

# Modus operandi of persons convicted of a sexual offense from victims' perspectives in a Turkish sample

European Journal of Criminology  
2023, Vol. 20(4) 1390–1410  
© The Author(s) 2021  
Article reuse guidelines:  
sagepub.com/journals-permissions  
DOI: 10.1177/14773708211040446  
journals.sagepub.com/home/euc



**Burak M. Gonultas (Gönültaş)** 

Sivas Cumhuriyet University, Turkey

**Emek Yüce Zeyrek-Rios**

Mardin Artuklu University, Turkey

**David Lester**

Stockton University, USA

## Abstract

Child sexual abuse is typically studied using reports from the offender and in Western countries. The aim of the present study was to investigate pre- and post-abuse strategies of persons convicted of a sexual offense to children in Turkey using the statements made by the child victims and to frame the results using rational choice theory. A qualitative study was made for the themes in the police statements from 46 children who were victims of child sexual abuse. The content analysis revealed that persons convicted of a sexual offense to children differ in terms of their methods to approach children and in their pre- and post-abuse behaviors depending on their relationship with the victim. A total of 85% of the offenses were extra-familial and 15% within the family. Only 21% of the extra-familial offenses were opportunist; most involved bribes and introductions through friends or intermediaries. Two tactics unique to Turkey were promises of marriage and the use of children as intermediaries. The use of force and blackmail was more common in the intra-familial offenses. The results of the qualitative analysis were, on the whole, consistent with results from persons convicted of a sexual offense to children's statements, but some of the tactics used by offenders in Turkey were unique to Turkish culture.

---

## Corresponding author:

Burak M. Gonultas (Gönültaş), Department of Social Work, Sivas Cumhuriyet University, Faculty of Letters, Merkez Kampüs, Sivas, Turkey.

Email: mburakgonultas@gmail.com

## Keywords

Child sexual abuse, crime investigation, persons convicted of a sexual offense to children, rational choice theory

## Introduction

Research on sexual offenders has been developing (Seto, 2019). Since the 1980s the research and awareness of child sexual abuse (CSA) have increased (Plummer, 2018), but it is still limited, especially in non-western nations (Liang and Hu, 2018) such as Turkey. Statistics on sexual abuse and offenders is unavailable for research purposes, and the data available lack sufficient detail to draw conclusions. In Istanbul, in 2009–2012, the suspects investigated for CSA crimes were males ( $n = 167$ ) with a mean age of 35 years (Gönültaş, 2013). Only 0.5% of the offenders were illiterate, 17% were unemployed, and 43% were self-employed.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, empirical studies began to appear that attempted to understand sex offenders from a criminological perspective (Abel et al., 1988; Berliner and Conte, 1990; Hanson and Bussiere, 1996). A major line of research was on the modus operandi of sex offenders and the interaction between the offender and the victim (Leclerc and Tremblay, 2007). Previous research suggested that the key characteristic of sex offenders lies in the way in which they commit the offense (Beauregard et al., 2012; Kaufman et al., 1998; Leclerc et al., 2009, 2011; Smallbone and Wortley, 2001; Ward and Hudson, 1998). Despite this, there were few studies that examined the methods that sex offenders used to approach children and their offending strategies (Plummer, 2018). Furthermore, only a limited number of studies investigated the victims' perspective (e.g. Berliner and Conte, 1990; Gönültaş, 2013; Katz and Barnett, 2016; Plummer, 2018; Van Gijn and Lamb, 2013), especially in Turkey. Therefore, the current study makes a significant contribution to the literature as it aims to describe from the victims' perspective the forms and methods of the persons convicted of a sexual offense to children's (PCSOC's) approach. By analyzing these within the framework of rational choice theory, the research highlights several inferences about the decision-making processes that PCSOCs apply while committing the crime (Cornish and Clarke, 2002). Thus, the current research seeks to expand the literature on CSA by highlighting the criminological dimension through the addition of the victims' perspective.

## Theoretical background

### *Rational choice theory and decision-making process*

Rational choice theory is an important tool in explaining how sex offenders approach children and why they follow certain strategies (Beauregard et al., 2012; Plummer, 2018). This theory offers a specific theoretical framework designed to examine the criminal decision-making process (Beauregard and Leclerc, 2007; Clarke and Felson, 1993). According to this approach, crime is an effective means of obtaining one's desired goals (money, status, sexual pleasure, etc.), and criminals commit offenses for this reason (Cornish and Clarke, 2002; Gönültaş and Sahin, 2018). The determination of decision-making processes, along

with offense methods, is crucial in understanding the mechanisms underlying the offenses. Criminals decide to offend by weighing the associated costs and benefits. The decision-making process involves a level of rationality despite influences from a wide variety of situational factors (skills, time constraints, meeting conditions involving the target, etc.). In this sense, criminals improve their decision-making process and adapt their strategies over time (Leclerc and Tremblay, 2007). Situational variables determine the nature and sequence of the offender's actions, thus requiring a conceptual framework to explain all related decision-making processes (Lussier and Beauregard, 2014). In this context, observing how a specific crime (e.g. from the perspective of the victim) progresses can allow researchers to make inferences about the decision-making process.

*Progression of the sexual abuse.* Research regarding the progression of sexual abuse has shown that abusive acts are ruled by choices (Proulx et al., 1999), and the offenders' pre- and post-abuse decision-making processes are determined by situational and environmental factors (Wortley and Smallbone, 2006). The strategies adopted by sex offenders vary according to situational variables such as whether the offender is known to the victim, the seclusion of the location, and the victim's vulnerability. Furthermore, these factors also shape the offender's mode of approach (manipulative, coercive, non-deceptive, opportunist-non-persuasive, etc.) (Gönültaş and Sahin, 2018; Leclerc and Proulx, 2018; Proulx et al., 1995), a finding supported by the present research.

Research has shown that 47% of offenders engage in sexual contact directly, without using manipulation or deceit (Leclerc et al., 2006). In these cases, the offenders take advantage of the victim's vulnerable status, such as sleeping or showering, thereby displaying an "opportunity" (Leclerc et al., 2006; Leclerc and Proulx, 2018). The progression of sexual abuse is such:

1. *Pre-abuse phase: Preparation*

- (i) First, it is important that the offender can identify the child and approach him/her (Cornish, 1998). The main situational factor that determines this step is the presence of the perpetrator inside or outside of the victim's house (Deslauriers-Varin and Beauregard, 2010; Plummer, 2018). The most important determinant in cases in which the abuser is inside the house is accessibility to the victim. The offender is physically close to the child and can easily create an isolated environment. The child's vulnerability while sleeping creates an opportunity for abuse much more quickly (McAlinden, 2013; Smallbone and Wortley, 2001). In cases in which the perpetrator is outside the house, the determining factor for the child's vulnerability is individual factors and the lack of guardianship (Plummer, 2018). For offenders outside the house, approaching a child requires more precise risk assessments (Holt and Massey, 2012; McAlinden, 2013), and, therefore, a more complex decision-making process. While planning an offense, these individuals work at or volunteer for locations like schools or parks where they can have access to children (Colton et al., 2010). In both cases, accessing a vulnerable child is a result of a series of rational choices.

- (ii) Second, it is important to gain the child's trust and exert control over him/her (Cornish, 1998). For this, the offender employs strategies such as bribery, isolation of the child in order to leave him/her defenseless, desensitization of the child through sexualization, and coercion (Plummer, 2018). In this phase, offenders also use prosocial behaviors such as being a friend with the child and/or the family (Cornish, 1998; Gönültaş, 2016a). Bribery is used to gain the children's trust by manipulating them and taking advantage of their fragile state, often in the form of giving gifts, rewards, compliments, or privileges which aim to make the children feel special (Berliner and Conte, 1990; Colton et al., 2010).

Offenders use methods like bribery to separate children from their providers of emotional and physical support, isolate them, and leave them defenseless (Cornish, 1998; Craven et al., 2006). This also includes a rational mode of action by avoiding potential eyewitnesses (Kaufman et al., 1998; Plummer, 2018). In this stage, offenders aim to gain control over children by taking them away from a safe place using closeness or friendship as a bond (Cornish, 1998; Gönültaş, 2013; Plummer, 2018). In a study conducted by Gönültaş (2013) on a sample in Istanbul ( $n = 202$ ), 69% of offenders succeeded in isolating the child through bribery and manipulation which was followed by the abusive acts.

Desensitization of the child through sexualization starts with a seemingly "innocent" touch (such as wrestling, cleaning the child after getting dirty) that seems to be a friendly approach but which subsequently escalates into sexual abuse (Colton et al., 2010; McAlinden, 2013; Smallbone and Wortley, 2001). Offenders also resorted to pornography to desensitize children with the goal of making them accept sexual behavior as normal (Cornish, 1998; Kaufman et al., 1998). Coercion involves the use of threats and force. The offenders use elements of emotional coercion to force obedience immediately before the abuse occurs (Berliner and Conte, 1990). At this point, the perpetrator can also apply physical force. In one study, some perpetrators (25%) used both verbal and physical coercion to prevent victims, particularly young victims, from escaping and resisting (Beauregard et al., 2007). In Gönültaş's sample (2013), just before committing the abuse, many perpetrators resorted to threats and physical constraints from which only 20% of the victims escaped.

2. *Post-offense phase*: After the offense, perpetrators engage in behaviors to prevent victims from disclosing the abuse, often using both bribery and threats (Cornish, 1998; Plummer, 2018; Smallbone and Wortley, 2001). Frequently used threats include harming the family if the abuse is disclosed, discontinuing the bribes and privileges that were previously given, and making the child believe that they would be held responsible for the abuse if the offender claimed that they had consented (Campbell, 2009). The threat of harming a family member took place mostly in cases of abuse within homes (Goodman-Brown et al., 2003).

*Offenders' methods: From the victims' perspective.* To uncover the progression of CSA, the literature suggests two methods, one from the offenders' perspective and the other from

the victims' perspective (Berliner and Conte, 1990). Most studies investigating the methods used by sex offenders rely on the offenders' perspective. These studies run the risk of the offenders intentionally or unintentionally distorting the truth, hiding information to avoid further sentencing, or simply misleading the researchers for the sake of it (Proulx et al., 1999; Van Gijn and Lamb, 2013). In countries such as Turkey where it is difficult to work with CSA offenders due to legal procedures and obtaining permission, studying the offenders' strategies from the victims' perspective can be a meaningful alternative. Using the victim's description of the offense can provide an opportunity to uncover more details of the initial contact, approach, and grooming methods (Gönültaş, 2016b). In addition, Beauregard et al. (2012) found that a distinguishing characteristic of child sex offenders is the strategy they adopt during commission of the offense. Furthermore, the most important evidence of abuse in most CSA cases is the statement from the child (American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect, 1999; Lamb et al., 1998).

Research has shown that there are both covert and overt pathways to CSA (Proulx et al., 1999). The covert pathways include the perpetrator's sexual fantasies and can be obtained only from the perpetrators themselves, and this information is often heavily influenced by distortion, manipulation, and cognitive biases. The overt pathways are the ways in which the abuse takes place and the modus operandi (MO) of the perpetrator. Overt pathways are easier to investigate and uncover than are covert pathways. The examination of MO provides a more objective analysis of the offense, and the details can be obtained from the victim or an eyewitness, supported by actual forensic evidences (e.g. CCTV images, physical/medical examinations, DNA samples, etc.). Thus, we can make inferences on evidence of rationality of PCSOCs via victim statements.

Qualitative analysis is shown to be effective in revealing the overt pathways in CSA (Noakes and Wincup, 2004). The current research examines the MO of the offenders based on victim statements with the goal of uncovering the overt pathways to CSA by using qualitative analysis. Research investigating the overt pathways relying on victim statements has provided significant results in the past. The existing literature has mainly focused on the steps that CSA offenders take and the specific methods they use while approaching their victims (Berliner and Conte, 1990; Gönültaş, 2013; Katz and Barnetz, 2016; Plummer, 2018; Van Gijn and Lamb, 2013). For instance, in an Australian sample, Plummer (2018) highlighted the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim and methods such as inducements, bribery, and close ties, in addition to the use of coercion by offenders in order to obtain victim compliance prior to the abuse and silence afterward. Other Western studies have shown that the sexual abuse took place gradually (sexualization, etc.) by increasing the physical intimacy before the abuse, followed by coercive methods at the time of the abuse (e.g. Berliner and Conte, 1990; Katz and Barnetz, 2016; Plummer, 2018; Van Gijn and Lamb, 2013). Similar results were obtained by Gönültaş (2013) in a Turkish sample. The post-abuse methods that the offenders use in order to prevent victims from disclosing the abuse were also found to be similar both in Western and Turkish samples, namely threat, manipulation, and bribery (i.e. Gönültaş, 2013; Taşğın and Sarı, 2014; Van Gijn and Lamb, 2013). However, research findings are not clear about how the perpetrators make the initial contact with children and the methods that are used by perpetrators to approach children in the first phase (pre-abuse phase). Uncovering the methods adopted

by extra-familial offenders when approaching children is very important, especially in prevention and criminal investigations. Thus, research identifying these methods is necessary. The present research aimed to uncover these methods and the socio-cultural connotations of them in order to address the aforementioned gap in the literature.

## Method

### *Research design*

A qualitative research method is preferred in order to uncover the details of the PCSOC's MO from the victims' perspective based on victim statements obtained during the forensic interview. Qualitative method provides rich information especially for research in criminology (Noakes and Wincup, 2004). To minimize any psychological harm to the participants and to protect the victims from any further ill-treatment, secondary data analysis was conducted using the victims' statements following the guidelines of *Journal Article Reporting Standards for Qualitative Research (JARS-Qual)* (Levitt et al., 2018), as well as standards proposed by the American Psychological Association (APA) for the research design. The statements underwent content analysis and the frequencies of each behavior were presented based on the age and relationship of the victims and perpetrators. We report how we determined our sample size, all data exclusions, and all measures in the study.

### *Data collection*

Istanbul Child Protection Unit (ICPU) (in Istanbul Police Department) has a special team responsible for investigating child abuse cases. They are particularly specialized in the investigation of serial and unidentified sexual abuse cases. These cases are mostly extra-familial cases. This unit has rooms that are specifically designed to have effective interviews with children. The Governorship of Istanbul issued permission to use only the CSA cases from 2012 that resulted in a conviction and that were archived ( $n = 97$ ). Each investigation file contained crime scene investigation reports, forensic reports, victims' statements, and the testimonies by witnesses, parents, and offenders. Each file was reviewed for the adequacy of information for the interaction between the PCSOC and the victim, details about the pre- and post-abuse behaviors of the offenders, and how the perpetrator and the victim had met in extra-familial cases. The files that did not have adequate information regarding these issues were eliminated ( $n = 51$ ), and the rest were rendered anonymous and analyzed ( $n = 46$ ).

In the process of investigating sexual abuse, the victims' statements have a critical importance for both identifying and understanding the nature of the offense and for legal and rehabilitation purposes (prosecutorial and judicial processes, psychological treatment, and rehabilitation of the victims, etc.) (American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect, 1999; Doğangün et al., 2016). Hence, according to the relevant Turkish law, the process of obtaining the victims' statements was conducted professionally and carefully in order to prevent the re-questioning of the victims during the criminal justice processes and to prevent further traumatization of the children. The victims' statements included in the current research were the outcome of 50–70 min interviews. The interviews

consisted of four phases. The first two phases are the pre-interview phases in which the child's identifying information is obtained (name, age, etc.) and the child is being informed about the procedure and being prepared for the forensic interview (~15–25 min). The third phase is the forensic interview phase which lasts ~30 min. The last phase includes informing the child and his/her family about how to reach for help after the judicial procedure finishes (~5–10 min).

"All of these forensic interviews include specific questions about the identity of the abuser, when and where the abuse took place, the duration of abuse, type of abuse, the presence of violence, and/or threats. These interviews are conducted by asking the victim open-ended questions" (Doğangün et al., 2016). The forensic interviews were initially recorded on camera under the supervision of a social worker and a psychologist, and then the records were transcribed by an expert investigator. Therefore, these records are valid, and they contain rich information about the incidents. The typed statements were mostly 3–3.5 pages in length (including the identifying information of parties, information about offense, and consents). This method provided an opportunity to portray the abuse from the victim's very own perspective and in their own words (Doğangün et al., 2016).

### *Sample*

The mean age of the child victims was 12.5 ranging from 9 to 15; 62% were female ( $n = 29$ ) and 38% were male ( $n = 17$ ); 56.5% of the children were the victims of penetrative abuse ( $n = 26$ ). The mean age for the PCSOCs was 32.6, ranging between 19 and 63. Most of the PCSOC's were extra-familial (84.8%,  $n = 39$ ). They included neighbors from the same building complex, someone introduced by a friend or a relative, someone who was met through Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) (50% Facebook, 35% MSN, 15% SMS), or someone who got physically close opportunistically (while working on the street or at a bazaar, sitting at the park, or playing computer games at an internet cafe). The intra-familial PCSOCs were most commonly the father, a sibling, or an uncle (15.2%,  $n = 7$ ).

### *Data analysis*

Every statement was read, common points about incidents were determined, and the content was analyzed by the research team that included a forensic science expert and an investigative psychologist. An initial codebook was developed via statements. Further discussions and reviews of coding followed the initial development of the codebook in order to obtain consensus. This process is detailed in Table 1. The final inter-rater reliability was 87% based on the calculations suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) (the number of agreements was divided by the sum of total agreements and disagreements). Using the codebook, the data were tabulated, digitized, and entered into SPSS for Windows, then analyzed.

The foundational concepts were determined in terms of pre- and post-abuse actions of PCSOCs (Tables 2 to 4) and the ways different types of PCSOCs differ from one another. In the current research, the methods, behaviors, strategies, etc. adopted by offenders before or after the abuse are labeled as attitude or behavior.

**Table 1.** Data analysis process.

Stage 1	Research team pulled a sample of 46 victim statements. Statements were de-identified.
Stage 2	Each researcher read a sample of 10 random statements and identified themes and categories
Stage 3	Researchers discussed themes and categories that each had identified based on the statements they read. After careful discussions, the initial codebook was developed
Stage 4	The team recorded the initial statements ( $n = 10$ ) using the codebook.
Stage 5	The team met again. The consensus was achieved on the 10 statements and codebook refined.
Stage 6	The team members individually coded all cases according to the codebook with interrater reliability of 72%. After careful discussions on the themes that they disagreed on, the second round of coding was conducted which yielded an IRR of 87%.

Notes: IRR: inter-rater reliability.

The pre-abuse actions of offenders differ based on the opportunity to have physical proximity to the child, and/or the methods they use to approach them. Under the pre-abuse phase, three sub-themes were identified. The first categorization was based on the nature of the relationship between the offender and the victim, especially if the offender was a family member or not. The second sub-theme is the MO of offenders. This theme includes the stages of initial contact with the child and the increasing physical proximity to start the act of abuse. Extra-familial offenders are differentiated in this stage either by engaging in sexual grooming behaviors (strategic offenders) or simply skipping this step and engaging in sexual abuse during the initial contact (opportunistic). The differentiation was not observed for intra-familial offenders as they already had physical proximity to the child. The third sub-theme included the specific actions that the PCSOCs engaged in and were seen as rational. For instance, to form the “initial contact” (second sub-theme), one offender had used another child as an intermediary (third sub-theme) while another one had sent a friend request on social media (third sub-theme).

The post-abuse phase consists of two sub-themes. In this phase, offenders were not differentiated because both types of offenders engaged in similar behaviors after the abuse took place. The second sub-theme consists of behaviors that are functional in terms of preventing the child from disclosing the abuse and are seen as rational. Quotes are placed as examples to support our categories.

### *Ethical considerations*

The Governorship of Istanbul and Istanbul University Cerrahpaşa School of Medicine Ethics Committee issued the necessary permissions. Consent is generally not an issue when using archival research (McKee and Porter, 2012). However, the gathering method of the original data can be a concern. The study obtained the data voluntarily under the supervision of a social worker and/or psychologist. Nevertheless, even if the data come from a secondary source, the principles of confidentiality must still be followed (Socio-Legal Studies Association, 2009). To assure confidentiality, we used only the participants’ initials and included no other identifying information. Moreover, we protected the data in a locked safe, with the password known only by researchers.



**Table 2.** The extra-familial PCSOCs' attitudes during the pre-abuse phase.

I. Sub-theme	Modus operandi	N	2. Sub-theme	3. Sub-theme	N	Quote/exemplar of categories
Extra-Familial PCSOCs	Strategic	31	Initial contact	Introduced by someone from the family-an acquaintance Introduced by a friend of the child (intermediary) Sending friend requests-text messages	5 20 6	In the place where the Saturday open market is set up, my friend called E. introduced me to someone named uncle K., who is elder and has a Hyundai minibus. My friend told me that K. is his uncle. He also told me that his uncle would take me and my friend for a ride and entertain us if I want so ... (E/S-1) When I logged in to my Facebook account, I saw that someone named C.M. sent me a friendship request I thought he might be one of the people I knew so I accepted his friendship request. After I accepted the request, he appeared online and immediately said hi to me. Then I replied hi to him and he asked me if we could get to know each other. (E/S-2) I was close to the location of p. Pizza, which is in our building complex. Uncle K. came and called me to the door of his apartment to give me one of his old phones that he no longer used and I went there. Later, he told me that it would take a while to find the phone and asked me to wait inside. I waited for him in his living room ...." (E/S-3) We got on the yellow car of this man. After riding in his car for a while he took us to the bazaar in E. and bought us stuff like coke and cake from the grocery store there. Later he dropped us by the s. Building complex and gave me and my friend 15 lira each. I thought this man was a good person. (E/S-4)
			Pre-abuse experience with PCSOC	Buying food, buying chocolates, buying skates, buying a phone, giving money	25	

(Continued)

**Table 2.** (Continued)

I. Sub-theme	Modus operandi	N	2. Sub-theme	3. Sub-theme	N	Quote/exemplar of categories
						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>... when we were looking at some magazines on the coffee table while sitting in the guest room, there were magazines with naked people on them under the other magazines. On the television, there is a paused video showing a naked man and a woman in bed. I told the man 'what are you doing why are you watching these shameful things?' The person answered me 'what is wrong with this, you will do the same when you grow up.' then, he started to rub against me ...." (E/S-5)</li> </ul>
		6	Introducing to the family-I will marry you-I will have a family with you		6	C. told me that I was a type of girl that he would want to get married to. ... that I am a good girl who would make a good wife and a mother. He wanted to introduce me to his parents. That's why I went to his house with him. I trusted him because he was going to marry me. But there was no one at home ... (E/S-6)
Opportunistic		8	Help-ask for help, fake identity	Sudden attack by approaching	6	I went to the internet café close to my home. Here, a man next to my pc table at the café who is around 20–25 years old, medium height and a little overweight came to me and asked me if i could open a porn video for him. Then from his pc I entered google, wrote down the word porn and meanwhile on my pc my Facebook page was open. The man told me that his name was D.C.T. and asked me to add him on Facebook and I added him. (E/O-1)

**Table 3.** The intra-familial PCSOCs' attitudes during the pre-abuse phase.

I. Sub-theme	N	2. Sub-theme	3. Sub-theme	N	Quote/exemplar of categories
Intra-familial PCSOCs	7	Contact resulted in the abuse	Child is sleeping-unguarded	3	... my mother and my grandmother were cooking in the kitchen. My siblings were with them as well. I was eating fruits in the balcony. When I was sitting in balcony, my uncle H. came and suddenly took me on his lap and put me in his bed in the balcony. He pulled down my pajamas and panties ... (I-1)
			Child is playing-unguarded	2	
			Child is alone without having mother-father at home-unguarded	2	
		Experience with PCSOC	6	Threat-blackmail-force Promise	

**Table 4.** PCSOCs' attitudes during the post-abuse phase.

I. Sub-theme	n	2. Sub-theme	n	Quote/exemplar of categories
Extra-familial PCSOCs	39	Bribe	13	... what happened here has to stay here, ok? If you ever tell anyone I will tell others that you wanted it. That's what I will tell everybody, and people will believe me and accuse you. (E/PA-1)
		Threat	11	
		Warning	9	
Intra-familial PCSOCs	7	Warning-threat	6	... while we were residing in the district of S., my father cornered me when there was no one at home. He started to touch my boobs over my clothes. I told my father that I would tell on him to my mother. However, my father threatened me with beating up my mother. I didn't tell anyone what happened because I was afraid of my father ... (I-2) ... after this man did these things to me, told me not to tell anyone what he had done to me and that he gave me money, or he would kill me. I didn't tell anyone about anything because I was afraid of him (I-3)
		Warning	2	
		Threat	4	
		Bribe	1	

## Results

### Pre-abuse main theme

#### Extra-familial PCSOCs

*Initial contact.* When examining the means of meeting used by the extra-familial PCSOCs, it was found that the most common type used was an introduction through friends or family members. For the rest of the sample, either the child met the PCSOC for the first time or was contacted through CMC (Table 2, E/S-2). According to the

victims' statements, their first reaction to an extra-familial individual approaching them was to avoid or resist their efforts to get closer. Consequently, if the children were prevented from avoiding or resisting the PCSOCs during the initial contact, it was much easier to get close to them and establish rapport. For extra-familial PCSOCs, a common method used to meet a potential victim was through an intermediary or an acquaintance. The intermediary was often a friend of the child who was a previous victim of the same PCSOC. Generally, this friend approached the child while playing in the neighborhood, introduced an older person as a relative or a "good person" and invited the target child to the adult's place accompanied with a tempting offer. In our sample, there were five intermediaries. They were all boys and their mean age was 11 years. They were abused by PCSOCs, and they were directed to other friends or children by the offender giving the intermediary a privilege (money, mobile phone) ( $n = 4$ ) and by blackmail ( $n = 1$ ). In cases where the victims met the PCSOCs through CMC, the PCSOCs sent a friendship request to the victims' social media account (generally Facebook), and the victims, being curious about the person, initiated conversation after accepting the request.

*Pre-abuse experience with PCSOCs.* According to the victims' statements, PCSOCs got physically close to victims after the first phase (initial contact). In the analysis of this phase, the study uncovered the verbal and behavioral cues that helped the PCSOCs get physically close to victims. The PCSOCs succeeded in this through certain expressions and behaviors. These attitudes lured the children from a safe location (such as their homes or in front of their houses, schools, etc.) to the PCSOCs' house or an alternative location such as parks, cars, or secluded places in buildings. Hence, the victims entered the control zone of the PCSOC. The extra-familial PCSOCs utilized methods that allowed them to get physically close to the victims, most often tools like giving money, buying chocolate, buying phones, buying food, taking the victims for a ride, buying skates, and making promises (e.g. "I will marry you," "I will introduce you to my family," or "I want to have a family with you") (Table 2, E/S-6). They used these methods to approach victims and lure them from safe locations to locations that were spatially under the PCSOCs' control.

During this phase, the victims developed a feeling of trust toward the PCSOCs and allowed them to get physically closer, even describing them as "a good person." At this point, they started to spend time together, and the PCSOCs started to show some sexually explicit material to the children ( $n = 27$ ). During a considerable part of this phase, the PCSOCs exposed the victims to sexually enticing behaviors, such as greeting the victims in their underwear while opening the door, showing their sexual organs through torn pajamas or pants, and keeping pornographic magazines in the victims' sight or having pornographic visuals on TV/mobile phones/computers (generally laptops). If victims felt uncomfortable, the PCSOCs would try to reassure the child (e.g. "You will also do these kinds of things when you grow up" or "These are the facts of life") in order to normalize the behavior. This phase, which progressed into the act of abuse, was critical because the offenders got physically close to the victims through behaviors like sitting next to them, taking them on their laps, or hugging. At this point, the PCSOCs were physically very close to the victims and the acts of sexual abuse occurred.

When examining whether the victims were aware of the forthcoming acts of abuse, we found that most victims identified that something was wrong (87%,  $n = 26$ ). Some attempted to move away from the PCSOC by crying, while some attempted to escape but could not succeed. Some of them could not react because they were afraid. If the victims showed any resistance, the PCSOCs used coercion—verbally and physically violent methods (yelling, threatening with death, threatening with informing their fathers, squeezing arms, and using physical force on the child, etc.). The use of threats and force typically made the victims obedient during the abuse.

The second type involved opportunistic PCSOCs. We observed that these extra-familial PCSOCs often approached the children asking for or offering help (Table 2, E/O-1). Some extra-familial PCSOCs met the victims at the time of the abuse (opportunistic), and these victims were alone or not with their guardians (mothers, fathers, teachers, babysitters, etc.). Here, the victims were not lured or taken somewhere else, but the abuse took place directly where the PCSOCs met the victims or somewhere very close-by. The most common methods used were violent acts such as force, threats, or blackmailing, and the offenders were thereby able to become close to the children and acquired a superior position (Table 2, E/O-1).

Immediately before the abuse, the child victim's chance of escape was very low. The key determinant of this process was the PCSOC being close to the child and being in control. In this phase, the means used by the offender included a verbal or tangible reward that attracted the child's interest. This phase was the first and most important in order to have the victim under spatial control. According to our research, while the children were distracted by rewards (playing computer games, eating cakes, playing with toys, playing with the mobile phone, etc.), the PCSOCs started to direct certain sexual behaviors toward the children, which is also considered sexual abuse. However, these behaviors were intended to direct the children's attention to sexual subjects and assessing their reactions. If the PCSOCs encountered resistance at this point, they persuaded the children with expressions (e.g. "You will do the same when you grow up"). After that point, the offenders succeeded in getting physically close to the children (sitting next to them, hugging, taking them on the lap, etc.), who were then under their spatial control.

At this stage, the victims could still react to the PCSOCs, and they sometimes tried to escape when hugged or made to sit on the PCSOC's lap. However, this was the time when the PCSOCs were physically closest to the victims, and the PCSOCs (both extra- and intra-familial) succeeded in breaking the child's last resistance before the act of abuse through coercive violent behaviors (holding the child tightly and shaking, threatening, blackmailing, etc.). After that point, the victims were under the total control of the PCSOCs, and the act of abuse followed. In this phase, there was almost no chance of escape for the victims.

*Intra-familial PCSOCs.* The domestic cases, where the abuse occurred within the home, differed from the extra-familial cases. In intra-familial cases, the victims were generally alone or sleeping and unguarded during the incident of abuse (Table 3, I-1, 2, 3). The PCSOCs approached the victims and succeeded in ensuring direct physical intimacy. The PCSOCs became physically closest to the child through behaviors and expressions.

Whereas in the case of extra-familial PCSOCs, the physical intimacy increased step-by-step and resulted in physical closeness with the child, in the case of intra-familial PCSOCs, the direct physical intimacy was easier to obtain as a result of regular domestic routines (such as putting the child to sleep for the night).

### *Post-abuse main theme*

Qualitative analysis revealed that PCSOCs generally engaged in verbal or behavioral interactions with the children after the act of abuse. In extra-familial cases, most commonly the PCSOCs gave money to the child (bribery). These PCSOCs also gave warnings (e.g. “Do not tell your family or the police”) to accompany the bribery. The children said that they thought that the PCSOC would really hurt them which were why they did not inform anyone. In all intra-familial cases, the PCSOCs threatened, warned, and used manipulative ideas (e.g. “I’ll kill you if you tell anyone,” “I’ll inform your father about what happened,” “You wanted it,” “We wouldn’t have done it if you hadn’t wanted to,” or “Do not tell anyone about what happened”) after the act of abuse (Table 4, E/PA-1).

## **Discussion**

The purpose of the present research was to identify the methods of approach used by PCSOCs based on statements from the victims. Our findings on rational choices can be viewed as inferences of rationality from victim reports of their interaction with the offenders. Therefore, we use the term “evidence of rationality” when analyzing their perceptions.

The PCSOCs in the present study (both intra- and extra-familial PCSOCs) were shown to approach children and commit the offense by the following rational processes. Some PCSOCs use violent or coercive methods, but others employ more subtle methods to lure children to the site of abuse and to ensure silence after the abuse. In extra-familial cases, the PCSOCs approach the victims gradually and often become physically close by using bribery and deceit; whereas in intra-familial cases, the PCSOCs use more coercive methods. Our finding is consistent with previous research. For example, Plummer (2018) showed that deceptive methods occur frequently in extra-familial CSA cases but are rarely used in domestic ones, and often the victims experience force and verbal threats in domestic cases. Our findings are also in line with previous studies based on the victims’ perspective (Berliner and Conte, 1990; Van Gijn and Lamb, 2013) and on the offenders’ perspective (Kaufman et al., 1998; Smallbone and Wortley, 2001).

This qualitative analysis of CSA by intra-familial and extra-familial PCSOCs indicates that the determining factor in the choice of processes that the PCSOC adopts is distance. For example, extra-familial PCSOCs may choose to use bribery to decrease the distance between themselves and the victim. This closeness helps them to gain control over the victim and carry out the abuse. Moreover, it also prevents any potential eyewitnesses. This appears to be an evidence of rationality. On the other hand, for an intra-familial PCSOC, there is no need to lure the victim because physical closeness is easily achieved. This type of PCSOC does not need to deceive the victim with prosocial behaviors that require extra time and effort. They use coercive methods directly to achieve the physical proximity needed to carry out the abuse. These PCSOCs also use coercive methods and

threats as a part of their post-offense behavioral patterns because preventing the child from disclosing the abuse is more important than it is for an offender who is a stranger to the child. The pre-offense and post-offense coercive methods are rational considering the offenders' specific situations. The differences in the processes adopted by different types of CSA offenders show that they may assess the risks and calculate the best possible method to use based on the circumstances.

In extra-familial cases, the PCSOCs use several methods in their initial approach. Previous research has identified that the initial approach methods of extra-familial CSA usually involve taking place in the child's social environment (school, children's playgrounds, coaching), befriending them, showing care and interest, and spending time with them (Beauregard et al., 2007; Plummer, 2018; Smallbone and Wortley, 2001). These PCSOCs are either from the local social environment (neighbors), or they access the child through an intermediary (social media, another child). In the initial approach, the PCSOCs often used bribery (such as a mobile phone, chocolate, skating), a promise, or a privilege (riding by car). The findings of our study are generally consistent with the existing literature, but we found that PCSOCs sometimes approach their potential victims by using another child as an intermediary. We believe that the intermediary method may serve two purposes:

- The victims develop trust towards the PCSOCs and become interested in them because there is a trusted friend involved, which thereby decreases the child's potential resistance and suspicion.
- There is no need to use any coercive methods because using an intermediary provides protection for the PCSOC from the children's parents or potential guardians (neighbor, teacher, relatives, etc.). Children who are supervised constitute a higher risk for PCSOCs. Such children are more likely to avoid being approached by strangers, and the PCSOCs try to reduce these risks by using an intermediary. This appears to be evidence of rationality that PCSOCs follow in order to increase their chances of success.

The qualitative analysis reveals that extra-familial PCSOCs who choose victims that they do not know often approach the children by asking for or by offering help. Beauregard et al. (2007), who examined CSA from the offenders' perspective, found that most offenders (48%) approach children through a fake or deceptive identity approach. In these cases, to get physically close to children, offenders approach the potential victim with the excuse of asking for help (e.g. asking the time), and our findings are in line with these results. The PCSOCs appear to take advantage of the children's vulnerability and lack of self-protection. Thus, using a fake identity to approach a child appears to be evidence of rationality for the PCSOC.

The methods of deception (bribery, promise, privilege, etc.) used in the initial meeting phase lure the children from a safe location to a place where they are isolated and under the PCSOC's control. Initially, the victims spend time with the PCSOCs, roaming, playing in the house of the perpetrator, etc. At this point, in most cases, the PCSOCs may show sexual material (such as pornography) to the children in order to desensitize them and normalize sexual activity, and it allows the offenders to get physically close to the victims.

Previous research conducted from the perspective of both the offender and the victim has shown that PCSOCs pay attention to the victims and spend time with them. It has also been found that by engaging in some seemingly innocent touches, which turns into sexual touches, and by showing pornographic material, the offender increases the physical proximity gradually (Beauregard et al., 2007; Berliner and Conte, 1990; Kaufman et al., 1998; Leclerc and Proulx, 2018; Plummer, 2018; Smallbone and Wortley, 2001). Our findings are in line with literature findings.

In the current study, one of the methods used by PCSOCs differs from those previously reported, namely the “promise of marriage.” Some offenders approached their female victims by promising the child that they will get married and start a family together. The promise of marriage is an important contribution to literature in two ways: It is not about a materialistic gain as in most other methods used by offenders. Moreover, it incorporates the sociocultural characteristics of the culture into the grooming phase. As youth marriage is still common in Turkish society, despite efforts to change this, the PCSOCs may use this tradition to manipulate their victims. This method has a unique impact on the victim. The communal structure in Turkey is sensitive to family values and having a family (Zeyrek-Rios et al., 2021). The PCSOCs seem to be aware of this and abuse it by inducing the fear of rejection and invalidation of a family (as well as feelings of guilt and shame) in order to lure the child into an abusive relationship. PCSOCs appear to make calculations by taking the cultural setting into consideration, again an indicator of rationality.

As seen in the current research, the methods adopted by offenders to approach children can differ based on the socio-cultural dynamics of the society. In order to prevent CSA, each society should explore their culture-specific methods in addition to the well-studied methods that are used by CSA offenders. Secondly, the use of a promise of marriage can be beneficial in explaining the relationship between neglect and sexual abuse. The research on pedophiles shows that these offenders specifically target children who have experienced neglect in their homes (Gönültaş, 2016a). An offender who is aware of a child’s history of neglect at home and his/her needs to be part of a family can take advantage of the child’s vulnerability and manipulate her with a promise to start a family together. In summary, in societies which overvalue the institution of marriage and assign worth to females through their role as being a wife, especially girls coming from households where they were neglected, can be at a higher risk for abuse by being lured into it by the promise of marriage.

In intra-familial cases, the child is already under the PCSOC’s control spatially, and so the PCSOC can achieve physical proximity to the child faster than an extra-familial PCSOC. In their research, Kaufman et al. (1998) found that intra-familial offenders take advantage of their status over the child to ensure dominance. Leclerc and Proulx (2018) showed that non-persuasive and opportunistic strategies were more common among domestic offenders (78%). These offenders took the advantage of living in the same household and the child is asleep when engaging in abuse. The PCSOC may assume that approaching a child outside has higher risks, whereas approaching a child within the house has lower risks. Choosing a child at home appears to be evidence of rationality.

According to our findings, threat and force become essential instruments to the act of abuse in order to minimize the child’s resistance or risk of escape. When applying these



methods, the victims usually obey the offender. Here, using coercive methods may be evidence of rationality for PCSOCs because it helps them to achieve their goals. In the literature, both verbally and physically coercive methods are prevalently used by PCSOCs, especially to break the victims' resistance and prevent them from escaping (Beauregard and Leclerc, 2007; Plummer, 2018; Van Gijn and Lamb, 2013). Our findings are consistent with the literature.

In our research, we found that coercive and violent behaviors used after the abuse are useful to keep the victims silent and have them available for future abuse. Intimidation and threats after the abuse are important tools to prevent disclosure of the abuse (Berliner and Conte, 1990). Smallbone and Wortley (2001) showed that the most frequently used method to ensure the child's silence is threatening to hurt the victim's parents. Moreover, in addition, bribes such as giving money and some special privileges are common alternative methods.

By using coercive elements, such as bribery and threats, the PCSOCs seem like aiming to avoid a possible criminal case against them while increasing the likelihood of the children returning for future abuse. The PCSOCs may experience some stress resulting from the risks associated with their offenses, and they may apply coercive methods such as threatening to kill their parents or by intimidating the child by showing a weapon. In other words, in the post-abuse phase, using coercive methods appears to be evidence of rationality.

The current research had some limitations. The majority of PCSOCs in our sample were extra-familial because the ICPU mostly conducted extra-familial cases during the period studied. Furthermore, the cases that were eliminated due to incomplete information might have yielded different results, if had complete information. Thus elimination of certain cases could have potentially biased the results. More detailed examples that provide a fuller description of the strategies adopted by offenders would be more helpful. As the information originally gathered for the present study was in order to obtain evidence, the details of the interaction between the victim and the offender might not have been complete. Moreover, the applicability of the motivation-facilitation model (Seto, 2019) to Turkish offenders would be interesting. We did not have the opportunity to contact the perpetrators involved in these cases of CSA. Future research should gather data from the perpetrators themselves to understand covert pathways, their internal motivations, and possible substance consumption and its effects on their impulsivity. Future research should also use collaborative information from perpetrators, victims, and case files (expert opinions, witness statements, forensic reports, etc.) to provide a more comprehensive understanding of each case. Furthermore, our implications (especially intermediaries and grooming methods related to social structure) should be tested with more samples of victims and offenders in the future. The current study highlighted the differences in MO of offenders based on the nature of their relationship with the child (i.e. intra-familial vs extra-familial). However, the differences in MO based on the child's gender or age were not explored. Future research should aim to uncover the MO of PCSOCs based on the gender and the age of the victims, which would yield useful inferences in the context of developing prevention strategies. For example, "promise of marriage" is a unique and culturally specific finding, however, it is also important to acknowledge that it only applies to female victims. Thus, further research

should focus on whether there are different methods used for male victims (e.g. does the level of violence differ, etc.).

Another limitation is the non-inclusion of cases where the offenders deceived the victims using the Internet. The major focus of the research is the relationship and level of intimacy in explaining the strategies that different types of offenders adopt. Some offenders use the internet to find targets, stalk them online, hunt them down, and, after they gain the children's trust, lure them to a place where they abuse them. Future research should focus on CSA cases where the initial contact, as well as the pre-abuse phases, were initiated through social media. In future research, offender characteristics such as age, education, and criminal background, as well as victim characteristics and the time between the incident and the child's reaching out for help, should also be considered for analysis. However, there are legal difficulties in Turkey in reaching both victims and offenders to conduct research on CSA.

## Conclusions

The present research demonstrated that PCSOCs appear to utilize methods, techniques, and strategies to get physically close to victims and keep them under control before and during the act of the abuse. Within this framework, the study reached a general conclusion that there is some evidence of rationality on the part of CSA offenders, who may be rational in using country-specific social dynamics in order to achieve their goals. The findings such as using intermediary to approach the child, using deceptive language, showing a friendly approach, exposing children to sexually explicit material, and using the promise of marriage can be seen as examples of these types of actions during the pre-abuse phase. Using bribes, threatening, the children not to disclose the abuse are examples of the post-abuse phase. The present study also presents insights in terms of methods related to the social structure of Turkish society such as using an intermediary child and promising to start a family together.

A key message that should be taken from this research is to keep children as far from the perpetrators as possible because, once the child is physically close to the perpetrator, it is almost impossible for him/her to escape. The first practical implication regarding the prevention of CSA is directed at their parents and should inform them of useful preventive strategies. Information should include topics such as how offenders may approach children for sexual purposes, which methods they would use (e.g. the use of intermediaries), and how to ask for help. In Turkey, there is no specific training for children's guardians (parents, babysitters, etc.) about CSA offenders, their strategies of approach, and their grooming methods. Such training should be provided based on the findings of this research and that by others. The professionals working with children such as teachers and social workers should receive specific training on the methods that CSA offenders adopt to approach children. There should be an assessment of the perceptions and knowledge of these professionals regarding CSA offenders, and accurate, data-driven information should replace unrealistic ideas. Thus, the guardians can become competent guardians for the effective protection of the children.

In research on sexual abusers, the methods used by CSA offenders to approach children should focus on their decision-making processes, especially in Turkish samples and

samples from other non-Western cultures. The results of the present study and results from future studies should be used to develop preventive strategies for guardians of children and for professionals.

### Acknowledgements

The authors thank Mr Edward Michael Rios for proofreading and his contributions in improving the writing.

### Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### ORCID iD

Burak M. Gonultas (Gönültaş)  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4182-6098>

### References

- Abel GG, Becker JV, Cunningham-Rathner J, et al. (1988) Multiple paraphilic diagnoses among sex offenders. *Bulletin of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law* 16(2): 153–168.
- American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect (1999) Guidelines for the evaluation of sexual abuse of children subject review. *Pediatrics* 103: 185–191.
- Beauregard E and Leclerc B (2007) An application of the rational choice approach to the offending process of sex offenders: A closer look at the decision-making. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment* 19(2): 115–133.
- Beauregard E, Leclerc B and Lussier P (2012) Decision making in the crime commission process: Comparing rapists, child molesters, and victim-crossover sex offenders. *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 39(10): 1275–1295.
- Beauregard E, Rossmo K and Proulx J (2007) A descriptive model of the hunting process of serial sex offenders: A rational choice perspective. *Journal of Family Violence* 22(6): 449–463.
- Berliner L and Conte JR (1990) The process of victimization: The victims' perspective. *Child Abuse & Neglect* 14(1): 29–40.
- Campbell AM (2009) False faces and broken lives: An exploratory study of the interaction behaviors used by male sex offenders in relating to victims. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 28(4): 428–440.
- Clarke RV and Felson M (1993) Introduction: Criminology, routine activity, and rational choice. In: Clarke RV and Felson M (eds) *Routine Activity and Rational Choice: Advances in Criminological Theory*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publications, 4–27.
- Colton M, Roberts S and Vanstone M (2010) Sexual abuse by men who work with children. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse* 19(3): 345–364.
- Cornish DB (1998) Regulating lifestyles: a rational choice perspective. In: 7th international seminar on environmental criminology and crime analysis, Barcelona, Spain.
- Cornish DB and Clarke RV (2002) Crime as a rational choice. In: Cote S (eds) *Criminological Theories: Bridging the Past to the Future*. London: Sage, 291–311.

- Craven S, Brown S and Gilchrist E (2006) Sexual grooming of children: Review of literature and theoretical considerations. *Journal of Sexual Aggression* 12(3): 287–299.
- Deslauriers-Varin N and Beauregard E (2010) Victims' routine activities and sex offenders' target selection scripts: A latent class analysis. *Sexual Abuse* 22(3): 315–342.
- Doğangün B, Gönültaş BM, Uzun-Oğuz E, et al. (2016) Psychological complaints reported by sexually abused children during criminal investigations: Istanbul example. *Child Abuse & Neglect* 56: 54–61.
- Gönültaş BM (2013) The examination of common features of suspects' expressions and the construction of sexual violence cases against children. PhD diss., Forensic Science Institute of Istanbul University.
- Gönültaş BM (2016a) Cinsel istismarcıların çocuklara yaklaşım metot ve teknikleri. *Journal of World of Turks/Zeitschrift für die Welt der Türken* 8(1): 289–305.
- Gönültaş BM (2016b) The importance of victim statement process of child sexual abuse cases. *The Journal of Academic Social Science* 4(23): 274–289.
- Gönültaş BM and Sahin B (2018) Event locations in extra-familial child sexual molestation cases: The Istanbul example. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 62(5): 1164–1178.
- Goodman-Brown TB, Edelstein R, Goodman G, et al. (2003) Why children tell: A model of children's disclosure of sexual abuse. *Child Abuse & Neglect* 27(5): 525–540.
- Hanson RK and Bussiere MT (1996) *Predictors of Sexual Offender Recidivism: A Meta-Analysis*. Ottawa: Ministry of the Solicitor General of Canada.
- Holt K and Massey C (2012) Sexual preference or opportunity: An examination of situational factors by gender of victims of clergy abuse. *Sexual Abuse* 25(6): 606–621.
- Katz C and Barnett Z (2016) Children's narratives of alleged child sexual abuse offender behaviors and the manipulation process. *Psychology of Violence* 6(2): 223–232.
- Kaufman K, Holmberg JK, Orts KA, et al. (1998) Factors influencing sexual offenders' modus operandi: An examination of victim-offender relatedness and age. *Child Maltreatment* 3(4): 349–361.
- Lamb ME, Sternberg KJ and Esplin PW (1998) Conducting investigative interviews of alleged sexual abuse victims. *Child Abuse & Neglect* 22(8): 813–823.
- Leclerc B, Carpentier J and Proulx J (2006) Strategies adopted by sexual offenders to involve children in sexual activity. *Crime Prevention Studies* 19: 251–261.
- Leclerc B and Proulx B (2018) An opportunity view of child sexual offending: Investigating non-persuasion and circumstances of offending through criminological lens. *Sexual Abuse* 30(7): 869–882.
- Leclerc B, Proulx J and Beauregard E (2009) Examining the modus operandi of sexual offenders against children and its practical implications. *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 14(1): 5–12.
- Leclerc B and Tremblay P (2007) Strategic behavior in adolescent sexual offenses against children: Linking modus operandi to sexual behaviors. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment* 19(1): 23–41.
- Leclerc B, Wortley R and Smallbone S (2011) Victim resistance in child sexual abuse: A look into the efficacy of self-protection strategies based on the offender's experience. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 26(9): 1868–1883.
- Levitt HM, Bamberg M, Creswell JW, et al. (2018) Journal article reporting standards for qualitative research in psychology: The APA publications and communications board task force report. *American Psychologist* 73(1): 26–46.
- Liang B and Hu M (2018) A typology of sex offending against minors: An empirical study of rape and molestation cases in China. *Sexual Abuse* 30(8): 951–974.
- Lussier P and Beauregard E (2014) Sex offending: A criminological perspective. *Journal of Criminal Justice* 2(42): 105–110.

- McAlinden AM (2013) Grooming and the sexual abuse of children: Implications for sex offender assessment, treatment and management. *Sexual Offender Treatment* 8(1): 1–13.
- McKee HA and Porter JE (2012) The ethics of archival research. *College Composition and Communication* 64(1): 59–81.
- Miles MB and Huberman A (1994) *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*. CA: Thousand Oaks
- Noakes L and Wincup E (2004) *Criminological Research: Understanding Qualitative Methods*. London: Sage.
- Plummer M (2018) Lived experiences of grooming among Australian male survivors of child sexual abuse. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 33(1): 37–63.
- Proulx J, Ouimet M and Lachaine N (1995) Pedophilia and criminology in action. *Revue Internationale de Criminologie et de Police Technique* 48: 294–310.
- Proulx J, Perreault C and Ouimet M (1999) Pathways in the offending process of extrafamilial sexual child molesters. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment* 11(2): 117–129.
- Seto MC (2019) The motivation-facilitation model of sexual offending. *Sexual Abuse* 31(1): 3–24.
- Smallbone SW and Wortley RK (2001) *Child Sexual Abuse: Offender Characteristics and Modus Operandi*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.
- Socio-Legal Studies Association (2009) Statement of principles of ethical research practice. Available at: <https://www.slsa.ac.uk/index.php/ethics-statement> (accessed 1 February 2020).
- Taşğın S and Sarı O (2014) Aile içi ensestini nitel analizi: Şanlıurfa örneği. *The Journal of International Social Research* 7(35): 486–500.
- Van Gijn EL and Lamb ME (2013) Alleged sex abuse victims' accounts of their abusers' modus operandi. *Journal of Forensic Social Work* 3(2): 133–149.
- Ward SM and Hudson (1998) A model of the relapse process in sexual offenders. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 13(6): 700–725.
- Wortley R and Smallbone S (2006) *Situational Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse*. NY: Criminal Justice Press.
- Zeyrek-Rios EY, Canter D and Youngs D (2021) Offense narrative roles of Turkish offenders. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* April 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X211010285>.