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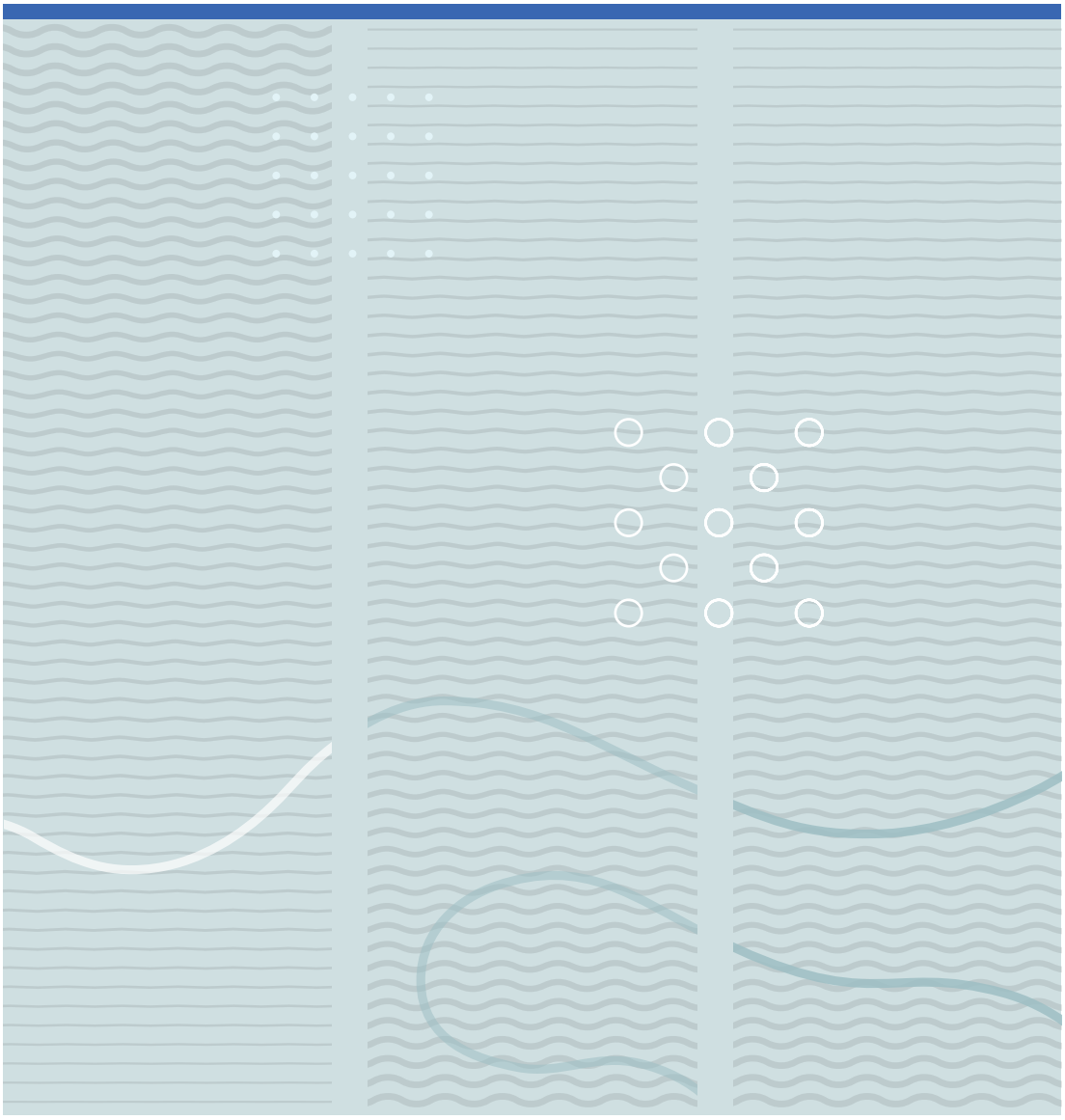
Kjersti Draugedalen

Teachers As Human Rights Defenders
- Transforming Teachers' Safeguarding Role Against Harmful Sexual Behaviour



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– Transforming Teachers' Safeguarding Role Against Harmful Sexual Behaviour

A PhD dissertation in
Pedagogical Resources and Learning Processes in Kindergarten and School

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Dedication

To the stars of my life,

Louisa Thembeni & Julia Lindiwe

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Kjersti Draugedalen
Tønsberg, February 2023

Abstract

This study explores teachers' understandings of and responses to harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) in primary schools, and the challenges that schools face in building interdisciplinary cooperation with other children's service providers. The aim of the study is to strengthen teachers' transformative safeguarding for children who display HSB through enhanced interdisciplinary cooperation between schools and frontline service providers. The five research questions guiding the study are:

RQ1: How do teachers understand and respond to HSB?
RQ2: What support systems do teachers identify in safeguarding against HSB?
RQ 3: How do teachers identify support and engage with school-based colleagues/other professionals/service providers?
RQ 4: What do teachers need to implement transformative safeguarding in schools?
RQ 5: How can frontline services support teachers' transformative safeguarding in schools?

The empirical study was carried out in one municipality in south-eastern Norway using an exploratory mixed methods approach, and with a sequential multiphase study design divided into four phases. In phase one, a baseline survey was conducted with 159 primary school teachers. Phase two consisted of focus-group interviews with 19 teachers and school staff. Drawing on the findings from the survey and focus-group interviews, phase three involved building grounded theory that might support sustainable safeguarding among educators and other professionals. Phase four consisted of qualitative interviews with members of six frontline services cooperating with schools.

The study found that most teachers in the sample struggle to differentiate between healthy, problematic and harmful sexual behaviour, and are uncertain about how to respond to it or who to contact (Article I). Safeguarding is perceived as an overwhelming

responsibility and many teachers fail to intervene when they encounter harmful sexual behaviour due to lack of competence, time, resources and support available to them. Furthermore, asymmetrical power relations between teachers and those they might seek support from add to their anxieties about HSB and safeguarding (Article II). Aligning Nel Noddings' 'Ethics of Care' with Human Rights Education (HRE) in a child-rights-based approach, the study develops a grounded theory to address the asymmetrical power relations and the role of emotions teachers experience when they encounter HSB. This opens for new transformative practices for addressing HSB in schools (Article III). Building on this theory and on insights from service providers, the study proposes the following measures to support teachers' safeguarding activities: physical presence of other agencies in schools; cooperative practices when addressing concerns; and shared HSB training and resource allocation. The study advocates a 'system of care' of transformative practices for interdisciplinary cooperation between school and frontline services, encompassing the role of emotions and asymmetrical power relations (Article IV).

Keywords: Harmful Sexual Behaviour, Teachers' Safeguarding, Ethics of Care, Human Rights-based Education, Norway, Primary Schools, Interdisciplinary Cooperation

Sammendrag

Denne studien undersøker læreres forståelse og håndtering av skadelig seksuell atferd (SSA) i barneskolen, og utfordringer skoler møter på i utformingen av det tverretatlige SSA-samarbeidet med hjelpetjenester for barn og unge. Målet med dette prosjektet er å styrke læreres transformative «beskyttende rolle» (safeguarding) ovenfor barn og unge som utviser SSA gjennom økt tverretatlig samarbeid mellom skolen og hjelpetjenestene. Studien inneholder fem forskningsspørsmål (FS) som var førende for datainnsamling og analyse:

FS 1: Hvordan forstår og responderer lærere på SSA?
FS 2: Hva slags støttende systemer identifiserer lærere i SSA-forebygging og håndtering?
FS 3: Hvordan identifiserer lærere støtte og knytter kontakt med hjelpetjenester tilknyttet skolen?
FS 4: Hva trenger lærere for å inneha en transformativ beskyttende rolle i skolen?
FS 5: Hvordan kan hjelpetjenester støtte læreres beskyttende rolle i skolen?

Tre empiriske delstudier ble gjennomført i en kommune i Sørøst-Norge gjennom en utforskende mixed methods tilnærming i en sekvensiell multifase-design i fire faser. I fase en ble det gjennomført en spørreundersøkelse blant 159 barneskolelærere for å etablere en baseline av læreres forståelse og responser. Fase to inneholdt fokusgruppeintervjuer med 19 lærere og skoleansatte ved seks skoler. Fase tre inneholdt en databasert teoriutvikling hvor intensjonen var å bidra til en mer bærekraftig beskyttende rolle for lærere i møte med SSA ved å dra veksel på dataene i fase en og to. I fase fire ble det gjennomført kvalitative intervjuer med seks informanter fra hjelpetjenestene som samarbeider med skoler.

Funnene i studien peker på at de fleste lærerne i datautvalget synes det er vanskelig å skille mellom sunn, problematisk og skadelig seksuell atferd, og er usikre på hvordan de skal håndtere atferden og hvem de skal kontakte (artikkel I). Å påta seg en beskyttende

rolle oppleves som et overveldende ansvar og mange lærere klarer ikke å sette inn fungerende tiltak når de møter SSA på grunn av mangel på kompetanse, tid, ressurser og støtte. Videre påvirker asymmetriske maktforhold mellom lærere og de som skal hjelpe dem læreres trygghet i møte med SSA (artikkel II). Ved å kombinere Nel Noddings' omsorgsetikk med menneskerettighetsutdanning i et barnerettighetsperspektiv har studien videreutviklet en teori for lærere som adresserer asymmetriske maktrelasjoner og emosjoner for å muliggjøre en mer transformativ beskyttende rolle i forebygging og håndtering av SSA i skolen (artikkel III). Med utgangspunkt i denne teorien, og med innsikt fra hjelpetjenesters innspill, foreslår studien følgende tiltak for å støtte læreres beskyttende rolle i møte med SSA: hjelpetjenesters fysiske tilstedeværelse på skolen, samarbeidende praksiser ved bekymring for atferd og felles SSA-kompetanseheving og bruk av ressurser. Studien anbefaler et såkalt 'omsorgssystem' for transformative praksiser for tverretatlig samarbeid mellom skolen og hjelpetjenester som tar hensyn til asymmetriske maktforhold og emosjoner i forebygging og håndtering av SSA (artikkel IV).

Nøkkelord: skadelig seksuell atferd, læreres beskyttende rolle, omsorgsetikk, menneskerettighetsutdanning, Norge, barneskole, tverretatlig samarbeid

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Article II

Draugedalen, K., Kleive, H. & Grov, Ø. (2021). Preventing harmful sexual behavior in primary schools: barriers and solutions. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 121* https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2021.105295

Article III

Draugedalen, K. & Osler, A. (2022). Teachers as human rights defenders: strengthening HRE and safeguarding theory to prevent child sexual abuse. *Human Rights Education Review, 5*(2). https://doi.org/10.7577/hrer.4776

Article IV

Draugedalen, K. (2023). Supporting Teachers in Safeguarding against Harmful Sexual Behaviour - Service Providers' Perspectives on Transformative Practices. *London Review of Education. 21* (1), 4. https://doi.org/10.14324/LRE.21.1.04

Tables and Figures

Tables:

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACE	Adverse Childhood Experiences
ATSA	Association for the Treatment and Prevention of Sexual Abuse
CDENF	Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child
CoE	Council of Europe
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSA	Child Sexual Abuse
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
DMP	Data Management Plan
EoC	Ethics of Care
HRE	Human Rights Education
HSB	Harmful Sexual Behaviour
ID	Intellectual Disability
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
MM	Mixed Methods
NKVTS	Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies
NOTA	National Organisation for the Treatment of Abuse
RCN	Research Council of Norway
REBESSA	Resource Team for Concerning and Harmful Sexual Behaviour
RVTS	Regional Centre on Violence, Traumatic Stress and Suicide Prevention
SLT	"Coordination of Local Drug and Crime Prevention Interventions" [in Norwegian "Samordning av Lokale rus- og kriminalitetsforebyggende Tiltak"]
TA – HSB	Technology-Assisted Harmful Sexual Behaviour
TIC	Trauma-Informed Care
UB	Unconscious Bias
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USN	University of South-Eastern Norway
WHO	World Health Organisation
WSA	Whole-School Approach

Part I: Extended Abstract

“The child who is not embraced by the village will burn it down to feel its warmth.”

- African proverb

1 Introduction

In this chapter I will start by introducing the phenomenon Harmful Sexual Behaviour (abbreviated HSB) to contextualise the professional rationale for this PhD study. I will also account for my personal motives for conducting this research, as these are intrinsic to how I have interpreted and carried out the study. My project has a Public Sector PhD design, and I will describe how the design has prompted a research process that differs from a traditional PhD. I end the chapter by presenting the study's aim, research questions and design.

1.1 Background

The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2017) has declared sexual abuse against children a public health issue on the rise with severe consequences for countries worldwide (Matthews, 2019). Knack et al. (2019) argue that societies' traditional strategies to combat Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) have predominantly focused on *tertiary prevention* within the public health approach, which centres on criminalisation and legal responses after an offense has been perpetrated. However, emerging studies show that a substantial proportion of CSA is carried out by other children and young people, estimated to be anywhere between 30-70% depending on the country in question (Beier et al., 2016; Hackett, 2014; Gerwitz-Meydan & Finkelhor, 2020; Kripos, 2017; McKibbin et al., 2017; McKibbin & Humphreys, 2021; Shawler et al., 2019).

Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) is a phenomenon that challenges societies' traditional criminal responses and demands strengthening of *primary* and *secondary prevention* efforts. Framing CSA protection in a primary prevention perspective has been emphasised as an effective universal strategy for ensuring that all children are protected from harm, both off- and online (Maxwell, 2022; Wortley & Smallbone, 2006). However, this is particularly the case with HSB, where universal arenas, such as primary schools, become unique sites both for prevention and intervention of CSA that occurs among children (Ey & McInnes, 2020; Letourneau et al., 2017; 2022).

The thesis applies the Council of Europe's (2020) definition of *primary-, secondary- and tertiary-prevention approaches to HSB* when exploring teachers' safeguarding role. The various levels are described as follows:

Primary prevention refers to community or population wide initiatives that comprise *awareness raising*, *sex and relationship education*, and *child sexual abuse education* for children. The Council of Europe links this type of education directly to human rights, thus such prevention also includes enhancing awareness and education about sexual behaviours. Schools are viewed as ideal arenas for primary prevention through a universal approach to safeguarding, which the Council of Europe (2022b) also underlines in their recommendations to combat children's exposure to pornographic content.

It is worth noting that the primary prevention principles harmonise with the *Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)* approach elaborated on by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 2014) in their "Operational Guidance for Comprehensive Sexuality Education", as well as the United Nations Educational, Cultural & Scientific Organisation's (UNESCO, 2018) "International technical guidance on sexuality education".

Secondary prevention is described as "interventions prior to abuse with higher risk, aimed at targeting at-risk groups and offering early interventions" (CoE, 2020, p. 12). At this level, the prevention work includes interventions at the lowest threshold possible, and encompasses HSB training for parents, carers and professionals (also referred to as *the Circle of Trust* for children). However, the Council of Europe (2020, p. 12) acknowledges the current lack of research, and underlines training as a way forward in the secondary prevention:

> There is a lack of understanding of HSB, and as (a) result insufficient knowledge on adequate ways to respond to children displaying such behaviour. Research shows that many teachers do not possess the knowledge and never received training on this issue (see e.g, Draugedalen, 2020). **Parents, carers and professionals working directly with children should receive information and training** on harmful sexual behaviour displayed by children. This would help identify early signs of HSB and prevent its occurrence and escalation.

Tertiary prevention is defined as "Support in situations where children have sexually abused other children to reduce the likelihood of recurrence. This can include assessment, safety planning and therapeutic interventions" (CoE, 2020, p. 13). Furthermore, the interventions in tertiary prevention must be designed according to the specific child and have a holistic rehabilitative approach, and preferably contain community-based and welfare-oriented responses.

Although primary and secondary prevention may seem most relevant for teachers, I argue in this thesis that transformative safeguarding must encompass a holistic awareness of primary, secondary *and* tertiary prevention of HSB to enable successful interdisciplinary cooperation between schools and frontline services.

1.1.1 Defining the behaviour

The term *children and young people who display problematic or harmful sexual behaviour* (HSB) has been derived from Hackett's (2010) continuum of sexual behaviours [1]. The model divides sexual behaviour into the categories normal, inappropriate, problematic, abusive and violent. The latter four are covered by the umbrella term HSB. The definition of HSB mirrors the continuum: "Sexual behaviours of children and young people under the age of 18 years old that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful toward self or others, or be abusive towards another child, young person or adult". (Hackett et al., 2016, p. 12).

Several terms are used in the HSB literature as HSB is a relatively new field where expertise in academic and clinical fields overlap (Hallett et al., 2019). Some labels have been highly stigmatising, with terms such as *child molester*, *juvenile sex offender* and *perpetrator*. However, there is a growing consensus on moving away from describing

[1] Simon Hackett problematised the use of his continuum in a presentation for Barnafrid's webinar on HSB, February 21st, 2023, arguing that it was not intended to be applied as a checklist and that behaviours must be assessed in the context they occur. Together with New South Wales government in Australia, Hackett has adapted his continuum and developed a new tool that focuses more on context. (https://liu.se/nyhet/evenemang-hos-barnafrid Swedish website)

the child to describing the behaviour, adhering to the principles of the United Nations' (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child (Association for the Treatment and Prevention of Sexual Abuse (ATSA), 2017; Hackett, 2014; Silovsky et al., 2020). Moreover, some competing terms include "children who display[2]" *problem(atic) sexual behaviour*, *sexually aggressive behaviour* and *sexually abusive behaviour*. In the UK and some parts of Europe, the umbrella term *harmful sexual behaviour* is being increasingly applied (Allnock & Atkinson, 2019; Vorland et al., 2018).

Hackett (2014) maintains that HSB not only has grave impact on the victim, but also on the child displaying the behaviour, as well as their families and the wider community. Such a child-rights perspective presupposes the argument that children who display HSB are primarily CHILDREN in need of guidance and assistance, and not shame and punishment.

Although the Convention on the Rights of the Child defines any person under the age of 18 as a child, HSB literature has traditionally operated with the term *child* meaning up to 12 years of age, and *young people* between 13 and 18 years of age. However, these are highly contested categories as there are great variations in relation to when children enter puberty (Hackett, 2014). This study focuses on children in primary school in Norway, age group 5 to 13 years, meaning that most children in the research are considered pre-pubescent children. Hackett (2020, p. 21) underlines caution as "research into younger children remains in its infancy". Thus, this study also draws on research on adolescents to compensate for the existing knowledge gap.

[2] There are also some variations in the term "display" where some expertise in the field, such as ATSA (2017) and Allerdyce & Yates (2018), use the past tense, e.g.., "who have displayed" emphasising that it is describing past behaviour rather than the current and future behaviour.

1.1.2 Defining the aim

The rise of HSB calls for innovative approaches in primary and secondary prevention of CSA. This thesis aims to make such a contribution by focusing on transforming teachers' safeguarding role against HSB.

According to Firmin et al. (2022, p. 112), *safeguarding* "is defined broadly in the UK as a collective responsibility to protect people's health, well-being and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect". Various international fields have increasingly applied the term, where safeguarding is for example considered the new "buzzword" in the aid sector (Sandvik, 2019). The concept of safeguarding in the school context is now receiving increasing attention (Firmin, 2019; Lloyd, 2019), where earlier developments in the UK have paved the way for its relevance to schools:

> Safeguarding can be exercised via schools as places, teachers as people and education as a process. It encompasses a spectrum of concern, from the promotion of well-being of all children, to the protection of the smaller number of children whose needs are not being met, including needs for protection. We are increasingly aware of the damaging effects of abuse and neglect upon children's learning. (Daniel in Baginsky, 2008, p. 7)

Although the term has no equivalent in Norwegian and drawing largely from developments within the UK-context, I apply safeguarding in this thesis to mean the *prevention and intervention* of HSB.

'Transformative safeguarding', as applied in this study, is a normative term and focuses therefore on improving teachers' current safeguarding practices. The normative aspect is underlined by emphasising that teachers are human rights defenders, where their professional duty is to keep children in their care safe from harm. In this context, 'transformative practice' is described as:

> A synergistic relationship between the personal and political; a need for decolonized and democratic organizations and healing spaces; attention to means and process; an understanding that oppression has a negative impact on mind, body, spirit, and interpersonal relations; and attention to individual and collective practices for care and inquiry that are needed to heal oppression and trauma. (Pyles, 2018, p. 181)

1.1.3 Motives for the study

Children's perspectives and worldviews have always captivated me, and I believe that we (the adults) can learn many important things by listening to them. Learning how to listen to children implies seeing the world from the child's point of view and understanding *how* children communicate with us. Their point of views often contrast with adults' perspectives because of the inherent inequality of power between the two parties. Thus, understanding how children negotiate their space and agency in conditions where they have limited definition power is crucial to understanding how they interact with us. In the case of children facing sexual abuse or other adverse childhood experiences, adults are particularly obliged to listen to them, and to act accordingly. However, research shows that children often do not tell adults about these horrific experiences, and that adults struggle to identify or respond to such stories (Estyn, 2021; Halvorsen et al., 2020, Smahel et al., 2020). There is a lingering societal taboo connected to these experiences that often results in silence, shame and victim-blaming.

I have spent most of my professional life wanting to make a difference for children who face adversities on their own, and I see that through my journey as a child, teacher, mother and researcher, this drive has been one constant factor. In striving to be a transparent and reflexive researcher, it is necessary to start this thesis by sharing some of my personal experiences in life since they in large part have influenced how I view the world and my professional work. As shall be seen, everything is indeed connected, or interdependent, as Nel Noddings (2013) would phrase it.

To start with the beginning, my own experiences as a child have motivated me to try to understand how adults can become more attentive and sensitive to children who face adversity, and how they can offer what the child would consider help in such a situation. Growing up as a child, I endured several adverse childhood experiences. I periodically experienced poverty, bullying in school and abusive relationships in my childhood, and these experiences resulted in a latent insecurity within me. What was clear to me from an early age was that I could not talk about these experiences with the adults around

me. In the beginning, this was because I considered these experiences normal. No one had told me that there are some things that are harmful for children to experience, so I just did not know what a healthy childhood looked like. The insecurity that I felt I therefore attributed to my own shortcomings and developed a notion of me being broken and a failure. Later on, my behaviour became more aggressive because this was the only way I managed to deal with this feeling, and I experienced that adults started to become concerned and worried about me. Especially in school. However, during all the conversations around their concern I do not remember anybody ever asking me *why* I was angry, and after a while I experienced that I actually became the problem. My way out of this downward spiral was that we moved, and I got a fresh start in a new school where I met a teacher who actually saw me and cared about me. I believe that saved me.

In my adult life, I have always been drawn to arenas where I can work with children and try to make a difference in their lives. Inspired by my own teacher, I wanted to be the safe adult I had been missing in primary school. After I finished upper secondary school I started by working one year as an assistant in kindergarten. This was followed by a year in Uganda through a youth exchange programme where I worked as a teacher in a primary boarding school and at a centre for street-connected and marginalised children. These experiences motivated me to pursue teacher education in Norway, specialising in developing studies with fieldwork in primary schools in Tanzania. Furthermore, I took a Master's degree in Multicultural and International Education, where I did fieldwork in primary schools in Uganda for six months. Doing research on how language policies negatively affect students' identity and culture in primary schools introduced me to works of great thinkers, such as Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Ngugi wa Thing'o, Kwesi Kwaa Prah, Birgit Brock-Utne and, last but not least, Paolo Freire (Draugedalen, 2006). While in Uganda I also met the man I later married, and together we have two children.

Being a mother for these two brilliant and fierce daughters who keep on kicking down doors and breaking glass ceilings wherever they go is by far my greatest joy and pride in life. However, watching them sometimes encounter ignorance, discrimination and

profiling in society is not, and this is my ultimate motivation for changing the system from within. As an educator, I often become furious with how rigid and backward the school system continues to be. I have worked over 10 years in urban and rural schools in Norway as a primary school teacher, most often with children who have had needs that the traditional school system failed to meet. These children were often labelled as having *special needs*. However, many times the needs were not needs at all, but a sense of being different. The common denominator was that they felt like they did not belong, or that they were misunderstood or that they even felt excluded from the class and school community they were forced to spend most of their time in every day. Edward Said (1995) refers to this process as being *othered*. Consequently, many of the children acted out, and ended up becoming the self-fulfilling prophecies for others' concern. These experiences are indeed similar to how I felt and reacted when I grew up.

In 2015, I was part of the first class of the University of South-Eastern Norway's (USN) pioneering advanced studies programme for professionals entitled 'Sexual Abuse in a Lifetime Perspective'. This education introduced me to new perspectives through research on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) and Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB), and completely changed my viewpoints on schools' role and teachers' responsibility for safeguarding children. Having the opportunity to discuss these perspectives in class with professionals from other services also showed me the complexity of interdisciplinary cooperation when it comes to concerns for children's behaviours and potential interventions. I became preoccupied with integrating the new perspectives into my work as a teacher and started advocating for enhanced interdisciplinary cooperation within the school arena to intervene more successfully when encountering concerning and challenging behaviours among students. I discovered then that children's *sexual behaviours,* in particular, triggered high emotions in professionals. These reactions motivated me to explore how to effectively safeguard against behaviours that were considered taboo among professionals. As a part of my attempts to create public awareness about HSB in schools, I published my exam paper in the Norwegian journal *Spesialpedagogikk [Special pedagogy]* (see Draugedalen, 2018).

The newly acquired knowledge also changed the way I viewed the feelings about my own behaviours in childhood and ended up offering me a language and scientific theories to express, process and heal my experiences. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I learnt how caring relations with significant others can have transformational power and create hope for a better future amid adversity. I have realised that this *is* indeed every teacher's potential superpower. Moreover, in sharing my own story, I also want to contribute to breaking down the existing taboos about adverse childhood experiences and try to model the very recommendations that I advocate for teachers in this thesis. I have learnt that this process can be expressed as *posttraumatic growth* (Calhoun and Tedeschi, 2014).

While I see that my personal experiences of othering in the school system have indeed shaped me, I recognise that I have still inhabited a relatively privileged position in both school and society by the mere fact of being a cis-gendered white woman. I am also aware that most teachers in the primary school system in Norway are teachers just like me, cis-gendered white women (as reflected in Statistics Norway (2021), and the demographics of my informants in Tables 4.2 and 4.3). However, Norwegian students today, on the other hand, increasingly represent a more multicultural and diverse demographic (Osler & Skarra, 2021), as do my daughters. Professor Christopher Emdin (2016) has elaborated extensively on how such a 'culture-gap' in schools in the US negatively affects Black children in his book entitled "For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood... and the Rest of Y'all Too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education".

From a feminist critical standpoint, I therefore argue in this thesis that it is vital to apply an intersectional lens to safeguarding against HSB in schools. Such safeguarding means sensitivity to the fact that girls *are* at higher risk of being the target of sexual violence and therefore do need special protection, as outlined by the Council of Europe's Istanbul convention (CoE, 2011). To this extent, Simone de Beauvoir (1997) has provided some compelling arguments with respect to girls and women being othered in society in her book appropriately entitled *The Second Sex*.

However, transformative safeguarding also means sensitivity to ***not*** stigmatise boys as a group, or for that matter, *reinforcing stereotypes* of any kind. Davis & Marsh (2020, p. 256-7) describe othering processes of Black children as *Adultification:* "when Black children are perceived as being less innocent and less vulnerable, and subsequently not afforded the same protection as their non-Black peers". Indeed, Firmin and colleagues (2022, p. 16) have documented how such profiling of Black adolescents is both an undermining and extensive trend in services' safeguarding practices in the Global North:

> Wider attitudes towards young people tend towards suspicion and hostility, with an underpinning assumption that anti- social or criminal activity is involved when they occupy public spaces. This is particularly true for Black young people, who are increasingly losing all trust in statutory agencies, as their presence is vilified and controlled.

Furthermore, a study from Norway has shown how the added vulnerability of intersecting identities can result in being more at risk of intimate partner violence (IPV):

> Simultaneously being excluded or discriminated against by the cultural ingroup on the basis of sexual orientation, and being excluded or discriminated against by the majority group on the basis of ethnicity, race, and/or sexual orientation, is the case for most of our participants. (Ummak et al., 2022, p. 18)

Thus, as professionals we are obliged to understand the intersectional juxtaposition of how trauma often is expressed as behaviours to be in a position where we can help children while upholding their human rights and dignity. As a mother and an educator in this context, I want to contribute to a 'dignified and relational' safeguarding of children in school, where teachers create space for children's voices while being mindful of their own position of power. Furthermore, as professionals, we are obliged to recognise how we can be triggered and re-traumatised ourselves, and that we might need help at some point. To recognise these emotions in ourselves *is* to be professional, in my opinion, but this requires great courage and honesty on the part of teachers. I therefore contend that school leaders and frontline services must also be mindful of their positions of power when creating space for teacher's voices in safeguarding, and must be sensitive to offering support that teachers experience as helpful in demanding situations.

1.1.4 Public Sector PhD design

As a teacher who has worked many years in the education system I have experienced many practical challenges in schools' approaches to prevent and intervene when dealing with challenging behaviours. Learning about the "Public Sector PhD" design, I immediately knew that this was a suitable design for my project. A public PhD differs slightly from traditional PhD designs at universities. In 2014, the Research Council of Norway (RCN) started to fund organisations in the public sector to enable employees to carry out research through a programme entitled "Public Sector PhD". By the time I applied for my project in the spring of 2018, RCN (2018) had funded 117 public PhD projects in Norway. Half way through 2020, there were 28 public PhD projects within the education sector, four of these conducted by teachers in primary and secondary school (Mausethagen et al., 2021).

The Norwegian government promotes this design for three reasons: 1) to increase long term and relevant competence building and research activity in public organisations, 2) to increase research recruitment in the public sector, and 3) to enhance interaction between academia and the public sector (RCN, 2018). As with traditional PhDs, the candidate can choose between completing the project in three or four years. However, when choosing a four-year public PhD project, the candidate must complete the 25% mandatory work in the public sector instead of the university.

My four-year PhD design has been a tripartite cooperation between RCN, the public sector and the university, in my case between RCN, Tønsberg municipality and the University of South-Eastern Norway. Thus, a practical implication of the public sector PhD design is that the study contains two project proposals (one for RCN and one for USN). The USN project proposal, following the standard academic requirements for PhD projects, focuses on the scientific process of doing research. The project proposal for RCN focuses more on policy and practice implications the PhD project will have for the municipality and the greater Norwegian society. The following excerpt from my initial PhD proposal to RCN illustrates the unique features in a public PhD design:

> The aim of the project is to produce practical knowledge on the identification of and intervention for children who display HSB that can further develop cooperation between various municipal services so that the municipality can spearhead innovative initiatives with special expertise on this topic. The PhD project will produce valuable insights for the municipality into how the inter-agency cooperation between schools, frontline services and specialised services can be further developed around children and young people who display HSB by strengthening teachers' competence on safeguarding. The acquired knowledge, and the doctoral thesis as a whole, will be an important part of the municipality's future work with public health in general, and children and young people who display HSB in particular. Both the Trauma-Informed Care approach and the Traffic Light Tool can be used in all services that work with children and young people, and increasing focus is planned on implementing these approaches in services. Through this pioneering project, the municipality can develop a unique competence in intervening when children and young people display HSB and improve the inter-agency cooperation model between schools, frontline services and specialised services that will continue after the project ends. (Excerpt from my project proposal to RCN, 2018, p. 9, my translation.)

The focus on *practice* in the project proposal to RCN has resulted in me doing a lot of work in the field, trying to resolve real-life challenges together with other professionals, (as will be elaborated on in section 4.7.3). Hence, the specific design of my PhD has allowed me to experience interdisciplinary cooperation first-hand, and consequently allowed me to carry out more practice-oriented and 'hands-on' applied educational research since I was already working closely with schools.

1.1.5 Aim, research questions and design

When reviewing the existing literature on HSB in school and identifying knowledge gaps (elaborated on in Chapter two) considering my own professional and personal experiences, I decided I wanted to contribute to what I deem to be a necessary paradigm shift in the education system. Inspired by the developments of Contextual Safeguarding (Firmin, 2017) in the UK, I argue that such a shift also means abandoning individualised approaches and systems for behaviours:

> Individualised systems ask people to behave differently in persistently unsafe and unequal conditions; their behaviour (and not the context in which it occurs) is the target of the system (Firmin and Lloyd, 2022, p. 12).

In trying to contribute to a more 'child-oriented system of care', I wanted this thesis to be a catalyst for transforming teachers' safeguarding role against HSB by emphasising their role as human rights defenders.

Thus, in an ambitious attempt to enhance public awareness and advocate for systemic change based on the Council of Europe's (2020) public-health approach to prevention, the overarching aim of this exploratory study is to:

Strengthen teachers' transformative safeguarding for children who display HSB through enhanced interdisciplinary cooperation between schools and frontline service providers.

The study has three objectives (Os) and five research questions (RQs):

- O1: Create a research-based overview of teachers' knowledge and competence about children who display HSB, how they respond and who they cooperate with, to identify challenges in the cooperation between schools and frontline services

  RQ 1: How do teachers understand and respond to HSB?

  RQ 2: What support systems do teachers identify in safeguarding against HSB?

  RQ 3: How do teachers identify support and engage with school-based colleagues/other professionals/service providers?

- O2: Explore strategies to strengthen teachers' safeguarding for children who display HSB in schools

  RQ 4: What do teachers need to implement transformative safeguarding in schools?

- O3: Explore frontline service providers' support for teachers when encountering HSB in schools

  RQ 5: How can frontline services support and strengthen teachers' transformative safeguarding in schools?

This PhD consists of this overarching paper and four published articles. Articles I and II address RQs 1, 2, and 3. Article III addresses RQ 4, while Article IV addresses RQ 5.

1.2 Summary

In this chapter I have accounted for the HSB phenomenon and elaborated on my personal motives for pursuing a PhD project dedicated to 'transformative safeguarding' for teachers. Furthermore, I have also described the particular public PhD design project with the intention of providing a holistic backdrop for the study. Lastly, I have presented the overarching aim, objectives and research questions guiding the study.

In the next chapter I will explore what is known about teachers' understandings of and responses to HSB in the school context.

2 Review of the Literature on HSB in Schools

In this chapter I present the school context as a site where harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) occurs. Then I review the current literature and introduce six key themes emerging from existing research on teachers' understandings of and responses to HSB in schools. I also explore how Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) may be linked to the presentation of HSB in children. Finally, I account for the current Norwegian context and present studies of children's perspectives on HSB in schools, as well as the current status of HSB and interdisciplinary cooperation.

2.1 Understanding the behaviour in a school context

HSB among children and young people presents a vast challenge for societies, and prevention of child sexual abuse (CSA) should therefore include intervening when such behaviour arises at the lowest possible threshold (Hackett, 2020; 2014). HSB in school contexts has indeed been raised as a global concern for the last 30 years (Allnock & Atkinson, 2019), and early empirical studies (such as Kaeser et al., 2000 and Larson & Svedin, 2002) have underlined the importance of this context when observing sexual behaviour in young children. However, recent studies point to the need to detect HSB at an earlier age to prevent CSA, as primary and secondary prevention efforts in school are still currently underdeveloped (Ey & McInnes, 2020; Hackett, 2020). This may be rather surprising considering the significance of the school as a social arena in universal primary prevention measures (CoE, 2020). Due to the amount of time children and young people spend in the school system, this site *is* especially suited for prevention and intervention of HSB (Firmin et al., 2019). It is also arguably more cost-effective:

> Situating prevention interventions in school settings (vs. clinics) offers the broader public health benefit of near-universal reach that can be targeted to specific age groups and delivered at relatively low cost. (Letourneau et al., 2022, p. 2)

However, HSB is an ongoing problem in institutions such as schools where groups of children are gathered, and studies have found that *school cultures* influence students'

behaviours (Firmin, 2017; Lloyd, 2019; Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017). Hackett (2020, p. 18) specifies '*context*-driven' behaviours:

> For the majority of children, their sexual behaviours may not be reflective of individual pathology, but of problematic or abusive cultural norms. In other words, the behaviours are often circumstantial, rather than preferential.

While studies have addressed schools' role in the identification of HSB (Hackett et al., 2016; Smith et al., 2014), little is still known about teachers' understanding of and responses to HSB.

2.2 Overview of the research field

The international literature on teachers' understanding of and responses to HSB has largely been an under-researched academic field. However, some studies from around the world have provided valuable data on teachers' perspectives on safeguarding against HSB in schools. Below, six emerging themes from studies on teachers and HSB are presented.

Teachers' understandings of HSB and identified need for training. Studies from various countries have identified teachers' lack of understanding of the phenomenon as a possible rationale for their failure to act upon the presented behaviours in schools. Ryan's (2000) and Kaeser et al.'s (2000) studies from the US found that primary school teachers often failed to report HSB because they were unsure of whether the behaviours were healthy or harmful. Similarly, in a study from the UK, Davies and colleagues (2000) noted that their informants (pre-school teachers) seemed to act on their own subjective beliefs when responding to sexualised behaviour. Larsson & Svedin's (2002) study from homes and day-care centres for 3–6-year-olds in Sweden revealed that parents observed HSB more often than teachers did, and that teachers observed more general behaviour problems. At the same time, the teachers also reported a lack of knowledge and training in childhood sexuality. A study from Finland (Sandnabba and Santtila, 2003, p. 579) arrived at similar conclusions when day-care personnel observed sexual behaviours in children 2 to 7 years of age. However, the authors pointed out "The results

suggest that child sexual behavior reported by day-care personnel may provide useful information about the development of children's sexuality". Similarly, earlier theoretical and practice-oriented literature emphasised the necessity of *training* to respond appropriately to the observed behaviour (Carmody, 2009; Carson, 2006; Chrisman & Couchenour, 2002; Essa & Murray, 1999; Hackett & Taylor, 2008; Horton, 1996).

In recent studies, Shawler et al. (2019) found that caregivers and school personnel were most often the first people to identify HSB in schools. Comparatively, 40% of the teachers in an online survey with 107 primary and pre-school educators in Australia reported having observed HSB in schools (Ey & McInnes, 2018). The same study found that the teachers struggled to classify the observed behaviour (McInnes & Ey, 2019), and that even though guidelines and policies do exist on paper nationally, teachers were insecure about HSB and reported that they both wanted and needed more training and support in identifying and responding to the behaviour (Ey et al., 2017).

Teachers' lack of knowledge on HSB has been identified among teachers in Italian primary schools (Miragoli et al., 2017), secondary schools in the UK (Allnock & Atkinson, 2019; Firmin et al., 2019; Lloyd & Bradbury, 2022; Waters et al., 2022), Ethiopia (Altinyelken & Le Mat, 2018) and in case studies from South African and Norwegian upper secondary schools (Makhasane & Mtembhu, 2019; Goldschmidt-Gjerløw & Trysnes, 2020). Lloyd's (2019) study from the UK found that students reported that they experience sexual harm in secondary schools, but that staff were often not aware of interventions and responses to HSB and therefore did not always respond appropriately. Teachers in secondary schools in Canada reported that initial teacher education had not prepared them to intervene in cases of sexual harassment, and that they were rarely given opportunities for further training (Meyer, 2008). The same lack of training was found among special educators in India working with students with intellectual disability (ID) (Nair & Jose, 2017), and special educators in Indonesia (Tsuda et al., 2017), as well as child-care providers in the US (Martin, 2014).

Lloyd (2018) and Phippen et al. (2018) documented and addressed teachers' lack of knowledge of and response to *Technology Assisted Harmful Sexual Behaviour (referred*

to as TA-HSB). TA-HSB is defined as HSB where there is an element of technology involved, either online or through the use of computer technology (Lewis, 2018).

Content and effects of HSB training for teachers. Studies have shown that training in children's sexual health has a positive effect on educators' knowledge and attitudes (Aboksari et al., 2021; Counterman & Kirkwood, 2013; Hackett, 2020; UNFPA, 2015). Recent studies in the US further focus on *perpetration prevention* (Assini-Meytin et al., 2020; Letourneau et al., 2017, 2022; Ruzicka et al., 2021), where, for example, the researchers at the Moore Center for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse have developed a school-based prevention programme called "Responsible Behavior with Younger Children" (RBYC). The programme has shown promising results in decreasing prevalence of HSB in the pilot schools (Letourneau et al., 2022). The "perpetration prevention" intends to both empower students to talk about CSA (abuse of younger children) in schools, and teachers to address HSB with their students (Assini-Meytin et al., 2020; Ruzicka et al., 2021).

Two studies from the UK and US respectively, found that even short training programmes for teachers had a notable effect on teachers' subjective competence in approaching HSB (Charnaud & Turner, 2015; Yoder et al., 2016), whereas three studies (Clements et al., 2017; Hackett et al., 2013; Vorland et al., 2018) showed the same result for inter-professional and interdisciplinary training in HSB (where teachers were included in the samples). The participants in all the studies reported that they felt more confident in working with children and young people displaying HSB after the training, and Hackett et al. (2013, p. 341) also reported that the participants "understood the reasons leading to sexually abusive behaviours in young people and the frequency of family problems in young people's backgrounds". Clements et al. (2017) claimed that one of the most important aspects of the short HSB training was that it creates an awareness among professionals. The authors maintained, (as Kaeser et al. in 2000), that awareness of HSB is crucial because it can facilitate earlier intervention at the lowest level within universal services, such as schools. However, Clements et al. (2017) argued that creating awareness is only the first step in HSB training, and further training for

teachers should be comprehensive with a variety of activities over time supported by other services. As an example, Weingarten et al.'s (2018) study from Hawaii showed that school staff reported role-playing as the most helpful training in implementing a sexual violence prevention programme in class.

Student–teacher relationship and school connectedness. Studies on safeguarding against HSB in schools emphasise the link between the students' subjective experiences of school connectedness and relationships with teachers, and argue that this connection is essential for a successful HSB intervention in a young person's life (Allnock & Atkinson, 2019; Hackett & Taylor, 2008; Sprott et al., 2005; Yoder et al., 2016). Sprott et al. (2005, p. 13) further claimed that children's experience of feeling connected to school could compensate for environmental risks and prevent further increase of violent behaviour. Likewise, Yoder et al. (2016) stated that a strong school bond could enhance treatment outcomes and reduce the risk factors for young people who already have committed sexual crimes. Lloyd's (2019) study also found that in school environments where students felt supported by teachers, students were more likely to contact them for help when experiencing HSB. Similarly, Firmin et al. (2022) have argued that safeguarding practices are strengthened when professionals in general have good relations to the young people they set out to safeguard.

Emotional impact on teachers and its consequences. Studies have addressed the emotional impact on teachers when safeguarding against HSB in schools. McInnes & Ey (2019) found in their study that the danger of re-traumatisation and burnout was high among teachers, and educators reported distress, emotional exhaustion and stress when dealing with children who displayed HSB. The stress was higher where they felt unsupported by site leaders. Goldschmidt-Gjerløw's (2022; 2019) study found similar trends while arguing that cultural taboos surrounding child sexual abuse still prevail among teachers, preventing them from adequately addressing it in upper secondary schools. Other studies showed that teachers who felt emotionally strained and overworked were less likely to stop sexual harassment when it occurred (Allnock & Atkinson, 2019; Meyer, 2008).

Furthermore, scholars have contended that teachers are at risk of both developing and adopting a school culture that can be destructive because of the social influence the staff have on each other (Allnock & Atkinson, 2019; Firmin, 2019; Lloyd, 2019; Meyer, 2008). Bearing this in mind, Meyer (2008) claimed that teachers who are new to a school are particularly vulnerable to such a process in learning and adopting the hidden curriculum and unwritten rules of the school. The author maintained that this process could sometimes result in unconsciously adopting bad habits and lower professional standards.

Generally, studies pointed out that lack of resources, time and support from school leaders created an emotional burden in safeguarding efforts. Meyer's (2008) study found that time pressure and excessive workloads put on teachers were two factors that prevented them from responding to verbal harassment in a consistent manner. Likewise, in Allnock & Atkinson's (2019) study teachers reported resourcing problems as the reason for not having the capacity to develop close relationships with their students. Studies indicate that teachers who felt unsupported by their school leaders were more unlikely to react to sexual harassment (Allnock & Atkinson, 2019; Firmin et al., 2019; Meyer, 2008).

As the school leaders are fundamental in shaping the school culture, and ultimately the staff's responses to harassment, a type of 'chain-reaction' in the lack of responses was found in the literature: By not addressing sexual harassment, school leaders signalled to their staff that such violations were not considered serious, and thus the teachers should not act upon them either. Unresponsive leaders therefore resulted in teachers not acting upon sexual harassment and violations, which again resulted in students also giving up on reacting to presented HSB and instead starting to accept it, and sometimes even normalising harmful sexual behaviours (Allnock & Atkinson, 2019; Fineran & Bennett, 1998; Goldschmidt-Gjerløw, 2022). Thus, McInnes & Ey (2019) argued that teachers must be offered the opportunity to discuss emotionally challenging themes frequently, and that external 'expert support' should come to the school site to tutor teachers. In comparison, a study about CSA perpetrated by educators, Christensen &

Darling (2020) pointed out that mental health difficulties and stressors experienced by teachers contributed to their abusive behaviour towards students. Although their research is about teachers abusing students, the authors argue the need for supervision and a support system for teachers due to their ethical responsibility as role models:

> Teachers need to clearly understand their inherent position of power and trust in any relationship with children and young people in their care; that they are the adult in any given situation and the responsibility for their behaviour – professionally, morally, and ultimately legally – lies with them. (Christensen & Darling, 2020, p. 33)

Inclusive education and whole-school safeguarding. Early literature in the HSB field pointed out that schools have a major role in countering adverse childhood experiences or dysfunctional family attachments by providing secure attachments to children through safe environments and healthy relationships (Carson, 2006; Hackett & Taylor, 2008). Several studies have addressed the exclusion of students who display HSB from schools and argued that contrary to what such zero-tolerance policies aim to achieve, namely safer school environments, the result is often the reverse (Firmin et al., 2022; Hackett & Taylor, 2008; Letourneau et al., 2022; Lloyd &Bradbury, 2022; McNeely et al., 2002; Sprott et al., 2005). Indeed, several authors have pointed out that the exclusion might end up increasing the very behaviour the school is trying to prevent. By excluding someone who displays challenging behaviour, the school may potentially cut the ties the vulnerable student has to friends and a stable environment, which in the end can result in reinforcing symptoms of antisociality (Levenson & Socia, 2016; Yoder et al., 2016). The Association for the Treatment & Prevention of Sexual Abuse (ATSA, 2017, p. 78) has addressed the very same mechanisms within traditional crime punishment stating that; "(…) while juvenile sex crime policies might have been crafted to mitigate risk, the available evidence shows these policies fail to achieve this aim".

Thus, scholars have advocated for a whole-school approach (WSA) to safeguarding, meaning that safeguarding practices must involve all staff members in the school, as well as being embedded in the curriculum (Firmin, 2019). They also underline the importance of education personnel building relationships with students, and of having

open and transparent policies and procedures (Allnock & Atkinson, 2019; Fyson, 2009; Scottish Government, 2020).

Two studies also found that the school administration (leaders) had an important role in creating an inclusive and safe school culture for both students and teachers, as well as providing time and resources necessary for teachers to implement the inclusion policy (Weingarten et al., 2018; Walker, 2020). Several studies have argued that these proactive measures are particularly important to prevent gendered violence and harassment in schools and, especially, to secure girls' safety (Carmody, 2009; Makhasane & Mthembu, 2019; Meyer, 2008; Walker, 2020).

Interdisciplinary cooperation and community-based approach. HSB interventions are often complex and multifaceted, and usually involve several services. Thus, interdisciplinary cooperation with partners outside schools has been emphasised as a precondition for successful holistic HSB interventions (Chambers et al., 2021; Charnaud & Turner, 2015; Firmin, 2019; Hackett et al., 2013; Lloyd, 2019). Moreover, interventions must be integrated throughout the whole school, as well as in the interdisciplinary partnership simultaneously to be effective. Ey & McInnes (2018) claimed that there is a need to train educators in how to respond to HSB and engage support services, where one recommendation to enhance the interdisciplinary cooperation for teachers is to work with professionals in other services on a regular basis. According to Lloyd's (2019) study, professionals in services that cooperated with schools reported that teachers experienced anxiety when it came to referring a problem, and that a way to mitigate teachers' anxiety was to provide educational staff with regular support and training. The suggested initiatives about teachers working closely with other services have also been supported by earlier research (Kaeser et al., 2000). Similarly, Vorland et al. (2018) argued that safeguarding against HSB in Norwegian schools also must encompass holistic training in relevant services at the same time. As a part of the holistic HSB approach, having systems and structures in place in schools enables them to become proactive sites in their HSB prevention and intervention efforts.

The Harmful Sexual Behaviour Framework (Hackett et al. 2019) is one comprehensive structure from the UK that aims to enhance the interdisciplinary response to HSB. The framework, consistent with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE, 2016) guidelines on HSB for young people, has a holistic approach to prevention and intervention work that also includes the education sector. Similarly, Meiksans et al. (2017) have developed a *Continuum of Responses for Harmful Sexual Behaviours* for the Commissioner for Children and Young People of Western Australia, containing a holistic approach to HSB.

Carmody (2009, p. 13) has argued, "Education alone will not prevent sexual assault. Rather it is a key strategy within a comprehensive multi-sectoral and multi-level response eliminating sexual and other forms of violence". In this respect, Meyer (2008) has found that the school leaders must take a lead role in the community to pioneer a more holistic transformation by engaging students, families, teachers and the greater community. Firmin et al. (2019) have elaborated on this idea and developed a comprehensive resource for schools addressing the various so-called 'levers' in "Beyond Referrals". Their resource is part of a more holistic approach to HSB for all relevant stakeholders using Firmin's (2017) Contextual Safeguarding (Lloyd et al., 2020a). Firmin et al. (2019) have provided a detailed approach to how schools can become proactive prevention sites. Simultaneously, the Contextual Safeguarding approach calls for a change in assessments made by social care and child welfare services. According to Lloyd et al. (2020b), these assessments should also consider the role school environments and the greater community play in the presentation of HSB, instead of solely focusing on the family context. In a call for a paradigm shift in safeguarding, Firmin et al. (2022) emphasise cooperation between relevant actors in young people's contexts.

Equally, Yoder et al. (2016) have argued that by targeting the school system as a part of a holistic approach within the community per se, more stability is created in the treatment efforts, and that various stakeholders in the community can all contribute to a safer society by enforcing the same prevention messages as the school system. By developing strong bonds to the greater community, schools are in a better position to

influence society's attitudes and actions (Ey & McInnes, 2018; Meyer, 2008). Other scholars contend that successful and holistic prevention needs the whole community to stand up against sexual violence, no matter which role they have (Carmody, 2009; Chaffin et al., 2006). In addressing the greater community, Ryan (2005, p. 132) appealed to "a collective sense of adult responsibility to raise a generation of children who are nonviolent".

To date, two literature reviews have been conducted on teachers' responses to HSB (McKibbin & Humphreys, 2021 about educators' and health practitioners' responses, and Kor et al., 2022 about school responses). Both reviews point to the need for a comprehensive approach in safeguarding against HSB, and McKibbin & Humphreys (2021, p. 12) propose a "Building Block" Model of tiered responses across services:

> The model identifies the skills required by frontline workers to undertake the process of identification and response as well as the organization-level and system-level scaffolding needed for good practice. What becomes clear through the model is that mandatory reporting and other safeguarding legislation—the traditional approach to addressing HSB—only addresses the issue of HSB at the "pointy end" of the public health model of prevention. The "Building blocks" model indicates that practice must span the entire public health spectrum, linking universal services with secondary and tertiary prevention measures.

Similarly, Kor et al. (2022, p. 13) conclude that "a multi-sectoral approach bringing in different expertise and resources from child protection, paediatric professionals, and children, youth and families services is a key enabler for effective HSB prevention and response".

2.2.1 HSB and prevalence of Adverse Childhood Experiences

It is important to underline that children and young people who develop HSB are a highly heterogeneous group, and there are multiple reasons why they display these behaviours (Silovsky et al., 2020; Hackett, 2020). However, several studies have found that *adversity* often plays a key role in developing HSB (Anderson & Parkinson, 2018; O'Brien, 2008; Hackett, 2014, 2020; Tougas et al., 2016). Finkelhor et al. (2007) have documented the

multiple stressors of the cumulative impact of trauma, whereas Tarren-Sweeney (2008) points to cumulative impact being a possible predictor of HSB. Studies also find that young people who display HSB often come from dysfunctional family households (Malvaso et al., 2020; Miragoli et al., 2017; Righthand & Welch, 2001), and/or have experienced violence and abuse (Cale & Lussier, 2017; Dillard & Beaujolais, 2019). Hackett (2020, p. 26) maintains that although there is a poignant lack of empirical evidence about HSB prevalence and causes, "Families of young people with sexually abusive behaviours are widely described in the literature as multiply troubled and dysfunctional". Furthermore, learning disabilities are often overrepresented among young people who display HSB (Fyson, 2009).

In their systematic literature review on school responses to HSB, Kor et al. (2022, p. 2) elaborate on various experiences and exposures in childhood that may contribute to development of HSB:

> Systematic reviews showed that most children and young people who display HSB, particularly females, are also themselves victims of sexual abuse (Malvaso et al., 2020; Seto & Lalumière, 2010). However, the victim-to-offender correlation alone is not sufficient to explain HSB because not all children and young people who display HSB have a history of maltreatment (Allardyce & Yates, 2018). Domestic abuse, sexualized care environments, inadequate sex education, harmful consumption of pornography, and lack of pro-social role models are other important contributing factors.

McKibbin et al. (2016, p. 666) conclude that the general HSB treatment literature has undergone a paradigm shift, in that the most recent literature tends to address "sexually abusive behaviour on multiple ecological levels and has a particular focus on a young person's experience of trauma".

Thus, theories on *Adverse Childhood Experiences* (ACEs) are often included in the current literature on prevention and intervention of HSB among children and young people. The term ACE is often associated with Felliti et al.'s (1998) study on how adverse childhood experiences directly influence physical and mental health in adulthood. The original ACEs were divided into three categories: abuse (all forms), neglect and household

dysfunction. The authors found an exponential link between the number of ACEs in childhood and the risk of reduced physical and mental health (and even early death) in adulthood (Felitti & Anda, 2010).

As seen in the introduction, WHO (2017) has declared that CSA is a global public health problem, which indicates the enormous scope of the problem. Similarly, Felitti & Anda (2010) have found the same for ACEs in general. Hence, within the field of mental health prevention ACE categories are often viewed as risk factors, and children and young people who experience a high prevalence of risk factors are categorised as a 'vulnerable group' (Shaffer & Yates, 2010). Studies have also shown that an intergenerational transmission of ACEs often occurs due to previous generations' untreated ACEs (Narayan et al., 2021, Woods-Jaeger et al., 2018).

However, the ACE study has been criticised for excluding relevant categories, and in the US, Finkelhor et al. (2013) found that potential ACEs occurring outside the home, such as peer rejection, peer victimisation and community violence, correlated with deteriorated mental health, often more so than the original ACEs. Based on these and other findings, Cronholm et al. (2015) developed a model for 'expanded ACEs' that includes bullying, community violence, neighbourhood safety, racism and living in foster care. Similarly, the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) in England has claimed that categories such as poverty, discrimination, peer violations, low birth weight and developmental difficulties in childhood are stronger predictors of deteriorated health in adulthood than the original ACEs (Asmussen & McBride, 2021; Asmussen et al., 2020). Furthermore, Danese (2019, p. 246) cautions that "simple, attractive narratives about childhood trauma may be inaccurate and hide the complexity that must be addressed to improve the lives of traumatised children". Smith & Pollak (2021, p. 82) advocate for a rethinking of the original ACE concepts and categories, as "most categories of adversity overlap, and most brain and behavioral outcomes are associated with many different aspects of adversity".

While recognising the complex dilemmas of categorising and interpreting HSB within the ACE framework, this thesis stresses the connection between HSB and ACEs primarily when addressing teachers' responsibility to safeguard vulnerable younger children.

2.2.2 The Norwegian context

The current status of children's rights in school and the prevalence of HSB. Norway, like other Nordic countries, promotes a strong human rights rhetoric (Lile, 2019; Osler & Skarra, 2021). The provisions in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) have been adopted into domestic law; human rights are said to underpin education policy; and teachers are tasked with transmitting the nation's collective self-image to the next generation (Lile, 2019). Norway has also ratified the Council of Europe's (CoE) Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (the Lanzarote Convention, introduced in 2007) and the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention, introduced in 2011). As an official rule, the principles of human rights, CRC and social justice are deeply ingrained in the education system (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019a). Schools are obliged under Chapter 9 A of the Education Act (1998) to ensure that children are safe from bullying of any kind. Furthermore, as a part of the normative ethical platform, when executing their profession, teachers in Norway pledge to intervene and protect children against harm (Union of Education Norway, 2012). Thus, the human rights framework in education is an integral part of Norway's official commitment, including the implementation of Human Rights Education (HRE), as described in article 29 of the United Nations' (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Although Norway likes to pride itself with strong human rights rhetoric, various reports have documented a significant rise in HSB among children and youth in recent years, which often appears to go on undetected by the adults around them. The National Criminal Investigation Service (Kripos, 2017) pointed out in their report from 2016 that there was an alarming increase in the number of minors charged with rape. Their sample [n= 225] consisted predominantly of boys (only four girls were in the sample), where

over 30% of the children charged were under 15 years of age. Furthermore, the Ombudsperson for Children in Norway (2018) interviewed 200 young people between 15 and 19 years of age in a report entitled: “Everyone knows someone who has experienced it – conversations with youth about sexual harassment”. As the title indicates, the informants revealed that they are frequently exposed to HSB from their peers and urge schools to teach more about sexuality and sexual violations and to take a more active stance against sexual harm among peers. Similarly, the UEVO study from the Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies (NKVTS) with 9240 informants 12-16 years of age showed that 22% [n= 2003] reported that they had experienced HSB and sexual abuse from a peer, where 30% of them had not notified anyone (Hafstad & Augusti, 2019). The national Ungdata (youth) survey from 2020 (with a sample of 37 246 respondents combining secondary and upper secondary school) showed that 40% of the girls and 24% of the boys in upper secondary education had experienced unwanted sexual attention or sexual harassment (Bakken, 2020).

Furthermore, 50 young people between 14 and 19 years of age interviewed by Save the Children (Bergrav, 2020) reported that online pornography and contents with sexual violence are too accessible for children and that the contents influence their sexual behaviour. The informants in the study requested that safe adults, such as teachers, should address pornography with children and young people in an age appropriate and non-judgmental manner. The National Criminal Investigation Service (Kripos, 2022) offered similar recommendations in their report entitled “Children under 13 years of age who share sexualised videos”, although here they encouraged parents, and not teachers, to engage more in their children’s online activities in an age-appropriate and non-judgmental manner. The Norwegian Media Authority’s (2022) survey with 3200 informants 9–18 years of age, reported an increase in requests to share nude pictures. There was also a registered increase from 42% in 2018 to over half of the informants (13-18 years of age) who had viewed pornography on the internet in 2022 (50% of them had watched pornography before the age of 13).

In a survey conducted among teachers [n= 1151], only 12% reported that they had received adequate training to realise effective sexuality education (Sex & Samfunn [Sex & Society], 2022). In the same report, 47% of the young informants [n= 1140] 16-17 years of age stated that the quality of the current sexuality education is not good. Studies from Norway and Sweden have found that students do not necessarily consider teachers to be protective agents safeguarding their right to protection from harassment (Goldschmidt-Gjerløw, 2022; 2021; Korkmaz et al., 2022; Lagerlöf & Øverlien, 2022). These findings echo reports from the EU Kids Online 2020 survey (with 25 101 informants, 9-16 years of age from 19 European countries):

> The number of children who reported that they told no one about their negative experiences ranges between 4% (France) and 30% (Estonia). Most often, children told about the negative experience to a parent or friend, or both (rarely did they tell a teacher or professional whose job it is to help children). (Smahel et al., 2020, p. 7)

Meanwhile, comparable trends related to discrimination and racism have been identified in Norwegian schools. The Mental Health Youth Survey with 210 informants (16-31 years of age) revealed that three of four students with a Sami background had experienced discrimination and prejudice, predominantly in school (Hansen & With Skaar, 2021). Similarly, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2022) U-Report Norway survey with 1815 informants (13-19 years of age) showed that one of three students with a multicultural background had experienced racism. Informants in both reports expressed that teachers do not know how to safeguard effectively against racism and discrimination, as many do not identify the students' experiences as racism or discrimination. Moreover, a qualitative study on Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Among Ethnic and Sexual Minorities among nine women (aged 25–42) in Norway illustrates the explicit intersectional vulnerability of combined social identity markers:

> Though equality is a widely assumed characteristic of Norwegian society, government reports and our findings alike suggest that heteronormativity and racism do function as enhancive stressors among queer women of ethnic minorities within the context of IPV in Norway. (Ummak et al., 2022, p. 21)

Recently, the Norwegian authorities and judicial processes have been accused of being unable to recognise racism in Norwegian society. The leader of the Norwegian Centre against Racism, Hatem Ben Mansour, claimed that the *Anti-Discrimination Tribunal,* a governmental service, does not understand what racism is due to its members' lack of diversity. The centre has therefore stopped using the tribunal altogether as complaints about racism tend to be dismissed (Acharki, 2023, February 9).

The current status of HSB and interdisciplinary cooperation. The Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies (NKVTS) first brought attention to HSB as a phenomenon through a literature review over a decade ago (Kruse, 2011). In recent years, this centre has also provided three state-of-the-art research reports on HSB, which have influenced policy and practice relating to agencies' responses and cooperation. The first report (Holt et al., 2016) showed that professionals lack knowledge on and competence in HSB. The report also revealed a lack of routines for mapping sexual behaviour and for enhancing the cooperation between various service providers in HSB cases. Based on these findings, the government requested the centre to identify an updated status report on HSB treatment, competence and cooperation in Norway.

The second report (Askeland et al., 2017) revealed that neither Norway nor any of the other countries in the study (the UK and the Nordic countries) had succeeded in establishing national structures to ensure equal and comprehensive HSB treatment. The study also showed that both the cooperation between service providers and their competence on HSB varied to a high degree across the country. Various recommendations were proposed to ensure a more streamlined inter-agency approach to HSB; the National Competence Network on HSB should continue their work to ensure competence in prevention, risk assessment, evaluation and treatment in all regions in Norway. The National Clinical Network should coordinate the clinical HSB treatment for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry services nationally. Moreover, the five regional resource centres (Regional centres on violence, traumatic stress and suicide prevention

(RVTS) North, Mid, West, East and South) were to be responsible for increasing HSB competence in all regions in order to streamline a national structure.

In 2018, NKVTS published their third report (Vorland et al., 2018), this time investigating municipalities' frontline efforts on interdisciplinary cooperation in HSB cases. The report showed great variations in cooperation between the various frontline service providers in the municipalities, and informants reported confusion about roles, guidelines and responsibility for coordination in HSB cases. The study also showed that municipality employees lacked knowledge about HSB, and how to intervene. The recommendations underlined the importance of shared HSB training in the municipalities, especially for such frontline service providers as school and the healthcare services, who encounter children daily. The report emphasised the need to have clearer guidelines for the services' roles and the interdisciplinary cooperation in HSB cases. Many of the informants requested national guidelines. This was the first time teachers were interviewed about HSB and interdisciplinary cooperation in Norway, and the report highlighted the school arena as an important site for interdisciplinary cooperation. An additional smaller study (Øverli et al., 2018) investigating the municipal cooperation on HSB from the child welfare service's perspective confirmed the above variations in competence, cooperation and routines.

Protection from harm through primary prevention is currently gaining increasing attention through the government's focus on *public health awareness*. The new curriculum for primary and secondary schools, in force from 2020 (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019b), puts more emphasis on the teaching of physical and mental health for children. This focus also includes teaching of comprehensive sexuality education, which is now featured as part of several subjects in both primary and secondary school. However, the increased focus on sexuality in school has not yet resulted in any practical training for teachers, leaving it up to the individual schools and teachers to tackle the challenging issue alone (Svendsen et al., 2023). Findings from a recent study in upper secondary schools (Goldschmidt-Gjerløw, 2022,

2021, 2019; Goldschmidt-Gjerløw & Trysnes, 2020) reflect some of these difficulties experienced by teachers in addressing and intervening in HSB cases. The findings showed that teachers do not intervene adequately against sexual harassment, and that some teachers were often uncomfortable teaching about sexuality and relationships education. A recent analysis of Norway's intended realisation of Human Rights Education (HRE) in the Norwegian education system reveals a similar lack of clear commitment by the government in prioritising the teaching of human rights in classrooms (Lile, 2019).

Due to the above developments and NKVTS' recommendations, the RVTS Mid Central Region and Resource team for Concerning and Harmful Sexual Behaviour (REBESSA) received funding from the Directorate of Health to develop a guide on safeguarding against HSB for teachers in primary and secondary school, and was launched March 2021 (Sandvik et al., 2021). The structure of the guide contains a combined primary, secondary and tertiary prevention approach by drawing on the categorisation of sexual behaviours from the Traffic Light Tool (Family Planning Queensland, 2012; Brook, 2013; in Norwegian by Hegge, 2016). Chapters on healthy (green), problematic (amber) and harmful (red) sexual behaviour include recommended responses for teachers and other professionals. The school guide and the included e-learning tool aim to enhance HSB cooperation between schools and relevant services by presenting various services' roles and procedures.

This is the first guide of its kind in Norway and aims to strengthen teachers' safeguarding role in schools.

2.3 Summary

In this chapter I have reviewed the international and Norwegian literature on teachers' understandings and responses to HSB. Six emerging themes from the literature were identified and some significant knowledge gaps were pointed out. I have also discussed how adverse childhood experiences are potentially linked to HSB, and how this behaviour has implications for the school context. Children's perspectives on HSB in school have also been included to illuminate the child-oriented approach in this thesis.

In the next chapter, I draw on this presentation of the existing literature to develop the notion of 'transformative safeguarding' for teachers, where I will account for the legal and theoretical perspectives that I use in what I define as *a Child-Rights Framework* for transforming teachers' safeguarding role.

3 Legal and Theoretical Underpinnings of Transformative Safeguarding

In this chapter I will start by presenting the *Child-Rights Framework* as a foundation for teachers' transformative safeguarding role. I account for how children's rights are the guiding principle for states that have ratified the United Nations (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Council of Europe's (2007) Lanzarote Convention concerning safeguarding children. I will then scrutinise these normative international instruments' implications for teachers' professional mandate by drawing upon Human Rights Education. I apply Nel Noddings' (2013, 2006) perspectives on Ethics of Care in theorising a transformative safeguarding role for teachers. Noddings' theories are supplemented with literature on trauma-informed approaches when addressing the potential of teachers' unique position to safeguard children while being sensitive to intersectional impacts of trauma. Finally, I compliment this literature by drawing on the role of emotions to ensure that the envisioned safeguarding is sustainable and ethical.

Figure 3.1 illustrates the various theoretical components of teachers' transformative safeguarding role against HSB:

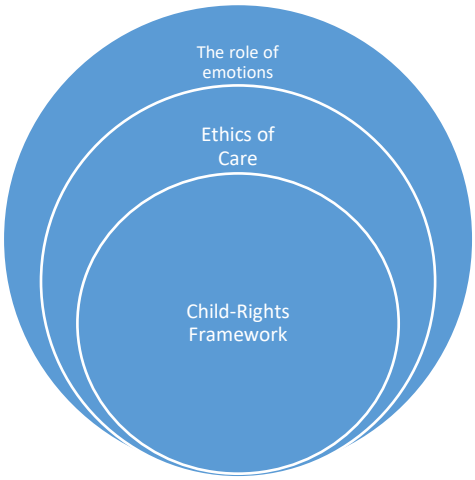

Figure 3-1 Legal and theoretical components of teachers' transformative safeguarding role against HSB

3.1 Child-Rights Framework

Firmin et al. (2022) advocate for youth-centred systems and interventions that are cooperative, intersectional and trauma-informed due to the particular significance and trademark of adolescence. While I recognise the specificities of adolescence, I argue that young children similarly have the same need for cooperative, intersectional and trauma-informed systems and interventions. Thus, I argue for child-centred systems and interventions through a *Child-Rights Framework*.

Although the focus of this thesis is on teachers, children are indeed the real subjects of transformative safeguarding. The underlying assumption is that by targeting teachers to improve their practice through upholding children's rights, all children will ultimately benefit from this practice. The Child-Rights Framework informs all the other safeguarding principles, as illustrated in Figure 3.1. The principles of CRC are an integral part of the Child-Rights Framework and permeate the very idea of transformative safeguarding for teachers. While the CRC provides a legal framework for member countries, it is optional for countries to ratify it. On this note, it is worth mentioning that 196 countries, with the US as the only exception, have ratified the convention. However, a country may ratify the CRC without incorporating the convention into national laws, as illustrated through the dilemmas discussed in Osler & Kato's (2022) study from the education system in Japan and Daniels' (2022) study from the Scottish education system. In the case of Norway, the country has ratified the convention and incorporated it into national law, so other laws have had to be adjusted.

Hence, CRC directs teachers' mandate to safeguard children legally, and I will account for these premises in the following subsection. In addition to CRC, the Lanzarote Convention has concrete implications for Norway's safeguarding practices against HSB in schools, and this convention is featured as the second legal underpinning of transformative safeguarding.

3.1.1 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

As a part of the human rights framework (UN, 1948), the CRC (United Nations, 1989) was formed as a concrete recognition of children's particular status and the need for a protective legal framework to uphold their unique human rights.

As mentioned above, Norway has incorporated the CRC into domestic law. Hence, the articles in the convention have direct consequences for how safeguarding should be implemented in schools in Norway, and I will therefore address the relevant articles I have drawn upon in the Child-Rights Framework applied to this thesis.

The first implication for teachers' safeguarding is that *the best interests of the child* should be the defining principle in any intervention, as formulated in article 3(1). Article 3(3) further underlines measures for securing adequate safeguarding. Like the previous principle, *children's participatory right* is another key feature of the child-rights framework, as formulated in article 12(1). Article 19(1) clearly articulates the responsibility of governmental employees, such as school staff and the frontline services, to safeguard children from all forms of physical or mental violence (including sexual abuse) by any means necessary.

An article that has direct implications *for teachers' legal mandate* to safeguard children is article 29, which makes explicit member states' goals for children's education. The article states that education should aim for, among other things 1(b) "The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations". Member states that have ratified and incorporated the CRC into domestic law are therefore legally obliged to implement Human Rights Education (HRE), which is detailed, for example, in the United Nations Declaration on HRE and Training (UNDHRET, 2011).

Safeguarding against child sexual abuse (both physically and virtually) is also specifically outlined in article 34:

> States Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, States Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent:
> (a) The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;
> (b) The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices;
> (c) The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials

Moreover, article 39 underlines member states' responsibility for promoting recovery and reintegration in the intervention of a child exposed to ACEs:

> States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts. Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.

Finally, article 40 concerns the legal considerations when a child is accused of an offence, such as HSB, and emphasises reintegration as a part of the intervention:

> States Parties recognize the right of every child alleged as, accused of, or recognized as having infringed the penal law to be treated in a manner consistent with the promotion of the child's sense of dignity and worth, which reinforces the child's respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of others and which takes into account the child's age and the desirability of promoting the child's reintegration and the child's assuming a constructive role in society

As noted, children committing offences against other children challenge a society's traditional responses to punishment, and the CRC requires alternative strategies for the prevention and intervention work as the children involved often are under the age of criminal responsibility (currently 15 years in Norway).

3.1.2 The Lanzarote Convention

The Council of Europe (CoE) monitors and assists member states' compliance with human rights standards and the implementation of CRC, and this includes Norway. In 2007, the Council launched the *Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse* (The Lanzarote Convention). The convention requires

member states to take legal steps to prevent sexual violence and to protect child victims, as articulated on their website:

> The Council of Europe Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, also known as "the Lanzarote Convention", requires criminalisation of all kinds of sexual offences against children. It sets out that states in Europe and beyond shall adopt specific legislation and take measures to prevent sexual violence, to protect child victims and to prosecute perpetrators. (CoE, 2023)

The Council of Europe's *Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child* (CDENF), also known as the Lanzarote committee, is responsible for monitoring and reporting on countries' implementation of the convention. In 2015, the committee released their first implementation report entitled "The framework", which focused on scrutinising countries' legal framework, judicial procedures and data collection mechanisms relating to child sexual abuse (CoE, 2015). Their second implementation report, entitled "The strategies", focused on improving countries' strategies, specified as the *structures*, *measures* and *processes in place* (CoE, 2018, p. 3). In this report, the committee recognises the particular problem of criminal responses regarding children and young people, and emphasises alternative approaches to HSB:

> The Lanzarote Committee
>
> -urges Parties that have not yet done so, to put in place effective intervention programmes or measures for persons, including children, who fear they may offend to prevent the risk of offences being committed,
>
> - invites Parties to pay special attention to children who fear they may offend. (CoE, 2018, p. 52)

Although using dated and controversial terminology in the title of the sub section: "The specific case of juvenile offenders", the committee (2018, p. 60) specifies the need for more age-appropriate and trauma-informed interventions relating to HSB:

> The Lanzarote Committee urges Parties who have not yet done so to put in place an offer dedicated to meet the developmental needs of children who sexually offend, including those who are below the age of criminal responsibility with a view to providing them adapted programmes or measures so that they can be helped.

According to the Norwegian Government's (2018) official website, Norway ratified the Lanzarote convention on May 15, 2018, and the convention came into force as of October 1 the same year. Furthermore, the Norwegian Ministry of Children and Families (2019, p. 8) submitted their first status report to the Lanzarote committee in 2019, reporting to the Council of Europe that Norway has procedures in place for safeguarding children in schools:

> The Framework Plan for Kindergartens requires staff to be conscious of the fact that children may be victims of neglect, violence and sexual abuse. Children in school have the right to a good and safe school environment free from bullying, violence, discrimination and other harassment. This includes protection from sexual abuse. The rules are stipulated in chapter 9 A of the Education Act. Schools are responsible for preventing, detecting and dealing with cases of violence, bullying and other harassment of children. In addition to enforcing the regulations, a lot of work is being done to improve the competence of school staff.

The Ministry also mentions Norway's initiative to develop HSB competence and treatment through the national clinical network, and that NKVTS is continuing their "measures aimed at strengthening the work targeted at offenders" (2019, p. 25).

The Council of Europe (2020) has increasingly addressed safeguarding children against HSB as being one of the measures for implementing the Lanzarote Convention. As an example, HSB received particular attention in the Council's Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021). In a literature review on HSB commissioned by the Council, Professor Simon Hackett (2020, p. 5) described this strategy:

> The Strategy has as one of its five priority areas "a life free from violence for all children". Peer violence and harmful sexual behaviour by children is one theme which the Strategy mid-term evaluation process identifies as a challenge requiring further action.

The Lanzarote committee released a concept paper later that year recognising the dilemma when it comes to HSB and lack of implemented interventions, acknowledging: "Children who display harmful sexual behaviour is a taboo topic, with limited available research. Therefore, not all member states have developed a specific response to this issue" (CoE, 2020, p. 11).

The concept paper also echoed Hackett's (2020) recommendations for utilising the public health approach to HSB through primary, secondary and tertiary prevention. However, due to the identified lack of effective approaches for primary, secondary and tertiary prevention, the Lanzarote committee established a working group that aims to contribute to the development of non-binding instruments or tools containing relevant guidance for member states (in progress in 2023).

3.1.3 Human Rights Education

As a starting point for safeguarding children, Human Rights Education (HRE) offers teachers a robust framework for safeguarding against HSB by combining primary and secondary prevention measures. The theoretical foundation of HRE is heavily rooted in the principles of critical theory and human rights, as illustrated in Donna Mertens' (2010) description of the Transformative Paradigm. Embedded in the HRE concept is the realisation of critical theory in education. Scholars such as Paolo Freire (1968; 2001), Gert Biesta (2006; 2019) and Henry Giroux (et al., 2010; 2019) have argued that teachers need to address inequality and injustice in the classroom setting as a means of empowering students to change society for the better of *all*.

Building on these and other critical theories, HRE contains a specific tripartite framework for educating *about*, *through* and *for* human rights in schools (Osler, 2016; Struthers, 2020). This means that teachers should educate students *about* human rights (as well as human rights violations), and inform and educate children about their rights to safe environments and a healthy upbringing. Teachers should also educate students *through* human rights by giving them a voice and practising student participation in the classroom. Finally, education *for* human rights means empowering students to use their human rights through the practice of solidarity and social justice (Struthers, 2020). Through HRE, teachers can create an inclusive environment for all students in the classroom by teaching and practising student participation and social justice in the classroom (Osler & Solhaug, 2018). Struthers (2020) argues that such classroom practices and environments are particularly important in safeguarding children against CSA.

HRE offers teachers a clear, value-based theoretical platform, supported by national laws and international commitments that can aid them to more effectively prevent and intervene against not only sexual but any other violation of human rights in schools. The focus on children's rights simultaneously empowers children to detect harm and might encourage students to use their voice and speak up about violations to trusted adults in school. Osler (2016) emphasises that children need to see the relevance that children's rights have in their own immediate surroundings to understand how rights apply to them. However, realising a child-rights safeguarding practice presupposes an ethical obligation for teachers in communicating rights in a particular manner:

> It is the responsibility of adults to provide empowering knowledge in a safe and age-appropriate way to children. When adults show concern for and interest in children, they are more likely to develop confidence and self-esteem as they acquire new skills. (…) a person with higher self-esteem has been shown to have a lower chance of experiencing abuse than a person with lower self-esteem. Thus, if professionals who work with children can be both informative and supportive, this will be an important part of the general preventive and human rights-based approaches. (Ala-Luhtala et al., 2015, p. 694)

The above section describes a *transforming orientation to HRE* for teachers (as illustrated in table 1 in Article III on p. 40).

Although HRE provides teachers with a sound framework for safeguarding children, effective HRE *is* still dependent on the actual relation that students have with their teachers. As seen, students who are exposed to ACEs often do not talk about their experiences, and teachers need to be aware of factors that impel children to keep quiet. Viewing the student-teacher dynamic through an intersectional lens may help teachers to become more sensitive to how marginalisation and inherent inequality in power is often assigned to certain *social identity markers*, which in turn affect some children more than others.

As part of advancements in critical race theory, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) coined the concept of *intersectionality* to describe the intersecting or overlapping social identity markers (such as race, class, gender and other individual characteristics) and how these

relate to systems of oppression, domination or discrimination. Much like the way categories in Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are overlapping and interdependent, Crenshaw similarly argues that the level of prejudice a person encounters in society is affected by the number of discriminations and disadvantages connected to their identity markers. This trend has been identified in the school system in the US, where Dee & Gershenson (2017) found that *Unconscious Bias* (*UB* – also defined as reflexive assumptions towards specific groups) among educators and school leaders may contribute to the persistence of stereotypes and discrimination in the school system.

Being that teachers are decisive for children's development and learning through their role as a *significant other* (Sullivan, 1953), Crenshaw's theory implies a great ethical responsibility for teachers to challenge their own UB, as well as the prejudice and human rights violations that students face in the education system. The moral theory *Ethics of Care (EoC)* can offer teachers such an approach through promoting empathic sensitivity to intersectional expressions of trauma and focus on healing relations between teachers and students.

3.2 Ethics of Care as an approach to safeguarding children

The educational philosopher Nel Noddings (2013) has elaborated on the moral theory Ethics of Care (EoC) originally coined by Carol Gilligan (1982). Noddings advocates for a relational approach in education, and points to teachers' professional responsibility due to the unequal power relation between teacher and student. Noddings (2006) maintains that through *moral education,* schools can become an arena for teaching and promoting healthy values in society.

3.2.1 Moral Education, human interdependency and climate of care

As detailed in Article III (p. 41-43), Noddings' (2013) moral education has four components that the teacher should use in the classroom to successfully educate caring and responsible students, and that the last component, *Confirmation,* is particularly relevant to safeguarding against HSB. By confirming students' true intent in the

classroom, the teacher creates a *climate of care,* and communicates that the teacher (and consequently, the students) will offer help and assistance when needed, and not shame and guilt. The review of the literature in Chapter two made it apparent that teachers often struggle to prevent and intervene in the event of challenging behaviours, such as HSB, and that they report lack of time and resources in dealing with it. Noddings (2012, p. 777) has argued that the relational approach of human interdependency is also more effective in creating more conducive conditions for *teachers* because the climate of care often functions as a catalyst for students' learning, development and healing:

> In talks with teachers about this approach, I am often asked how they can do this' - establish a climate of care - 'on top of all the other demands'. My answer is that establishing such a climate is not 'on top' of other things, it is underneath all we do as teachers. When that climate is established and maintained, everything else goes better.

Noddings' relational approach in Ethics of Care resembles theories on Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) formulated by, for example, Bath (2015; 2008), Harris & Fallot (2001) and Levenson (2020; 2017). According to Howard Bath (2015; 2008), TIC consists of three 'pillars'; namely *safety*, *connections* and *managing emotions (*or *coping,* as he renamed the third pillar in 2015). The approach is based in the belief that by making children *feel safe* through *close relations*, professionals are then able to *regulate* children into their 'window of tolerance'. The window of tolerance model (Siegel, 1999) maintains that human beings must be within their window of tolerance to be able to manage their emotions, and to be capable of learning. Children who have experienced trauma and adversity are more often in a state of alert, resulting in these children having a narrow window of tolerance. However, teachers who manage to regulate children's behaviours in a confirming and caring manner create safe classrooms.

It is worth noting that Bath (and Seita, 2018) abandoned the term trauma-informed care, and replaced it with Transforming Care to stress the potential for change for all children. In this sense, the principles of TIC resonate with other evidence-based approaches to challenging behaviours in school that emphasise safety, relations and practising skills (Ablon & Pollastri, 2018; Greene & Ablon, 2005; Greene, 1998; 2014).

TIC has also been applied to sexuality education (Faulkner & Schergen, 2016). The evolving understanding of how adversity and trauma affect children and young people, and how such experiences can manifest as various behaviours have also increasingly been recognised in current Norwegian literature and research (Nordanger & Braarud, 2017; Lauridsen & Munkejord, 2022; Steinkopf, 2021; Søftestad, 2018).

3.3 The role of emotions in safeguarding children

In trying to ensure a sustainable approach for teachers, the third and final aspect of transformative safeguarding addresses the role of *emotions.* Professor in psychology Paul Ekman (1992, p. 177) contends that "Emotional expressions are crucial to the development and regulation of interpersonal relationships". Philosopher Martha Nussbaum (2001) defines *emotions* to be intentional and evaluative products of a person's experience and considered meaningful to the person who experiences them. The focus on emotions is also found in literature on pedagogy, where, for example, Michalinos Zembylas (2017), professor in educational theory and curriculum studies focuses on emotions in HRE to create compassion and solidarity among students.

To be in a position to constructively educate, regulate and act on children's behaviours, a teacher must be able to confirm, and *empathise*, with a student. Like Noddings, Nussbaum (2010) addresses empathy as a key feature for change in society. In her book *From disgust to humanity* she emphasises the importance of empathy as a means of upholding others' dignity as human beings. Noddings (2012) uses the term 'empathic accuracy' to emphasise the importance of understanding what the student really needs and feels. Empathy is usually considered to be an integral part of the professional mandate in all work with human beings. Trauma psychology expert Charles Figley (2002, p. 20) explains the potency of empathy in the following definition: "empathy is the vehicle whereby helpers make themselves open to absorption of traumatic information". Developing empathy for students should therefore be considered a crucial part of safeguarding, as empathy builds a "strong working alliance with others" (Stebnicki, 2008, p. 31).

Perry (2014) has stressed the ability to show empathy as especially important when working with children who experience ACEs. However, he also cautions that there is an inherent danger of internalising other's pain through empathy, as it can cause re-traumatisation and burnout among professionals. This trend was identified in Chapter two, where teachers often reported re-traumatisation, distress and burnout when dealing with HSB among children in school (Allnock & Atkinson, 2019; McInnes & Ey, 2019). Daniel Siegel (1999) contends that negative emotions can create high levels of activation and dysregulation in anyone experiencing them, and may trigger a state of *alert* (fight, flight or freeze). As these are universal responses to danger among humans, both adults and children can be triggered and may need help to regulate themselves. Perry (2006) states that for adults to regulate trauma responses among dysregulated children, they must first be regulated themselves. In this sense, adults who work with children and young people have a heightened responsibility for self-regulation.

Equally, Noddings (2012) argues that the caring relation between a teacher and a student contains affective dimensions that must be managed by the teacher. Hochschild (2012) defines this process as *emotional labour* and claims, like Noddings, that such labour presupposes a relationship between the one showing the emotion and the one receiving it. People working in service professions, such as teachers, are expected to manage their emotions as part of their professional duties. However, Hochschild (2012) claims that managing emotions professionally is often difficult when faced with triggering situations. To this end, professor in social justice, Megan Boler (1999, p. 176), has noted an illustrating example of topics that challenge emotional labour in her book *Feeling power*: "In my teaching experience it is consistently questions of race and sexuality that are the most "discomforting" to educators and students". Like the elements in Noddings' moral education, Boler therefore advocates for practising *a pedagogy of discomfort* where teachers and students should critically examine, become aware of and reflect over their own emotions, values and beliefs.

Nussbaum (2013) contends that emotions are a part of any society and must be addressed in public and political contexts as collective phenomena. The author (2013)

warns that grief, disgust, fear, envy and shame are potent public emotions with the capacity to cause major harm in society if not addressed properly. In relation to sexual abuse, Nussbaum (2021; 2010) has argued that the emotion *pride* propagates systemic sexual abuse, narcissism and toxic masculinity. Hence, laws governing sexual abuse are insufficient for society, and must be accompanied with an understanding of the distorted emotions that breed abuse. As recognised in the literature, HSB is a taboo topic that often invokes high emotions in professionals with safeguarding responsibilities (CoE, 2020; Goldschmidt-Gjerløw, 2019; McInnes & Ey, 2019). The Council of Europe points out how *technology-assisted harmful sexual behaviour (TA-HSB)* creates further specific barriers to safeguarding among children's circle of trust:

> Children in five of the ten focus countries specifically mentioned that sexuality is still taboo in their society. As a result, teachers, parents and other adults are unwilling or too embarrassed to talk to children about sex issues in general, and in particular the risks associated with generating sexual images and/or videos of themselves. (Council of Europe, 2022a, p. 17)

While the emotion of pride propagates sexual abuse, *shame* and *guilt* about ACEs (in particular CSA) continue to propagate societal taboos and impede an honest approach in the public discourse. The collective phenomena of public emotions in society require teachers to understand how these emotions affect themselves and others to enable them to execute the necessary emotional labour in safeguarding against HSB.

3.1 Summary

In this chapter I have accounted for the various legal and theoretical components of a transformative safeguarding role for teachers. I draw on international legal standards for a child-rights framework based on the CRC and Lanzarote conventions and Human Rights Education. Furthermore, I argue that Ethics of Care offers teachers a child-rights and intersectional approach to safeguarding. Lastly, I draw attention to the importance of the role of emotions being addressed in ensuring a sustainable safeguarding practice for teachers. In the next chapter, I will describe the methodological framework and approach for conducting my study.

4 Methodology

This chapter starts by introducing the epistemological paradigm informing the study, namely, transformative research. Thereafter, I will discuss why I have chosen an exploratory mixed methods approach and elaborate on the research design and process that resulted in my four articles. In other words, I explain what I did and how I did it. I will end the chapter by discussing the implications of the approach I took and why working as an insider-researcher contributes to the credibility and strength of my thesis. I include reflections on research validity and the ethical issues I encountered.

4.1 The transformative paradigm

This PhD project situates itself firmly within the transformative paradigm. This is not one uniform framework, rather it is informed by several philosophical standpoints from critical theory, participatory action research and feminist theory (Mertens, 2010). I have accounted for critical and feminist theories informing the study in Chapters one and three, and I will illustrate how these theories intertwine with the epistemological approach in this chapter. Mertens (2010, p. 29) argues that "the starting point for transformative researchers is the territory that encompasses human rights and social justice", and I believe that I truly embody this statement in my research. One might, for example, argue that the very title of the thesis *"Teachers as Human Rights Defenders – Transforming Teachers' Safeguarding Role Against Harmful Sexual Behaviour"* proclaims a transformative perspective and my positionality as researcher.

Furthermore, the transformative approach critically examines the factors that give privilege to certain versions of reality so as to challenge the dominant discourse:

> The transformative paradigm's epistemological assumption centres on the meaning of knowledge as it is defined from a prism of cultural lenses and the power issues involved in the determination of what is considered legitimate knowledge. (Mertens, 2010, p. 32)

The aim of this study is to contribute to strengthening teachers' safeguarding and enhancing interdisciplinary cooperation around HSB. An important aspect of *transformative* research is to amplify the voices of people who are marginalised, and

that the knowledge produced should lead to change in society. I argue in this thesis that both teachers and children's voices have largely been marginalised in HSB research. In exploring teachers' understanding of and responses to safeguarding against HSB, reflections and analyses on power, justice and rights have been incremental in the research process.

Although the transformative framework permeates this study, I have also drawn methodologically on pragmatism in choosing Mixed Methods Research (MMR) as I shall account for below.

4.2 Mixed Methods Research

The study adopts a Mixed Methods Research approach (MMR), drawing on Creswell & Creswell's (2018, p. xxii) definition:

> Mixed methods involves the collection and "mixing" or integration of both quantitative and qualitative data in a study. It is not enough to only analyse your qualitative and quantitative data. Further analysis consists of integration of the two databases for additional insight into research problems and questions.

I began with a traditional quantitative research tool: a survey. I then incorporated a number of focus-group interviews into the research model, and later individual interviews. The processes were conducted sequentially and could be described as a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. I characterise them as 'mixed methods' because I drew on the earlier findings both in the design of the focus groups and individual interviews. Moreover, in my analysis I also draw on data across the three approaches and each set of data informs that which has gone before, and after.

In the on-going debate on quantitative and qualitative approaches to research in education (be they paradigms, methods or data strands), the MMR approach places itself in the middle of this dispute by advocating for the benefits of combining the two approaches (Johnson, 2015). The pragmatic standpoint in MMR that I have adopted in my project emphasises that the purpose of the study should guide the choice of

methods (Creamer, 2016; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In advocating this position, MM researchers recognise that there is more than one way of understanding and interpreting the world. Thus, cross-sectional perspectives have influenced my methodological approach and my evolving understanding of HSB as a social phenomenon:

> A mixed method way of thinking reflects views of reality as inherently multiple. This is a perspective implicitly shared by researchers who pull together members of a team in order to integrate knowledge that emerges from diverse disciplinary approaches. (Creamer, 2016, p. 9)

HSB is a phenomenon that to date has been largely unexplored in the field of education. Hence, I have been dependent on drawing on academic and clinical advances from other fields (such as psychology, sociology and criminology) when developing the focus for my study. While drawing on narratives from special education doctoral students, Corr et al. (2022) argue that one of the benefits of using a MMR approach in educational research is that it accommodates interdisciplinary training and multiple perspectives. Thus, it seemed to me that the MMR approach could capture multiple perspectives on teachers' and frontline services' perspectives, and that both converging and diverging data of individuals and/or their context could provide a more enriched understanding. A common feature of MMR research is thus its interdisciplinarity. As a concrete example of the project's interdisciplinary focus, Articles I and II feature in the HSB and CSA-specific journals *Journal of Sexual Aggression* and *International Journal of Child Abuse and Neglect*, whereas Articles III and IV feature in the education journals *Human Rights Education Review* and *London Review of Education*.

I applied Greene's (2007) *mixed methods way of thinking* when acknowledging that HSB is a complex social phenomenon. This 'mixing' of quantitative and qualitative methods, or *integration*, can allow me to compare different types of information from various perspectives to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Although the research design is a predominantly qualitative-driven study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017), I argue that the MMR way of thinking has informed

the analysis process, and the integration of results in various phases. According to Greene (2007), there are several purposes for mixing methods, which I apply.

The first purpose relevant to my study is that of *complementarity*. I used different methods (survey, focus groups and interviews) to understand the same phenomenon. While the survey and the focus groups examine the phenomenon from the teachers' point of view, the views of service providers in the interviews complement, inform and contrast these views. The second purpose was *development,* as I collected and analysed data by letting emergent issues inform the next phases of the study. Finally, I relied on *initiation*. Through examining the perspectives from teachers and frontline services, I detected divergence between the samples, which in turn initiated a new understanding of the phenomenon.

In carrying out an article-based MMR thesis, Brevik & Mathé (2021) argue that the researcher can mix methods when conducting the research, in the articles and in the extended abstract. I have attempted to mix when conducting research by integrating the two databases (quantitative and qualitative) in the data-collection process. I have also attempted to mix in the analytical phase of the extended abstract, and I will elaborate on the various integrations when describing the inferences drawn in the next chapter.

I adopted an *exploratory* design early in the research process, as I found that there was hardly any existing knowledge on teachers' perspectives on HSB in schools:

> Researchers explore when they have little or no scientific knowledge about the group, process, activity, or situation they want to examine but nevertheless have reason to believe it contains elements worth discovering. (…) the main goal of exploratory research is the production of inductively derived generalizations about the group, process, activity, or situation under study. Next, the researcher weaves these generalizations into a grounded theory explaining the object of study. (Stebbins, 2001, p. 4)

As grounded theory is typically evolving from the emerging data, I had not planned to develop a grounded theory about teachers' safeguarding against HSB when I started. However, as the project proceeded, two emerging issues in the thematic analyses of the

data (the role of emotions and asymmetrical power relations) ended up becoming the very foundation for the inductively derived generalisations about advancing safeguarding for teachers, as outlined in Article III.

The process of 'emergence' (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) has also defined large parts of my data-collection process as I encountered several challenges in carrying out the research and constantly had to rethink and adjust my approach as the project proceeded. These challenges are elaborated on in the various phases of the research design, and when discussing research credibility.

4.2.1 Exploratory Sequential Multiphase Design

My study has an exploratory *sequential multiphase design* (Tashakkori, et al., 2021), which consists of four phases:

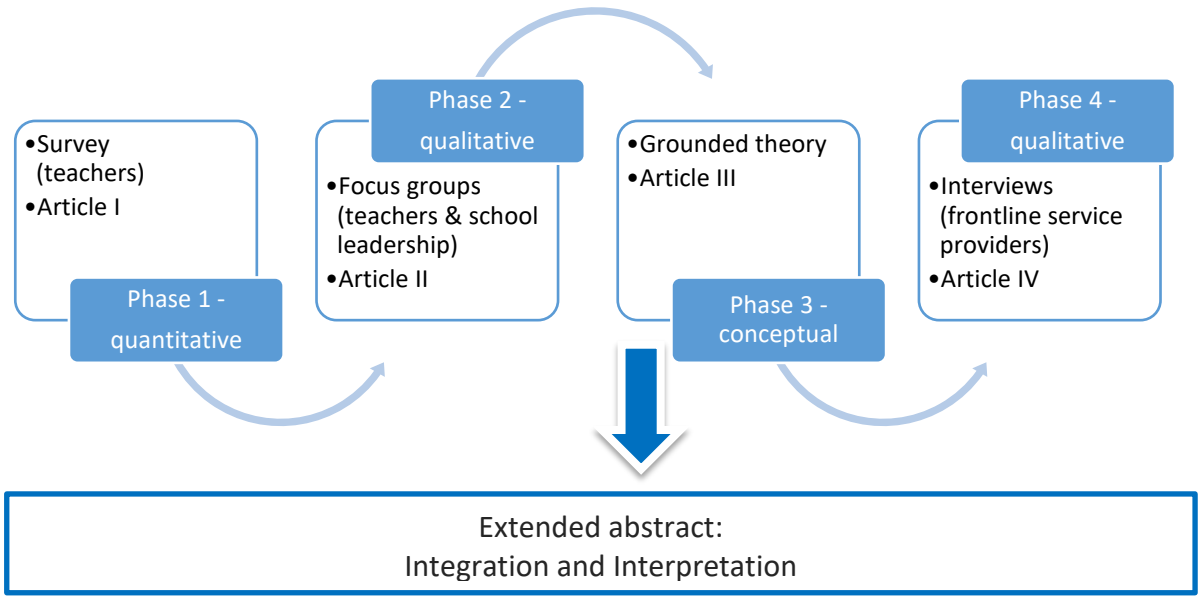

Figure 4-1: Sequential multiphase design

As shown in Figure 4.1, the research design has a dominant qualitative design in that *only* data collection in phase 1 was quantitative, whereas the other two phases (2 and

4) were qualitative. Phase 1 started with a quantitative method (survey) from January to July in 2019, which informed phase 2 (focus groups). I had reached the point of data saturation by the beginning of May so that I could identify certain trends. These data were *developed* (Greene, 2007) into a semi-structured interview guide, which was applied to the focus-group interviews in phase 2 from May to June in 2019. The multiphase design of the study enabled findings from phases 1 and 2 to inform phase 3 through the purpose of *complementarity* (Greene, 2007). The combined data from phases 1 and 2 resulted in emerging issues that were developed into a grounded theory in phase 3 (conceptual). Phase 3 developed organically as an on-going back-and-forth discussion with my supervisor from July 2019 to January 2022. Lastly, I collected data in phase 4 from December 2020 to May 2021, and the grounded theory was applied to this phase (qualitative interviews) and operationalised by drawing on the data from all the phases. The purpose for this mixing of data was to *initiate* (Greene, 2007) a new understanding in prevention and intervention work.

Table 4.1 on the next page (p. 52) provides a more detailed overview of the developments of the various phases of the PhD project and the articles. As described in Article I, the survey conducted in phase 1 set out to answer the first three research questions. In phase 2, focus-group interviews were conducted to elaborate on the three first research questions, as detailed in Article II. In phase 3, the grounded theory was developed to answer research question four by drawing on the data from the previous phases and is presented in Article III. Lastly, interviews with services providers were conducted in phase 4 and combined with development from all the previous phases to answer research question 5, presented in Article IV.

Thus, the table illustrates how the sequential design made it possible for the developments in the various phases to build on the previous phase(s), creating *dependence* in the timing (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017).

Table 4.1: Overview of phases and published articles

	Phase 1 – Article I **Survey** (Jan-July 2019)	Phase 2 – Article II **Focus groups** (May-June 2019)	Phase 3 – Article III **Conceptual** (July 2019-Jan 2022	Phase 4 – Article IV **Interviews** (Dec 2020-May 2021)
(Co-) author	Draugedalen (2021)	Draugedalen, Kleive & Grov (2021)	Draugedalen & Osler (2022)	Draugedalen (2023)
Journals	Journal of Sexual Aggression	International Journal of Child Abuse & Neglect	Human Rights Education Review	London Review of Education
World view	Transformative	Transformative	Transformative	Transformative
Methods	Quantitative	Qualitative	Conceptual	Qualitative
Main research questions	RQ 1: How do teachers understand and respond to HSB? RQ 2: What support systems do teachers identify in safeguarding against HSB? RQ 3: How do teachers identify support and engage with school-based colleagues/other professionals/service providers?	RQ 1: How do teachers understand and respond to HSB? RQ 2: What support systems do teachers identify in safeguarding against HSB? RQ 3: How do teachers identify support and engage with school-based colleagues/other professionals/service providers?	RQ 4: What do teachers need to implement transformative safeguarding in schools?	RQ 5: How can frontline services support and strengthen teachers' transformative safeguarding in schools?
Partici-pants	Sample 1: 159 primary school teachers out of 376 in total	Sample 2: 19 primary school teachers and school personnel		Sample 3: 6 frontline service providers
Data	Self-reported answers from teachers	Teachers' narratives	Draws on theory and teachers' narratives from phase 1 and 2	Service providers' narratives
Data sources	Survey data	Audio-recorded and transcribed focus groups		Audio-recorded and transcribed interviews
Mixed methods credibility	*Sequential validity:* The design of Article I was the starting point for Article II.	*Sequential validity:* Draws on reported answers from phase 1	*Sequential validity:* Draws on theory and teachers' narratives from phases 1 and 2	*Sequential validity:* Draws on teachers' narratives in phases 1 and 2, and theory in phase 3
Mixing and integration		Mixing and integration in the data collection		Mixing and integration in the extended abstract

(Adapted from Brevik, 2015, p. 36)

4.3 Participants

Sample 1: The survey was distributed to 15 schools in one municipality, which comprised 376 primary school teachers altogether. The sample consisted of the 159 teachers who answered the survey (n=159). See Article I for more detailed information about the participants and how they were identified.

Sample 2: The second sample from the focus groups consisted of 19 teachers and school personnel from six schools drawn from those who answered the initial questionnaire. Table 4.2 on the next page (p. 54) provides an overview of the relevant information about the informants and schools, in addition to the place and length of the interviews.

However, it is important to point out here that at the time of publication of Article II, I made a point not to disclose gender to preserve the informants' anonymity (p. 4). However, time has since passed with several changes in jobs and positions in the schools in the municipality, making informants more difficult to identify.

Furthermore, as illustrated in Chapters one and three, gender and ethnicity ended up becoming a prominent part of my theoretical frame of reference, and I have therefore deemed it necessary to include these categories in the extended abstract to provide relevant information about the context.

Table 4.2: Overview of the teacher focus groups

Date	School	Professional background and position, gender and ethnicity	Place of interview	Interview length
May 13, 2019	School 1 (Predominantly white student population)	Informant A (teacher, female, white[3]) Informant B (teacher, female, white)	Vacant office in school 1	46.76
May 28, 2019	School 2 (More ethnically diverse student population)	Informant A (principal, former teacher, female, white) Informant B (teacher, female, white) Informant C (teacher, female, white) Informant D (teacher, female, white)	Library in school 2	01.04.50
May 29, 2019	School 3 (More ethnically diverse student population)	Informant A (teacher, female, white) Informant B (teacher, male, white) Informant C (teacher, female, white) Informant D (teacher, female, white) Informant E (teacher, female, white) Informant F (assistant principal, former teacher, male, white)	Classroom in school 3	55.42
June 11, 2019	School 4 (Predominantly white student population)	Informant A (assistant principal, former teacher, female, white) Informant B (teacher, female, white)	Assistant principal's office in school 4	59.45
June 12, 2019	School 5 (Predominantly white student population)	Informant A (teacher, female, white) Informant B (social worker, female, white) Informant C (teacher, female, white)	Vacant office in school 5	52.03
June 19, 2019	School 6 (More ethnically diverse student population)	Informant A (teacher, female, white) Informant B (teacher, female, white)	Vacant office in school 6	01.10.15

Sample 3: The third sample consisted of six informants from various frontline services. Five of the informants worked in one municipality, while the sixth informant (the police officer) worked in the police district where the municipality is situated. Table 4.3 on the next page (p. 55) provides an overview of the relevant information about the informants' backgrounds and positions, in addition to the place and length of the interviews.

[3] As it is not considered common practice in Norway for informants to self-identify about gender or ethnicity as a part of a research interview, I have assessed the informants' identity based on my familiarity with them.

Table 4.3: Overview of qualitative interviews with frontline service providers

Date	Informant's position, service, gender and ethnicity	Place of interview	Interview length
Dec 10, 2020	Social worker from child welfare service (female, white)	Social worker's office	38.19 (interrupted by call)
Dec 17, 2020	Municipal psychologist from frontline mental health services (female, white)	At psychologist's home	50.12
Jan 4, 2021	Specialised school nurse from public health service (female, white)	Phone call	50.04
Jan 29, 2021	Coordinator of alternative education from the service for school- and after-school activities for youth (female, white)	Teams meeting	57.31
April 21, 2021	Police officer from a preventative unit cooperating with the municipality schools (female, white)	Phone call	59.58
May 3, 2021	School specialist from the pedagogical-psychological service (female, white)	Zoom meeting	58.06

4.4 Sampling

The study contains a *sequential mixed methods sampling* (Tashakkori et al., 2021). The first three RQs focused on exploring what teachers know, how they respond and which services they cooperate with. Thus, these questions directed me to use *cluster random sampling* (targeting a specific unit, such as a school) for sample 1.

I used *opportunity sampling* for sample 2, meaning that the sample of focus groups was selected from the target population that was available at the time and willing to take part (Tashakkori et al., 2021). The opportunity sampling was used to integrate the data from phase 1 with a sub-sample from sample 1 to explore the reasons for answers given in the survey.

I used *purposive sampling* with sample 3, targeting frontline service providers that I knew had both experiences of and training in HSB. Tashakkori et al. (2021, p. 162) argue that "purposive sampling often leads to greater depth of information from a smaller number of carefully collected cases". Richer data was my intention in selecting sample

3, as I was seeking frontline service providers' perspectives on interdisciplinary cooperation that I could compare with teachers' perspectives in phase 4. Figure 4.2 illustrates how the various samples are connected, and how an integrated sampling strategy was used to gain access to key populations:

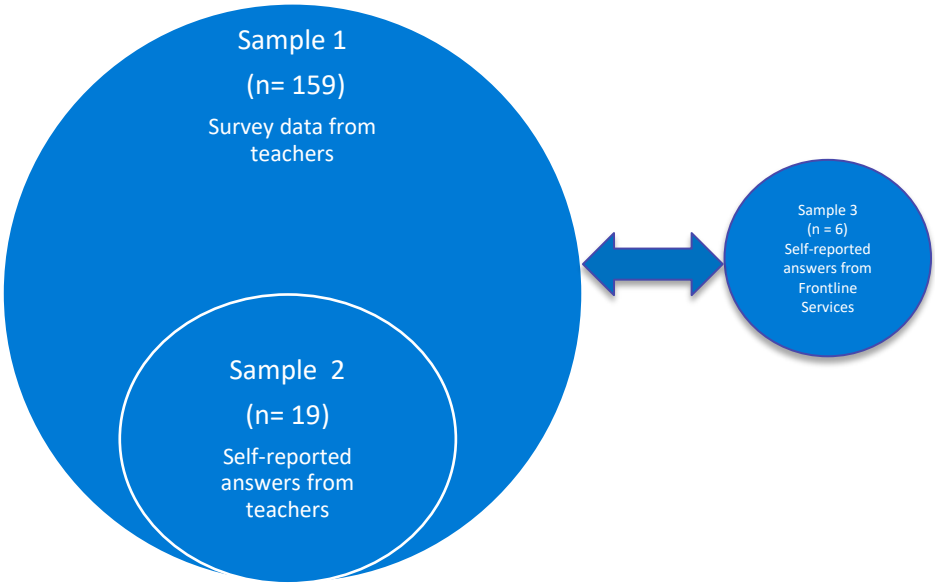

Figure 4-2 Integrated sampling strategy to gain access to key populations

Even though the informants in sample 3 are not a part of samples 1 and 2, the informants from the three samples know of and often cooperate with each other when a school has a concern about a student's behaviour (hence the arrow in the figure).

4.5 Data Collection

4.5.1 Phase 1

I started by taking a pragmatic stance to my study as I was exploring the first objective, which was to "Create a research-based overview of teachers' knowledge and competence on children who display HSB, how they respond and who they cooperate with to identify challenges in the cooperation between schools and frontline services". Since I had identified a significant knowledge gap in the academic literature (detailed in Chapter 2), I wanted to gather as much information as I could about teachers' self-reported perspectives on and responses to HSB. To ensure that I would collect data that

would include these aspects, I developed the following research questions (RQs) to answer the objective:

> RQ 1: How do teachers understand and respond to HSB?
> RQ 2: What support systems do teachers identify in safeguarding?
> RQ 3: How do teachers identify support and engage with school-based colleagues/other professionals/service providers?

With the assistance of my co-supervisor (spring 2018), I decided that a survey would generate the best overview of teachers' knowledge and responses, as a survey can be used to make more generalised assumptions about a phenomenon (Creswell, 2003, p. 22-23). The survey (see Appendix 1) had a hybrid design, with both fixed and open-ended questions, and a small vignette at the end. (See Article I for more detailed information about the categories). The open-ended questions were included to allow informants to elaborate on their yes or no answers. The vignette was included to explore teachers' responses to a concrete case. I wanted to include the qualitative elements in the survey to detect teachers' potential value judgements and attitudes to HSB.

In line with Van Teijlingen & Hundley's (2001) recommendations, I piloted the survey with 10 informants (16 July, 2018) with various backgrounds outside education to ensure that the questions were clear and understandable. Several of them gave me feedback that led me to change some of the questions. Following their requests, I added the gender neutral 'they/them' as a category and added a list of definitions in the attachment that provided information about the project.

I sent information about the survey and the link in an e-mail to the administrative director in the municipality where I planned to conduct my research. The director forwarded the e-mail to all the school heads in the municipality, with a request that they forward the e-mail to their respective teachers. As described in Article I, I observed that the response rate of the survey was very low during the first month and therefore ended up visiting almost all the schools in the survey sample to present my project. During these presentations, I also tried to recruit teachers for the focus groups in phase 2.

Phase 1 was important to gain an overview of what teachers know, how they respond and who they consider to be support that they can engage with when encountering HSB. This phase impacted how I proceeded with the data collection into phase 2. I decided to pursue the initial findings from the survey by using these data as the starting point for the interview guide with teachers in phase 2.

4.5.2 Phase 2

In this phase I continued to explore the first objective: "Create a research-based overview of teachers' knowledge and competence on children who display HSB, how they respond and who they cooperate with to identify challenges in the cooperation between schools and frontline services". From the objective, the following RQs guided the development of the interview guide for conducting focus groups (Appendix 2):

> RQ 1: How do teachers understand and respond to HSB?
> RQ 2: What support systems do teachers identify in safeguarding against HSB?
> RQ 3: How do teachers identify support and engage with school-based colleagues/other professionals/service providers?

As seen in Chapter two, HSB is a phenomenon that occurs in a social context, and the *school culture* influences teachers' responses. Thus, it was important for me to explore teachers' shared *meaning-making process* (Alexakos, 2015) in terms of their knowledge and responses to HSB in groups. Focus groups are often suitable for observing attitudes, perceptions and beliefs shared by a group (Then et al., 2014), where a researcher can observe a hierarchy of roles and relations within the group (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). However, to fully understand what teachers need to implement safeguarding in schools, I wanted to contrast and compliment the informants' views with perspectives from the clinical expertise at V27, Norway's pioneering resource unit on HSB, which has spearheaded tertiary prevention training on HSB understanding and responses in Norway. For years we had discussed the teachers' role in HSB responses at various conferences and courses (specified in Appendix 4). As result of this continuous discussion, I invited them to co-write Article II with me.

The process of recruiting informants for the focus groups proved to be equally as challenging as getting respondents for the survey. I had to contact the schools several times to try to schedule appointments with informants, and there was one focus group (number 7) that initially had been planned but was cancelled because the teachers kept postponing our appointment. However, at the schools I visited in person, I noticed a visible change in the recruitment of informants and in the schools' interest in the topic.

I used a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix 2), which was based on the answers from the survey. I also brought copies of the survey responses with me so the focus-group participants could look through the answers as we talked. I distributed and went through the signed consent forms with information about the project in all the focus groups.

4.5.3 Phase 3

The second objective 'Explore strategies to strengthen teachers' safeguarding for children who display HSB in schools' resulted in the creation of the grounded theory. The following RQ was formulated from the objective:

RQ 4: "What do teachers need to implement transformative safeguarding in schools?"

I discussed this question thoroughly with my supervisor, Professor Audrey Osler, and these discussions led me to focus on a child-rights framework. In this phase, we reviewed the existing categories and analysis of the findings to start formulating an emerging theory. Corbin & Strauss (2008) argue that theoretical sampling is 'concept-driven' in knowing what to focus on next. Thus, our theory building evolved around concepts we detected in phases 1 and 2.

4.5.4 Phase 4

In phase 4, the final objective, "Explore frontline service providers' support to teachers when encountering HSB in schools", guided the data collection from services that cooperate with schools. The following RQ was formulated from the objective:

RQ 5: “How can frontline services support and strengthen teachers’ transformative safeguarding in schools?”

As I became more familiar with the data collection process (and guided by the feedback from my midterm seminar), I realised that it was not feasible to focus on both frontline and specialised services (as was the original plan in the first project proposals). Consequently, I narrowed my sample focus down to frontline services. Palaiologou et al. (2016, p. 10) describe this back-and-forth process as the cyclical nature of the research strategy.

I contacted all the informants directly and scheduled the interviews without any problems. I know and have worked with most of the informants in sample 3, so they were already familiar with my background and the PhD project. The pandemic affected the data collection of the interviews in phase 4. Initially, I had scheduled all interviews with the informants in person, but I only managed to hold two interviews before a new COVID-19 lockdown and strict regulations for social contact were imposed in Norway. Consequently, the following four interviews were conducted on the phone or on Zoom/Teams (see detailed information in Table 4.3).

In Table 4.4 on the next page (p. 61) the strengths and limitations of my data collection are listed, as well as the consequences this had across the phases. The table aims to illustrate how the various instruments and methods in the study have respective strengths and weaknesses, and how the various methods used in the data collection depended and built on each other.

Table 4.4: Strengths and limitations of the data collection in phases 1, 2 and 4

	Strengths (+) and limitations (-)	**Consequences across phases**
Survey (Quantitative)	+ standardised instrument + many respondents + identify patterns - self-reported data only	The responses in the survey contributed to development of the focus-group interviews in phase 2.
Focus groups (Qualitative)	+ open-ended questions + flexible interview guide + opportunity for teachers to build on each other's responses - self-reported data only - group dynamics may influence answers - groups may develop differently - limited insight into individual reasoning	Based on the need to understand teachers' collective meaning making, I decided to conduct focus groups in phase 2.
Individual interviews (Qualitative)	+ open-ended questions + flexible interview guide - self-reported data only - few participants	Based on the need to contrast teachers' views of interdisciplinary cooperation, I conducted interviews with frontline service providers

Adapted from Mathé (2019, p. 40)

One potential weakness detected in the table is that all the methods in the study only provide self-reported data. I have tried to mitigate this by triangulating the results with other data sources, such as existing literature and research, and by conferring with experts in the HSB field.

In the end, what I am discussing is teachers' and service providers' *perceptions* of the challenges they face in addressing HSB. Since my research is following a transformative paradigm and is ultimately concerned with enabling and supporting teachers to address HSB so they can support children in acting pro-socially and learning effectively, it is arguable that their perceptions of their daily realities are the key to ensuring effective professional behaviour.

4.6 Data Analyses

4.6.1 Analytical process

Statistical analysis of survey. Many of the closed questions were multiple response items, which made it difficult to detect relationships between variables of interest (Tashakkori et al., 2021). As emphasised in Article I under limitations (p. 237), remarks could be made about the rigour of the study. As Johnson & Christensen (2017) point out, it is indeed difficult to create a good survey instrument, and I must acknowledge that my limited experience in designing surveys most likely contributed to this limitation. Thus, the survey presented in Article I functioned more as a starting point for identifying teachers' knowledge about and responses to HSB in the south-eastern region of Norway. However, I applied a descriptive statistical analysis to the closed questions to identify trends and patterns in teachers' understandings and responses to HSB. According to Tashakkori et al. (2021, p. 256) the aim of a descriptive statistical analysis "is to understand the data, detect patterns and relationships, and clearly communicate the results". In trying to do so, I almost exclusively used *measures of central tendency* by drawing on the 'mode' category, which is to illuminate the most frequent score in data (Tashakkori et al., 2021, p. 257). Furthermore, a thematic analysis was used when analysing data that came from the open-ended questions.

Thematic analysis of focus groups. The focus-group interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim in Word. I started analysing the focus-group transcripts using *open coding* (Birks and Mills, 2011) as soon as I had generated the first data set, and kept on comparing and contrasting the results as I received data from more focus groups, as well as my own memos. Lincoln and Guba's (1985) evaluative criteria of trustworthiness were applied to the data-analysis process, which involves establishing credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. To ensure credibility, several techniques were used, as described by Cohen and Crabtree (2006). Based on my prolonged engagement in education and frequent visits to schools as a researcher, sufficient time was deemed to have been spent on both understanding and persistent observing of the phenomenon of HSB in the school setting. The analyses of my

interpretation of the data by the co-authors provided analytical triangulation, with the second and third authors offering an outsider perspective in Article II. I was responsible for all the transcriptions, analyses and translations of relevant excerpts from the various categories into English because I planned to write my articles in English.

The open coding focused on listing common themes in the transcripts (Flick, 2009), and I grouped 13 initial codes related to schools, and five codes related to interdisciplinary cooperation. I also created one code for other emerging themes. The transcripts were then read a number of times to regroup the coded themes into more distinct categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Through the intermediate coding, the analysis of the categories took a more particular direction as I started synthesising and explaining phenomena identified in the data (Birks & Mills, 2011). For example, in the memos I had noted that the school leaders seemed to set the tone in the focus groups when they were present (mentioned in Article II).

The thematic analysis of the focus groups resulted in five categories relating to barriers (1. Level of awareness and knowledge about HSB; 2. The need for specific training related to HSB and the management of HSB; 3. Overwhelming role as a teacher; 4. An absence of multi-agency work and external support; and 5. An absence of clear practical guidance for addressing HSB at the school level). One category was related to potential solutions (identified contributions to breaking down teachers' experienced barriers).

Developing a grounded theory. The findings *Safeguarding as an overwhelming responsibility* and *asymmetrical power relations* from phase 2 were examples of *emergence* (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) in the data that resulted in the evolving of the grounded theory in phase 3. Following Teppo's (2015) analytical procedure for developing a grounded theory, my supervisor and I identified these findings as the two *core categories* in the theoretical integration of the data analyses. We combined the various sources of data in formulating a conceptual explanation for advancing safeguarding, as presented in Article III. The grounded theory was thereafter applied to the analysis of the qualitative data in phase 4 (as detailed in Article IV).

Thematic analysis of the interviews. The qualitative interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim in Word. Again, I followed Corbin & Strauss's (2008) procedure for conducting a trustworthy thematic analysis. In phase one I familiarised myself with the data by playing and replaying the recordings several times to immerse myself in the data. All the transcripts were read several times to categorise various themes through open coding, and connections between themes were detected and described. As with the analysis of the focus-group transcripts, relevant coded extracts were put into broad categories and themes. The service providers received copies of the various versions of Article IV to proofread and ensure that I had understood them correctly. Ultimately, the analysis process resulted in three initiatives of interdisciplinary cooperation with schools presented in Article IV as 'Transformative Practices' (these are Physical Presence, Cooperative Practices around Concern, and Shared HSB Training and Resources).

4.7 Research credibility

4.7.1 Validity

By applying the mixed methods approach to my study, the approach itself contributed to *sequential validity* in that each phase influenced the next phase of the design. Sequential validity was also enhanced by *member checking* when I utilised the previous results in the survey as a starting point for the interview guide in phase two, and by letting the informants read their transcripts. Furthermore, the MM approach allowed for continuous *triangulation* (Tashakkori et al., 2021, p. 314) because I compared *multiple data sources* (interviewing different people with different perspectives, e.g., teachers and frontline workers) across the four phases. I also used *multiple investigators* (several observers and researchers from other disciplines helped me contrast my personal and professional perspectives through various discussions and presentations, co-authorships and cooperative initiatives, as detailed in Appendix 4). I used *multiple methods,* which includes multiple research methodologies (such as the transformative and pragmatic paradigm combined with grounded theory) as well as methods of data

collection (survey, focus groups and interviews). Finally, I have applied *multiple theoretical perspectives* (through combining various legal and theoretical strands into a child-rights framework) to transform teachers' safeguarding role, and schools' interdisciplinary cooperation with frontline services.

According to Tashakkori et al. (2021), there are four types of inference validity in the quantitative strand of the research: statistical conclusion validity, internal validity, construct validity and external validity. Even though the survey cannot be considered representative, I tried to ensure some degree of *statistical conclusion validity* of the results in the following way: I conducted a descriptive statistical analysis of the data and presented the 'mode' trends (the most frequent score in the data). By triangulating the data with previous research and my inside (emic) knowledge of teachers and the Norwegian context, I therefore infer that I have tried to the best of my ability to ensure that my results are unlikely to be explained solely by chance or random factors (Tashakkori et al., 2021). Similarly, through the same process I have tried to develop *internal validity* by ruling out other plausible explanations when inferring an observed relationship (for example that lack of HSB training results in lack of awareness of the phenomenon). *Construct validity* refers to the degree to which inferences can be made about particular theoretical constructs. For example, as a means of enhancing construct validity when developing the theoretical construct *transformative safeguarding* in the grounded theory (phase 3), I based the construct on findings from the two previous phases. Likewise, when developing the theoretical construct *a system of care* (phase 4), I built it on the combined integration of literature, findings and inferences from the other three phases. *External validity* describes whether the inferences made from the research sample are consistent across other settings, persons, times and similar outcomes. I have tried to triangulate my findings with a comprehensive review of international HSB literature and continuously involved *peer-debriefing* from other professionals to minimise the threat to the external validity of my findings.

For the qualitative strand of my research, an *Audit trail* (through Appendix 4, a reflexive journal, Chapter 1 and this chapter) provides a detailed account of the personal, professional and social context of the study. The aim of an audit trail is to ensure *confirmability*, which is a transparent description of the research steps taken and choices made in the process. Johnson (2015) argues that one person applying mixed methods is extensive work, and MMR is therefore a more suitable approach when various researchers from different perspectives and disciplines work together. I have therefore tried to continuously cooperate and receive advice and supervision from professors in various fields throughout the PhD process (see detailed list in Appendix 4).

Reactivity is another factor that can compromise the validity of my data. Johnson & Christensen (2017) maintain that informants tend to not act naturally when being observed. On the one hand, collecting teachers' data in schools where they were working provided a familiar and safe setting for them. On the other hand, this school setting may have influenced how they interpreted and answered my questions (Cohen et al., 2011). I tried to mitigate this dynamic while interacting with my informants by relating to their experiences as teachers and referring to my own background as a teacher.

This study touches on several issues pertaining to the inside/outsider perspective, or what Tashakkori et al., (2021) call the *emic/etic validity* of the research. My previous experiences as a teacher, as well as my experiences with interdisciplinary cooperation in schools, reveal a prolonged engagement and familiarity with the topic in multiple ways. It is because of this insider position that I have been able to obtain the findings I am presenting in this study.

As detailed in Chapter one, my extensive experiences with the school system in various settings have given me knowledge and training in approaching challenging behaviours in alternative ways through cooperation with frontline services. These insider perspectives have enabled me to acquire a unique position in interaction with teachers and school leaders, as my background promotes trust and familiarity. My personal familiarity with multicultural settings and intersectionally sensitive approaches has also

enabled me to connect with students who often feel marginalised by the school system, which has enabled me to bring their voices into the discussion I have had with teachers and other professionals. Furthermore, my studies in advanced studies in sexual abuse have enabled me to model the approach I promote in this thesis for the teachers and frontline services and serve to illustrate how HSB training can be an effective strategy to strengthen primary and secondary prevention in schools. Finally, being that this is a public PhD, the insider perspective is indeed promoted (and expected) by the RCN through the very design.

Although I identify my insider perspective as a strength in the research process, I acknowledge that it also can pose a potential risk of *bias* (Robson, 2002). Maintaining an awareness of natural bias when researching my own profession was essential, as this bias affects the interpretation of the data. However, clarifying researcher bias and engaging in reflexivity is particularly important for validation of qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My opportunity as a PhD candidate to engage in discussions on data validity and address bias with my supervisor helped me to develop reflexivity and thereby reduce bias.

In the introduction I outlined my motives for the study (1.1.4), and referred to how personal, professional and academic experiences have influenced my worldview in all aspects of life. By adhering to the feminist approach in research, I believe it is essential to be transparent about how my perspectives have informed and shaped the research process, as I cannot separate my academic stance from my personal stance. As such, although this is a mixed methods project, I suggest that an autoethnographic approach (Ellis et al., 2011) has also influenced the process. By describing my personal experiences (auto) to understand cultural experiences (ethno), I am trying to illustrate, and perhaps model, a sustainable approach to safeguarding for teachers by sharing my own story. In trying to mitigate for this emic bias I have continuously discussed the findings and my inferences throughout the process with professionals from other fields.

4.7.2 Research ethics

Ensuring participants' informed consent and confidentiality. All informants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time from the project, and the participants in the focus groups and interviews were given written information about the project and consent forms prior to the interviews.

However, in one focus group, the participants said that they had not volunteered but had been instructed by the school leaders to participate. I immediately paused the interview and emphasised that they could withdraw from the focus group at any time, and that participation was solely voluntary. Nevertheless, all the members of the group ended up staying for the interview. This incident made me acutely aware of the asymmetrical power relations at play when the municipal leadership informed the schools about my project. After this experience, before I started the interviews, I always made sure to ask *how* the informants had agreed to participate before explicitly emphasising that participation was completely voluntary. Furthermore, at the beginning of each focus group I always emphasised that I was looking for *teachers'* experiences and perceptions as a way to stop school leaders from taking over or dominating the conversations in the groups where they were present. I also used my own experiences as a teacher to exemplify perceptions, as well as to build trust with the informants.

All informants have given their signed consent to participate. The consent forms have been locked away in my office. The participants in the survey received an attachment with the consent form, emphasising that passive consent was given when answering the survey. All the transcripts of the interviews were encoded. The audio-recording of the focus groups and interviews contained almost no identifying information but will be erased after the end of the project. The transcripts adapted dialects and slang into standard Norwegian to preserve anonymity. All identifying information of described places and persons has been removed. The interviews were conducted in Norwegian, and all extracts are my own translations.

Data management and sharing. I was required to use the Data Management Plan (DMP) developed by the Norwegian Research Council as part of the project proposal in 2018, and could therefore more easily determine and fulfil the research sponsor requirements, as stated by Michener (2015). My data were classified as category red, both due to the sensitivity of the topic "harmful sexual behaviour", but also due to the small sample size of informants. USN's strict guidelines on red category data meant that I needed to store the data in a secure database and strive to anonymise my informants as much as possible. The Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) has approved this research project under project number: 286353. However, the application was only approved after several revisions. Initially, I had wanted to collect data on personal experiences with sexual abuse among teachers, but this request was denied by the NSD. Ultimately, the questions in the survey and interview guides contained no personal questions about abuse whatsoever. However, I was instructed to refer to the counselling services' contacts in case informants' own experiences were triggered (as seen in Appendices 2 and 3). Coincidentally, the application process might serve to further point out how HSB and sexual abuse are taboo and sensitive topics that presumably evoke triggering emotions in professionals.

Mons et al. (2017) elaborate on the degree of sharing data, and state that data should be Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable (also known as the FAIR principles). I have tried to incorporate the FAIR principles when working on the three empirical articles. In article I, most of the raw data material from the survey is presented and available in the exact way it appeared in Nettskjema (which is a secure database approved for storing red category data). The data from the focus groups (Article II) and individual interviews (Article IV) are mostly presented as meta-data to preserve anonymity. However, I have presented some raw data in excerpts of informants' authentic statements in Articles II, III and IV to support my arguments. Even though Article III is a theoretical contribution, it also contains raw data from the focus groups to illustrate emerging themes used to support the grounded theory.

Ethical implications of public PhD design research. The public PhD design has affected my research activities throughout the project period but has also enabled me to gain unique access to relevant practical experiences. Furthermore, the design has also resulted in the research process being quite unconventional. Many times, I have been trying to juggle the various roles as an employee in a municipality who is doing research on their behalf. I have struggled with this duality during my entire project, as ensuring employer stakeholders' interests, and being an independent researcher often seem contradictory. One might question how independent I really am when I am researching people I have been working with, and while doing it on behalf of the municipality that is paying my salary. A part of the self-reflexive process for me has been to understand the various ethical aspects of my role as a researcher. To try to enhance the trustworthiness of the study I believe it is important to be transparent about my journey and the roles I have taken/been given along this process, as these cumulative experiences influence all inferences I have drawn from the data.

Thus, I have been inspired by Birks and Mills' (2011) idea of writing a storyline as an analytical memo, although I have altered the design a little so it fits a public PhD design. I have created a detailed timeline for the phases and relevant activities informing the research process (Appendix 4), and in the following paragraphs I will use the timeline to illustrate strengths, limitations and ethical dilemmas in conducting a public sector PhD. The timeline shows that I have spent a substantial amount of time in primary and secondary schools, observing, listening and talking to teachers and students. I have also spent a substantial amount of time getting to know and understand frontline services' roles through various interdisciplinary cooperation efforts. For example, I started my PhD journey at the beginning of August 2018, and for the first one and a half years, my mandatory work meant that I had a 50% position as "SLT coordinator[4]". My particular

[4] SLT is an abbreviation for the following phrase in Norwegian "Samordning av Lokale rus- og kriminalitetsforebyggende Tiltak": "Coordination of local drug- and crime-prevention interventions" (my translation). The SLT model has been initiated by the National Mediation Service to help municipalities to systemise their prevention and intervention work with children and adolescents (https://konfliktraadet.no/slt-modellen/ Norwegian website)

task was to create and coordinate the municipal's procedures for what the various services would do when groups of children and young people engaged in criminal activities. This assignment was a concrete municipal response to increasing incidents of "beefing"[5], drug use and other worrying trends among young people in the region. I coordinated and held 10 inter-agency meetings with various services, had meetings with all the secondary schools in the municipality, coordinated two inter-municipal meetings for parents and was physically present at two secondary schools one day a week for three months (at their request). I also participated in regular crime prevention meetings hosted by the police, as well as meetings with the local administration in the municipality.

In my SLT work I saw that the schools' approach to youth at risk often had a tendency to escalate the behaviour that caused the concern. Thus, I volunteered to spend full days in schools where they struggled with challenging behaviours among students so I could observe the dynamics between them and their teachers. In many cases, being present in schools gave me unique information to share with the teachers and relevant services for intervening. I also observed that teachers struggled to approach challenging behaviour in a constructive way. Creating spaces with teachers and other professionals where we listened to the student's point of view on the situation and behaviour was an important first step for more transformative practices in schools.

A related and important motive for me to spend time (and present my project) in schools and relevant services was to *raise awareness* about my PhD project as a concrete contribution to primary prevention of HSB. The dominant discourse that I encountered (especially from the administration and school leaders in and outside the municipality) when I designed the project proposal was that this topic was too specialised to be relevant for teachers. Moreover, they claimed that I put too much responsibility on teachers who already had too many tasks. I have therefore spent time studying and understanding challenges around the implementation of policies in schools, and at the

[5] Slang expression for scheduled rumbles, often between groups of minors

municipal administration level, and this experience may give legitimacy to my aim of strengthening teachers' safeguarding and proposed structures for transformative practices.

The timeline highlights that I have continuously prioritised voluntary tasks that do not give merit in academia but make a crucial contribution to practice, implementation and improvement. I was hired by RVTS Midt to co-author the school guide on how school staff can respond to HSB among students. The Directorate of Health funded the project, and the Directorate is currently in the process of strengthening the early HSB prevention and intervention focus nationally. In addition, I have written a book for practitioners on interdisciplinary cooperation in school with Helle Kleive, a psychology specialist and the previous leader of V27, as mentioned above, Norway's pioneering resource unit on HSB (Draugedalen & Kleive, 2022). To ensure that that our book indeed (re)presented a child-oriented approach to prevention and intervention, my children Louisa (12) and Julia (19) contributed to several parts of the book as consultants and co-authors. I have also written 10 commentaries in various public journals, targeting staff in schools and kindergartens, the police and higher education. I have also presented my project to various services nationally over 50 times. I have been a member of the editorial board of a journal for kindergarten staff and have been a peer reviewer for two scientific journals. Finally, I have presented my project at various international conferences. I believe that all in all, these experiences have helped me to understand the complexity of implementing new initiatives in services that work with children, and the synergetic dynamics of policy, theory and practice.

Finally, the timeline reveals how COVID-19 affected my research journey. Suddenly, communication was only possible via telecommunications, and the plans for conducting research and working abroad were altered several times. Due to the pandemic, I was automatically granted a six-month extension of the PhD project by the Research Council. However, I must admit that conducting research in the pandemic has been a challenging and sometimes very lonely process. Nikki Rutter et al. (2021) have eloquently elaborated on how the pandemic affected her and her fellow students' PhD journeys at Durham

University. The authors describe how they needed to change various aspects of their research projects as COVID regulations were imposed and altered. Perhaps the most heartfelt point mentioned in the article was their feeling of continuous isolation and solitude in the PhD process, and I can truly relate to their experiences.

What becomes clear from the timeline is that there is indeed a continuous ethical dilemma in assuming an active role in designing and implementing interventions for schools and services in the municipality and at the same time trying to position oneself as a neutral outsider exploring teachers' and service providers' understandings and responses to safeguarding and transformative practices. Thus, I have tried to the best of my abilities to be as transparent as I can about how my role(s) have influenced the results and the inferences in this project.

4.8 Summary

In this chapter I have described the methodological approach used in my study, and accounted for the chosen paradigm, methods and study design of the project. Furthermore, I have detailed the evolving process of my data collection and analysis, as well as outlined the credibility of my research project and discussed particular ethical dilemmas of conducting a public sector PhD.

In the next chapter I will present the main findings from the studies and illustrate the integration of inferences drawn through a discussion on the various contributions of this thesis.

5 Research Findings

In this chapter I will start by presenting a summary of the four published articles and consider the ways in which my findings confirm the answers to the five research questions. Thereafter, I will discuss the overall original contribution of my research to research on HSB and the ways in which it promotes understandings of human rights-based education. Finally, I will elaborate on the implications and recommendations for practice and future research.

5.1 Summary of the Articles

The overarching aim of the thesis is to strengthen teachers' transformative safeguarding of children who display HSB through enhanced interdisciplinary cooperation between schools and frontline service providers. As mentioned in section 1.1.5, the overarching aim was divided into three objectives comprising five research questions. The objectives have been explored through the following three empirical articles, as well as one conceptual article. Where appropriate I situate my findings in the context of studies outside Norway.

5.1.1 Article I

Title: Draugedalen, K. (2021). Teachers' responses to harmful sexual behaviour in primary school: Findings from a digital survey among primary school teachers. *Journal of Sexual Aggression, 27*(2), 233–246.

The aim of this article was to realise the first objective: *"Create a research-based overview of teachers' knowledge and competence on children who display HSB, how they respond and who they cooperate with, in order to identify challenges in the cooperation between schools and frontline services".* Building on existing research from Chapter two that pointed to a knowledge gap regarding teachers' knowledge and responses (Kor et al., 2022; McKibbin & Humphreys, 2021), this article sought to establish a baseline for the project by answering the first three research questions:

RQ 1: How do teachers understand and respond to HSB?

RQ 2: What support systems do teachers identify in safeguarding against HSB?
RQ 3: How do teachers identify support and engage with school-based colleagues/other professionals/service providers?

As described in section 4.3, the survey sample consisted of 159 teachers from 15 primary schools, which comprised the data collection source in phase one.

To answer RQ 1: *How do teachers understand and respond to HSB,* I explored teachers' self-reported level of knowledge of HSB. The data showed that most teachers in the survey (between 66-73%) reported that they had not received any information, or had no knowledge of or training in HSB in their education or their professional career. As seen from Chapter two, this concurs to a high degree with previous research on teachers' reported lack of HSB training from Norway (Vorland et al., 2018), the UK (Firmin et al., 2019; Lloyd, 2019; Lloyd & Bradbury, 2022; Waters et al., 2022) and Canada (Meyer, 2008).

Furthermore, less than 25% of the teachers in my survey reported having encountered HSB in schools. It is worth noting that these findings diverge somewhat from the findings in Ey & McInnes' (2018) study from Australia, where only 35% of their respondents reported having received no formal HSB training and 40% of the teachers reported having observed HSB in school. This divergence may reflect the fact that most Australian territories have in place designated policies and guidelines on HSB for teachers (Ey et al., 2017). Although the authors point out an inconsistency in the educational departments' approaches to HSB, there is mandatory reporting, training and guidelines for teachers for most parts of the country. As argued by Clements et al. (2017), HSB training creates awareness among professionals when it comes to identifying HSB.

Thus, in my article, I problematised and contrasted the finding that few teachers observe HSB with reports from Norwegian youths that describe sexual violations in schools as something happening to everyone (Norwegian Ombudsperson for children, 2018). I argue that it is likely that teachers' lack of HSB training results in a lack of awareness when it comes to identifying and responding to HSB.

In exploring the second research question *RQ 2: what support systems do teachers identify in safeguarding against HSB,* the findings indicated *who* individual teachers contact for support, and *what* structural support system they identify. The data showed that most teachers would contact the principal, the school nurse and a colleague (in descending order) for support if encountering HSB. I identified a significant vulnerability in this pattern, as the school nurse represents the only external agency in the teachers' 'individual support system' when responding to HSB. As noted in Chapter two, the school leaders in individual schools largely decide further actions when HSB occurs (Allnock & Atkinson, 2019; Firmin et al., 2019; Goldschmidt-Gjerløw, 2022). Thus, in the article I argue that teachers' identified support system makes safeguarding against HSB largely dependent on each school's leaders, which becomes a vulnerable structure for a holistic intervention.

I also sought to explore whether teachers identified any structural support system for responses by asking if the school had a procedure for HSB. Few teachers answered 'no' to this question, indicating at first glance that schools may have procedures. However, almost 60% of the teachers answered that they do not know if their schools have procedures for HSB. Furthermore, many of the teachers who initially answered yes to the question could not specify the procedures when asked to do so. These results, indicating that schools do not have procedures for HSB responses, echo previous findings among Norwegian teachers (Vorland et al., 2018) and teachers in the UK (Lloyd, 2019; Waters et al., 2021). Hence, another argument in the article is that the lack of systemic procedures in school results in placing the responsibility for safeguarding against HSB solely on the individual teacher.

In answering the third research question *RQ 3: how do they identify support and engage with school-based colleagues/other professionals/service providers,* I explored which services teachers considered relevant to cooperate with if encountering HSB. The services identified by almost 90% of the teachers were the child welfare service, followed by the school nurse, and the local resource centre for victims of sexual abuse and the Children's House. It is interesting to note that all these services have designated

physical presence in the schools in the sample. However, in exploring which service to involve when encountering HSB, I detected a confusion among teachers about who to contact. The school nurse was the only consistent service featuring across teachers' answers to RQ 2 and RQ 3. Therefore, I maintain that the school nurse is a particularly significant support in safeguarding against HSB, as this service seems to have the best access to teachers (and parents).

In the article, the findings were discussed in light of Mertens' (2010) transformative paradigm, underlining education as an intersubjective space for change (Kemmis et al., 2014) and teachers as the agents of that change (Freire, 1968, 2001; Giroux, 2010). Applying these perspectives to my data analysis, I advocate for HSB training for teachers and a more systemic response to HSB in schools through clearly defined roles in interdisciplinary cooperation, as well as for procedures and national guidelines.

Even though not being a part of the theoretical framework at this point, I also specify the necessity of honouring the child's participatory rights in safeguarding against HSB.

5.1.1 Article II

Title: Draugedalen, K., Kleive, H. & Grov, Ø. (2021). Preventing harmful sexual behaviour in primary schools: Barriers and solutions. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 121*, 105295.

Article II also explored the first objective: *"Create a research-based overview of teachers' knowledge and competence on children who display HSB, how they respond and who they cooperate with in order to identify challenges in the cooperation between schools and frontline services",* and the first three research questions. Building on Carlene Firmin's and Östen Wahlbeck's advice (the external opponents at my midterm seminar on 5 Oct, 2020) about focusing on qualitative aspects of the study, this article set out to provide a richer and more in-depth understanding of teachers' perspectives and responses to HSB through focus-groups interviews. I wanted to triangulate (Tashakkori et al., 2021) the quantitative responses from the survey with qualitative data from the focus groups to explore possible convergence.

I wrote Article II together with two of Norway's leading clinical experts on HSB, psychologist Helle Kleive and senior psychiatrist Øystein Grov, to compliment my primary prevention perspective with their tertiary prevention perspectives. As I was the first and corresponding author I designed the study and collected and analysed the data. As accounted for in Chapter 4.3, I conducted focus-group interviews with 19 educators and school staff in six schools from the survey sample. Although I penned most parts of the article, the co-authors re-analysed my findings, revised all parts of the article and provided specialist information on clinical developments, treatment and interventions (as well as access to expertise) in Norway and abroad.

In exploring answers to RQ 1: *How do teachers understand and respond to HSB*, the shared reflections from informants in the focus groups provided a more enriched perspective on the understandings and responses in the survey, illustrating Greene's (2007) purpose of *complementarity* in MM. When confronted with the survey results, most of the informants confirmed that they had not received any HSB training, and many displayed the emotions of shame and embarrassment in acknowledging their lack of competence and awareness about the phenomenon. Concurring with the findings from the survey, many informants reported that they had not observed the behaviours among students in school. However, as the discussions evolved in the various interviews, several informants acknowledged that it was difficult to differentiate between and respond to healthy, problematic and harmful sexual behaviour. Some of the teachers also admitted that they had not thought about children having sexual behaviours before, indicating the prevailing taboo of sexual behaviours (Goldschmidt-Gjerløw, 2019; Hackett, 2020). However, informants across all groups reported a genuine interest in learning how to approach HSB, and some requested courses for their school. One informant even joined the focus group to obtain assistance with a concrete HSB incident. There is a possibility that I had not been able to acquire such a level of honesty and openness from the focus groups without presenting data from the survey first, and this finding may illustrate the added value of Greene's (2007) purpose of *development* as emerging issues from the survey informed the next phase.

Teachers also reported that lack of time and resources constrained their ability to have conversations with students about their concerns and their ability to provide general safeguarding. Many of the informants expressed such a high level of frustration and despair regarding this issue that one of the thematic categories was appropriately labelled 'overwhelming role as a teacher'. Similarly, Selvik & Helleve (2022, p. 9) conducted focus-group interviews with Norwegian teachers in secondary schools about their responses to students who experienced domestic violence, where the authors noted that a heavy workload, little time and lack of training among teachers resulted in a "paralyzing experience of uncertainty" in encounters with students with such experiences.

When discussing the second research question RQ 2: *What support systems do teachers identify in safeguarding against HSB,* the school nurse was mentioned throughout the groups as the most suitable person to turn to for this type of concern, confirming the finding from the survey. The unique position of the public health and school nurses' role in sexual abuse prevention and sexuality education has been emphasised by the government (The Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services, 2017; 2019), as well as Norwegian and international literature (Haugland, 2017; Haugland & Grimsmo, 2014; Rew & Bowman, 2008; Sundler et al., 2021). Osler and Vincent (2003) have also reported that young people often identify school nurses as easier to talk to than teachers, and this service could therefore offer significant support and guidance to both students and teachers in tackling sensitive issues together in ways that promote mutual trust. At the same time, Lagerlöf and Øverlien's (2022) study from Sweden found that few of the respondents experiencing intimate partner violence in school notified the school nurse. As previously mentioned by teachers, the school nurses' competence and relations to students are equally determining factors for their influence in safeguarding.

One factor that could contribute to these divergent results is that school nurses do not have a clearly defined role in interdisciplinary cooperation when it comes to safeguarding with schools. Selvik & Helleve (2022, p. 7) interviewed teachers from two schools in Norway about their encounters with students who experienced domestic

violence and who they cooperated with. The authors found that although teachers had contact with the school nurse and treatment staff, the "possibilities for support were not defined", thus leaving the cooperation on concern to the individual teacher. These findings support the need for more clearly defined safeguarding roles for professionals.

In answering the third research question RQ 3: *How do they identify support and engage with school-based colleagues/other professionals/service providers*, teachers reported the school nurse as the second most relevant service to contact if encountering HSB. The other services mentioned, namely the child welfare service and the resource centre for victims of sexual abuse, differed from the support system revealed in RQ 2. The informants also gave a more nuanced account of the difficulties in identifying support agencies and engaging with them. Many of the teachers had experienced that frontline service providers were unavailable when they tried to cooperate with them about concerns or in specific cases. However, services that came to the schools and engaged with the teachers were often considered to be a relevant support system if teachers needed assistance with a concern, and this finding further supports the need for the physical presence of services in school.

As in Article I, this article's findings were discussed in light of Mertens' (2010) transformative paradigm, and Kemmis et al.'s (2014) theory about education as intersubjective spaces of change, and teachers as agents of that change (Freire, 1968, 2001; Giroux, 2010). Furthermore, Alexakos' (2015) perspectives on Authentic Inquiry Research (AIR) were applied to the research design as a concrete way of bringing context and group dynamics of the focus groups to the forefront while analysing and discussing the findings. Based on the data analysis, we advocated the promotion of HSB competence, a more sustainable role for teachers, and coordinated practice and multi-agency cooperation.

5.1.1 Article III

Title: Draugedalen, K. & Osler, A. (2022). Teachers as human rights defenders: strengthening HRE and safeguarding theory to prevent child sexual abuse. *Human Rights Education Review, 5*(2), 32-55.

Article III was guided by the second objective: "*Explore strategies to strengthen teachers' safeguarding for children who display HSB in schools"*, and the following research question: What do teachers need to implement transformative safeguarding in schools? I wrote this article in cooperation with my supervisor, Audrey Osler, as she was instrumental in developing the grounded theory on advancing teachers' safeguarding. Being one of the pioneering contributors to the academic field of Human Rights Education (HRE), Osler offered unique insights into developing the theoretical underpinnings of teachers' transformative safeguarding role.

The article set out to join an ongoing discussion on safeguarding in schools in the journal Human Rights Education Review, initiated by Goldschmidt-Gjerløw (2019) (Goldschmidt-Gjerløw & Trysnes, 2020), and was a direct response to Alison Struthers' (2021) article "Protecting invisible children in England: how human rights education could improve school safeguarding".

As pointed out by Ruzicka et al. (2021, p. 462), "Teaching children to protect themselves has not been convincingly associated with reduced risk of actual victimization", our argument in the article was that although teaching children legal literacy through HRE is a crucial step in primary prevention, legal literacy alone is insufficient as a safeguarding practice in schools and attention needs to be given to asymmetrical power relations. Goldschmidt-Gjerløw (2022, p. 430) has also expressed this dilemma: "Defending one's own and others' rights is not straightforward – one's ability to do this in practice is to a certain extent conditioned by the power relations that are in play". Accordingly, Rayment et al. (2020, p. 25) detail the comprehensive process that must occur before safeguarding can have the intended effect for children:

> For young people to have got to the stage of telling adults or seeking help is the tip of the iceberg. Telling relies on them having developed self-respect, the ability to recognise abuse and trusted relationships with adults. Respectful relationships with others are also needed if young people are to resolve or prevent problems safely on their own or within friendship groups.

Thus, Osler and I argued for the necessity to advance safeguarding theory for teachers to encompass the role of emotions and asymmetrical power relations. The point of the article is to illuminate that these pre-conditions must be in place for teachers to be able to teach legal literacy to children. In this process, we discussed back-and-forth how to frame the article to best encompass a holistic approach to safeguarding in school. In developing our grounded theory, we drew on Greene's (2007) *complementarity* when combining different methods to understand a phenomenon. We decided that even though the article draws on empirical findings focused on HSB, our theoretical advances of teachers' safeguarding could not, and should not, be limited to HSB. Thus, we chose to apply the term *child sexual abuse* (CSA) in the title to signal that safeguarding for teachers must cover all types of abuse, not just HSB.

This article introduced the child-rights framework through the focus on HRE in combination with Ethics of Care (Noddings, 2006). We argued that through the practice of *confirming,* teachers enable a child-rights approach to safeguarding while simultaneously strengthening safe relationships with students. The approach echoes Lloyd & Bradbury's (2022, p. 13) appeal: "The heart of preventive, restorative approaches to sexual harm should include active student participation in promoting school ethos and culture".

Furthermore, in addressing safeguarding in an intersectional child-rights perspective, while emphasising asymmetrical power relations and the role of emotions, our grounded theory might also be applicable to safeguarding against other human rights violations in schools, such as stereotyping and profiling children with minority backgrounds. In this respect, Lloyd & Bradbury (2022, p. 13) have addressed how viewing safeguarding through an intersectional lens enables timely questions about awareness of context and students' social identity markers:

> Do schools replicate systemic harms that act as a barrier to some groups speaking? Furthermore, if responses disproportionately impact particular groups of children–Black children, those with additional physical and learning needs, children with social care involvement–how does this impact decisions to disclose and listen?

As already pointed out by Boler (1999), sexuality and racism seem to trigger similar emotional responses and reactions in teachers. We argue in the article that even though we focus on CSA and HSB, teachers' safeguarding should encompass awareness of human rights violations in general, as these taboo topics often prevent professionals from exercising the emotional labour they need to be regulated safe adults.

Finally, in this article, Osler and I use the term *child-on-child abuse* as an alternative concept for HSB. In the UK, the Department of Education (2022, p. 12) defines *child-on-child abuse* as a broad term which, in addition to comprising sexual violence, also includes bullying, teenage relationship abuse and general violence. This term is a variant of *peer-on-peer abuse*, which is often used when describing HSB among young people (see Firmin, 2017, Lloyd & Bradbury, 2022). As pointed out in the introduction, there is an on-going debate about suitable terminology in the field, and it is interesting to note that, for example, in their article Waters et al. (2022) propose that the term *peer-on-peer abuse* should be changed to *child-on-child abuse*, as they argue that the former is vague and open to personal interpretation.

Similarly, the external opponent for my completion seminar, Dr. Lesley-Anne Ey, addressed our use of the term child-on-child abuse in Article III. Ey argued that within the Australian context a new term, *child-to-child abuse* is currently replacing child-on child abuse to avoid stigmatising and labelling the child. Although this point resonates with me, I have chosen to use the term child-on-child abuse in both Articles III and IV to be consistent in my use of terminology across all the articles.

5.1.1 Article IV

Title: Draugedalen, K. (2023). Supporting Teachers in Safeguarding against Harmful Sexual Behaviour - Service Providers' Perspectives on Transformative Practices. *London Review of Education, 21* (1), 4.

Article IV was guided by the third objective: *"Explore frontline service providers' support to teachers when encountering HSB in schools"*, and the respective research question was:

RQ 5: How can frontline services support and strengthen teachers' transformative safeguarding in schools?

Building on the theorisation of teachers' safeguarding in Article III, this article examines frontline service providers' perspectives on how they can support schools' safeguarding, proposing a holistic structure of transformative practices that addresses emotions and asymmetrical power relations.

The findings identified three transformative practices among frontline services that support teachers' safeguarding; the physical presence of services in schools (also identified by teachers in Article II); cooperative practices around concerns (also identified by teachers in Article II); and shared HSB training and resources (also identified by teachers in Articles I and II).

In advocating a more universal prevention of HSB, I applied Greene's (2007) purpose of initiation by contrasting the teachers' and frontline services' perspectives to build on and initiate a new understanding of the phenomenon. By building on the other three articles, I developed a holistic approach to safeguarding entitled 'a system of care'. In presenting 'a system of care', I argue that the three transformative practices of supporting teachers' safeguarding against HSB should also incorporate a caring approach.

For example, through *the physical presence of services in schools*, measures could be taken to designate shared time for interdisciplinary cooperation involving reflection,

tutoring and discussions in schools with professionals who can regulate potentially dysregulated teachers. This interdisciplinary interaction should both be a proactive measure for universal prevention, as well as a reactive measure in and after emotionally charged situations, such as HSB incidents.

Furthermore, the physical presence of services has the potential of creating a more holistic and sustainable approach to primary, secondary and tertiary prevention. As identified in the literature in Chapter two, a lack of interdisciplinary cooperation between schools and the frontline services is one obstacle to implementing safeguarding. This barrier has also been identified by Bronstein (2003, p. 298) in relation to social work more generally:

> Supporters of school-linked services hope to achieve overall systems change (Gardner, 1989). They hope that more collaboration between teachers and school social workers can better address needs of students, families, schools and communities. As Allen-Meares (1996) said, our schools often encourage professional "turfism" and an undermining of "a coordinated approach to equal educational opportunity and the development of our human capital. The need to reform the links between systems is urgent" (p. 538). Collaboration among individual professionals is the first step in developing collaborative relationships among community constituents, agencies, and professional groups.

The combined findings from teachers and frontline services indicate that the physical presence of frontline services may have the potential of mitigating professional 'turfism'.

Findings on the second transformative practice, *cooperative practices around concern*, indicate a potential of empowering teachers to take active ownership of concerns and possible interventions while being supported by services.

Similarly, the child welfare service's new design also indicated better cooperation with both students and their parents. Including students and their parents in the process of concern at the earliest possible threshold could be one concrete way of implementing participatory rights for children and families. This process resembles the transformative

approach of family group conferences as a method for HSB incidents, as detailed by Anderson & Parkinson (2018, p. 493-4):

> The underlying philosophy is that families, not professionals, are the "experts" on their own family situation and difficulties, and that most families have sufficient strengths and resources to make competent decisions around meeting their children's needs.

Findings on the third transformative practice, *shared HSB training and resources*, indicate that basic training in the Traffic Light Tool and other resources seem to strengthen teachers' knowledge about healthy, problematic and harmful sexual behaviour. Furthermore, as pointed out by the child welfare service, the tool offers shared understanding of concern. Through interdisciplinary interaction, relations between professionals are strengthened at the same time (as also illustrated in Article II).

The relational aspect in the system of care model is emphasised on every level, and is inspired by several primary, secondary and tertiary prevention efforts honouring participation and agency. As an example, Thulin et al.'s (2018) study from the tertiary prevention treatment Combined Parent–Child Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CPC-CBT) has shown promising results for children who have experienced violence from their parents when honouring the children's perspectives and participatory rights as a part of the treatment. The children in the study highlighted the relationship with their therapist as being essential to the treatment outcome.

Similarly, Hackett et al. (2022) have emphasised the importance of development, involvement and relationship for successful HSB treatment outcomes for tertiary prevention. As noted, building relationships between professionals has the potential of mitigating asymmetrical power relations as well as catering for or diminishing emotional reactions in safeguarding.

5.2 My contribution to HSB research

Here I discuss the various empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions of my study. I will elaborate on inferences drawn in this study by addressing the research questions and discussing what more we can learn from looking at all the findings under one. I will also consider what the study contributes to human rights-based education.

5.2.1 Empirical contributions

As this is the first study on primary school teachers' understandings of and responses to HSB in schools conducted in Norway (as well as one of few studies internationally), this is a key empirical contribution. This study offers new knowledge in a largely unexplored field and has found some evidence of the current barriers to realising safeguarding in primary schools. In the following, this empirical contribution will be elaborated on.

First, the survey and the focus groups combined indicate that teachers' understandings and responses to HSB in Norway are affected by a lack of training, and a lack of resources and time. The responses are largely dependent on the school leaders' choices of action (Articles I and II). As a result, teachers' safeguarding becomes an individualised responsibility due to the lack of a systemic support system and is therefore perceived as an overwhelming emotional responsibility (Article II).

Even though the data in my study diverge somewhat from Australian teachers' responses (Ey & McInnes, 2018), these trends have been documented in studies from primary schools in Italy (Miragoli et al., 2017), India (Nair & Jose, 2017) and the UK (Waters et al., 2021), as well as in secondary schools and upper secondary schools from various countries (Allnock & Atkinson, 2019; Altinyelken & LeMat, 2018; Firmin, 2019; Goldschmidt-Gjerløw, 2019, 2022; Makhasane & Mtembu, 2019; Meyer, 2008; Lloyd, 2019). Thus, the baseline from my survey contributes to filling the international knowledge gap on primary school teachers' understandings and responses to HSB (Article I).

Second, my study suggests that teachers consider school leaders, the school nurse and colleagues to be decisive factors for safeguarding practices in schools. Schools' lack of systemic structures therefore results in vulnerable safeguarding practices and variations between schools (Article II).

Third, the study indicates that teachers identify support based on the services' presence in school, as all the listed services (child welfare service, school nurse and resource centre for victims of sexual abuse) have designated time in schools. Similarly, their engagement with school-based colleagues depends on the degree of relations and contact between them (Articles II and IV).

Fourth, the empirical contribution concerns prerequisites for implementation of safeguarding in schools. Teachers need procedures, guidelines and training and increased cooperation with frontline services. At the same time, they need recognition of how emotions and asymmetrical power relations influence teachers' safeguarding from school leaders and frontlines services (Articles I and II).

Fifth, my study indicates that frontline services can support teachers' transformative safeguarding in schools through physical presence, cooperative practices around concern and shared HSB training and resources (Articles II and IV). However, these practices must be framed through 'a system of care', which considers the role of emotions and asymmetrical power relations in the interdisciplinary cooperation (Article IV).

An overall empirical inference drawn from these five contributions of the study is therefore that to enable education as an intersubjective space for change and teachers as agents of change in strengthening primary prevention efforts in safeguarding against HSB, the government must prioritise training in healthy, problematic and harmful sexual behaviours as an initial step. Øverlien et al.'s (2016) study among kindergarten-, teacher- and social care students has previously revealed that the students do not receive adequate training about violence and abuse and that they therefore do not feel prepared to tackle this public health issue in their future profession.

It is worth pointing out here that there may be a discrepancy between the message Norway communicates to the Lanzarote committee about the current training of professionals, and the actual reality in schools. The Norwegian Ministry of Children and Families (2019, p. 22) ensured in their status report to the Lanzarote convention that professionals, such as teachers, were learning about child sexual abuse by being offered concrete informative webpages and pedagogical resources, as well as through a new interdisciplinary initiative:

> In 2017, the Ministry of Education and Research took the initiative to ensure cooperation in the area of violence and abuse between the first degrees in higher education in health sciences, social sciences, the police, teaching, and special needs teaching. The students should gain a better insight into their own roles and areas of responsibility and those of other professions such that they are better equipped for multidisciplinary cooperation. The work is being continued by the University of South-Eastern Norway.

Even though I have made a concrete contribution to this innovative and promising initiative through a presentation at their annual conference in 2021 (see timeline in Appendix 4, p. 141), I would still argue that the efforts mentioned in the Ministry's report are in no way sufficient for providing adequate knowledge to teachers and other professionals to safeguard children in Norway. My argument is supported by a similar claim made recently by five Norwegian researchers (Svendsen et al., 2023) about the current lack of sexuality education. The authors pointed out that neither the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training nor the teacher training institutions have so far provided training in sexuality education for teacher students in schools or kindergartens. Furthermore, the Directorate's (2019b) curriculum does not specify required skills for teachers to implement Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE).

However, it is appropriate to point out that UNESCO also fails to specify this (2018, p. 19) in their *International technical guidance on sexuality education*. Instead, one may argue that UNESCO contributes to a 'persisting myth' of teachers automatically being qualified to teach anything in a curriculum regardless of training and preparation:

> Teachers are skilled in providing age- and developmentally appropriate learning experiences for children and young people, and young people see schools and teachers as a trustworthy source of information.

The findings in my study (Articles I and II) challenge this assumption about teachers being competent. On the contrary, when comparing UNESCO's statement with the literature and research presented in this thesis, there is a compelling reason to believe that teachers are *not* automatically skilled in teaching emotionally charged topics or intervening appropriately in sexual behaviours. This may actually result in young people *not* considering teachers as trustworthy sources of information. Thus, viewing my findings against teachers' mandatory teaching of the interdisciplinary topic *Health and Life Skills,* as proposed by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2019b), may provide crucial information to the government about the current status of the implementation of the curriculum in schools. In this respect, it may be tempting to borrow the conclusion from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 2015, p. 7) that they make in their Evaluation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education Programs across the globe: "Although innovative work has taken place in many countries, there is often a wide gap between progressive national policies and programme implementation at the local level".

On an unrelated note, there is another interesting observation to be made about the directorate's efforts in safeguarding against HSB. As one of the authors of the first school guide for the prevention and intervention of HSB for school staff in primary and secondary school teachers in Norway, I was surprised to learn that the Directorate of Health and not the Directorate for Education and Training funded this project. The Directorate of Health is indeed responsible for school nurses and health-related concerns in schools. However, as seen from my findings in Article II, schools involve school nurses to a varying degree and their role description is not always clear. Even if it was presumably not intentional on the part of the Directorate for Education and Training, it could be reasonable to infer that a similar 'chain-reaction' of priorities identified in the literature in Chapter two also applies here: the perceived lack of focus on HSB from the senior leaders in the education sector in Norway may indeed contribute

to the current lack of training, strategies and procedures in schools on prevention and intervention detected in this study.

Lastly, although not being a research question in this study, I contend that my findings have dug deeper into the empirical knowledge about teachers and HSB than previous work by advancing a child-rights safeguarding theory for teachers. As such, I argue that one empirical contribution of this study is also made to the field of Human Rights Education by expanding our existing knowledge on how HRE may be used to safeguard against HSB in schools.

5.2.2 Theoretical contributions

My PhD project uses a child-rights framework in developing a safeguarding role for teachers that recognises the role of emotions and asymmetrical power relations in interdisciplinary cooperation with frontline services. To the best of my knowledge, this approach has not been developed before. Thus, a theoretical contribution of this study is the development of our *grounded theory on transformative safeguarding for teachers* (as described in Article III). By aligning HRE and Ethics of Care and simultaneously addressing the role of emotions and asymmetrical power relations, the theory provides an innovative and sustainable primary and secondary prevention approach for teachers' safeguarding in schools.

As seen in the literature, HSB places children at risk of being both stigmatised and isolated in the school context, with the result that children who exhibit this behaviour are more vulnerable to destructive peer pressure and negative feedback from their surroundings (Levenson & Socia, 2016; Yoder et al., 2016). These social exclusion mechanisms make teachers' understandings and responses particularly decisive in both prevention and intervention work with children who are at risk. As the designated leader of a class community, teachers have the power to influence the climate of care in the classroom through their approaches and responses to students, and transformative safeguarding must start with teachers understanding their role in the classroom. Our grounded theory can offer teachers this value-based platform. Furthermore, in

operationalising HRE education, underpinned with Ethics of Care and Trauma-Informed Care principles, a teacher establishes safety and close relations to the students, and creates a climate of care. This climate facilitates learning and development and mitigates challenging behaviours, particularly for children with ACEs. This provides teachers with more sustainable approaches for their emotional labour in safeguarding children. If teachers are trained to adopt a more intersectional approach to safeguarding, they might be better able to prevent and intervene in human rights violations at a lower threshold.

Moreover, the theory frames safeguarding against HSB within the human rights and CRC framework and thus provides teachers with a robust justification for comprehensive sexuality and sexual abuse education, and may assist schools in their implementation of the Health and Life Skills curriculum in Norway.

Even though education contexts vary across countries, Chapter two identified trends among teachers that are similar to my findings. Based on these detected similarities, the grounded theory may have relevance in other countries as well. Bearing in mind that the theory provides an evidence-based framework for teachers in preparing them *emotionally* to implement the Council of Europe's (2020) three primary prevention strategies (awareness raising, sex and relationship education, and child sexual abuse education), this theoretical contribution may be applicable to education systems across Europe.

Another theoretical contribution of the study is my proposed structure of transformative practices in schools entitled '*A system of care'* (presented in Article IV on page 18). The flow chart indicates the various levels and actors involved in safeguarding, while explicitly placing the responsibility for caring on each level. This model combines primary, secondary and tertiary prevention as it offers an overview over professionals' roles and their safeguarding responsibilities. The proposed structure builds on McKibbin & Humphrey's (2021) 'Building Block' Model of tiered responses across services combined with the empirical findings from phases 1, 2 and 4. Moreover, the model includes an awareness of the role of emotions and asymmetrical power relations in

safeguarding, and embodies an intersectional, trauma-informed and child-rights approach to safeguarding.

To the best of my knowledge, this is the first comprehensive safeguarding model for teachers that encompasses such factors. The model is thus a concrete theoretical contribution to advancing and strengthening the systemic structures of prevention and intervention of HSB.

Moreover, my study has contributed to the development of the Norwegian school guide for the prevention and intervention of HSB in primary and secondary schools. In the guide, I developed a flow chart with concrete procedures and a description of roles in interdisciplinary cooperation (Sandvik et al., 2021, p. 24). This flow chart was later adapted by two of the co-authors (Sandvik & Tennfjord) for professionals working with younger children in the kindergarten guide (Sandvik et al., 2022, p. 18). Although not a direct part of the PhD project, the flow chart could be considered a theoretical contribution of the project's public sector design to practitioners in Norway.

Throughout my PhD period, schools have contacted Helle Kleive and myself to request consultations and presentations on teachers' safeguarding against HSB. Teachers' continuous interest in the topic led us to publish a practical book for teachers on safeguarding against HSB in schools and on interdisciplinary cooperation (Draugedalen & Kleive, 2022). Even though the book is not a theoretical contribution that is included in the study, my PhD project influenced all parts of the process of developing it.

5.2.3 Methodological contributions

Using my own background as a child, mother and educator is a methodological contribution of this thesis, and aims to illustrate that as human beings, we share many significant similarities through our interdependency.

First, my adverse experiences as a child are relevant because they form a large part of my identity and infiltrate my epistemological research stance. While I do recognise that my life story is personal and cannot be generalised, my personal narrative could be

considered to be a real-life example of Felitti et al.'s (1998) research on how ACEs in a child can be manifested through a lifetime perspective. As seen in Chapter two about ACEs, research in trauma psychology and neuroscience have brought advances to various academic and clinical fields through empirical discoveries of how the brain and body are impacted and transformed by trauma (Felitti et al., 1998; Levine, 1997; Van der Kolk, 2014), and its consequences for learning (Siegel, 1999). In this perspective, I wanted to offer insights into how this research *may* be manifested in lived experiences.

Furthermore, through my story I also wanted to offer hope to professionals that transformation is possible by exemplifying the power of healthy relationships in healing trauma and creating resilience for children who have experienced ACEs. This key message to professionals thus is an illustration of what the literature is saying (Perry, 2006, 2009).

Second, as a mother I can offer my personal lived experiences and perspectives on strategies to counter the 'culture gap' in the school system, as this may serve as one illustration of how these experiences may be interpreted and acted upon. By actively listening and being sensitive to my daughters' lived experiences while being mindful of my own position of power, I also want to try to model Noddings' (2006) recommendations for teachers in transforming their safeguarding role.

Lastly, as an educator, the insider perspective that comes with having been working as a teacher for many years has given my project unique credibility among the teachers and school leaders I have interacted with. I speak 'the school lingo', can relate to their situation and understand practical challenges in implementation work. Furthermore, as illustrated through my timeline (Appendix 4), I have also spent a substantial amount of time studying interdisciplinary cooperation and designs, learning from highly skilled experts. Thus, frontline services, as well as more specialised expert agencies, have also embraced my project along the way. I also try to illustrate how the advanced education sexual abuse programme prepared me to tackle the issue of CSA in class in ways I had never learnt during my teacher education, and I therefore advocate that this programme should be offered to all teachers.

As an important final point, I firmly believe that a teacher can be in a unique professional position to safeguard children, which may often exceed parents' abilities. In many instances, parents of children who display HSB may need support themselves, as ACEs may also affect them. Hence, assigning the dominant responsibility for safeguarding to professionals, such as teachers, could ensure a more sustainable safeguarding practice. As opposed to parents, teachers are *professional leaders of peer groups* in an everyday context, which means that teachers have a particular opportunity to create and maintain healthy and pro-social rules for interactions within *a whole* class from the beginning of primary school.

As seen, childhood adversities and trauma are often manifested in student behaviour that has negative impact on the school context (Levenson & Socia, 2016), and the behaviour must therefore be addressed in the context where it occurs with the persons who experience it.

5.3 Limitations

This research project has some limitations that need to be addressed. First, the research was conducted in a predominantly white community, whereas Norwegian schools are becoming increasingly diverse. This may have affected my findings, and the results are therefore not representative for education settings elsewhere in Norway. Related to this limitation about the student demographic is the observation that the participants in this study (both teachers and other professionals) are predominantly (exclusively) white. This is equally true of the whole teaching workforce (Statistics Norway, 2021). As a result, the study, and the wider education community, lacks the insights of a diverse workforce, which could have produced other data. Furthermore, as this is a PhD project, it is necessarily limited in scope, and unable to draw on the insights of children and young people. Moreover, I interviewed a limited number of frontline service providers (six), who have very varied mandates and roles. The findings of this small-scale study cannot be generalised, but they give some pointers for future research. These choices have influenced my results and so I have framed them by drawing on research and

practice, as well the expertise of various academics, clinicians and practitioners. I have also tried to be transparent about my positionality as an insider.

5.4 Recommendations for practice and future research

As a part of disseminating my research, presenting our book and introducing the school guide, Helle Kleive, Kristin Larsen, Oddfrid Skorpe Tennfjord, Marita Sandvik and my children and I conducted a joint presentation from Norway at the Association for the Treatment & Prevention of Sexual Abuse (ATSA) 2022 conference in Los Angeles. The following response came from a participant answering the survey after our presentation, and may serve as an illustrating example of the difficulties educators face in highly polarised education contexts:

> I found the traffic light tool useful but struggle with being able to apply the info to US schools given the current climate and laws regarding Sex Ed or human sexuality. I wish we were more like Norway in mandating it but in (*a US state*), things are restricted by policy and parents. (27 Oct., 2022)

Considering that HSB is still a controversial topic in several countries across the world, it should therefore be highlighted that the current developments in Norway *may* be considered both promising and conducive to an emerging paradigm shift in the education system. There are currently several innovative initiatives in streamlining primary, secondary and tertiary prevention efforts nationally, and I am proud to say that I consider my PhD project to be one of these initiatives. As such, it is my sincere intention to contribute to a more robust theoretical framework for the prevention of and intervention in HSB, which will enable teachers to transform their safeguarding role amidst controversy and high public emotions.

In line with the public health approach of the project, I have structured my recommendations for practice into combined primary, secondary and tertiary prevention efforts to illustrate how levels and actors are interdependent of each other.

Primary prevention initiatives for teachers include the Council of Europe's (CoE, 2020) three focus areas: *HSB awareness raising*, *sex and relationship education* and *sexual*

abuse education in schools. As specifically outlined in all of my articles, teachers need teacher-specific, as well as general shared interdisciplinary HSB training. Teacher-specific transformative safeguarding must include teachers' unique role in the classroom as the caring-for person, as well as the role of emotions and asymmetrical power relations in safeguarding. The general interdisciplinary HSB training can be arranged through existing courses provided by the RVTS centres, as well as utilising diverse e-resources, such as the school guide. Thus, a concrete implication for practice is that the government must start prioritising such systemic training in all municipalities/regions in Norway. Another implication for practice is that frontline services must claim greater ownership of the school arena through a statutory physical presence of their services in schools, and systemic cooperative practices for working with expressed concerns. These practices must, however, be realised through a system of care that addresses asymmetrical power relations and emotions in safeguarding and interdisciplinary cooperation practices, where school leaders and frontline services are mindful of their positions of power as they offer assistance in emotional labour.

As one concrete measure in initiating transformative safeguarding for schools and relevant services, national guidelines and recommended procedures have the capacity to streamline the above primary, secondary and tertiary prevention efforts, and can provide an initial structure for a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach for schools and relevant services in safeguarding against HSB. The school guide provides a tentative overview of such an approach, and should be developed further.

This is the first exploratory study from Norway on primary school teachers' understandings of and responses to HSB, which automatically points out the massive need for further studies on a much larger scale to uncover more trends and patterns related to HSB in schools. This study should be replicated to investigate if the results change over time, or if other factors should be altered, included, excluded or otherwise transformed with other populations.

Further research should include children and young people's perspectives, preferably in more diverse contexts. There is also a need to study safeguarding against various forms

of human rights violations to see whether safeguarding against HSB can be used as recommended in this thesis.

The various designs, such as the child welfare service's physical presence in schools, should be critically studied in future research to detect potential challenges and dilemmas. Bakketeig et al. (2019) have problematised interdisciplinary cooperation with services such as the child welfare service and the police due to their mandate of power, and must be studied in HSB cooperation. The same applies to interdisciplinary cooperation in schools with other services.

In going forward, there is a pressing need to study the various developments in practice when it comes to safeguarding against HSB, such as municipalities' use of the school guide and HSB training.

Finally, there is a need for more comparative studies, situating the Norwegian HSB developments within the wider international context of HSB research.

5.5 Summary

In this chapter I have presented and discussed the findings of each of the four articles. Then I have discussed the various contributions of my PhD thesis and elaborated on the strengths and limitations of my study. Lastly, I have accounted for its implications and made recommendations for practice and future research through the public health approach to prevention.

6 Concluding Remarks

In this thesis I have explored how to strengthen primary and secondary prevention efforts through transforming teachers' safeguarding role against HSB. In doing so, I created a baseline of teachers' understandings and responses to HSB. Furthermore, the complementarity of multiple data sources identified a need to theoretically advance the safeguarding practice for teachers. With the assistance of my supervisor, I developed a grounded theory that encompassed the role of emotions and asymmetrical power relations in safeguarding. In qualitative interviews with service providers who cooperated with schools, I identified three transformative practices: the physical presence of services in school, cooperative practices around concern and shared HSB training and resources. Integrating the grounded theory with the findings from service providers, I created a 'system of care' for interdisciplinary HSB cooperation.

By presenting the grounded theory and the system of care model, I have explored efforts to streamline primary, secondary and tertiary prevention into a more holistic approach.

In arguing for this systemic approach, my aim is to recommend ways forward for accomplishing the overarching aim of this thesis, namely to:

> *Strengthen teachers' transformative safeguarding of children who display HSB through enhanced interdisciplinary cooperation between schools and frontline service providers.*

In this respect, it is my sincere intention to offer teachers both hope and concrete assistance that may enable them to execute the emotional labour needed to safeguard children. It is also my intention to illustrate and advocate increased support for teachers in their significant societal role.

Inspired by Catherine Corr's (2015) touching conversion poetry of her own data in her thesis, I will end my thesis in a similar way, through a call for systemic transformation in advancing teachers' safeguarding of children:

To be the sole teacher...
that I consider to be an enormous responsibility.
I almost get, like, a heart attack sometimes
because I have had so many heavy cases,
and yes,
many who are suffering and struggling.
and to be all alone..
And you go to meetings after meetings,
and it's you alone who has to think about these children.
It really gets to you.[6]

The results in Table 6 show that a majority of teachers
do not know if their schools have procedures.[7]

Although not being the school's intention,
a lack of a systemic whole-school response in such cases
may end up outsourcing the entire responsibility
for detection and intervention of HSB to the individual teacher
without having a support system in place.[8]

For teachers to dare to safeguard
they need to know that they are a part of something greater
that will help them find the right solution for that particular child.
We need to open schools up for more shared reflections on difficult topics
so teachers can be supported.
There is so much shame surrounding this topic,
and we need to get away from that.[9]

We wish to consider what role emotions might play
in enabling a care-based ethics,
in selecting curriculum content,
and in enabling or inhibiting teachers' readiness
to act as human rights defenders
and practice a human rights-based safeguarding role.[10]

[6] (Informant B, focus group 1) Draugedalen et al. (2021, p. 5)
[7] Draugedalen (2021, p. 241)
[8] Draugedalen (2021, p. 242)
[9] (informant from the Service for School- and after School Activities) Draugedalen (2023, p. 7)
[10] Draugedalen & Osler (2022, p. 44)

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8 Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey instrument: Survey items from phase 1 presented to teachers.

1. Gender
- She
- He
- They/them

2. Age
- Under 20 years
- 20 - 29 years
- 30 – 39 years
- 40 - 49 years
- 50 - 59 years
- 60 years or more

3. Education
- Teacher education
- Pre-school teacher education
- Arts and crafts education
- Practical-pedagogical education
- Other

3b) If other, please specify:
Free text answer

4. Do you have children?
- Yes
- No

5. How long have you worked as a teacher?
- Less than 5 years
- 5-9 years
- 10-14 years
- 15-19 years
- 20-24 years
- 25 years or more

6. Are you a teacher responsible for a class?
- Yes
- No

7. Are you a teacher responsible for subjects?
- Yes
- No

8. a) Have you received knowledge about the topic *children who display problematic or harmful sexual behaviour*?
- Yes
- No
- Don't know

8b) If yes, please specify briefly in which context you received this knowledge

Free text answer

9. **What do you do at your school if you encounter a child who displays harmful sexual behaviour?**
   - Contact a colleague
   - Contact the school nurse
   - Contact the principal
   - Contact the child welfare service
   - Contact the police
   - Contact the parents
   - Nothing
   - Don't know

10. **Does your school have routines if it is discovered that a child has sexually abused another child?**
    - Yes
    - No
    - Don't know

    10b) If yes, what are the procedures in such a situation?

    Free text answer

11. **Which services do you think would be relevant to cooperate with in cases where a child has sexually abused another child?**

    (multiple choice)
    - The child welfare service
    - The police
    - Children's House
    - Pedagogical-Psychological Service (PPT)
    - The school nurse
    - The Resource Centre for Victims of Sexual Abuse
    - Children and young people's psychiatric out-patient clinic (BUP)
    - Other

    11b) If you chose other, please specify:

    Free text answer

12. **a) Have you yourself encountered a child who has displayed harmful sexual behaviour?**
    - Yes
    - No
    - Don't know

    12b) If yes, were you the one who defined the sexual behaviour as harmful?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Don't know

    12c) Were the school leaders involved in the case?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Don't know

12d) Did you get support and help from someone in school to deal with the situation?
Yes
No
Don't know

12e) Did the child who displayed HSB get help?
Yes
No
Don't know

13. **a) During your education, have you received any information or training in HSB?**
Yes
No
Don't know
13b) If yes, where and when?
Free text answer

14. **a) During your professional career, have you received any information or training regarding children who display problematic or harmful sexual behaviour?**
Yes
No
Don't know
14b) If yes, how and when?
Free text answer

15. **a) Trauma-informed care is an approach when working with children based on safety, relations and regulation of emotions. Are you familiar with this approach?**
Yes
No
Don't know
15b) If yes, how did you become familiar with this approach?
Free text answer

16. **Do you discuss in staff meetings how to approach children who display various challenging behaviours?**
Yes
No
Don't know

17. **Do you have a shared practice in your school for intervening with children who display various challenging behaviours?**
Yes
No
Don't know

18. **Do you have general discussions among colleagues about various forms of challenging behaviours?**
Yes
No
Don't know

19. Have you participated in the education programme that the Resource Centre for Victims of Sexual Abuse has taught at your school?

Yes
No
Don't know

20. Do the teachers actively participate in the education programme?

Yes
No
know

21. Do the teachers in your school use the centre's resources?

Yes
No
Don't know

22. How is the cooperation between teachers and the centre?

Very good
Good
Fair
Bad
Very bad
Don't know

23. Do you cooperate with other services outside school in cases that concern challenging behaviours among children?

Yes
No
Don't know

24. a) Do you have frequent opportunities to discuss your concerns around children?

Yes
No
Don't know

24b) If yes, what kind of opportunities are there?

Free text answer

25. What do you think about interagency cooperation between schools and other services?

Free text answer

26. Teachers are sometimes put in a situation where they receive concerning information from children that they must act on. Read through the following vignette and briefly describe what you would have done in this situation if you were Tove's teacher:

"Tove is 7 years old and is in year two. Tove is best friends with Siv in her class. They play together every day. Tove spends a lot of time at Siv's home, and they usually walk home together with Siv's big brother, Tom. Tom is 13 years old and is in high school nearby. Tom is often alone with Siv and Tove until their parents come home from work. One day Tove tells her teacher that she has seen Tom touching Siv's private parts."

Free text answer

(Translated from Norwegian)

Appendix 2:

Interview guide – focus groups with teachers Questions from phase 1 presented to teachers in phase 2.

These questions are addressed to you as professionals, and that is mainly the perspective I am seeking when we talk about this topic. The information you share will be anonymised and only used in this project if you explicitly consent to this.

The municipal psychologists and professionals at the resource centre for sexually abused victims can be contacted if you need advice or counselling regarding experiences with sexual abuse.

1. Tell a little bit about yourself and how long you have worked as a teacher.
2. What is your role in school?
3. Why did you agree to participate in this focus-group interview?
4. Have you received any information or training relating to HSB?
5. If you look at how teachers responded in the survey about HSB training, what do you think about that?
6. Why do you think many teachers in the survey stated that they do not observe problematic or harmful sexual behaviour among students in school?
7. Why do you think many teachers in the survey answered "Don't know" when asked if they have encountered children who display HSB or not?
8. If you experience problematic or harmful sexual behaviour in school, how do you approach or deal with this behaviour?
9. Why do you think teachers in the survey answered that they are unsure of their schools' procedures when a child sexually abuses another child?
10. What are the procedures for addressing such a situation in your school?
11. What are the challenges you experience when trying to prevent the occurrence of HSB in your school?
12. Which people or services would assist or support you if you were addressing HSB in your school?
13. Are you cooperating with other services when you are concerned about a child's behaviour? In such a case, which?
14. How does the cooperation with other services function in your school?
15. Are you content with the procedures around concern you have in your school? Why, why not?
16. Do you have a shared understanding of how to approach challenging behaviour in your school? Why, why not?

(Translated from Norwegian)

Appendix 3:

Interview guide – frontline services: Questions from phase 1 and 2 presented to frontline services in phase 4.

These questions are addressed to you as professionals, and that is mainly the perspective I am seeking when we talk about this topic. The information you share will be anonymized and only used in this project if you explicitly consent to this.

The municipal psychologists and professionals at the resource centre for sexually abused victims can be contacted if you need advice or counselling regarding experiences with sexual abuse.

1. What is your role linked to schools?
2. How long have you worked with schools?
3. Do you encounter children who display HSB in your service?
4. What do you do when you concern is expressed about a child's sexual behaviour?
5. Do you have any procedures in your service about what do to when you encounter a child who displays HSB?
6. Which services do you think would be relevant to cooperate with when a child has displayed HSB?
7. Have you received any information or training regarding HSB?
8. What do you think is important for teachers in their safeguarding against HSB in schools?
9. What do you think is important for teachers to know about HSB?
10. Why do you think many teachers in the survey stated that they do not observe problematic or harmful sexual behaviour among students in school?
11. Why do you think many teachers in the survey answered "Don't know" when asked if they have encountered children who display HSB or not?
12. Why do you think teachers in the survey answered that they are unsure of their schools' procedures when a child sexually abuses another child?
13. Which challenges do you encounter when working with schools?
14. How do you think they could be solved?
15. How does the cooperation with other services function in the schools you cooperate with?
16. What do you think are success factors for a well-functioning cooperation between schools and other services?
17. How can your service strengthen teachers' safeguarding role in schools?

(Translated from Norwegian)

Appendix 4:

Detailed timeline for phases and relevant activities informing the research process:

Pre-research phase (August to January 2018)

- **22 August, 2018** – Presentation of PhD project at the 10th Nordic Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect conference hosted by the Nordic Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NASPCAN), Tórshavn, Faroe Islands (Presentation title: "How can teachers be agents of social change through proper knowledge and competence on children who display harmful sexual behavior in the primary school system?")
- **24 September, 2018** – Presentation of project in Police Council
- **26 September, 2018** – Presentation of project in Steering group for Interdisciplinary Efforts for Drug-abuse and Crime Prevention (Norwegian abbreviation: SLT)
- **27 September, 2018** – Attended NKVTS' launch of the report: "Interdisciplinary cooperation around children and young people with problematic or harmful sexual behaviour" (Vorland et al., 2018) in Oslo
- **22-23 October, 2018** – Attended national conference ("Barnehøydekonferansen") with lectures by Bruce Perry and Stuart Ablon in Oslo
- **1 November, 2018** – Interviewed Kari Killén for information video for teachers about HSB
- **15 November, 2018** – Lecture for students in advanced studies of sexual abuse in a lifespan at University of South-Eastern Norway, Drammen
- **20 November, 2018** – Presentation of project at the Sexual Offense conference hosted by Norwegian Correctional Service and University of South-Eastern Norway (Presentation Title: Harmful sexual behaviour among young people – how do we approach it?" Original title: "SKADELIG SEKSUELL ATFERD BLANT UNGE - Hvordan møter vi det?")
- **27-28 November, 2018** – Attended "Youth at risk" conference (which had special focus on preventing and treating HSB), Trondheim
- **29 November, 2018** – Presentation of project for Pedagogical Psychological Service (PPT)
- **4-5 December, 2018** – Attended conference on prevention hosted by the police academy in Stavern

Phase 1 (January to July 2019)

- **7 January, 2019** – Lecture for students in advanced studies in domestic violence at University of South-Eastern Norway, Drammen
- **23 January, 2019** – Presentation of PhD project at the National HSB Competence Network in Thon Hotel Opera, Oslo
- **25 January, 2019** – Presentation of project for Child Welfare Service
- **30 January, 2019** – Coordinated interdisciplinary SLT meeting 1
- **4 February 2019** – Discussion with staff (SLT procedure) in secondary school 1
- **4 February, 2019** – Skype meeting with Jenny Lloyd from Contextual Safeguarding Network
- **6 February, 2019** – Coordinated interdisciplinary SLT meeting 2
- **11 February, 2019** – Discussion with staff (SLT procedure) in secondary school 2
- **12 February, 2019** – Participated in Regional HSB tutoring event hosted by RVTS East
- **25 February, 2019** – Discussion with staff (SLT procedure) in secondary school 3
- **26 February, 2019** – Presentation in School A
- **27 February, 2019** – Discussion with staff (SLT procedure) in secondary school 4

- **28 February, 2019** – Presentation of project for Public Health Service
- **5 March, 2019** – Presentation in School B
- **5 March, 2019** – Presentation in School C (School 6 in focus groups from sample 2)
- **6 March, 2019** – Coordinated interdisciplinary SLT meeting 3
- **6 March, 2019** – Hosted inter-municipal meeting for parents, part 1
- **12-13 March, 2019** – Attended national conference hosted by the police's crime prevention forum, Gardermoen
- **14 March, 2019** – Discussion of project with Children's House in South-East region of Norway
- **19 March, 2019** – Presentation in School D (School 5 in focus group from sample 2)
- **19 March, 2019** – Presentation in School E (School 4 in focus group from sample 2)
- **19 March, 2019** – Presentation in School F (School 1 in focus group from sample 2)
- **20 March, 2019** – Presentation of project for Service for people with disabilities
- **21 March, 2019** – Presentation in School G (School 2 in focus group from sample 2)
- **21 March, 2019** – Lecture for students in advanced studies in sorrow and trauma at University of South-Eastern Norway, Drammen
- **28 March, 2019** – Coordinated interdisciplinary SLT meeting 4
- **2 April, 2019** – Presentation in School H (School 3 in focus group from sample 2)
- **3 April, 2019** – Hosted interdisciplinary SLT meeting for parents in secondary school 4, part 1
- **4 April, 2019** – Discussion with staff (SLT procedure) in secondary school 5
- **5 April, 2019** – Present in secondary school 4 all day
- **9 April, 2019** – Hosted inter-municipal SLT meeting for parents, part 2
- **11 April, 2019** – Attended the National Criminal Investigation Service' launch of the report "Sexual exploitation of children and young people over the internet", Oslo
- **12 April, 2019** – Present in secondary school 4 all day
- **23 April, 2019** – Presentation in School I
- **24 April, 2019** – Presentation in School J
- **26 April, 2019** – Present in secondary school 4 all day

Phase 2 (May to June 2019)

- **2-4 May, 2019** – Attended the National Adolescent Perpetration Network (NAPN) conference, Fort Lauderdale, US
- **7 May, 2019** – Presentation in School K
- **8 May, 2019** – Coordinated interdisciplinary SLT meeting 5
- **9 May, 2019** – Presentation of project for Interdisciplinary Efforts for Drug-abuse and Crime prevention (Norwegian abbr: SLT) regional network
- **22 May, 2019** – Presentation in School L
- **23 May, 2019** – Attended conference on school refusal hosted by Tønsberg PPT, Jarlsberg
- **3 June, 2019** – Coordinated interdisciplinary SLT meeting 6
- **11 June, 2019** – Presentation in School M
- **11 June, 2019** – Hosted interdisciplinary SLT meeting for parents in secondary school 4, part 2
- **12 June, 2019** – Presentation in School O
- **13-14 June, 2019** – Attended the national HSB conference in Oslo

- **18 June, 2019** – Presentation of project for Service for school and after-school activities for youth

Phase 3 (July 2019 to November 2020)

- **15 August, 2019** – Presentation of project for Frontline mental health service
- **23 August, 2019** – start up meeting for project on school guide for teachers hosted by RVTS Midt & REBESSA, Trondheim
- **27 August, 2019** – Coordinated interdisciplinary SLT meeting 7
- **2 September, 2019** – interdisciplinary meeting (school environment) in secondary school 4
- **9 September, 2019** – Attended conference on HSB and learning disabilities hosted by RVTS East
- **16 September, 2019** – Discussion with staff (school environment) in secondary school 3
- **19 September, 2019** – Presentation of survey at National Organisation for the Treatment of Abuse (NOTA) International Conference, Belfast, Northern Ireland (Presentation title: "Teachers' possibilities of detection and intervention with children displaying problematic and harmful sexual behavior in primary school")
- **23 September, 2019** – Present in secondary school 3 all day
- **24 September, 2019** – PechaKucha presentation of project at University of South-Eastern Norway, Bakkenteigen
- **26 September, 2019** – PechaKucha presentation of project at University of South-Eastern Norway, Drammen
- **27 September, 2019** – Present in secondary school 3 all day
- **8 October, 2019** – Meeting with staff in secondary school 3 (school environment)
- **10 October, 2019** – Lecture for staff at Heggeli familiehjem (reinforced foster care)
- **11 October, 2019** – Coordinated interdisciplinary SLT meeting 8
- **21 October, 2019** – Meeting with selected staff in secondary school 4
- **22 October, 2019** – Discussion with staff in secondary school 4
- **23 October, 2019** – Sexuality education with school nurse in secondary school 4
- **29 October, 2019** – Meeting with staff in secondary school 4
- **1 November, 2019** – Meeting with staff in secondary school 1
- **1 November, 2019** – Present in secondary school 4 all day
- **6-7 November, 2019** – Presented with SLT colleagues at the national SLT conference hosted by the National Mediation Service, Sandefjord
- **13 November, 2019** – Meeting with elected staff in secondary school 4
- **18 November, 2019** – Coordinated interdisciplinary SLT meeting 9
- **19 November, 2019** – Arranged HSB conference for 200 professionals in Tønsberg, Norway with Ellen Oliver, youth coordinator from the National Mediation Service
- **21 November, 2019** – Meeting with elected staff in secondary school 4
- **26 November, 2019** – Lecture on HSB for primary school in another region
- **28-29 November, 2019** – Attended AIM3 HSB-Assessment course hosted by RVTS East
- **10 December, 2019** – Coordinated interdisciplinary SLT meeting 10
- **11-13 December, 2019** – Visited "Balans" HSB treatment in Kristianstad with Helle Kleive, and met with Cecilia Kjellgren, Annika Wassberg and Anette Birgersson
- **13 December, 2019** – Editorial meeting for the journal 'Barnehagefolk' (for professionals in kindergarten)
- **6 January, 2020** – Visiting scholar at the criminology department at Durham University

- **13 January, 2020** – Introductory meeting with Simon Hackett
- **16 January, 2020** – Skype meeting school guide
- **20 January, 2020** – CRiVA (Centre for Research into Violence and Abuse) morning meeting
- **21 January, 2020** – CRiVA session with Nicky Rushton
- **22 January, 2020** – Catch up with Simon Hackett
- **28 January, 2020** – Meeting with Kelda (Kelly) Henderson
- **3 February, 2020** – Catch up with Simon Hackett
- **4 February, 2020** – Skype meeting school guide
- **6 February, 2020** – Meeting with Anna Glinski
- **10 February, 2020** – CRiVA morning meeting
- **10 February, 2020** – Meeting with Fiona Vera-Gray
- **20 February, 2020** – Catch up with Simon Hackett
- **26 February, 2020** – Meeting with Simon Hackett and Sophie King-Hill
- **2 March, 2020** – Attended the CRiVA seminar "Gendered violence and the criminology of complex trauma"
- **2 March, 2020** – Catch up with Simon Hackett
- **6 March, 2020** – Held introductory speech with Inga Marte Thorkildsen at the launch of the documentary film "All that I am" about sexual abuse in Kilden Cinema, Tønsberg
- **16 March, 2020** – My stay at Durham university was cancelled due to COVID-19
- **12 May, 2020** – Digital presentation at CSA (Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse) PhD student workshop (Presentation title: "Teachers' possibilities of detection and intervention with children displaying problematic harmful sexual behaviour in primary school")
- **26 May, 2020** – Digital presentation at CRiVA webinar (Presentation title: "Teachers' possibilities of detecting and intervening with children who display harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) in primary school")
- **15 June, 2020** – Digital editorial meeting for the journal Barnehagefolk
- **7 August, 2020** – Meeting with administration in secondary school 3
- **13 August, 2020** – All day lecture with Oddfrid Skorpe Tennfjord about HSB and the school guide with staff in a pilot primary school
- **14 August, 2020** – Meeting with administration in secondary school 3
- **20 August, 2020** – Present in secondary school 3 all day
- **25 August, 2020** – Recording e-learning tool for the school manual in Trondheim
- **28 August, 2020** – Present in secondary school 3 all day
- **1 September, 2020** – Half-day meeting with administration and elected staff in secondary school 3
- **3 September, 2020** – Present in secondary school 3 all day
- **4 September, 2020** – Meeting with staff in secondary school 3
- **7 September, 2020** – Present in secondary school 3 all day
- **14 September, 2020** – Presentation of project to Resource center for schools
- **23 September, 2020** – Meeting with selected staff in secondary school 3
- **25 September, 2020** – Presentation at seminar for students in practical-pedagogic studies at University of South-Eastern Norway, Bakkenteigen (Presentation title: "Trauma-informed care in school and teachers' cooperation partners when encountering harmful sexual behaviour, violence and other challenging behaviours" Original title: "Traumebevisst omsorg i skolen og læreres samarbeidspartnere i møte med skadelig seksuell atferd, vold og alvorlige atferdsvansker")
- **2 October, 2020** – Present in secondary school 3 all day

- **5 October, 2020** – My midterm webinar (external opponents: dr. Carlene Firmin, University of Bedfordshire, UK and Professor Östen Wahlbeck , University of Helsinki, Finland)
- **15 October, 2020** – Meetings with administration and staff in secondary school 3
- **4 November, 2020** – Meeting with selected staff in secondary school 3
- **10 November, 2020** – Meeting with administration in secondary school 5
- **11 November, 2020** – Zoom meeting with network for research on violence (Nordic)
- **20 November, 2020** – Meeting with selected staff in secondary school 3
- **27 November, 2020** – Teams meeting with network for research on violence (National) (NKVTS' Nettverksmøte forskernettverk om voldsutøvelse)

Phase 4 (December 2020 to May 2021)

- **2 December, 2020** – Meeting with administration in secondary school 3
- **6 January, 2021** – Half-day digital lecture with Oddfrid Skorpe Tennfjord about HSB and the school guide with staff in a pilot secondary school
- **7 January, 2021** – Presentation of PhD project at interdisciplinary webinar on sexual abuse and violence against children hosted by the Police Academy and University of South-Eastern Norway (Presentation title: "Harmful sexual behaviour in school – the teacher's role in interdisciplinary cooperation" Original title: "Skadelig seksuell atferd i skolen - Lærerens rolle i et tverretatlig samarbeid"
- **5 February, 2021** – Digital lecture for social science students at University of South-Eastern Norway (Presentation title: "Children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviour – The teacher's role in prevention and intervention" Original title: "Barn og unge som utviser problematisk og skadelig seksuell atferd i skolen – Lærerens rolle i forebygging og avdekking")
- **7 February, 2021** – Digital editorial meeting for the journal Barnehagefolk
- **16 February, 2021** – Teams lecture with staff in secondary school 5, part 1 (Presentation title: "Trauma-informed care in school and teachers' cooperation partners when encountering harmful sexual behaviour, violence and other challenging behaviours" Original title: "Traumebevisst omsorg i skolen og læreres samarbeidspartnere i møte med skadelig seksuell atferd, vold og alvorlige atferdsvansker")
- **17 February, 2021** – Meeting with selected staff in secondary school 3
- **19 February, 2021** – Attended full-day digital course in HSB assessment tool "Profesor" hosted by RVTS West
- **8 March, 2021** – Zoom meeting school guide
- **16 March, 2021** – Teams lecture with staff in secondary school 5, part 2 (Presentation title: Children and young people who display problematic and harmful sexual behaviour in school – teachers' role in prevention and intervention" Original title: "Barn og unge som utviser problematisk og skadelig seksuell atferd i skolen– Lærerens rolle i forebygging og avdekking")
- **19 March, 2021** – Zoom meeting school guide
- **25 March, 2021** – Presentation at the digital launch of RVTS Midt and REBESSA's school guide
- **12 April, 2021** – Digital half day lecture for students at RBuP's advanced studies of environmental therapy and outpatient work (videreutdanningen i miljøterapi og ambulant arbeid)
- **22 April , 2021** – Teams meeting with organisers of next national HSB conference

- **22 April, 2021** – Sexuality education with child welfare service in secondary school 3
- **26 April, 2021** – Consultation with a primary school regarding ongoing HSB incident, part 1
- **30 April, 2021** – Teams meeting with National network for research on violence (NKVTS' Nasjonalt nettverksmøte i forskning på voldsutøvelse)
- **4 May, 2021** – Meeting with selected staff in secondary school 3
- **5 May, 2021** – Meeting with student council in secondary school 3
- **20ay, 2021** – Half-day digital lecture for Master's degree students in public health at VID university (presentation title: "Children's sexual development – how to understand and approach sexual behaviour in children?" Original title: "Barns seksuelle utvikling -Hvordan forstå og møte seksuell atferd hos barn?"
- **30 May, 2021** – Digital editorial meeting for the journal Barnehagefolk
- **31 May, 2021** – Consultation with a primary school regarding ongoing HSB incident, part 2

Phase 3 continued (June 2021 to January 2022)

- **3 June, 2021** – Meeting with editor regarding book project
- **3 August, 2021** – Meeting with Helle Kleive in Oslo
- **12 August, 2021** – Interdisciplinary meeting regarding HSB in a primary school
- **20 August, 2021** – Digital lecture on HSB for a child welfare service in another region
- **6 September, 2021** – Consultation with a primary school in another region on the request of a Children's House, part 1
- **13 September, 2021** – Consultation with a primary school regarding ongoing HSB incident, part 3
- **14 September, 2021** – Consultation with a primary school in another region on the request of a Children's House, part 2
- **20 September, 2021** – Teams meeting with National network for research on violence (NKVTS' Nasjonalt nettverksmøte i forskning på voldsutøvelse)
- **20 October, 2021** – Presentation with Oddfrid Skorpe Tennfjord at the national harmful sexual behaviour conference "They are all our children" hosted by RVTS South, Kristiansand (Presentation title: "From mine and yours to our children regarding the HSB field in Norway today – with a focus on development, shared understanding and cooperation" Original title: "Fra mine og dine til våre barn, Om fagfeltet i Norge i dag – med fokus på utvikling, felles forståelse og samarbeid")
- **22 October 22, 2021 to 10 January, 2022** – Visiting scholar at School of Social work at Barry University, Florida, US, under guidance of Professor Jill Levenson
- **2 November, 2021** – Presentation of PhD project at Barry University's School of Social Work's Meet & Greet (Presentation title: "How can teachers detect and intervene for children who display problematic and harmful sexual behavior in primary school?")
- **2 November, 2021** – Attended Jill Levenson's Master's degree class in family therapy
- **9 November, 2021** - Attended Jill Levenson's Master's degree class in family therapy
- **16 November, 2021** – Attended Jill Levenson's Master's degree class in family therapy
- **17 November, 2021** – Attended the digital national child welfare service conference
- **23 November, 2021** - Attended Jill Levenson's Master's degree class in family therapy
- **24 November, 2021** – Teams meeting with National Network for Research on Violence (NKVTS' Nasjonalt nettverksmøte i forskning på voldsutøvelse)
- **19 January, 2022** – Lecture for staff at Family Counselling Services in another municipality (Presentation title: "Children and young people who display problematic and harmful sexual behaviour – Understanding the phenomenon, early intervention and interdisciplinary

cooperation" Original title: "Barn og unge som utviser bekymringsfull og skadelig seksuell atferd - Fenomenforståelse, Tidlig innsats og Tverretatlig samarbeid")

- **26 January, 2022** – Attended Carlene Firmin's digital lecture 'Green Lights seminar'

Extended abstract write-up phase (Feb 2022 to Jan 2023)

- **18 February, 2022** – Digital presentation for WHO's Healthy Cities network in Norway "Healthy municipalities" (Sunne kommuner) about HSB
- **9 March, 2022** – Digital lecture for all the primary and secondary school teachers in a municipality in another region (Presentation title: "Trauma-informed care for teachers when encountering sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour" Original title: «Traumebevisst omsorg for lærere i møte med seksuelle overgrep og skadelig seksuell atferd»)
- **28 April, 2022** – Presentation at conference about Freedom from Negative Social Control and Honour-Based Violence in another municipality (Presentation title: "Relation and interdisciplinary cooperation as tools in teachers' approach to concerns" Original title: "Relasjon og tverretatlig samarbeid som verktøy i lærerens arbeid med bekymringer")
- **20 May, 2022** – Presentation of findings at the Barn och Unga med Sexuella Beteendeproblem (BUAS) network meeting, Malmø, Sweden, hosted by Cecilia Kjellgren (Linnaeus University) and Annika Wassberg (Balans) (Title: "Teachers' possibility of detecting and intervening with children who display problematic and harmful sexual behaviour in primary school" Original title: "Læreres mulighet til å avdekke og sette inn tiltak ovenfor barn som utviser problematisk og skadelig seksuell atferd i barneskolen")
- **24 May, 2022** – Consultation with Child Welfare Service about HSB incident
- **2 June, 2022** – Presentation for Child Welfare Emergency Unit (Presentation title: "Children and young people who display problematic and harmful sexual behaviour – Understanding he phenomenon, early intervention and interdisciplinary cooperation" Original title: "Barn og unge som utviser bekymringsfull og skadelig seksuell atferd - Fenomenforståelse, Tidlig innsats og Tverretatlig samarbeid"
- **9 June, 2022 –** Half-day lecture for Master's degree students in public health at VID university (Presentation title: "How to understand and approach sexual behaviour in children? Problematic and harmful sexual behvaiour (HSB) – Understanding the phenomenon, early intervention and interdisciplinary cooperation" Original title "Hvordan forstå og møte seksuell atferd hos barn? Problematisk og skadelig seksuell atferd (SSA) - Fenomenforståelse, Tidlig innsats og Tverretatlig samarbeid"
- **10 June, 2022** - Teams meeting with National network for research on violence (NKVTS' Nasjonalt nettverksmøte i forskning på voldsutøvelse)
- **15 July, 2022** – Teams meeting/phone call with organiser for key note presentation at the January conference 2023
- **15 August, 2022** – Half day lecture with Helle Kleive for all the teachers in a municipality in another region
- **19 August, 2022** – Phone call with organiser of the national HSB conference 2023 for key note presentation
- **8 September, 2022** – Book launch of our book (Title: "Harmful sexual behaviour in school – who can help me? Cooperation between services" Original title: "Skadelig seksuell atferd i skolen – hvem kan hjelpe meg? Samarbeid mellom tjenester")
- **14 September, 2022** – Presentation of findings at the International Human Rights Education Seminar at the University of South-Eastern Norway, Drammen (Presentation Title: "Addressing harmful sexual behaviour, child rights and teacher emotions")

- **27 October, 2022** – Presentation with Helle Kleive and my children at the Association of the Treatment of Sexual Abuse (ATSA) conference, Los Angeles, US (Presentation title: "Towards a More Universal Approach to Prevention and Intervention of Harmful Sexual Behavior in Schools?")
- **10 November, 2022** – Presented and facilitated at Tønsberg municipality's Student Council Conference (This year's topic selected by the students in primary and secondary schools: "Sexual health, emotions and the body")
- **11 November, 2022** – Meeting with administration in secondary school 1 about sexual health education
- **17 November, 2022** – Presentation for the National Clinical Network on Harmful Sexual Behaviour with Helle Kleive, Gardermoen (Presentation title: "Harmful sexual behaviour in school – what is the role of the children and youth psychiatric outpatient clinic (BUP)?", Original title: "Skadelig seksuell atferd i skolen – hva er BUPs rolle?")
- **23 November, 2022** – My completion seminar (external opponent: Dr Lesley-Anne Ey, University of South Australia
- **5 December, 2022** –Interdisciplinary meeting on future sexual health education in municipality
- **8 December, 2022** – Participated in podcast in municipality on sexual health facilitated by youth (as an initiative based on the student council conference – available in Norwegian at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NzZQq40puS0&t=314s)
- **12 December, 2022** – Presented my project to the leader group of the Department for Children and Young People in the municipality
- **27 January, 2023** – presentation at the January Conference 2023 (Januarkonferansen 2023) in Tromsø (Presentation title: "Harmful sexual behaviour in school – who can help me? Cooperation between services", Original title: "Skadelig seksuell atferd i skolen – hvem kan hjelpe meg? Samarbeid mellom tjenester")

Part II: The Articles

Article I

Draugedalen, K. (2021). Teachers' responses to harmful sexual behaviour in primary school – findings from a digital survey among primary school teachers, *Journal of Sexual Aggression, 27*(2), https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600.2020.1773552

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Teachers' responses to harmful sexual behaviour in primary school – findings from a digital survey among primary school teachers

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Teachers' responses to harmful sexual behaviour in primary school – findings from a digital survey among primary school teachers

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ABSTRACT

Existing research points to a gap in knowledge regarding what teachers in primary schools know about harmful sexual behaviour, and about how they react and deal with this behaviour in the school setting. This article sets out to better understand this gap based on results from a digital survey carried out among teachers in primary schools in South-Eastern Norway. Data were collected from 15 primary schools with a total of 159 respondents from a selection of 376 teachers, which makes up a response rate of 42.3%. Findings from the survey show that teachers report lack of knowledge about children who display problematic and harmful sexual behaviour, and that they struggle to find an appropriate response towards the behaviour when observed in school. The article identifies both individual and systemic responses in schools that may impede early intervention towards harmful sexual behaviour.

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KEYWORDS
Teachers' understanding and responses; problematic and harmful sexual behaviour; children and adolescents; Norway

1. Introduction

This article presents findings from a survey conducted among primary school teachers in South-Eastern Norway. The data collected identifies teachers' self-reported level of knowledge of harmful sexual behaviour (HSB), which agencies they perceive are relevant to cooperate with, and their responses to children who display HSB. The results are discussed against existing research and knowledge about children who display HSB with focus on early intervention and a whole-school approach to safeguarding.

The presented study contains some radical implications for teachers' perceived role and responsibility in preventing HSB, where a potential paradigm shift is introduced through the transformative approach to education. Teachers have the opportunity to shape children's development and future immensely, as well as being able to protect them from harm and trauma. Consequently, as a way forward this article points to certain theoretical approaches and competencies that teachers can apply in the classroom in order to transform the HSB prevention and intervention efforts in schools.

1.1. Definitions

There is an ongoing international debate about definitions relating to children and young people who present with sexual behaviours that cause concern to or harm others. Ey and McInnes (2018, p. 102) point to that "there is no established universal definition of what constitutes problematic sexual behavior in children". Many authors argue that labels such as "\juvenile offender" or "juvenile

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perpetrator" increase stigma and prejudice against an already vulnerable group (Allerdyce & Yates, 2018; Hackett, 2014). An alternative definition that has gained momentum in the UK in recent years is "Children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviour", abbreviated to HSB.[1] The rationale being that when describing children at an early developmental stage, often under the age of criminal responsibility, the focus should be on the behaviour and not the person (Hackett, 2014). The rationale harmonises with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in that it aims at protecting the human dignity of a vulnerable group.

Hackett et al. (2016, p.12) define HSB as: "Sexual behaviours of children and young people under the age of 18 years old that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful toward self or others, or be abusive towards another child, young person or adult (derived from Hackett, 2014)". As both abusive and problematic sexual behaviours are developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage, a useful umbrella term is "harmful sexual behaviours" (Hackett, 2014, p. 17). HSB often includes elements of coercion, manipulation, threats or violence (as cited in Hackett's (2010) continuum of sexual behaviours).

The leading academic and clinical expertise in Norway (such as V27, Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies [NKVTS] and Regional Centres on Violence, Traumatic Stress and Suicide Prevention [RVTS] among others) have advocated for the HSB terminology in Norwegian [*Barn og unge med problematisk og skadelig seksuell atferd* – translated "Children and young people with problematic and harmful sexual behaviour"], and it is now the preferred term in the academic literature in Norway. The term is abbreviated SSA [HSB], and covers the range of children and young people from the age group 0 to 18 years of age.

The HSB literature often refers to the category "*children* who display HSB" when describing prepubescent children typically in primary school (Hackett, 2014). There is usually a line drawn between the age of 12 and 13 years that marks the shift to adolescence (Hackett, 2014; Ingnes & Kleive, 2011), although transition into puberty varies greatly among children worldwide. This study draws mostly upon the literature on prepubescent children, and therefore applies the definition "children who display HSB".

1.2. The Norwegian context

Norway is a democratic country in Scandinavia with a population of around 5,3 million with a high degree of gender equality, and maintains an extensive welfare model that provides universal health care and free education. The Norwegian government has ratified the UN Convention of the Child, and the principle of "the best interest of the child" is guiding all government's decisions regarding children in the society. Children in Norway usually attend primary school from the age of 5 to 13 years.

The Norwegian education system, and primary schools in particular, have a clear and defined policy of offering education for all children. Education laws are deeply rooted within the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and are aimed at protecting children's human and participatory rights, as well as their well-being. Teachers' mandate with regards to safeguarding children has been underlined by the Norwegian government's plan for increased efforts towards fighting violence and abuse (Barne- og Likestillingsdepartementet, 2017).

In Norway, the age of criminal responsibility is 15 years, the age of consent to sexual activity is 16 years, and the age of being fully recognised as an adult is 18 years. This means that the children whom this article is meant to cover, are under all of the following thresholds for consent and responsibilities in Norway. As designated caretakers by the state, Norwegian primary school teachers are in other words crucial protectors of children's well-being. They are also key stakeholders in keeping children safe from harm, even when it is another child who is doing harm.

1.3 Scope of the problem

Children and youth who display HSB make up a large portion of the population who sexually assault children in sexual abuse statistics. Numbers vary, but approximately 30–50% of all sexual abuse

against children are committed by other children or adolescents, and numbers are rising (Långström, 2000; Barbaree & Marshall, 2006; Ingnes & Kleive, 2011; The National Criminal Investigation Service in Norway Kripos, 2017). According to two recent reports launched by The Norwegian Ombudsman for Children (2018a; 2018b) violence, sexual violation and sexual abuse against children and young people are both an underestimated, as well as an increasing, societal problem in Norway.

HSB literature on prepubescent children often stresses the importance of context when exploring presentation of HSB at a young age (Larsson & Svedin, 2002; Ryan et al., 1988). Apart from the home, children 5–13 years spend most of their days in schools. Schools are important contexts when HSB is presenting at a young age, but have often been neglected in HSB research and literature (Carson & AIM, 2017). Based on the statistics above, it is very likely that professionals who are working with children encounter children who display HSB. Due to the amount of time teachers in primary schools spend with children every day, they have a particularly high probability of encountering such behaviour.

Teachers have a unique position in the classroom with regards to teaching and safeguarding, and schools are therefore recognised as crucial arenas in primary prevention of HSB (Charnaud & Turner, 2015, p. 1345; Hackett et al., 2016, p. 24). Further, Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies [NKVTS] addressed the importance of sex education in schools in a report published in 2017. The report stresses the need for systematic teaching of sexual health on all levels of the education system as a measure to prevent sexual abuse and HSB among children (Askeland et al., 2017). Such recommendations concur with the broader international debate on teachers' and schools' role in prevention of sexual abuse (Carmody, 2009; Flood et al., 2009; Goldschmidt-Gjerløw, 2019; Letourneau et al., 2017; McKibbin et al., 2016; Sprott et al., 2005).

Although teachers' role in prevention is widely recognised, existing empirical research about teachers' understanding and responses to HSB in primary schools reveal some challenges. Teachers across the globe report a lack of training and competence in identifying healthy, problematic and harmful sexual behaviour in children and young people. Cooperation with other agencies in HSB cases vary greatly, and teachers report a general insecurity about procedures and roles when encountering HSB among pupils (Charnaud & Turner, 2015; Ey et al., 2017; Ey & McInnes, 2018; Firmin, 2019; Lloyd, 2019; McInnes & Ey, 2019; Vorland et al., 2018). Further, international expertise points to a void of research into teachers' and school responses towards HSB (Carson, 2006; Charnaud & Turner, 2015; Lloyd, 2019; Ey & Mcinnes, 2018; Firmin, 2019; Hackett & Taylor, 2008).

Little is known about primary school teachers' understanding and responses towards HSB in the Norwegian context, and Vorland et al.'s (2018) report "Interdisciplinary cooperation around children and adolescents with problematic or harmful sexual behaviour" is so far the only official study in Norway that has explored the issue from teachers' viewpoint. Consequently, this article seeks to be a contribution to fill the international void by exploring teachers' responses from a Norwegian perspective, and to discover whether teachers self-reported experiences concur with, or differ from, the few international studies carried out in this area.

2. Methodology

2.1. Epistemological framework

The epistemological foundation of the survey is the transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2010). The aim of a transformative approach in research is to bring about positive social change, and the paradigm is deeply rooted within the perspective of human rights and social justice. Education is based on the same ideology, as Kemmis et al. (2014) state that education is in its very nature socially bound, and that it has a double purpose in "developing individual students and, simultaneously, developing a world worth living in" (p. 205). Implicit in this statement is that education strives to transform the world to a better place through the individual student as well as through the collective practice taking place in schools. Thus, the theoretical underpinnings of this research stem from Kemmis et al.'s (2014) ideas of education as intersubjective spaces for change. Kemmis et al. (2014) define

school sites as spaces where various factors influence each other interdependently. Teachers are essential stakeholders in the school sites because they are responsible for actual execution of any transformation in their respective intersubjective spaces. Hence, Giroux's (2010) and Freire's (1970) perspectives on teachers' unique position in the classroom, and their ability to create social change, are applied to illustrate the important role of teachers.

2.2. Participants

The survey was conducted from January to July 2019, among teachers in 15 primary schools in the South-Eastern part of Norway. Three hundred and seventy-six teachers received the survey altogether, and a total of 159 teachers ($n = 159$) responded, making the response rate at 42.3%. The largest group (34.8%, $n = 55$) of the respondents were in the 40–49 years age group, and 77.8% ($n = 123$) of the respondents were women. 79.6% ($n = 125$) of the respondents are primary school teachers by education.

2.3. Procedure

The survey was distributed to the principals in each school. The principals forwarded the mail containing information about the project, as well as the link to the survey, to their respective teachers. The database for designing and conducting the online survey used is called "Nettskjema" and belongs to the University of Oslo. There was no log connected to the link, which means that anyone who received the mail could answer by clicking the link.

2.4. Measures

The survey was structured into 4 parts with 26 questions altogether. The 4 parts consisted of the following sections: (1) demographic questions, (2) questions about HSB experiences and responses, (3) school's practice and policy regarding HSB, and (4) questions about interdisciplinary cooperation. The demographic section covered age, gender, level of education and how many years of professional practice. The second section contained questions about teachers' experience with, training in, and responses to children who display HSB. Section three contained questions about whether the school has a common practice and policy in addressing challenging behaviour. The last section contained questions about interdisciplinary cooperation, and which agencies teachers have contact with and access to. The survey was a mix between open-ended and closed questions, and included a vignette. The purpose of the variations in questions was to acquire teachers' self-reported factual knowledge, as well as to allow for value judgements and attitudes related to the topic. The survey was piloted to 10 individuals with diverse, but relevant, backgrounds and professions, and was revised upon their feedback.

2.5. Data analysis

The survey was a hybrid between closed and open-ended questions. A thematic analysis was used when analysing data that came from the open-ended questions (as can be seen in Table 6). For the closed questions a statistical analysis was applied in order to identify trends and patterns in teachers' understandings and responses towards HSB.

2.6. Ethical considerations

There are several ethical considerations regarding the process of the survey that could have impacted the results and the response rate. The mail the informants received was the only information they had about the project before answering the survey. The link itself proved difficult to find because it came underneath a long paragraph of information about the project. More information concerning the

request for informants and consent was included in the mail, but only as an attachment. As described by Buchanan and Hvizdak (2009), informed consent in web designed surveys is passive in nature, and was in this survey just implied when participants completed the forms.

Several mails were sent to principals regarding a reminder to the teachers to answer the survey. Two weeks after the initial mail was sent out, another mail was sent with an update of numbers of respondents and a reminder to the teachers that survey was still open. Due to a continuing low response rate, I approached the schools directly requesting to present the background for the survey and ask teachers to participate in it. 14 out of 15 schools accepted the request and received a presentation. There was a visible increase in response rate after the presentations were carried out. However, even after physical presentations in schools the response rate of the survey remained notably low. This phenomenon has been reported by Börkan (2010) who points to a general low response rate in internet studies. Likewise, studies about teachers' understanding and responses toward children who display HSB report challenges in recruiting informants, and that it may have to do with the sensitivity of the topic (Charnaud & Turner, 2015; Ey et al., 2017; Ey & McInnes, 2018; Larsson & Svedin, 2002).

The survey has been approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD).

2.7. Limitations

An obvious limitation of the study is that it is a small scale survey from one geographical area within Norway, and the results cannot be considered representative of teachers' views in Norway. Caution should be taken in the analysis of results and the implications for practice. Where possible, I have viewed the results against existing international research in order to triangulate the validity of the results (Creswell, 2003, 2014).

There might be a possibility that teachers answered the survey without reading the attachment that was enclosed in the mail containing information about the study, as well as the definition of harmful sexual behaviour. Hence, that could contribute to the participants' lack of understanding of the concept and the reported confusion.

Regarding the actual rigour of the survey, there are some important remarks to be made. The survey intends to function as a starting point for discussion, rather than to claim to subscribe entirely to a quantitative procedure. The survey is for example not statistically proof, as many of the respondents have omitted to answer many of the questions, and quantitative techniques regarding data analysis have not been applied in full (as illustrated in Table 2). However, the survey may function as one snapshot of some teachers' self-reported knowledge and attitudes regarding HSB, which can be problematised and discussed in light of other existing research, as is the aim of this article.

3. Results

3.1. Teachers' self-reported level of knowledge of HSB

3.1.1. Self-reported knowledge, information and training about HSB

Table 1.

Table 1. Self reported knowledge, information and training about HSB.

Questions	Yes	No	I don't know	No response
Have you received any knowledge about the topic of children who display HSB?	21.5% ($n = 34$)	72.8% ($n = 115$)	5.7% ($n = 9$)	1.59% ($n = 1$)
Have you ever in your professional career received any information or training about children who display problematic or harmful sexual behaviour?	26.8% ($n = 41$)	66% ($n = 101$)	7.2% ($n = 11$)	3.8% ($n = 6$)
Have you received, in the course of your education, any information or training about children who display problematic or harmful sexual behaviour?	18.5% ($n = 29$)	73.9% ($n = 116$)	7.6% ($n = 12$)	1.3% ($n = 2$)

Table 2. Self reported encounters with children who display HSB.

Questions	Yes	No	I don't know	No response
Have you yourself experienced an encounter with a child who displayed HSB?	23.9% ($n = 38$)	60.4% ($n = 96$)	15.7% ($n = 25$)	0
If yes, were you the one who defined the behaviour as harmful?	40.4% ($n = 21$)	42.3% ($n = 22$)	17.3% ($n = 9$)	?

Table 3. Self reported cooperation with other agencies.

Questions	Yes	No	I don't know	No response
Do you cooperate with other agencies outside school with regards to challenging behaviours among pupils?	70.1% ($n = 110$)	26.8% ($n = 42$)	3.2% ($n = 5$)	1.3% ($n = 2$)
Do you have frequent opportunities to discuss your concerns regarding pupils?	83.4% ($n = 131$)	14.6% ($n = 23$)	1.9% ($n = 3$)	1.3% ($n = 2$)

3.1.2. Self-reported encounters with children who display HSB

Table 2.

3.2. Agencies teachers perceive are relevant to cooperate with when facing children who display HSB

3.2.1. Self-reported cooperation with other agencies

Table 3.

3.2.2. Self-reported perceptions of other agencies

Table 4.

What do you think of interagency cooperation between schools and other agencies?

The question received 125 responses, where 119 of the responses were positive and included comments such as "important, useful, good, valuable and necessary". 6 of the answers had a more negative connotation, where two responses stated that the interagency cooperation "could have been better". Three responses stated that there should be more interagency cooperation and openness between agencies because the cooperation was lacking and information flow varied a great deal. One response stood out by stating that "I don't have time for interagency cooperation. All my planning time is used for planning lessons."

No response: 21.4% ($n = 34$)

Table 4. Self reported perceptions of other agencies.

Which agencies would you consider to be relevant to cooperate with in cases where a sexual abuse against a child has been disclosed, and the sexual abuse has been committed by another child?		
Multiple choice answers	Number	Percent
Child Welfare service[2]	141	88.7
School nurse	140	88.1
Resource centre for victims of sexual abuse[3]	111	69.8
Children's House (Barnehus)[4]	80	50.3
Police	76	47.8
Children and young people's psychiatric out-patient clinic (BUP)	73	45.9
Pedagogical Psychological Services (PPT)	37	23.3
Other	4	2.5

Table 5. Self reported responses when encountering HSB.

What do you do in your school if you encounter a child who displays HSB?		
Multiple choice answers:	Number	Percent
Contact the principal	133	83.6
Contact the school nurse	114	71.7
Contact a colleague	62	39
Contact the Child Welfare Service	35	22
Contact the parents	16	10.1
Contact the police	4	2.5
I don't know	4	2.5
Do nothing	0	0

3.3. Teachers' responses to HSB

3.3.1. Self-reported responses when encountering HSB

Table 5.

3.3.2. Reported school procedures regarding sexual abuse against children committed by other children

Tables 6 and 7.

4. Discussion

4.1. Teachers' self-reported level of knowledge of HSB

As can be seen in Table 1, an overwhelming majority of teachers respond that they have not received any knowledge, information or training about HSB, neither in general (72.8%), in their career (66%) nor in their education (73.9%). It is also interesting to note the number of teachers who responded "I don't know". 5.7% ($n = 9$) of the teachers do not know whether they have received any knowledge about HSB in general, and 7.2% ($n = 11$) do not know if they have received information or training about HSB in their career, and another 7.6% ($n = 12$) do not know if they have received any information or training about HSB in their education. The high number of teachers answering "I don't know" might indicate an insecurity among teachers about what HSB is, and what constitutes this phenomenon. These findings concur with Ey et al.'s (2017) study "Educators' understanding of young children's typical and problematic sexual behaviour and their training in this area." where Australian teachers report that they have received little training in HSB, and have limited knowledge on the topic.

A similar picture can be seen in the answers to the question about personal experience with HSB in Table 2. 60.4% ($n = 96$) of the teachers report that they have not encountered HSB. A total of 15.7% ($n = 25$) teachers reported that they don't know whether they have encountered children who display HSB, which might be another indication that teachers do not know what the signs of HSB are. There is also a logical error in the reporting to this question: 38 teachers report that they have encountered HSB. Nevertheless, when asked to specify whether they were the ones to define the behaviour as harmful in the follow-up question, 52 teachers reply in total.

Altogether, this perceived confusion about what constitutes HSB in children and adolescents concurs with findings in other studies about teachers' lack of competence in differentiating between children's normal, problematic and harmful sexual behaviour. Ey and McInnes (2018)

Table 6. Reported school procedures regarding sexual abuse against children committed by other children.

Question	Yes	No	I don't know	No response
Does your school have procedures that are implemented if a sexual abuse against a child is discovered, and the abuse has been committed by another child?	30.2% ($n = 48$)	10.7% ($n = 17$)	59.1% ($n = 94$)	0

Table 7. Specification of school procedures regarding sexual abuse against children committed by other children.

If yes, specify the procedures:	
38 free text answers:	Emerging themes:
"I follow the guidelines from the municipality"	Follow procedures/municipality guidelines ($n = 3$)
"We have a file where all the routines are, but I do not remember them right now"	
"I follow the municipality's guidelines"	
"Contact the principal, and then he has a procedure to follow"	Contact the principal/administration of the school ($n = 18$)
"I report it to the principal"	
"I report it to the administration"	
"Report it to the administration, and follow procedures after that"	
"Contact the principal immediately. He has procedures for taking the case further"	
"Teachers contact the principal if they get a suspicion or knowledge about sexual abuse"	
"I contact the administration, who then contact the Child Welfare Service or other agencies"	
"The administration handles this. We report it I don't know the details of the procedures but I know they pursue it"	
"The principal and the administration take over and follow procedures"	
"Report to the administration"	
"I alert the principal. The principal has procedures for further follow up and investigation of the case"	
"Contact the principal, who further contacts the Child Welfare Service"	
"Contact my superiors, who then act on the information"	
"Contact our nearest leader. Follow further plan about what we should do in given order"	
"Contact the principal!"	
"We address the matter for the principal, who takes the case to the Child Welfare Service and the police"	
"The teacher alerts the principal at once, and principal and the administration starts with the procedure immediately"	
"I am not quite sure, but the administration contacts the Child Welfare Service, and further case procedures I do not know"	
"I contact the school nurse and the assistant principal"	Contact the principal/administration **and** other agencies ($n = 7$)
"Contact the administration and school nurse, and maybe pursue the case further after initial investigations"	
"Principal, school nurse, the Child Welfare Service"	
"That you contact the administration, as well as the Child Welfare Service"	
"Discuss it with the administration and contact the Child Welfare Service"	
"Contact the principal – contact the Child Welfare Service – contact the police – contact the Children's House"	
"Contact the principal and Child Welfare Service"	
"Contact the school nurse, the Child Welfare Service, the police"	Contact other agencies ($n = 4$)
"That the Child Welfare Service and the Incest centre are contacted"	
"Contact the Child Welfare Service"	
"Police, The Child Welfare Service are contacted, as well as the sexual abuse team in the municipality, Incest centre"	
"I know there is a plan, but I don't know what it contains"	Not sure what the procedures are ($n = 6$)
"I do not know because I have not been in such cases, but I know that the school has had those incidents"	
"I am unsure of the details, but I am sure that they have"	
"I do not have any knowledge of it"	
"I know where the file is and the routines are there, but I do not have them in my head"	
"Unsure"	

found that there are clear gaps in Australian teachers' understanding of typical sexual behaviour. Vorland et al. (2018) report a similar picture, where Norwegian teachers state that there is a lack of knowledge about both healthy, problematic and harmful sexual behaviour in school, and that this often leads to a lack of intervention. According to Lloyd's (2019) study in England staff in schools are often not aware of interventions and responses to HSB and therefore do not always respond appropriately. Hence, in some of the interventions, victim-blaming occur due to lack of competence.

The high percentage of teachers reporting that they have either not encountered HSB, or that they do not know, is quite alarming when viewed against the report from the Norwegian Ombudsman from 2018 entitled: "Everyone knows someone who has experienced it – conversations with youth about sexual violations". As the title reveals, Norwegian youth report that this is an overwhelming phenomenon happening to almost everyone, and that they recognise that schools are important arenas which can intervene towards sexual violations. However, the youth report that responses towards problematic and harmful sexual behaviour vary greatly between schools, and it is therefore emphasised in the report that teachers' competence about sexual violations must be increased so they can detect and intervene towards problematic and harmful sexual behaviour between children and adolescents (2018a, pp. 38–39). A concrete tool that has been launched to aid teachers and other professionals to differentiate between healthy, problematic and harmful sexual behaviour is various versions of "the Traffic Light tool" (Brook, 2013; True, 2015). The Traffic Light is also available in Norwegian (Hegge, 2016).

4.2. Agencies teachers perceive are relevant to cooperate with when facing children who display HSB

As can be seen in Table 3, the majority of teachers (70.1%) report that they cooperate with outside agencies with regards to challenging behaviours among pupils, and that 83.4% of the teachers report that they have frequent opportunities to discuss their concerns regarding pupils. It is also important to recognise that most of the teachers are positive towards interagency cooperation with other agencies. These findings are encouraging with regards to interdisciplinary cooperation in HSB cases. Successful interventions in HSB cases depend greatly on various agencies working closely together with schools (Carson, 2006). Being that teachers inhabit such a crucial role in safeguarding children under the age of criminal responsibility it is also encouraging to note from Table 4 that 88.7% of the teachers consider the Child Welfare Service to be relevant to cooperate within cases where a sexual abuse has been committed by another child. Both Askeland et al. (2017) and Vorland et al. (2018) (as well as V27 and the RVTS centres) recommend that the Child Welfare Service should be the coordinating agency in HSB cases. Established routines of contacting the Child Welfare Services in HSB cases are essential for early intervention and appropriate assistance for the child in question.

4.3. Teachers' responses to HSB

The findings on teachers' responses indicate a reported misperception about other agencies' roles, and who to contact when teachers observe children who display HSB. An example of this mismatch is that the majority of teachers answer that they would contact principal (83.6%, $n = 133$), the school nurse (71.7%, $n = 114$) or a colleague (39%, $n = 62$) if they encounter a child who displays HSB, as can be seen in Table 5. However, when asked if the school has procedures on a more systemic level when a sexual abuse against a child has been discovered, and the sexual abuse is committed by another child, the results in Table 6 show that a majority of teachers do not know if their schools have procedures. There is in fact an overwhelming percentage of 59.1% of the teachers ($n = 94$) who report that they do not know whether their schools have procedures. Even some of teachers who first responded "yes" to the question about school procedures, end up stating "I don't know" when asked to specify the procedure (see Table 7).

Another finding of significance is that the school nurse is one of the resources that are most frequently listed as a go-to by teachers it they encounter a child who displays HSB. This finding concurs with data in Vorland et al.'s (2018) study. However, a critical remark to make about the role of the school nurse is that of the top three resources to contact when discovering HSB (principal, school nurse, colleague) the school nurse is the only person who represents an outside agency. The school nurse is in other words the only contact point with outside agencies, making the school nurse a decisive factor in interagency cooperation. Ultimately, this list of prioritised persons to

contact means that it is up to the judgement of the respective administration in each school whether they contact other agencies outside the school or not. Referrals from schools in HSB cases may in other words be entirely dependent on the competence of the respective administration in each school, and that of the school nurse. These vulnerable structures have been identified in several studies, where Charnaud & Turner suggest "co-ordinated strategies from social service in supporting teachers" (2015, p. 1355) should be established in order to enable multiagency safeguarding approach. Vorland et al. (2018, p. 16) also address the need for "well-defined guidelines on how the various services should relate to children and young people with HSB".

Altogether, these findings indicate that the majority of teachers are not certain whether their schools have systemic procedures for sexual abuse against children committed by children, or how they as individuals should respond to these situations. The mismatch in the answers can be accredited to different interpretations of the question about what a procedure actually is, but it can also point to a general confusion about the school's systemic responses to HSB. The discrepancy between the individual teacher response, as opposed to the perceived whole school procedure and approach, might therefore indicate that the responses to HSB occurring in schools might be dependent on the individual teacher's perception of the behaviour, and may therefore end up relying solely on teachers' judgements since the systemic response of the school is not clearly communicated. Although not being the school's intention, a lack of systemic whole-school response in such cases may end up outsourcing the entire responsibility for detection and intervention of HSB on the individual teacher without having a support system in place. According to McInnes and Ey's (2019) study Australian teachers reported distress, emotional exhaustion and stress in dealing with children with HSB, and that stress was higher where they felt unsupported by site leadership. Lloyd (2019) addresses the challenges of individualised responses in staff, and argues that the actual social norm creation process among staff in schools often ends up enabling HSB. Firmin (2017) therefore advocates for a more systemic response towards the prevention of HSB. Firmin (2017) argues that the traditional whole-school approach towards prevention lacks a focus on the actual relationships between HSB and the environments the behaviours occur in. School environments must be viewed in connection with the larger community in order to achieve what she has coined "Contextual Safeguarding" of all children in that community. Lloyd (2019, p. 4) further claims that instead of focusing on individualised responses to each HSB incidents in schools, it is important to look at factors in the schools and across schools with an emphasis on context and the interplay between different contexts. The school response should thus be a part of a broader multi-agency response. Both Firmin (2017) and Lloyd (2019) emphasise that national policy frameworks on systemic responses, such as contextual safeguarding, is vital for a successful implementation. Firmin and Lloyd's ideas of a contextual safeguarding network resemble Kemmis et al.'s (2014) perspective on the holistic approach to education. According to Kemmis et al. (2014) practices in education must be understood through the intrinsic role the education system has to the society. Practices can either enable or constraint transformations in education as well as society. By strengthening the support network around teachers through clear structures and interdisciplinary cooperation, teachers can be equipped to inhabit a unique position to influence children's attitudes, development and well-being, as described by Giroux (2010).

Clearer roles and mandates in multi-agency responses have also been addressed on a more general level by the Norwegian Ombudsman (2018b), in the report "Had we gotten help earlier, everything would have been different – The Ombudsman's report on children who have been exposed to violence or abuse". Youth who had experienced violence and abuse were interviewed about their experiences of multi-agency responses, and many identified lack of coordination between the agencies as one of the major obstacles to receiving proper intervention and assistance. Some of the youth who were interviewed described their meeting with the various agencies as a system that ended up making their situation worse (Norwegian Ombudsman 2018b, p. 20). The Change Factory in Norway, which is comprised of young people with experiences from the Welfare services (referred to as "experts"), argues that the system listens too little to young

people's voices when trying to help them. The experts also state that most children and young who experience violence and abuse do not tell others because they do not feel safe. They claim that professionals need more training in safeguarding and taking care of children to gain children's trust (www.forandringsfabrikken.no). In this perspective, the teacher's role is decisive in children's development and learning within the education system, and this position comes with a great ethical responsibility and requires that teachers are equipped with an understanding of which conditions that enhance or prohibit children's development and learning (Freire, 1970). Translated into practice for teachers, this means that if a child starts revealing concerning information which needs to be acted upon, a teacher must first create a setting that feels safe for the child. After having established such an environment, supportive communication and active listening are important techniques for the teachers in order to promote open communication with the child. According to Freire (1970) these are also the principles which foster empowering and authentic dialogue. Further, the teacher must ensure that the child is fully informed about involving other agencies, and that the child's participatory rights are honoured when deciding the next steps. Collaborating with the child in finding solutions is underlined by the Change Factory as the most significant factor for a successful intervention.

4.4. Identified challenges and implications for practice and future research

The challenges related to lack of information, knowledge and training that teachers report in the survey concur with reported challenges from teachers worldwide (Charnaud & Turner, 2015; Lloyd, 2019; McInnes & Ey, 2019; Vorland et al., 2018), and have great implications for practice in schools. It is vital for an actual prevention of sexual abuse that teachers themselves feel capable of detecting and intervening towards problematic and harmful sexual behaviour. However, teachers in the survey and other studies report that they do not feel capable, and have not been equipped with the appropriate training they need to inhabit such a role. Hence, there is an urgent need for building competence among teachers. Additionally, teachers report confusion around various agencies roles' in HSB cases, which stresses the need for a more systemic top-down structure of prevention in schools. The results from the survey support the growing body of research which stresses the importance of competence building for teachers, *and* a whole school and community approach in safeguarding children against sexual abuse and HSB (Allnock & Atkinson, 2019; Firmin, 2019; Hackett & Taylor, 2008; Kemmis et al., 2014; Lloyd, 2019; McElearney et al., 2019; McInnes & Ey, 2019; Pedersen et al., 2017; Sprott et al., 2005). As shown from the teachers' responses in the survey, there is a need for a more systemic response from the individual schools in question. However, as reported by the youth in the Ombudsman's reports, school responses do vary greatly (2018a), as do the multi-agency responses (2018b). On a macro level, there is an emerging necessity for clearer direction from the central governing bodies when it comes to ensuring procedures and roles in safeguarding children. As noted by Firmin (2017) and Lloyd (2019) HSB must be addressed both within the school, as well as in the broader context in the community through a multi-agency response. At the Contextual Safeguarding website (https://csnetwork.org.uk/) there is a programme called "Beyond Referrals" which offers schools a multi-agency toolkit for a more holistic approach to safeguarding. Further, by developing national standardised guidelines for schools, a more systemic prevention of sexual abuse among children in schools throughout the country could be secured (Firmin, 2019; Vorland et al., 2018).

The study should be replicated at a larger scale with more scientific rigour in order to further document teachers' understandings and responses towards HSB, and contribute to the building of an international body of research in the field.

5. Concluding thoughts

Research shows that teachers can be key stakeholders in acting on, and preventing, sexual violation and abuse among children and adolescents in schools by utilising their unique position in the

classroom. However, as seen both in the survey presented and in other studies, teachers report lack of information and training, and that they find it difficult to differentiate between healthy, problematic and harmful sexual behaviour. Further, they report a confusion about other agencies' roles and mandates in HSB cases, which leaves teachers in a vulnerable position with regards to referring these cases to outside agencies, and ultimately safeguarding children in their schools. A more systemic response from both the schools and communities in HSB cases could ensure better safeguarding and a more proactive prevention approach. Moreover, by creating national guidelines for schools in HSB cases, the approach taken by the individual school may not tend to vary to the degree which it is today. Streamlining procedures in HSB cases nationally would at the end of the day strengthen teachers' competence and the ability to cooperate with outside agencies.

Notes

1. in American literature (Bonner et al., 1999; National Center on the Sexual Behavior of Youth (NCSBY); Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA), Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health (2014) and Australian literature (O'Brien, 2008; Briggs, 2014; Blomfield, 2018)) the terms "problem sexual behaviour" and "sexual problem behaviour" are more frequently used.
2. "The Child Welfare Service's task is to provide children, adolescents and families with help and support when there is a difficult situation in the home or a child is in need of help from the Child Welfare Service for other reasons (for example, behavioural problems or problems connected with drugs or alcohol)" (https://bibliotek.bufdir.no/BUF/101/Barnevernet_Brosjyre_ENGELSK.pdf).
3. The Resource centre for victims of sexual abuse is a Norwegian private charity foundation which offers assistance to survivors of sexual abuse, and children and adolescents displaying HSB. The centre also carries out educational programmes in kindergartens and primary schools.
4. The various National Children's Houses are a part of the respective police districts, and offer assistance to children and young people who have been sexually abused where the case has been reported. Some Children Houses also offer treatment in HSB cases. https://www.statensbarnehus.no/.

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Preventing harmful sexual behavior in primary schools: Barriers and solutions☆

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ABSTRACT

Background: Schools are recognized as crucial stakeholders in preventing and combating public health problems such as sexual violence and abuse. While prevention efforts have often focused on safeguarding children from adult perpetrators, less attention has been dedicated to safeguarding against harmful sexual behavior (HSB) displayed by children and young people at school. As little is known about teachers' understanding of and responses to HSB in primary school more research is needed.

Objective: The objective of the study is to explore and identify barriers to the prevention of HSB in primary school. Possible solutions to these identified barriers are pursued through a transformative lens.

Participants and setting: Nineteen informants from six schools participated in focus-group interviews at their respective schools in the south-eastern region of Norway in May and June 2019. Fifteen of the informants were primary school teachers, three were school principals and one was a social worker.

Methods: The focus-group interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts and field notes were analyzed using thematic analysis.

Findings: Primary school teachers report a lack of HSB competence and limited multi-agency cooperation or coordinated practice. Under these circumstances, the teachers perceive the prevention of HSB as an overwhelming individual professional responsibility.

Conclusions: The study suggests that the following three policy initiatives need to be prioritized:

1. Training in healthy, problematic, and harmful sexual behavior to be made mandatory across all schools and cooperating agencies
2. Statutory interdisciplinary cooperation between schools and relevant agencies to be enhanced
3. National guidelines on the prevention of sexual violence in schools, creating an overarching structure, to be developed and implemented.

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1. Introduction

The rise of sexual harassment, sexual offenses, and sexual abuse against children and young people has led to great concern in societies worldwide, and has been defined by the World Health Organization (2017) as a major public health problem and a grave violation of human rights. Numbers vary, but according to international research, between 30 and 50% of all sexual abuse offenses against children are committed by other children or young people (Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA), 2017; Boyd & Bromfield, 2006; Hackett, 2014; Shawler et al., 2019). Indeed, in school contexts, harmful sexual behavior (HSB) has been raised as a global concern since the 1990s (Allnock & Atkinson, 2019), but prevention efforts are still in their infancy. HSB among children and young people is a major challenge for societies, thus the prevention of sexual abuse should incorporate the perspective of intervening in such behavior (Ey & McInnes, 2020; Hackett, 2014; Letournau et al., 2017). A recent study found that many respondents who had displayed HSB as adolescents reported that they did not get the interventions they needed (Kjellgren, 2019). Shawler et al.'s (2019) study found that caregivers and school personnel were most often the initial identifiers of HSB. These findings raise the question of how HSB can be detected at an earlier stage in order to prevent sexual abuse. While the primary school arena is recognized as important, few studies have explored teachers' perspectives on their safeguarding role. This particular study seeks to fill this knowledge gap by answering the following research questions: *What do teachers experience as barriers in the prevention of HSB in primary schools? What support do they need to overcome such barriers?*

1.1. Harmful sexual behavior

The term harmful sexual behavior (HSB) will be used throughout this paper to describe peer-on-peer sexual abuse. HSB is defined as "sexual behaviors of children and young people under the age of 18 years that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards oneself or others, or be abusive towards another child, young person or adult" (Hackett et al., 2016, p. 12). This study focuses on HSB presented at primary school level among children aged between five and 13 years.

1.2. Framing the problem

A number of studies from around the world explore primary school teachers' perspectives on HSB, indicating specific challenges in operationalizing prevention work at the school level. For example, Kaeser et al. (2000), found that teachers often failed to report HSB, and stressed the need for training to be able to respond appropriately to the observed behavior. Davies et al. (2000) observed that their informants seemed to act on their own subjective beliefs when responding to sexualized behavior, and highlighted the need for training based on empirical findings. Larsson and Svedin (2002) and, more recently, Miragoli et al. (2017), underlined the importance of context when observing sexual behavior in young children, and pointed out that schools are likely arenas where HSB may be observed. In other recent research, such as an on-line survey of 107 educators in Australia, the responses indicated comparable findings where the teachers did not always classify the observed behavior accurately (McInnes & Ey, 2019). Teachers reported that they felt insecure when children presented HSB and that they both wanted and needed more training and support in identifying and responding to this problem (Ey et al., 2017). Firmin et al. (2019) found similar trends in UK secondary schools where teachers' responses to HSB were often individualized. Another study found that students reported experiencing sexual harm in secondary schools, but that teachers were often not aware of how to intervene or respond appropriately (Lloyd, 2019). Similar patterns reflecting non-intervention by teachers were reported in a South African high school case study (Makhasane & Mthembu, 2019). A recent study among upper secondary school teachers in Norway (Goldschmidt-Gjerløw, 2019, 2021; Goldschmidt-Gjerløw & Trysnes, 2020) also concluded that teachers do not intervene adequately to prevent sexual harassment in schools. Goldschmidt-Gjerløw (2019) observed that teachers were often uncomfortable teaching about sexuality and that many avoided the topic altogether. Furthermore, studies have pointed to a lack of guidelines for teachers relating to the prevention of sexual violence (Charnaud & Turner, 2015; Firmin, 2019; Lloyd, 2019; McInnes & Ey, 2019).

1.3. The current Norwegian context

Recent reports from young people in Norway have revealed a lack of teaching about sexual health in schools, as well as a lack of school responses to sexual harassment and violations (Barneombudet [Children's Ombudsperson], 2018; Bergrav, 2020). For years national expertise in sexual abuse has emphasized the importance of early prevention approaches, such as age-appropriate sex education at school, for addressing HSB among children and young people (Aasland, 2014, 2020; Søftestad, 2018; Søftestad & Andersen, 2014). Examples given include a wide range of topics related to sexual health, boundaries, consent, and abuse, starting in first grade in primary school, so that children can develop a language to express what they feel and think about the topic, enabling them to talk about both positive and negative experiences. As Aasland (2020, 2014) argues, children are highly competent in such discussions, and are also more likely to report abuse if there is a safe forum where they can talk. There is a wealth of Norwegian literature on HSB pointing out the importance of teaching sexual health as a preventive measure for children with HSB (see Askeland et al., 2017; Holt et al., 2016; Ingnes & Kleive, 2011; Kruse, 2011; Moen et al., 2016; Vorland et al., 2018). Such literature reflects a growing awareness of HSB, sexual violence, and the need for prevention and intervention at the earliest possible stage in children's lives, and of the need to include primary schools in preventive and interventive efforts. Leading clinical and academic experts, such as the HSB resource team, Betanien V27, have initiated and promoted sensitization efforts; since the turn of the century the Betanien V27 team has pioneered the

development and streamlining of HSB intervention and treatment efforts. Together with the various regional centers dealing with violence, traumatic stress, and suicide prevention (RVTS), and the Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies (NKVTS), Betanien V27 is contributing to the development of a more systemic approach to HSB. As a part of this developing approach to HSB, the role of schools in prevention and intervention efforts is now receiving more attention.

This greater awareness can also be detected in the new national curriculum for primary and secondary schools (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). The new curriculum has a sharper focus on children's physical and mental health and encompasses the teaching of sexuality as an integrated part of several subjects throughout primary and secondary school. Teachers are now expected to teach students about sexuality, consent, boundaries, and violations from first grade. Consequently, primary school teachers need to be able to identify HSB and to intervene. However, research suggests that teachers are underprepared for this additional safeguarding role. There are, to date, just two studies of teachers' understanding and responses to HSB in Norwegian primary schools (Draugedalen, 2021; Vorland et al., 2018). These studies confirm the findings of international research: teachers' lack of training, and their inability to differentiate between healthy and harmful sexual behavior. The studies also point out variations in and sometimes an absence of school procedures and responses.

1.4. Transformative perspectives on education, the teacher's role and research

The epistemological framework applied in this study is the transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2010). One ultimate purpose of education is to transform the world for the better through collective practices in schools (Kemmis et al., 2014). Education is a means of achieving social change, where teachers are the key stakeholders in implementing such change. They are agents of societal change who are in a position to implement societal transformative practices (Freire, 1974; Giroux, 2010). A teacher can critically address societal problems through dialogue and pupil participation, thereby creating a reciprocal fellowship with students who, in turn, can shape and transform attitudes and behaviors for the best interests of all. An important aspect of research conducted within the transformative paradigm is that the knowledge it produces should lead to positive change in society. Thus, the study is categorized as applied research in education that seeks to improve practices in schools (Palaiologou et al., 2016). As few studies have been conducted in the field, the study is also defined as exploratory research. The research design is informed by the perspectives of *Authentic Inquiry Research (AIR),* which are rooted in sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978). Context, culture, and community therefore play a significant role in the process of "making meaning" for the individual. AIR builds and elaborates on sociocultural theory in the classroom context, claiming that the teacher and students mutually shape and influence each other in meaning making. According to Alexakos (2015), authentic inquiry research does not only produce knowledge about the actual teacher role, but allows the researcher to explore the dynamics of the classroom. These classroom dynamics are essential for understanding the mechanisms of such collective processes as exclusion, marginalization, and conflict, and the teacher's role in these dynamics. Consequently, practices in school may be transformed and improved by exploring and addressing the factors that influence teachers' perceptions of agency in their safeguarding role.

2. Method

2.1. Research design and sample

The focus-group design (FG) was chosen to explore teachers' experienced barriers and solutions for the prevention of HSB. The FG allows the researcher to observe attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs shared by the group (Then et al., 2014), and creates a space where participants' relations and roles are situated through a hierarchy within the group (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Six FG interviews were carried out with nineteen informants in six of the schools from the survey sample in May and June 2019. The sample comprised fifteen primary school teachers, one principal, two assistant principals, and one social worker.

2.2. Data collection

The informants were recruited after the researcher (first author) had presented the study in primary schools in the south-eastern region of Norway. The researcher approached the schools with multiple requests before the informants agreed to participate. One FG had six participants, one had four, whereas the other groups only had two or three participants each. The FGs were carried out after class in a quiet area in each of the six schools (one in the library, one in a classroom, four in a designated meeting room), and all lasted around one hour. The informants discussed the findings from the survey (Draugedalen, 2021) that had already been conducted in the area. Throughout the interviews, emphasis was placed on the participants' shared meaning-making process as they explored the previous findings from the survey. A semi-structured interview guide was used, but the informants were invited to freely discuss the findings. Key questions from the interview guide were:

- Why do you think many teachers in the survey stated that they do not observe problematic or harmful sexual behavior among students in school?
- If you experience problematic or harmful sexual behavior in school, how do you approach or deal with this behavior?
- Why do you think teachers in the survey answered that they are unsure of their schools' procedures when a child sexually abuses another child?
- What are the procedures for addressing such a situation in your school?
- Which people or agencies would assist or support you if you were addressing HSB in your school?

- What are the challenges you experience when trying to prevent the occurrence of HSB in school?

2.3. Data analysis

Lincoln and Guba's (1985) evaluative criteria of trustworthiness were applied to the analysis process, which involves establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To ensure credibility, several techniques were used, as described by Cohen and Crabtree (2006). Based on the researcher's *prolonged engagement* in education and frequent visits to schools as a researcher, sufficient time was deemed to have been spent on both understanding and *persistent observing* of the phenomenon of HSB in the school setting. The analyses of the researcher's interpretation of the data by the co-authors provided *analytical triangulation* with the second and third authors offering an outsider perspective. *Member checking* was undertaken by utilizing the previous results in the survey as a starting point for the interview guide. To ensure transferability, *thick descriptions* were extracted from the data to gain a deeper understanding. To establish dependability, an *external audit* was provided through feedback from an outside researcher who examined both the process and the product. Lastly, confirmability was ensured through an *audit trail*, which is a transparent description of the research steps taken and choices made in the process. The interviews were transcribed verbatim in Word right after each focus-group interview in preparation for the data analysis. Thematic analysis (Flick, 2009) was used when coding the data; themes and categories emerging from the findings were developed, starting with open coding where common themes in the transcripts were listed. Thereafter, the transcripts were read and re-read a number of times to regroup the coded themes into more distinct categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The thematic analysis resulted in five categories relating to barriers, as well as one category relating to potential solutions. Relevant excerpts from the various categories were translated into English. Transcription, the initial analysis, and the translations were done by the researcher, while the second and third authors read and commented on the various versions of the full article. As the second and third authors have extensive clinical experience of HSB and have pioneered developments in this field in Norway, they helped connect the findings with existing literature, and address implications for practice and future research. This back-and-forth process between the authors was also important due to the issue of *bias* (Robson, 2002). The researcher has a natural bias because she is a primary school teacher by profession, and an insider/outsider perspective requires a continuous self-reflexive attitude in the research process (Alexakos, 2015). Discussions between the authors throughout the process were crucial to achieving a degree of the objectivity in the conclusions reached here. Reflexivity and openness about the research may hopefully strengthen the study's trustworthiness (Attia & Edge, 2017).

2.4. Ethical reflections

To build trust with the informants the researcher emphasized that the aim of the study was to document *teachers'* experiences with students. To familiarize the informants with the phenomenon the researcher also used her own teaching experiences while underlining that there were no correct answers. The informants participating in this study were guaranteed confidentiality, which has some implications for the presentation of the data. South-eastern Norway is a small geographical area in terms of school districts, which makes the informants easily identifiable. For this reason, the gender and age of the participants will not be revealed to preserve their anonymity. Informed consent has been obtained in writing from all the FG participants. The research project has been approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD).

3. Findings

3.1. Level of awareness and knowledge about HSB

The first emerging theme from the focus groups centered on knowledge about sexual behavior. All of the focus groups confirmed the findings from the researcher's (Draugedalen, 2021) survey that referred to teachers' lack of knowledge and familiarity with the topic. Many of the interviewed teachers admitted they had never heard of the term HSB before, or even thought about children having sexual behavior. In general, many of the informants who participated in the focus groups displayed some degree of shame or embarrassment in feeling that this was something they should know something about, and expressed a genuine need to learn more so they could detect sexual violence and abuse. One informant confirmed this fear of overlooking HSB when talking about one's own work experience, due to a lack of awareness and familiarity with the phenomenon:

> "But there has not been anything of a sexual character. I have never experienced that. And it does worry me that when you have worked every day for 10 years then you're scared that you have let something pass that maybe should have been discovered." (Informant B, focus group 6).

Another teacher expressed that it is difficult to discover sexual abuse and violence among students, and pointed out that the ability to prevent such behavior first presupposes being aware that these things actually happen between children:

> "I think that I, at least, do not have enough knowledge to see which of the children in this class might be there. But we do see, and have a gut feeling when we see that the behavior of a child maybe changes, or we feel that there is something there… But how to detect it?" (Informant A, focus group 2).

Most of the informants admitted that they had not learned anything about this topic in their education nor at their place of work. A few informants had learned about sexual abuse in their education, but this information was usually related to so-called special awareness days. Only one informant had participated in advanced studies in sexual abuse.

3.2. The need for specific training related to HSB and the management of HSB

There was a consensus within all the groups that the motivation for participating in this study was that they would gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Some of the groups also requested lectures on sexual behavior for the whole school. One informant additionally reported that the reason for participating in the group was to seek advice to help in a current case. Another informant made an interesting point in addressing the lack of and need for training:

> "And I think that if we're a part of this, we'll pay more attention to it, because I believe we're overlooking a lot. (…) Because you find yourself in a situation where you need it, so you learn a little about it, sort of (…) and then you learn it, really, too late, I think." (Informant D, focus group 2).

Comparatively, it became evident that where teachers themselves had asked for or had been offered more training, tutoring, or information, this was linked to an increasing awareness about what to pay attention to and where. An informant who had received some training expressed the need for school personnel to recognize potential high-risk situations in schools:

> "You always have to be present in the informal spaces, it's when… it's where they are. In the woods? Yes, exactly. It doesn't happen in class, in the classroom, no. No, no, it's not about putting a finger down someone's trousers in class. No, it happens in the informal spaces outside, right?" (Informant C, focus group 5).

Lack of opportunities for training was addressed by most of the informants, and many teachers had experienced being involved in challenging cases where they felt that their competence was inadequate. However, possibilities to receive training were often viewed as difficult to realize due to teachers' fully booked schedules. Thus, the informants expressed that they were grateful to have participated in the FG interviews, and that the very setting, where mutual reflections and discussions were shared with colleagues in the group, had created a new collective awareness of the topic and its relevance for teachers.

3.3. Overwhelming role as a teacher

Most informants addressed the lack of time and resources as a constant constraint on their ability to carry out their professional safeguarding role. One informant expressed great concern when describing the importance of having the statutory and earmarked dialogue time with the students, knowing that these moments often function as a catalyst for children in terms of disclosing adversities:

> "Through statutory dialogues with students, then we all of a sudden notice that, out of the blue, things that we consider very, very severe just come up. Actually just out of one dialogue, where you're supposed to find out how they're doing in school, then very serious matters suddenly arise (…) and that's what's really sad, sort of, that you get too little time to have these conversations." (Informant A, focus group 6).

Teachers across the focus groups addressed a general sense of having too many tasks, and that this often resulted in having to decide which problem was the most acute at any particular point in time. Making such priorities often led to them not having the capacity to follow up all serious cases. A teacher in another focus group talked about similar challenges that grew out of the lack of time for detecting problems due to the increase in the number of children presenting concerning behavior:

> "And I think, I actually think a lot about it because I feel that children are becoming more and more restless, and I think there is a lot of… I, now I work in first grade, right? I think there are a lot of children who have problems that I fail to get to the bottom of." (Informant A, focus group 5).

Some informants suggested that more resources in the form of extra teachers could aid in creating more available time for each teacher, as well as in supporting them in difficult situations while facing potential adversities. These situations could range from when children actually are disclosing serious matters in class, to having a parent-teacher conference where there is a conflict, or being able to utilize a sudden opportunity to talk more with a child who needs it. Altogether, several teachers reported that the lack of time, together with the feeling of having the sole responsibility for their students' learning and healthy development were experienced by many as an enormous burden:

> "To be the sole teacher… that I consider to be an enormous responsibility. I almost get, like, a heart attack sometimes because I have had so many heavy cases, and yes, many who are suffering and struggling… and to be all alone (…), and you go to meetings after meetings, and it's you alone who has to think about these children. It really gets to you." (Informant B, focus group 1).

As seen in the above excerpts, many informants reported that they felt alone in dealing with difficult cases, and that the teacher's role therefore could be experienced as overwhelming. This feeling also extended to the absence of multi-agency work and external support in the school setting when faced with behaviors such as HSB:

> "We need environmental therapists and more agencies entering into the everyday practice in school. We, we cannot end up waiting for several months until we get some tips and guidance about how we can… We try all that we can, but it's pretty heavy here sometimes, really." (Informant B, focus group 1).

There was also consensus on the importance of the administration supporting their staff, and how this support made the teacher role feel less overwhelming in difficult situations. Many teachers expressed the significance of trust and good relations with their leaders as a precondition for acting on serious matters with children. Additionally, in schools where the administration was perceived to be supportive and present in discussing difficult matters, the teachers also expressed more confidence when it came to contacting an outside agency for assistance.

One observation that was made from the groups where school leaders were present was that these teachers generally tended to

communicate a more united approach or agency in relation to how to deal with HSB in school. An example that may be used to illustrate this tendency further is the fact that all of the above interview excerpts came from groups where no administration members were present.

3.4. An absence of multi-agency work and external support

All the informants had a certain degree of knowledge about various cooperating agencies, and most of them had very positive experiences with advice and tutoring from a range of agencies in cases where concerns had been raised. The school nurse was listed as the resource most frequently used by teachers (both in the survey and confirmed by the focus groups). However, many teachers wanted even more access to this resource. The informants expressed that the school nurse was often in high demand with teachers for spontaneous discussions on concerns, but that the nurse did not always have time for these conversations due to various preplanned tasks in and out of school. Several informants reported that it was difficult to access other agencies in emergency situations when they needed to discuss cases right away. Therefore, some teachers called for statutory cooperation with more external agencies on the school premises due to the severity of behavior that they observed.

At the same time, ambivalence was detected in some teachers' experiences with multi-agency work. A few informants disclosed a latent fear in contacting the child welfare service because they had experienced that it initiated an excessive and irreversible process in a case resulting in a negative outcome for the child in question. Several teachers also addressed the lack of information as a problem when cooperating with agencies such as the child welfare service. The lack of information from other agencies in ongoing cases was especially emphasized by informants who had experiences of HSB cases in their school. These teachers also reported that relevant agencies with whom the schools cooperated did not have the know-how they were seeking. Indeed, one informant who had been involved in two major domestic abuse cases had experienced great difficulties in finding experts who could offer advice to the teachers. According to this informant, the dominant impression from these cases was that many of the involved parties just did not know what to do, or who should do what.

3.5. An absence of clear practical guidance for addressing HSB at the school level

Most of the teachers revealed the absence of a procedure in school if faced with HSB, which confirmed the findings from the survey (Draugedalen, 2021). One teacher expressed this confusion when talking about a current HSB case in first grade where there was a lack of experienced coordination and a plan of measures for the child:

> "But the fact is that I'm a bit frustrated because - what happens? (…) Yes, what's going to happen further? What, who is coordinating and helping the child to..? (…) I can't be in all places at the same time, and my frustration is maybe (…) related to the fact that that the child does not have an intervention in place." (Informant A, focus group 5).

Many groups therefore called for more earmarked time in their schedule for cooperation between school personnel focusing on concerns about children and mutual practices so they could have a more systemic approach to challenging behavior. Usually, coordinated practices and procedures for HSB prevention and intervention seemed to evolve after the fact, and out of concrete experiences of difficult cases. For example, one school had articulated very clear procedures as a result of their experiences of several serious cases involving other agencies. The following conversation describes the difference in school procedures between schools, as the teacher talked about a case from a school in another part of Norway where the informant had been working earlier. The teacher had been asked to escort a child to a Children's House (Children's Houses are operated by the Norwegian police and conduct judicial, forensic interviews with children in reported cases where they either are victims of or have witnessed violence and abuse. Some Children's Houses also interview and treat children and young people who have been reported for HSB):

> A: "I think that here, for example, when everything has gone off track, when it has been reported to the police (…) and then you're supposed to take the child to the Children's House without the parents' consent, for example, right? That… I don't think it was right to put me as a teacher in that situation."
>
> B: "But we don't do that. Here, we're absolutely consistent in that someone from the administration takes it *(the child)*, and that is exactly to protect, to ensure that the parents can still cooperate with the teacher." (Informant A & B, focus group 4).

In this school, the procedures were clearly communicated to the teachers concerning who would be doing what when cooperating with outside agencies. However, significant discrepancies were detected when it came to coordinated practices between the respective schools. As the following excerpt describes, many variables are connected to various schools that may influence and complicate coordinated practices and procedures:

> "Because the practices in these two schools I have been working in are very different. And, so this is a much bigger school with more leaders (…). It's easy to place the responsibility with another leader when you have so many… So, is it the school counselor one talks to, right? Or is it actually my immediate superior? (…) There's no clear procedure that I have been shown." (Informant A, focus group 1).

Subsequently, having clear procedures was a topic that was addressed in all the focus groups, and many informants also addressed the need for more general guidelines for the prevention of HSB. The significance of the administration's leadership in implementing safeguarding procedures was also addressed under this theme by many of the informants, both within the school itself and between the school and cooperating agencies. Three of the six focus groups had experienced recent changes in the administration (change of principal), and this was raised in these groups as a decisive factor in changing the safeguarding practices at their school.

3.6. Identified contributions to breaking down teachers' experienced barriers

Despite all the barriers that the teachers experienced, they also reported some promising developments in their schools. Many of the focus groups mentioned how a new design with the child welfare service in schools had made interdisciplinary cooperation and support in difficult cases a little less challenging. In recent years, the regional child welfare service has had a designated caseworker in place in many of the primary schools for a designated number of hours each week. As one teacher suggested when asked who to contact if faced with HSB: "and we now have someone from the child welfare service who is available to us each Friday, so I think that maybe that would be a natural cooperation partner to discuss things with." (Informant E, focus group 3). The caseworker, available to both teachers and students, can have informal and impromptu conversations about concerns on the school premises:

> "And I just have to say that I personally have had negative experiences, especially with the child welfare service, and how difficult it has been. Where you write a report about this child, but there is no dialogue. But now I experience after having talked with the caseworker who comes to our school that this has changed." (Informant F, focus group 3).

Other promising examples of interdisciplinary cooperation which may offer teachers more competence, clarity, and support are schools' encounters with the Children's Houses. Informants in the schools who had been involved with a Children's House in specific cases reported more confidence in contacting external agencies, as well as being aware of procedures and roles in cases involving violence and abuse. Teachers also said that they had learned techniques for talking to children about their concerns, and concrete experiences with expert agencies also informed a new awareness among teachers. Informants who had observed judicial interviews were impressed by the approach to the child and took that awareness back to their school where they advocated for more training of teachers in having difficult conversations with children. Many of the focus groups also mentioned that the educational programs for primary school students provided by the local resource center for victims of sexual abuse were a source of information and assistance for teachers. Some teachers mentioned that the resource center's modelling of conversations on controversial themes with the students was very useful, and that it helped them to put a greater focus on the phenomenon through raising their awareness. Some teachers also reported that they received support and guidance in specific cases. However, the reported level of involvement of the teachers in the educational program varied significantly between schools.

4. Discussion

4.1. Promotion of HSB competence for teachers

The findings clearly indicate some of the barriers that primary school teachers experience in their attempts to prevent HSB. Two of the major challenges found were related to the lack of and need for HSB competence in schools. As noted in international research, teachers' lack of HSB competence can mean that children and young people who display HSB in school are receiving unhelpful and sometimes even harmful responses (Hackett, 2014; Meiksans et al., 2017). These responses may in turn impede or obstruct the possibility of giving proper assistance to the child in question, as well as safeguarding its peers. Furthermore, if teachers do not know which signs to look for when trying to identify the behavior or find out how to deal with it, it will become difficult for them to create safe spaces in schools where students are protected from sexual violation. Similarly, if teachers are insecure when it comes to how to deal with problematic or harmful sexual behavior, it is highly unlikely that they at the same time will feel comfortable teaching students about sexuality, consent, and boundaries. Consequently, teachers need HSB-specific competence if they are to be able to implement transformative practice for children's behaviors.

HSB-specific training for teachers is now being offered in various parts of the world as a measure for enhancing teachers' understanding as well as securing more appropriate school responses, and a few studies have started to measure the effect of HSB training for teachers. Two studies found that even short training programs for teachers had a notable effect on their subjective competence in approaching HSB (Charnaud & Turner, 2015; Yoder et al., 2016), whereas three studies (Clements et al., 2017; Hackett et al., 2013 and Vorland et al., 2018) showed the same result for inter-professional and interagency training in HSB. The participants in all the studies reported that they felt more confident in working with children and young people displaying HSB after the training, and Hackett et al. (2013, p. 341) also pointed out that the participants "understood the reasons leading to sexually abusive behaviors in young people and the frequency of family problems in young people's backgrounds". Clements et al. (2017) claim that one of the most important aspects of the short HSB training program is that the training raises awareness among professionals. The authors maintain, as do Kaeser et al. (2000), that this is a crucial point because this awareness can facilitate earlier intervention at the lowest level within universal services, such as schools. As seen in the findings, discussions and reflections around children's sexual behaviors enhanced the teachers' awareness. Raising the awareness of HSB and potential reasons for it can empower teachers to address this behavior in a dignified manner that in turn can empower the child to change. However, acquiring such competence requires multiple steps. Clements et al. (2017) argue that raising awareness is only the first step in HSB training, and that further training for teachers should be more comprehensive with a variety of activities over time supported by other agencies.

4.2. Promotion of a more sustainable teacher role

Another finding in this study is that teachers are often overwhelmed by their role, and that this feeling undermines their ability to safeguard students the way they need to. As reported by the informants in this study, various constraints on teachers, namely lack of time, resources, multi-agency cooperation and a coordinated practice, contribute to lack of agency and the experience of the teacher

role as overwhelming. Many teachers felt that this predicament deprived them of the opportunity to have important conversations with students, or to follow up on matters of concern. This is in line with Allnock and Atkinson's (2019) study, where teachers reported resource problems as the reason for not having the capacity to develop close relationships with their students. The transformative potential of the teacher role requires that teachers have enough time together with students to be able to realize their unique position in the classroom. According to Freire (1974), one of the most important factors when it comes to a teacher's influence lies in the actual relationships with students, and a teacher must therefore invest both much time and energy in building close relationships with students in their class. If teachers are feeling overwhelmed due to a heavy load with little time and support, expecting transformative practices in the prevention of sexual abuse in schools simply becomes unrealistic.

It is, however, interesting to note that in the groups where no members of the administration were present, the feeling that the teacher role was overwhelming was communicated more clearly. It must be noted that his finding might be due to the fact that the teachers in groups with their leaders present were hesitant to criticize their superiors. However, it could also indicate that the groups where leaders were present felt more supported by their superiors, possibly also evidenced by their very presence in the focus group. Several studies have emphasized the importance of leadership as support for the teacher's ability in the safeguarding role. Walker (2020) reported that the administration is key in enforcing a safe and sustainable school culture for both students and teachers by offering teachers the necessary time and resources they need. Meyer (2008), Firmin et al. (2019), and Allnock and Atkinson (2019) have pointed out that if teachers are to act on sexual violence and harassment, they need to be supported by their own leaders. These studies also showed that teachers who felt unsupported by their administration were more unlikely to react to sexual harassment. Allnock and Atkinson (2019) further state that when teachers do not act upon sexual harassment and violations, students also give up on reacting to presented HSB. Subsequently, the attitudes of school administrations influence all aspects of implemented school policies, whether formal or informal. As seen in this study, teachers express the need to be supported by clear leaders if they are to implement a more systemic safeguarding process. Hence, a sustainable teacher role requires school leaders who *enable* their teachers to become agents of change through providing sufficient support, time, and resources.

4.3. Coordinated practice and multi-agency cooperation

The data material in the study reveals that teachers report a lack of a coordinated and systemic practice in the prevention and management of HSB in schools. In order to implement such a practice in schools, there is a need for an inclusive approach where interdisciplinary cooperation with relevant agencies is a given. As Carmody (2009) maintains; "Education alone will not prevent sexual assault. Rather it is a key strategy within a comprehensive multi-sectoral and multi-level response eliminating sexual and other forms of violence" (p. 13). Hackett and Taylor (2008), Firmin et al. (2019), and Lloyd (2019) have therefore pointed out that if support is to be effective, an intervention must be integrated both throughout the entire school and in the multi-agency partnership. Moreover, Charnaud and Turner (2015) underline the importance of "coordinated strategies from social services in supporting teachers for effective safeguarding and promoting of the welfare of children" (p. 1355). Even though there is strong consensus on the significance of multi-agency cooperation, various authors identify some challenges in the potential teamwork. Ey and McInnes (2018) claim that there is a need to train educators in understanding how to respond to such behaviors and engage support services. However, according to Lloyd's (2019) study, multi-agency partners frequently reported teachers' anxiety when it came to making referrals, thus showing that educational staff need support and training to be able to act. The anxiety over referring a student was also identified in this study, especially when it came to referrals to the child welfare service. Hence, Lloyd (2019) and Kaeser et al. (2000) suggest that teachers need to work with professionals in other services on a regular basis so that schools and cooperating agencies can share a coordinated practice and understanding of the various agencies' roles. Such practice would ensure that the cooperating agencies would also receive the necessary training and competence. The promising examples of interdisciplinary cooperation identified by the informants indicate that innovate approaches from various stakeholders can indeed benefit and support teachers. As seen, these initiatives both transferred competence into the school and raised awareness among teachers at the same time. The most important success factors of the case worker and the local resource center are that they are available for cooperation with teachers at their actual site of work:

> If we want a change in education across a nation, we can only have it by its being realized in each site, site by site. If we want national change in education, we must also harness the agency, experience and wisdom of the people who know and inhabit the site – in particular, of course, teachers and leaders and students at each site. (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 218).

4.4. Limitations

The focus groups were composed of informants from a small geographical area of Norway, which makes the results difficult to generalize. Furthermore, being situated in Norway, the authors' interpretations are influenced by a specific geographical, political, and cultural context. The transformative perspective chosen for this study permeates the analysis and discussion, and the normative aim of improving practice may have impacted the informants' meaning making. Finally, the principals and assistant principals' presence in FGs may have influenced the informants' level of honesty. There is also a possibility that informants could have been influenced by the researcher's presence and participation in the focus groups, an issue also mentioned by Flick (2009). The interviews were transcribed in Norwegian, and later translated into English by the first author. The informants' meaning making might have been affected by the translation. Caution must therefore be advised in interpreting the various data presented in this article. Wherever possible, the findings from the focus groups have been triangulated with existing research in the field to compensate for the small sample, and validate findings, as recommended by Flick (2009).

4.5. Implications for practice and future research

Based on the findings from this study, the following three areas need to be addressed at the policy level in going forward with a more systemic prevention of sexual violence in Norway. First, training in healthy, problematic, and harmful sexual behavior should be made mandatory across all schools and cooperating agencies. As seen above, empirical evidence supports the belief that HSB-specific training for teachers and cooperating agencies both raises awareness and enhances teachers' competence in detecting and intervening in HSB cases. This is therefore a fundamental and inevitable step towards enabling professionals to comfortably provide safe spaces for conversations on sexuality, as well as making them capable of detecting and intervening in the event of sexually abusive behavior. HSB training through AIM3 (Assessment, Intervention & Moving on) courses and RVTS West's "Basic knowledge about problematic sexual behavior among children and young people" are currently available (both off- and online) to all professionals working with children and young people in various parts of Norway. (AIM courses have been adapted from the AIM Project in the UK for the Norwegian context by V27, and are now offered by the various RVTS centers.) The short courses would be a feasible solution for providing teachers with the initial awareness that is a necessary starting point, as described by Clements et al. (2017).The newly launched RVTS website www.seksuellatferd.no *[*transl: *sexual behavior]* is another resource site for professionals which provides a digital version of the Traffic Light Tool (Hegge, 2016), which is used to identify healthy, problematic, and harmful sexual behavior. The website also makes the recently launched school manual for primary and secondary schools available. The manual aims at aiding teachers and other school personnel in detecting and intervening in cases of problematic and harmful sexual behavior. In addition to the manual itself, an e-learning tool is also included as a part of a systemic competence package made available to schools. The e-learning features up-to-date video lectures on relevant topics, and can provide teachers with a viable opportunity for training at their own pace and time. The manual includes a section about healthy sexual behavior related to the themes in the new curriculum, and can offer schools concrete support with respect to how to approach the subject in school. Procedures for problematic and harmful sexual behaviors are listed, and the manual aims to offer schools and cooperating agencies a shared understanding of the various stakeholders' roles in HSB cases.

The second policy area to address is enhanced statutory interdisciplinary cooperation between schools and relevant agencies. Eriksen and Germeten (2014) emphasize the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration between teachers and other agencies for enabling early interventions. One specific method for providing time and resources is for the administration to earmark slots on the timetable for multi-agency cooperation. Systemic interdisciplinary collaboration enables a collective increase in the professionals' competence and creates a broader network of expertise through professional learning. The new design within the child welfare service, where a child welfare caseworker is situated in schools has initially had promising results when it comes to low-threshold interdisciplinary cooperation. As seen in the teachers' accounts, this caseworker also functions as support for teachers in challenging cases, and might make their experiences of isolation and ineptitude a little less overwhelming. It is reasonable to believe that such a design may help with the reported lack of time and resources that the teachers experience. However, further studies into this design are needed to provide more rigorous findings on the effects this has in schools. More research is also needed on the cooperation between Children's Houses and schools in individual cases, and the effect this measure has on school responses to HSB (and sexual abuse in general). Teachers who were in contact with Children's Houses reported that they were more confident in procedures and roles in HSB cases after the agency's involvement. More research is also needed on the educational program offered by the local resource center for victims of sexual abuse, both from teachers' and students' perspectives.

The third policy area to address is the establishment of an overarching structure for detection and intervention of sexual violence in schools with national guidelines, as recommended by Vorland et al. (2018). One step in the right direction is the school manual for primary and secondary schools. This is a promising start to the creation of a robust national structure. In theory, such a structure can help individual schools and the relevant agencies to streamline their procedures and practices in HSB cases, as opposed to the current system where there are major discrepancies between different schools and communities. This would ensure a systemic and coordinated practice, not only in *a* school, but in *all* schools. However, in practice, this structure requires a national implementation of a comprehensive approach including guidelines, a manual, training, and more resources allocated to schools, which in turn must be administered and prioritized by the government.

4.6. Concluding thoughts

This study has focused on exploring the barriers teachers experience in the prevention of HSB in primary schools. It was discovered from the teachers' own accounts that they do not feel they are equipped with the knowledge and competence needed for them to be able to detect and intervene in cases of sexual violence and HSB. Additionally, conditions that undermined their ability to perform their profession as intended were also discovered, namely, lack of time, resources, and coordinated practices in school. As shown through international research, these challenges are not unique to Norwegian teachers. The study therefore suggests ways forward for schools and cooperating agencies in proposing training and a more coordinated practice for schools. However, as emphasized in the discussion, to furnish a holistic system that can protect children and young people from harm, there also needs to be good multiagency cooperation with schools, which in turn can enable teachers to utilize their unique position as children's and young people's protectors in school. Ultimately, realization of the teachers' safeguarding role according to the new curriculum will therefore require an overarching governmental initiative.

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Article III

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Research articles

Teachers as human rights defenders: strengthening HRE and safeguarding theory to prevent child sexual abuse

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Abstract

Sexual abuse is a public health issue with long-term consequences for children's lives and education. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is a key reference point in safeguarding, increasingly incorporated into domestic law. This article aims to strengthen safeguarding theory and practice by reviewing human rights education (HRE) theory and aligning it with care-based ethics. It proposes a renewed focus on HRE in teacher education that examines the teacher's role and professional responsibilities, strengthens rights-based knowledge, and explores the transformative power of rights. By empowering teachers with skills to recognise and act on harmful sexual behaviour (HSB), they can become powerful human rights defenders, protecting children against child-on-child and adult-on-child abuse. Drawing on empirical data on teachers' understandings of HSB, we apply theory, cautioning against an under-theorised approach that over-relies on rights knowledge or children's ability to claim their rights in an emotionally charged arena with asymmetrical power relations.

Keywords

Harmful sexual behaviour, teacher's role, HRE theory, transformative human rights education, ethics of care, Convention on the Rights of the Child

Introduction

Child sexual abuse is increasingly recognised by policymakers at global, regional and national levels as a public health issue with long-term consequences for children's lives and futures, and for their educational opportunities. The World Health Organization (2017) has declared sexual abuse against children a global public health issue and expressed grave concern for the consequences, both for individual child victims and societies as a whole.

Prevention of sexual abuse is currently receiving increased attention in public health strategies. The Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Council of Europe, 2007), commonly known as the Lanzarote Convention, provides an international legal framework requiring criminalisation of a range of offences against children. It has been ratified by all 47 Council of Europe member-states, and is open to other States Parties to sign and ratify. The Convention's drafters took, as a starting point, existing UN and Council of Europe standards, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (United Nations, 1989). The Lanzarote Convention is a binding treaty that provides, *inter alia*, for preventative measures, including intervention programmes, education for children, recruitment and training of persons working with children, and raising awareness among the general public (Articles 4 to 10). It therefore has direct implications for school curricula, teacher education and teacher roles, across all Council of Europe member-states.

The CRC is frequently cited as a reference point in safeguarding policy and is increasingly incorporated into the domestic law of countries around the globe, including four of the five Nordic countries: Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. According to the provisions of the Convention, States Parties have a duty to ensure that teachers are provided with appropriate support and training and to ensure that there are legal and policy frameworks to protect the children in their care from sexual abuse:

> States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child. (UN, 1989: Article 19)

In other words, teachers have the role of human rights defenders in relation to the children in their care. Effectively, they are required, as part of their professional duties, to take appropriate action to prevent child sexual abuse. This role of human rights defender is not one where an individual teacher is expected to act alone; it is one where the state is required to offer appropriate support, including a thorough education of teachers in children's human rights. We are emphasising teachers' professional duties as children's human rights defenders. We recognise that schools can be experienced by students as violent places and that individual

teachers may perpetuate sexual abuse (Harber, 2005), but contend that when teachers recognise the role of children's human rights defender as central to their professional responsibilities, cultures of violence can be disrupted.

In this article, we argue that for teachers to confidently take up their roles as children's human rights defenders, safeguarding children from sexual abuse, a fresh theoretical approach to human rights education is required. We aim to strengthen theory and practice in child safeguarding by reviewing human rights education (HRE) theory. This is important for a number of reasons.

First, it is imperative to consider how HRE theory might be appropriately aligned with a broad care-based ethics that will support teachers in identifying and responding to harmful sexual behaviour (HSB). We note that HSB in a child (defined below) could also be indicative of past or ongoing adult-on-child abuse (Ey & McInnes, 2020). We acknowledge there is no confirmed scientific connection between displaying HSB and having been sexually abused. However, a significant portion of children who display HSB have undergone a range of adverse childhood experiences where sexual abuse is one of several difficulties encountered - alongside problems such as physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, mental illness, household alcoholism and drug abuse. Teachers who respond to HSB may therefore frequently be taking the first steps in protecting a child from a cycle of abuse. Secondly, theorising teachers' work needs to recognise the role of emotions in teaching and learning. This is critical, for across a range of social and cultural contexts, dealing with HSB among children requires teachers and other professionals to overcome cultural taboos. Thirdly, and importantly, power relationships need to be acknowledged in the sexual exploitation of children and in the initiatives taken to prevent child sexual abuse. For this reason, we caution against an over-simplistic link between children *knowing* rights and *claiming* them. Finally, in an HRE-based approach to child sexual abuse, HRE needs to be transformative. That is to say, both teachers and children need to recognise human rights as much more than society's normative principles. An HRE-based approach to HSB needs to be conceptualised in such a way that that it empowers both teachers and learners to work for societal change.

It is our intention, when theorising HRE, to apply it to real situations, where this theory can be used or modified, as appropriate. We want it to have practical application. Indeed, the theory has been generated, to a large degree, from empirical research. In this paper we illustrate our theoretical construct, drawing on data from an empirical study of teachers' understandings of child sexual abuse. Before we explore the theory and practice of a human rights-based approach to addressing child sexual abuse in more depth, we discuss the term 'harmful sexual behaviour' (HSB) in the context of schooling.

Harmful sexual behaviour

Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) is defined as: 'Sexual behaviours of children and young people under the age of 18 years old that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful toward self or others, or be abusive towards another child, young person or adult' (Hackett, Holmes & Branigan, 2016, p. 12).

The focus of child protection efforts globally has generally been on adult perpetrators, thereby failing to take into account 'children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviour' (Ey & McInnes, 2020). Children and young people who display HSB make up a significant proportion of the sexual abuse statistics. Researchers estimate that between 30-50 per cent of all sexual abuse against children is committed by other children and young people (Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers [ATSA], 2017; Hackett, 2014; Shawler et al., 2019). Schools are thus a unique arena for both prevention and early intervention against HSB (Ey & McInnes, 2020). Primary school teachers are particularly well positioned to act as key safeguarding actors in early prevention and intervention work. We stress that HSB, sometimes referred to as child-on-child abuse, may be indicative of previous trauma and of past or current adult-on-child abuse (Creeden, 2013; Ey & McInnes, 2020; Leonard & Hackett, 2019; McKibbin, Humphreys & Hamilton, 2016).

Nevertheless, research suggests that teachers internationally are frequently unable to fulfil their intended safeguarding responsibilities. In England, research with teachers and young learners suggests that peer-to-peer sexual abuse has become normalised, so that teachers overlook it and students feel unable to report it (Allnock & Atkinson, 2019; Firmin, 2019; Waters, Anstey, Clouston & Sydor, 2021). In Norway, which has seen a rise in sexual violence and abuse, children and young people report that teachers are not doing enough to protect them from harm from peers (Barneombudet, 2018; Bergrav 2020; Hafstad & Augusti, 2020). Teachers confirm that they find it difficult to intervene to address HSB (Draugedalen, 2021; Draugedalen, Kleive & Grov, 2021; Vorland, Selvik, Hjorthol, Kanten & Blix, 2018). In South Africa, where there are concerns about an increase in various types of school-based violence, teachers have also been assessed as ill-equipped to address HSB (Makhasane & Mthembu, 2019).

In adopting the term HSB, we acknowledge there are other contesting terms in the literature, depending both on era of origin and authors' geographical positioning. HSB is a relatively new field and one where academic and clinical fields overlap (Hallett, Deerfield & Hudson, 2019). As these authors note, labelling children has sometimes been highly stigmatising, with terms such as *child molester*, *juvenile sex offender* and *perpetrator* applied. In line with the principles of the CRC, there is a growing consensus to move away from labelling the individual to describing their behaviour (ATSA, 2017; Hackett, 2014). In the UK and elsewhere in Europe, the term *harmful sexual behaviour* has started to gain momentum (Allnock & Atkinson, 2019;

Vorland et al., 2018). Hackett (2011) proposes a continuum of child sexual behaviour: normal, inappropriate, problematic, abusive, and violent. It is the behaviours in the last three categories which are labelled as harmful or potentially harmful.

The HSB literature generally makes a distinction between *children* and *young people/adolescents*, drawing the line between 12 and 13 years with the onset of puberty. However, our use of the term 'children' is in line with the CRC's definition of children as all individuals under the age of 18, except where we distinguish between younger and older students or wish to emphasise a wide age range. We illustrate our theory with empirical data from Norway, which is focussed on primary schools (students aged 5-13), but we also draw on literature relating to adolescents, since there is a scarcity of international research on young children who display HSB (Ey & McInnes, 2020).

The idea of children committing offences against other children challenges a society's traditional responses to punishment, and demands alternative prevention and intervention strategies, as the children involved are often under the age of criminal responsibility. According to child rights principles, children who display HSB are first and foremost children in need of help, not punishment. It is the duty of professionals to offer that help as early as possible. Importantly, although children and young people who display HSB are a highly heterogeneous group, there is, as highlighted above, a growing consensus among academics and clinicians worldwide that those who display HSB often have histories of trauma and abuse, with many exposed to a high degree of 'adverse childhood experiences' (Felitti et al., 1998).

Human rights exist to address the needs of the vulnerable (Osler, 2016) and in the context of education it is the responsibility of adult professionals to safeguard the most vulnerable children in their care. The responsibility of teachers is rooted, as we have seen, in CRC Article 19, which mandates the state and its employees to protect children from all forms of physical or mental violence (including sexual abuse). Furthermore, Article 39 requires states to promote the recovery and reintegration of a child exposed to adverse childhood experiences 'in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child' (UN, 1989).

In its 2016-2021 Strategy for the Rights of the Child, the Council of Europe has given particular attention to HSB:

> The Strategy has as one of its five priority areas 'a life free from violence for all children'. Peer violence and harmful sexual behaviour by children is one theme which the Strategy mid-term evaluation process identifies as a challenge requiring further action. (Hackett, 2020, p. 5)

However, the Council recognises a particular dilemma when it comes to HSB and the lack of effective intervention: 'Children who display harmful sexual behaviour is a taboo topic, with limited available research. Therefore, not all member states have developed a specific

response to this issue' (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 11). This observation is in keeping with research in Norwegian upper secondary schools published in *Human Rights Education Review* and elsewhere (Goldschmidt-Gjerløw, 2019; Goldschmidt-Gjerløw & Trysnes, 2020; Goldschmidt-Gjerløw, 2021). This research found that teachers did not intervene consistently to address students' sexual harassment of their peers, with some so uncomfortable about dealing with sexuality they avoided the topic altogether.

Children and young people's perspectives on HSB and safeguarding

A nationwide survey of children aged 12-16 revealed a number of disturbing trends. These concerned young people's exposure to harm and a possible lack of safeguarding by adults across a range of arenas, both physical and virtual (Hafstad & Augusti, 2019). The data from Norway revealed that just over 6 per cent [n= 543] reported sexual abuse by an adult, and that 44 per cent of respondents had not yet disclosed this to anyone. A much larger proportion, 22 per cent [n= 2003], had experienced HSB and sexual abuse by a peer, but 30 per cent had not disclosed this experience. The findings showed that girls were at far greater risk of sexually abusive experiences than boys, and that most often the victim knew the abuser. The report confirms that children and young people are too poorly protected from violence and abuse, and that some groups remain especially vulnerable. Those labelled 'the most vulnerable groups' are those with a higher prevalence of cumulative risk factors (e.g., low socioeconomic status, parents' substance abuse, psychiatric illness or incarceration) (Hafstad & Augusti, 2019, p. 20).

Research among adolescents on intimate partner violence revealed a lack of protection afforded to the young people studied. There was a clear connection between partners 'sexting' (sending text messages with sexual content) and the prevalence of violence in a relationship (Hellevik & Øverlien, 2016). Similar results were detected in the international study, EU Kids Online 2020, which maps internet access, online practices, skills, online risks and opportunities for children aged 9–16 across 19 European countries (Smahel et al., 2020). It found that students seldom confide in teachers when they have negative online experiences:

> Number of children who reported that they told no one about their negative experiences ranges between 4% (France) and 30% (Estonia). Most often, children told about the negative experience a parent or friend or both (rarely did they tell a teacher or professional whose job it is to help children). (Smahel et al., 2020, p. 7)

It appears that in the new digital spaces that have emerged, young people are generally left to themselves to navigate acceptable behaviour and that governments have often been slow to react. For example, Hellevik and Øverlien (2016) observed that the Norwegian authorities published four action plans to combat domestic violence, but none of these addressed digital

violence. It was only in 2021 that a national action plan on how to prevent and intervene against internet-related sexual abuse of children was launched.

Another area of concern to young people is easy access to pornography. In a study from the UK, titles from so-called 'mainstream' pornography sites were analysed, and it was found that 1 in 8 titles contained descriptions of sexual violence (Vera-Gray, McGlynn, Kureshi & Butterby, 2021). In a mixed methods study from Norway, informants aged 14-19 years claim that pornography influences young people's sexuality and sexual behaviour. They identify a connection between the use of pornography and pressure to participate in sexual acts they perceive as degrading, violating and, in some cases, painful. The informants call for better protection from pornography (Bergrav, 2020). They also state that they want adults, such as teachers, to address these issues in safe spaces, observing that adults seldom initiate such conversations, and when they do, they tend to address the topic in a judgmental manner, inhibiting children and young people from expressing their views. The study noted that children and young people's views on pornography, and 'how sex is supposed to look and feel like', often remain unchallenged.

Building on EU Kids online 2009 (Staksrud & Livingstone, 2009), Livingstone and Stoilova (2021, p. 507) propose the 4 C classification of online risks: *content*, *contact*, *conduct* and *contract*. Simply put, these four categories represent the types of risk children encounter: what they actually view (pornographic content); those with whom they come into contact (adults practising 'grooming', sexual abuse or exploitation); the conduct that takes place between the child and those they encounter (sexual harassment, 'sexting'); and, finally, the contract that formally or informally is made between children and digital providers. Yet it would seem that basic digital education can go some way to protecting children online. A review of the impact of digital learning on young people found 'a positive association between digital skills and online opportunities, information benefits, and orientation to technology' (Livingstone, Mascheroni & Stoilova, 2021, p. 1).

The overall message from studies we have reviewed, examining the issue from the perspectives of children and young people on the one hand, and teachers on the other, is that teachers do not generally enact a safeguarding role. Yet of all the professionals working with children, they are the best placed both to prevent HSB and, where it occurs, to protect children. We turn next to examining how HRE might be conceptualised to enable teachers to become effective human rights defenders and enact their safeguarding role.

Theorising a human rights-based approach to safeguarding

The human rights project rests on recognition of human dignity (UN, 1948: Preamble) and human vulnerability. Human rights education in schools, drawing on the CRC, must necessarily be about realising the inherent dignity of all children and supporting the most vulnerable

(Osler, 2016; Struthers, 2020). The CRC also recognises the political rights of children and confirms that these are important to the realisation of other rights in education:

The project of enabling human rights and social justice through education is dependent on a deep understanding and application of children's human rights, particularly their participation rights, by policymakers and by teachers and other professionals working in school settings (Osler, 2016, p. 104).

These principles give strength to a human rights-based approach to safeguarding in schools and childcare settings and to approaches that ensure that the rights of the most marginalised are protected. Protecting the needs of vulnerable children is in itself a justification for HRE and for a human rights-based approach to safeguarding:

If ever there was a compelling reason for ensuring that young people are well-versed in their human rights entitlements, their protection from abuse or neglect is surely it. HRE is thus vital for 'raising awareness, understanding and acceptance of universal human rights standards and principles, as well as guarantees at the international, regional and national levels for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms' (Struthers, 2020, p. 3, quoting 2011 UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, Article 4a).

Yet at the same time 'schools … may unwittingly reinforce existing inequalities, neglect the perspectives of those they claim to serve, and be tools of violence against children' (Osler, 2016: p.107). It is this tension between human rights ideals and the everyday practices of schools that needs to be addressed when theorising a human rights-based approach to safeguarding. A clear starting point for ensuring effective HRE and strategies to address and prevent sexual abuse is the provision of opportunities for teachers to consider these tensions and deepen their own knowledge base. This is critical if they are to act as children's human rights defenders and contribute to safeguarding young learners in school.

Table 1

Human rights education and teachers' work. (Developed from Osler, 1997, pp. 192-3).

	Conforming	**Reforming**	**Transforming**
Various understandings of rights and human rights education (HRE)	Human rights are agreed international standards National values reflect human rights HRE is mandated	Democratic societies protect everyone's rights Individual breeches of rights occur HRE may need to be strengthened	Human rights are a site of struggle Ambiguities and tensions exist HRE may challenge established political interests
Teachers' role	Duty bearer (on behalf of the State) Implement mandated curriculum Transmit knowledge and values	Critique and interpret curriculum policy (read education theory) Provide students with opportunities to study how rights are protected / occasionally breeched Address 'rights gaps' Identify and support vulnerable students	Co-construct HRE with students, recognizing their diverse identities, experiences, histories Enable students to engage in critical examination of injustice in own lives and wider society Equip and enable students to act for social justice Engage with/ contribute to education theory Recognise shared vulnerabilities

Table 1 highlights three societal orientations to human rights and HRE and considers their

implications for teachers' work. Organised as *conforming*, *reforming* and *transforming*, these three orientations are not necessarily mutually exclusive and we might expect an individual teacher to identify with practices or beliefs in more than one of them. So, for example, in the conforming orientation a teacher may understand human rights to be part of an internationally agreed framework of standards. If this only leads teachers to recognise their role as implementing the mandated curriculum, they are not likely to support students in recognising the transforming potential of human rights. Yet a teacher whose professional orientation best fits the reforming or transforming column may equally recognise human rights as part of an internationally agreed framework of standards. In this sense, the orientations may be seen as a progression from left to right, across Figure 1. A transforming orientation is the orientation we would look for to enable human rights-based safeguarding processes.

In theorising a human rights-based approach to safeguarding, we examine in turn the following four elements: the need to align HRE with care-based ethics; teachers' work and the role of emotions in HRE teaching and learning; asymmetrical power relations in HRE and safeguarding work; and the concept of a transformative HRE and its role in safeguarding.

In our theorising, we draw on data collected in 2019, from six schools in a municipality in southern Norway. A total of 19 school-based professionals participated in focus-group interviews at their respective schools. 15 of these were primary school teachers, and it is their voices we draw on here. The schools were selected to include various environments/student demographics: urban and rural settings; predominantly White and ethnically diverse student populations; and a degree of socio-economic diversity. The participating teachers from these schools were self-selecting. Our purpose here is not to provide a detailed narrative or analysis of the wider study, which can be found elsewhere (Draugedalen, Kleive & Grov, 2021). Here we simply seek to illustrate ways in which data from these teachers can be read through the theoretical construct we present. We discuss a number of issues: HRE and care-based ethics; teachers' emotions in HRE-based safeguarding; asymmetrical power relations in safeguarding; and a transformative human rights education.

Aligning human rights education and care-based ethics

We assert that for teachers to be effective human rights defenders and work with children to implement a human rights-based approach to safeguarding at school, this must be achieved within the framework of an 'ethics of care' (Noddings, 2013). Here children are respected and supported, with teachers accepting the role of care-givers who place their students' well-being at the heart of their professional activity and attach significant value to the relationship between themselves and their students. This relationship is one of reciprocity, where the carer-teacher is attentive and listens to and observes the needs of the cared-for student, and

the student recognises the care in his or her responses. Underpinning teacher-student relationships are the principles of solidarity (what Noddings terms mutuality) and reciprocity. These two principles also underpin human rights:

> Rights demand human solidarity … we need to be willing to recognise and defend the rights of strangers, including people with different cultures and belief systems from our own. … [And] there is the key concept of reciprocity. Person A's rights cannot be secured unless Person B is prepared to defend them, and vice versa. (Osler & Starkey, 2010, p. 48)

In discussing the concepts of mutuality and reciprocity, Noddings is interested in an educational and social outcome, namely, the development of caring individuals. Her concern is both the well-being of the individual student and the development of societal values (Noddings, 2006).

In an educational setting, human rights principles are not abstract ideas to be communicated but living principles that apply in everyday life and everyday interactions. The school is the key arena in which moral education takes place. Noddings' conception of moral education is compatible with our understanding of HRE. It has four components—*modelling*, *dialogue*, *practice* and *confirmation*—each of which can be enacted in the classroom to develop caring and responsible students (Noddings, 2013). Teachers should model the desired behaviour that they wish students to adopt. Modelling requires that teachers critically examine their own role and behaviours and identify the moral behaviours they wish to communicate.

The second component emphasises that teachers engage in authentic dialogues with students, so as to truly understand their perspectives. This element dovetails well with the principles underpinning CRC Articles 12-16 (UN, 1989), which address children's participation rights. These include the right to be heard, freedom of expression, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and freedom of association. These rights cannot be enacted in isolation, they require a community. Teachers need to be active listeners and to create a classroom community in which dialogues can be initiated by themselves and their students.

In Noddings' third component, the teacher should provide opportunities to practice moral, caring principles, which she stresses cannot be communicated verbally, but exemplified through practice:

> A teacher cannot "talk" this ethic. She must live it, and that implies establishing a relation with the student. Besides talking to him and showing him how one cares, she engages in cooperative practice with him. (Noddings, 2013, p. 167)

The last component of Noddings' moral education is that of *confirmation*. In essence, confirmation requires that teachers know their students well enough to best understand their

true intentions in any action, and can confirm the desired intention to the student, even though the action itself may be questionable or harmful. Thus, confirmation allows students who have done wrong a chance to correct their wrongdoing, and allows the teacher to be in a position of tutoring the student to adopt alternative, more caring actions. However, this component is only possible when a positive and trusting relationship is already established through a longer process of receptive listening by the teacher:

> The one doing the confirming has to know the one who is confirmed well enough to make a reasonable, honest judgement of what the other was trying to do. When we confirm someone, we attribute to a questionable act the best possible motive consonant with reality. To do this, we must have sufficient knowledge of the other to make it plausible that this better motive was actually operating. … children and teenagers – often react with relief and gratitude: Here is someone who sees my better self! The better self, perceived through receptive listening, is thus encouraged. (Noddings, 2006, p. 113-114)

By approaching students who have engaged in a questionable act (for example, sexual harassment) with a confirming attitude, a teacher has a far greater chance of making a lasting impact on students, and of enabling them to change their negative behaviour. Here, Noddings is relying on the concept of the interdependence of all in the school community and the responsibility of the wider community to resolve uncaring behaviour. Again, interdependence is a concept underpinning the human rights framework (Osler & Starkey, 2010, p. 47).

Noddings' ethics of care resonates well with the principles of 'trauma-informed care', an approach originally developed among professionals working with children and young people who have had adverse childhood experiences, an approach based on clinical developments in trauma psychology and neuroscience (Bath & Seita, 2018). Levenson (2019) is among the growing number of HSB experts who advocate for a more universal trauma-informed approach in educational settings. A key message from trauma-informed care is that of the power of healthy relationships - both in healing trauma and creating resilience among those who have experienced adverse childhood experiences (Perry, 2009).

A number of teachers in our study recognised and articulated the importance of a care-based ethics, or care-based practice, although the term they used was 'help' rather than 'care'. In the quote that follows, a teacher discusses academic and social needs in tandem. She talks about 'struggling' children and highlights the importance of knowing individual children well, in the way Noddings (2013) suggests:

> Many children who are struggling both socially and academically, they also often have other things going on. Their parents often struggle too, so there is a connection that impacts the children. It is important to understand what is wrong in order to

> help. (Informant B, focus group 6)

In the extract that follows, teacher A talks about the importance of a *relationship of trust*, suggesting interdependence and reciprocity between teacher and child. Her colleague, B, responds by using the language of rights:

> A: I think that when you develop a close relation with these pupils that you see going around and are bothered by something, then most of them will be able to open up. We have also experienced children who all of a sudden just come and start talking. So, it is apparent that to have trust and a good relation is important…
>
> B: I try to be ahead, so I tell them about their rights, what other people are allowed or not allowed to do with them, so the children are sure that it is their body and they are in charge. But I have not been able to make them open up about things they have experienced. (Informant A and B, focus group 2)

Teacher B acknowledges that a discourse on rights has been insufficient, in her experience, to enable any child to confide in her. It would seem that by combining these two approaches—teaching child rights within a care-based ethics where relationships of trust are established—teachers create opportunities for children to 'open up'. Not only are care-based ethics and a human rights-based approach complementary but, as this case illustrates, teachers need to cooperate and share practices to find the key to effective safeguarding. It remains unclear whether Teacher B's young students did or did not learn that specific remedies exist if their rights are breached.

Teachers' work and the role of emotions in HRE teaching and learning

We have been involved in the development of a research instrument designed to assess teachers' perceptions of the principles of the CRC (Osler & Solhaug, 2018; Osler & Skarra, 2021) and we are also aware of recent studies that have looked at teachers' role in human rights education (for example, Gollifer, 2021; Jerome, 2018; Robinson, Phillips & Quennerstedt, 2020). However, we note that the focus of educational research on the CRC to date has largely been on children and on student teachers and teacher education. We concur with Jerome & Starkey (2021, p. 73) that 'the teacher's central role in children's rights education (CRE) … has been relatively unexplored in the literature'.

Zembylas (2017) has devoted attention to the role of emotions in HRE, in the context of prevailing rational understandings of human rights. He is primarily concerned with the role of emotions in creating compassion and solidarity among students. Our interest here is in the role of emotions in shaping *teachers*' approaches to both human rights and child rights education. In particular, we wish to consider what role emotions might play in enabling a care-based ethics, in selecting curriculum content, and in enabling or inhibiting teachers' readiness to act as human rights defenders and practice a human rights-based safeguarding role. The

teacher is responsible for communicating the curriculum; s/he has agency in choice of content and method. S/he thinks, acts and feels. Like Zembylas (2017) we are interested in the different ways in which emotions may be implicated in the experience of those who perceive, mobilise or claim human rights, and specifically on teachers' perceptions of their role.

In the area of sexual abuse and assault there has been a long-standing societal tendency to blame the victim. So, for example, girls and women may be advised to consider how they dress, so as to discourage sexual harassment, rape or even misogynist killings. Children who experience sexual harassment from their peers, or who display HSB, may be equally prone to stereotyping by the adults into whose professional care they are placed. If one purpose of teaching is to encourage students' critical thinking and taken-for-granted perspectives, this must be a process in which teachers themselves engage. Following Boler (1999) this implies:

> A pedagogy of discomfort … [that involves] inviting educators and students to engage in critical inquiry regarding values and cherished beliefs, and to examine constructed self-images in relation to how one has learned to perceive others. (pp. 176-177)

A pedagogy of discomfort is necessarily one that takes time. It invariably requires all actors to consider privilege, power and inequality and to acknowledge ways in which emotions can enable or inhibit learning. It applies as much to teachers' work as it does to student learning.

Data from another of the focus groups exemplifies how teacher emotions come into play. This teacher appears to have found a more caring human rights-based approach to safeguarding by engaging in a pedagogy of discomfort:

> A: One can say that one has challenging pupils, but what is it about them that make them challenging? Am I not adjusting my lectures well enough to their needs? Am I not seeing enough? Instead of saying: 'He just has to pull himself together!', how do I really adjust to the pupil?
>
> Researcher: But that requires a certain self-reflection in what you are saying right now?
>
> A: Yes, that may be the most important mission we have. You know, like when we talk about regulation of emotions with children, then you need to control your own feelings and situation before you can help a child in… in an emergency situation then you need an absolute control over your own emotions. (Informant A, focus group 4)

The teacher's professional learning has come about by first acknowledging the emotional impact on herself as teacher, and then adjusting and regulating her feelings so she is able to focus on the child's needs.

Addressing asymmetrical power relations in HRE and safeguarding work

We concur with Alison Struthers 'that when children are taught about their rights in practical

- rather than aspirational - terms, they are better able to apply a human rights lens to their own lived experiences' (Struthers, 2021, p. 48). We have previously emphasised the importance of legal knowledge as 'part of the struggle for justice' that, for us, is the very purpose of HRE (Osler, 2010, p. 121; Osler, 2016). Legal literacy, and an understanding of the steps that individuals may take if and when their rights are infringed, is powerful knowledge:

> Children must be legally literate and develop the legal knowledge and skills necessary to identify breaches of rights, recognise them as such and, where appropriate, seek legal means to enforce them. (Lundy and Martinez Sainz, 2018, p. 17)

We agree with Struthers (2021) that 'reactive safeguarding processes, that rely on adults observing and actioning signs of abuse and neglect' on an *ad hoc* basis will almost certainly be insufficient. We recognise that busy primary school teachers, for example, pursuing professional practices that focus, first and foremost, on communicating knowledge and enabling children to acquire a range of literacy, numeracy and social skills may or may not identify behaviours in an individual child that indicate abuse or neglect, or record them in such a way that patterns of concern are identified between professionals. While it is undoubtably true 'that when children are taught what breaches of human rights actually look like, they are better able to recognise and report violations in their own lives' (Struthers, 2021, p. 46) we would urge caution in assuming that this is likely to be a *sufficient* strengthening of safeguarding procedures with regard to sexual abuse. Prevailing societal attitudes mean that victims of sexual abuse, even when they recognise violations of their rights, frequently delay *reporting* abuse, sometimes for years, and may be tutored by abusers to believe that any wrongdoing is their own fault (Halvorsen, Solberg & Stige, 2020).

We join with Struthers (2021) in advocating for stronger links to be made between children's safeguarding and HRE. However, adding basic HRE knowledge to teachers' current limited safeguarding training will probably have minimal impact. Provision of safeguarding training for teachers and education for children are listed as part of a broader intervention programme to protect children against sexual abuse and exploitation under the binding Lanzarote Convention, across all Council of Europe member-states. It follows that, under the Convention, member-states will be required to develop such programmes and that progress in doing so will be monitored.

We contend that for human-rights based safeguarding education and training to be effective it not only requires that all parties, including children, understand what breaches of human rights look like and the remedies available to them, but that such programmes explore the asymmetrical power relations that frame current HRE and safeguarding work. As we have previously argued: 'HRE must necessarily address human vulnerability and societal injustices and power differentials. … To claim full rights at school, for example, vulnerable students need

the support of those in power, including teachers' (Osler & Skarra, 2021, p. 194). For effective safeguarding practices to be implemented, teachers need opportunities to consider and discuss these power differentials, and how they might be mitigated, for example through care-based ethics and a pedagogy of discomfort, as discussed above.

Other asymmetrical power relationships are those existing between students. We know that girls are at greater risk of sexually abusive behaviour than boys (Hafstad & Augusti, 2019). The tendency to blame the victim leaves girls and LGTB+ students especially vulnerable, along with any student encountering transphobia. These power differentials are ones that teachers need opportunities to consider, discuss and reflect on.

Asymmetrical power relations also exist between teachers and school leaders and administrators. Teachers need the active support of school leaders to implement effective human rights-based safeguarding. Without support from school principals, and an assurance that a teacher will be taken seriously by senior school administrators, children are left vulnerable. The CRC and the broader human rights framework do not address power relationships in their provisions, yet forms of HRE that ignore power relationships are unlikely to support societal change or transformation (Osler, 2015).

There was consensus across the focus groups in the six schools that support from school leaders made safeguarding duties less daunting or overwhelming (Draugedalen, Kleive & Grov, 2021). Without support, teachers reported a sense of isolation and uncertainty. In one case, a teacher described what happened when she observed HSB among students:

> I have contacted the principal, I have contacted the assistant principal, and of course I have discussed it with my colleagues. And I have contacted the Child Welfare Service. But the problem is that I feel we are not being heard. Maybe in the Child Welfare Service, but not in school. It is not taken seriously. (Informant A, focus group 5)

Asymmetrical power relationships between teachers and school principals undermine teachers' confidence in their observations and judgments, with direct implications for children's protection. School-based teams that included other professionals, such as a school nurse, helped alleviate unequal power differentials, allowing children's needs to be more easily addressed.

In a separate discussion about HSB and reporting processes, two teachers observed how within their school there was no clear action plan, due in part to poor communication and cooperation between professionals:

> B: Some want to bring the concern directly to the school's welfare teacher, while others notify the assistant principal, and others again the principal. It varies a lot

> depending on how the individual teacher feels.
>
> A: We're vulnerable, right? From the start we (teachers) must dare to see. But then there is the issue of how the information and concern is received. That the relation between us adults will determine further outcome of the process. We choose people we confide in, who are available to us and that we trust. (Informant A & B, focus group 1)

'Daring to see' harmful sexual behaviour relates to a teacher's confidence in their own judgement and perceived risks in getting it wrong. Since teachers may fear acting alone, both emotion and power relations come into play.

A transformative HRE and its role in safeguarding

We assert that 'transformative HRE involves critical examination of the present and the past, so that teachers engage in a process of self-reflection and support learners in reimagining and creating a just future. Importantly, it requires teachers to support students in *acting* for justice' (Osler & Skarra, 2021, p. 192). We are concerned here with longer-term societal change and whilst we recognise that education alone cannot be expected to achieve this, it has an important contribution to make. Legal knowledge has a part to play, but it coincides and interacts with the knowledge that children bring to the process of learning, namely their own everyday experiences of justice and injustice. Ultimately, both teachers and students need to be empowered to recognise themselves as agents of change and to see alternatives to the everyday injustices in their own lives and in the lives of those they observe.

Alongside human rights knowledge (and especially knowledge of legal standards and their remedies), teachers need to embrace the role of human rights defender of the children they teach, practising an ethics of care, and acknowledging the emotional as well as the rational elements of human rights and the impact of their own emotions on their everyday work.

We contend that human rights-based safeguarding practices need to be situated in the wider societal context of teaching and learning that acknowledges power differentials between adults and children, between children, and between teachers and their senior colleagues. A recognition of these power differentials is a first step in working to ameliorate them and to move towards a situation in which children are better protected and positioned. We envisage a context where children recognise sexual abuse as a violation of their rights but where teachers, as human rights defenders, cooperate in building communities. We envisage a future society in which abused children will not be stigmatised but supported to tell their stories and trusted and protected when they report their concerns.

A transformative human rights-based approach to safeguarding starts with the teachers' willingness to recognise that abuse happens. Societal change and eventual transformation begins with an acknowledgment of a problem and the need for change. Children need to be

trusted and believed when they speak out:

> I believe that as primary school teachers we are significant others, we are so important to these children that it is very likely that it is us they contact if we are willing and able to see and believe them. (Informant A, focus group 1)

One of the schools from the study was modelling what we would describe as a transformative approach to safeguarding. This school adopted the practice of confirming (Noddings, 2006) when addressing HSB, by guiding students to make appropriate choices:

> C: … Just like, when a small child touches itself. … Then you can talk to that child about it, and you can do that without making such a big deal about it, right? You can reassure the child that it is completely okay to do that, but not when the class is gathered in assembly. … Just like you say that we do not pick our noses when we eat. It is almost like, if you just address it in a normal way, then I feel that they are absolutely fine with it. (Informant C, focus group 3)

Concluding thoughts

We propose a theoretical human rights-based approach to safeguarding by emphasising teachers' role as human rights defenders. This framework aligns HRE with care-based ethics; addresses the role of emotions in teachers' work as it relates to child rights and safeguarding; considers the role of asymmetrical power relations when talking about rights; and proposes a transformative HRE.

Teachers are in a unique position to implement an important safeguarding role in schools and we recognise the importance of early intervention, starting in primary school. They also have professional, legal and moral obligations in the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We recognise that some teachers may start from a conforming orientation to HRE, while others will see their role as one of reform, rather than transformation. We wish to confirm these different starting points, and to acknowledge that an individual may move from conforming to reforming and transforming in the course of a day's work, or indeed a single conversation. The approach may be incremental. Elements of all three orientations may operate simultaneously and constructively. Our contribution here is to provide a theoretical framework that illuminates some of the barriers to effective safeguarding, recognises complexity, and permits an informed debate on ways forward.

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Article IV

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Research article

Supporting teachers in safeguarding against harmful sexual behaviour: service providers' perspectives on transformative practices

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Abstract

Sexual abuse of children is a growing public health issue, with a substantial proportion of such abuse carried out by other children and young people. Schools and teachers are uniquely placed to prevent and intervene against harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) among children and young people. Yet, for schools to safeguard effectively, they are reliant on cooperation with a range of children's services. This study forms part of a wider research project exploring teachers' safeguarding role. It identifies two emerging issues critical in interpreting the data and developing sound safeguarding processes: recognition of the role of professionals' emotional reactions in addressing HSB and the impact of asymmetrical power relations. Building on Draugedalen and Osler's theorisation of teachers' safeguarding, this article examines front-line service providers' perspectives on how they can support schools' safeguarding, proposing a holistic structure of transformative practices that addresses emotions and asymmetrical power relations.

Keywords safeguarding; inter-agency cooperation; school responses; ethics of care; education professional roles; Norway

Introduction

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2017), sexual abuse against children is an increasing public health problem worldwide. Studies show that around 30–50 per cent of sexual abuse is committed by other children and young people (Shawler et al., 2019).

In Norway, the National Criminal Investigation Service (Kripos, 2017) and the Ombudsperson for Children (2018) have warned of an increasing trend of problematic and harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) among children and young people. Young people frequently report HSB from their peers, and they urge schools to teach more about sexuality and sexual violations and to take a more active stance against sexual harm among peers (Norwegian Ombudsperson for Children, 2018; Bergrav, 2020; Hafstad and Augusti, 2019). Indeed, the revised primary and secondary school curriculum puts greater emphasis on teaching students about sexuality, consent and boundaries from first grade (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). However, teachers report that they lack competence in differentiating between healthy, problematic and harmful sexual behaviours, and that inter-agency cooperation and support are inconsistent (Draugedalen, 2021; Vorland et al., 2018). In these circumstances, safeguarding becomes the overwhelming responsibility of the teachers (Draugedalen et al., 2021).

Definitions

The phrase 'problematic or harmful sexual behaviour' is derived from Hackett's (2010) continuum of sexual behaviours whose model divides sexual behaviour into the following categories: normal, inappropriate, problematic, abusive and violent. The definition of HSB reflects this spectrum: 'Sexual behaviours of children and young people under the age of 18 years old that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful toward self or others, or be abusive towards another child, young person or adult' (Hackett et al., 2019: 13).

HSB and inter-agency cooperation in the Norwegian context

Safeguarding against HSB is often a complex process that involves several services. Various international studies have therefore highlighted the importance of schools cooperating closely with front-line services for successful prevention and intervention against HSB (Charnaud and Turner, 2015; Clements et al., 2017; Ey and McInnes, 2018; Firmin et al., 2019; Kor et al., 2022; McKibbin and Humphreys, 2021). In the UK, safeguarding in the school context has received a sharper focus through Firmin's (2019) theory of contextual safeguarding in recognising that schools can be sites of extra-familial risks and harms. Firmin et al. (2022: 43) also advocate for a paradigm shift in safeguarding through 'development of intra- and inter-organisational structures and policies that are directed towards improving interagency working'.

In Norway, the Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies (NKVTS) has contributed to significant developments in the HSB field through three research reports, which have influenced policy and practice regarding agencies' responses and cooperation. The first report (Holt et al., 2016) found that professionals lack knowledge and competence about HSB. The report also revealed a lack of established procedures for mapping sexual behaviour, and for cooperation between various service providers in HSB cases.

The second report (Askeland et al., 2017) revealed that Norway, the UK and the Nordic countries had not succeeded in establishing public national structures to ensure equitable and comprehensive HSB treatment. The study also found that both the cooperation between service providers and their HSB competence varied to a high degree across Norway. It made various recommendations to ensure a more streamlined inter-agency approach to HSB.

Later on, NKVTS published a third report (Vorland et al., 2018), this time investigating municipalities' front-line efforts on inter-agency cooperation in HSB cases. It found considerable variation in cooperation

between the various front-line service providers, with informants reporting confusion surrounding roles, guidelines and responsibility for coordination in HSB cases. The recommendations underlined the importance of shared HSB training in the municipalities, especially for front-line services such as school, health and care, which encounter children on a daily basis.

As a result of the 2018 NKVTS recommendations, a guide for teachers in primary and secondary schools on safeguarding against HSB was launched in March 2021 (Sandvik et al., 2021). The structure of the school guide draws on the categorisation of sexual behaviours from the Traffic Light Tool (Brook, 2013; in Norwegian by Hegge, 2016), and chapters on healthy, problematic and harmful sexual behaviours include guidance for teachers on how to respond. The guide and the e-learning tool that it includes aim to strengthen the cooperation between teachers and relevant services through introducing the various services' roles and procedures in HSB cases.

Framing the research

This article forms part of a wider mixed-methods study from Norway that explores the perspectives and understandings of teachers and children's service providers responsible for supporting school personnel in their safeguarding role. This qualitative element of the study scrutinises front-line service providers' perspectives on supporting teachers' safeguarding in schools, and explores transformative practices that can assist teachers in tackling the emotional role of safeguarding. The study also addresses power relations in inter-agency cooperation.

'Teachers as human rights defenders': a human rights education approach to safeguarding

This study subscribes to the transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2010) and seeks to explore *transformative practices* between schools and cooperating services that aim to empower children and heal trauma in line with human rights standards, specifically the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) and social justice principles. It understands transformative practice as:

> A synergistic relationship between the personal and political; a need for decolonized and democratic organizations and healing spaces; attention to means and process; an understanding that oppression has a negative impact on mind, body, spirit, and interpersonal relations; and attention to individual and collective practices for care and inquiry that are needed to heal oppression and trauma. (Pyles, 2018: 181)

Even though children and young people who display HSB are part of a highly heterogeneous group, research shows that a significant proportion have been exposed to adverse childhood experiences, such as violence and abuse (Dillard and Beaujolais, 2019). The potential existence of adverse childhood experiences among students in primary school places an explicit responsibility on professionals to protect 'the most vulnerable members of the society', as stated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989: Articles 19 and 39).

Human rights education encompasses transformative practices in schools, emphasising children's right to freedom from abuse, oppression and trauma, and it specifically underlines teachers' responsibility to safeguard the most vulnerable children in their care (Osler, 2016). Human rights education is a key means through which teachers can address inequality and injustice in classroom settings, through educating *about*, *through* and *for* human rights in schools. This makes teachers powerful role models for students; their responses to children's attitudes and behaviours will affect students profoundly. As Levenson and Socia (2015: 1885–6) point out, human rights education complements a trauma-informed approach, for teacher responses have the potential to reinforce HSB, rather than to change problematic behaviours:

> Negative or traumatic early childhood experiences can lead to behavioral problems which, when carried over into the school setting, can compromise academic and social competence. Children who elicit negative feedback from teachers and prosocial classmates may be at increased risk for

> association with delinquent peers, who provide a climate of social acceptance while reinforcing antisocial behavior.

In elaborating teachers' responsibility for safeguarding, Draugedalen and Osler (2022) have theorised a human rights education-informed approach to safeguarding against child sexual abuse, emphasising that teachers are, in terms of their professional duties, children's *human rights defenders*. In this approach, where human rights education and care-based ethics are aligned, the role of emotions and asymmetrical power relations in human rights education and safeguarding work are foregrounded, enabling a transformative human rights education, in turn, to play a central role in safeguarding.

Teachers' emotional responses may affect their ability to provide care for students in school. Nel Noddings (2013: 45) describes the process accordingly: 'If the demands of the cared-for become too great or if they are delivered ungraciously, the one-caring may become resentful and, pushed hard enough, may withdraw her caring.' Thus, safeguarding processes should take into account that teachers, and other adults, tend to have emotional responses related to children's sexuality, as well as to child sexual abuse and child-on-child harassment and abuse (Ey and McInnes, 2020).

Advancing safeguarding also means acknowledging the intrinsic asymmetrical power dimension to teachers' emotional reactions towards students, as they, *the one-caring*, as Noddings (2013) expresses it, are the more powerful partner in teacher–student relationships. Oberle et al. (2020: 1742) argued that 'Teachers' own social–emotional competence (SEC) and well-being are central to the social–emotional support they can provide to students.' If teachers become dysregulated and unable to manage their emotions, their responses influence students.

While teachers are the power-carrying partner in the teacher–student relationship, similar asymmetrical power relations simultaneously affect teachers as the weaker partner (the *cared-for*) in relations with school leaders and front-line services, where teachers are dependent on their support. Supportive practices must be sensitive to power differentials in the various safeguarding processes.

Derived from the above theory, two research questions guided the analysis of the data: 'How do professionals' emotions affect safeguarding processes?', and 'How do (asymmetrical) power relations affect those processes?'

Method

Research design and sample

The researcher conducted qualitative interviews with six front-line service providers between December 2020 and May 2021. Two interviews were carried out face to face as originally planned, with the remaining four conducted either on Skype or by phone due to Covid-19 restrictions. Each interview lasted about an hour, and a semi-structured interview guide directed the conversations. Key questions from the interview guide are highlighted in Box 1.

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Box 1. Selected questions from the interview guide (Source: Author, 2023)

What is your service's (as well as your individual) role in cooperation with schools?
What is your role if there is an HSB case in the municipality?
What are the challenges in cooperating with schools?
Why do you think teachers in the survey report that the inter-agency cooperation between schools and other services varies?
How can enhanced inter-agency cooperation support teachers' safeguarding role?

The six informants were representatives of various front-line services in a municipality in south-eastern Norway, cooperating with the 16 schools that had earlier participated in a survey (Draugedalen, 2021). The front-line service providers were identified according to both their specific professional responsibilities in inter-agency cooperation with the municipality's schools and their known engagement in HSB prevention. Five informants worked for municipal agencies supporting schools: a specialised school nurse from the public health service; a school specialist from the pedagogical-psychological service (the equivalent role in the UK is school psychologist, while in the USA it is education psychologist); a social worker in child welfare; a municipal psychologist from front-line mental health services; and a coordinator of alternative education from the service for school and after-school activities for youth. A sixth informant was a police officer from a preventive unit cooperating with the municipality schools, who had further training in children's development.

Data analysis

The interviews were recorded, and they were transcribed verbatim in Microsoft Word. Analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006; elaborated on by Nowell et al., 2017) six-phase method for conducting a trustworthy thematic analysis. In phase one, 'Familiarising yourself with your data', the process of transcription and the process of playing and replaying the recordings enabled the researcher to immerse herself in the data. All transcripts were read several times to categorise various themes and phenomena, and connections between themes were detected and described. The researcher's previous experiences with inter-agency cooperation in schools provided a prolonged engagement and familiarity with the topic. This was both a strength and a potential risk: it was important to approach the data, as far as possible, with an open mind. Phase two, 'Generating initial codes', involved applying thematic coding (Flick, 2009). Phase three, 'Searching for themes', meant that the relevant coded extracts were put into broad categories and themes. In phase four, 'Reviewing themes', the raw data were revisited for referential adequacy to check that the conclusions were indeed derived from the original data. In phase five, 'Defining and naming themes', peer debriefing from a fellow researcher ensured that the derived themes were sufficiently clear. Ultimately, analysis processes resulted in three initiatives of inter-agency cooperation with schools, presented as 'transformative practices'. These were *physical presence*, *cooperative practices around concern* and *shared HSB training and resources*. In the sixth and last phase, 'Producing the report', namely writing this article, relevant excerpts from informants were selected to illustrate the developed themes and the analytical narrative. By triangulating the findings with existing literature, the intention is to 'add to the knowledge of the subject through new theoretical or practical interpretations' (Nowell et al., 2017: 11). The interviews were conducted in Norwegian, and all quotations are the author's own translations.

Ethics and researcher positionality

All the informants received the interview guide and information about the project prior to the interviews, and they gave their written consent to participate. It was made clear to the informants that they could withdraw from the research at any time. The raw data were stored together with field notes in a secure database, and the research project was given ethical approval by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD).

The researcher is a primary school teacher by profession. This insider perspective provides a unique insight into teachers' practices, where the researcher also has a prolonged familiarity with inter-agency

cooperation. All perspectives, whether insider or outsider, require a continuous self-reflexive attitude throughout the research process. In accordance with Attia and Edge's (2017) principles, the reflexive researcher's openness about context, and recognition of positionality, arguably strengthen the study's validity. The researcher is familiar with the research informants, as she is a former colleague of theirs and has shared work experiences with many of them. On the one hand, an insider position makes it easier to establish rapport with the informants in the interviews. On the other hand, there is the possibility that the interviewees were influenced by the researcher's presence (Flick, 2009), or failed to fully explain issues that they might elaborate with a stranger, less familiar with the context. Further, the transformative paradigm chosen for this study influences the choice of theoretical starting point, the methodology and the interpretation. It is also influenced by specific Norwegian geographical, political and cultural contexts.

Findings: transformative practices

Physical presence in schools

Agencies' physical presence in schools seems to strengthen teachers' trust, and this has been reported as a catalyst for engaging in difficult conversations at an early stage (Draugedalen et al., 2021). School nurses have a long tradition of statutory working hours in schools, and have been identified as the front-line service with which teachers cooperate the most (Draugedalen, 2021). The school nurse confirmed the importance of being physically present in schools, and stressed the unique opportunity of becoming an active member of the school community: 'It's very important that school nurses are integrated into the school, and that they spend a lot of time to get to know the teachers. They need to be visible.' Being visible meant being available to students, parents and teachers for low-threshold concerns and discussions around students' health and health challenges.

Three other informants were actively seeking to have more physical presence in school. As part of a government-initiated reform in the child welfare service to increase inter-agency cooperation and enable earlier intervention, in recent years, the service has experimented with a new design to operationalise greater cooperation with schools. The informant from the child welfare service had a designated responsibility for preventive work and inter-agency cooperation, which meant weekly statutory working hours in most schools. The aim was for the child welfare service to be more accessible to students, parents and teachers, and to offer assistance and guidance at the earliest possible stage:

> Teachers tell us that it's so much easier to approach us and chat informally about evolving concerns when we are already there, and that this helps them to know what to do further. We're also participating in meetings with parents and students so we can address the concern together and agree on a shared plan of action.

The service for school and after-school activities is responsible for following up students who struggle to attend school, in addition to hosting a range of after-school activities for young people. The informant pinpointed teachers' need for agencies to be accessible, and the service had initiated a school-based cooperative project, where an inter-agency resource team is piloting being physically present in a school on a weekly basis:

> The idea is that it is supposed to be a resource team for teachers, children and their families. By intervening earlier, in cooperation with the student, it's possible to use the actual school as an arena for growth and mastering new skills. It is harder to do this if the student has dropped out of school.

The service reported that using the school as a site for intervention was often perceived as less invasive and stigmatising for the child in question, especially if they were actively included in exploring solutions. The preventive unit in the police shared the desire for a lower threshold physical presence in schools, and had introduced a new plan of participating annually at parent–teacher meetings in several schools. The unit also had plans to join existing resource teams when requested.

Cooperative practices around concerns

The pedagogical-psychological service assists schools in mapping individual students' learning difficulties and struggles with school or assisting and mentoring teachers to overcome negative group dynamics in class, among other tasks. The informant stressed the importance of exploring and cooperating with teachers as a concrete measure to strengthen the school's role in safeguarding:

> We do indeed have children who display HSB involved in our service, so we believe that it is wise to explore the problem together with the school to find a solution. We will guide them and support them to contact the child welfare service and be a part of the process, but we do not take over.

Traditionally, the providers of child welfare, mental health services, school and after-school activities and the police have all agreed that they encounter children and young people when the concern about their behaviour has become so severe that it may be hard to change. The social worker from the child welfare service voiced this challenge: 'For years, we have seen that many of the concerns we receive from schools could have come to us at an earlier stage before it escalates to such a serious level, often a bit too late.' The informant from the police shared the same desire to intervene in the case of a child or a youth at an early stage, before it escalates to the level of criminality:

> If I am to simplify reasons for crime to find points of interventions that can prevent and stop crime from happening, then you could say that violence, abuse and violations of children in their earliest years can explain a lot of the crime that happens. This is why the police's motivation for prevention is so significant.

Staff in the mental health service had recently started to participate in inter-agency meetings in schools, and they had been given designated schools to follow up regularly as a means of discussing concerns at an earlier stage. Although the service historically catered mostly to counselling children and youth (and their parents) struggling with mental health issues, it had recently developed concrete projects in schools. Thus, the informant wanted to extend the tutoring practice to teachers to support them in their concerns.

The informant from the school and after-school activities service saw that complex cases created insecurity among teachers that in turn affected students, and pointed out that teachers must be supported in discussing their concerns:

> For teachers to dare to safeguard, they need to know that they are a part of something greater that will help them find the right solution for that particular child. We need to open schools up for more shared reflections on difficult topics, so teachers can be supported. There is so much shame surrounding this topic, and we need to get away from that.

Shared HSB training and resources

All informants were familiar with HSB work, and most of them had previously participated in HSB training in the municipality. Thus, many informants mentioned the Traffic Light Tool as a concrete means of bringing clarity to behaviours and enhancing inter-agency cooperation. The school nurse found that the tool was useful in dialoguing with teachers on exploring and agreeing on potential concerns, as well as in promoting further action and cooperation with other services:

> We have had some focus on HSB in the municipality. I remember some years ago we learnt about the Traffic Light Tool. The knowledge was systemised into what to look for, when to respond and when to wait. The school I worked in also learnt about it and ordered the tool, so it gave us a shared understanding.

The representative from the child welfare service often used the Traffic Light Tool in schools, and reported that teachers tended to become more confident in defining and intervening on sexual behaviours when they could base their judgements on the Traffic Light Tool:

> We are so happy that we have got more knowledge about HSB, and the Traffic Light is such a brilliant tool! Teachers have found it so useful, and they have access to the tool in their schools, and many use it often. We have many discussions with them about what type of behaviour they observe.

The mental health service had started cooperating with the public health service about increasing awareness of sexuality in the various services that work with children and adolescents, and wanted to bring that training to teachers and students in schools. The idea was that shared training for all services would create a system whereby services can assist and inform each other to promote healthy sexuality among children, and to understand when it becomes problematic and harmful. As a means of increasing a shared inter-agency HSB competence, the municipal psychologist also advocated for the transfer of knowledge between services in order to support each other:

> I think it is very important that both the school and other services, like the child welfare service, have basic competence in psychology, so they are able to have informed discussions and evaluations about a child's behaviour and which interventions to put in place. Our service could help them do that.

At the same time, the informants emphasised that the municipal administration must prioritise training for systemic effect. The police officer elaborated on leaders prioritising this work: 'The top leaders of the administration need to be united in prevention and safeguarding efforts so that they can guide school leaders in the same efforts.' The informant suggested that the government's and municipality's action plans should include procedures and guidelines for enhancing systemic HSB competence.

Discussion

Transformative practices

The findings reveal that several front-line services had entered the school arena as a means to strengthen safeguarding and prevent concerns from escalating. The various services emphasised the presence of different professionals in schools who could explore behaviours together with teachers as operationalising a supportive network for teachers. As seen from the data, one concrete way of promoting resilience among professionals was through creating cooperative practices around concerns in schools. The informants' aim for cooperative practices around concern was to create a more united understanding of how to approach and intervene with children and young people who display challenging behaviours in school. Research has emphasised the need for shared knowledge promotion in schools and for front-line service providers for a more comprehensive approach to safeguarding (Firmin et al., 2019). Such an approach has also been underlined in literature reviews on teachers' responses to HSB. McKibbin and Humphreys (2021: 12) have introduced the 'building blocks model for promising practice' on holistic responses to HSB: 'The "Building blocks" model indicates that practice must span the entire public health spectrum, linking universal services with secondary and tertiary prevention measures.' Similarly, Kor et al. (2022: 13) have emphasised that 'a multi-sectoral approach bringing in different expertise and resources from child protection, paediatric professionals, and children, youth and families services is a key enabler for effective HSB prevention and response.' Front-line service providers can offer support through physical presence and cooperative practices. The services can also offer each other support through shared reflection and discussions. Studies have shown that inter-agency training in HSB has positive effects on participants' subjective competence and knowledge, as an outcome of shared training and reflection (Clements et al., 2017; Vorland et al., 2018). Shared inter-agency HSB training can facilitate a systemic approach and create a supportive network across services. The transformative practices presented in the study could form a sustainable foundation for implementing safeguarding in schools. However, in ensuring that practices are indeed transformative, in that they bring 'attention to individual and collective practices for care and inquiry that are needed to heal oppression and trauma' (Pyles, 2018: 181), the practices must address asymmetrical power relations between the various stakeholders.

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'A system of care': a proposed structure of transformative practices

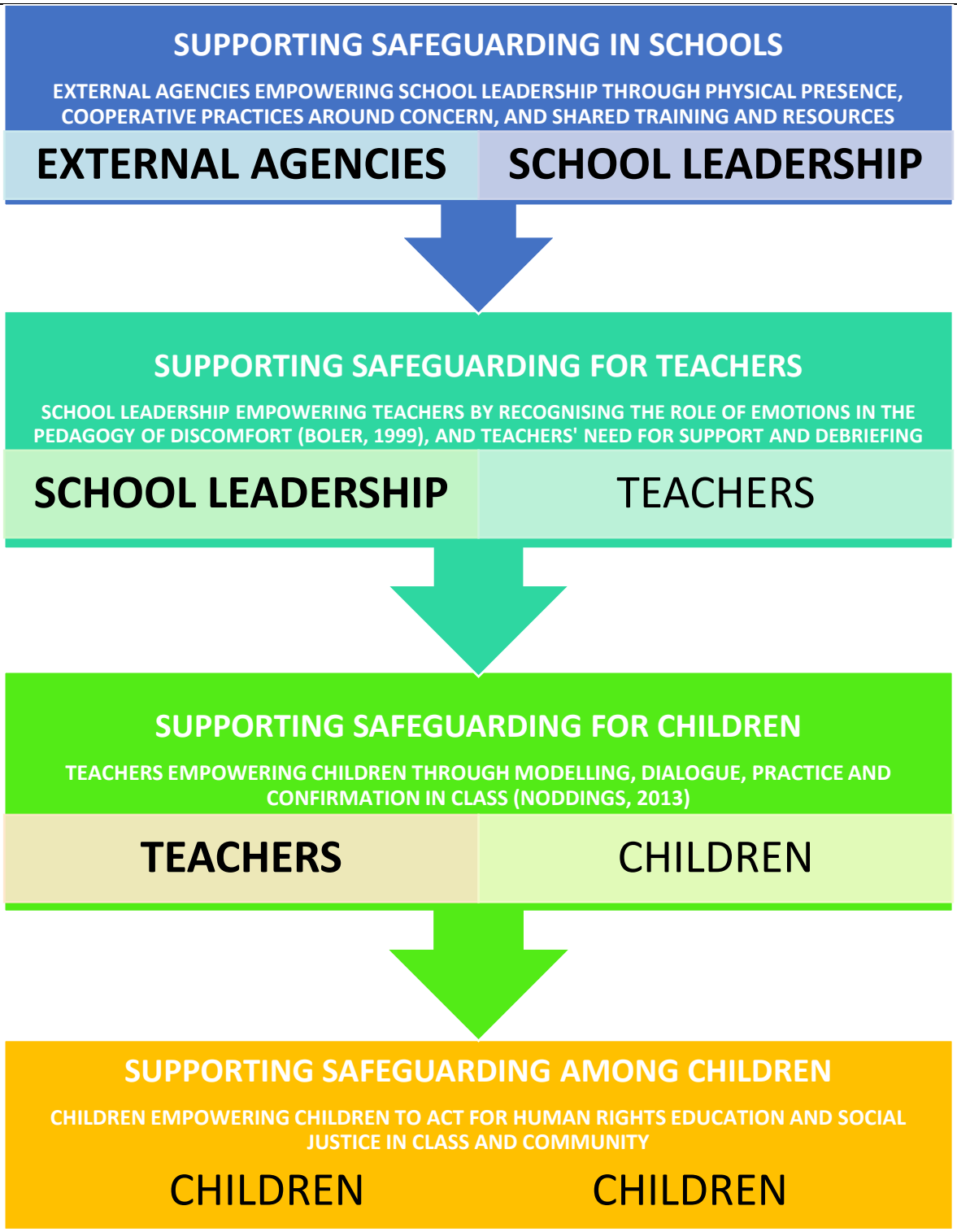
Elaborating on McKibbin and Humphreys's (2021) building blocks model and Kor et al.'s (2022) implications for practice implementation, and drawing on empirical data and the existing literature on contextual safeguarding (Firmin et al., 2019, 2022), this article proposes a holistic approach to safeguarding through streamlining efforts, comprehensive training and statutory physical presence in schools for front-line service providers. Figure 1 illustrates how a holistic approach to safeguarding in schools requires a 'system of care' among professionals, which recognises the emotional role of safeguarding and addresses how asymmetrical power relations place a responsibility for caring with the various professionals.

In each tier, inequality in power relations is illustrated with the stronger partner marked in bold. The stronger partner (the *caring-for*) is responsible for the weaker partner (the *cared-for*), and for securing a sense of safety between the parts on each level. Figure 1 uses the term 'children' to point out that safeguarding is always the responsibility of an adult; hence, children do not carry the responsibility for safeguarding practices. However, children can be empowered to become important allies in acting for human rights education and social justice in class and in the school community.

In this model illustrating the various actors within a hierarchy, front-line services and school leadership represent equal powerful partners' relations, and they thus have a collective responsibility for securing teachers' sense of safety and well-being. However, services with expertise in children's behaviour must be sensitive to the asymmetrical power relations that inherently lie in 'representing the expertise'. Thus, when front-line services cooperate with schools, they should be the one-caring in this relationship.

School leadership needs to be sensitive to the asymmetrical power relations that exist between leaders and teachers when supporting teachers' safeguarding, where the school leadership is the one-caring and must secure a sense of safety for teachers. Ey and McInnes (2020) claim that re-traumatisation and burnout are dangerously high among teachers. Their findings show that educators reported distress, emotional exhaustion and stress in dealing with children with HSB, and that stress was higher where they felt unsupported by site-based leadership and external services. These findings corroborate Goldschmidt-Gjerløw's (2022) study on sexual violence in schools, which found that teacher characteristics as well as school culture and management influenced whether teachers addressed sexuality and sexual violations in school. Hence, school management is key in implementing the new curriculum and safeguarding against HSB, as well as in preventing burnout.

Figure 1. Addressing asymmetrical power relations and emotions in safeguarding (Source: Author, 2023)



In safeguarding children, teachers must be sensitive to the asymmetrical power relation that exists between a teacher and a child, where the teacher is the one-caring in this relationship who must secure a sense of safety for children.

This article has drawn on empirical data from front-line services to show how these services can support schools in safeguarding at the top of the hierarchy (in blue in Figure 1). This level is a prerequisite for implementing transformative safeguarding practices at all other levels. However, in the proposed structure, these findings are complemented with existing literature and the theoretical framework

concerning the levels of school leaders, teachers and children to enable transformative practices throughout.

Transformative practices in physical presence, cooperation, training and resources

The physical presence of front-line services makes it possible to have time for shared reflection, tutoring and discussions across service providers and school staff. Physical presence allows the services to become active members of the school community, and promotes trust and cooperation. As identified in this article, school nurses are important examples of external services that are already integrated in schools, and can offer teachers support.

The hierarchal structure indicates that there must be shared training for service providers in general, as well as specific training for teachers. The 2020 curriculum for primary and secondary school focuses more sharply on prevention of sexual harm (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020), but there is no planned training to support this new curriculum. As Øverlien and Moen (2016) have already documented, teacher students, preschool teacher students and social work students do not receive sufficient professional training in children's rights, violence and sexual abuse, or in learning how to communicate about sensitive topics with children. Due to their role in the classroom, and their extended time with students, teachers are crucial in enabling HSB interventions. They are also important mediators in inter-agency cooperation, since the concerning behaviour takes place at their professional site. Thus, there is a need for teachers' pre-service and in-service training in sexuality and children's sexual health, where the teacher's own role and its significance are emphasised.

It is also necessary to understand how trauma affects children's development, because of the high prevalence of trauma and adverse childhood experiences among children and youth who display HSB. Advances in related fields such as social work can support schools and front-line services in developing safe spaces and practices. Levenson (2017) advocates for social workers to implement a trauma-informed practice that emphasises safety, trust, choice, cooperation and empowerment between the social worker and the client, and that is applicable to teacher–student relations and inter-agency cooperation. According to Pyles (2018), it is the very principles of safety, trust, choice, cooperation and empowerment that promote the transformative practices that can address oppression and heal trauma.

Implications for practice and future research

The proposed structure for transformative practices indicates a possible way forward for the various services in a more comprehensive approach to safeguarding. However, implementation requires political will and government prioritisation. Additionally, physical presence would need to be made statutory, and these changes require allocation of further resources. Future research might explore inter-agency cooperation in schools more rigorously and 'evaluate effectiveness of prevention programs, particularly in HSB reductions' (Kor et al., 2022: 14). Finally, there is a need to further explore the child welfare service's new design of physical presence in schools.

The transfer value of the study to an international audience

Although this article has concentrated on inter-agency cooperation in Norway, it is hoped that it has transfer value to an international audience. Although there is considerable international variation in education systems and the services that cooperate with them, there may also be some common factors. Due to the amount of time children spend in school, schools remain unique arenas for prevention and intervention efforts. The main idea of the proposed structure for inter-agency cooperation is not to insist that such cooperation needs to be streamlined across borders, but rather to suggest that it would be beneficial for safeguarding practices if inter-agency cooperation occurs within the school arena more frequently.

Concluding remarks

This article has explored how enhanced inter-agency cooperation can strengthen schools' ability to safeguard against HSB through transformative practices. The findings point towards promising initiatives and comprehensive models for inter-agency cooperation in safeguarding. However, current models need to address both the emotional element of safeguarding and the asymmetrical power relations at play, if they are to be effective and sustainable for all parties.

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Declarations and conflicts of interest

Research ethics statement

The author declares that research ethics approval for this article was provided by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) ethics board. The author conducted the research reported in this article in accordance with Norwegian Centre for Research Data standards.

Consent for publication statement

The author declares that research participants' informed consent to publication of findings – including photos, videos and any personal or identifiable information – was secured prior to publication.

Conflicts of interest statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest with this work. All efforts to sufficiently anonymise the author during peer review of this article have been made. The author declares no further conflicts with this article.

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Errata

p. 12, 2nd paragraph: Second apostrophe added to ‘Sexual Abuse in a Lifetime Perspective’.

p. 40, 1st paragraph, line 6: An s added to “interventions”.

p. 45, 3rd paragraph, last line: “such a classroom practice and environments are particularly important” changed to: “such classroom practices and environments are particularly important”.

p. 81, 1st paragraph, line 3: Punctuation added: “questions. Thereafter”

p. 95, 5th paragraph, line 6: “has previously revealed the students do not receive” changed to: “has previously revealed that the students do not receive”.

p. 96, 3rd paragraph, line 3: (see timeline in Appendix 4, p. 137) changed to: (see timeline in Appendix 4, p. 141)

p. 98, 4th paragraph, line 5: “make teachers’ understanding and responses particularly decisive influence in” changed to: “make teachers’ understandings and responses particularly decisive in”.

p. 99, 3rd paragraph, line 1: “Chapter three identified” changed to: “Chapter two identified”.

p. 108, footnote 9: Draugedalen (2023, p. 13-14) changed to: Draugedalen (2023, p. 7)

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