

Asian sexual violence survivors' experiences and expectations of support within schools in New Zealand

PROJECT REPORT | 2024



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Dr. Ying (Ingrid) Wang, Professor Peter O'Connor



Figure 1: Visual response to participants' artworks

“The Kaupapa is to nurture and support the growth of every child and every student.” – Research participants' voices.

Executive summary

This research was funded by the Lottery Grant Board with a Health Research post-doctoral fellowship. This report is based on findings from a two-year project that employed an innovative, culturally responsive and age-appropriate approach to understanding young Asian sexual violence survivors' lived experiences and expectations of support within schools in New Zealand.

According to the 2023 Census, Asians comprise 17.3% of New Zealand's total population, and Asian communities are one of the fastest-growing populations in New Zealand. Despite the growing demographic significance of the Asian communities in New Zealand, the experiences and needs of young Asian sexual violence survivors remain largely unexplored. This study addresses a significant research gap that exists in providing culturally responsive and age-appropriate support for young people within the Asian communities, which comprise diverse ethnic subsets. Addressing this gap is crucial for fostering inclusivity and equity within New Zealand society.

The use of the term "Asian" is undetermined because the Asian community has many subcultures. Due to the small sample size of this qualitative study, this research does not provide data covering all Asian ethnicities in New Zealand. The participants in this study were self-identified with some of the largest Asian ethnic groups in New Zealand, such as Indian, Chinese, Korean, Filipino and Pakistani.

Leveraging the power of arts in health research, the study aimed to investigate Asian sexual violence survivors' experiences and expectations of support from schools, to identify social, cultural, and systemic barriers preventing these survivors from accessing support and to explore new insights gained through arts-based research methods regarding the support of these young survivors.

The study used a qualitative thematic research design. A total of 14 semi-structured arts-based interviews were completed between June 2023 and December 2023. They included seven young Asian people affected by sexual violence, six educators/school counsellors with experience of supporting young Asian survivors in educational settings, and one caregiver of a young Asian survivor. Bringing forth different perspectives from the participants promotes a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under the study. Data from the interviews were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis and arts-based analysis.

The purpose of this report focuses on answering the following research questions:

- What are the Asian sexual violence survivors' experiences and expectations of obtaining support from schools?
- What are the social, cultural and systemic barriers for these survivors in obtaining support from the schools?
- What new insights and creative approaches will be yielded from arts-based research methods regarding the support for these survivors within schools?

This report focuses on the main themes around young Asian survivors' help-seeking experiences and their expectations of support. The creative component of the study is addressed in

separate publications focusing on new insights gained through arts-based research methods.

Key findings

Lack of timely support: Young Asian survivors often lacked timely support due to accessibility issues, infrequent interventions, and long waiting times, which negatively impacted their mental health, relationships, and academic performance.

Negative experiences with support services: Survivors who received support sometimes faced negative experiences with providers, which discouraged them from remaining within the support system and seeking further help.

Caregiver challenges: Many caregivers lacked support and understanding from support systems, limiting their ability to assist survivors effectively. Some caregivers discouraged survivors from seeking support due to mistrust in the system, concerns about family reputation or shame regarding sexual violence within the family.

Cultural barriers: Cultural norms around gender roles, family reputation, coping mechanisms and the model minority stereotype fostered silence and created pressures that further influenced survivors' reluctance to seek help.

Peer impact: While peer support is critical for the wellbeing of young survivors, ineffective or unhealthy peer influence often led to negative experiences. Dating or peer relationships sometimes involved sexual violence, making disclosure difficult due to peer pressure and misconceptions about sexual violence.

Culturally insensitive support: Many support providers, including educators and school staff, lacked the cultural awareness, sensitivity, and competence needed to offer effective support. Limited time, resources, and training further hindered their ability to assist. Referring young Asian people to external services was also challenging due to parental permission issues, a shortage of suitable agencies, and disconnection between support service providers.

Empowerment-focused support preferences: Young Asian people affected by sexual violence preferred empowerment-based approaches that offered decision-making autonomy and sought greater caregiver involvement through holistic, wrap-around support.

Creative and arts-based approaches: Participants found creative and arts-based methods valuable for establishing safe spaces where sensitive topics like sexual violence could be explored and discussed. Participants gained new perspectives about their experiences through arts-based methods.

Key recommendations

Informed by the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed to equip young Asian people affected by sexual violence and their caregivers with the necessary skills and knowledge for help-seeking, and to enhance the cultural competence and sensitivity of support service providers within New Zealand education system:

Cultural competence training: Implement comprehensive and consistent training for support service providers focusing on cultural competence and sensitivity when assisting young Asian individuals and their families.

Culturally sensitive support services: Develop school-based support services tailored to the specific needs of young Asian people and their caregivers. These should build trust, improve parent-child communication, and enhance awareness of available support systems.

Caregiver education: Provide culturally relevant education programmes to enable caregivers to challenge cultural norms around sexual violence and help-seeking behaviours, improving their understanding of available support options.

Community collaboration: Engage with community leaders and organisations to address cultural barriers, build trust in support systems, and improve access to resources for young Asian people and their families.

Empowerment-focused approaches: Ensure support services prioritise survivor agency by adopting strength-based, person-centred, empowerment-focused approaches that encourage young people's participation in care decisions.

Strengthen peer support: Improve peer assistance programmes in schools by training peers in cultural sensitivity and empathetic support, creating a positive and supportive peer environment. Enhance knowledge and skills and foster healthy conversations about the topic of sexual violence prevention.

Improve access and consistency: Remove barriers and streamline referral processes to ensure timely, continuous, and reliable support for young people affected by sexual violence.

Collaborative support models: Develop an integrative support services model by fostering collaboration between legal, health, and education systems for more effective support.

Policy Advocacy: Advocate for educational policies that prioritise inclusivity, culturally responsive, and equitable access to sexuality education and support services in schools for young Asian people and their families.

Arts-based methods: Incorporate arts-based approaches into support systems to offer safe spaces for creative expression, fostering healing and amplifying marginalised voices.

Further research: Support ongoing research that explores equity, inclusivity, and cultural sensitivity in supporting young Asian people, ensuring that findings inform practices, policies, and future interventions. Prioritise cultural competency in research design and implementation.

These recommendations aim to create a holistic, wrap-around, supportive and culturally responsive environment within New Zealand educational institutions for young Asian people and their families.



Figure 2: Visual response to participants' artworks

“We are in an ecosystem.” – Research participants' voices.

Introduction

Sexual violence has profound and long-lasting impacts on young individuals, leading to social disruptions and myriad physical and psychological challenges with immediate and long-term repercussions. In New Zealand, research indicates that one in five women has reported experiencing sexual abuse (New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse, 2017), with nearly half (47%) of sexual assault victims falling within the 15 to 29 age group (Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa, 2021, p. 10). Despite these alarming statistics, the experiences of specific groups within this demographic, such as young Asian individuals, remain significantly understudied. This gap in knowledge presents a critical need for targeted, culturally responsive support systems for young Asian people affected by sexual violence, who often face unique challenges tied to social marginalisation.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, the Asian population has grown to comprise 17.3% of the total population, reaching over 861,576 people (Stats NZ, 2024). However, despite this demographic growth, the needs and experiences of the Asian communities in New Zealand have not been adequately addressed in research (Chiang et al., 2021). Culturally responsive and age-appropriate support for young Asian people affected by sexual violence is essential, as this population subgroup in New Zealand includes young individuals from diverse ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Peiris-John et al., 2021). Failing to recognise this diversity may hinder the development of effective support systems.

The term “Asian” itself is complex in this context, as it encompasses multiple ethnic communities with distinct identities, migration experiences, and socio-economic realities (Ameratunga et al., 2008; Peiris-John et al., 2021; Wong et al., 2015). Young Asian individuals in New Zealand often have varied levels of acculturation and integration into the country’s bicultural society (Rasanathan et al., 2006; Stuart & Ward, 2011), which complicates their help-seeking behaviours and access to support. Additionally, these young people’s experiences are shaped by multiple intersecting factors such as race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexuality, socio-economic status, abilities and disabilities, contributing to layers of marginalisation (Ramalho et al., 2023).

Given this complexity, it is crucial to adopt an intersectional approach when studying the experiences of young Asian survivors of sexual violence. Intersectionality allows for a nuanced understanding of how various identities and social markers interact with structural oppressions, shaping the lived experiences of these young individuals (Green et al., 2017). Moreover, recent research highlights the importance of fostering critical consciousness among marginalised youth, enabling them to recognise and challenge oppressive systems (Diemer et al., 2020; Heberle et al., 2020; Maker Castro, 2022).

This study focuses on the experiences of young Asian people affected by sexual violence, with a particular emphasis on the barriers they face in seeking support from schools. By identifying both the challenges and facilitators, this research aims to provide insights into how schools can better support these young individuals within a culturally inclusive framework.

Background

Sexual violence has a profound and lasting impact on the lives of young individuals, introducing social disruptions and myriad physical and psychological challenges with both immediate and enduring consequences (Green et al., 2010; Kendall-Tackett et al., 2001; Kristensen & Lau, 2007; Wilson, 2010). While numerous studies have examined sexual violence in the broader New Zealand context (Fergusson et al., 2013; Flett et al., 2012), there remains a significant lack of focus on young Asian people affected by sexual violence. This gap is particularly concerning given the added complexities that these individuals face, including cultural stigma, intergenerational issues, language barriers, and varying levels of acculturation.

Sexual violence encompasses a broad range of behaviours defined by Krug et al. (2002) as “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic a person’s sexuality, using coercion, threats of harm or physical force, by any person regardless of relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work” (p. 149). Additionally, child sexual abuse, as defined by the New Zealand Family Violence Interventions Guidelines, spans any form of sexual exploitation of a child or young person, regardless of consent (Fanslow, 2002; Mortensen & Lim, 2016). For the purpose of this study, sexual violence is defined as any nonconsensual sexual activity, exploitation or behaviour, including online.

The definition of wellbeing for the individual is that they have the psychological, social and physical resources when the individual meets particular psychological, social or physical challenges (Dodge & Telljohann, 2003). The World Health Organization’s Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan (WHO, 2021) addresses children’s developmental aspects of wellbeing including “a positive sense of identity, the ability to manage thoughts, emotions, as well as to build social relationships, and the aptitude to learn and to acquire an education, ultimately enabling their full participation in society” (p. 1). Schools play a key role in promoting the wellbeing and resilience of their students (Cahill et al., 2014, p. 12). Supporting children and young people’s wellbeing, the schools need to encompass strategic attention for partnership, leadership, teaching, support, and referral (Cahill

et al., 2014). To support young Asian people affected by sexual violence, it is necessary to partner with family and community, lead comprehensive approaches, teach social and emotional skills, support those needing additional assistance, and refer those needing other appropriate services (Cahill et al., 2014; Durlak et al., 2011).

In working to promote the wellbeing and resilience of young Asian people affected by sexual violence, delivering support for them can be very challenging for the schools and teachers if they lack adequate understanding of the needs of this subgroup of the population. Previous international research identifies the barriers (Gill & Harrison, 2019; Gilligan & Akhtar 2006; Sawrikar & Katz, 2017) and challenges (Reavey et al., 2006; Roberts & Zhang, 2016) in supporting child sexual abuse survivors. Although there is limited research regarding young Asian sexual violence survivors' experiences of support within New Zealand, a number of media stories in recent years disclosed some issues within schools in terms of support available for those survivors (Henry, 2022a, 2022b; Hutt, 2020; Leask, 2021). The wellbeing of these survivors was impacted by inadequate or inappropriate support systems within schools in terms of there being a lack of psychological, social and physical resources available for them.

During the early phase of this study, the principal investigator of this study Dr Ying Wang developed a cultural competence workshop titled "Understanding Cultural Barriers to Addressing Sexual Violence Within the Asian Community", which was presented to various stakeholders, including schools, mental health services providers, and nongovernmental organisations, reaching over 100 health providers, including nurses, psychologists, psychotherapists, counsellors, student support teams, social workers, and rape prevention educators. Although the workshop was not conducted for research purposes, its aim was to engage the community and workforce in understanding cultural barriers. Through discussions within the workshops, Dr Wang identified a significant and urgent need for further cultural competence training for support providers. These shortcomings can negatively affect wellbeing of these young Asian individuals, leading to further marginalisation.

This research aims to address the gaps in understanding how school can better support young Asian people affected by sexual violence. By exploring young survivors' experiences and the perspectives of their caregivers and educators, this study seeks to provide actionable insights into creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for these vulnerable individuals.

Positionality statement

This research is hosted by the Centre for Arts and Social Transformation (CAST) at the Faculty of Education and Social Work, the University of Auckland. CAST is a leading research institution dedicated to exploring the role of creative arts in fostering health, wellbeing, education, and social transformation. Its notable projects, such as providing emotional support to children following the Canterbury earthquake and developing the Mitey resource for primary schools in partnership with the Sir John Kirwan Foundation, demonstrate CAST's commitment to using creativity to address trauma and improve children and young people's wellbeing.

Professor Peter O'Connor, this project's mentor, brings extensive expertise in the use of the power of creativity to address complex social issues. His leadership in projects that explore the role of the arts in disaster recovery, child and youth mental health, and reducing stigma around mental illness provides invaluable insight into how arts-based approaches can transform wellbeing. His work spans diverse contexts, from schools to prisons, and his transdisciplinary research emphasises collaboration between artists, academics, NGOs, and government departments. Professor O'Connor's expertise in applied theatre, particularly his longstanding leadership of the Everyday Theatre programme focusing on family violence and child abuse, serves as a critical resource for this project.

As the principal investigator, Dr Ying (Ingrid) Wang is a first-generation migrant from China, a woman of colour, and a mother. Her personal and professional experiences navigating cultural and linguistic challenges as an immigrant inform her understanding of the complex identities of Chinese New Zealanders (Wang, 2023). Prior to her academic position, her clinical background as a creative arts therapist and ACC sensitive claims provider deepened her insight into the needs of marginalised groups, including immigrants, refugees, and survivors of sexual violence. This has shaped her understanding of the need for culturally appropriate, tailored support for young Asian people affected by sexual violence. She acknowledges the importance of recognising her multifaceted identities and the associated challenges of navigating between roles, and the dynamic interplay of roles, responsibilities, and emotional entanglements in research (Wang, 2024).

Research design

This study draws from the current challenges schools face in delivering support for young Asian individuals affected by sexual violence and intends to explore this topic through different perspectives, including the valuable views of people within the support system, such as teachers, school counsellors and caregivers, and the centrally important views of young Asian sexual violence survivors themselves.

Arts-based research (ABR) methods are the emphasis of this study's research methodology. Arts-based research methods allow research participants to feel a sense of safety through the creation of space through arts for dialogue (Bolton, 1986), and provide this project a mechanism to understand young Asian sexual violence survivors' perspectives and expectations, and the challenges and barriers to accessing support from schools through facilitation of a safe and non-threatening creative conversation. ABR facilitates a deeper exploration of sensitive topics, offering nuanced perspectives beyond conventional verbal means (Austin & Forinash, 2005; Casey & Webb, 2019; Gerber et al., 2022; Woodgate et al., 2023). Particularly effective with children, youth, and young adults, ABR can address literacy challenges and mistrust of authority, facilitating communication on challenging subjects such as sexual violence (Nathan et al., 2023).

In this study, the individual semi-structured interviews are designed as creative explorations to explore the participants' experiences, emotions and reflections through metaphoric, non-threatening processes. These interviews were conducted individually to provide a private space for the explorations and discussions. The arts-based interviewing process is employed to extend the necessary care in addressing the sensitive topic of sexual violence. Art-mediated interviewing has proven to be a valuable method for gathering, analysing, and representing qualitative study findings from the interactions between the researcher and participants (Deakin-Crick et al., 2012; Wang, 2016). By utilising arts-based methods, the interview questions do not explicitly address traumatic events. Instead, the researcher uses metaphorical or symbolic language, encouraging participants to delve into their complex emotions through tangible elements such as colours, lines, shapes, objects, and poetic expressions.

The creative component of the study is addressed in separate publications focusing on new insights gained through arts-based research methods. Arts-based data representations are embedded in this report through hyperlinks to several creative outputs of this study.

Research questions

- What are the Asian sexual violence survivors' experiences and expectations of obtaining support from schools?
- What are the social, cultural and systemic barriers for these survivors in obtaining support from schools?
- What new insights and creative approaches will be yielded from arts-based research methods regarding the support for these survivors within schools?

Research objectives

- Understand young Asian sexual violence survivors' experiences and expectations of support systems in schools.
- Understand the challenges and barriers to supporting these survivors from educators', teachers' and school counsellors' perspectives.
- Understand barriers and stigmas around supporting these survivors from caregivers' perspectives.
- Discuss suggestions and recommendations for more effective and appropriate support within schools with the research participants.
- Explore the effectiveness of the use of arts in exploring this sensitive topic through safe, innovative and non-threatening interventions.

Recruitment strategies

This study has sought to recruit three categories of participants in order to obtain different perspectives for this study. The first group of participants are young Asian sexual violence survivors aged 16–24. According to statistics from the New Zealand Crime and Victims Survey (2020), the 16–24-year-old group is four times more likely to be sexually assaulted than other age groups. Therefore, this research focuses on the young Asians in this specific age group due to their higher risk of being impacted by sexual violence. The second group of participants are caregivers of young Asian sexual violence survivors. The third group of participants constitutes educators, teachers or school counsellors who have experience supporting young Asian sexual violence survivors. These participants come from secondary and tertiary educational institutions in New Zealand. The definition of the Asian population for this research includes participants who are self-identified as belonging to one or more of the Asian subcultures within New Zealand, whether they were born in New Zealand or not. The use of these three participant groups is a qualitative research strategy to promote a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study.

	Total	Female	Male	LBGT+	Ethnicities
Asian young person affected by sexual violence (16–24 years old)	7	4	2	1	2 (Mainland Chinese) 1 (NZ-born Chinese) 2 (Indian) 1 (Filipino) 1 (Chinese/Cook Islander)
Educator/teacher/school counsellor	6	6			1 (Mainland Chinese) 2 (Indian) 1 (Korean) 1 (Taiwanese) 1 (Pakistani)
Caregiver	1	1			1 (Mainland Chinese)

Extensive preparations were necessary to access relevant ethnic communities and potential research participants. Recruitment methods included collaborating with community stakeholders such as Rape Prevention Education, Asian Networks, Asian Family Services, student service providers, and various mental health service providers. These stakeholders leveraged their existing connections with survivors within Asian communities. The researcher also developed cultural competency workshops, which were delivered to over 100 professionals from educational and health service providers. These workshops provided an opportunity to advertise the study to broader communities.

Data analysis

The research data were generated from each research participant's creative arts-making and the conversations alongside the arts-making process. The conversations and arts-making process were recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis. Reflexive thematic analysis was employed as an approachable and adaptable method for interpreting the collected data, allowing for the identification and examination of themes within the dataset (Braun & Clark, 2012). In the context of this study, reflexive thematic analysis served as a method for researchers to interpretively analyse the data, taking into account the specific dataset, the theoretical framework guiding the analysis, and the analytical skills and resources available (Braun & Clark, 2019). Arts-based approaches in the analysis process was used allowing for a deeper understanding of the experiences and expectations of young Asian people affected by sexual violence.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Auckland Health Research Ethics Committee prior to conducting the recruitment and interviews (Ethics Ref. AH26042). Participant information sheets were provided to all potential respondents. The information sheet described the background of the study, participants' rights, their involvement, and how data collected in the study would be used. Individuals who freely consented to participate in the study signed a consent form. This form acknowledged that participants' rights would be protected during all phases of the study. Participants were assured that their names and any other personally identifiable information would not be included in written reports and other publications arising from the study.



Figure 3: Visual response to participants' artworks

“Their growth environment really has something to do with them ... If they do not have a good shelter, they are easily affected by the outside world, and they are injured.” – *Research participants' voices.*



- ▶ Experiences with support services
- ▶ Impact from peers
- ▶ Impact from caregivers
- ▶ Impact of cultural norms and beliefs
- ▶ Experiences within the education system
- ▶ Expectations of an ideal support system

Findings

This report focuses on six broad themes that emerged from the data analysis:

- Experiences with support services
- Impact from peers
- Impact from caregivers
- Cultural norms and beliefs
- Experiences with the education system
- Expectations of the support system.

The findings about the effectiveness of arts-based methods for exploring this sensitive topic with vulnerable communities are briefly explored in the Discussion section of this report. However, the creative aspect of this study will be discussed in other publications.

Experiences with support services

In exploring young Asian sexual violence survivors' multifaceted experiences with support services, several critical themes emerged, encapsulating both the challenges and enablers within the systems. These narratives highlighted a spectrum of issues that hinder effective support and instances where positive interventions have facilitated healing and recovery. This comprehensive examination of both the obstacles and successes within support services for young Asian sexual violence survivors provides valuable insights into how these systems can be improved to better serve those in need.

Accessibility issues

Participants' narratives highlighted that young Asian sexual violence survivors often faced significant barriers when attempting to access mental health services. These barriers included long waiting lists, limited availability of sessions, and a lack of awareness about available resources.

Long waiting lists: Participants' narratives indicated that they experienced long waiting periods before they could begin therapy, leaving them feeling unsupported during a crucial time of need.

I waited for a whole year before I started therapy, which really sucked because I felt really lost a lot of the time during that year. It just sucks.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Unclear communication: Participants described issues with communication about waiting lists, which sometimes added to the uncertainty and frustration; therefore, accessing support may be delayed during the process.

My previous therapist said that I was on the waiting list, but she told me that through Facebook Messenger, so I don't know if she's actually put me on there or anything because that was like a year or two ago, and I've heard nothing back. So, I just emailed them myself and am now waiting for any reply from them.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Limited sessions: Some participants revealed that, even when therapy was accessible, the limited number of sessions available could be insufficient for meaningful progress.

There's, I mean, they, the university, have counselling, but this is such a long waitlist ... and you only get six sessions. How is that going to be helpful for anyone? What about the people who can't afford to pay for their therapy? How about people who need more than six sessions to feel better?

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Lack of awareness: Some participants discussed a lack of awareness about available mental health resources, which delayed the initiation of therapy.

She didn't know about this counselling help before, and by the time she found out, it was already in her last year. She only went twice, but then she couldn't make more appointments. (Caregiver)

These narratives underscore the need for more accessible, comprehensive, and sustained mental health services to support young Asian sexual violence survivors effectively.

Lack of timely support

The experiences of young Asian sexual violence survivors revealed an issue around the lack of timely and consistent support from mental health and counselling services. This insight highlights how delayed and inadequate responses from support systems can significantly impact the recovery and wellbeing of survivors.

Temporary and insufficient support: Participants expressed that they felt that the support they received was temporary and inadequate. Temporary and insufficient assistance made young Asian survivors feel unsupported and unable to share their experiences fully.

I went to a court case. The court-assigned therapists emailed my school counsellors to book a session. I didn't really want to talk to them about it. I felt like I could not really share a lot of things with them because I felt that was just temporary.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

A lot of shit support [laughs]. I'd rather have one good support than a lot of mediocre/bad support. Right? Having one really solid support is much more beneficial than having a lot of diluted support.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Lack of regular support: In some cases, support services were not offered on a regular basis. Infrequent and brief interventions failed to provide the sustained assistance survivors required, resulting in a gap where they felt neglected and without a stable support network.

Their services are not weekly or fortnightly, but just an initial meeting for one or two hours, so they never felt they had support from these organisations. This is my experience as a guidance counsellor for nearly 14 years. (Educator/School Counsellor)

- ▶ Experiences with support services
- ▶ Impact from peers
- ▶ Impact from caregivers
- ▶ Impact of cultural norms and beliefs
- ▶ Experiences within the education system
- ▶ Expectations of an ideal support system

Delayed appointments: Participants highlighted that delays in getting appointments could result in survivors having to deal with their issues on their own. By the time survivors received help, they often had already struggled through their issues alone, diminishing the effectiveness of the support provided.

At uni. I did go. I tried to go to the counsellor. It was from health, but I think I had maybe three appointments over the five years. They weren't very helpful. Because by the time you got the appointment, you'd already dealt with the shit, right? (Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

When she met the counsellor, it didn't work out, twice. The first time, she ended up finding an Indian counsellor. My daughter initially wanted to open the door to talk, but it was closed again. When she found the second one, it was COVID-19 time, and she could only do online sessions. She didn't want to talk online; she wanted to talk face to face. (Caregiver)

Lack of early intervention: Participants expressed their need to have early intervention and support, which can make a significant difference in the mental health and development of survivors.

If the school paid attention to her physical and mental health from the beginning and gave us parents a platform and a way to communicate, it could help the children and help the growth of disadvantaged children. If there were support at that time, she would have become as confident and sunny like other foreign [Pākehā] children. She would not be a burden to society. (Caregiver)

“ I felt like I could not really share a lot of things with them because I felt that was just temporary.”

These narratives underscore the need for more timely, consistent, and proactive support systems to aid young Asian sexual violence survivors effectively.

Negative experience with support services

Some of the participants who had experience with support services expressed negative feelings about the services they received. Negative experiences with support services can significantly deter young Asian survivors from seeking and maintaining support. Issues such as feeling re-traumatised during counselling sessions and encountering unhelpful responses from support organisations highlight the urgent need for more effective and empathetic support systems focusing on trauma-informed work. From encountering unhelpful and unsupportive responses from organisations to facing insensitive reactions from professionals, survivors often found themselves navigating a complex and sometimes harmful support system.

Lack of empathy: The attitude of service providers can impact the young survivors' willingness to engage with support services. Participants highlighted a lack of empathy from service providers, which significantly affected young Asian survivors' engagements with support.

I remember one of the girls knew some organisations which could support her. She contacted them bravely. But the information from them was vague, and their responses to the girl were not very kind and nice. Their voices were kind of cold. They just provided general information about the service, so she couldn't go further.

(Educator/School counsellor)

The school counsellors weren't helpful. I would go to the office every day and just sit there for hours and hours, and no one would talk to me; no one would help me. I'd just be sitting there by myself in a room all day, basically like solitary confinement. Basically, I wait for them to come and get me... I would just go to the bathrooms usually, like I would just lock myself in a cubicle.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Lack of competency: Participants revealed that the ability and competency of the service providers could also significantly influence young Asian survivors' disclosure of sexual violence. Competency issues among service providers could lead to distrust and reluctance in survivors to disclose sensitive information. Inadequate responses could cause further harm, reducing survivors' willingness to share their experiences.

Because my reaction hurt her. So, I realised what I had done and tried to make it up, but the damage was already done. I apologised, but I found that because of my reaction, she was willing to talk more about physical harm, but she was less willing to talk about sexual harm.

(Educator/School counsellor)

Oh, she was also a student counsellor. So, I don't know, maybe that made me doubt a little bit in my mind about her ability, which I probably shouldn't have. But that made me kind of want not to talk.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Lack of knowledge of trauma-informed care: Some service providers did not provide the safety and gentleness needed for delivering trauma-informed care. There were incidents of re-traumatisation reported by participants.

They used "art therapy", quote, because it wasn't actually art therapy, asking her to write stuff and draw stuff that was very raw, without actually giving her time to process or go into it slowly. So, she was re-traumatised a couple of times in that service as well. Yes. So that was quite sad.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

“She was re-traumatised a couple of times in that service.”

- ▶ Experiences with support services
- ▶ Impact from peers
- ▶ Impact from caregivers
- ▶ Impact of cultural norms and beliefs
- ▶ Experiences within the education system
- ▶ Expectations of an ideal support system

These narratives highlight that negative experiences encountered with support systems impact young Asian survivors' willingness to engage with support services. They address the need for a competent workforce with knowledge, sensitivity and awareness and understanding of the importance of providing trauma-informed care.

Culturally insensitive support

Culturally insensitive support contributed to negative experiences among some participants, hindering young survivors from seeking and maintaining support. Participants highlighted disparities in understanding cultural contexts, reinforcing negative self-images, and overlooking the impact of trauma.

Disparities in understanding cultural contexts: Participants noted there was a disconnection between the cultural backgrounds of the survivors and the support professionals. This might impact the young survivors' willingness to engage in therapy.

I think, historically, they've had psychologists that are white or male, and a lot of the time, the first hesitancy they get from the counsellors is, we don't want a psychologist who doesn't want to understand our context.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

Because I don't think [school counsellor] understood my culture or why my mum was the way she was. And my mum didn't really understand Western culture. So maybe it would be helpful to have a middle ground that could help connect the two.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Assumptions in understanding cultural context: This disconnection occurs between service providers and clients from different cultural backgrounds and also between those from similar ethnic backgrounds. A young survivor recounted her frustration with an ethnic counsellor who failed to address her concerns and reinforced negative self-images of this young individual.

When I went to see my counsellor, I was like, "Oh my gosh! She [the counsellor] is ethnic." She is Indian and she understood why I couldn't just go talk to my mum. But she wouldn't ever focus on what I wanted to talk about. It was always, like, "Oh, but you're so bright. You're so smart. You're so resilient. You will be performing well for the rest of your life." It was just, like, "You're so good and golden, and you will be fine." But I am here, like, I am not! It was reinforcing a negative self-image.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

An educator noted ethnic service providers' inappropriate approaches in dealing with trauma, where the severity and sensitivity of the survivor's experiences are not fully acknowledged.

The social worker and counsellor were Indian but, it was ... I don't know how to explain it. In India, they expect you to be very open, you know, if you are seeing a doctor or someone, and they just go full speed. There is no, for example, "We need to be careful about how this will affect you." I think there was definitely a lack of understanding of how trauma works. *(Educator/School Counsellor)*

"It was reinforcing a negative self-image."

These narratives emphasise the need for a culturally competent workforce from diverse cultural backgrounds. This includes continuous cultural competency training for help-professionals who provide support to young Asian survivors and their families.

Positive experiences with support services

On the other hand, some participants shared positive experiences with support services, where they felt understood and aided in their journey. These narratives highlight the significance of empathetic and effective interventions in facilitating survivors' recovery journeys.

Empathetic and supportive interventions: Empathetic and supportive interventions, such as those from understanding counsellors and specialised professionals, significantly contributed to the healing process of young people affected by sexual violence.

*My daughter went to *** University to see a counsellor. After learning about this help, she felt that she had a mental problem. The counsellor from *** University was helpful to her. But after she met the counsellor, I asked her how she was doing. She said it was very good and it helped her a lot. I asked how they helped her. She said that the counsellor said: "It's not that your mother doesn't love you, but your mother needs to see a psychologist." After saying that, she looked at me. She thought I was going to explode.*

(Caregiver)

There was a person who specialised in sexual assault cases. Both of them were nice. I felt protected in the hospital.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Proactive and accessible services: Some participants expressed that the proactive outreach from support providers gave young survivors the crucial realisation of the need for further support following a traumatic event. The free counselling sessions served as a vital introduction to the seriousness of the issues, prompting them to seek more intensive help.

I think the university provides you with five sessions and maybe one more if you need it. I had kind of stopped going and then was procrastinating going back, even though I should have. So, the counsellor contacted me, saying, "Hey, let's have a session because something really traumatic happened to you." And I didn't want to be impolite and say no. So, it was kind of like a ray of sunshine because it illuminated the fact that I would need more help than I thought I would. I was sitting there and realised I wasn't able to talk about it, which made me realise that I needed more help.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

The free counselling sessions were really good because they were kind of like the gateway of getting me to understand that these things were serious, and they needed more serious help for them.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

- ▶ Experiences with support services
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Effective collaborative efforts: Participants spoke about the collaborative efforts between counsellors and mental health services, praising their effectiveness in addressing complex issues. These efforts ensured that survivors received the necessary push and resources to address their trauma and progress in their recovery journey.

She [the counsellor] was happy for me that I got through with [community mental health service]. She helped me make a report against the guy who sexually assaulted me when I was younger. Because I guess I kind of needed that push. So, she had a really big impact on my life.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

[Counsellor] would bring my mum in quite often and have one-on-one conversations with her about me sometimes as well. I'm really grateful that [counsellor] got me in contact with [mental health service] because, obviously, just talking to my mum wasn't really helping. And I was kind of reaching a bit of a crisis level.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Participants' narratives reveal that current support services for young Asian sexual violence survivors are often inconsistent, inaccessible, and culturally insensitive. Many described these services as fragmented and inadequate, leading survivors to fall

through the cracks of a broken support system. Long waiting lists, limited sessions, temporary support, and delayed appointments reflect a service structure that fails to meet the urgent and ongoing needs of survivors. This results in survivors feeling unsupported, frustrated, and abandoned during critical times.

The disconnection between survivors and the services they rely on creates an environment where the help offered feels superficial or ineffective. These systemic gaps not only hinder healing but exacerbate the psychological and emotional wounds survivors carry. The lack of empathetic, trauma-informed care further compounds these challenges. Some participants reported re-traumatisation by professionals who lacked the necessary sensitivity, while others encountered culturally insensitive or dismissive service providers, which deterred them from seeking continued support. This cultural disconnection deepens the survivors' sense of alienation and mistrust.

To address these critical gaps, the system urgently requires comprehensive, culturally competent, and trauma-informed care, alongside early intervention and sustained, long-term support. These narratives underscore the importance of empathetic, proactive, and collaborative services to effectively support young Asian survivors on their recovery journey.

“It was kind of like a ray of sunshine because it illuminated the fact that I would need more help than I thought I would.”

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Impact from peers

The involvement of peers in the support system for young Asian survivors presents both benefits and challenges. This section delves into the impact of peers on young Asian people affected by sexual violence, emphasising the significant influence peer relationships have on their mental health and overall wellbeing.

Unhealthy dynamics from peers

Peers, while offering potential support, can also exert negative influences or create unhealthy dynamics. The narratives illustrated instances of peer pressure, bullying, and racial discrimination, shedding light on the complexities and challenges within peer dynamics.

Peer bullying: Some participants revealed that young Asians often experience bullying and social isolation from peers, leading to significant changes in their personalities and increased emotional distress.

That girl was very domineering, to put it bluntly, and then it was a kind of bullying. It was that girl who gathered other people together during lunch, talked and laughed together, and isolated my daughter. My daughter was alone, hiding in a corner. That's when her personality began to change. This girl is the only friend in her life.
(Caregiver)

*I have a friend who used to live in the dormitory of *** University. Because it was a mixed dormitory, many people held parties and once nailed condoms to her door. She is a girl living alone.*
(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Peer pressure: Peer pressure within friend groups can compel young people to conform to unhealthy behaviours and social norms, making it difficult for them to assert their own boundaries and seek help. An educator explained the challenges of implementing peer support for those suffering from mental issues:

We have peer support for new beginners. But if teenagers suffer from mental health and other issues, we don't make peer support, because the peers can be affected by mental health issues, so peers influence peers. So, it is really dangerous for schools to provide peer support to those suffering from mental health issues.
(Educator/School Counsellor)

There were cases in which participants recounted the peer pressure that influenced their relationship dynamics:

And so the dynamic of the relationship in our friend group from halls, it was very much, like, "Well, there are other couples, they're doing things like this, so..." A lot of peer pressure. And then when I finally came to my consciousness, and I was, like, "You know what, actually, I can't do this anymore".
(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

I remember, in my first year, my boyfriend at the time was in a dorm block, which was called the party block. And there were, like, a whole bunch of other boys, and they used to make very sexual jokes that I found very uncomfortable. Other people would hear them. No one could say anything, they were going to laugh. And I was probably going to laugh and try to brush it off. That was not a positive and healthy culture.
(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Racial discrimination: Participants shared their experiences when facing racial discrimination and cultural alienation within their peer groups, which exacerbated their sense of isolation and impacted their cultural identity and self-esteem. A young Asian person affected by sexual violence described her experience, which led her to reject her heritage:

I was brought up here, and my parents were not, and I was the only person of colour, brown person, in the entire primary school that I went to, and my whole class and intermediate. I was very much used to only being with white people. So, I definitely became someone who hated my culture, hated my background, and hated my heritage. I would reject anything in the end. I would refuse to wear any [ethnic] clothes to go to Indian functions. I had wanted nothing to do with it. So, I wasn't Indian enough to be friends with the Indian people because I didn't know any, like, Bollywood actors. I didn't know any Indian music. I didn't know any Indian stuff to talk about. But I was too Indian not to get racially bullied by my friends, my white friends. And so, I never felt like I could really trust any of those people. (Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

“I wasn't Indian enough to be friends with the Indian people ... But I was too Indian not to get racially bullied by my friends, my white friends.”



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These narratives emphasise the critical need for targeted interventions that address the negative aspects of peer dynamics. By fostering a supportive and inclusive environment, it is possible to mitigate the adverse impacts of peer relationships on young Asian people affected by sexual violence.

Complexity within dating relationships

While peer support within romantic relationships could be a source of comfort and understanding for young survivors, it was not always consistently positive. In some cases, relationships with peers, particularly romantic partners, could pose risks to the survivor’s wellbeing. Co-dependent relationships and emotional challenges within relationships could exacerbate the survivor’s struggles rather than alleviate them. Additionally, some peers may lack the understanding or capacity to provide effective emotional support, leaving the survivors feeling unsupported or misunderstood despite their efforts to seek solace from them.

Challenges of co-dependence: Some participants highlighted the dual role a dating partner could play:

This boyfriend [of the survivor], this go-to person, when there is a problem with the relationship, it becomes a big risk. So, her boyfriend can be both a protective factor and a risk factor at the same time. (Educator/School Counsellor)

He was very supportive of me after a very traumatic event, and we had a co-dependent relationship that was challenging because he was also depressed, and we would often bring each other down. (Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Insufficient emotional support: Some participants noted that their peers struggled to provide the needed emotional support.

While he’s the one I live with, and he’s always around, he is not amazing at being emotionally supportive. He tries, but I don’t think he really understands because he doesn’t have mental health issues himself. (Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

So, my high school boyfriend was quite nice, but I don’t think he really knew how to deal with it either. But I just kind of needed someone to hug me and tell me it was okay, which is what he did. So, I guess that wasn’t enough. (Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

These narratives illustrate the complexity of peer support in relationships for young survivors. While dating partners can offer significant emotional comfort, they can also present risks and challenges that complicate the survivors’ healing process. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing effective support strategies that recognise both the benefits and potential drawbacks of peer support within romantic contexts.

Sexual violence within peer relationships

Sexual violence within peer relationships and dating contexts presents complex dynamics and challenges for young Asian people affected by sexual violence. Instances of sexual encounters without clear boundaries or consent were reported, highlighting cultural differences in attitudes towards sexuality. Peer pressure, alcohol consumption, and unhealthy relationship dynamics contributed

to the vulnerability to sexual violence in young Asian individuals. Survivors might also face difficulties in expressing their feelings about sex and may experience emotional manipulation or coercion from partners. Instances of peer pressure and harassment contributed to a hostile environment for young Asian people.

Sexual violence within peer groups: Some participants noted negative influences from peers. An educator was surprised by the cultural differences in attitudes towards sexual relationships among international students:

It’s very messy ... I was very surprised. It was the first time I understood that sexual life can be so chaotic among international students. Many of them can have sexual relations without being in a relationship, and there may be more than one. She said, it’s normal, it’s a natural agreement. She told me, don’t be surprised. It’s normal for international students here. (Educator/School Counsellor)

A caregiver recounted how peer influence and alcohol led to a tragic incident:

At that time, she had no friends anymore and started hanging out with people she didn’t know much about. She started to drink. She also learned how to drink from that girl. Later, in university, she was friends with a bunch of classmates and classmates’ classmates, and then she got drunk, and someone raped her. (Caregiver)

Emotional manipulation in dating relationships: Some young Asian participants described the emotional manipulation they experienced in dating relationships.

Both of us, we were young. We were each other’s first proper partner. We were enthusiastic ... We broke up because my partner kept trying to emotionally guilt trip me into being intimate with him. And I didn’t want to be. So, I’ve compromised and done other intimate things to shut him up. (Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Towards the end of that relationship, I confessed to my partner that I hadn’t been enjoying sex and had been faking it. He became furious, saying he couldn’t trust me anymore. I felt terrified because it was the first time I had ever shared my feelings about sex, and I believed I could never tell anyone again. I thought I’d have to pretend for the rest of my life. (Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

“I felt terrified because it was the first time I had ever shared my feelings about sex, and I believed I could never tell anyone again.”

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These narratives underscore the need for interventions and education that address the complex dynamics of peer relationships and the significant impact these relationships can have on young survivors' wellbeing. Providing education on consent, healthy relationships and emotional support can help mitigate the negative effects of peer pressure and cultural differences, fostering a safer environment for young Asian people affected by sexual violence.

The positive role of peer support

On the other hand, peer support emerges as a significant component of the support network for young Asian survivors, offering a sense of comfort and relatability that may not be as readily accessible from adults. Peers, including school friends, siblings, and cousins, provide an avenue for sharing experiences and seeking support, often perceived as less intimidating than confiding in adults. These narratives underscore the importance of peer relationships in fostering a supportive environment where young people feel understood and validated. Through the support of peers, young Asian individuals can navigate their challenges with greater resilience and confidence.

Comfort in peer relationships: Participants noted the comfort young people find in discussing their issues with peers rather than adults. Young Asian people affected by sexual violence found it easier to share their experiences and feelings with peers who are of the same age, as this reduced the fear and anxiety associated with discussing sensitive issues with adults. The peer connection provided a sense of safety and understanding, fostering an environment where these young individuals could express themselves more freely.

For students, it is difficult to talk to adults, but it is easier and less scary to talk to people of the same age.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

When I think of the person that I am currently working with, something that they have identified in terms of support is friends who have been a really key focus.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

I think family is not the first; the first is peers, especially friends, school friends, or relatives of the same age, such as cousins. For example, one of my male clients, a boy, has a cousin of the same age who he is most willing to share with. *(Educator/School Counsellor)*

Supportive presence: Participants described how peers provided non-intrusive companionship, offering the immediate support they needed. This companionship provided emotional relief and a sense of solidarity, helping young Asian people affected by sexual violence manage their distress and feel less isolated.

I didn't dare to tell my family after the sexual assault. My friends were my last support ... They are just accompanying me silently, and when I need something, I just talk to them. If I don't mention it, they won't ask too many questions.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

I've told some of my friends during that time. Also in high school, I'd have to take a few days off because of the court case and ... to see the lawyers and stuff. And then, I told some of them what happened. They were really supportive,

which is great. But at the same time, I still didn't want to be a burden to them. So, if I kept talking about it, I would ruin the mood.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

A caregiver was grateful for the support from peers for her daughter's crisis moment:

My niece ran to her place at 2 o'clock in the middle of the night to check on her, worried that something might happen to her because she cried last night and told my niece that she didn't want to live anymore. *(Caregiver)*

Emotional validation and encouragement: Participants expressed that peer support provided emotional validation, which was crucial for young Asian people who may downplay their experiences. Peers encouraged young Asian people affected by sexual violence to seek professional help, thus bridging the gap between the survivors and the necessary support services.

Because of her life experience, she felt that many things had no hope and were useless. Then she couldn't trust others. She said that she was unwilling to see me at first. She was brought in by her friends.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

I was really lucky that I had really good friends who aren't Asian and aren't Filipino who kind of helped me. Who helped me talk my feelings through that, that wasn't an okay thing to be thinking, especially with what happened.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

I kind of called it my "PTSD hermit era" because I just never left the house; I was too scared to go outside. So, my friends gave me a reason to at least leave the house and do other things, not just stay in my room and not do anything else.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Because I might not think it's a big deal. I'm trying to minimise it to myself. But when you go and tell people that, they don't catastrophise it, and they do make it the actual size it is, without minimising it.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Shared experiences and mutual support: Peers who have undergone similar experiences can provide unique support. It can be within a family context or through a peer support programme. Shared experiences create a unique bond among young people, enabling them to support each other in ways that others may not fully understand.

Sometimes, when sexual violence happens within a family context, within an extended family context, sometimes that sibling can have had the same experience. So, it can be a shared experience of sexual violence. If it's, especially when it's been perpetuated by a family member as well.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

The school also has so-called peer support, which is run by the senior students; that is, counsellors are only in charge, but those who run it are seniors in Grade 12 or 13. If juniors encounter relationship problems, for example, they can go to these seniors and talk about stuff.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

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Community and belonging: Peer groups foster a sense of community and belonging, aiding in emotional stability and personal growth. These positive relationships help young Asian people affected by sexual violence feel supported and integrated, which is essential for their recovery and overall wellbeing.

But from that, I met a group of people in university. Although I still feel a little bit separated from them, I feel a lot more welcomed by them than I did in high school. I feel like I'm one of them. Although I don't talk to them as if they were my best friends, it feels like a much healthier dynamic here at university than in high school. I feel like I have support if I want to reach out for it.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

It's based around supporting character development, personality growth, and all of these positive aspects like emotional stability. Yeah, a lot of those things. We just come together in a room, with about six kids, ranging in age from 13 years upwards.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Participants' narratives illustrate that peers play a critical yet complex role in the support systems of young Asian people affected by sexual violence, offering both positive and negative influences. While peer relationships can provide emotional relief and understanding, they also introduce harmful dynamics, including bullying, peer pressure, and racial discrimination, that can severely impact young Asian individuals' mental health. Peer pressure further complicates young Asian people's ability to assert boundaries, making it difficult to seek help. Peer-driven social norms, particularly around relationships and sexuality, foster environments where survivors may feel coerced or manipulated, as seen in instances where pressure to conform contributed to their trauma. Moreover, racial discrimination compounds this isolation, forcing some young Asian individuals to reject their cultural identity in an effort to navigate predominantly mainstream social environments. These harmful peer dynamics highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions to foster healthy peer relationships and mitigate these negative influences.

Romantic peer relationships present additional challenges for young Asian people affected by sexual violence. While they can offer emotional support, these relationships often become co-dependent, deepening emotional struggles. Some participants noted that their partners, though well-intentioned, lacked the emotional capacity to provide meaningful support, leaving them feeling misunderstood. In other cases, dating relationships introduced further risks, with survivors facing emotional manipulation or sexual coercion. This duality underscores the importance of addressing the specific challenges romantic relationships pose in young people's life and recovery journey.

Sexual violence within peer groups, particularly in dating contexts, introduces complex vulnerabilities. Survivors recounted instances of coercion and non-consensual encounters, often exacerbated by peer pressure, alcohol, and unhealthy relationship dynamics. These narratives reveal a critical need for education on consent and healthy relationships to prevent further harm and support survivors in recognising and rejecting harmful behaviours.

Despite the challenges, peer support remains a crucial element of the recovery process for many young Asian survivors. Peers, particularly those of the same age, often provide a relatable and immediate source of comfort, making survivors feel understood and validated in ways adults cannot. Structured peer support programmes, such as those in schools, were also highlighted as essential in fostering a sense of community and belonging, helping young Asian people affected by sexual violence navigate their recovery with resilience and confidence. The dual role peers play in both harming and supporting young Asian survivors underscores the need for a nuanced approach to peer-based interventions.

“I didn't dare to tell my family after the sexual assault. My friends were my last support.”



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Impact from caregivers

Caregivers are pivotal in providing support to young Asian people affected by sexual violence, yet some face significant challenges that inadvertently contribute to their children's isolation. Language barriers and unfamiliarity with the education system can hinder effective communication with schools. Some participants highlighted systemic issues within schools, where parents were often not well engaged with the school or adequately informed about their children's wellbeing.

Communication barriers

Despite some caregivers' willingness to collaborate, the lack of proactive outreach from schools exacerbates the disconnect. These narratives underscore the critical need for improved communication and support mechanisms between caregivers, schools, and support services to effectively address the needs of young Asian individuals.

Connection Issues: Participants spoke about difficulties in understanding and communicating with school staff due to language barriers. This addressed the breakdown between the young people, the parents and the education system.

I didn't even know who her teachers were. No one from the high school contacted me either... I don't understand the education system here at all. Just go to the school – what else can I do as a mother? Besides, even if I go to the school, I don't understand. I couldn't find anyone who spoke good English to accompany me to understand the situation. It is very difficult for me to speak the language. The teacher said a few words, and I had to think about it for a long time, not knowing what she meant. There are simply many obstacles. (Caregiver)

Because there have been so many times when the support for the child, the parent does not know. And the school does not know how to liaise with the parent. The school does not know how the parents are going to react if they find out. So, the breakdown is in the relationship here. (Educator/School Counsellor)

“The school does not know how the parents are going to react if they find out.”

Participants discussed the school's failure to engage with and inform parents about their children's wellbeing. Due to a lack of knowledge and support from schools, some caregivers did not know how to support the young Asian people affected by sexual violence.

I always contact those schools and say: As a school, we can possibly provide this or this, like to have a meeting, deal with the parents, you know, provide meetings to the parents and the teenagers. But when parents see the deans and teachers, they never provide it. (Educator/School Counsellor)

So, whenever they say, “My children have depression, anxiety or self-harm danger to go to school,” then I ask them if those schools contacted them about the issues. They say, “No, never.” The schools have an obligation to contact the parents about their children, to say, “Your children haven't been to school a lot, and your children need support.” But they never [did]. So, the parents need to do that for their children, but they have no idea how to. (Educator/School Counsellor)

An educator/school counsellor described the disconnect between the parents and their children due to the lack of knowledge and support strategies:

The things with sexual harm, it may start off with very small, like grooming, and then it gets bigger and bigger. Online grooming happens. To be honest, I don't think that burden should fall on parents. Parents do not have that technology. They're so busy with doing other stuff. They can't be held responsible for talking about online safety to their kids. (Educator/School Counsellor)

Mental health challenges for caregivers

Many participants shed light on the mental health challenges and traumatic experiences faced by caregivers themselves, underscoring the intricate interplay between caregivers' wellbeing and their ability to provide support. This deficiency in caregiver support stems from feelings of guilt, isolation, and limited social networks.

Traumatic Histories: Many participants noted that caregivers' past traumas could significantly impact their mental health and wellbeing, influencing their ability to support young Asian people affected by sexual violence.

I have gone through a lot in life, including within my own family, and I also had big issues with my mother. But I don't blame them. I don't blame them for all the blows in life. I just blame myself. I make myself very strong. No matter how I was bullied, I would make myself stronger and stronger to fight against the world. I have to fight myself first. (Caregiver)

This caregiver herself also has traumatic experiences from sexual violence, and she shared her struggles during the legal process:

When they contacted me, no one spoke Chinese, and there was no interpreter. Then when I was asked to appear in court to testify, the interpreter assigned to me was a man. They said they wanted to support me, but I was in court, and I didn't want to talk about it. I broke down in court and almost passed out from crying. Not a single helper. The trial was adjourned, saying the victim suffered an emotional breakdown. (Caregiver)

A young Asian individual affected by sexual violence addressed how historical traumas impacted on her caregiver's emotional stability and ability to support her:

But I discovered that he also suffered from mental illness. There was domestic violence in his family, and his father beat his mother. One time we had an argument, and he banged the table, and I ran out. He later said he knew he was like his dad sometimes and could hurt me. He has never behaved like his father towards me, because he said

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that he was born in such a family environment, and he did not want his own family to be like this.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Participants noticed that caregivers' own mental health issues could affect their ability to support young Asian people. These narratives highlighted the compounded stress on caregivers dealing with personal mental health struggles, exacerbated by factors such as immigration, family relationships, and lack of familial support.

I knew that his father gambled, and I even offered his mother to see a counsellor, not me, but other counsellors who had gambling-related psychological treatment. She can come without talking about gambling. Because of his father's gambling, his mother was impacted, so she can get free counselling support. It's actually difficult for his mother. His mother came here [New Zealand] alone. His father's relatives are all here, but his mother has no relatives here. Moreover, the marriage relationship is not good and not harmonious. (Educator/School Counsellor)

I talked to this mother. The mother said she had divorced and remarried [to the same person]. The reason why she didn't want to divorce was because she divorced the last time to the same dad, and the last time she divorced, the custody right was given to the father. So, she didn't dare to divorce anymore. She was afraid she would leave, and she lost her right to be a guardian. So, she wouldn't divorce. (Educator/School Counsellor)

My dad, he's still around, but, like, throughout my childhood, my mum and my dad never got along, but they stayed together. And when I was 13, they told me they were staying together for me, which I think actually damaged me a lot more than helped me. But they were saying, "You should have two parents at home." But my dad was always trying to demonise my mum. And my mum's always trying to demonise him. And they were together for a lot longer than they should have been. (Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

“He later said he knew he was like his dad sometimes and could hurt me.”

These narratives illuminate the complexities of caregiving within the context of caregivers' own mental health struggles and traumatic histories, emphasising the need for comprehensive and holistic support systems to address both caregiver and young Asian people's needs.

Lack of support for caregivers

Due to social isolation, language barriers, and lack of local knowledge and support, many caregivers lack support from family and community. They sometimes rely on their children to deal with day-to-day tasks. They also do not know where to access external support when their children or themselves face mental health challenges.

Caregiving roles for caregivers: In certain instances, some participants found themselves taking on caregiving roles for their own caregivers due to a lack of external support. For example, isolation of immigrant caregivers leads to role reversal. Participants described the complex dynamics within caregiver-child relationships, wherein young Asian people affected by sexual violence may assume caregiving responsibilities to fill gaps in support structures for their caregivers.

I mean, growing up in a single-parent household with a twin brother. And we moved all the way to New Zealand and didn't know anyone in the country. Our family is halfway across the world. I learned to support mum. I support my mum by being good.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

My dad is very unsupportive. So even within her [mother's] own marriage, she doesn't really have support. Also, part of the problem is that I'm her only friend. She doesn't have any friends or people that she talks to. So, I'm the only person she ever felt like she could talk to about personal stuff or share emotions with.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Lack of mental health support for caregivers: Participants addressed the lack of mental health support for caregivers, who often provided care while neglecting their own needs.

But in the early days, it never occurred to me that they [parents] could need support about this. And when I did have the feeling that I needed support, I was just venting at them. (Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

It's so painful, you know, so the parents got the pain as well that they also need to be supported because it's their child that this has happened to them. So, there is a lack of compassion for parents sometimes.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

As a parent, you've already restricted your world, and you've restricted your child's world. And there's a lot of guilt on you for letting it happen in the first place to your child. Right? And so now you just have each other, possibly nobody else. So, the parents need the help.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

Some caregivers doubted the effectiveness of therapy for themselves despite its potential benefits. Hesitancy and distrust towards therapy and support systems were prevalent among caregivers, overwhelmed by emotions and responsibilities, often failing to recognise their own need for help.

She also doesn't really believe in therapy, or she believes in it for me, but she doesn't believe in it. So even though, like I've told her, she would really benefit from it, she should get therapy. She thinks that she shouldn't because she doesn't really believe in that.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

I actually told his mother that her life was not easy, and she needed some support. For her own health, she could come and talk about her own concerns. But she didn't come. She said, "I don't need it."

(Educator/School Counsellor)

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“I’m the only person she ever felt like she could talk to about personal stuff or share emotions with.”

These narratives underscore the importance of inclusive support systems addressing both young Asian individuals’ and caregivers’ mental health. Despite some efforts to promote caregiver wellbeing, their lack of trust and awareness of available support often led to missed opportunities for assistance.

Cultural and familial barriers

Cultural beliefs and misconceptions about the support services further hinder caregivers’ willingness to engage. In several instances, caregivers, often influenced by cultural beliefs or aspirations for their child’s future, have resisted referrals for mental health services. Concerns about the potential stigma associated with seeking mental health support or the impact on academic and career prospects, can lead to reluctance to pursue necessary assistance.

Misconceptions about the support services: Caregivers’ misconceptions about the support system can create barriers to accessing vital support services, leaving the young survivors without the assistance they require. A school counsellor talked about her frustration at being unable to make necessary referrals:

I wanted to make a referral, but they disagreed. They are Chinese. Because her mother hopes her daughter will study medicine in the future, and her mother said: If her daughter has this record of getting support for her mental health, her daughter may not be able to go to medical school.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

Her mother was worried that if her daughter went to [community mental health service], she would be asked to take medicine because her symptoms were very serious, highly suicidal. Because Chinese parents are very resistant to taking medicine for mental health issues, they feel that they will be dull or whatever they will be, and they will listen to many bad stories about it.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

Familial barriers to help-seeking: Caregivers’ influence on young Asian individuals’ access to mental health support can sometimes be obstructive.

Her daughter was originally fine with that. I told her daughter about the referral first. Her daughter agreed at first, but she wanted to ask her mother. Then the mother is not okay with it, and then her daughter becomes not okay with it. (Educator/School Counsellor)

Every time I do a referral, I have to persuade the parents. They have all kinds of concerns, not new to Asian families. But I saw that this student really needed help, and her parents did not agree. I was really frustrated.

(Educator/School Counsellor)



“Every time I do a referral, I have to persuade the parents. They have all kinds of concerns.”

Discomfort in conversations about sexual violence: Some participants discussed significant barriers young Asian people faced when seeking help and disclosing experiences of sexual violence to their caregivers. When parents were involved, discussions about sexual violence could quickly shut down communication, reflecting the deep emotional burden and stigma associated with these topics. Caregivers may grapple with feelings of guilt, inadequacy, and failure, which further hinder open dialogue and support.

I’ve had young people in therapy and their parents didn’t know that they were seeing me. Because the disclosure to a parent would have turned into a punishment for them, not in the literal sense, but like, “you can’t talk about this again, ever.” (Educator/School Counsellor)

This school counsellor further explained: “So the time that I am working with children or young people, I also bring the parents into the therapy room sometimes. And as soon as I say the word “sexual violence” or “harm”, it shuts the conversation down. There is no conversation. And part of it is because this is too much. Sexual violence is a loaded thing for any parent. (Educator/School Counsellor)

- ▶ Experiences with support services
- ▶ Impact from peers
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I think part of it is also when parents don't want to have this conversation. That's not because they don't want or don't care about their children. It's because there are all these things happening – “I am a failed parent. I am a bad parent. I am guilty of this. Why could I not stop it? My life here in a different country has been wasted because I let it happen to my child.” (Educator/School Counsellor)

Pressure from caregivers to be silent: Caregivers' own fear and discomfort impacted young Asian individuals' willingness to disclose sexual violence or engage in a conversation about sexual violence.

Let's say, you give a young person an option: “to go and talk to your parents or go and out the perpetrator or leave your home or set boundaries...” I mean, can you do all of that? So, the young person already from the beginning has gone and talked to the parent, and it has backfired. So, they're being quiet. (Educator/School Counsellor)

I can think of a recent person I'm working with. And yeah, there was this really strong sense of “don't tell anyone”. This young person had shared this with her parents, but there was a really strong sense of “you can't tell anything”. (Educator/School Counsellor)

[School counsellor] tried to talk to my mum about what's been going on. She was telling my mum whenever I self-harmed. But my mum told me not to go to [school counsellor] and talk to her about it.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

“I've had young people in therapy and their parents didn't know that they were seeing me.”

These narratives highlight the complex interplay between cultural norms, familial expectations, mental health support-seeking behaviours and disclosure behaviours within Asian communities. These challenges underscore the need for creating safe and supportive spaces where both young Asian people affected by sexual violence and their caregivers can openly discuss and address the complexities of sexual violence, while also providing caregivers with the necessary support and resources to navigate these difficult conversations.

Being blamed by parents

Additionally, being blamed by parents for having experienced sexual violence can exacerbate the pain and trauma felt by young Asian individuals. This blame often stems from misconceptions about consent and relationships, leading parents to attribute fault to their children's actions or choices. Such blaming can cause young Asian people to feel invalidated and further isolated in their struggles. Moreover, parental responses may reflect their own coping mechanisms or attempts to rationalise the situation, inadvertently dismissing their child's emotional needs.

Consequently, young Asian individuals may internalise feelings of guilt and inadequacy, hindering their ability to seek support and heal from their experiences.

Misconceptions about consent and relationships: Parents may have outdated or misguided views on consent and relationships, which can lead to blaming the young person for sexual violence experience.

I told both my parents that I'd been raped or had been sexually assaulted by multiple different people. And they blamed everything on me. They were like: “You dated him? It's your choice.” They said: “We all told you, he was bad for you, but you chose to date him anyway.” I think they have the same backward idea of consent and a relationship that I had before I realised.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

But they just have the same concerns – “She went out at night, or she met those men or those boys. This is why it happened.” So, they just blame their children like outsiders. This is why the victims have more hurt and pain.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

Rationalisation and coping: Parents may use blaming as a coping mechanism to protect themselves from the emotional impact of their child's trauma.

I was talking about her daughter's safety issue, but she was saying: “My daughter was a troublemaker before.” But this may be her self-protection at the time. Maybe she responded like this to make sense of her own behaviour.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

They just think they lose face. They think their children chose wrongly, bringing shame to parents and families. So, they just tried to hide it. (Educator/School Counsellor)

Emotional invalidation: Some participants encountered emotional invalidation and blaming from caregivers, leading young Asian individuals to a feeling of guilt and a tendency to suppress emotions.

At the time, I had a high school boyfriend who would sometimes make me feel better. But my mum wasn't really happy that I was going to my boyfriend for help rather than coming to her. But when I did come to her, I kind of just felt worse. Or she would make me feel guilty, like I shouldn't be feeling bad when I obviously know that, and I don't want to be feeling bad.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

I wasn't encouraged to explore my emotions or feel things. I wasn't taught that it's okay to feel certain emotions and that there's a name for them. It was very much like, “You're being a burden, and you're being too much by feeling this thing. Do less of that.” So, I kind of learned how to suppress my emotions from a very young age.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

None of the parents can understand their children's feelings. They were kind of like outsiders. They just say, that because their children dress this way, they are targeted by men. (Educator/School Counsellor)

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“They just blame their children like outsiders. This is why the victims have more hurt and pain.”

These narratives highlight the complex reasons behind being blamed by parents, which impacts young Asian individuals' wellbeing and motivation for help-seeking. These challenges underscore the need for educating parents and providing resources and knowledge about sexual violence in communities.

Violence within the family

In instances where the perpetrator is a family member, seeking help becomes more complicated. Caregivers may not always provide the support needed, adding to the young Asian individuals' distress. Concerns about the impact on other family members can also deter young Asian people affected by sexual violence from seeking help.

Lack of support from caregivers: An educator noticed that a young Asian survivor's primary caregiver did not provide the necessary support because of her concerns about the father, who was the perpetrator. Because of this mother's failure to protect this young person, the emotional aftermath of the violence could be profound, leading to severe trauma responses.

She regards her mother as a very important support. In my opinion, her mother does not stand up for her. Instead, her mother gave her pressure and said, “Give Dad one more chance. If your father does it again, then we report it to the police.” So, she was stuck because her mother was important to her, but her father hurt her.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

She told me that although she didn't often contact her father and tried to avoid contact, she once heard that her father was watching a movie. She didn't know what movie it was, but when she heard a woman screaming, it triggered her flashback big time, so she did self-harm.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

Family dynamics and guilt: Family dynamics often complicate the decision to seek help, as young Asian people may fear the repercussions on other family members. Some participants expressed that the complexities of familial relationships and the potential impact on relatives could deter individuals from taking action against their abusers.

I mean, the thing is, my cousin [the perpetrator] who's already a mess. He's already one of the most, not the black sheep of the family, because we have another one. But I say the second black sheep of the family, right? But no one can cut them off. So, he's already kind of fucked up. Adding this layer would destroy his mother, my auntie. I'm not gonna do that.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

In some cases, caregivers continued to support the abuser, further isolating the survivor. An educator shared a distressing account of a mother's continued support for her abusive husband:

I just met a woman, the mum; her husband abused the daughter. He's in jail now. She never turned up and we just had phone conversations. Of course, they don't want to see me in person. But, my goodness, she still loved her husband, supported him and visited him. I can just imagine, what the mum is doing must hurt the daughter, worse and worse, making it more painful for her. It is terrible.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

“She was stuck because her mother was important to her, but her father hurt her.”

These narratives underscore the intricate and painful dynamics within families where abuse occurs. There is an urgent need for sensitive and comprehensive support systems that address both the immediate needs of young Asian individuals and the complex family relationships that influence their willingness and ability to seek help.

Positive support from caregivers

Despite the numerous barriers and challenges posed by caregivers, participants also highlighted instances of support from them. While caregivers may present obstacles to seeking help, they also offer valuable forms of support that contribute to a sense of belonging and stability for the young Asian people affected by sexual violence. From acts of physical presence to emotional reassurance, caregivers play a multifaceted role in the lives of young Asian individuals, offering a source of comfort amidst adversity. Moreover, caregivers also actively engage in seeking assistance when needed, as evidenced by instances where they reached out to authorities on behalf of their loved ones, demonstrating a commitment to protect and support them, even in challenging circumstances.

Supportive presence: Caregivers often provided a comforting physical presence that could be profoundly reassuring. Despite some emotional challenges for some participants, they still saw their caregivers as reliable support:

I remember as a teenager, my mum did this with me when I was struggling. She'd just come and sit with me while I did my own thing, and her presence was comforting.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Everyone else will come and go, but family will always be there for you. That's the only constant thing in your life. So, as much as I know we have a tricky relationship, I know that if I needed her, she would always be available to me, even if she's not emotionally available.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Let's draw my mum. I would draw her, like kind of opening this lock. She opened a lock that people put around me ... She was very beautiful, as a person and on the inside. I actually miss her quite a bit. I was so grateful that she was here.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

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Sense of belonging: Some participants noted that family support extended beyond practical assistance to include emotional and psychological reinforcement. Family support plays a crucial role in fostering a sense of belonging by fulfilling basic needs and creating a stable foundation.

But what actually helps being part of the family is, again, that sense of belonging. You know, people are always around you if you need support, even if it is physical sometimes, for example, providing food. So, the basic needs are met. So, the person doesn't have to worry about those things necessarily. (Educator/School Counsellor)

I would say, even though their family can be a barrier, it can also be a support system in a different way of providing the feeling of belonging. Even though there is much stuff that is not helpful, there is also stuff there that is helpful. (Educator/School Counsellor)

I remember the joy in her eyes, the joy of success: "It seems like mum wants to take care of me still" ... It never occurred to me to leave her alone. (Caregiver)

Acts of protection and assistance: Some participants noted that caregivers often acted to protect young Asian individuals, sometimes going to great lengths to seek help. However, the nature of support could vary, reflecting a complex interplay of protection, support and the limitations that caregivers may face in addressing sensitive and traumatic experiences.

I contacted the police because of what happened to my daughter. I didn't have the nerve to say it was my daughter, so I just said it was the daughter of a friend. (Caregiver)

They were supportive of the court case. But we didn't really talk about that after that, pretty much ever. They were supportive as they thought that what happened to me was wrong. But they weren't supportive in the way that I needed. If I needed help, they wouldn't come and help me proactively, like they wanted to avoid it.
(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

“I was so grateful that she was here.”

To address the needs of young Asian sexual violence survivors, it is critical to provide comprehensive support not only for the survivors themselves but also for their caregivers. Caregivers play a pivotal role in the recovery process, yet they often face significant barriers, such as lack of culturally competent resources and insufficient guidance on navigating complex support systems. Without targeted support, caregivers may struggle to provide the emotional, practical, and culturally responsive care that young Asian people require.

Participants' narratives highlight that caregivers' stress and trauma responses can directly impact the survivors' healing. Inadequate support for caregivers often leads to delayed or fragmented recovery for young survivors, reinforcing the need for trauma-informed, culturally attuned interventions that include the family unit. Participants' narratives also underscore the importance of recognising the positive impact caregivers can have on the recovery of young Asian survivors. Strengthening caregiver resources through the education system and health system, and access to culturally specific services, can foster a more cohesive recovery environment for young Asian people affected by sexual violence.

Neglecting caregiver support perpetuates systemic inequities, particularly within Asian communities where language barriers, cultural stigma, and family dynamics complicate access to services. Addressing these gaps not only helps caregivers better manage their own stress but ensures they are equipped to advocate effectively for the young individuals, reducing long-term negative outcomes. In this context, caregiver support is not a secondary concern but a foundational element in the broader framework of recovery for young Asian people affected by sexual violence.



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Impact of cultural norms and beliefs

Participants discussed the influence of cultural norms and taboos surrounding the topic of sexuality, and the shame associated with discussing sexual harm in Asian communities. Upbringing, education, and cultural factors contributed to young Asian people affected by sexual violence doubting themselves and feeling ashamed of their experiences.

Stigma surrounding sexual violence

Participants' narratives reflected the cultural stigma surrounding sexuality and relationships within Asian communities. This silence perpetuated the stigma surrounding sexual violence and prevented young Asian individuals from seeking help and support.

Self-Blaming and Shame: Cultural upbringing and education could lead to self-blaming among young Asian people affected by sexual violence. Participants discussed how cultural norms made young Asian individuals question their victimhood and feel guilty about their experiences.

Because of the upbringing, education and culture. They think they just did something wrong. They doubt that they are victims. (Educator/School Counsellor)

So, I never really opened up to him [father] because of fear because, you know, in Chinese culture, there are these expectations like you can't have a boyfriend until you reach a certain age.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Taboo Topics: In some Asian subcultures, discussions around sex, sexuality, and sexual violence are considered taboo. Many participants noted that these topics were often shrouded in silence and stigma, making it difficult for individuals to seek information or support.

In fact, sex is a taboo in China. I don't think it's important for me to know about sexuality education. I didn't dare to tell my family after the sexual assault.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

There's the stigma, there's the taboo. It is unspoken in our communities; it's not talked about. It's not openly conversed about in any form, even positive sexual relationships and stuff, it's not spoken about.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Because back when I was young, I don't even know what age [I was] we moved to New Zealand, I was quite interested in [the topic of] sex. I was maybe six or seven, and I was quite interested but didn't quite get it. I remember at one point asking my mother a question or something. She raged, and she lost her shit, which she doesn't remember.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

“I remember one point asking my mother a question. She raged.”

Stigma surrounding discussions of sexual violence: In many Asian subcultures, there exists a pervasive stigma surrounding discussions of sexual violence, rooted in deeply ingrained notions of shame and family reputation.

They never think that the little ones would be exposed to sexual harm. If we provide [workshops] for teenagers, the parents may never turn up. Because they worry that people would think those parents, teenagers and young adults might be abused or assaulted.

(Educator/School Counsellors)

I guess most of the way, like, culture, how I was brought up by my parents. We didn't really talk about anything like that. I still don't really talk about anything that is really personal. So, parents' culture. And it builds in society as well, I guess. I feel it is better now. But you still feel judged when you try to reach out, in some ways.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Culture of silence: Pressure from parents, the burden of family reputation and stigma surrounding sexual harm in Asian communities result in young Asian people affected by sexual violence feeling unable to disclose and discuss their experiences. This culture of silence prevented some young Asian survivors from seeking help.

Because Asian ... for example, this boy, he told his mother about some sexual violence events, and his mother said: "Forget about this." So, he had no way to speak again. He felt that it was useless to talk to his mother, so he closed himself up and stopped opening up.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

I do feel Asian kids are much more likely to keep things to themselves; that's just intergenerational belief systems.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

I think she, coming from a different generation and culture, had a different perspective. The way my sister and I were raised, it was all about keeping things to yourself, not talking about them.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

“The way my sister and I were raised, it was all about keeping things to yourself, not talking about them.”

The narratives reflected the cultural silence, cultural expectations and stigma surrounding the topic of sexuality and sexual violence within Asian communities. These highlighted the need for culturally responsive education around sexuality education and sexual violence, addressing Asian communities' needs.

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Family reputation and model minority

As highlighted by the participants in the narratives, the emphasis on protecting family honour and reputation could create challenges to help-seeking and support, perpetuating a culture of silence and secrecy. Cultural norms emphasise harmony and high achievement, which could create barriers to disclosing sexual harm. Young Asian people affected by sexual violence often feared bringing disgrace upon their families, which inhibited their ability to seek help.

Protecting family’s reputation: Participants’ narratives underscored the strong cultural inclination to protect the family’s reputation among young Asian survivors of sexual violence. This needs to safeguard familial honour often led to the concealment of personal struggles and emotional distress.

I think with that element of wanting to protect the family, in terms of maybe reputational things, especially when it happens to a young female as well. Yeah, whether it’s reputation, whether it’s how the whole family may be perceived about the event that happened to this person, but some of the family carry it. Still, they carry it in a way that actually creates more heaviness.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

But the signs and symptoms might look different, because the kids are either, depending on the family, of course, you know, I find that Asian kids are better at hiding stuff. Because again, it’s like bringing shame to the family, if you show that you’re struggling, so they’re better at that.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

Family expectations: Participants provided insight into the formidable barrier of high academic expectations prevalent within certain cultural contexts. Across diverse experiences and perspectives, a common theme emerged – the pervasive pressure from parents to excel academically and meet societal standards of success. Young Asian individuals recounted their own academic achievements as a coping mechanism. Being a high achiever academically also made their other struggles invisible. The emphasis on academic performance as a measure of worth and acceptance emerged as a significant barrier, contributing to the immense pressure faced by young Asian individuals navigating their educational journey.

I think there is a huge push towards a more academic way ... I think a lot of Asian cultures are very successful and academically driven.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Well, for me, I was pretty good in school. So, I guess it wasn’t really something for them to worry about.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

But there wasn’t really much to see, because I didn’t allow myself to be more seen. You know, when you think of stereotypes, “you’re the sporty one”, “you’re the smart one” – like it’s very one-dimensional.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

*All she could do was study hard and go to *** University ahead of schedule. She didn’t want to be in high school anymore. So, she went to university early. When she went to university, she was only 16 years old.* (Caregiver)

He doesn’t have this courage. I asked him, “Which of these two secrets will your mother accept more? One is that you like boys and you are gay. The other is that you don’t go to college.” He said that maybe being gay is easier to accept, but not going to college is more difficult to accept. But he can’t hold these all the time; it’s a lot of pressure.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

Pressure of being a model minority: Participants’ narratives revealed the pressure of being a model minority, which impacted young Asian individuals’ willingness to seek help as they see it as shame, failure or troubling others.

I think we pride ourselves too much in collective culture rather than the individual because, or we praise people who have done really well, so much that it’s kind of caused people who aren’t performing really well to feel like they, like there’s something wrong with them.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

And then, that whole idea about you have to perform academically well, no matter what, you need to excel. That definitely comes from culture, especially from India. You have to be a good student. You have to be good at curricular activities and things like that. Those kinds of things are barriers. (Educator/School Counsellor)

The Asian culture wants to be polite. We don’t want to cause trouble. That’s part of resistance, right? So, it is just difficult to express your needs sometimes because you don’t want to bother people.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

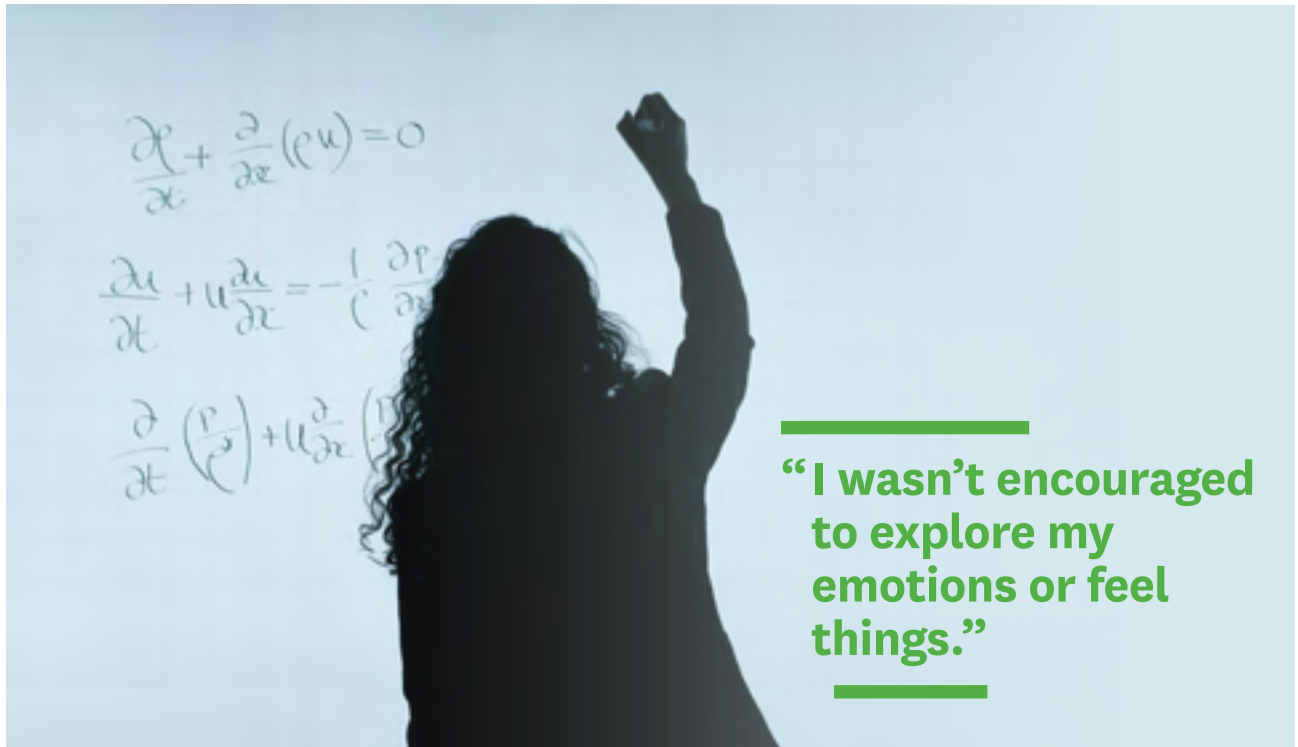
“The Asian culture wants to be polite. We don’t want to cause trouble.”

These narratives highlighted the need to develop a culturally nuanced support framework to address these culturally specific barriers in help-seeking among young Asian people affected by sexual violence and their families. They also underscored the need for training to enable help- professionals and educators to identify young Asian individuals’ challenges, which might be masked by their “good student” behaviours and high academic achievements.

Cultural impact of coping mechanisms

The participants explored the cultural impacts of coping mechanisms. Deeply ingrained cultural beliefs, such as the acceptance of suffering as an inevitable part of life, could shape individuals’ perceptions of their own struggles and influence their coping strategies. Moreover, cultural norms emphasising resilience and stoicism could discourage individuals from seeking help or expressing their emotional needs openly. The narratives also highlighted the generational gap that exists in understanding and addressing the challenges. This could hinder effective support and exacerbate feelings of isolation for young survivors seeking assistance.

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“I wasn’t encouraged to explore my emotions or feel things.”

Cultural beliefs around suffering and resilience: Cultural beliefs shaped how survivors and their families coped with their experiences. The expectation to “move on” and “forget about the past” may perpetuate a culture of silence and hinder the healing process for survivors. These beliefs could discourage seeking help and expressing emotional needs.

I also read the words of a monk, which also helped me a lot. These words were engraved in my mind: “No matter how hard you work in this life, you will still suffer.”
(Caregiver)

One of them was like: “Oh, I don’t even know why they have to worry about this stuff. In my day, we just moved on. We just put it behind us and forget about the past.” So, that’s definitely a barrier. (Educator/School Counsellor)

Just like this boy’s mother, she said: “Forget about it. Forget it.” How could you forget this thing [event]? Her subtext is: “You have to be strong, you have to move forward, and you have to put these kinds of negative things behind you.” (Educator/School Counsellor)

Emphasis on gratitude: Societal pressures to maintain a façade of gratitude and contentment, particularly within Asian cultures, could invalidate survivors’ experiences of pain and trauma, further complicating their journey toward recovery.

I felt like I should reach out to my mum and others for support. But when I did, it didn’t feel very good. I believe it’s because of where she came from and her socio-economic class. It was more like you should just be grateful for what you have. And I was very grateful for what I had, but that didn’t stop me from feeling bad.
(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

They also are out of touch with the changing landscape of young people, for example, the things that they deal with

today. So, they always use their own childhood to compare things to today, which doesn’t really help because, you know, values are different and ideas are different.
(Educator/School Counsellor)

Emotional suppression: Participants provided insight into the pervasive influence of emotional suppression within Asian cultural contexts. Across generations, cultural norms and familial dynamics often dictate the expression and acknowledgement of emotions, shaping individuals’ perceptions of emotional wellbeing and coping mechanisms.

You cry, but you don’t know why you’re crying because parents always stop you from crying without really addressing why you’re crying.
(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

I wasn’t encouraged to explore my emotions or feel things. I wasn’t taught that it’s okay to feel certain emotions and that there’s a name for them.
(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

The impact of upbringing on individuals’ emotional experiences suggests that cultural and familial expectations may discourage the expression of negative emotions. An educator provided her view about the cultural influence on emotional suppression:

I think, let alone culture or habits, maybe they have not been educated in this area about how to express emotions. They feel that expressing emotions may be a bad thing because, as children, they heard: “Be sensible and don’t show negative emotions.” Maybe it’s upbringing, right? Maybe the right method is how to connect to yourself. To learn to accept negative emotions, but it cannot always be positive emotions. They just feel that they can’t have negative emotions, and even if they do, they can’t let others see them. (Educator/School Counsellor)

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Overall, these narratives underscored the complex interplay between cultural influences, coping mechanisms, and expectations surrounding suffering, highlighting the need for culturally responsive and trauma-informed support services. The expectation of enduring such abuse in silence, fueled by societal pressures and culturally impacted coping systems, further exacerbated the trauma experienced by survivors. These narratives highlighted the need to understand these culturally specific barriers when supporting young Asian survivors and their families.

Entrenched gender roles

Participants illuminated a barrier from entrenched gender roles that young individuals within the Asian communities often face. These stories underscored the ways in which societal norms and cultural beliefs could perpetuate harmful dynamics, particularly concerning gender-based violence and the expression of one's gender identity.

Gender roles within relationships: From feeling pressured to conform to traditional roles within relationships to facing societal judgment and stigma for deviating from gender norms, young Asian people affected by sexual violence were navigating a complex web of expectations that could hinder their ability to seek support and healing.

She experienced domestic violence and sexual violence at the hands of her husband. And even when her mother-in-law would visit from India, her mother-in-law would say: "This just happens. That's what men do. You just have to deal with it. You should feel lucky that he's providing for you. So, it's your responsibility as a wife to go along with it." (Educator/School counsellor)

I realised that I hadn't been taught about these things, and it had been reinforced that my role in a relationship was to have sex. I was made to believe that it was my duty, and if I didn't comply, I was a bad girlfriend. (Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Gender identity: The stigma surrounding masculinity could prevent male survivors from coming forward and accessing the support they need, further perpetuating cycles of silence and shame. This issue is particularly acute in cultures with strict gender norms and religious influences that stigmatise deviations from traditional masculinity and heterosexuality.

He had many secrets and was afraid to tell his mother. For example, he is gay, and he doesn't dare to tell her. (Educator/School Counsellor)

And it's kind of there's a strong Catholic Christian culture in the Philippines that if you can't fix it through any other means, you just turned to Catholicism, which I struggled with because, because of my gender and sexuality, kind of was alienating, like, religion was alienating for me. So, I didn't have that avenue to turn to. (Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

The stigma surrounding masculinity could prevent male survivors from coming forward and accessing the support they need, further perpetuating cycles of silence and shame.

I guess it's kind of like toxic masculinity ... like kind of showing weakness. You don't show weakness, right? Because it is not manly that way.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

I feel I am vulnerable enough just to express myself. I just feel like there are so many different restrictions that people try to put on me as a male. In society, I feel like they put a lock on me. I didn't. It's like the male community, in a certain way, has one certain personality, one certain set of rules, you know, gender roles.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

“It had been reinforced that my role in a relationship was to have sex.”

Participants' narratives illustrate that cultural norms within Asian communities create significant barriers to addressing sexual violence, perpetuating a culture of silence and shame that prevents young Asian people affected by sexual violence from seeking the support they need. Deeply entrenched gender roles, and taboos around sex and sexuality foster a culture where discussions of sexual harm are not only stigmatised but actively suppressed. The cultural pressures to preserve family reputation compound these challenges, forcing young survivors to prioritise their family's honour over their own wellbeing. Addressing these issues requires not only recognising these pressures but actively working to dismantle the societal structures that prioritise family reputation over survivor support. Without addressing these challenges, attempts to improve support systems for young Asian survivors will remain incomplete and ineffective.

Moreover, the “model minority” myth creates an additional, often invisible, barrier to help-seeking among young Asian people affected by sexual violence. The pressure to excel academically and maintain an image of “model minority” discourages individuals from acknowledging their trauma or seeking assistance. Cultural interventions must directly address this harmful stereotype and create environments where young people feel empowered to seek emotional and psychological support without the weight of social expectations. Ignoring the intersection of cultural identity and societal pressure is a critical oversight in understanding young Asian individuals' support needs.

To adequately address these challenges, there is an urgent need for culturally responsive, trauma-informed care that recognises these harmful cultural dynamics. Addressing cultural stigmas and societal pressures is not optional; it is an essential component of building effective support systems for young Asian people affected by sexual violence.

- ▶ Experiences with support services
- ▶ Impact from peers
- ▶ Impact from caregivers
- ▶ Impact of cultural norms and beliefs
- ▶ Experiences within the education system
- ▶ Expectations of an ideal support system

Experiences within the education system

Participants' voices revealed significant barriers within the education system, which hinder access to effective support for young survivors and their families. These narratives underscored the urgent need for school leadership to address biases and enhance cultural competency to ensure equitable support for all students.

Lack of empathy and support

Educators recounted instances where school management, including principals and pastoral care leaders, displayed a lack of understanding and empathy towards students facing mental health challenges. Instead of providing appropriate support, these leaders resorted to punitive measures like expulsion or disregarded the importance of cultural and language considerations in providing support.

Avoidance of dealing with issues: Some participants highlighted how school leaders failed to understand and support students with mental health challenges. This lack of support often exacerbated the students' issues and alienated them further. Participants pointed out that some school leaders preferred to remove the problem rather than address it, leading to a sense of frustration and helplessness among students and their advocates.

I met the principal, deputy principal, and pastoral care principal, but they never understood how to support this. For example, this teenager has ADHD, and he has some symptoms. They understood this, and then they just tried to kick him out. So, I went there to advocate for the family and the boy, and I insisted on having a board meeting. So, the board members are all parents, so they understand better than the school. (Educator/School Counsellor)

As a girl at that time, she had no depression in China. Everything went wrong after she came here. There were also problems with her homestay. She had a bad relationship with her classmates, and then she was diagnosed with depression. Then she was asked to see the school counsellor. Because she had a language barrier at the time, the school counsellor did not want to see her and said there was no way to support her. We were given a decision directly by the school, and our entire team was furious at that time, which was to send her back to China. (Educator/School Counsellor)

Dismissal of cultural and language needs: Instances were reported where school leaders dismissed the importance of cultural and language considerations, impacting students' ability to receive appropriate support.

There was another one in a college a long time ago. That college's principal kicked the Korean and other cultural [ethnic] counsellors out. He said: "Why do we need cultural [ethnic] counsellors? All the students need to speak English." Yeah, lack of understanding. Now they have a new principal, but this new principal has the same concept. You know, never change, never change. (Educator/School Counsellor)

The school counsellor said she couldn't do the work. She said she couldn't do it if the student couldn't speak English. (Educator/School Counsellor)

Lack of sensitivity: Service providers within education systems sometimes lacked the sensitivity required to deal with young survivors' disclosure and their requests for support. Lack of sensitivity from service providers could exacerbate the trauma of young survivors.

After the incident, I could not sit one of the school's exams...I was so dizzy that I couldn't take the exam. I went to the school to apply for a grade that would allow me to be assessed according to my regular grades if I was unwell or had a family issue. I applied online, but no one paid any attention to me. I went to apply offline again, and when I asked at the student hub, they sympathised with me and said they would help me contact my department. The student hub said they would not get into the details of the incident, and they would respect my privacy. But the exam department asked me to describe the whole incident. (Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Overlooking the Needs of International Students: A school counsellor who worked with international students expressed her anger and frustration about the support for international students.

The school just pushes them out, which means they don't pay attention to and don't respect our [international] students. Just want to use them as a cash cow. It's not nice to say – I'm very angry. I feel sorry for these students. It's very pitiful. They came here to study and pay such a high tuition fee, but they didn't expect the treatment to be so poor. (Educator/School Counsellor)

“Why do we need cultural [ethnic] counsellors? All the students need to speak English.”

Participants' narratives shed light on a concerning gap in cultural competency among school staff when it comes to supporting young Asian survivors, including those who are international students.

Lack of training

Participants expressed frustration at the limited time allocated for crucial training on mental health and support strategies for staff. These narratives indicated that there is a clear need for ongoing education and training to refresh staff on biases and promote cultural sensitivity. Without appropriate training and support, school staff may struggle to connect with Asian students and their families in meaningful ways. Addressing these issues requires a concerted effort to enhance cultural competency among school staff and foster open, supportive and honest communication with parents to support young survivors better.

- ▶ Experiences with support services
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Limited training time: Participants reported insufficient time dedicated to training on mental health and support strategies.

There were times when I was asked to do a presentation on mental health and how teachers can support kids or recognise some signs and symptoms of someone struggling, but every time it came down to it, I only got five to 15 minutes to do this, including answering questions and everything during a really busy staff meeting. And so, there was no idea or concept of like, this is a big deal. (Educator/School Counsellor)

Need for ongoing education on biases: There is a call for regular training to address inherent biases and promote sensitivity among school staff. Participants emphasised the importance of challenging and changing entrenched prejudices to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment.

My biggest question is, how is the school viewing the parents? And that will determine how they help them. So, do we have somebody going into the schools and getting them to sit in the discomfort of their own biases? Do we have somebody that's going to the senior management, having a workshop on their own biases? How do they see different people from different cultures? (Educator/School Counsellor)

And there are inherent biases of racism and stereotypes and all that kind of stuff that perpetuate negative cultures and thoughts that can spread in the school or the teachers' network. So, I guess, just more refreshment on biases. (Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Lack of specific training on sexual violence: Participants' narratives highlighted critical gaps in training related to addressing sexual violence, revealing a significant area for improvement within educational settings.

There was a training module on just general mental health, like depression and anxiety symptoms. And there was a little bit of awareness around self-harm and how to pick that up. But I don't think there was ever anything around sexual violence. (Educator/School Counsellor)

A school counsellor expressed her regrets on inappropriate reaction toward sexual violence disclosure due to lack of training in this area:

I must admit that I don't have much experience in this area, so I made a mistake when I first time heard from her about her sexual abuse. My natural reaction was because I don't have enough experience. (Educator/School Counsellor)

“My natural reaction was because I don't have enough experience.”

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These narratives underscored the need for ongoing professional development to equip school staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to support young Asian survivors and their families effectively.

Lack of cultural competency

Participants' narratives addressed a lack of cultural competency within school staff, including educators and school counsellors. This created barriers not only to young Asian survivors' help-seeking but also to engagement with their families.

Lack of cultural competency in parent engagement:

Difficulties in effectively engaging parents due to a lack of cultural competency could lead to a breakdown in support for students. Without understanding and respecting cultural differences, schools risk miscommunication and ineffective support for students.

Because there have been so many times when the support for the child, the parent does not know. And the school does not know how to liaise with the parent. The school does not know how the parent is going to react if they find out. So, the breakdown is in the relationship here. Why are you so afraid of calling the parents in and having an honest conversation? (Educator/School Counsellor)

Having more counsellors, translators, or even a cultural adviser would be beneficial. In psychology, I've learned that it's important to bring in a cultural adviser if you're unsure about how someone's culture works or how they're feeling, for example, Māori. Because I don't think [school counsellor] understood my culture or why my mum was the way she was. (Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Lack of cultural knowledge for effective interventions:

Participants acknowledged that the current support within schools often lacks the necessary knowledge and skills to provide adequate assistance. Participants' narratives emphasised that cultural sensitivity and awareness are essential for providing effective support, regardless of the staff's ethnic background. Simply employing Asian staff does not guarantee the cultural competence needed to address the diverse needs of Asian students and their families.

Sometimes, the people within that support system do not know what to say, not know how to support and do not know what to do. So, we have this young person here, and they [these support people] are still here, but they're not able to facilitate support. (Educator/School Counsellor)

A school counsellor expressed her concerns: "Many mainstream organisations believe that if they have Asian staff, they can do Asian work. No! Because your staff needs support, it is not enough to treat them as your ordinary employees ... Do you think hiring an Asian, then you can do such a job? Where does your Asian staff professionalism come from?" (Educator/School Counsellor)

“Sometimes, the people within that support system do not know what to say, not know how to support and do not know what to do.”

These narratives shed light on the importance of recognising that cultural sensitivity goes beyond the ethnicity of staff members and requires ongoing education and awareness-building efforts to ensure that all students receive the support they need in navigating sensitive issues like sexual violence.

Lack of resources for asian students and parents

Participants highlighted a critical issue within the realm of resources aimed at supporting the Asian communities, particularly concerning the lack of cultural appropriateness. Participants expressed frustration with the existing resources, noting that they fail to resonate with the needs and experiences of the Asian population.

Culturally inappropriate within resources: The reliance on Eurocentric perspectives in research and resource creation poses significant barriers to meaningful engagement within the Asian community.

So, the resources are out there, but they don't speak to us [Asian community]. And part of it is because the lens is not for our population, it's very Eurocentric, right? (Educator/School Counsellor)

I think part of the issue is that because the research is done in such a Eurocentric way, and the resources are thrown at the parents. They're shutting the conversation down. (Educator/School Counsellor)

Cultural inappropriateness of resource delivery: Participants highlighted that the methods and approaches used in research often overlook the unique cultural nuances and strengths inherent within Asian cultures. As a result, when these resources are presented to the community, they are met with resistance and reluctance to engage in the conversation.

We throw this knowledge on them. And then they just are like, "I'm gonna close off more and more and more and shrink and shrink." Do we think they don't talk amongst themselves? They do. They just don't want us to know what they're talking about because we will trash that knowledge, because it's not the knowledge that they want. (Educator/School Counsellor)

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Even when the resources are translated, they are not necessarily culturally appropriate resources that meet the needs of Asian communities.

You have these resources, we throw them at people, we throw it at the counsellors and the psychologist and say: “Deal with it. We’ve done our bit. We’ve translated them now.” So, it doesn’t help. And a part of it is because it’s easier. It’s easier to have a resource that’s just translated than actually say: “Hey, the starting point is ...”
(Educator/School Counsellor)

“It’s easier to have a resource that’s just translated than actually say: ‘Hey, the starting point is ...’”

These narratives addressed the need for culturally nuanced knowledge and resources for young Asian people affected by sexual violence and their families. Simply translating resources into different languages without considering the broader cultural context fails to address the underlying issue of cultural relevance and appropriateness. Recognising and valuing the community’s unique perspectives allow for more meaningful and effective education and knowledge resources that resonate with the Asian communities.

Lack of funding and manpower

Participants highlighted significant gaps in funding and manpower, particularly for international students. These gaps hindered the ability of schools to offer necessary services and resources, impacting the overall educational experience and wellbeing of Asian sexual violence survivors.

Insufficient Funding for Counselling: Some participants addressed that insufficient funding for counselling services is a significant barrier to providing adequate mental health support to students. The lack of financial resources limits the availability and quality of counselling services, affecting both the staff employed and the materials provided.

They did receive funding for counselling. That’s why they employ the counsellor otherwise, they have never had a counsellor before. So, I think funding is a big thing.
(Educator/School Counsellor)

They did offer me art material, but I had to go to the art room and collect it myself and then our teacher just kept standing watch over me like what I was grabbing and how much I could take. So, no material was readily available, apart from maybe some paper, coloured pencils and pastels. That was it. So, I had to bring my own material.
(Educator/School Counsellor)

Inadequate Staffing: Participants’ narratives indicated that the lack of sufficient staff, particularly school counsellors, limited the

ability of schools to provide consistent and effective support for students. Inadequate staffing leads to overburdened counsellors and insufficient individual attention for students.

But high school is a big school and lacks resources and manpower. You know, they always protest “but the government has no money.” (Educator/School Counsellor)

In an ideal world, there would be way more school counsellors. In my school, which had about 5,000 students, there were only like four or five school counsellors, and that’s just not enough.
(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Lack of Funding for International Students: The specific funding issues for supporting international students further complicated the provision of adequate mental health services. Without dedicated funding, international students face unique challenges in accessing the support they need.

We don’t have funding, so those [international] students can claim insurance. But is it impossible for us to do the work of claiming insurance? So, can those schools advance money first? But they refused and asked the students to pay by themselves. But students are not willing to pay.
(Educator/School Counsellor)

I think our international department is for international students who also need care, but they have no funding. Just like referrals, I can’t even go to [community mental health service] for referrals because they are not eligible. In fact, international students also need help.
(Educator/School Counsellor)

“In my school, which had about 5,000 students, there were only like four or five school counsellors, and that’s just not enough.”

These narratives highlighted the need for increased funding and manpower in schools. Without adequate resources and sufficient staffing, particularly in counselling departments, schools struggle to provide the necessary support for Asian students’ wellbeing.

Lack of external support for staff

External support systems are vital for complementing school staff’s efforts in addressing students’ diverse needs. However, participants pointed out significant gaps in external support, particularly in areas requiring specialised care and coordination.

Insufficient Support Resources: In this study, school staff expressed their need for more external support, such as supervision and counselling.

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All I have now is just external supervision. Is that enough? Not really. I only have two external supervisors for myself. In these supervisions, they always talk about self-care. But in that space, sometimes I just forgot what to say. I just talk about stuff like self-care but I feel something very heavy. External supervision is included in my job description but not for myself. I need something like counselling. (Educator/School Counsellor)

Another school counsellor talked about how inadequate support increased her workload and stress:

My paid job is just counselling, but I also do social work. Because I couldn't find anyone, I shouldn't have done it, but I couldn't bear it, so I did it. Because I know how difficult it is for us Asians. (Educator/School Counsellor)

Lack of coordination among agencies: Participants' narratives implied that the lack of coordination among external support agencies and service providers created inefficiencies and gaps in the support provided to young Asian people affected by sexual violence.

In different areas, like [child and youth mental health services provider] and [another child and young mental health services provider], they just work on their own, no connection in between. There should be one specific government department to support young people. It should be the Ministry of Youth. In the same space, it is a kind of one-stop shopping. (Educator/School Counsellor)

She was going for a sexual assault examination and needed to do a follow-up check, but she came from Wellington and didn't know where to go to do it [in Auckland]. But I have never dealt with something like this. So, I called and Googled, and looked for an agency here [Auckland], but I couldn't find the right one. (Educator/School Counsellor)

“They just work on their own, no connection in between.”

The narratives suggested that the lack of external support hampers the ability of educators and school counsellors to provide comprehensive care for young Asian survivors. There is a need for better supervision, coordinated agency efforts, and accessible information to enhance the overall support system and make it more effective.

Sense of hopelessness and frustration among staff

The participants' narratives illustrated the profound emotional toll on school staff, such as educators and school counsellors. Participants revealed a sense of hopelessness and frustration, impacting their ability to perform effectively and maintain their wellbeing.

Emotional exhaustion: Some participants highlighted the immense pressure on educators to constantly advocate for their communities while lacking the necessary support and outlets for their own stress. The absence of a platform to discuss and manage their frustrations contributed to a sense of hopelessness and emotional burnout.

Because in my organisation, everyone is busy. Also because of lack of resources. We must be champions for our communities. I don't have any space to talk about it: to release my stress, to show my frustration and to think about the big picture. I just realised that I don't feel hopeful. (Educator/School Counsellor)

I know my limitations because I only work for my clients. I just focus on my job in a small space. So sometimes I miss the bigger picture, and I sometimes don't feel hopeful. (Educator/School Counsellor)

I feel like with the new generations of teachers coming through, and how badly the pay is, like, people are there because they want to be there, hopefully. But when you have been in the system for a while or for a long time, you can start to get disheartened. (Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Helplessness and frustration: Participants' narratives showed that long-term exposure to systemic issues without resolution and resources fosters deep-seated anger and disappointment among educators and school counsellors.

I am indeed very angry because there are so many disappointments accumulated over many years. I have been in contact with international students since I started working in this industry. As a professional, these things I see are real. (Educator/School Counsellor)

I found that I really have a lot of frustration, and I really feel that what I can do in this role is quite limited. Too much is out of my hands, outside of my control. Once again, I express my frustration at those parents and the frustration at the entire support system through drawings. (Educator/School Counsellor)

[Pointing at her drawing] Because I draw these things very subconsciously, I draw them without thinking too much. But it can still express my helplessness and how I view the school system. It can still express what's in my mind. (Educator/School Counsellor)

“I just realised that I don't feel hopeful.”

Overall, these narratives underscored the urgent need to provide training to school staff, to offer more internal and external support to school staff, and to create a more supportive and hopeful working environment for support providers working with young Asian people affected by sexual violence.

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Enablers in education support system

The participants also pointed out that the support system in education encompasses various components that work together to create a supportive environment for young Asian people affected by sexual violence.

Safe spaces: The concept of “safe spaces” in schools was highlighted by participants as essential in supporting students’ mental health and wellbeing. These safe spaces could be physical locations within the school where students could retreat to feel secure and receive support, or they could be more abstract, representing the presence of understanding and supportive individuals. The narratives illustrate various ways in which schools are creating and utilising these safe spaces.

But on the door of the room, it does say “quiet space”, or you know, “safe space” or something like that. So, kids could just go. If they wanted to talk to someone, they could ask a teacher and the teacher would go with them into that room to talk, or the remedial teacher, who was like a special needs support, was also available for that kind of stuff. So that room was technically assigned as the space for kids to go and talk. (Educator/School Counsellor)

Students are distressed. They cannot only find a counsellor but also if the counsellor is not available, we also have a timeout room, which can provide them with temporary relief. (Educator/School Counsellor)

She’s a really good educator with a very good understanding of mental health and providing a safe space. Her office is a safe space for the kids. Both of them, there are two of them. So yeah, I would say those two, and the nurse room was definitely a safe space. (Educator/School Counsellor)

Also, if they don’t want to come to the school regularly, the dean would let them withdraw from some subjects. If they are hesitant to go to some specific subjects, they just delete them from the timetable, and then they can go to some rooms, like rooms in the library, not just the timeout room, for those who don’t want to be in the class. Like Year 13, they have a study period. So, they don’t need to go to the class in the study period. If they need to have some air, there is this kind of room. (Educator/School Counsellor)

Beyond physical rooms, safe spaces also encompass trusted individuals’ emotional and psychological support and the understanding extended by educators and peers.

For some people, just having people there, who they just feel safe with after not feeling safe in their body and not feeling safe in particular environments, that almost, like, corrective experience can be, really, that in itself can be healing – to be in spaces where they actually just feel safe, without necessarily going into talking about what’s happened. (Educator/School Counsellor)

I did end up needing a lot of extensions because I wasn’t in the right headspace to work through a lot of stuff. Fortunately, the classes I took were quite lenient in that regard, and they granted me extensions without requiring

me to go into specific details about what had happened, which I found really helpful.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

I had to email one of my lecturers – “I can’t do this assignment, because something really bad happened to me. And I’m not in the right headspace.” And they were really, they kind of accepted it, which I super appreciate. Because having to explain that to like, practically a stranger was not ideal.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

“...to be in spaces where they actually just feel safe, without necessarily going into talking about what’s happened.”

Supportive staff: The participants’ narratives emphasised the critical role of supportive staff in enhancing the educational experience for students, particularly those dealing with personal and emotional challenges. The presence of understanding and accommodating staff showcased innovative and empathetic approaches to student support.

So, they were really accommodating, for example, if I would encourage the child to use fidget spinners in the class, even though fidget spinners have been banned in lots of classrooms, they would be okay with that. You know, the teachers would be fine with that.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

We provide a yellow card or orange card. We give it to them, and they just secretly show the teacher the card, like that. If the teacher notices the card, and just maybe nods the head, secretly. (Educator/School Counsellor)

I told the teacher of Year 13 painting class about what happened. She was super supportive, and she was crying for me. I also had some other classes I didn’t really like. I didn’t really try that hard. I had to get the counsellor to email the teachers to extend my assignments, and to give me extensions and stuff.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

So, during that semester, I couldn’t enroll in any papers because it’s now up to each individual lecturer whether they allow online access to their course or not. All my lecturers have been really nice and really understanding, and they say, “Yes, you can. We’ll offer you an option online.” (Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

One of my course coordinators, I was very honest with her and told her what was actually happening for me. I had reported a guy who sexually assaulted me when I was younger, and I was telling her about how the court case was coming up and how I felt about that ... even

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though I'm not in that course anymore, I still talk to her sometimes, and she wants me to keep her updated on how the court case is going and stuff like that. She agreed with my frustrations and stuff like that, which feels quite good because everyone else is kind of like, "Oh, that sucks," whatever, and moves on.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

When I was growing up, I liked the colour pink. It looks nice to me. I like this colour. One of my friends said: "Pink is a girl's colour." Then, the teacher said: "Pink is a boy's colour too." So that allowed me to feel free to like what I like, not feel being judged. I think that was a very important part of my primary schooling.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Parent-child-educator meetings: Participants shared that collaboration between parents, young people and educators is effective and helpful for addressing the holistic needs of students.

I do think they work closely with parents; they try to work closely with parents because I've seen a couple of kids I worked with, non-sexual violence, that were finding it really difficult to come to school. And the teachers would go and sit with the child and the parents, would bring them in, and they both would sit together, have a talk and things like that. So, it does happen, but of course, not as much as it could. (Educator/School Counsellor)

These Korean parents, not only from my workshop but also from my counselling rooms, because I always invite their parents if my clients are young like teenagers and young adults... (Educator/School Counsellor)

Although these kinds of meetings were offered, there were challenges in family involvement.

Involving family can be tricky, and even my parents, who don't really believe in therapy, would have been resistant if a school counsellor had tried to involve them. Anytime that my therapist had family sessions with us, they would leave and say, "That was crap! That was terrible. We are not going to listen to anything they said." They never found family sessions helpful and would dismiss any advice or suggestions. So, it's a complex situation, but offering it as an option could still be helpful.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Support for educators: Some educators and school counsellors explored how internal and external support not only helped them to work with young Asian students but also enhanced their wellbeing.

I met the principal, deputy principal, and pastoral care principal, but they never understood how to support this. For example, this teenager has ADHD, and he has some symptoms. They understood this, and then they just tried to kick him out. So, I went there to advocate for the family and the boy, and I insisted on having a board meeting. So, the board members are all parents, so they understand better than the school. (Educator/School Counsellor)

So, I became uneasy. After hanging up the phone, I had to go to debrief and to ask my colleagues and I said, "I'm so angry." (Educator/School Counsellor)

I also have regular supervision. I am very lucky. My supervisor is in this field and has also supported sexual violence survivors. (Educator/School Counsellor)

Culturally sensitive support: Participants shared that culturally sensitive support and community-based approaches are important for effectively addressing the diverse needs of young Asian people affected by sexual violence.

Because I am a counsellor and I understand Korean culture. I just provide the services in a culturally appropriate way. So, the parents feel more comfortable, and the teenagers are comfortable, so they disclose. (Educator/School Counsellor)

One of the things that has come out when I am providing support to young people is that the ethnicity pairing helps. And sometimes the gender helps as well. About the psychologist [pointing at her drawing], and so, one of the things that a lot of the young people have said is that it helps to speak with somebody who is Asian and female. (Educator/School Counsellor)

The experiences shared by participants underscore deep-rooted systemic issues within the education system, particularly when supporting young people affected by sexual violence. A prominent barrier is the lack of empathy and cultural understanding demonstrated by school leaders. Educators recounted instances where school management responded to students with mental health challenges by applying punitive measures, such as expulsion, instead of offering adequate support. This lack of empathy not only exacerbates students' trauma but also alienates them further from the education system, perpetuating their sense of isolation and helplessness.

Furthermore, the narratives revealed a significant oversight in addressing cultural and language needs. The dismissal of these critical aspects of care, as seen in the accounts of principals removing ethnic counsellors or refusing to engage with students due to language barriers, highlights a profound gap in cultural competency. Such actions send a message that cultural diversity is a burden rather than a strength. This failure to accommodate non-English-speaking students not only hinders their access to support but also invalidates their lived experiences.

Additionally, the unique needs of international students remain grossly overlooked. Participants expressed frustration at the transactional approach schools take toward these students, viewing them primarily as sources of income rather than as individuals deserving of protection and care. This attitude not only perpetuates the marginalisation of international students but also signifies a broader systemic disregard for the wellbeing of minority populations within the education system.

The findings from these narratives make it evident that schools are not adequately prepared to support young Asian people affected by sexual violence. These findings address that enhancing the enablers in the educational support system is crucial, working together to create a nurturing, empathic and responsive environment that addresses the needs of students and their families, ensuring their wellbeing and academic success.

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Expectations of an ideal support system

Empowerment focused

Empowerment is a fundamental aspect of providing effective support in educational settings. It involves giving young Asian people the agency to understand and navigate their cultural identities, build resilience, and develop independence. This theme delves into various dimensions of empowerment, including cultural understanding, skill development, validation, self-care, and independence.

Cultural understanding: Participants shared insights about how understanding cultural identity is crucial for the empowerment of young Asian people. It involves recognising the diverse meanings of cultural affiliation and providing a space for young Asian individuals to explore and affirm their identities.

I think I would start with maybe getting an idea of what their culture means to them. Because I think there's a lot of different ideas about what being Asian means, you know, and so, getting an idea of that would then sort of put me in a better position to understand what matters to them, rather than assuming certain things. So that would be something that gives them the agency and empowerment to decide what's important for them.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

Another school counsellor expressed her understanding through a poetic exploration:

Somewhere where they can belong

Practice their rights and wrongs

Allowing themselves the ability to

Care for their own personal song because

Everyone deserves space.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

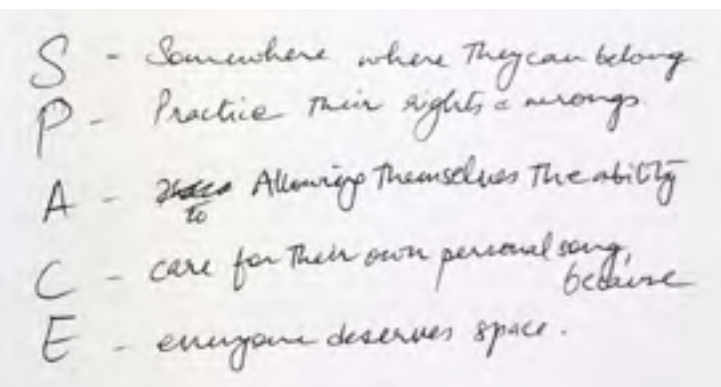


Figure 4: Participant's poetic exploration

Validation and Positive Narratives: Participants highlighted that validation and recognition of young people's strengths and achievements are essential for empowerment. Shifting the focus from traumatic events to positive aspects of young Asian people's identities helps in building more balanced and affirming self-narratives.

Just getting validation – getting information like “that’s really good work”, or someone providing them with something other than what’s happened to them. To provide, “Now, let’s just centre that about you and make that a really cool part of your narrative.” It’s like, actually, this person can be a really amazing athlete, or could be really great at a particular subject. That kind of [support] gets lost sometimes because there’s so much focus on the events that happened to them when they’re engaging with services. So, it [the event] becomes so big, and all those other aspects of them kind of [become] diminished or washed away. Yeah, it’s almost like there’s a hyper-focus.
(Educator/School Counsellor)

We need to bring people together, the people [who] have children with sexual violence, trauma or not; and giving them the power to start talking, “What are some of the ways that they are supporting their children?” Right, and not even starting with sexual violence and just saying, for example, parenting. Some of the things like, “What is your strength?” (Educator/School Counsellor)

And part of it is because I say, “Okay, what are some of the things you did this week that helped?” They might say: “I got up to help my child with breakfast. We had three meals a day. I was able to send the money back. I was able to teach my kid how to ask for help for anything.” That is a success. (Educator/School Counsellor)

Skill development: Participants also expressed their need for necessary skills to navigate challenges. These skills are foundational for maintaining wellbeing and personal growth.

Well, they need some skills too. Hope is very important, skills are also very important, and a sense of control and power is also very important. (Educator/School Counsellor)

Resilient, after everyone accepts it, you need to be able to withstand pressure and have resilience. Otherwise, you will not be able to withstand what actually happened. This is also a skill. (Educator/School Counsellor)

I think that if support is provided, it should aim to help individuals become independent, teaching them how to manage their emotions and develop self-awareness. That’s what I believe is the ideal form of support.
(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Self-care and independence: Empowerment is closely linked to fostering independence and self-care skills. Encouraging young Asians to take ownership of their wellbeing, make their own decisions and recognise their successes fosters the foundation of self-reliance and personal growth.

- ▶ Experiences with support services
- ▶ Impact from peers
- ▶ Impact from caregivers
- ▶ Impact of cultural norms and beliefs
- ▶ Experiences within the education system
- ▶ Expectations of an ideal support system

And nurturing is about nurturing yourself instead of relying on others for sustenance. It's about self-care and making your own decisions, having your own voice that's a form of independence as well.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

I think for a long time, I've relied on the systems, whether it's a school, often it was school, or like therapy, or whatever. I was really counting on outside influences to make me better. Even if I was willing to get better, when I was younger, I didn't really understand that I had to put in almost all of the work myself. Whereas now I'm getting virtually no help from any systems. But I'm doing all the work myself; I've got my own goals; I'm working on my own things. And that's been the key to getting better. So, to see the picture of where I am now compared to then, it's very nice to see the growth. It is a quite new thing.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Independence. I think the support system should be set up to help young Asian people become independent, just as my mum has supported me to be able to live independently.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

I think in terms of applying trauma-informed care, sort of principles, wanting, I guess from a practitioner perspective, wanting to give choice to this person who's sitting with me rather than imposing.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

Self-awareness: Some participants discussed that it was crucial for them to find motivation within themselves and develop self-awareness for help-seeking.

I know I need help. There's no shame. I don't have to talk to anyone about it. I don't even have to vocalise it if I don't want to. I just let myself accept the reality of it, which is sad, because when you think about yourself as a child and then that situation, it's not great. But as soon as I wanted help, I recognised I needed it. I found it.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

If you've got your own motivation to break through it, then you can feel people's help; even though that help might not be that strong, it gives you more strength to go out.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

I'd say instead of [school counsellor] or my support systems trying to outshine or break through this wall, maybe they could help me feel empowered so that I can break through this initial layer myself. And then from there, it's much easier for them to support me.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Creating positive and supportive cultures: Some participants highlighted that creating a positive and supportive culture within educational settings is crucial for empowerment of these young individuals. It involves fostering an environment where young Asian people feel safe to express themselves, seek help and recognise their potential for growth.

I grew up in an environment surrounded by alcohol and drugs, but I chose not to consume them. Creating new environments and fostering new thoughts on development are all parts of growth and independence, and self-reliance. Also learning when to ask for help.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Like I'm watching Sex Education season four at the moment, and they have a very supportive school culture, the new fancy school there. And the culture is very much talk about it, talk about your issues, talk about your problems, people will help you. Yeah. And so even if I don't want to talk about it, I'd feel better knowing that I could, if I wanted to. And so, knowing that you'll have a positive experience if you disclose, or if you seek help. It is very critical, to at least allow myself to do it. When I find that I have the option to say no, I'm more likely to say yes. So, if I have the option to not say anything, I might actually say something.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Positive culture, so like, it's like you believe the victim, like there's no victim blaming.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Because in school, in our early years, that's where we're learning about the world. We're learning about ourselves; we're learning how to treat others. And so, if we recognise the inherent strength, power and potential of everyone, we're already living in a better world.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

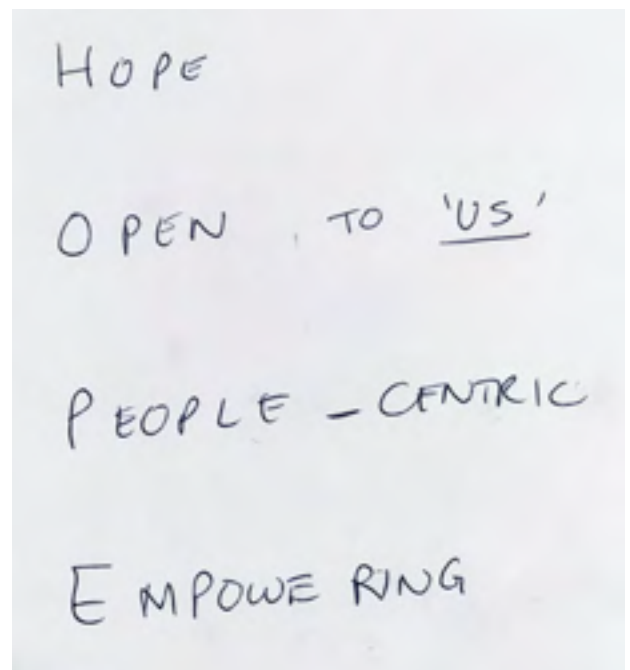


Figure 5: Participant's poetic exploration

These narratives addressed that empowerment-focused support in educational settings involves understanding and valuing cultural identities of young people. It is also crucial to create positive and supportive environments for young people to develop essential skills, gain self-motivation, and get validation for their personal growth.

- ▶ Experiences with support services
- ▶ Impact from peers
- ▶ Impact from caregivers
- ▶ Impact of cultural norms and beliefs
- ▶ Experiences within the education system
- ▶ Expectations of an ideal support system

Person-centred approach

A person-centred approach emphasises the importance of understanding and responding to individual needs, perspectives and experiences. This approach involves recognising the unique circumstances of each young individual, providing tailored support, and fostering an environment of respect, empathy and growth. Participants' narratives highlighted the importance of cultural sensitivity, empathy, individual growth and trauma-informed care.

Cultural sensitivity and empathy: Some participants explored the importance of understanding and respect of the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of young Asian people.

If we take the epistemological approach of social constructivism, everyone has their own truth, and they might think this is the truth. And someone asked me: "Is this the truth?" They don't necessarily have to align, but they can both be true for that person.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Compassionate caring for individuals. Able to work together collectively. Respond with cultural sensitivity. Engage and feel ... because I think engaging is the first part of how we work with this stuff.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

A young Asian individual discussed her perspectives from her learning of Māori cultural knowledge:

You know, how we've got like restorative justice processes, like having that kind of manaakitanga [expressing kindness and respect for others, emphasising responsibility and reciprocity] in our processes. And in the culture, we want everyone to grow and improve. We don't necessarily punish everyone. Like identifying, "You are the perpetrator, so you are bad."

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

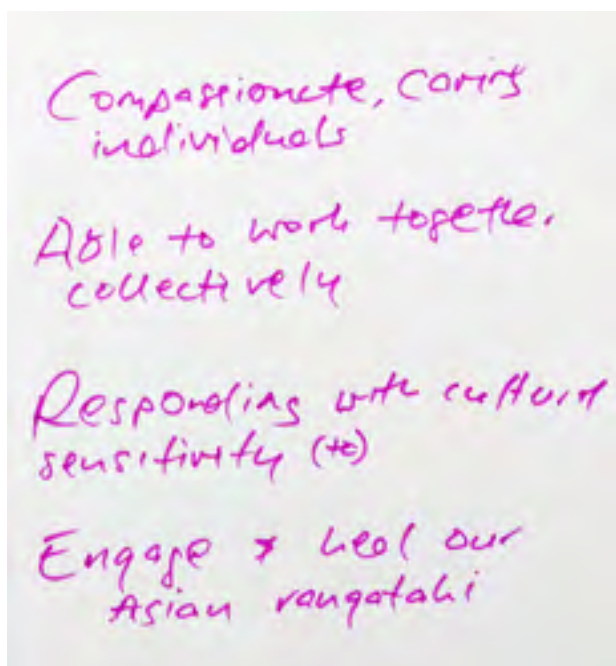


Figure 6: Participant's poetic exploration

Recognising individual differences: Participants' narratives highlighted that individuals have different potentials, skills, and knowledge; therefore, different needs.

Everyone's got this ability to grow, to unfurl, to be better, and move through the stages. You're not staying here. You're not stuck here forever. So, recognising that everyone has the potential to improve, to grow, to be better.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

I think in high school, they always teach you how to manage your sadness and stuff like that, but they never really go through why, where it came from, you know, what might have led to it? What kind of things in your childhood caused this? And then how you can undo it?

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

So, it's like I'm somewhere in the middle, represented by the blue and pink. Some males may want to be all blue or all pink. I feel there was no one available to discuss these complexities with me in my situation.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

I think we need to recognise that not everyone has the same tools and skills, and not everyone has the same kind of sexual health literacy.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

I think an ideal support and ideal situation would be people just being open and not judging; and just having an open mind for different types of people, different types of learning, different types of situations.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Difference means recognising that everyone is different. And everyone is in a different stage of acceptance, a different stage of resilience. (Educator/School Counsellor)

I think someone from different disciplines, in terms of the way we hold for the student, will be bound by different rules, professional bodies and different codes of ethics because of the discipline of the profession that they're coming from; the duty of care looks slightly different, as well. Because I guess, as a therapist, or as a counsellor, my priority is this person. This is who I'm most concerned about because this is the person that is sitting in the room with me, in terms of the institution, or the school, or wherever it might be. (Educator/School Counsellor)

Building trust and rapport: Fostering trusting relationships is essential for a person-centred approach. Consistency, openness and non-judgmental attitudes help young Asian individuals feel safe and supported.

So, having someone like that in a school, especially when a student is struggling or in distress or panicking or whatever it is, to sit with them and provide support can make a significant difference. It's important to have one consistent person you go to so that trust and a strong relationship can develop. That would be ideal.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

- ▶ Experiences with support services
- ▶ Impact from peers
- ▶ Impact from caregivers
- ▶ Impact of cultural norms and beliefs
- ▶ Experiences within the education system
- ▶ Expectations of an ideal support system

If people allow me a safe space, they make it me-centred, then I can have the strength to overcome my own burden. I really liked the idea of person-centred therapy, thinking about it from a non-medical model way. So, like, making someone feel that their emotions are valid. But also, helping them understand that there is help for them.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

First, we accept your reality. Then we give you the tools and power for you to choose. We believe you. We let you do it in your own way.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

You can have your issues there without being judged by anything around you. In an ideal world, you know, the relationships you build with a therapist are very strong. In an ideal world, we'd have that kind of place for everyone, where they can kind of just come in, do something, anything that they want to do. And then afterwards, they can talk to someone that they feel safe with and that they trust, knowing they'll be helped.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Age-appropriateness: Some participants commented that a person-centred approach needs to be age-appropriate for young people.

I suggest you never let young people do question papers or forms, that kind of thing, "yes, no, very enjoyable", that kind of thing. I remember taking a PTSD test, which asked me to choose from five answers to test my level. I think people can't learn anything about me through this kind of test. *(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)*

Another young Asian survivor discussed creativity methods for working with young people and children:

I feel like art therapy can be really helpful for children, especially in primary school. When you're younger, you don't have those preconceptions or judgments; you're just a kid. But in high school, if someone had asked me to draw my feelings, I would have probably refused, thinking it sounded stupid. So, I believe it would be really beneficial to introduce these practices to children and teach them these concepts at a young age. Whether it's about sex education or other aspects of mental health, I think it's something that's really important to learn when you're young, rather than introducing it when problems have already occurred and become big issues for people.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

These narratives show the need for a personal-centred and age-appropriate approach in support systems within educational settings. By understanding and responding to the unique needs, skills and experiences, the schools can provide effective support that fosters growth, resilience and empowerment.

Bridging parent–youth communication

Bridging the communication gap between caregivers/parents and youth is crucial for fostering mutual understanding and support. Participants discussed various perspectives on the importance

of connecting caregivers/parents and young Asian students, particularly in the context of different cultural backgrounds and the challenges faced by immigrant families.

Role of educational institutions: Educational institutions play a pivotal role in bridging the communication gap between caregivers/parents and young Asian people.

If schools and universities can really support, the most important thing they should do is to have a small organisation or individual teachers that can serve as a bridge between parents and children. *(Caregiver)*

I think what my high school counsellor was doing when she was trying to explain things to my mum, it was really good. *(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)*

I would probably start with family, improving connections. My mum can reach me here [pointing to her drawing]. My mum and I can work together to make me feel better, help each other, and understand each other better. We can offer support to each other in a way that's helpful for both of us. *(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)*

A school counsellor suggested psychoeducation workshops for young Asian students and their parents, particularly for international students:

I think there should be pre- and post-psychoeducation workshops. I think it is very necessary, including talking to parents. Parents should also be aware of this and what are the risks of these children coming here ... It's about understanding what problems they might encounter and what are some common problems for international students. I think both parents and students need to understand. *(Educator/School Counsellor)*

Cultural understanding of parent–child relationships: Some participants highlighted that recognising and understanding the collectivist cultural values of some Asian subcultures, such as family unity and hierarchy, can help bridge cultural gaps and improve the support provided to the young Asian people and their families.

Because we are a collectivist culture, many things are planned by parents for their children. We do not encourage children to fall out with their parents and become too independent, so the information received by parents and children should be the same and cannot be disconnected. *(Educator/School Counsellor)*

I think more education for people who have migrated to a new country, especially on understanding and respecting new cultures, could be helpful. For my mum, her Chinese heritage was stolen, and she did not talk to anyone about it ... The way [mental health service provider] explained to her that what she was doing was harmful was really beneficial. If this kind of education and understanding were more accessible or established early on, it would help people like my mum and others in similar situations feel less scared and more supported.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

- ▶ Experiences with support services
- ▶ Impact from peers
- ▶ Impact from caregivers
- ▶ Impact of cultural norms and beliefs
- ▶ Experiences within the education system
- ▶ Expectations of an ideal support system

Integrated support system

An integrated support system for young Asian survivors and their families involves coordinated efforts from schools, communities, and government entities to provide holistic care. Participants' narratives pointed out the need for collective effort and a unified approach to support young Asian people.

Integrated service: Schools play a crucial role as primary support providers in the support system. These perspectives collectively highlight the need for an integrated service model where schools act as central hubs, offering seamless, culturally sensitive, and holistic support to address the complex needs of young Asian people.

Looking at how I felt as a teenager or how I felt when I was struggling, so much of it is tied to the system that I have to deal with on a daily basis, whether it's the school system, government system or medical system, or whatever it is that I have to deal with so much constantly. So much of how I am feeling or struggles I have to face are because the system is so poorly designed for people like me. It doesn't allow people like me to flourish in society. I think that affects a lot of my life. So, whether it's school or anything else, so [many] of the systems have been designed that way. (Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

There should be one specific government department to support young people. It should be the Ministry of Youth. In the same space, it is a kind of one-stop shopping. (Educator/School Counsellor)

When I think about care, it is the continuity of the care. Culturally responsive. Compassion. Healing. I want to say, like barrier-free, that'd be nice. (Educator/School Counsellor)

Building partnerships: Participants highlighted the importance of building partnerships between schools and community-based support providers to alleviate the pressure on educational institutions and ensure continuous care for young Asian people affected by sexual violence.

I hope the school can consider putting some work in the community, just like mental health, just like a health coach, which means putting it in the community or GP clinics. In fact, this can reduce the burden [on the schools]. (Educator/School Counsellor)

You can't do support work without schools. I think that, after all, the school is their caregiver, and the school is the primary caregiver. We only work with students on a short-term basis. In the end, we have to go back to school, and we need partnership, instead of letting us take responsibility and the school does nothing. It is not right! (Educator/School Counsellor)

It's a bit like the concept of a walk-in clinic. Once a week, they really come to our school. It's more regular. If students are interested or need it, they can come over at that time and learn more about it ... High quality, I think this support needs to be of high quality ... the people who can come are experienced, good people rather than anyone else. If we really have this system, it will also be a good quality person and expert. (Educator/School Counsellor)

Accessibility and availability: Making support services and spaces accessible and available regularly within educational settings is important for young Asian people to receive the timely and necessary assistance when they need it.

I really hope that people from HELP, or ACC therapists, can come to school, maybe one day a week, just come to our school. Because our school also has other agencies, is it possible to make it more regular, where a specialist can come one day a week, and then students can come to consult and talk? Because a counsellor is one profession, but the specialist is specialised, and then students know that if they are interested or need it, they can come, such as during lunchtime. (Educator/School Counsellor)

I think this system should be allocated on demand, instead of only doing three sessions like now. It means that if you need short-term service, it will be short term, if you need long-term service, it will be long term, and this service should be sustainable. It is a service that anyone can access. I hope we can set up a service like this, which is available everywhere in New Zealand, namely an easy access service. Also, there is no pressure – any international students in different languages can be served. (Educator/School Counsellor)

These narratives highlighted the need for dedicated collaborations between schools, communities, health providers and government to create an environment that provides holistic and continuous support for young Asian people affected by sexual violence and their families.

Culturally responsive support

Participants discussed the importance of culturally responsive, language-appropriate communication and cultural understanding of the unique needs of diverse communities, particularly Asian and other ethnic groups.

Language appropriation: For some caregivers/parents who came from immigration or refugee backgrounds, the language barrier impacted their engagements with educational institutions.

I think schools and universities, since they recruit Asian immigrants, should first understand the family situations of these Asian immigrants. If there is only a single mother, whose English is not good, can the school meet with the parents and introduce the school or university? (Caregiver)

Occasionally our school has events such as those about online bullying, and from time to time, there will be an event for parents to come and talk about online bullying, but I think we need to have one specifically for Asians and one that speaks Chinese. Because most of the evening events are in English. If there are Chinese speakers, there should be a parenting evening or something like that. (Educator/School Counsellor)

A school counsellor addressed the need for culturally and linguistically appropriate support for international students:

There should be multifaceted support, equality, and it must be respectful. Culturally and linguistically appropriate. Because we should give these students who come to study abroad a good New Zealand experience, so mental health is indispensable. (Educator/School Counsellor)

- ▶ Experiences with support services
- ▶ Impact from peers
- ▶ Impact from caregivers
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- ▶ Experiences within the education system
- ▶ Expectations of an ideal support system

Language-appropriate support is not only about providing language translation services, but also reflects including cultural perspectives in providing knowledge and support. A school counsellor addressed translation through a cultural lens:

I think sometimes having people from a similar culture being able to recognise how to talk about these things with a cultural lens would be incredibly helpful. Yes, yes. Because you're speaking the language both conceptually and linguistically sometimes. Because sometimes there isn't even the word, in terms of being able to translate it exactly. It's more like it's something that's roundabout or like a concept. It's not even about having someone who can translate it into a pamphlet. It's like actually having someone who understands how we operate culturally. Why is this difficult? Why is this taboo? What is the history behind it? Because it will be laced with all sorts of historical things as well. (Educator/School Counsellor)

A young Asian individual provided her understanding of how cultures live within languages from her Māori language learning experience:

You can't learn Māori language without learning about te ao Māori. It is just not possible, and you shouldn't do it. So, when you learn about the culture and you learn the language, then you really recognise the depth of kaitiakitanga, which is far more than stewardship or guardianship. It is an alliance with everything about Mother Earth, protecting the earth.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Cultural responsibility: Working with young Asian people affected by sexual violence and their families also requires cultural understanding, cultural awareness and cultural knowledge.

I think a big part of especially working with Asian or ethnic communities is cultural supervision. I think that's quite important, in terms of being a practitioner, working with someone of an Asian ethnicity, actually having the right cultural support as well, like someone who understands those kinds of layers. I think that's a very big part of it.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

Another school counsellor addressed the need to provide support that is specifically culturally responsive for international students:

Ideally, there would be some support like this before they [international students] come. I think there needs to be an orientation, that is, one before arriving overseas, and then another orientation after arriving. It's not individual, but general. Tell them what to do if they encounter any problems, such as gambling problems, alcohol problems, friendship problems, relationships, homesickness, stress, and sexual health. (Educator/School Counsellor)

A young Asian individual discussed her view about considering cultural appropriateness in psychological assessment:

The kind of assessment that can be discarded when appropriate. Psychology needs to understand why people do what they do and whether they would lie if they did it. For example, the question, "Have you ever been sexually

assaulted?" Maybe out of 100 people, 99 people would choose "no". But that's the bias. Because everyone will take into account their own dignity, whether they will be exposed to the public, and other factors. So, there is no point in doing that form.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Another young Asian individual highlighted the need to consider cultural adaptation into culturally responsive support:

The way that I viewed the values of Ahimsa, which is non-violence, which is one of the fundamental parts of Hinduism. You think about respect for other people; that's their duty to care for the environment. They all come through te reo Māori qualities, like manaakitanga. You've got all of these things that are reflected often in indigenous cultures because we all have the inherent understanding that the Earth and nature are fundamental.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

These narratives suggest that culturally responsive and language-appropriate support are vital for effectively assisting young Asian people and their families. This involves cultural understanding, culturally tailored communication strategies, and the provision of linguistically and culturally appropriate resources.

Ideal healing spaces

Participants expressed the need for accessible and comfortable spaces to foster a supportive environment for young Asian people affected by sexual violence. Participants explored the importance of providing creative, safe and welcoming spaces where young Asian people can feel comfortable and supported.

Non-clinical space: Creating non-clinical, welcoming spaces with a calming atmosphere can reduce the stigma and fear associated with help-seeking.

I didn't want it to be like just somewhere that's very clinical, like a hospital room or something like that because it feels quite scary.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

I think it is best to give the students a place to talk. The rooms are warm coloured, the surroundings are not so harsh, they are very calm. And best of all, the people who work there are not wearing white coats. Unlike that hospital, when I went to get my depression medication, I was scared to death when I saw those people with white coats. (Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Spaces for making connections: The need for welcoming spaces that foster community and connections was emphasised by participants, highlighting the importance of creating environments that encourage social interaction and personal growth.

For example, if we provide a space, we can find a foreign teacher, but it's better if they can speak a little bit of Chinese, like the EF English in China, which is a foreign teacher and a bunch of international students. We can talk about our lives and learn a few words every day.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

- ▶ Experiences with support services
- ▶ Impact from peers
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- ▶ Expectations of an ideal support system

“I didn’t want it to be like just somewhere that’s very clinical, like a hospital room or something like that, because it feels quite scary.”

Some free room. Just provide food, and also some therapeutic tools. You know, we use some soft ones, kind of therapeutic tools – just free rooms. When they go there, they can feel free eating food, listening to music and doing art. And they just accompany each other.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

For example, we can study astronomy, plant flowers and trees, or go to the farm to help out, or rehearse musical instruments together, or we can go painting, and someone will teach us how to paint different things. I think these are more rewarding than those that are short term.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Creative and healing space: Incorporating creative activities into support spaces can be beneficial for young Asian people, particularly those who may find it challenging to express themselves verbally.

I think sometimes being in a space that’s set up like a garden or something they can do, which is tangible as well, because I think for some young people, if linguistically they’re not able to necessarily talk about this, we can do something; whether it’s art space or just like sometimes, I’ve worked with people where we also play a board game. You know, when you can use characters on the board game to sometimes explain things, or it can be

a bit more of an abstract way, especially when working with like neurodiverse people as well. Because simply putting in words is very difficult for some people. So, I think having external spaces whether it’s out [in] nature, whether it’s something by the sea, or some way that it feels really safe, but also having tactile things as well, not just asking someone to come into a room and having to share something that’s so hard. (Educator/School Counsellor)

I think that’s why those more neutral spaces, like those outdoor spaces, are something that also heals. The connection to other aspects of our being also serves a really important purpose for us.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

I’d prefer somewhere with colours, not too colourful, but with some variety, not too boring. And yeah, maybe it could be a place where you have the option to be creative or, you know, like sometimes in high school when I was in the waiting room if no one else was there, I would push all the chairs to the side and do yoga or something to try and calm myself down. Somewhere that allows people to engage in creative or calming activities without being overly stimulating, yeah.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

- ▶ Experiences with support services
- ▶ Impact from peers
- ▶ Impact from caregivers
- ▶ Impact of cultural norms and beliefs
- ▶ Experiences within the education system
- ▶ Expectations of an ideal support system

I think the vibe of the space is very calm. I find those colours calming and soothing. That's how I imagine the space, whether it's an outdoor space like a garden or a room. Somewhere with low sensory stimuli and cooling colours, not too many, just the right balance.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

These narratives vividly depict ideal healing spaces, incorporating tactile and creative activities. By being mindful and creative and addressing these aspects, education systems can create more supportive, inclusive and comfortable environments for fostering connections and supporting the wellbeing of young people.

Destigmatisation

Participants' narratives revealed the importance of addressing stigma and facilitating open discussion about sensitive issues such as mental health and sexual violence in Asian communities. This highlights the need for education and engagement with the community.

Encouraging open discussion: Participants revealed the need to address and dismantle the pervasive sense of shame associated with discussing sexual violence within the community. They emphasised the importance of reframing these conversations to show that sharing experiences is not shameful but a necessary step towards healing.

Allowing them to realise that it's not shameful to share these experiences, and to explain to them that shame is like a tool that society came up with to keep people in check. (Educator/School Counsellor)

For those sometimes coming into those spaces, that kind of perpetuates the idea of the secrecy, the shame, you have to come and do this, and you have to do this in a very small room, no one must know about it ... That perpetuates that idea, the shame. Whereas if it was like a safe enough space, somewhere, you know, where people still felt like they were surrounded by trees or whatever, and no one could hear or whatever, they're still kind of removing some of that sort of "you need to come into a sacred space and talk about the shame of yours" or whatever they carry.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

I would like to facilitate discussions among males because, as a male who grew up in a similar situation, I've noticed that some other males have also been through similar experiences, and it has affected them in various ways. This can lead to mental health issues like gender dysphoria and more. I believe it's important for all males, regardless of their identity, to engage in these discussions ... I believe these discussions are important, but I also believe they should be led by individuals who have experienced it.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Community engagement: Participants discussed their views about engaging the community to address stigma around sensitive issues such as mental health and sexual violence. These narratives indicated the time and patience needed for raising awareness around mental health and sexual violence in the community.

Particularly because cultural significance is placed on knowledge. I think with Filipinos, in particular, it is really important to inform "This has happened, and these other things can happen as a result of your mental health."

I don't think that's a widely known thing.

(Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

I think we can keep working on things like stigma, especially culturally. I think that will take some time, but if we can take away the cultural stigma by having more education, and by having more access to that, and not just within the school community, but the school community being connected really well with the external community. So, it's not just contained in the microcosm of the school – the school is also connected with the community.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

A school counsellor suggested that the engagement with the community needs to be culturally sensitive, being mindful of the different levels of understanding and awareness of sexual violence in Asian communities.

As researchers or the people in the community working with sexual violence survivors, we are thinking about this because we read about it every single day and we do research on this every single day, so we are already there. When we get them into a room, and then we think they are already in the space here, they are with us in this metaphorical space. But they're not there. My biggest issue is that if we are there, in a different space at a different time, prospectively, and they are here, then it's so much easier to label our communities that they have a stigma against sexual violence. I don't think so. I think that if we can start the conversations from here, reinforcing, "Hey, you did well!" who knows? Maybe the parents will have the intuition to figure out and point it out.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

Addressing stigma and facilitating open conversation requires a multifaceted approach that includes education, creating safe and non-judgmental spaces, and engaging with the needs of the community. It requires cultural sensitivity and understanding to foster an environment where people from various Asian subcultures feel supported and empowered to share their perspectives and experiences without fear of shame and judgment.

Holistic community building

Participants' narratives highlighted the importance of community involvement in generating and sharing knowledge and supporting both individuals and the collective wellbeing of the Asian communities. It addressed the importance of interconnectedness between schools, caregivers/parents and the broader community in creating a holistic support system for young Asian people.

Community-based knowledge production: Participants emphasised the importance of gaining knowledge from the community and producing knowledge for the community.

- ▶ Experiences with support services
- ▶ Impact from peers
- ▶ Impact from caregivers
- ▶ Impact of cultural norms and beliefs
- ▶ Experiences within the education system
- ▶ Expectations of an ideal support system



Figure 7: Visual response to participants' artworks.

That knowledge needs to come from the people at the back [adding elements to her drawing]. I can't produce that knowledge. Academics can't produce that just on their own, psychology as a field can't produce that on their own. It needs to come from a community. So, it comes from the community, it goes out in the community, regurgitates, comes out, there's a loop. (Educator/School Counsellor)

... these different people that have been part of their community. Whether it's friends or family, they've got all those threads that come out, learning from other people. (Educator/School Counsellor)

Community connectedness: Supporting the Asian communities, supporting caregivers/parents and young Asian people through education and other resources is beneficial for building holistic community support for young Asian people affected by sexual violence.

So, it's not just like the school community, not just the parents, but there were also links to more communities, and I guess all of these people talk [this topic] and think as well, I think that could be really helpful. But not necessarily, again, speaking about this particular person but speaking about, how do we as a whole community, if this happens, or when this happens, or whatever it might be, if we come across this, how do we operate as a community, not just the school community, but as a whole community, you know, to support.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

I mean, within I think everyone is kind of held, like the school was also held by the community. And then the community is also connected to the school.

(Educator/School Counsellor)

Community inspiration: Fundamental values and cultural wisdom can be positive forces that drive community support systems.

A young Asian individual talked about the wisdom and strengths of her culture:

It gives us wisdom and conviction, and that gives us empathy. I think that is a concept that is often not inherent in the West – I feel that, anyway. Empathy is inherent to me, to my mum and to my family, therefore, I can inherit my culture. That comes from, again, not having the individualism. It's an altruistic nature that is embedded in empathy. (Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Another young Asian individual explored her learning from her adopted culture, and described her cultural understanding of kaupapa:

I always find that when we align on the same vision and on the same kaupapa, that is at the heart of what everyone does. That's when we get the best results if the vision and the kaupapa are to nurture and support the growth of every child, and every student, then everything should support that. A strengths-based approach supports, having a trust-first system and having all of these kinds of things that all align with that kaupapa. So, if you can make sure everyone is aligned with the kaupapa then you should have an environment and a system where the teachers, the processes, and the culture support that. (Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

This young Asian summarised her perspective about community power with a Māori proverb:

Nāku te rourou, nāu te rourou, ka ora ai te iwi – With your basket and my basket, the people will thrive. (Young Asian person affected by sexual violence)

Community-driven knowledge and support are vital for fostering a holistic community support system for young Asian people affected by sexual violence. By engaging the community, embracing cultural wisdoms, and providing integrated support for the community, a nurturing and supportive environment for all members of the community can be formed.

- ▶ Experiences with support services
- ▶ Impact from peers
- ▶ Impact from caregivers
- ▶ Impact of cultural norms and beliefs
- ▶ Experiences within the education system
- ▶ Expectations of an ideal support system



Nāku te rourou, nāu te rourou, ka ora ai te iwi – With your basket and my basket, the people will thrive.

An ideal support system for young Asian people affected by sexual violence must be comprehensive, integrated, and culturally responsive to both the individual and collective needs of the Asian communities. Participants highlighted the importance of a coordinated approach that brings together schools, healthcare providers, and government entities to ensure holistic care. Schools, in particular, should serve as central hubs, offering culturally sensitive and trauma-informed support for the students. This model needs to reduce the fragmentation of services, making it easier for young people to access consistent, high-quality care.

Interconnectedness between schools and community-based support services is critical to alleviate the pressure on educational institutions and ensure sustained, accessible care. A collaborative framework involving health services, community organisations, and schools would ensure that support is available both within and outside the educational environment. Participants emphasised the need for schools to partner with experts in mental health and trauma-informed care, to provide specialised support on a regular basis, allowing students to seek help without stigma or delay. Such a system should not be limited to short-term interventions but instead adapt to the evolving needs of survivors, offering both short-term and long-term support as required. This would allow for more sustainable, accessible, and inclusive services, catering to young people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, including international students.

By embedding a trauma-informed, culturally responsive care model into the very fabric of educational institutions, the support system can ensure that young Asian people affected by sexual violence are not left to navigate fragmented, inadequate services, but are instead met with compassion, expertise, and sustained assistance.

Discussion

This project explores the experiences and expectations of young Asian survivors of sexual violence in seeking and receiving support within the education system in New Zealand. To date, there is a lack of research focusing on the experiences of young Asian sexual violence survivors. This project aims to gain insight into the lived experiences of young Asian survivors, their caregivers, and educators regarding the young survivors' journeys of seeking support and receiving support within schools. The findings underscore six broad themes and various subthemes. By addressing the research questions, this discussion aims to understand the barriers these survivors face for receiving support and highlight innovative and culturally responsive approaches that can improve their support systems.



What are the Asian sexual violence survivors' experiences of getting support from schools?

Participants reported a range of experiences in seeking support within the education system. These experiences encompassed interactions with help-professionals, teachers, peers, and caregivers/parents. Overall, young Asian people affected by sexual violence faced numerous barriers relating to disclosure, help-seeking, and receiving effective support from support systems, which negatively impacted their mental health, relationships, social engagement, and academic performance.

Complicated journey of obtaining support from help-professionals

This study revealed that young Asian people affected by sexual violence faced accessibility issues when seeking support. Struggling to access timely and consistent support had a profound impact on their mental health and academic performance, leading to feelings of overwhelm, anxiety, and depression. Findings indicate that long waiting times for appointments and irregular interventions were common obstacles hindering survivors' ability to receive necessary support services. This, in turn, affected their academic achievements and social interactions, compounding their sense of isolation and distress. The likelihood of young Asian people affected by sexual violence to trust the support systems may also be influenced by their formal experiences with the support system, such as their limited exposure to formal counselling (Das et al., 2023). When young Asian people face difficulties in getting timely, sufficient, regular, and long-term appointments from mental health and counselling services, their trust in the support system may be diminished. Additionally, temporary and otherwise insufficient support make young Asian individuals feel unsupported or unable to share their experiences and needs fully.

The narratives from participants portrayed complicated lived experiences regarding their attempts to gain support and the inadequate support services subsequently received from mental health help-professionals. Some participants disclosed instances where young survivors were further traumatised due to the lack of trauma-informed care within the support system. Indeed, the need for trauma-informed care was a recurring theme in the participants' narratives. Trauma-informed care approaches, which recognise the widespread impact of trauma and integrate this understanding into support practices, are crucial for helping survivors feel safe and supported (Sweeney et al., 2018). This finding aligns with previous studies, emphasising the need for help-professionals to receive comprehensive training in trauma-informed care to adequately understand and address the needs of young Asian people affected by sexual violence.

Participants discussed their negative experiences with culturally insensitive and unempathetic support providers. This lack of cultural competence and understanding deterred survivors from seeking and maintaining contact with support services. Disparities and assumptions in understanding cultural context were apparent in participants' narratives and resonate with studies that addressed the lack of understanding of young Asian people's culture and specific needs, which reduced young survivors' willingness to seek or maintain professional help

(Gill & Harrison, 2019). Experiences of discrimination, racism, or cultural misunderstanding in the support system contribute to the lack of trust among young Asian survivors (Anandavalli, 2022; Roberts et al., 2016). Some narratives from our study also addressed that being of Asian ethnic cultural background does not automatically mean being culturally competent in working with the Asian communities. There were cases of assumption and cultural bias within Asian ethnic help-professionals that addressed the complexity of working with Asian immigrant families and young people due to different levels of acculturation and different life experiences.

Complicated journey of obtaining support from schools

It was evident from our findings that the education providers sometimes failed to provide effective and appropriate support for young Asian sexual violence survivors. Some staff members, including school leaders, educators, and school counselors, lacked the understanding, empathy, training, and cultural competence required to address the unique needs of these young survivors. This inadequacy was compounded by a disconnection between the young Asian survivors' caregivers/parents and the education providers, which included both secondary and tertiary education institutions. Language limitations and poor knowledge of the healthcare system among parents contribute to young Asian people's limited awareness and access to sexual, reproductive, and mental health services (Peiris-John et al., 2016). Participants' narratives in our study highlighted a critical gap in the realm of resources and culturally appropriate support from schools aimed at supporting the Asian communities.

Previous studies point out that it is crucial to provide culturally sensitive services to children and families in the Asian communities to avoid the risk of inadequate support (Sawrikar & Katz, 2017). Cultural awareness is essential for professionals, such as educators and school counsellors, working with the Asian communities, and they should engage in ongoing training and self-reflection to prevent biases and stereotyping (Fontes & Plummer, 2010). Existing literature emphasises the urgent need for culturally competent practices in education, support services, and policy development (Anandavalli, 2022; Fontes & Plummer, 2010; Gilligan & Akhtar, 2006; Gill & Harrison, 2019; Harrison & Gill, 2018). Our study found that current support within schools often lacked the necessary knowledge and skills to provide cultural sensitivity. Many participants expressed frustration at the limited time and funding allocated for training and addressed a lack of specific training on working with sexual violence survivors, and the absence of cultural competency training for working with Asian communities.

In our study, participants' narratives, across three groups of participants – young people, caregivers, and educators – revealed that schools had difficulties in effectively engaging caregivers/parents that could lead to a breakdown in support for young Asian people affected by sexual violence. In some cases, caregivers/parents did not know where to seek help within schools, and schools did not know how to engage with caregivers/parents. This breakdown contributed to the difficulties for young Asian survivors' help-seeking, such as difficulties in obtaining permission for referrals to mental health services and setting up holistic support strategies for young Asian people.

International students, visitors/tourists, refugees, and recent migrants in New Zealand Asian communities are more vulnerable when they experience sexual violence (Hauraki & Feng, 2016). For international Asian students, the challenges were even more complex due to different funding systems, lack of language support, and difficulties in engaging with their caregivers/parents. The additional stress of navigating a foreign educational and support system without adequate resources and funding made it even harder for these students to seek help.

Despite the numerous barriers, there were instances of positive experiences where survivors received empathetic, culturally aware, and responsive support from help-professionals and school staff. These positive interactions significantly influenced young Asian people's willingness to engage with support systems. Participants' narratives underscored that effective support from teachers, lecturers, and mental health providers improved their perception of their traumatic experiences, motivated them to engage in healing journeys, and enhanced their overall wellbeing and relationships with others, including peers, families, and the community. These positive experiences highlight the potential for schools to play a crucial role in the healing and recovery process of young Asian survivors of sexual violence when support is provided effectively and compassionately.

Complicated journey of obtaining support from peers

Peers in schools play a critical role in shaping the experiences of young Asian survivors of sexual violence. Previous research shows that support from friends is as important, sometimes even more important than the significant support of family members (Obradović et al., 2013). Our study noted that the influence of peers can be both positive and negative, significantly affecting survivors' help-seeking behaviours, mental health, and overall wellbeing. Unhealthy dynamics among peers, such as bullying, peer pressure, and ostracism, often create a hostile environment where survivors feel isolated and unsupported. This environment can deter young Asian individuals from disclosing their experiences or seeking help, fearing further victimisation and social stigma.

The narratives from participants depicted complicated dynamics within peer relationships and regarding getting support from peers, such as friends and dating partners. The findings from our study show that, although many young Asian people affected by sexual violence were more comfortable sharing their experiences with their peers than their caregivers/parents or educators, they often could not obtain adequate support, especially for their emotional support needs. On the other hand, while some young Asian people were seeking support and validation from peers with similar life experiences and cultural backgrounds, some participants discussed how peers from a different cultural background could bring new perspectives that helped them to understand their traumatic experiences from a fresh angle. This finding emphasised the necessity to understand the complexity around acculturation and cultural identities of young Asian people (Berry et al., 2006).

The complexity of dating relationships added another layer of difficulty for young Asian survivors' help-seeking experiences. Participants reported instances of sexual violence within dating

relationships, which were often accompanied by problematic perceptions of sexual violence and consent. These factors made it challenging for survivors to recognise and disclose the abuse, further complicating their access to support. This finding aligns with existing literature on the impact of peer relationships on disclosure and the psychological wellbeing of survivors (Couture-Carron, 2017). This might be rooted in a context in which sexual assault and various manifestations of gender-based violence predominantly stem from a culture of misogyny, involving the enforcement of sexist and patriarchal norms and expectations, where male entitlement is fostered, leading to aggression and sexual violence as a means of reasserting dominance when women deviate from established expectations (Espinosa, 2023).

Despite the challenges, positive peer support can play a transformative role in the recovery process of young Asian people affected by sexual violence. Supportive friends who offer empathy, understanding, and validation can significantly bolster a young person's confidence in seeking help. Positive peer interactions can provide a sense of belonging and reduce feelings of isolation, which are crucial for emotional healing. The peer environment in schools is a double-edged sword for young Asian students. By recognising and addressing the dual nature of peer influence, schools can create more supportive and healing environments for young Asian people affected by sexual violence. This requires a concerted effort to train and empower both students and staff to build a culture of empathy, support, and understanding. Schools need to provide more time and opportunities for Asian immigrant students to form healthy friendships and peer support systems (Obradović et al., 2013).

Complicated journey of obtaining support from caregivers

The study highlighted the intricate and multifaceted experiences of young Asian people affected by sexual violence in receiving support from their caregivers. Family support plays a pivotal role in young Asian people's mental wellbeing (Obradović et al., 2013). However, cultural stigmas, communication barriers, a lack of awareness among caregivers about sexual violence and a lack of support available to caregivers impacted caregivers' ability in supporting young Asian people.

Mental health issues and the challenges of adapting to life in a new environment as immigrants among caregivers themselves were identified as significant barriers. Caregivers dealing with their own mental health issues and traumatic experiences often struggled to provide the necessary support and understanding to their children. For immigrant families, young people often act as the family's cultural brokers in supporting their caregivers/parents who may have economic and linguistic difficulties (Obradović et al., 2013). In some cases, young Asian people find themselves taking on caregiver roles to support their parents, not only regarding economic and linguistic difficulties but also emotional support, adding additional stress and burden to their already challenging situations. This role reversal could detract from their ability to focus on their own healing and recovery, highlighting the complex interplay between familial expectations, cultural norms, and the support needs of young Asian people affected by sexual violence.



The differing levels of acculturation between caregivers and young Asian people led to significant misunderstandings and miscommunications. This gap often resulted in caregivers being unaware of or unwilling to utilise available support services within the education system. The narratives in our study revealed that caregivers may harbour cultural beliefs that stigmatise discussions around sexual violence, which could inhibit young Asian people affected by sexual violence from disclosing their experiences, which is aligned with previous studies (Das et al., 2023; Fontes & Plummer, 2010; Ismail et al., 2015; Tummala-Narra et al., 2019). In our study, instances were reported where parents actively silenced their children, creating barriers to the disclosure of violent events. This silencing could be attributed to cultural stigmas surrounding mental health and sexual violence, leading caregivers to downplay or dismiss the severity of their children's experiences.

Participants' narratives revealed instances where caregivers, despite their intention to offer support, were ill-equipped to provide the necessary emotional and practical support due to these barriers. Some caregivers struggled to navigate the support systems, leading to missed opportunities for intervention and support for the young Asian people. The relationship between

young Asian individuals and their caregivers is further strained by high expectations for academic success. This pressure, coupled with being blamed by parents for the occurrence of traumatic events, often discouraged survivors from disclosing their experiences. Some caregivers often prioritised educational achievements over addressing trauma, creating challenges around engaging with mental health support as some caregivers worried engaging in mental health interventions might impact their children's future career path.

Despite these challenges, some participants reported positive experiences where caregivers were supportive, understanding, and proactive in seeking help for the young Asian people affected by sexual violence. These positive interactions were instrumental in building trust, forming a sense of stability and belonging, and facilitating the help-seeking process, highlighting the potential impact of informed and empathetic caregiver support in the recovery journey of young Asian people affected by sexual violence.

What are the social, cultural, and systemic barriers for these survivors in getting support from schools?

Social barriers in getting support

Our study finds that social barriers faced by young Asian people affected by sexual violence in accessing support from schools are multifaceted. These barriers include stigma and shame, family expectations and dynamics, peer pressure and social isolation, lack of awareness and understanding, mistrust of authorities, language and communication barriers, and socioeconomic factors. Addressing these barriers requires a comprehensive approach that includes cultural sensitivity training for school staff, creating a supportive and inclusive school environment, and ensuring that resources and support systems are accessible to young Asian people and their families.

In many Asian communities, discussing sexual violence is often considered taboo (Das et al., 2023; Fontes & Plummer, 2010; Ismail et al., 2015; Tummala-Narra et al., 2019). Sexual health emerges as a taboo topic within Asian families in New Zealand, creating intergenerational issues for young Asians in Western society (Peiris-John et al., 2016). This stigma creates a significant barrier for young Asian people seeking support, as they may fear judgment and ostracism from their family and their wider Asian communities. It is essential for professionals working with young Asian people affected by sexual violence to be mindful of these cultural values and taboos, approaching people from the Asian communities with sensitivity and understanding when examining the impact of Asian values on disclosure (Foynes et al., 2014).

The social emphasis on family honour and reputation in some Asian communities can discourage survivors from disclosing their experiences, leading to isolation and a lack of support. Family reputation and maintaining social integrity are central factors contributing to the reluctance to disclose sexual violence within the Asian community (Sawrikar & Katz, 2017). Young Asian people affected by sexual violence are hesitant to report abuse, especially when the perpetrator is a family member or someone closely connected to the family, due to the pressure of protecting relationships and social integrity (Foynes et al., 2014). Social stigma, specifically tied to concerns about family harmony and reputation, influences the disclosure of sexual violence, and this phenomenon is observed within immigrant communities in Western societies as well (Lim et al., 2022). Young Asian immigrants in Western countries also view sexual violence as a shameful experience that should be kept hidden (Couture-Carron, 2017; Ho et al., 2018).

Language barriers can pose significant challenges for young Asian people seeking support in schools. Schools may lack staff who are fluent in the survivor's native language, especially those students from immigrant families or who are international students, making it difficult to communicate effectively about their experiences and needs. Additionally, differences in communication styles, such as indirect communication or reluctance to openly discuss personal matters or sensitive topics around sexual violence, can hinder the young Asian individuals' ability to convey their experiences and receive appropriate support. For example, young Asian

people affected by sexual violence, particularly female victims, often face intensified emotional responses such as shame, fear and guilt when disclosing their experiences, primarily because of the social and cultural value placed on virginity (Fontes & Plummer, 2010). The absence of open conversations about sexual violence means that survivors may not be aware of the resources and support systems available to them. Additionally, cultural nuances in communication can lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations of the survivor's needs and concerns.

Many young Asian people and their families may have a mistrust of authorities, such as school counsellors, teachers and mental health service providers, stemming from cultural differences or previous negative experiences. This mistrust can be a significant barrier to accessing support, as young Asian people may feel that their issues will not be understood or addressed adequately by those in positions of authority. Misconceptions about mental health services held by young Asian survivors' caregivers can create barriers to accessing vital support services, preventing the young individuals from obtaining the assistance they require. Furthermore, young Asian people may hesitate to report sexual violence or seek help due to low trust of authorities and a lack of awareness about available resources and reporting mechanisms (Gill & Harrison, 2016).

The emphasis on family reputation and the model minority stereotype within Asian communities residing in Western countries may lead to a culture of silence surrounding sexual violence (Robertson et al., 2016; Sawrikar & Katz, 2017). Young Asian immigrants with experiences of sexual violence in Western countries are less likely to seek help due to the stigma associated with disclosure and the pressure to maintain familial and community harmony (Couture-Carron, 2017; Lim et al., 2022). Participants reported that young Asian survivors' caregivers discouraged the survivors from seeking support due to fears of bringing shame upon the family or facing societal stigma. This pressure to maintain a façade of perfection hinders open discussions about sexual violence and prevents survivors from receiving the help they need. Moreover, participants' narratives revealed the pressure of being a model minority impacted young Asian individuals' willingness to seek help as they see it as shame, failure or troubling others. The pressure to excel academically and meet societal standards of success made some young Asian survivors prioritise being a high achiever academically, which made their other struggles invisible.

Cultural barriers around getting support

Cultural barriers for young Asian people affected by sexual violence in accessing support from schools are deeply rooted in cultural norms, gender roles, hierarchical structures, perceptions of mental health, lack of culturally competent resources, and community pressures. Addressing these barriers requires a culturally sensitive approach that involves collaboration with community leaders, culturally competent training for school staff, and the development of resources that are tailored to the specific cultural contexts of the survivors.

Asian cultures, being more collectivist and masculine, may contribute to underreporting due to a desire to safeguard the family reputation and conceal associated shame (Back et al., 2003; Hofstede, 2001; Stoltenborgh et al., 2011). The power distance and power difference within Asian communities and

Asian families can significantly impact the disclosure behaviour of young Asian people affected by sexual violence, as societal power structures, gender norms, and cultural expectations may influence survivors' perceived agency and willingness to seek support. In the context of many Asian subcultures with high power distance dimensions, if the perpetrator of sexual violence holds significant power, such as being an authority figure or an elder family member, the young individual may be reluctant to challenge or report the abuse due to the ingrained respect for authority and the fear of repercussions within the hierarchical structure (Foyne et al., 2014; Hofstede, 2001). This view aligns with our study's finding that violence within the family and the fear of exacerbating familial tensions prevented young Asian individuals from seeking help.

Traditional gender roles in many Asian cultures can significantly impact how sexual violence is perceived and addressed. Cultural norms in some Asian communities that emphasise female submissiveness, patriarchal values, and a culture of silence contribute to the increased risk of sexual abuse (Sanjeevi et al., 2018, p. 633). Young female survivors may be expected to conform to roles that prioritise obedience, modesty, and subservience, making it difficult for them to speak out against abuse. The finding from our study indicates that caregivers' views regarding gender roles impact young Asian individuals' perception of their traumatic experiences. Some participants downplayed their experiences or did not recognise that what they had experienced was sexual violence, significantly impacting their help-seeking behaviour. Participants reported cases where they thought having sex was part of women's responsibility. Previous research shows that they are more accepting of men's controlling behaviours, which increases their vulnerability to dating abuse (Couture-Carron, 2017). Conversely, male survivors may struggle with the cultural expectation of stoicism and strength, which can prevent them from expressing vulnerability and seeking support. Help-seeking becomes even more complex and challenging for those identifying as LGBTQIA+ as they face double stigmas within the Asian communities (Lim et al., 2022).

Young Asian people affected by sexual violence also face the cultural impact of coping mechanisms. In some Asian cultures, where Buddhist teachings are followed, people believe suffering is part of life; therefore, they might see coping with sexual violence experience as their journey to gaining strength and resilience (Fontes & Plummer, 2010; Ho et al., 2018). In our study, some participants discussed how cultural beliefs shaped young people and their caregivers' ability to cope with their traumatic experiences. Pressure from some caregivers, such as expectations to "move on" and "forget about it", led to a culture of silence and an avoidance of undertaking a healing journey among young Asian survivors. Many participants discussed the pervasive influence of emotional suppression with the Asian cultural context. Young Asian people affected by sexual violence struggled to identify their emotions and lacked emotional expression skills, which may be influenced by their upbringing and social expectations. Societal pressure to maintain gratitude and contentment invalidated young survivors' traumatic and painful experiences (Fontes & Plummer, 2010; Ho et al., 2018). Participants' narratives from our study revealed that young Asian people affected by sexual violence encountered emotional invalidation and blaming from caregivers, leading to feelings of guilt and emotional suppression among young individuals.

Systemic barriers around getting support

Systemic barriers for young Asian people affected by sexual violence regarding the accessing of support from schools are also multifaceted and deeply entrenched. Addressing these barriers requires comprehensive reforms that include cultural competency training for school staff, more external support for school staff, the provision of culturally relevant resources, the establishment of clear and inclusive policies, active engagement with Asian communities, the dismantling of biases and stereotypes, and the promotion of collaboration with external agencies.

A significant systemic barrier is the insufficient cultural competency training provided to school staff. Many educators, counsellors, and administrative personnel lack the knowledge and skills to effectively support Asian survivors of sexual violence. Participants reported instances where they felt unsupported, even hurt by the inadequate support from school staff. The lack of an understanding of young Asian people's culture and the lack of empathy for their specific needs reduced young Asian individuals' willingness to seek and maintain support (Gill & Harrison, 2019). The motivation of young Asian survivors to trust the support offered by authorities can be influenced by their formal experiences with the support system (Das et al., 2023).

Participants' narratives indicated an issue of a lack of empathy and support among some pastoral care leaders and school management teams. Biases and stereotypes about Asian cultures and individuals could affect the way school staff perceive and respond to young Asian people. Participants reported that some schools dismissed the importance of cultural and language considerations, resulting in insensitive and inadequate support for young Asian people, including Asian international students. Lacking funding and manpower, particularly for Asian international students, hindered the ability of schools to offer necessary and timely service and resources, impacting the overall experience and wellbeing of young Asian people. Participants who were educators and school counsellors expressed a sense of frustration at the lack of training, funding and support available to them, and they also illustrated a sense of hopelessness, which impacted their ability to perform effectively and maintain their own wellbeing.

In our study, some participants reported their negative experiences with mental health providers and help-professionals. Their narratives highlighted that young Asian people affected by sexual violence often face barriers when attempting to access mental health services. Long waiting periods for initial appointments, inconsistent and irregular sessions, temporary and insufficient support, and lack of awareness about available mental health services delayed or prevented the initiation of therapy for these young Asian survivors. In addition, some participants expressed negative feelings about the mental health services they received. The narratives from some participants addressed the lack of competency among some mental health providers and help-professionals. This ability and competency included the knowledge and skill for trauma-informed care, cultural sensitivity and awareness about the special cultural needs among young Asian people and their families. Our finding aligns with the existing literature that emphasises the urgent need for culturally competent practices in education, support services, and policy development (Anandavalli, 2022; Fontes & Plummer, 2010; Gilligan & Akhtar, 2006; Gill & Harrison, 2019; Harrison & Gill, 2018, 2019).



In addition, participants' narratives indicated that many resources and support systems available in schools and in the community were designed based on Eurocentric perspectives, which might not be culturally relevant or sensitive to the needs of young Asian people affected by sexual violence. Simply translating existing resources into different languages is often insufficient, as it fails to address the cultural context and nuances that are crucial for effective support. There is a need for culturally responsive and community engaging resources that are developed with input from the community and reflect their values, beliefs, strengths, and practices. Young Asian individuals often view schools as the ideal setting for acquiring knowledge and skills related to sexual violence prevention, as their parents' generation may be resistant to change (Beres, 2017). However, it is crucial to develop school support systems, including intervention and prevention programmes, for young Asian individuals in New Zealand in collaboration with Asian communities because this collaborative approach ensures that the needs and perspectives of community members are taken into consideration (Beres, 2017). Addressing both individual and contextual influence on experiences of young Asian sexual violence survivors and their families is crucial in guiding culturally responsive resources and support systems (Singh, 2009).

Our study found that there was often a disconnect between schools and the Asian communities they serve. Schools may

not actively engage with young Asian students' caregivers to understand their needs and perspectives, leading to a lack of trust and collaboration. This disengagement can result in a failure to provide culturally relevant support and can discourage young Asian people and their families from seeking help from the school system. Communication barriers and systemic disconnections between caregivers and educational institutions often impede access to support. Narratives from the participants noted that many young Asian survivors' caregivers did not have the knowledge and skill to support the young survivors. Participants in our study reported that caregivers' lack of understanding and awareness about available school support services hindered young survivors' ability to seek help. Cultural differences and language barriers frequently exacerbated these challenges, leading to further isolation and separation.

Participants in our study discussed the issue of the disjointed support service system. Educators and school counsellors often operated in isolation from external agencies that specialise in supporting young people affected by sexual violence. Participants' narratives indicated that the lack of coordination among external support agencies and service providers created inefficiencies and gaps in the support for young Asian people and their families. This lack of collaboration could limit the resources and support services available to survivors and prevent the development of comprehensive support networks.

Support providers within schools also face challenges in accessing external support. Barriers such as gaining parental permission, a lack of knowledge of available external support agencies, and disconnection between different support providers hinder the ability of school staff to refer young Asians to necessary external support. Partnerships with organisations such as mental health services, legal support, community stakeholders and cultural advocacy groups could be beneficial to provide holistic support to young Asian survivors and their families. Without these collaborations, schools might not be well-equipped to address the multifaceted needs of the Asian communities. Addressing these gaps is crucial for building a supportive educational environment that meets the needs of young Asian people and their families.

What are the Asian sexual violence survivors' expectations of getting support from schools?

Young Asian people affected by sexual violence have multidimensional expectations when it comes to receiving support from schools. Their expectations encompass various themes, including **empowerment-focused initiatives, a person-centred approach, effective communication with caregivers, integrated support systems, culturally responsive support services, ideal healing spaces, and holistic community building**. These themes collectively inform a comprehensive understanding of what these survivors seek from educational institutions to aid their recovery and overall wellbeing.

Validation and positive narratives are also essential components of empowerment for young Asian people affected by sexual violence (Spencer, 2014). Many participants hoped that schools would focus on recognising and celebrating young Asian people's strengths and achievements, which helps shift the focus from traumatic events to positive aspects of their identities and growth. This approach can build more balanced and affirming self-narratives. Additionally, skill development is vital for young individuals to navigate challenges and maintain wellbeing and personal growth. Empowerment also involves fostering independence and self-care skills, encouraging young Asian people to take ownership of their wellbeing and make their own decisions. Creating positive and supportive cultures within educational settings is another crucial expectation. Participants expressed their hope for educational environments where they feel safe to express themselves, seek help, and recognise their potential for growth.

Participants highlighted their expectation for schools to adopt a person-centred approach that understands and responds to individual needs, perspectives and experiences, which aligns with other studies around supporting survivors of sexual violence (Free et al., 2021; Masters, 2015; Swartout, 2011). This approach involves recognising the unique circumstances of each young individual and providing tailored support. Cultural sensitivity and empathy are key components, as they help schools understand and respect the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of young Asian people. Recognising individual differences is also important, as each survivor has different potentials, skills, and knowledge, and therefore different needs. Building trust and rapport is essential for a person-centred approach. Schools should foster trusting relationships through consistency, openness, and non-

judgmental attitudes, helping young Asian individuals feel safe and supported. Age-appropriateness is another critical factor, ensuring that support is tailored to the specific developmental stage of the young person.

Effective communication between caregivers/parents and youth is crucial for fostering mutual understanding and support, impacting on young people's sexual behaviours (Beckett et al., 2010; Keijsers & Poulin, 2013; Madeline, 2014). Participants expressed their need for schools to play a pivotal role in bridging this communication gap, especially given the different cultural backgrounds and challenges faced by immigrant families. Cultural understanding of the parent-child relationship is vital for educational institutions to facilitate better communication and understanding between parents and young Asian people. Recognising the importance of family unity and collectivist cultures can enhance the holistic support for young Asian individuals and their families. Schools should work towards creating an environment where both caregivers and students feel understood and supported.

Many participants expressed their expectation for an integrated support system where schools, communities, external support agencies and government entities coordinate efforts to provide holistic care. Participants expected schools to act as primary support providers, offering seamless, culturally sensitive, and holistic support. This includes building partnerships between schools and community-based support roles to alleviate the pressure on educational institutions and ensure continuous care. Accessibility and availability of support services within educational settings are crucial. Participants expressed their expectation of timely and necessary assistance, and schools should ensure that these services are readily accessible and available regularly. Participants' narratives also highlighted the expectation of culturally responsive support, which involves language-appropriate communication and cultural understanding of the unique needs of Asian ethnic groups.

Participants expressed their expectation for schools to be involved in holistic community building, indicating the need for community-based knowledge production and fostering community connectedness, supporting caregivers/parents and young Asian individuals through education and resources. Addressing stigma and facilitating open discussions about sensitive issues such as mental health and sexual violence are also crucial expectations for holistic community building. Participants hoped schools would encourage open discussions and help dismantle the pervasive sense of shame associated with these topics. Community engagement is also important, as it involves raising awareness and addressing stigma within the broader community.

Participants' narratives addressed the expectation of accessible and comfortable spaces that foster a supportive environment. Schools and mental health service providers should provide non-clinical, welcoming spaces with a calming atmosphere to reduce the stigma and fear associated with help-seeking for young Asian people affected by sexual violence. These spaces could encourage community and connections, promoting social interaction and personal growth for these young individuals. Incorporating creative activities into support spaces can also be beneficial, particularly for those who may find it challenging to express themselves verbally.

What new insights and creative approaches will be yielded from arts-based research methods regarding the support of these survivors within schools?

This project report focuses on the experiences and expectations of young Asian survivors of sexual violence, particularly in seeking support from schools. While the creative aspects of the findings are not explored in depth in this report, this brief discussion addresses the use of arts-based research methods to understand the perspectives, challenges, and expectations of these young people.

Arts offer a safe and non-threatening way for survivors to express themselves. Through artworks, researchers can grasp their lived experiences and internal struggles, acting as a double-sided window between participants and researchers (Murphy, 2001). In this study, arts-based methods provided a dual layer of safety: they allowed participants to discuss difficult topics using comfortable language and creative expressions, and they helped researchers approach sensitive questions with care. Creative expressions, such as visual art and poetry, were used to explore the emotional aspects of participants' experiences. This approach enabled researchers to delve into participants' narratives, metaphors, and images, gaining deeper insights into their experiences.

Sexual violence is a sensitive and often avoided topic in many Asian subcultures, even among those living in Western countries like New Zealand. It is associated with shame and stigma, making open discussion challenging within the Asian communities. However, employing arts-based research methods creates a safe and inclusive space for participants to express themselves (Shuman et al., 2022). These methods allow participants to use creativity, metaphors, colours, and symbols to discuss sensitive issues with cultural sensitivity and age-appropriateness.



Figure 8: Example of participants' artwork, exploring the barriers to help-seeking.

Through arts-based methods, the participants' artworks were developed into arts-based responses to creatively present the emotional impact on participants from their traumatic experiences. Short movies and songs have been developed from the participants' narratives and artworks as creative manifestations of data representation.

(Please click the links below to view the movies and songs).

Creative Data Representation

A Little Seed is a short movie that captures young Asian survivors' emotional journeys at the time they needed support after their traumatic events. This creative output uses metaphors and words from participants' interview transcripts.

Not Leaving Me in The Rain is an AI-assisted song that creates a collective voice from young Asian survivors' experiences of the inadequate support services they encountered. The lyrics were created from participants' narratives.

It's Not Her Fault is an AI-assisted song that captures the challenges around caregivers' support for young Asian survivors and the complexity of caregivers' needs. The lyrics were created from participants' metaphors and narratives.

A Growing Seed is a short movie that presents young Asian people's call for empowerment-based support approach. This creative output uses metaphors and words from participants' interview transcripts.

In this creative environment, participants were empowered to share their experiences and gain new perspectives through artistic expression (Malchiodi, 2020). This approach helped young Asian people affected by sexual violence reclaim their narratives and offered a more nuanced and empathetic understanding of their experiences. Participants were enabled to turn their complex emotions and embodied memories into a holistic snapshot in their artworks (Saltzman et al., 2013). Through creativity, the profound emotions of these survivors become visible, hearable, and feelable, giving a voice to those who are often marginalised and making the information more accessible and engaging for a wider audience, including young people who might not engage with traditional research outputs such as academic papers, conferences and research reports.

By facilitating a supportive and inclusive creative space, this study fostered safety and encouraged participants to explore and share their lived experiences freely. This approach promoted equity by ensuring that all voices, including those from marginalised communities, were heard and represented. It highlights the intersectional experiences of young people and acknowledges their diverse needs. Through creativity and open dialogue, the young people are empowered to reclaim their narratives.

To emphasise the power of arts in this research, we conclude with a found poem composed from participants' narratives. This found poem expresses the complexity of young Asian survivors receiving support from caregivers. This research used found poetry as data representation, maintaining participants' voices (Butler-Kisber, 2002; Rich, 2023; Richardson, 1992).

A poem about caregivers' support

*My mum wanted to support me
But she didn't really help me or anything
She did typical things, like offering me food, taking me places
but that didn't stop me from feeling bad*

*She was kind of in denial, I guess
Left me alone to deal with it myself
She just said: "You should just stop crying and deal with it
Yes, this is a bad thing to happen, but move on!"*

*My mum is a really strong woman, and she's always been that way.
So even within her own marriage, she doesn't really have support.
She said: "You have to be strong; you have to move forward. In my day, we just moved on"
She said: "You should just be grateful for what you have. We don't want to cause trouble"
She said: "We are just working hard all the time, but we don't have time to stop and heal"
It was the education given to me
I think she is coming from a different generation and culture*

*Psychologists suggest: "Go and talk to your parents..."
Do you know I can't talk to my parents?
They always use their own childhood to compare to things today
She said: "I couldn't even look at boys when I was younger"
She said: "Because in our culture, you don't have relationships until after you finish university"
She said: "You're being a burden, and you're being too much by feeling this thing"
But it wasn't the right words to say to me. She didn't really know what was going on*

*I was stuck because my mother was important, but my father hurt me
She said: "Forget about this. You can't tell anything. It needs to be not spoken"
I no longer saw her as someone that I could go to for help or anything
I am her only friend; she doesn't have any friends or people*

*She said: "Be sensible and don't show negative emotions"
She said: "You are resilient. You can get through this"
But at the moment, I don't feel I can
Okay, I need to stay away from her when I'm feeling bad*

*I wasn't encouraged to explore my emotions or feel things
Maybe it's upbringing, culture or habits
She said: "We don't talk about it, we just kind of harden up"
She said: "Forget about it. Forget it"
How could you forget this thing?
I felt that it was useless to talk to my mother, so I closed myself up*

*She comes from a different generation and culture, a different perspective
The Asian culture wants to be polite
I still don't really talk about anything that is really personal
I don't want to bother people
A layer of heaviness that needs to be kept hidden
They are like a rope around my neck*

*They weren't supportive in the way that I needed
"I am so liberal. I'm so progressive," She spoke
Relative to the culture she was brought up in she is
But relative to the culture that we exist in in New Zealand, she isn't*

*Culture, how I was brought up by my parents
You know, values are different, and ideas are different. So, I don't blame her
Not particularly their fault because they didn't know how else to deal with it
Families, themselves, are isolated from the mainstream*

(Participants' collective voices)



Limitations

The findings of this study should be considered with several limitations in mind. All participants in this study were self-selected, which may result in a sample that is not representative of the broader Asian community. Individuals who chose to participate might have distinct characteristics or experiences that differ from those who did not volunteer. The significant stigma attached to sexual violence can create substantial barriers to research participation. This stigma might deter many survivors from participating, resulting in underrepresentation of those who may have different perspectives or experiences. The study's small sample size, particularly for caregiver participants, limits the generalisability of the findings. While the insights gained are valuable, they may not be applicable to the larger population of Asian sexual violence survivors and their caregivers. Only young people aged 16 to 24 participated in this study. This restriction means that the experiences of survivors of other ages, particularly younger children, are not captured. Thus, the findings may not fully reflect the needs and experiences of survivors across different age groups within school systems.

In New Zealand, many diverse Asian ethnic groups are often categorised under one large "Asian" umbrella. This overlooks the distinct cultural, social, and linguistic differences among various Asian subgroups. The lack of disaggregation in the data limits the ability to address the unique needs and experiences of specific ethnic groups within the broader Asian community. Participants were only recruited from Auckland and Wellington. This geographic limitation means that the experiences and perspectives of survivors and caregivers from other regions of New Zealand are not represented, potentially missing regional variations in experiences and available support services. All educator and school counsellor participants were from Asian ethnic groups. This homogeneity may limit the findings by not including the views and experiences of support providers from other cultural backgrounds, which could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issues.

These limitations highlight the need for future research to adopt more inclusive and representative sampling methods, consider regional diversity, and ensure the disaggregation of data to capture the varied intersectional experiences of different Asian ethnic groups. Addressing these limitations can enhance the understanding and support provided to Asian sexual violence survivors and their caregivers.

Recommendations

Informed by the study findings, this study proposes the following recommendations to form a holistic and wrap-around support system for young Asian sexual violence survivors and their families. To effectively support young Asian people affected by sexual violence, we recommend implementation of the following strategies.

For schools

- Conduct regular training sessions for all school staff focusing on cultural competency, trauma-informed care, and effective communication. This training could equip staff to support youth from diverse cultural backgrounds with different needs and experiences.
- Develop and implement clear policies for handling disclosures of sexual violence, including a detailed internal and external referral process to ensure timely, appropriate support.
- Create inclusive physical and social spaces within the school that are welcoming, calming and creative, allowing young people to feel safe, connected and supported.
- Foster a positive school culture by educating students about healthy peer support, unhealthy peer pressure, relationships, sexual health and consent, tailored to the different needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Strengthen existing peer support programmes by training peer supporters on cultural sensitivity, awareness of available support services, and empathetic support.
- Develop environments that encourage students to learn and explore emotional expression skills, cultural identities, self-care and personal growth.
- Provide comprehensive support for school staff, including training, workload management, internal peer support and external supervision to ensure their wellbeing and ability to support students.
- Develop strategies to engage parents and caregivers from the Asian communities, raising their awareness about the challenges their children might face and providing tools and knowledge for effective support.

For communities

- Implement education programmes for Asian communities to address cultural norms around sexual violence and help-seeking behaviours, using culturally relevant materials and outreach efforts.
- Recognise and utilise the community's knowledge and strength by engaging members in discussions and initiatives addressing topics such as mental health and sexual violence.
- Collaborate with community leaders and organisations to build trust in support systems and facilitate better access to resources for survivors and their caregivers.
- Conduct community outreach to educate about the challenges faced by young Asian sexual survivors and their caregivers, aiming to foster understanding, reduce stigma, and encourage supportive behaviours in the community.
- Provide training for community members and service providers to ensure culturally appropriate support and resources.
- Develop programmes and workshops to enhance caregivers' parenting skills and awareness of mental health support, equipping them to provide nurturing environments for their children.
- Increase community awareness about mental health issues, emphasising early intervention and support for young survivors.

For service providers:

- Provide ongoing training on cultural competency and trauma-informed care for all service providers. Ensure help-professionals from diverse ethnic backgrounds are equipped to understand and respect the cultural backgrounds, experiences, and specific needs of survivors from diverse Asian communities.
- Embed empowerment-centred approaches into support services, ensuring young Asian survivors have agency and are actively involved in decision-making about their care.
- Adopt a person-centred approach that recognises the diverse experiences and strengths of each young individual.
- Develop integrative support services that coordinate the legal, educational, and health systems to provide comprehensive care.
- Ensure the provision of regular and reliable support services, such as counselling, to improve survivors' mental health and wellbeing.
- Work closely with schools and parents to create a coordinated support network for survivors. Collaborative efforts can help create a more supportive environment both at school and at home.
- Develop culturally sensitive working models specifically for Asian survivors. Recognise the different needs of various subcultures and acculturation levels within Asian communities to provide more effective and respectful support.
- Adopt a sensitive and trauma-informed approach that avoids re-traumatising survivors. Recognise and address the support needs of caregivers of young survivors, providing them with the necessary resources to support their children effectively.
- Integrate arts-based methods into the support system to create a safe and comfortable space for survivors to express themselves and gain new perspectives. Use creative expression as a tool for healing and empowerment, ensuring that marginalised voices are heard and valued.

For the Ministry of Health

- Address the invisibility of Asian sexual violence survivors in health strategies and planning. Ensure that the unique challenges and needs of Asian communities are acknowledged and integrated into relevant health policies.
- Recognise the diverse needs of Asian subcultures, avoiding a simplified "Asian model". Develop strategies that are sensitive to the specific cultural, linguistic, and social nuances of various Asian communities.
- Foster a culturally competent workforce by mandating cultural competency training and ongoing support for health providers. Ensure that healthcare professionals are equipped to provide culturally sensitive and equitable care to survivors from diverse backgrounds.
- Integrate policies that promote cultural competence and trauma-informed care into all training programmes for healthcare providers and the workforce.
- Enhance access to healthcare for young Asian sexual violence survivors by removing barriers such as long waiting times, complex referral processes, and lack of culturally appropriate and language-appropriate services.
- Simplify the referral process to ensure timely and coordinated care for young Asian survivors.
- Collaborate with schools to develop school-based health services that provide accessible and timely support to young survivors. Ensure these services are equipped to handle the unique challenges faced by Asian survivors.
- Allocate more funding to support the families of sexual violence survivors, providing resources and services to foster a supportive home environment.

For the Ministry of Education

- Develop policies and strategies to address the cultural and linguistic needs of Asian students, including international students.
- Move away from a one-size-fits-all approach, particularly in sexuality education, and develop culturally relevant curricula focusing on relationships, sexual consent, and a healthy peer environment.
- Implement teaching strategies that respect and reflect the diversity of students' experiences and perspectives.
- Develop policies and strategies for ongoing training for all school staff, including teachers, administrative staff, pastoral care teams, and school counsellors. Focus on cultural competency, trauma-informed care, and effective communication skills to better support students from diverse backgrounds.
- Allocate resources to create safe and inclusive physical and social spaces for students of all ethnic backgrounds.
- Provide funding and strategies to support the families of Asian students, offering information and services to address their children's wellbeing needs.

For researchers

- Ensure the inclusion of a diverse and representative sample from various Asian subcultures to capture the nuanced experiences of different groups.
- Develop research strategies to overcome the stigma attached to sexual violence that may prevent participation in research. This could include creating safe and confidential spaces for participants and using culturally sensitive recruitment methods.
- Incorporate the views and experiences of support providers from various cultural backgrounds, not limited to Asian ethnic groups, to gain a broader perspective on the effectiveness of support services.
- Engage in community-based participatory research that involves the community in the research process. This approach ensures that the research is culturally relevant and that the community's voices are heard and valued.
- Prioritise cultural competency in research design and implementation. Researchers should be trained in cultural sensitivity and should use culturally appropriate methods and tools.
- Develop partnerships with community organisations, schools, and healthcare providers to facilitate comprehensive research that covers various aspects of support for survivors.
- Adopt holistic research approaches that consider the interconnections between different aspects of survivors' lives, including mental health services, legal support, educational needs, and family dynamics.
- Conduct longitudinal studies to track the long-term outcomes of support interventions and to identify factors that contribute to the resilience and recovery of survivors over time.
- Make the findings accessible to both academic and non-academic audiences, including young people, their caregivers and those help-professionals supporting young survivors, to maximise research impact.

For policymakers

- Advocate for policies that promote inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, and equitable access to support services for all students, in the spirit of the Treaty of Waitangi.
- Actively engage with Asian communities in research planning and policy development to address the needs of young people from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Increase funding for research on Asian sexual violence survivors to address the invisibility of Asian data.
- Encourage partnerships between schools and community organisations to provide additional support and resources for young Asian survivors and their families.
- Ensure that resources are distributed equitably and culturally sensitively, prioritising Asian communities with the greatest need.
- Address the needs of various Asian communities in national strategies for reducing family violence and sexual violence harm.

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