An exploratory study of victim resistance in child sexual abuse: Offender modus operandi and victim characteristics[*]

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Abstract

The use of self-protection strategies and related situation in rape has been studied by several scholars. The circumstances in which children are more likely to resist sexual victimization have, however, not been studied. This study examines the association between offence-related factors - specifically, the pre-offence situation, the modus operandi strategies adopted by offenders, and victim characteristics - and victim resistance in sexual offences against children. The sample consisted of 94 adult offenders convicted of having committed a sexual offence against a child (or adolescent) of 16 years of age or less, and who agreed to provide confidential self-report data concerning their offending behaviour and victim resistance actions. Victim resistance strategies were regrouped into three categories, namely, physical resistance, forceful verbal resistance, and non-forceful verbal resistance. The total number of resistance strategies was also used in the analyses. Overall, the age of the victim was found to be related to non-forceful verbal resistance, and violence was related to all forms of resistance. Younger girls were found to be more likely to employ non-forceful verbal resistance than older girls and to use a greater number of strategies as well. In order to provide reliable knowledge to build on for reducing the risk of child sexual abuse, this study suggests the need for prevention programs to include empirical findings regarding the circumstances in which children are more likely to resist sexual victimization.

Introduction

Criminologists and psychologists have been interested for some time in understanding victim resistance to crime. Prior research has examined victim resistance in robbery (Block and Skogan, 1986), burglary (Cook, 1986), sexual offences against women (see Ullman, 2007 for a full review), and assault (Lizotte, 1988). Results have been mixed. Some studies have indicated that resistance is useless or even dangerous, while others have indicated that resistance may be beneficial. Studying sexual offences against women, Ullman and Knight (1991; 1992) were among the first to find that resisting might be beneficial. For instance, they found that victims who resisted were not more likely to suffer injuries than victims who did not resist, and that where injuries did occur these were associated with the offender's physical attack rather than with the victim's efforts to resist. A higher level of victim resistance was also associated with less severe sexual abuse. More recently, Tark and Kleck (2004) analysed the effects of victim action on the outcomes in around 25,000 incidents of various crime types (robbery, burglary, rape, assault, personal larceny). The main finding of this study was that victim resistance is usually successful, and at worst inconsequential. In the rare cases that victim resistance was harmful, injuries suffered by the victim were rarely serious.

The issue of victim resistance in sexual offences against children is more complex, mainly because children are particularly vulnerable. Few empirical studies have examined the effectiveness of victim resistance or self-protection strategies in sexual offences against children. Finkelhor and his colleagues (Finkelhor, Asdigian and Dziuba-Leatherman, 1995a; 1995b) examined the efficacy of children's (between the ages of 10 and 16) resistance for several types of victimization, including assaults by peers, family

members, gangs, kidnappings by persons and sexual offences. Based on these studies, it appears that children who take part in prevention programs focusing on the acquisition of self-protection skills are more likely to use self-protective strategies, to disclose abuse when it does occur, and to perceive themselves as having been more effective in avoiding or minimizing the harm of sexual victimization. Unfortunately, Finkelhor et al. (1995a) found that children involved even in the most comprehensive personal safety programs were more likely to suffer injuries in coping with sexual assaults. According to the authors, this finding was perhaps related to children's more aggressive resistance. Then, in a follow-up study, Finkelhor et al. (1995b) found that these children did not experience lower levels of completed victimizations. A study using self-report data from child-sex offenders indicated that the most successful resistance strategies employed by children involved being assertive and saying "no", and the least successful strategies involved trying to get away, fighting back, and yelling for help (Smallbone and Wortley, 2000). Reppucci and Haugaard (1989) have argued that before designing prevention programs we should first know what actually happens in those offences. In other words, prevention should be based on empirical studies focusing on a detailed analysis of the actual offence not anecdotal accounts. To our knowledge, this study is the first to be carried out on the issue of victim resistance in child sex abuse in relation to various offence characteristics. We thus aim to provide a first look into the circumstances in which children are more likely to resist sexual victimization.

Aim of the study

In this study, we seek to gain insights into victim resistance in child sexual abuse. Victim resistance refers to any physical or verbal actions used in order to avoid victimization. Because the aim of this study is to better understand victim resistance, we focus on factors with immediate proximity to the offence itself (i.e. the immediate pre-offence situation, the offender's modus operandi strategies, and the characteristics of the victim). Note that the absence of empirical research examining what factors may be associated with victim resistance in child sexual abuse renders this study the first of its nature and consequently, exploratory. Based on the literature, particular variables were selected to account for the situation, the modus operandi strategies, and victim characteristics. First, the location for sexual contact (e.g., the offender's home) has been found to be strongly associated with the modus operandi strategies adopted to commit the crime (Leclerc, Beauregard and Proulx, 2008). Most child-sex offences occur in the context of ordinary day-to-day routine child-care activities (e.g., tucking the child into bed, watching T.V. with the child) (Wortley and Smallbone, 2006; Young, 1997). Offender modus operandi differences according to offender-victim relationship were also suggested (Smallbone and Wortley, 2000). As the situational aspects of a crime influence the offender's decision making, and consequently the offender-victim interaction (Cornish and Clarke, 1986; Tedeschi and Felson, 1994), we could expect that the offence location, the circumstances exploited or created by the offender to have time alone with the child (isolation) and the offender-victim relationship to be linked in some way to victim resistance. Second, based on the criminological literature showing that the offender and the victim adopt behaviours shaped in part by the other (Felson and

Steadman, 1983; Luckenbill, 1977; 1982), we expect modus operandi strategies to be associated with victim resistance. As rape victims are more likely to use active resistance such as fighting back when the offender uses violence (Ullman and Knight, 1992), we also expect active resistance to be related to violence in child sex abuse. Third, based on the fact that victim gender and age differences have been found in victims' behavioural responses to threats for various types of victimization (Asdigian and Finkelhor, 1995), we also expect victim age and gender to be associated with victim resistance. More specifically, based on Asdigian and Finkelhor' study, younger and girl victims should resist their offender more often.

Method

Sample

This study uses data from a large research project on child sex offenders in which the offender modus operandi and victim resistance were examined. A total of 197 adult males who admitted committing a sexual offence against a child (16 years old or less) for which they were serving a sentence in Queensland (Australia) were included in this study. Each participant agreed to complete a 386 items self-report questionnaire which includes a section on victim resistance. As participants provided data on resistance strategies used by victims overall (i.e., across all of their victims), it was not possible to link specific types of resistance back to each victim for participants who abused multiple victims. Therefore, participants who only sexually abused one victim were considered (n=94). On average, participants were 40.80 years old at assessment (SD=12.20), and the majority (79.8%) was Australian born. Most of the participants did not achieve an

education level higher than elementary school (87.2%). Participants were serving a mean sentence of 75 months (*SD*=50.30, *Range*=9-300).

Procedure

Initially, all participants were approached individually by a member of the research team and invited to complete a modified version of the Modus Operandi Questionnaire (MOQ) (Kaufman, 1989). The MOQ is a self-report questionnaire that assesses offending behaviour along a time continuum that includes selection of potential victims, gaining victims' cooperation in sexual activity, and maintaining victims' silence following the abuse. Generally, the MOQ was administered one on one with a research assistant. Research assistants explained how to complete the MOQ and offered assistance to guide participants throughout the task. Participants rated each item on a Likert-type scale ranging from 0 to 6 (0=never; 3=sometimes; 6=always) to report the frequency with which they used a particular type of location and adopted particular modus operandi strategies during the period they abused their victim. Included in the MOQ is also a section regarding prevention strategies used by victims (see details below). Participants were told that their involvement in this study was strictly voluntary. Each participant signed a consent form stating that the information would be used for research purposes only. They were assured that the information would be kept confidential and that records of names would be destroyed after data collection (for further details, see Smallbone and Wortley, 2000).

Measures

Victim resistance. When completing the MOQ, participants were asked to report if their victim used any of the following resistance strategies during the period of abuse: "yelled or screamed", "fought back", "said no", "told they didn't want to", "cried", "told someone else what was happening", "told they were scared", "demanded to be left alone", "said they would tell someone", "said that people are not supposed to touch their private parts", "tried to get away", "yelled for help". These variables were first regrouped into four types of resistance strategies as followed in the literature on victim resistance in rape (e.g., Ullman, 1997): 1) forceful physical resistance, 2) non-forceful physical resistance, 3) forceful verbal resistance, 4) non-forceful verbal resistance. Then each type of resistance was coded dichotomously for its absence (0) or occurrence (1). This classification allows for an examination of the nature (physical or verbal) and the degree of resistance (forceful or non-forceful) of strategies used to avoid victimization. By combining the nature and the degree of resistance, the classification covers the most important aspects to take into consideration to understand victim resistance. First, forceful physical resistance refers to active aggressive behaviours such as using a weapon, attacking the offender, and fighting back. In this study, it refers to one variable, which is fighting back. Second, non-forceful physical resistance refers to passive physical resistance behaviours such as trying to avoid the offender and running away. In this research, it refers to a single variable that is, trying to get away. Third, forceful verbal resistance refers to active verbal actions aimed at threatening the offender or scaring him. In this investigation, it includes yelling or screaming, telling someone else about the abuse, saying that she/he would tell someone, and yelling for help. Fourth, non-

forceful verbal resistance refers to passive verbal actions such as reasoning the offender, telling him to stop, and begging him. In this study, it includes saying no, telling the offender that they did not want to, crying, telling the offender that they were scared, asking to be left alone, and saying that people are not supposed to touch private parts. Note that as all victims who used forceful physical resistance also used non-forceful physical resistance, these variables were then collapsed into a single variable that was used in the analyses instead (i.e. physical resistance). Finally, the number of resistance strategies employed by victims was also computed to create a continuous scale (0= no resistance; 1=one resistance strategy, 2=two resistance strategies, 3=three resistance strategies, 4=four resistance strategies, 5=five strategies or more).

Situational factors. To investigate the effects of the situation, modus operandi, and victim characteristics, eight variables were used. Recall that participants initially rated each item on 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 to 6 (0=never; 3=sometimes; 6=always) to report the frequency with which they used a particular type of location and specific modus operandi strategies during the period they abused their victim. The first three variables refer to the situation during the period of abuse, and are: (1) the offence location; (2) the isolation of the child for sexual contact; and (3) the offender-victim relationship. First, 'Location' is a single item, drawn from the MOQ that measures the frequency with which offenders used their own home to abuse their victim. In this study, the average score of participants was 3.12 (*SD* = 2.63; Range = 0-6). Only 28 offenders (30.1%) reported that they had never used their home during the period in which they abused their victim. Second, 'Isolation' is a scale that was developed from items relating to circumstances that were exploited or created in order to be alone with the child for

sexual contact (alpha = .78). The scale includes 21 items (e.g., “taking them places during the day without one of their parents’’; “taking a bath/shower with them’’). The scores obtained varied between 0 and 54. The higher the score the more frequent the use of isolation. The average score of the participants was 8.28 (*SD*=10.55). The majority (74.2%) of participants used such strategies. Third, the type of offender-victim relationship (extrafamilial or intrafamilial) was also asked to participants and included as a dichotomous variable (0=intrafamilial, 1=extrafamilial). The relationship was extrafamilial in 33% of cases.

Offender modus operandi. Three other variables refer to modus operandi strategies (desensitizing the victim to sexual contact, giving gifts and privileges, and using violence). ‘Desensitizing’ and ‘gifts and privileges’ refer to two different sets of manipulative strategies that offenders may adopt to gain victims’ cooperation in sexual activity. These variables were based on scales previously developed from the MOQ by Kaufman et al. (1997). More specifically, ‘desensitizing’ refers to the set of tactics adopted to gradually involve the victim in sexual activity, and was measured by 16 items (e.g., “talking more and more about sex”; “touching them sexually more and more from one time to the next”) (alpha = .90). The scores obtained varied between 0 and 71. The higher the score the more frequent the use of desensitization. The average score for the ‘desensitizing’ scale was 14.30 (*SD*=16.38). Most participants (76.3%) adopted such strategies. ‘Gifts and privileges’ refers to a set of strategies in which incentives or rewards were given to the victims. This scale comprised 10 items (e.g., “giving them money from time to time”; “giving them gifts from time to time”) (alpha = .86). Some participants adopted such strategies (34%) and the average score was 3.68 (*SD*=7.62).

The scores obtained varied between 0 and 36. The higher the score the more frequent the use of giving gifts and privileges. Because less than half of participants adopted these strategies, this variable was dichotomized (0=absent, 1=present). The use of violence was also considered in this study. The variable 'violence' referred initially to any threats of violence or actual violence used to obtain sexual contact. Because the frequency of using such strategies was low, we also considered any threats of violence and physical violence that were used to make the victim go to the crime site. This variable is dichotomous (0=absent, 1=present) and refers to using any forms of violence before sexual contact. Example items include "saying they would be hit", and "using physical force". Only 20.4% of participants reported using violence.

Victim characteristics. The characteristics of the victim (age and gender) were also considered in this study. Age of the victim refers to the age at which the offender began perpetration. The mean age of the victim was 11.66 (*SD*=2.95, Range=2-16) and girls were abused in 89.2% of cases. The age of the victim was included as a continuous variable, whereas the gender of the victim was as a dichotomous variable (0=boys, 1=girls).

Analytic Strategy

The main point of this study is to better understand in which circumstances children resist sexual victimization. Descriptive, bivariate (t-test and chi-square) and multivariate analyses (regression analyses) were completed throughout this investigation. Initially, the distribution for 'isolation' and 'desensitizing' differed greatly from normal (i.e., highly skewed). To reduce the impact of these distributions on the analyses, log

transformation was performed (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001). One should also note that the current data do not allow for the identification of the exact sequence of behaviours that took place during the crime (see limitations). As the offender is by definition the instigator, it is rather assumed that victim resistance followed offender's actions. In multivariate analyses, victim resistance was thus treated as the dependent variable and offender modus operandi strategies as the independent variables.

This study comprises two parts. In the first part, the proportions of victims who used resistance strategies are presented. Then the relationship between offence characteristics and types of victim resistance (i.e. physical resistance, forceful verbal, and non-forceful verbal resistance) (Table 2), and the total number of strategies used by the victim during the offence (Table 3) is assessed. In order to identify the best predictors of victim resistance, regression analyses of types of victim resistance and the total number of resistance strategies are also completed (Table 4). The second part of the study focuses on the relationships between victim characteristics and victim resistance. Based on the mean, the victim-age variable was dichotomized into two groups (0-11 years old = younger victims, 12-16 = older victims), and subsequently crossed with victim gender. Four subgroups were created: 1) younger boys, 2) younger girls, 3) older boys, and 4) older girls. As boy victims were quite rare, however, these cases were dropped from the analysis and only the presence of victim resistance pattern differences between younger and older girls were investigated. All victim resistance variables included in Table 1 were considered (Table 5).

Results

Victim resistance strategies

Table 1 presents proportions of victims who used resistance strategies. As indicated, the strategies most often used by victims were telling the offender they did not want to, saying no and saying they were scared. Fighting back and trying to get away were the least likely to be used (28% and 28.3%, respectively). Overall, non-forceful resistance was often used by victims (60%). A total of 44% used forceful verbal resistance, while 28% physically resisted their offender. Recall that a victim may have used different types of strategies (for example, forceful and non-forceful verbal resistance).

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Linking offence characteristics to victim resistance

Table 2 focuses on associations between offence characteristics and types of resistance. Bivariate analyses indicate that modus operandi strategies are all associated with non-forceful verbal resistance. It suggests that irrespective of whether manipulation or violence is used by offenders, victims tend to use very passive forms of resistance such as demanding to be left alone when offenders try to engage them in sexual activity. When examining other types of resistance, desensitization is no longer associated with victim resistance, but giving gifts and privileges is still more common for victims using forceful verbal resistance. Violence is the only offence characteristic related to physical resistance [$\chi 2$ (1, N = 91) = 5.049, p = .025.)]. Victim age is also related to non-forceful verbal resistance, suggesting that older victims are less likely to use this type of resistance when

sexually abused. Table 3 examines the associations between offence variables and the total number of resistance strategies used by the victim during the offence. Modus operandi strategies are all associated with the number of resistance strategies used by the victim.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Table 4 shows results of logistic regression analyses completed on types of victim resistance. The last column presents results of linear regression analysis performed on the total number of resistance strategies. Findings indicate that violence is strongly associated with all types of victim resistance (physical resistance, forceful verbal resistance and non-forceful verbal resistance). Assuming that violence preceded resistance, violence increases the chances of victim resistance. For instance, it indicates that, by using violence, offenders are nearly five times (Ψ (Odds Ratio) = 4.666) more likely to make their victim resist physically than those who do not use violence. Moreover, the age of the victim decreases the chances of non-forceful verbal resistance. For each one-unit increase of the victim's age (2 to 16 years old), the chances that the victim will use non-forceful verbal resistance decreases 1.25 times (1/.802). Violence is also positively associated with the total number of resistance strategies used by the victim. Note that the relationships between other modus operandi strategies (i.e., desensitizing, giving gifts and privileges) and verbal forms of resistance found at a bivariate level are no longer significant at a multivariate level. Furthermore, other offence characteristics are not associated with victim resistance[1].

INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

Linking victim characteristics to victim resistance

Subsequent analyses focus on the association between victim characteristics and resistance. Before completing these analyses, recall that the mean was used to dichotomize the victim age variable into two groups (0-11 years old = younger victims, 12-16 = older victims). Then victim age was subsequently crossed with victim gender providing four groups: 1) younger boys, 2) younger girls, 3) older boys, and 4) older girls. Because the number of boys abused in the present sample is small, however, the accent was put on examining girls only (*n*=83). Table 5 indicates that younger girls are more likely to tell the offender that they are scared and/or that they do not want to have sexual contact. Younger girls are also more likely to use non-forceful verbal resistance than older girls and to use more strategies as well[2].

INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

Discussion

Offender modus operandi and victim resistance

At a bivariate level, results found in this study suggest that modus operandi strategies used to involve the victim in sexual activity are linked to victim resistance. Specifically, desensitization is linked to non-forceful verbal resistance. Giving gifts and privileges is related to both non-forceful and forceful verbal resistance. Violence is associated with all types of resistance, which includes physical resistance. At a multivariate level, however, most of these modus operandi strategies are no longer

associated with victim resistance. The only modus operandi strategy linked to victim resistance is violence. Assuming that resistance followed violence, results suggest that when the offender uses threats of violence or physical force, the victim may feel that there is no other way to escape the abuse, but to resist. Findings also indicate that the victim may generally respond according to offender behaviours in child sexual abuse and vice versa. It is consistent with Luckenbill (1977) and Felson and Steadman's (1983) finding that the offender and the victim adopt behaviours shaped in part by the behaviours of the other during their interchange leading to homicide.

In her investigation of women resistance in rape, Ullman (2007) showed that women typically respond with verbal resistance to verbal threats and physical resistance to physical attacks. Data used in this study, unfortunately, do not allow for the identification of the violence-resistance sequence (see limitations). One cannot be absolutely certain that the resistance followed offender violence and not the other way around. As the offender is by definition the instigator, it is rather assumed that victim resistance followed offender's actions. The perpetration of the typical child sex offence is more complex than rape, homicide and most types of crime. Most often, child sexual abuse emerges from a trust-based relationship in which the victim has a strong emotional tie to the offender. The offence involves a complex step-by-step manipulation process that may take place over a long period of time. For these reasons, it is quite difficult to identify the exact and full sequence of the offender-victim interchange in child sex offending. In the majority of cases, however, we should still expect the offender to initiate the victim in sexual activity and then the victim to respond to the offender with verbal, physical or non resistance. The other way around should be quite rare which is

consistent with previous findings in rape (Kleck and Sayles, 1990). Nevertheless, for the purpose of prevention, future studies should try to uncover the exact violence-resistance sequence as much as possible even if data used have some limitations in that regard.

The importance of victim characteristics

At a bivariate level, the age of the victim was found to be negatively associated with non-forceful verbal resistance indicating that as the victim gets older, non-forceful verbal resistance is less likely to be used. This finding reappeared at a multivariate level. To better capture the effect of victim characteristics on victim resistance, additional bivariate analyses were then performed. Once again, results were consistent with previous findings. Younger victims are more likely to use non-forceful verbal resistance. Furthermore, compared to older girls, younger girls are more likely to say that they were scared and to tell that they did not want to have sexual contact. Younger girls were also more likely to employ non-forceful verbal resistance and to use a greater number of resistance strategies to avoid the abuse as well. This finding is consistent with results found by Asdigian and Finkelhor (1995). These authors showed that younger victims (boys and girls) are more likely to use passive forms of resistance such as crying and to use a greater number of resistance strategies as well. Older victims were also more likely to use active forms of resistance during the assault. What does it tell us? As passive resistance may not stop the offender from pursuing with the abuse, it may be assumed that younger victims would need to use a greater number of strategies to escape the abuse. Employing particular forms of resistance strategies is also a function of an individual's capability to using them. Younger children are biologically less capable of

using forceful resistance strategies effectively such as fighting back. These results suggest that the way the offence is carried out, as well as victim resistance, may differ according to victim characteristics.

Victim resistance and prevention programs

The results of this empirical study have policy implications for prevention programs aimed at reducing the risk of sexual victimization. Overall, multivariate analyses suggest that child sexual abuse victims are likely to resist when the offender uses violence or vice versa. Clearly, resistance may put children safety in jeopardy. Following this line of thinking, the question arises of whether children should be encouraged to resist especially if it is assumed that resistance follows violence. On the one hand, resistance to violence may engender negative consequences. Resistance may increase risk of injury. In that case, children may also feel like they are to blame if they do not succeed. On the other hand, resistance to violence may perhaps prevent intrusive behaviours and a higher frequency of sexual episodes, which are associated with increased symptoms of sexual abuse (Kendall-Tackett, Williams and Finkelhor, 1993). Therefore, recommending or encouraging resistance in those circumstances is a very tricky issue. Guidelines on how children should react to offender behaviours are an important part of self-protection prevention programs. Perhaps less active forms of victim resistance such as verbal resistance should be encouraged over more active forms in order to reduce further risk of injury when the offender is violent. In fact, scholars have found some indications that children who received a comprehensive training were more likely

to suffer injuries during sexual victimization because they were more likely to fight back (Finkelhor et al., 1995a; 1995b).

As offenders have also reported to target the most vulnerable children (e.g., those who lack attention and self-esteem, see Berliner and Conte, 1990; Conte, Wolf and Smith, 1989), it follows that some efforts could be made in order to render these children less vulnerable in the first place and thus less attractive for offenders. An alternative or complement to teaching children how to resist offenders would be to favour resilience building in children by developing protective factors (Smallbone, Marshall and Wortley, 2008). For instance, diminished self-esteem, social isolation and other psychological issues could be addressed by providing services and resources to at-risk children. In order to prevent re-victimisation, these issues could be further addressed in interventions following the experience of sexual victimization.

Our results also show that younger victims, in general, are more likely to use non-forceful verbal resistance. Younger girls were more likely to use non-forceful verbal resistance and to use a greater number of resistance strategies to avoid the abuse than older girls. Recent research also showed that boys and girls may respond differently to their offender during the offence. It was found that as the victim gets older, offenders are more likely to achieve victim participation in sexual episodes if the victim is a boy, but less likely to do so if the victim is a girl (Leclerc, Proulx, Lussier and Allaire, 2009). It supports previous research in the sense that a one-size-fits-all approach to prevention should not be encouraged. Instead, and as proposed elsewhere (Asdigian and Finkelhor, 1995), if victim-oriented programs are to be part of prevention initiatives, perhaps those

programs should be adapted to specific subgroups of children (boys vs. girls, younger vs. older).

Limitations

There are some limitations in this study. First, it should be noted that the MOQ does not provide information on the violence-victim resistance sequence. However, children should not resist before their offenders actually adopt strategies to involve them in sexual activity even if the abuse actually involves several episodes. This is especially true as offenders have been found to select the most vulnerable children in order to commit their offences (Berliner and Conte, 1990; Conte et al., 1989). Still, in this study, we cannot be certain that in all cases victim resistance followed the use of violence and not the other way around. For instance, the victim may offer resistance in response to manipulative behaviours. Then in response to such resistance, the offender may decide to use violence. As sexual activities between an adult and a child often emerge from a trust-based relationship, this issue is very complex to investigate and understand. Scholars should try to scrutinize the exact sequence of violence-resistance in child sexual abuse. Second, the data do not provide details regarding each episode. Because child sexual abuse most often involve multiple rather than single episodes, one should take into account that this study rather offer an overall view of the process linking modus operandi strategies to victim resistance. Third, other limitations may come from the nature of the sample. The sample used for the current study contains offenders who had only one victim. Compared to multiple victim offenders, some of these offenders may lack the skills necessary to neutralize the likelihood of victim resistance. Moreover, the fact that

this study only comprises convicted offenders is also a limitation. Victims of convicted offenders are perhaps more likely to have employed resistance strategies than in cases the offender was not caught. Another limit is that the present study is based on self-reported data, which means that some findings may be biased by offenders' cognitive distorsions. For instance, even in a context of anonymity, offenders may have minimized or exaggerated the number of resistance strategies used by the victim. In order to present a positive image of themselves, some offenders may minimize or fail to report that the victim actually used some resistance strategies.

Conclusion

To our knowledge, this study is the first to examine the issue of victim resistance in sexual offences against children by focusing on the offence itself. Therefore, the results need to be interpreted accordingly. In their literature review on the prevention of child sexual abuse, Renk, Liljequist, Steinberg, Bosco and Phares (2002) strongly recommended that the responsibility for preventing child sexual abuse should rest on the shoulders of adults not children (see also Becker and Reilly's review (1999). We agree. According to Smallbone et al. (2008), the best way to prevent child sexual abuse with potential victims may be to make children less vulnerable in the first place by investing in general resilience-building with children and by providing them with more effective guardianship and safer environments. Self-protection prevention programs, however, are still a big part of current prevention efforts. Scholars should thus provide them with empirical knowledge in order to inform about what actually happens in child sexual abuse. As the current study is rather exploratory, other studies must also examine the

links between offence characteristics and victim resistance in greater details and with a larger sample size. Investigating gender differences between boys and girls is especially important as it offers great potential for orienting self-protection programs. Moreover, examining the efficacy of victim resistance in child sexual abuse in the real world is also indispensable. With empirical evidence on the effectiveness of children self-protection, practitioners would have clear, or at worst, better indications on what works and what doesn't. Future studies might also consider the following: (1) the duration of abuse (i.e., if offenders who abused their victim over time used a variety of different modus operandi strategies and if victims used a broader array of resistance strategies); and (2) the escalation patterns that involves a range of offender and victim behaviours (i.e., what do escalating patterns look like, which lead to violence). Finally, it is hoped that the findings of this study will encourage and provide guidance for scholars interested in understanding victim resistance in child sexual abuse. Such knowledge is essential to inform prevention programs aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse.

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Table 1. Proportions of Victims who used Resistance Strategies (*n*=94)

Variable	Frequency/mean	Percent/(SD)
Physical resistance		
Fought back	26	28%
Tried to get away	26	28.3%
Forceful verbal resistance		
Told someone else	33	35.5%
Said would tell someone	31	33.7%
Yelled or screamed	28	30.1%
Yelled for help	25	26.9%
Non-forceful verbal resistance		
Told did not want to	43	46.7%
Said no	37	40.2%
Said was scared	37	40.2%
Cried	36	38.7%
Demanded to be left alone	31	33.7%
Said not supposed to touch private parts	26	28.3%
Additional variables		
Physical resistance	26	28.3%
Forceful verbal resistance	40	43.5%
Non-forceful verbal resistance	55	59.8%
Total number of resistance strategies used	2.27	2.16 (Range 0-5)

NOTE: One value was missing for the following variables: fought back, told someone else, yelled or screamed, yelled for help, and cried. Two values were missing for the following variables: tried to get away, said would tell someone, told did not want to, said no, said was scared, demanded to be left alone, said not supposed to touch private parts. Two values were missing for all additional variables (i.e., physical resistance, forceful verbal resistance, non-forceful verbal resistance, and total number of resistance strategies used).

Table 2. Offence Characteristics by Types of Victim Resistance (n=94)[1, 4]

Variable	Physical resistance No/Yes *p*	Forceful verbal resistance No/Yes *p*	Non-forceful verbal resistance No/Yes *p*
Location[2]	NS	NS	NS
Isolation (log-transformed)[2]	NS	NS	NS
Desensitizing (log-transformed)[2]	NS	NS	.71 (.59) /1.03 (.55) .010
Gifts and privileges (% yes)[3]	NS	23.1%/50% .007	21.6%/43.6% .030
Violence (% yes)[3]	13.8%/34.6% .025	5.9%/37.5% .000	5.4%/29.6% .004
Victim gender (% girls)[3]	NS	NS	NS
Victim age[2]	NS	NS	55.73/40.29 .006
Offender-victim relationship (% extrafamilial)[3]	NS	NS	NS

Abbreviations: NS = Non significant.

1. Statistics are presented only for significant variables.
2. Continuous variables tested with t-test. Mean is presented (with standard deviation in brackets). Means and standard deviations for victim age were 12.73 (2.00) and 10.87 (3.27), respectively. The *p* value was .003. Because the Levene test was significant for victim age, however, the Mann-Whitney *U* test and mean ranks are presented instead for this variable.
3. Categorical variables tested with Chi-Square analyses. Percentages are presented. When the validity of the Pearson's Chi-Square test is violated, the level of significance of the Fisher's Exact test was presented instead.
4. One value was missing for the following variables: location, isolation, desensitizing and gender of the victim.

Table 3. Offence Characteristics by the Total Number of Resistance Strategies Used by the Victim During the Period of Abuse (n=94)[1]

Variable	Total number of resistance strategies Pearson's r / t -test *(p)*
Location[2]	NS
Isolation (log-transformed)[2]	NS
Desensitizing (log-transformed)[2]	.243 (.020)
Gifts and privileges[3]	-2.762 (.007)
Violence[3]	-3.362 (.001)
Victim gender[3] (girls)	NS
Victim age[2]	NS
Offender-victim relationship[3] (extrafamilial)	NS

Abbreviations: NS = Non significant.
1. Statistics are presented only for significant variables.
2. Continuous variables tested with Pearson's r.
3. Categorical variables tested with t-test.

Table 4. Regression Analyses of Victim Resistance (*n*=87)[1]

Variable	Physical resistance	Forceful verbal resistance	Non-forceful verbal resistance	Total number of resistance strategies
	b/SE Ψ	b/SE Ψ	b/SE Ψ	b/SE β
Location	-.168/.130 .845	-.107/.122 .899	-.171/.127 .843	-.126/.103 .152
Isolation (log-transformed)	.194/.678 1.214	.053/.643 1.055	.112/.662 1.119	.314/.542 .075
Offender-victim relationship (extrafamilial)	-1.320/.753 .267	-.756/.640 .469	-.682/.650 .506	-.728/.555 -.156
Desensitizing (log-transformed)	.175/.610 1.191	.279/.564 1.321	.815/.585 2.260	.358/.495 .098
Gifts and privileges	.815/.683 2.258	1.102/.647 3.011	.683/.651 1.980	.771/.576 .172
Violence	**1.540/.685** **4.666***	**2.482/.771** **11.969****	**2.078/.907** **7.991***	**1.576/.564** **.296****
Victim gender	-.340/.869 .711	-.361/.875 .697	1.313/.975 3.717	.261/.747 .037
Victim age	.220/.114 1.247	.113/.096 1.120	**-.220/.104** **.802***	-.004/.076 -.006
Constant	-3.381/1.665* -	-1.839/1.517 -	1.229/1.521 -	1.531/1.213 -
Nagelkerke R^2/Total adjusted R^2	.237	.319	.350	.146
Hosmer-Lemeshow Goodness-of-fit test (*p*-value)	.375	.488	.184	-
Model χ^2 (*p*-value)	.049	.003	.001	-
*p<.05 **p<.01				

ABBREVIATIONS: b = unstandardized beta; β = standardized beta; S.E. = standard error; Ψ = odds ratio.

Table 5. Girl Victim Subgroups by Victim Resistance (*n*=83)

Variable	Younger girls Percent/mean	Older girls Percent/mean	χ^2 / t (*p*)
Physical resistance			
Fought back	24.1%	28.3%	.166 (.684)
Tried to get away	27.6%	26.9%	.004 (.949)
Forceful verbal resistance			
Told someone else	34.5%	34%	.002 (.962)
Said would tell someone	37.9%	30.8%	.430 (.512)
Yelled or screamed	24.1%	30.2%	.340 (.560)
Yelled for help	24.1%	26.4%	.051 (.821)
Non-forceful verbal resistance			
Told did not want to	62.1%	38.5%	**4.166 (.041)**
Said no	51.7%	32.7%	2.822 (.093)
Said was scared	55.2%	30.8%	**4.639 (.031)**
Cried	48.3%	32.1%	2.092 (.148)
Demanded to be left alone	34.5%	32.7%	.027 (.870)
Said not supposed to touch private parts	31%	25%	.343 (.558)
Additional variables			
Physical resistance	27.6%	26.9%	.004 (.949)
Forceful verbal resistance	48.3%	38.5%	.736 (.391)
Non-forceful verbal resistance	82.8%	48.1%	**9.370 (.002)**
Total number of resistance strategies used[1]	2.86	1.92	**1.922 (.029)**

1. Because the Levene test was significant, we present the Mann-Whitney *U* test instead.

ENDNOTES

[1] As Asdigian and Finkelhor (1995) found that younger and girl victims may resist their offender more often, we also examined whether the presence of an interaction effect between victim characteristics could be observed in regression analyses of victim resistance. No such effect was found.

[2] Although the statistics are not presented, note that additional analyses were completed with younger and older girls. Associations between offence characteristics and resistance variables (i.e., physical resistance, forceful verbal resistance, non-forceful verbal resistance, total number of strategies used) were examined for each victim group. Analyses conducted with younger girls did not show any differences regarding victim resistance. Patterns found with older girls were similar to those found in previous analyses. All modus operandi strategies were linked to non-forceful verbal resistance. While, desensitizing was not associated with other forms of resistance, giving gifts was related to forceful verbal resistance. Moreover, physical resistance was, once again, more common when offenders were using violence. Finally, analyses revealed that giving gifts and using violence were related to the number of resistance strategies employed by victims. These additional analyses are available upon request.