

## **Finnish Adolescents' Experiences of Police Interviews**

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Master's Thesis in Psychology

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## ÅBO AKADEMI – FACULTY OF ARTS, PSYCHOLOGY AND THEOLOGY

### Summary of Master's Thesis

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| <p>Abstract:</p> <p>Most research on child disclosure has focused on younger children and there is a gap in the knowledge regarding adolescents' disclosure processes during forensic interviews. Children's testimony is often the only evidence abuse has taken place. Therefore, investigators need to be sure that their interviewing techniques facilitate disclosure, as well as support the wellbeing of children and adolescents. In the current study, we examined adolescents' experiences of investigative interviews and the encounter with the police, and how the experience was associated with their disclosure process. For this purpose, we created a questionnaire which was distributed by Finnish police officers directly to the adolescents, and through electronic distribution by support organisations for adolescents. Forty-four Finnish adolescents aged 12 to 17 years reported their experiences of investigative interviews. The adolescents described their experiences of the interviewing police as largely positive. Adolescents who felt that the interviewer listened and believed them, also reported more willingness to tell everything during the interview. Most participants reported telling everything and being truthful during the interview. The participants' reports suggest that filming the interviews did not bother the adolescents to the extent that it affected their disclosure during the interviews. No gender effects were found. The current study was the first to examine adolescents' experiences of investigative interviews and gives an important insight in how to minimise barriers of disclosure during child forensic interviews.</p> |                |
| Keywords: adolescents, investigative interviews, forensic interviews, disclosure, child abuse  |                |
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| Ämne: Psykologi   |              |
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| <p>Abstrakt:</p> <p>Tidigare forskning inom barn och ungas vittnesmål har fokuserat på yngre barn, medan det finns lite kunskap om ungdomars erfarenheter av polisintervjuer. Barn och ungas vittnesmål är ofta det enda beviset i brottsfall där den unga misstänks vara offer för våld. Därför är det ytterst viktigt att poliser som intervjuar barn och unga kan vara säkra på att deras metoder och frågor hjälper barnet att berätta allt hen vet samt stöder barnets välmående. I den föreliggande avhandlingen undersöktes hur ungdomar, som misstänks ha bevittnat eller varit offer för våld, själva upplevde polisens intervjuer samt om de avslöjade allt de visste under intervjun. Studien utfördes i form av en nätenkät. Enkäten distribuerades i samarbete med polisen samt stödnätverk för barn och unga. Ungdomar (<math>N = 44</math>) i åldern 12–17 som blivit intervjuade av polisen deltog i studien. Majoriteten av deltagarna rapporterade att de hade haft en positiv erfarenhet av intervjuaren. Ungdomar som upplevde att polisen lyssnade och trodde på dem rapporterade att de berättade mer under intervjun. Majoriteten av ungdomarna rapporterade att de berättade allt de visste och att de var sanningsenliga under intervjun. En merpart av ungdomarna rapporterade att filmandet av intervjun inte störde dem till den graden att det skulle ha påverkat deras berättande. Könsskillnader påvisades inte i detta sampel. Detta var den första studien som undersökte ungdomars erfarenheter av polisintervjuer. Resultaten ger betydelsefull information till poliser som intervjuar barn och unga hur de kan hjälpa ungdomar att berätta om sina erfarenheter.</p> |              |
| Nyckelord: ungdomar, polisintervjuer, polisförhör, vittnesmål, barnmisshandel   |              |
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## **Finnish Adolescents' Experiences of Police Interviews**

Investigations of child physical abuse (CPA) and child sexual abuse (CSA) often rely on the child's testimony alone, as the results of medical investigations can be difficult to interpret and the abuse seldom has other witnesses than the victim and the perpetrator (Hodshon & Maltby, 2016). It is, therefore, important for interviewers to ensure that their interview strategy maximises children's ability and willingness to provide truthful information. Several factors have been found to affect children's willingness to disclose experiences of abuse during the investigative interview, such as the age and gender of the child (Goodman-Brown, Edelstein, Goodman, Jones, & Gordon, 2003), and the type and severity of abuse (Lev-Wiesel & First, 2018).

Most research on child disclosure to date has focused on younger children, leaving a gap in the knowledge concerning adolescents and the factors that influence their willingness to disclose during forensic interviews (Hershkowitz, Lamb, Katz, & Malloy, 2013; Lahtinen, Laitila, Korkman, & Ellonen, 2018; Leach, Powell, Sharman, & Anglim, 2017).

Methodological limitations in previous studies, such as small sample sizes and variation in how possible confounding variables (for example age, gender, and the type of abuse) are accounted for, might obscure the actual factor that facilitates adolescents' disclosure (Brennan & McElvaney, 2020). To date, there are no studies in which researchers investigate adolescents' perceptions of the investigative interview and the impact of their encounters with the police on their decision to disclose their experiences. In the present study, we studied this through investigating adolescents' experiences of the investigative interview, as well as analysing how the interview situation and the characteristics of the interviewer were associated with their disclosure of abuse.

### **The Investigative Interview**

In Finland, children's testimony is recorded during the pre-trial stage of the criminal investigation. Younger children are usually interviewed by psychologists in specialized university hospital units, whereas older children and adolescents are in general interviewed by police officers trained in child forensic interviewing (Korkman, Pakkanen, & Laajasalo, 2017). The investigative interviewing protocol used by interviewers in Finland is the National Institute of Child and Human Development (NICHD) Protocol (Lamb, Hershkowitz, Orbach, & Esplin, 2008). The NICHD protocol is internationally one of the most used protocols for forensic interviews with children (Orbach et al., 2000) and the use and structure of the protocol have been studied in great detail (e.g., Cyr, Dion, Mcduff, & Trotier-Sylvain, 2012; La Rooy et al., 2015). A detailed description of the protocol can be found in multiple publications by Lamb et al. (e.g., Lamb, Brown, Hershkowitz, Orbach, & Esplin, 2018). The Finnish National Police Board annually offers a one-year specialized training course for police investigators, who conduct investigative interviews with children. The training includes lectures in psychology, the theory behind the NICHD protocol, as well as practical training with supervision (Myklebust, 2017). Previous studies have focused on the quality of the NICHD protocol and the experiences of the interviewers, revealing that training has positively changed their questioning style, attitudes, and beliefs (e.g., Heikkilä, 2017; Kaunisto, 2013; Lahtinen, Korkman, Laitila, & Mehtätalo, 2017).

Several studies have shown that rapport building helps children to be more comfortable during forensic interviews which leads to more accurate and complete answers about abuse (e.g., Brown et al., 2013; Teoh & Lamb, 2010). Therefore, the NICHD protocol was revised with adjustments that emphasise rapport building, identification of reluctance, and providing supportive comments (Hershkowitz, 2011). In a study by Blasbalg, Hershkowitz, Lamb, Karni-Visel, & Ahern (2018), the researchers reported that the Revised Protocol was related to reduced reluctance and increased informativeness from interviewees,



thereby positively affecting children's wellbeing. McGroarty & Baxter (2009) found that children interviewed in a friendly manner are more consistent in their responses. Children interviewed in an abrupt manner become uncertain about their responses, which in turn decreases the reliability of their recall. Further studies focusing on how interviewer behaviour affects children's disclosure would be beneficial, to inform investigators about what to pay attention to so that children and adolescents would feel comfortable disclosing abuse to the police.

McElvaney, Greene, & Hogan (2012) suggested the emotional struggle children experience about wanting to tell about abuse, and the internal and external pressure that builds up from it finally leads to disclosure. The researchers described the emotional struggle children experience between wanting to tell and not wanting others to know as the "pressure cooker effect". An essential part of the "pressure cooker effect" is that the build-up of pressure and the distress of withholding a secret becomes too much to cope with, which leads to disclosure. Hence, the disclosure might be unplanned and depends on the opportunity being available, such as having someone to confide and trust in. This highlights the need for interviewers to build rapport with children during the interview.

### **Differences in Disclosure Procedures**

Research suggests that both the kind of abuse (CSA or CPA) and the age of the victim at the time of the abuse affect the disclosure procedure (e.g., McGuire & London, 2020).

#### ***Disclosing Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)***

Research has suggested that multiple factors are associated with adolescents' disclosure of abuse. In a study by Lahtinen and colleagues (2018), the results indicated that compared to younger children, adolescents rarely disclose CSA to adults and even less to professionals such as the police. These findings are in line with those of other studies (Priebe & Svedin, 2008; Schnyder, Landolt, Schönbucher, Mohler-Kuo, & Maier, 2012), also

suggesting there are separate factors explaining the difference in disclosure between adolescents and younger children.

Leach et al. (2017) found the likelihood of children to disclosing CSA increased until the age of 11 years, after which it decreased with age up to 16 years. The researchers discussed possible reasons for the decrease of disclosure in adolescence, one being that adolescents do not identify the sexual activity as abuse, but as a consensual relationship with an older individual. This notion is supported by later research as well (Lahtinen et al., 2018). Not realizing an experience as abuse can be a barrier to disclosure, especially since perpetrators may employ subtle strategies to persuade their victims abuse is just normal sex (Crisma, Bascelli, Paci, & Romito, 2004). In a Finnish study by Lahtinen et al. (2018), with a large sample consisting of adolescents aged 12 and 15, the most common reason for not disclosing any kind of abuse was that the incident was not considered serious enough. Adolescents might also experience more feelings of guilt and responsibility than younger children, as they may feel responsible or believe they could or should have prevented the abuse (Goodman-Brown et al., 2003). In a study by Leander, Christianson, & Granhag (2007), the majority of the children studied reported few sexual details in police interviews in cases with corroborative evidence for the abuse, which could be explained by feelings of guilt or shame.

However, other studies have suggested disclosure does not decrease with children's increasing age. In a study by Hershkowitz, Horowitz, & Lamb (2005), adolescents and preadolescents were more likely to disclose CSA than school-aged children. Lippert, Cross, Jones, & Walsh (2009) studied predictors of children's disclosure during forensic interviews and found a higher disclosure rate in older age groups. Due to this discrepancy, more research in the experiences of adolescents in investigative interviews is needed, as it could provide

valuable information about the reasons for which adolescents disclose or do not disclose abuse to interviewers.

### ***Disclosing Child Physical Abuse (CPA)***

Compared to CSA, there is a scarcity of research on the disclosure of CPA. In a self-report study, researchers examined the disclosure of CPA among a large sample of Swedish adolescents (Jernbro, Otterman, Lucas, Tindberg, & Janson, 2017). Disclosure to professionals was low, which was assessed to be due to a lack of trust in adults and authorities, as well as a fear of being disbelieved. Other barriers for disclosure found were loyalty towards parents (when a parent was the abuser) and normalisation of abusive behaviour since some adolescents did not recognise parental maltreatment as abuse. Similarly, Hershkowitz and colleagues (2005) noticed children were unwilling to accuse their parents of any kind of abuse.

According to findings from a recent retrospective study by McGuire & London (2020), the most common reason for nondisclosure was not realizing an experience as abuse, which was the case in both CPA and CSA. Lahtinen and colleagues (2018) and Lahtinen, Laitila, Korkman, Ellonen, & Honkalampi (2020) found the most common reason for not disclosing CPA, as well as CSA, was that the children had not considered the experience serious enough.

### ***Gender Differences***

In most studies, the disclosure rate of CSA has been lower for boys than for girls (Edgardh & Ormstad, 2000; Hershkowitz, Lamb, & Katz, 2014; Priebe & Svedin, 2008). Edgardh and Ormstad (2000) suggested boys might face other challenges when disclosing CSA than girls. If the perpetrator was male, boys might be less inclined to report CSA due to fear of being labelled as homosexual or concerns about their sexuality and masculinity (Easton, Saltzman, & Willis, 2014). Lahtinen and colleagues (2018) found gender differences

in a Finnish sample, where boys were less inclined to disclose abuse to professionals if the abuse had been severe, while there was no association between disclosure to professionals and the age of the perpetrator. In a sample of Norwegian adolescents who disclosed CSA, Priebe & Svedin (2008) found that the severity of the abuse influenced the adolescents' decision to disclose. Girls were more likely to talk to professionals if there was an age difference of five years or more between the perpetrator and the child. Priebe & Svedin (2008) found additional gender differences between disclosing and non-disclosing adolescents. For example, girls were less likely to disclose when they had been exposed to contact or penetrative abuse compared to other types of abuse. Girls were also less likely to disclose abuse if the perpetrator during the first or only abuse occasion had been a familiar person rather than a stranger. Most of the previous studies have focused exclusively on female victims of CSA, whereas fewer studies have been conducted on male victims. Prior studies have suggested that gender differences found might be the result of a more general difference in the help-seeking behaviour of men versus women (Galdas, Cheater, & Marshall, 2005). Furthermore, Priebe and Svedin (2008) suggested a gender perspective can be helpful when developing guidelines for professionals and providing education for support systems.

While there is limited research on the disclosure of CPA, there is even less research in gender differences concerning the disclosure of CPA. Jernbro and colleagues (2017) found that girls disclosed abuse more often than boys, but the difference was not statistically significant. In a retrospective study by McGuire and London (2020), the researchers did not find gender differences related to the disclosure of CPA.

### **Facilitators and Barriers for Disclosure during Police Interviews**

The literature on the effects of the interview characteristics (e.g., time and place of the interview; the number of interviews) on disclosure has been scarce. Whereas younger children are interviewed in specialized units in Finland, adolescents are usually interviewed

at police stations and the question remains how supportive and child-friendly these environments are (Korkman et al., 2017).

In a study by Leander (2010), investigating CSA interviews where the abuse had been verified (e.g., with film or photographs), children reported significantly more details during later investigative interviews compared to the first interview. They also produced more denials and avoidances during the first interview compared to subsequent interviews. Leander suggested that abused children might be resistant to report abuse during the first interview, hence additional interviews may be essential to encourage children to report about abuse.

In Finland, interviews with children under the age of 15 years are always videotaped during the pre-investigation stage, and, since 2015, interviews with children up to 17 years may be videotaped (Myklebust, 2017). To our best knowledge, there are no previous studies focusing on how adolescents perceive the interview being recorded and how this in turn is associated with their willingness to disclose abuse. There is, however, an indication from previous studies that children find it distressing to stand witness at trials (Plotnikoff & Woolfson, 2004, 2009, 2019).

The gender of the interviewer might also affect children's willingness to disclose abuse during police interviews and investigators should take possible gender interactions into account when interviewing children. For instance, Foster, Wyman, Tong, Colwell, & Talwar (2019) used experimental conditions to study gender effects on children's disclosure. Their results suggested children might provide more information to an interviewer of the same gender. However, the researchers did point out that the interaction between gender of the child, gender of the interviewer, and type of accusation (true or false), is complex (Foster et al., 2019). Results from a study by Lamb & Garretson (2003) showed a significant effect between interviewers' gender and behaviour, though this effect was reduced in protocol-guided interviews. Research focusing on possible interviewer gender effects on adolescents'

willingness to disclose is still required, as previous studies have used samples consisting of younger children.

### **The Current Study**

In the current study, we aimed to examine adolescents' experiences of forensic interviews in which they were interviewed as suspected victims or witnesses of CSA and/or CPA. Moreover, we examined whether their experiences of the interviews were associated with their disclosure process. For these aims, we derived the following predictions from previous research:

- 1) Adolescents who experienced the interviewer positively would report willingness to disclose information during the interview;
- 2) Boys would report lower rates of disclosure to the interviewer than girls

We expected that the reasons for not disclosing reported by adolescents would differ from those reported by younger children. Reasons for nondisclosure may include factors such as a lack of trust in adult professionals, a fear of being disbelieved, and feelings of shame and guilt. We also explored how adolescents experienced the environment of the interview and factors associated with it, such as the interview being video recorded. Due to the limited amount of research, we did not make specific predictions concerning these factors.

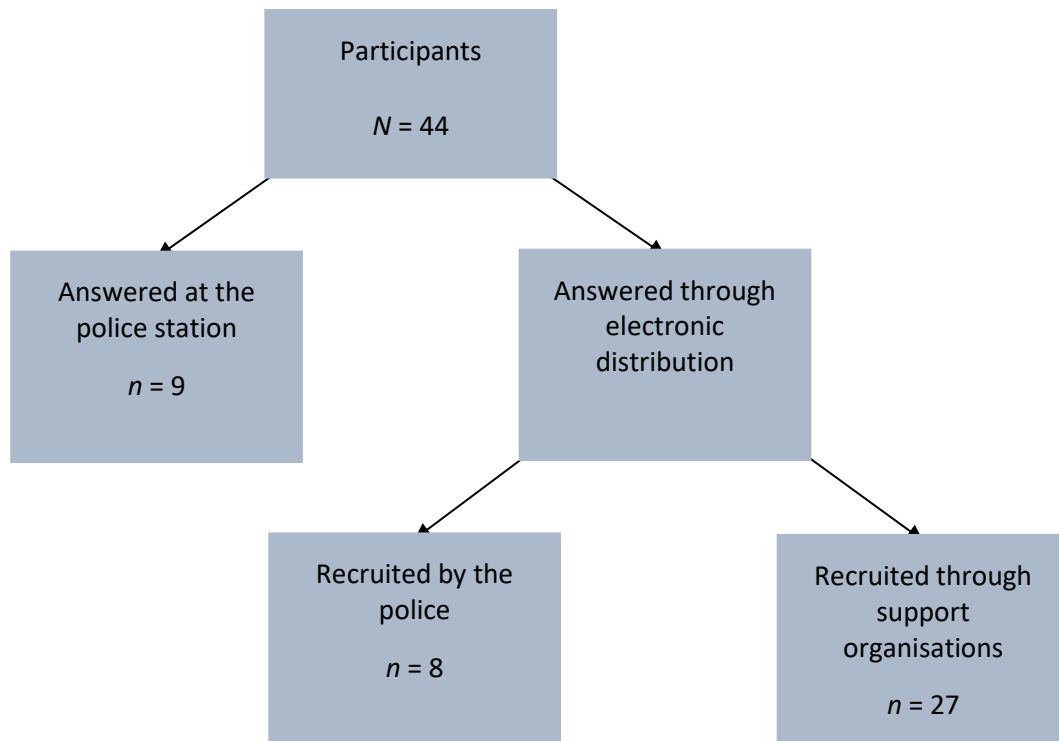
There has only been a limited amount of research systematically investigating children's disclosure of abuse. This is, at least partly, due to difficulties in research methods (Leander, 2010), as previous studies have mostly been based on retrospective interviews with adults and file reviews (McElvaney et al., 2012). The chance for recall bias and adult reinterpretation of experiences was minimised in the present study, as the participants were adolescents and the abuse had occurred relatively recently (Lahtinen et al., 2018).

### **Method**

## **Participants**

Data were collected in two ways. First, participants were recruited by police officers after investigative interviews. The age of the participants ranged from 12 to 17 years.

Secondly, participants were recruited through support organisations for adolescents, that distributed an electronic survey. The electronically distributed survey was part of a larger study about adolescents' general experiences of police interviews. In the electronically distributed survey, we included participants who stated they had been interviewed as alleged victims or witnesses of a crime and were 15–17-year-old adolescents. They were, however, allowed to answer the survey based on the experiences they had when they were younger. After excluding incomplete questionnaires, the final sample consisted of 44 adolescents. Sixty-one participants did not fit the criteria for participation (such as being the wrong age, not having experience of investigative interviews, or not giving consent for their answers to be used in the study) and were excluded from the study. The dropout rate was 32.3%. See Figure 1 for a flowchart of the sample.

**Figure 1***Flowchart Presenting Sample Inclusion***Ethical Permission**

The current study received ethical permission from the Board for Research Ethics at Åbo Akademi University as well as from the National Police Board of Finland.

The age sample in the present study was in concordance with the Finnish Child Protection Law (2007), which states children over the age of 12 have a right to express their views on matters concerning them, as well as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which states children have the right to participate in decision-making concerning themselves. In the second data collection, which was done by electronic distribution, we included participants who were 15–17-year-old adolescents, in line with the permission from the Ethical Board of Åbo Akademi University.



## Procedure

We created the online questionnaire used in the study using the SurveyAnalytics platform. The first data collection was performed through the police from December 2020–April 2021. The web questionnaire was saved on electronic tablets that we distributed to five police units, which had agreed to participate in the study (three in the Helsinki metropolitan area, one in Turku, and one in Jyväskylä). Adolescents answered the questionnaire at the police station after the interview. Possible participants were identified by the investigative teams' sergeants. According to the research permit from the National Police Board of Finland, consent for the adolescent to participate was required by the adolescents themselves, as well as by social welfare authorities, and the legal guardians of the adolescent. The police officers were instructed about the information they were to give the participants. Before answering the questionnaire, the participants were assured anonymity and informed of the voluntary nature of the study. Police officers were also able to recruit participants by sending a link to the questionnaire to adolescents, who had been interviewed within the last half-year by the police.

A second data collection was performed from June to August 2021. We distributed the survey to support organisations for children and adolescents (see list of organizations in Appendix A). The organisations shared a link to the survey through their networks. According to the ethical statement by the Board of Ethics at Åbo Akademi University, participants did not need permission from a legal guardian or social authorities to participate in the study. The items used for the present study were part of a longer survey about adolescents' experiences of investigative interviews.

The distributed questionnaire was available in Finnish, Swedish, English, Estonian, Russian, Arabic, and Somali. The electronically distributed survey was available in Finnish, Swedish, and English. At the end of the questionnaire, the respondents were informed about

support- and help services intended for children and adolescents who have been victims of abuse or a crime. The participants did not receive compensation for their participation.

### **Measures**

Many questions were included and adapted from the Finnish Child Victim Survey (Fagerlund, Peltola, & Kääriäinen, 2014). The questionnaire was reviewed by police officers who had participated in child interview training prior to the data collection. The questionnaire included both multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions. The electronically distributed questionnaire included an additional question about the approximate time when the interview took place, as well if the adolescent had been interviewed in the role of victim and/or witness to a crime. All adolescents who answered the survey at the police station were alleged victims.

The questionnaire included three separate parts: demographic questions, the adolescents' experience of the interview and how this was associated with their disclosure procedure, as well as the adolescents' thoughts about the interviewing police officer and how this was associated with their disclosure process. Before answering the questionnaire, the adolescents agreed to participate in the study. At the end of the questionnaire, we included an optional question about how the adolescents' experienced answering the survey.

#### ***Demographic Items***

We inquired about the adolescents' age, gender, and native language.

#### ***Experience of the Interview***

We asked the adolescents about prior experience of investigative interviews, how they experienced the environment of the interview, and the subjects discussed during the interview (e.g., "How did it feel to discuss conversations you've had in chats or on the phone?"). We also asked if the adolescents felt they had received enough information about the interview. To inquire about the disclosure procedure, we asked the adolescents if they had disclosed the

abuse to someone before the interview; if they left something untold during the interview, and reasons for it (e.g., “I was too afraid to tell everything”); and if they told something untrue during the interview and reasons for it (e.g., “I was afraid someone could hurt my friends/family if I told the truth”). We also inquired about the adolescents’ emotions before and during the interview (See Appendix B for all items and response options).

### ***Experience of the Interviewer***

We inquired how the adolescents perceived the interviewer and factors that affected the interview (e.g., “Do you think that the police believed you?”). Lastly, we inquired if the participants would have liked to have changed any aspects of the interview and in which way, as well as allowing the participants to comment anything about the interview and the police (See Appendix B for all items and response options).

### **Statistical Analysis**

Statistical analyses were performed using the platform *R* (R Development Core Team, 2008). To test associations between categorical items, we used the chi-square tests.

## **Results**

### **Descriptive Results**

Distributions regarding gender and native language are presented in Table 1. The mean age of the sample was 15.3 ( $SD = 1.3$ ).

Twenty-seven participants (61.4%) answered the questionnaire through the link that was distributed by support organisations, nine participants (20.4%) answered the questionnaire at the police station right after the interview, and eight participants (18.2%) answered the questionnaire through the link distributed by the police. Thirty-four participants (77.3%) answered the questionnaire after their first interview and 10 participants (22.7%) reported answering after multiple interviews. Ten participants had been interviewed by the police concerning multiple cases.

Most participants reported being interviewed as a suspected victim (62.8%). The remaining participants reported being interviewed as witnesses (18.6%), or as both a victim and witness (16.3%). One participant reported being interviewed as both witness and suspected perpetrator and one participant did not report in what role they were interviewed.

A majority did not find the survey difficult to answer (59.3%), whereas 40.7% reported some of the questions were hard to answer.

**Table 1**

*Demographics of the Final Sample*

| Demographic                      | <i>N</i> | %    |
|----------------------------------|----------|------|
| Gender <sup>a</sup>              |          |      |
| Female                           | 32       | 72.7 |
| Male                             | 2        | 4.5  |
| Other                            | 2        | 4.5  |
| I don't want to say              | 6        | 13.6 |
| I don't want to define my gender | 1        | 2.3  |
| Language <sup>b</sup>            |          |      |
| Finnish                          | 42       | 94.5 |
| Swedish                          | 1        | 2.3  |

*Note.* Age range 12–17 years for first data collection ( $n = 17$ ). Age range 15–17 years for second data collection ( $n = 27$ ). <sup>a</sup>One participant did not report gender <sup>b</sup> or language.

***The Disclosure Process***

Most participants reported the suspected crime the interview concerned was true (85.0%) or partially true (11.0%). Only one participant reported that the suspected crime the interview concerned was not true. Most of the participants (75.0%) told everything they knew

concerning the suspected crime during the interview, whereas 25.0% of the participants reported telling only partially what they knew about the crime. Similarly, most of the participants (90.9%) reported being truthful during the interview, while a minority of the participants (9.1%) reported being partially truthful. There was no significant association between being interviewed as a victim and the willingness to tell everything,  $\chi^2(3) = 6.98, p = .07$ . The chi-square test showed a significant association between being interviewed as a victim and reporting to be truthful during the interview,  $\chi^2(3) = 10.68, p = .01$ , indicating that adolescents who were interviewed solely as alleged victims were also more willing to be truthful compared to those who were interviewed as witnesses or perpetrator.

The most common reported reason for not telling everything during the interview was fearing a family member would get angry at the participant (20.8%), believing telling would be of no help (16.7%), or being too ashamed (16.7%). The most reported reasons for telling something that was not true was fearing a family member would get angry at the participant (37.5%) and fearing someone might hurt the participant's family or friends (25.0%). All results regarding reported reasons for leaving something untold or telling something that was not true during the interview are presented in Table 2.

Thirty-two (72.7%) participants had told someone about what had happened prior to the interview. The most common disclosure recipients were parents (26.7%), friends (24.4%), and adult professionals, such as school personnel, health professionals, and social workers (22.2%). The most common way of telling was face-to-face (84.9%). Most of the reported reasons for not telling anyone before the interview included fearing someone would get angry at the participant (24.1%), as well as being too afraid to tell (17.2%), being too ashamed to tell (17.2%), and believing telling would not help (17.2%).

**Table 2***Reported Reasons for Leaving Something Untold/Telling Something Untrue*

| Reason  | Left something untold (%) | Told something untrue (%) |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| The interviewer didn't ask about it               | 8.3                       | -                         |
| I was afraid someone could hurt my friends/family | 12.5                      | 25.0                      |
| My friends would get angry at me/leave me         | 4.2                       | 0.0                       |
| My family member would get angry at me            | 20.8                      | 37.5                      |
| I was too ashamed to tell                         | 16.7                      | 12.5                      |
| I was too afraid to tell                          | 12.5                      | 12.5                      |
| I didn't think that telling would help            | 16.7                      | 0.0                       |
| In my opinion, nothing has happened               | 8.3                       | 0.0                       |

***The Interview***

Thirty-four (79.1%) participants reported the interview was filmed. Of these, many (37.1%) reported that the filming bothered them, but that it did not affect what they told during the interview, while 28.6% of the adolescents reported being bothered about the filming of the interview initially but not subsequently. The filming did not bother 22.9% of the adolescents. A minority of the participants (11.4%) reported feeling bothered about the filming to the extent it affected what they told during the interview. There was no significant association between the interview being filmed and the willingness to tell everything,  $\chi^2(1) = 0.13$ ,  $p = .71$ , or being untruthful during the interview,  $\chi^2(1) = 0.73$ ,  $p = .39$ .

Most of the participants (55.8%) reported feeling nervous about being interviewed at the police station but relaxing during the interview. Few participants experienced the environment as unpleasant (18.6%) or stated they were nervous during the whole interview

(18.6%). There was no significant relationship between the environment of the interview (police station) and the willingness to tell everything,  $\chi^2(3) = 1.67, p = .64$ , or being untruthful during the interview,  $\chi^2(3) = 2.99, p = .39$ .

Most of the participants reported they answered the survey after their first interview (77.3%), whilst a smaller part answered after multiple interviews (22.7%). There was no significant association between the number of interviews and the willingness to tell everything,  $\chi^2(1) = 0.00, p = 1$ , or being untruthful during the interview,  $\chi^2(1) = 1.70, p = 1$ .

### ***The Interviewer***

Most interviewers were reported to be female (92.7%). Most participants (43.9%) reported that the gender of the interviewer affected the interview, whereas 36.6% reported it did not affect the interview. Some of the participants (19.5%) reported they were unsure if the gender of the interviewer affected the interview.

Most respondents considered the interviewing police officer to be very nice (37.5%), nice (27.5%), or okay (22.5%), whereas two participants (5.0%) did not consider the police officer to be nice, and three participants (7.5%) did not like the interviewing police at all. Participants who regarded the police in a positive manner reported more willingness to tell everything during the interview,  $\chi^2(4) = 9.16, p = .06$ , as well as being truthful during the interview,  $\chi^2(4) = 7.77, p = .10$ . However, the associations were not statistically significant.

Fifty percent stated it got easier to talk to the police during the interview and 22.5% felt it was easy to talk to the interviewing police from the start of the interview. There was a significant association between reporting that the police were easy to talk to and telling everything during the interview,  $\chi^2(2) = 8.39, p = .02$ , such that if the police had established a good rapport with the adolescent, the adolescents were more willing to talk about their experiences. There was also a non-significant association between feeling the police were easy to talk to and being truthful during the interview,  $\chi^2(2) = 5.88, p = .05$ . Most of the

adolescents (64.1%) felt the police listened to them. The results from the chi-square test indicated, that when adolescents felt they were listened to, they were more willing to tell everything,  $\chi^2(3) = 9.29, p = .02$ , as well as being truthful during the interview,  $\chi^2(3) = 8.15, p = .04$ .

Participants varied in their reported perception of whether the police believed them during the interview; 42.5% of the participants felt the police believed them; 22.5% reported the police believed at least partially; 22.5% were unsure if the police believed them; and 12.5% felt the police did not believe them. There was a statistically significant association between feeling that the police believed the participant and reports about telling everything,  $\chi^2(3) = 15.58, p = .001$ . Adolescents were more willing to tell everything during the interview when they felt believed by the interviewer. There was no statistically significant association between reports of the police believing the participant and being truthful,  $\chi^2(2) = 5.88, p = .05$ .

Most of the adolescents (37.5%) felt the interviewing police was not pressuring them to tell what had happened, whereas 30.0% reported they were partially pressured to tell. A minority (15.0%) reported they were pressured to tell and 17.5% responded they did not know if they were pressured to tell during the interview. There was no significant association between feeling pressured to tell and the willingness to tell everything,  $\chi^2(3) = 1.29, p = .73$ , or being untruthful during the interview,  $\chi^2(3) = 0.66, p = .88$ .

Most participants (92.5%) felt the police explained well enough what the interview was about, and there was no significant association between this and telling everything,  $\chi^2(1) = 1.08, p = .29$ , or being truthful during the interview,  $\chi^2(1) = 0.16, p = .69$ .

### **Telling Everything and Being Untruthful During Interview**

Participants were asked to report what feelings they had before and during the interview. Additionally, we tested associations between reported feelings and the willingness



to tell everything during the interview as well as reports of being untruthful during the interview. The results for these findings are shown in Table 3 (feelings before) and Table 4 (feelings during). Respondents could report multiple feelings. Most of the adolescents reported feeling nervous (77.3%), anxious (75.0%), and scared (54.5%) before the interview. During the interview, most of the participants reported feeling anxious (72.1%), nervous (72.1%), and scared (44.2%).

**Table 3**

*Chi-Square Results for Feelings Before Interview and Telling Everything/Not Being Truthful*

| Feeling        | Tell everything |          | Tell untrue |          |
|----------------|-----------------|----------|-------------|----------|
|                | $\chi^2(1)$     | <i>p</i> | $\chi^2(1)$ | <i>p</i> |
| Nervous        | 0.69            | .40      | 1.70        | 1        |
| Angry          | 1.83            | .17      | 1.52        | 1        |
| Scared         | 0.12            | .72      | 0.11        | .73      |
| Anxious        | 3.27            | .07      | 0.36        | .54      |
| Annoyed        | 0.36            | .54      | 0.0         | 1        |
| Relieved       | 0.67            | .41      | 4.26        | 1        |
| Nothing        | 0.07            | .78      | 4.26        | 1        |
| Something else | 0.34            | .55      | 2.07        | .15      |

**Table 4***Chi-Square Results for Feelings During Interview and Telling Everything/Not Being Truthful*

| Feeling                     | Tell everything |          | Tell untrue |          |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|----------|-------------|----------|
|                             | $\chi^2(1)$     | <i>p</i> | $\chi^2(1)$ | <i>p</i> |
| Nervous                     | 0.11            | .73      | 3.54        | 1        |
| Angry                       | 2.58            | .10      | 4.35        | 1        |
| Scared                      | 0.00            | 1        | 0.59        | .43      |
| Anxious                     | 1.49            | .22      | 0.52        | .47      |
| Annoyed                     | 2.04            | .15      | 2.26        | 1        |
| Relieved                    | 2.89            | .08      | 0.28        | .59      |
| Nothing                     | 0.13            | .71      | 8.84        | 1        |
| Something else <sup>a</sup> | -               | -        | -           | -        |

<sup>a</sup> Not calculated due to zero cells.

Participants were asked if there was anything they wished they could have changed concerning the interview or the interviewer, that would have made it easier to talk about the alleged crime. Most participants did not wish for any change ( $n = 11$ ), followed by a wish the interview had not been filmed ( $n = 8$ ), and changing the interviewer's way of asking about events ( $n = 8$ ). There was a significant association between the wish of changing "something else" about the interview and the willingness to tell everything,  $\chi^2(1) = 4.34$ ,  $p = .04$ , such that adolescents would have been more willing to tell everything during the interview if "something else" would have been changed about the interview. Participants did not write examples of what "something else" could be. All results for frequencies of suggested changes for interviews and their association with telling everything during the interview and telling something untrue during the interview are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5**

*Frequencies and Chi-Square Results for Suggested Changes in Interview and Telling Everything/Not Being Truthful*

| Interview change                          | <i>n</i> | Tell everything |          | Tell untrue |          |
|---|----------|-----------------|----------|-------------|----------|
|   |          | $\chi^2(1)$     | <i>p</i> | $\chi^2(1)$ | <i>p</i> |
| Time/Place                                | 2        | 6.79            | 1        | 2.22        | 1        |
| Interview not being filmed                | 8        | 0.00            | .96      | 0.03        | .09      |
| Write about what had happened             | 4        | 1.21            | 1        | 4.95        | 1        |
| Gender of interviewer                     | 2        | 6.79            | 1        | 2.22        | 1        |
| Interviewer's way of getting to the point | 5        | 1.98            | 1        | 0.05        | .83      |
| Interviewer's way of asking about things  | 8        | 0.00            | .96      | 4.60        | 1        |
| Something else                            | 2        | 4.34            | .04      | 2.22        | 1        |
| Nothing                                   | 11       | 1.62            | 1        | 5.35        | 1        |

### Discussion

In the current study, we investigated how adolescents experienced forensic interviews when they were interviewed as alleged victims or witnesses of child sexual and/or physical abuse. More specifically, we studied how the interviewer and the interview setting were associated with adolescents' willingness to disclose what they knew about the alleged abuse. For this purpose, a web-based survey was distributed electronically by the police and support organisations for adolescents. The current study provided important insights into how adolescents experience the forensic interview procedure and how their experience is associated with their decision to disclose. This in turn is important for informing investigators and interviewers in future cases in adapting the interviews to be as supportive as possible.

## **Main Findings and Interpretation**

In the current study, we found support for the first hypothesis. The results indicate that interviewer behaviour influences how adolescents report experiences of abuse during formal interviews. Participants' experiences of the police were largely positive; participants who felt it was easy to talk to the police and the police believed them, also reported telling more during the interview. Also, when adolescents experienced that the interviewer listened to them, adolescents reported more willingness to talk and to tell the truth. These results suggest that interview training, which includes training in rapport building, plays an essential role in supporting children and adolescents to disclose important information during investigative interviews. Previous findings by Brown and colleagues (2013) suggested interviewers who work on rapport building also assure more complete responses, which is in line with the findings in this study.

Most of the participants reported they told everything they knew and that they were truthful during the interview. The results show that the interviewing police participating in this study are well equipped for eliciting information from witnesses, as well as supporting adolescents during the interview. Most participants reported filming of the interview had little effect on their telling of events and that it did not bother them considerably; this is an important finding, as children's testimony is often the only evidence abuse has taken place and in Finland and the other Nordic countries, the video-recorded testimony is used as evidence-chief during a possible trial (Korkman et al., 2017). Reports from this study show investigative interviews can support children's wellbeing, whilst assuring that children and adolescents are providing sufficient information to the investigators. As nondisclosure is an issue during many abuse investigations, barriers for disclosure must be avoided as much as possible.

Participants reported no considerable difference in the feelings they experienced before and during the interview. However, fewer participants reported feeling scared during the interview compared with before the interview. Also, these results support the finding that the interviewing police officers could provide a supportive environment for the adolescents.

### ***Findings Associated with the Interviewer***

In line with previous research (Foster et al., 2019), we found that the gender of the interviewer might affect adolescents' willingness to disclose. Foster and colleagues (2019) suggested children offer more information to an interviewer of the same gender. In the current study, no clear effect of gender is revealed, as a substantial amount of both participants and interviewers were female.

Another interesting finding from the present study was that only a few participants reported they did not tell everything because the interviewer did not ask about it. This suggests interviewers might not necessarily need to ask about each separate suspicion directly, and that general and open-ended questions might give sufficient information about the suspected crime. This is in line with the vast number of studies encouraging child forensic interviewers to utilize open-ended prompts to maximise the information provided by children in the interviews (for an overview of the research, see Lamb et al., 2018).

### ***Findings Associated with the Interview Situation***

Results from this study suggest that children's experiences were not negatively affected by the interview being videotaped. This finding is interesting from an international perspective, as videotaped interviews are used as evidence-in-chief in some but not most countries, and since no previous research has been conducted on how children experience the video recording. In comparison, findings from multiple studies (e.g., Andrews & Lamb, 2017; Skinner, Andrews, & Lamb, 2019) reveal that during trials, lawyers tend to use questions which are associated with inaccurate responding and are not adjusted to the age of

the child being questioned, while other studies have assessed the experience of children giving evidence in court and found that children have very negative experiences of testifying (Plotnikoff & Woolfson, 2004, 2009, 2019). Investigative interviews also have other benefits compared to trial interviews, such as being closer in time to the actual crime and consequently the memory being more intact, and less contaminated by multiple interviews. Analyses of the testimony of rape victims have found that there is a significant loss of information between the pre-trial investigative interview and the trial (Westera, Kebbell, & Milne, 2013).

We did not find a difference between the number of interviews and willingness to tell. This could partially be because most answered the survey after their first, and possibly only, interview. Previous research has suggested children might report more details during later interviews (Leander, 2010; Waterhouse, Ridley, Bull, La Rooy, & Wilcock, 2016). However, a more recent study by Brubacher and colleagues (2019) suggested interviewer's support during the interview is more important than familiarity to assure children's disclosure. Future research could study this with a larger sample.

To our knowledge, this is the first study in which adolescents have been asked about their experience being interviewed at police stations. Future research could focus on which factors would make the environment of the interview and video recorded interviews more comfortable for adolescents and children being interviewed.

### **Limitations**

The main limitation of the present study was the relatively low statistical power, making it difficult to interpret non-significant results. Due to criteria set by the Finnish Police Board, it was challenging to get access to the population of interest. Even so, our sample is unique and sufficient to provide some insight into a specific age groups' experience of

investigative interviews. Furthermore, most of the adolescents reported they felt the questionnaire was easy to respond to.

The tablets used in data collection were distributed to five police units, but there is no way of assessing how many adolescents were interviewed at these units. It is however likely that only a part of the total number of adolescents interviewed fitted the criteria for participating in the study and thus, the sample may not be representative for all adolescents interviewed by the police. In view of the challenges in getting a sufficient sample of participants, the period for data collection was extended with an additional period in the summer of 2021, including electronic distribution by support organisations for children and adolescents. Electronic distribution implied less control over participant criteria, but it also enabled more adolescents to participate in the study.

Adolescents who participated through electronic distribution were informed of the study in writing and advised to contact the author in case of further questions. The police officers were informed of how to instruct the participants, and the guardians and social authorities were guided to contact the author in case they had further questions. There might still have been minor individual differences in instructions for which we were not able to control. Furthermore, while the participants were assured of the anonymity of the study and that the interviewing police officer would not see their answers, the participants might still have worried their answers could be connected to them. Therefore, participants could have chosen to answer positively about the police, which might have affected the results. We also cannot exclude a certain sample bias, as police officers chose who were offered to participate in the study. The police might have asked adolescents who responded positively during the interview to answer the survey as well, while not even suggesting this to adolescents who seemed overly stressed by the interviewing situation. The electronically distributed survey, on the other hand, gave adolescents the chance to report about their experiences without the

impact of police officers and provide more valid reports. Due to small sample sizes, we could not investigate differences between these two groups. Future studies could also explore whether there is a difference in how adolescents respond depending on whether they participate immediately after the interview while still at the police station or online and out of the police station.

Due to the sample consisting of mostly female participants, gender differences could not be comprehensively studied. Based on results by several researchers (e.g., Hershkowitz et al., 2014), gender might affect the disclosure process, especially disclosure to formal services, such as the police. Due to the nature of the study, we do not have information on whether female adolescents were interviewed more often than males or if females were more willing to participate in the study.

## **Conclusions**

The present study showed that the adolescents' experiences of the interview situation and interviewer are associated with their willingness to tell and be truthful during investigative interviews. Adolescents' perceptions of the interviewing police were mainly positive. Adolescents reported more willingness to tell everything during the interview when they experienced the interviewers believed them, listened to them, and it was easy to talk to the interviewers. To our knowledge, this was the first study focusing on adolescents' experiences of investigative interviews. Although the results of this study should be interpreted with caution, as the sample size was small, the present study emphasises the importance of granting adolescents the possibility to provide information about their experiences of investigative interviews.



## Swedish Summary

### Ungdomars erfarenheter av polisintervjuer

#### Inledning

Barn och ungas vittnesmål är ofta det enda beviset i brottsfall där de misstänks vara offer för sexuellt eller fysiskt våld. Därför är det ytterst viktigt att poliser som intervjuar barn och unga i sitt sätt att intervjua barnet förmår hjälpa barnet att berätta allt hen vet. Enligt tidigare forskningsresultat finns det variation i sätten barn berättar om erfarenheter av våld. Den beror bland annat på barnets kön och ålder samt vilken typ av våld brottet handlat om (McGuire & London, 2020). Tidigare forskning har mestadels varit retrospektiv och gjorts i vuxna urval, där deltagare har ombetts minnas sin barn- eller ungdom. I föreliggande avhandling var deltagarna ungdomar, vilket minskar risken för återkallningsfel och att vuxna omtolkat sina erfarenheter i från barn- och ungdomen. I avhandlingen undersöktes hur ungdomar i åldern 12–17, som misstänks ha varit offer eller vittne för sexuellt eller fysiskt våld, själva upplevde polisens intervjuer samt huruvida de berättade allt de visste om brottsmisstanken under intervjun.

Studier kring barns berättande om sexuella och fysiska övergrepp har hittills fokuserat på yngre barn, medan färre studier fokuserat på ungdomars orsaker för att avslöja eller inte avslöja våld under polisintervjuer. Forskare inom ämnet har föreslagit olika orsaker som kan hindra ungdomar från att berätta om sexuellt våld. Resultat från tidigare studier indikerar att ungdomar avslöjar sexuellt våld mer sällan för vuxna och myndigheter, bland annat polisen, än yngre barn. Detta föreslås bero på en ovisshet om vad som räknas som våld; att unga inte anser att våldet varit allvarligt nog att avslöja; eller att ungdomar tror sig vara i ett samtyckesbaserat kärleksförhållande med en äldre person. En ytterligare orsak kan vara att ungdomar kan känna mer ansvar än yngre barn och därför kan vara mer benägna att skylla sig

själva för att det blivit offer för sexuellt våld, med påföljden att de upplever starka känslor av skuld och skam som utgör hinder för berättandet.

Antalet studier på ungas berättande om fysiskt våld är i dagsläget begränsat jämfört med studier om deras berättande om sexuellt våld. Hittills visar forskningsresultat att unga sällan avslöjar för myndigheterna om fall beträffande fysiskt våld. Föreslagna orsaker till detta är att ungdomar beskyddar föräldrar som misshandlar dem; att våldsamt beteende normaliseras i familjen; samt att ungdomar är rädda för att bli misstrodda om de avslöjar att de varit offer för våld.

Det finns en mångfald andra faktorer som föreslagits påverka hur ungdomar avslöjar erfarenheter av våld och misshandel. I fall av sexuellt våld har forskning visat att flickor och pojkar har olika slags utmaningar när det gäller att avslöja erfarenheter av våld, och att pojkar mer sällan rapporterar sina erfarenheter än flickor. Exempelvis är pojkar mindre benägna att avslöja erfarenheter av sexuellt våld om förövaren varit en man, medan flickor är mindre benägna att avslöja erfarenheter av sexuellt våld då våldet varit grovt och förövaren varit en äldre person. Andra faktorer som möjligen påverkar ungdomars benägenhet att avslöja våld är platsen för intervjun, om intervjun filmas och hur många intervjuer ungdomen varit med om gällande samma brott.

På basen av tidigare studier formulerades följande hypoteser för denna studie:

- 1) Deltagare som hade en positiv upplevelse av den intervjuande polisen, rapporterar också att de avslöjade mer information under intervjun.
- 2) Bland deltagarna är det mindre vanligt att pojkar än flickor rapporterar att de har avslöjat allt under polisintervjun.

### **Metod**

Studien beviljades etiskt tillstånd av den forskningsetiska nämnden vid Åbo Akademi samt Polisstyrelsen. Deltagarna svarade på en nätbaserad enkät med hjälp av surfplattor som

blivit fördelade till fem olika polisstationer. Perioden för datainsamling förlängdes och enkäten distribuerades även elektroniskt via stödorganisationer för ungdomar. Enkäten kunde besvaras på finska, svenska och engelska via den elektroniska utdelningen samt ytterligare på estniska, ryska, arabiska och somaliska via polisen, då dessa är de vanligaste intervju språken som används i polisintervjuer i Finland.

Deltagarna ( $N = 44$ ) bestod av ungdomar i åldern 12–17 år. Deltagarna hade tillåtelse att delta i studien både av sina förmyndare och av en representant för socialmyndigheterna. Enkäten var uppdelad i tre delar. I första delen ombads deltagare rapportera ålder, kön och modersmål. Till följande innehöll enkäten frågor om hur deltagarna upplevde intervju situationen och den intervjuande polisen. Vi frågade även om deltagarna berättat allt de visste om brottet under intervjun och orsaker till att det lämnat något osagt. Slutligen bad vi deltagare rapportera om det fanns något de önskade ändra med intervjun som skulle ha hjälpt dem att berätta allt. En del av frågorna är tagna från Barnofferundersökningen (Fagerlund et al., 2014) men omarbetade för denna studie. Enkäten gjordes i samarbete med poliser som har erfarenhet av att intervjua barn och unga gällande brott. Deltagande i studien var frivilligt och svaren behandlades anonymt. De statistiska analyserna genomfördes med programmet *R* (R Development Core Team, 2008).

## **Resultat**

Majoriteten av ungdomarna rapporterade att de berättade allt de visste och var ärliga under intervjun. En analys av svaren visade att en positiv upplevelse av intervjuaren var associerad med fler rapporterade avslöjanden under intervjun. Majoriteten av deltagarna rapporterade att de hade haft en positiv erfarenhet av intervjuaren. Ungdomar som upplevde att polisen lyssnade på dem, trodde på dem och att polisen var lätt att tala med rapporterade även att de berättade mer. Största delen av ungdomarna rapporterade att polisen inte pressade dem att tala under intervjun. En merpart av ungdomarna rapporterade att filmandet av

intervjun inte störde dem eller att det störde dem enbart i början av intervjun. Filmandet av intervjun och intervjuplatsen (polisstation) var inte signifikant associerade med rapporterade avslöjanden.

De vanligaste känslorna som ungdomarna rapporterade både före och under intervjun var nervositet, ångest och rädsla. Rapporterade känslor före och under intervjun samt hur de var associerade till att berätta allt och vara ärlig under intervjun presenteras i tabellerna 3 och 4. Den vanligaste uppgivna orsaken för att inte berätta allt, var deltagarens oro att en familjemedlem kunde bli arg på dem. Största delen av deltagarna ville inte ändra på något gällande intervjun, följt av en önskan att intervjun inte skulle ha blivit filmad och att intervjuaren skulle ha ställt frågor på ett annat sätt. Alla rapporterade önskemål för ändringar gällande intervjun presenteras i tabell 5. Det fanns ingen signifikant skillnad mellan könen och rapporter om avslöjanden under intervjun.

### **Diskussion**

Syftet med den föreliggande studien var att undersöka hur ungdomar upplever polisintervjuer samt vilka faktorer som under intervjun hjälper och hindrar ungdomar att berätta om sina upplevelser till polisen. Till vår kännedom är detta den första studien där det forskas i endast ungdomars erfarenheter.

Resultaten från denna studie tyder på att ungdomars erfarenhet av intervjuaren påverkade hur de berättade om brottet. Deltagares upplevelse av polisen var till största delen positiv. Ungdomar som rapporterade mer positiva upplevelser av intervjuaren rapporterade även att de avslöjat mer och varit mer sanningsenliga under intervjun. Resultaten från denna studie tyder på att det är viktigt att intervjuare lägger ner tid på att skapa förtroende med barn och unga som blir intervjuade gällande brott. Ungas vittnesmål är ofta enda beviset på att ett brott har skett. Detta var första studien där man frågat hur unga upplever filmandet av polisintervjun; största delen upplevde inte filmandet negativt eller att det skulle ha påverkat

deras berättande. I en del länder används filmade polisintervjuer som vittnesmål i rätten, då en stor del av tidigare resultat tyder på att ungdomar upplever vittnandet i rätten negativt. Fynden från denna studie tyder på att användningen av filmade intervjuer som vittnesmål kan forskas mer i framtiden. Polisintervjuer är även närmare i tid till erfranheten av brottet och följaktligen är minnet av händelsen klarare.

Det begränsade antalet deltagare förhindrade klara resultat av skillnader mellan könen gällande rapportering av erfarenheter av våld.

Resultaten bör tolkas med försiktighet. Största begränsningen i denna studie var att samplet förblev relativt litet, vilket försämrar den statistiska styrkan samt generaliserbarheten av resultaten. En ytterligare begränsning var att vi inte kunde påverka vilka ungdomar som gavs möjlighet att delta i studien. Därtill kan ungdomar ha upplevt att de måste besvara frågorna på ett sätt som är socialt accepterat, oberoende försäkran om att polisen inte kommer att se deltagarens svar och att deltagandet var anonymt.

Framtida studier med större sampel kan ge oss mer information om ungdomars erfarenheter av polisintervjuer. Fortsatt forskning inom ämnet samt fokusering på olika typer av våld, användningen av tolk under polisintervjuer, samt mer sårbara grupper erfarenheter av intervjuer kan erbjuda viktig information till polisen om vad som bör beaktas i framtida intervjuer.

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## Appendix A

List of support organisations for children and adolescents that shared the link for the survey through their own networks:

Sekasin-chatroom

Nuortelämä.fi

Satakunnan sovittelutoimisto

Pesäpuu ry

Finnish Red Cross Youth Centers

## Appendix B

**Table 1**

*Adolescents' Questionnaire: Questions and Response Options*

| Questions   | Response Options  |
|---|---|
| How old are you?  | 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17  |
| Are you...  | A girl, A boy, Other, I don't want to define my gender, I don't want to say   |
| Your native language is:  | Finnish, Swedish, English, Other  |
| Did you know beforehand why you were being interviewed?                   | Yes, No   |
| Have you been interviewed by the police before concerning something else? | Yes, No   |
| What was the interview about? <sup>a</sup>                                | Suspicion that I was the victim of a crime, I was a witness (I had seen/heard something concerning a suspected crime), I was interviewed as a suspect |
| Was this the first time you were interviewed about this event?            | Yes, No   |
| Before the interview, did you tell anyone else about what had happened?   | Yes, No   |
| How did you tell?   | Face to face, By phone, On social media, Through chat, In some other way  |

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|   |  |
|---|--|
| Why haven't you told anyone?  | I didn't think it was serious enough to tell, I was too afraid to tell, I was too ashamed to tell, I don't think anyone would be interested to know, I don't think telling would help, Nothing happened, I was afraid someone would get angry with me / punish me, I was afraid that it would have negative consequences for people close to me, Other reason  |
| If you told someone, how did they react or what did they do?                    |  |
| How did you feel before the interview?  | Nervous, Angry, Scared, Anxious, Annoyed, Relieved, Nothing special, Something else  |
| According to you, was the matter that was suspected true?                       | Yes, Partially, No   |
| During the interview, did you tell everything you knew about what had happened? | Yes mostly, I didn't tell anything, I told partially, but I left some parts out  |
| Why did you leave something untold?   | The interviewer didn't ask about it, I was afraid someone could hurt my friends/family if I had told everything, My friends would get angry at me/leave me if I had told everything, My boy-/girlfriend would get angry at me/leave me if I had told everything, My family member would get angry at me if I had told everything, I was too ashamed to tell everything, I was too afraid to tell everything, I didn't think that telling would help, In my opinion, nothing has happened, Something else |
| What could have helped/made you tell?   |  |
| During the interview, did you tell something that wasn't true?                  | Yes, Partially, No   |
| Why did you tell something that wasn't true?                                    | I was afraid someone could hurt my friends/family if I told the truth, My friends would be angry with me/leave me if I told the truth, My boy-/girlfriend would be angry with me/leave me if I told the truth, My family member would be angry with me if I told the truth, I was too afraid to tell the truth, I was too ashamed to tell the truth, I don't think that telling the truth would help, In my opinion, nothing has happened, Something else  |

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|   |   |
|---|---|
| How did it feel to discuss conversations you've had in chats or on the phone?                 | We didn't discuss conversations I've had in chats or on the phone, It felt okay, It felt good, It felt bad  |
| How did it feel to discuss the pictures or videos you've sent?                                | We didn't discuss pictures or videos during the interview, It felt okay, It felt good, It felt bad  |
| How did you feel about the interview being filmed?  | The filming did not bother me, In the beginning the filming bothered me, but after a while it didn't, The filming bothered me, but it didn't affect what I told during the interview, The filming bothered me and it affected what I told during the interview (I didn't want to tell because of the filming), The interview was not filmed |
| How did you experience the environment for the interview?                                     | The environment was unpleasant, I was nervous to be at the police station, but I relaxed during the interview, I was nervous during the entire interview; I would rather have had it somewhere else   |
| How did you feel during the interview?  | Nervous, Angry, Scared, Anxious, Annoyed, Relieved, Nothing special, Something else   |
| What would you have liked to know before the interview?                                       |   |
| Was the interview held in your native language?   | Yes, No   |
| Was an interpreter used during the interview?   | Yes, No   |
| Did you and the interpreter speak the same language?  | Yes, No, Some small differences e.g., dialect, Big differences  |
| How did you experience the use of an interpreter?   | It did not bother the interview, It bothered the interview a bit, It bothered the interview, Because of the interpreter I couldn't tell everything I wanted   |
| The police who interviewed me was   | Female, Male  |
| Do you feel that the gender of the police affected how well you could talk about your things? | Yes, No, I don't know   |

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|   |   |
|---|---|
| What did you think of the police?   | Really nice, Nice, Okay, Not very nice, I didn't like him/her at all  |
| Did you think it was easy to talk with the police?                                    | Yes, No, Not immediately, but it got easier during the interview  |
| Did you think that the police listened to what you told him/her?                      | Yes, Partially, No, I don't know  |
| Do you think that the police believed you?  | Yes, Partially, No, I don't know  |
| Do you think the police pressed you during the interview?                             | Yes, A little, No, I don't know   |
| Did the police explain to you well enough what the interview was about?               | Yes, No   |
| If you could change something about the interview and/or the police, what would it be | Time / Place, The interview would not have been filmed, I would have been able to write about what had happened, The gender of the interviewing police, The police way of getting to the "point", The police way of asking about events, Something else, I wouldn't change anything |
| Tell freely what you want about the interview or the police investigation             |   |

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<sup>a</sup> Question included only in electronically distributed survey.

## PRESSMEDDELANDE

**Finska ungdomars upplevelse av polisen positiv efter polisintervjuer**

Pro-gradu avhandling i psykologi

Fakulteten för humaniora, psykologi och teologi vid Åbo Akademi

Resultaten från en pro-gradu avhandling vid Åbo Akademi tyder på att ungdomar berättar mer och är mer sanningsenliga under polisintervjuer då de upplever den intervjuande polisen positivt. Majoriteten av deltagarna hade en positiv erfarenhet av intervjuande polisen. Dessa fynd visar att ungdomar avslöjar mer då de upplever att intervjuare lyssnar och tror på dem samt är lätta att tala med. Resultaten från denna studie tyder på att det är viktigt att intervjuare lägger ner tid på att skapa förtroende med barn och unga som blir intervjuade gällande brott. Syftet med studien var att undersöka hur ungdomar upplever polisintervjuer samt vilka faktorer som under intervjun hjälper och hindrar ungdomar att berätta om sina upplevelser till polisen. Sammanlagt 44 ungdomar som misstänktes ha bevittnat eller varit offer för våld och blivit intervjuade av polisen deltog i studien. Studien utfördes i form av en nätenkät. Enkäten distribuerades i samarbete med polisen samt stödnätverk för barn och unga. Studien var den första av sitt slag som undersökt erfarenheter av denna åldersgrupp.

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