



Keeping Vulnerable People Safe from Abuse in Care

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The Issue

- Allegations of sexual abuse of people with an intellectual disability are being raised in regard to people who are in a caring role.
- At times these allegations lead to convictions often they do not.
- The purpose of this talk is to look at factors that contribute to sexual abuse of people with intellectual disability.
- It is part of a wider piece of work that I am doing.

Sex abuse

“Any sexual contact between an adult and child 16 years of age and younger;

or any sexual activity with an adult who is unable to understand, has not given consent, is threatened, coerced or forced to engage in sexual behaviour.”

Senate Inquiry into violence, abuse and neglect against people with a disability 2015

What have we done in Australia?

National Level

- National Disability Standards
- State Level
- Disability Act 2006
 - Disability Service Commissioner- Complaints Management System,
 - Investigative and defunding capacity Section 100 DA 2006
- Quality Frameworks 2007, DHS standards and Evidence Guide 2011

Recent Government Inquiries

- ***Inquiry into Abuse in Disability Services*** Parliament of Victoria
 - “Physical violence toward people...normalized and predators...work in residential services.” 26 May 2016
- ***Beyond Doubt; The experiences of people with disabilities reporting crime***, Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission 2014
 - “People with Disabilities are routinely denied access to Justice and Safety...justice system is ill equipped to meet their needs.”
- ***Violence, Abuse and Neglect against People with Intellectual Disability in Institutional and Residential settings***, Senate Inquiry - 2015
 - “Violence against people with disabilities is Australia’s hidden shame.”
- ***Royal Commission into Institutional Child Abuse 2017***
 - recommendations regarding changes to the legal system including rules of evidence for people with a disability in court

Themes in the scholarly literature

- Incidence of abuse of people with an intellectual disability
- People with an intellectual disability had a higher risk of sexual abuse. (Soylu, Ahmet, Muhammed, Selcen and Mu (2013:4434)
- “While there were nearly 400 referrals for sexual abuse (n=397), there were almost no prosecutions... most did not result in a change of accommodation or support agency” ... (Cambridge, Beadle Brown, Milne, Mansell, Whelton: 2011)
- Sexual abuse of people with intellectual disabilities is much higher than previously thought and is often not addressed.

People with Intellectual Disability as Perpetrators

- Its very disappointing that there is a significant body of literature regarding people with an intellectual disability as perpetrator but not much looking at people with intellectual disability as victims.

Themes in the Scholarly Literature

- There is also very little research that addresses preventative strategies. A recent literature review found only 6 studies that met the research criteria. Of these, 5 of the 6 focused on teaching people with intellectual disabilities strategies to protect themselves from abuse. (Araten-Bergman, Bigby and Ritchie, 2017)
- Mainstream literature gives us some ideas of factors that might be relevant.

Complex factors contribute to abuse



Theories Based on Individual Traits

- Psychopaths ...lack a conscience, have few emotions and display an inability to have any feelings, sympathy or empathy for other people.” (Boddy 2011)
- Antisocial personality disorder is described as including criminal behavior, lying, reckless and impulsive behavior, aggression, and irresponsibility. (Ozdel et al,2015)
- Most people with antisocial personality disorder are not psychopaths. (Hare, 1998)

Non Psychopathic Individual Factors

Non psychopathic antisocial personality disorders may have following contributing factors:

- Mainstream literature found that 87% of perpetrators had a history of childhood trauma/abuse. (p145) (Hulme and Middleton, 2013)
- Early experiences/attachment issues. (Wood and Riggs, 2008)
- More likely to have broader range of deficits
- More likely to respond to counselling
- External locus of control-(responsibility for actions externally) (Hulme, and Middleton (2013)

Psychopathy

- “Psychopaths - abnormal brain connectivity and chemistry, especially in the areas of the amygdala and orbital/ventrolateral frontal cortex. (Boddy 2011)
- View in the literature that psychopathy arises from biological/structural factors.
- Literature suggests that psychopaths do not benefit from counselling

Psychopaths in the Community

Traditional research in this area presumed that psychopaths generally ended up in prisons or psychiatric facilities. Research focused on mental institutions and prisons.

New areas of research emerging from the business community following the Global Financial Crisis and the work of Robert Hare (1998) and associates which has looked at “corporate psychopaths” and the distribution of psychopathic traits in the community.

Corporate psychopaths flourish in the business/organizational communities during times of rapid change.

Make the “hard” business decisions without regret or remorse.

Pursue “own” goals at the expense of the corporation or business. (Boddy, 2011)

Psychometric Testing for Psychopathic Traits

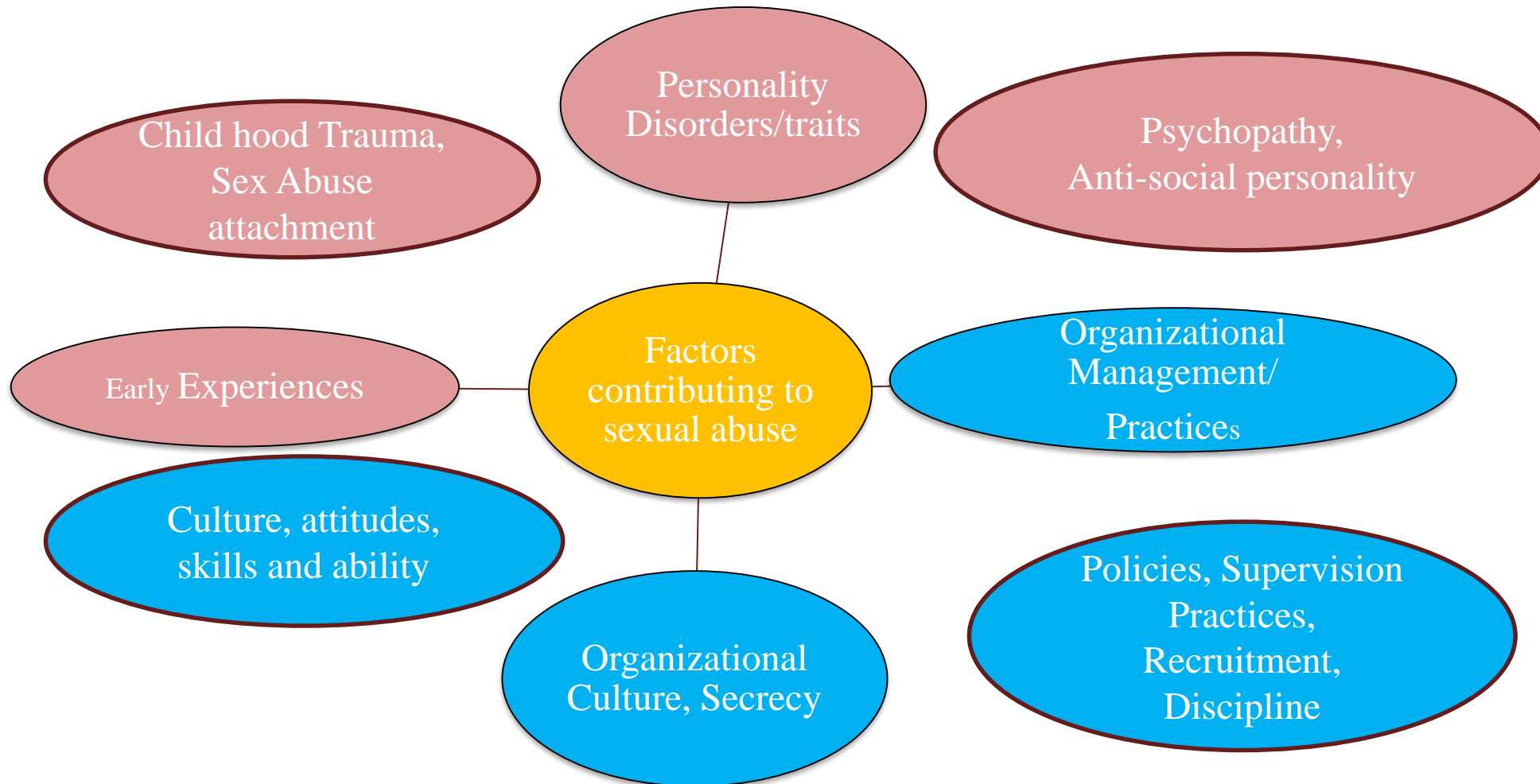
Psychometric tests designed to measure these traits. For example Hare's Psychopathy Checklist revised. (PCL-R, Hare 1998)

PCL-R measures

Factor 1 -lack of empathy or guilt, callous and remorseless use of others, deceptiveness.

Factor 2 -Impulsivity, irresponsibility, violation of social norms and expectations.

Contributing Factors



Implications for Disability Services

- The factors that could potentially impact on the delivery of quality services where people feel safe are complex and influenced by individual factors as well as organizational and societal factors .
- Personality disorders and traits like psychopathy and other non psychopathic personality characteristics are relevant factors for consideration in regard to organizations providing services to intellectual disabilities.
- Timely for organizations to start to look at the full range of factors contributing to abuse including the relevance of psychometric testing of managers and staff.

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Questions

Thank you

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