



Report of Bosnia and Herzegovina on “Protecting Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse” for the Secretariat of the Lanzarote Committee

Consultations with Children

March 2024

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I. INTRODUCTION

National delegations or other responsible entities, assisted by a team of facilitators, are responsible for reporting on the results of consultations with children to the Council of Europe, in particular the Lanzarote Committee Secretariat. The proposed structure for country reports is included below. National delegations are free to include more information and details if they find it useful. The deadline for submission of reports by country will always be communicated via the website of the Department of Children's Rights. Depending on the activity, the Lanzarote Committee or the Secretariat will work with reports from national delegations and include children's contributions accordingly.

The Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina is, according to Article 12 of the Law on Ministries and Other Administrative Bodies of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)¹, responsible for monitoring and implementation of international conventions and other documents in the field of human rights and fundamental freedoms. This includes the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which BiH adopted by succession on November 23, 1993², as well as the Lanzarote Convention of the Council of Europe on the Protection of Children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, which was ratified and entered into force on March 1, 2013³. In this way, BiH is committed to the implementation of the aforementioned conventions, and the obligation to report on the implementation of them to the competent Committees.

In October 2023, BiH prepared and submitted to the Lanzarote Committee a Report about "Protection of Children from Sexual Abuse in the Circle of Trust: Legal Frameworks" as part of the second round of monitoring of this Committee. As the next step in the implementation of this topic, BiH analyzed the Guidelines for the Implementation of Child Participation in Lanzarote Committee's Activities and the European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, and started activities on the development of volunteer report – consultations with children on their understanding of "circle of trust"- what is this circle for them and who is in it.

We are pleased to say that the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of BiH, with the great help of UNICEF in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNICEF BiH) and the Network of non-governmental organizations for children in Bosnia and Herzegovina "Stronger Voice for Children" managed to conduct consultations with children, and based on that made a Volunteer Report. UNICEF BiH provided funding and formed a list of issues in accordance with the Guidelines, while the Association "Naša djeca" Sarajevo coordinated the inclusion of associations from the Network and the work of facilitators and children's groups, after which the final report was made.

We hope that this Report will be a good indicator of the opinion and voice of children from Bosnia and Herzegovina on the increasingly important topic of their exposure to various forms of sexual violence, as well as a quality instrument on the basis of which it will be possible to compare trends in this topic with children from other Lanzarote Committee member states.

¹ "Official Gazzete of BiH" numbers 5/03, 42/03, 26/04, 42/04, 45/06, 88/07,35/09, 59/09,103/09, 87/12, 6/13, 19/16, 83/17;

² "Official Gazzete of RBiH" number 25/93;

³ "Official Gazzete of BiH" /International agreements number 11/12;

II. GENERAL INFORMATION

Consultations with children were conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, more precisely in six cities/local communities: Banja Luka, Bijeljina, Sarajevo, Trebinje, Tuzla and Zenica. The facilitators of these consultations were organizations associates⁴, members of the network "Stronger Voice for Children" – masters and graduates of social work, psychology, pedagogy and trusted persons with whom children have already worked.

All facilitators are signatories of child protection policies, have PSEA certificates and other professional qualifications for working with children. By name, the facilitators were: Tatjana Risojević from the association "Nova generacija", Sanita Smajić from the association "Otaharin", Lejla Musakadić-Ejubović, from the Association "Naša djeca" Sarajevo, Adna Kepeš from the association "Naša djeca" Zenica, Medina Gračić from the association "Zemlja djece u BiH" and Mijat Šarović from the association "Sunce nam je zajedničko". All consultations were done through one-day workshop, lasting 4-6 hours, with a break for lunch. The sessions were planned on the basis of Guidelines issued by the Lanzarote Committee. The consultations were organized in accordance with the schedule that was acceptable for children participants, and were successfully completed in a period of two weeks, ending with 09.03.2024.

The thematic focus of these sessions centered on eliciting the thoughts and attitudes of children and young people regarding the implementation of the Lanzarote Convention, with a specific emphasis on fostering a sense of trust and openness. To set a comfortable atmosphere, the introductory session began with a game, allowing the children to relax. Following this, they were briefed on the workshop's duration, the method of work, and the importance of confidentiality and anonymity, ensuring a safe space for sharing. During the first session, the focus was on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and monitoring of the situation of children's rights which all groups previously participated in. Children have identified the risks and problems they face. The second part of the first session was accompanied by presentations through which the content and purpose of the Lanzarote Convention was presented to the children.

During the second session, the consultations covered the following topics through discussion and/or work in small groups:

- Circle of Trust
- The risks that children face
- Engaging children in decision-making

The third session was devoted to discussing the following topics:

- Suggestions for educational initiatives
- Role of parents and teachers
- Reporting mechanisms awareness
- Opinions on current educational programs

⁴ Association of Citizens " Nova generacija" Banjaluka; Association of Citizens „Otaharin“ Bijeljina; Association of Citizens „Naša djeca“ Sarajevo; Association of Citizens „Sunce nam je zajedničko“ Trebinje; Association of Citizens „Zemlja djece u BiH“ Tuzla and Association of Citizens „Naša djeca“ Zenica.

The final segment of the workshop was dedicated to fostering an open dialogue where children could freely exchange their thoughts and viewpoints on the topics previously discussed, ultimately crafting recommendations. This interactive format facilitated six dynamic sessions, each conducted face-to-face with active engagement from the children. In total, 85 children participated in the consultation, comprising 52 girls and 33 boys, spanning ages 7 to 18.

With great enthusiasm, desire, and interest, children actively participated in the consultations. These groups predominantly comprised children well-versed in topics concerning children's rights, enabling facilitators to foster highly positive, productive, and interactive cooperation. Among the younger participants, aged 7-10, in one group, some expressed unfamiliarity with terms such as sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, prevention, protection, child pornography, and prostitution, requiring additional assistance in understanding these concepts. They creatively conveyed their thoughts through drawings on stickers, which they then affixed to the board to share their answers. Conversely, it is noteworthy that for one group, primarily consisting of older children aged 17 and 18, this workshop marked their inaugural experience engaging openly and purposefully on this topic through workshops.

"To those in power in Bosnia and Herzegovina, I would convey that the topic of sexual violence must be 'normalized' and become a regular subject of discussion and conversation."

The positive aspect regarding this topic lies in the familiarity of the children with each other and their respective groups within the community, which they recognize as a secure environment. They engaged in discussions without hesitation, expressing a sense of importance and openly sharing their views, often delving into personal experiences. Several children expressed gratitude for the opportunity to speak about these issues for the first time, stating that they "felt important" when participating in the discussions.

During one group conversation, the boys highlighted the lack of attention to their experiences and the issue of violence against boys. They emphasized that activities are predominantly focused on girls, neglecting discussions about the challenges boys face. Furthermore, they expressed sadness at the tendency to generalize situations through a "one-size-fits-all" approach, which they felt was unjust.

In one of the workshops, a film titled "Two Girls" was shown to the children, aiming to raise awareness among young girls about the dangers of human trafficking for sexual exploitation. The film depicted the harrowing experiences of two young girls who were deceived and subsequently coerced into human trafficking by individuals they knew and trusted. The children received guidance on data protection measures on social networks and the responsible use of these platforms. They shared experiences of receiving anonymous messages on social networks with negative implications.

At the conclusion, the children expressed disappointment upon learning that nearly one in five children in Europe faces some form of sexual exploitation or abuse. They conveyed a belief that such issues are increasingly prevalent in society and emphasized the significance of their participation in monitoring the implementation of the Convention, both for themselves and for broader social communities.

III. FINDINGS

"Please, on behalf of all the children in the world, do not see us merely as statistics and figures in reports, but hear us, for we are calling out to you. Help us, let's solve this global problem together, respect our opinions. Stand by children, work for children, and with children!"

Children's thoughts and consideration on the thematic priorities or activities

While the organizers and facilitators initially emphasized the "circle of trust" as the thematic priority for these consultations, it became apparent that the children from Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) had not previously engaged in monitoring the Lanzarote Convention. Therefore, our discussions, although centered on the circle of trust, also addressed a broader aspect: familiarizing children and young people with the purpose of the Lanzarote Convention and its fundamental concepts. From introducing the Lanzarote Convention to discussing various issues related to sexual exploitation and abuse, the children actively participated in the consultations and voiced their opinions.

"The ratification of this Convention and its signing has spurred more discussion on this topic, although it has largely been taboo in itself. We need greater enforcement of what constitutes it, not just its form. We need to raise awareness among young people, but also adults. Children should be asked about topics that concern them. This topic needs to be more transparent in the community and not considered inappropriate and taboo."

During the presentation of the approaches outlined in the Lanzarote Convention, children provided their interpretations of the following terms:

Prevention:

- Educating children on safeguarding themselves from potential abusers.
- Educating teachers and institutional representatives who can assist children.
- Ensuring legal protection for children.
- Promoting self-defense.

Protection:

- Educating children and parents on recognizing potential dangers.
- Instructing children on how to report abuse to parents, police, and schools.
- Utilizing reporting channels such as the Blue Phone, pedagogues, psychologists, teachers, and parents.

Sexual Abuse:

- Inappropriate touching by an adult.
- Rape and violent relationships.

Sexual Abuse and Prostitution:

- Exploitation via social networks.
- Adults posing as others to send explicit messages to children.

Child Pornography:

- Exploitation through the dissemination of photographs depicting minors' body parts, often shared voluntarily on social media.

Circle of Trust

"Young people don't feel safe and often choose to remain silent about most issues, due to teasing from their peers, but it's crucial for children to feel safe and have their circle of trust."

In the children's opinion, the circle of trust comprises individuals they have known for an extended period, such as parents, siblings, friends, and comrades. Some children also included the staff of the Day Care Center, the school pedagogue, and the headroom teacher among those they trust. Interestingly, one group expanded their circle of trust to include the internet and books.

However, children seldom included school staff, pedagogical services, the police, or social work centers in their circle of trust. It is concerning that in one group, children indicated that the police and social work centers were their last resort for advice, recommendations, or protection.

Throughout the sessions, children consistently expressed greater confidence in their friends and preferred to confide in them. While parents were also trusted, children noted that they often lack sufficient knowledge and understanding, particularly regarding newer forms of violence and exploitation, like cyberbullying and sexting.

"Children and young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina need to be provided with a safe circle of trust, which they can seek from both state institutions and organizations. We young people do not feel safe and protected, as they respond to our issues with silence and new brochures."

The thoughts and attitudes of children regarding the role and significance of the circle of trust are interwoven throughout all the subsequent topics discussed below.

Risks Awareness

Children primarily rely on the Internet, news, friends, and then adults as sources of information on topics that interest them. They often encounter these topics through non-formal education or social networks like Instagram. However, children feel that their peers tend to take these topics lightly.

During discussions, a girl recounted a past experience of feeling uncomfortable when a boy touched her knee, stating that *"now that I think of the situation, when I was in seventh grade and we went to a competition, a boy touched my knee and I remember that I was uncomfortable, and my palms were sweating. I didn't even know it could be counted under what we're talking about today."* This further highlights the need for educating children about recognizing forms of sexual exploitation and harassment. Children frequently use the internet without considering potential dangers. The most commonly used apps for accessing "fun content" are TikTok, followed by YouTube and Instagram. While children believe they use the internet safely and in moderation, their actual usage can amount to several hours a day. Children are aware of the dangers online, often through hearing about tragic events firsthand. Boys especially note the prevalence of inappropriate content, including injuries, criminal activities, fights, and sexual content.

Regarding cyberbullying, children mentioned the possibility of receiving hurtful messages based on the content they follow on social networks. While they may not have personal experiences, they have heard of instances happening to others. Some children believe that parents can have the most influence by prohibiting certain content. However, older children acknowledge the wide availability of content and the difficulty in finding a safe online space. There is a clear misunderstanding among children about the insecurity of posting personal content on social networks.

"When I tell my parents about some minor things to which they react strongly, I don't know how they would accept more significant things, because they interpret everything in their own way."

In addition to the internet and non-formal education provided by associations, several groups mentioned campaigns as another source of information they have encountered. Some children have actively participated in campaigns aimed at educating about the risks of creating and sharing explicit images. They have learned about these campaigns through social networks and television, considering them to be impactful.

Children expressed that schools have the potential to educate young people about these risks, but they feel that workshops conducted by psychologists and pedagogues often cover the same topics repetitively and lack interactivity. They believe that workshops should provide opportunities for children to share their experiences. According to children, schools should hold monthly workshops on this topic as they perceive that little is currently being done to prevent sexual exploitation.

"Schools aren't doing anything about violence; they talk in general terms but don't focus on specific issues. It's come to a point where violence arises in different ways that adults can't address and approach effectively."

Inclusion in Decision-Making

All groups unanimously agreed that children should be involved in decisions concerning their own safety. They argue that some children, regrettably, become victims of violence, granting them a profound understanding of the issue and the ability to contribute to finding solutions. There is a consensus that parents and all adults should be educated about the significance of including children in decision-making processes.

While some participants feel that only older children should be involved in decision-making due to the belief that younger children tend to trust everyone indiscriminately, there is a general consensus on the importance of empowering children to have a voice in matters concerning their safety.

The Role of Parents and Teachers

During the activities, children expressed that they have had less than positive experiences with parents and certain teachers regarding the discussion and dissemination of information on this topic. In their interactions with parents, they frequently encounter condemnation, criticism, and judgment without feeling heard or understood. They emphasize the importance of fostering better cooperation between parents and teachers to facilitate the exchange of information about a child's behavior and to cultivate a sense of trust.

"The problem is that after going for a talk in the school's counseling service, confidential information becomes known to all students in the school, so children mock us."

"Adults support children who are victims of violence in three ways: they take them to a psychologist, a pedagogue, and a psychiatrist, and they don't deal with the problem any further."

When children face problems, parents often respond by yelling and displaying a lack of understanding. Children feel that their problems should not be trivialized but instead met with the support they need at that moment. They stress the importance of promoting activities geared towards providing psychological support to children who have experienced trauma during their upbringing.

"Older generations consider us too sensitive about everything when we talk to them about certain issues. I think they need to understand what we're going through."

Reporting Mechanisms Awareness

"We have to react before something happens to us. We don't expect anything from the government, school, or associations. In everything, the school sees an opportunity to protect itself, not the students. They're afraid of losing in the rating. The last people I would turn to are the police, doctors, and social welfare center."

Children believe they can report sexual abuse to various entities including The Blue Phone, parents, school, police, the center for social work, and the staff of the Day Care Center. They emphasize the necessity of educating parents about the mechanisms for reporting violence in schools, stating that they would be more likely to report if they knew whom to report to. They also stress the importance of self-confidence in reporting abuse. Some children feel that reporting abuse in school is ineffective due to the perceived inadequacy of professional school services, suggesting the installation of cameras and security measures in schools to provide an avenue for reporting problems.

Children expressed concerns about certain teachers lacking understanding when it comes to reports of rape or sexual harassment. They are troubled by the fact that everything depends on the "will of an individual person," with no consistent mechanism in place to address such situations. According to the children, they often feel compelled to gauge a teacher's mood before disclosing incidents, stating "we have to see if the teacher is in a mood today so we can tell about what is going on." Girls particularly note instances where they felt compelled to inform their parents about situations involving physical touch with boys, following which they were "attacked and blamed for putting themselves in those situations".

"It is necessary to work on protecting individuals who report violence, which will make others who notice such violence become helpers and voices for the victims."

Older children and youth from urban areas, organized into two groups, indicated that they are generally well-versed in recognizing potential signs of sexual exploitation and harassment, understanding how to report such incidents, and recognizing when it is crucial to take action. When asked how they would respond if someone close to them was at risk of experiencing cyberbullying, they unanimously agreed that they would make efforts to offer assistance or seek help from adults.

"I think it's crucial to establish trust between the judicial system and those who have survived violence because many of them don't even want to tell/report their stories knowing that the system will fail them. That's why I believe that every person who has committed sexual violence should be punished, and that after release from prison, people in the community should be informed about the kind of person living in their vicinity."

A common conclusion drawn by one group of children is that systematic solutions are lacking, and that incidents of violence among children often elicit short-term, ad-hoc responses from relevant authorities. They believe that this issue is largely overlooked by all relevant institutions.

Opinion on Current Educational Programs

Children expressed the view that campaigns and programs addressing sexual exploitation and abuse in schools are largely lacking in implementation. They believe that educational institutions need to be more sensitive when discussing this and other related topics.

"I recommend that discussions with children in schools be elevated to a higher level because we spend most of our time in schools. It is necessary to introduce mandatory education for adults to understand that this topic is not a way to approach anyone, especially not children."

Children expressed at times feeling blamed rather than supported by teachers who are responsible for providing assistance and support. They recommended the implementation of anonymous reporting boxes within schools to address all forms of violence. Boys emphasized the need for workshops focused on addressing the specific forms of violence affecting boys. Children stressed the importance of approaching each case individually and processing it accordingly, rather than generalizing information.

Several groups reported having discussed social media and its potential dangers to children at least once in school during community classes. However, they believe that broader content addressing potential risks and protective measures should be incorporated into school curriculum to enhance understanding and awareness among students.

Proposal for Educational Initiatives

In the expectations and recommendations sections below, children have provided additional suggestions. Some of the most common ones include:

- Organizing educational workshops led by professionals to raise awareness about online and offline safety and the prevention of sexual violence.
- Integrating the topic of sexual violence into community classes to ensure comprehensive education.
- Implementing programs for the protection of children within schools to provide support and resources for students in need.

IV. CHILDREN'S VISION FOR ENHANCING THEIR POSITION

From extensive consultations with children, it is evident that children expect parents, public institutions, schools, relevant organizations, and other entities to prioritize the best interests of each child. Given the thematic priority and sensitivity of the topic, responsible adults should focus primarily on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse by developing educational programs that raise awareness about the importance of promoting methods of protection against such forms of harm.

Children believe that schools have the potential to creatively and effectively present these issues in a way that is both engaging and serious. By doing so, children would be more interested in the topic, making it easier for them to collaborate with adults in finding approaches and models that lead to solutions. Consequently, even those who are less initially interested would have the opportunity to learn something new and raise awareness about the problems at hand.

Children also expect that victims, as well as those who report instances of violence, receive support through psychological, and legal assistance and protection. They emphasize the importance of joint action by parents, teachers, and children themselves in expanding the circle of trust and creating an environment conducive to problem-solving. By involving children in issues that concern them, it becomes much easier to ensure their safety and protection, recognizing that children are indeed the future.

From representatives of the authorities, children expect:

- A sensitive and respectful approach in their interactions.
- Nonviolent communication when addressing them.
- Development of strategies and mechanisms for reporting and protecting against all forms of violence.
- Implementation of activities aimed at protecting boys from all forms of violence, not just girls.
- Education of teaching staff and children about various forms of sexual abuse.
- Open discussions about this topic through round tables, conferences, and other activities.
- Adherence to Article 12 of the UN Convention, which asserts children's right to express their opinions and mandates that adults respect them.

Children are seeking effective and systematic solutions to the problems of child abuse, recognizing that this is not solely a matter for schools or families, but for the entire community. They expect school pedagogical services and teachers to focus on prevention to ensure these forms of abuse do not occur.

Prevention efforts should include quarterly lectures on this topic in schools, accompanied by workshops facilitated by pedagogues, psychologists, and teachers, with the involvement of students. They recommend that competent ministries, such as education, family and sports, and health protection, create programs within the education system to address all forms of violence and protect children from abuse. These programs should be optional or extracurricular and encompass discussions about various forms of violence, including online risks, raising awareness among parents.

Children expect to be actively involved in setting thematic priorities through workshops, children's parliaments, and similar platforms, as some children have unfortunately experienced such violence and can offer valuable insights.

However, based on most discussions and comments, children have little confidence in the government's willingness to take concrete measures. They express a desire for more tangible actions and better cooperation between relevant institutions. Some schools are perceived as reluctant to engage in non-formal education, preferring to adhere strictly to the school curriculum.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

"In documents and on paper, everything is thoroughly discussed, but all of that is very poorly implemented and respected in practice. I believe that when it comes to solving this, we should listen to the advice of young people because they know more efficient and creative ways to fight the problem."

The recommendations proposed by children, which they believe would contribute to improving the position of children in relation to our thematic priority, are as follows:

1. Introducing an easy-to-remember helpline number for assistance.
2. Implementing universal gesture or mimic models to recognize those in danger.
3. Conducting interactive workshops involving children, parents, and teachers simultaneously.
4. Integrating the topic directly into the teaching process through language and other classes.
5. Organizing performances in schools to subtly address this topic.
6. Releasing short educational videos instead of advertisements to raise awareness and educate adults about the risks of sexual exploitation.
7. Organizing street performances and other events involving children and young people to attract public attention.
8. Installing "support boxes" for anonymous reporting of violence throughout the city.
9. Providing child-friendly education on how to report violence.
10. Creating large-scale posters visible throughout the city to raise awareness among children, young people, and others.
11. Establishing online support networks for those who have experienced violence to seek advice and support.
12. Educating teaching staff about the Lanzarote Convention and its recommendations.
13. Organizing forums, campaigns, and promotions of the Lanzarote Convention in schools, social work centers, and the general public.
14. Mandating institutions such as schools and health centers to inform children and parents about mechanisms for reporting violence.
15. Displaying instructions on how to report violence on every important institution that deals with children.
16. Implementing peer education programs as children and young people are more likely to trust and share experiences with their peers.
17. Empowering survivors of violence and advocating for stricter criminal policies, including increased penalties for perpetrators.
18. Organizing educational visits by the Ministry of the Interior and authorized personnel to schools to educate children on the risks and forms of sexual exploitation, emphasizing reporting and encouraging child safety.

Priorities

When discussing priority issues for problem-solving, children from our groups have emphasized the following:

1. Improving the reporting of sexual exploitation and abuse by implementing an easy-to-remember helpline number funded by the state, along with introducing universal symbols or gestures to identify those at risk.
2. Strengthening citizen security and reducing violence through measures such as installing security cameras in public places, including transportation, and enhancing legal regulations to increase sanctions and penalties for perpetrators. This includes increasing police patrols in community settlements.
3. Fostering stronger bonds and cooperation between students and school staff to expand the circle of trust. This involves integrating relevant topics into regular educational activities to facilitate preventive action across various subjects.
4. Destigmatizing the topic of sexual abuse and exploitation in society, addressing defensive attitudes and prejudices surrounding these issues.
5. Promoting societal responsibility and sensitivity towards sexual exploitation without resorting to condemnation.
6. Establishing partnerships between families, schools, social services, police, and citizens' associations to develop a comprehensive prevention model for all forms of sexual abuse.
7. Strengthening connections between all community stakeholders involved in addressing sexual abuse is essential.
8. Inviting children to participate in workshops and seminars focused on raising awareness of online safety, allowing them to share experiences, ask questions, and learn new ways to protect themselves online.
9. Building capacity by providing professional staff, such as pedagogues, psychologists, and social workers, in all schools.
10. Addressing issues of trust (or mistrust) in the judicial system.
11. Updating and effectively utilizing pedophile registers in Bosnia and Herzegovina to ensure adequate protection against sexual offenders.

"The message to the authorities is to increase penalties for those who commit not only this type of violence but any other, and to establish institutions to support victims of sexual exploitation and abuse."

How to involve children in future activities

Children feel they can actively participate in activities aimed at solving the problem of sexual abuse and exploitation. At the local level, they believe in the importance of organizing and participating in public events to raise awareness among children, young people, and adults alike. Additionally, children recognize their potential to engage in innovative projects, such as organizing tournaments, online campaigns, mutual education sessions for students of different ages, theater performances, and art workshops. On an international level, children envision themselves participating in conferences and short campaigns that receive media coverage.

Consultations have highlighted the need to empower and support children through workshops so they can independently create activities related to this issue. Children should be encouraged to form their own groups and initiate discussions with school authorities to organize lectures on the topic. Thematic radio and TV shows featuring children as participants are also deemed important for facilitating discussions and sharing experiences.

Non-formal education is seen as another avenue for involving children, provided that workshops are interactive and inclusive. Children can also contribute by implementing activities that highlight specific topics, such as wearing pink T-shirts on the International Day for the Elimination of Bullying, which fosters learning and encourages exploration of related subjects.

VI. OTHER RELEVANT NOTES

The question of why people who sexually abuse children often receive relatively lenient prison sentences remains a contentious and unresolved issue that has attracted significant attention.