

Disrupting Harm

Evidence from 13 countries on the context, threats, and children's perspectives of online child sexual exploitation and abuse.

Detailed Analysis of the Frontline Service Providers Survey
Ethiopia

Last updated 27/4/21

Introduction	3
Basic Description of Survey Sample	4
Perpetrator Demographics	7
Scenarios.....	8
Scenario 1.....	9
Scenario 2.....	11
Scenario 3.....	12
Scenario 4.....	13
Summary.....	15
Vulnerabilities	16
Reporting	20
Availability of Support	22
Investigations and Convictions.....	25
Law Enforcement and Government Support.....	26
Public Awareness	28

This report is a summary of preliminary data collected for this research project. The perspectives contained herein represent the individuals interviewed and surveyed. Support from the Fund to End Violence Against Children does not constitute endorsement.

Introduction

The Disrupting Harm frontline workers survey aimed to explore the knowledge, attitudes and practices related to OCSEA that are presenting to those directly working to prevent and respond on the welfare frontline. Insights from frontline workers via this survey allowed us to more deeply explore findings from other research activities such as the national literature reviews and government interviews from the perspective of staff directly engaged in the response to this growing problem.

A convenience sample of 50 interviews were conducted with client-facing frontline child protection workers who were surveyed in each participating country. In order to participate in the survey respondents had to meet the following qualifying requirements:

- 1) Be an adult over 18 years of age;
- 2) Work the last 12 months (at least) in the field of social work, psychology or welfare;
- 3) Manage their own case load directly in the last 12 months;
- 4) Have caseloads that included children over the last 12 months.

The survey itself included a combination of 68 closed and open-ended questions. The data was collected via SurveyGizmo and administered by Disrupting Harm staff (either in person, or remotely via phone/Skype – due to COVID-19). Whilst the data collected is not statistically representative, it is still a vital snapshot in indicating scope and broadening our perspectives on knowledge, attitudes and practices related to OCSEA.

NOTE:

In Ethiopia, the data collection for the survey was conducted during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic from July 27th 2020 to October 2nd 2020 where movement restrictions were in place.

Basic Description of Survey Sample

In Ethiopia, a sample of 50 participants was identified and surveyed, however the data set indicated some anomalies at the cleaning stage.

In contrast to other Disrupting Harm countries, throughout the entire survey, participants in Ethiopia did not provide any open-ended responses. While it is clear that cases of OCSEA in Ethiopia are very rare/do not come to the attention of frontline workers/law enforcement/legal actors (found in all research activities), many of the questions in the survey were focused on perceptions – rather than experience – of OCSEA. We do however believe that the lack of clear understanding of OCSEA and experience in working on cases of OCSEA might have resulted in participants not engaging well with the survey.

Additionally, as survey administrators suggested, despite being reassured about the anonymity of their responses, frontline workers may have remained concerned about possible government surveillance and due to the fear of their answers being linked to them did not provide any additional details.¹

Lastly, COVID-19 movement restrictions, conducting the survey remotely and constant Internet shutdowns by government during this period due to an assassination and subsequent protests in the latter portion of 2020 made the administration of the survey difficult. Doing computer-assisted surveys in Ethiopia is also not common. This is particularly relevant as a number of para-professionals took part in this survey. They may have been doing this type of survey for the first time.²

During data cleaning, we therefore took the decision to exclude 17 surveys that were in total completed in less than 15 minutes. Thus, 33 responses were analysed. Of the 33 responses analysed, 8 respondents (24%) identified as females and 25 (76%) as males.

¹ Personal communication with the field team in Ethiopia.

² Personal communication with the field team in Ethiopia.

Participants were asked to select a single category that best describes their organisation. In reality, these categories are sometimes not mutually exclusive, however the indications of a category that ‘best’ describes their organisation does help to depict the range of organisations that participants represent (Figure 1).

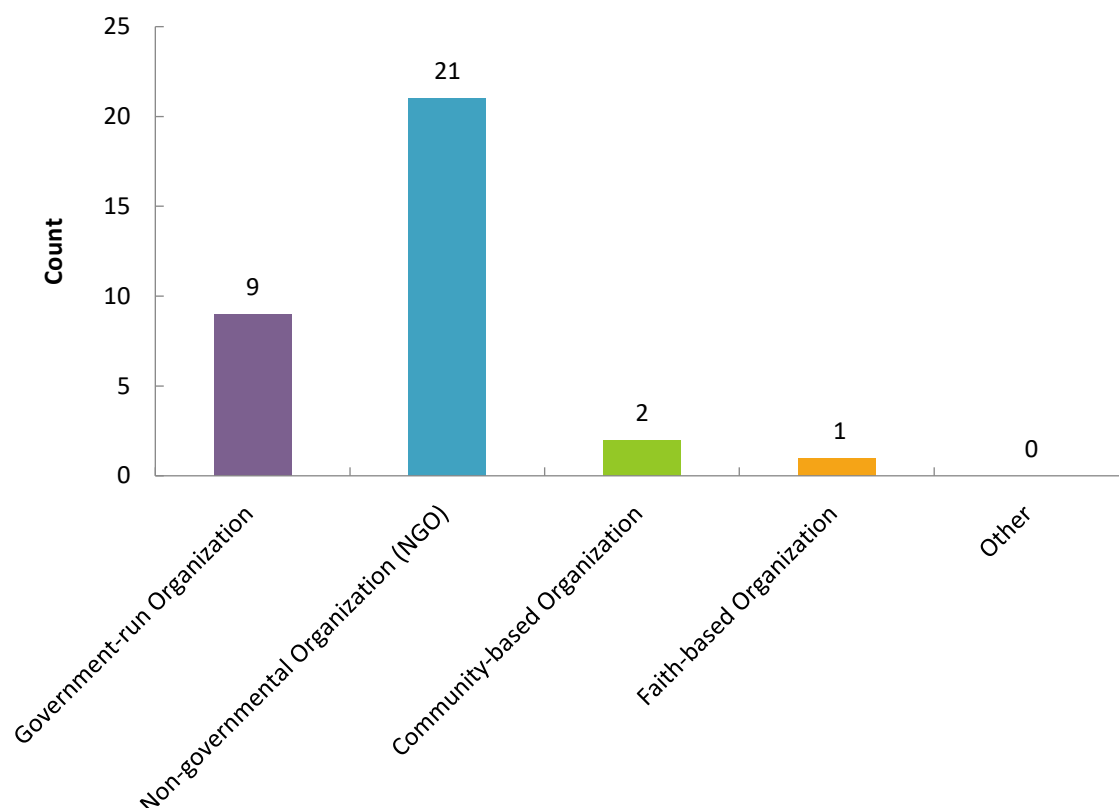


Figure 1. Types of participants' organisations. N=33

21 participants identified their organisation as non-governmental (64%), 9 as government-run (27%), 2 as community-based organisations (6%) and 1 as a faith-based organisation (3%).

The frontline workers were asked to detail what type of services they provided related to children. The results are illustrated in Figure 2 below.

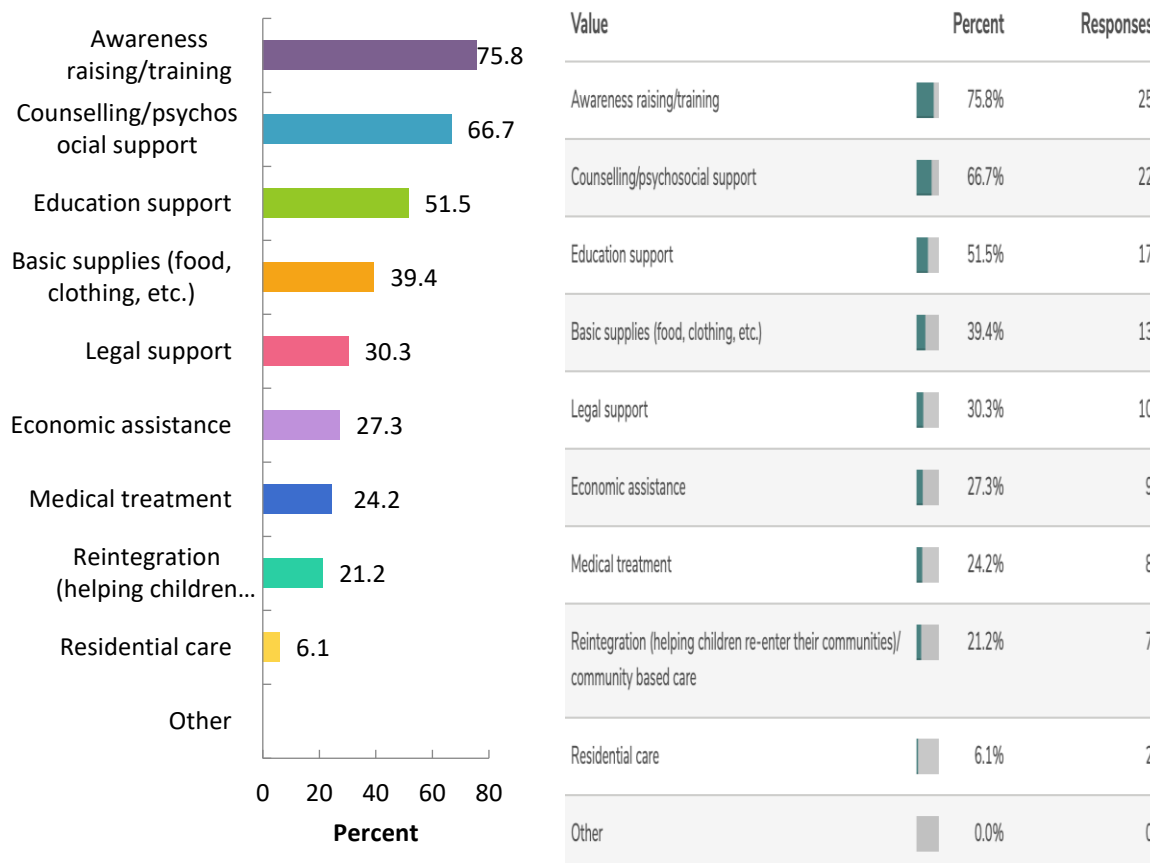


Figure 2. Types of services provided by participants' organisations. N=33

Nearly all respondents (97%) worked in organisations providing more than one service to children (n=32). As Figure 2 indicates, the most frequently reported services were awareness raising activities (n=25 – 76%) and counselling/psychosocial support (n=22 – 67%). Approximately half of the participants provided education support services (n=17 – 51%), which was followed by providing basic supplies (n=13 – 39%). Around a third of the frontline workers surveyed reported providing legal support (n=10 – 30%), economic assistance (n=9 – 27%) and medical treatment services (n=8 – 24%). Reintegration services were provided by 21% of respondents (n=7) and residential care services by 6% (n=2).

Perpetrator Demographics

To expand on the current understanding of the context in which OCSEA happens in Ethiopia, the survey sought to explore the typical relationships that were observed by frontline social support workers between offenders and child survivors when they reported having worked with OCSEA cases.

The majority of respondents (30 out of 33) have not managed any OCSEA cases in the past 12 months. Only three respondents reported working on OCSEA cases and of those, two described the perpetrator as a 'community member over 18' and one as 'other relative under 18'. When asked about the facilitators, only two respondents reported working on OCSEA cases that involved a facilitator. One described the facilitator as a 'community member over 18' and one as a 'community member under 18'.

When given the opportunity, none of the respondents provided additional comments.

Scenarios

Participants were presented with three scenarios depicting situations in which at least one offender victimised a child through different modes of online sexual abuse and exploitation (one scenario was removed from the survey at the request of the ethical review board as it was felt to be too sensitive for the Ethiopian context in pre-testing). After being provided with definitions of ‘OCSEA’, a ‘perpetrator’ and a ‘facilitator’ earlier in the survey, the participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that the child was a victim and that the offender had committed an OCSEA-related offence.³ These questions were designed to elicit insights about how participants assessed different forms and situations of OCSEA. It should be noted that responses are likely based on a combination of the participant’s knowledge on the issue, including how these issues may (or may not) be defined in law in a country, as well as influenced by social norms and beliefs. Irrespective of the basis for responses, the results indicate areas that are well understood (sometimes almost unanimously) and others where training and consistent messaging is needed to ensure consistent responses.

A four-point Likert scale was used to assess agreement with statements for the scenario questions. Where interesting indications in differences occurred, we note them, but otherwise combined ‘slightly agree’ and ‘strongly agree’ together and ‘slightly disagree and strongly disagree’ together, resulting in binary agree/disagree categories for the analysis presented here.

³ Names for the scenarios were changed to common names in each country for the translations but have been edited in the analysis to be consistent across all the Disrupting Harm reports.

Scenario 1

Palila pays a 16-year-old younger relative, Tamah, to undress while filming and later posts it online. Mamo, who does not know Palila, watches this interaction online from home 30 miles away.

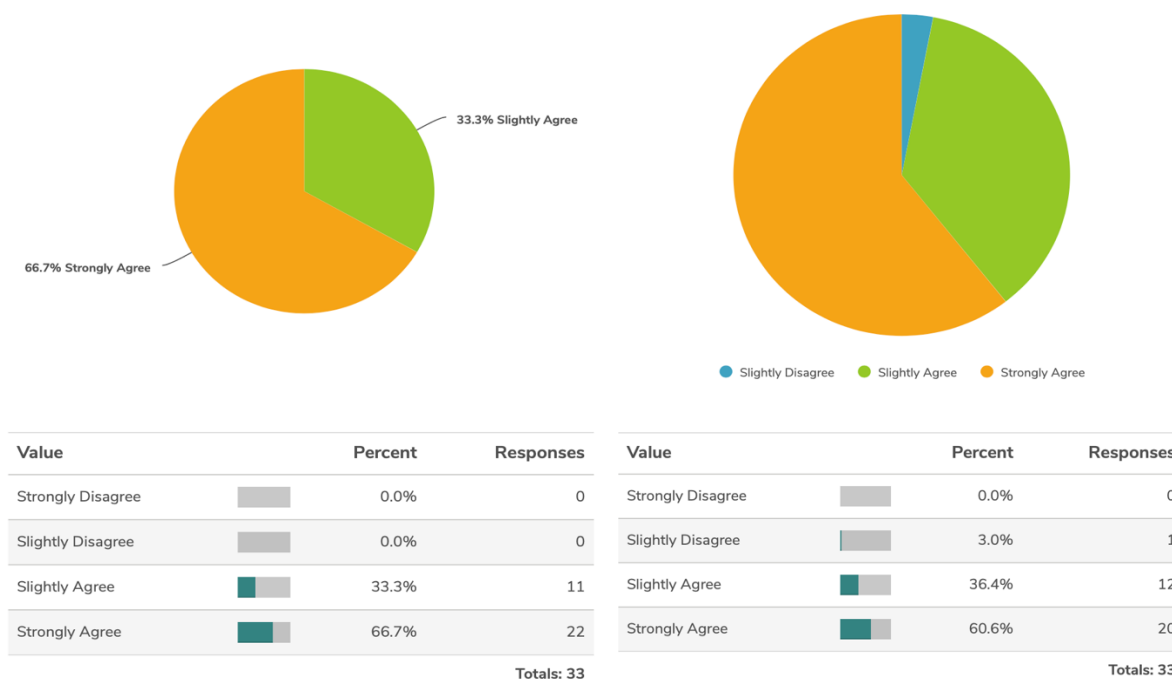


Figure 3. Do you think Tamah is a victim of an OCSEA related crime?

Figure 4. Do you think Mamo has committed an OCSEA-related crime?

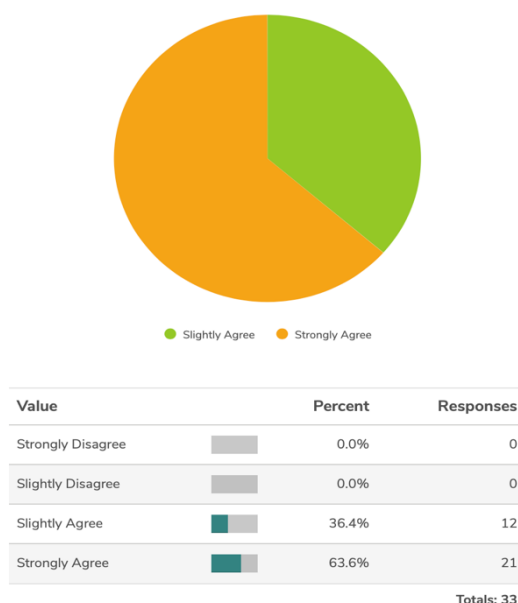


Figure 5. Do you think Palila has committed an OCSEA-related crime?

All 33 participants agreed that Tamah was a victim of sexual exploitation (22 strongly and 11 slightly) and that the adult who paid and filmed her had committed an OCSEA-related crime (21 strongly and 12 slightly) – Figures 3 and 5.

While 97% (n=32) of respondents agreed (20 strongly and 12 slightly) that the third-party viewing the material has committed an OCSEA-related crime, one slightly disagreed (3%) – Figure 4.

When given the opportunity to share additional comments on the scenario, none of the frontline workers commented.

Scenario 2

Kaimi is a 17-year-old student. Kaimi has struggled to make good grades this year and is worried that Uli, a teacher who is a close family friend, will tell Kaimi's dad. Kaimi offers to send Uli naked pictures if he promises not to talk to the family. Uli accepts.

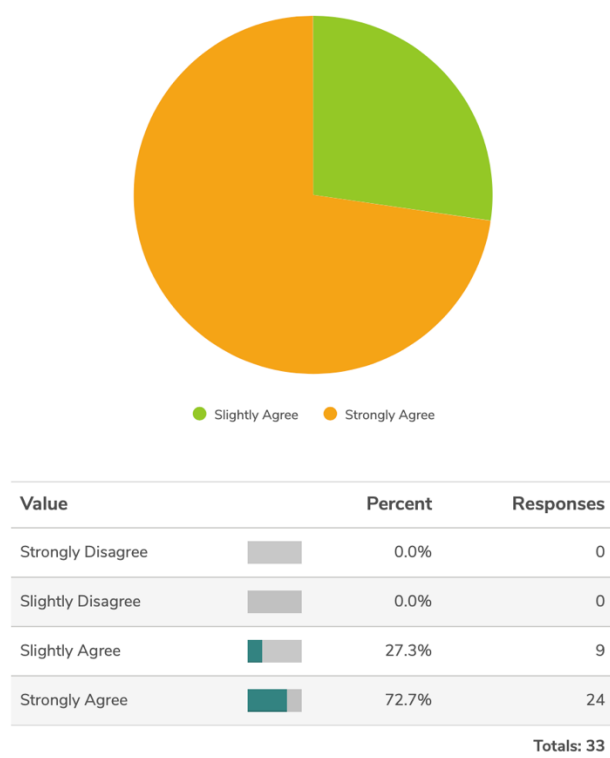


Figure 6. Do you think Kaimi is a victim of OCSEA?

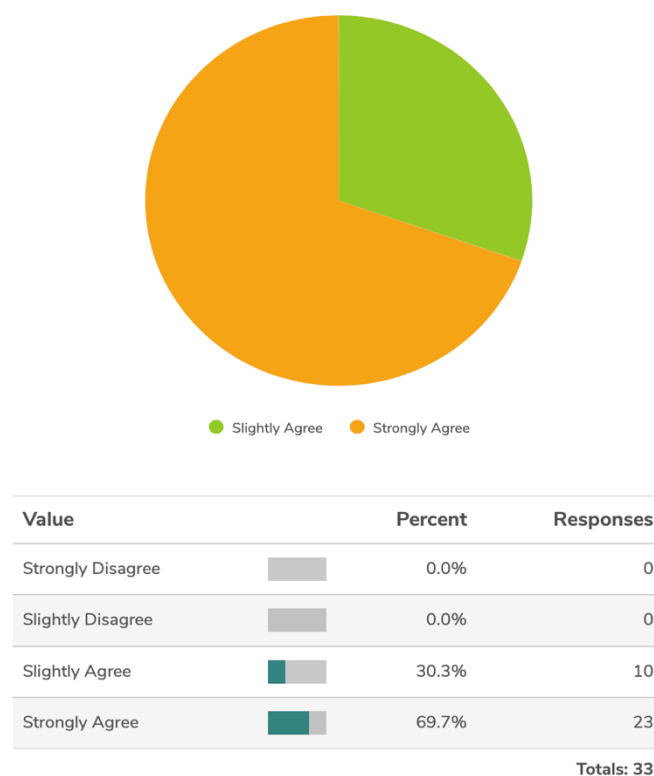


Figure 7. Do you think Uli has committed an OCSEA-related crime?

While all 33 participants (100%) agreed that the student (Kaimi) is a victim of OCSEA, 24 agreed strongly, however 9 only slightly – Figure 6. Similarly, all respondents thought that the teacher (Uli) in a position of power has committed an OCSEA-related crime, however 23 agreed strongly and 10 only slightly – Figure 7. None of the respondents disagreed with the statements and none provided additional comments.

Scenario 3

Sam is a 10-year-old whose family struggles to make ends meet in their rural village. Sam's uncle, Alex, has a good government job and has always given money to help the family out. Recently, Uncle Alex wrote a message to Sam on Facebook asking to have a secret meeting at his house. When Sam arrives, Uncle Alex asked Sam to sit on his lap and began touching his private parts.

This scenario was removed from the survey in Ethiopia per request of the government's ethical review body.

removed

Figure 8. Do you think that Sam is a victim of OCSEA?

removed

Figure 9. Do you think Alex has committed an OCSEA-related crime?

Scenario 4

Joe is 16, and his girlfriend Lucy is 15. They have been dating for a year and regularly have sex. Sometimes, when they can't be together, they send photos to each other of themselves naked. Joe's friend Matt knows about this and breaks into Joe's phone and forwards naked pictures of Lucy to a group of their friends.

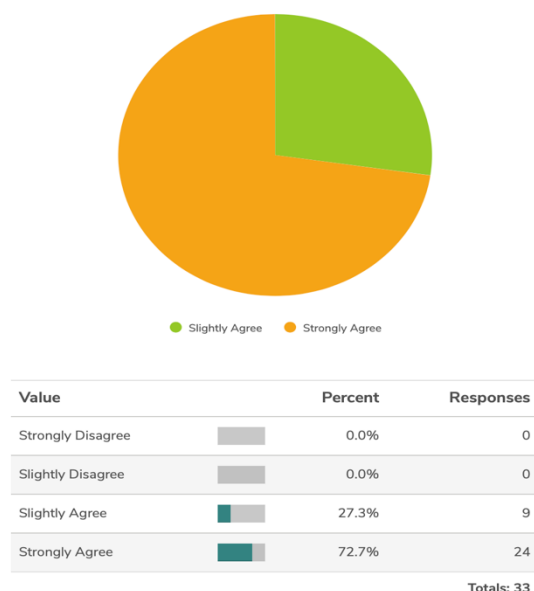


Figure 10. Do you think Lucy is a victim of an OCSEA related crime?

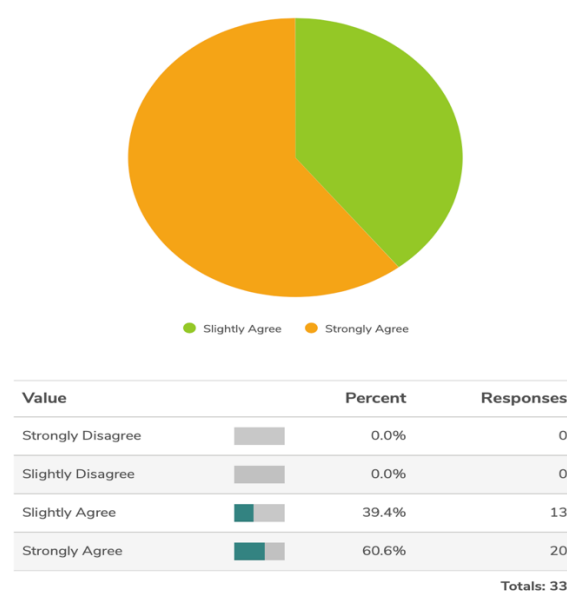


Figure 11. Do you think Joe is a victim of an OCSEA related crime?

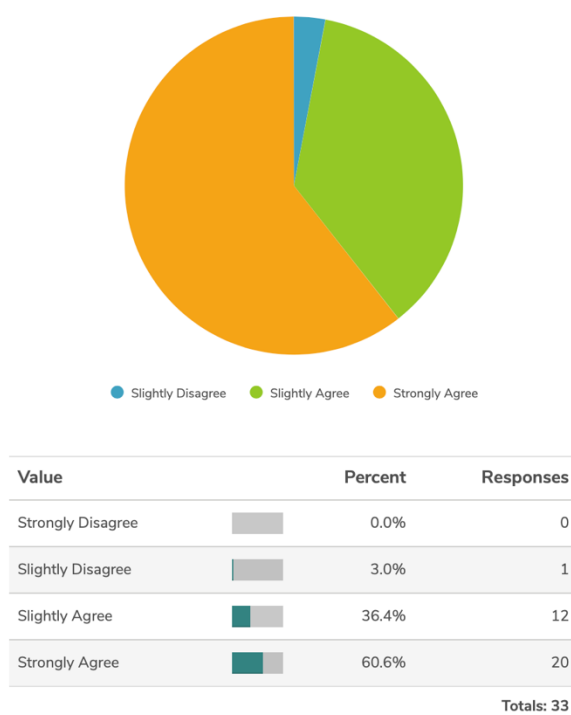


Figure 12. Do you think that Joe has committed an OCSEA related crime?

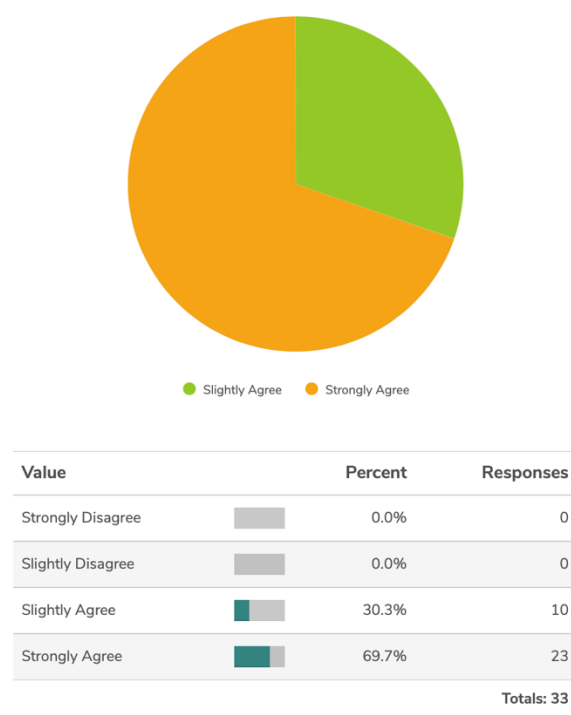


Figure 13. Do you think that Matt has committed an OCSEA related crime?

As Figure 10 and 11 indicate, all 33 respondents agreed that Lucy (24 strongly and 9 only slightly) and Joe (23 strongly and 10 only slightly) are victims of an OCSEA-related crime. At the same time, nearly all respondents also agreed that Joe has committed an OCSEA-related crime (20 strongly and 12 slightly). Only one respondent slightly disagreed – Figure 12.

All participants also agreed that Matt has committed an OCSEA related offence (23 strongly, 10 slightly) – Figure 13.

Summary

Participants overwhelmingly correctly identified the children as victims and the adults as offenders across the three scenarios. The variation was mostly seen between the strongly vs slightly agree options, however due to the lack of any qualitative responses it is not clear where these results were coming from.

In Scenario 4, where two minors, Joe and Lucy, are in a consensual, sexual relationship, but Joe's friend Matt breaks into Joe's phone and shares naked photos of Lucy, we see that while all respondents agreed that Joe and Lucy are victims of OCSEA and that Matt has committed an OCSEA-related crime, 97% (n=32) of respondents also agreed that Joe has committed an OCSEA crime. While technically two children consensually photographing themselves naked is the crime of 'creating child sexual abuse material', there is ongoing debate about this characterisation. For example, if the images had remained between the two consenting parties, harm may not have been experienced. While no evidence on the issue exists in the Ethiopian context, in a 2020 Swedish study on self-generated sexual content, it was found that children thought sharing such images could even provide advantages in their relationships and/or increase their self-esteem.⁴ On the other hand, when the materials are forwarded without consent, they may end-up circulating the web and being acquired by offenders.⁵ Additionally, the normalisation of children sharing sexual images, videos and sexualised online conversations may lead to victims underreporting because they may fail to perceive what is happening to them as abusive or exploitative.⁶

⁴ ECPAT Sweden. (2020, May). ["I början vart det lite läskigt men nu är det vardag" En rapport om yngre barn och egenproducerat material.](#) [Translated from Swedish].

⁵ Bracket Foundation. (2019). Artificial Intelligence: [Combating online sexual abuse of children](#). 10.

⁶ Palmer, T. (2015). [Digital Dangers: the impact of technology on the sexual abuse and exploitation of children.](#) Barnado's. 35.

Vulnerabilities

Based on their knowledge and experience, participants indicated whether they believed a list of factors about the child and society increased children's vulnerability to general sexual exploitation (i.e., all kinds) and more specifically to OCSEA.

- **Factors about the child identified as increasing vulnerability to general sexual abuse and exploitation (any types).**

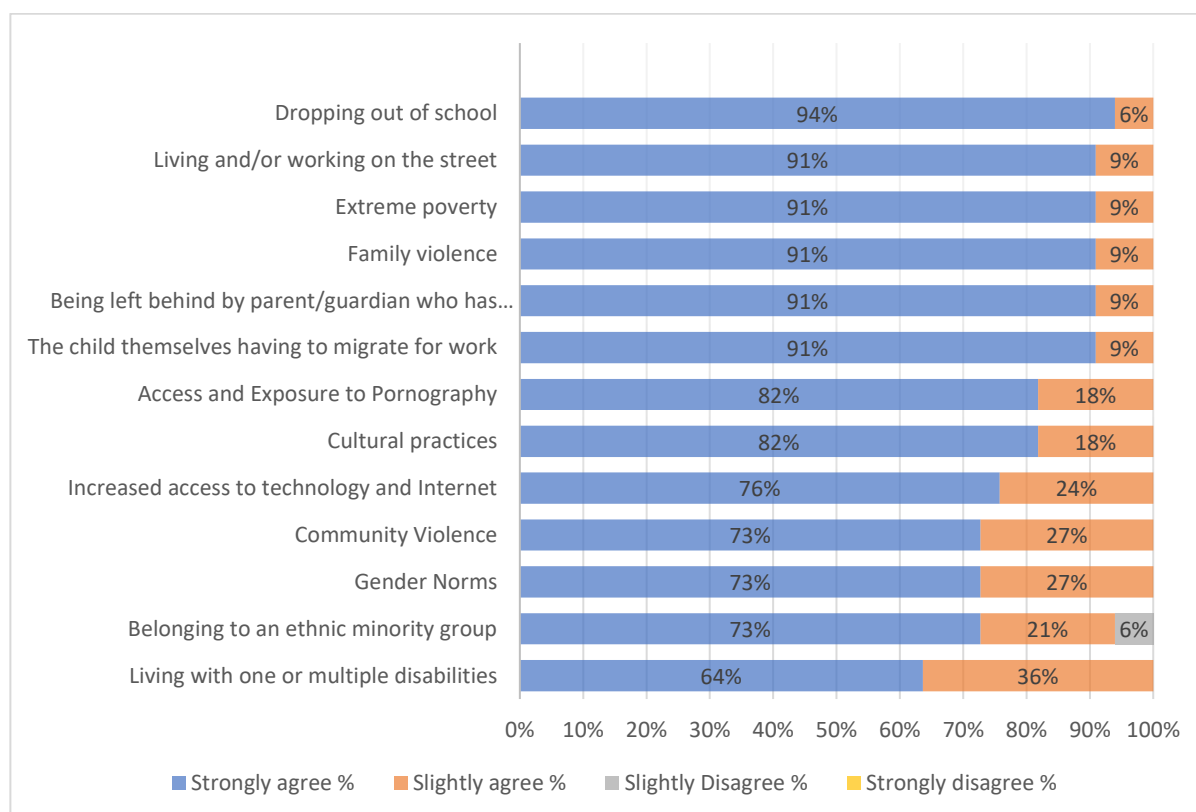


Figure 14. Participants' perceptions of factors about the *child* impacting children's vulnerability to general child sexual exploitation. N=33

Figure 14 shows agreement that almost all the factors listed were considered to impact children's vulnerability to child sexual exploitation. 100% of respondents agreed that dropping out of school, living and/or working on the street, extreme poverty, family violence, being left behind by parent/guardian who has migrated for work, the child having to migrate for work, access and exposure to pornography, cultural practices, increased access to technology and Internet, community violence, gender norms and living with one or more disabilities increase children's vulnerability to child sexual exploitation in Ethiopia. 94% of frontline workers also agreed that belonging to an ethnic minority group has an impact on vulnerability (6% - 1 respondent disagreed).

When given the opportunity to list additional factors that participants believed increased children's vulnerability to sexual exploitation, none of the respondents provided a response.

- **Factors about the child identified as increasing vulnerability specifically to online forms of child sexual exploitation and abuse**

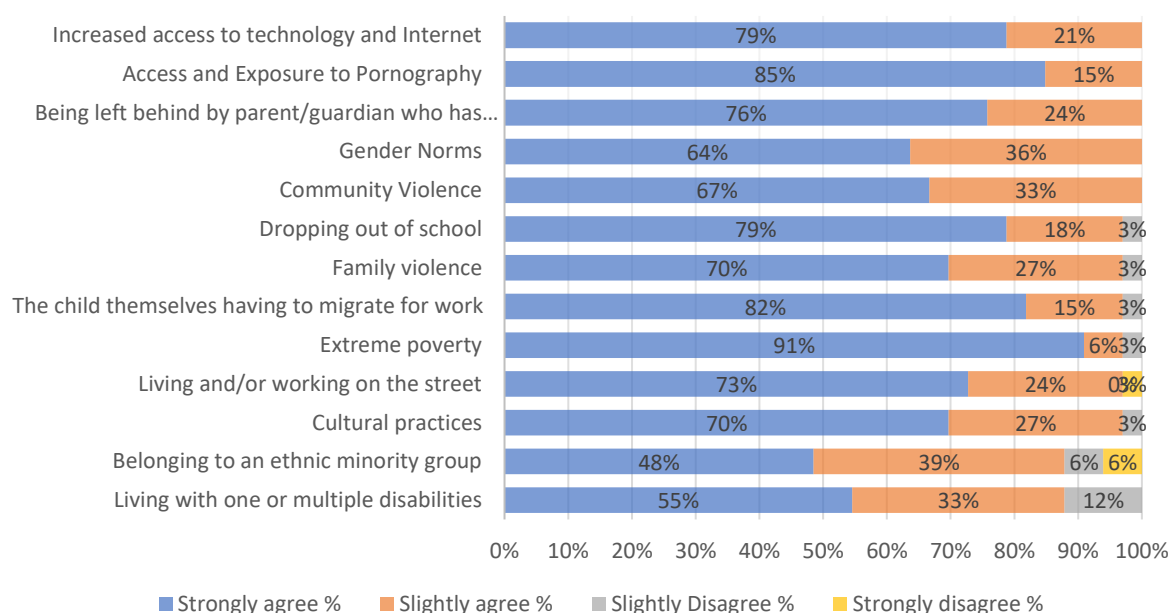


Figure 15. Participants' perceptions of factors about the *child* impacting children's vulnerability to OCSEA. N=33

Similarly, as in the case of children's vulnerability to general child sexual exploitation, strong agreement among respondents was found on what factors increase children's vulnerability to child sexual exploitation. All participants (100%) agreed that increased access to technology and Internet, access and exposure to pornography, being left behind by parent/guardian who has migrated for work, gender norms and community violence increase children's vulnerability to OCSEA in Ethiopia. Nearly all (97%) also agreed that dropping out of school, family violence, the child having to migrate for work, extreme poverty, living and/or working on the street and cultural practices have an influence. Slightly smaller (however still high) agreement was found around the factors belonging to an ethnic minority group (88% agreed it increases vulnerability to OCSEA) and living with one or multiple disabilities (also 88%).

When given the opportunity to list additional factors that participants believed increased children's vulnerability to OCSEA in Ethiopia, none of the respondents provided a response.

When participants were asked about the **similarities and differences in children's vulnerability when considering online forms of sexual exploitation and abuse in comparison to general sexual exploitation**, nobody provided a response.

- **Factors about the society identified as increasing vulnerability to general sexual abuse and exploitation (any types).**

When asked, “in your country, indicate if you think the following factors about society can increase vulnerability to sexual abuse and exploitation in general” – survey respondents reported the following factors as sources of vulnerability to general sexual exploitation:

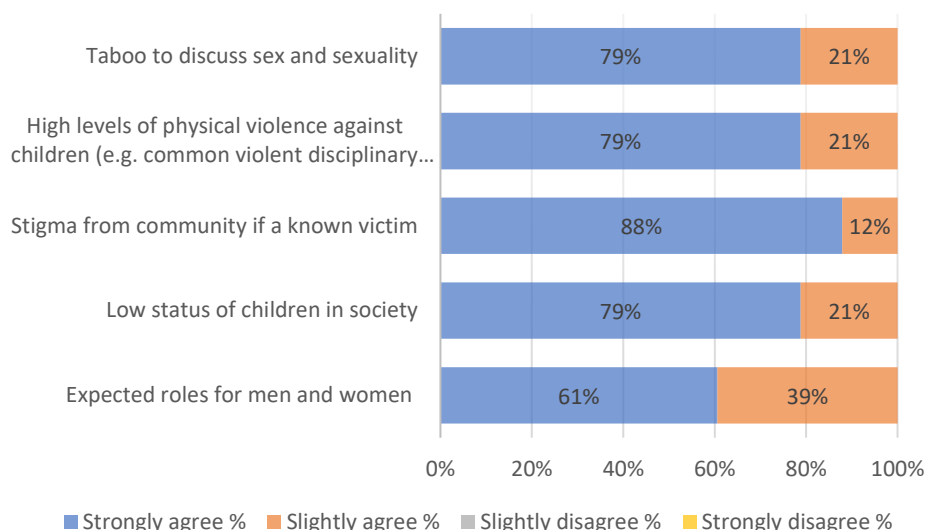


Figure 16. Participants’ perceptions of factors about *society* impacting children’s vulnerability to general sexual exploitation and abuse. N=33

As Figure 16 shows, all respondents agreed (100%) that taboos around discussing sex and sexuality (79% strongly and 21% slightly agreed), high levels of violence against children (79% strongly and 21% slightly agreed), stigma from communities (88% strongly and 12% slightly agreed), low status of children (79% strongly and 21% slightly agreed) and expected roles for men and women (61% strongly and 39% slightly agreed) increased children’s vulnerability to child sexual exploitation in Ethiopia. The lack of variation in the responses could be explained by the fact that respondents selected all options as generally relating to child sexual exploitation, not specifically in the Ethiopian context. Alternatively, this could be linked to a general lower understanding of dynamics of sexual abuse.

When given the opportunity to list additional factors about the society that participants believed increased children’s vulnerability to child sexual exploitation in Ethiopia, none of the respondents provided an answer.

- **Factors about the society identified as increasing vulnerability specifically to online forms of child sexual exploitation and abuse**

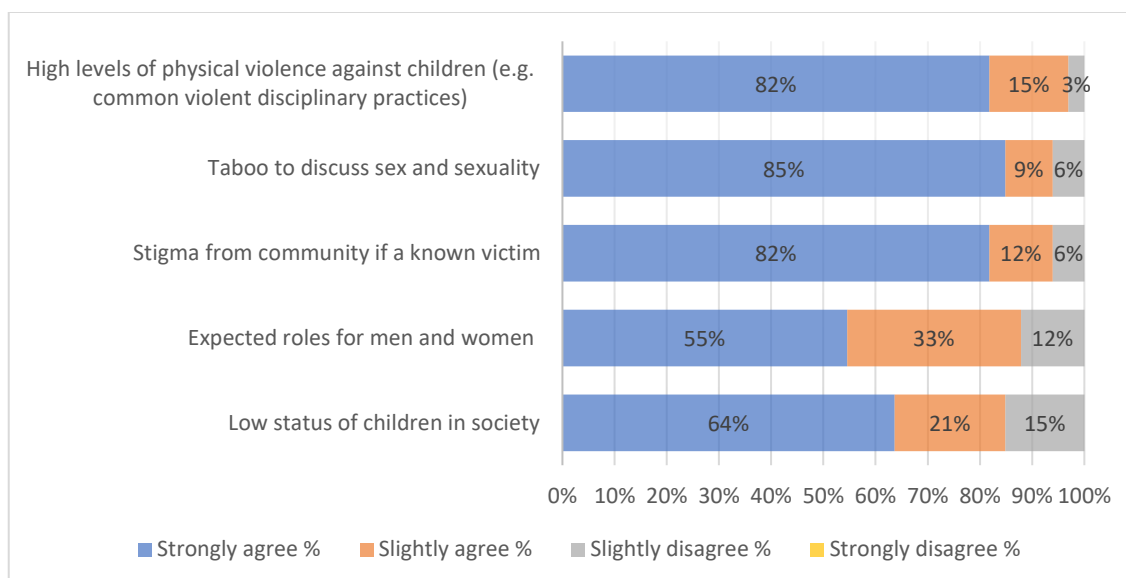


Figure 17. Participants' perceptions of factors about the *society* impacting children's vulnerability specific to OCSEA. N=33

The agreement around societal factors that respondents believed impacted children's vulnerability to OCSEA was slightly smaller than when asked about general child sexual exploitation, however remained high. 97% of frontline workers agreed that high levels of physical violence against children influence vulnerability to OCSEA. That was followed by 94% agreeing that taboos around discussing sex and sexuality and stigma from the community have an impact. 88% perceived expected roles for men and women (55% agreed strongly and 33% slightly) and 85% that low status of children in the society (64% agreed strongly and 21% slightly) were factors influencing vulnerability to OCSEA.

When given the opportunity to list additional factors about the society that participants believed increased children's vulnerability to OCSEA in Ethiopia, none of the respondents provided an answer.

When participants were asked specifically **why societal factors increase vulnerability to OCSEA differently to sexual exploitation generally** none of the respondents commented.

Reporting

In order to explore what influences decisions about reporting cases of child sexual exploitation and abuse, participants were asked to indicate whether they believed particular social and cultural factors influenced reporting both on general child sexual exploitation (all kinds) and specifically related to OCSEA in Ethiopia.

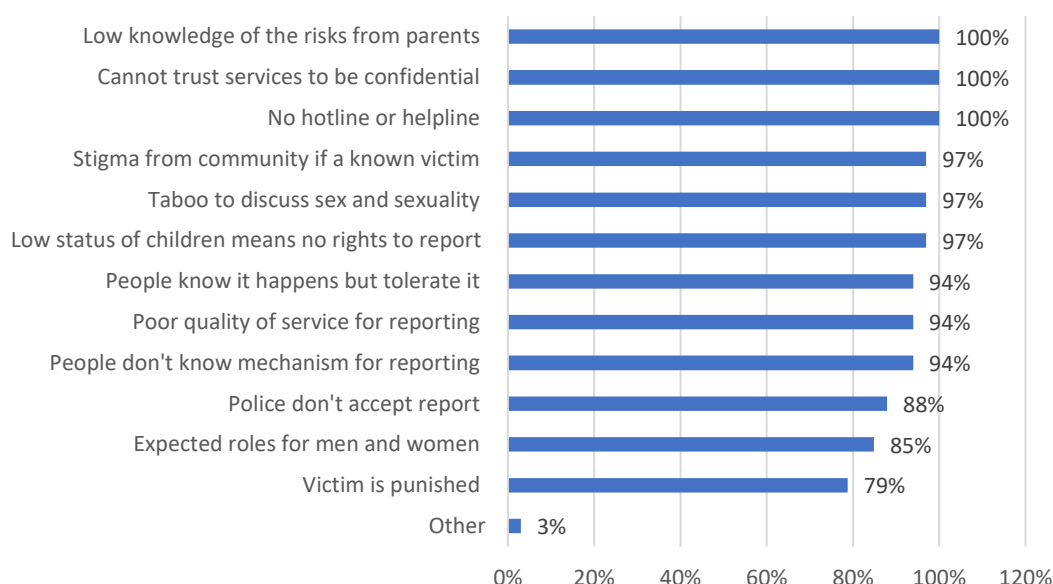


Figure 18. Social and cultural influences on reporting *child sexual exploitation in general* . N=33

Broad consensus was observed among respondents when asked what factors influence reporting sexual abuse and exploitation in Ethiopia (Figure 18). All (100%) frontline workers agreed that low knowledge of risks from parents, not trusting the services to be confidential and no hotline/helpline have an impact when making the decision to report child sexual exploitation. Nearly all respondents also agreed that stigma from the community (97%), taboos around discussing sex and sexuality (97%), low status of children meaning no rights to report (97%), people knowing it happens but tolerating it (94%), poor quality of service for reporting and not knowing the mechanism for reporting (94%) influence reporting sexual abuse and exploitation. Slightly smaller agreement (however still very high) was found on: police not accepting reports (88%), expected roles for men and women (85%) and victim being punished as factors influencing reporting decisions (79%). When given the opportunity to list additional factors, one respondent added 'fear of family' as a factor that contributes to reporting child sexual exploitation.

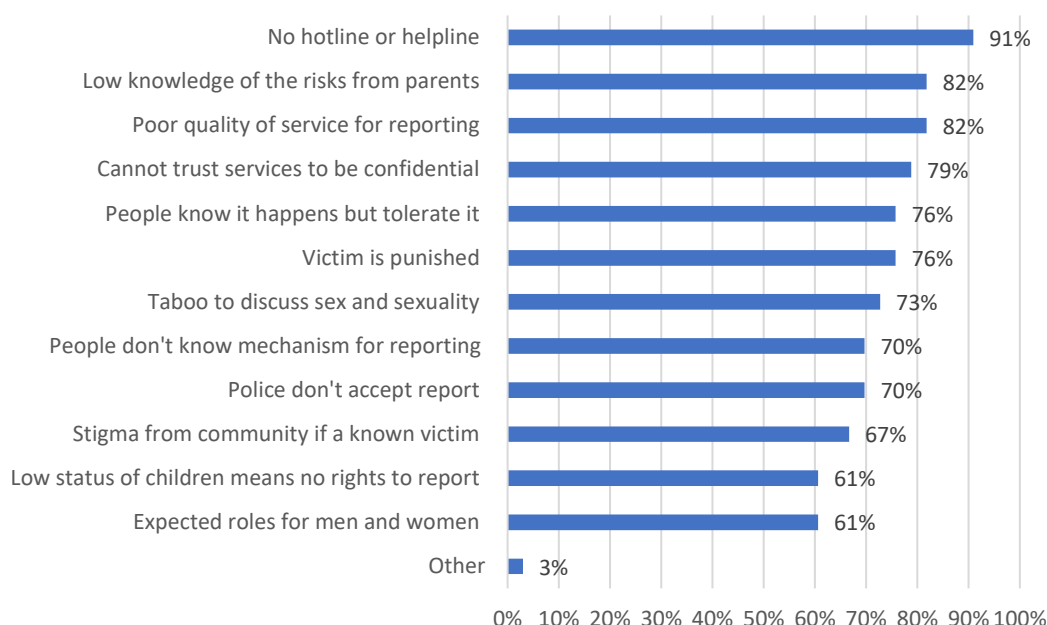


Figure 19. Social and cultural influences on reporting OCSEA. N=33

In regards to OCSEA specifically (as opposed to general child sexual exploitation), the agreement on factors which influence reporting was also high, however slightly smaller than in the case of general child sexual exploitation. Highest agreement was found on the ‘no hotline or helpline’ factor – 91% agreed it has an impact on reporting. That was followed by 82% agreeing that poor quality of services for reporting and low knowledge of the risks from parents influence reporting. 79% agreed that the fact that services cannot be trusted to be confidential also influenced reporting, while 76% agreed that people knowing it happens but tolerating it and victims being punished both play a role. Over two thirds of participants also agreed that taboos around discussing sex and sexuality (73%), people not knowing the mechanism for reporting (70%), police not accepting reports (70%) and stigma from the community (67%) influence reporting OCSEA in Ethiopia. Smallest agreement was found on the factors low status of children meaning no right to report (61% agreed) and expected roles for men and women (61% agreed). No additional comments were provided by participants.

Availability of Support

Respondents were asked to evaluate the overall availability and quality of medical, psychological, legal and reintegration services for child victims of OCSEA in Ethiopia.

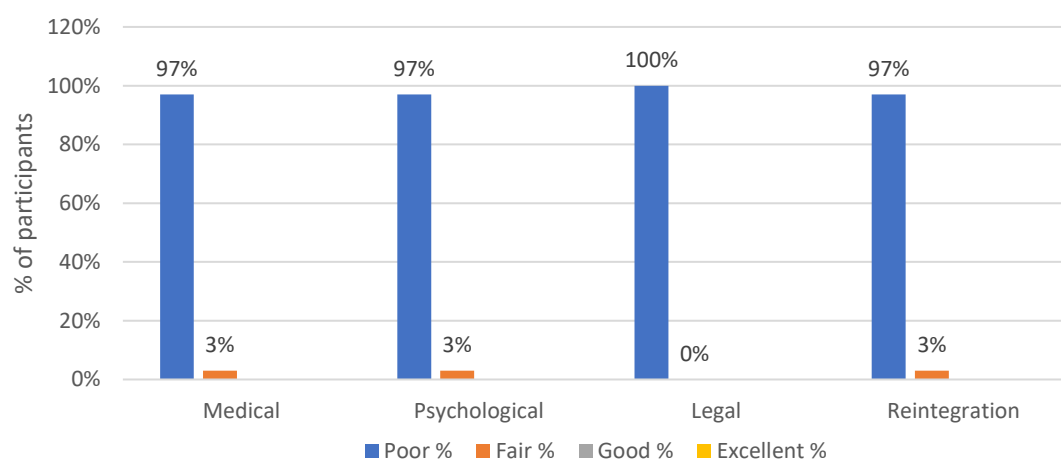


Figure 20. Perception of Availability of Services. N=33

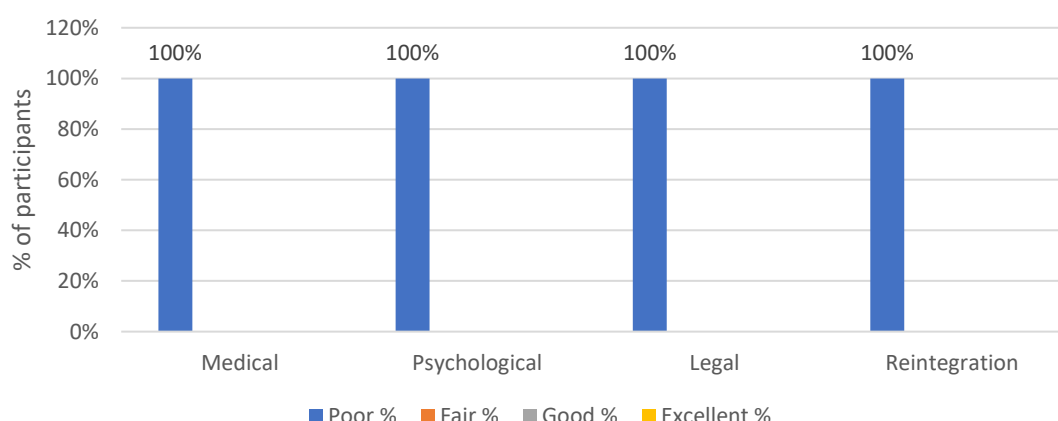


Figure 21. Perception of Quality of Services. N=33

Figures 20 and 21 show that both the availability and quality of all services (medical, psychological, legal and reintegration) were rated by nearly all (97%-100%) respondents as poor. When respondents were given the option to explain their appraisals of the quality and availability of services above, they did not provide any comments. Despite being reassured about the anonymity of their responses, frontline workers may have been concerned about the issue of government surveillance and feared their answers being linked to them/used against them, so did not provide any additional details.⁷ Alternatively, the respondents might have felt uncomfortable commenting on issues they did not feel confident about.⁸

⁷ Personal communication with the field team in Ethiopia.

⁸ Personal communication with the field team in Ethiopia

To better understand what affects the availability of support services for children, respondents were asked to indicate to what extent particular factors they believed had an influence on the availability of services for children.

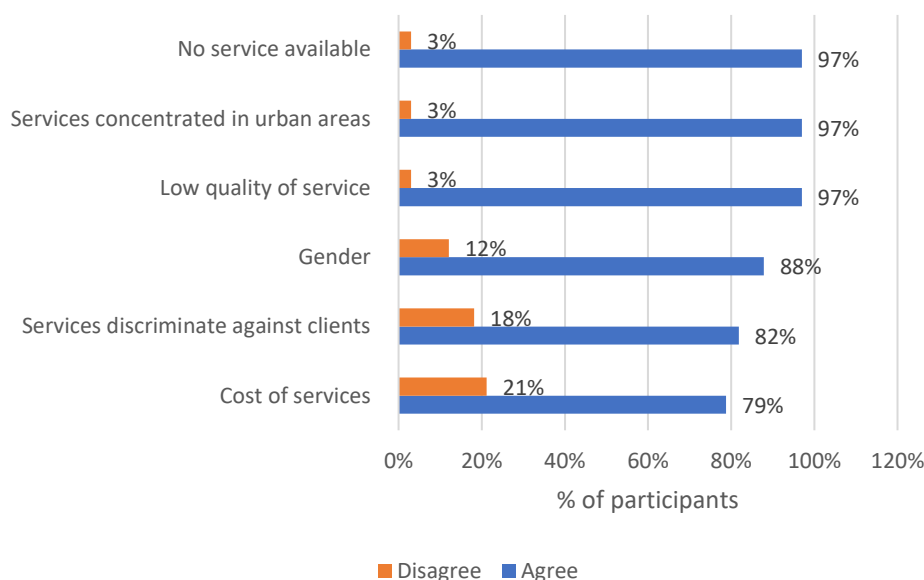


Figure 22. Factors affecting the availability of support services for child victims of *child sexual exploitation*.
N=33

Figure 22 above indicates that factors perceived as having the biggest influence on the availability of support services for children recovering from child sexual exploitation was the location – services are concentrated in urban areas (97% agreed), unavailability of services (97%) and low quality of services (97%). 88% of respondents also agreed that gender has an influence on the availability of services in Ethiopia and 82% agreed that services discriminating against clients has an impact. Slightly smaller agreement was found around the cost of services factor – while 79% agreed it influences the availability of services for victims of child sexual exploitation, 21% disagreed. No additional factors were mentioned by respondents.

When participants were asked to indicate to what extent those same factors affect the availability of support services for child victims of OCSEA, the results were similar, however the agreement was slightly smaller than when asked about general child sexual exploitation (Figure 23). This however might be influenced by limited knowledge on the issue.

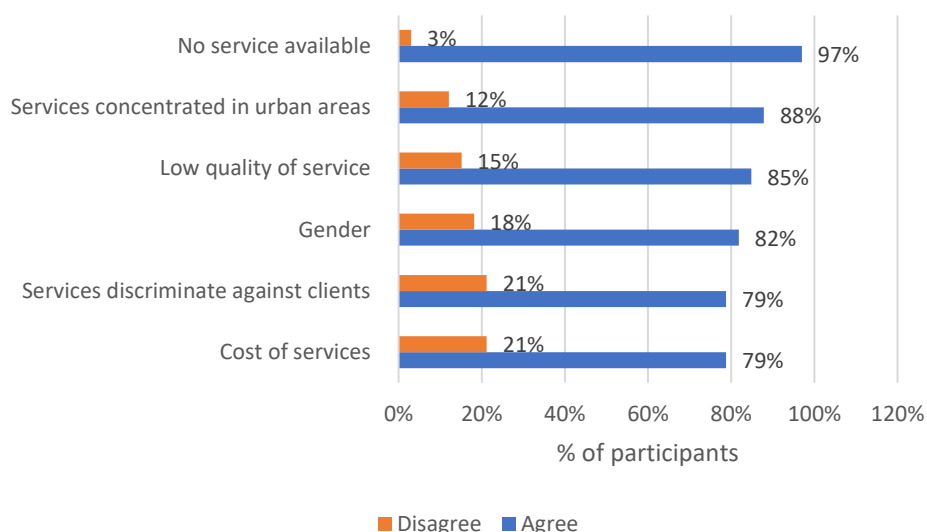


Figure 23. Factors affecting the availability of support services for child victims of OCSEA. N=33

Nearly all respondents agreed that no services are available to child victims of OCSEA (97%). That was followed by 88% agreeing that the concentration of services in urban areas have an influence on availability of support services (compared to 97% agreeing in the case of general child sexual exploitation). 85% agreed that it is the low quality of those services (compared to 97% agreeing in the case of child sexual exploitation) and 82% agreed that the gender of victims has an impact (compared to 88% agreeing when asked about general child sexual exploitation). Smallest agreement was found around the cost of services factor (79% agreed) and ‘services discriminate against the clients’ factor as affecting the availability.

Investigations and Convictions

Participants were asked to estimate the amount of OCSEA cases they managed in the last 12 months and determine approximately how many of those resulted in investigations and convictions.

In Ethiopia, in the last 12 months, none of the participants reported working on an OCSEA case, hence no estimations are provided. The field team in Ethiopia commented that while cases of OCSEA might be happening in the country, the knowledge on what OCSEA means is very low. That results in cases not being reported and passed on law enforcement and examined in the justice process.⁹

⁹ Personal communication with the field team in Ethiopia.

Law Enforcement and Government Support

In order to understand frontline social support workers perceptions of responses by local law enforcement on the issue of OCSEA, respondents were asked to answer, “Based on your work which best describes local law enforcement's: 1) awareness of OCSEA crimes; and 2) response to OCSEA crimes. Their responses to this question are depicted in Figure 24.

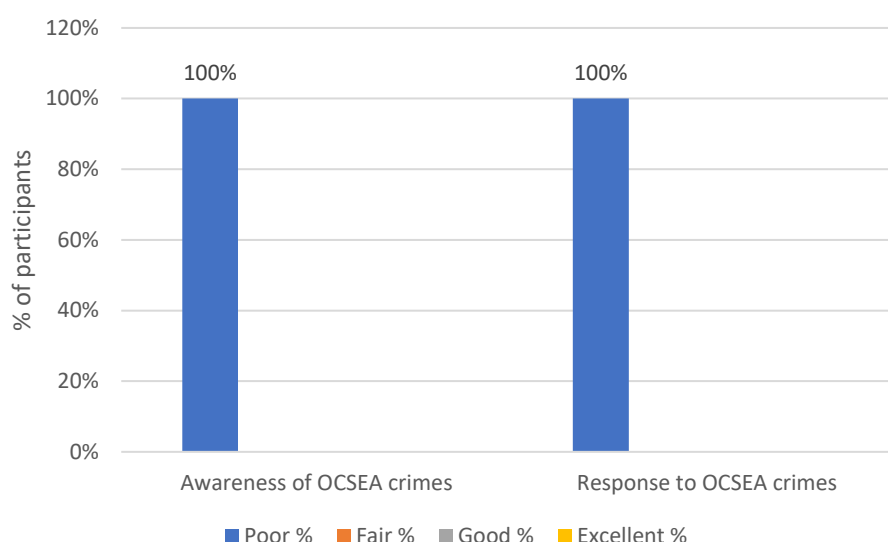


Figure 24. Participants’ perceptions of local law enforcement awareness and response to OCSEA. N=33

As Figure 24 indicates, all frontline workers surveyed in Ethiopia rated law enforcement’s awareness and response to OCSEA as poor. When given the opportunity to elaborate on their responses, participants did not include any additional comments. Again, the lack of details might have been influenced by fearing government surveillance. Since the understanding of OCSEA in the country is very low, respondents might have been afraid that if they implied they were exposed to OCSEA in any capacity, they could be seen as participating in the crime.¹⁰

To better understand the ratings above, participants were asked about their perceptions of the quality of efforts to address OCSEA (Figure 25).

¹⁰ Personal communication with the field team in Ethiopia.

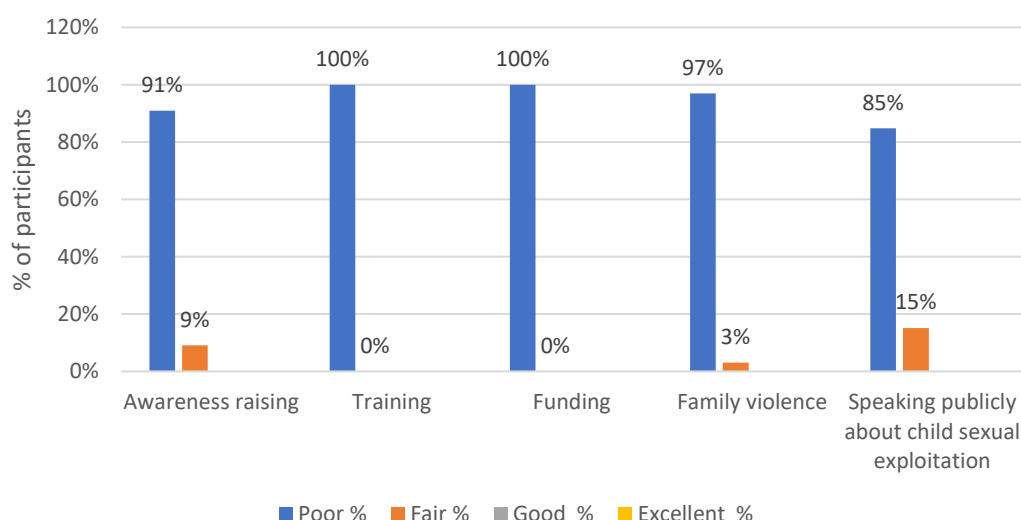


Figure 25. Participants' perceptions of quality of government efforts to address OCSEA. N=33

As illustrated in the graph above, respondents perceived the government's efforts to address OCSEA poorly. All frontline workers agreed that the training and funding provided by the government is poor (100%). Nearly all participants perceived the government's efforts to combat family violence as poor (97%). Awareness raising activities on OCSEA were perceived by 91% of respondents as poor and 9% as fair. Speaking publicly about child sexual exploitation was also given poor ratings by 85% of participants and fair ratings by 15%.

Next, frontline social support workers surveyed were asked to assess the collaboration on OCSEA between non-government sectors such as NGOs, tourism companies, Internet companies etc. The results are illustrated in Figure 26.

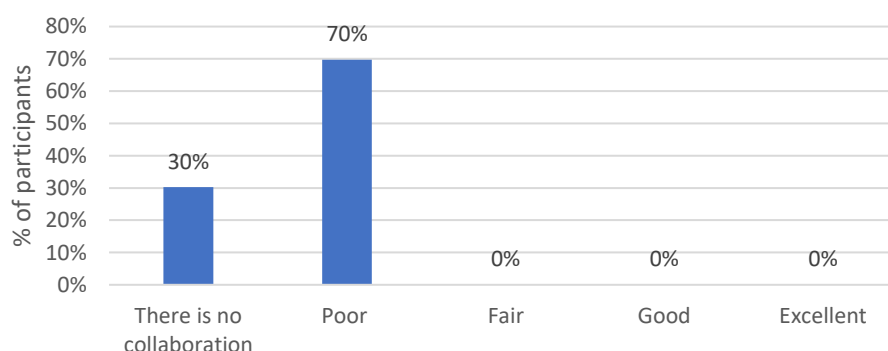


Figure 26. Participants' perceptions of collaboration on OCSEA between non-government. N=33

While 70% rated the collaboration on OCSEA between non-government as poor, 30% claimed there is no collaboration between them. None of the respondents rated the collaboration as fair, good or excellent.

Public Awareness

Lastly, the survey attempted to ascertain the levels of public awareness around the issue of OCSEA in Ethiopia. In order to do so, frontline social support workers were asked to subjectively appraise young people’s awareness, parent’s awareness and the general public’s awareness of OCSEA – their responses are illustrated in Figure 27.

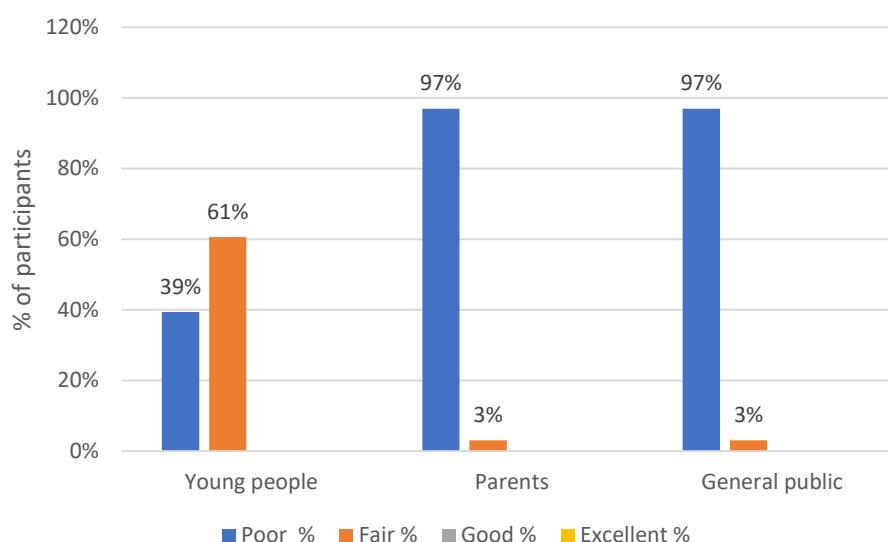


Figure 27. Awareness of OCSEA. N=33

Figure 27 shows that nearly all participants described parent’s and the general public’s awareness of OCSEA as poor (97%). Young people’s awareness was rated slightly better, but still very poorly – 39% described their awareness as poor and 61% as fair. When respondents were given the option to provide additional comments to qualify their answers above, nobody provided any comments.