

What children exposed to domestic violence value when meeting social workers – a systematic practice-oriented review



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Background and aim

The quality of relationships between professionals and clients is important for change (Bohart et al 2002; Norcross 2010).

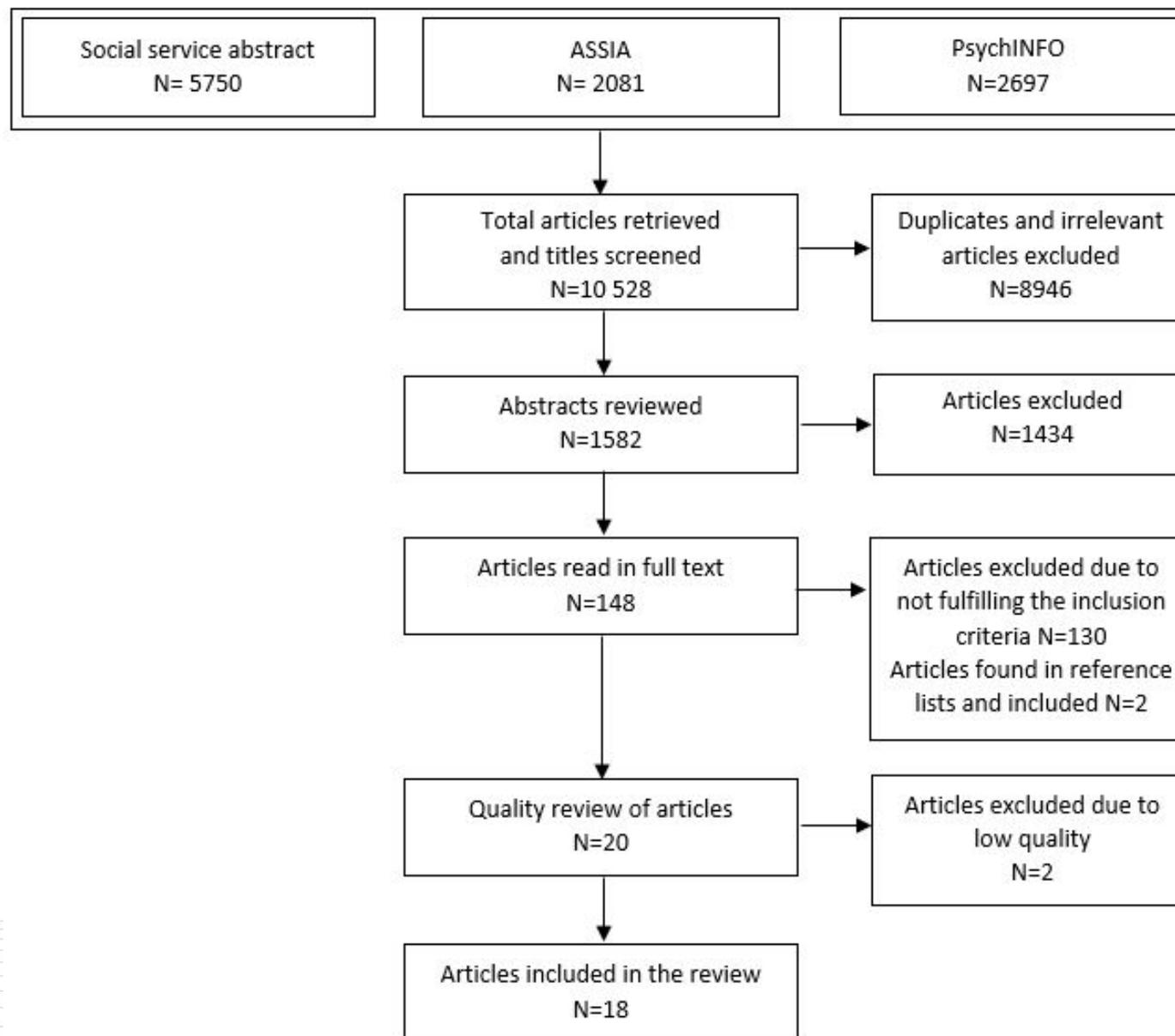
Social support is central for children's resilience and recovery after domestic violence (Geffner et al 2003; Guille 2004; Owen et al 2008).

Children's 'readiness to change' should include the roles of organizations and professionals (Humphreys et al 2011).

The aim of this review was to synthesis previous research on children exposed to domestic violence with experiences of meeting social workers to further understand what children found valuable in the meeting.

Search and selection process

- Electronic literature search in ASSIA, PsychINFO and Social Services Abstracts
- Inclusion criteria:
 - 1) Peer-reviewed
 - 2) Empirical
 - 3) Children exposed to DV as respondents
 - 4) Focus on children experiences or perceptions of meetings with social workers due to their exposure of DV
 - 5) Written in English
- Exclusion criteria:
 - 1) Sole focus on children's behavior in or handling of meetings with social workers
 - 2) Intervention effects on children
 - 3) Accessibility



Author(s)	Children participating	Service provided	Time of service	Method	Country
Beetham et al. (2019)	N=4 (girls N=2; boys N=2) age 7-10	Group counselling	Service recently ended	Individual interviews	UK
Callaghan et al. (2019)	Questionnaires: N=45 (girls N=28; boys N=30) age 11-19 Interviews: N=20 (girls N=14; boys N=6) age 11-18	Group intervention/counselling	Service ongoing or recently ended	Questionnaires and individual interviews	Greece, Italy, Spain, England
Cater (2014)	N=29 (girls N=15; boys N=14) age 4-19	Individual counselling	Service ongoing or recently ended	Individual interviews	Sweden
Coburn & Gormally (2014)	N=6 (girls N=6; boys N=0) age 11-15	Individual and group support/counselling	Service ongoing	Individual interviews	UK
Eriksson (2009)	N=17 (girls N=7; boys N=10) age 8-17	Family law investigations	Service ended within two weeks-two years	Individual interviews	Sweden
Eriksson (2012)	N=17 (girls N=7; boys N=10) age 8-17	Family law investigations	Service ended within two weeks-two years	Individual interviews	Sweden
Fotheringham et al. (2013)	N=17 (girls N=†; boys N=†) age 10-19	Individual counselling	Service ongoing	Individual interviews	Canada
Källström & Thunberg (2019)	N=9 (girls N=5; boys N=4) age 12-18	Individual counselling	Service ongoing or recently ended	Individual interviews	Sweden
McCarry et al. (2021)	Focus groups: N=4 (girls N=4; boys N=0) Telephone interviews: N=5 (girls N=†; boys N=†) age 8-18	Individual and group counselling	Service ongoing	Focus groups and telephone interviews	USA
McManus et al. (2013)	N=10 (girls N=1; boys N=10) age 7-10	Support programme with child-mother and peer-group sessions	Service ongoing	Individual interviews	UK
Pernebo & Almqvist (2016)	N=9 (girls N=5; boys N=4) age 4-6	Group counselling	Service recently ended	Individual interviews	Sweden
Perry & Frampton (2017)	N=224 (girls N=†; boys N=†) age 4-17	Individual therapy/counselling	Service ongoing	Questionnaires	UK
Phillips & Phillips (2010)	N=20 (girls N=†; boys N=†) age 10-17	Group support and counselling	Service ongoing	Participant observation, field conversations, focus groups, and individual interviews	USA
Roy et al. (2020)	N=3 (girls N=†; boys N=†) age 10-16	Individual support/counselling	Service ended	Individual interviews	UK
Stanley et al. (2012)	N=19 (girls N=11; boys N=8) age 10-19	Service in general	†	Focus groups	UK
Swanston et al. (2014)	N=5 (girls N=3; boys N=2) age 8-13	Domestic violence charities and services in general	Service ongoing or ended	Individual interviews	UK
Willis et al. (2010)	N=14 (girls N=†; boys N=†), age approx. 14-18 ‡	Services in general	Service ongoing	Focus groups	USA
Åkerlund & Strandberg (2017)	N=10 (girls N=6; boys N=4) age 11-19	Individual counselling	Service ended within 2 years	Interviews	Sweden

† Information missing or unclear, ‡ high school students, exact information of age is missing, according to the US school system students should be approx. 14-18 years.

Preliminary findings: Basic requirements

Accessibility

- Easy to access by the child themselves and perceive approachable

A safe place

- A place free from violence
- Predictibility, stability, and consistency

Trust

- Be well-intentioned, responsible and confidential

Preliminary findings: Inclusion

Information

- Inform the child about their situation and explain it in an age-appropriate way for them to understand

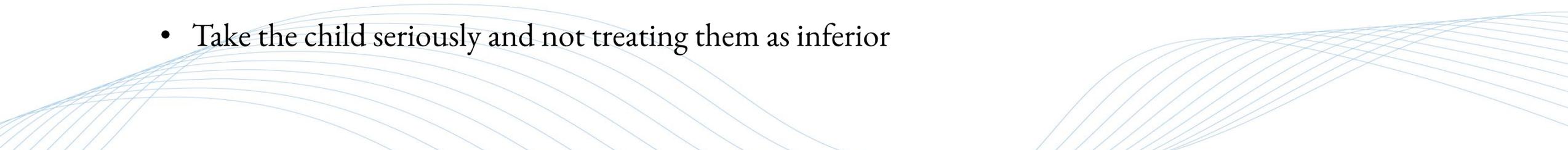
Flexibility

- Adapt the meeting format to the child's needs and emotional state and allow them to influence the meeting and conversation

Choices

- Provide the child with the opportunity to participate in the meeting on their own terms and not feel pressured to do or say anything

Empowerment

- Take the child seriously and not treating them as inferior
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Preliminary findings: Acknowledgement

Good talking partners

- Act friendly, and listen to the child

Validation

- Listen to and try to understand the child's experiences of violence without judging and react in proportion to the seriousness

Shifting the burden of responsibility

- Help the child understand their situation and the limits of their responsibility – they are not to be blamed for the violence and they could not prevent it

Acknowledging different identities

- Get to know the child and talk about other things in their lives than the violence. Respect other aspects of their life and try not to disrupt these

Preliminary findings: Enjoyment

Fun

- Provide the child with fun and play. Not necessarily activities but joke together and decrease the seriousness in the atmosphere

Activities

- Offer the child activities which can include art-based activities, playing games, having a snack or physical activities such as dancing

Practical implications and future research

Social workers with the responsibility to help and support children exposed to domestic violence could enhance the building of rapport by actively incorporating these aspects when meeting with the children.

Future research should address:

- 1) if these aspects have different meaning for different children,
- 2) if these aspect are ranked equally important, and
- 3) if it makes any difference for the children's resilience and recovery when social workers actively address these aspects.

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