

Strengths and weaknesses of working with advisory groups of children in research

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Departament d'Educació

September,
REES centre

The topic

Gender-based violence in Spain (2024):

35 Women killed (618 since 2013)

24 Children orphaned (457 since 2013)

10 Children killed (63 since 2013)



Children suffer its consequences directly or indirectly and over a time span of many years. They **don't know who to tell or who to turn to for help.**

SOURCE: <https://estadisticasviolenciagenero.igualdad.gob.es/>

The research

What would make early detection of gender violence at home easier from **the point of view of children**

What **would schools need to become a key player**, capable of helping boys and girls who are victims of this violence.

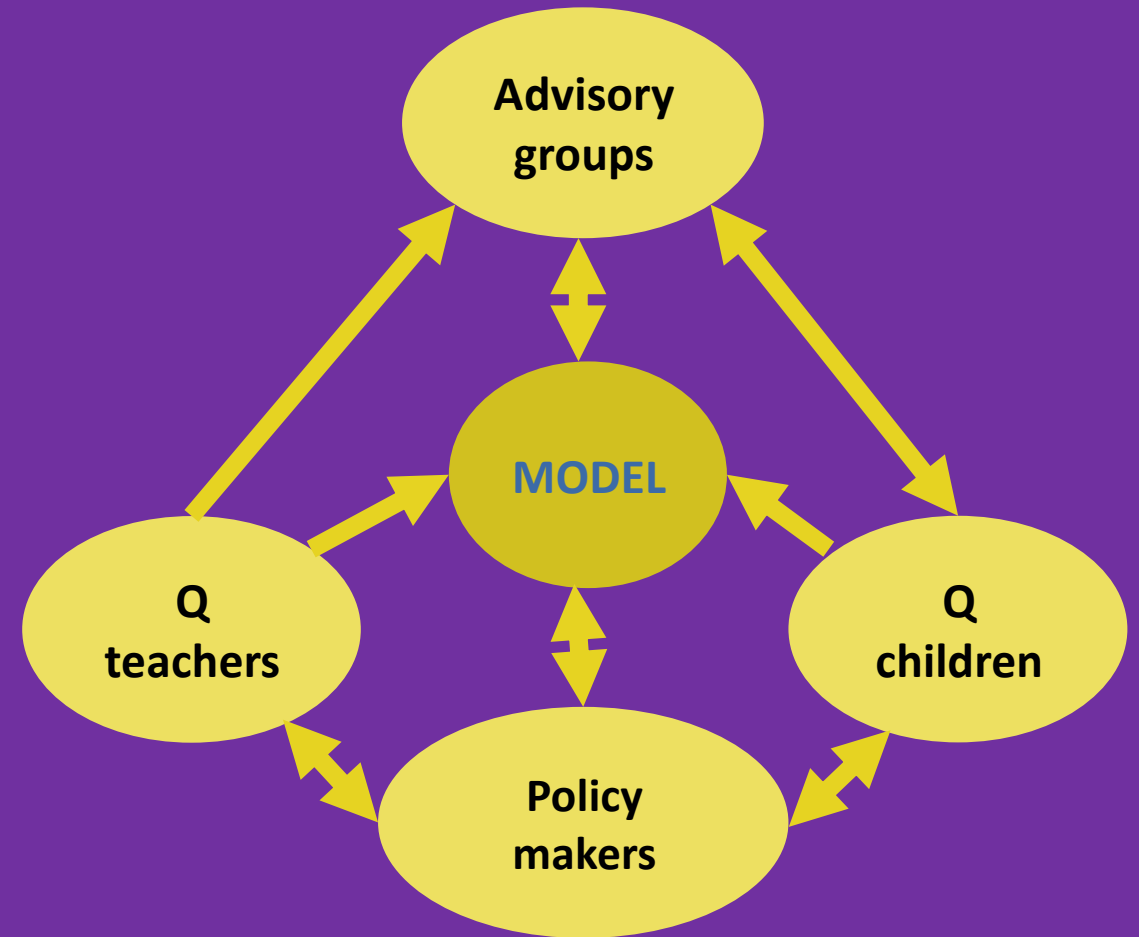


Assumptions:

- The **participation and implication of children** is crucial for the development of effective tools for detection.
- **Schools, as safe spaces** where there are close and trusted adults, can play a decisive role.

Methodology

Participatory research



Advisory groups of children

Phases of the research process	Not involved	Consulted	Collaborating	Autonomous
Deciding on the research question				
Designing the research and choosing the methods				
Preparing research instruments				
Identifying and recruiting participants				
Collecting data				
Analysing the data and drawing conclusions				
Producing a report				
Dissemination of the report and its findings				
Advocacy and mobilisation to achieve policy impact				

Note. Table elaborated on the basis of the Matrix for Analysing Children's Engagement in research processes (Shier, 2019)

Participants

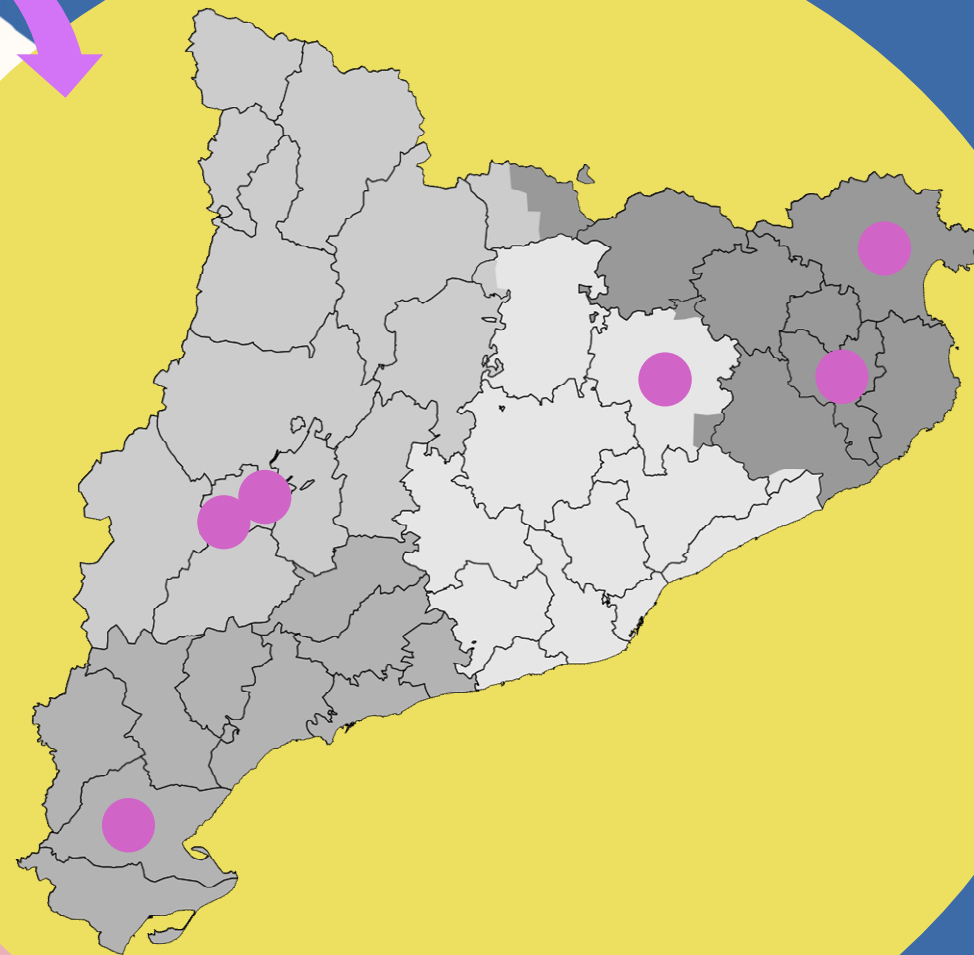
6 advisory groups: 45 children (10-16)

3,664 students from 8 to 16 years old

106 schools

322 teachers, members of the management team, and other professional profiles

86 schools



Results highlights

[From children's questionnaire](#)

Figure 1. Children's response to a situation of gender-based violence at home (often & always %)

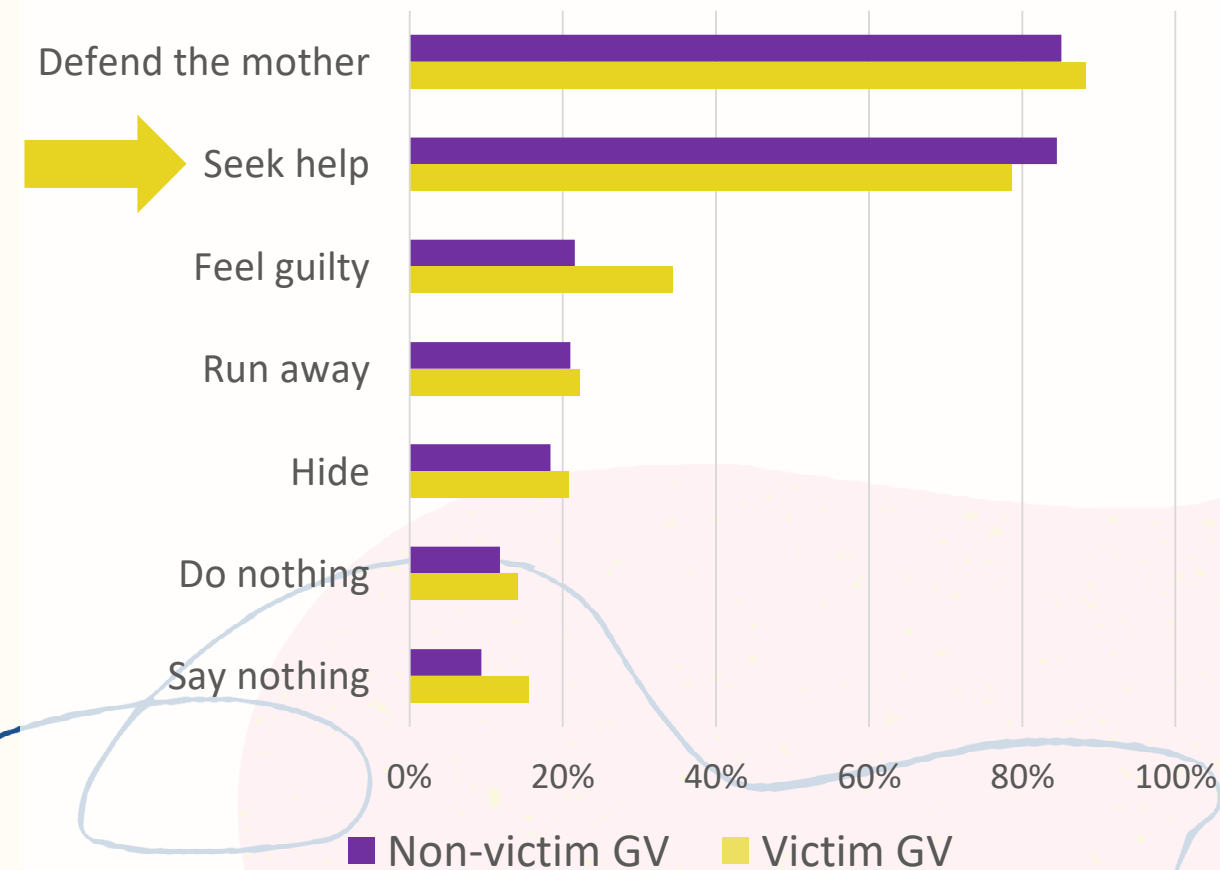
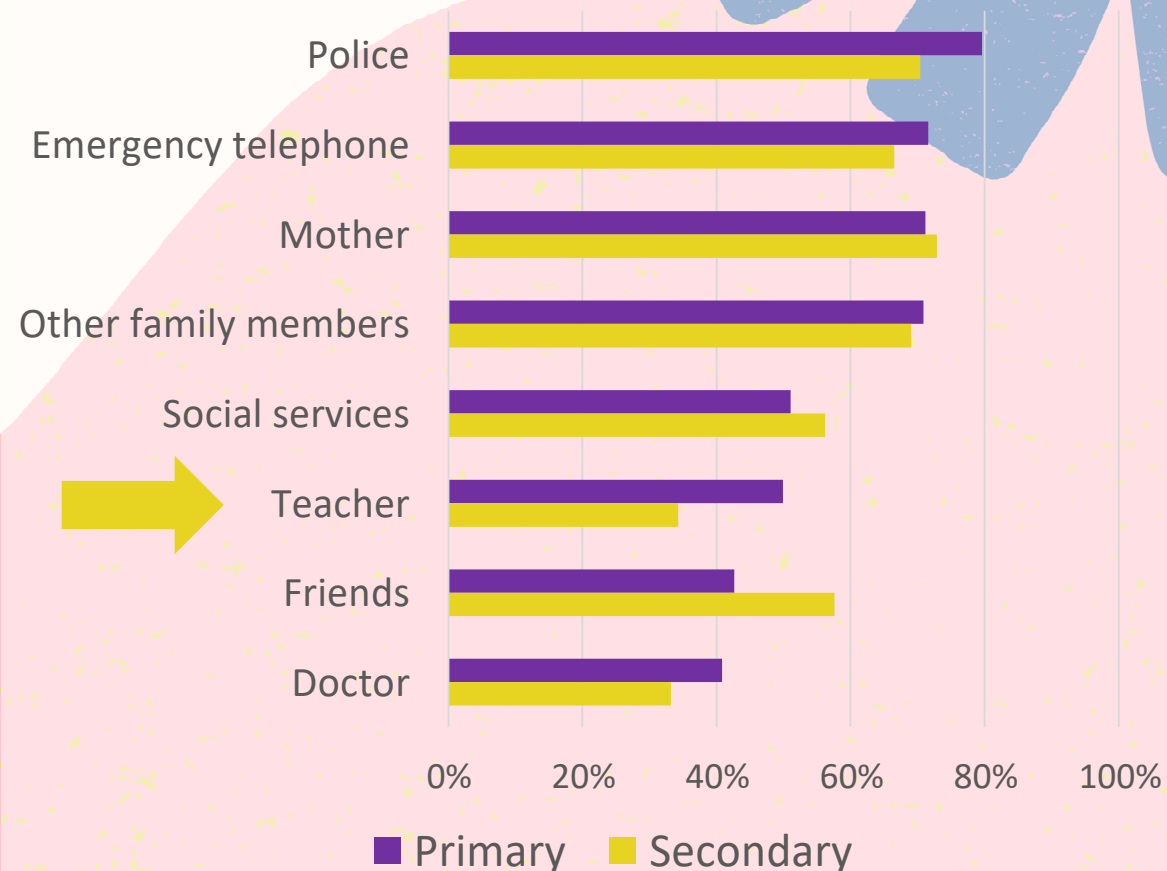


Figure 2. Schoolchildren who say they would report a situation of gender-based violence to different people or services (often & always %)



Results highlights

From teachers' questionnaire

Figure 3. Children who suffer gender-based violence at home, when it comes to explaining it to the school...

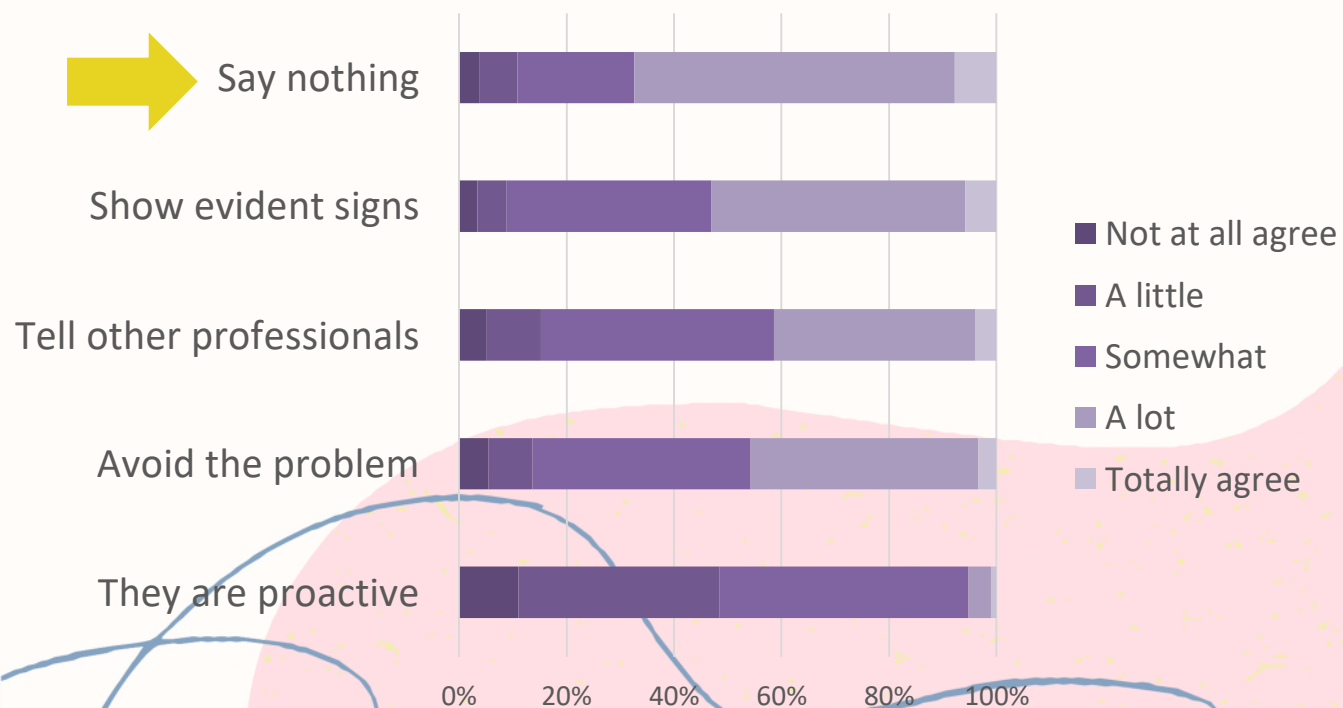
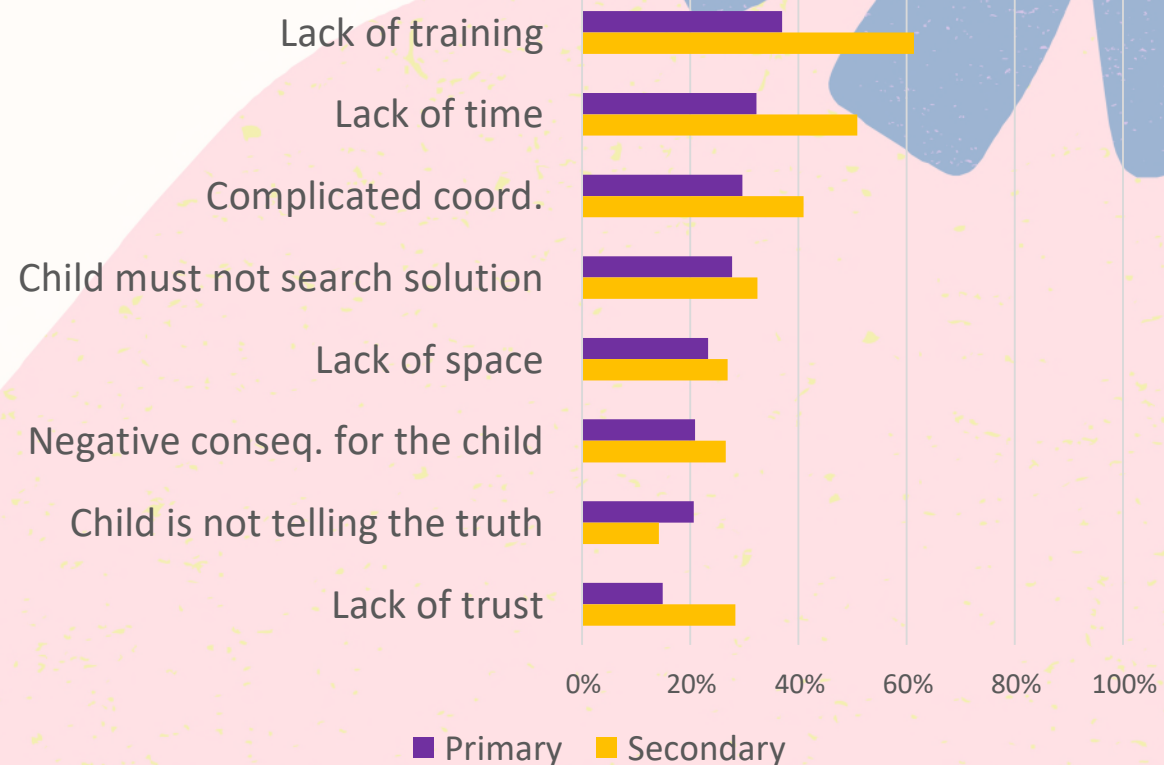


Figure 4. Obstacles perceived by teaching staff



Children's Quotes

What happens in my school is that, unfortunately, boys don't want to accept that certain things are male violence because **they DO some of these things**. (Girl, 16)

There is no such thing as gender-based violence, violence is violence, regardless of gender, age, nationality or skin colour. (Girl, 15)

I think this issue **should be discussed at school from an early age** to prevent these terrible accidents from happening. (Boy, 11)

I think that in recent years the **image of men has deteriorated** and that not all men are like that. (Boy, 15)

Reflecting about children involvement

I really enjoyed participating in this research on this topic, and it's been a pleasure to be able to help with that. I'm looking forward to seeing what we've all accomplished together, I also loved the experience. (Girl, 11)

Ethical and methodological considerations

- 1) To identify strengths and weaknesses of the participatory strategies used.
 - Data analysis based on the 14 ethical and methodological elements identified by Montreuil et al (2021).

Children's own perceived engagement

- 2) To collect the assessment of the benefits perceived by children and adolescents participating in research.

Strenghts

Improvements:

- ✓ Presenting the questionnaire throughout a vídeo recorded by AG.
- ✓ Providing and infographic in accessible format with the results.
- ✓ Holding a closing act with all the children participating in the research.

- Active role throughout the research.
- Relevant topic, hot, and close.
- Researchers were the same in each session.
- Support material in visual presentation format during the group sessions.
- Brainstorming, open-ended questions.
- The processing of research data was completely confidential and anonymous.
- Participation was completely voluntary.
- Carried out in a space known to the child, with an adult of reference.
- Possibility of abandoning the research at any time if they felt uncomfortable.
- Possibility of contacting the research team if they needed to.
- Children were informed that their contributions cannot always be included or put into practice.
- The objectives of the research and its planning were shared with children.
- All the contributions made by children were recorded and then sent to them, ensuring the authenticity of their contribution.
- A diploma of participation was given to each child signed by the PI of the Project.
- Some municipalities gave them a small gift for participating.

Weaknesses

Improvements:

- ✓ Involving children in the establishment of the objectives and the design of the research.
- ✓ Attributing rotating roles to the children.
- ✓ Introducing alternative forms of expression and creation.

- No participation in deciding the research question, objectives, design, and data collection.
- Children as collaborators (no space to decide for themselves).
- Discontinued participation.
- No interactions between the groups.
- Lack of diversity in dynamics and more creative forms of expression.
- No information collected to compare prior expectations and their fulfilment.
- Adults were the conductors and secretaries of the groups.
- The presence and/or interventions of the referring adults may have conditioned the responses.
- No consensus across all municipalities/schools.
- Diploma sent online.
- Bias in children's councils' composition.
- Some groups were more homogeneous, with no cultural or religious diversity.
- Not all groups shared the discussions of the meetings with the larger group (municipal or school) for feedback and greater representativeness.

Feeling
useful

*I hope that with all the work we and you have done, **that it doesn't happen so many times or very few or zero**, and that it doesn't continue to be normal! (Boy, 10)*

Talk about
the issue

*I really enjoyed participating in this research because I think it's a very important issue that **needs to be discussed more**. (Girl, 14)*

Personal
learning

*I think this research project has been very interesting and **I've been able to learn** quite a few things that I didn't know about gender violence... I think it's helped me understand more what it's about and see different opinions and different ways of trying to resolve it or work on it... It's helped me quite a bit. (Boy, 15)*

Feeling
listened to

*I really enjoyed participating in this project that we've done because I think it's very good that they **take our voice into account**. (Boy, 10)*

DETECCIÓ DE LA VIOLÈNCIA MASCLISTA

**Des de la perspectiva dels
infants i adolescents**



[Video](#)

Conclusions

- There is a certain debate about what is and what is not “feminism” and “gender-based violence”, mainly among adolescents. Some boys feel uncomfortable about it.
- Children want to form part of the solution to the problem, by taking action and seeking help, but many state that they would not know where to go in the event of gender-based violence.
- Schools can offer children and adolescents safe places they can trust, but it seems that they are not currently seen as such by children.
- Both, children and teaching staff need time/space to talk about it at school and more information and training is needed.
- Research design based on recognizing children as right holders generates different and valuable learning opportunities.



AWARENESS

COORDINATION



HELP

[Action model for the treatment of gender-based violence in schools](#)

To read more about the project

<https://www.udg.edu/ca/projectes/wearehere>

Garcia-Molsosa, M., Montserrat, C., Soler-Masó, P., Planas-Lladó, A., & Iglesias, E. (2024). Advisory groups of children in research on gender-based violence. *Child Abuse & Neglect*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2024.106935>

Planas-Lladó, A., Garcia-Molsosa, M., Vidal, E. I., Ribas, P. B., Soler-Masó, P., & Montserrat, C. (2023). What do children say about seeking help in situations of gender-based violence? Different perspectives depending on whether they have experienced such situations or not. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 144, [106349](#).

Montserrat, C., Garcia-Molsosa, M., Planas-Lladó, A., & Soler-Maso, P. (2022). Children's understandings of gender-based violence at home: The role school can play in child disclosure. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 136, [106431](#)

