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in Interview with
Anja Teubert



Beyond Digital Violence (ByeDV)

A project for the implementation of professional standards for dealing with mediatised sexualised violence against children and adolescents in dialogue with research and practice.

The distinguishing feature of the project "Beyond digital violence. Capacity building for relevant professionals working with children and young people who experienced sexualised violence using digital media (ByeDV)" is the close collaboration between research and practice. Colleagues from counselling centres validate the usability of the recommendations for action, which were developed during ByeDV's predecessor project „HUMAN“ by research duo Kärgel und Vobbe, and then together with representatives of the German Society for Prevention and Intervention of Child Abuse, Neglect and Sexualised Violence (DGfPI) and the researchers, they develop quality criteria to be applied throughout the EU. The discursive development of technical standards in a joint process sounds exciting and could possibly serve as an example for other projects. That's why we want to talk to the individuals involved.

The cooperating partners are five counselling centres with the mandate of crisis intervention in cases of sexualised violence against children and adolescents: Prevention Office Ronja - Women Against Violence e.V. Westerbürg, Child and Youth Services Känguru, Child Protection Centre Ulm/Neu-Ulm, Men's Office of Hannover e.V., Wildwasser Marburg e.V.. They are all implementing the empirical case-based working strategies in cases of mediatised sexualised violence against children and adolescents. The implementation process is being professionally and academically supported by the DGfPI as well as the SRH University Heidelberg (SRH).

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Sonja Kroggel (Child Protection Centre Ulm/Neu-Ulm), Maj Walter (Wildwasser Marburg e.V.) and Claudia Wienand (Prevention Office Ronja, Women Against Violence e.V. Westerburg), as well as Sylvia Fein from the DGfPI and the research team Katharina Kärger and Frederic Vobbe (SRH) spoke via Zoom about their (collaborative) work in ByeDV.

Anja Teubert: *I am looking forward to hearing from you about your experiences implementing the recommendations for action and working together with the two researchers from the SRH University Heidelberg and the DGfPI over the course of ByeDV. To start off, I am interested in knowing about the most important cornerstones of the project?*

Katharina Kärger (KK): First, one must understand that the project ByeDV came about as the follow-up project of the BMBF-supported HUMAN project¹. In that project, Frederic Vobbe and I, with the involvement of experts from research and practice, empirically developed recommendations for dealing with cases of mediated sexualised violence against children and adolescents. The result was a 200 page, sometimes demanding, Monograph with complex case structures. That gave rise to the idea to see how and under what conditions the recommendations could be made viable and applicable for specialised practices. In the framework of the follow-up project ByeDV, we are testing that with five flagship centres that specialise in counselling in cases of sexuali-

sed violence. The expertise and experience gained and expanded in ByeDV will be summarised in the form of quality criteria for implementing professional standards when dealing with mediated sexualised violence against children and adolescents.

Frederic Vobbe (FV): Perhaps the term flagship centres should be replaced with the term multipliers with respect to the outlook to the future of this project. It is also about passing on the experience collected and the collective further development of professional standards.

Anja Teubert: *Then I would be eager to hear from the multipliers; what motivated you to apply to participate in ByeDV?*

Claudia Wienand (CW): We found the call for proposals both exciting and fitting, in that we were seeing increasing counselling requests for cases of sexualised violence using digital media. As a result of the Lockdown during the Corona pandemic, more and more parents came to us, because sexualised violence using digital media had been initiated against their children. As the schools began to reopen after the lockdown, we began to receive more requests for prevention programming. At the same time, we have found that dealing with such cases from the point of view of those affected is still quite cumbersome, which is why we would like to contribute to effecting change.

Sonja Kroggel (SK): Through our counselling work, it became clear that we need to and want to work more closely on the subject of digital media and

¹ The project „HUMAN. Entwicklung von Handlungsempfehlungen für die pädagogische Praxis zum fachlichen Umgang mit sexualisierter Gewalt mit digitalem Medieneinsatz gegen Kinder und Jugendliche“ was conducted at SRH University Heidelberg and funded by the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF) from December 2017 to April 2021. Further information about HUMAN and the empirically developed recommendations are available on the project website www.human-srh.de.

sexualised violence. We cannot avoid the subject of digital media when talking with young people.

Maj Walter (MW): My colleagues and I took part in the final symposium of the HUMAN project. In listening to many of the presentations, I found myself thinking, 'Yes, that's exactly what it's all about, and we need these recommendations to be even more practice-oriented and detailed' - combined with the feeling that what we learn through prevention and intervention trainings and events is certainly still correct, but that it isn't as relevant to the lived realities of children and young people, and we therefore need something new. In this regard, I felt that the final symposium for HUMAN aligned with my feelings on the subject, which is why the call for participants for ByeDV interested me.

Anja Teubert: *How do you implement these approaches? How do you work?*

CW: As representatives of the counselling centres, we meet with the teams from the DGfPI and SRH University Heidelberg for five Intervention Workshops. At these workshops, we work together very intensively on various themes and issues. In between the workshops, we fill out reflection sheets to reflect on and evaluate our implementation and analysis process. In doing so, the subject of mediated sexualised violence is also more deeply considered. The counselling centres also meet virtually at other times to share experiences from our implementation processes and support each other.

MW: During consultations, I refer specifically to the recommendations for action. Generally, specialists from residential homes find a case in the recommendations that roughly corresponds to the cases they have recently encountered and can then work through and orient themselves based on the recommendations. For example: Could this be a measure of intervention that makes sense for us? I have received a lot of positive feedback on this approach. The specialists find it very helpful to use the case studies and recommendations as a structure.

SK: I would like to refer to the most recent Intervention Workshop as an example. It was really great for me that we worked together on a case study from the recommendations for action, further summarised the recommendations and, with the support of Frederic and Katharina, developed the first quality

criteria [note: professional standards for addressing the risk of dissemination]. In our counselling centre, we have discussed at length as a team about mediated sexualised violence. In the meantime, we are increasingly reaching out to our networks. For example, we have been presenting ByeDV in various working groups. We notice that the interest is very high. Many – especially schools – then ask what we can offer them on the subject.

Anja Teubert: *How is your experience-based knowledge and the quality criteria derived from it anchored in your work?*

CW: I am personally internalising the topic of digital media and sexualised violence more and more. Through sensitisation to the issue, I have become more keenly aware of it. The topic pops up everywhere, and I continue to deal with it with fascination. We have now held a number of prevention workshops on mediated sexualised violence, mostly in schools, where we had valuable dialogues with young people, which I find very enriching. I hope that the quality criteria that are developed from our experiences and expertise will ultimately also inspire others.

MW: In addition, with a view to myself and the question of confidence, I can say that since becoming involved in ByeDV, I always think 'What is the basic approach in cases of mediated sexualised violence?', 'Are there certain factors that automatically have to be taken into account?' For example, we would be more careful in the consultation when it comes to the question of criminal charges. In cases where there are existing images and an established risk of dissemination, I may have to think differently about the question of criminal charges, without implying that criminal charges should be filed immediately when digital media are used. Another example relates to trauma work. For example, let's take the question of re-traumatisation when confronted with abuse images. Does an individual then need different trauma work? Does the previous trauma work have to be adapted or is it not so different? I keep asking questions like this, even if I don't have an answer to them yet.

SK: When working with young people, I think about digital media and mediated sexualised violence more and more often, even if the reason for the consultation is completely different; for example,

when young people tell me that they are often alone when they use digital media. Similar to Maj, we are concerned with the question of trauma work. Usually, the principle in trauma work is 'no perpetrator contact', but how do we deal with this when images have been shared or the same social networks are used?

Anja Teubert: *Do you discuss such questions together in the Intervention Workshops?*

Sylvia Fein (SF): We want to consider such questions in depth: Do we have to think about safe spaces differently? What of relevance is being discussed in specialist circles? Is the subject being considered at all, or is ByeDV an impetus for discussion? In the course of the project, gaps have become visible that we try to close or at least address.

FV: I find the image of gaps very fitting. We are currently experimenting a lot. The quality criteria will be the result of a communicative process. They will come about from the practical work and the daily experiences of the ByeDV practitioners. This also includes a lot of resistance, for example in the relationship between the recommendations for action and existing habits, due to the conditions under which specialised counselling takes place or in cooperation with other actors in the help networks. The most visible gaps will be filled by sharing experiences with each other. The quality criteria thus represent the positive piece of the gaps that we can point to and say 'now we know how to do it better'.

Anja Teubert: *How do you pass on your experiences in working with the recommendations for action to signal that it is less about reading and more about reflecting on the recommendations?*

SK: I pass on my experiences by first referencing the recommendations for action, but I also convey that it is about dealing with the topic yourself. It helped me a lot to reflect on how I use digital media and to exchange ideas about personal media use with other counsellors. There was also a discussion on the subject in our team. In addition, I have become more familiar with the social media that young people use. With this in mind, I can read the recommendations for action differently. I notice that when contacting other professionals, the first step is to draw attention to the importance of digital media in the context of sexualised violence. It's about raising awareness.

CW: I can say very recently that our counselling center, together with the prevention specialist group of the state working group, organised a state-wide conference on sexualised violence in schools. Katharina and Frederic were kind enough to offer workshops on mediated sexualised violence. I was thrilled that: a) we were sensitised to the subject of digital media, because school is an important place for young people to socialise, in which sexualised violence is also an issue, and b) we were able to offer first-hand know-how.

MW: In concrete terms, I am currently revising all the continuing education courses that we offer, including the fundamental courses. We have added digital media to every training. Through my contact with colleagues and in working groups, I have the impression that they are all thinking about the role of digital media but don't necessarily know how to incorporate digital media into their work. And, it's really helpful to be able to point to the recommendations for action as a framework.

KK: The nice thing is that the counselling centres involved in ByeDV are already going into their networks to raise awareness of the importance of the mediation of sexualised violence. As a result, we can achieve greater multiplier effects through the publication of the quality criteria - which also serves as a safeguard.

Anja Teubert: *How do you see your respective roles in the context of the implementation and the development of quality criteria?*

MW: I solidified that at the most recent Intervention Workshop. We all contributed our points of view and perspectives from practice. These were framed by the colleagues from the DGfPI. Despite our different assessments and priorities, Katharina and Frederic then picked out the common thread from this hodgepodge. That's the academic perspective that I haven't internalised; to look at it on a different level and say, 'ok, that's the most important point for this counselling centre, and that's the most important for another centre, then we'll summarise everything and see where the common thread is'. I noticed that very clearly at the last workshop, and I found it really impressive.

KK: In my opinion, the essential thing is that through academic support we are trying to create a frame-

work for practitioners to generate quality criteria on the basis of their own practical knowledge. Maj said it so beautifully; through analysis, we are able to moderate the discussions in a focused manner towards developing the quality criteria. In doing so, we make the existing expertise as visible as the open questions and dissent. In this way, we are jointly developing quality criteria for the implementation of professional standards in dealing with mediated sexualised violence.

FV: I would like to frame our role on the question of how we can remain scientific if, on the one hand, we put our recommendations for action into practice in the field and, at the same time, we are evaluating the implementation formatively as a process. First of all, this is based on an understanding of implementation in the sense of 'can the recommendations for action be made useful?'. This is something we cannot find out at all without cooperating with practitioners. This may mean transforming the recommendations for action where there are concerns about usefulness. Because the implementation process is meant to include criticism, sometimes the critique is: 'that doesn't work.' Our evaluation approach is not a conclusive judgement on the recommendations for action or the practices in specialised counselling centres. We try to derive something new from challenges in a solution-oriented manner. This allows us to take part in discussions in a way that is somewhat different from what often takes place in academia and still work out in the end what the core of the debate is. The topics for the next Intervention Workshop always come from practice. They feed on the experiences that come from practice and that are transmitted to us via the reflection sheets. At the beginning of every workshop, we ask whether we are implementing the concerns of the counselling centres in the way they had imagined or whether something has to be thrown out. With a view to the quality criteria, a consensus should ultimately be reached, even if we have different tasks in the interim phases: the counselling centres implement and we make sure that we formulate proposals for quality criteria from this mass of data that is generated.

SF: We at the DGfPI e.V. focus on getting into conversation within the counselling community, so that the knowledge gained through ByeDV does not remain only within the five multiplier organisations, but rather that the circle keeps growing. For

example, we have planned digital specialist forums to discuss the technical questions that arise in ByeDV in an interdisciplinary manner. That's one. The other is the European level, where we are trying to establish contacts and enter into cooperation. I find it interesting that, for example, images of abuse are really a European problem. They are located on European servers, even if they were not necessarily generated in Europe. I think it's very good that there are many initiatives at the European level that control and limit the digital space, which seems to us less controllable, to the extent that at least children's and young people's rights are relevant.

SK: I have nothing more to add. The most recent Intervention Workshop was really excellent. Despite different perspectives, a common outcome came about.

Anja Teubert: *How much influence do the two researchers have; how is that perceived?*

SK: I have never had the feeling that Katharina and Frederic are influencing the process, but rather that they are bringing together and sorting ideas. They help us keep an overall view of the project. I also feel like we could speak up if something didn't suit us.

MW: I perceive the discussions as totally equal. Maybe also because one sometimes notices negotiations between Katharina and Frederic. So, it is not the case that the research team is in charge and we can't question what is being said. I think that issue resolved itself relatively quickly.

Anja Teubert: *Who will decide at the end what will be published as quality criteria?*

KK: So according to the project structure, Frederic and I evaluate the feedback from the reflection sheets of the counselling centres and the discussions in the Intervention Workshops in order to work out proposals for the quality criteria. Through regular dialogue with the counselling centres about our insights, we ensure that the ByeDV practitioners set the content guidelines and, if necessary, put us back on the right path. Ultimately, we only publish quality criteria on which consensus has been reached with the counselling centres.

Anja Teubert: *Thank you for the fascinating insights. I am interested to learn how the project progresses.*