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Module Code: C84F04

University of Nottingham

Assessed Coursework Cover Sheet for Applied Psychology Postgraduate Courses

Module Title: C84FRP

Coursework Title: Forensic Psychology Research Dissertation

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This is to confirm that I submit this piece of assessed work in the full knowledge of the published guidelines on plagiarism and its consequences

Type name: Sarah Kelani

Application for approval of all studies involving **Healthy Human Participants only conducted by Staff and Students of the University of Nottingham which don't involve an invasive procedure**

Title of Project: Sibling Abuse Study

Chief Academic/Supervisor:
Dr Simon Duff, Registered Practitioner Psychologist (Forensic), Director of Stage II Forensic Training Centre for Forensic & Family Psychology. University of Nottingham, B05, YANG Fujia Building, Jubilee Campus, Nottingham, NG8 1BB. Email: mczsd@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

Other key researchers/collaborators:

Students name and course:

Sarah Kelani, MSc Forensic and Criminological Psychology.

3 Type of Project:
Masters Student project (Forensic Psychology) Interviews
Qualitative only

4 Location of study: University of Nottingham, YANG Fujia Building, Jubilee Campus, Nottingham, NG8 1BB
Start date:01/10/18
End date:16/06/19
Length of study: 9 months

5 Description and number of participants to be studied: What is you sample size and why.

Four female participants will be recruited to take part in a semi-structed interview led by a female researcher. As the main aim in IPA is to provide a depth of exploration into the participants account (Smith & Pietkewicz, 2014). For this reason samples in IPA research studies are typically homogenous and small, which allows for detailed and thorough analysis on a specific population (Smith & Pietkewicz, 2014). All participants will be mothers of children are who have experienced/perpetrated of sibling sexual abuse. This is to ensure all participants can draw upon their life experiences post discovery of their child's sexual abuse. No characteristics such as sexuality, religion, race or socio-economic background will be taken into account. All participants will be recruited through a community based not-for- profit organisation which provides training and trauma support for sexually abused children, the mothers of those children will be approached to take part in the study.

Summary of Experimental Protocol: Background

One of the most underreported and misunderstood areas of sexual abuse has been sibling sexual abuse (Smith & Israel, 1987). Sibling sexual abuse is defined as sexual behaviour that is not age appropriate, not transitory and not motivated by developmentally appropriate curiosity (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1999). Under the term sibling sexual abuse are many sexual activities including fondling of genitals directly or through clothes, intercourse, attempted intercourse, oral-genital contact, exhibitionism, exposing children to adult sexual activity or pornography, and the use of children for prostitution or pornography (Whelan, 2003; Wiehe, 1997). The traumatic impact of sexual abuse on child victims has received increased attention (Cole, 1982). It has been well-established that child sexual abuse (CSA) is a traumatic experience with significant and enduring implications for victims across varied domains psychological, cognitive, behavioural, sexual and intellectual functioning (Paolucci, Genuis & Violato, 2001). Research has focused on factors which help to mediate the effect of CSA on child victims (Barker-Collo & Read, 2003). Such as a caregivers response especially maternal response has been identified as a key factor, influencing post-abuse adjustment and the outcomes for child victims (Yancey & Hansen, 2010). Particularly maternal support has been demonstrated to be a more significant predictor in emotional and behavioural adjustment in victims than are abuse-related factors and the relationship between victim and perpetrator (Tremblay, Hebert & Piche, 1999).

Aims

Explore how mothers of children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse – understand it, manage it, feel about it, have reacted to it?

The objectives are to:

- Address the gap in existing literature, by conducting an qualitative investigation on mothers of children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse.
- Use an Interpretive Phenomenological analysis approach to gain understanding of the subjective experiences of non-offending mothers following the discovery that their child had experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse.

Research Protocol & Method

Participants will be informed about the study by a community based not-for-profit organisation and if they express interest in participating they will be provided the participant information sheet (See Appendix A). This document explains the research and provides an invitation to take part in the study. Those who wish to participate in the study will contact the researcher directly via email or provide permission for the support organisation to forward their details to the researcher. No further feedback will be given to support organisation in regards to the participants involvement in the study.

Initial contact with the prospective participants will be done by email and provide participants further information on the study as requested or required including a reiteration that the participation will be voluntary and the confidentiality of information provided. It will also be repeated that due to the nature of the subject matter, participants may withdraw from the study at any time. Additionally the participant will be provided the semi-structured interview copy (Appendix D). After communication with the researcher if the participant wishes to continue with the study, a time and location for the interview will as be negotiated at the suitability of the participant. Upon meeting with the participants, the purpose of the study will be re-stated and they will be asked to sign a consent form (See Appendix B) this will state that they understand the research study, they can withdraw from the study and that interviews will be audio recorded. Also, participants will be told that anything they say during the interview will be kept confidential, unless they reveal something of concern that may put themselves or anyone else at risk. If there has been no input by services, it will then be necessary to report to the Sexual Assault Referral Centre and may also include reporting to the police. After the participant has signed the consent form the

semi-structured interview will begin going through a series of questions (See Appendix D) with the interviewer. This will include questions and prompts regarding the discovery process, coping responses and their needs. The interview will end by providing the participant opportunity to raise any other information or issues which may have not been considered. Once the interview is finished, participants will be given a debrief information form (See Appendix E) pertaining to details of the study and the right to withdraw from that point on until

one week after the interview, this is in order to provide you with time to change your mind if you change your mind about consenting to take part in the study. It will also provide details of support organisations to contact if any issues occur. The interviews will then be transcribed and analysed using IPA.

Do not go over the page

6 **Lay Summary of project** (in lay words):(maximum 200 words) ***Summaries which include language which is too technical for lay members of the Committee will be rejected***.

A majority of research regarding child sexual abuse is conducted on partners of sexual abuse. Less attention has been paid towards exploring how mothers of children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse – what it is, understand it, manage it, feel about it, have reacted to it? A mothers connection with their children who may have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse, this relationship between mother and child will hold a lot of complexity and challenges which come through discovery and may impact their sense of identity. An understanding of the mothers experience is crucial to guiding non-governmental organisations and therapeutic interventions working with these families. The aim of the proposed study is to address the gap in the current literature regarding mothers of children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse.

7 Will written consent be obtained from all volunteers? **Yes**

Sarah Kelani, Student, BSc in Psychology.

8 Will an inconvenience allowance be offered **No**

If Yes, give rate (*delete as appropriate)

*Per day:
*Per Study:
*Per procedure:
Give the maximum allowance payable to a participant:
Pro rata if a participant withdraws part way through?

9 FUNDING

Will there be any material benefits from the study for the Department or individual investigator? (E.g. equipment, research salaries, consumables etc)

No

If yes please specify in general terms what the benefits will be:

10 Studies involving NHS Staff, organisations, Services

Does the study involve any premises, services staff who hold a contract with a hospital, Primary Healthcare or Social Care Trust?

No

If you answer yes please contact the University Sponsor Office before you start and submit your application to this Committee: Please e-mail sponsor@nottingham.ac.uk who will advise you where you need to apply to for approvals i.e. HRA/Hospital Trust R&D approval which is a University research governance requirement.

11 How will the subjects be chosen?

All participants will be mothers of children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse. This is to ensure all participants can draw upon their life experiences post discovery of their child's sexual abuse. No characteristics such as sexuality, religion, race or socio-economic background will be taken into account. All participants will be recruited through a community based not-for- profit organisation which provides training and trauma support for sexually abused children, the mothers of those children will be approached to take part in the study.

12 Describe how possible participants will be approached.

Participants will be informed about the study by the community based not-for-profit organisation (see appendix F) and if they express interest in participating they will be provided the participant information sheet (See Appendix A). This document explains the research and provides an invitation to take part in the study. Those who wish to participate in the study will contact the researcher directly via email or provide permission for the support organisation to forward their details to the researcher. No further feedback will be given to support organisation in regards to the participants involvement in the study.

Please submit copies of letters/emails giving permission/support

16 For interview/focus groups:

The student researcher will conduct all the interviews and has had previous experience in semi-structured interviews as part of a BSc Psychology independent project. Particular attention will be taken to the place that the interviews will be taken place. It will be undertaken in the facility of the community based not-for-profit organisation. This is to ensure the safety of both the participant and the researcher, and allow the participant to leave at any time throughout the interview with ease. The researcher will ensure that the interviewee informs someone of their whereabouts during the interview and when they are expected to finish. Additionally, the researcher will be considerate and ensure that they themselves inform somebody of their whereabouts during the interview and when they'll be expected to finish. All interviews will be audio recorded. Participant anonymity will be ensured by using participant pseudonyms and all participants will not be able to be directly identified from the transcript by adapting the specific items (for instance places) mentioned in the interview. As the research has a risk to include the disclosure of illegal, sexual or deviant behaviour it is important to acknowledge all potential risks. This involves potentially sensitive topics, which may induce psychological stress or anxiety. In order to mitigate these potential risks the researcher will initially state that the participants are able to withdraw from the study at any time during the interview without reason or harm. Throughout the interview participants will also be encouraged to advise the researcher of whether they feel distressed at any point with the questions asked and will be told that if so, they are under no obligation to answer. Participants will be told in advance that anything they say during the interview will be kept confidential, unless they reveal something of concern that may put themselves or anyone else at risk. If there has been no input by services, it

will then be necessary to report to the Sexual Assault Referral Centre and may also include reporting to the police.

17 Data Storage and Data management

All data collected will be deleted if consent is not given or if the participant withdraws. The researcher will always protect the participants' anonymity by the use of pseudonyms and identifiable personal information will be adapted to ensure participant anonymity. The data collected will always be relevant to the study being undertaken and will be stored securely with a password protected computer. Consent forms and data will be stored separately. Audio recordings of participants will only be taken with the consent of the participant. The participant information sheet will include information on what the research is for, who will conduct the research, how the personal information will be used, who will have access to the information and how long the information will be stored for. Thus all the information collected will have consent from the participant, and participants will not be able to be directly identified from the transcript adapting the specific items (for instance places) mentioned in the interview. The student researcher of the study will be responsible for all data collected.

18 What ethical problems do you foresee in this project?

Valid consent - Informed consent will be obtained for all participants before they take part in the study. The form will include that they will be undertaking a semi-structured interview on mothers of children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse, clearly stating what they could conceivably object to. The form will state that they are free to withdraw from the study during participation and the right to withdraw their data from the study two weeks after participating, without any harm or reason. The consent form will specify at what point they will no longer be able to withdraw their data. How they will be able to do this will be clearly specified in the consent form. A copy of the interview schedule will be sent to all the participants via email prior to the interview this is to ensure the participant know what we will be talking about and give the participants an opportunity to ask any further questions or provide any questions they would like the researcher to ask them.

Confidentiality - Participants will be told that anything they say during the interview will be kept confidential, unless they reveal something of concern that may put themselves or anyone else at risk. If there has been no input by services, it will then be necessary to report to the Sexual Assault Referral Centre and may also include reporting to the police. Participant anonymity will be ensured by using participant pseudonyms. The data from all participants will be stored on a password protected computer. Also, the data recording will be protected on an encrypted phone, which will only be accessed by the researcher and the supervisors. Thus, participants will not be able to be directly identified from the transcript by adapting the specific items (for instance places) mentioned in the interview.

Giving advice - The researcher will not put themselves in a position of authority, to give advice and in all cases will refer participants to a suitably qualified professional and appropriate help-lines. This will be clearly stated in the debrief form.

18. What are the possible limitations of the proposed design of this study?

Limitations include, the retrospective nature of the study design. As for some participants the abuse may have taken place many years ago, prior to taking part in the study. However because of the sensitive topic, a retrospective design is the most ethical means. A further limitation refers to the representativeness of the sample. All participants will be recruited through a not-for-profit community organisation, through which these women's families received specialist therapeutic intervention. This may limit the generalisability of the findings from the analysis.

DECLARATION: I will inform the Medical School Ethics Committee as soon as I hear the outcome of any application for funding for the proposed project and/or if there are any significant changes to this proposal. I have read the notes to the investigators and clearly understand my obligations as to the rights, welfare and dignity of the subjects to be studied, particularly with regard to the giving of information and the obtaining of consent.

Signature of Lead Investigator: **Date: 28.01.2019**



****Nb If you are a student your supervisor must sign this form otherwise it will be rejected**

Name and address for correspondence with applicant:

Please submit your completed application to:

Administrative Support
Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee
c/o Faculty PVC Office
B Floor, Medical School (nr Bridge)
QMC Campus, Nottingham University Hospitals
Nottingham
NG7 2UH

e-mail: louise.sabir@nottingham.ac.uk

Research Protocol

The Lived Experience of Non-Offending Mothers in Cases of Sibling Sexual Abuse.

Overview of the topic

One of the most underreported, misunderstood areas of sexual abuse has been sibling sexual abuse (Smith & Israel, 1987). It is defined as sexual behaviour that is not age appropriate, not transitory and not motivated by developmentally appropriate curiosity (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1998). Under the term sibling sexual abuse are many sexual activities including fondling of genitals directly or through clothes, intercourse, attempted intercourse, oral-genital contact, exhibitionism, exposing children to adult sexual activity or pornography, and the use of children for prostitution or pornography (Phillips-Green, 2002; Whelan, 2003; Wiehe, 1997).

The traumatic impact of sexual abuse on child victims has received increased attention (Cole, 1982). It has been well-established that child sexual abuse (CSA) is a traumatic experience with significant and enduring implications for victims across varied domains including psychological, cognitive, behavioural, sexual and intellectual functioning (Paolucci, Genuis & Violato, 2001). Research has focused on factors which help to mediate the effect of CSA on child victims (Barker-Collo & Read, 2003). Such as a caregivers response, especially maternal responses have been identified as a key factor, influencing post-abuse adjustment and the outcomes for child victims (Yancey & Hansen, 2010). Particularly maternal support has been demonstrated to be a more significant predictor in emotional and behavioural adjustment in victims, than are abuse-related factors and the relationship between victim and perpetrator (Tremblay, Hebert & Piche, 1999).

While research has been directed to the impact of maternal support in child victim outcomes, research on the impact of social support for the victim's mother is limited. Hiebert-Murphy (1998) conducted one of the few investigations into maternal outcomes, with social support examined. It was found that emotional distress was related to a lack of support from friends and family as well as a greater use of maladaptive coping strategies. Humphreys (1995) observed that the usual sources of social support (family and friends) used by mothers became difficult to access because of the stigma related to child sex abuse. Sexual behaviour between siblings is likely to be five times more times prevalent than parent-child sexual abuse (Finkelhor, 1980). Previous research has suggested that sibling sexual abuse has severely negative consequences on the victims (Weihe, 1997), however less attention has been paid to abusive sibling relationships regardless of the suggestion that it may be the most prevalent form of family violence (Hardy, 2001).

The increasing literature on traumatic events not only affecting those who are directly victimised, but those individuals who are in close relationship with the victim can also be significantly affected from a psychological point of view (Remer & Ferguson, 1995). Secondary traumatisation refers to the experience and development of trauma-related symptoms as a consequence of close affiliation to the primary victim (Figley, 1983). A majority of the existing literature exploring this area examines the impact on health professionals who work with traumatised individuals (Salston & Figley, 2003). Less attention has been focused in the effect of traumatic experiences in the family and friends of direct criminals and victims (Feldman & Kaal, 2007). Where research exists, much of the emphasis is towards partners of sexual abuse (Ahrens & Campbell, 2000). Whereas a mother's intimate emotional connection with both the victims and perpetrator especially in sibling sexual abuse, holds a lot of complexity with the changes that come through discovery, the primary role of a mother as a caregiver of both the victim and perpetrator, and the impacts on her sense of identity, these factors may differentiate mothers from other

secondary victims (Hooper, 2013). Thus non-offending mothers occupy a complex position where they need to attend to the needs of the victim, perpetrator and themselves.

The findings of the proposed study may be important for indicating the re-traumatisation aspect of legal processes, as it may develop distress for the family. For example, participating in pre-trial and procedures, police and child protection investigations, providing witness statements as well as outcomes pertaining to convictions and sentencing. Whereas, encouraging a collaborative process between these services may allow a lower rate of re-traumatisation and allows them to draw upon mothers' relational attachment with the child victim. It may also reduce the impact of distress and better prepare them for the whole process. Therefore, the findings of the study may provide better support for mothers/understanding the mother's needs, and lead to better support for children involved and improve treatment outcomes. An insecure maternal attachment style is highlighted as contributing to the development of child sexual abuse, through the mother's suggested emotional unavailability. However little is known about the impact of sibling sexual abuse to the mother. Unresolved childhood trauma such as sexual abuse has been established as having likely implications on adult attachment relations (Leifer, Kilbane & Kalick, 2004). For instance, Zuravin and Fontanella (1999) found that lower quality attachments in childhood increased the likelihood of transmission of maltreatment including physical abuse and sexual abuse. Thus the findings of the proposed study may have important implications on psychological research and provide insight into the experiences of mothers of children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse.

Research question(s)

How do mothers of children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse – understand it, manage it, feel about it, have reacted to it?

The objectives are to:

- Address the gap in existing literature, by conducting an exploratory investigation on mothers of children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse.
- Use an Interpretive Phenomenological analysis approach to gain understanding of the subjective experiences of non-offending mothers following the discovery that their child had experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse.

Proposed methods

Participants

Four female participants will be recruited to take part in semi-structed individual interviews led by a female researcher. As the main aim in IPA is to provide a depth of exploration into the participants account (Smith & Pietkewicz, 2012), samples in IPA research studies are typically homogenous and small, which allows for detailed and thorough analysis on a specific population (Smith & Pietkewicz, 2012). All participants will be mothers of children who have perpetrated/experienced sibling sexual abuse. This is to ensure all participants can draw upon their life experiences post discovery of their child's sexual abuse. No characteristics such as sexuality, religion, race or socio-economic background will be taken into account. All participants will be recruited through a community based not-for-profit organisation which provides training and trauma support for sexually abused children, the mothers of those children will be approached to take part in the study. The exclusion criteria excludes those who are under 18, are unable to speak English, and if they have any visual difficulties such that they cannot read large font text with glasses or lenses.

Procedure

Participants will be informed about taking part in a 1:1 interview which will last 1 – 1 ½ hour, informed by the community not-for-profit organisation which will be face to face and if they express interest in participating they will be provided the participant information sheet (See

Appendix A). This document explains the research and provides an invitation to take part in the study. Participants will also be provided with the interview schedule in order for the researcher to be transparent and the participants to be reassured if needed. Those who wish to participate in the study will contact the researcher directly via email or provide permission for the community organisation to forward their details to the researcher. No further feedback will be given to the community organisation in regards to the participants involvement in the study.

Initial contact with the prospective participants will be done by email and provide participants further information on the study as requested or required including a reiteration that the participation will be voluntary and the confidentiality of information provided, including a copy of the semi-structured interview questions before the interview takes place in order for the researcher to be transparent and for the participant to be more reassured if needed. It will also be repeated that due to the nature of the subject matter, participants may withdraw from the study at any time. After communication with the researcher if the participant wishes to continue with the study, a time and location for the interview will as be negotiated at the suitability of the participant. Upon meeting with the participants, the purpose of the study will be re-stated and they will be asked to sign a consent form (See Appendix B) this will state that they understand the research study, they can withdraw from the study, at any time and that interviews will be audio recorded, also the participant will be provided another copy of the semi-structured interview questions. After the participant has signed the consent form the semi-structured interview will begin going through a series of questions (See Appendix D) with the interviewer. This will include questions and prompts regarding the discovery process, coping responses and the mothers needs. The interview will end by providing the participant opportunity to raise any other information or issues which may have not been considered. Once the interview is finished, participants will be given a debrief information form (See Appendix E) pertaining to details of the study and the right to withdraw from that point on until one week after the interview. Also attached to the debrief form will be a list of support organisations for participants to use if they have further concerns. The interviews will then be transcribed and analysed using IPA, by the student researcher.

Proposed analytical methods

IPA is concerned with understanding how an individual experiences a particular phenomenon which is taken from a particular perspective within a particular context (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). It seeks to understand in detail how people make sense of their experiences and attach meaning to life events (Smith et al, 2009). As Reid, Flowers and Larkin (2005) posit IPA is the exploration of experience, together with a reflective process of interpretation which is subjective. Within IPA it is imperative that researchers involve reflexivity throughout and consider 'fore-having' points. The concept of fore-having refers to the researchers prior 'experiences, assumptions and preconceptions' (Smith et al, 2009) which is developed by their socialisation from birth. The interpretation of the participants account and the researchers fore-conceptions may advance or as Smith (2007) hypothesises may interfere with interpretation.

The theoretical underpinnings of IPA is within hermeneutics and phenomenology together with an idiographic perspective (Shinebourne, 2011). As phenomenology is the study of detailed experience and hermeneutics is the study of interpretation, it should be noted that one would not be seen without the other (Smith et al, 2009). IPA is also idiographic in that its concern is with a particular event (Shinebourne, 2011), as for this there is a specific focus on how particular experiences are given meaning. The experience of the phenomena is accounted for on its own terms and are not grouped into pre-defined categories through an inductive bottom-up process (Shinebourne, 2011).

The process of Interpretive Phenomenological analysis begins with reading and re-reading the interviews as a process of immersion of the text (Willig, 2012). Within this first step it is important to be mindful of the links between the extracts (particular phrases, words or sentences which describe aspects of the experience) and as a whole (Willig, 2012). After reading the interview several times, trying to imagine what it may be like experiencing what is described the researcher then returns to the beginning of the interview and examines each line of the text in more detail (Willig, 2012). The aim during this stage is to capture the meaning being communicated in each line as accurately as possible (Willig, 2012). This can be done by writing short descriptive phrases in the margin of the text, phrases which summarise and crystallise the meaning in the line of the text without transcending the text (Willig, 2012). The next step involves drawing upon the descriptive notes in the margins of the text and writing a descriptive summary statement which refers to the meaning, value and significance of the experience from the point of view of the participant (Willig, 2012). Within IPA, literature in used to shed light on what it is that participants are experiencing rather than why participants describe their experience (Willig, 2012).

f) **Staffing issues / equipment (if applicable)**

The research study aims to seek support from a community based not-for-profit organisation to provide access to the participants (mothers of children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse). The researcher will seek the agency's consent for the study to take place via email (appendix F). Interested individuals will be provided an information sheet which outlines the study, and the details of the participants involvement (Appendix A). Attached to that will be a consent form which participants who agree to participate will sign (Appendix B). One staff member will be required to agree consent of the agency, and provide participants the information sheet and consent form. Prior to the study taking place the researcher will introduce themselves via email to the support agency and organise a meeting and discuss the research, the agency's involvement and how it can benefit them. Those who wish to participate in the study will contact the researcher directly via email or provide permission for the support organisation to forward their details to the researcher. Also another staff member will be required if the participant will to have a professional form the community based not-for-profit organisation in the room to provide additional support. Contact by email will allow the a time and location for the interview to be negotiated at the suitability of the participant. The location may possibly be the not-for-profit organisation's building which may require administrative support and will be discussed in the initial meeting. Each participant will be required for an hour to an hour and-a-half for the interview to take place. Once the interview has taken place the researcher will transcribe the interviews and analyse them this may require two -three months.

Appendices: Appendix A

Study Title: The Lived Experiences of Non-Offending Mothers in Cases of Sibling Sexual Abuse

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET
Research Ethics Reference: Sibling Sexual Abuse Study
Version 1.0 Date: 13/11/2018

We would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. One of our team will go through the information sheet with you and answer any questions you have. Please take time to read this carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us anything that is not clear.

What is the purpose of the research?
Mothers perspectives in cases of child sexual abuse have received limited research attention in comparison to the body of literature focussing on victims and perpetrators of child sexual abuse. There is a growing number of research that shows that mothers experience significant loss and trauma following the discovery of their child's sexual victimisation by a family member (Thompson, 2017). An understanding of the mothers experience is crucial to guiding statutory agencies and therapeutic interventions working with these families. The aim of the proposed study is to address the gap in the current literature, by conducting an exploratory investigation, on the experience of how mothers of children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse – understand it, manage it, feel about it, have reacted to it? This study's findings will be an important progression towards a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of mothers after discovery.

Why have I been invited to take part?
You have been invited to take part in this research because we are looking to explore how mothers of children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse construct their experiences post-discovery. All participants we invite will be mothers of children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse. The exclusion criteria excludes those who are under 18, are unable to speak English, and if they have any visual difficulties such that they cannot read large font text with glasses or lenses. The inclusion criteria are mothers aged 18 years or older and must be mothers of children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse. We will be recruiting up to four participants in this study.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide if you want to take part in this research. We will describe the study and go through this information sheet with you to answer any questions you may have. If you agree to participate, we will ask you to sign a consent form and will give you a copy to keep. However, you would still be free to withdraw from the study at any time, during the interview and up to one week after without giving a reason and without any negative consequences, by advising the researchers of this decision. This would not affect your legal rights.

1. *What will happen to me if I take part?*

Prior to the research study the researcher would have sought support from the not-for-profit community organisation to provide access to you and seek consent for the study to take place. If you wish to participate in the study you will contact the researcher directly via email or provide permission for the support organisation to forward your details to the researcher. A researcher will contact you via email to go over the information sheet, and explain the procedures. The researcher will also provide you with the interview schedule in order for the researcher to be transparent and for you to be more reassured if needed. If you agree to take part in the study, you will be asked to attend a single meeting at the location convenient for you possibly at the not-for-profit organisation's facility. Upon arrival for the visit, we will talk you through the study procedures and give you chance to ask any questions. If you are still happy to take part, then you will then be asked to sign a consent form which will consent to you agreeing to participate in the study. After you have signed the consent form the semi-structured interview will begin by going through a series of questions with you. This will include questions and prompts regarding the discovery process, coping responses and the your needs. This should take approximately one hour to an hour and-a-half. The semi-structured interview will end by providing you an opportunity to raise any other information or issues which may have not been considered. Once the interview is finished, you will be given a debrief information form (See Appendix E) pertaining to details of the study and the right to withdraw from that point on until one week after the interview, this is in order to provide you with time to change your mind if you change your mind about consenting to take part in the study.

2. *Are there any risks in taking part?*

All information provided during the interview will be kept confidential unless you reveal something of concern that may put yourself or someone else at any risk. If there has been no input by services, it will then be necessary to report to the Sexual Assault Referral Centre and may also include reporting to the police. As the research has a risk to include the disclosure of illegal, sexual or deviant behaviour it is important to acknowledge all potential risks. This involves potentially sensitive topics, which may induce psychological stress, or anxiety. In order to mitigate these potential risks the researcher will initially state that you are able to withdraw from the study at any time during the interview without reason or harm. Throughout the interview you will also be encouraged to advise the researcher of whether they feel distressed at any point with the questions asked and will be told that if so, you are under no obligation to answer. In the debrief you will be provided with contact details of support lines if any further concerns occur and there will be a worker from the community based organisation are around to offer additional support, if needed

3. *Are there any benefits in taking part?*

There will be no direct benefit to you from taking part in this research but your contribution may provide information that may help to better support mothers. Which in turn may also help the children involved in the community based organisations intervention. As mothers of children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse needs are often overlooked while the focus is on ensuring the safety, wellbeing and care of the victim, the punishment of the perpetrator and the reduction of future risks of harm. Thus the study may aid to bring light to these issues.

4. *Will my time/travel costs be reimbursed?*

Unfortunately, participants will not receive an inconvenience allowance to participate in the study.

5. *What happens to the data provided?*

All data collected will be deleted if consent is not given or if the participant withdraws. The data collected will always be relevant to the study being undertaken and will be stored securely on an encrypted computer. Only the researcher and supervisors will have access to personal and sensitive research data. Consent forms and research data will be stored separately. Audio recordings of participants will only be taken with the consent of the participant and sensitive data will

be recorded confidentially on a password protected phone. The interview will be transcribed onto an encrypted computer and the research will ensure anonymity by using pseudonyms and identifiable personal information (e.g. places) will be adapted to ensure participant anonymity. A linkage record will be retained on the audio recording device, and all research data and records will be stored for a minimum of 7 years after publication or public release of the work of the research. To help ensure your privacy, you will be assigned a volunteer study pseudonym name (for example Diana for participant number 1), and it will be used instead of your name. We will save all the transcribed interviews and research data using that pseudonym name so that none of the data will have your real name or other individual identifiers associated with them. Your name and any information about you will not be disclosed outside the study centre.

6. *What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?*
Even after you have signed the consent form, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason and without your legal rights being affected, within the interview and 7 days from the date of the interview. This can be done by letting either the research or supervisors know via email, and any personal data will be destroyed.
Researcher: Sarah Kelani Sarah.kelani@nottingham.ac.uk
Supervisors: Dr Simon Duff Simon.duff@nottingham.ac.uk

Who will know that I am taking part in this research?
All information collected about you during this research would be kept strictly confidential, and electronic data will be anonymised with a pseudonym as detailed above. All such data are kept on password-protected databases sitting on a restricted access computer system and any paper information (such as your consent form, contact details and any interview information) would be stored safely in lockable cabinets in a swipe-card secured building and would only be accessed by the research team.

Under UK Data Protection laws the University is the Data Controller (legally responsible for the data security) and the Chief Investigator of this study (named above) is the Data Custodian (manages access to the data). This means we are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. Your rights to access, change or move your information are limited as we need to manage your information in specific ways to comply with certain laws and for the research to be reliable and accurate. To safeguard your rights we will use the minimum personally – identifiable information possible.

You can find out more about how we use your information and to read our privacy notice at:

https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/utilities/privacy.aspx/

Designated individuals of the University of Nottingham may be given access to data for monitoring and/or audit of the study to ensure we are complying with guidelines. Anything you say during the interview will be kept confidential, unless you reveal something of concern that may put yourself or anyone else at risk. If there has been no input by services, it will then be necessary to report to the Sexual Assault Referral Centre and may also include reporting to the police.

7. What will happen to the results of the research?
The research may / will be published in the Journal of Family Violence. The research will be written up as a master's thesis. On successful submission of the thesis, it will be deposited both in print and online in the University archives, to facilitate its use in future research. The thesis will be

published open access. The research will be written up as dissertation for the degree of MSc Forensic Psychology.

8. Who has reviewed this study?

All research involving people is looked at by an independent group of people, called a Research Ethics Committee, to protect your interests. This study has been reviewed and given favourable opinion by the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

9. What if something goes wrong?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this project, please speak to any of the researchers Sarah Kelani or Simon Duff, who will do their best to answer your query. The researcher should acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how he/she intends to deal with it. If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this by contacting the FMHS Research Ethics Committee Administrator, c/o The University of Nottingham, Faculty PVC Office, B Floor, Medical School, Queen's Medical Centre Campus, Nottingham University Hospitals, Nottingham, NG7 2UH. E-mail: FMHS- ResearchEthics@nottingham.ac.uk

10. Contact Details

If you would like to discuss the research with someone beforehand (or if you have questions afterwards), please contact:

Sarah Kelani
Email: msxsk23@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix B
Participants Consent Form
Final version 1.0: 13.11.2018

Title of Study: Sibling sexual abuse study

REC ref: (please add when approved)

Name of Researchers: Sarah Kelani – MSc Student & Dr Simon Duff

Name of Participant: **Please initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study which is attached and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason. ☐
3. I understand that should I withdraw, more than 7 days after the interview has taken place then the information collected so far cannot be erased and that this information may still be used in the study analysis.
4. I understand that relevant sections of my data collected in the study may be looked at by the research group and by other responsible individuals for monitoring and audit purposes. I give permission for these individuals to have access to these records and to collect, store, analyse and publish information obtained from my participation in this study. I understand that my personal details will be kept confidential. ☐
5. I understand that the interview will be audio recorded using a digital device and that anonymous direct quotes from the interview may be used in the study reports. ☐
6. I understand that what I say during the interview will be kept confidential unless I reveal something of concern that may put myself or someone else at any risk. It will then be necessary to report this to the appropriate persons. ☐
7. I understand that information about me recorded during the study will be made anonymous before it is stored. It will be uploaded into a secure database on a computer kept in a secure place. Data will be kept for 7 years after the study has ended and then destroyed. ☐

☐

8. **Optional:** I agree that my research data may be stored and used in possible future research during and after 7 years, and shared with other researchers including those working outside the University.

9. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
Name of Person taking consent	Date	Signature

Appendix C

List of Independent Support Services

Below is a list of support services available within the Nottingham area, to people who have experienced or experiencing difficulties in their lives. Please contact one of the numbers if you feel you are having problems with coping.

Women's Aid Integrated Services

Telephone - 0808 800 0340

ISAS – Incest and Sexual Abuse Survivors

Telephone - 0115 824 0314

Victim Support

Telephone - 0300 303 1967

Turning Point

Telephone - 0115 986 6890

Nottingham Counselling Service

Telephone - 0115 959 1743

Park Counselling

Telephone - 07913 153406

Appendix D

Interview Schedule

1. What was your first reaction?
2. Can you describe your thoughts and feelings towards the victim?
3. How do you think the whole experience has been for your child?
4. Can you describe your thoughts and feelings towards your child?
5. How do you think the whole experience has been for the perpetrator?
6. Have you had any sources of support available to you?
7. What sources of support have you found helpful or unhelpful?
8. Have you had any social needs during your experience?
9. In what ways has your life changed after you discovered the abuse?

Appendix E

Debrief Sheet

Your participation in this study is highly appreciated, however if you decide you would like to withdraw your data from the research you may do so without any consequences or needing to provide a reason. Please understand that withdrawal can only take place seven days from participation of the interview, this is in order to provide you with time if you change your mind about consenting to take part. All the data given will be anonymous, confidential and securely stored to only be accessed by the researcher and supervisors, unless you reveal something of concern that may put yourself or someone else at any risk. If there has been no input by services, it will then be necessary to report to the Sexual Assault Referral Centre and may also include reporting to the police. Your anonymity will be secured by using pseudonym names of participants and they will not be identified directly from the transcript as the researcher will change specific items (e.g. places) spoken of in the interview. The researcher is not in a position of authority to give advice. As for this if you feel that this study has raised any issues that may lead you to believe you have a personal health concern, it is recommended that you contact your local GP or a help line listed below for added guidance.

Thank you very much for your contribution to this study. All the data you provided can be withdrawn from one week of the interview taking place. The data used within the study, will focus on

understanding how you experience a particular life event (Reid, Flowers & Larkin, 2005). It aims to understand how people make sense of their experiences and attach meanings to life events (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Previous research has shown that traumatic events not only affects victims but the people in close relationship to the victim (Remer & Ferguson, 1995). This study aims to look at how mothers of children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse including how they understand it, manage it, feel about it, have reacted to it? I hope it will inform how best to support mothers in the future. As this is a sensitive and potentially difficult topic to discuss, if you feel the need for further support please contact the support sites provided below.

Last date of withdrawal (5pm) ……../……../…….

You may withdraw by contacting the researcher via email at sarah.kelani@nottingham.ac.uk

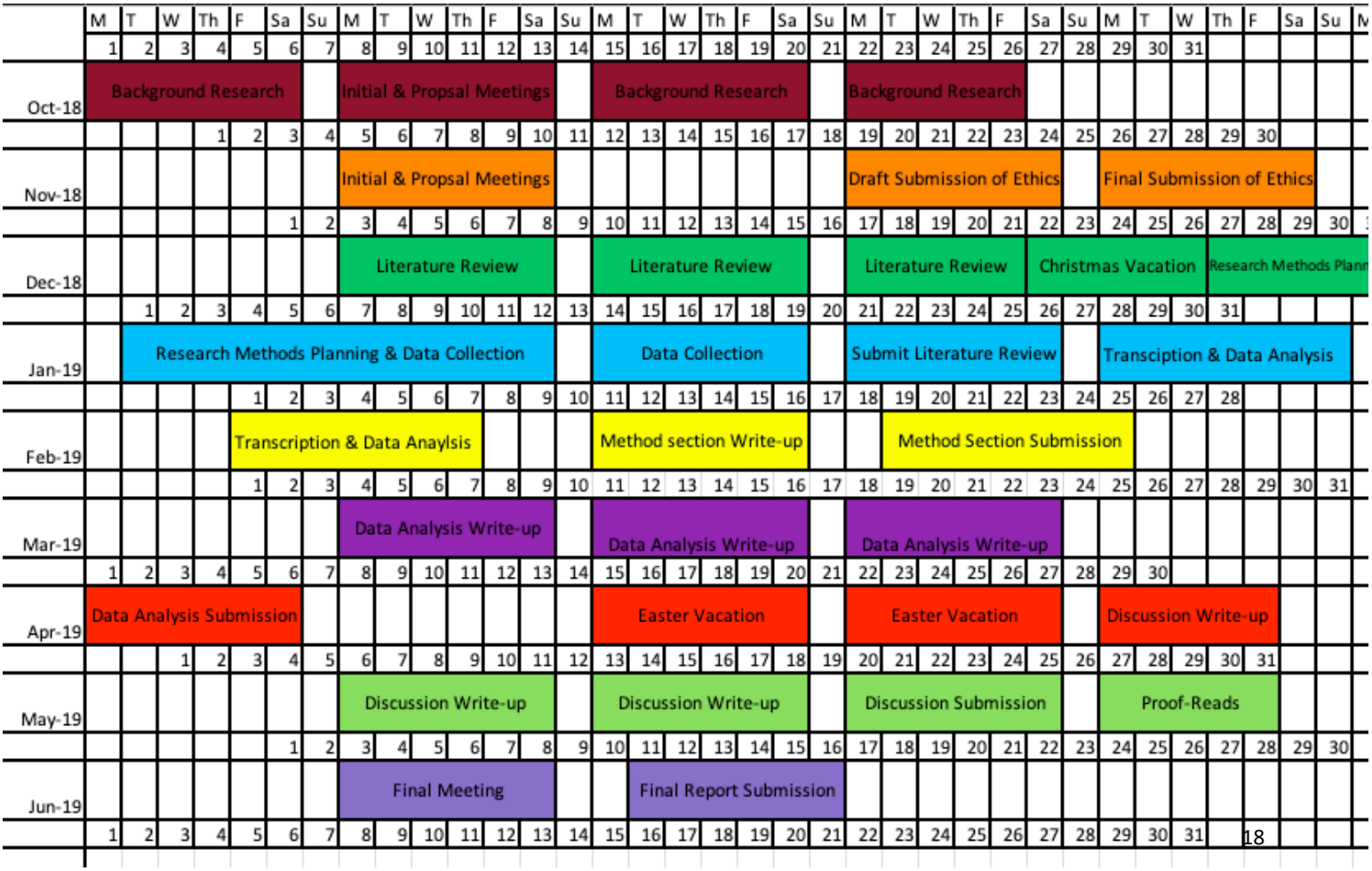
If you have any further questions or would like more information about the study please contact:

Researcher: Sarah Kelani Sarah.kelani@nottingham.ac.uk
Supervisors: Dr Simon Duff Simon.duff@nottingham.ac.uk

Thank you again for your participation, if any problems occur because of the study please contact external support for guidance. (please see overleaf)

Appendix E

Estimated timescale



Appendix F

Proposed Email:

Dear XXX.

I am a student on the Forensic Psychology MSc Degree at Nottingham University, and I am conducting a study to fulfil the requirements of my Forensic Psychology Research Dissertation.

The study aims to explore how mothers of children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse – understand it, manage it, feel about it, have reacted to it? It will explore how experiences of the mothers have been constructed. As these mothers may have unique therapeutic needs in their own right (Hooper, 2013). The proposed study may aid to develop more specific therapeutic interventions to support mothers. Furthermore, the proposed study may highlight the experiences of on-offending mothers following the discovery which may have implications for organisations like yours. I am looking for four to five participants who are mothers of children who are victims of sibling sexual abuse, in order to do 1-1 interview with them. This is to ensure all participants can draw upon their life experiences post discovery of their child's sexual abuse which is aligned with the analytical approach. No characteristics such as sexuality, religion, race or socio-economic background will be taken into account. I would be very grateful if I could meet with your organisation for you to find out more about the study before coming to any decision on supporting me with my research.

Kind regards,

Sarah Kelani.

Appendix G

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University of Nottingham
UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

Email: FMHS-ResearchEthics@nottingham.ac.uk

Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences
Research Ethics Committee
c/o Faculty PVC Office
School of Medicine Education Centre
B Floor, Medical School
Queen's Medical Centre Campus
Nottingham University Hospitals
Nottingham, NG7 2UH

4 April 2019

Sarah Kelani
MSc Forensic & Criminological Psychology
c/o Dr Simon Duff
Director of Stage II Forensic Training
Centre for Forensic & Family Psychology
Room B05 YANG Fujia
Jubilee Campus
Wollaton Road
Nottingham

Dear Ms Kelani

Ethics Reference No: 241-1902 – **please always quote**	
Study Title: Sibling Abuse Study	
Chief Investigator/Supervisor: Dr Simon Duff, Registered Practitioner Psychologist (Forensic) Division of Psychiatry and Applied Psychology, School of Medicine.	
Lead Investigators/student: Sarah Kelani, MSc Forensic and Criminological Psychology.	
Proposed Start Date: 01/10/18	**Proposed End Date:** 16/06/2019

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

- FMHS REC Application form and supporting documents version 0.1: 22/01/2019

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

Lived experiences with children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse.

Sarah Kelani

Journal Style: Journal of Interpersonal Violence

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Acknowledgements

I would firstly like to thank Jesus Christ for pulling me through this dissertation and giving me strength to complete. I would also like to thank Dr Simon Duff for his help, support and encouragement whilst supervising me. Thank you to Imara and to all the mothers that took part in the study. Lastly, thank you to my family for their continued help and encouragement.

Isaiah 40:31- but those who hope in the Lord, will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Abstract

The majority of research regarding sibling sexual abuse has focused on victim and perpetrator experiences and there has been less attention paid toward exploring the experiences of mothers, although they are considered responsible for supporting the child after disclosure. The current study aims to fill the gap by analysing mothers experiences regarding the disclosure of SSA. This research uses Interpretative Phenomenological analysis to explore lived experiences of mothers of children who have perpetrated/experienced sibling sexual abuse. The research aimed to explore how mothers understand it, manage it, feel about it, and have reacted to it. Interviews were conducted with 4 mothers, aged between 37-45 years and all from the Midlands UK. Five themes were identified in the analysis; rollercoasters, torn loyalties, power, managing knock-on-effects and rewriting the future. The main conclusions drawn from this research were the difficulties mothers face in sibling sexual abuse cases because they care for both the perpetrator and victim and want to meet the needs of both, since they are both their children. Furthermore, the research found that mothers felt their future had to be altered to include the impact of the abuse which occurred within the family, and the changed family circumstances. Moreover the research demonstrated that mothers went through an on-going process which involved them feeling a mixture of intense emotions once they discovered the abuse of their child.

Keywords: Mothers, Sibling sexual abuse, family issues, vicarious trauma

Introduction

It has been well established that child sexual abuse (CSA) is a traumatic experience with significant and enduring implications for victims across varied domains psychological, cognitive, behavioural, sexual and intellectual functioning (Paolucci, Genuis & Violato, 2001). Of sexual abuse cases, sibling sexual abuse (SSA) is considered the most common sexual abuse and the longest lasting type of abuse in the family, it is also the least reported because parents may consider it as harmless play or normal sexual curiosity (Bass, Taylor, Knudson-Martin & Huenergardt, 2006; McNevin, 2010). This belief may prevent parents from noticing the severity of the behaviour and parents are less likely to report the abuse to the authorities (Veigh, 2003; Wiehe, 2002). However parental relationships may buffer against the negative effects of sibling sexual abuse (Gass, Jenkins & Dunn, 2007), and provide protection from loneliness and depression in early adulthood (Milevsky, 2005). It is important to explore the experiences of mothers of victims of sibling sexual abuse (SSA) because of the part they play as primary caregiver as well as the ability they have in mediating risk factors with parental protection and support (Coohey & O'Leary, 2008; Pintello & Zuravin, 2001).

This research explores the lived experience of mothers with children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse. The concept of motherhood is typically romanticised; however this view does not always resonate with the experiences of mothers (Sutherland, 2010). Motherhood may elicit strong and complex emotions such as feelings of resentment, fear of criticism or public disapproval of moving away from social norms (Surtherland, 2010; Weissman, Paykel, Siegel & Klerman, 1971), these feelings may reside next to feelings of

love, affection and commitment making complex emotional tensions (Oberman & Josselson, 1996). Literature suggests that women embed ideas of motherhood, which when internalised, the attitudes, values and beliefs of others form their sense of self (Sutherland, 2010). These ideas may help with a mothers understanding of the difference between their expectation and reality which may impact their psychological and emotional wellbeing (Henderson, Harmon & Newman, 2016; Sutherland, 2010). The concept of motherhood is represented in different forms within society and although belief in the representations suggests an element of choice, Sutherland (2010) argues 'mandates' are forced on women which lead them to mother in a way society accepts. When abuse occurs within a family the mother may have to re-assess her role as a mother, and her role in the family (Elbow & Mayfield, 1991). Using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009), this study explored the experiences for mothers who have children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse including how they understand it, manage it, feel about it, have reacted to it?

The Role of the Mother in Sexual Abuse Cases

Research has found that CSA victims who are given higher levels of maternal support have improved recovery outcomes longitudinally (Morrison & Clavenna-Valleroy, 1998; Wyatt & Mickey, 1988). Therefore, it is a robust finding that the non-offending parent, usually the mother, provides a vital role with mediating recovery outcomes for CSA victims (Thompson, 2017). When mothers are faced with disclosures it may require her to go through a series of cognitive processes, assessing the truthfulness of the information, figuring out what the abuse means for her family, while making decisions and finding resources (Elbow & Mayfield,

1991). Within research exploring mothers of victims and mothers of perpetrators, there have been some similarities between these different sets of mothers. Mothers of victims of intrafamilial abuse were found to have experienced domestic violence, been supportive of their child and had been sexually abused themselves (Deblinger, Russell-Hathaway, Lippmann & Steer, 1993). Similar to this, mothers of perpetrators were likely to had been physically and sexually abused themselves, as well as domestically abused (New, Stevenson & Skuse, 1999).

Leifer, Kilbane and Kalick, (2004) addressed parents with histories of sexual abuse and how this affected their support of their child after disclosure occurred. They identified that mothers with a history of sexual abuse were more likely to have relational problems than nonoffending mothers with no history of sexual abuse. For instance, mothers with a history of sexual abuse as a child and had children who were victims of sexual abuse experienced a breakdown in their attachments alluding to the idea that the effects of their CSA lead on into adulthood, impacting both their adult and parental relationships. These women were less securely attached or more dismissive in their attachment compared to mothers with without a history of CSA and had children who were victims of sexual abuse. This suggests that mothers with a history of child sexual abuse were more likely to be less trusting of others, and uncomfortable with others. The mothers with less secure attachments had a sense of worthlessness and were reluctant to rely on others, whilst the mothers with dismissive attachments had a positive view of self and a negative view of others. In contrast the mothers with

histories of CSA and were able to protect their children from sexual abuse were more likely to have healthy secure attachments adulthood and their parental role (Leifer, Kilbane & Kalick, 2004). Thus, literature has addressed parents with a history of sexual abuse and examined the parenting, attachments of these adults and how their actions affect their children post-disclosure. However Leifer et al's, (2004) study had limitations such as the homogeneity of the sample their results are not generalizable to populations other than African American, low-income population.

Disclosures of Sexual Abuse

Usually disclosure for SSA follows a typical pattern, from being known by the sibling subsystem only to being known by family or community members, abuse usually does not end because of disclosure but rather because the perpetrator and victim become adults and leave the family home (Caffaro & Con-Caffaro, 2005). Though when children disclose as children, it tends to be to their parents (Berliner & Conte, 1995; Gomes-Schwartz, Horowitz & Cardarelli, 1990; Lamb & Edgar-Smith, 1994; Lynch,Stern, Oates & O'Toole, 1993; Roesler & Wind, 1994). When victims of sexual abuse decide to disclose, they must consider whom to open up about the abuse to and the possible reaction that they may receive (Lafleur, 2009). There are different kinds of reactions such as 'interrogating the child, being emotional and may even blame the child in the process' (Finkelhor, 1979). Depending on the type of reaction it may raise the disclosure to a higher level of intensity (Lafleur, 2009), unfortunately, as a result of parent' reactions victims may not to first disclose their abuse to their parents (Finkelhor, 1979), thus, children may disclose to a teacher, counselor or friend. The trauma of sexual abuse during the disclosure does not leave once the abuse

is disclosed, some researchers even argue that after the child has told someone is when the trauma begins (Finkelhor, 1979; Herman & Hirschman, 1981).

Mothers

In earlier studies nonoffending mothers were portrayed in a negative light and as a homogenous population however, more recent research suggests that these mothers are more heterogenous regarding maternal post-disclosure response, personality and psychopathy (Elliot & Carnes, 2001; Crawford, 1999). Empirical explorations of this population are still young, compared to the body of research that relates to the victims and perpetrators (Tener, Lusky, Tarshish & Turjeman, 2018). Available research has highlighted three main topics relating to non-offending mothers: trauma, coping and belief, disbelief and protective, non-protective factors. A brief overview of these research areas and their overall findings will be discussed below.

Trauma

Trauma is a stressful event which is presented as a change in the environment, initiating emotional tension so great that it interrupts an individual's normal response pattern (Friedrich, 1990). Trauma can be so significant that is warrants a PTSD diagnosis where the individual may experience symptoms such as flashbacks, however individuals may experience trauma at a smaller intensity. Researchers suggest that sexual abuse is a traumatic experience, and intrafamilial sex abuse (ISA), may be more traumatic than extrafamilial sex abuse (ESA) (Finkelhor, 1979), this is because, the closer relationship the greater the violation of trust, security and guilt due to the child feeling conflicted in their loyalties (Lafleur, 2009). The characteristics of sexual abuse contributes to traumatic sexualization, disloyalty and powerlessness of the trauma

(McCallum, 2001). This idea is echoed for sibling sexual abuse cases as sibling relationships are naturally close and when sexual abuse occurs, it tends to be more aggressive creating feelings of disloyalty and powerlessness (Rudd & Herzberger,1999).

There is increasing research on traumatic events and its effect on those who are close to the victim, who can be significantly affected in a psychological way (Remer & Ferguson, 1995). Secondary victimization is defined as the experience of trauma related symptoms which occur because of a close relationship to the victim (Figley, 1983). It is centered around the idea that the individual does not have to be directly affected to experience the impact of trauma (Balakrishna, 1998; Herman, 1992). Most research exploring this idea examines the impact on health professionals working with traumatised individuals known as 'vicarious traumatisation' (Salston & Figley, 2003). Even less focus has been upon the impact of traumatic experiences on family and friends of direct victims (Feldman & Kaal, 2007; Thompson, 2017) in criminal cases. Where there has been research, it has been focused on partners of sexual abuse and assault victims (Ahrens & Campbell, 2000). Understanding that friends and family may have secondary trauma is important for clinicians working with this population (Timmons-Mitchell et al, 1996).

Coping

Research has found after disclosures are discussed with mothers of victims of ISA, mothers used denial as a defense in order to guard themselves against anxiety and the pain they were experiencing (Womack, Miller & Lassiter, 2000). This psychological defense helps mothers in dealing with possible breakdowns of the family unit, their role as a mother, and their self-image (Womack

et al, 2000). Literature looking at how mothers with children dealing with chronic illnesses, found resources such as a community of social support, economic resources, good health, positive attitudes and beliefs (Friedrich, 1990). These resources can also benefit parents dealing with SSA, as mothers having a community of social support may help in their ability to adapt to the changes occurring in their family, from the consequences of the trauma and aid as an outlet to express themselves without feeling judged (Lafleur, 2009). Economic resources aid in supporting the family unit as they seek therapy both at an individual and family level to build good coping skills after the disclosure (Lafleur, 2009). Overall, maintaining positive attitudes and beliefs together with good physical health can help the family when adapting to the changes by keeping them healthy and being able to make a change in their future (Lafleur, 2009).

There are methodological issues with research conducted on mothers of sexually abused children. Some studies used secondary sources such as investigative reports and interviews from child support services in order to find the responses from mothers (Heriot, 1996; Pintello & Zuravin, 2001). Whereas secondary data may provide information which is useful in interpretations of these mothers responses, it may not be accurately captured, and biases may occur. Other researchers used the reports of the abused child to find the level of belief, disbelief, support or unsupportive actions from the mother (Hunter, 2015). However, this type of methodology, does not address the mothers' intentions of their support and action because the report is from the point of view of the child. Many studies that have examined the impact of sibling sexual abuse (SSA) have primarily focused on victims and perpetrators largely ignoring the impact of SSA on primary care givers. The present study was

interested in addressing the gap in the current literature regarding mothers of children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse, using a qualitative approach.

Research literature on child sexual abuse (CSA) is usually split into two categories in line with the type of relationship between the perpetrator and victim; if the perpetrator was outside, or within the family. Extrafamilial sexual abuse (ESA) is categorized as a child being sexually abused by someone outside of the family (Regehr, 1990). Of interest for this study is Intrafamilial sexual abuse (ISA) which is categorized as a child being sexually abused by a member of their own family, typically being the biological father or mothers partner (Barrett & Trepper, 2004). Despite the history of being underreported, research has found that the most prevalent kind of intrafamilial sexual abuse is sibling sexual abuse (SSA) (Bierker, 1989; Rudd & Herzberger, 1999). Rudd and Herzberger (1999) found that sibling sexual abuse is five times more common when comparing brother-sister to father-daughter incest. SSA has not only been underreported but it has also been under-researched (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 2005).

Maternal Response

The short and long-term effects of sexual abuse on child victims has been researched extensively, and it has been established that CSA is a significant traumatic experience which may have long lasting impacts on the victims across various areas, including psychological, emotional, cognitive, behavioural, physical, sexual, interpersonal and academic functioning (Finkelhor, Hotaling, Lewis & Smith, 1990; Paolucci, Genius & Violato, 2001). Also, research has investigated factors which mediate the effects of CSA on child victims. An

extensive exploration into the factors that mediate the effects of CSA on child victims is beyond the scope of this research, however a relevant factor pertains to caregiver's response. A maternal response has been identified as a prominent factor which impacts post-abuse adjustment and consequences for child victims (Baker-Collo & Read, 2003; Elliot & Carnes, 2001; Kendall-Tackett, Williams & Finkelhor, 1993; Yancey & Hansen, 2010).

Belief, Disbelief and Protective, Non-Protective.

Research has found the first responses of disclosure for mothers were varied and influenced the way mothers respond to their abused child (Lafleur, 2009). Denial, guilt and anger were typical internal responses experienced by mothers, (De Jong, 1988; Deblinger & Heflin, 1996; Regehr, 1990) other mothers experienced shock (Herman & Hirschman, 1981) whilst some experienced sadness, frustration, fear, inadequacy and distrust (De Jong, 1988; Deblinger & Heflin, 1996). These internal responses were key for researchers to find the link between them and actions taken after disclosure.

Research has suggested that nonoffending parents' belief of their child's sexual abuse and their support of their child, during and directly following the sexual abuse disclosures, played a significant part within the recovery and intervention process for the child (Thompson, 2017). The initial disbelief and denial which mothers experienced after disclosures of ISA were natural defense mechanisms, as mothers were shocked that abuse occurred within the household without her awareness (Johnson, 1992). Although these feelings may change, and research has shown that mothers' transition from disbelief to belief that the abuse occurred and subsequent support for the child victim, also mothers believe it is necessary that changes occur in the family unit

(Johnson, 1992). For instance, because of the mothers initial shock she may not believe abuse occurred in her home without her knowledge, thus denying such abuse happened. However, when the shock dissipates, many mothers believe their children and take action in aiding their child in treatment, thus accepting the abuse happened (Thompson, 2017).

Methodology

All participants were recruited via a community-based not-for-profit organisation which offered psychological treatment services to families affected by child sexual abuse. Participants were informed about the study by the community-based not-for-profit organisation and if they expressed interest in participating, they were provided the participant information sheet (See Appendix A). This document explained the research and provided an invitation to take part in the study. Those who wished to participate in the study were contacted by the researcher directly via email or provided permission for the support organisation to forward their details to the researcher. Initial contact with the prospective participants was by email and provided participants further information on the study, reiterating that the participation was voluntary, and the confidentiality of information provided. It was also repeated that due to the nature of the subject matter, participants may withdraw from the study at any time. Additionally, the participants were provided a copy of the semi-structured interview (Appendix D) allowing participants the opportunity to read over the interview questions and decide if there were questions which made them feel uncomfortable, that they wanted to change or disregard. This ensured the research upheld a high level of ethics. After communication with the researcher if the participant wished to continue with the study, a time

and location for the interview was negotiated at the suitability of the participant. Upon meeting with the participants, the purpose of the study was re-stated, and they were asked to sign a consent form (See Appendix B), it stated that they understood the research study, they could withdraw from the study and that all interviews were audio recorded. After the participant signed the consent form the semi-structured interview began going through a series of questions (See Appendix D) with the interviewer. This included questions and prompts regarding the discovery process, coping responses and their needs. After each interview the researcher provided the participant opportunity to raise any other information or issues which may have not been considered. Once the interview was finished, participants were given a debrief information form (See Appendix E) pertaining to details of the study and the right to withdraw from that point on until one week after the interview. Participants were also provided a list of support organisations (See Appendix E) to contact if any issues occur. The interviews were then transcribed and analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

Theoretical Background

An essential theory underpinning IPA is idiography (Smith, Harré & Van Langenhove, 1995). IPA is concerned with the detailed understanding of how an individual experiences a particular event which is taken from a particular perspective within a particular context (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Within IPA studies, findings are typically presented as a group of similarities and differences with the participants accounts. In an idiographic study, as it has been a result of the examination of participants individual accounts, it is possible to make individual statements about those participants (Smith, 2015). For

example, a mother may judge themselves a for failing to fulfil the needs of their children (Welfare, 2010). The word 'understanding' can successfully demonstrate both notions of interpretation and understanding in IPA as identifying or empathizing with someone and understanding as attempting to make sense. IPA is a combination of empathetic hermeneutic and questioning hermeneutics. Utilizing both parts of hermeneutics allows the researcher to provide a denser analysis and do a greater justice to the participant as a whole (Smith, 2015). Additionally, IPA acknowledges symbolic interactionism (Denzin & Lincoln, 1995) by recognising how meanings are given to experiences by participants in both a social and personal world view.

The present study is guided by Smith's (2015) step-by-step approach to the analysis in IPA. The six steps are as follows: (1) the transcript is read several times using the margin to note down what is interesting or significant about what the participant said on the experience of being mothers of children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling abuse and making sense of this experience. (2) the next margin is used to identify particular themes related to the mothers experiences. The initial responses move to a higher level of eliciting and allow for theoretical connections, to be conducted throughout the whole transcript. (3) then an initial list of emergent themes are produced in chronological order (4) next the researcher attempts to understand the connections between themes. Traditionally the researcher would do this by cutting up the themes and put them onto a large surface then move them around in order to look for patterns. (5) As the clustering of themes began, it was cross referenced against the interviews of the mothers and is placed into a table of themes. By interpreting each interview in this way, the researcher will begin to ask questions such as 'what is the participant trying to

accomplish, and is something leaking out here that was not intended?' This would allow the researcher to approach the text and explore the experiences of mothers of children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse. This research uses IPA which is informed by the phenomenological epistemology, to explore the experiences of mothers of children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse. Four participants who identified as women, with children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse, from the Midlands UK were involved in the study. Table 1 summarizes the demographic information of each participant. These women were selected as it enabled the researcher to gain knowledge on their experiences/understandings being mothers of children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse.

Procedure

Participants took part in a semi-structured interview, each lasted 45 minutes to 1 hour. Predominantly using open-questions participants were asked to share their experiences with the researcher. Utilizing a semi-structured interview allowed the participant to provide detailed responses as it permits them to talk about their experiences as mothers on their own terms and their frame of reference (Willig, 2013). Probing questions were used to gain more details, and garner pre-identified topics of relevance to the researcher, acquired by previous literature which emphasised the main themes pertinent to mothers experience. Including questions and prompts regarding the discovery process, coping responses and their needs. All interviews were unique according to the participants point of view, which as a result influenced subsequent interviews as the researcher included issues raised by previous participants. At the end of

each interview the researcher provided the participant opportunity to raise any other information or issues which may have not been considered, but they found to be important. All interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim by the author. Detailed analysis of transcripts was performed using IPA methods as outlined by Smith et al (2009), participants were given pseudonyms to protect confidentiality. The first author listened to and read the transcript simultaneously to check for any errors in transcription, to ensure accuracy of information and increase familiarity with the data. Initial themes were made for each participant by clustering and examining similar themes into main themes which demonstrated meaning at increasingly abstract levels. The research referred to Smith et al (2009) and Crabtree, Wilson & McElvaney (2018) within the analysis process. Data were then cross analysed by comparing themes across participants and identifying similarities and differences across individuals for a set of master themes to emerge. Relevant verbatim texts for each over-arching theme were found. Labels for themes were either from participants words or were produced by the research team to better represent the master theme.

As IPA is concerned with the detailed understanding of how an individual experience a particular event which is taken from a particular perspective within a particular context (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Thus, it is important to recognize how the interrelationship of researcher and participant attributes, because race and gender can influence the research process (Bhopal, 2010). Notably these analyses have been performed by one researcher: A Black British Woman MSc student while all the participants in this study were white British women from the Midlands UK. It is important to note that the researcher's own

experiences, values and biases will inevitably shape and influence the process of data interpretation.

Table 1

Demographic information of Participants

Name	Gender of Children	Number of Children	Ethnicity	Time Elapsed
Adelé	1 boy 2 girls	3	White British	2 years
Shadé	1 boy 2 girls	3	White British	2 years
Lara	2 boys 1 girl	3	White British	5 years
Jadé	1 boy 2 girls	3	White British	7 months

Analysis

From the analytic process five main themes emerged from the interviews: rollercoasters, torn loyalties, power, managing knock-on-effects and rewriting the future. Each theme is illustrated with quotes using pseudonyms to maintain anonymity.

‘‘Rollercoaster”

The analysis demonstrated that all mothers experienced struggles during the discovery of the abuse and found difficulties with making sense of the new information with their personal identities as mothers. This experience involved mothers reporting a mixture of feelings such as anger, shock, disbelief, feeling numb and some feeling unable to process the information properly. Some mothers experienced struggles with disclosure such as

difficulties concentrating: ruminations over the details of the abuse, replaying past events, sleeping and eating changes, feeling overwhelmed by sadness, guilt and anger. The "rollercoaster" was an unpredictable change, where their feelings changed from one extreme to another. It was an on-going process which involved mothers feeling a mixture of intense emotions once they discovered the abuse of their child: "You can't prepare no, and you can't prepare for your feelings and everything else that's going to come because it's a rollercoaster, the first few months is a rollercoaster" (Shadé).

The following extract provides an illustration of the multiple and often competing emotions experienced by mothers about their sons (perpetrator): "very mixed at times very angry urm disappointed frustrated we've been through an awful lot with him…it feels like a rollercoaster because every time we feel like you know I feel like we are getting somewhere and he's in a, you know he's in a better place and he's almost it's like he's sabotages things by doing something urm I worry about him, but at the same time he he he's the easier one to deal with, much easier to deal with because he's remorseful" (Jadé).

Most mothers experienced a mixture of shock, disbelief, and anger regarding their child's behaviour and found it difficult to comprehend the abuse. Mothers emotions varied and were conceptualised as dynamic and prone to change: "because it was completely out of the blue, and completely, urm, don't know how to describe it just, just numb and shocked and slightly in disbelief, urm, and then, I think upset and angry, urm, yeah." (Jade).

Shadé's relationship with her son (perpetrator) went under a lot of strain, negatively affecting their relationship. Their relationship was further impacted by her son not being formally punished by the criminal justice system and

she struggled to forgive him, as it depended on her daughter's recovery. The following extract demonstrates Shadé's ambivalence towards her son: "so, I do love him, but it's I can't, I can't, forgive just yet, not until she's alright again, she's alright, obviously she's alright, but not until she's dealt with it properly herself."

While Shadé went on to describe intense anger towards her son, Adele's new understanding helped her to forgive her son and re-establish her relationship. As she described her son considering taking his own life "so then that absolutely broke my heart, because I thought oh my god, this has been happening without my even noticing…, I think I, I was more yeah, I was more protective with him, and I felt like I'd got to support him because his, his dad had kind of disowned him, so the fact that I needed to step-up even more now and get, get him through this and I've got to get the whole family through it."

Torn Loyalties

Participants experienced difficulties with their significant relationships in the aftermath of disclosure. Many mothers experienced difficulties to attend to the needs of both their children and remain neutral. When they faced having to move their son (perpetrator) out of the home, this resulted in the split of the family unit, further exacerbating their problems.

Mothers' relationships suffered as they felt conflicted in attempting to support the victim, offender and extended family. Shadé specifically disconnected from her son as she was unable to cope with the changed family dynamics from the disclosure: "in the beginning, I was very torn it was like I love him, he's my son, I don't want anything bad to happen to him, urm, and then in the next breath it

was, I'd look at my daughter and I'd be like, what has he done to you?, you know it's. It's very hard to put yourself with both" (Shadé).

This was also evidenced by Adele when her son had to move out and she felt it was crucial to support their son as well as the victim and her other child: "so I was having to split myself into 10 pieces because obviously I didn't want him to feel like he'd been thrown out and I'd got the other two girls and I've got three children so and I felt like I was splitting myself into ten because you know I've got to, you know I wanted to make sure to see him to make sure he wasn't on his own and but then I got to spend time with my girls as well, and but then I got, you know I used to take him out".

Participants spoke of having torn loyalties with both victim and perpetrators for mothers, maintaining an impartial stance between their children was difficult and resulted in emotional unrest. The following extract provides evidence of Jadé feeling torn in meeting all her children's needs: "the biggest challenge is that I don't have two daughters I have two daughters and a son and he's vulnerable which is why this all happened in the first instance and I can't just cut him out while that might be the right thing for well she (victim) feels it might be that it's the right thing for her whether I believe it to be in the long-run the right thing for her it's another matter so I have we have I have to do what is right for all of them and what they all need is all quite different, and that that's the biggest challenge so feeling guilty, you can't do what your children need (gets emotional)" (Jade).

Most participants had to remove their son from their home for a period of time, of these participants some voiced difficulties with understanding their child's capability to offend, which contributed to mothers inability to reconcile

existing perceptions about their son (perpetrator). Where participants previously held positive beliefs about their son's character this had been strongly challenged by this contrasting new reality thus participants experienced cognitive ambivalence as Lara mentioned her feelings towards her son (perpetrator): "Ok I hated him for what he's done and I can't change what he did to my, my son and my daughter that's what hurts the most".

Power

The findings highlighted participants' experiences with perceived or actual loss of personal agency, control and a compromised sense of self-worth. This theme represents an important aspect of mothers' post-disclosure journey of SSA, for many mothers disclosure may undermine their prior beliefs and perceptions regarding their relationships and self-identity. Mothers are often confronted by different intervening services and authorities after disclosure including professionals such as the police, social care and therapists, as well as the influences from social networks and pressures of society. As the central focus is on protection and safety of the children the effects on mothers may be viewed as secondary to this aim thus resulting in their needs being ignored or overlooked. Analysis revealed two subthemes regarding Power: disempowerment and empowerment.

<u>Disempowerment</u>

Mothers' experiences of disempowerment were often exacerbated by perceived blame or negative judgement for not recognising signs of sexual abuse. In some cases, feelings of disillusionment were fuelled by a perceived lack of responsiveness from various authorities when the authorities were approached for assistance by mothers after the discovery of the abuse, as Lara explained

when she spoke of improvements authority services could make: "I think as you say the family should be treated as one instead of separate and urm should have more help around these kinds of issues because I don't think there's hardly any, anywhere to go, to be honest you feel like you just feel like you've been looked down on instead of being helped sometimes".

In some cases, there was an accusatory and punitive response experienced from external agencies who questioned their capacity to mother their children protectively. Disclosure of abuse imposed a new lens through which mothers had to look at themselves from which was further exacerbated from feeling blamed by external agencies as Lara mentioned: "I got, was made me to feel that it was my fault that's why it happened, and it wasn't the case so it's hard to see it like that when you aren't in there".

Empowerment

Participants empowered themselves in different ways and expressed their feelings about the abuse. In particular participants who felt silenced by the justice system mishandling their case expressed their feelings and empowered themselves by solving the situation through individuals in political positions this is evidenced with Shadé: "to which point I did, I went off on my own back and I went and done it myself, urm and I spoke to MP's about it and they looked into it and everything else."

Similarly, Adele fought against the feelings of blame and guilt when she found a sense of empowerment by expressing her feelings about the problems of her daughters case to the head of children's services when she became frustrated about the how her daughters case was going: "I've done everything in my power I mean I took my complaint to the highest, I actually got the head of children's

services involved with my complaint because I was absolutely disgusted and because I'm quite forward and I mean I put myself through all the safeguarding training I've done level two, level three safeguarding, urm and I was not told about anything I could be doing."

In another case Lara empowered herself through an attempt to regain a sense of control which was closely tied in with a need to reinstate a sense of normality in their daily lives. This was evident for Lara in the form of re-establishing a sense of the ordinary and regularity of norms for herself and her family: "but urm I I've tried to get them to live a normal life if that's the case if that's the right word to use and I'm trying."

Participants also described gaining support from family and friends: "urm my friends my close friends, urm have been brilliant my family well my, my parents know urm and they've been brilliant as they always are about everything" (Jadé)

Managing Knock-on-effects

Mothers struggled to deal with the consequences of the abuse, as families individually underwent disturbance and change because of the disclosure. They spoke of their child's distress because of the sexual abuse, but described how much harder it was to witness the side-effects of the abuse and their children in distress, this was evidenced by Lara when she spoke of her current difficulties with her daughter (victim): "I'm still battling it now, with the teenage phase as my daughter's an ordinary teenager you know what she's been she's been quite a handful at the moment quite, quite physically and mentally abusive towards me."

Participants reported that there were constantly new issues stemming from the abuse for instance, some participants described their child as emotionally abusive towards them. As well as their family members, they described living with outbursts of aggression. However, Jadé understood that this behaviour from her daughter was a part of the emotional impact of her sexual abuse. However, she also felt that the abusive behaviour was inexcusable and was something she should not be expected to endure: "and I understand that you know her reactions are completely normal and that you know she's not being difficult you know for no reason…more recently I've actually started feeling somewhat cross with her because she is now its almost like that's what she wants, it's like she wants to push us away so, is she's very, very angry so she'd directing that at us and there is only so much you can take and we're getting to a point at the moment where I can't I can't I can't keep being kind of the punching bag so that's the difficulty at the moment in terms of my feelings towards her is that none of this is her fault and she's just expressing how she's feeling."

Rewriting the Future

Mothers described the abuse as altering their family dynamics and it changed their view of the future. Their feelings of the future had to be altered to include the impact of the abuse which occurred within the family, and the changed family circumstances. These changes meant that the participants could not have the family they envisioned: "my biggest issue at the moment it's about how you move forward as a family and that's the bit that seems impossible because the notion of family is just completely different" (Jadé).

Participants also described different fears they experienced about the future such as the prolonged effects of the abuse on both their children as they grew older, fears of future romantic relationships and, their relationship with other siblings: "and I'm so scared of that, I'm so scared, I'm scared she'd going to end up using this later on in life as not an excuse but if you know when she does make a bad decisions and a boyfriends and sexual experiences I don't want this to be used like that" (Shadé).

Discussion

The aim of the current study was to explore the experiences of mothers of children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse. Throughout the interview participants detailed the effects of their child's abuse on their own lives. The results indicated that participants experienced a mixture of emotions in their attempt to navigate their motherhood after disclosure shaped by a range of intrapersonal and interpersonal factors. These mothers possess a special position as they occupy a group of mothers of both perpetrator and victim, in a sense they may be considered a special type of secondary victim as they experienced a mixture of emotions and struggles after disclosure; in conditions that may be described as complex, and often marked by confusion, uncertainty and trauma. These findings demonstrate that the maternal experience cannot be appropriately captured with a single theoretical concept, but it is represented as a dynamic journey.

Impact on Relationships

In the initial reaction of disclosures mothers described having feelings of intense anger, shock and disbelief. These were similar reactions to mothers of victims after the disclosure of CSA (Herman & Hirschman, 1981;

Deblinger & Heflin, 1996). Even though mothers may have initially reacted with anger and disbelief, this did not have a direct relation to whether mothers took action to protect their daughters. The mothers initial reactions of anger were more demonstrative of the shame, embarrassment and disbelief they felt from the disclosure. In the case of SSA disclosures these reactions did not indicate how mothers coped afterwards, it also did not determine whether mothers were able to provide protection for their daughters. Compared to research with mothers of victims of CSA, disbelief of the abuse typically indicated mothers inability to provide a safe family environment for their child (Hunter, 2015). The information from the current study alludes to mothers reactions progressing with time. At the time of the interview most mothers had positive and growing relationships with their children, mothers were able to return to their caring mother role.

All four mothers experienced separation of their families because of the physical and emotional separation of their sons. Mothers were worried about the impact on their son's lives and the consequences they have to face for the rest of their lives. The complexity of caring for their sons as well as their daughters were evident in the interviews, Adele mentioned the struggles she had supporting her son (perpetrator) and daughter (victim) and "splitting" herself to do so. This dichotomy demonstrates the dynamic journey mothers face in sibling sexual abuse cases because, they care for both the perpetrator and victim and want to meet the needs of both, since they are both their children.

Managing the Family

Mothers emphasized that the disclosure initiated a rollercoaster of emotions and struggled to process the information appropriately. As a way of

understanding the abuse which occurred in their families, mothers dealt with changes in their family and experienced feelings of loss. Research on no-offending partners has found a similar sense of loss with their partner and their future due to the disclosure of CSA (Jacob & Veach, 2005). Participants also reported that their son's (perpetrator) altered their families, this is similar to the findings of Welfare (2008) with adult siblings of CSA victims as they reported their past childhood memories had been shattered. Similar to previous research denial, guilt and anger were typical internal responses experienced by mothers, (Deblinger & Heflin, 1996; Regehr, 1990).

Mothers were forced to cope with changed family dynamics which effected their future visions. Consistent with previous research mothers in this study struggled to deal with new problems stemming from the abuse and worried about the effects of the abuse on their children's future. This echoes findings that the experience of CSA is not a singular event but an incident that victims are continuously confronted by (Banyard & Williams, 2007). The family stress theory posits that adapting to a crisis includes managing the other "pile-up of demands" which occur after and individuals incorporating these new experiences into the way the family is viewed (Patterson & Garwick, 1994).

Most mothers tried to respond to their son's (perpetrator) in a supportive manner and take a proactive stance in attempts to find treatment and rehabilitation rather than punitive responses, however some mothers did feel that it was important for their son (perpetrators) to hold responsibility for their offending. This is contrasting to research on mothers of perpetrators of CSA as Welfare (2008) has found that some mothers without the full knowledge of their

daughter's experience became protective of their son and minimized their son's actions.

Healing as a Mother

Some mothers in the present study reported feeling that their child was emotionally abusive. These experiences have also been reported by research focussed on intimate partners of CSA survivors but had not previously been reported by mothers. This has been captured as an imitation of the dynamics involved within CSA in the relationship (Jacob & Veach, 2005). This relates to Remer and Elliott's (1988a;1988b) theoretical model of adjustment and healing of secondary CSA victims. They suggest four stages; trauma, awareness, crisis & disorientation, integration, orientation & resolution. The researchers grouped the range of emotions that partners of survivors of CSA experienced which were similar to the trauma experienced by victims themselves. The mothers in this current study highlighted similar emotional reactions as those focused on by Remer and Elliot (1988a;1988b). In particular Remer and Elliot suggest that integration and resolution occur when the trauma becomes a part of the secondary victim's personality structure and they accept the on-going healing journey. An important aspect in the healing of secondary victims is the ability for primary victims to heal first. For mothers in the present study it is suggested that the integration and resolution stage is dependent on the healing of the primary victim.

Implications for Practice

It is hoped that the current findings might promote a better understanding of the maternal experience with sibling sexual abuse, potentially aiding statutory

and therapeutic services. This is not only important in regard to interventions for mothers but also for the mothers wellbeing in their own right.

Clinical implications

Findings from the current study illustrate the complexity of mothers' post-disclosure journeys, including their experiences of loss and struggles to support their children. Further complicating the impact of SSA on mothers is that for many mothers after disclosure they are confronted with many stressors and losses. Thus, these mothers occupy a special therapeutic need which is independent from the needs identified for perpetrators and victims (Hooper, 2013). Providing psycho-education in relation to trauma may be of benefit to these mothers, this may aid them in developing adaptive coping strategies. The study identified the intensity of mothers experiencing anger and emotional numbing, hence mothers may benefit from processing these feelings and processing them in more constructive manners (Plummer, 2006). Processing feelings of being torn and ambivalence may be an important target for interventions.

Statutory implications

The current findings also have important implications for agencies which intervene in cases of SSA. Statutory agencies working with these mothers should acknowledge the impact of guilt, shame and blame which are experienced and the subsequent affects this has on their identity as mothers and self-worth (Mannion, Meisel, Solomon & Draine, 1996). As decisions by child protection services concerning child custody arrangements typically rely on the initial reactions of the mother, which guide assessments of her perceived protective capabilities of protecting their child.

Limitations of research

The present study has several limitations, which may suggest caution in the interpretation of the results. Firstly, the retrospective design of the interviews must be accounted for. As for most of the mothers their child's sexual abuse and disclosure took place a couple of years before their involvement with this study. Thus, with the extended time elapsed between the disclosure and involvement in the current study, the intensity of their experience may have been lost. However due to the sensitive manner of the research topic the retrospective design was deemed the most appropriate and ethical.

Another limitation of the study involved the representativeness of the sample of participants. A purposeful sample was used to recruit participants via a community organisation, which the mothers received therapeutic intervention. This may have limited the generalisability of the findings, for instance the sample was not culturally diverse, thus it is not possible to examine the degree to which cultural norms might influence mothers experiences. Thus, this study may have not touched upon some of the issues for women of colour within this sub-group of mothers, further research is needed to explore the experiences of these women in their own right.

Also, as used in the language of some women, it is probable that the mothers influenced the construction of their responses and experiences, either on a conscious level (e.g. the awareness to provide a good impression) or maybe unconsciously (by internalising the language of the group without a deeper understanding of its meaning and/or the need for it), because they were interviewed by a woman. Thus, the interviews, although insightful, may have been restricted in their ability to reflect the mothers' perceptions of their

experiences. All of these limitations should promote caution in interpretation of the results.

Conclusion

To the author's knowledge, there has not yet been an empirical investigation on the experiences of mothers of children who have perpetrated/experienced SSA within the UK. Research has previously focussed on the relation between mothers of CSA and parenting and has found the presence of CSA can have negative effects (Tarczon, 2012). The study aimed to provide a voice to group of individuals who have been unrecognised within literature. The understanding gained from mothers experiences may help mothers and benefit in our understanding of family dynamics after disclosure of sibling sexual abuse.

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Executive summary

Rationale of Study

The current study would best benefit therapeutic charity services which aim to support families of children affected by sibling sexual abuse. One of the most underreported and misunderstood areas of sexual abuse has been sibling sexual abuse (Smith & Israel, 1987). Sibling sexual abuse is defined as sexual behaviour that is not age appropriate, not transitory and not motivated by developmentally appropriate curiosity (Caffaro & Conn-Caffaro, 1999). Under the term sibling sexual abuse are many sexual activities including fondling of genitals directly or through clothes, intercourse, attempted intercourse, oral-genital contact, exhibitionism, exposing children to adult sexual activity or pornography, and the use of children for prostitution or pornography (Whelan, 2003; Wiehe, 1997). The traumatic impact of sexual abuse on child victims has received increased attention (Cole, 1982). It has been well-established that child sexual abuse (CSA) is a traumatic experience with significant and enduring implications for victims across varied domains psychological, cognitive, behavioural, sexual and intellectual functioning (Paolucci, Genuis & Violato, 2001). Research has focused on factors which help to mediate the effect of CSA on child victims (Barker-Collo & Read, 2003). Such as a caregivers response especially maternal response has been identified as a key factor, influencing post-abuse adjustment and the outcomes for child victims (Yancey & Hansen, 2010). Particularly maternal support has been demonstrated to be a more

significant predictor in emotional and behavioural adjustment in victims than are abuse-related factors and the relationship between victim and perpetrator (Tremblay, Hebert & Piche, 1999).

A majority of research regarding child sexual abuse is conducted on partners of sexual abuse. Less attention has been paid towards exploring how mothers of children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse – what it is, understand it, manage it, feel about it, have reacted to it? A mothers connection with their children who may have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse, this relationship between mother and child will hold a lot of complexity and challenges which come through discovery and may impact their sense of identity. An understanding of the mothers experience is crucial to guiding non-governmental organisations and therapeutic interventions working with these families. The aim of the proposed study is to address the gap in the current literature regarding mothers of children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse.

Analysis and Collection of Data

Four female participants were recruited to take part in the study in a 1:1 semi-structured Interview which lasted from 45 minutes to 1 hour and were all digitally audio recorded. The study used Interpretive phenomenological analysis to analyse the interviews. It provided an in-depth exploration into participants accounts which is specifically useful for homogenous and specific populations (Smith & Pietkewicz, 2014). The process of the analysis began with reading and re-reading the interviews as a process of immersion of the text (Willig, 2012).

After reading the text several times the researcher attempted to imagine what it may like experiencing what was described. Then the researcher examined each line of the text by writing short descriptive phrases in the margin of the text, phrases which summarise and crystallise the meaning in the line of the text without transcending the text (Willig, 2012). The next step involved drawing upon the descriptive notes in the margin of the text and writing a descriptive summary statement which refers to the meaning, value and significance of the experience from the point of view of the participant (Willig, 2012). Lastly the as the clustering of themes began, it was cross referenced against the interviews of the mothers and is placed into a table of themes.

Key Findings

The results indicated that participants experienced a mixture of emotions in their attempt to navigate their motherhood after disclosure shaped by a range of intrapersonal and interpersonal factors. These mothers possess a special position compared to others who are exposed to trauma and victimisation. As they occupy a group of mothers of both perpetrator and victim, in a sense they may be considered a special type of secondary victim as they experienced a mixture of emotions and struggles after disclosure; in conditions that may be described as complex, and often marked by confusion, uncertainty and trauma.

Implications & Recommendations

To the author's knowledge, there has not yet been a study on the experiences of mothers of children who have perpetrated/experienced SSA within the UK. It is hoped that the current findings might promote a better understanding of the maternal experience with sibling sexual abuse, potentially aiding

statutory and therapeutic services. This is not only important in regard to interventions for mothers but also for mothers wellbeing in their own right. Providing psycho-education in relation to trauma may be of benefit to these mothers, this may aid them in developing adaptive coping strategies. The study identified the intensity of mothers experiencing anger and emotional numbing, hence mothers may benefit from processing these feelings and processing them in more constructive manners (Plummer, 2006). Processing feelings of being torn and ambivalence may be an important target for interventions. The study aimed to provide a voice to group of individuals who have been unrecognised within literature. The understanding gained from mothers experiences may help mothers and benefit in our understanding of family dynamics after disclosure of sibling sexual abuse.

Powerpoint presentation slides

Exploring the lived experience of mothers with children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse

Sarah Kelani
sarah.kelani@nottingham.ac.uk

Aims of the research and rationale

- Explore how mothers of children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse – understand it, manage it, feel about it, have reacted to it?
- A majority of research regarding child sexual abuse is conducted on partners of sexual abuse. Less attention has been paid towards exploring how mothers of children who have experienced/perpetrated sibling sexual abuse.
- An understanding of mothers' experience is crucial to guiding non-governmental organisations and therapeutic interventions working with these families.

Methods Used

- Interpretive Phenomenological analysis was used within the study, which is concerned with understanding how an individual experiences a particular phenomenon which is taken from a particular perspective within a particular context (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).
- As the main aim in IPA is to provide a depth of exploration into the participants account (Smith & Pietkewicz, 2014), samples in IPA research studies are typically homogenous and small, which allows for detailed and thorough analysis on a specific population (Smith & Pietkewicz, 2014).

Results of the Research

- The results indicated that participants experienced a mixture of emotions in their attempt to navigate their motherhood after disclosure shaped by a range of intrapersonal and interpersonal factors.
- As the mothers occupy a group of mothers of both perpetrator and victim, in a sense they may be considered a special type of secondary victim as they experienced a mixture of emotions and struggles after disclosure; in conditions that may be described as complex, and often marked by confusion, uncertainty and trauma.

Implications of the research and suggestions for future research

- To the author's knowledge, there has not yet been a study on the experiences of mothers of children who have perpetrated/experienced SSA within the UK.
- It is hoped that the current findings might promote a better understanding of the maternal experience with sibling sexual abuse, potentially aiding statutory and therapeutic services.
- Providing psycho-education in relation to trauma may be of benefit to these mothers, this may aid them in developing adaptive coping strategies.

References and additional information

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Reflective report of Research activities.

Conceptualisation

The first proposal I submitted which was a quantitative proposal, but I was not confident in carrying out the study, this was specifically because of the previous challenges I have had with statistics as well as my comfortability with qualitative projects. During the first week of induction I spoke about this with my supervisors and I was able to change and write another proposal which was qualitative and still along the lines of the first proposal.

Preparation

After I had written and submitted my proposal and ethics application, I had anticipated that it may take a long time for them to check and approval my proposal because of the influx of dissertation proposals being handed in at the same time. Although this brought a bit of anxiety and concern because of the long waiting time, I was able to use this time to begin writing up my methodology and introduction sections, while also being weary about whether I was able to write to the standard of a master's degree. However, once I had completed those sections, my supervisor checked it and mentioned my good writing style this boosted my confidence in writing. Also throughout the time of waiting for my ethics application to be approved I began emailing charities which dealt with families of child sex abuse, some of these charities contacted me back and told me they were not able to help me, whilst others did not reply me. This again gave me concerns and fears on whether I was able to complete the project as I did not have any participants. My proposal and ethics had been approved by

April and by that time my lectures had finished so I was able to solely focus on my dissertation, by the end of April one charity had reached back to me letting me know they were able to help so we set up a meeting with them by April. During this time there I had some anxieties on whether they were going to be happy with me doing my project as well as whether they would trust me to carry out the research appropriately. However, during the meeting the charity let me know that they were keen and were happy to set up a meeting with me and their therapists who would know the mothers well and introduce them to the study. Two weeks after we organised a meeting and I was able to let the therapist know about the study and the inclusion/exclusion criteria. After the meeting they contacted me again letting me know that there were 9 mothers which they believed fit into my criteria and let me know that they will contact them. The from the time of the charity letting me know that they will contact participants, it took around 1 month and a half for some participants to get on board. During this time, I again had some concerns because the deadline was close and I needed time to transcribe, analyse and write up the rest of the dissertation, thus I asked for an extension which was thankfully granted to me. From this I learnt that I cannot rely on therapeutic charities as contexts for research unless there is no time pressure on me, and that qualitative work with clinical populations should only be done if I am solidly positioned within an organisation from which I want to gather data from and that research projects must fit logistical practicalities. The overall learning curve was that pragmatics and logistics are central to choosing a dissertation topic.

Data Collection

In July I had been given the contact details of the participants and organised interviews with them, as the interview topic was on sibling sexual abuse I was careful to be sensitive to the participants emotional distress. When participants became emotional I was sure to let them know that they did not need to answer the question and reiterate to them that we did not have to finish the interview. This conflict prevented me from probing into question which I thought may need more explanation. However, this does not negate the fact that I enjoyed the interviews and speaking to the mothers about their experiences and getting the main part of the study done. As the interviews brought up emotional topics, whilst transcribing I attempted to take breaks to watch a comedic tv show this helped me to take my mind off the emotional parts of the interview as I have siblings myself and it became overwhelming at times to listen. Also, during the end of most interviews, the participants hoped that it would go well with my research, although this was nice to hear, it did add a bit of pressure because I wanted to do it justice and make their voices heard by potentially publishing the project. This pressure was relieved when I met with my supervisor and he told me that I shouldn't stress too much and the focus should be firstly on doing the best I can with the project to attain a masters degree, not publishing and that can be focused on later along the line.

Data Analysis and Write-up

During the analysis phase of my dissertation I had a meeting with my supervisor to discuss themes which I had deemed important, and Simon (my supervisor) advised me to not deem anything as unimportant especially if it is brought up in more than one interview as then it may be important to them. This was an

important part of my analysis as it enabled me to take a better experiential view of the participants as that is the basis of the Interpretive Phenomenological analysis which I used within the study. Once I had finished the analysis my supervisor had given me feedback and let me know that some of the quotes, I used from the interviews were always the best ones to explain and using the more pertinent quotes first to explain themes, this helped me to improve the analysis section of my research. The discussion phase of the research it was a little stressful with the deadline being closer, however I was able to self-care by using the weekends to rest for instance going to comedy shows or theatre plays. This took my mind off the stress of handing in my research project to a good standard and released some of the pressures off me.