Author's response to reviews

Title: Patterns of Child Sexual Abuse in Religiously-affiliated and Non-religiously-affiliated Institutions: Results of the Liaison Office of the Independent Commissioner for Victims in Germany

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editors,

today we want to submit the revised article “Patterns of Child Sexual Abuse in Religiously - affiliated and Non-religiously - affiliated Institutions: Results of the Liaison office for Victims in Germany”.

Thank you very much for your valuable feedback. Below you can see the feedback and what we have done:

1. Please could we ask that you clarify ethical approval for your study. You mention that you have complied with ethics and data protection however you do not explicitly state whether ethical approval was actually obtained. Research involving human subjects (including human material or human data) that is reported in the manuscript must have been performed with the approval of an appropriate ethics committee. Research carried out on humans must be in compliance with the Helsinki Declaration (http://www.wma.net/en/30publications/10policies/b3/index.html). A statement to this effect must appear in the Methods section of the manuscript, including the name of the body which gave approval, with a reference number where appropriate.

   This important information was added.

2. Please can you also clarify that you obtained consent for this study. As we understand it, you had already decided to use the data for research purposes (prospectively collected data for research), so we would expect you to have obtained consent to use this data for research at the time. Please specify whether those supplying the data were asked for consent for it to be used for research purposes and what the primary purpose of the data collection actually was.

   We explained this in the revised article.

3. In addition to this please can we ask that you ensure that any controversial statements are referenced and supported. You will also need to make sure that all of the language is suitable for a scientific publication and that there is nothing inflammatory/defamatory mentioned in the manuscript. Listed below are some examples of sentences which we deem to be controversial and which need to be re-written. The controversial statements must also be supported by references.

Page 3:

‘over the past 50 years, a mere 20% of the 3000 reported cases of sexual abuse to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith resulted in consequences’

– We suggest you remove ‘a mere’ as this implies that this was under representative. This may be the case, but there are other possible explanations.

‘The Protestant Church is not directed by a central organ like the Vatican,’

– We suggest you replace ‘organ’ with ‘institution’ or ‘body’ as this is more correct in English.

Page 4:
‘Furthermore, private boarding schools or state-run institutions have engaged in addressing and prosecuting cases of maltreatment and sexual abuse.’

- Please provide a reference for this statement.

‘A prominent case has been the German private boarding school “Odenwaldschule”. For three decades the sexual exploitation of students prevailed in this closed system in the name of educational reform. The same educators who preached self-determination, not only abused the wards, but also set up a perfidious system of concealment and oppression which provided an environment allowing for continual sexual abuse.’

- Please provide a reference for this statement.

Page 5:

‘Within the Roman Catholic Church, celibacy as a way for paedophiles/hebephiles to escape from sexual issues by being drawn to priesthood was sometimes critically discussed in the last years as being a risk factor for sexual abuse.’

- Please provide a reference for this statement.

‘Some studies have suggested that fundamentalist conservative Protestants and Catholics may be at higher risk for child maltreatment, as certain biblical passages are interpreted to promote harsh consequences for misbehavior of children.’

- Please provide a reference for this statement.

We added references, went through the manuscript and cancelled inflammatory sentences. Besides, a translator has checked the language again.

We would like to thank you again for your recommendations.

Sincerely,

Nina Spröber