

Beyond Digital Violence

Capacity Building for Relevant Professionals Working with Children and Young People Who Experienced Sexualised Violence Using Digital Media

Intermediate Data Analysis Summary

Project Deliverable No. D3.1

- submitted to but not yet approved by the European Union -

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Administrative Project Information

Project Title:	Beyond Digital Violence Capacity Building for Relevant Professionals Working with Children and Young People Who Experienced Sexualised Violence Using Digital Media
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Project Webpage:	www.byedv.de
Description:	ByeDV aims to implement previously developed empirical recommendations on how German counselling practices can professionally deal with sexualised violence using digital media (SVUDM) committed against children and adolescents. By means of an accompanying formative evaluation, quality criteria are to be developed, which are to be understood as a blueprint for European experts when counseling on SVUDM. Data will be collected for the purpose of qualitative analysis and evidence-based conclusions leading to the development of the quality criteria.



Introduction

Under the premise of recursive-elliptical feedback-loops, SRH University Heidelberg is formatively evaluating the process of implementing empirical case-based recommendations for dealing with cases of sexualised violence using digital media (SVUDM) in five counselling centres (subcontractors) with a mandate for crisis intervention in cases of sexualised violence against young people.

The quality criteria for the implementation of the above-mentioned recommendations will be developed based on the formative evaluation results. Its dissemination in the member states of the European Union will be aimed at empowering professionals who work on or may come into contact with the topic of sexualised violence against children and adolescents.

Deliverable No. D3.1 "Intermediate Data Analysis Summary", which is part of Work Package 3 »Evaluation«, presents exploratory interim results of the formative evaluation.¹

Digression: Project Outline »ByeDV«

The project ByeDV aims to develop quality criteria for the implementation of recommendations for dealing in professional practices across European Union member states with sexualised violence using digital media (SVUDM) against children and adolescents. This is necessary, because aside from reference to the importance of media competencies or the right to one's own image, violence through digital media lacks guidance for intervention. With the publication of the results of the research project "Human. Development of Recommendations for Action for Pedagogical Practice on the Professional Handling of Sexualised Violence Using Digital Media", empirical and case-based recommendations for dealing with mediatised sexualised violence are available for the first time in German-speaking countries. These form the foundation for the implementation process initiated by the ByeDV project.

The recommendations developed in the HUMAN project were drafted in collaboration with survivors of SVUDM and their relatives, professionals from counselling services, and interdisciplinary experts from academia and practice. Based on their collective experiences and expertise, the project team of the SRH University Heidelberg, funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (grant number: 01SR1711, funding period: December 2017 to April 2021), identified typical case structures of sexualised violence using digital media. Appropriate strategies for action were then identified through dialogue with the participants. These take into account the interests of helpers, those affected and their relatives to the extent that they a) reveal the perspectives of all those involved in the help process by reflecting on a prototypical case study and b) integrate them into options for action. The recommendations for action do not represent general instructions, guidelines or checklists. Rather, they point out possibilities for helping affected children and adolescents in the best possible way within given structures and systems. However, this presupposes the transfer of the recommendations to one's own work, or more precisely to the individual case.

That is where ByeDV comes in. During the project, the above-mentioned recommendations will be implemented in professional practice. A transformation of the recommendations for action is indispensable insofar as their usefulness depends on different (system) factors (e.g., profession, institution, mission, legal situation). The implementation process thus reveals a) in which structures and processes the support of affected children and adolescents takes place and b) the professional standards that the work on mediatised sexualised violence needs to follow.

Not least in order to develop the quality criteria, the implementation process is formatively evaluated on the basis of so-called reflection sheets. In a 10–12-week retrospective, a set of questions enables the professionals to reflect on their implementation process. The evaluation results are translated into prototypical quality criteria by the project team from SRH and discussed with the professionals involved in ByeDV as well as the project's advisory board.

¹ The report is based on the evaluation of the first two of a total of four implementation periods. The reason for this is that the end of the third implementation period falls within the reporting interval. The fourth implementation period begins afterwards.



Successes and Challenges in Implementation: Period 1

The following section outlines the successes and challenges experienced during the initial phase of the implementation process (September 2021 to January 2022). All reports are based on the content-analytical interpretation of the above-mentioned reflection sheets. Accordingly, they reflect the perspectives of the practitioners (hereinafter ‘participants’) involved in ByeDV.

Successes in Implementation: Period 1

In order to successfully initiate the implementation process, it was important that the participants had already comprehensively dealt with cases of SVUDM in their practice. Those who have worked with SVUDM found the recommendations to have been helpful when they came across situations in practice that were very similar to the case studies presented in the recommendations for action. Some participants have found it useful to then add their own insights to the recommendations as they find ways to address specific questions. Furthermore, the recommendations provided an opportunity to reflect with colleagues on past situations and consider do’s and don’ts for the future. The participants have experienced the recommendations as motivating and generating inspiration for new ideas, especially related to prevention. Multiple participants specifically noted the usefulness of the case study ‘Magdalena’², as it fits well with ideas about prevention, intervention and making different target groups (e.g., peers/students, teachers, schools) aware of issues and the impact of dissemination of sexualised images. It also encourages discussion about the possibilities and challenges related to deleting or reducing the searchability of abuse images and/or revealing photos. The systemic perspective and insights into trauma pedagogy are seen as particularly useful in that respect. Finally, the recommendations have also been useful as a source of reference and to learn relevant vocabulary related to SVUDM.

Contact with the other practitioners participating in ByeDV is another aspect that has been enlightening and enriching. Together, the different perspectives from participants have helped with

² Case study ‘Magdalena’ is part of the recommendations for dealing with SVUDM against children and adolescents published by Frederic Vobbe and Katharina Kärger as a result of the project HUMAN.



compiling content based on individual experiences. Participation in ByeDV has also elicited interest and curiosity in the subject from internal and external colleagues. As a result, the recommendations and the ByeDV project have inspired interesting and fruitful discussions related to the subject of SVUDM.

Challenges in Implementation: Period 1

SVUDM is a new subject for many participants in particular and practitioners (counsellors against sexualised violence) in general. Participants state that there is often a feeling of powerlessness when confronted with issues outside one's comfort zone, such as mediatised forms of sexualised violence. One participant noted having had better and different understood the recommendations after participating in the first intervision workshop and found it useful to then return to the recommendations to rewrite some parts in the participant's own words.

Several participants noted concerns about the ability to effectively reach the target audiences. Not all participating counselling centres work exclusively with children and adolescents, so they have had to make sure parents and caregivers understand the challenges and nuances of the online world experienced by young people today in order to develop meaningful intervention strategies. Reaching and getting the attention of young people sometimes presents a challenge. In some cases, the pandemic delayed implementation, caused cancellations and continues to make in-person activities less possible. In addition, because the online world is fast-changing, perpetrators are always coming up with new strategies. Thus, it feels hard for the participants to stay informed.

Given the demands of their professional and personal commitments, most participants voiced concerns about their ability to devote enough time to the project. Will they have the bandwidth to have the proper exchanges with colleagues and are the project team's expectations realistic? Will working on the project interfere with day-to-day work, such as counselling, continuing education, etc.?

Factors for Success in Implementation: Period 1

Taken together, the experiences gained in the initial phase provide hints of factors that contribute to a successful implementation of the recommendations. Participants see how important it is to educate themselves about and increase their own awareness of the online world that young people are exposed to, and to do so they may need to become more familiar with online tools, platforms, apps and games in order to relate to their clients and be trusted resources when problems occur.



Young people's willingness to engage with the subject of SVUDM and be reflective about prevention ideas will depend in part on their individual experiences, language abilities and norms.

Some participants suggested that short versions or abstracts of the recommendations could be helpful. Of the recommendations themselves, and in thinking about the format for the quality criteria, one participant noted a personal disconnect between wanting something broadly applicable versus very concrete recommendations for individual situations. Concrete case studies are not always useful, as in practice, each situation is so unique. Some participants suggested developing action plans to apply what is learned, especially with regard to prevention and intervention techniques. Many participants highlighted the importance of developing methods for prevention work and consideration of how to best work with different target groups and age groups, as well as how to broaden the project's reach, including reaching out to online service providers about their role in prevention and intervention.

As the project progresses, it will be important to increase awareness of the subject together through collegial exchange, workshops and discussion of the recommendations, both with internal and external colleagues. These should take place during and between intervention workshops³.

Successes and Challenges in Implementation: Period 2

In the following, the second phase (February 2022 to April 2022) of the implementation of the empirical case-based recommendations for action to deal with cases of SVUDM against children and young people is considered.

Successes in Implementation: Period 2

As the project has progressed, participants have noted that they have become more sensitised to the subject at hand and it has made them more confident in prevention and therapeutic pedagogical intervention. The recommendations are being used as a reference when participants come across relevant cases to then check if an intervention would make sense. They have also

³ In order to support the implementation process both technically and scientifically, the DGfPI and SRH project teams meet with one or two representatives from each counselling centres for a total of five intervention workshops. There, the status quo of the implementation is jointly reflected. The subject of this is, among other things, reinforcing and conflicting factors of the implementation or application/usability of the recommendations.



been useful when designing workshops both for young people and practitioners.

The participants' colleagues also now see the importance of being sensitised to this subject. The applicability of the recommendations' case studies makes it easy to explain the subject to colleagues. Several participants reported that they are consequently seen as a resource for colleagues on subjects like social media and SVUDM prevention. The recommendations provide motivation and stimulate new ideas for prevention, approaching problems and designing new offerings and projects for youth. Additional workshops on related topics, such as young people's online lifeworlds⁴ and exchanges and discussions with colleagues are seen as productive and enriching, as they provide different perspectives and give insight into how other organisations are going about implementation.

Challenges in Implementation: Period 2

The participants perceive the subject of mediatised sexualised violence as complex, and find it challenging to cover everything when designing workshops. One reason for this is that it is a difficult subject for the participants to broach with young people and teachers. It may make it challenging to reach them with information and design projects, especially about prevention, that achieve this end. It can be hard to find a way to encourage young people to take responsibility for helping protect affected individual in their peer groups by personally preventing further dissemination of images and videos. The online world plays a huge role in the lives of young people, and their interactions with it start very early, yet young people report very different and diverse online experiences. Another subject that came up was evaluating the role of victims versus perpetrators, especially when some victims are generating and disseminating sexual material and when some perpetrators are themselves juveniles.

Furthermore, it can be challenging to raise the profile of SVUDM as a public issue when so much of what happens online is motivated by financial interests rather than protecting children. Prevention and awareness are needed. According to the participants, more campaigns, more international information and more networking are necessary.

Once again, participants wish they could devote more time to implementation, personal research and projects related to ByeDV as well as discussions with colleagues (internal and external). A

⁴ The DGfPI and SRH project teams offer the participants such opportunities - sometimes in cooperation with external experts.



related concern is how to use what little time is available to make sure that they and their colleagues feel prepared to deal with acute situations related to SVUDM. And again, Corona

remains a concern.

Factors for Success in Implementation: Period 2

Focussing on the future, the experiences gained in the second period point to success factors for implementing the recommendations for action. For example, participants clearly state the following: In order to be successful, the recommendations and the quality criteria will have to reach many professionals and be able to provide them with orientation and support. Therefore, more sensitisation campaigns and prevention offerings for children and adolescents with visuals are considered important. It may also be helpful for the participants to develop additional case studies based on their own experiences in practice. Perhaps materials related to current information on the subject, education materials for professionals, etc. can be compiled as references. Abstracts of the recommendations may also be useful.

It is important to sensitise colleagues and expose them to more information about social media and continue to include colleagues and network partners as more is learned about the subject. Working together and maintaining good cooperation between participants and project partners is also mentioned as important for moving forward with the implementation.

Conclusion

Considering the concrete implementation measures, all participants have progressed in their implementation process. At the end of the first implementation period, all participants were sensitised to the fact that digital media affects the context of sexualised violence and thus, their own practices. At the same time, the question of what this insight means for the ongoing implementation of the recommendations for action was left open. By continuing to work on the second implementation phase, participants have been engaged in capacity building in their teams and networks. Owing to their own increased sensitisation, open attitudes and the developing expertise attributed to them by third parties, participants find that more questions about professional standards in cases of SVUDM inevitably arise. The intensified networking within the project allows for discourse in practice. However, the nature of professional standards and their implementation is an evolving subject.



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Nevertheless, the interim results outlined above reveal on a meta-level the dimensions on which quality criteria for the implementation of recommendations for dealing with cases of SVUDM are to be developed over the course of the project. The following table summarises these as target states. For illustrative purposes, they are supplemented by anchor quotes from the reflection sheets.



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Target states	Anchor quotes from the reflection sheets <i>(own translation)</i>
<p>A professional approach to sexualised violence using digital media requires handling security.</p>	<p>"On the one hand, I am concerned with the question of the way in which the recommendations can be methodically transferred into therapeutic-pedagogical intervention practices." "I often experience that there is a lot of hesitation regarding sexualised violence using the media, and I would like to help bring about something that can counteract this by participating in ByeDV."</p>
<p>A professional approach to sexualised violence using digital media requires an appropriate level of awareness.</p>	<p>"Institutions like schools should be more concerned with the issue, as it happens again and again that intimate content, for example, is spread among children and young people." "I realise that the topic of sexualised violence using digital media has been an increasingly important one for quite some time, but especially since I've been involved in the project."</p>
<p>A professional approach to sexualised violence using digital media calls for successful prevention.</p>	<p>"How can the subject of sexualised violence using digital media be transposed as a prevention course for students, teachers?" "[...] Without setting behavioural rules. And to consider the needs and developmental tasks of children/adolescents?"</p>
<p>A professional approach to sexualised violence using digital media requires knowledge of digital media in the context of perpetrator strategies, childhood and adolescence, etc.</p>	<p>"[...] and I have had to realize once again that dealing with trends is a seemingly endless task, as new online games, etc. are constantly coming onto the market and becoming part of young people's lifeworlds." "In addition, it must be taken into account that perpetrators unfortunately always find new strategies to perpetrate violence."</p>
<p>A professional approach to mediated sexualised violence calls for multiperspectivity.</p>	<p>"The multiprofessional collaboration in the intervention workshops bring an enriching exchange. Change of perspective, dissent and also similar positions encourage self-critical reflection and motivate me to do further research on my own initiative."</p>
<p>A professional approach to sexualised violence using digital media implies resources for knowledge acquisition and implementation processes.</p>	<p>"Due to multifaceted responsibilities, I was only able to proceed with the implementation of the recommendations for action to a somewhat limited extent."</p>



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