

Article

Zero Tolerance of Children's Sexual Abuse from Interreligious Dialogue

Cristina M. Pulido ¹, Ana Vidu ², Roseli Rodrigues de Mello ³ and Esther Oliver ^{4,*}

¹ Department of Journalism and Communication Sciences, Autonomous University of Barcelona, 08193 Barcelona, Spain; cristina.pulido@uab.cat

² Law School, University of Deusto, 48007 Bilbo, Spain; ana.vidu@deusto.es

³ Department of Pedagogical Theories and Practice, Federal University of Sao Carlos, Sao Carlos 13565-905, Brazil; roseli@ufscar.br

⁴ Department of Sociology, University of Barcelona, 08034 Barcelona, Spain

* Correspondence: estheroliver@ub.edu

Abstract: Child sexual abuse is a social problem that concerns our societies. The sustainable development goals have highlighted the eradication of child sexual abuse as one of the highest-priority goals of this century. Breaking the silence within religious communities is an essential step going forward. Therefore, establishing a dialogue between people of different religions is crucial to achieving this goal. The purpose of this article is to explore whether there are current interreligious dialogue initiatives based on scientific recommendations to prevent child sexual abuse. The method used herein is a qualitative document analysis of the selected initiatives. The results indicate that interreligious dialogue initiatives include scientific recommendations in their prevention programs. Furthermore, these successful initiatives connect religious values and the need to support victims and to break their silence. Based on these results, it can be concluded that interreligious initiatives for child sexual abuse prevention programs based on scientific evidence are crucial in order to eradicate child sexual abuse.

Keywords: interreligious dialogue; child sexual abuse; prevention; social transformation



Citation: Pulido, Cristina M., Ana Vidu, Roseli Rodrigues de Mello, and Esther Oliver. 2021. Zero Tolerance of Children's Sexual Abuse from Interreligious Dialogue. *Religions* 12: 549. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12070549>

Academic Editors:
Svetlana Sharonova and Marta Soler

Received: 15 May 2021
Accepted: 28 June 2021
Published: 19 July 2021

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2021 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Breaking silence within religious communities is an essential step to prevent and address child sexual abuse (CSA). According to [Rudolfsson and Portin \(2018\)](#), the sexual abuse survivors in a congregation need to experience appropriate conditions and feel that victims' needs and concerns are in focus and not left behind. Additional research identifies that the discourse underlying religion as the root of violence does not help end violence ([Miller 2020](#)). Overcoming prejudices towards believers of different faiths is crucial to achieving that purpose. People use religious values in different ways. For instance, evangelical mothers may use evangelical ethics or biblical messages from a transnational and multicultural perspective ([Jung 2020](#)). Research needs to focus on how religion could be part of the solution, and interfaith communities have enormous potential to contribute to this aim ([Miller 2020](#)).

Moreover, the official books of different religions have statements against violence and child sexual abuse. For instance, in Leviticus 18 verse 10, incestuous sexual abuse is forbidden: "they shall not have sexual relations with your granddaughters". Furthermore, in the New Testament, Matthew 18:6, Jesus preaches that children should not be harmed. Furthermore, Islam prohibits violence against children, and sexual abuse is banned ([Munir 2015](#)). In other faiths such as Buddhism, sexual violence against children is also denounced ([Akhila 2019](#)). In this vein, some scholars highlight the relevance of connecting religious values in overcoming child sexual abuse and supporting victims, such as in the case of the Jewish community in Australia ([Epstein and Crisp 2018](#)).

Research has identified seven recommendations for preventing child sexual abuse: (1) zero tolerance of child sexual abuse, (2) community involvement in prevention and detection, (3) scientific evidence-based action, (4) training in identifying potential abusers, (5) supporting victims of child sexual abuse, (6) supporting victims of second-order sexual harassment, and (7) connecting the rejection of child sexual abuse with religious values in faith communities.

This paper analyses child sexual abuse prevention initiatives from an interreligious perspective in terms of these scientific recommendations for preventing child sexual abuse. In this vein, the first research question of this study [RQ1] is defined as follows: are interreligious initiatives including scientific recommendations for child sexual abuse prevention?

Considering the scarce interreligious initiatives regarding preventing and eradicating child sexual abuse, this article presents these initiatives in detail in order to identify to what extent they include scientific recommendations for child sexual abuse prevention and response.

2. Theoretical Framework

Child sexual abuse is a social problem that concerns our societies. According to United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF 2020), every year, millions of children around the world face sexual abuse and exploitation in different environments (home, school, community, or through digital technologies). At least 120 million children under the age of 20 (1 in 10) have suffered from child sexual abuse. In addition, research has shown that perpetrators are usually someone that victims know and trust. The silence surrounding this issue is also notorious as many of the victims never tell anyone (UNICEF 2020). In this vein, one of the sustainable development goals addresses eradicating sexual violence, and one type of sexual violence is child sexual abuse. Prevention, detection and supporting victims are urgent needs.

Drawing on this, the European Commission (2020), consistent with its pledge against all forms of violence, published a report entitled "EU strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse" to provide an effective response to child sexual abuse by developing responses to these crimes occurring both online and offline. This strategy comprises eight initiatives that seek to promote the coordination of multistakeholder action concerning prevention, research, and supporting victims. One of the eight initiatives of the report details actions to "enable member states to better protect children through prevention" (European Commission 2020), including taking a scientific approach to the prevention of child sexual abuse and evaluating the effectiveness of prevention programs, as the programs rarely assess their effectiveness. In this vein, the EC document (European Commission 2020) highlights that prevention efforts should prioritise institutions working with children (such as sports centres and clubs, religious institutions, health care services, schools, and afterschool activities). Professionals need to be trained in order to prevent and detect early signs of possible sexual violence and abuse and to learn how to interact with children and families (Roca et al. 2020). In this sense, dialogical interactions are crucial to promoting better-quality conversations and understanding among teachers, professionals and families (Flecha and Soler 2014; Aguilera-Jiménez and Gallardo 2020).

Drawing on this, one of the scientific recommendations is to involve entire communities in the prevention process. Different studies have focused on prevention mechanisms in schools (Walsh et al. 2015; Roca et al. 2020) and family involvement in terms of child sexual abuse risks (Rudolph et al. 2018). However, the scientific literature has paid less attention to how religious institutions prevent child sexual abuse within their communities (McLeigh and Taylor 2019) and to what extent interreligious dialogue could reinforce the principle of zero tolerance of child abuse and its prevention.

The commitment of institutions to supporting victims is an essential criterion. For instance, the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry (SCAI) commissioned a research project to document institutional abuse outcomes in Scotland's long-term childcare. One of the results they obtained states the need to promote evidence-based child protection policies

and initiatives to prevent institutional abuse and support child abuse survivors (Carr et al. 2019).

In this vein, another study based on sexual harassment within universities highlighted the need to develop effective protocols in order to guide the prevention and measures that are to be implemented to address sexual harassment in institutions (García-Hernández et al. 2020). According to García-Hernández et al. (2020), these protocols should be coherent and focused on supporting victims. In this sense, the process starts by breaking the silence within institutions. The first research about gender-based violence in Spanish universities showed how the step of breaking this silence is difficult, mainly due to the difficult consequences for the members involved (Valls et al. 2016). Thus, taking the pledge and speaking up against sexual harassment has implications for people who support victims suffering from what is known as second-order sexual harassment (Flecha 2021; Vidu et al. 2021). Nevertheless, it is necessary to guarantee a safer space for breaking the silence and supporting survivors going forward. Institutional leaders could transfer these recommendations to the prevention of child sexual abuse and contribute to identifying the crucial factor of promoting positive relationships because “they are a protective factor against involvement in situations of sexual aggression, and they influence the acquisition of transformative beliefs regarding models of attraction and nonviolence. In turn, these beliefs, even more, affect the prevention of this type of violence” (Elboj-Saso et al. 2020, p. 2).

Regarding the impact of evidence-based violence prevention in the USA according to the results of the national sample of youth 10–17 years old, the majority of them rated that these programs are helpful for CSA prevention and response (Finkelhor et al. 2014). However, the implementation of these programs is far from universal, and “quality programs are not the norm” (Finkelhor et al. 2014, p. 684). Education is a critical factor for preventing child sexual abuse, as Finkelhor states, “Education can help them to distinguish when someone really cares about them from when someone is being sexually exploitative” (Finkelhor et al. 2020, p. 4).

3. Materials and Methods

The first step was to search for any interreligious initiative that promotes child sexual abuse prevention. To achieve this, the search strategy included the following keywords in Google: “child sexual abuse”, “prevention”, “interreligious”, or “interfaith”. From the results obtained, those with more consistency with the research question developed were the four initiatives selected for this paper.

The second step was to define the method for analysing those selected initiatives. The method used is the qualitative document analysis of these four initiatives for the prevention of child sexual abuse from an interreligious perspective. This analysis aimed to identify whether the initiatives had included the scientific recommendations of child sexual abuse prevention identified and selected in the previous section.

The four initiatives selected meet the criteria of including two or more different religions. Other international organisations meet the criteria of including two or more different religions, and some other international organisations have been selected since they are considered “interreligious”. The analysis of each initiative is based on one of the key documents mentioned in Table 1, in which recommendations are included, implying a guide to prevent child sexual abuse in various religious communities. The following table summarises the sample selected for document analysis.

The first document selected is “Peace, Love, Tolerance—Key messages from Islam & Christianity On Protecting Children From Violence And Harmful Practice” (AAVV 2016). This document is a report developed by Al-Azhar University and the Coptic Church of Egypt with UNICEF. These two institutional religions from Egypt (Islam and Christianity) and UNICEF have developed a report highlighting the key messages from the Islam and Christian perspectives that condemn any violence against children. One chapter focuses on child sexual abuse.

Table 1. Key documents of the initiatives selected.

Key Document	Initiative
I01 Peace. Love. Tolerance Key Messages From Islam & Christianity On Protecting Children From Violence And Harmful Practice.	A report developed by Al-Azhar University and the Coptic Church of Egypt with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).
I02 Protecting Children from Online Sexual Exploitation: A guide to action for religious leaders and communities.	A guide developed by Religions for Peace and ECPAT and supported by UNICEF.
I03 1st Forum report: Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities: Child Dignity in the Digital World.	A report developed by Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities.
I04 Ending Violence Against Children Hub Evidence Guide.	The EVAC Hub published a comprehensive scoping study on faith & ending violence against children to address some of these evidentiary gaps developed by the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities.

The second document selected is “Protecting Children from Online Sexual Exploitation: A guide to action for religious leaders and communities” (ECPAT and Religions for Peace 2016). ECPAT International is a network of 90 member organisations in 82 countries with one joint mission: to end the sexual exploitation of children. Religions for Peace is the largest international coalition that brings together representatives of the world’s religious communities dedicated to achieving peace. Religions for Peace have national and regional affiliates in 90 countries and Women of Faith and Interfaith Youth Networks at the global, regional and national levels. Both institutions, together with UNICEF’s support, have developed a guide to protect against child sexual exploitation addressed to religious leaders for applying child sexual abuse prevention in their corresponding communities.

The third document selected is “1st Forum report: Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities: Child Dignity in the Digital World” (Interfaith Alliance 2018). The report is from the first forum on child dignity online. The four hundred fifty attendees were faith leaders and senior representatives from governments, law enforcement agencies, international organisations, NGOs, and industry. They developed comprehensive and practical solutions to protect children from online threats. The report exposed practical implications for child online sexual abuse prevention.

The fourth document selected is the “Ending Violence Against Children Hub Evidence Guide” (EVAC JLIFL 2019). The Joint Learning Initiative’s Ending Violence Against Children (EVAC) in Faith and Local Communities published a comprehensive scoping study on faith and ending violence against children to address evidentiary gaps. The study also focused on identifying the strengths and weaknesses of current support mechanisms and how faith-based organisations could support their work. Ten key messages for improving child sexual abuse prevention resulted from this study.

Data Analysis

The designed data analysis is based on the research aim of exploring whether dialogue interreligious initiatives include scientific recommendations on preventing child sexual abuse. According to the scientific recommendations selected in the literature review, described in the introduction section, the following data analysis categories are defined as follows in Table 2.

Table 2. Data analysis categories.

Data Analysis Category	Description
Zero tolerance of child sexual abuse (01)	Zero tolerance of child sexual abuse is one requirement for implementing a successful prevention action in any institution or community. It should be a norm and value for all.
Community's involvement in prevention and detection (02)	The entire community's involvement is one of the recommendations in order to ensure better results from child sexual abuse prevention. Instead of sustaining the silence, communities should build safer spaces for children when they are involved to avoid any child sexual abuse.
Scientific evidence-based action (03)	The scientific evidence-based action is a requirement for promoting a safer and healthy space for children and for avoiding some activities based on nonscientific contributions.
Training for identifying potential abusers in interactions (04)	Children and youth should be trained to identify when someone truly cares about them and when someone is being sexually exploitative.
Support victims of child sexual abuse (05)	Victims need support to report and to avoid revictimisation.
Support victims of second-order sexual harassment (06)	People who support victims may experience attacks due to their support of the victims; thus, it is also necessary to support them.
Specific category in faith communities Connect rejection of child sexual abuse with religious values (07)	Faith and religious communities need to connect religious values and meaning according to their sacred scriptures, including the rejection of child sexual abuse, to overcome the silence and protect children.

4. Results

There are interreligious initiatives that address preventing child sexual abuse. The results of this study show that the interreligious initiatives selected and analysed include scientific recommendations to prevent child sexual abuse. They were selected due to their strong commitment to zero tolerance of child abuse, promoting community involvement to prevent child sexual abuse, supporting the victims and those who support them, and reinforcing the religious values that increase involvement in the prevention of child sexual abuse. The contribution here is to contrast the analysis of the key documents for each of the initiatives selected with the scientific evidence recommendations found in the previous scientific literature.

4.1. Zero Tolerance of Child Sexual Abuse

All initiatives analysed (I01, I02, I03, and I04) reject child sexual abuse and implement zero tolerance of child sexual abuse. The connection of different faiths to protect the lives of children reinforces the commitment of implementing zero tolerance of child sexual abuse.

The sacredness of life, honoured in our religious traditions, grounds our belief in the ultimate meaning and value of the child. This sacredness of life compels us to be a voice of conscience. If we fail to protect the child, we deny our humanity, risk our future and betray our beliefs. (Religions for Peace Executive Committee Statement on Commitment to Eliminate Violence against Children)

In the other example selected, there is a clear statement that condemns any violence against children (I01): "Islam and Christianity condemn any kind of violence against children. The two faiths stress the importance of treating children with love, tenderness, affection and compassion" (AAVV 2016, p. 12). Another example selected from the Interfaith Alliance (I03) highlighted "Protection of children's dignity is pivotal to the progress of their community and the world we live in" (Interfaith Alliance 2018, p. 53). In the document elaborated by the ECPAT and Religions for Peace (I02), there is a clear recommendation of a "religious obligation to end violence against children" (ECPAT and Religions for Peace 2016). Some religious leaders recognized that religious communities could do more because of the omission, denial, and silence resulting from child sexual abuse perpetration.

4.2. Community's Involvement in Prevention and Detection

As we describe above, the entire community's involvement is one of the recommendations for ensuring better results from child sexual abuse prevention. Instead of sustaining silence, the community builds a safer space for children in those cases in which communities are committed to preventing any child sexual abuse. The initiatives selected include this scientific recommendation. For instance, I04 highlights the following principle:

Faith communities can play key roles in preventing violence against children by empowering children to understand their intrinsic value and know their rights and educating caregivers and communities on prevention and tackling specific harmful beliefs that can fuel this violence. (EVAC JLIFL 2019).

This quote emphasizes the crucial role that communities have in preventing child sexual abuse. Furthermore, initiative I03 also emphasizes how religious leaders have a unique role in promoting safer communities, as the following quote shows:

Faith leaders are uniquely positioned to help develop safer communities based on the respect and influence they hold in their communities. Followers look to faith leaders for spiritual and emotional support. This allows faith leaders to positively leverage their influence within communities to promote behavioural change through both words and actions. Religious infrastructure like churches, mosques, temples, etc. is present in the smallest villages as well as largest cities and can be used as channels for communication and change. (Interfaith Alliance 2018).

The other detail highlighted by initiative I02 is that community efforts should be addressed to create a safer space in which children feel free and secure to ask for help, which is a crucial point that is quoted as follows:

One key way in which religious institutions and faith-based organisations can start to protect children and adolescents is to ensure that they are safe within their own community. A major part of this consists of ensuring that children and adolescents know who to ask for help if they have a problem and making them feel comfortable about seeking help and protection. Religious institutions should ensure that they have up-to-date safeguarding policies and procedures and that these are followed scrupulously. (ECPAT and Religions for Peace 2016).

4.3. Evidence-Based Action

Regarding the crucial point to develop evidence-based programs, there is a common requirement to reclaim the need to include science contributions in the action plan developed (I02, I03, and I04). For instance, initiative I04 said that there are some actions based on informal activities, but they need to promote the best collaboration between researchers and practitioners, as quoted:

Many promising faith-informed initiatives remain informal practices or are not documented. Intentional collaboration between researchers and practitioners is needed for more robust documentation on impact and causality. Further research gaps were identified in a range of areas. (EVAC JLIFL 2019).

Initiative I03 goes one step further and states the urgent need to bring together the knowledge created from diverse disciplines for a deep understanding of trauma and how to overcome it. Interdisciplinary dialogue is key, as the following quote suggests:

He called on the urgent need to bring together what has been learned from sociology, psychiatry, law, spirituality, and other fields to understand the depth of the trauma and wounds, as well as the measures for healing, to better understand where to head in safeguarding from here onwards. Father Zollner SJ also mentioned here the first Master's course in safeguarding –a two-year full-time academic degree programme- that brings in an interdisciplinary approach. (Interfaith Alliance 2018)

Initiative 02 stresses that all child-safe activities and programmes developed should be based on evidence generated by specialists in this topic to ensure risk prevention.

To assess and develop child-safe activities and programmes, the following are needed: all faith groups should review their current activities and programmes, especially those focused on children, to assess potential child protection issues and any online risks to children in consultation with specialised agencies, including CSOs on child online protection. They should also ensure that any new activities and programmes are designed to prevent risks to children, both physically and online. (ECPAT and Religions for Peace 2016).

4.4. Training for Identifying Potential Abusers in Interactions

There is only one initiative found that includes this scientific recommendation. One scientific suggestion found in the previous scientific literature is the need to train children and youth in order to differentiate between situations when someone cares about them from a situation when someone is sexually exploitative. We have not explicitly found this recommendation in the documents. However, there is a recommendation found in initiative I04 that emphasizes the training religious actors on identifying the interactions that could be classified as abusive to be able to denounce and to respond to child survivors' needs, as the following quote states:

Faith actors are often important and trusted first responders to violence against children. They need to be further equipped and trained at local levels to recognise, report, refer, and respond to child survivors' needs appropriately. (EVAC JLIFL 2019)

4.5. Support Victims of Child Sexual Abuse and Victims of Second-Order Sexual Harassment

The support of victims of child sexual abuse and the support of those who protect them are essential points found in the scientific literature review to ensure a safer space free of violence. All initiatives have a common base to support victims and to engage the community to support survivors. There is also a recognition of how religious communities could be complicit in violence or, by contrast, could take the pledge to break the silence, as the following quote shows:

Faith communities can be complicit in and perpetrate forms of violence against children. They have a responsibility to "break the silence" and publicly acknowledge and challenge all its forms. Systems must ensure that faith actors are held accountable for any attempts to cover up abuse. (EVAC JLIFL 2019)

Initiative I03 shows the relevance of being an active listener to children's voices, being a supporter and not the contrary, as follows:

For his part, Reverend Hidehito then addressed the conference on the importance of listening to children who are victims of abuse and not disregarding their experiences and stories of abuse to ensure that they are fully taken into consideration. As people of faith, Reverend Hidehito argued, humanity must truly have faith in children, their stories and their views. Additionally, he argued that faith groups need to ensure that the houses of worship can act as safe havens for all. (Interfaith Alliance 2018)

4.6. Connecting the Protection of Children with Religious Values

The different initiatives analysed (I01, I02, I03, and I04) agree that the connection of religious values with the action to protect victims is very necessary for the communities. Knowing that the sacred scriptures reject child sexual abuse contributes to overcoming the silence and protecting children. This connection is remarked from different points, such as the mandates of different faiths to protect children in a collaborative way among them. Initiative 04 supports this idea:

Faith actors have a unique faith-based mandate to care for and protect vulnerable children as created and loved by God. They can draw on specific faith resources and traditions but

also work collaboratively across faiths to develop shared values based on the dignity and worth of all children. (EVAC JLIFL 2019)

Initiative I01 emphasizes how sacred scriptures promote child protection by being proactive in promoting safer environments for all children. This point is one of the common bases of the dialogue between Christians and Muslims on this initiative. Furthermore, initiative 03 states that the leaders of the world's major faiths—participants at the *Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities: Child Dignity in the Digital World*—agree on different commitments to highlight the need to foster dialogue and to engage in interfaith initiatives to address the religious implications of child abuse and exploitation and to promote the protection of victims using spiritual and religious values.

Work to inspire spiritual and practical action and education by all faiths within their own religious leadership at all levels on how to respond to cases of child abuse and to support victims and their families. (Interfaith Alliance 2018)

Initiative I02 remarks how interfaith partnerships reinforce the main value of protecting children's rights, making them a common goal in working with other civil society groups, as follows:

Interfaith partnerships focused on protecting children can broaden the base of shared values and reinforce the principles of child rights because they will be communicated to a larger audience. Partnerships across interreligious and civil society groups can strengthen or solidify the views of local communities on child rights. Such partnerships can also benefit areas where ethnic or religious issues are a source of conflict or tension. By focusing on the needs and protection of children, multifaith partnerships can help unite members of a community around this shared priority, even when they may not normally work together (ECPAT and Religions for Peace 2016)

The collaboration between ECPAT and Religions for Peace was highlighted in initiative I02 by selecting passages from different holy texts. All of the texts reinforced the idea that protecting children is a common value found in the different faith traditions.

5. Discussion

Child sexual abuse is being addressed in an increasing number of places. The scientific literature shows a clear concern for this global problem. There are different scientific recommendations consisting of community involvement for overcoming child sexual abuse in different settings, such as family or educational settings (Walsh et al. 2015; Roca et al. 2020; Rudolph et al. 2018). However, religious communities as spaces to prevent CSA have been less analysed in the literature (McLeigh and Taylor 2019). Aiming to fill this gap, our study broadens the spectrum by focusing not only on religious communities as key to overcoming CSA but also by asserting that dialogue between different faiths is key to addressing child sexual abuse at its root and contributing to its prevention.

However, overcoming child abuse is not only a matter of concern for communities but also for institutions. In this line, the studies analysed show that both the European Commission (2020) and UNICEF (2020), among other organizations (Carr et al. 2019), are committed to eradicating this problem. Our analysis demonstrates, first, that institutions need to rely on scientific evidence to have efficient measures to both prevent CSA and support survivors. Second, child protection must be connected to religious values. On many occasions, religious institutions have a fundamental role in promoting the welfare of their own community. This factor cannot be overlooked for overall child protection.

The lack of reporting constitutes another of the most worrying realities in overcoming sexual harassment. In some spaces, such as academia, victims tend to suffer retaliation and to feel alone while complaining (Valls et al. 2016). This issue obstructs reporting and is in fact a strategy to keep harassers unpunished (Flecha 2021). As a potential solution to this, for everyone to intervene and for victims to have support, the supporting people also have to be protected. To that end, second-order sexual harassment (Vidu et al. 2021) must also be approached and overcome. Drawing on this, our study shows that in the case of minors,

the protection of those who listen, believe and support victims of CSA plays an even more crucial role as infants need to be surrounded by safe and confident spaces as disclosure often depends on that.

In religious contexts, a discourse in which faiths have tended to predominate as the basis for violence has tended to promote more violence (Miller 2020). Our research not only demonstrates the inconsistency of such an assertion but also shows that a multicultural perspective of religious values improves coexistence and promotes dialogical interactions (Campdepadrós-Cullell et al. 2021). In fact, the sacred books of the religions analysed in this study include some very clear statements against violence and sexual abuse.

These results suggest that interreligious dialogue improves coexistence and the views of other religions while promoting an environment of zero tolerance of CSA. Overcoming CSA requires a clear position of the entire community, institutional commitment, and protection for those who encourage and protect victims. Child sexual abuse will not end without evidence-based mechanisms and policies. In the same way, training needs to follow evidence-based criteria. In the fight against child sexual abuse, no value should be disregarded, and no faith should be disregarded. Equality needs to be demonstrated in all its aspects and contexts.

6. Conclusions

The social commitment to overcoming child sexual abuse has increased over the past years. The eradication of child sexual abuse is one of the main aims of the sustainable development goals. Thus, the actions developed by different institutions, civil societies and even religions are crucial for achieving this challenge. One of the European Commission's recommendations highlights the need to include evidence-based programs (European Commission 2020) for prevention programs to be successful. In this sense, a weak point of some of the activities developed for preventing child sexual abuse is the lack of scientific recommendations on the matter.

The results obtained through the documentary analysis showed the existence of incipient interreligious initiatives that are working together to ensure a safer place for children, victims of sexual abuse and those who support them. The analysed initiatives include scientific recommendations, highlighted in the scientific literature and reviewed in the corresponding key documents developed. In conclusion, all initiatives agree on the following statements: (a) zero tolerance of child sexual abuse, (b) involving the entire community in the detection and prevention of the CSA, (c) supporting direct victims and those who support them, (d) including evidence as the basis of the training regarding CSA, and (e) promoting the connection of peoples' religious values to reinforce their own meaning and to produce engagement to break the silence.

Replicating interreligious initiatives of child sexual abuse prevention programs based on scientific evidence is crucial for eradicating this problem. In addition, future research can analyse the social impacts of those communities that implement interreligious strategies and practices by following evidence-based criteria and aiming at knowing the results obtained regarding the eradication of CSA, which is a common goal shared by communities with different faiths.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, C.M.P. and A.V.; methodology, E.O.; software, A.V.; validation, R.R.d.M., E.O. and C.M.P.; formal analysis, A.V.; investigation, C.M.P.; resources, R.R.d.M.; data curation, E.O.; writing—original draft preparation, C.M.P.; writing—review and editing, A.V.; visualization, E.O.; supervision, R.R.d.M. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: The APC was funded by the Consolidated Research Group on Sociological Theory and Social Impact of Research (SGR 2017 01589).

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: The data analysed is available in the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- AAVV. 2016. Peace, Love and Tolerance. Key Messages From Islam & Christianity On Protecting Children from Violence and Harmful Practices. Available online: <https://www.unicef.org/egypt/media/5911/file/UNICEFJointBook.pdf> (accessed on 27 April 2021).
- Aguilera-Jiménez, Antonio, and María Mar Prados Gallardo. 2020. Dialogic learning, interactive teaching and cognitive mobilizing patterns. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Educational Research* 10: 271–94. [CrossRef]
- Akhila, Sangabopura. 2019. Child abuse and protection buddhist attitude on prevention child abuse for sustainable. In *Buddhist Approach to Harmonious Families, Healthcare and Sustainable Societies*. Ba Đình: Hong Duc Publishing House, pp. 239–50.
- Campdepadrós-Cullell, Roger, Miquel Àngel Pulido-Rodríguez, Jesús Marauri, and Sandra Racionero-Plaza. 2021. Interreligious Dialogue Groups Enabling Human Agency. *Religions* 12: 189. [CrossRef]
- Carr, Alan, Finiki Nearchou, Hollie Duff, Dearbhaile Ní Mhaoileoin, Katie Cullen, Annie O’Dowd, and Laaura Battigelli. 2019. Survivors of institutional abuse in long-term child care in Scotland. *Child Abuse and Neglect* 93: 38–54. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
- ECPAT and Religions for Peace. 2016. Protecting Children from Online Sexual Exploitation. A Guide to Action for Religious Leaders and Communities. Available online: <https://www.unicef.org/media/66776/file/Guide-for-Religious-Leaders-and-Communities-ENG.pdf> (accessed on 13 May 2021).
- Elboj-Saso, Carmen, Tatiana Iñiguez-Berrozpe, and Diana Valero-Errazu. 2020. Relations With the Educational Community and Transformative Beliefs Against Gender-Based Violence as Preventive Factors of Sexual Violence in Secondary Education. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. [CrossRef]
- Epstein, Sarah B., and Beth R. Crisp. 2018. Educating Australia’s Jewish Communities about Child Sexual Abuse. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse* 27: 523–36. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
- European Commission. 2020. EU Strategy for a more Effective Fight Against Child Sexual Abuse, Report. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-security/20200724_com-2020-607-commission-communication_en.pdf (accessed on 7 May 2021).
- EVAC JLIFL. 2019. Ending Violence Against Children Hub Evidence Guide Ending Violence Against Children Scoping Study Briefs: What do We Learn from the Scoping EVAC Hub Events. Available online: <https://evac.jliflc.com/evac-hub-evidence-guide/> (accessed on 20 January 2021).
- Finkelhor, David, Jennifer Vanderminden, Heather Turner, Anne Shattuck, and Sherry Hamby. 2014. Youth exposure to violence prevention programs in a national sample. *Child Abuse and Neglect* 38: 677–86. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
- Finkelhor, David, Kerryann Walsh, Lisa Jones, Kimberly Mitchell, and Anne Collier. 2020. Youth Internet Safety Education: Aligning Programs With the Evidence Base. *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse*. [CrossRef]
- Flecha, Ramon, and Marta Soler. 2014. Communicative Methodology: Successful actions and dialogic democracy. *Current Sociology* 62: 232–42. [CrossRef]
- Flecha, Ramon. 2021. Second-Order Sexual Harassment: Violence Against the Silence Breakers Who Support the Victims. *Violence Against Women*, 1–20. [CrossRef]
- García-Hernández, Renán J., Julita E. Hernández-Sánchez, and Verónica García-Martínez. 2020. Sexual harassment in a higher education institution. *Generos* 9: 210–33. [CrossRef]
- Interfaith Alliance. 2018. Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities: Child Dignity in the Digital World. Available online: <https://iafsc.org/resources/publications/child-dignity-global-forum-event-report> (accessed on 13 May 2021).
- Jung, G. 2020. Mothers and nation in the global era: The role of evangelical Protestant mothers in the discursive construction of multicultural Korea. *International Sociology* 35: 353–74. [CrossRef]
- McLeigh, Jill D., and David Taylor. 2019. The role of religious institutions in preventing, eradicating, and mitigating violence against children. *Child Abuse and Neglect* 110: 104313. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
- Miller, Allison Denise. 2020. Preventing Community Violence: A Case Study of Metro Detroit and Interfaith Activism. Ph.D. dissertation, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Blacksburg, VA, USA.
- Munir, Muhammad. 2015. Rights of the child an islamic perspective on preventing violence, abuse, and exploitation of children and pakistani law. *Hamdard Islamicus* 38: 33–58. [CrossRef]
- Roca, Esther, Patricia Melgar, Regina Gairal-Casadó, and Miguel A. Pulido-Rodríguez. 2020. Schools that “open doors” to prevent child abuse in confinement by COVID-19. *Sustainability* 12: 4685. [CrossRef]
- Rudolfsson, Lisa, and Fredrik Portin. 2018. “It’s Almost Impossible to Speak about It”: Sexual Abuse, Forgiveness, and the Need for Restitution Rituals. *Religions* 9: 421. [CrossRef]
- Rudolph, Julia, Melanie J. Zimmer-Gembeck, Dianne C. Shanley, and Russell Hawkins. 2018. Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Opportunities: Parenting, Programs, and the Reduction of Risk. *Child Maltreatment* 23: 96–106. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
- UNICEF. 2020. Sexual Violence Against Children. Available online: <https://www.unicef.org/protection/sexual-violence-against-children> (accessed on 3 September 2020).
- Valls, Rosa, Lidia Puigvert, Patricia Melgar, and Carme Garcia-Yeste. 2016. Breaking the Silence at Spanish Universities: Findings From the First Study of Violence Against Women on Campuses in Spain. *Violence Against Women* 22: 1519–39. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

-
- Vidu, Ana, Gema Tomás, and Ramón Flecha. 2021. Pioneer Legislation on Second Order of Sexual Harassment. Sociolegal Innovation in Addressing Sexual Harassment. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
- Walsh, Kerryann, Karen Zwi, Susan Woolfenden, and Aron Shlonsky. 2015. School-based education programmes for the prevention of child sexual abuse. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*. [[CrossRef](#)]