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Toward a Global Definition and Understanding of Child Sexual Exploitation: The Development of a Conceptual Model

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Abstract

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a serious and persistent global issue affecting up to 5% of the child and youth population worldwide; yet there is no universally accepted definition. To develop a theoretically robust definition of CSE, this review systematically synthesized literature examining CSE definitions aiming to develop a conceptual model and typology. Electronic databases were searched to February 2021, yielding 384 nonduplicative records. Inclusion criteria were peer-reviewed and grey literature investigations of sexual exploitation, with a mean sample age of 18 years or younger, available in the English language. Literature review and data extraction followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. Sixty-six studies met final inclusion criteria. Two independent reviewers extracted relevant data and used an epistemological approach to thematically analyse meaning and patterns across CSE definitions. Key findings demonstrate that CSE nomenclature is widely inconsistent, and despite growing awareness of this severe form of abuse, language continues to perpetuate stigma and criminalisation, utilising terms such as 'adolescent or child prostitute'. Our findings propose a scientifically and trauma-informed definition and conceptualisation of CSE, based on the following four-dimensional components: (1) A child/young person; (2) sexual acts; (3) abuse; and (4) exploitation (abuse + exchange). In this systematic review, a unified definition and conceptual model aims to advance knowledge and understanding of CSE, contributing to the progression of social norms which embrace nuances of trauma-informed practice and support for the identification and recovery of children, young people and families affected by sexual exploitation.

Keywords

Child sexual exploitation, child abuse, sexual assault, sexual abuse, trafficking

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a serious and persistent global issue affecting up to 5% of the child and youth population worldwide; however, definitional ambiguity regarding the term CSE has hindered an advancement of the field regarding its research, policy and treatment (Laird et al., 2020; Moynihan et al., 2018). Terms used synonymously and/or interchangeably to describe CSE include; child sexual exploitation, commercial sexual exploitation of children, juvenile prostitution, sex work, modern-day slavery, sex trafficking and trading, survival or transactional sex (Gerassi, 2015; Laird et al., 2020). Inconsistency in the nomenclature describing the issue has led to difficulties when attempting to compare or synthesize data and measurements, which in turn may hinder the ability to compare research findings across populations (Graham et al., 2019).

While a precise definition of CSE has proved elusive, the term broadly refers to the use of coercion, force, fraud, or abuse of a position of vulnerability, with adolescents and children for sexual activity (on or offline) in exchange for something of value (e.g. gifts, money, substances or developmental needs including shelter, food and protection: Commission for Children and Young People, 2015; United Nations, 2017). All sectors agree that children and young people are to be protected from sexual violence; however, varying conceptual understandings of CSE limit professional capacity to identify and respond therapeutically. For example, a face-to-face service which operates by adopting the term CSE as interchangeable with sexual abuse may be more

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inclined to assess incidences of physical sexual abuse, but less likely to identify online sextortion or sexting coercion. Likewise, a service defining and operationalising CSE based on involving a monetary exchange only, is likely to be unaware of other types of reward which exploit the child or young person's position of vulnerability.

To resolve the definitional ambiguity amongst CSE nomenclature and to develop a robust, consistent and comprehensive definition of CSE, this paper systematically reviews current definitions and analyses terminology across key conceptual areas. Informed by this systematic review, we aim to develop a conceptual model of CSE, which is distinguishable from other types of child sexual abuse. Importantly, this typology may translate to a classificatory framework of acts and experiences classified as child sexual exploitation. Finally, this study aims to develop a comprehensive definition of CSE which can be applied universally.

Literature Review

Historical Background

The term child sexual exploitation was first distinguished from child sexual abuse in the 1924 Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child, which articulated that 'children are to be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse' (League of Nations OJ, 1924; Art 24). In 1996, the Declaration and Agenda for Action for the First World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, defined CSE as 'sexual abuse by the adult and remuneration in cash or kind to the child or a third person or persons' (p.1). However, the definition of CSE has evolved over time and by 2017 the United Nation's published a Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, which defined 'sexual exploitation' as 'any actual or attempted abuse of position of vulnerability, differential power or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another', stating this was a broad term which encompassed a number of acts, including transactional sex, solicitation of transactional sex and exploitative relationships (pg. 6).

In addition, there appears to be a degree of uncertainty as to what CSE embodies, and while many definitions contextually associate CSE with organised crime and monetary exchange (e.g. sex trafficking), others includes relational abuse (i.e. 'boyfriending': Hayes & Barnardo's, 2007) and the exploitation of a child or young person's basic needs or desires as a form of payment (e.g. shelter, connection or belonging, protection, substances or gifts: Commission for Children and Young People, 2015; Tackling Child Labour through Education Project, 2015).

Despite the common usage of CSE as a term across many disciplines, meanings and understandings of the term remain varied. For example, legal paradigms bind the definition of CSE to geographical borders; whereby domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST) is a term adopted within the United States, as informed by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (United States of America, 2000). Based on this definition, CSE encompasses U.S. citizens or legal residents under the age of 18, who experience the recruitment, harbouring, transportation, provision or obtaining for the purpose of a commercial sex act induced by force, fraud or coercion (Franchino-Olsen, 2019). In contrast, sex trafficking of minors beyond the United States' borders is classified as the commercial sexual exploitation of children (Gerassi, 2015). Additionally, the power imbalance between a perpetrator and young person is frequently included in definitions by using age differences. However, age cut-offs regarding sexual consent and age-gaps between a victim-survivor and perpetrator vary greatly across social and legal definitions, increasing difficulties in identifying and defining CSE by age criterion alone (Aronowitz & Fraley, 2017; Cook & Mott, 2020).

While globally the buying of children and young people for sexual services is admitted as child sexual exploitation, levels of awareness of the problem vary and are highly impacted by political, legal and socio-cultural influences (Luo et al., 2008). Criminal justice and children's rights are often expressed differently between and within countries; for example, in China prostitution is not lawful, yet no law stipulates that it is a crime (Duan, 2013); and laws and sentencing regarding engaging in prostitution with an underage girl (commonly referred to as 'EPUG') differs to that of raping a girl under 14 years old (Duan, 2013). Other socio-cultural factors such as collectivism versus individualism, or the favouring of boys over girls may also influence the way CSE is perceived or understood in Western versus Eastern cultures. Additionally, extreme poverty and educational factors in populous countries can impact economic survival, manipulating families to give up children to recruiters in exchange for money. For example, the 'devadasi system' remains common in rural South India, where young female children are dedicated to temple priests and patrons for sexual services, in order to attain the promise of family wellbeing or payment of debts (Carson et al., 2013; Sathyanarayana & Babu, 2012). Similarly, a significant trafficking and sex tourism problem is reported in Cambodia and Thailand, where 'debt bondage' fuelled by poverty presents with children being sent to engage in sex work for creditors until a family's debt is paid (Blackburn et al., 2010). Yet, in contrast to developing countries where CSE commonly presents in media coverage as sex tourism and child soldiers, the United Kingdom and United States reports gangs, paedophile rings and traffickers preying upon children in the foster care systems (US Department of State, 2019). With such variation in social norms between Eastern and Western societies regarding depictions and understandings of CSE and consensual sexual experiences, aggregating and synthesising data on CSE globally could be improved by progressing towards a consistent definition (Chen et al., 2004).

Finally, CSE terminology has evolved over decades, shaped by the way children engage in the world both on and offline. Contemporary definitions now include the 'actual' and 'attempted' (e.g. grooming or solicitation) acts of sexual exploitation (UN); and contact versus non-contact types, whereby a child may now become subject to abuse or exploitation while physically alone (Landolt et al., 2016; Simon et al., 2020; United Nations, 2017). CSE can also encompass online sexual solicitation and child sexual exploitation material (Seigfried-Spellar & Soldino, 2020). In 2019, over 45 million photographs and videos of children being sexually abused were reported to the US National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, which had doubled from the year prior (Quayle, 2020). Furthermore, a recent meta-analysis showed that one in nine young people experience online solicitation (Madigan et al., 2018). Considering the role digital platforms have in curtailing online child sexual abuse and exploitation worldwide (Ali et al., 2021), and the multitude of behaviours and socio-cultural nuances embodied within CSE, the development of a clear and concise definition of CSE is crucial to advance prevention, reporting, education and law enforcement.

The Tyranny of Language in Child Sexual Exploitation Nomenclature

Language used to describe sexually exploited children and adolescents needs to be unified in order to prevent victim-blaming, which leads to additional harms experienced by victim-survivors by inferring that they may have been complicit in their abuse (Moynihan et al., 2018). For example, some studies distinguish between 'voluntary prostitution' and 'force/fraud/or manipulation' (Moynihan et al., 2018; Nijhof et al., 2012), or utilise terms such as 'juvenile prostitution' (Kaestle, 2012; Wilson, 2000; Yates, 1991) or 'sex work' (Swahn et al., 2016). Studies rarely elaborate on how or why such terms are chosen; however, the adoption of terminology that is child-centric and trauma-informed is essential across many settings, including judicial and treatment. Shifting from a subjective to an objective understanding of exploitative behaviours may increase universal understanding and recognition of vulnerable youth in screening and assessment of CSE. As such, it may also increase objectivity and reliability in outcomes measures when applying CSE language to screening tools and research design. Additionally, a consistent classification of CSE may assist in the prevention of victim-blaming attitudes by separating the behaviour from the individual themselves (e.g. a young person affected by child sexual exploitation, as opposed to a prostitute or sex worker).

Child Sexual Exploitation Prevalence and Measurement

Due to the current definitional ambiguity regarding CSE, accurate prevalence data regarding CSE are extremely difficult to ascertain (Moynihan et al., 2018). This results in restricting meaningful aggregation, comparison and synthesising of information, which in turn, hinders the advancement of the field (Moynihan et al., 2018). Based on reported data, nearly two million children and young people are reported to be experiencing sexual exploitation globally (Polaris Project, 2014). Amongst high school populations, previous research indicates 2.8% of students have engaged in selling sex for money or other goods (Svedin & Priebe, 2007); and a 2015 study found 47% of a university student sample had been approached by an adult in a sexual manner when they were under the age of 16, with a fifth of these (22%) engaging in the solicited sexual act (Ireland et al., 2015). In England and Wales, police collated data associated with CSE offences in a 12 month period in 2016, identifying reports involving 1020 cases of sexual grooming and 12,875 cases of sexual solicitation, exposure and/or involvement in sexually explicit material online (Kelly & Karsna, 2017).

While CSE occurs to young people and children across a diverse range of demographics, the majority of studies report young women as the predominant victims of CSE (Kaestle, 2012; Layne et al., 2014; Naramore et al., 2017; Oram et al., 2015; Reid, 2011; Reid & Piquero, 2014; Salisbury et al., 2015). However, other studies report no gender differences between male and female victims (Reid & Piquero, 2016), and one study based on a high school population ($N = 4339$) reported sex being exchanged for goods more often in boys (1.8%) than girls (1.0%: Svedin & Priebe, 2007). Compounding this ambiguity is the variance amongst CSE nomenclature used throughout the prevalence data, with these papers reporting on 'exchanging or trading sex' (Adjei, 2017; Svedin & Priebe, 2007), 'sexual exploitation' (Ireland et al., 2015) and commercially sexually exploited children (Salisbury et al., 2015; Reid & Piquero, 2016).

Variance amongst CSE measurement and the lack of unified definition limits the accuracy of shared knowledge regarding prevalence, aetiology and sequelae and consequently leads to deficiencies in research design (Matthews et al., 2019; Moynihan et al., 2018). For example, a systematic review reported that primary studies investigating CSE vary widely in their use of CSE outcomes measures, with validated instruments ranging from assessing risky sexual behaviour to depression or trauma symptoms, or omitting outcomes measures altogether (Moynihan et al., 2018). Instruments which assess CSE amongst existing literature are commonly dichotomous, and captured via self-report (e.g. 'have you ever traded a sex act for money?', answering 'yes' or 'no'). This type of measurement focuses on the exchange of commercialised sexual acts for money; however, it is limited as it does not ascertain the context of the exchange (e.g. online or offline platforms), contact versus non-contact sexual abuse, the exchange of other items such as substances, affection, or basic needs, nor other crucial aspects of CSE such as abuse or power differentials. Simplistic dichotomous measurement invariably excludes several forms of CSE, such as survival sex or

extortion where the request is complied with based on fear or shame, and not for monetary reasons (Chohaney, 2016).

Operationalising Child Sexual Exploitation

Age of the child. Beyond the taxonomy of an objective CSE definition, the classifications within the nomenclature of CSE itself are also widely variable. For example, while several studies measure a child or young person as 'under the age of 18 years' (Adjei et al., 2017), others specify between the ages of 13 to 21 years (Barnert et al., 2020) or even capture emerging young adults in their samples to include up to 24 years of age (Srivastava et al., 2019). While age cut-offs are likely more clinically relevant in detecting and intervening for individuals affected by CSE, age differences are also important when used to describe power imbalance between a perpetrator and a young person (Cook & Mott, 2020; Fraley & Aronowitz, 2017). Furthermore, understanding of the word 'child' varies amongst sectors and laws, and is often developmentally defined as below the age of puberty or legally defined as below the age of majority (i.e. the threshold of adulthood as recognised by the law: Liefaard & Sloth-Nielsen, 2016). The Department of Education in the United Kingdom (2017) indicates that CSE occurs 'even where a young person is old enough to legally consent to sexual activity', with consent remaining valid only when the choice is made with freedom and capacity (e.g. if a child feels there is no other meaningful choice, or are under the influence of substances or fearful of what might happen if they do not comply, consent cannot be given whatever the age of the child: Kelly & Karsna, 2017). While nuances within CSE classification overlap with conceptual issues, such as age and consent, and vary across legal and health sectors, clearer parameters to define the target population may assist in the progression towards a globally shared definition, and promote consistency across datasets to reach consensus regarding critical issues such as prevalence and aetiology.

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

'Child sexual exploitation' is frequently used interchangeably with, or grouped as a subcategory of 'child sexual abuse' (SEA Glossary, United Nations, 2017). However, a recent systematic review indicated that methodologically published studies on both CSE and CSA groups are incomparable (Selvius et al., 2018). Both CSA and CSE definitions include contact sexual activities (e.g. penetrative assault such as rape or oral sex, and non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing and touching outside of clothing); or non-contact sexual activities (e.g. exposing children to watching sexual images or activities or grooming); and occur across online and offline contexts.

Terms such as 'trading', 'swapping' or 'exchanging' are more frequently, if not exclusively, referred to within the context of CSE but not CSA (Moynihan et al., 2018). Critically, this does not preclude gift giving to also occur over the duration of CSA, yet the nature of this differs. For example, a study by McGee et al. (2002) reported that material objects such as sweets, cigarettes and alcohol were used by perpetrators to entice a child or young person into child sexual abuse. Importantly, this gift-giving tends to occur in the context of grooming a child, rather than an exchange per se (Kelly & Karsna, 2017). CSE according to the Department of Education in the United Kingdom is explained in part by the victim-survivor being offered, promised or given something they need or want, including tangible (money, drugs and alcohol) and intangible rewards (status, protection and affection).

The ambiguity between definitions of CSA and CSE continues to hinder the progression of prevalence studies and agency data (Kelly & Karsna, 2017). Delineating the boundaries between these two types of sexual violence is critical for consistent and comparable measurement across sectors and subsequent prevention and intervention efforts.

Purpose of the Study

The development of a shared global definition of CSE, which is unified, comprehensive and comparable, will advance understanding of CSE for research, policy, prevention and response. To the authors' knowledge no research to date has established a clear typology and/or comprehensive definition of child sexual exploitation (Gerassi, 2015; Moynihan et al., 2018; United Nations, 2017). To develop a more theoretically robust definition of CSE, the first objective of this study is to provide a systematic synthesis of studies examining child sexual exploitation and to identify and compare fundamental differences in definitions and understandings of CSE. While a taxonomy of CSE in the form of this empirical definition can provide a global foundation to understand and measure this phenomenon, there are several concepts within the definition which would benefit from a deeper and more specific classification. For example, parameters surrounding age in years in relation to the term 'child' or 'young person' vary greatly amongst literature, and many studies include differing contexts of sexually exploitative behaviours or types, including actual or attempted forms of sexual violence, from both on and offline platforms.

Without a comprehensive and consistent classification of what constitutes CSE, ambiguity may continue to permeate CSE research and practice. Therefore, informed by the differences and commonalities within CSE definitions, the second objective of this study is to develop a conceptual model of CSE using inductive thematic analysis, to evaluate patterns within the data, and to describe and aggregate these findings into a typology of CSE. Key research questions include (1) how has child sexual exploitation been defined across the current evidence-base? (2) how has child sexual exploitation been measured across the current evidence-base? and (3) what is the most comprehensive and global definition?

Method

Identification of Studies and Study Selection

Key search terms (see Table 1 in the Supplementary Online Content) were searched via electronic databases between January 3rd and February 23rd 2021 including Medline, PsycINFO, the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature, EMBASE and Informit. Additionally, references of all included studies and grey literature were handsearched. Two authors (JL, BK) independently screened all titles and abstracts to determine which would proceed to full-text review. When reviewers were uncertain of a study's eligibility, the full report was obtained, and discrepancies discussed to obtain consensus. Altogether, our search resulted in the identification of 86 studies, published between the years 1991 and 2021 that addressed CSE utilising qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods. A total of 74 studies were included as per Figure 1.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Eligibility criteria for inclusion in the current review are summarised in Figure 1 (see for reporting mechanisms on systematic reviews: Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff and Altman, 2009) and were studies which investigated: (a) sexual exploitation; (b) experienced by children and young people (with a mean age of 18 years or less at the time of experience); and (c) available in the English language. Exclusion criteria included studies which: (a) did not include the target population; (b) were non-empirical; or (c) focused heavily on a separate research topic, such as sexually transmitted infections or substance use.

Study Coding

The final sample of the current systematic review is based on 74 studies which met inclusion criteria. Studies were coded as follows; articles which utilised a broad range of terms to define

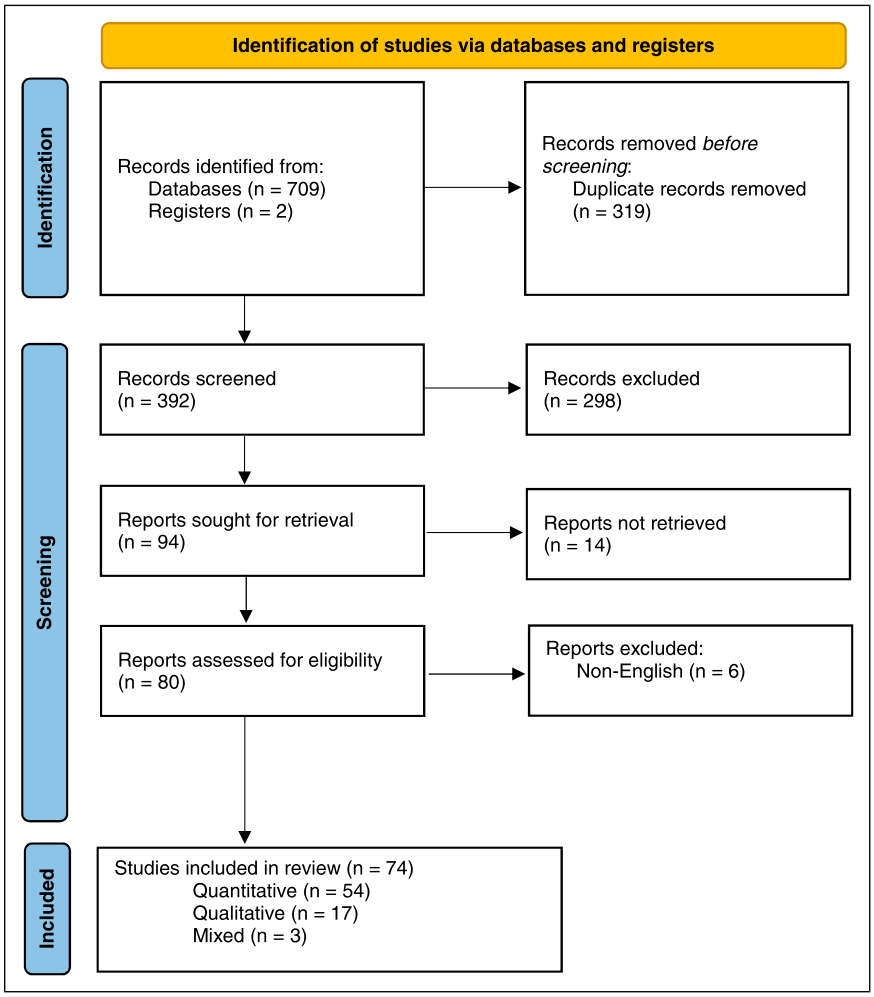

Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 Flow diagram of included studies in the systematic review.

sexual exploitation or used interchangeable terms were coded as 'SEMix'; those which addressed 'transactional' or 'exchange sex' coded as TS; those referring to 'commercial sexual exploitation' coded as CSE1 or 'child sexual exploitation' CSE2; 'commercial sexual exploitation of children' coded as CSEC; 'domestic minor sex trafficking' coded as DMST; any term which included the use of 'trafficking' more broadly were coded as T; referencing to 'sex work', 'prostitution' or 'selling sex', coded as P; 'online child sexual exploitation' coded as OCSE; and 'sexual exploitation' more generally coded as SE.

Data Extraction and Measures

Data collected from eligible studies included: author(s), year, operationalisation, definition and terminology of CSE, sample characteristics (sample size, population type, gender and age), study design and location were extracted. As per Matthews and Collin-Vezina (2019) conceptual model of CSA, four dimensions classify child sexual abuse; (1) is this person a child; (2) is true consent absent; (3) is the act sexual; and (4) does the act constitute abuse. To delineate CSE from CSA, this review includes exploitation as a dimension often described as a monetary or non-monetary exchange for sex acts between a perpetrator(s) and a child or young person. Specifically, this review operationalises CSE to include the dimensions of (i) being a child (quantitatively described as <18 years of age or qualitatively described as child, minor, youth or adolescent), (ii) to include a sexual act (on or offline), (iii) abuse (abuse of vulnerability or position of power, in an unequal power relationship, often with coercion, fraud or force) and (iv) exploitation via the exchange of monetary or non-monetary resources for sex acts.

While the issue of sexual consent overlaps with the conceptualisation of child sexual abuse and exploitation, for the purpose of operationalising CSE, if a young person or child (condition one) experiences a sexual act (condition two) which was abusive (condition three) and exploitative (condition four), then the relevance of consent is void. Therefore, consent as a dimension was excluded in our conceptualisation of CSE due to its lack of purpose in operationalising CSE specifically.

Analytical Strategy

The included literature was analysed using the process of thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006; Chase, 2005; Braun & Clark, 2006; Guest et al., 2012). An epistemological approach was used to theorise meaning from language, by identifying, analysing and reporting patterns found within data, relying on categorising semantic and explicit themes which are stated. Phases of Thematic Analysis utilised for this study were in accordance with Braun & Clarke (2006), including: Phase (1) identifying and extrapolating data; Phase (2) coding data; Phase (3) searching and recording of themes, patterns, or constructs; Phase (4) reviewing themes; Phase (5) defining and naming themes; and Phase (6) synthesising themes into a conceptual model. Analytical questions were designed and used as coding tools to analyse against the literature (phase 1). Coded parts of the text were tagged as raw data in a table (phase 2), then categorised and thematised by comparing categories and the source material (phase 3). Emerging themes were grouped via structuring content analysis (Bengtsson, 2016), definition components were named across the four dimensions (child, sexual act, abuse and exploitation), and a conceptual model was synthesised (phase 6). J.L and B.K triangulated coding and categorisation, and discussion resolved discrepancies to reach consensus.

Findings & Discussion

Selected Studies and Study Characteristics

In total 74 studies, comprising 104763 participants were included, with a mean age of 16.19 (SD 2.71) years and near even distribution across gender (female: 52.7%, $n = 55,235$). As shown in the PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1) the electronic search yielded 384 non-duplicate records. A total of 86 articles were identified as potentially meeting inclusion criteria. In total, 74 studies published between the years 1991 and 2022 were included in the current review (Table 1), with most studies from the United States of America ($n = 37$), followed by Asia ($n = 10$; including Hong Kong $n = 2$, India = 3, China = 1, Cambodia & Thailand = 1, Iran = 1, Taiwan = 1, Japan = 1), African countries (Africa $n = 5$; Kenya $n = 1$; Ethiopia $n = 1$) and Canada ($n = 5$), the United Kingdom ($n = 4$) and Sweden ($n = 4$), Australia ($n = 3$), the Philippines ($n = 2$), and one study each from Russia and Norway (see Characteristics of Studies Included in the Systematic Review Table 2 in the Online Supplementary Material).

Child Sexual Exploitation Nomenclature

Child Sexual Exploitation nomenclature was widely inconsistent, encompassing a broad range of vernacular (see Table 3: Sexual exploitation definitions and measures in the Online Supplementary Material). Across the 74 studies 10 main terms emerged within the analysis (see Table 2). Of the included studies, the term prostitution or language which operationalised the 'selling of sex' or 'sex work' for adolescents and children was utilised the most ($n = 12$: Fredlund et al., 2018; Grosso et al., 2015; Kaestle, 2012; Lavoie et al., 2010; Lung et al., 2004; Nadon et al., 1998; Pedersen & Hegna, 2003; Rana, 2021; Sathyanarayana & Babu, 2012; Swahn et al., 2016; Wilson & Widom, 2010; Yates, 1991), followed by studies which utilised the term 'commercial sexual exploitation' ($n = 10$: Bath et al., 2020; De Vries & Goggin, 2020; Franchino-Olsen, 2021; Hampton & Lieggi, 2020; Reid, 2011, 2014; Reid & Piquero, 2014, 2016; Rothman et al., 2019; Tsutomu Tanaka et al., 2019) or 'commercial sexual exploitation of children' specifically ($n = 8$: Chang et al., 2016; De Vries et al., 2020; Lanctôt et al., 2020;

Table 1. Operational components of sexual exploitation definition and measurement.

Author	Dimensions of measurement								
	Dimension 1. Child		Dimension 2. Sexual act				Dimension 3. & 4. Exploitation		
	Quant	Qual		'Actual'		'Attempted'			
	<18 years of age	Includes 'child', 'minor', 'youth', 'adolescent'	Defined as 'sex' or 'sex act' as a general term	Includes 'online' contact	Includes 'offline' contact	Includes grooming, recruitment	Defined as 'sexual abuse'	Includes an explicit mention of 'non-consensual' or lack of consent	Includes mention of inducement and exchange of sex acts on or offline for money or other non-monetary resources.
Adjei (2017)	×		×						×
Atwood (2012)			×						×
Barnert et al. (2020)		13–21 years of age	×						×
Bath et al. (2020)	×		×			×	×		×
Chang (2015)	×		×			×	×		×
Chohaney (2016)	×		×			×	×		×
Cook & Mott (2020)	×		×	×		Inferred[1]	×		×
CCYP (2015)		Child & young people	×				×	×	×
Courture (2020)		Adolescent	×				×		×
Dana (2019)			×						×
Deb (2011)		Child	×				×		NR
DeVries & Goggin (2020)		Minors or youth	×			×			×
De Vries & Goggin, 2020b		Minors or youth	×			×			×
Edwards (2006)			×				×		×
Ertl (2020)	×		×			×	×		×
Fedina (2019)	×		×			×			×
Franchino-Olsen et al., 2020	×		×			×	×		×
Franchino-Olsen et al., 2021	×		×			×			×
Fredlund (2013)	×		×						×
Fredlund (2018)		Adolescent	×						×
Gatwiri (2020)	×		×	×		Inferred[1]	×		×
Greenbaum (2018)	×		×			Inferred[1]			×
Grosso (2015)	×		×						×
Hampton & Lieggi, 2020		Youth or child	×	×			×		×
Ireland (2015)		Child	×				×		×
Kaestle (2012)		Adolescent	×						
Kimber & Ferdossifard, 2020		Child or adolescent	×			×	×		×

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

	Dimensions of measurement							
	Dimension 1. Child		Dimension 2. Sexual act			Dimension 3. & 4. Exploitation		
Author	Quant	Qual		'Actual'	'Attempted'			
Lanctot et al., 2020		Child	×					×
Lavoie (2010)			×					×
Layne (2014)			×					×
Lung (2004)			×					×
Martin (2010)			×					×
Moore et al., 2019/2020	×		×		×	×		×
McKibbin, 2017		Child	×	×		×		×
Nadon (1998)		Adolescent or juvenile	×					×
Naramore (2017)		Child	×			×		×
O'Brien (2017a)	×		×		×	×		×
O'Brien (2017b)	×		×		×	×		×
Oram (2015)		Child	×		×	×		×
Panlilio (2019)	×		×					×
Pederson (2003)		Adolescent	×					×
Ramiro 2019		Child	×	×	×	×	×	×
Raj 2019	×		×		×	×		×
Reid (2011)	×		×		×	×		×
Reid (2014)	×		×		×	×		×
Reid & Piquero (2014)	×		×		×	×		×
Reid (2016)	×		×		×	×		×
Rothman et al., 2019	×		×		×	×		×
Rothman (2020)	×		×		×	×		×
Saewyc (2010)			×					×
Salisbury (2015)	×		×		×	×		×
Self-Brown (2018)	×		×		×	×		×
Srivastava (2019)			×		×	×		×
Svedin (2006)			×					×
Swahn (2016)			×					×
Tsutomu (2019)			×					×
Twis (2020)	×		×		×			×
Ulloa (2016)			×			×		×
United Nations (2017)	×	Child: < 18 years of age	×		Inferred[1]	×		×
Urada (2014)	×		×			×		×

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

	Dimensions of measurement					
	Dimension 1. Child		Dimension 2. Sexual act		Dimension 3. & 4. Exploitation	
Author	Quant	Qual	'Actual'	'Attempted'		
Weston & Mythen (2020)	×		×			×
Wallace (2021)			×	×	×	×
Wilson (2010)			×			×
Yates (1991)		Juvenile	×	×		×
Zamudio-Haas (2020)			×			×

Note: Sexual contact = sexual touching, oral sex, sexual intercourse, or other sex acts. NR = Not reported; CALD = Culturally and Linguistically Diverse community; PTSD = Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder; STI or HIV = Sexually Transmitted Infection or Human Immunodeficiency Virus. [1]Infers an element of attempted sexual exploitation or grooming stating (e.g. deceive a minor into sexual activity or engagement/solicitation of a minor or attempted).

Table 2. Terminology Themes in Included Studies (N = 74).

Terminology Theme	n
Prostitution, sex work or selling sex[a]	12
Commercial sexual exploitation[b]	10
Domestic minor sex trafficking[c]	9
Commercial sexual exploitation of children[d]	8
Child sexual exploitation[e]	8
Exchange or transactional sex[f]	6
Sexual exploitation (general over-arching term)[g]	6
Mixed terminology (more than one definition utilised)[h]	9
Trafficking[i]	4
Online child sexual exploitation and abuse[j]	1

[a](Fredlund et al., 2018; Grosso et al., 2015; Kaestle, 2012; Lavoie et al., 2010; Lung et al., 2004; Nadon et al., 1998; Peterson & Hegna, 2003; Swahn et al., 2016; Wilson & Widom, 2010; Yates, 1991)
[b](Bath et al., 2020; De Vries & Goggin, 2020; Franchino-Olsen, 2021; Hampoton & Lieggi, 2020; Reid, 2011; Reid, 2014; Reid, 2014; Reid et al., 2016; Rothman et al., 2019; Tsutomu, 2019)
[c](Chohaney, 2016; Ertl et al., 2020; Fedina et al., 2019; Moore et al., 2019, 2020, O'Brien et al., 2017a, 2017; Raj et al., 2019; Twis et al., 2020)
[d](Chang et al., 2015; De Vries & Goggin, 2020; Lanctot et al., 2020; Naramore et al., 2017; Panlilio et al., 2019; Rothman et al., 2020; Salisbury et al., 2015; Self-Brown et al., 2018)
[e](Barnert, 2020; Cook & Mott, 2020; CCYP, 2015; Gatwiri et al., 2020; McKibbon, 2017; Svedin et al., 2006; Weston & Mythen, 2020)
[f](Atwood et al., 2012; Dana et al., 2019; Edwards et al., 2006; Srivastava et al., 2019; Ulloa et al., 2016; Zamudio-Haas et al., 2020)
[g](Couture et al., 2020; Fredlund et al., 2013; Ireland et al., 2015; Kimber & Ferdossifard, 2020; Layne et al., 2014; Saewyc et al., 2010)
[h](Adjei et al., 2017; Martin et al., 2010; Oram et al., 2015; United Nations, 2017; Urada et al., 2014)
[i](Deb et al., 2011; Franchino-Olsen et al., 2020; Greenbaum et al., 2018; Wallace et al., 2021)
[j](Ramiro et al., 2019).

Naramore et al., 2017; Panlilio et al., 2019; Rothman et al., 2020; Salisbury et al., 2015; Self-Brown et al., 2018). 'Domestic minor sex trafficking' (n = 9: Chohaney, 2016; Ertl et al., 2020; Fedina et al., 2019; Moore et al., 2019, 2020, O'Brien et al., 2017a, 2017; Raj et al., 2019; Twis et al., 2020), 'child sexual exploitation' (n = 8: Barnert et al., 2020; Blackburn et al., 2010; Commission for Children and Young People, 2015; Cook & Mott, 2020; Gatwiri et al., 2020; McKibbin, 2017; Svedin & Priebe, 2007; Weston & Mythen, 2020), 'transactional sex' (n = 6: Atwood et al., 2012; Chang et al., 2016; Cheung et al., 2016; Dana et al., 2019; Edwards et al., 2006; Ulloa et al., 2016; Zamudio-Haas et al., 2020) and 'sexual exploitation' as a broad overarching term followed (n = 6: Couture et al., 2020; Fredlund et al., 2013; Ireland et al., 2015; Kimber & Ferdossifard, 2020; Layne et al., 2014; Saewyc & Edinburgh, 2010). Nine studies utilised mixed terminology interchangeably throughout their articles (e.g. sexual exploitation interchangeable with female sex worker, transactional sex, compensated dating and prostitution: Adjei & Saewyc, 2017; Chang et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2016; Martin et al., 2010; Oram et al., 2015; Shokoohi et al., 2022; United Nations, 2017; Urada et al., 2019; Urada et al., 2014), four focused on 'trafficking' (Deb et al., 2011; Franchino-Olsen, 2019; Greenbaum et al., 2018; Wallace et al., 2021), one pinpointed 'online child sexual exploitation and abuse' (Ramiro et al., 2019), one referred to 'adult-to-child sexual contact' (Luo et al., 2008), and two separate studies referred to colloquial socio-cultural terms, including 'devadasi', referring to 'female child prostitutes' (Sathyanarayana & Babu, 2012) or 'enjo-kosai', referring to compensated dating (Lee et al., 2016).

Despite growing awareness of the severe form of trauma and abuse associated with sexual exploitation in children and adolescents, language continues to perpetuate stigma and criminalisation of this young cohort when terms such as 'adolescent or child prostitute' persist. Research reports children as young as 12 are frequently blamed for rape, with defence attorneys commonly using rape myths to undermine a child's credibility in trials (George et al., 2021). For example, attorneys using the victim precipitation myth, which suggests that rape can be avoided by not engaging in behaviours perceived as risky or provocative. Similarly, the victim credibility myth is used, which suggests that individuals who have experienced sex work, criminality, mental illness or drug use are inherently untrustworthy, therefore their reports of rape are false or warrant suspicion (George et al., 2021). Referring to the sexual exploitation of children and youth as 'selling sex' or 'sex work', overemphasises the degree of agency or consent involved in the act. Consequently, this approach results in victim-blaming, undermining the coercive and abusive elements of the experience, and the stark psychological and physical impacts of sexual exploitation.

'Compensated dating' is another phenomenon referred to by two studies specifically (Chang et al., 2016; Cheung et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2016), defined as 'semi-prostitution' whereby a young person engages in 'transactional sex' or 'getting paid' (via gifts) for providing sexual services to customers. While this term avoids the use of terms such as prostitution directly, there may also be risk of idealising or minimising the seriousness of the commodification of sex with children or young people. Similarly, Luo et al. (2008) refer to 'adult-child sexual contact', purposefully exchanging the term 'assault' with 'contact' due to their study including 'contacts' without force (e.g. equivalent of assault). However, the addition of terminology may compound the ambiguity amongst CSE literature and research.

The current CSE evidence-base often refers to the economic, social and political conditions which 'push' children and young people out of a home environment, and 'pull' them towards another source of safety, survival and/or connection (Kragten-Heerdink et al., 2018; Chang et al., 2016). An example of this is presented in a study which examined the exploitation of children in India, with a focus on 'devadasi' or female child temple prostitutes/sex workers (Sathyanarayana & Babu, 2012). Devadasi are traditionally seen in South India, where cultural practices hold religious sanctity, 'pushing' families to dedicate daughters from age six to provide sexual

services to temple priests and patrons, in order to attain 'wellbeing of the family', reduce poverty, to follow previous generations, 'to appease Gods' and/or due to a daughters physical disability (Sathyanarayana & Babu, 2012). Socio-cultural factors, social norms, and individual needs and beliefs about sexuality can each impact a child or young person's trajectory into sexual exploitation; however, these myriads of terms across the globe may continue to limit researchers' data aggregation and risk inaccuracy (and potentially under-estimating) of CSE prevalence.

Push-pull factors are especially important to consider in the context of accurate defining of CSE, as a young person or child experiencing sexual exploitation may also face several risk factors which increase their developmental vulnerability and leads to behaviours that function to meet their basic underlying human needs, such as safety, physical survival, love, belonging and connection (McDonald & Middleton, 2019). Yet, despite a large discourse of literature surveying the vulnerability and risk factors which contribute a child's path into CSE (Laird et al., 2020), the vernacular surrounding CSE itself remains focused on language such as 'selling or 'transaction', insinuating an act of 'instigation' and highlighting the behavioural or 'active' position of a young person. In contrast, these terms focus less on perpetrator involvement, similarly to victim-blaming. Within a survival framework, language might specify that a 'young person or child is affected by CSE' or is a CSE 'survivor', opposed to victim (which undermines the inherent resilience of an individual from a harm reduction approach). It is recommended to avoid terms which minimise the exploitative nature of the sexual acts by virtue of a child or young person's developmental age, such as 'dating' or 'transactional sex' and erroneously emphasise choice, and to avoid terms which contribute to victim-blaming, such as 'trading/selling', 'prostitution' or 'commercial sex' which fail to acknowledge the humanness in the experience.

Research which embodies a child-centred language assumes that universally there is no situation where trading/selling sex is an optimal health or career option for children or young people (McDonald & Middleton, 2019). Terms which objectively encompass the experience of the young person or child alongside highlighting the culpability of a perpetrator's participation in coercion or inducement will likely hold more utility in defining CSE than those which focus on the behaviour of a child or young person alone. Accurately defining CSE may also progress social norms which minimise victim-blaming, increase court credibility of those affected by CSE and further trauma-informed practice.

Child Sexual Exploitation Definition

Similarly, to the variation in CSE terminology, CSE definitions remained variable (see Table 3 in the supplementary material). Table 1 outlines sexual exploitation definitions and measures which were compared across the included papers; this information was contrasted across the four criterions for CSE, adapted from Matthews and Collin-Vezina's (2019) conceptual model of CSA.

Child. When referring to the population with definitions of CSE, 32 studies explicitly incorporated children and young people <18 years of age within their measures or definitions (as per Table 3), and while 21 studies did not explicitly include age in years they qualitatively referred to 'child', 'juvenile', 'adolescent', 'minor', 'youth' or 'young person' in their eponymous terms expansively. Only one study reported the age of a perpetrator, stating CSE can be perpetrated by both adults and youth (Adjei & Saewyc, 2017), and another study specifically referenced adult-to-child sexual contact without specific age parameters for the adult or child (Luo et al., 2008). One study referred to female 'child sex workers' raised from birth with this trajectory in mind, who are offered to priests and temple patrons from age six for sexual exploitation (Sathyanarayana & Babu, 2012). While most studies conceptualised CSE as occurring within the context of an age

Table 3. Implications for Practice, Policy and Research.

A consistent and comprehensive operationalised and defined understanding of CSE can progress future research, by improving prevalence estimates, validated instruments and data collection. A clear CSE definition could improve the accurate detection and assessment of individuals affected by CSE, furthering prevention and early intervention efforts and providing access to necessary intervention for children, young people and families affected by CSE.
Research which embodies a child-centred language would refrain from labels such as 'prostitution' or 'sex-work' to describe the experience of a child or young person's inducement into CSE. Furthermore, an evidence-based and consistent definition of CSE may progress social norms, minimising victim-blaming, increasing court credibility of those affected by CSE and improving trauma-informed responses to policy, practice and research.
To improve research replication and methodological rigour, explicitly specified age range criteria should be included within CSE definitions.
Future research would benefit from the delineation of the conceptual overlap between grooming, child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation.
A CSE versus CSA decision tree may hold clinical utility for community prevention and intervention programs which target young people and children affected by CSE, offering a clear structure to increase CSE identification and assessment and practitioner understanding of what constitutes CSE.

discordant relationship, CSE can be committed by a person of any age, including peer-to-peer abuse (World Health Organization, 2005). Children and young people affected by CSE may also be perpetrators or facilitators of grooming or CSE, which is often an attempt protecting oneself from performing the sexual act and deferring this to another vulnerable young person or child. Furthermore, parameters regarding age of legal sexual consent or socio-cultural perceptions of normative sexual behaviour varies vastly across the globe, between and within countries (Dubowitz, 2017).

Sexual Acts. While all 74 studies referred to a 'sexual act' as a broad term, none specified the nature of the contact, for example, as to whether the contact was a sexual/physical contact, or a non-contact offence (e.g. online sexual contact). Moreover, only five definitions specified 'online' contact within their definition (Cook & Mott, 2020; Gatwiri et al., 2020; Hampton & Lieggi, 2020; McKibbon, 2017; Ramiro et al., 2019). Of the 74, 28 included grooming or recruitment within their definition of sexual exploitation; however, four of these studies inferred that grooming may be possible as a component of CSE by using the United Kingdom's Department of Education's definition which states CSE can all occur 'through the use of technology' (UK Department of Education, 2015).

Few studies mentioned specifically what constituted 'sexual acts'. While most studies referred to at least one specific context or type, none mentioned the same sexual acts on or offline across the 74 definitions. Five studies included pornography/child pornography in their definition (Hampton & Lieggi, 2020; Naramore et al., 2017; O'Brien et al., 2017a; Franchino-Olsen et al., 2020/2021; Bath et al., 2020). Two studies specified forced marriage (Franchino-Olsen et al., 2021; Bath et al., 2020) and exploitation in strip clubs (Franchino-Olsen et al., 2021; Couture et al., 2020). Thereafter, studies varied greatly regarding the context or type of exploitation that was included in their definition. Bath et al. (2020) included exotic dancing, sexual entertainment and servitude; Cook and Mott (2020) included 'the use of technology' and similarly, Ramiro et al. (2019), focused on online forms of sexual exploitation, such as virtual or text-based online dialogues that are sexually suggestive and video-based; cyberprostitution; non-consensual sharing or receiving of unwanted sexually explicit photos and videos (non-consensual sexting); production, access and distribution of child sexual materials on or offline; being a witness to online sexual activities; online sexual grooming (synonymous with sexual chatting, online solicitation of children for sexual purposes or online sexual enticement of children; sexual extortion of children or sextortion; and live online child sexual abuse. Couture et al. (2020), included formal forms of sex work, organised/informal networks, organised prostitution rings and massage parlours. Franchino-Olsen et al. (2020), included mail order bride trade involving minors and Greenbaum et al. (2018), included production of sexual material and performance in sexually oriented business. Two studies mention 'sexually exploitative relationships' as a context of CSE (CCYP, 2015 & Ireland, 2015). The 'Devadasi' system in South India refers to 'sexual services' in general, which includes sexual intercourse, other sexual acts and temple dancing (Sathyanarayana & Babu, 2012). Two studies report on 'compensated dating' to include transactional sex and other forms of companionship or escorting (Chang et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2016).

A study which reviewed data on child sexual abuse and exploitation across 73 countries, indicated child 'prostitution' is perceived by 92% of international countries as a form of CSA/E, whereas less agreed upon forms are internet solicitation for sex (86%), child marriage (80%) and female genital mutilation (80%: Dubowitz, 2017). Generally, conceptualisations of CSE remain so broad that they are unable to fully describe the range of specific behaviours or actions which constitute CSE. Definitions of CSE may benefit from clarifying the scope of sexual activity and behaviours when referring to the sexual exploitation of children and young people, especially considering the extension of offline to online contexts. Furthermore, while child sexual abuse conceptualisation is definitive regarding completed or attempted sexually abusive acts with both contact sexual interaction (e.g. physical sexual contact or exploitation) and non-contact sexual interaction (e.g. exposing a child to witness sexual activity or online forms of child sexual abuse), CSE literature has yet to capture these nuances within their definitions (Murray et al., 2014).

Exploitation. Of the 74 studies, 35 included 'abuse' within their CSE definitions, including reference to unequal power, abuse of vulnerability, coercion, force, or fraud. Only three studies included a lack of consent or non-consensual act within their defining of CSE (Ramiro, 2020; Cook & Mott, 2020; CCYP, 2015). Almost all studies reported on the 'exchange' or 'trading' of monetary or non-monetary resources for sex acts (n = 70), between a young person/child and a perpetrator. While only four studies referred to prostitution, trafficking or CSE terms without extended definitions reported (Weston & Mythen, 2020; Deb et al., 2011; Wilson et al., 2010; Luo et al., 2008).

Two studies specifically referred to the trading of money alone, often termed 'commercial sexual exploitation' (Adjei, 2017; Edwards, 2006), most referred to money and other non-monetary items, including affection, shelter, food, clothes, alcohol or drugs, luxury items, accommodation, gifts and basic needs. Often, these terms were expanded to include 'anything of value' or 'something of perceived value' to encompass all forms of need or income generation. Two studies referred to 'compensated dating' with both monetary and gift items exchanged; however, the term 'compensation' may imply the offset or payment can 'compensate' or be equal in measure to the occurring event (sexual exploitation), which may unintentionally lean heavily on language to veil or minimise an act of sexual violence into another type of sexual behaviour.

While all 74 studies broadly referred to the exchanging of sex acts for resources, only one study specifically describes a young person or child as being involved in the solicitation of the exchange (Yates, 1991), and one study specifies that the purchaser could also be a youth (Adjei, 2017). Current conceptualisations and terminology regarding CSE would benefit from clarifying the term 'exploitation', for example, if a child or young person solicits someone to engage in sexual acts (on or offline) for money or non-monetary needs, and the act also constitutes 'abuse' (i.e. occurring within a relationship of power whereby the young person is in a position of inequality, and whereby their vulnerability is exploited and in the absence of true consent) then the act itself would be considered CSE regardless of who initiates the event. In this scenario, a perpetrator may or may not have been involved in solicitation, but completed the contact form of sexual abuse, and thus engaged in the exploitative exchange within CSE. Furthermore, research recognises that both consent and who solicits in CSE is irrelevant (e.g. victim-survivor or perpetrator, adult or child), as it is common for a child or young person to believe they are voluntarily engaging in sexual activity with the person who is exploiting their unmet needs (McDonald & Middleton, 2019).

Overall, our findings indicate CSE is frequently delineated from CSA via the element of exploitation, which involves a reciprocal exchange of monetary and/or non-monetary resources, alongside a power imbalance between perpetrator and young person, regardless of who initiates or solicits the sex acts (Simon et al., 2020). While CSA may involve a 'unilateral' exchange of gifts for the purpose of grooming or manipulating a young person into complying with sex acts, our findings indicate that CSE involves a more nuanced 'reciprocal' exchange between a perpetrator and young person. For example, the perpetrator might receive financial, social or political profit, exchanged for the exploitation of a young person's unmet needs, by providing the youth/child with resources such as protection, survival, money, transport, substances and/or shelter. Where sexual gratification, or exercise of power and control, is the primary motivation and gain for a perpetrator (and there is no gain for the child/young person), this constitutes CSA, even if a unilateral exchange occurred in the context of grooming. Importantly however, the reciprocal exchange and receipt of something by a child/young person in CSE does not make them any less of a victim/survivor. It is also important to note that the prevention of a negative event can fulfil the requirement for exchange, for example, a child who engages in sexual activity to stop someone carrying out a threat to their own life or harm to themselves or loved ones.

Toward a Unified Definition of Child Sexual Exploitation

A clearly defined and operationalised definition of CSE is critical to effectively shape research and evidence-based prevention, intervention and policy responses (Simon et al., 2020). Such a definition is critical to limit variability in prevalence estimates, develop validated instruments, monitor and collect reporting data, and even inform legal systems regarding what constitutes CSE perpetration and survivorship. Confirmed by our review, the term 'child sexual exploitation' varies considerably across law, policy, culture and epidemiology, limiting the application of research, prevention and shaping of social norms (Matthews et al.). To bring a connection to trauma-informed care, trauma-sensitive and recovery-oriented language should be integrated into the existing nomenclature surrounding CSE (McDonald & Middleton, 2019; Recovery Oriented Language Guide - 2nd Ed (ROLG), 2019). Trauma-sensitive and recovery-oriented language provides a foundation which would help to understand the impact of trauma, while seeking to actively resist retraumatisation (ROLG, 2019). Trauma informed attitudes, expectations and actions impact social norms, reduce stigma and victim-blaming, and reflect respect, non-judgement, and an unconditional positive regard for all human beings (ROLG, 2019). For example, statements which include terms such as a young person 'selling' sex acts for 'money' or 'payment' might be more accurately expressed as a young person's 'needs' or 'vulnerabilities' exploited for sex acts to reduce victim-blaming and acknowledge the developmental stage or vulnerability of a child or young person in CSE.

Therefore, in synthesising findings from the current study and incorporating a trauma-informed lens, the following definition (Table 4) and conceptual model (Figure 2) for classifying CSE were developed.

Child sexual exploitation. An abusive act where an individual or group takes advantage of a power imbalance, to use, force, coerce and/or deceive a child or young person into completed or attempted sexual activity, on or offline; (a) by an offer or actual exchange of unmet needs or wants of the child/young person (e.g. food, clothing, shelter, money, protection, belonging, affection and/or developmental needs or anything of perceived value to the young person or child); and/or (b) for the economic or social advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator; (c) irrespective of consent or who initiates or solicitates the contact (e.g. child/young person or perpetrator, adult or peer). *Note*: Child or young person refers to individuals below the legal age of adulthood or otherwise considered by societal norms to be a child.

Implications of a Child Sexual Exploitation Typology

This unified conceptualisation and comprehensive definition of CSE in the form of a typology can be used to assess and identify cases. Considering young people and children can perceive that they are engaging in consensual sexual activity, but may also be experiencing CSE, professional awareness and identification is essential to providing prevention and

Table 4. Expanded Child Sexual Exploitation Definition.

Term	Meaning
Child sexual abuse	Adopted by the definition of the 1999 WHO Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention: 'Child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that they do not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society. Child sexual abuse is evidenced by this activity between a child and an adult or another child who by age or development is in a relationship of responsibility, trust or power, the activity being intended to gratify or satisfy the needs of the other person. This may include but is not limited to the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity, the exploitative use of a child in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices, the exploitative use of children in pornographic performance, and materials'.[1]
Child	Developmentally or chronologically a child (e.g. below the legal age of adulthood or otherwise considered by societal norms to be a child, commonly expressed as <18 years of age).[2]
Completed	Completed sexual contact (with or without physical touching) or exploitation of a child or young person, either online or offline.[3] For example, but not limited to, penetration, abusive sexual contact as intentional touching with no penetration, and non-contact sexual abuse such as exposing a child to sexual activity on or offline, involvement in sexual image, text or video-based material of a child, sexual harassment, prostitution, or trafficking.
Attempted	Noncompleted sexual interaction with, or exploitation of a child or young person.[4] Includes the initiation of attempted sex acts, where an offender intended to complete child sexual abuse or exploitation and can include grooming on or offline.
Sexual	An online or offline contact resulting in a sexual act intended to seek any physical or mental sexual gratification for the abuser or another person, or the act is legitimately experienced by the child as a sexual act.[5] Note: Often via coercion, fraud, or force and while harm will normally be present it is not essential.
Exploitation (abuse + unequal reciprocal exchange)	An abusive act (e.g. occurs within a relationship of power where the child/young person is in a position of inequality; exploits the child's vulnerability and occurs without true consent); irrespective of who solicitates (e.g. victim-survivor or perpetrator, adult or peer) where sex acts are exchanged for the child or young person's unmet needs, via the provision of monetary or non-monetary resources (e.g. food, clothes, shelter, affection, protection, belonging, gifts and/or anything else of perceived value to the young person or child) on or offline. Sexually exploitative acts may occur, but are not limited to, production and distribution of child sexual exploitation material, child pornography, exposure to virtual, image or video-based dialogues of a sexual nature, cyberprostitution, exploitation in strip clubs, exotic dancing, sexual entertainment, sexual servitude, non-consensual sharing or receiving of unwanted sexually explicit texts, photos and videos/sexting coercion, online sexual grooming (sexual chatting, online solicitation or enticement for sexual purposes), live online child sexual abuse, sexual extortion/sextortion, the recruitment, harbouring, transportation, provision or obtaining of minors for the purposes of sex acts/sex trafficking and forced marriage.
Child sexual exploitation	

Footnotes: [1] Adopted by the definition of the 1999 WHO Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention. [2, 5] Adapted from Matthews & Collin-Vezina (2019). [3] Adopted by Murray, Nguyen & Cohen, 2014 and the United Nations Glossary of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation.

intervention of completed and noncompleted acts of this type of sexual violence. Decision trees are an analytical tool which presents the root decision at the top of the figure (is this individual experiencing child sexual exploitation) and branches which stem from the root representing different possible outcomes (confirmed CSE or CSE excluded) or even unknown outcomes (at risk of). A decision tree may offer good utility for professionals from any sector seeking to quickly understand if a child or young person is or is not affected by CSE, or if they are at risk. Therefore, this study combined the synthesised nomenclature and definition of CSE into a conceptual decision tree which may assist in professionals identifying the presence of CSE in a child, young person, or family's experience (Figure 2).

Implications for Research and Practice

While conceptually there is an overlap between grooming, CSA and CSE, current literature frequently conceptualises these types of sexual violence as synonymous or umbrellaed beneath each other (e.g. CSE is a type of CSA: Tables 3 and 5 for an overall synthesis of summaries, key implications and critical findings). However, longitudinal evidence suggests that young people and children who have experienced CSA

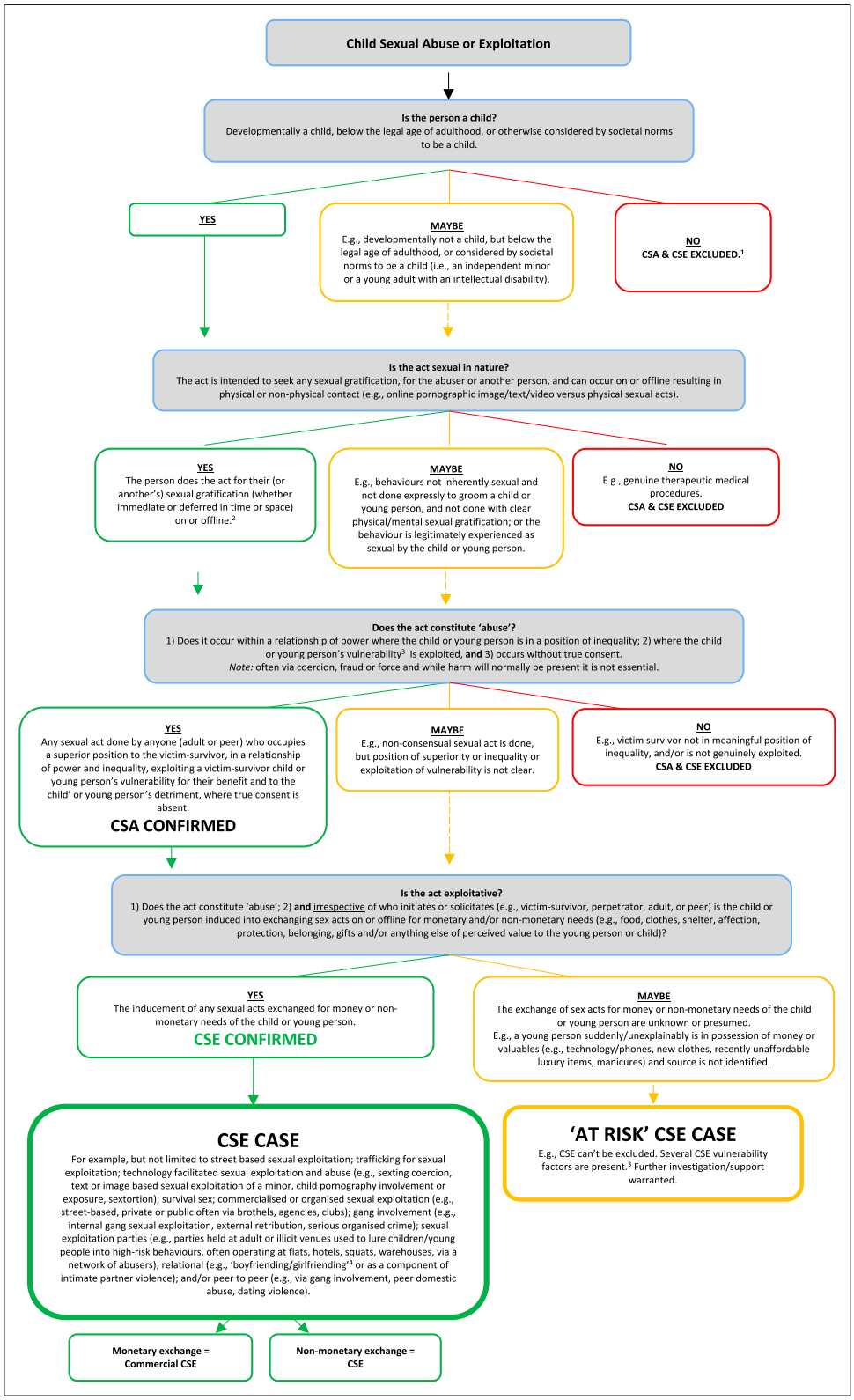

Figure 2. Child Sexual Exploitation Typology and Decision Tree

Note: Adapted from Matthews & Collin-Vezina (2019) and Laird et al. (2020). *Footnotes*: [1]Exploitation may still be occurring to an adult. [2]Harm will normally be present but is not essential. [3]Vulnerability factors specifically associated with an increased risk for CSE include sexual risk behaviours (condomless sex, sexual intercourse in public, meeting with strangers face-to-face from an online environment for sex); increased no. of sexual partners; exposure to child pornography; symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder; a history of child sexual abuse; externalising problems (aggression or high relational conflict); sexting; exposure to violent or rape pornography; involvement in crime and/or drug use (Laird et al., 2020). [4]Boyfriending/girlfriending: a term used to describe a perpetrator grooming a child/young person into a perceived boyfriend/girlfriend relationship, where the perpetrator coerces or forces the child/young person into having sex with friends or associates (Shephard & Lewis, 2017).

Table 5. Critical Findings.

In a large systematic review of 66 studies, comprising 97, 899 participants with a mean age of 16.2 years, and an even distribution across sex (53.3% identifying as female), CSE definitions were highly inconsistent and variable. This has implications for measurement discrepancies, interfering with accurate and consistent identification of individuals affected by CSE.
Research largely maintains the use of language which may perpetuate stigma, victim-blaming and/or reduce trauma-informed approaches to policy, practice and research, using terms such as 'prostitution' or 'sex work' to describe children and young people affected by sexual exploitation.
Results show *Child* or *young person frequently* refers to individuals below the legal age of adulthood (frequently <18 years of age) or otherwise considered by societal norms to be a child.
Very few studies which define CSE specify the nature of the sexual contact, nor whether the contact was completed, attempted and online or offline.
Only 4% of included studies included a lack of consent or non-consent within their definition of CSE, and 1% discussed solicitation by a child or youth.
'Child sexual exploitation' may be defined as: an *abusive act* where an individual or group takes advantage of a power imbalance, to use, force, coerce and/or deceive a child or young person into *completed* or *attempted sexual activity*, *on* or *offline*; (a) by the solicitation or actual *exchange* of *unmet needs* or *wants* of the *child/young person* (e.g. food, clothing, shelter, money, protection, belonging, affection and/or developmental needs or anything of perceived value to the young person or child); and/or (b) for the economic or social *advantage* of the *perpetrator* of facilitator; (c) *irrespective* of *consent* or who initiates the contact (e.g. child/young person or perpetrator, adult, or peer).
In the majority of CSE cases, it is the developmental vulnerability (by virtue of age), and/or an unmet need which is exploited, propelling a child or young person into the reciprocal exchange of sex acts for the provision of their survival or need (e.g. shelter, substances, money, food, protection and resources).

in their lifetime are 3 to 4 times more likely to then experience CSE, reinforcing the conceptualisation that CSE is indeed a separate type of abuse, and may even be considered an outcome of CSA (Laird et al., 2020). The delineation between grooming, CSA and CSE warrants further investigation; however, it is possible that these aspects of sexual violence are dimensional along a continuum. For example, grooming and CSA may involve a unilateral profit for a perpetrator, propelling a child or young person's vulnerability where an unmet need is further exploited; however, by the time the child presents to a service, they are often described as 'gaining' or 'profiting' from the reciprocal exchange (e.g. inappropriately labelled as sex working or prostitution). However, in most CSE cases, it is the developmental vulnerability by virtue of age, or an unmet need pushing a child or young person into the reciprocal exchange of sex acts for the provision of their needs or survival (e.g. physical/social-emotional/economic needs, shelter, substances, money, food, protection and/or resources).

Additionally, findings confirm evidence reported in existing studies, whereby CSE research is heavily focused on Western contexts and developed countries, with literature examining CSE in developing societies remaining scarce (Wenting, 2021). While prevalence rates for CSE are difficult to ascertain, global child sexual abuse rates are high, ranging from 8% to 31% for females and 3% to 17% for males, with the highest rates reported in Africa and Australia (Poddar & Mukherjee, 2020). A shared operationalised definition of CSE may provide additional support for future research to compare and aggregate epidemiological data pertaining to prevalence of CSE. Furthermore, studies which examine CSE may also benefit from evaluating how socio-cultural contexts influence understanding, awareness and reporting of CSE across the globe.

Limitations

It is important to recognise that any attempt to unify or conceptualise child sexual exploitation has inherent limitations. Given the increased likelihood of a vulnerable or at-risk child or young person experiencing push factors leading into CSE, a high proportion of data was sampled from criminal records and child protection, and as CSE is a multi-sector issue, impacting epidemiology, law, policy and health sectors, this may limit and bias the synthesising and generalisability of extrapolated definitions. The high variability and discrepancies between sampled CSE nomenclature may imply the phenomena is in a state of rapid research growth, whereby unified conceptualisations are likely to expand and deepen over time; therefore, proposed operationalisation and definitions of CSE should be interpreted against future research. Finally, this review does not claim to provide a single solution to the complexities associated with defining CSE, but instead proposes a scientific approach to synthesising existing definitions and nomenclature to inform progress towards a conceptual model and definition.

Conclusion

There is a need to improve shared understandings of the concept of CSE across the sectors of research, policy, law, prevention, health and to advance social norms. While generally literature describes child sexual exploitation in its most expansive form beneath or synonymous with child sexual

abuse, these types of abuse are distinct, with our findings clarifying that CSE encompasses an element of inducement via monetary or non-monetary exchange for the sexual gratification of the perpetrator (Simon et al., 2020). Current attempts at defining and conceptualising CSE more specifically have been affected by several factors beyond a lack of nomenclature, including the use of convenience samples, inconsistent and simple dichotomous measurement and statistical methods, and failure to comprehensively capture the broad range of sexual acts that are considered CSE across several environments (e.g. on and offline), sectors (e.g. law and health; Graham et al., 2019; Moynihan et al., 2018) and types (e.g. commercial monetary compensation vs. trafficking). Without a more comprehensive and universally accepted definition of CSE, measurement and data collection may be difficult or impossible to compare, severely reducing the ability for intervention and prevention efforts to build a collective and effective evidence-based response. The current analysis, unified definition and conceptual model aim to (i) advance knowledge and understanding of CSE, to (ii) aid identification and measurement, and (iii) contribute to the progression of social norms which embrace nuances of trauma-informed practice and support for the identification and recovery of children, young people and families affected by sexual exploitation.

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Supplemental material

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Author Biographies

Ms Jessica Laird Ms Laird is a Doctor of Clinical Psychology Candidate at Deakin University, Melbourne Australia, a Registered Nurse and Provisional Psychologist. Her research investigates factors associated with child sexual exploitation and aims to improve evidence-based and trauma-informed practice which targets early-intervention and recovery for children, young people and families.

Dr. Bianca Klettke is a cyberpsychology researcher at Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia, with a focus on investigating factors impacting on the intersection between online behaviours and (sexual) violence. Having published over 40 peer-reviewed papers in the field, Dr. Klettke's recent research has focused on online behaviours, including sexting, sext dissemination and cyberbullying, within the context of psychological, social and legal harms as well as the associated motivations, risk and protective factors. Her work includes the first systematic review on sexting behaviours across both adult and adolescent populations. Overall, her research aims to understand motivating factors, in order to inform community-based prevention initiatives to combat these harms.

Dr. Hallford is a Clinical Psychologist and Research Fellow at Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia. His

research aims to investigate the psychopathology of episodic future thinking and intervention related to mental health issues.

Dr. Hall is a Clinical Psychologist and Senior Lecturer at Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia. Her research focuses on the role of emotion dysregulation as a transdiagnostic treatment target for vulnerable young people with complex mental health and substance use issues, with an emphasis on borderline personality disorder (BPD) and substance use disorders (SUD). In her work, she utilises face-to-face, telephone and technology enhanced methods to deliver interventions. Furthermore, she develops and translates evidence-based interventions into community and health settings with a focus on transdiagnostic approaches, Motivational Interviewing and mindfulness and acceptance based Cognitive Behavioural Therapies.