



Article

“It’s a Phenomenon in Our Community, a Phenomenon That Is Silenced”: Child Sexual Abuse and the Circles of Silence in the Jewish National Religious Community in Israel

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Abstract: This study focused on Jewish national religious educators in Israel by exploring their narratives surrounding coping with the CSA of their students, including the perceived silencing of the phenomena within the community and the desire to provide their students with the care they require. In-depth interviews were conducted with 34 national religious educators, including teachers ($n = 20$), counselors ($n = 4$), and principals ($n = 10$), which were analyzed using a thematic approach. Three themes emerged in the findings: (1) a community in silence surrounding CSA, (2) the role of sex education in bridging between silence and CSA, and (3) educators’ experiences of breaking the silence by making their voices heard. The findings revealed that the participants experienced three circles of silencing surrounding CSA: silencing of their experience within their community, silencing of their students, and self-silencing. These circles affected the educators both personally and professionally. This study discusses how these circles of silence received three justifications: familial, religious, and personal. This study highlights the important role of Jewish national religious educators in identifying and leading interventions in CSA cases and the need for reflective, socio-religious, culturally based training alongside support for the educators to maintain their wellbeing when addressing CSA.

Keywords: child sexual abuse (CSA); educators’ narratives of silence; circles of silence; Jewish national religious



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1. Introduction

CSA is prevalent across all socio-cultural, religious, and non-religious groups (Sawrikar and Katz 2017a, 2017b) at a high prevalence of 12% (Sharma 2023). International research has substantiated the pervasive, worldwide, and alarming rate of CSA (Simon et al. 2020). Moreover, across cultures and countries worldwide, research has indicated that the statistics on prevalence underestimate actual CSA occurrence and that there is a significant gap between prevalence and disclosure (Alaggia et al. 2017). A variety of barriers inhibit CSA disclosure, with unique barriers found in ethnic minority communities that require culturally informed prevention, intervention, and treatment approaches (Sawrikar and Katz 2017a, 2017b).

Through their daily interactions with children, educators, including teachers, counselors, and principals, are often on the frontlines of child sexual abuse (CSA) detection (Scholes et al. 2012; Walsh et al. 2010; Sigad et al. 2014), disclosure (Hinkelman and Bruno 2008; Schönbucher et al. 2012), prevention and intervention (Márquez-Flores et al. 2016; Sigad and Tener 2022; Tener and Sigad 2019; Walsh and Brandon 2012). Given this vital role and their ability to affect outcomes, it is necessary to understand how their values and community influences, particularly their socio-cultural and religious backgrounds (e.g., Sigad and Tener 2022; Sigad et al. 2023a; Tener et al. 2022), affect their coping with this phenomenon. For example, research on closed, religious communities has found that perceptions of community cohesiveness, hierarchal status, and individual reputation can lead to the doubting and silencing of CSA survivors, as well as a general lack of information and awareness of CSA and its characteristics (Lusky-Weisrose et al. 2021; Michel and Tener 2023).

Recent research has examined CSA in various religious communities (e.g., [Tishelman and Fontes 2017](#); [Katz et al. 2022](#)), including Jewish communities (e.g., [Lusky-Weisrose et al. 2021](#)). However, to date, no study has focused specifically on the Jewish national religious community in Israel and its particular cultural, social, and religious characteristics. As such, the purpose of the current study was to explore the lived experiences of educators in this group and describe and analyze their perceptions of and coping with CSA. This study is also dedicated to expanding the international scholarly discourse regarding the dynamics of the phenomena among religious groups. Therefore, this study can be considered a case study of how CSA coping among educators is related to traditional religious communities worldwide, from which implications beyond this specific group can be gleaned. Furthermore, the findings have the potential to aid in creating culturally informed bottom-up CSA prevention and intervention.

1.1. Educators Coping with CSA

Previous research has found numerous obstacles to educators' ability to intervene in cases of CSA despite their crucial role in addressing it. According to studies conducted worldwide, teachers often lack the necessary training and knowledge regarding CSA, including dealing with disclosure and prevention ([Kim et al. 2012](#); [Márquez-Flores et al. 2016](#); [Mathews 2011](#); [Riad and Forden 2021](#)). Moreover, the official responsibility of addressing the CSA is usually given to others, such as a principal or counselor ([Lusky-Weisrose et al. 2021](#)). Consequently, teachers are not provided adequate support ([Tener and Sigad 2019](#)) to cope with or address the CSA of their students and its grave personal and professional repercussions ([Sigad et al. 2023b](#)).

In Israel, the [Mandatory Reporting Act \(1977\)](#) requires adults to disclose any suspicion of CSA, with specific mandates for professionals who work with children. In addition, school staff have distinct guidelines from the Ministry of Education regarding CSA identification, disclosure, and intervention ([Director General's Circular 2008](#)). Between the years of 2020 and 2021, over 4600 CSA cases were disclosed to the Ministry of Education's Psychological and Counseling Services Division (SHEFI), an increase of 24% from the year prior ([The Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel \[ARCCI\] 2021](#)). However, Israeli teachers were found to lack knowledge regarding CSA and their specific responsibilities in relation to CSA incidences ([The Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel \[ARCCI\] 2008](#); [Perry-Hazan and Tal-Weibel 2020](#)). Teachers in Israel are not required to participate in mandatory training or courses on CSA, and CSA intervention remains an elective part of the curriculum in the majority of higher education programs. The Israeli Ministry of Education does, however, offer elective professional development training for teachers, in which topics related to CSA disclosure and intervention are included ([Becker and Mizrahi-Simon 2017](#)).

1.2. CSA Prevention and Intervention Programs in School Systems

School-based sex education programs often focus on topics such as knowledge of sexual matters, sexuality, sexual health, wellbeing, sexual orientation, and sexual assault ([Goldfarb and Lieberman 2021](#)). Sexual self-protection education programs also exist, focusing on teaching children the skills, knowledge, and behaviors to lower the risk of CSA incidences ([Che Yusof et al. 2022](#)). These programs have found international success ([Che Yusof et al. 2022](#)). If administered properly, they increase children's overall knowledge of CSA ([Tutty et al. 2020](#); [Wolfersteig et al. 2022](#)) and effectively encourage them to report, reducing the trauma of sexual abuse ([Del Campo and Fávero 2020](#)). Furthermore, effective prevention programs are adapted to students' age and cognitive developmental levels, provide students with opportunities to practice significant concepts and skills, use interactive educational techniques ([Lu et al. 2022](#)), and provide specific examples of general explanations ([Blakey et al. 2019](#)). Teachers' experiences in relation to children's self-protection programs remain largely unstudied. However, [Allen et al. \(2020\)](#) found that, although teachers were initially reluctant to teach child protection material, they grew

increasingly invested as they became immersed in the project and witnessed its positive influence on students.

In Israel, the Ministry of Education recently developed a new general life skills program intended for elementary through middle school students. This program covers both sex education and CSA prevention, including topics such as consent, privacy, sexual harassment, and the importance of disclosure ([The Psychological and Counseling Services Division \[SHEFI\] 2022](#)). However, most of the lesson plans are aimed at the secular Jewish school system, with few tailored to the State's religious Jewish education system. The religious lessons differ in some instances in the language utilized, such as referring to the LGBTQ+ community, and emphasize religious values and terms, such as mutual responsibility. While the Ministry of Education encourages educators to use this program, its implementation is neither enforced nor monitored, and data are not collected regarding its implementation ([Kahane Uli and Court 2013](#)). In fact, research has found that sex education in Israeli religious schools, particularly for girls, focuses largely on religious values of modesty ([Kahane Uli and Court 2013](#)).

1.3. Coping with CSA in the National Religious Community

Of the Jewish population in Israel, about 20% identify as national religious ([Gross 2020](#)), a group characterized by a strict observation of Jewish religious law ([Kahane Uli and Court 2013](#)) and an identity that combines religiosity and nationalism ([Gross 2020](#)). [Hermann \(2014\)](#) found that right-wing affiliations, particularly Israeli nationalism or hypernationalism, were as high a predictor of community identification as religiosity. While the community tends to be cautious in its exposure to modern trends and "the outside world," it has become increasingly present in Israeli public life, from culture to politics.

The national religious community is also generally marked by gender inequality, emphasizing traditional Halachic roles for women (i.e., gender roles based on Jewish religious law), gender separation in schools, and only allowing men to study the Talmud, which is the collection of rabbinical studies that hold religious authority within Judaism ([Hermann 2014](#); [Segal and Bekerman 2009](#)). Moreover, the community has its own separate state education system, in which the secular curriculum is imparted in conjunction with religious and nationalistic values ([Gross 2020](#)). Even so, recent trends in the national religious community have indicated more openness to some secular values, such as an increasingly egalitarian household division of labor ([Hermann 2014](#)). Additionally, theater productions intended for religious audiences that adhere to religious norms, such as modesty, have begun to deconstruct the purity of family life and explore issues of child abuse ([Rutlinger-Reiner 2013](#)).

Limited research exists on CSA within Israel's distinct religious communities. Among Jewish religious communities specifically, contemporary research has focused on the ultra-Orthodox, namely on public attitudes ([Lusky-Weisrose et al. 2021](#)), CSA survivors ([Tener et al. 2021](#)), and community leaders' perspectives ([Alfandari et al. 2021](#)). Nevertheless, the literature on CSA within the national religious community has been extremely scarce. A recent study ([Finklestein 2022](#)) on the sexual assault of children and youth receiving social services examined the differences across religious identifications. It found that, although students from the national religious community accounted for only 19% of the Jewish educational system, they comprised 29% of the students receiving social services following CSA. Moreover, nearly 50% of these students were boys, compared to one-third in the secular community.

Jewish national religious society is further characterized by the observance of Jewish religious commandments, such as hierarchical respect ([Hermann 2014](#)), an emphasis on family life as holy, modesty, and refraining from speaking slanderously about others ([Kahane Uli and Court 2013](#)). Yet, the disclosure of sexual abuse and the accompanying need to cope with such adverse events may clash with these tenets. Within the national religious community, the emphasis on hierarchy, family, and modesty, including the shame associated with CSA due to the taboo nature of sexual matters, frequently leads to the

silencing of survivors of sexual abuse. Perpetrators who hold important positions in the community, such as religious figures, receive leniency and face little censure when incidents of CSA they committed are revealed (Stern 2017). Within this context, the “Takana Forum” was established in 2003 to cope with the cases of sexual harassment and abuse in the national religious community that do not fall under legal jurisdiction. The forum has also handled cases of abuse within the purview of the law in instances where survivors refuse to press legal charges. While the forum does not have enforcement power, its religious and social standing provide the leverage needed to seek justice for survivors (Stern 2017).

1.4. The Current Study

This study is part of a larger project of over 200 interviews with educators from three cultural subgroups in Israel: religious Jews (ultra-Orthodox and national religious), secular Jews, and Arabs (Muslim, Christian, Bedouin, and Druze). Grounded in a context-informed perspective (Nadan and Roer-Strier 2020), the broader study sought to create a grounded theoretical model of educational professionals’ experiences coping with CSA in different cultural settings. Each of the groups of the larger study is included both separately and simultaneously in additional studies.

The current study focused on Jewish national religious educators coping with the CSA of their students. To explore their experiences, the following research questions were asked: (1) How do educators from the Jewish national religious community experience and understand the CSA of their students? (2) How does coping with the CSA of their students affect Jewish national religious educators in their professional and personal lives? (3) How do these educators attribute meaning to CSA as a phenomenon in the context of the national religious community?

2. Methods

The aim of the current study was to explore the perspectives and experiences of educators from the Jewish national religious community who encountered students who experienced CSA. A descriptive phenomenological–psychological perspective guided this study (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Given the lack of literature on the Jewish national religious community and the closed nature of this community (Atkinson and Flint 2001; Bonevski et al. 2014), alongside the complexity of the phenomena, a qualitative approach was chosen to enable a multifaceted exploration of the ascribed meanings by those coping with the experience (Lincoln and Guba 1985). This approach captured the lived experiences of national religious educators in Israel and conceptualized how they made sense of their students’ CSA in their professional lives (Spinelli 2005). Through the in-depth analysis of these first-hand accounts, this study aims to uncover their defining elements (Sokolowski 2000) and suggest areas to be addressed via policy and future research.

2.1. Participants

The sample included 34 educators who identified as Jewish national religious and worked in national religious schools throughout Israel. All of the study participants were professionally involved in cases of CSA. The sample included 19 female educators and 15 male educators, of whom 20 were teachers (10 female and 10 male), 10 were principals (5 female and 5 male), and 4 were educational counselors (all female). At the time of the data collection, the educators ranged in age from 25 to 63 years ($M = 44.4$) and in years of experience from 2 to 35 years ($M = 13$).

The threshold criteria for participation were being a Jewish national religious educator with significant experience coping with CSA in their professional lives (Englander 2012). Participant recruitment was particularly challenging due to the religious taboo surrounding CSA and sexuality. Due to the difficulty involved in recruiting participants, the researchers located the initial participants via their connections to the community. Following this, they used snowball sampling to reach additional candidates (Atkinson and Flint 2001; Patton 2015). The researchers contacted these potential participants by phone to explain

this study's purpose, ask for their consent to be interviewed, and request that the potential participants describe their experiences with CSA in their professional lives. Participants who had meaningful experiences were invited to participate in this study. Data collection was continued until it reached saturation (Fusch and Ness 2015).

2.2. Procedures

A multidisciplinary research team of 25 members, including experienced CSA researchers and graduate students from diverse socio-cultural groups, collected and analyzed the data from 2019 to 2023 for the broader research project. Eleven of the research team members, including the author of this study, belong to the Jewish secular community in Israel, six to the Jewish religious community (four national religious and two ultra-Orthodox), and eight to the Arab community (one Druze, one Christian, one Bedouin, and five Muslim).

Specifically, the data collection of the current study was completed by the first author and four Jewish national religious M.Ed. students. The students participated as part of a requirement to complete a seminar or research thesis on the topic. Initially, three interviews (two open and one semi-structured) were conducted by the first author. The proceeding 32 interviews were conducted by the four students who received ongoing in-depth training. The interviews lasted 45–75 min with the purpose of creating an unrestricted, open dialogue (Spradley 1979) about the educator's experience with CSA. The interview guide was based on the following content categories: the definition and understanding of what constitutes CSA; the meaning educators attributed to CSA (e.g., According to your professional experience, what is the meaning of CSA?); educators' coping with CSA cases (e.g., Please share an example of an incident of CSA of your student and how you coped with it.); professional figures involved in the CSA intervention (e.g., In your professional experience, which professional figures are involved in CSA intervention? In your experience, how do they cope with and respond to CSA?); educators' perceptions of their role in relation to CSA cases (e.g., What do you think is the educator's role and responsibility in regards to CSA?); socio-cultural context (e.g., In your view, how does the Jewish national religious community perceive and respond to CSA?); and educators' perceptions of the impact of the CSA disclosure and intervention on their personal lives (e.g., How does being an educator dealing with cases of CSA affect your personal life?). The interviews were conducted in Hebrew and recorded and transcribed in Hebrew. Representative quotes were translated into English and then back-translated to Hebrew to ensure the translation authentically captured the meanings communicated by the participants.

2.3. Data Analysis

The analysis was conducted by the author and research assistants using qualitative thematic analysis in an inductive, grounded manner (Braun and Clarke 2021). Once the research team became thoroughly familiar with the interview transcripts, they began the open coding process, seeking out the participants' perceptions and experiences in coping with CSA (Roulston 2010; Patton 2015). Next, the team's separate open coding was integrated and the various codes were merged into relevant themes (Patton 2015). The codes and themes were cross-case analyzed (Patton 2015) until data saturation was reached, that is, when no new meanings were revealed regarding the educators' experiences.

The data and interpretations were discussed during bimonthly peer debriefing sessions (Nowell et al. 2017) during the study period to confirm that the coding system was organized, consistent, and accurate. Regular meetings and discussions were also used to synthesize the units of meaning and assess the final themes for cohesiveness (Nowell et al. 2017). This was accompanied by an audit trail, tracking the progression from raw data to the final analysis (Bowen 2009). Finally, the researchers conferred with experts on CSA, culture and religion, and qualitative research regarding the research process and analysis (Henry 2015).

2.4. Rigor and Trustworthiness

Several techniques were employed to ensure this study's trustworthiness (Morse 2015; Lincoln and Guba 1985). Triangulation was maintained, with the research team for this study comprising six members (four M.Ed. students, one research assistant, the author, and the co-P.I. of the broader study). Data validity was corroborated via member checking. Participants from the Jewish national religious socio-cultural group were invited to review their transcripts to refine and expand their answers (Morse 2015). Member checking was also conducted by the Jewish national religious team members to ensure cultural and religious accuracy. A comprehensive audit trail of the research and analysis was kept, with written documentation and raw data included alongside all interpretations (Bowen 2009).

The bimonthly debriefing meetings of the research team included reflective discussions of how the team members experienced conducting interviews on the sensitive topic of CSA. Also discussed was how the position of the researcher, including personal and professional perceptions, influenced the data collection and interpretation processes, particularly considering that the researchers were educators involved in the field of CSA. In addition, ongoing, formal, and informal conversations were held among the team members and their colleagues for additional reflective purposes. As such, peer debriefing also assisted the members in maintaining awareness of their influence on the analysis.

The credibility of the findings was established by inserting participants' quotations alongside the analysis, providing transparency regarding the researchers' interpretive choices (Maxwell 2005). The themes were structured and presented as follows: (a) background details for the relevant participant; (b) excerpt from the participant's interview; (c) interpretation of the excerpt's language and meaning, placing the quote in context with the themes that emerged from all participants. Hence, the underlying analysis was laid out for the reader to approve or refute (Patton 2015).

2.5. Ethics

The current study was approved by the ethics committee of the author and co-P.I.'s affiliated institutions. Before beginning the interviews, this study and its aim were explained to the participants, and their consent was requested. During the interviews, the interviewers provided the participants with the contact information of relevant mental health professionals in case it would be needed then or later due to the sensitive nature of the research topic. As part of the transcription process, the interviews were anonymized, and all identifiable details were removed.

3. Results

The findings were based on the analysis of the 34 interviews with educators from the Jewish national religious community, with the aim of gaining an understanding of the complexity of their experiences when exposed to cases of CSA of their students. The interaction between silencing and speaking out that arose in the analysis resulted in three interrelated themes: (1) the community's silence surrounding CSA; (2) sex education as a bridge between silence and protection; and (3) teachers breaking the silence and making their voices heard.

3.1. "I Really Don't Have the Words": The Community's Silence Surrounding CSA

The participants in this study emphasized the issue of silencing when sharing their perceptions of CSA. Most of the participants spoke of experiencing silence in the community at large and the impact of this on child survivors, as well as the hushed climate they had to navigate to handle matters of sexuality and particularly the phenomenon of CSA. Furthermore, this silencing appeared to affect their own understanding of both CSA and sexuality, as the majority of the participants described not possessing the lexicon to help them conceptualize or communicate about CSA incidents. In addition to this general atmosphere of silence, experiences of being directly silenced in their role as educators or engaging in silencing themselves were also prevalent among the majority of participants.

Naomi is a principal in a religious elementary school. She has seven years of experience as a principal. Naomi disclosed her concerns about participating in this study due to the pervasive silencing and fear in the Jewish national religious community regarding CSA:

This is a phenomenon in our society, a very difficult phenomenon that's silenced [...] I wish we could create some kind of resilience among the children so that they wouldn't get hurt or give them the tools to protect themselves. I know that, by and large, in the religious sector, if "they know" [if the CSA incident is made public], then [the family thinks] "I might get hurt, my daughter won't get married, the family will get a bad name." I think it [the silencing] comes from these places, that people worry about what will happen to their children's future. So, it would be like a stain, if our family was hurt [...] it would hurt their marriage, hurt them [...] In religious society, compared to secular society, the phenomenon of sexual vulnerability is even more silenced. Most of the time, parents are silent. They don't want anyone to know, they're ashamed. In my opinion, it's sad that it's like this. The feeling of guilt is on the victim instead of the attacker.

Naomi described the silencing of CSA as a consequence of community members' fear of the negative implications for the survivor and their family. CSA was seen as tarnishing both the child's and family's reputation in a manner that may influence the child's future marriageability. Naomi described these aspects of her community as if observing it from the sidelines, while she expressed a contrasting set of values. She wanted children to have the tools to protect themselves and for the perpetrator to bear the consequences of the CSA rather than the survivor. However, there was no expression of hope that this wish might become a reality.

Yair is a homeroom teacher in an all-boys yeshiva, an all-boys religious educational institution (Fuchs 2013), with 11 years of experience. He shared how exposure to the CSA of his students and the silencing he experienced within the community led him to question his sense of self, both personally and professionally, as well as his community.

These things overwhelm me. [...] [The case of CSA] required from me pedagogic and caring skills that I am not sure I have. I wasn't trained for this. Looking back, I am disappointed in myself in how I handled [the case of CSA that was disclosed] [...] This is not a topic that is discussed at all in the religious community. There is almost no discourse or reference to it. At school, we, the staff, are in a mindset of accomplishments and, of course, Torah [the body of knowledge and law of the Jewish scriptures]. There are the sacred subjects [biblical studies] that take up half of the curriculum. There is no room for emotional discourse and certainly not for openness about sexuality. There is almost no support for students or dialogue on the subject. So, of course, there is also none for the educational staff. I think I'm starting to understand that maybe because we're not open to the issue, we think it doesn't exist in our community.

Similar to Naomi, Yair experienced silence surrounding CSA. However, unlike Naomi, he was not on the sidelines but contributed directly to the silencing by perpetuating an educational style that did not invite and may have even inhibited open, honest acknowledgment. In parallel to his students, who failed to receive adequate support in this environment, Yair also did not have access to the proper professional or personal tools regarding CSA or other matters related to sexuality. This left Yair to cope with the phenomenon on his own, unsupported and uncertain of his ability to provide the appropriate care, guidance, and education for his students.

Arie, a bible studies teacher, was present during a sexual incident between students in his class. He did not address the incident or share it with his colleagues, despite his misgivings:

It was a sight I will never forget. Shocking. And it really worried me... What is happening to him [the victim]? Maybe he understood what was happening to him? Maybe he felt it? Maybe he was hurt [...] Because I really don't have the

words, like I said, I lack the words that I would need in the first place to even have such a conversation. . . There are people who understand this and know exactly what to say, how to say it. . . I don't understand it. I don't have a vocabulary like them. . . And really, that's why I didn't share it with anyone either. . . No counselor, nothing. Just this little incident I had in class. I believe I would have received help, but I'd have to ask for it, and I have no way to do that.

Like most of the educators, Arie experienced CSA as something undiscussed within the national religious community and described how this silencing negatively affected his personal and professional coping. Never having acquired the language or tools to cope with CSA and peer-to-peer sexual abuse, he did not intervene when he witnessed his student being sexually assaulted and did not disclose what happened to the school administration. The students were left with no assistance in dealing with the incident, and Arie was left feeling traumatized, guilty, and ashamed of his inability to support his students.

An important minority of the educators held a positive perspective of the community's tendency towards silencing. Among these participants, the intra-community code of conduct was thought to provide care to CSA survivors and their families while emphasizing the critical value of discretion. Tova, an elementary school principal with eight years of experience and two years into retirement, shared this positive view:

There are special places in our community that deal with cases of harm [. . .] and I know that no one there knows anything. No leaks, no information. They write, "The case happened, it was dealt with," and that's it. It's also a way of coping. The case is properly handled by qualified psychologists. Not neglected, not swept away, not ignored. If care is needed, care is provided. Those who need to receive care are taken care of. . . I think that in our society, at least in some places I know of, there's a lot of respect for discretion in this matter. We do everything to not "whiten anyone's face" [speak ill of a person in public]. I think there is extensive care. If things are taken care of and done properly, no one really needs to know what happened. It doesn't contribute anything. Those who need to know, know; those who need to care, care; and that's it. The rest know that the case has been dealt with, that's what matters. I believe that if it's necessary to turn to external parties, then it's done. I'm talking about treatment after the reporting phase. It's not swept away.

Tova's positive interpretation of this communal silence in relation to CSA, which she perceived as a form of discretion, was distinct from the majority of the participants. She drew a connection between discretion and the Jewish religious value of refraining from slanderous speech. Thus, Tova placed trust in those community members she saw as responsible for handling CSA incidents and did not perceive the lack of shared information as silencing. It is possible that her authoritative role as a principal influenced her experience. Conversely, other educators, particularly the teachers, described feeling silenced in situations where they disclosed a CSA incident to the school principal and then received no further information.

The educators experienced a range of forms of silencing within their community regarding CSA, which had a prevailing place in their perceptions and narratives. These forms of silencing included the silencing of children by the community, the educators' experience of being silenced, and finally, the participants as silencers. Although it was not their intention, the educators enacted a form of self-silencing. In setting such boundaries, they specifically delineated topics that were not considered acceptable to be discussed.

3.2. "[We Should] Help More Children Prevent It": Sex Education as a Bridge between Silence and Protection

While the participants described forms of silencing in their communities, a majority simultaneously sought solutions to aid their students in preventing and contending with CSA. These participants felt they were being pulled between the desire to care for and educate their students and the commitment to their religious values. Specifically, their

narratives were enmeshed with what they termed “protective education,” an approach to self-protection within the socio-cultural context of their community that some described as a compromise between the two competing impulses.

Rebecca, a teacher at a religious school in a low socio-economic-status area, described how her understanding of her responsibility as a teacher changed following the CSA disclosure of her student:

[The incident] clarified for me that it’s my responsibility as a teacher to teach how not to hurt and not to get hurt. [...] There are lesson plans about personal space and privacy and everything for prevention. . . . It could be that if we were more dedicated to it, then she wouldn’t have gone with him. Even though she’s a girl who does what she wants for the most part, but maybe she would have recognized before going that it didn’t seem right that he was calling her somewhere else, and so maybe she would have avoided it. Like preliminary education.

Although the culture of silencing within the national religious community, as discussed in the first theme, led Rebecca to feel uncomfortable with the subject of CSA, the responsibility she felt as an educator motivated her to stand against this uneasiness. Reflecting on her encounter with this CSA case, she wondered if perhaps protective sex education would have taught her student to be wary and, therefore, would have led her to be shielded from an abusive experience. In this way, Rebecca embraced the responsibility of educating her students about CSA. Education, in her view, comprises not only teaching her students not to harm others but also functions as a first-stage strategy to help them gain the knowledge and skills to “not be harmed”.

Chaya, another teacher, placed a similar and perhaps even greater emphasis on the importance of protective education:

Give us [the teachers] the resources to deal with it and help more children prevent it. In my opinion, the procedures and the importance of learning about healthy sexuality and the body must be emphasized and refined. It’s not that it doesn’t exist, there are a lot of life skills classes, but I think that the emphasis should also be placed even more on teachers to encourage thinking and to encourage open dialogue among the students, and it’s important to have the full cooperation of the administration so that we know how to do it, when, how much, and why.

Like Rebecca, Chaya stressed teachers’ responsibility to educate their students to protect themselves from CSA, while also calling for more resources and school support to do so.

Alongside this desire to protect, the theme of balancing open education with socio-religious norms was repeated throughout the interviews. Yair described how he agreed to participate in the interview because he believed in the importance of increasing awareness and dialogue. Yet, during the interview, he appeared conflicted between his personal and professional commitments and his cultural context:

It’s a bit difficult for me to go into too much detail in front of you on the subject, for reasons of modesty [as a religious value]. But I strongly believe that it’s right to talk about the issue and to raise awareness, that’s why I’m here in the interview. The topic of education for healthy sexuality is not a particularly popular topic with us [...] There are things for which silence is beautiful. First, in front of you [the interviewer] as a woman, for reasons of modesty, I can’t go into detail. Second, it’s hard for me to imagine [my students] in such a light. They are good boys and students.

Yair shared how his community’s cultural and religious norms conflicted with his personal and professional commitment to protecting and caring for his students. He struggled when using language considered taboo due to its relationship with sexuality, a difficulty he framed using terms such as “modesty” and the Jewish concept of “beautiful silence”, which denotes that the wise know when to stay quiet and that speaking can often lead to harm. As in the first theme, where he described staying silent after his students’ CSA

disclosures, Yair's narrative was characterized by a struggle between conflicting impulses. Here, the contradiction was between his religious values and the importance he perceived in protective education.

While Yair's desire to protect students through education was stymied, other educators were able to incorporate sex education in their classrooms, maintaining a delicate balance between openness and dialogue, on the one hand, and religious norms of sexual modesty, on the other. Indeed, Leah did not feel that she was silenced as a teacher on the topic of coping with CSA, but rather that she must reasonably adapt her language to the sensitivities of the community:

I don't think there's silencing or concealment. Maybe there's an adapted, more refined language. You know, because, after all, we're a religious state school, I won't talk to the children about genitalia or relations between a man and a woman. It isn't appropriate, and it isn't in our curriculum for "life skills." But there's no silencing or enforced "modesty" [this is translated from the Hebrew word *hatzana*, from the root word of modesty, meaning repressing, concealment and hiding, generally used in taboo and sexual contexts] of sexuality.

Leah echoed the minority of educators' voices who ascribed value to the community's discretion. In Leah's case, she did not perceive such an approach as silencing. She described teaching "life skills," a term used in religious schools to refer to the curriculum that addresses sexuality. In teaching life skills, she used what she perceived to be more delicate terms and avoided what she deemed religiously inappropriate for her students. Thus, to maintain a balance between open discourse and religious values, Leah was highly attentive to an inner compass of socio-cultural acceptability.

Similarly, Shira, an educational counselor, shared what she considered acceptable and essential to teach and what was not, in relation to protective sex education:

In the sixth grade, we have workshops about menstruation and development in general. In the sixth grade, I teach girls about everything related to puberty. For both boys and girls. We brought in a religious guide who met with the boys three times and talked with them about sexual development, their bodies, what's happening with them, and there was a reference to porn, to everything related to sexual arousal, how to recognize, what to recognize. . . It was actually a series of lectures. . . He also gave lectures at that time to their parents. . . It was specifically for boys, because for the girls, I provide what's needed together with the educational counselors' workshop. . . It's true that we don't have sex education classes, and I won't talk to them about how children are made. But yes, about their physiological sexual development, about what it does to them, and about the exposure to porn if it does come up. I don't see it as silencing. On the contrary, the more we talk about it in a healthy and correct way, the more children will grow up in a healthy and correct way, because sexuality is part of our development.

Shira's balance between education and religious values differed from Leah's. To allow for more open dialogue, she created a separation based on gender for both the students and the teachers, designating a male teacher to conduct the discussions with parents on sexuality and sexual development. Interestingly, both Shira and Leah emphasized that these were not sex education classes and that sexual reproduction was not discussed, while, in the same breath, insisting that there is no silencing around sexuality in the community.

Shalhevet, a principal in an elementary school further clarified the uncertainty educators face in trying to navigate their desire to provide protective education and discourse for their students in the context of a silencing community:

This topic is a bit confusing because, on the one hand, you really, really want to talk about it with the children. On the other hand, sometimes you don't want to at all, because you think to yourself, whoever isn't there, maybe, it's not for sure that he needs to hear everything. You need to think very, very carefully about

how you speak about it and how you maybe talk around it. But I think it [the discourse] already exists, but maybe we need to talk even more about the issue, so that the child does not keep to himself, that he needs to report.

Shalhevet further described the educators' dilemma and confusion surrounding sex education and discretion as they battle with the concerns that exposure to these topics, even in an educational context, could harm their students. This attitude reflected the religious taboos and perspectives generally shared by the participants, particularly the idea of "beauty in silence." Even so, Shalhevet emphasized that, while it needs to be carried out carefully, open discourse with students is necessary to protect them and empower them to seek support.

Thus, the participants embodied a spectrum of perspectives regarding their responsibility to cope with CSA through education and open discourse in the context of their socio-religious circumstances. In their narratives, some participants emphasized open, protective discourse as essential for preventing and coping with CSA. They shared their socio-culturally adapted approaches to protective education through careful consideration and selective terminology. These educators balanced the dialogue regarding sexuality with their religious values. Others agreed but described their difficulty balancing this responsibility with their religious commitments. In contrast, several of the educators described how they actively broke the silence surrounding CSA within their community. Their experiences will be discussed in the following theme.

3.3. "I Put Things on the Table": Breaking the Silence and Making Their Voices Heard

The previous themes detailed the experiences of educators struggling with the silence surrounding CSA in their community and their own desire to protect and educate their students. Despite these participants' perceptions that sex education is necessary for their students' wellbeing, some became, in a limited sense, part of the silencing. Alongside this conflicted group, there was also a significant minority who purposefully broke through this silence and accomplished what several termed as "putting things on the table" without feeling compelled to compromise their religious sensibilities.

As seen in the previous theme, while she was strongly in favor of silence when dealing with specific CSA cases, Tova, nevertheless, spoke out in favor of providing sex education in schools. In this way, she was able to encourage raising awareness to break the silence regarding CSA. She described the concrete steps she took as principal to attain this goal, despite the challenges involved:

I took it on myself and on the staff to teach the topic of sexuality. In the first year that I started working, I brought lectures about sexuality to the school. All the teachers were present at the lectures. We brought teaching and learning materials and passed them on to the children, from first grade. Really, to give the teachers the appropriate tools. It wasn't always easy for everyone. It is exceedingly difficult for a religious teacher to use words related to sexuality, but there was no choice. We learned how to use the real terms, not to sweep it under the rug, to put it on the table. The only way is to equip teachers with the appropriate tools and hope that, in the moment of truth, it will really work, that the children, in the moment of truth, will use the knowledge they've acquired. This is a language that has to be used in school. School hours must be invested in it.

Tova had a unique perspective on sex education and sexual discourse as she emphasized that, despite religious educators' discomfort, it is important to use "real terms." This level of directness contrasted with the adapted language referred to by other participants. Furthermore, she beseeched the school system as a whole, and the entire school administrative team to support both students and staff in this regard. Thus, Tova suggested a multi-faceted understanding and way to impact the silencing around CSA occurring within the national religious community.

Sharon, an educational counselor, shared how, even though she belonged to the national religious community and taught in a religious state school, she made sure to break the silence and discuss CSA openly:

I come from the national religious community, and I put the things on the table. I have no hesitation in that. With this issue, absolutely not! I think national religious society has gone through a lot of changes in these areas. It's not what it used to be, when people didn't talk about it and were ashamed and didn't deal with it.

While Sharon was confident in identifying as part of the national religious community, she was also adamant about the need for open discourse about CSA to be heard and understood by the community members. She perceived the community as having undergone a transformation towards increased openness and considered herself part of this process.

Dana, a 49-year-old teacher with 14 years of experience, shared her hope for the future of the community:

I only have one wish: that all educational institutions will approach the issue of sexuality with courage and determination and not be afraid to talk to the students about it, in all its aspects, openly. As soon as there's discourse, the shame disappears. It's just like with drugs. In the past, talking about drugs was *muktzeh* [a Jewish religious legal term derived from restrictions on which physical items may be touched during the Jewish Sabbath, used here metaphorically to refer to a topic that is taboo and should not be touched]. Today it's talked about openly, so the discourse and treatment of it are honest. Once a case is revealed, the path to healing and treatment is good. Whether for the victim, who can also become an offender, and definitely for the offender, who will stop his heinous acts [. . .] There is still a long way to go, but we're on the right course. There are still the extremists and conservatives, as in every community, but the center, the majority, and also the leaders of the community, are ready to speak it out loud and act against those who offend. There are many recent cases that prove this. I can't believe that sexual abuse cases just suddenly started happening. I believe they were always there. What's changed is the attitude and the courage to face the cases and the victims and tell them: "You are not alone."

Like Sharon, Dana described a transformation in the community, a shift towards open dialogue and a commitment to coping with CSA. Yet, she emphasized that, in her view, there is still a long road ahead, which will require bravery and steadfastness in order to protect victims.

This study's findings shed light on the multifaceted manner in which silence regarding CSA is a strong and inherent part of the national religious community's coping and meaning making in relation to CSA. Alongside this silence, however, it was also common to encounter aspirations for developing religious and socially sensitive educational interventions.

4. Discussion

This study aimed to gain an understanding of the experiences of Jewish national religious educators coping with CSA. To achieve this aim, a context-informed approach was implemented to ensure the consideration of critical contextual elements, such as the participants' social, cultural, political, and socio-economic circumstances and how they contribute to the various meanings given to the encounter of CSA in their community (Nadan and Roer-Strier 2020). Therefore, this approach allowed for an understanding of the distinct Jewish national religious community and context in the current study. However, it also acts as an example for the context of other closed communities.

The silence surrounding CSA in this socio-cultural group was the most pervasive experience gleaned from the findings. The educators' narratives suggested a spectrum of views regarding this silence. Some felt that it was ubiquitous in community life and negatively influenced them and their students; this included those who found themselves self-silencing. A minority believed that the community had changed and that such silence was no longer an issue. At the other end of the spectrum were those who did not

perceive the community response to CSA as a form of silencing but rather as a form of positive discretion.

Silencing is a recognized characteristic of other closed communities when contending with CSA. For example, in the Muslim Arab community in Israel, CSA survivors have described feeling similarly affected by social expectations and socio-cultural systems, as seen among those who avoided disclosure due to the potential consequences for and from their families (Attrash-Najjar and Katz 2022). Arab teachers in Israel have also expressed that the fear of negative effects and the desire to protect the honor and reputation of the families involved in CSA cases can lead to underreporting (Sigad and Tener 2022). Likewise, CSA survivors from Israeli kibbutzim, which are communal communities specific to Israel, were actively silenced by adult figures in their kibbutzim (Michel and Tener 2023). In the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community in Israel, silencing was found to be confounded by social norms, the taboo of male CSA survivors, and the expectation of unquestioning obedience to authority, leading to the underreporting of CSA cases (Zalberg 2017). Additionally, multiple compelling and all-encompassing socio-cultural justifications may further enforce silence, particularly from the familial, spiritual, religious, and personal perspectives.

4.1. Familial Justification

Circles of silence are rationalized as being for the good of the family and its place in the community. Silence is even seen as protective of abused children and their futures. When everyone involved maintains silence, the child's marriageability, the family's reputation, and the image of the child's innocence all remain intact. This barrier to the disclosure of CSA has been found internationally in a variety of minority communities (Sawrikar and Katz 2017a). For example, in the research on CSA in Israeli kibbutz communities, one of the main justifications found for silencing victims was to protect the community's reputation and particularly the familial characteristic of the kibbutz, including mutual dependence and trust between the members (Michel and Tener 2023). A similar finding was revealed in the context of reporting CSA in Ghana, where protecting family reputation and maintaining family ties were primary causes for not reporting (Amo-Adjei et al. 2023). The issue of family reputation, shame, and stigmatization has been found to be particularly significant in the context of CSA within the Orthodox Jewish community, as reporting CSA may be viewed as disturbing the familial peace and a strike against the family's good name within the community (Katzenstein and Fontes 2017).

4.2. Religious–Spiritual Justification

Religious–spiritual justifications for silencing in the context of CSA have been recognized in other closed communities. For example, religious norms and beliefs from various communities internationally have been found to be barriers to CSA disclosure. For instance, beliefs regarding stoicism within Asian religious beliefs, the norm of bearing the cross and suffering in silence within Catholic communities, and beliefs regarding karma, found in several religions originating in India, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, may lead survivors and the community at large to remain silent regarding CSA (Sawrikar and Katz 2017b). Within the Jewish Orthodox community, the Halachic prohibition against speaking ill of others (in Hebrew: lashon hara) may prevent discourse, disclosure, and intervention in the context of CSA (Katzenstein and Fontes 2017). Similarly, a recent study on sibling sexual dynamics and abuse within the Jewish Orthodox community found that the religious taboo on sexuality created an environment of silencing and prevented the participants from discussing their experiences and reaching out for help (Marmor and Tener 2022). The current study found another layer of a religious norm that encouraged silencing, as told by some of the participants who described how discussing sexuality and actively coping with CSA were seen as taking the focus away from the study of the Torah and holy scriptures.

4.3. Personal Justification

The educators struggled to cope emotionally with the phenomenon and thus perpetuated the silence as a defense mechanism. Within the CSA literature, there are various suggestions regarding the psychological barriers to discourse, detection, disclosure, and intervention. For example, the halo effect, which implies that the positive perceptions of individuals or situations may influence the perceptions of other individuals or situations, may prevent the recognition of CSA if the perpetrator is a highly respected community member. Similarly, the psychological phenomenon of cognitive consistency may lead to a psychological barrier to accepting situations incongruous with firmly held perceptions and beliefs (Scurich and Dietz 2023). For example, in the findings, a participant shared how discussing CSA and matters of sexuality was challenging for him due to his difficulty overcoming his image of his students as “good boys”. This difficulty was perhaps enhanced by his socio-cultural and religious norms, such that discourse and coping with CSA may be incongruous with the religious and social taboo on sexuality. Moreover, while research on CSA has identified a multitude of psychological barriers to disclosure faced by children, including shame, self-blame, and embarrassment (Connolly et al. 2017), the current study suggested similar psychological barriers experienced by educators within the national religious community. Another psychological barrier that may have enhanced the personal silencing experienced by the educators in the current study could be gaze aversion (AlMatrooshi et al. 2021), as it may be too difficult for the educators to cope with acknowledging CSA within the community.

4.4. Implications of the Circles of Silence

Such circles of silence affect CSA survivors, their families, the perpetrators, and educators, such as those in this study. Yet, a community cannot speak when it lacks the words necessary for expression. It is language that allows thoughts to be shaped and, consequently, construct reality (Whorf 2012), which, in the national religious community, is closely connected to the high value placed on modesty in how one dresses, speaks, behaves, and is educated. Restrictions on sexuality (Katzenstein and Fontes 2017) are embedded in community norms, including the avoidance of words referring directly to sexuality or sexual organs (Gemara et al. 2021). Although one of the educators in this study called for the use of “real words” regarding CSA, this may not be possible for most of the community, as they do not have the language or the words are too taboo. Thus, while the educators pointed out silencing regarding CSA, they may have overlooked how central the lack of a lexicon is and how far-reaching its impact on discourse and non-discourse may be. To aid their students who are CSA survivors, educators must find a way to speak openly about sexual matters. Thus, sex education within the national religious community plays a critical role as it exists at the delicate point between open dialogue on sexuality and religious values.

Bottom-up interventions have attempted to incorporate comparable culturally relevant practices in a nonjudgmental manner. For example, a CSA intervention in the form of a mobile game for children and parents in Tanzania adapted its language to be culturally sensitive through the use of accepted colloquial terms and the omission of explicit terms (Malamsha et al. 2021). Similarly, a culturally sensitive intervention program in Hawai'i adapted its curriculum and language by incorporating familiar Hawaiian names, terms, and concepts (Baker et al. 2013). Finally, action research was utilized in Trinidad and Tobago to develop a culturally sensitive CSA intervention, through which contextual knowledge was produced together with the participants to formulate culturally pertinent and operational guidelines (Reid et al. 2019).

4.5. Coping with CSA and Multiple Identities

Despite the culture and presence of silence around CSA, many of the study participants still took action to protect their students, and even more held out hope for the possibility of changing their culture through education and some form of open dialogue. Professionals,

with teachers among them, are often faced with navigating conflicting relations between their professional and religious values (Häusler et al. 2019); for example, previous research examined the experiences of teachers concerning clashes between teaching science and religious studies (Häusler et al. 2019). It was found that while religious beliefs and practices may have helped prevent teachers' burnout and bolster their wellbeing, the experience of conflict between the two sets of values may have led to strain and stress (Häusler et al. 2019). Similarly, research among other professionals has found similar challenges, such as conflicting professional and religious values in the treatment of LGBT clients by therapists (Paprocki 2014). Another study explored the experiences of Ethiopian midwives navigating their conflicting values regarding providing abortion services (Holcombe et al. 2015).

The current study supports these previous findings, as the Jewish national religious educators navigated conflicting professional and religious values in their coping with the CSA cases of their students. The educators functioned within several concurrent identity contexts that existed in tension and competition with one another. These tensions straddled the divide between their community and professional, pedagogical values. Therefore, it may be helpful to understand the teachers' experience through the concept of multiple identities (Hall 1993; Verkuyten et al. 2019; Gaither 2018; Appadurai 1996; Basok 2002).

As mentioned, the educators' identity may be composed of numerous contrasting identities, rather than a singular one (Hall and Du Gay 1996). Similarly, they may adopt a different identity in each environment (Hall and Du Gay 1996; Hall 1993; Suárez-Orozco 2004). Identities are continually revised, reassessed (Bekerman 2009), and redefined (Basok 2002). When participating simultaneously in two different, disjunctive cultural contexts, the teachers' professional value of taking a stand for the welfare of their students was confronted with numerous uncertainties, contradictions, and ambiguities in light of their religious values (Benet-Martínez and Haritatos 2005). Participation in disjunctive cultural contexts or in upholding diverse value systems can lead to incongruity and doubts (Benet-Martínez and Haritatos 2005), affecting the ability to function. Although navigating between these multiple belief systems is possible, the potential strife, as seen in the findings presented here, could be reduced when continuity is established between the different identity contexts (Suárez-Orozco 2004). The findings of familial, religious, and personal justifications for silencing CSA, despite the educators' authentic aim to protect their pupils, were expressed by their struggles with divergent behavioral codes. The educators were, needless to say, not on their own in this negotiation of multiple identities in the context of CSA, as the wellbeing of their students who were CSA survivors was at stake. The coping strategies ultimately adopted will, in turn, affect the life course of the children in their care. Thus, while the current strategy of justifying silence is understandable, given the challenge of negotiating between such divides, the price is too grave.

To contend with the consequences of such contradictions, the existing research has emphasized the importance of open dialogue and discussion with teachers regarding their religious values and the implications and interactions with professional values in the context of ethical dilemmas. Avoiding this topic may leave teachers feeling alone, fearful, disempowered, and unsure of how to professionally navigate situations that conflict with their religious values (Barrett 2015).

The Jewish national religious community is strong. Thus, it is necessary to create continuity between the educators' worlds and develop equally strong school communities enriched by the goal of child development and welfare. Educational communities are places in which educators can support one another and their students. The school is its own community, a culture in and of itself. As such, it can create new norms and ways of seeing and doing things. There is an opportunity for the school setting to foster a culture that accounts for the gap between the professional value of child welfare and the communal values of modesty and honor that lead to CSA silencing. For example, schools could promote prevention programs to encourage acknowledgment of the phenomenon, open discussion with the students, and the creation of relationships, opportunities, and environments where children feel safe to disclose (Blakey et al. 2019; Fryda and Hulme 2015;

[Yakhnich et al. 2023](#)). If teachers are supported by a secondary culture that understands and accounts for their community values, this would provide them the means to support their students, despite the strong mores of silence. These findings highlighted a much-needed awareness not only of the experiences of educators, which shape their own wellbeing, but also their ability to protect, care for, and educate their students. Such a perspective could also be more broadly applied beyond this community to other traditional communities.

4.6. Limitations

This study should be contemplated in consideration of its limitations. As it is qualitative in nature, and was based on a small sample, its findings are not generalizable. This study was also unable to determine correlations or their direction, such as between the religious context and the silencing of CSA. The inclusion of other contextual factors that might shape the experiences of educators facing CSA was beyond the scope of this study. Thus, future studies should examine the potential impact of additional factors, such as gender, age of the student and educator, and levels of support received personally and professionally. Additionally, although the participants were all Jewish national religious community members, no data were known about their place of birth, whether they were raised as religious or became religious, and their levels of religious observance. Thus, no differentiations could be made regarding these factors.

The topic was taboo in the cultural context of the participants, hindering and complicating participant outreach. For example, educators who already committed to taking responsibility in cases of CSA of their students may have been more likely to participate in this study. They may have been more exposed to CSA and wished to convey a message regarding silencing. Therefore, although uncommon, speaking out could have been important to them. Thus, it is important to learn about the attitudes and experiences of educators for whom this may not be the case.

Furthermore, the analysis of the structures of different schools was beyond the scope of the current study due to the difficulty in recruiting a larger number of participants. Therefore, it is recommended for future studies to examine the influence of various school structures ([Rashid and Barron 2019](#)). Future research should also include a wide range of socio-cultural groups dealing with CSA to increase the understanding of this phenomenon using a context-informed approach. Although the current study focused on the experiences and perceptions shared by Jewish national religious educators, including principals, counselors, and teachers, the differences, discourse, and interrelationships between them were not examined. Likewise, no distinction was made regarding different types of CSA. Future research should investigate each form of silence regarding CSA experienced by educators, as their experiences may differ depending on the types of abuse.

4.7. Implications

In this study, Jewish national religious educators were found to face a conflict between the roles of being a protector of children and an educator focused on religious values. Consequently, a contradiction seemed to exist between teaching religious values, such as modesty, and caring for children who experienced CSA. Therefore, although they acknowledged the presence of CSA, they also often acted within the cultural norm of remaining silent about CSA. Additionally, there was a notable challenge regarding the lack of culturally acceptable language and practices to address this phenomenon. Hence, the presence of silence is understandable, while also detrimental to the survivors' wellbeing, and educators should be made aware of this risk. To achieve this, it is imperative that educators be supported to examine their cultural practices, norms, and coping styles and how these impact their students' vulnerability to CSA.

Of particular note, the current study revealed that educators must be recognized as key social actors in addressing CSA. Accordingly, they must be provided with the necessary relevant information, resources, and support regarding CSA. There is ample evidence that educators possess experiential knowledge that is imperative to creating effective

curricula, policies, and interventions. Beyond the findings regarding the Jewish national religious educators' experiences and perspectives of CSA, the limits and gaps within the school system as well as the complex role of religion in coping with such matters were also demonstrated.

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