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REVIEW

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Navigating, being tricked, and blaming oneself—A meta-synthesis of youth's experience of involvement in online child sexual abuse

Line Indrevoll Stänicke[1,2] | Gry Katrin Reiremo[1] | Sebastian Istad Scheie[1] | Reidar Schei Jessen[1] | Tine K. Jensen[1,3]

[1]Department of Psychology, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway

[2]Nic Waals Hospital, Lovisenberg Hospital, Oslo, Norway

[3]Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies, Oslo, Norway

Correspondence
Line Indrevoll Stänicke, Department of Psychology, University of Oslo, Pb 1094 Blindern, Oslo 0317, Norway.
Email: l.i.stanicke@psykologi.uio.no

Abstract

Social media use is an integrated part of youth's social life, enabling access to knowledge and social exploration, but it also increases the risk of experiencing online child sexual abuse (OCSA). Quantitative reviews of OCSA provide insights into prevalence, risk factors, and mental health outcomes, but we have limited knowledge about how youth experience OCSA. This study aims to synthesize qualitative studies on youth's (12–24 years of age) first-person experiences of OCSA. We conducted a systematic database search and included 16 studies. The meta-synthesis resulted in three meta-themes: (1) "Navigating in a digital world – feeling safe and understood," (2) "Being lured, tricked, and caught up in online child sexual abuse," and (3) "Facing the consequences – feeling powerless and blaming oneself." Although the studies included most females, findings apply to all genders and across ages. The results highlight how online sexual engagement is a way to explore social and sexual relationships and address a basic need to be understood and supported. However, when trust is misused, developmental tasks related to autonomy and agency may be shattered, replaced with shame and self-blame. These findings point to the need to openly and nonjudgementally address OCSA so that it can be disclosed, and the psychological impact can be addressed.

KEYWORDS
digital risks, online child sexual abuse, online engagement, trauma, youth

1 | INTRODUCTION

Youth's lives today are described as digital-by-default, meaning that their lives are structured by digital platforms, leaving few options other than digital involvement (Stoilova et al., 2020). Social media use is highest among youth (Smahel et al., 2020), and concerns related to digital risks such as online child sexual abuse (OCSA) is growing in line with increased use.

Quantitative reviews show that youth engage in online activities for many positive purposes such as gaining knowledge, connecting, enjoyment, self-expression, and exploring sexuality (Davidson et al., 2022). However, many online activities put youth

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at risk for exploitation (Finkelhor, 2022; Finkelhor et al., 2023). Finkelhor and colleagues (2022) suggest using the integrated concept of "online child sexual abuse" (OCSA) when referring to "image-based sexual abuse," "non-consensual sexting and sextortion," "revenge pornography," and "online solicitation." In a US-based online survey, including young adults aged 18 to 28 years, the prevalence rate was 15.6% for OCSA, and the perpetrators were mostly acquaintances and not online strangers (Finkelhor, 2022).

Studies show that being cisgender female or non-heterosexual, having mental health problems, lower self-esteem, conflictual relationships with parents, risk-taking behaviours online, and offline sexual abuse are associated with OCSA (Finkelhor et al., 2023; Pedersen et al., 2023; Turner et al., 2023; Wolak et al., 2018). Stronger digital skills may be related to increased risk of OCSA (Smahel et al., 2020). OCSA may have severe consequences that overlap with those experienced with offline sexual solicitation, such as hostility, disgust, shame, guilt, panic attacks, PTSD, depression, self-harming, suicide risk, and impaired relationships (Ali & Paash, 2021; Chauviré-Geib & Fegert, 2023; Finkelhor, 2022; Joleby et al., 2021; Jonsson et al., 2019; Wolak et al., 2018). While these studies are important, they provide little information about the youth's meaning-making processes facing online affordances and challenges that may lead to OCSA embedded in everyday life (Couldry & Hepp, 2020). Some studies have explored OCSA from the youth's perspective. Enjoyment and responsiveness in the relationship by sending pictures or performing sexual activities online may increase shame and guilt, and the feelings of betrayal may generalize to lack of trust in others (Jonsson et al., 2019). OCSA situation is experienced as threatening (Hamilton-Giachritsis et al., 2020).

The integration of digital media in youth's social lives, and the high exposure to OCSA (Finkelhor et al., 2023), makes it important to understand OCSA within a developmental and psychosocial framework (Morita et al., 2022). Adolescence is characterized by cognitive, biological, psychological, and social changes (Thapar et al., 2015). The social and personal transformations, including sexual exploration, may be challenging and continue from 11 to 12 years of age into one's mid-20s. Psychological developmental tasks involve a movement from dependency on caregivers towards autonomy, self-regulation, and agency in goal setting, decision-making, and self-efficacy (Murphy et al., 2008; Nunes et al., 2022). The outer support represented by caregivers are internalized, and youth develop an increased capacity for problem solving, perspective taking, and affect regulation. Friends and peers become the main source of social and personal exploration (Hammack, 2015; Murphy et al., 2008). Oppositional behaviour and risk-taking behaviour are not uncommon, and youth take more risks together with peers (Osmont et al., 2021). Online engagement may be understood as an extended peer arena, and digital risk engagement may be an exploration of social roles, norms, and self-identity (Stänicke, 2022; Stänicke et al., 2023). Understanding how youth experience OCSA is critical to better understanding the relationship to adolescent development in general and risks in particular (Morita et al., 2022).

Technology may facilitate the initiation, escalation, and maintenance of OCSA and increase the negative consequences of unwanted sharing of sexual images (Finkelhor et al., 2023; Hamilton-Giachritsis et al., 2020). The online communication may be *anonymous* (e.g., using fake pictures), and it may be *asynchronous* (e.g., easy to edit and personalize), and it is highly *accessible* (Valkenburg & Peter, 2011). Online sexual content may be difficult to delete, and the permanence and accessibility of the material leave the victims in persistent fear (Jonsson et al., 2019). Because OCSA is often performed by known perpetrators, understanding the consequences from the youth perspectives across different age groups and gender are essential to understand how OCSA can be prevented.

1.1 | The current study

Previous studies provide important insights into prevalence, risk factors, and outcomes, but we still have limited knowledge about how youth themselves experience OCSA. Qualitative studies that involve youth who have first-hand experiences with OCSA aim at capturing the many idiosyncratic ways youth get involved in and experience their online relationships and how they contribute to meaning making and self-understanding. The next step in knowledge acquisition is to synthesize this knowledge across studies with the potential to build more robust knowledge claims and strengthen the clinical utility of the joint studies. Qualitative studies are closely related to its context, and even though data and results from one study may not be generalizable to another context, concepts can be transferred and synthesized across different contexts (Levitt, 2018). In this paper, we report on a meta-synthesis of qualitative studies of youth's (12–24 years of age) first-person experiences of OCSA. The overall purpose was to complement knowledge from reviews of quantitative studies on OCSA and develop concepts that both reveal characteristics from the individual studies and highlight a whole across the studies (Britten et al., 2002). The research questions were as follows: (1) How do youth experience the processes that led to OCSA? (2) How do youth give meaning to the relationship to the person who involved them in OCSA? (3) How do youth describe consequences of OCSA in their everyday life? To enable the translation of results across studies, and to understand the youth's way in and out of OCSA, the findings are discussed according to developmental challenges during adolescence—such as social and sexual exploration, increased autonomy, and agency—and knowledge on traumatization in general. Furthermore, understanding how youth experience OCSA may help inform prevention and treatment programs. To our knowledge, this is the first meta-synthesis on this population.

2 | METHOD

We applied Noblit and Hare's (1988) meta-ethnography method for meta-synthesis, which follows seven steps: (1) getting started, (2) deciding what is relevant to the initial interest, (3) reading the

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studies, (4) determining how the studies are related, (5) translating the studies into one another, (6) synthesizing translations, and (7) expressing the synthesis. To highlight nuances, we included qualitative studies with different methodologies that focused on youth's first-person experiences of sexual abuse on digital platforms, such as SnapChat or TikTok and included both clinical and nonclinical populations. This meta-synthesis was registered in PROSPERO (CRD42021275024).

2.1 | Literature search

To increase knowledge on young people's experience of OCSA, we decided to search for qualitative studies with different methodologies analysing youth's first-person experiences of sexual abuse on digital platforms, such as SnapChat or TikTok and included both clinical and non-clinical populations (step 1). The authors developed a search string together with a university librarian, guided by words associated with sexual abuse, qualitative research, and online activity (see Appendix A). We conducted a conventional literature search (July 2021) and searched the following databases: MEDLINE, Embase, PsychINFO, CINAHL (EBSCO), Scopus, and Cochrane Library. We searched both MeSH words and free text in the relevant databases. The electronic search strategy identified 4685 references. We removed 3049 duplicates and 1487 unique records remained.

2.2 | Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The second step was to decide which studies was relevant for the initial interest. We worked in two teams (the first, fourth, and fifth author were one team, and the second and third author were the other team). Both teams screened the records' titles and abstracts against the broad inclusion criteria: sexual abuse, qualitative methodology, and online activity (see Table 1). First, all authors screened the records independently. Second, each team discussed disagreements on inclusions and exclusions. Third, all screeners met and resolved differences through discussion. We used the digital screening program Rayyan to organize the initial process of screening (https://www.rayyan.ai/). In this step, we excluded 1144 articles and identified 343 articles for independent appraisals of the abstract (Figure 1).

The third step, to read the studies, began by reading abstracts for the 343 remaining articles. During this phase, we narrowed the inclusion criteria to participants under 25 years of age who had experienced OCSA before 18 years of age, studies with first-person perspective and participants' direct citations, and articles published in English and peer reviewed in an academic journal. We excluded studies that primarily focused on offline sexual abuse, the experiences of people who had abused youth online, or the reflections of parents, clinicians, or teachers on youth's experiences of being involved in OCSA. We excluded studies on the experience of "frexting" and "dick pics" when representing a voluntary exchange. We included studies on "sexting" if the study included experiences of OCSA. We also decided to include results from mixed-method design *if* included open-ended questions. We removed review articles because they included quantitative results and we wanted to include primary data for the data-analysis (Levitt, 2018). In this step, we removed 302 articles. The remaining 41 articles were included for full-text reading and discussed by all authors. Finally, 14 articles met all inclusion criteria for full-text review (see Figure 1).

TABLE 1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Topic of interest	**Experiences of online sexual abuse**, image-based, technology-assisted, or internet-related sexual abuse, non-consensual sext or sexting or sextortion, digital intimate partner violence and abuse, cyber sexual violence, online solicitation or online grooming	Trafficking Frexting Online help and treatment Experience of physical sexual abuse but not online
Methodology	**Qualitative method** Qualitative method for data-analysis, data-collection with open questions or written text. Focus groups with participants who shared their own experiences of sexual abuse online during adolescence or young adults. Mixed method design, if possible, to extract qualitative results	Quantitative method Data collection with questionnaires with closed answer alternatives Focus group with participants sharing perspectives on sexual abuse online in general Theoretical articles and review articles
Study population	**Children and adolescents (0–25 years of age)** Girls/women, boys/men, and mixed gender	Adults older than 25 years of age
Perspective	First-person perspective	Studies which primarily focused on the perspectives of relatives, teachers, health personnel or the abusers
Quotes	Includes reports of participants' direct citations	No direct citations
Articles	Articles written in English, published and peer reviewed in an academic journal	Review articles Studies reported in another article or Ph. D. thesis, conference paper, or book chapters

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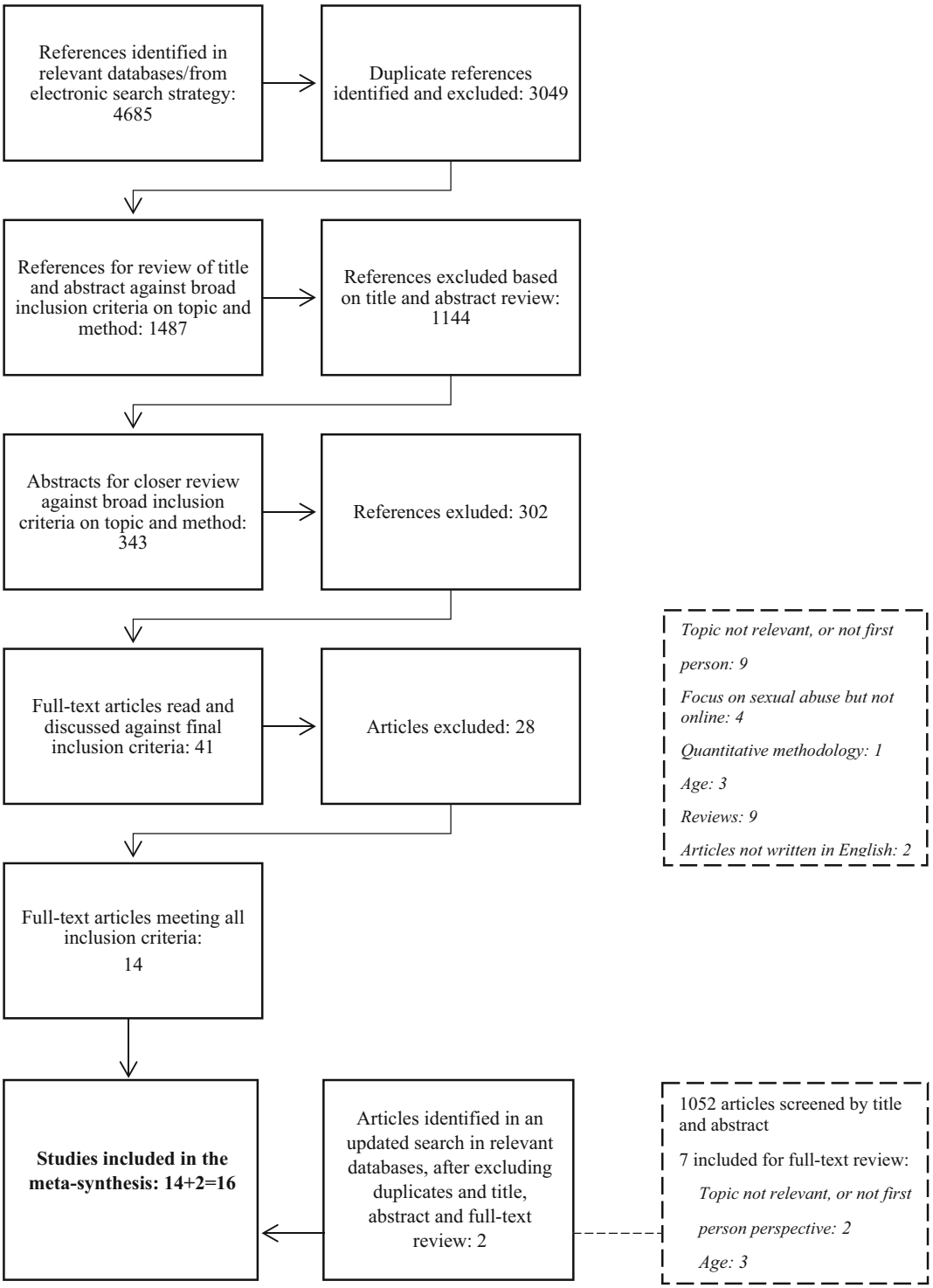


FIGURE 1 Flow diagram—steps in the selection of articles.

We evaluated the appropriateness of the data, methods for data-analysis, ethical considerations, and study quality using the criteria from *Critical Appraisal Skills Program* (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2020; see Appendix B). We paid attention to the transparency of the data-analysis, such as use of interview methods, and direct citations for the results (Levitt, 2018).

We searched through the reference lists of the reviews and pertinent articles for relevant articles in the grey literature, but no extra articles were included. A literature search in March 2023 resulted in 2730 references. We followed the same procedure, excluding 1678 duplicated and screening the remaining 1052 titles and abstracts. Two of the reviewers (LIS and GKR) read seven articles in full text, and two

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articles met all inclusion for full-text review. Altogether, 16 articles were included for full-text review in the meta-synthesis.

2.3 | Characteristics of the studies

The first, second, and third author extracted characteristics of the included articles (author, year, title, context, participant characteristics, research methodology, and data analysis) dating from 2013 to 2022 (see Table 2).

The included studies represented a variety of qualitative methodologies and data collection—such as semi-structured interviews and focus groups—and represented different fields of knowledge—such as psychology and sociology—and ensured a broad and interdisciplinary synthesis (see Table 2). The studies included different OCSA terminology such as "online sexual solicitation," "image-based sexual abuse," or "online sexual harassment." The respective studies recruited participants from internet platforms such as the Childline website and Facebook page. The interviews were conducted at schools, by telephone, or through collaboration with nongovernmental organizations.

In total, 747 young people participated across the studies and included 511 girls/young woman, 234 boys/young men, and two identified as gender fluid. In four of the studies, only females ($n = 203$) were included, and in three studies, the sample included less than 25% males. The participants were between 11 and 24 years of age but all had been involved in OCSA before 18 years of age. The participants were included from six different countries (Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Spain, Sweden, UK, Israel, and Australia). Few of the studies reported ethnicity or cultural background for the participants. The articles' authors were from western countries.

2.4 | Translation and synthesis

A meta-synthesis aims to produce an interpretative synthesis of data from primary studies based on the authors' concepts (second order constructs) and associated quotes from the participants (first-order constructs) (Britten et al., 2002). To begin the fourth phase, to determine how the studies were related, the second and third author organized the data and findings within every study into meaning units—consisting of information on the study (e.g., Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, Anthony, & Beech, 2014), the author's concept (e.g., "Deception"), interpretation of the concept (e.g., "The lies told by the abusers were generally believed by the victims at the time," p. 411), an associated quote (e.g., "He'd find things out about me first and then say yeah, I like that too and I like this. So, it was like, it was almost like he was using my responses to shape who he was," p. 411), and our generated code (e.g., "feeling cheated"). The fifth phase was to translate the studies into one another by developing new "third-order concepts" of the meaning units that integrated content from the primary studies. As the starting point for the translation of findings, we selected four index articles (Joleby et al., 2020; Katz, 2013; Whittle et al., 2015; Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, & Beech, 2014) characterized by high methodological quality rich data (Noblit & Hare, 1988).

The sixth step was to synthesize the meaning units by translating them from one study to another and developing categories of the findings. The second team presented a hierarchy of subthemes (e.g., "feeling cheated"), themes (e.g., "Experiencing conflicting feelings and dependency"), and meta-themes (e.g., "Being lured, tricked, and caught up in online child sexual abuse"), and all authors discussed the hierarchy. Some themes were diversed, and others were combined. During the seventh phase, we wrote the manuscript. The phases were somewhat overlapping, and the analysis continued during the writing of the manuscript, for example, by changing the order of meta-theme two and one to highlight a narrative in the findings—describing a process or ways into and out of OCSA.

2.5 | Reflexivity

To enhance the trustworthiness of the results from the meta-synthesis, the authors met for consensus meetings to decide on inclusion criteria and data extraction, to discuss interpretations of data, and to develop the hierarchy of concepts (methodological integrity checks; Levitt, 2018). To increase reflexivity, we made reflection notes and engaged in self-reflection of our theoretical perspectives. The two teams included researchers in developmental psychology, trauma, and gender studies. All were clinical psychologists representing psychodynamic, integrative, and existential perspectives. During the data analysis, we became interested in developmental and interpersonal perspectives to understand youth's online activity, the participants ways in and out of the OCSA, and how it developed from a "normal" exploration of relations and sexual experiences into extreme and intrusive exploitation. We were also informed by knowledge on traumatization in general to understand the participants' experiences.

2.6 | Ethics

This meta-synthesis included data from existing studies and the authors had no direct contact with the participants or the authors of the studies. Still, all included studies were evaluated whether they had sufficient ethical consideration (according to CASP).

3 | RESULTS

The analysis resulted in three meta-themes: (1) "Navigating in a digital world – feeling safe and understood," (2) "Being lured, tricked, and caught up in online child sexual abuse," and (3) "Facing the consequences – feeling powerless and blaming oneself." The three meta-themes show different aspects of OCSA: How youth get to know the person as part of their online everyday life, the gradual development into abuse, and how they experience negative consequences in the long run. In the following, we illustrate the meta-

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TABLE 2 Characteristics of included studies.

Author (year)	Title	Focus/central research question	Country	Study setting	Sample size, age, and gender	Data collection method	Research design and data analysis	Concept
Garcia-Gòmes, 2017	Teen girls and sexual agency: exploring the intrapersonal and intergroup dimensions of sexting	To explore the characteristics of sexualized adolescent cyberculture by analysing their discourses about sexting, including positive and negative consequences on their lives	Spain	Guided discussions by a teacher who knew nothing of the research interests	36 females 12–18 years of age	Guided group discussions involving 4–5 participants	Discourse analysis	Sexting
Hamilton-Giachritsis et al., 2020	Technology-assisted child sexual abuse in the UK: Young people's views on the impact of online sexual abuse	To understand the impact following technology-assisted child sexual abuse from the perspective of young people, including identifying additional elements or complexities arising from the digital element	United Kingdom	Interviews took place at child protection centres, by telephone or online	16 (1 male, 15 females) 15–17 years of age	16 semi-structured individual interviews	Thematic analysis	Technology assisted child sexual abuse
Hellevik, 2019	Teenagers' personal accounts of experiences with digital intimate partner violence and abuse	To explore the nature of digital intimate partner violence and abuse among victimized teenagers and how it co-occurs with other forms of dating violence in this age group	Norway	Respondents recruited through schools, social media, and youth camps.	14 (12 female, 2 males) 15–18 years of age	Semi-structured individual interviews	Thematic analysis	Digital intimate partner violence and abuse
Joleby et al., 2020	"All of me is completely different": Experiences and consequences among victims of technology-assisted child sexual abuse	To understand how victims of technology-assisted child sexual abuse (TA-CSA) have made sense of their experiences over time, and what impact the victimization had on them in the short and long terms	Sweden	Interviews took place face-to-face at interviewees' choice of location (e.g., a library)	7 females 17–24 years of age	In-depth individual interviews	Thematic analysis	Technology assisted child sexual abuse (TA-CSA)

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TABLE 2 (Continued)

Author (year)	Title	Focus/central research question	Country	Study setting	Sample size, age, and gender	Data collection method	Research design and data analysis	Concept
Katz, 2013	Internet-related child sexual abuse: What children tell us in their testimonies	To characterize the narratives of alleged victims of child sexual abuse using the testimonies of 20 children who were referred for investigative interviews following suspected sexual abuse through the Internet	Israel	Interviews took place face-to-face at a welfare office	20 (19 females, 1 male) 11–14 years of age Hebrew	Investigative individual interviews	Thematic analysis	Internet-related child sexual abuse
Lunde & Joleby, 2022	Being under pressure to sext: Adolescents' experiences, reactions, and counterstrategies	To explore adolescents' experiences of being under pressure to sext (sending nude images), what situations they view as pressuring, how they react to the pressure, and what counterstrategies they used	Sweden	Written statements from 225 primary school students from 10 different schools	225 (49.7% females) 13–16 years of age	Open ended questions, part of a questionnaire	Thematic analysis	Sext (sending nude images)
Mandau, 2021	"Snaps," "screenshots," and self-blame: A qualitative study of image-based sexual abuse victimization among adolescent Danish girls	To explore adolescent girls' experiences of image-based sexual abuse (IBSA) victimization	Denmark Unknown ethnicity	Online posts	157 females 11–20 years of age	Posts collected from an online counselling hotline	Thematic analysis	Image-based sexual abuse (IBSA)
Monks et al., 2019	A qualitative exploration of electronic image sharing among young people: Navigating the issues of conformity, trust, intention, and reputation	To explore the main factors affecting young people's image-sharing behaviours, particularly in the context of peer relationships and norms, and including both positive and negative consequences	Australia	Interviews held during a 2-day leadership workshop for young people on online activity	68 (39 females, 29 males) 13–14 years of age	Focus group interviews	Thematic analysis	Electronic image-sharing behaviours

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TABLE 2 (Continued)

Author (year)	Title	Focus/central research question	Country	Study setting	Sample size, age, and gender	Data collection method	Research design and data analysis	Concept
Setty, 2019	Meanings of bodily and sexual expression in youth sexting culture: young women's negotiation of gendered risks and harms	To explore young people's use of technology, meanings, and understandings of the ethics of sexting in terms of privacy and consent, and practices and perceptions surrounding sexting including both positive and negative consequences	United Kingdom	The interviews took place face-to-face at a private room at school or at youth clubs	41 (16 females, 23 males, 2 identified as gender fluid) 14–18 years of age	9 focus group interviews (3 with males, 2 with females and 4 mixed-gendered) and 7 semi-structured individual interviews	Symbolic interactionism Grounded theory	Sexting
Stonard et al., 2017	"They'll always find a way to get to you": Technology use in adolescent romantic relationships and its role in dating violence and abuse	To explore the role that electronic communication technology (ECT) plays in adolescent romantic relationships and psychologically abusive and controlling behaviours and its perceived impact	United Kingdom	5 groups in a school setting with a teacher present. 3 groups at one of the participant's homes with the researcher present	52 (30 females, 22 males) 12–18 years of age 92.3% described their ethnicity as white	Focus group interviews—1 with females and 7 with mixed-gendered	Thematic analysis	Electronic communication technology (ECT)
Van Ouytsel et al., 2017	Sexting: adolescents' perceptions of the applications used for, motives for, and consequences of sexting	To explore adolescents' perceptions of applications used for sexting, the motives for engaging in sexting, and the positive and negative consequences of sexting behaviour	Belgium	Interviews were held in two secondary schools	57 (38 females, 19 males) 15–18 years of age Flanders	11 focus group interviews	Thematic analysis	Sexting
Walker et al., 2013	Sexting: young women's and men's views on its nature and origins	To explore the experience of pressure to be involved in sexting by both young women and young men	Australia	Interviews were held face-to-face in an educational setting	33 (18 females, 15 males) 15–20 years of age	Semi-structured individual interviews	Thematic analysis, NVivo	Sexting

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TABLE 2 (Continued)

Author (year)	Title	Focus/central research question	Country	Study setting	Sample size, age, and gender	Data collection method	Research design and data analysis	Concept
Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, & Beech, 2014	In their own words: young peoples' vulnerabilities to being groomed and sexually abused online	To explore young people's experience of online grooming leading to online and/or offline sexual abuse	United Kingdom	Interviews took place face-to-face in a neutral setting (e.g., a victim suite at a police property)	8 (6 females, 2 males) 13–18 years of age White British	Semi-structured individual interviews	Thematic analysis	Online grooming leading to online and/or offline sexual abuse
Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, Anthony, & Beech, 2014[a]	'Under his spell': Victims' perspectives of being groomed online	To explore and highlight key themes within the process of online grooming from the victim's perspective	United Kingdom	Interviews took place face-to-face in a neutral setting (e.g., a victim suite at a police property)	8 (6 females, 2 males) 13–18 years of age	Semi-structured individual interviews	Thematic analysis	Online grooming
Whittle et al., 2015	A comparison of victim and offender perspectives of grooming and sexual abuse	To explore the dynamic of the relationship between victims of online grooming and contact sexual abuse and adult offenders who groomed and abused them	United Kingdom	Time and place were arranged for a face-to-face interview, in a neutral setting	3 females 12–14 years of age	Semi-structured individual interviews	Thematic analysis	Online grooming and contact sexual abuse
Wood & Wheatcroft, 2020	Young adults' perceptions of internet communications and the grooming concept	To understand young adults' perceptions of risk, their internet behaviours, and understanding of the grooming concept	United Kingdom	Interviews were held face-to-face at youth organizations	10 (3 females, 7 males) 18–23 years of age	Semi-structured individual interviews	Thematic analysis	Online grooming

[a]Same sample as Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, and Beech (2014) but different analysis.

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themes and associated themes and subthemes (see Table 3). To increase transparency, we present selected citations from the articles (primary data-material; Levitt, 2018). For the same reason, we add the number of studies (*n*) that include relevant data with the following terms: (a) "Most"—results based on data from 12 to 16 studies, (b) "Several"—based on 6–11 studies, and (c) "Some"—based on 1–5 studies (Hill et al., 2005). We include the number of meaning units (*me*) for themes and subthemes.

3.1 | Navigating in a digital world—feeling safe and understood

The first meta-theme illustrates how youth became involved in OCSA as part of their engagement in digital relationships in general.

3.1.1 | Exploring online relationships

Some studies ($n = 5$) highlight how youth explored all kinds of relationships online. Exploration of intimacy and sexuality, including sharing of private content online, was described as a normal activity in their everyday life. Some studies ($n = 2$, $me = 5$) emphasized that *picture sharing is something youths do* (1.1.1):

> Yeah, all my friends do it as well. It's like erm it's like you know something people our age do. People would say you're weird if you didn't do it.
>
> (Garcìa-Gòmes, 2017, p. 401)

Youth did not seem to distinguish between producing and sharing pictures or videos with nonprivate or private or intimate content, such as nude pictures. They described a difference between adults and young persons' attitude towards picture sharing: "I know you think I'm wrong, all adults say that but it's like something you don't understand" (Garcìa-Gòmes, 2017, p. 398). In a way, adults should be more "up to date." Some ($n = 5$, $me = 11$) also highlighted that the youth *considered digital risks but felt safe* (1.1.2) while communicating online. The fact that they knew a person or could see the person contributed to a feeling of safety: "I can see what they look like, so I know they're telling the truth" (Wood & Wheatcroft, 2020, p. 8). The presence of a person's face through online communication channels seems to increase a feeling of closeness and a false feeling of safety.

3.1.2 | Building a close and intimate relationship online

Several studies ($n = 9$) underlined how youth described the person who involved them in OCSA as building a relationship with them over time. They felt supported by them in their everyday life.

Several studies ($n = 8$, $me = 19$) underlined how the youth were *feeling understood* (1.2.1) by the person who later abused them. They trusted the person and developed regular and intimate contact by talking about everyday activities, like school or homework, or topics they were interested in: "He is very caring, asking me about my day at school, and I told him everything, he really understood me with my teacher and everything" (Katz, 2013, p. 1538). The fact that the person spent a lot of time with them made them feel special and lucky: "Felt like I could tell him anything like, really trusted him … It was mainly like everything a girl would like to hear, like you're beautiful, you deserve good things, and I can do all that for you" (Whittle et al., 2015, p. 551). The youth felt valued and important.

Some studies ($n = 5$, $me = 10$) underlined that the youth felt *committed to the relationship* (1.2.2) with the person who involved them in OCSA—they experienced an exchange of favours they did for each other:

> I was under his spell so I'd do anything he wanted. Just come home from school, speak to him, do this, do that (sexual activity via webcam), go to bed … He was showing me so much attention in the beginning and talk to me near enough every day about everything and help me with my homework and stuff I thought in return, I'd do what he wants.
>
> (Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, Anthony, & Beech, 2014, p. 415)

They seem to have experienced the relationship as equal, mutual, and reciprocal. Therefore, it felt appropriate to meet the person's expectations. In fact, one youth described the relationship as intimate and that she kept it a secret to show how mature and trustworthy she was:

> It was our private place, our love, it was nobody else's business. He always told me that he loves and respects me and will never tell on us, and of course, I want to show him how grown up I am and that he should trust me, I really did not tell anyone.
>
> (Katz, 2013, p. 1539)

Maybe the youth explored online with a sense of safety and "good faith" and were manipulated with flattering comments.

3.2 | Second meta-theme: being lured, tricked, and caught up in OCSA

The second meta-theme highlights how the youth experienced the valued relationship changing into OCSA. Initially, it seems that the youth were not aware of how the relationship was developing. Gradually, the youth became engaged in abusive behaviours.

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3.2.1 | Experiencing conflicting feelings and dependency

Several ($n = 7$) of the studies represented an increasing experience among the youth of difficulties in the relationship with the person, but still, they felt dependent and committed to the engagement. In some studies ($n = 4$, $me = 7$), the youth highlighted that they began *feeling cheated* (2.1.1). In particular, they noticed that the person adjusted their answers to match what the youth enjoyed, needed, or was interested in:

> He'd find things out about me first and then say yeah, I like that too and I like this. So, it was like, it was almost like he was using my responses to shape who he was, so he could pretend to be this person that I liked in order to get what he wanted from me.
>
> (Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, Anthony, & Beech, 2014, p. 411)

Gradually, the youth felt cheated, and some realized that they had been trapped.

Several studies ($n = 6$, $me = 9$) emphasized how the youth began *experiencing an inner conflict* (2.1.2) towards the online sexual relationship—they felt supported by the person but began to also experience difficulties. One girl described how she loved talking to the person but also hated it and struggled to find a way out of the situation:

> Then he started talking to me on sexual things, telling me stories, sending me perverted pictures … he asked me to imagine that he is taking off my clothes, touching my body … he asked me all the time if I loved talking to him, and although I hated it, I told him I enjoyed it.
>
> (Katz, 2013, p. 1539)

Some studies ($n = 3$, $me = 3$) reported that even though youth experienced difficulties while being involved in sexual behaviour online, they appreciated that someone was attracted to them and were *afraid of losing the relationship* (2.1.3).

> At the beginning, he asked me about my body and breasts, then he asked me if I had ever seen a penis … then he showed me his penis on the web camera (…) and in return, I showed him myself with only bra and underwear … one day he asked me to take my clothes off and to touch myself, then he told me to put my fingers into my vagina and I did that, he told me to make sounds and I did … I started to think about him all the time and only with him I was relaxed, when we were not talking, I was really upset and nervous around everyone … I got really addicted to him ….
>
> (Katz, 2013, p. 1539)

3.2.2 | Feeling controlled and trapped

Most studies ($n = 14$) emphasized how youth gradually experienced being controlled and trapped into an escalating situation of abuse. The youth's experiences explicitly describe online sexual exploitation and abuse. Several studies ($n = 10$, $me = 14$) highlighted that the gradual development into grooming and abuse made it challenging for the youth to set limits and protect themselves. They were gradually *experiencing increased pressure* (2.2.1) from the person who involved them in sexual abuse online. Actions that previously had been good enough for the abuser were not sufficient anymore, and the expectations became more difficult to meet:

> He asked me to send him some pics of mine and I felt embarrassed at the beginning, but I love him and I started taking pics erm I started sending pics in underwear, but he wanted more and you know I love him to bits and I knew he wasn't going to show my pics to anybody and I sent him some more […] it's kinda weird, it makes me feel sexy.
>
> (Garcìa-Gòmes, 2017, p. 400)

In some studies ($n = 3$, $me = 5$), youth also described how the offender reacted in a negative way when the youth said or did something the person, they felt offended by did not approve. The responses were seemingly harsh and *unpredictable* (2.2.2) and difficult to handle:

> When I said something he didn't like and he's just like oh go away I wish you were dead … he occasionally tried to make me feel really bad about myself like oh you're so ugly, you're so fat, I'm surprised more people don't hate you …. It was a bit of a rollercoaster because there were times when I thought I loved him and then others when I hated him and didn't want to speak to him ever again.
>
> (Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, Anthony, & Beech, 2014, p. 418)

Their unpredictable mood undermined the youth's sense of control and, at the same time, increased their fear of being left alone.

Several studies ($n = 6$, $me = 13$) included descriptions from youth that indicate how *difficult it was to understand their own actions* (2.2.3) when exploring intimate content in online relationships.

> I always did what he asked of me … one day he told me to take a cucumber, I went to the kitchen, took one and returned to the room, then he ask me to turn on the web camera, to take of my clothes and to put the cucumber into my vagina, so I did that … my sister suddenly got into the room and asked me why I am putting the cucumber into my vagina, and I really could not understand why ….
>
> (Katz, 2013, p. 1539)

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TABLE 3 Overview of meta-themes, themes, and subthemes.

Meta-theme	Theme	Subtheme	Meaning units (*me*)	Studies (*n*)
First meta-theme: Navigating in a digital world—feeling safe and understood	1.1 Exploring relationships online	1.1.1 Picture-sharing is something youths do (*n* = 2, *me* = 5) 1.1.2 Considered digital risk but felt safe (*n* = 5, *me* = 11)	*me* = 16	*n* = 5 Garcìa-Gòmes, 2017; Monks et al., 2019; Stonard et al., 2017; Walker et al., 2013; Wood & Wheatcroft, 2020
	1.2 Building a close relationship online	1.2.1 Feeling understood (*n* = 8, *me* = 19) 1.2.2 Committed to the relationship (*n* = 5, *me* = 10)	*me* = 29	*n* = 9 Garcìa-Gòmes, 2017; Hamilton-Giachritsis et al., 2020; Joleby et al., 2020; Katz, 2013; Setty, 2019; Van Ouytsel et al., 2017; Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, & Beech, 2014, Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, Anthony, & Beech, 2014; Whittle et al., 2015
Second meta-theme: Being lured, tricked, and caught up in online sexual abuse	2.1 Experiencing conflicting feelings and dependency	2.1.1 Feeling cheated (*n* = 4, *me* = 7) 2.1.2 Experiencing an inner conflict (*n* = 6, *me* = 9) 2.1.3 Afraid of losing the relationship (*n* = 3, *me* = 3)	*me* = 19	*n* = 7 Joleby et al., 2020; Katz, 2013; Monks et al., 2019; Setty, 2019; Van Ouytsel et al., 2017; Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, Anthony, & Beech, 2014; Whittle et al., 2015
	2.2 Feeling controlled and trapped	2.2.1 Experiencing increased pressure (*n* = 10, *me* = 14) 2.2.2 Unpredictable mood (*n* = 3, *me* = 5) 2.2.3 Difficult to understand their own actions (*n* = 6, *me* = 13) 2.2.4 Being commanded and threatened (*n* = 4, *me* = 11)	*me* = 43	*n* = 14 Garcìa-Gòmes, 2017; Hamilton-Giachritsis et al., 2020; Hellevik, 2019; Joleby et al., 2020; Katz, 2013; Mandau, 2021; Monks et al., 2019; Lunde & Joleby, 2022; Setty, 2019; Stonard et al., 2017; Van Ouytsel et al., 2017; Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, Anthony, & Beech, 2014; Whittle et al., 2015; Wood & Wheatcroft, 2020
Third meta-theme: Fearing the consequences—feeling powerless and blaming oneself	3.1 Starting to realize the abuse—overwhelmed and paralysed	3.1.1 Feeling shame, guilt, and self-disgust (*n* = 5, *me* = 12) 3.1.2 Afraid the online sexual content would be shared with others (*n* = 5, *me* = 5) 3.1.3 Feeling betrayed (*n* = 2, *me* = 3)	*me* = 19	*n* = 8 Hamilton-Giachritsis et al., 2020; Hellevik, 2019; Joleby et al., 2020; Katz, 2013; Lunde & Joleby, 2022; Mandau, 2021; Stonard et al., 2017; Van Ouytsel et al., 2017
	3.2 Increased destructive behaviour and changed self-image	3.2.1 Mistrust towards everyone (*n* = 2, *me* = 5) 3.2.2 Experiencing a changed self-image (*n* = 2, *me* = 3) 3.2.3 Thinking of suicide (*n* = 1, *me* = 1)	*me* = 9	*n* = 2 Joleby et al., 2020; Monks et al., 2019

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While exploring relationships online, the youth felt they were led into risky situations they did not understand the consequences of.

Some studies ($n = 4$, $me = 11$) emphasized how the youth experienced *being commanded and threatened* (2.2.4) to send more pictures:

> [The offender said] "I can use that video – I can sort of put that anywhere I want, send it to whoever I want." It was a bit scary, and I'd do things because of that as well (Bella); I was being blackmailed because he said that I know where you live, I know this, I know that I'll come and harm your family if you don't do this.
>
> (Hamilton-Giachritsis et al., 2020, p. 7)

They describe how difficult it was to get an overview of the situation, to understand their communication with the person, and how easy it was to get deeper and deeper into trouble, and the importance of the relationship made it difficult to end the engagement.

This could prolong their attempt to end the relationship and increase the experience of losing control. They felt they had to solve the problem by themselves because they were afraid of telling someone about the abuse.

Some studies ($n = 2$, $me = 3$) underlined how the youth were *feeling betrayed* (3.1.3) and how difficult it was to recognize the betrayal of trust:

> It evoked quite a lot of feelings, because I felt, I think it was a slap to the face, like "Oh, this is what has happened," kind of. To just get all this served at one time was really tough, […] to find out everything, his identity, all the other people that had been abused, and stuff like that.
>
> (Joleby et al., 2020, p. 7)

Facing the OCSA seems to have surprised the youth. They felt overwhelmed and paralysed by the experience.

3.3 | Third meta-theme: facing the consequences—feeling powerless and blaming oneself

The third meta-theme highlights how the youth felt increasingly hopeless and powerless. They blamed themselves after being involved in the OCSA.

3.3.1 | Starting to realize the abuse—overwhelmed and paralysed

Several studies ($n = 8$) highlighted how youth experienced feelings of being overwhelmed and paralysed after they realized that the relationship had turned into OCSA. Some studies ($n = 5$, $me = 12$) underlined that the youth were *feeling shame, guilt, and self-disgust* (3.1.1). They felt responsible for their actions and blamed themselves for not detecting the abuse: "I felt very disgusted by myself and by people in general. Both what I had been asked to do, and that I had been able to do it" (Joleby et al., 2020, p. 7). They could see that the other person had done something wrong but felt disappointed in themselves.

Some studies ($n = 5$, $me = 5$) highlighted how youth became *afraid the online sexual content would be shared with others* (3.1.2). One youth described how she tried to please the person because he said it otherwise would be shared with her family:

> Because you know you'd done it once or twice they just expect it all the time and then if you try and say like oh, I don't want to talk about that or whatever, he'd like to threaten or black (mail), like I'll send your dad all the chat logs if you don't.
>
> (Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, Anthony, & Beech, 2014, p. 418)

3.3.2 | Increased destructive behaviour and changed self-image

Some studies ($n = 2$) described how youth may experience destructive behaviour and difficult thoughts about themselves and the future after being involved in OCSA. In some studies ($n = 2$, $me = 5$), it was emphasized how the youth were experiencing *mistrust towards everyone* (3.2.1) and some became convinced that "everyone" had seen the online sexual content they had shared with the person who abused them. One girl became afraid of all older men:

> Every time an older man, or a man, gives me more than a glance when I walk past, I automatically think "This person has seen these videos, this is a paedophile."
>
> (Joleby et al., 2020, p. 9)

The girl seems to be unsure if anyone is to be trusted—if she was tricked once, maybe it can happen again.

Two studies ($n = 2$, $me = 3$), described how some youths were *experiencing a changed self-image* (3.2.2). Youth described increased focus on their body, appearance or what they wore ("clothing anxiety") because of the OCSA:

> Before it happened, I didn't reflect on my appearance […] What I'm working on most these days is what I call "clothing anxiety." Picking an outfit in the morning takes at least an hour, and half of the time it results in me not being able to leave.
>
> (Joleby et al., 2020, p. 10)

In another study, it was underlined how they felt attached to the person and were struggling to find a new self-understanding. They longed for the contact and what they used to do together:

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> He brainwashed me; otherwise, I would not have done all the things I did. He taught me how to masturbate and I enjoyed it, a lot. I was thinking of him all the time and felt addicted to our meetings. and even now I am still thinking of him and all the things we did together.
>
> (Katz, 2013, p. 1539)

In the relationship, they may have shared private experiences and explored their body. When they feel trapped and tricked, they may struggle to integrate the whole experience.

One study ($n = 1$, $me = 1$) emphasized how the self-blame and anger towards self could be overwhelming for some youth and they began *thinking about suicide* (3.2.3):

> Between the ages of 12 and 14, I really noticed that I, kind of, it sounds so sick, but I felt that I kind of wanted to sell my body (…) I felt like a failure, I would never find someone, so I might as well just do this, and then I could kill myself.
>
> (Joleby et al., 2020, p. 8)

They felt difficulties of feeling overwhelmed, shameful, and guilty—and struggled to find a way back to their everyday life. They described mistrust and having thoughts of suicide or harmful behaviour, but underlined how they missed the relationship.

4 | DISCUSSION

In the current meta-ethnographic study, we examined how youth experienced and gave meaning to the processes, relationship, and the consequences of OCSA with the aim to complement knowledge from quantitative studies and develop nuanced concepts across individual qualitative studies. By synthesizing results from 16 qualitative studies, we developed three meta-themes that highlight how OCSA was experienced as a process that started as part of digital activities in their everyday life and developed into an abusive relationship with a person online. In the beginning, the engagement made them feel valued and prompted temptation and exploration (first meta-theme). Gradually, however, they felt lured, tricked, and caught into an activity which they lost control over (second meta-theme). The engagement made them feel powerless and doomed to face the negative consequences (third meta-theme). The findings add empirical support to earlier individual qualitative studies of youth's experience of OCSA and extend earlier knowledge by showing findings consistent across samples with younger and older youths and different gender. In the following, the findings are related to developmental challenges of sexual and social exploration, autonomy, and agency. Then, we highlight the negative consequences of OCSA from the youth's perspective and emphasize some clinical implications of the findings.

4.1 | Developmental challenges and digital communication

The results from the present study lend additional empirical support to earlier reviews based primarily on quantitative studies that have underlined how OCSA develops from digital activities that are part of youth's everyday life, such as exploring self-expression (Davidson et al., 2022), sexuality, and romantic relations (Finkelhor, 2022). The present study shows how the youth trust in sharing personal content with the abuser (first meta-theme "Navigating in a digital world – feeling safe and understood"). They used online platforms to explore sexuality and intimacy and to seek emotional support (subtheme 1.1 and 1.2). From a developmental perspective, the accomplishment of separation from caregivers and trust in peers during adolescence (Thapar et al., 2015) presupposes that young people increasingly engage in relations to peers and gradually adapt to adult responsibilities. The initial contact that later develops into OCSA is perceived as safe exploration of sexuality and intimacy by the participants themselves, and within what they and their peers consider "normal" online communication.

In this way, the online engagement may be a way of demonstrating autonomy and agency by exploring social relations outside the scrutiny of caregivers. Risk behaviour is not uncommon in adolescence (Osmont et al., 2021), and they may be aware that they are balancing on the edge of what is accepted. Perhaps the developmental task related to autonomy and agency make the youth more vulnerable, tempted, and willing to engage in digital risks like sexual behaviour online that for some escalate into OCSA, even if they are aware of the dangers. The distinction between healthy exploration and abuse remains subtle and may not become apparent for the youth before there is no turning back. It may be that this is at the core of understanding the development of self-blame and shame. An agency-seeking youth may feel that they "knowingly" engaged in these activities (exerting agency), hiding it from adults (in their pursuit of autonomy), just to experience defeat in the "adult" digital world.

The present study indicates that the youth experienced a gradual process from safe and exciting exploration through online communication into OCSA—a process described as being lured and tricked (second meta-theme "Being lured, tricked, and caught up in online child sexual abuse"). The results indicate that the presence of a person's face through online communication channels seem to increase a feeling of closeness that may have created a false sense of safety (subtheme 1.1). The communication may become intensified, which invites one to easily share secrets and push personal limits on sexual issues. However, as shown in second meta-theme, breaking out of a harmful situation or relationship such as this is not straightforward. Perhaps "the autonomous" youth may feel it is their sole responsibility to find ways out—leaving them feeling even more helpless and lonely. One way to help the youth loosen this "Gordian knot" may be to help them understand the dynamics between the meta-themes in this study.

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Furthermore, some youth experienced that the online relationship reduced influence from the outside world and felt absorbed by the relationship—it was the only thing they thought about (see subtheme 1.2). This finding is in line with the perspective of the three As in online communication theory—anonymity, asynchronization, and accessibility—which may bring an understanding of why the relationship to the perpetrator became so important (also underlined by Joleby et al., 2021; Hamilton-Giachritsis et al., 2020). Despite experiencing growing difficulties in the online relationship (subthemes 2.1 and 2.2), many participants felt increased pressure to extend their limits to maintain the relationship, because they were afraid of losing the connection and the attention from the abusive person. Maybe we can add a fourth A: *absorption*. An online relationship can become all-consuming for the youth. Some struggled to acknowledge the abusive relationship even though they could describe several negative consequences of the engagement. Some seemed to be caught in a spiral of threats of disclosure that accelerated their involvement. Perhaps these online processes were further accelerated by the exploration and risk-seeking that characterize development in adolescence.

4.2 | The consequences of OCSA

The results from the present study indicate that many of the youth felt increasingly hopeless and powerless as they began to understand the nature of the contact, blaming themselves for having entered a relationship that turned into OCSA (third meta-theme "Facing the consequences – feeling powerless and blaming oneself"). In the online relationship, they felt understood, validated, and supported, for example, by receiving help with schoolwork but turned into a negative feeling of losing control and feeling tricked (subtheme 3.1). Importantly, the negative consequences described by the youth overlap with the experiences of young people that have reported sexual abuse offline (see also subtheme 3.2) (Ali & Paash, 2021; Finkelhor, 2022; Wolak et al., 2018). However, unlike offline sexual abuse, the results highlight that many youths described being concerned that the images they had shared were being spread on social media or shared with their family.

This finding resonates with existing knowledge highlighting that digital content is characterized by being present over time (Couldry & Hepp, 2020). Young people are therefore at risk of being reminded of previous digital behaviour for years to come, which might hamper the developmental process of moving on (Morita et al., 2022) particularly if the engagement was traumatizing. Jonsson et al. (2019) underline the difficulties to delete the material as leaving the victims in fear for a long period. Because the perpetrator is often part of the youth's social network, seeing the person face-to-face may activate trauma reminders and strong negative emotions. The fear that friends and classmates see sexual images may cause persistent stress and anxiety. In addition, the youth may feel a lot of shame for their engagement in the relationship—both by sending sexual content like pictures and videos but also by appreciating and not wanting to lose the relationship.

Further, some studies described how youth reported a changed self-image (subtheme 3.2). They had shared pictures of themselves and explored intimacy as part of the abuse. Consequently, they described an increased focus on their body and struggle to find out who they were outside of the relationship. Perhaps the experiences that the youth had with the abuser have been embodied and integrated in their self-understanding (Shapiro, 2019). Furthermore, losing the relationship left the participants with a sense of emptiness—they struggled to integrate the engagement in their experience of self or self-image. These findings underline that even though the abuse took place online, the consequences are embodied and grounded in the everyday life of young people and may have emotional implications that need to be addressed in offline relationships, for example, with caregivers or therapists.

4.3 | Clinical implications

The results highlight how OCSA may be a way to explore social and sexual relationships and addresses a basic need to be understood and supported. When trust is misused, developmental tasks related to autonomy and agency may be shattered, replaced with shame, and self-blame. The distinction between healthy exploration and abuse is subtle and becomes apparent for the youth in the aftermath when there is no turning back. The negative consequences described by the participants in the included studies overlap reported consequences in quantitative studies on OCSA and of offline sexual abuse (e.g., Chauviré-Geib & Fegert, 2023; Finkelhor, 2022; Joleby et al., 2021; Jonsson et al., 2019). Importantly, even though the studies included most females, the findings refer to studies with samples of only young woman, studies with both genders, and across samples with different age groups of youth.

We know from other studies that youth seldom tell their parents, friends, or even their therapists about OCSA (Livingstone et al., 2022; Smahel et al., 2020). For caregivers, teachers, and clinicians these findings point to the need to openly and nonjudgementally address OCSA across gender and age groups of youth so that it can be disclosed and so that the possible psychological impact may be addressed. Importantly, clinicians may also benefit from knowing that OCSA can be related to exploration of relationships, intimacy, and sexuality in an online arena, and how the engagement may meet a need to be heard, validated, and supported in their everyday life. Further, they need to know how difficult it can be to end the relationship.

4.4 | Limitations

The empirical data and the researchers' perceptions are acknowledged as partial and context dependent (Levitt, 2018). The articles included different ways of collecting data and the participants may give different information in a focus group than in an interview. The exact age or ethnicity of the participants are not known in every study, but the

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samples included mostly girls/young woman from western countries and ranged from 12 to 24 years of age, which may reduce the relevance of the results for boys, or youth identified with gender fluid, transgender identity, or from nonwestern countries. At the same time, the studies reflect that most of the victims of OCSA are young females (Finkelhor et al., 2023), and the developed themes and concepts can be discussed according to results from other samples and contexts (analytic generalizability; Levitt, 2018).

4.5 | Future research

There is a need for more knowledge about what hinders young people from asking for help and which factors make it easier to share negative and often shameful experiences online with adults. There is also a need for more knowledge on who is most vulnerable when experiencing digital risks.

5 | CONCLUSION

This meta-ethnographic study aimed to synthesize 16 qualitative studies on youth's (12–24 years of age) subjective experience of being involved in OCSA. The results suggest that the experiences of OSCA may be understood according to normative developmental milestones in youth's adaptation to the adult world, such as social and sexual exploration, and developing autonomy and agency. However, OCSA is difficult to understand and can increase self-blame. Findings are across different age groups and gender. Further, the ubiquitous presence of digital communication make some youth vulnerable for OCSA. Finally, clinicians and helpers should include examination of engagement in OCSA in their clinical work with youth.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available in [repository name] at [DOI/URL]. These data were derived from the following resources available in the public domain: [list resources and URLs].

ORCID

Line Indrevoll Stänicke https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7522-8307

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APPENDIX A: EXAMPLE SEARCH STRING Embase, MEDLINE, PsycInfo (Ovid)

Embase Classic + Embase <1947 to 2021 July 08>, Ovid MEDLINE(R) ALL <1946 to July 08, 2021>, APA PsycInfo <1806 to July Week 1 2021>

Date of search: 2021-07-09. Number of retrieved references: Embase 523, PsycInfo 767, MEDLINE 362.

Key: psyh = search in PsycInfo, medall = search in MEDLINE, emczd = search in Embase. / = subject heading, tw = title, abstract, kw = author supplied keywords in Embase, kf = author supplied keywords in MEDLINE, ADJn = word distance of maximum n words.

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Author and year	1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	5. Were the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	10. How valuable is the research?
Garcìa-Gòmes, 2017	Yes	Yes	Partly	No	Partly	Partly	Unclear	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hamilton-Giachritsis et al., 2020	Yes	Yes	Partly	Yes	Yes	Unclear	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hellevik, 2019	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Unclear	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Joleby et al., 2020	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Katz, 2013	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lunde & Joleby, 2022	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mandau, 2021	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partly	Yes	Partly	Partly	Yes	Yes	Yes
Monks et al., 2019	Yes	Yes	Yes	Nei	Partly	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Setty, 2019	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partly	Yes	Yes
Stonard et al., 2017	Yes	Yes	Partly	Unclear	Partly	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Van Ouytsel et al., 2017	Yes	Yes	Partly	No	Yes	Unclear	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Walker et al., 2013	Yes	Yes	Partly	No	Yes	Unclear	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, & Beech, 2014	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, Anthony, & Beech, 2014	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Whittle et al., 2015	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wood & Wheatcroft, 2020	Yes	Yes	Yes	Nei	Yes	Unclear	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

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APPENDIX B: CRITICAL APPRAISAL SKILL PROGRAMME (CASP)

1	(Sexual abuse or sexual assault or sexual harass* or sexual trauma or sexthing or sexting or grooming or solicitat* or victimization).tw,kw,kf.	138,669
2	(sexual abuse/ or sexual harassment/ or sexual harassment/or sexting/) use psyh	24,449
3	(sexual assault/ or exp sexual abuse/or sexual harassment/) use emczd	30,302
4	(sexual harassment/or Sexual Trauma/) use medall	1949
5	or/1-4	154,708
6	(exp Internet/ or Online Community/ or exp Websites/ or Internet Usage/ or Online Social Networks/ or exp Social Media/ or exp Blog/ or Digital Storytelling/or Mobile Applications/) use psyh	51,582
7	(Internet/ or Social media/ or Blogging/ or Online Social Networking/or Mobile Applications/) use medall	93,137
8	(Internet/ or online social network/ or Social media/ or blogging/or mobile application/) use emczd	150,972
9	(((mobile or phone* or smartphone* or iphone or ipad) adj3 (app or apps or application*)) or online or internet or digital* or web or "social medium" or "social media" or "online social network*" or "social networking site*" or blog* or weblog* or moblog* or vlog* or microblog* or "social bookmarking" or "social web" or "social internet" or "participative internet" or "discussion board*" or "discussion forum*" or "discussion fora" or chatroom* or chat or chatting or facebook or twitter or tweet* or linkedin or myspace or instagram or snapchat or "second life" or youtube or "you tube" or jodel or flickr or qik or bambuser or wiki* or reddit or pinterest or tumblr or tik-tok or "tik tok" or tiktok or whatsapp or slack or messenger or wechat or weibo or snapchat or VK or VKontakte).tw,kw,kf.	1,484,979
10	((sharing or share*) adj3 (material* or image* or photo* or picture* or video* or text or content or poetry or message* or diary or diaries or poem* or story or stories or experience*)).tw,kw,kf.	44,556
11	(smartphone* or ((smart or mobile) adj phone*) or iphone* or ipad*).tw,kw,kf.	73,919
12	or/6-11	1,632,583
13	(exp Qualitative Methods/ or exp Interviews/or Narrative Analysis/) use psyh	32,477
14	(exp Qualitative Research/ or exp Grounded Theory/ or exp Interviews as Topic/ or exp Interview, Psychological/ or Focus Groups/ or exp Anecdotes as Topic/ or exp Personal narratives as topic/or exp Narration/) use medall	162,224
15	(qualitative research/ or grounded theory/or interview/) use emczd	294,570
16	(qualitative* or "grounded theor*" or interview* or "focus group*" or anecdote* or narrative* or ethnograph* or phenomenol* or "discourse analys*" or "thematic analys*" or (case adj3 stud*)).tw,kw,kf.	2,769,468
17	or/13-16	2,838,376
18	5 and 12 and 17	1652
	Embase	523
	PsycInfo	767
	MEDLINE	362

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