

Module code: C84FRP

Student no: 4312732

MSc Forensic and Criminological Psychology

2018

Reporting tendencies of child maltreatment within a UK based sample of the general
population.

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Journal the paper is written for: The International Journal of Child Abuse & Neglect

Research Proposal

Project title

Reporting tendencies of child maltreatment within a UK sample of the general population.

Overview

Child abuse is a serious public health problem, resulting in death, physical injuries, and long-last psychological consequences for children (Louwers, Korfage, Affourtit, Koning, & Moll, 2012). The definitions of child abuse differentiate due to cultural and social diversities (Fraser, Mathews, Walsh, Chen, & Dunne, 2010). This has a detrimental effect on the conceptualisation of child abuse and can make it difficult to differentiate and identify between the different types of child abuse (Ystgaard et al., 2004).

Reporting Tendencies

According to Berkowitz (2008) education and awareness remains a significant modality that impacts upon the reporting of child maltreatment. The NSPCC (2010) established that only 1% of children were referred to child protection services, yet, research indicates that between 4-16% of children experience physical abuse, 10% experience psychological abuse, between 1 and 15% experience neglect. The prevailing evidence suggests that a large number of suspected abuse victims may not receive protective services. Therefore, greater awareness resonating reporting importance is essential so that implementation of effective prevention programs can take place (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002; Talsma, Boström, & Östberg, 2015).

Factors effecting reporting tendencies

Knowledge

Empirical studies have established that obvious signs of child abuse increase the likelihood of reporting an incident (Ashton, 1999; Zellman & Antler, 1990).

However, when abuse and neglect are not clear, it is difficult to decide whether actual maltreatment exists (Zellman & Antler, 1990).

Personal Characteristics

In surrounding literature, a variety of factors have been established to influence reporting tendencies of child abuse. For instance, gender has been found to influence how individuals perceive victims in cases involving child abuse (Pattalia, Pozzulo, & Reed, 2017).

Further confounding factors include ethnicity and culture diversities. Sawrika and Katz (2017) found universal barriers to reporting child abuse across ethnic minority groups. These include, fear of not being believed, lack of awareness, lack of faith in the criminal justice system (AlMadani, Bamousa, Alsaif, Kharoshah, & Alsowayigh, 2012; Sulimani-Aidan & Benbenishty, 2013).

Empathy

General empathy is defined as the reaction of an individual to the experiences of another (Davis, 1983). It encompasses perspective taking, empathic concern, and personal distress (Davis, 1983). More specifically, empathic concern refers to the affective response of feeling concern for another individual and thus, wanting to alleviate distress (Nickerson, Mele, & Princiotta, 2008). The term empathy has been used interchangeably with sympathy. However, the two have been established as separate phenomenon. According to Chrisma (1988),

generalized empathy is the process utilised to respond to another's perceived emotional state by experiencing similar feelings. Whereas, sympathy includes an empathetic state, but also entails a positive regard for the other person.

Rationale

There have been mixed findings on the associations of generalised empathy as a characteristic that structures an individual's personality. On the one hand, empathy has been linked with pro-social or helping behaviours (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1990). However, Eisenberg (2003) suggested that general pro-social behavior was more inclined to be motivated by selfish reasoning such as gaining the approval of others, rather than personal distress.

If empathy is a significant factor that impacts upon reporting tendencies of child abuse, campaigns could be tailored to address these findings. For instance, campaigns and adverts encouraging awareness and reporting of child abuse tend to use very emotive imagery. For less empathic groups, alternative methods of raising awareness could be utilised to engage all of the general public in this issue. The practical implications outlined, could subsequently facilitate the prevention and detection of child abuse. Similarly, the findings of this study may also assist with the development of safeguarding awareness and training programmes for persons who care and work with children

Research Questions

1. Does general empathy affect the perceived seriousness of the observed child maltreatment?
2. Does general empathy affect individuals' reporting tendencies of child maltreatment?

3. Do demographic factors including age, gender, ethnicity, and education influence child abuse reporting tendencies?

Proposed Methods

a. Participants

Participants will be recruited using a convenience sample via online social media. Participants will be aged 18 and above located in the UK and will have use of the computer and the internet to take part in the research study. Previous research has indicated that compliance to report is still compromised by a range of individual and contextual factors. Therefore, focusing on a general population based in the UK, encompasses all individuals to establish factors that may influence reporting tendencies. The participants will be recruited via snowballing technique on Facebook. The link to take part in the study will be made available to friends and family on Facebook. The link will contain a brief paragraph of the aims of this study, information regarding participation and a hyperlink to participate in the research (see appendix 5). All participants will use a unique code to anonymise data and to facilitate withdrawing at a later stage if participants wish.

In order to calculate the number of participants to take part in the research study, a $N > 50 + 8K$ method (Green, 1991) when testing R^2 was used. This would equate to 114 participants needed ($N > 50 + 8 \times 8$). However, additional data will be collected in case of withdrawal of any data or incomplete responses.

b. Procedure

The research design is a within participants design meaning that all participants will take part in all conditions. The study will be conducted online using Bristol online Survey system. Once the participants click the hyperlink, a window will open containing the information sheet (see appendix 2) and consent form (see appendix 3) of which the participants will be asked to read thoroughly and give their electronic consent. Participants will be informed that they are free to withdraw from the study at any time by closing the browser. Participants will then be instructed to answer demographic information and then read the vignettes chronologically (See appendix 1). Underneath each vignette will be a series of questions relating to the seriousness of the scenario and the likelihood of reporting the abuse. In total, the questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Once completed, a debrief sheet will be presented on screen, outlining the purpose of the research and information regarding the anonymity and confidentiality of data (see appendix 4). The debrief sheet will also provide contact details of organisations for participants to approach if they require any further support.

c. Measures (or materials in experiments)

Materials

At the beginning of the study, participants will be asked a series of questions to gain demographic information. This will consist of questions regarding

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Ethnicity
4. Education

All questions in this section of the questionnaire require participants to either select the appropriate answer or fill in the lined space.

3 vignettes will be used to demonstrate hypothetical scenarios of child abuse. The vignettes were adapted from both Zellman and Bell's (1990) study on professional mandated reporting of child abuse. However, the current study includes vignettes depicting emotional neglect, emotional abuse, and physical abuse. Emotional neglect is a less researched phenomenon that is defined as not meeting the child's developmental or emotional needs, including inadequate nurturance or affection (Proctor & Dubowitz, 2014). Emotional abuse is defined as psychological tactics that are aimed to undermine emotional security and a sense of self (Bornstein, 2006). This type of child abuse is extremely prevalent but hugely under recognised (Glasser, 2002). Physical abuse is defined as deliberately causing physical harm to a child that may involve bruises, broken bones, red marks for example (Kellogg, 2007). It is suggested to be the most recognisable and common form of abuse observed by the general public (Swerdlin, Berkowitz, & Craft, 2007).

Furthermore, the vignette introduction portrays a 6-year old victim based on Finkelhor's (1986) analysis suggesting that children aged between 6 and 7 appear to have an increased vulnerability to both single and multiple victimisations of child abuse. The victim-offender relationship was chosen as it has been widely recognised that the majority of child abuse happens within the family environment (Back & Lip, 1998). Furthermore, the separation between mother and father was utilised after Glaser (2002) suggested that a break-down in the family environment such as separation or divorce, may increase child-maltreatment behaviours conducted by the parents. The gender of the child remained unknown as gender of the victim has been found to influence both

reporting tendencies (Anastasio & Costa, 2004) and empathy (Barnett et al., 1992) in previous literature. The introduction presented before each of the vignettes is utilised to standardise the context of each of the vignettes. The vignettes were developed to not be purposefully emotive or cause distress to the participants taking part in the study but may be of a sensitive nature.

Underneath each vignette, a series of questions will be asked relating to:

1. The seriousness of the scenario
2. Did the situation constitute abuse?
3. Likelihood of taking action?
4. If likely, what action would be taken? (drop down list)

Each will be measured on a 10-point likert scale.

Empathy will be measured using **The Interpersonal Reactivity Index Scale (IRI) (Davis, 1980)**. A 28-item multifaceted construct developed to explore empathetic tendencies. Representing different facets of the multidimensional concept are 4 separate sub scales: perspective taking, fantasy, empathetic concern, and personal distress. Items are evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (does not describe me well) to 4 (describes me very well). Items in each scale are summed to obtain a subscale score and a total score. Amongst the surrounding literature, the IRI has been confirmed to have good construct validity and test-retest reliability (Péloquin & Lafontaine, 2010; Johnson, Hughes, & Ireland, 2007).

Prior to research commencing, both the vignettes and measures will be checked for both appropriateness and ease of understand by a range of child focused professionals.

d. Proposed analytical methods

A multiple regression analysis will be conducted to establish whether the outcome variable of reporting tendencies can be predicted using the continuous and categorical demographic variables.

e. Estimated timescale

Action	Timeframe
Data collected	1 st March-April
Data analysis	1 st April-May
Competition of draft portfolio	1 st June

Word count - 1676

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Appendices (data collection instruments, participant information sheet, consent form, debriefing sheet and standardised instructions)

Appendices	Order
Social Media Advert	1.
Information form	2.
Consent	3.
Vignettes & Questionnaire	4.
Interpersonal Reactivity Index	5.
Debrief	6.

Appendix 1

I am a student at the University of Nottingham currently studying a masters degree in Forensic and Criminological Psychology. As part of my masters degree, I am conducting a dissertation on reporting tendencies of child abuse. The study will take you approximately 20 minutes and your participation would be greatly appreciated. As the research topic is quite a sensitive area, please do not take part if you feel uncomfortable answering questions on scenarios containing child abuse. If you wish to take part, please click on the link below. I would really appreciate if you send this link to others that are interested in taking part. Thank you!

Appendix 2

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

Centre for Forensic & Family Psychology

Division of Psychiatry & Applied Psychology

School of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences

Project Title: Identification and reporting tendencies of child maltreatment within the general population.

Researcher: Robyn Wright (email: Msxrw10@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk)

Supervisor: Lydia Bullock(email: mszlr@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk) Shihning Chou (email: lwzsc1@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk)

Ethics Reference Number: ... *[to be inserted following ethical review]*

You are being invited to participate in a research study titled factors effecting the reporting tendencies of child maltreatment within the general population. To take part in this study, participants must be over the age of 18, a UK resident and have access to a computer and the internet. This study is being conducted by Robyn Wright with the co-supervision of Lydia Bullock and Dr Shihning Chou. I am a MSc student studying Forensic and Criminological Psychology at the University of Nottingham. The information we get from this study may help to explore participants understanding of different forms of child maltreatment.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact us at the above email addresses.

What is the study about?

The purpose of this research study is to explore the reporting tendencies of child abuse among the general public. The vignettes have been developed not to cause distress, however they are of a sensitive nature, therefore, if this topic is too sensitive, we kindly ask that you do not take part in the study. During the study, you will be asked to read 3 hypothetical scenarios of child maltreatment and answer subsequent questions regarding identification and reporting likelihood. It will take you approximately 20 minutes to complete with a total of 12 questions.

If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form. Your participation is voluntary, and you may decline to answer a particular question, and without giving a reason. You are free to withdraw (i.e. pull out) at any point before or during the study by closing the browser window. It will not affect you

in anyway. The data will only be uploaded on completion of the questionnaire by clicking the SUBMIT button.

However, because this study uses anonymous questionnaires, you will receive an anonymous code that can be used to withdraw your data from the study throughout and after the study has taken place.

Will the research be of any personal benefit to me?

The research may not benefit you directly however, the information that the researcher attains from this study will help to understanding the factors that influence reporting child maltreatment. This information may then be used to help by implement the development of effective child protection media campaigns, aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of child abuse reporting, as well as promoting the welfare of children.

What will happen to the information I provide?

All of the information that you provide during the research will be kept confidential and anonymous. Only your data from the questionnaires will be used when reporting the research findings. You will not be asked for your name or any other personal details, so it will not be possible for you to be linked with the data. The UK Data Protection Act 1998 will apply to all information gathered within the questionnaires.

We believe there are no known risks linked with this research study. We will do everything possible to make sure your answers in this study remain anonymous. We will reduce any risks by keeping all information gathered within the questionnaires on password-locked computer files so that no data can be accessed by anyone other than the researcher and the supervisor. All of the data will be stored for a period of 10 years before being destroyed.

What will you do with the data?

The data will contribute to the researcher's doctorate / MSc thesis. The results of the study may be published in scientific journals and presented at scientific conferences. The data will be reported anonymously, with any identifying information removed. If you would like a summary of the results, then you can contact the researchers using the contact details above.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to ask. We can be contacted before and after your participation at the above address.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

Appendix 3

PARTICIPANT CONSENT

Centre for Forensic & Family Psychology

Division of Psychiatry & Applied Psychology

School of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences

Project Title: Identification and reporting tendencies of child maltreatment within the general population.

Researcher: Robyn Wright (email: Msxrw10@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk)

Supervisor: Lydia Bullock(email: mszlr@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk) Shihning

Chou (email: lwzsc1@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk)

Ethics Reference Number: *[to be inserted following ethical review]*

Unique personal Code _____

(Your first 3 letters of your surname, three letters of the month you were born and last two letters of your phone number) **Example:** Joe Bloggs, March, XXXXXXXXX76 = GGSMAR76

- I have read and understood the Participant Information.
YES/NO
- I know how to contact the researcher if I have questions about this study?
YES/NO
- I understand that my participation is voluntary I am free to withdraw at any time?
YES/NO
- I understand that I can withdraw my data at any time during and after the study has taken place using my unique code to do so?
YES/NO
- I understand the overall anonymised data from this study may be used by other researchers in the future for research and teaching purposes? YES/NO
- I understand that non-identifiable data from this study might be used in academic research reports or publications? YES/NO
- I am 18 or over YES/NO
- I indicate my willingness to take part in the study voluntarily YES/NO

Appendix 4

Proposed Questionnaire

Age _____

Gender (circle) Female/Male/Other

Ethnicity _____

Education (circle)

1. Less than GCSE level
2. GCSE levels
3. A level or equivalent (NVQ, BTEC, Diplomas)
4. Degree level
5. Post graduate Degree level (Masters/PHD)
6. Other

Please Read the following scenarios and answer the subsequent questions that follow to the best of your ability.

Vignettes

A 6-year-old child lived with his/her mother and father. The mother and father have been arguing recently, resulting in the father leaving home and seeking temporary residence elsewhere, leaving the child in the care of his/her mother.

The child plays alone on the whole. The child tries to get the attention of his/her mother, but the mother is found to be on her phone, avoiding contact and interaction with the child for extended periods of time. The mother does not comfort the child when they are distressed, she instead turns away and uses her mobile phone.

Please circle the correct answers accordingly.

1. How serious do you think this scenario is? (1= not serious at all, 10= very serious)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. Does the scenario constitute a type of child abuse? Yes/No

3. How likely are you to take action on the scenario? (1= not likely at all, 10= very likely to take action)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. If you would take action, what action would this be? (drop down of options including: Nothing, phone the police, phone social services, tell a friend, phone NCPCC or other)

A 6-year-old child lived with his/her mother and father. The mother and father have been arguing recently, resulting in the father leaving home and seeking temporary residence elsewhere, leaving the child in the hands of his/her mother.

The child is having a tantrum with his/her mother as they want to go to the park on the way home from school. The mother is distressed and can not seem to calm the child down. The mother is embarrassed and becomes angry and hostile towards the child and smacks the child on the back of the thigh leaving a noticeable red mark.

Please circle the correct answers accordingly.

1. How serious do you think this scenario is? (1= not serious at all, 10= very serious)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. Does the scenario constitute a type of child abuse? Yes/No

3. How likely are you to take action on the scenario? (1= not likely at all, 10= very likely to take action)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. If you would take action, what action would this be? (drop down of options including: Nothing, phone the police, phone social services, tell a friend, phone NCPCC or other)

A 6-year-old child lived with his/her mother and father. The mother and father have been arguing recently, resulting in the father leaving home and seeking temporary residence elsewhere, leaving the child in the hands of his/her mother.

The mother picks her child up from school. She notices that the child has fallen over and has stained their school trousers. She begins to shout at the child in front of the other parents and children, stating that they are stupid and selfish for creating more washing for her. She further states that if the child does this again, they will not see their father again.

Please circle the correct answers accordingly.

1. How serious do you think this scenario is? (1= not serious at all, 10= very serious)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. Does the scenario constitute a type of child abuse? Yes/No

3. How likely are you to take action on the scenario? (1= not likely at all, 10= very likely to take action)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. If you would take action, what action would this be? (drop down of options including: Nothing, phone the police, phone social services, tell a friend, phone NCPCC or other)

Appendices 5

INTERPERSONAL REACTIVITY INDEX

The following statements inquire about your thoughts and feelings in a variety of situations. For each item, indicate how well it describes you by choosing the appropriate letter on the scale at the top of the page: A, B, C, D, or E. When you have decided on your answer, fill in the letter next to the item number.

READ EACH ITEM CAREFULLY BEFORE RESPONDING.

Answer as honestly as you can. Thank you.

ANSWER SCALE: **(DOES NOT DESCRIBE ME WELL) A B C D E (DESCRIBES ME WELL)**

1. I daydream and fantasize, with some regularity, about things that might happen to me.

(FS)

2. I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.

(EC)

3. I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other guy's" point of view.

(PT) (-)

4. Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems. (EC)

(-)

5. I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel. (FS)

6. In emergency situations, I feel apprehensive and ill-at-ease. (PD)

7. I am usually objective when I watch a movie or play, and I don't often get completely

caught up in it. (FS) (-)

8. I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.

(PT)

9. When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them.

(EC)

10. I sometimes feel helpless when I am in the middle of a very emotional situation. (PD)

11. I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from

their perspective. (PT)

12. Becoming extremely involved in a good book or movie is somewhat rare for me. (FS) (-)

13. When I see someone get hurt, I tend to remain calm. (PD) (-)
14. Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal. (EC) (-)
15. If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments. (PT) (-)
16. After seeing a play or movie, I have felt as though I were one of the characters. (FS)
17. Being in a tense emotional situation scares me. (PD)
18. When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them. (EC) (-)
19. I am usually pretty effective in dealing with emergencies. (PD) (-)
20. I am often quite touched by things that I see happen. (EC)
21. I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both. (PT)
22. I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person. (EC)
23. When I watch a good movie, I can very easily put myself in the place of a leading character. (FS)
24. I tend to lose control during emergencies. (PD)
25. When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his shoes" for a while. (PT)
26. When I am reading an interesting story or novel, I imagine how I would feel if the events in the story were happening to me. (FS)
27. When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces. (PD)
28. Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place. (PT)

Scoring

NOTE: (-) denotes item to be scored in reverse fashion

PT = perspective-taking scale

FS = fantasy scale

EC = empathic concern scale

PD = personal distress scale

A = 0

B = 1

C = 2

D = 3

E = 4

Except for reversed-scored items, which are scored:

A = 4

B = 3

C = 2

D = 1

E = 0

Appendices 6

PARTICIPANT DEBRIEF

Centre for Forensic & Family Psychology

Division of Psychiatry & Applied Psychology

School of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences

Project Title: Identification and reporting tendencies of child maltreatment within the general population.

Researcher: Robyn Wright (email: Msxrw10@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk)

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Ethics Reference Number: ... *[to be inserted following ethical review]*
Debrief Sheet

Thank you for volunteering to participate in my study in your own time.

The study aimed to investigate the effect of demographic variables such as age, gender, ethnicity etc and empathy on reporting tendencies of child abuse.

All data collected will be kept confidential and will only be accessible by myself and my co-research supervisors. You have the right to withdraw your own data from the study at any time using your unique code. All data will remain anonymous throughout.

If you would like to get in touch about this research topic, please contact myself or the project supervisors on the email addresses below.

Researcher

Robyn Wright – Msxrw10@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

Supervisors

Lydia Bullock – mszlrb@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

Shihning Chou – lwzsc1@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

If you would like to receive advice or report an incident of child maltreatment here are some contact details:

NSPCC Child Abuse – 0808 800 5000

Childline – 0800 1111

If you have been directly affected by the content used in this research, please seek help from the following contact details:

Victim support – 0808 168 9111

Muslim Youth Helpline – 0808 808 2008

National Youth Advocacy Service – 0808 808 1001

SupportLine - 01708 765200

info@supportline.org.uk



**University of
Nottingham**

UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

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**Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences
Research Ethics Committee**

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19 March 2018

Robyn Wright

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Dear Robyn

Ethics Reference No: 251-1802 – please always quote	
Study Title: Reporting tendencies of child maltreatment within a UK based sample of the general population	
Chief Investigator/Supervisor: Dr Shihning Chou, Associate Professor, Deputy Director, Dr Lydia Bullock, Assistant Professor of Forensic Psychology, Centre for Forensic & Family Psychology, Division of Psychiatry & Applied Psychology, School of Medicine.	
Lead Investigators/student: Robyn Wright, MSc Forensic and Criminological Psychology Student.	
Type of Study: MSc, internet mediated, online questionnaires	
Proposed Start Date: 01/03/2018	Proposed End Date: 30/07/2018 4 mths
No of Subjects: 114+	Age: 18+years

Thank you for submitting the above application and the following documents were received:

- FMHS REC Application form and supporting documents version 1.0: 29.01.2018

These have been reviewed and are satisfactory and the study has been given a favourable opinion.

A favourable opinion has been given on the understanding that:

1. The protocol agreed is followed and the Committee is informed of any changes using a notice of amendment form (please request a form).
2. The Chair is informed of any serious or unexpected event.
3. An End of Project Progress Report is completed and returned when the study has finished (Please request a form).

Yours sincerely

Professor Ravi Mahajan

Chair, Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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Abstract¹

Objective: The aim of the study was to explore the association between demographic variables and the intentions to report child maltreatment.

Participants: A convenience sample of 241 participants from the general population were recruited. All participants were over the age of 18, located within the UK and had internet access.

Method: Three vignettes were presented containing behaviours of child emotional abuse, physical abuse, and emotional neglect. Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire determining the likelihood of reporting the behaviour. Furthermore, completion of the Interpersonal Reactivity Scale (IRI, Davis, 1980) to measure empathy using 4 separate facets of empathic concern, fantasy, perspective taking, and personal distress was utilised.

Results: Participants were more likely to report emotional abuse in comparison to physical abuse refuting previous research. Participants were least likely to report emotional neglect, consistent with previous research. Using robust multiple regression analysis, general empathy was established as a significant predictor of reporting intention in both the emotional abuse vignette ($p = 0.001$) and the emotional neglect vignette ($p = 0.002$). Similarly, general empathy was also distinguished as a significant predictor of seriousness in emotional abuse ($p = 0.03$) and emotional neglect ($p = 0.004$).

Conclusion: Certain variables were determined essential to increase the likelihood of reporting. This has important implications for victims of child maltreatment and interventions designed to prevent a culture of concealment when reporting (Smith & Freyd, 2013).

Keywords – Child abuse, Reporting intention, Empathy.

Literature Review

¹ This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Overview

Child abuse is a serious public health problem, resulting in death, physical injuries, and long-lasting psychological consequences (Louwers, Korfage, Affourtit, Koning, & Moll, 2012). The production of reliable data surrounding the prevalence, nature and context of child maltreatment is essential to inform policy efforts aimed at the prevention, early identification, and appropriate response (Mathews, Norman, Dunne & Marston, 2017). However, many countries have not yet generated robust evidence of prevalence, and much of the existing literature is limited to selected types of maltreatment (Stoltenborgh, Bakermans-Kranenburg, Alink, & van Ijzendoorn, 2012).

Such types include well-recognised physical abuse, defined as deliberately causing physical harm to a child (Kellogg, 2007; Flaherty, Sege, Price, Christoffel, & Norton, 2006). Research that places emphasis on this, may exacerbate the lack of recognition and reporting of alternative types such as emotional abuse, defined as the utilisation of psychological tactics aimed to undermine emotional security and a sense of self (Wolfe & Mclsaac, 2011) and emotional neglect, a less researched phenomenon that is defined as not meeting the child's developmental or emotional needs, including inadequate nurturance or affection (Proctor & Dubowitz, 2014). Although under recognised, the damaging consequences of have been highlighted more recently in surrounding literature (English, Thompson, White, & Wilson, 2014). The disparity of recognition has a detrimental effect on the conceptualisation of child abuse and thus, perpetuates the difficulties surrounding boundary identification in its various forms (Ystgaard, Hestetun, Loeb, & Mehlum, 2004). Due to this, knowledge gaps and misconceptions of child abuse are widespread amongst the general public (Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010). Therefore, efforts to inculcate awareness of this matter are fundamental for the prevention, recognition, and action that is required on a global level (Mathews & Collin-Vezina, 2016).

Reporting Tendencies

According to Berkowitz (2008) education and awareness remains a significant modality that impacts upon the recognition and reporting of child maltreatment. A recent publication by the NSPCC included a survey conducted in 2008, establishing that only 1% of children were referred to child protection services, yet, research indicates that between 4-16% of children experience physical abuse, 10% experience psychological abuse, and between 1 and 15% experience neglect (Gilbert, Spatz Widom, Browne, Fergusson, Webb, & Janson, 2008). The prevailing evidence suggests that a large number of suspected abuse victims may not receive protective services. Therefore, to diminish the widening gap between the rate of child abuse and the rate at which cases are being reported to authorities, awareness resonating reporting importance is essential so that implementation of effective prevention programs can take place (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002; Talsma, Boström, & Östberg, 2015).

The theoretical underpinning of reporting intentions has been associated with the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). The construct is used to elucidate the relationship amongst behavioural intentions, social norms, and personal attitudes in a multitude of contexts (Sulak, Saxon, & Fearon, 2014). In this theory, social norms are established as normative beliefs that evoke appropriate responses within a given context (Vallerand, Deshaies, Cuerrier, Pelletier, & Mongeau, 1992). Thus, if a participant has a greater intention to act in a certain context, the subsequent behaviour is more likely to be performed. In pertinent cases of child maltreatment, behavioural intentions may predict actual reporting intentions. Therefore, acknowledging this relationship may pinpoint individuals that respond in a socially acceptable way, but fail to act. This is often regarded as the preliminary step towards intervening, as it facilitates victim access to additional support.

Influencing Factors

Knowledge

Empirical studies have established that obvious signs of child abuse increase the likelihood of reporting an incident (Ashton, 1999; Zellman & Antler, 1990). However, when abusive or neglectful signs are unclear, it is difficult to discern whether actual maltreatment exists (Zellman & Antler, 1990). Existing studies have acknowledged identifiable factors that have impacted on reporting intentions and decisions amongst adult samples. Jones et al. (2008) revealed four main themes that impacted upon decision to report. These factors are predominantly associated with amount of knowledge available surrounding each case. For instance, injury history, knowledge and experience with the family, consultation and advice from colleagues, and previous experience reporting maltreatment were amongst the themes established. However, the prevailing results are only generalisable to the reporting intentions of child physical abuse, further research is required to establish the applicability to other types of maltreatment.

Victim Characteristics

Surrounding literature has evidenced that male witnesses place greater blame attribution onto male victims, as they are deemed more capable of fighting back against their attacker (Davies, Pollard, & Archer, 2001). Gender-role beliefs also resonate within child maltreatment literature, as male respondents deem the abuse as less severe and the victim more culpable when the victim is male. Witnesses also demonstrate increased negativity in their perceptions when male child victims are abused by female perpetrators (Quas, Bottoms, Haegerich, & Nysse-Carris, 2002). Furthermore, Bornstein, Kaplan, and Perry (2007) explored the differences in perceptions of child physical abuse and determined that vignettes involving a female victim were perceived with greater seriousness than male victims. It is also exemplified that exposure to multiple types and frequent episodes of maltreatment is more prominently associated with an increased risk in damaging psychological consequences for female victims than males (Gilbert, Widom, Browne,

Fergusson, Webb, & Janson, 2009). Although a prevalent gender stereotype exists for male victims across various female perpetrated crimes, limited research has evidenced this in a non-sexual abuse context. Therefore, findings lack generalisability to all types of child maltreatment. Further exploration is required as some researchers argue that there is a greater propensity for maladaptive outcomes in cases of emotional abuse and neglect than physical abuse (Infurna, Reichl, Parzer, Schimmenti, Bifulco, & Kaess, 2016).

Witness Characteristics

A number of witness demographics have been established to influence the reporting propensities of child maltreatment within the general population. Along with victim sex, sex of the witness has been found to influence the credibility of the victim and thus, reporting intention (Pettalia, Pozzulo, & Reed, 2017). Kean and Dukes (1991) suggested that females are predisposed to perceive victims with greater empathy regardless of the type of abuse. This was established as female participants determined the perpetration of physical abuse, psychological abuse, and neglect to be more abusive than male witnesses.

Additionally, ethnicity and culture diversity has been evidenced to influence reporting intention. Sawrikar and Katz (2017) found universal barriers to reporting maltreatment across ethnic minority groups. These include, fear of not being believed, lack of awareness and a lack of faith in the criminal justice system (AlMadani, Bamousa, Alsaif, Kharoshah, & Alsowayigh, 2012; Sulimani-Aidan & Benbenishty, 2013). Moreover, evidence has suggested that in minority cultures, prevalence of dishonouring the family may occur if the reporting directly threatens collectivist values. This was prominent in Asian communities (Gilligan & Akhtar, 2005), Jewish communities (SulimaniAidan & Benbenishty, 2013), Arab communities (Haj-Yahia & Tamish, 2001), and Zimbabwean culture (Kaseke, 2010). However, refuting previous conclusions, Ashton (2004) failed to determine a relationship between reporting intention and the demographics of age and gender. However, of the eight variables explored, ethnicity and immigrant status had a significant effect on reporting, in that westernised participants of white ethnicity were more likely to report maltreatment.

Empathy

General empathy is a phenomenon frequently contested by many researchers (Lamm, Silani & Singer, 2015; Davis, 2018). Its conceptualisation has practical implications when used throughout research (Jeffrey, 2016). It has been defined as the accurate cognitive understanding of the experiences of others (Davis, 1983) and thus, responding with an affectively motivated action that is deemed appropriate to that person's situation (Baron-Cohen, 2011). According to Davis (1983) out of the four distinct entities of empathy (perspective taking, fantasy, empathic concern, and personal distress), empathic concern is the facet that promotes an effective response aimed at alleviating distress of an individual (Nickerson, Mele, & Princiotta, 2008). As a general mechanism, empathic concern directed at another person evokes prosocial altruistic behaviour (Hein, Morshima, Leiberger, Sui, & Fehr, 2016). In a context of child maltreatment, empathy promotes a capacity and willingness to experience the abused child's profound distress in order to initiate prosocial helping behaviours (Mathew & Collin-Vezina, 2016).

The Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977) posits that attitudes and subjective norms towards a perceived behaviour influences both behavioural intention and execution (Ajzen, 2012). Doane, Pearson, and Kelly (2014) explored the interaction between the construct of empathy and the Theory of Reasoned Action using stimuli containing victims of cyberbullying. In the four types of cyberbullying behaviour, empathy was determined as a predictor of behavioural intentions, injunctive norms, and attitudes. However, due to the cross-sectional design utilised, temporal precedence remains unestablished as it is undetermined whether behaviours can be predicted prospectively (Doane, Pearson, & Kelly, 2014).

Several factors have been established to influence general empathy in a victim dependent context. Researchers have previously evidenced differences in empathy in males and females. Females are predominantly more empathic due to their predisposed maternal instincts (Barnett, Feierstein, Jaet, Saunders, Quackenbush, & Sinisi, 1992; Davis, 1983,

Kean & Dukes, 1991). Due to this, it can be hypothesised that female participants may demonstrate higher empathy towards child maltreatment stimuli and thus, have a greater intention to report.

Rationale

There have been mixed findings on the associations of generalised empathy as a personality construct. Previous literature has predominantly associated it with pro-social or helping behaviours (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1990). However, there has been increased speculation as to whether empathy evokes a behavioural intention or a performed behaviour (Sulak, Saxon, & Fearon, 2014). Various researchers have evidenced that empathy-related responding or prosocial behaviour is also motivated by selfish reasoning, such as gaining the approval of others by conforming to social norms (Eisenberg, 2003), or egoistic concerns such as the desire for reciprocity (Eisenberg & Eggum, 2010), rather than own personal distress.

Determining the factors disinhibiting the reporting is crucial for early detection and prevention. The findings may contribute to the understanding of reporting, as well as promoting the welfare of children (Humphries et al., 2016). Recognising the role of empathy may advance campaigns and adverts encouraging awareness and the reporting of child abuse. Contemporary campaigns tend to use emotive imagery to trigger an empathic response (Small & Verrochi, 2009). For distinguished groups with diminished reporting intention, alternative methods may be utilised to engage the entire population in this public health issue. The findings of this study may also assist with the development of safeguarding awareness and training programmes for persons who care for and work with children (in line with the Children Act, 2004).

Research Questions

1. Do the reporting tendencies of the general population differ across the types of maltreatment?

2. Do demographic factors including age, gender, ethnicity, education, and general empathy affect the intention to report child maltreatment?
3. Does general empathy affect the perceived seriousness of the child maltreatment and thus impact on the intention to report?
4. Are certain types of maltreatment easier to identify than others? Does this affect reporting intention?

Methods

Participants

Prior to participant recruitment, a power analysis was utilised to establish the number of participants required using a $N > 50 + 8K$ method (Green, 1991) when testing R^2 . This equated to 114 participants required ($N > 50 + 8 \times 8$).

Participants were recruited using a convenience sample via online social media platforms including Facebook and Reddit. An advert containing a hyperlink was posted on the platforms to facilitate participation using friends and family. To ensure the sample remained unbiased and representative of the general population, it was posted on pages with both male and female viewers. Snowballing sampling was utilised (Browne, 2005), as some individuals shared the advert with their own network of contacts. The advert contained a brief summary of the purpose, duration and inclusion criteria of the research.

Requirements for participation included that all participants must be aged 18 or above and have use of an electronic device with access to the internet. The sample included participants solely located in the UK.

Participants were instructed to click on the hyperlink of either option J or option N after reading an information sheet. Both hyperlinks contained identical questionnaires, however the order of questions was differed to counter balance potential order effects. Prior to survey distribution, pilot testing was employed using two child professionals and two members solicited from the general public. The aim of the piloting was to assess the

adequacy and validity of the measures utilised (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2010). Face and content validity were verified for both the vignette content and subsequent questionnaire.

Overall, a final sample size of $N=244$ participants was recruited with an age range of 18-65⁺ ($M= 32.22$, $SD=1.22$). Out of this total, 125 participants selected Option J, and 121 participants selected option N. The gender distribution was relatively equal, 106 participants were male (43.3%) and 132 participants were female (54.1%), 6 participants did not disclose gender. (2.5%). The majority of participants identified their ethnicity as White (90.7%) or Asian (4.5%). The total response rate was 60.5%.

Design

The study applied a repeated measures design to investigate whether general empathy and additional demographic variables were associated with reporting intention using hypothetical child maltreatment vignettes. The independent variable consists of the three vignettes containing differential maltreatment types. The dependent variables consist of general empathy, the perceptual rating of seriousness and reporting likelihood, and the demographic variables.

Materials

The Interpersonal Reactivity Index

Over the years, various self-report measures of empathy have been developed (Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2004; Garton & Gringart, 2005; Dadds et al., 2008). Currently, Davis' Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; Davis, 1980) is the most widely and frequently used scale to measure individual differences in empathic tendencies (Pulos, Elison, & Lennon, 2004). Its popularity is attributable to the multidimensional conceptualisation of empathy. Secondly, the IRI is regarded as the most comprehensive measure of self-reported empathic dispositions. The measure is a 28-item multifaceted construct containing 4 separate sub scales: perspective taking, fantasy, empathetic concern, and personal distress. Items are evaluated using a 5-point likert scale ranging from 0 (does not describe me well) to

4 (describes me very well). Items in each scale are summed to obtain a subscale score and a total empathy score. Amongst the surrounding literature, the IRI has been confirmed to have good construct validity and test-retest reliability (Péloquin & Lafontaine, 2010; Johnson, Hughes, & Ireland, 2007).

Vignette Questionnaire

A questionnaire made up of twenty-one questions was utilised to investigate the reporting tendencies of participants within three hypothetical child maltreatment vignettes (See appendix 1). The questionnaire preliminary aimed to retrieve demographic data comprising of age, gender, ethnicity, and educational level. The demographic variables are utilised as previous research has indicated an effect on reporting intention (Fraser, Mathews, Walsh, Chen, & Dunne, 2010). All questions require participants to select an appropriate answer or fill in the space provided.

Moreover, vignettes are employed as a means of exploring behaviours within a sensitive context in a less threatening and less personal manner (Barter & Renold, 1999). The vignettes are adapted from Zellman and Bell's (1990) study exploring the mandated reporting tendencies of professionals using child maltreatment scenarios of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and physical neglect (See appendix 2). However, in the current study, vignettes of emotional neglect, emotional abuse are utilised due to their high prevalence and under recognition demonstrated in surrounding literature (Glaser, 2002). Furthermore, physical abuse is utilised as although it is arguably the most widely recognised form of child maltreatment, it evokes inconsistent responses within the general population due to individual differences, such as child rearing attitudes or behavioural reinforcement (Swerdlin, Berkowitz, & Craft, 2007). Along with adaptations from Zellman and Bell's (1990) vignettes, modifications of Walsh, Bridgstock, Farrell, Rassafiani, and Schweitzer's (2008) study are utilised in order to depict practical scenarios that the general population may encounter in

day-to-day life. This was adapted as preliminary pilot testing revealed that participants had difficulty responding to the vignettes that were not contextually relevant to their everyday life.

Additionally, a contextual paragraph based upon Finkelhor's (1986) analysis was included in order to standardise each vignette (See appendix 3). Within this, details of the victims age, parental history and victim-offender relationship were included. The age of the victim is determined at 6 years-old due to Finkelhor and Baron (1986) deductions that children aged between 6 and 7 are increasingly vulnerable to multiple types of both individual and repeated victimisations. The relationship between victim and perpetrator is signified by a parent and child as it is identified that the majority of abusive behaviour occurs within the child's familial environment (Back & Lip, 1998). Furthermore, parental separation was utilised to signify a break-down within the family environment as it has been proposed to increase child maltreatment perpetration conducted by a single parent (Glaser, 2002). The gender of the child remained neutral to prevent confounding effects previously identified (Anastasio and Costa, 2004). After each vignette, a series of 5 questions were used to assess the reporting intention of participants. The questions measuring the seriousness and reporting intention were assessed on a 10-point likert scale. Alternative questions were assessed using a drop-down list that participants selected at their discretion.

Procedure

Participants were recruited on a voluntary basis using various social media platforms including Facebook and Reddit. To take part in the study, participants were instructed to click on the hyperlink within the advertisement. This activated a new window operate by Bristol Online Survey software (BOS) where a participant information sheet was presented. Once read, participants were prompted to click a finish button that activated a new page requiring selection of one of the two options displayed (option J or option N). Following selection, participants were redirected to a new window containing a consent form and the research questionnaire. For each question, participants were only able to click one answer unless prompted. Once completed, participants were prompted to click the finish button. This

generated the participant debrief sheet outlining the aims of the study, as well as suitable helplines surrounding child maltreatment.

Ethical Implications

Prior to conducting this piece of research, ethical clearance was established in agreement with the BPS code of ethics and conduct by the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Reference number: 251-1802). By which certain ethical guidelines were adhered to throughout this study. For instance, anonymity was established throughout as participants were prompted to create a unique code during the completion of the consent form. An information sheet was presented prior to participation to advise participants that the study included sensitive material so that they were protected from experiencing any psychological harm. After completion, participants were debriefed on the purpose of the study with the aim of removing any misconceptions regarding the research. The form also contained contact details for external organisations should participants feel that they need any additional support.

Results

Treating Raw Data

Once the study was closed on BOS, the data was downloaded into IBM SPSS Statistics 24 software. Preliminary tests were conducted to create histograms to test whether the data met the assumptions for parametric analysis. Box plots were created to detect outliers that were present within the raw data. Z scores determined that two outliers were statistically significant, thus removed from the raw data (Dancey & Reidy, 2007). The means and standard deviation of the dependent variables from all three maltreatment conditions are summarised in Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1. Means and Standard deviation of Questionnaire scores from all three Vignettes and the Interpersonal Reactivity Index.

Questions	Emotional Neglect		Emotional Abuse		Physical Abuse	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Seriousness	7.19	4.27	7.73	1.66	7.02	2.20
Reporting Likelihood	5.11	2.62	6.37	2.51	5.78	3.00

	Mean	SD
Fantasy scale	16.08	5.91
Perspective scale	17.71	5.08
Personal distress	10.80	5.18
Empathic concern	18.88	5.37
Empathy Total	63.31	14.55

Research Question 1

A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to determine the variance in reporting likelihood across the different maltreatment types. However, as the data did not meet the assumptions of Sphericity, a Greenhouse-Geisser correction was applied to the degrees of freedom of the F distribution to reduce the likelihood of a type 1 error (Field, 2013).

Results determined that the mean reporting likelihood differed significantly between the three vignettes ($F(1.79,417.56) = 25.67, p < 0.001$) an overall effect size of 0.099 (partial η^2) demonstrated that 9.9% of the variation in error scores can be accounted for by the differing levels of maltreatment. Post hoc tests using the Bonferroni correction was utilised to reduce the likelihood of a type 1 error (Armstrong, 2014). This indicated that there was an overall significant difference between emotional neglect and emotional abuse conditions (mean difference = 1.27, $p < 0.001$, $CI(95\%)$ 0.89-1.64). Similarly, a significant difference was also identified between emotional neglect and physical abuse conditions (mean difference = 0.68, $p = 0.003$, $CI(95\%)$ 0.18-1.17). Finally, a significant difference was also established between emotional abuse and physical abuse conditions (mean difference = 0.59, $p = 0.001$, $CI(95\%)$ 0.19-0.99).

Research Question 2

A multiple linear regression was calculated in order to establish whether reporting tendencies for each vignette differed based upon total empathy score, age, gender, ethnicity, and education level, results are summarised in Table 2. Preliminary analysis indicated that a number of variables (emotional abuse reporting tendency, physical abuse reporting tendency) were skewed and therefore, non-normally distributed. Although attempts were made to transform the non-normally distributed items using log and square root transformation, the variables remained skewed and thus non-normally distributed. As this data violated assumptions of normality, utilisation of the bootstrap approach was required (Efron & Tibshirani, 1993). This enabled the narrowing of confidence intervals and generated the significance tests of the model parameters to reduce the likelihood of a type 1 error (Field, 2013). Furthermore, to meet the assumptions of a multiple regression analysis, dichotomisation of the Total Empathy variable took place to make interval level data. This was conducted to simplify the statistical analysis by using the median as a division point to conduct a binary split. This led to the comparison of high and low values of empathy (Rucker, McShane, & Preacher, 2015).

Emotional Neglect: The regression indicates that 7.4% of the variance for the outcome variable of reporting likelihood is accounted for by demographic information ($F(6,235) = 3.13, p = 0.006$). Ethnicity ($b = 0.33 [0.02, 0.65], p = 0.04$) and total empathy ($b = 1.17 [0.50, 1.85], p = 0.001$) significantly predicted reporting tendency in the emotional neglect vignette.

Emotional Abuse: The regression indicates that 7.4% of the variance for the outcome variable of reporting likelihood is accounted for by demographic information ($F(6,230) = 3.08, p = 0.006$). Total empathy significantly predicted reporting tendency in the emotional abuse vignette ($b = 1.05 [0.38, 1.71], p = 0.002$).

Table 2: Linear model of predictors of reporting likelihood with 95% bias corrected and accelerated confidence intervals reported in parenthesis. Confidence intervals and standard errors based on 1000 bootstrap samples.

Variable	Vignette 1 (Emotional Abuse)				Vignette 2 (Emotional Neglect)				Vignette 3 (Physical Abuse)			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>P</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>P</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>P</i>
Total Empathy	1.05 (0.43, 1.67)	0.34	.21	0.00	1.17 (0.47, 1.85)	0.35	.23	0.03	0.56 (-0.22, 1.26)	0.39	.09	0.14
Age	0.09 (-0.24, 0.48)	0.16	.04	0.60	0.27 (-0.04, 0.65)	0.17	.13	0.10	-0.06 (-0.46, 0.32)	0.19	-.02	0.75
Gender	0.41 (-0.51, 0.61)	0.32	.01	0.88	0.15 (-0.42, 0.79)	0.32	.03	0.65	0.64 (-0.05, 1.37)	0.36	.12	0.08
Ethnicity	0.29 (0.01, 0.56)	0.16	.12	0.10	0.33 (0.00, 0.69)	0.17	.14	0.05	0.54 (0.26, 0.82)	0.18	.19	0.00
Education Level	0.04 (-0.29, 0.33)	0.40	.28	0.80	-0.06 (-0.40, 0.30)	0.17	-.02	0.74	0.07 (-0.26, 0.39)	0.17	.03	0.63
R ²		.07					.07				.08	

Physical Abuse: The regression indicates that 7.6% of the variance for the outcome variable of reporting likelihood is accounted for by demographic information ($F(6,237) = 3.23$, $p = 0.005$). The results indicate that ethnicity ($b = 0.54$ [0.18, 0.90], $p = 0.004$) significantly predicts reporting tendency in the physical abuse vignette.

Due to the multifaceted nature of the IRI scale (Davis, 1980) analysis of the four scales of empathy and reporting tendencies for each vignette were explored independently. No statistical significance was determined between the reporting likelihood of the emotional neglect and emotional abuse vignettes and four scales of empathy; however, a significant regression model was established in the physical abuse vignette. The regression indicates that 6.6% of variance for the outcome variable is accounted for by the empathy facets ($F(4,232) = 4.11$, $p = 0.003$) and that empathic concern significantly predicts reporting likelihood in the physical abuse vignette ($b = 0.13$ [0.04, 0.21], $p = 0.006$).

Research Question 3

A multiple linear regression was conducted to determine whether perceived seriousness for each vignette differed based upon total empathy score, age, gender, ethnicity, and education level, results are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Linear model of predictors of seriousness with 95% bias corrected and accelerated confidence intervals reported in parenthesis. Confidence intervals and standard errors based on 1000 bootstrap samples.

Variable	Vignette 1 (Emotional Abuse)				Vignette 2 (Emotional Neglect)				Vignette 3 (Physical Abuse)			
	B	SE B	β	P	B	SE B	β	P	B	SE B	β	P
Total Empathy	0.50 (0.05, 0.92)	0.22	.15	0.03	0.65 (0.22, 1.12)	0.24	.17	0.00	0.41 (-0.19, 1.00)	0.29	.90	0.14
Age	-0.04 (-0.23, 0.15)	0.09	-.03	0.69	0.30 (0.12, 0.47)	0.10	.20	0.00	0.11 (-0.11, 0.32)	0.12	.06	0.30
Gender	0.00 (-0.40-0.37)	0.20	.00	0.99	-0.30 (-0.50, 0.44)	0.22	-.01	0.90	0.59 (0.12, 1.11)	0.26	.14	0.03
Ethnicity	0.17 (-0.08, 0.42)	0.10	.11	0.10	0.33 (0.10, 0.57)	0.14	.19	0.00	0.41 (0.19, 0.61)	0.13	.19	0.00
Education Level	-0.14 (-0.35, 0.08)	0.10	-.10	0.15	-0.21 (-0.42, -0.02)	0.11	-.13	0.04	0.02 (-0.25, 0.26)	0.12	.00	0.89
R ²		.04					.09				.08	

Emotional Abuse: The regression indicates that 7.0% of the variance for the outcome variable of seriousness is accounted for by demographic information ($F(5,238) = 2.02, p = 0.007$) and that total empathy is a significant predictor of seriousness in the emotional abuse vignette ($b = 0.50 [0.46, 0.92], p = 0.03$).

Emotional Neglect: The regression indicates that 9.4% of the variance for the outcome variable of seriousness is accounted for by demographic information ($F(5,237) = 4.94, p = <0.001$) and that total empathy ($b = 0.65 [0.22, 1.12], p = 0.004$), age ($b = 0.30 [0.12, 0.47], p = 0.002$), ethnicity ($b = 0.33 [0.10, 0.57], p=0.003$) and education level ($b=-0.21 [-0.42, -0.02], p = 0.04$) are all significant predictors of seriousness in the emotional neglect vignette.

Physical Abuse: The regression indicates that 7.9% of the variance for the outcome variable of seriousness is accounted for by demographic information ($F(5,238) = 4.06, p =$

0.001) and that gender ($b = 0.59 [0.12, 1.11], p = 0.03$) and ethnicity ($b = 0.41 [0.19, 0.61], p = 0.001$) are significant predictors of seriousness in the physical abuse vignette.

The four scales of the IRI were further explored against the seriousness scores independently. In the emotional neglect vignette, the regression model determined no significance ($F(4,231) = 2.01, p = 0.09$), yet empathic concern is established as a significant predictor of seriousness ($b = 0.06 [0.00, 0.11], p = 0.05$). Similarly, in the physical abuse vignette, the regression model determined no significance ($F(4,232) = 2.21, p = 0.07$), yet results indicate that empathic concern is a significant predictor of seriousness ($b = 0.08 [0.01, 0.14], p = 0.02$).

Research Question 4

Content analysis was utilised following Grbich's (2012) guide in order to form data frequencies from the qualitative answers. Overall, 5 codes were produced for the question 'What type of abuse is this?'. Using a generalised inductive approach demonstrated by Thomas (2006), compression of the varied, raw data into brief summary format was achieved to establish clear links. Overall, in the emotional neglect vignette, it was identified that 15.7% of participants correctly identified the type of abuse with the code 'emotional neglect'. Within the emotional abuse vignette, 37.3% of participants correctly identified the behaviour as 'emotional abuse'. In the physical abuse vignette, 69.5% correctly identified the behaviour as 'physical abuse'. This corresponds with previous literature that has established that physical abuse is the most widely recognised type of child maltreatment within the general public (Swerdlin, Berkowitz, & Craft, 2007).

Discussion

This study aimed to explore the effects of general empathy and additional demographic variables (age, gender, ethnicity, education level) on the reporting intentions of different types of child maltreatment. Overall, it was deduced that participants were more inclined to report emotional abuse than physical abuse or emotional neglect. Furthermore,

general empathy was determined to significantly predict seriousness and reporting intention in the emotional neglect and emotional abuse vignettes. Although no significance was determined between empathy and reporting tendencies in the physical abuse vignette, significance was established between the IRI subscale of empathic concern and reporting intention.

Research Question 1

In the one-way repeated measures ANOVA, it was established that reporting tendencies varied across the three vignettes depicting different types of child maltreatment. This finding is consistent with previous literature, concluding that there appears to be difficulties recognising and thus reporting types of child maltreatment (Chihak, 2009; Fraser, Mathews, Walsh, Chen & Dunne, 2009; Keane & Chapman, 2008). However, research suggests that the difficulties surrounding reporting are somewhat more prominent for the less recognised types including emotional abuse and emotional neglect (Glaser, 2002). Yet, it is deduced that participants are more likely to report child emotional abuse in comparison to more widely recognised child physical abuse (see Table 1), refuting Flaherty et al. (2006). This suggests that reporting intention is not entirely dependent on recognition, supporting Lee and Chou's (2017) conclusions. However, emotional neglect maltreatment is determined as the least likely to be reported, consistent with previous research (Proctor & Dubowitz, 2014). This perhaps corresponds to the knowledge deficit relating to the under recognised types of maltreatment and misinterpretation of the legislation around them (Alvarez, Kenny, Donohue & Carpin, 2004; Borimnejad & Fomani, 2015). This is highlighted in the NSPCC research study that identified that between 1 and 15% of children experience psychological abuse (Gilbert et al., 2008). The unequivocal gap between the high and low estimates demonstrates the ambiguity in both recognition and reporting of this type of maltreatment. This is perhaps due to the methodological and ethical challenges that act as barrier for conducting research in this sensitive area (Alrimawi, Rajeh Saifan, & AbuRuz, 2014).

Research Question 2

General empathy was established as a significant predictor for reporting likelihood in the emotional neglect and emotional abuse vignettes. This is consistent with surrounding literature such as Doane, Pearson and Kelly (2014) whom suggested that empathy is a predictor of behavioural intentions, corresponding with the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen, 2012). It was deduced that higher general empathy evoked an increase in reporting likelihood, thus attitudes towards the perceived maltreatment influenced behavioural intention, supporting Ajzen's theory (1985). By relating to underlying theoretical concepts, the construct reliability of this finding is increased, suggesting that individuals with higher general empathy have a greater intention to report. It can therefore be deduced that the use of empathy-inducing advertisement utilised in present campaigns will be somewhat more effective when demonstrating emotional abuse or emotional neglect. Alternative methods are advised to promote the reporting of child physical abuse.

When analysing the four facets of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index independently, empathic concern was determined as a significant predictor of reporting likelihood in the physical abuse vignette. This corresponds with Davis' findings (1983) identifying that the empathic concern facet enables the capacity to experience the abused child's distress and promotes prosocial altruistic behaviour that is aimed at reducing this (Hein, Morshima, Leiberg, Sui & Fehr, 2016; Mathew and Collin-Vezina, 2016).

Research Question 3

Overall, general empathy was established as a significant predictor of seriousness in the emotional abuse and emotional neglect vignette, likewise to reporting intention. It can therefore be inferred that participants with higher general empathy are more inclined to perceive the behaviour with greater seriousness.

In the physical abuse vignette, gender and ethnicity were significant predictors of seriousness, however, only ethnicity was determined to also predict participants' reporting

intention of the same maltreatment types. However, due to the majority of participants identifying their ethnicity as White (90.7%), findings correspond with Ashton (2004), whom deduced that Whites have a greater intention to report. This is perhaps due to the cultural societal norms and legal support predominantly found in westernised society that emphasises the importance of reporting child maltreatment (Borimnejad & Fomani, 2015). This further concurs with the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977) which identifies that the social norms embedded within a culture promote socially desirable behavioural intentions (Sulak, Saxon, & Fearon, 2014).

Moreover, general empathy total was not established as a significant predictor of seriousness in all vignettes, however after exploring the IRI using the four separate facets, empathic concern was established as a significant predictor of seriousness in the emotional neglect and physical abuse vignette. Again, consistent with Davis' (1983) deductions that suggest that in an empathy-inducing environment, empathic concern promotes prosocial altruistic behaviour that is anticipated to encourage positive behavioural intention (Ajzen, 2012).

Research Question 4

Overall, participants identified child physical abuse (69.5%) more readily than emotional abuse (37.3%) and emotional neglect (15.7%). This is consistent with surrounding literature that suggests that physical abuse is the most easily recognisable maltreatment (Swerdlin, Berkowitz, & Craft, 2007). Further consistencies were found amongst the cross-over in identification of emotional abuse and emotional neglect. Although emotional neglect was identified correctly in only 15.7% of participants, 'emotional' was the most frequent thematic code utilised (23.1%). This suggests that there are perhaps misconceptions between the facets of emotional abuse and emotional neglect as separate interties (Iwaniec, 2010).

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study that impact upon the generalisability of the interpreted results. Firstly, there are concerns regarding the self-report measures that are demonstrated within the questionnaires employed. These require participants to self-evaluate themselves using a Likert scale. This is problematic as it allows participants the opportunity to demonstrate themselves in a more socially desirable way (Gittelman et al., 2015; Van de Mortel, 2008). For instance, the question measuring how likely a participant may be to take action on the hypothetical maltreatment scenario, may be influenced by social desirability bias due to a need to be perceived as a moral member of society (Visschers, Jaspaert, & Vervaeke, 2017). Furthermore, various researchers have concluded problems with employing Likert scales in such research. As well as being criticised for having highly subjective intervals (Boster & Hale, 1989), they have been also established to encourage response order effects if participants lack motivation to attend to all the response options given (Weng & Cheng, 2000).

After dichotomising the variable measuring empathy to form a total score for each participant, individuals close to but on opposite sides of the median split point are established to be significantly different from one another, rather than very similar. Additionally, using the sample median evokes difficulty when cross-comparing results, as different studies will use different values to facilitate a binary split. Splitting the variables into two groups has also been described as an extreme form of rounding which comes with an inevitable loss of information (Royston, Altman, & Sauerbrei, 2006). Furthermore, the use of a high and low groups conceals any non-linearity of the variable and the response (Altman & Royston, 2006).

Furthermore, the results obtained are liable to potential order effects as randomisation of the maltreatment vignettes could not be facilitated. Thus, it is possible that participant respondent engagement reduced as a result of boredom or fatigue (Hess, Hensher, & Daly, 2012).

Various methodological issues have been established when employing vignettes in research studies. For instance, making associations between beliefs is problematic as researchers have concluded that responses to vignettes lack ecological validity, as the responses do not correspond to individuals' responses to real-life settings. Thus, it is increasingly difficult to generalise the findings to real-life contexts (Harding, Zinzow, & Jackson, 2010). Nevertheless, experimental studies are useful to systematically investigate variables that do affect attributional biases toward real victims and perpetrators.

Future Directions

Future research should incorporate additional qualitative research by using semi-structured interviews to gain an understanding of the rationale for reporting or failing to report child maltreatment. This could allow for an increase in construct validity, as attitudes and personality constructs such as empathy have been described as unstable constructs that are inaccurately measured using personality and attitude scales (Windle, 1955).

Additional research may utilise a more ethnically diverse sample in order to understand and diminish the possibility of cultural barriers that exist when reporting (Sawrika & Katz, 2017). This analysis was not conducted in the present sample, as the majority of participants identified their ethnicity as White (90.7%). Previous literature has indicated that although socio-demographic characteristics may not be conclusive, they have become somewhat accountable for the increase in underreporting of child maltreatment. Differences in conceptualisation of child maltreatment may be prevalent in individuals who were raised in cultures where maltreatment was not a punishable act (Fraser, Mathews, Walsh, Chen, & Dunne, 2010).

Conclusion

In summary, individuals are inclined to report certain types of child maltreatment more than others, and specific variables are essential to increase the likelihood of reporting

the behaviour. This finding has important implications for victims of child maltreatment and interventions designed to prevent a culture of concealment surrounding reporting propensity (Smith & Freyd, 2013). Globally, there is a need for multidisciplinary education and innovative methods to address the existing shortfalls in reporting. Enhanced awareness and empathy are key attributes to facilitate a cascade of beneficial outcomes in violence prevention, humane responses, policy reform, and development of healthy social norms and communities.

Word Count – 5951

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Questionnaire following each vignette

1. On a scale of 1 to 10 how serious do you think this scenario is?
2. Does this scenario constitute a type of child abuse? If Yes, please specify which type of child abuse.
3. On a scale of 1-10 how likely are you to take action on the scenario?
4. If you would take action, what action would this be? (Please select all that apply – no action, phone the police, contact social services, contact NSPCC or charity, get advice from a friend, and other) - if other please specify.

Appendix 2

Vignettes

Emotional Neglect:

The child plays alone on the whole. The child tries to get the attention of his/her mother, but the mother is found to be on her phone, avoiding contact and interaction with the child for extended periods of time. The mother does not comfort the child when they are distressed, she instead turns away and continues to use her mobile phone.

Emotional Abuse:

The mother picks her child up from school. She notices that the child has fallen over and has stained their school trousers. She begins to shout at the child in front of the other parents and children, stating that they are stupid and selfish for creating more washing for her. She further states that if the child does this again, they will not see their father again.

Physical Abuse:

The child is having a tantrum with his/her mother as they want to go to the park on the way home from school. The mother is distressed and cannot seem to calm the child down. The mother is embarrassed and becomes angry and hostile towards the child and smacks the child on the back of the thigh leaving a noticeable red mark.

Appendix 3

Contextual Paragraph for Vignettes

A 6-year-old child lived with his/her mother and father. The mother and father have been arguing recently, resulting in the father leaving home and seeking temporary residence elsewhere, leaving the child in the care of his/her mother.

Executive Summary

Introduction

This summary is prepared for the NSPCC charity organisation to provide insight into the phenomenon of child maltreatment and the impact of demographic variables on reporting intention.

Surrounding Literature

Child abuse is a serious public health problem, resulting in long-lasting psychological consequences (Louwers, Korfage, Affourtit, Koning, & Moll, 2012). Reliable data surrounding the prevalence, nature and context of child maltreatment is essential to inform policy efforts aimed at the prevention, early identification, and appropriate response (Mathews, Norman, Dunne & Marston, 2017). Amongst previous literature, various factors have been established to influence the reporting intention in child maltreatment contexts. Zellman and Bell (1990) suggested that knowledge surrounding the victims' injury history and previous experience with maltreatment influences reporting tendencies. Further evidence has suggested that victim characteristics impose greater likelihood of reporting the perpetration. For instance, victim sex has been determined to encourage stereotypical gender role-beliefs within witnesses (Davies, Pollard, & Archer, 2001; Quas, Bottoms, Haegerich, & Nysse-Carris, 2002). In addition, several witness demographics have been associated with greater reporting intention. Kean and Dukes (1991) determined that females are predisposed to perceive the victims with greater empathy regardless of the type of abuse. This was established as female participants determined the behaviours of physical abuse, psychological abuse, and neglect to be more abusive compared to males.

Empathy is a phenomenon defined as responding with an affectively motivated action that is deemed appropriate to that person's situation (Baron-

Cohen, 2011). In a context of child maltreatment, empathy promotes a capacity and willingness to experience the abused child's profound distress in order to initiate prosocial helping behaviours (Mathew and Collin-Vezina, 2016).

Therefore, it is assumed to be associated with the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977), a theory that posits that attitudes and social norms influences both behavioural intention and execution (Ajzen, 2012). Doane, Pearson, and Kelly (2014) explored the interaction between empathy and this theory using stimuli containing victims of cyberbullying. In the four types of cyberbullying behaviour, empathy was determined as a predictor of behavioural intentions, injunctive norms, and attitudes.

Rationale

Determining the factors disinhibiting the reporting of child maltreatment is crucial for early detection and prevention. The findings may contribute to the understanding of reporting, as well as promoting the welfare of children (Humphries et al., 2016). For instance, campaigns and adverts encouraging awareness and the reporting of child abuse tend to use emotive imagery to trigger empathic responses. For distinguished groups with reduced reporting intention, alternative methods may be utilised to engage the entire population in this public health issue.

Research Questions

5. Do the reporting tendencies of the general population differ across the types of maltreatment?
6. Do demographic factors including age, gender, ethnicity, education, and general empathy affect the intention to report child maltreatment?

7. Does general empathy affect the perceived seriousness of the child maltreatment and thus impact on the intention to report?
8. Are certain types of maltreatment easier to identify than others? Does this affect reporting intention?

Method

The research design utilised a repeated measures method. A convenience sample of 241 participants were recruited from the general population using a research advertisement on various social media platforms. Participants were required to be over the age of 18 and located in the UK with access to the internet.

Materials

The questionnaire contained 3 vignettes, each containing separate behaviours of emotional abuse, emotional neglect, and physical abuse. The vignette content was adapted from Zellman and Bell's (1990) study and further refined after piloting indicated that the content was not contextually relevant to participants' everyday life. Seriousness and reporting intention were assessed using a 10-point Likert-type scale. The participants also completed the Interpersonal Reactivity Scale (IRI, Davis, 1980) to measure empathy using 4 separate facets of empathic concern, fantasy, perspective taking, and personal distress assessed using a 5-point Likert scale.

Findings/ Discussion

To determine the variance in reporting intention between the three types of maltreatment, a one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted. Overall, participants were more likely to report emotional abuse in comparison to

physical abuse, refuting previous research. Participants were least likely to report emotional neglect which is consistent with previous research (Proctor & Dubowitz, 2014).

Furthermore, to distinguish the associations of the demographic variables and both seriousness and reporting intention, robust multiple linear regression analysis was utilised. As data violated normality assumptions, non-parametric alternatives were utilised. Overall, general empathy was established as a significant predictor of reporting intention and seriousness in both the emotional abuse vignette and the emotional neglect vignette. After repeating the regression analysis using the four individual facets of the IRI scale, empathic concern was determined as a significant predictor of child physical abuse, consistent with Davis (1983).

Qualitative analysis was employed to establish the identification of each type of maltreatment. Using a generalised inductive approach of content analysis demonstrated by Thomas (2006), 5 codes were produced for each maltreatment type. It was determined that physical abuse was the most identifiable type of maltreatment (69.5%) and emotional neglect was the least identified type (15.7%). This corresponds with previous literature that established that physical abuse is the most widely recognised type of child maltreatment within the general public (Swerdlin, Berkowitz, & Craft, 2007).

Limitations

Various limitations provoke concerns around the generalisability of the results attained. Employing self-report measures require self-evaluation, however, this allows participants to demonstrate themselves in a more socially desirable way (Gittelman et al., 2015). Various researchers have criticised Likert scales for

having highly subjective intervals (Boster & Hale, 1989). They have been also established to encourage response order effects if participants lack motivation to attend to all the response options given (Weng & Cheng, 2000). Furthermore, vignettes have been previously criticised for lacking in ecological validity (Harding, Zinzow, & Jackson, 2010).

Implications/Recommendations

The findings have important implications for victims and more specifically, interventions designed to prevent a culture of concealment when reporting maltreatment (Smith & Freyd, 2013). Globally, there is a need for multidisciplinary education and innovate methods to address the previous failings of reporting maltreatment.

Word count - 998

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PowerPoint Presentation Slides

Reporting tendencies of child maltreatment within a UK based sample of the general population.

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Aims & Rationale

Aims	Rationale
Establish the role of empathy and demographic variables on the seriousness and reporting intentions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Contribute to development of media campaigns, less emotive for less empathetic peopleMixed findings previously suggesting empathy evokes pro social behaviour (Mathew & Collin-Vezina, 2016).Associated with the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977).
Determine differences in identification of different types of maltreatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Improve safeguarding awareness and enhanced training (Humphries et al., 2016).Emotional abuse and emotional neglect are reported as under recognised types of maltreatment
Determine discrepancy in reporting different types of child maltreatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is this due to under recognition of certain types of abuse?Maltreatment reporting hierarchy (Stoltenborgh, Bakermans-Kranenburg, Alink, & van IJzendoorn, 2012).

Method Utilised

Participants

- Convenience sample via social media pathways - snowball sampling (Browne, 2005)
- 246 participants in total ($M = 32.22$, $SD = 1.22$)
- Repeated measures design - 3 separate maltreatment vignettes (emotional abuse, emotional neglect, physical abuse)
- Bristol online survey software
- Inclusion criteria - UK, 18+, access to the internet

Measures

- Interpersonal reactivity index (IRI) (Davies, 1980), 3 vignettes (emotional abuse, emotional neglect, physical abuse) adapted from Zellman & Bell, 1990).
- Utilised various demographic variables that previous research had evidenced an effect reporting child maltreatment (age, gender, ethnicity, education)
- Questionnaire measuring seriousness and reporting intention (10-point likert scale)

Results

Vignette	Result
Emotional Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Greater reporting likelihood - refuting previous research (Sege & Flaherty, 2006).General empathy = significant predictor for reporting likelihood.General empathy = significant predictor for seriousness
Emotional Neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Least reporting likelihood - consistent with Proctor and Dubowitz (2014)Least identified type (15.7% correctly identified)General empathy = significant predictor for reporting likelihoodGeneral empathy & ethnicity = significant predictors of seriousnessEmpathic concern (IRI facet) = significant predictor of seriousness consistent with Davis (1983).
Physical Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Most identified type of maltreatment in the qualitative analysisEmpathic concern (IRI facet) = significant predictor of reporting likelihood consistent with Davis (1983).Gender & ethnicity = significant predictors of seriousnessEmpathic concern (IRI facet) = significant predictor of seriousness consistent with Davis (1983).

Implications & Future Research

Implications

- Self report measure - social desirability (Gittelman et al., 2015)
- Dichotomisation of variables (Royston, Altman, & Sauerbrei, 2006)
- Use of vignettes (Harding, Zinzow, & Jackson, 2010)
- Non-ethnically diverse population (Sawrika & Katz, 2017)
- Response order effects - (Hess, Hensher, & Daly, 2012)
- Future Research
- Use ethnically diverse population to analyse cultural differences within reporting tendencies
- Differences in conceptualisation of child abuse in subcultures (Fraser, Mathews, Walsh, Chen, & Dunne, 2010).

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Reflective Report

Introduction

This is a brief reflective account of the research undertaken for a dissertation project exploring the reporting tendencies of child maltreatment within a UK sample of the general population, submitted to the University of Nottingham for the degree of M.Sc. Forensic and Criminological Psychology. In this report, I will explore the strength and challenges I faced during the conceptualisation, preparation, and conduction of the research study.

Literature Review

Prior to starting my Masters in September 2017, I had a preliminary topic of child maltreatment that I kept in mind to complete a piece of research on. This was because I had no previous experience or knowledge in this area. Additionally, as the course progressed, I took a specific interest in the modular work based around forensic child psychology which furthered my interests in this area. In November 2017, I conducted a comprehensive literature review on the area of child maltreatment and identified a gap where future research could be facilitated. Researchers had previously determined that various maltreatment types were more under-recognised than others, however inconclusive research revealed that this could perhaps be due to the differences in conceptualisation across various populations and cultures due to differences in social norms. Having conducted a detailed literature review on the surrounding area, I initially decided to conduct research to determine the effect of culture differences in conceptualisations of child abuse. Reflecting on this, I felt that I placed undue pressure on myself to make a fast decision on my research topic without considering the potential challenges I could face. To overcome this in the future,

I will carefully plan each stage of my research project in relation to my research area, in order to understand the accessibility and potentially challenges that may occur.

After I had determined my specified area of research, in December 2017, I prepared a draft of my research proposal that was submitted firstly to my dissertation supervisors and then to the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee to approve of the research taking place. However, it was only after I had prepared this proposal, that I realised I was struggling to finalise my idea and construct key research questions I wanted to answer with my research findings. I additionally doubted how relevant my rationale was for conducting the research. The final challenge I recognised was the potential difficulties in gaining enough participants to meet my power analysis of 114 participants that were of a representative sample of all major ethnic minority groups. Given the time constraints of data collection, I felt that this was not an attainable sample. As the deadline for my ethics proposal was fast approaching, I decided to take a proactive approach and rethink my initial research proposal by conducting an additional literature review to identify a new area of research.

After conducting a secondary literature review using additional literature by maltreatment charities such as the NSPCC, I became aware of some of the potential barriers prevalent when reporting maltreatment. When further examined, it was evident that maltreatment reporting was dependent on a variety of demographic variables including gender, age, ethnicity and education. I then established an additional journal suggesting that empathic tendencies and pro-social behaviour were associated with increased reporting likelihood in perceptions of cyberbullying (Doane, Pearson, and Kelly (2014)). This provided the foundations for my new research idea.

Following this, I discussed the applicability of this research on to child maltreatment with my dissertation supervisors. I was then able to refine the conceptualisation of my research idea to specifically explore general empathy and additional demographics and their associations with reporting tendency. The previous literature review helped to allay some of my fears regarding the legitimacy of my study, since it seemed to build up a picture congenial to my aims. Overall, the conceptualisation of my study helped me to develop time management and prioritisation skills in order to meet the upcoming deadline of my ethics proposal. Failing to meet this would restrict the period of time dedicated to participant recruitment, which could potentially have detrimental effects on the statistical power of my study.

Method

After further clarification with my supervisors, I felt hopeful about the initiation of my study. However, I also felt some trepidation regarding the feasibility and its usefulness. Whilst waiting for ethical approval, I used my time effectively to start preparing my questionnaire and vignette designs. In January 2018, I began to set up my qualitative research study on Bristol Online Survey software. I was initially quite apprehensive about getting to grips with the software, as I had previously employed Qualtrics software in my undergraduate degree. Fortunately, I researched for online tutorials to support my learning.

After finalising my questionnaire, I decided to conduct preliminary tests to gauge the appropriateness and applicability of my vignette designs. The initial discussions I held with child care professionals to pilot my study, advised me on various aspects of the vignettes and questions I was utilising. Both reassured me and revealed that on some places, my language was not coherent enough and

could affect the participants' understanding. Nevertheless, the professionals showed a great interest in the research topic which was promising and suggested that participants may show a similar interest. However, in these discussions I also discovered that the applicability of the vignettes containing child abusive behaviours was somewhat concerning. This provoked me to rethink my original vignette content. I instead adapted my vignettes to include behaviours that were more applicable and more likely to occur within the target populations every day life. Once adapted and after I had gained approval from the ethics board on 19th March, my survey was completed and made live on Facebook and Reddit social media sites on 7th April. I was initially extremely apprehensive about reaching my target number of participants after a power analysis determined that I required 114 participants. However, after participants began sharing my advert with friends and family via snowball sampling (Browne, 2005), I had recruited over this total within the first week of data collection.

Findings/Results

One of the biggest challenges I faced during my research project was centred around the analysis of my data. On May 16th, I closed my survey and exported the raw data into SPSS. I initially screened for anomalies and skewness using histograms and boxplots. From this, I determined that one of my independent variables (physical abuse reporting intention) was nonparametric. At first, I tried to resolve this by transforming my variable to compensate for its skewness. I did this by conducting a logarithmic transformation and a square root transformation. However, neither data transformations eliminated the skewness to make my data normally distributed. Therefore, the statistical tests I had previously envisaged using now had to be rethought. To help overcome the apprehensions of using tests that I had no previous experience utilising, I

decided to purchase Andy Fields (2013) research statistics book. This instructed me to use robust regression with the bootstrap approach rather than multiple regression (Efron & Tibishirani, 1993). After exploring how bootstrapping works and following the step by step guide in my statistics book, I was able to conduct my robust regression analysis with confidence. On reflection, overcoming this obstacle developed my ability to problem solve and learn the transferable skills required to conduct my statistical analysis effectively.

At the start of June 2018, I had finalised my analysis results and determined whether I would conclude significant assumptions from my research. The results I obtained were included in my dissertation write up. This was another pertinent challenge in my dissertation project journey, as I was required to write my robust regression analysis in a correctly formatted table that conformed to the American Psychological Association (APA) writing style. As I had not previously formatted any statistical analysis using a table, it was something that I again had to research to suitably understand. Once researched, I determined an appropriate example in a journal article that I was able to use as guidance. I also arranged a final supervision to check with my supervisors that my formatting and statistics write up was correct. In this period, I feel that I have benefited from the arranged supervisions, as it has allowed me to enhance my understanding in areas that required personal development. It also provided valuable experience co-ordinating my work and working alongside other professionals. This is a fundamental skill that I will transfer when conducting future research, as well as within my chosen career.

Overall, this research project has developed my independence, as in my undergraduate dissertation project, I depended on seeking supervision when I required immediate support. However, as this research project placed greater

importance on self-directed learning, I feel that I have developed my ability to problem solve the challenges that I encountered and worked independently to solve these to complete my project successfully. Achieving significant results in an area that may contribute to the prevention of a world-wide public health issue encourages me to continue independent research in the future.

Word count - 1500

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