

## Disrupting Harm

**Evidence from 13 countries on the context, threats, and children's perspectives  
of online child sexual exploitation and abuse.**

Detailed Analysis of the Frontline Service Providers Survey

Malaysia

*Last updated 30/04/21*

This report is a summary of preliminary data collected for this research project. The perspectives contained herein represent the individuals interviewed and surveyed. Support from the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children does not constitute endorsement.

***Introduction* ..... 3**

***Basic Description of Survey Sample* ..... 4**

***Perpetrator Demographics* ..... 6**

***Scenarios*..... 7**

    Scenario 1..... 8

    Scenario 2..... 9

    Scenario 3..... 10

    Scenario 4..... 12

    Summary..... 13

***Vulnerabilities* ..... 14**

***Reporting* ..... 21**

***Availability of Support* ..... 23**

***Investigations and Convictions*..... 26**

***Law Enforcement and Government Support*..... 27**

***Public Awareness* ..... 29**

## Introduction

The Disrupting Harm frontline workers survey aimed to explore the knowledge, attitudes and practices related to OCSEA that are presenting to those directly working to prevent and respond on the welfare frontline. Insights from frontline workers via this survey allowed us to more deeply explore findings from other research activities such as the national literature reviews and government interviews from the perspective of staff directly engaged in the response to this growing problem.

This report is the preliminary analysis conducted by ECPAT International. It is based on a convenience sample of 50 interviews were conducted with client-facing frontline child protection workers who were surveyed in each participating country. In order to participate in the survey respondents had to meet the following qualifying requirements:

- 1) Be an adult over 18 years of age;
- 2) Work the last 12 months (at least) in the field of social work, psychology or welfare;
- 3) Manage their own case load directly in the last 12 months;
- 4) Have caseloads that included children over the last 12 months.

The survey itself included a combination of 68 closed and open-ended questions. The data was collected via SurveyGizmo and administered by Disrupting Harm staff (either in person, or remotely via phone/Skype – due to COVID-19). Whilst the data collected is not statistically representative, it is still a vital snapshot in indicating scope, and broadening our perspectives on knowledge, attitudes and practices related to OCSEA.

**NOTE:**

*In Malaysia, the data collection for the survey was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic from August 20<sup>th</sup> 2020 to November 16<sup>th</sup> 2020 where movement restrictions were in place. Administrators provided instructions and trouble-shooting virtually to participants who mostly completed the survey from home.*

## Basic Description of Survey Sample

The frontline workers who were surveyed in Malaysia (n=50) consisted of 41 females (82%), 8 males (16%) and 1 person identifying themselves as 'other' (2%).

Participants were asked to select a single category that best describes their organisation. In reality, these categories are sometimes not mutually exclusive, however the indications of a category that 'best' describes their organisation does help to depict the range of organisations that participants represent (Figure 1).

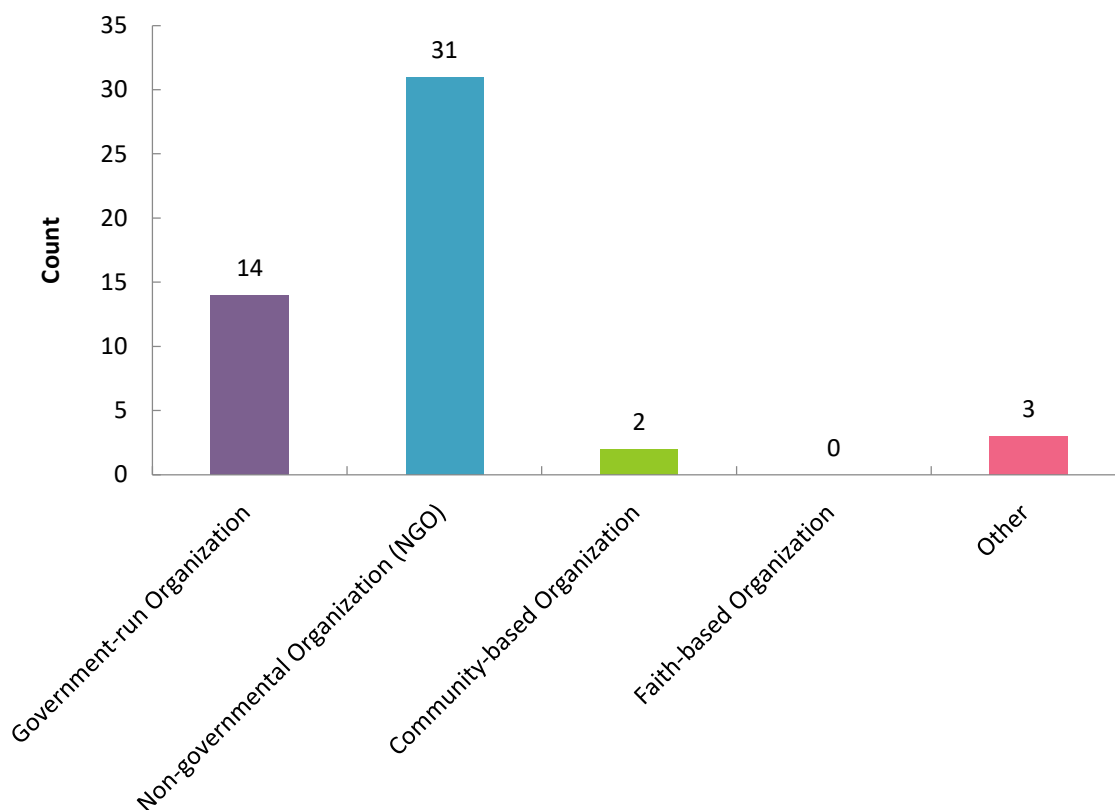


Figure 1. Types of participants' organisations. N=50

The majority of participants identified their organisation as non-governmental (n=31 - 62%) or as a government-run organisation (n=14 - 28%). Two (4%) respondents described their organisation as community-based and three (6%) as 'other', which included private practice and a community school.

The frontline workers were asked to detail what type of services they provided related to children. The results are illustrated in Figure 2 below.

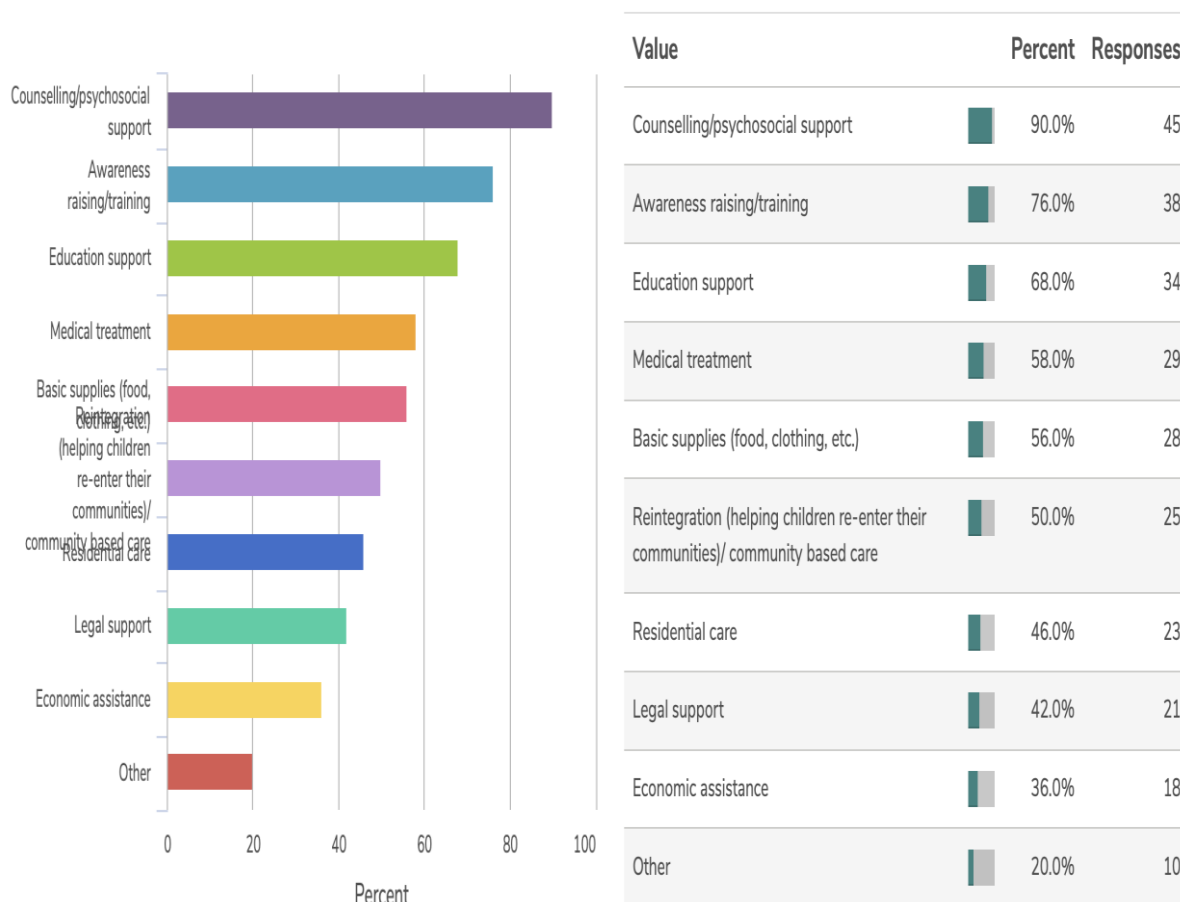


Figure 2. Types of services provided by participants' organisations. N=50

Nearly all participants (n=46 - 92%) worked in organisations providing more than one service to children. As Figure 2 indicates, the most frequently reported services were providing counselling/psychosocial support (n=45 – 90%) and awareness raising/training (n=38 – 76%). That was followed by education support (n=34 – 68%), medical treatment (n=29 - 58%) and services providing basic supplies (n=28 – 56%). Around half of the respondents provided reintegration (n=25 – 50%), residential care (n=23 – 46%) and legal support (n=21 – 42%) services. Economic assistance was the least commonly provided service, however 18 participants still reported providing those services (36%).

Other services mentioned by frontline workers included:

- Case referral to other services/case management coordination
- Running a hotline for sexual and reproductive health related issues
- Juvenile delinquency interventions
- Leadership training
- Running 'toy libraries'

- Conducting assessments of mental capacity to testify in court
- Providing recreational and sport activities
- Providing religious support

## Perpetrator Demographics

To expand on the current understanding of the context in which OCSEA happens in Malaysia, the survey sought to explore the typical relationships that were observed by frontline social support workers between offenders and child survivors when they reported having worked with OCSEA cases.

From the 20 respondents who had worked with OCSEA cases, men were commonly identified as perpetrators and slightly more often as facilitators of OCSEA than women. One participant working in an NGO mentioned: *“Based on the cases I have managed previously, it usually involves a male figure (aged between 18 to 30) who grooms the girl child online in the context of a relationship”* (RA3-MY-25-A).

Out of those who have managed cases in the past 12 months, the most commonly referenced relationship between the victim and perpetrator was said to be that the perpetrators were strangers (nationals) followed by parents/stepparents and community members under 18. Similarly, participants indicated the most common relationships between facilitators and victims in the OCSEA cases they have managed. The majority of the cases managed by respondents did not involve a facilitator, however out of the few that did, community members over 18, parents/stepparents, community members under 18 and family friends were the selected options.

When frontline service workers were given the opportunity to provide additional comments about the offenders they encountered in OCSEA cases, they talked about seeing authority figures/people in the position of power as perpetrators, e.g.: *“Exacerbated by increased screen time and online interactions during COVID-19, there is also a rise in cyberbullying, online blackmail, teen love related cases, closed chatgroups subscribing to child porn or unsolicited photos where perpetrators may at times be young themselves. Other forms have included community members such as religious members of society/group, coach/ teacher etc”* (RA3-MY-16-A).

Interestingly, a number of participants also spoke of issues occurring between young people that they characterised as ‘OCSEA’. Circumstances like young people self-generating sexual materials in exchange for money does constitute OCSEA: *“Most of our cases have been influenced by their friends and peers. Currently the victims become more excited because they can earn money for themselves”* (RA3-MY-01-A). Survey administrators added that the conservative nature of Malaysian society may lead young people to explore their sexuality through online communication with peers and youth similar to their age, and this may in fact be viewed as safer than doing so in real life. However, normalisation of these behaviours could also be considered a vulnerability factor too.<sup>1</sup>

Below are a number of quotes from participants describing their insights into some of the child sexual exploitation and OCSEA cases they worked with:

<sup>1</sup> Personal communication from Malaysia local field research team.

*“These cases include children who are exposed to the social media like group WeChat, meeting apps etc.” (RA3-MY-01-A);*

*“Children who are involved with OCSEA cases are very rare” (RA3-MY-02-A);*

*“Most of my cases involved those more than 18 years old. This coincides with the current HIV situation in the country” (RA3-MY-38-A)*

One participant working in an organisation providing psychological and medical treatment to victims mentioned: *“I think there are more [OCSEA cases] than what I see in the clinic” (RA3-MY-09-A)*. Other conversations with professionals working in Malaysia suggested that the country has quite a ‘medical’ approach to providing services, that is quite formal at times, suggesting that those not referred to ‘formal’ psychiatric services/medical services may slip through the net.<sup>2</sup>

## Scenarios

Participants were presented with four scenarios depicting situations in which at least one offender victimised a child through different modes of online sexual abuse and exploitation. After being provided with definitions of ‘OCSEA’, a ‘perpetrator’ and a ‘facilitator’ earlier in the survey, the participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that the child was a victim and that the offender had committed an OCSEA-related offence.<sup>3</sup> These questions were designed to elicit insights about how participants assessed different forms and situations of OCSEA. It should be noted that responses are likely based on a combination of the participant’s knowledge on the issue, including how these issues may (or may not) be defined in law in a country, as well as influenced by social norms and beliefs. Irrespective of the basis for responses, the results indicate areas that are well understood (sometimes almost unanimously) and others where training and consistent messaging is needed to ensure consistent responses.

A four-point Likert scale was used to assess agreement with statements for the scenario questions. Where interesting indications in differences occurred, we note them, but otherwise combined ‘slightly agree’ and ‘strongly agree’ together and ‘slightly disagree and strongly disagree’ together, resulting in binary agree/disagree categories for the analysis presented here.

---

<sup>2</sup> Personal communication from Malaysia local field research team.

<sup>3</sup> Names for the scenarios were changed to common names in each country for the translations but have been edited in the analysis to be consistent across all the Disrupting Harm reports.

### Scenario 1

Palila pays a 16-year-old younger relative, Tamah, to undress while filming and later posts it online. Mamo, who does not know Palila, watches this interaction online from home 30 miles away.

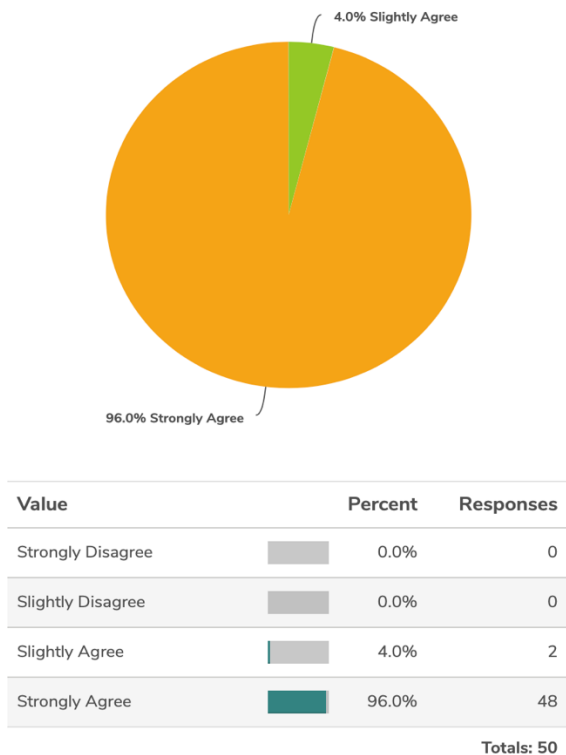


Figure 3. Do you think Tamah is a victim of OCSEA?

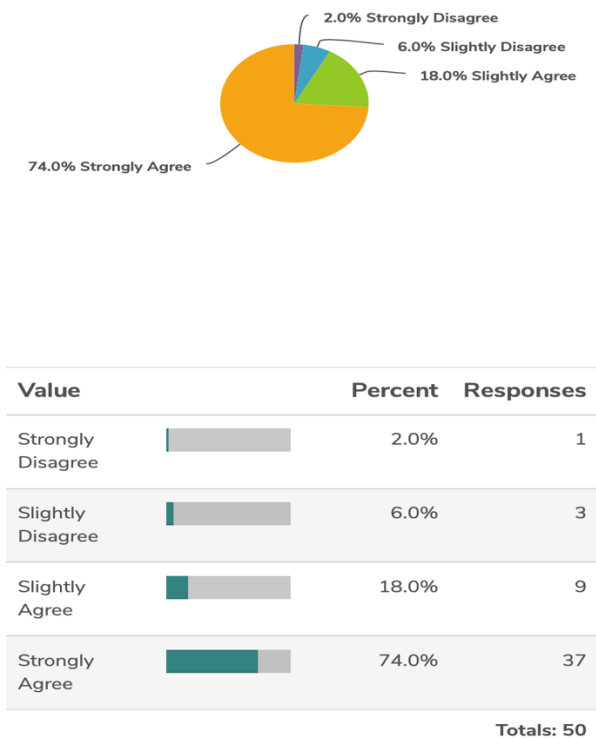


Figure 4. Do you think Mamo has committed an OCSEA-related crime?

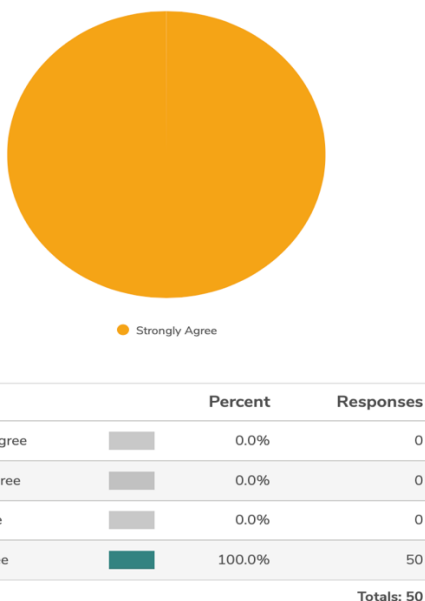


Figure 5. Do you think Palila has committed an OCSEA-related crime?



Nearly all (96%) participants agreed that Tamah was a victim of sexual exploitation (Figure 3) and that the adult who paid and filmed her (Palila) had committed an OCSEA-related crime (100%) – Figure 5.

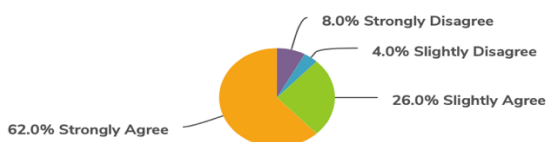
Of the three circumstances in this scenario, participants seemed to struggle the most to identify if the remote third-party viewing the material had committed an OCSEA related crime – though this was still skewed towards agreement. 37 respondents strongly agreed (74%), 9 agreed only slightly (18%) and 4 disagreed (1 strongly and 3 slightly) - Figure 4. While those who disagreed with the statement did not provide any additional comments, when given the opportunity to elaborate on the selected answers, others discussed Mamo’s intent when watching the video:

*“It’s not stated why Mamo watches it, and if Mamo intends to report the interaction. He would have committed an offence if he fails to report it” (RA3-MY-26-A);*

*“Would also depend on whether Mamo is aware that he’s watching a child undress or if he believes her to be a consenting adult” (RA3-MY-31-A).*

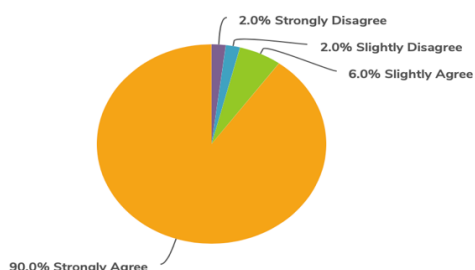
### Scenario 2

*Kaimi is a 17-year-old student. Kaimi has struggled to make good grades this year and is worried that Uli, a teacher who is a close family friend, will tell Kaimi’s dad. Kaimi offers to send Uli naked pictures if he promises not to talk to the family. Uli accepts.*



Value	Percent	Responses
Strongly Disagree	8.0%	4
Slightly Disagree	4.0%	2
Slightly Agree	26.0%	13
Strongly Agree	62.0%	31
Totals: 50		

Figure 6. Do you think Kaimi is a victim of OCSEA?



Value	Percent	Responses
Strongly Disagree	2.0%	1
Slightly Disagree	2.0%	1
Slightly Agree	6.0%	3
Strongly Agree	90.0%	45
Totals: 50		

Figure 7. Do you think Uli has committed an OCSEA-related crime?

The majority of participants (n=44 - 88%) agreed that the student (Kaimi) is a victim of OCSEA, however 26% only slightly agreed and 12% slightly (n=2 – 4%) or strongly disagreed (n=4 – 8%) with the statement – see Figure 6.

As Figure 7 indicates, nearly all respondents agreed that the teacher in a position of power (Uli) has committed an OCSEA-related crime, with 48 agreeing (96%) and 2 participants disagreeing (4%).

One respondent who strongly disagreed that Kaimi is a victim in the scenario commented: *“As much as Kaimi might not be a victim of OCSEA in this case but the fact that he produces naked pictures shows that he is exposed to sexual materials; he might be also exposed to other forms of exploitation in his environment”* (RA3-MY-39-A).

Other comments included:

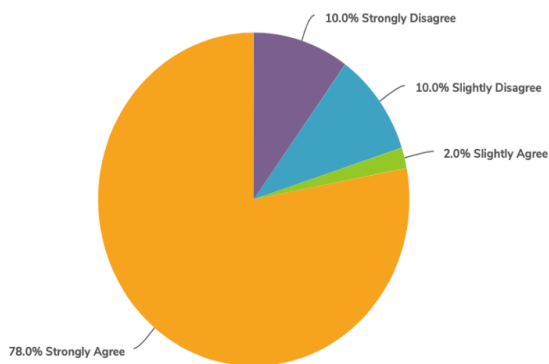
*“As Uli has power and he decides to abuse his power, its already become a part of sexual abuse”* (RA3-MY-23-A);

*“As an educator, Uli shouldn’t have accepted Kaimi’s offer. An incident must have taken place earlier that allowed Kaimi to do the same with Uli. Did Uli ever ‘make a move’ to Kaimi?”* (RA3-MY-18-A);

*“The scenario shows that the child is under duress/distress. Had it been a different relationship and power dynamic, the child may not have offered such photos. The adult accepting is already taking advantage of the vulnerability of the child”* (RA3-MY-16-A).

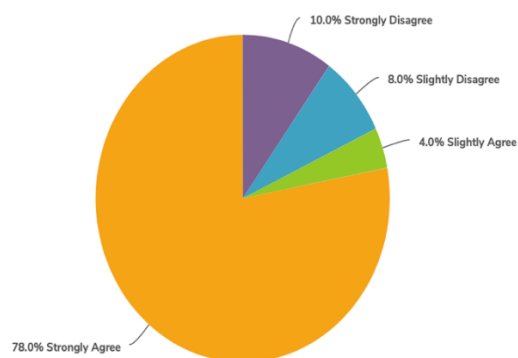
### Scenario 3

*Sam is a 10-year-old whose family struggles to make ends meet in their rural village. Sam's uncle, Alex, has a good government job and has always given money to help the family out. Recently, Uncle Alex wrote a message to Sam on Facebook asking to have a secret meeting at his house. When Sam arrives, Uncle Alex asked Sam to sit on his lap and began touching his private parts.*



Value	Percent	Responses
Strongly Disagree	10.0%	5
Slightly Disagree	10.0%	5
Slightly Agree	2.0%	1
Strongly Agree	78.0%	39
Totals: 50		

Figure 8. Do you think Sam is a victim of OCSEA?



Value	Percent	Responses
Strongly Disagree	10.0%	5
Slightly Disagree	8.0%	4
Slightly Agree	4.0%	2
Strongly Agree	78.0%	39
Totals: 50		

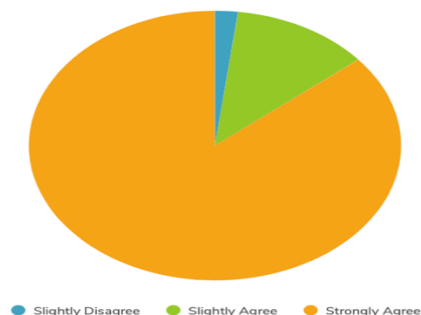
Figure 9. Do you think Alex has committed an OCSEA-related crime?

While 80% of participants (n=40) agreed that 10-year-old Sam is a victim of OCSEA, as much as 20% (n=10) did not perceive Sam as being a victim of an OCSEA-related crime (5 strongly disagreed and 5 slightly disagreed) – Figure 8. Similarly, 82% of respondents (n=41) agreed that Alex has committed an OCSEA-related crime and 18% disagreed (n=9) – Figure 9.

From the additional comments it appears that the perception of the crime as not constituting OCSEA may have related to participants viewing the abuse as occurring offline without recognising the online grooming (via messaging service) that was present in the beginning of the scenario. When given the opportunity to share additional comments on the scenario, those who disagreed with both statements mentioned: *“Sexual abuse was not done online”* (RA3-MY-38-A); *“The abuse is not related to the online medium”* (RA3-MY-26-A); *“The child is a victim of sexual abuse but there are no elements of technology being used in the commission of the offence”* (RA3-MY-29-A). This is of interest, as Malaysia is one country that does have a definition for online grooming in law.

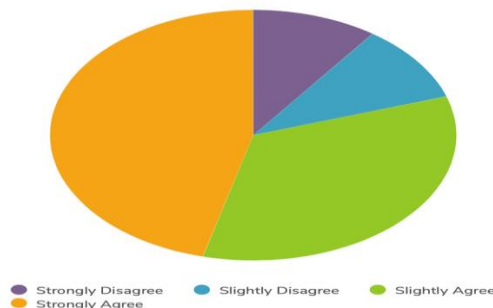
### Scenario 4

Joe is 16, and his girlfriend Lucy is 15. They have been dating for a year and regularly have sex. Sometimes, when they can't be together, they send photos to each other of themselves naked. Joe's friend Matt knows about this and breaks into Joe's phone and forwards naked pictures of Lucy to a group of their friends.



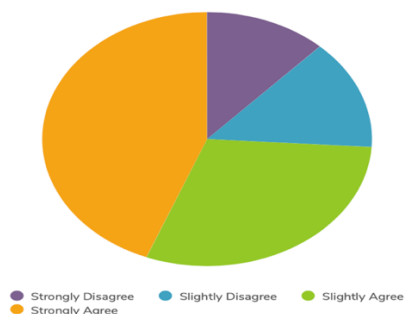
Value	Percent	Responses
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0
Slightly Disagree	2.0%	1
Slightly Agree	12.0%	6
Strongly Agree	86.0%	43
Totals: 50		

Figure 10. Do you think Lucy is a victim of an OCSEA related crime?



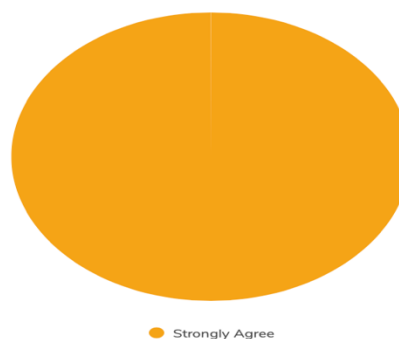
Value	Percent	Responses
Strongly Disagree	10.0%	5
Slightly Disagree	10.0%	5
Slightly Agree	34.0%	17
Strongly Agree	46.0%	23
Totals: 50		

Figure 11. Do you think Joe is a victim of an OCSEA related crime?



Value	Percent	Responses
Strongly Disagree	12.0%	6
Slightly Disagree	14.0%	7
Slightly Agree	30.0%	15
Strongly Agree	44.0%	22
Totals: 50		

Figure 12. Do you think that Joe has committed an OCSEA related crime?



Value	Percent	Responses
Strongly Disagree	0.0%	0
Slightly Disagree	0.0%	0
Slightly Agree	0.0%	0
Strongly Agree	100.0%	50
Totals: 50		

Figure 13. Do you think that Matt has committed an OCSEA related crime?

Nearly all participants agreed that Lucy is a victim of an OCSEA related crime (n=49 - 98%) – Figure 10 - and that Matt has committed an OCSEA related crime (n = 50 - 100%) – Figure 13.

80% of respondents (n=40) agreed that Joe is a victim of OCSEA (34% only slightly agreed) - Figure 11. Interestingly, at the same time, 74% of respondents agreed that Joe has committed an OCSEA-related crime (30% slightly agreed, 14% slightly disagreed and 12% strongly disagreed) – Figure 12. One participant working in an NGO providing, among other, legal support to children claimed: *“Joe is both a victim and a perpetrator. In Malaysia, the age of consent is 16 and he would have committed statutory rape. Also, as there is a violation of his privacy of his relationship with Lucy (and possibly his photos have also been shared although not explicitly mentioned here), Joe is also a victim of OCSEA”* (RA3-MY-16-A).

Aside from the need for awareness raising on the issue, two additional comments on the scenario illustrated victim-blaming evident in perspectives of some frontline social support workers:

*“This is an alarming scenario that adolescents are being naive and ignorant about sex. Even though there might be many other factors, sex education is so essential to combat this issue”* (RA3-MY-39-A);

*“This situation will definitely leave an impact on Lucy in particular. While being too bold and not taking into consideration the effects of the situation, maybe Lucy would be traumatized for a while but if she chooses this path as fun then this will be continued and they will be braver. Adolescents should be exposed to the issues of ‘confidentiality and privacy in social media’. Their involvement and use of social media are completely limitless”* (RA3-MY-18-A).

## Summary

In the majority of scenarios, participants correctly identified the children as victims and the adults as offenders across the four scenarios. However, in each scenario there were some larger divergences.

In Scenario 1, in which an adult paid his 16-year-old female relative to undress while he filmed it and later posted it online, an unrelated individual, Mamo, who did not know the child or the other adult, watched the interaction online from home 30 miles away. Nearly all of the participants agreed that the child was a victim of sexual exploitation and that the adult who paid and filmed her had committed an OCSEA-related crime. However, out of 50 participants, 9 only slightly agreed (18%) that Mamo committed a crime and 4 (8%) disagreed (Figure 4). In the additional comments, participants focused on the importance of determining Mamo’s intent when making a judgement about his guilt.

In Scenario 2, where a student, Kaimi, offers to send naked pictures to her teacher, Uli, (in order to make Uli not discuss her bad grades with her family) who accepts it, 26% only slightly believed Kaimi is a victim and 12% disagreed (8% strongly and 4% slightly). This seems to suggest that when children are perceived as ‘actively’ engaging in their exploitation, that the perpetrators may be less responsible for the crimes they are committing – even in a situation like this scenario where the adult holds a position of direct power over the child (also considered an aggravated offence in Malaysian law).

In Scenario 3, a 10-year-old boy is contacted through Facebook by his uncle who helped the boy’s family financially and asked for a secret meeting. During the meeting the uncle asks the boy to sit on

his lap and began touching his private parts. As much as 20% (n=10) of respondents disagreed that the boy is a victim of an OCSEA-related crime (10% strongly and 10% slightly) and 18% (n=9) that the uncle has committed an offence (10% strongly and 8% slightly). Those respondents who disagreed and gave additional comments argued that the abuse was not committed online and that is why they did not perceive it as an OCSEA-related crime.

Lastly, in Scenario 4, a 16-year-old male, Joe, and his 15-year-old girlfriend, Lucy, had been together for a year and were having regular sex and sometimes sending each other naked photos. In that scenario, Matt, Joe's friend, broke into Joe's phone and forwarded naked pictures of Lucy to a group of their friends. The majority of participants agreed that Lucy is a victim of OCSEA and that Matt has committed an OCSEA-related offence. The frontline workers were in less agreement in the questions about Joe. 20% of respondents (n=10) disagreed that Joe is a victim in this scenario and 34% only slightly agreed. Additionally, 74% perceived Joe as an offender (44% strongly and 30% slightly). While technically two children consensually photographing themselves naked is a crime, there is ongoing debate about this thinking. For example, if the images had remained between the two consenting parties harm may not have been experienced. In a 2020 study on self-generated content, it was found that children thought it could even provide advantages in their relationships and/or increase their self-esteem.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, when the materials are forwarded without consent, they may end-up circulating the web and being acquired by offenders.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, the normalisation of sexual content, both in terms of images and sexualised online conversations, may lead to victims underreporting because they may fail to perceive what is happening to them as abusive or exploitative.<sup>6</sup>

Given that participants were provided with definitions of OCSEA before reading the scenarios, some of those results raise a number of questions and point to a need of providing awareness raising and case handling/training activities. The definitions might have not been clearly understood, or other factors (such as cultural or legal) may have influenced participants perception of the situations described.

## Vulnerabilities

Based on their knowledge and experience, participants indicated whether they believed a list of factors about the child and society increased children's vulnerability to general sexual exploitation (i.e. all kinds) and more specifically to OCSEA.

- **Factors about the child identified as increasing vulnerability to general sexual abuse and exploitation**

---

<sup>4</sup> ECPAT Sweden. (2020, May). "[I början vart det lite läskigt men nu är det vardag](#)" En rapport om yngre barn och egenproducerat material. [Translated from Swedish].

<sup>5</sup> Bracket Foundation. (2019). Artificial Intelligence: [Combating online sexual abuse of children](#). 10.

<sup>6</sup> Palmer, T. (2015). [Digital Dangers: the impact of technology on the sexual abuse and exploitation of children](#). Barnado's. 35.

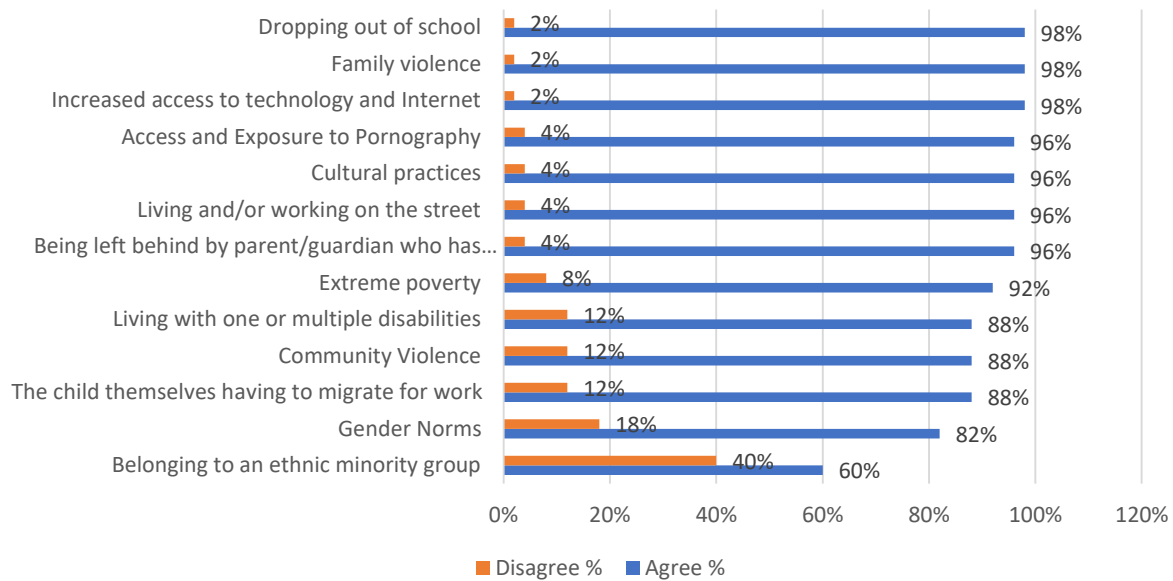


Figure 14. Participants' perceptions of factors about the *child* impacting children's vulnerability to general child sexual exploitation.

Figure 14 shows overwhelming agreement that almost all the factors listed were considered to impact children's vulnerability to child sexual exploitation. Factors such as dropping out of school (98%), family violence (98%), increased access to technology and Internet (98%), access to and exposure to pornography (96%), cultural practices (96%) living and/or working on the street (96%) and being left behind by parent/guardian who had migrated for work (96%) were most consistently selected as factors that participants agreed increased children's vulnerability to sexual exploitation. High agreement was also observed around factors such as extreme poverty (92%), living with one or multiple disabilities (88%), community violence (88%) and the child themselves having to migrate for work (88%). Belonging to an ethnic minority group was a factor about which participants had the most varying opinions about – while 60% agreed that it influences a child's vulnerability to child sexual exploitation, 40% disagreed. Approximately one in five respondents also disagreed that gender norms influence vulnerability to child sexual exploitation in Malaysia, though administrators noted that the concept of gender norms was unfamiliar to some.

Some of the factors additionally listed by participants that they strongly agreed increased children's vulnerability to sexual exploitation were:

- Lack of access to sex education
- Peer pressure, belonging to gangs/groups
- Being a part of an online gaming network
- Mental health disorders (neurodevelopmental disorders particularly)
- Lack of self consolidation and spirituality
- Being involved in a romantic relationship with an adult

- **Factors about the child identified as increasing vulnerability specifically to OCSEA**

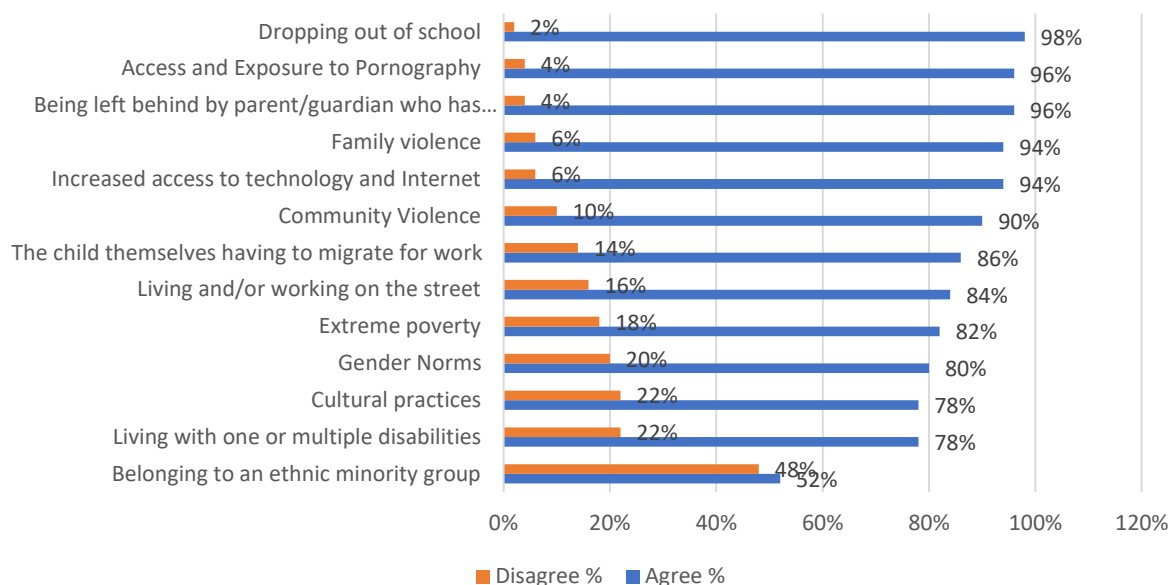


Figure 15. Participants’ perceptions of factors about the *child* impacting children’s vulnerability to OCSEA.

Over 90% of participants perceived dropping out of school (98%), access and exposure to pornography (96%), being left behind by parent/guardian who has migrated for work (96%), family violence (94%), increased access to technology and Internet (94%) and community violence (90%) as factors impacting children’s vulnerability to OCSEA. The rest of the factors were also highly rated, however their influence on OCSEA was rated as smaller compared to child sexual exploitation in general (e.g. cultural practices -78% respondents agreed comparing to 96% in the child sexual exploitation question). Even bigger discrepancies were found around the ‘belonging to an ethnic minority group’ factor – while 52% agreed, the remaining 48% did not perceive it as a factor impacting children’s vulnerability to OCSEA.

Some of the factors additionally mentioned by participants that they believed strongly increased children’s vulnerability to OCSEA were:

- Lack of access to sex education
- Lack of parental/adult’s supervision
- Living in a house with multiple people, where children are often left unsupervised for long periods of time
- Access to mobile phones
- Peer pressure

When participants were asked about the **similarities and differences in children’s vulnerability when considering online forms of sexual exploitation and abuse in comparison to general sexual exploitation**, they mentioned that online, children can be approached by perpetrators more easily; that children often look for friends/acceptance in the online world which perpetrators might take advantage of and that low knowledge about OCSEA increases children’s vulnerability to that crime.



**Similarities:**

*“Children’s vulnerability to OCSEA is quite similar to sexual exploitation because it is about the control strategy from the parents or guardians to make sure their children are protected from exploitation and have safe social interactions” (RA3-MY-02-A);*

*“There are more similarities with children's vulnerability largely because of their incapacity to face up to the authority figures in their life and physically, they are at the disadvantage” (RA3-MY-39-A);*

*“Similar – the abuse that had happen to the victim has caused an adverse effect on the child” (RA3-MY-01-A);*

*“The same because this will lead the child to suffer both emotionally and physically” (RA3-MY-28-A).*

**Differences:**

*“Children are online frequently to look for friends and validation, sometimes because they feel unloved at home. In the online world, this makes it easier for the predators to groom them, or for people to exploit their images. Child sexual abuse offline is often perpetrated by family members or someone they know, and may happen at any time” (RA3-MY-13-A);*

*“Sometimes, in minority communities, for example refugees, they might not really be exposed to the online world and don’t know how it operates. Some of them don’t even know how to read/write hence they don’t really know how to use technology. Because of this, they might easily become victims of these acts” (RA3-MY-23-A);*

*“Children's vulnerability is higher as many children have unsupervised access to the Internet/social media/micro chat. They often feel lonely and seek out friendship online that may be exploited” (RA3-MY-07-A);*

*“A child's vulnerability to OCSEA is exacerbated due to the ability to be a victim to more than one perpetrator at one time. Especially if the child is not informed about OCSEA” (RA3-MY-42-A);*

*“Not much difference other than the availability of online access/exposure/regions of locality” (RA3-MY-20-A);*

*“Because OCSEA is easy to access rather than the sexual exploitation” (RA3-MY-08-A);*

*“The difference is that under OCSEA the methodology used is technology. Otherwise, the intentions are the same, it is to cause harm to a child” (RA3-MY-29-A);*

*“Usually, the victim is known by the perpetrator and the perpetrator know the victim’s family members and there is certain level of trust to the perpetrator. This process is much wider because it involves online and can be exploited by more parties” (RA3-MY-27-A).*

- **Factors about the society identified as increasing vulnerability to general sexual abuse (any types)**

When asked, “in your country, indicate if you think the following factors about society can increase vulnerability to sexual abuse and exploitation in general” – survey respondents reported the following factors as sources of vulnerability to general sexual exploitation:

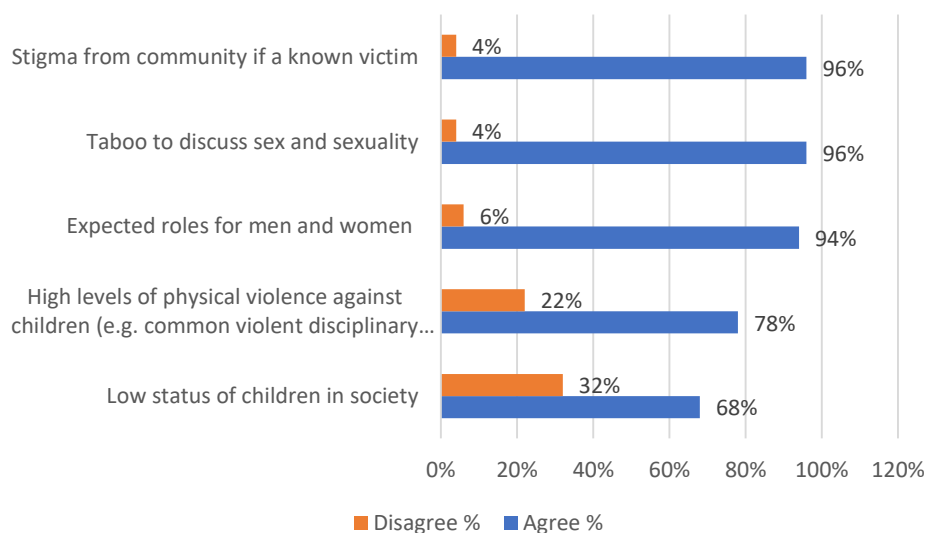


Figure 16. Participants’ perceptions of factors about the *society* impacting children’s vulnerability to general sexual exploitation and abuse.

As Figure 16 indicates, nearly all respondents agreed that stigma from community (96%), taboos around discussing sex and sexuality (96%) and expected roles for men and women were societal factors that impact children’s vulnerability to sexual exploitation. Less agreement was found around high levels of physical violence against children (78% agreed and 22% disagreed it has an impact on vulnerability) and low status of children in society (68% agreed and 32% disagreed).

When respondents were given the option to comment on other societal sources of vulnerability in Malaysia, which may not have been included in the survey options, they noted the following:

- Family not treating OCSEA as an offence, especially if the perpetrator is a family member
- High levels of emotional/psychological/financial abuse against children
- Lack of access to sex education
- Lack of expertise and poor management in authority’s sectors
- Lack of protection by community
- Low levels of knowledge on child development
- Poor family dynamics
- Children being given mobile phones too early
- *“Boys can protect themselves”*

- **Factors about the society identified as increasing vulnerability specifically to online forms of child sexual exploitation and abuse**

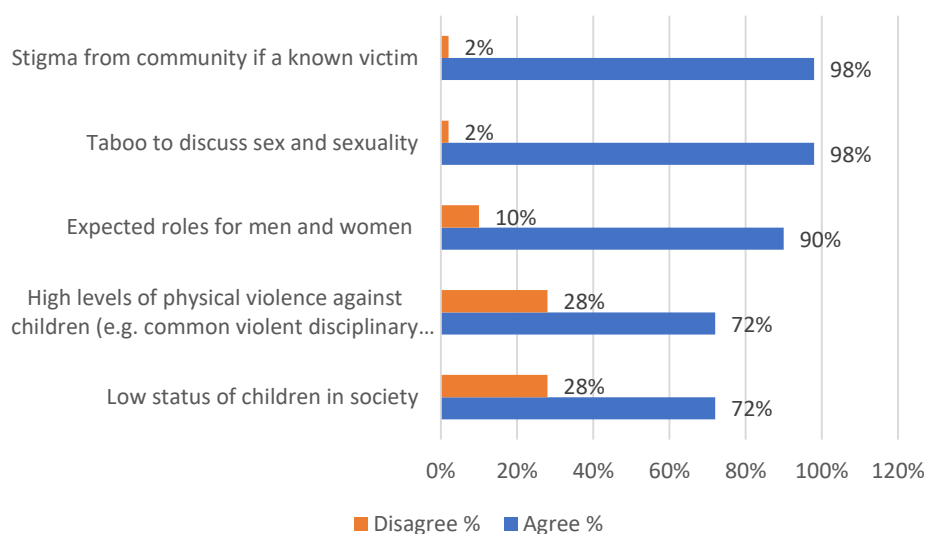


Figure 17. Participants' perceptions of factors about the *society* impacting children's vulnerability to OCSEA.

Societal factors increasing vulnerability to OCSEA were largely rated similarly to those increasing vulnerability to child sexual exploitation in general, with stigma from community (n=49 - 98%) taboos around discussing sex and sexuality (n=49 - 98%) and expected roles for men and women (n=45 - 90%) having the biggest influence. High levels of physical violence against children and low status of children in society were rated by 72% of frontline workers as having an impact on children's vulnerability to OCSEA.

Factors about the society additionally mentioned by participants they believed strongly increased children's vulnerability to OCSEA were:

- Peer influence
- Lack of sex education
- Social norms
- Weak justice system for children/victims
- *"Boys are able to protect themselves"*

When participants were asked specifically **why societal factors increase vulnerability to OCSEA differently to sexual exploitation generally**, among others, they talked about the culture of silence around sex in Malaysia, lack of awareness and education on sex-related issues and parents uploading their children's pictures online:

*"Taboo and stigma may increase the likelihood of suppression to discuss the topic openly in the society, increasing chances for children to explore or be exposed with it silently via online, which may make them less protected against exploitation"* (RA3-MY-24-A);

*“It is difficult for people in Malaysia to talk about sexual and reproductive health openly, especially for underage individuals. They tend to get their sexual and reproductive health education online, sometimes from random strangers. This puts the children at risk of being exploited” (RA3-MY-38-A);*

*“Low awareness, no guidance from parents, no proper discussion about sex education, no limitation to access pornography” (RA3-MY-44-A);*

*“Now, it’s normal for parents to upload their children’s picture on social media without knowing that the picture can be used by a perpetrator. Besides that, when something funny, bad happen, it could easily become viral” (RA3-MY-23-A);*

*“Social factors will contribute to OCSEA. When a mother and a father are being helped economically, to some extent they will show importance on their children’s education and this will break the vicious cycle” (RA3-MY-18-A);*

*“Differs because online is a wider network that can be created or exposed” (RA3-MY-28-A);*

*“The low status of children and high level of violence make them feel more isolated, which can increase vulnerability and dependence for validation online (that may be exploited by predators)” (RA3-MY-07-A);*

*“With online, the child is alone with the perpetrator. An educated child [about online threats] will be able to prevent this. Whereas sexual exploitation there is a lot of force and violence involved” (RA3-MY-35-A).*

## Reporting

In order to explore what influences decisions about reporting cases of child sexual exploitation and abuse, participants were asked to indicate whether they believed particular social and cultural factors influenced reporting both on general child sexual exploitation (all kinds) and specifically related to OCSEA in Malaysia.

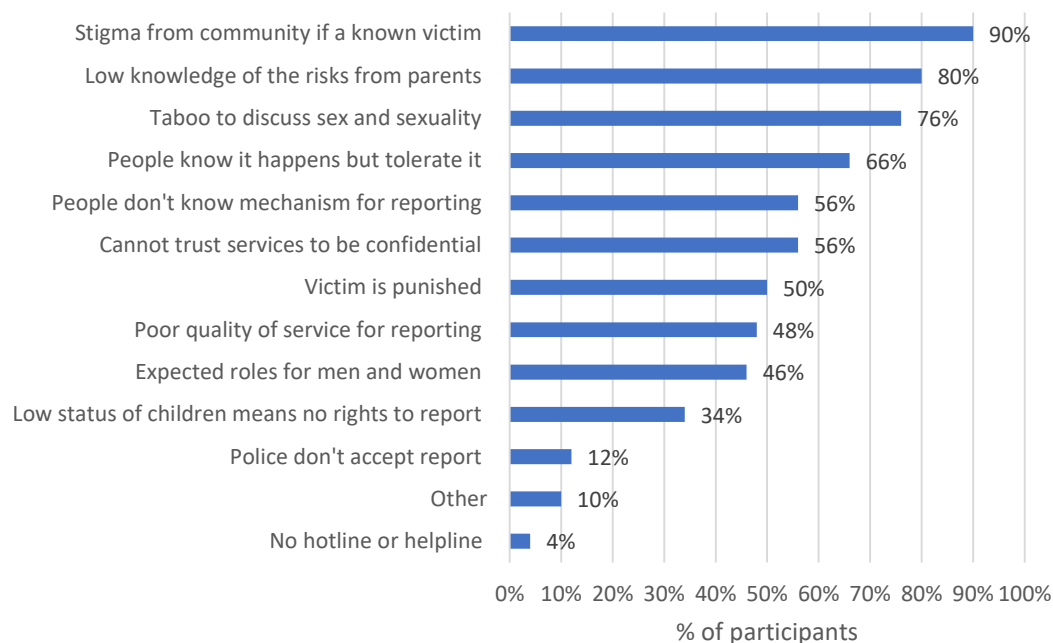


Figure 18. Social and cultural influences on reporting *child sexual exploitation in general*

Figure 18 shows that out of the options given, stigma from the community (n=45 – 90%), low knowledge of the risks from parents (n=40 – 80%) and taboos around discussing sex and sexuality (n=38 – 76%) were perceived as main factors that influence reporting child sexual exploitation. The majority of respondents did not perceive the lack of hotline or helpline (4%) to be a reason, however 56% said that the public didn't know mechanisms for reporting, suggesting hotlines are just not widely known about - "knowledge of the respective helplines" was also mentioned in additional comments. Fears that victims would be punished (50%) or that services were not confidential (56%) were indicated by half of participants, suggesting a real need for quality improvements in order to improve confidence and thus utility of reporting services.

Other factors mentioned by participants that influence reporting child sexual exploitation in general included:

- Language barriers
- Family name being more important
- No protection for boy victims
- Poor political will to be strict in the matter
- *"trust, teen love, power dynamics, not wanting to make perpetrator look bad if in relationship (emotional blackmail), child may be too young to flag or articulate what is happening to*

*him/her, thus caregivers or those within the child's protection circle may not know until too late or much later, disability” (RA3-MY-16-A)*

In the case of OCSEA it was the same four factors perceived as having the biggest influence on reporting: stigma from the community (82%), low knowledge of the risks from parents (76%), people not knowing the mechanism for reporting (74%) and sex and sexuality being taboo (72%). Similarly to child sexual exploitation in general, no hotline or helpline and police not accepting reports were the least selected factors as having an influence on reporting by frontline workers - Figure 19.

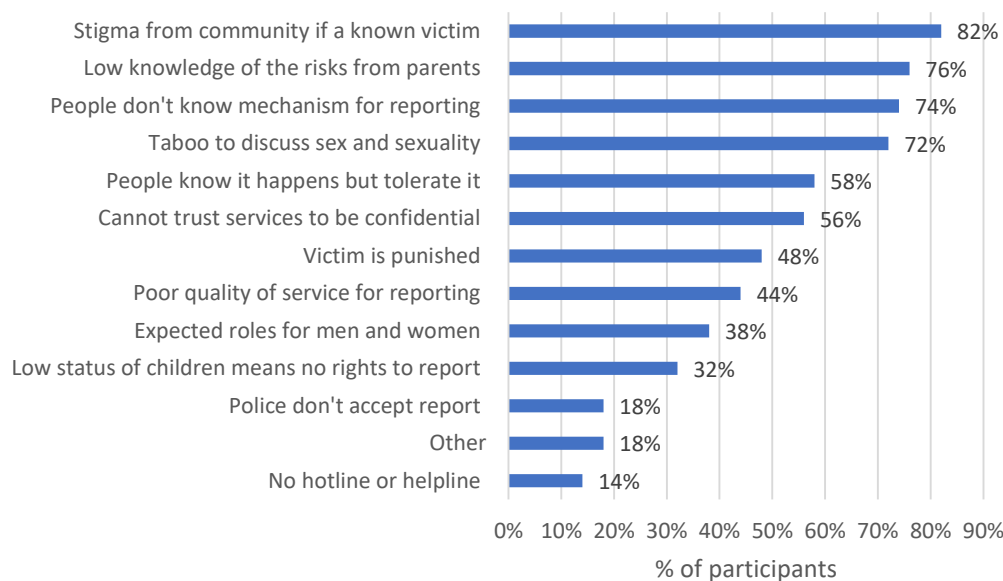


Figure 19. Social and cultural influences on reporting OCSEA

Other factors additionally named by participants as understood to influence reporting OCSEA included:

- *“Financial hurdle – cases involving online harassment often mean surrendering the device on which it was discovered, and not being able to get it back” (RA3-MY-26-A)*
- Online sexual exploitation not yet regarded as a threat especially towards the young people
- Lack of understanding of online sexual abuse
- Neglectful parenting
- Physical abuse taken more seriously than online abuse
- Difficulty of finding evidence: *“[...] trail of proof becomes harder especially on social media with time framed uploads - e.g., platforms with time limit. By the time the matter is flagged, the information trail may be harder to find”*
- The abuse not perceived to be serious enough to report
- Parent’s attitude towards seeking justice: *“Response to OCSEA crimes also depends on if parents want to make a report (for victim) or to continue to pursue justice (some cases may be dropped due to stigma)” (RA3-MY-24-A)*

## Availability of Support

Respondents were asked to comment on both the availability and quality of support services for child victims of OCSEA (medical, psychological, legal and reintegration); the following results were observed:

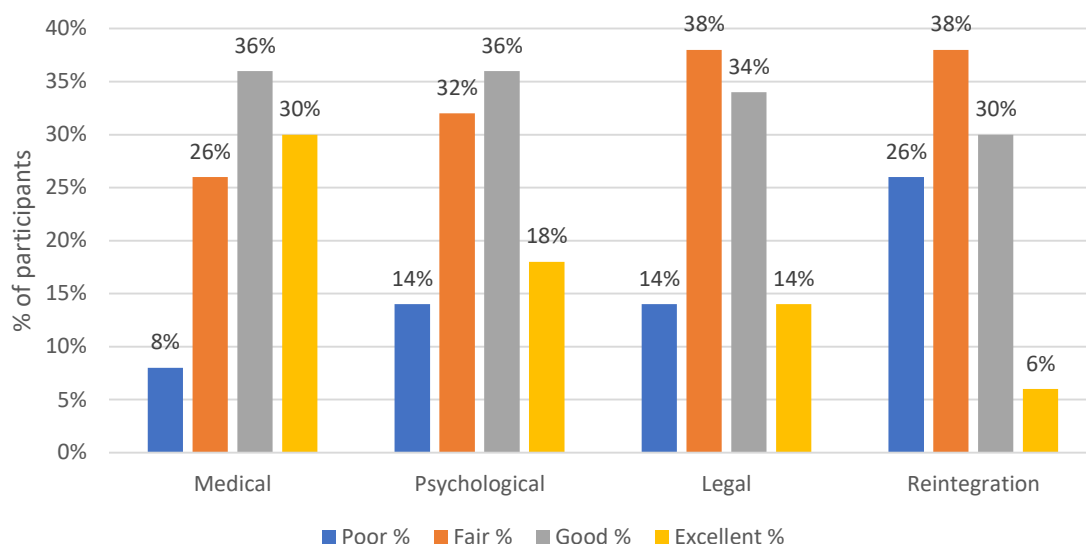


Figure 20. Perception of Availability of Services

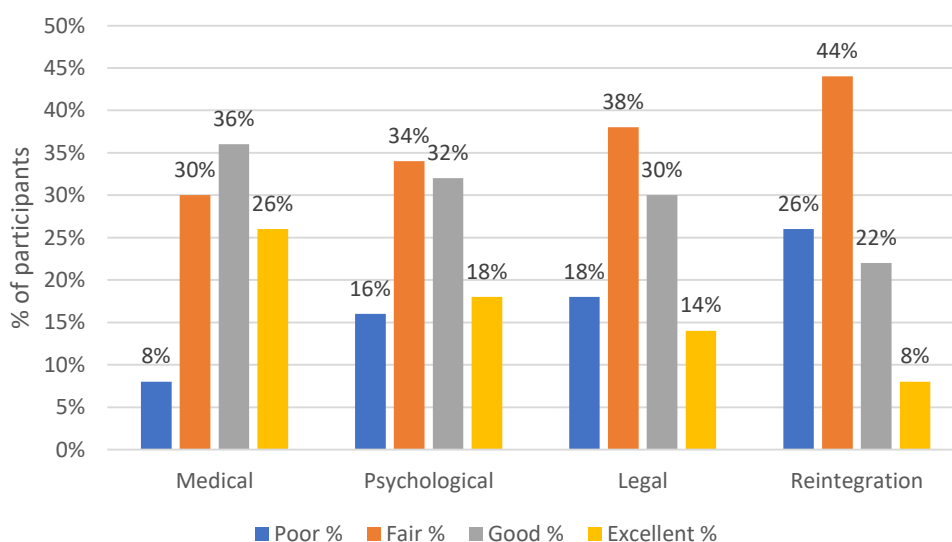


Figure 21. Perception of Quality of Services

Medical services received the highest ratings both in terms of the availability (36% rated them as good and 30% as excellent) and quality (36% rated them as good and 26% as excellent). Administrators noted that Malaysian responses to child sexual exploitation have a greater reliance on medical (and psychiatric) services than social work. Over 50% of frontline workers rated the availability of

psychological services as good (36%) or excellent (18%) and the quality of those services as good (32%) or excellent (18%). The availability of legal services was rated by the majority as either fair (38%) or good (34%) and similarly their quality – 38% rated their quality as fair, 30% as good, 14% as excellent and 18% as poor. Reintegration services received the lowest ratings with 64% perceiving their availability as either poor (26%) or fair (38%) and 70% their quality as either poor (26%) or fair (44%). ‘Excellent’ ratings (both for availability and quality of all services) were selected predominantly by the government workers. Additionally, none of the ‘poor’ ratings came from government workers.

One participant working in an NGO providing psychosocial support, legal, awareness raising and reintegration services mentioned: *“There are issues with availability, accessibility and affordability. This also ties into the varying levels of quality”* (RA3-MY-16-A).

To better understand what affects the availability of support services for children, respondents were asked to indicate to what extent particular factors they believed had an influence on the availability of services for children.

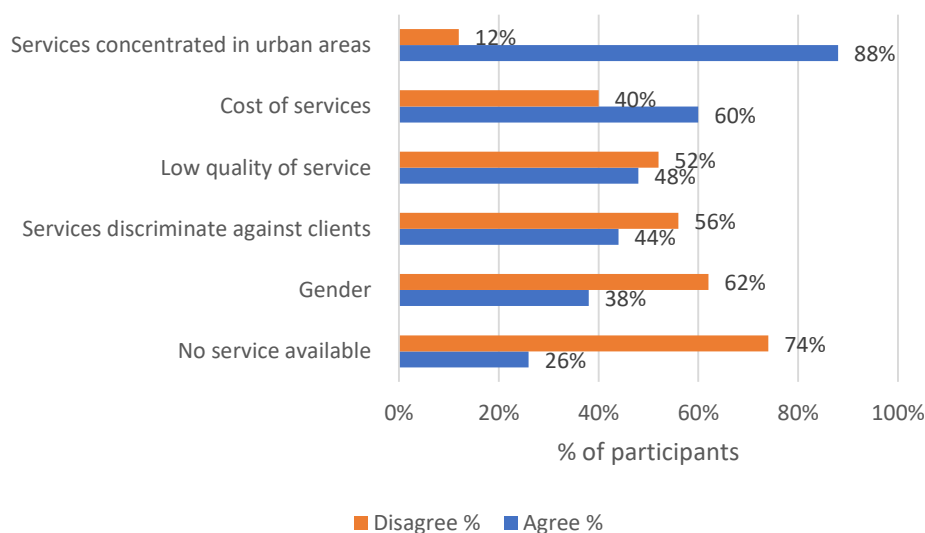


Figure 22. Factors affecting the availability of support services for child victims of *child sexual exploitation*

Figure 22 above indicates that factors perceived as having the biggest influence on the availability of support services for children recovering from child sexual exploitation in Malaysia was the location – services were concentrated in urban areas (88% agreed), followed by the cost of services (60%). Around half of participants also perceived low quality of services as a factor influencing the availability of services. More than half of participants disagreed that factors such as discrimination against the clients (56% disagreed), gender (62% disagreed) and unavailability of services (74% disagreed) affect the availability of support services for child victims of child sexual exploitation.

Participants mentioned additional factors, such as:



- Length of processing cases: *“Availability of timely and appropriate interventions. For cases that go through the court system and rely on the welfare department for further assistance the queue is long”* (RA3-MY-16-A)
- Funding to support organisations
- Lack of expertise
- Law that governs the practices
- Parents too busy to bring children to therapy
- *“Poor accountability of people in power (ministerial level) to help undocumented children”* (RA3-MY-38-A)

When participants were asked to indicate to what extent those same factors affect the availability of support services for child victims of OCSEA, the results were mostly similar (Figure 23), with a few slight differences.

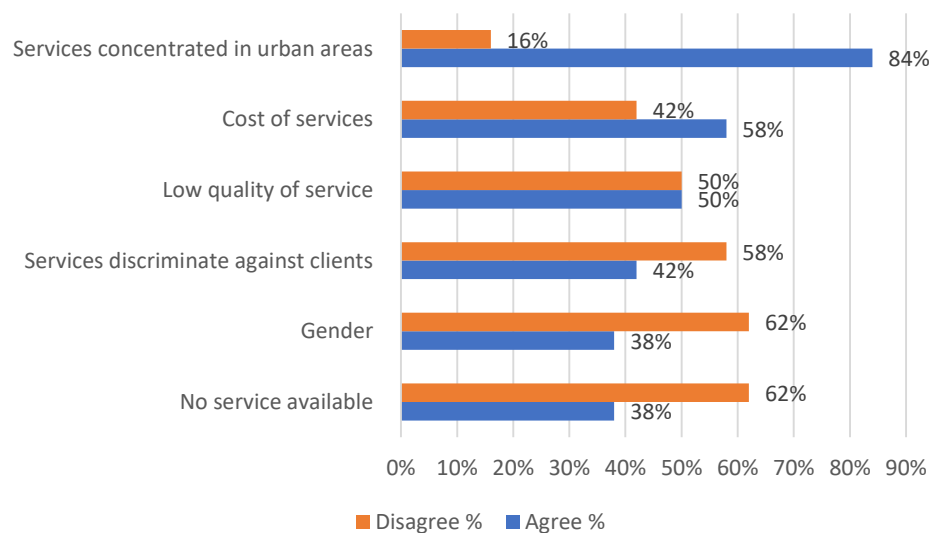


Figure 23. Factors affecting the availability of support services for child victims of OCSEA

84% of respondents agreed that services being concentrated in urban areas and 58% that the cost of services (58%) influences their availability of child victims of OCSEA. More than half of participants disagreed that factors such as discrimination against the clients (58% disagreed) and gender (62% disagreed) influence availability of services. The number of frontline workers that reported that no services are available for child victims of OCSEA compared to child victims of child sexual exploitation was higher (38% agreed in the case of OCSEA and 26% in the case of child sexual exploitation).

Respondents additionally mentioned factors such as:

- Law that governs the practices
- Police not accepting reports: *“Also OCSEA cases that happen on social media often don't even go through a police report or court process and children may be asked to just 'forget about it' and move on without proper trauma care”* (RA3-MY-16-A)

- Lack of focus and awareness on OCSEA: *“Existing resources focused a lot on physical abuse faced by children, more attention needed for online”* (RA3-MY-07-A); *“The idea of someone seeking support for OCSEA is still new, and I have not heard of any so far. I’m not sure if my answers would reflect the situation here”* (RA3-MY-13-A); *“very low awareness in Malaysia”* (RA3-MY-18-A)

## Investigations and Convictions

Participants were asked to estimate the amount of OCSEA cases they managed in the last 12 months and determine approximately how many of those resulted in investigations and convictions. It should be noted that those results are merely estimates, not reliable counts of official cases.

16 out of 50 participants indicated that in the last 12 months, at least one case of OCSEA cases they managed directly resulted in a complaint filed to the local police/judicial authorities (total of 107 estimated cases).

14 of 50 participants indicated that in the last 12 months, at least one of the cases they managed resulted in an investigation (total of 96 estimated).

12 of 50 participants indicated that in the last 12 months, at least one of the cases they managed resulted in a conviction (total 29 estimated).

The number of reported cases represent only a fraction of the number of OCSEA incidents that we expect are occurring, the majority of which continue to never to come to the attention of social workers or law enforcement.

As one participant mentioned:

*“Often, there are multiple elements involved leading to convictions. As such the convictions may not be solely or specifically related to OCSEA in the cases we handle. Some cases are still ongoing. To note that some of these cases do not originate with us making the police report. Some cases are the ones I see in court as part of court advisor role. So, we are not part of police reporting for all cases. Some we are brought in further down the juvenile justice process”* (RA3-MY-16-A).

## Law Enforcement and Government Support

In order to understand frontline service workers perceptions of responses by local law enforcement on the issue of OCSEA, respondents were asked to answer, “Based on your work which best describes local law enforcement’s: 1) awareness of OCSEA crimes; and 2) response to OCSEA crimes. Their responses to this question are depicted in Figure 24.

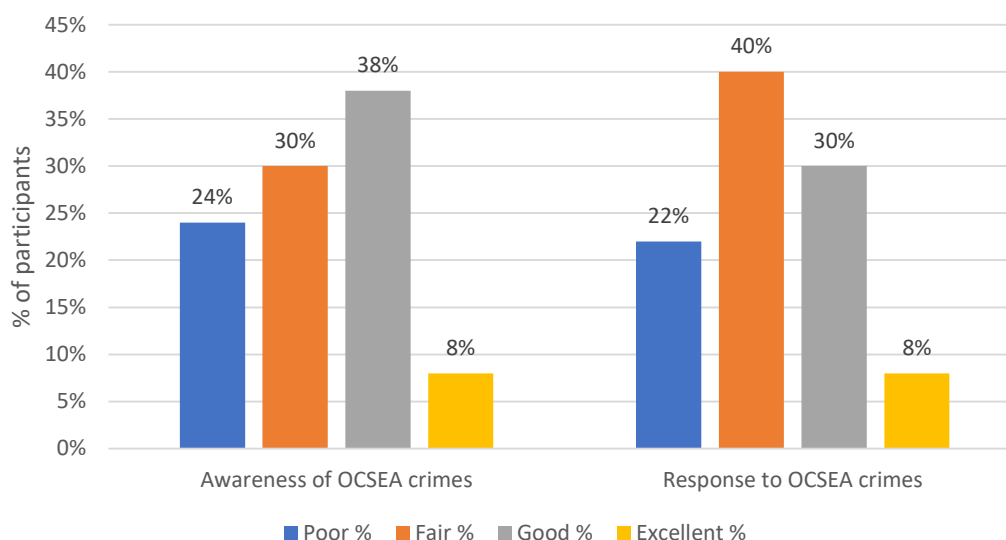


Figure 24. Participants’ perceptions of local law enforcement awareness and response to OCSEA

68% of participants perceived law enforcement’s awareness as fair (30%) or good (38%) and 70% law enforcements response to OCSEA as fair (40%) or good (30%). About a quarter of participants perceived the awareness of law enforcement (24%) and their response to OCSEA (22%) as poor. While NGO workers’ perceptions of law enforcement’s awareness and responses regarding OCSEA were mixed, government workers rated them predominantly as good and none rated them as poor.

One respondent working in an NGO providing legal support services mentioned:

*“I have had an experience myself lodging a report to the police regarding an OCSEA crime. The inspector in charge was not aware of the different social media used, the lingo used by children and lacked important knowledge that an inspector needs to know to execute an effective investigation” (RA3-MY-42-A).*

To better understand the ratings above, participants were next asked about their perceptions of the quality of efforts to address OCSEA (Figure 25).

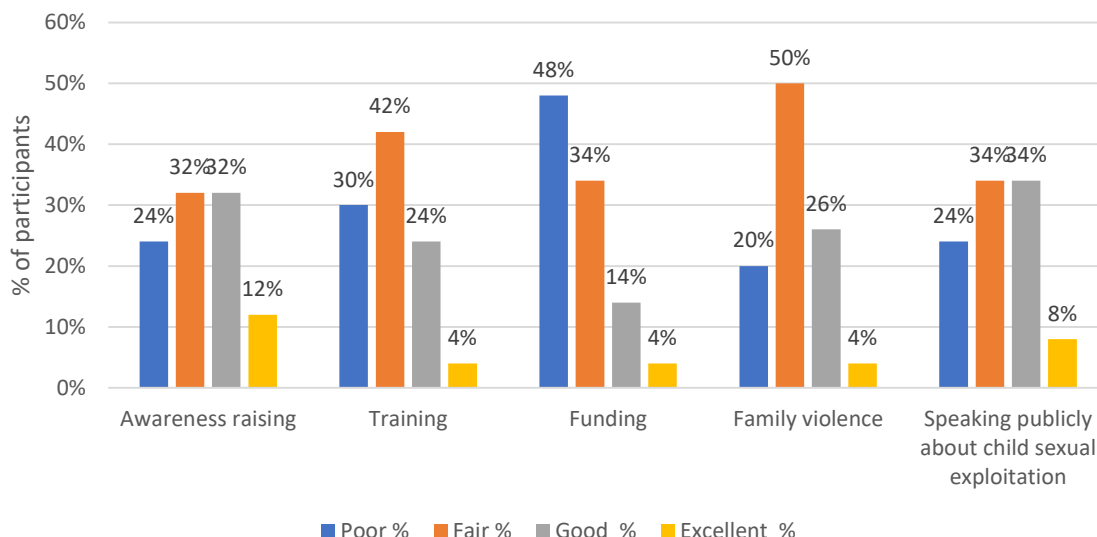


Figure 25. Participants’ perceptions of quality of government efforts to address OCSEA

Limited government funding (rated as poor or fair by 82% of respondents) and training (rated as poor or fair by 72% of respondents) were most frequently selected as major obstacles to provide adequate services to child victims of OCSEA. Governments’ response to family violence was rated by the majority as either fair (50%) or good (26%). Awareness raising activities and speaking publicly about child sexual exploitation were perceived very similarly, with around 60% of respondents rating it as fair or good and 24% as poor. While the majority of ‘poor’ ratings came from NGO respondents, government workers rated the services mostly as ‘good’ or ‘fair’.

One participant mentioned that the government should take on a bigger role in awareness raising: “[...] Many NGOs in Malaysia are making the best efforts to raise awareness; the government should play a more active role” (RA3-MY-39-A).

Next, frontline workers surveyed were asked to assess the collaboration on OCSEA between non-government sectors such as NGOs, tourism companies, Internet companies etc. The results are illustrated in Figure 26.

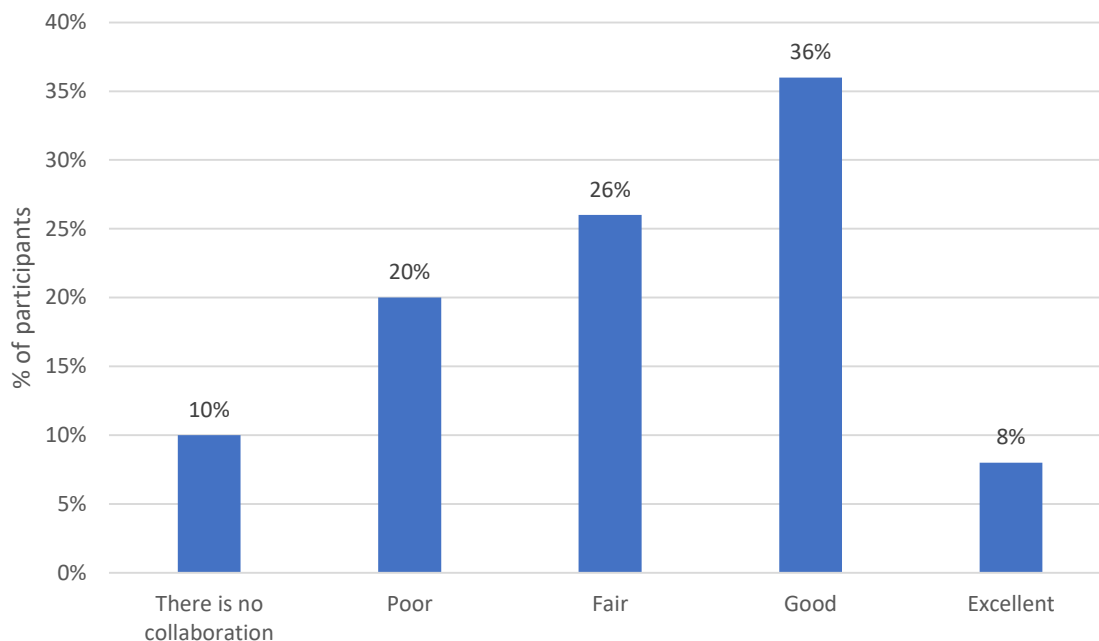


Figure 26. Participants perceptions of collaboration on OCSEA between non-government

While 44% of respondents (n=22) perceived the collaboration between providers as good (n=18 – 36%) or excellent (n=4 – 8%), 56% (n=28) rated it as fair (n=13 – 26%), poor (n=10 – 20%) or non-existent (n=5 – 10%). While NGO workers’ ratings varied, government workers perceived the collaboration predominantly as good.

## Public Awareness

Lastly, the survey attempted to ascertain the levels of public awareness around the issues of OCSEA in Malaysia. In order to do so, frontline workers were asked to subjectively appraise young people’s awareness, parent’s awareness and the general public’s awareness of OCSEA – their responses are illustrated in Figure 27.

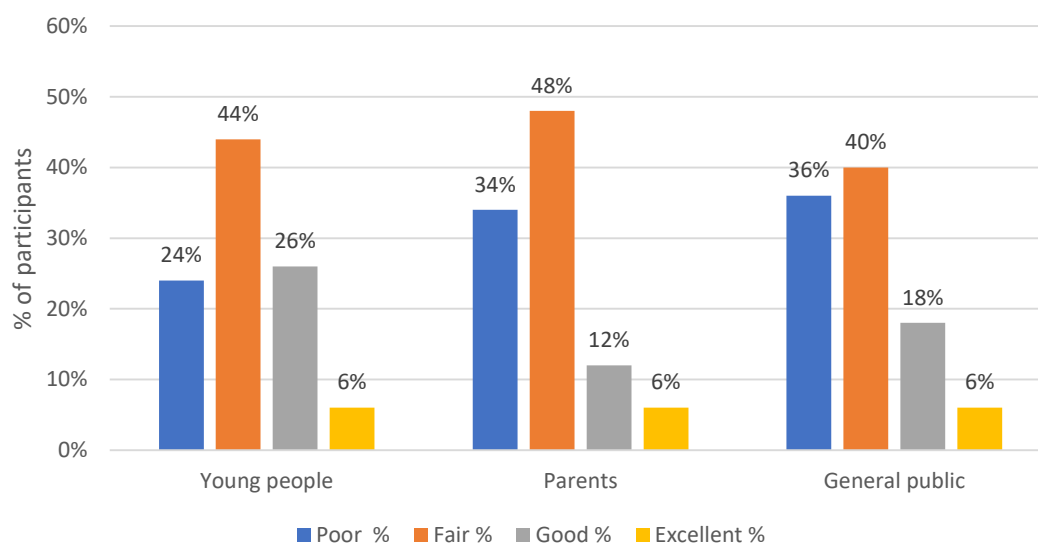


Figure 27. Awareness of OCSEA

The majority of participants described young people's, parent's and the general public's awareness of OCSEA as either poor or fair, with parents being rated as having the poorest knowledge on the issue (82% rated their knowledge as poor or fair), closely followed by the general public (76% rated it as poor or fair). Young people were found to have the highest awareness out of the three groups, however 68% still rated it as poor (24%) or fair (48%). In comments throughout the survey, several participants suggested that awareness raising is very much needed in the community and many people do not see online crimes as an issue. The lack of awareness was often explained by the fact that sexuality is a social taboo, with one participant saying: *"I'm not sure if the general population knows about or understands the concept of OCSEA, as we just don't talk about ANYTHING related to sex, what more when it comes to children"* (RA3-MY-13-A).

When respondents were given the option to provide additional comments to qualify their answers above, all indicated a strong need for awareness raising on OCSEA in Malaysia:

*"Generally, Malaysians are not keen to discuss about sexual and reproductive Health openly. This makes the awareness about OCSEA extremely poor"* (RA3-MY-38-A);

*"As with all countries, things can be improved further. Adults (not just parents and caregivers) need to be equipped with digital parenting, literacy and resilience skills"* (RA3-MY-16-A);

*"Goes back to education policies, the government needs to be more active and understand the serious impact on the society and community. Young people are looking at all the wrong places to obtain info and support"* (RA3-MY-39-A);

*"Higher time spent on online for young children nowadays has increased the risk for OCSEA; where many parents use gadgets as "baby sitting" replacement due to busy schedules (with works and chores), little that they are aware of what their children browse at time even if they know there might be potential risk for OCSEA"* (RA3-MY-24-A);

*"I myself lack knowledge and awareness regarding OCSEA. I feel that awareness is drastically needed, especially for those who work directly with children. Guardian and school teachers"* (RA3-MY-18-A);

*"We need more awareness for the public to understand"* (RA3-MY-34-A).