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Child abuse and neglect in Brussels during the COVID-19-lockdown

Camille Verheyden a, *, Erik Van Dooren b, Frank Van Holen a, c, Tim Stroobants d, Johan Vanderfaeillie a

a Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Department of Psychology, Pleinlaan 2, 1050 Brussels, Belgium
b Vertrouwenscentrum Kindermishandeling Brussel, Sainctelettesquare 17, 1000 Brussels, Belgium
c Pleegzorg Vlaams-Brabant en Brussel, Sainctelettesquare 17, 1000 Brussels, Belgium
d Vlaams Expertisecentrum Kindermishandeling, Sainctelettesquare 17, 1000 Brussels, Belgium

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ABSTRACT

Background: It is likely that the circumstances during the COVID-19-lockdown in Belgium increased the incidence and prevalence of child abuse and neglect (CAN) due to exacerbated risk factors and new COVID-19-related stressors. However, traditional reporters had less contact with children which could lead to undetected cases of CAN.

Objective: Gain insight into the number and profile of CAN reports filed to the Brussels Confidential Center of Child Abuse and Neglect (CCCAN) during the COVID-19-lockdown.

Participants and setting: A dataset comprising 536 CAN reports from periods before (N = 442) and during the lockdown (N = 94).

Methods: Characteristics about the report, reporter, victim and his/her family, perpetrator(s) and the trajectory with the CCCAN were registered. The number and characteristics of reports during the lockdown were compared to those of reports before the lockdown.

Results: The number of advisory questions (p = .506, d = .377) and allegations (p = .095, d = 1.206) remained unchanged. During the lockdown, the risk assessment of advisory questions was higher (p = .011, d = .280), they evolved more into social exigency investigations (p < .001, φ = .246) and were referred more often to judicial authorities (p = .010, φ = .163). Allegations were filed more often by the helpline, police and judicial authorities (p < .001, φ = .590) during the lockdown and involved more Dutch-speaking (p = .016, φ = .166) victims.

Conclusions: The number of CAN reports remained the same during the lockdown but their profile changed.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken to contain it, such as imposing strict lockdowns and social distancing, had a profound impact on children, parents and families (Adibell & Sümen, 2020; De Kinderombudsman, 2020; Federale Overheidsdienst [FOD] Volksgezondheid, 2020; Panchal et al., 2020). For vulnerable families, it became even more difficult to draw on their support
network or resources. This combined with new COVID-19-related stressors such as home schooling and the possible exacerbation of pre-existing vulnerabilities such as job insecurity, living in densely populated, diverse, multicultural cities and less favorable housing conditions possibly led to an increased prevalence of child abuse and neglect (CAN) (Brown et al., 1998; Tener et al., 2021; Vanderfaeillie, 2010). In addition, during the lockdown, access to care was also limited which may have allowed CAN to go unnoticed and reduced the number of reports.

With this study we wanted to highlight the impact of the COVID-19-lockdown (March 2020–May 2020) in Belgium on CAN reports in Brussels by analyzing administrative data. In what follows, we elaborate on how the COVID-19-lockdown may have impacted vulnerable families and the prevalence of CAN. We then describe the methodology of the study and present the research findings before concluding with a discussion and recommendations.

1.1. Child abuse and neglect in Belgium

1.1.1. Definition

In current study we used the same definition of CAN as the Belgian Dutch-speaking Confidential Centers of Child abuse and Neglect (CCCAN), based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [UNCRC] (1989):

Child abuse and neglect is any form of physical, emotional or sexual violence to which children are subjected. Not by accident, but by acts or omissions of parents or other persons. The consequences of child abuse and neglect seriously jeopardize the child's development. (Vertrouwenscentrum Kindermishandeling [VK], 2021b, “Wat is kindermishandeling?” section)

The CCCAN distinguishes five forms of CAN: physical abuse, physical neglect, emotional abuse, emotional neglect and sexual abuse (VK, 2021b).

1.1.2. Etiology

CAN results from the presence of genetic, biological, social, and/or societal risk factors combined with an absence of protective factors (Berger et al., 2004). Risk factors increase the likelihood of CAN by compromising the quality of parenting. Protective factors reduce the risk of CAN in the presence of a risk factor (Groenendaal & Van Yperen, 1994). Moreover, the risk of CAN increases as multiple risk factors are simultaneously present (Brown et al., 1998; Lamela & Figueiredo, 2015; Patwardhan et al., 2017). A multitude of risk factors have already been identified at the child (e.g. having mental and/or behavioral problems), parent (e.g. psychological problems, unemployment), family (e.g. (parenting) stress, domestic violence), and environmental level (e.g. living in a densely populated, disadvantaged neighborhood characterized by high poverty and unemployment rates) (Almuneef et al., 2016; Barboza-Salerno, 2020; Berger & Waldhoff, 2011; Black et al., 2001; Brown et al., 1998; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2020; Hindley et al., 2006; Lowell & Renk, 2017; Merritt, 2009; Quiroz et al., 2020; Vanderfaeillie, 2010). Protective factors are also found at the child (e.g. resilience, parental support), parent (e.g. having processed own CAN, high compliance and active involvement in counseling) and family level (e.g. having a satisfactory social network, family cohesion and stability) (CDC, 2020; Desair & Hermans, 2010; Hindley et al., 2006; Merritt, 2009; Vanderfaeillie, 2010).

1.1.3. Prevalence

In 2019, 586 reports of suspected CAN (almost 9 % of total reports in Flanders) concerning 826 minors were filed at the Brussels CCCAN (VK Brussel & Nupraatikerover.be, 2019). The largest group of reporters came from daycare and (after)school facilities (40 %), followed by the health care sector (31 %). Welfare organizations reported 12 %, the primary environment 7 %, police and judicial authorities 4 %, youth care 5 % and the helpline for violence and (child) abuse 1 % of all reports.

Despite this available data, it remains difficult to determine exactly how many children are experiencing CAN in Brussels. The actual number of CAN cases is in fact much higher than the registered reports, also known as the dark number. In most cases, CAN is inflicted by parents or primary caregivers which means that authorities depend on reports by professionals, such as teachers, or individuals who are not primary caregivers of the child (VK Brussel & Nupraatikerover.be, 2019; Vinck et al., 2016).

1.1.4. Child protection system

It is not mandatory to report (presumed) CAN in Belgium. However, every individual, including professional caregivers, has the possibility to report alleged CAN in Belgium (Adriaenssens, 2010). Dutch-speaking professionals can go directly to the CCCAN or to judicial authorities for this purpose (French-speaking minors are referred to the French equivalent “SOS Enfants”) and, since 2012, citizens are referred to the violence and (child) abuse helpline. In Belgium, CAN is initially addressed outside the judicial system. Referrals to judicial authorities occur mainly in cases of urgency, when voluntary help is refused (Desair & Adriaenssens, 2011; Vinck et al., 2016).

Belgium has CCCAN consisting of a multidisciplinary team of doctors, psychologists, pedagogs and social workers for the treatment of reported cases of CAN (Desair & Adriaenssens, 2011). The mission of the CCCANs is fourfold: assess reports of alleged CAN, install safety, prevent repetition and enable recovery. To this end they offer advice to other professionals (so-called advisory questions), assess reports of CAN and offer guidance to children and families (so-called allegations).

In the case of advisory questions, the CCCAN offers advice, support and/or coaching to professionals from other organizations who have questions regarding situations of suspected CAN. In this case, the report is discussed anonymously and the professional remains responsible for the care. These questions can typically be divided in three categories: (1) professionals who suspect CAN but are not sure about it and want to ask the CCCAN's opinion (e.g. a school teacher observes minor injuries on the back of a pupil and wonders if...
CAN is a possible explanation), (2) professionals who suspect CAN and want advice on how to act on it (e.g. the professional wants advice on how to address his concerns to the child), (3) professionals who want advice on how to refer a case to the CCCAN (e.g. who needs to be informed, which information has to be given, the urgency or the best moment to refer).

Regarding the allegations, the CCCAN involves all stakeholders; family members are interviewed and involved professionals are consulted. The goal is to ensure the safety of the children involved by, among other things, installing safe relationships between children and parents and restoring safe parenting. CCCANs are family-oriented and try - wherever possible - to maintain family ties and work with children while they are residing with their families (Decreet betreffende de integrale jeugdhulp, 2013).

The CCCAN can also investigate in so called ‘situations of social exigency’ at the indication of other youth care workers or after notification of judicial authorities (Desair & Adriaenssens, 2011; VK, 2021a). A social exigency procedure involves serious concerns and insufficient commitment of the context to achieve safety (Decreet betreffende de integrale jeugdhulp, 2013). This in contrast to situations of concerns about CAN but where parents are willing to cooperate with caretakers. If, after investigation, a decision of social exigency is taken, the CCCAN can intervene, organize and coordinate youth care itself (i.e., case management).

1.2. Child abuse and neglect during the COVID-19-lockdown

At the onset of the corona crisis, several scholars expressed concern for an increased risk of CAN following the introduction of restrictive measures such as social distancing and lockdowns (Bryant et al., 2020; Raman et al., 2020). This is due to the exacerbation of existing risk factors and new COVID-19-related risk factors emerging in combination with protective factors being hindered during the lockdown.

For example, research points to increased psychological problems in children and parents during lockdown (Adibelli & Sümen, 2020; Panchal et al., 2020; Patrick et al., 2020; The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action [The Alliance] et al., 2020). Parenting and financial stress also increased during lockdown. Parents had to take on different roles simultaneously. School closures forced them to engage in home schooling on top of parenting, while working from home (Bradbury-Jones & Isham, 2020). Additionally, job losses due to closing industries added to the financial stress, especially for families that were already economically strapped (Lee & Ward, 2020; The Alliance et al., 2020). Moreover, due to the enforced quarantine and social isolation measures, families were constantly enclosed together. This provided greater exposure to intra-family perpetrators. When victims and perpetrators spend more time together, it is likely that more violence will occur (Abramson, 2020; Bradbury-Jones & Isham, 2020; The Alliance, 2020). Effectively, Bullinger et al., 2020 recorded significantly more reports and proven cases of CAN in U.S. areas where residents were more likely to stay home as a result of the COVID-19 policy, compared to areas where residents stayed home less. Meanwhile, the social support network and its protective effect were less present during the lockdown due to social distancing and the ban on non-essential travel (Desair & Hermans, 2010; Merritt, 2009). At the environmental level, the lockdown also magnified certain risk factors which contribute to CAN. For example, poverty and unemployment rates are likely to rise because of the closure of many industries such as the hospitality sector. Especially vulnerable neighborhoods in metropolitan contexts, such as Brussels, experience difficulties. Recent research by Barboza et al. (2021) seems to confirm this. The study found higher rates of recorded CAN during the COVID-19 pandemic in neighborhoods where there is more poverty, unemployment and housing insecurity. For these reasons, current research focuses on CAN in Brussels during the COVID-19-lockdown.

Since the accumulation of risk factors is an indicator of CAN, as opposed to each individual risk factor, prolonged exposure to risk factors during the lockdown could increase the prevalence of CAN (Lamela & Figueiredo, 2015; Patwardhan et al., 2017). The risk of CAN increases for both children who were already in a situation of CAN and for those who were not (Abramson, 2020; The Alliance et al., 2020). Moreover, research established that the duration of maltreatment is associated with the severity of the consequences (Wagenaar-Fischer et al., 2010). Thus, early detection and examining if this could still occur during the lockdown is important.

1.2.1. Prevalence

Professionals’ warnings of an increase in CAN at the start of the COVID-19-lockdown were confirmed by media reports and anecdotal evidence coming from hospitals and other health organizations (Schmidt and Natanson, 2020; Sidpra et al., 2021). Furthermore, helplines (telephone, chat) about CAN were more often consulted worldwide (Petrovski et al., 2021; The National Hotline Consortium, 2020). Additionally, one in five parents reported having hit their child since the beginning of the pandemic (Lee & Ward, 2020). In Belgium, figures also indicated an increase of CAN: children reported through online surveys that they experienced more violence (both direct and indirect) during the lockdown. This appears to be most pronounced among children from weaker socio-economic families (Keynaert & Vandeviver, 2020; Kinderrechtencommissariaat et al., 2020). Several helplines were consulted more often about violence ans specifically about CAN and domestic violence (Commissie ad hoc voor de evaluatie en Verdere Uitvoering van het Vlaamse Coronabeleid, 2020; Hulplijn 1712, 2020).

While the evidence presented above points to an increase in CAN during the COVID-19-lockdown, this does not necessarily translate into increased reports to child protective services (CPS). More calls to helplines may be due to the fact that regular confidants are no longer available during the lockdown and more resilient, skilled victims find their way to helplines. However, this is not evident for all victims. There are also helplines that have seen their number of incoming calls drop (Campbell, 2020; Welch & Haskins, 2020). Moreover, decreased reports to police and/or CPS have also been noted in France, Germany, Croatia and the U.S. (Barboza et al., 2021; Baron et al., 2020; Caron et al., 2020; Dapic et al., 2020; Hell et al., 2020). Other German researchers found a decrease in some CPS and a status quo in others regarding the number of CAN reports and the number of risk assessments during the COVID-19-lockdown (Mairhofer et al., 2020; Mühlmann & Pothmann, 2020).

The reported figures are divided. Despite an increase in calls to helplines, this does not always translate into an increase in reports
to CPS. It is likely that the dark number of CAN (unreported cases) became larger during the COVID-19-lockdown. Actual cases are increasing without leading to an increase in reports. This may be due to the fact that children have less contact with traditional reporters because of the containment measures (Baron et al., 2020). The detection of CAN is largely done through personal, physical contact. Since this was limited during the COVID-19-lockdown, this may have had an impact on detection. Reports typically come from daycare, (after)school facilities, welfare and health organizations. These professionals have work-related contacts with children. However, these contacts were severely limited by the closure of the organizations or the cancellation of activities that require physical contact during the lockdown (VK Brussel & Nupraatikover.be, 2019).

1.3. Present study

It is likely that the circumstances during the COVID-19-lockdown in Belgium (13/03/2020–14/05/2020) caused the incidence and prevalence of CAN to increase. However, the detection of CAN has probably decreased because of limited contacts with traditional reporters due to the containment measures. Consequently, the first research question is as follows: (1) “Did the reports of CAN to the Brussels CCCAN increase or decrease during the COVID-19-lockdown?” Reports of alleged CAN during the COVID-19-lockdown may differ from reports prior to this lockdown period. Hence, we formulated a second exploratory research question, namely, (2) “On what characteristics (e.g. type of CAN, type of reporter, characteristics of victims, characteristics of perpetrators) do CAN reports during the lockdown period differ from reports before the lockdown period?” Moreover, during the lockdown traditional reporters (e.g. teacher and child welfare workers) had less contact with children. Therefore, we also attempted to answer the following question: (3) “Did other reporters take over the role of traditional reporters during the COVID-19 lockdown?” With this research we wish to gain insight into the number and profile of reports filed to the Brussels CCCAN during the COVID-19-lockdown in Belgium. We seek to contribute to the knowledge needed to make CAN visible, especially during crisis situations.

2. Method

2.1. Data

Administrative data of reports of CAN to the Brussels CCCAN was used. These reports regard Dutch-speaking minors (French-speaking minors are referred to the French equivalent “SOS Enfants”). The dataset comprised of 536 reports, of which 329 (61.4%) were advisory questions and 207 (38.6%) were reports of allegations of CAN. Ninety-four (17.54%) reports were filed during the lockdown. The remaining 442 (82.76%) reports were from the periods before the lockdown (2 months before the lockdown = 135 (25.19%); 1 year prior = 107 (19.96%); 2 years prior = 94 (17.54%) and 3 years prior to the lockdown = 106 (19.78%).

2.2. Measures

A codebook was constructed which contained all the information to be collected from the database of CCCAN containing reports of alleged CAN to the Brussels CCCAN. This information was divided into five categories: (1) characteristics of the report, (2) characteristics of the reporter, (3) characteristics of the victim and his/her family, (4) characteristics of the perpetrator(s), and (5) characteristics of the trajectory with the CCCAN.

Characteristics of the reports collected were: type of case file (advisory question or allegation to be further subdivided into regular allegation/social exigency report/helpline allegation/other); duration that the report was active (in months); risk assessment (a five-point scale from ‘0’: no indication for CAN to ‘4’: indicates a possible life-threatening situation (Browne & Herbert, 1999)); if the victim was known (yes/no); individual report (yes/no); number of siblings with whom reported; type of report (intra-familiar/extra-familiar/both/unknown or none); hospitalisation minor (yes/no).

Information collected about the reporter: reporting authority (health care/youth care/police and judicial authorities/primary environment/daycare and (after)school facilities/welfare organizations/helpline); communication (e-mail/phone/personal contact/written); whether reporter wishes anonymity (yes/no); whether reporter is known (yes/no); demand of the reporter (active intervention, coordination of direct assistance/advice/social exigency investigation/coaching or support/other); main and additional problem according to reporter (physical neglect or abuse/emotional neglect or abuse/sexual abuse/risk situation/abuse by minor himself/unknown, unclear or other).

On the victim and his/her family were collected: sex and age of the victim; age of father and mother at the moment of the report (in months); number of previous reports; age of the victim at the moment of the first report (in months); language spoken with the victim, father and mother (Dutch/other language); whether the victim is multilingual (yes/no); nationality of the victim, father and mother (Belgium/other country); cultural identity of the victim (Belgian/other); family composition (intact/separated/step family); other residence than home (yes/no) and total number of siblings.

Of the perpetrator(s) were recorded: number of perpetrators; whether the main perpetrator is the minor himself (yes/no); relationship of the main perpetrator with the victim (intra-familial/extra-familial/unknown/no perpetrator); what family figure the perpetrator is (biological parent/substitute parent/other family member); whether the extra-familial perpetrator had professional contact with the victim (yes/no); whether the main perpetrator is underage (yes/no); whether the main perpetrator lives with the victim (yes/no); sex of the main perpetrator (male/female).

Finally, the following information about the trajectory within the CCCAN in Brussels was collected: Whether a CCCAN staff member had personal contact (face-to-face or via video call) with the victim, with a direct family member or person involved or with the (co-
perpetrator (yes/no); whether the CCCAN diagnosed the situation (yes/no) and what was the diagnose (both main and additional problem); whether the CCCAN provided advice and/or support to any member(s) of the family and/or non-professionals involved (yes/no); whether the CCCAN provided advice and/or support to the professionals (regarding the treatment/diagnosis/both); whether there was any treatment (i.e. the CCCAN is working with a member of the family and/or with another non-professional involved) (no treatment/short-term, crisis care/long-term/short- and long-term); how the coordination of care went (with/without intervention in the family by the CCCAN); whether the CCCAN referred to and/or collaborated with other professionals (yes/no); whether the CCCAN installed case management (yes/no); whether the original report evolved to a social exigency report (yes/no); whether the CCCAN placed a report to the judicial authorities (yes/no) and the outcome of the social exigency investigation (no social exigency/social exigency).

2.3. Procedure

After obtaining formal approval of the Medical Ethics Committee of the UZ Brussel (BUN.: 1432021000435) on March 31st and signing a confidentiality agreement, the researchers got access to the database of reports of the Brussels CCCAN. Over a four-week period CAN reports and the relevant data, as described above, were collected.

The researchers constructed a dataset containing reports from five different periods; (1) reports filed during the COVID-19-lockdown in Belgium (13/03/2020–14/05/2020), (2) reports filed two months prior to the lockdown (12/01/2020–12/03/2020), reports from the same period as the lockdown but (3) one (13/03/2019–14/05/2019), (4) two (13/03/2018–14/05/2018) and (5) three years earlier (13/03/2017–14/05/2017). A total of 767 reports (advisory questions and allegations) were registered during these periods (see Table 1). The chats were not retained for the substantive quantitative analyses since there is no report here and the correctness of the alleged CAN discussed cannot be verified. Moreover, the chat serves all of Flanders and not just Brussels.

Reports were removed from the dataset for the following reasons: (1) the reported victim (and/or his/her family) was not resident in Brussels and was immediately referred to another CCCAN (N = 106, 45.98 %); (2) the reported victim and/or his/her family was French-speaking and was referred to the French-speaking counterpart “SOS Enfants” (N = 24, 10.39 %); (3) the report was referred to the youth care support center (ondersteuningscentrum jeugdzorg), the juvenile court, the social service of the juvenile court or the French-speaking counterpart “services de l’aide à la jeunesse” (SAJ) (N = 32, 13.85 %); (4) the victim was reported because of coping issues about past CAN (N = 7, 3.03 %); (5) no report of alleged CAN, but another problem (N = 55, 23.81 %); (6) the report is a duplicate (N = 1, 0.43 %); (7) the victim is not a minor (N = 2, 0.87 %) or is (8) unborn (N = 4, 1.73 %) (see Table 2 for a detailed overview by period). A total of 231 reports and the 330 chats were removed making for a total sample of 536 (69.88 %) reports.

2.4. Data analysis

Analyses were performed using the statistical software program SPSS version 27. First, preliminary analyses were performed on the dataset. The advisory questions and allegations were compared and differed significantly from each other on 34 of the 55 characteristics. Consequently, these two types of reports could not be taken together and were considered as two separate subsets. The four pre-lockdown periods (2 months before the lockdown, 1, 2 and 3 years prior to the lockdown) were compared twice, once for advisory questions (N = 273) and once for the allegations (N = 173). The advisory questions from the different pre-lockdown periods differed significantly from each other on 17 of the 56 characteristics and the allegations on 25 of the 56 characteristics. Nonetheless, these four periods were combined into one pre-lockdown period for both the advisory questions and the allegations, balancing out these differences (see Table 3).

Next, the analysis regarding the research questions were conducted. All analyses below were performed twice: once on the subset with advisory questions and once on the subset with allegations. First, descriptive analyses were done (mean, standard deviation, number, percentages, range) to identify the characteristics of the report, reporter, victim and his/her family, perpetrator(s) and the trajectory with the Brussels CCCAN for both the lockdown and pre-lockdown periods. Second, to investigate whether the number of reports in- or decreased during lockdown, the median number of reports in the pre-lockdown period was compared to the number of reports during the lockdown using a One Sample Wilcoxon signed-rank test (The population of both Dutch-speaking and French-speaking minors was stable in Brussels from 2017 to 2020 (Brussels Instituut Voor Statistiek en Analyse, 2021)). Finally, to

### Table 1

| Period       | Original Advisory questions | Original Allegations | Original Total reports | Deleted Advisory questions | Deleted Total reports | Retained Total reports |
|--------------|----------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
|              |                            |                      |                        |                            |                       |                        |
| Lockdown     | 87                         | 39                   | 126                    | 32                         | 94                    | (74.60 %)               |
| 2 months prior| 135                        | 55                   | 190                    | 55                         | 135                   | (71.05 %)               |
| 1 year prior | 101                        | 61                   | 162                    | 55                         | 107                   | (66.05 %)               |
| 2 years prior| 94                         | 58                   | 152                    | 58                         | 94                    | (61.84 %)               |
| 3 years prior| 76                         | 61                   | 137                    | 31                         | 106                   | (77.37 %)               |
| Total        | 493                        | 274                  | 767                    | 231                        | 536                   | (69.88 %)               |

*Note. Lockdown: 13/03/2020–14/05/2020, 2 months prior to lockdown: 12/01/2020–12/03/2020, 1 year prior to lockdown: 13/03/2019–14/05/2019, 2 years prior to lockdown: 13/03/2018–14/05/2018, 3 years prior to lockdown: 13/03/2017–14/05/2017.*
Table 3
Comparison of characteristics between advisory questions (N = 329) and allegations (N = 207) and between the four pre-lockdown periods.

| Characteristics | Values | Total sample (N = 536) | Pre-lockdown (N = 442) | Advisory questions (N = 270) | Allegations (N = 172) |
|-----------------|--------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
|                 |        | M(SD) or n(%)          | U or \( \chi^2/fe \)   | M(SD) or n(%)               | F/K-W or \( \chi^2/fe \) |
|                 | Advis. | Alleg. (N = 329)       | PLD 1 | PLD 2 | PLD 3 | PLD 4 | PLD 1 | PLD 2 | PLD 3 | PLD 4 |
|                 |        |                       |        |       |       |       |        |       |       |       |
| Report          |        |                       |        |       |       |       |        |       |       |       |
| Type of allegation | Regular allegation | / 128 (61.8%) | / / / / / / | 22 (65.7%) | 38 (79.2%) | 30 (71.4%) | 28 (58.3%) | 5.23 |
|                 | Social exigency report | / 72 (34.8%) | / / / / / / | 12 (35.3%) | 10 (20.8%) | 12 (28.6%) | 20 (41.7%) |        |
|                 | Helpline allegation | / 6 (2.9%) | / / / / / / | – – – – | – – – – | – – – – | – – – – |        |
| Other | / 1 (0.5%) | / / / / / / | – – – – | – – – – | – – – – | – – – – | – – – – |        |
| Duration report active (months) | / 4.1 (4.5) | 7.4 | 5.0 | 4.8 | 2.5 | 2.7 | 33.85*** | 4.3 | 6.8 | 6.8 | 10.9 | 5.22 |
| Risk assessment | / 2.1 (0.7) | 2.3 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 1.9 | 0.30 | 2.1 | 2.4 | 2.4 | 2.1 | 3.30 |
| Re-report | Yes | / 22 (6.7%) | 68.25*** | 13 | 4.7 | 7.7 | 1.7 | 12.89** | 12 | 10 | 22 | 14 | 10.59* |
| No | / 307 (93.3%) | 139 | / / / / / / | 88 | 59 | 48 | 57 | – – – – | 22 | 38 | 20 | 34 |        |
| Report individual | Yes | / 166 (50.5%) | 14.28*** | 51 | 35 | 28 | 24 | 3.96 | 19 | 17 | 8 | 19 | 16 | 11.29** |
| No | / 163 (49.6%) | 137 | / / / / / / | 50 | 24 | 24 | 34 | – – – – | 15 | 31 | 34 | 81 | 32 |        |
| Number of siblings reported | / 1.0 (1.3) | 1.5 | / / / / / / | 0.73 | 0.78 | 1.13 | 1.48 | 8.46* | 0.8 | 1.2 | 2.0 | 1.6 | 19.49*** |
| Type of report | Intra-familial CAN | / 298 (90.6%) | 90.8 | 90.6 | 90.6 | 90.6 | 90.6 | 90.6 | 90.6 | 90.6 | 90.6 | 90.6 | 90.6 | 90.6 |
| Extra-familial CAN | / 23 (7.3%) | 8 (3.9%) | / / / / / / | 4 (4%) | 6 | 3 | 5.8 | 7 | – | – | – | 5 | – | 3.63 |
| Both | / 2 (0.6%) | 8 (3.9%) | / / / / / / | – | 1 (1.7) | 1 (1.9) | – | – | – | – | 5 | – | 3.63 |
| Unknown or no CAN | / 6 (1.8%) | 3 (1.4%) | / / / / / / | 1 (1%) | – | 4 (7.7) | 1 (1.7) | – | – | – | – | 3.63 |
| Hospitalisation minor | Yes | / / / / / / | – – – – | – | – | – | – | 3.48 | – | – | – | – | 4.99* |

(continued on next page)
| Characteristics | Values | Total sample (N = 536) | Pre-lockdown (N = 442) | Advisory questions (N = 270) | Allegations (N = 172) |
|-----------------|--------|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
|                 |        | M(SD) or n(%) | Pre-lockdown | F/K-W or χ²/fe | M(SD) or n(%) | F/K-W or χ²/fe | M(SD) or n(%) | F/K-W or χ²/fe |
|                 | Advis. (N = 329) | Alleg. (N = 207) | | | Advis. (N = 207) | Alleg. (N = 107) | | |

**Advisory questions (N = 270)**

| M(SD) or n(%) | F/K-W or χ²/fe |
|---------------|----------------|
| Advis. (N = 329) | Alleg. (N = 207) |

| M(SD) or n(%) | F/K-W or χ²/fe |
|---------------|----------------|
| Advis. (N = 207) | Alleg. (N = 107) |

**Allegations (N = 172)**

| M(SD) or n(%) | F/K-W or χ²/fe |
|---------------|----------------|
| Advis. (N = 207) | Alleg. (N = 107) |

**Reporter**

| Healthcare/youth care/welfare organization | M(SD) or n(%) | F/K-W or χ²/fe |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Advis. (N = 329) | Alleg. (N = 207) |

| M(SD) or n(%) | F/K-W or χ²/fe |
|---------------|----------------|
| Advis. (N = 207) | Alleg. (N = 107) |

**Daycare and (after) school facilities**

| M(SD) or n(%) | F/K-W or χ²/fe |
|---------------|----------------|
| Advis. (N = 329) | Alleg. (N = 207) |

| M(SD) or n(%) | F/K-W or χ²/fe |
|---------------|----------------|
| Advis. (N = 207) | Alleg. (N = 107) |

**Police and judicial authorities**

| M(SD) or n(%) | F/K-W or χ²/fe |
|---------------|----------------|
| Advis. (N = 329) | Alleg. (N = 207) |

| M(SD) or n(%) | F/K-W or χ²/fe |
|---------------|----------------|
| Advis. (N = 207) | Alleg. (N = 107) |

**Helpline/primary environment**

| M(SD) or n(%) | F/K-W or χ²/fe |
|---------------|----------------|
| Advis. (N = 329) | Alleg. (N = 207) |

| M(SD) or n(%) | F/K-W or χ²/fe |
|---------------|----------------|
| Advis. (N = 207) | Alleg. (N = 107) |

**Communication**

| M(SD) or n(%) | F/K-W or χ²/fe |
|---------------|----------------|
| Advis. (N = 329) | Alleg. (N = 207) |

| M(SD) or n(%) | F/K-W or χ²/fe |
|---------------|----------------|
| Advis. (N = 207) | Alleg. (N = 107) |

**Anonymous reporter**

| M(SD) or n(%) | F/K-W or χ²/fe |
|---------------|----------------|
| Advis. (N = 329) | Alleg. (N = 207) |

| M(SD) or n(%) | F/K-W or χ²/fe |
|---------------|----------------|
| Advis. (N = 207) | Alleg. (N = 107) |

(continued on next page)
Table 3 (continued)

| Characteristics   | Values       | Total sample (N = 536) | Pre-lockdown (N = 442) |
|-------------------|--------------|------------------------|------------------------|
|                   | M(SD) or n(%)| U or $\chi^2$/fe       | M(SD) or n(%)          | F/K-W or $\chi^2$/fe |
|                   | Advis. (N = |                          | Advis. (N =          |                          |
|                   | 329)        |                         | 207)                  |                          |
|                   |              | PLD 1                  | PLD 2                  | PLD 3                  | PLD 4                  |
| Demand reporter   | Active intervention | 22 (6.7 %)            | 93 (45.1 %)            | 303.25***              | 8 (8 %)                 |
|                   |              | (45.1 %)               | (88.7 %)               | (88.7 %)               | (88.7 %)               |
|                   | Advise       | 290 (88.7 %)           | 42 (20.4 %)            | 83 (83 %)              | 53 (50 %)              |
|                   |              | (58 %)                 | (88 %)                 | (89.8 %)               | (96.2 %)               |
|                   |              | PLD 1                  | PLD 2                  | PLD 3                  | PLD 4                  |
|                   | Coaching/support | 15 (4.6 %)             | – (34.5 %)             | 9 (9 %)                | 2 (3.4 %)              |
|                   |              | (34 %)                 | (34 %)                 | (34 %)                 | (34 %)                 |
|                   | Social exigency investigation | –                 | 71 (34.5 %)             | – (34.5 %)             | – (34.5 %)             |
|                   |              | (–)                    | (–)                    | (–)                    | (–)                    |
| Main problem      | Physical neglect/abuse | 123 (37.4 %)        | 87 (42 %)              | 8.66                   | 39 (22 %)              |
|                   |              | (37.4 %)               | (37.4 %)               | (37.9 %)               | (37.9 %)               |
|                   | Emotional neglect/abuse | 134 (40.7 %)        | 94 (45.4 %)            | – (–)                 | 46 (26 %)              |
|                   |              | (40 %)                 | (45.4 %)               | (–)                    | (26 %)                 |
|                   | Sexual abuse | 31 (9.4 %)             | 11 (5.3 %)             | 8.79                   | 5 (8.5 %)              |
|                   |              | (9.4 %)                | (5.3 %)                | (8.79 %)               | (8.5 %)                |
|                   | Risk situation | 23 (7 %)               | 11 (5.3 %)             | 8 (7.9 %)              | 5 (8.5 %)              |
|                   |              | (7 %)                  | (5.3 %)                | (7.9 %)                | (8.5 %)                |
|                   | Unknown/unclear/other | 4 (1.2 %)           | – (–)                 | 1 (1.7 %)              | 7 (13.5 %)             |
|                   |              | (1.2 %)                | (–)                    | (1.7 %)                | (13.5 %)               |
|                   | Abuse by minor | 14 (4.3 %)            | 4 (1.9 %)              | 3 (3 %)                | 6 (3.8 %)              |
|                   |              | (4.3 %)                | (1.9 %)                | (3 %)                  | (3.8 %)                |
| Additional problem| Physical neglect/abuse | 29 (26.4 %)         | 29 (26.4 %)            | 4.35                   | 14 (5 %)               |
|                   |              | (29.6 %)               | (29.6 %)               | (30.4 %)               | (30.4 %)               |
|                   | Emotional neglect/abuse | 78 (70.9 %)        | 67 (68.4 %)            | – (–)                 | 32 (10 %)              |
|                   |              | (70.9 %)               | (68.4 %)               | (–)                    | (10 %)                 |
|                   | Sexual abuse | – (–)                  | 2 (2 %)                | – (–)                  | – (–)                  |
|                   | Risk situation | 2 (1.8 %)             | – (–)                 | – (–)                  | – (–)                  |
|                   | Unknown/unclear/other | 1 (0.9 %)           | – (–)                 | 1 (10 %)               | – (–)                  |

(continued on next page)
| Characteristics                        | Values | Total sample (N = 536) | Pre-lockdown (N = 442) | Allegations (N = 172) |
|----------------------------------------|--------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
|                                        |        | M(SD) or n(%)          | U or $\chi^2$/fe       | F/K-W or $\chi^2$/fe  |
|                                        |        | Advis. (N = 329)       | Alleg. (N = 207)       |                       |
| Minor and his/her family               |        |                        |                        |                       |
| Sex minor                              |        | Female 148 (48.2 %)    | 119 (58.3 %)           | 5.04* (57.7 %)        |
|                                        |        | Male 159 (51.8 %)      | 85 (41.7 %)            | 0.2 (4.5)             |
|                                        |        |                        |                        |                       |
| Age minor at time of report (years)   |        | 8.6 (4.8)              | 8.21 (4.9)             | −0.86 (0.5)           |
|                                        |        |                        |                        |                       |
| Number of previous reports            |        | 0.1 (0.4)              | 0.5 (0.9)              | −7.60*** (0.5)        |
|                                        |        |                        |                        |                       |
| Age minor at first report (years)     |        | 8.4 (4.8)              | 7.54 (4.8)             | −2.03* (4.6)          |
|                                        |        |                        |                        |                       |
| Language minor                         |        | Dutch 269 (91.5 %)     | 168 (88 %)             | 1.63 (94.8)           |
|                                        |        | Other 25 (8.5 %)       | 23 (12 %)              | 0.87 (5.2)            |
|                                        |        |                        |                        |                       |
| Minor multilingual                    |        | Yes 118 (88.7 %)       | 137 (85.1 %)           | 0.87 (91.5 %)         |
|                                        |        | No 15 (11.3 %)         | 24 (14.9 %)            | 23 (5.2)              |
|                                        |        |                        |                        |                       |
| Nationality of minor                  |        | Belgium 198 (84.3 %)   | 152 (85.4 %)           | 0.10 (84.8)           |
|                                        |        | Other 37 (15.7 %)      | 26 (14.6 %)            | 15 (15.2)             |
|                                        |        |                        |                        |                       |
| Cultural identity minor               |        | Belgian 13 (8.7 %)     | 23 (15.2 %)            | 3.08 (12.9)           |
|                                        |        | Other 137 (91.3 %)     | 128 (84.8 %)           | 0.20 (50.5)           |
|                                        |        |                        |                        |                       |
| Family composition                    |        | Intact 143 (52.8 %)    | 101 (49.8 %)           | 0.20 (50.5)           |

(continued on next page)
| Characteristics          | Values | Total sample (N = 536) | Pre-lockdown (N = 442) | Allegations (N = 172) |
|--------------------------|--------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
|                          |        | M(SD) or m(%)          | U or \(\chi^2/fe\)    | F/K-W or \(\chi^2/fe\) |
|                          | Advis. | Alleg. \((N = 329)\) | PLD 1 | PLD 2 | PLD 3 | PLD 4 | PLD 1 | PLD 2 | PLD 3 | PLD 4 |
|                          |        |                        |         |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Divorced                 | 99 (36.5) | 79 %                   | 33     | 17    | 25    | 13    | 19    | 14    | 14    | 16    |
|                          | (38.9)  |                       | (34.7) | (44.7) | (59.5) | (28.3) | (55.9) | (31.3) | (33.3) | (33.3) |
| Step family              | 29 (10.7) | 23 %                   | 14     | 4     | 3     | 7.1   | 6     | 13    | 4     | 9     | 20    |
|                          | (11.3)  |                       | (14.7) | (10.5) | (14.7) |       | (11.8) | (9.3)  | (2.4)  | (4.6)  |
| Other residence          | 260 (95.6 %) | 183 %                | 93     | 37    | 36    | 45    | 10.47** | 33    | 43    | 38    | 38    |
|                          | (91.5)  |                       | (97.9) | (92.5) | (85.7) | (100) | (25.9) | (97.1) | (95.6) | (90.5) | (84.4) |
| Yes                      | 12 (4.4)  | 17 (8.5) %            | 2       | 2.1   | 3    | 7.5   | 6     | -     | 1.2   | 2.4   | 4     |
|                          |       |                       | (2.1)  | (14.3) |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Age father at time of report (years) | 43.3 | 43.36 % -0.82 | / | 32 | 40 | 51.4 | 5.04 | 42.4 | 42.6 | 42.1 |
|                          | (12.7) |                       | (1.4)  | (15.1) |       |       | (9.3) | (6.0) | (8.3) | (13.2) |
| Language father          | Dutch  | 7 (10.6) % 36 (25) | 3     | 18.3 | 2     | 8.3   | 1.62 | 6     | 2     | 6.9   | 13    |
|                          |       | 5.76* %              | (15.8) | (15.4) |       |       | (22.2) | (34.2) | (23.5) |       |
| Other                    | 59 (89.4) | 108 (75) %           | 16     | 9 (100) | 11    |       | 21    | 27    | 25    | 26    |
| Nationality father       | Belgium | 19 (13.6) % 32      | 9     | 2 (10) | 2     | 3     | 2.36 | 8     | 4     | 9     |
|                          |       | 3.94* %              | (16.4) | (39.7) |       |       | (29.6) | (14.8) | (25.7) |       |
| Other                    | 121 (86.4 %) | 109 (77.3) %       | 46     | 18 (90) | 13    | 26    | 19    | 23    | 26    | 27    |
| Age mother at time of report (years) | 36.3 | 37.77 % -0.28 | 33.5 | 17 | 30.9 | 43.4 | 5.09* | 34.0 | 41.4 | 36.3 |
|                          | (9.3)  |                       | (9.30) | (15.1) |       |       | (6.43) | (7.0) | (6.41) | (7.30) |
| Language mother          | Dutch  | 10 (14.3) % 34      | 8     | 32 | 1     | 10 | 5.14 | 4     | 1     | 2.9   |
|                          |       | 1.85 %              | (22.1) | (11.1) |       |       | (14.8) | (10.5) | (33.3) |       |
| Nationality mother       | Belgium | 12 (8.2) % 30      | 9 (15) | 1  | 6.7 | 1 (3.2) | 4.58 | 3 (12) | 4     | 6     |
|                          |       | 9.31** %             | (20.8) | (14.8) |       |       | (13.8) | (18.2) | (15.2) |       |
| Other                    | 134 (91.8 %) | 114 (79.2) %       | 51     | 17 | 14 | 30    |       | 22    | 25    | 27    | 28    |
| Number of siblings       | 2.0 | -0.76 %             | 1.6 | 2 | 1.8 | 2.3 | 7.62 | 1.6 | 1.6 | 2.2 |
|                          | (1.4) |                     | (1.0) | (1.3) | (1.1) | (1.5) | (1.1) | (0.9) | (1.0) | (1.9) |
### Table 3 (continued)

| Characteristics                        | Values         | Total sample (N = 536) | Pre-lockdown (N = 442) | Allegations (N = 172) |
|----------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
|                                        | M(SD) or n(%)  | U or χ²/fe             | F/K-W or χ²/fe         | F/K-W or χ²/fe        |
|                                        | Advis. (N = 329) | Alleg. (N = 207)       | PLD 1 | PLD 2 | PLD 3 | PLD 4 | PLD 1 | PLD 2 | PLD 3 | PLD 4 | PLD 1 | PLD 2 | PLD 3 | PLD 4 |
| Perpetrator(s)                         |                |                        |                       |                       |
| Number of registrated perpetrators    | 1.0 (0.6)      | 1.2                    | -1.60                 | 4.05                  | 1.0                  | 1.1   | 1.1   | 1.4   | 13.11** |
|                                        | (0.7)          | (0.7)                  | (0.7)                 | (0.7)                 | (0.5)                | (0.5) | (0.5) | (0.8) | (0.8)   |
| Main perpetrator minor him/herself     | Yes            | 12 (4.4 %)             | 3 (1.7 %)             | 2.17                  | 2 (2.4)              | 4 (7.4 %) | 3 (7.3 %) | 2 (3.8 %) | 2.71   | 0.9   | 1.1   | 1.1   | 1.4   |
|                                        | No             | 262 (95.6 %)           | 171 (98.3 %)          | 2.17                  | 80 (97.6)            | 50 (92.6) | 38 (92.7) | 51 (96.2) | 24.11* | 0.9   | 1.1   | 1.1   | 1.4   |
| Relation main perpetrator              |                |                        |                       |                       |
| Intra-familial                         | 236 (71.1 %)   | 161 (78.9 %)           | 10.45*                | 14.11                 | 23 (67.6)            | 39 (81.3) | 31 (73.8) | 36 (80)  | 17.10* |
|                                        | (71.1 %)       | (78.9 %)               |                       |                       | (67.6)               | (81.3) | (73.8) | (80)  | (80)    |
| Extra-familial                         | 28 (8.5 %)     | 8 (3.9 %)              | 7 (6.9 %)             | 14.11                 | 5 (15.3 %)           | (12.1) | 1 (2.9) | 3 (6.7) | (10.4 %) |
|                                        | (2.7 %)        | (2.7 %)                | (5.6 %)               |                       | (15.3 %)             |       |       |       |         |
| Unknown                                | 12 (3.6 %)     | 1 (0.5 %)              | 1 (1 %)               |                       | 1 (2.9)              | -     | -     | -     | -       |
| No perpetrator                         | -              | 34 (16.7 %)            | 18 (17.8 %)           |                       | 10 (4.3)             | (9.5) | (10.4) | (2.8) | (2.8)   |
|                                        |                | (16.7 %)               | (9.5)                 |                       | (9.5)                |       |       |       |         |
| Intra-familial main perpetrator        |                |                        |                       |                       |
| Biological parent                      | 206 (91.2 %)   | 147 (96.1 %)           | 11.91**               | 11.19                 | 22 (95.7)            | 35 (92.1) | 28 (96.6) | 34 (97.1) | 1.22   |
|                                        | (91.2 %)       | (96.1 %)               | (91.2 %)              |                       | (95.7)               | (92.1) | (96.6) | (97.1) | (97.1)  |
| Substitute parent                      | 6 (2.7 %)      | 6 (3.9 %)              | 3 (4.1 %)             |                       | 1 (1.0)              | 3 (7.9) | 1 (3.4) | 1 (2.9) | (1.0)   |
|                                        | (2.7 %)        | (2.7 %)                | (4.1 %)               |                       | (1.0)                |       |       |       |         |
| Other family member                    | 14 (6.2 %)     | -                      | 4 (5.4 %)             |                       | 1 (1.0)              | -     | -     | -     | -       |
|                                        | (6.2 %)        | -                      | (5.4 %)               |                       | (1.0)                |       |       |       |         |
| Extra-familial main perpetrator        |                |                        |                       |                       |
| Professional contact                   | 4 (14.3 %)     | 6 (85.7 %)             | -                    |                       | 2 (2.88)             | 1 (2.88) | -     | -     | -       |
|                                        | (14.3 %)       | (85.7 %)               | (2.88)                |                       | (2.88)               |       |       |       |         |
| No professional contact                | 24 (85.7 %)    | 1 (14.3 %)             | 5 (28.6 %)            |                       | 4 (4.9)              | 1 (2.88) | -     | -     | -       |
|                                        | (85.7 %)       | (14.3 %)               | (11.1 %)              |                       | (4.9)                | (2.88) |       |       |         |
| Main perpetrator underage              | Yes            | 29 (11 %)              | 6 (3.7 %)             | 6.85**                | 4 (4.9)              | 8 (15.7 %) | 7 (18.4 %) | 8 (16) | 7.41   | -     | 1 (2.3) | 2 (6.5) | 3 (7.7) | 2.43 |
|                                        | No             | 234 (89 %)             | 158 (96.3 %)          |                       | 77 (95.1)            | (84.3) | (81.6 %) | 42 (84) | 36      |
|                                        |                | (89 %)                 | (96.3 %)              |                       | (95.1)               | (84.3) | (81.6) | (84)  | (36)    |
| Main perpetrator living with minor     | Yes            | 2.88                   |                        |                       | 5.97                 | (7.97) | (7.97) | (7.97) | (7.97)  |
|                                        | (2.88)         |                        |                       |                       | (7.97)               |       |       |       |         |

(continued on next page)
Table 3 (continued)

| Characteristics                          | Values | Total sample (N = 536) | Pre-lockdown (N = 442) | Allegations (N = 172) |
|------------------------------------------|--------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
|                                          |        | M(SD) or n(#)          | U or $\chi^2/fe$      | M(SD) or n(#)         | U or $\chi^2/fe$      |
|                                          |        | Advis. (N = 329)       | Alleg. (N = 207)       | Advis. PLD 1 PLD 2 PLD 3 PLD 4 | Alleg. PLD 1 PLD 2 PLD 3 PLD 4 |
|                                          |        |                        |                        |                      |                      |
| Sex perpetrator                          |        |                        |                        |                      |                      |
| Male                                     | 125    | 85 (51.8 %)            | 0.21                   | 37                   | 27                   | 22                   | 25 (56.8 %)        | 2.25                | 14                   | 25                   | 14                   | 13 (33.3 %)         |
| Female                                   | 6.74   | 132 (51.4 %)           | 44 (54.3 %)            | 24                   | 16                   | 19                   | 9                    | 18 (41.9 %)        | 17                   | 26                   | 7 (33.3 %)          |
| Trajectory CCCAN                         |        |                        |                        |                      |                      |                      |                      |                      |                      |                      |                      |
| Personal contact minor                   |        | 8 (2.4 %)              | 133 (64.3 %)           | 250.45***            | 3 (3 %)              | 1 (1.9 %)            | 4 (6.9 %)            | 4.318               | 24 (70.6 %)         | 35 (59.5 %)         | 25 (29 %)           | 29 (27.4 %)         |
| Personal contact family member/person    |        | 11 (3.3 %)             | 158 (76.3 %)           | 313.51***            | 3 (3 %)              | 3 (5.8 %)            | 5 (8.6 %)            | 6.13                | 25 (73.5 %)         | 40 (33 %)           | 33 (11.9 %)         | 13 (33.3 %)         |
| Personal contact (co-)perpetrator       |        | 8 (2.4 %)              | 129 (62.3 %)           | 244.96***            | 2 (2 %)              | 1 (1.9 %)            | 5 (8.6 %)            | 6.55**              | 21 (61.8 %)         | 35 (61.9 %)         | 26 (30 %)           | 1.79                |
| Diagnosis CCCAN                          |        | 4 (1.2 %)              | 129 (62.3 %)           | 248.82***            | 3 (3 %)              |                    | 1 (1.7 %)            | 2.28                | 16 (77.1 %)         | 37 (66.7 %)         | 29 (69 %)           | 32 (8.27 %)         |
| Main problem                             |        | 1 (25 %)               | 34 (27.2 %)            | 14.84**              | 1                    |                    | 3.67                 | 1                  | 2 (18.8 %)          | 8 (21.6 %)          | 4 (14.8 %)          | 17 (33.34***        |

(continued on next page)
Table 3 (continued)

| Characteristics | Values | Total sample (N = 536) | Pre-lockdown (N = 442) | Advisories questions (N = 270) | Allegations (N = 172) |
|-----------------|--------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
|                 |        | M(SD) or n(%)          | M(SD) or n(%)          | F/K-W or χ²/fe                | M(SD) or n(%)        | F/K-W or χ²/fe        |
|                 | Advis. | Alleg.                 | PLD 1 | PLD 2 | PLD 3 | PLD 4 | Advis. | PLD 1 | PLD 2 | PLD 3 | PLD 4 | Advis. | PLD 1 | PLD 2 | PLD 3 | PLD 4 |
| Emotional neglect/abuse | – | 73 (56.6 %) | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | 10 (62.5 %) | 2 (12.5 %) | 18 (66.7 %) | 5 (16.7 %) |
| Sexual abuse | 1 (25 %) | 2 (1.6 %) | 1 (33.3 %) | – | – | – | – | 2 (12.5 %) | – | 3 (11.1 %) | 3 (10 %) |
| Risk assessment | – | 9 (7.2 %) | – | – | – | – | – | 2 (12.5 %) | – | 3 (11.1 %) | 3 (10 %) |
| Unknown/unclear/other | 1 (25 %) | 9 (7.2 %) | – | – | – | 1 (100 %) | – | 1 (6.3 %) | 4 (10.8 %) | 1 (3.7 %) | 2 (6.7 %) |
| Abuse by minor | 1 (25 %) | 2 (1.6 %) | 1 (33.3 %) | – | – | – | – | – | – | 1 (3.7 %) | 1 (3.3 %) |
| Physical neglect/abuse | – | 12 (23.1 %) | – | – | – | – | / | 1 (100 %) | – | 4 (12.5 %) | 1 (2) | 8.88 |
| Emotional neglect/abuse | – | 35 (67.3 %) | – | – | – | – | – | – | 10 (71.4 %) | 7 (87.5 %) | 8 (53.3 %) |
| Unknown/unclear/other | – | 5 (9.6 %) | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | 1 (2.4 %) | 3 (8.1 %) | 2 (4.9 %) | 5.90 |
| Advise/support family/non-professionals | Yes | 11 (3.5 %) | 80 (41.2 %) | 115.34*** | 4 (4.1 %) | 1 (1.9 %) | 2 (3.8 %) | – | 2.32 | 15 (46.9 %) | 25 (58.1 %) | 17 (40.5 %) | 10 (22.2 %) | 12.20** |
| No | 301 (96.5 %) | 114 (58.8 %) | 93 (95.9 %) | 53 (98.1 %) | 50 (96.2 %) | 52 (100 %) | 17 (53.1 %) | 18 (41.9 %) | 25 (59.5 %) | 35 (77.8 %) |
| Advise/support professionals | Regarding the treatment | 31 (10.6 %) | 15 (8.5 %) | 0.62 | 7 (7.5 %) | 8 (15.7 %) | 9 (18.8 %) | 10 (4.9 %) | 3 (8.1 %) | 2 (4.9 %) |
| No | 20 (6.8 %) | 11 (6.3 %) | 8 (8.6 %) | 4 (7.8 %) | 3 (6.3 %) | – | 4 (12.9 %) | 1 (2.4 %) | 1 (2.7 %) | 2 (4.9 %) |
| Both | 242 (82.6 %) | 150 (85.2 %) | 78 (83.9 %) | 39 (76.5 %) | 36 (75.7 %) | 45 (91.8 %) | 27 (87.1 %) | 38 (92.7 %) | 33 (89.2 %) | 37 (90.2 %) |

(continued on next page)
Table 3 (continued)

| Characteristics                         | Total sample (N = 536) | Pre-lockdown (N = 442) | Advisory questions (N = 270) | Allegations (N = 172) |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
|                                         | M(SD) or n(%) | U or \( \chi^2 / \fe \) | M(SD) or n(%) | F/K-W or \( \chi^2 / \fe \) | M(SD) or n(%) | F/K-W or \( \chi^2 / \fe \) |
|                                         | Advis. (N = 329) | Alleg. (N = 207) | PLD 1 | PLD 2 | PLD 3 | PLD 4 | PLD 1 | PLD 2 | PLD 3 | PLD 4 | PLD 1 | PLD 2 | PLD 3 | PLD 4 |
| Treatment                               |                         |                        |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| Shortterm, crisis care                  | 3 (1 %) | 16 (8.4 %) | 316.47*** | 2 (2.1 %) | – | – | 1 (1.9 %) | 14.72* | 4 | 1 (2.4 %) | – | 4 (8.9 %) | 20.93** |
| Longterm                                | 5 (1.6 %) | 28 (14.7 %) | – | 5 (5.2 %) | – | – | – | 8 (25 %) | 2 (2.1 %) | 1 (2.4 %) | 5 | (11.1 %) | |
| Short- and longterm                     | 8 (2.6 %) | 114 (59.7 %) | – | 4 (7.4 %) | 1 (1.9 %) | 3 (5.8 %) | 14 | 25 (61 %) | 32 (29 %) | 29 | (64.4 %) | |
| No treatment                            | 296 (54.9 %) | 33 (17.3 %) | 90 (50 %) | 50 (51) | 48 (92.3 %) | 186.74*** | 9 (18.6 %) | 4 (7.4 %) | 8 (18.8 %) | 47 (61 %) | 29 (29 %) | 10 (16.7) | 9 (15.6 %) | |
| Coordination of care                    |                         |                        |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| No involvement by CCC in family         | 93 (90.3 %) | 11 (6.7 %) | 186.74*** | 14 (66.7 %) | 36 (100) | 26 (96.3 %) | 16.64*** | 2 (6.9 %) | 1 (2.7 %) | – | 6 (14.3 %) | |
| Involvement by CCC in family            | 10 (9.7 %) | 154 (93.3 %) | 7 (33.3 %) | – | 1 (3.7 %) | 2 (25 %) | 27 (93.1 %) | 36 (100) | 37 (85.7 %) | 36 | (92.8 %) | |
| Referral to professionals               |                         |                        |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| Yes                                     | 52 (16.7 %) | 64 (20.9 %) | 18.94*** | 18 (18.6 %) | 9 (16.7 %) | 5 (9.6 %) | 9 (17.3 %) | 2.12 | 9 (28.1 %) | 16 (42.9 %) | 18 (28.9 %) | 13 | 2.84 |
| No                                      | 260 (83.3 %) | 127 (41.5 %) | 79 (81.4 %) | 45 (47) | 47 (82.7 %) | (66.5) | 23 (71.9 %) | 25 (61 %) | 64 (81.3 %) | 24 | 32 | |
| Collaboration with professionals        |                         |                        |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| Yes                                     | 14 (4.5 %) | 93 (48.7 %) | 138.23*** | 7 (7.2 %) | 4 (7.4 %) | – | 1 (1.9 %) | 5.58 | 26 (81.3 %) | 24 (85.8 %) | 14 (33.3 %) | 18 (40) | 20.07*** |
| No                                      | 298 (95.5 %) | 98 (51.3 %) | 90 (92.8 %) | 50 (52) | 51 (98.1 %) | (95.5 %) | 6 (18.8 %) | 17 (41.5 %) | 28 (66.7 %) | 27 (60) | |
| Case management                         |                         |                        |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| Yes                                     | – | 16 (22.2 %) | – | – | – | – | – | 4 (33.3 %) | 2 (20 %) | 3 (25 %) | 3 | 1.52 |
| No                                      | – | 56 (77.8 %) | – | – | – | – | – | 8 (66.7 %) | 8 (80 %) | 9 (75 %) | 16 | |
| Evolved to social exigency              |                         |                        |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |
| Yes                                     | 20 (6.1 %) | 28 (20.9 %) | 22.50*** | 3 (3 %) | 2 (3.4 %) | 3 (5.8 %) | 1 (1.7 %) | 1.52 | 2 (9.1 %) | 6 (15.8 %) | 4 (46.7 %) | 14 | 12.69** |
| No                                      | 309 (93.9 %) | 106 (34.7 %) | 98 (97) | 57 (57) | 49 (79.2) | (93.9 %) | 20 | 32 (61) | 16 (24) | 24 | |

(continued on next page)
Table 3 (continued)

| Characteristics                  | Values                      | Total sample (N = 536) | Pre-lockdown (N = 442) | Advisory questions (N = 270) | Allegations (N = 172) |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
|                                  | M(SD) or n(%)               | U or $\chi^2$/fe       | PLD 1 | PLD 2 | PLD 3 | PLD 4 | F/K-W or $\chi^2$/fe |
|                                  |                             |                        |                  |                  |                  |                  |                        |
|                                 | Advis. (N = 329)            | Alleg. (N = 207)       |                  |                  |                  |                  |                        |
|                                 |                             |                         |                  |                  |                  |                  |                        |
|                                 |                             |                          |                  |                  |                  |                  |                        |
| Report to judicial system       | Yes                         | 12 (3.6 %)              | 2 (2 %)          | 4 (7.7 %)         | 6.71*               | 6 (17.6 %)         | 29 (14 %)              | 6 (12.5 %)            | 9 (21.4 %)            | 5 (10.4 %)            |
|                                 | No                          | 317 (96.4 %)            | 99 (98 %)        | 59 (100 %)        | 28                   | 42 (82.4 %)        | 48 (100 %)            | 42 (87.5 %)          | 58 (100 %)            | 33 (89.6 %)          |
|                                 |                             |                          |                  |                  |                     |                    |                          |                        |                        |                        |
| Result social exigency investigation | No social exigency   | – (33.3 %)              | –                  | –                  | –                  | –                  | – (20 %)              | 2 (20 %)            | 1 (8.3 %)            | 10 (52.6 %)          |
|                                 | Social exigency            | – (66.7 %)              | –                  | –                  | –                  | –                  | – (80 %)              | 8 (80 %)            | 11 (91.7 %)          | 9 (47.4 %)           |
|                                 |                             |                          |                  |                  |                  |                  |                        |                        |                        |                        |

Note. *$p \leq .05$, **$p \leq .10$, ***$p < .001$. PLD 1 = pre-lockdown period 1 (2 months prior to lockdown: 12/01/2020–12/03/2020), PLD 2 = pre-lockdown period 2 (1 year prior to lockdown: 13/03/2019–14/05/2019), PLD 3 = pre-lockdown period 3 (2 years prior to lockdown: 13/03/2018–14/05/2018), PLD 4 = pre-lockdown period 4 (3 years prior to lockdown: 13/03/2017–14/05/2017). For the non-normally distributed continuous variables, the nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis test was used instead of a One-Way ANOVA. When the assumption of the Chi-square test was violated, the Fisher's Exact test (only p-value) or the Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact test (fe) was used. CCCAN = confidential center of child abuse and neglect. $^a$ No data were found for this variable in the advisory questions so no results were computed.
examine the characteristics on which reports in the lockdown period differed from those in the pre-lockdown period and whether other reporters have taken over the role of traditional ones, reports from both periods were compared using chi-square, Fisher’s Exact, Fisher-Freeman-Halton, t- and its nonparametric counterpart Mann-Whitney U tests. Effect sizes Cohens’ $d$ and $\phi$ were computed (Cohen, 1988; Kotrlik et al., 2011). Variables with $>10\%$ missing values were not analyzed.

3. Results

3.1. Number of reports

The number of advisory questions ($p = 1.00$) and allegations ($p = .14$) did not differ during the lockdown compared to the pre-lockdown period (see Fig. 1 and Table 4).

3.2. Profile of reports

3.2.1. Advisory questions

During the lockdown, the risk assessment of advisory questions was significantly higher ($p = .011$) than before the lockdown ($M_{\text{lockdown}} = 2.25$, $SD_{\text{lockdown}} = 0.63$, $M_{\text{pre-lockdown}} = 2.01$, $SD_{\text{pre-lockdown}} = 0.72$). The advisory questions contained more unknown reporters (lockdown: 5.1 % vs pre-lockdown: 0.7 %; $p = .042$) and handled more emotional neglect and/or abuse (lockdown: 55.9 % vs. pre-lockdown: 37.4 %; $p = .024$) as the main problem and less sexual abuse (lockdown: 1.7 % vs. pre-lockdown: 11.1 %) during the lockdown. Advisory questions evolved significantly more into social exigency investigations (lockdown: 18.6 % vs. pre-lockdown: 3.3 %; $p < .001$) during the lockdown and significantly more referrals were made to judicial authorities than before the lockdown (lockdown 10.2 % vs. pre-lockdown: 2.2 %; $p = .010$) (see Tables 5 and 6).

Table 4
Number of reports by period and comparison between lockdown en pre-lockdown period using a One Sample Wilcoxon signed-rank test.

| Period          | Advisory question/allegation | Number of reports | Z       | p        |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|---------|----------|
| Lockdown        |                               | 59/35             |         |          |
| 2 months prior  |                               | 101/34            |         |          |
| 1 year prior    |                               | 59/48             | 3.00/9.00 | 1.00/.141 |
| 2 years prior   |                               | 52/42             |         |          |
| 3 years prior   |                               | 58/48             |         |          |
| Median pre-lockdown |                     | 58.5/45           |         |          |

Note. The median of the pre-lockdown period was compared to the value of the lockdown period for both advisory questions and allegations. Lockdown: 13/03/2020–14/05/2020, 2 months prior: 12/01/2020–12/03/2020, 1 year prior: 13/03/2019–14/05/2019, 2 years prior: 13/03/2018–14/05/2018, 3 years prior: 13/03/2017–14/05/2017.
Table 5
Descriptive results characteristics for the advisory questions and comparison between the lockdown and pre-lockdown period.

| Characteristics                        | Range/values | Lockdown¹ (N = 59) | Pre-lockdown² (N = 270) | Total (N = 329) | χ²(df)/fe t/U  | p    | d/φ  |
|----------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|----------------|------|------|
| **Report**                             |              | M(SD)/n(%)        | M(SD)/n(%)              | M(SD)/n(%)      |                |      |      |
| Risk assessment                        | (0–4)¹,²     | 2.25 (0.63)        | 2.01 (0.72)             | 2.05 (0.71)     | 315            | .617 | .280 |
| Victim known                           | Yes          | 4 (6.8 %)          | 18 (6.7 %)              | 22 (6.7 %)      | 329            | –    | 1.00 |
|                                         | No           | 55 (93.2 %)        | 252 (93.3 %)            | 307 (93.3 %)    |                |      |      |
| Report individual                      | Yes          | 28 (47.5 %)        | 138 (51.1 %)            | 166 (50.5 %)    | 329            | .26  | .611 |
|                                         | No           | 31 (52.2 %)        | 132 (48.9 %)            | 163 (49.6 %)    |                |      |      |
| Number of siblings reported            | (0–4)¹, (0–5)² | 1.27 (1.42)        | 0.98 (1.22)             | 1.03 (1.27)     | 329            | U = 7188.00 | .205 | .140 |
| Type of report                         | Intra-familial CAN | 56 (94.9 %)       | 242 (89.6 %)            | 298 (90.6 %)    | 329            | fe = 1.22 | .791 | .083 |
|                                         | Extra-familial CAN | 3 (5.1 %)          | 20 (7.4 %)              | 23 (7 %)        |                |      |      |
|                                         | Both         | –                  | 2 (0.7 %)               | 2 (0.6 %)       |                |      |      |
|                                         | Unknown or no CAN | –                  | 6 (2.2 %)               | 6 (1.8 %)       |                |      |      |
| Hospitalisation victim                 | Yes          | 28 (47.5 %)        | 138 (51.1 %)            | 166 (50.5 %)    | 329            | χ²(1) = 0.26 | .611 | .028 |
|                                         | No           | 31 (52.2 %)        | 132 (48.9 %)            | 163 (49.6 %)    |                |      |      |
|Reporter                                |              |                    |                        |                 |                |      |      |
| Reporting authority                     | Health care/youth care/welfare organizations | 14 (23.7 %)        | 108 (40 %)              | 122 (37.1 %)    | 329            | fe = 5.82 | .187 | .143 |
|                                         | Daycare and (after)school facilities | 44 (74.6 %)       | 153 (56.7 %)            | 197 (59.9 %)    |                |      |      |
|                                         | Helpline/primary environment | 1 (1.7 %)          | 9 (3.3 %)               | 10 (3 %)        |                |      |      |
| Communication                          | e-mail       | –                  | 9 (3.3 %)               | 9 (2.7 %)       | 329            | fe = 2.30 | .269 | .090 |
|                                         | Phone        | 50 (84.7 %)        | 231 (85.6 %)            | 281 (85.4 %)    |                |      |      |
|                                         | Personal contact | 9 (15.3 %)        | 30 (11.1 %)             | 39 (11.9 %)     | 329            | χ²(1) = 1.59 | .208 | .069 |
| Anonymous reporter                     | Yes          | 3 (5.1 %)          | 28 (10.4 %)             | 31 (9.4 %)      |                |      |      |
|                                         | No           | 56 (94.9 %)        | 242 (89.6 %)            | 298 (90.6 %)    |                |      |      |
| Reporter known                         | Yes          | 56 (94.9 %)        | 268 (99.3 %)            | 324 (98.5 %)    | 329            | –    | .042 |
|                                         | No           | 3 (5.1 %)          | 2 (0.7 %)               | 5 (1.5 %)       |                |      |      |
| Demand reporter                        | Active intervention | 2 (3.4 %)        | 20 (7.4 %)              | 22 (6.7 %)      | 327            | fe = 1.93 | .358 | .077 |
|                                         | Advise       | 52 (89.7 %)        | 228 (88.5 %)            | 290 (88.7 %)    |                |      |      |
|                                         | Coaching/support | 4 (6.9 %)        | 11 (4.1 %)              | 15 (4.6 %)      |                |      |      |
| Main problem                           | Physical neglect/abuse | 22 (37.3 %)       | 101 (37.4 %)            | 123 (37.4 %)    | 327            | fe = 12.17 | .024 | .195 |
|                                         | Emotional neglect/abuse | 33 (55.9 %)        | 101 (37.4 %)            | 134 (40.7 %)    |                |      |      |
|                                         | Sexual abuse | 1 (1.7 %)          | 30 (11.1 %)             | 31 (9.4 %)      |                |      |      |
|                                         | Risk situation | 1 (1.7 %)          | 22 (8.1 %)              | 23 (7 %)        |                |      |      |
|                                         | Unknown/unclear/other | –                  | 4 (1.5 %)               | 4 (1.2 %)       |                |      |      |
|                                         | Abuse by minor him/herself | 2 (3.4 %)        | 12 (4.4 %)              | 14 (4.3 %)      |                |      |      |
| Victim and his/her family              |              |                    |                        |                 |                |      |      |
| Sex victim                             | Female       | 25 (43.9 %)        | 123 (49.2 %)            | 148 (48.2 %)    | 307            | χ²(1) = 0.53 | .467 | .042 |
|                                         | Male         | 32 (56.1 %)        | 127 (50.8 %)            | 159 (51.8 %)    |                |      |      |
| Age victim at time of report (months)  | (1–216)¹, (0–222)² | 101.68 (60.56)    | 103.3 (56.82)           | 103.01 (57.41)  | 323            | ±(321) = -0.19 | .848 | .028 |
| Number of previous reports             | (0–3)¹,²     | 0.14 (0.57)        | 0.10 (0.42)             | 0.11 (0.44)     | 329            | U = 7947.00 | .950 | .070 |
| Age victim first report (months)       | (1–216)¹, (0–222)² | 99.37 (59.93)    | 101.1 (57.88)           | 100.79 (58.15)  | 323            | U = 7398.5 | .775 | .032 |
| Perpetrator(s)                         |              |                    |                        |                 |                |      |      |
| Number of registered perpetrators     | (0–2)¹,²     | 1.07 (0.75)        | 1.03 (0.58)             | 1.04 (0.61)     | 318            | U = 7154.00 | .598 | .030 |
| Main perpetrator                       | Intra-familial | 40 (67.8 %)        | 196 (72.6 %)            | 236 (71.1 %)    | 329            | fe = 3.53 | .305 | .107 |

(continued on next page)
### Table 5 (continued)

| Characteristics                                    | Range/values | Lockdown\(^1\) (N = 59) | Pre-lockdown\(^2\) (N = 270) | Total (N = 329) | \(\chi^2\) (df) / Fe-U | p     | d/φ   |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|------------------------|-------|-------|
|                                                    |              | M(SD)/n(%)              | M(SD)/n(%)                  | M(SD)/n(%)     |                       |       |       |
|                                                    |              | N                        | N                            | N              |                        |       |       |
| Extra-familial                                     |              |                          |                              |                |                        |       |       |
| Pre-lockdown                                       |              | 3 (5.1 %)                | 25 (9.3 %)                  | 28 (8.5 %)     |                        | .359  | 0.074 |
| Unknown                                            |              | 2 (3.4 %)                | 10 (3.7 %)                  | 12 (3.6 %)     |                        |       |       |
| Trajectory CCCAN                                   |              |                          |                              |                |                        |       |       |
| Personal contact victim                            | Yes          | 59 (100 %)               | 262 (97 %)                  | 329            |                        | .359  | .074  |
|                                                   | No           | 59 (100 %)               | 259 (95.9 %)                | 318            |                        | .224  | .087  |
| Personal contact family member/person involved     | Yes          | 59 (100 %)               | 262 (97 %)                  | 329            |                        | .359  | .074  |
|                                                   | No           | 59 (100 %)               | 259 (95.9 %)                | 318            |                        | .224  | .087  |
| Personal contact (co-)perpetrator                  | Yes          | 59 (100 %)               | 266 (98.5 %)                | 325            |                        | 1.000 | .052  |
|                                                   | No           | 59 (100 %)               | 266 (98.5 %)                | 325            |                        | 1.000 | .052  |
| Diagnosis                                          | Yes          | 4 (7 %)                  | 7 (2.7 %)                   | 11 (3.5 %)     |                        | .121  | .090  |
|                                                   | No           | 53 (93 %)                | 248 (97.3 %)                | 301            |                        | .121  | .090  |
| Type of treatment                                   | Short term   | 57 (100 %)               | 3 (1.2 %)                   | 312            |                        |       |       |
| Pressure ring                                      |              |                          |                              |                |                        |       |       |
| Long term                                          |              | 5 (2 %)                  | 1 (0.3 %)                   | 5 (1.6 %)      |                        |       |       |
| Short and long term                                 |              | 8 (3.1 %)                | 239 (83.7 %)                | 296 (94.9 %)   |                        |       |       |
| Referral to professionals                          | Yes          | 11 (19.3 %)              | 41 (16.1 %)                 | 52 (16.7 %)    | \(\chi^2(1) = 0.35\) | .555  | .033  |
|                                                   | No           | 46 (80.7 %)              | 214 (83.9 %)                | 296 (83.3 %)   |                        |       |       |
| Collaboration with professionals                    | Yes          | 2 (3.5 %)                | 12 (4.7 %)                  | 14 (4.5 %)     |                        | 1.00  | .022  |
|                                                   | No           | 55 (96.5 %)              | 243 (95.3 %)                | 298 (95.5 %)   |                        |       |       |
| Evolved to social exigency                         | Yes          | 11 (18.6 %)              | 9 (3.3 %)                   | 20 (6.1 %)     |                        | <.001 | .246  |
|                                                   | No           | 48 (81.4 %)              | 261 (96.7 %)                | 298 (95.5 %)   |                        |       |       |
| Report to judicial authorities                     | Yes          | 6 (10.2 %)               | 6 (2.2 %)                   | 12 (3.6 %)     |                        | .010  | .163  |
|                                                   | No           | 53 (89.8 %)              | 264 (97.8 %)                | 317 (96.4 %)   |                        |       |       |

**Note.** If the assumption of the Chi-square test was violated, the Fisher’s Exact test (only p-value) or the Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact test (fe) was used. Bold p-values are significant at the p ≤ .05 level. Only variables with <10 % missing values were analyzed.

CCCAN = confidential center of child abuse and neglect, CAN = child abuse and neglect.

Lockdown: 13/03/2020–14/05/2020. Pre-lockdown is the sum of all pre-lockdown periods: 2 months prior to lockdown (12/01/2020–12/03/2020), 1 year prior to lockdown (13/03/2019–14/05/2019), 2 years prior to lockdown (13/03/2018–14/05/2018), 3 years prior to lockdown (13/03/2017–14/05/2017).
Table 6
Descriptive results characteristics for the allegations and comparison between the lockdown and pre-lockdown period.

| Characteristics                      | Range/values | Lockdown¹ (N = 35) | Pre-lockdown² (N = 172) | Total (N = 207) | X²(df)/fe U | p     | d/φ   |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------|-------|-------|
|                                      |              | M(SD)/n(%)        | N                        | M(SD)/n(%)      | N           |       |       |
|                                      |              |                    |                         |                 |             |       |       |
| **Report**                           |              |                    |                         |                 |             |       |       |
| Type of allegation                   | Regular allegation | 10 (28.6 %) | 35 | 118 (68.6 %) | 172 | 128 (61.8 %) | 207 | fe = 35.07 | <.001 | 0.468 |
|                                      | Social exigency report | 18 (51.4 %) | 54 | 54 (31.4 %) | 172 | 72 (43.8 %) | 207 |             |      |       |
|                                      | Helpline allegation | 6 (17.1 %) | 6 | 6 (2.9 %) | 6 | 6 (2.9 %) | 6 |             |      |       |
|                                      | Other         | 6 (1.7 %)         | 1 | 2 (0.5 %) | 1 | 0 (0.0 %) | 0 |             |      |       |
| Risk assessment                      | (0-4)¹,²     | 2.49 (0.85)       | 35 | 2.26 (0.74) | 163 | 2.30 (0.77) | 198 | U = 2483.5 | .160 | 0.201 |
| Victim known                         | Yes          | 10 (28.6 %)       | 35 | 114 (66.3 %) | 172 | 139 (67.1 %) | 207 | χ²(1) = 0.35 | .554 | 0.041 |
|                                      | No           | 25 (71.4 %)       | 172 | 38 (23.7 %) | 172 | 47 (22.9 %) | 207 | χ²(1) = 0.52 | .472 | 0.050 |
| Report individual                    | Yes          | 10 (28.6 %)       | 35 | 60 (34.9 %) | 172 | 70 (33.8 %) | 207 | fe = 2.61 | .423 | 0.143 |
|                                      | No           | 25 (71.4 %)       | 172 | 112 (65.1 %) | 172 | 137 (66.2 %) | 207 |             |      |       |
| Number of siblings                   | (0-4)³, (0-6)² | 1.71 (1.38) | 35 | 1.41 (1.45) | 172 | 1.46 (1.44) | 207 | U = 2573.00 | .162 | 0.016 |
| Type of report                       | Intra-familial CAN | 35 (100 %) | 35 | 153 (89 %) | 172 | 188 (90.8 %) | 207 | fe = 54.45 | <.001 | 0.590 |
|                                      | Extra-familial CAN | – | – | 8 (4.7 %) | 172 | 8 (3.9 %) | 172 |             |      |       |
|                                      | Both         | – | – | 8 (4.7 %) | 172 | 8 (3.9 %) | 172 |             |      |       |
|                                      | Unknown or no CAN | – | – | 3 (1.4 %) | 172 | 3 (1.4 %) | 172 |             |      |       |
| Hospitalisation victim               | Yes          | – | 35 | 4 (2.3 %) | 172 | 4 (1.9 %) | 207 | –           | 1.00 | 0.063 |
|                                      | No           | 35 (100 %)       | 168 | 97.7 % | 203 | 98.1 % | 203 |             |      |       |
| **Reporter**                         |              |                    |                         |                 |             |       |       |
| Reporting authority                  | Healthcare/youth care/welfare organization | 6 (17.1 %) | 35 | 87 (50.6 %) | 172 | 93 (44.9 %) | 207 | fe = 54.45 | <.001 | 0.590 |
|                                      | Daycare and (after)school facilities | 4 (11.4 %) | 35 | 56 (32.6 %) | 172 | 60 (29 %) | 172 |             |      |       |
|                                      | Police and judicial authorities | 17 (48.6 %) | 172 | 18 (10.5 %) | 172 | 35 (16.9 %) | 207 |             |      |       |
|                                      | Helpline/primary environment | 8 (22.9 %) | 172 | 11 (6.4 %) | 172 | 19 (9.2 %) | 172 |             |      |       |
| Communication                        | E-mail       | 1 (2.9 %)         | 35 | 8 (4.7 %) | 172 | 9 (4.3 %) | 207 | fe = 5.01 | .148 | 0.160 |
|                                      | Phone        | 19 (54.3 %)       | 172 | 102 (59.3 %) | 172 | 121 (58.5 %) | 207 |             |      |       |
|                                      | Personal contact | – | – | 14 (8.1 %) | 172 | 14 (6.8 %) | 172 |             |      |       |
|                                      | Written      | 15 (42.9 %)       | 48 (27.9 %) | 172 | 63 (30.4 %) | 172 |             |      |       |
| Anonymouse reporter                  | Yes          | 1 (2.9 %)         | 35 | 6 (3.5 %) | 172 | 7 (3.4 %) | 207 | –           | 1.00 | 0.013 |
|                                      | No           | 34 (97.1 %)       | 166 | 96.5 % | 200 | 96.6 % | 200 |             |      |       |
| Reporter known                       | Yes          | 35 (100 %)       | 168 | 97.7 % | 203 | 98.1 % | 203 |             |      |       |
|                                      | No           | – | – | 4 (2.3 %) | 172 | 4 (1.9 %) | 172 |             |      |       |
| Demand reporter                      | Active intervention | 14 (40 %) | 35 | 79 (46.2 %) | 171 | 93 (45.1 %) | 206 | χ²(2) = 6.66 | .036 | 0.180 |
|                                      | Advise      | 3 (8.6 %)         | 39 | 22.8 % | 171 | 42 (20.4 %) | 207 |             |      |       |
|                                      | Social exigency investigation | 18 (51.4 %) | 53 (31 %) | 171 | 71 (34.5 %) | 171 |             |      |       |
| Main problem                         | Physical neglect/abuse | 10 (28.6 %) | 35 | 77 (44.8 %) | 172 | 87 (42 %) | 207 | fe = 6.03 | .150 | 0.189 |
|                                      | Emotional neglect/abuse | 23 (65.7 %) | 71 (41.3 %) | 172 | 94 (45.4 %) | 172 |             |      |       |
|                                      | Sexual abuse | 1 (2.9 %)         | 10 | 5.8 % | 11 | 5.3 % | 11 |             |      |       |
|                                      | Risk assessment | 1 (2.9 %) | 10 | 5.8 % | 11 | 5.3 % | 11 |             |      |       |
|                                      | Abuse by minor | – | 4 (2.3 %) | 172 | 4 (1.9 %) | 172 |             |      |       |
| Victim and his/her family            | Sex victim   | Female | 25 (78.1 %) | 32 | 94 (54.7 %) | 172 | 119 (58.3 %) | 204 | χ²(1) = 6.12 | .013 | 0.173 |
|                                      | Male         | 7 (21.9 %) | 78 | 45.3 % | 172 | 85 (41.7 %) | 172 |             |      |       |
| Age victim at time of report (months)| (1–214)¹, (1–211)² | 121.29 (114.0) | 121 | 90.52 (85.4) | 171 | 110 (90.52) | 206 | U = 2209.5 | .015 | 0.345 |
| Number of previous reports           | (0–3)³, (0–5)² | 0.4 (0.81) | 35 | 0.52 (0.92) | 172 | 0.50 (0.90) | 207 | U = 2739.00 | .037 | 0.142 |
| Age victim first report (months)     | (1–214)¹, (0–208)² | 113.86 (65.80) | 35 | 85.75 (58.46) | 171 | 90.52 (58.46) | 206 | U = 2209.5 | .015 | 0.345 |

(continued on next page)
Table 6 (continued)

| Characteristics                  | Range/values | Lockdown¹ (N = 35) | Pre-lockdown² (N = 172) | Total (N = 207) | X²(df)/fe U   | p    | d/φ |
|----------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|----------------|------|-----|
|                                  | M(SD)/n(%)   | N                  | M(SD)/n(%)              | M(SD)/n(%)      | N              |      |     |
| Language victim                  |              |                    |                         |                 |                |      |     |
| Dutch                            | 32 (100%)    | 32                 | 136 (85.5%)             | 159             | 168 (88%)      | 191  | 0.016 0.166 |
| Other                            |              |                    |                         |                 |                |      |     |
| Family composition               |              |                    |                         |                 |                |      |     |
| Intact                           | 17 (50 %)    | 34                 | 84 (49.7 %)             | 169             | 101 (49.8 %)   | 203  | 0.016 0.126 |
| Divorced                         | 16 (47.1 %)  |                     | 63 (37.3 %)             |                 | 79 (38.9 %)    |      |     |
| Step family                       | 1 (2.9 %)    |                     | 22 (13 %)               |                 | 23 (11.3 %)    |      |     |
| Family composition               |              |                    |                         |                 |                |      |     |
| Intact                           | 31 (91.2 %)  | 34                 | 152 (91.6 %)            | 166             | 183 (91.5 %)   | 200  | 1.00 0.005 |
| Divorced                         | 3 (8.8 %)    |                     | 14 (8.4 %)              |                 | 17 (8.5 %)     |      |     |
| Other residence                   |              |                    |                         |                 |                |      |     |
| No                               | 23 (14.5 %)  |                     | 123 (71.5 %)            |                 | 156 (75.7 %)   |      |     |
| Yes                              | 22 (12 %)    |                     | 55 (32.3 %)             |                 | 77 (37.3 %)    |      |     |
| Number of siblings                |              |                    |                         |                 |                |      |     |
| (0–6)¹,²                         | 2.37 (1.46)  | 35                 | 1.96 (1.33)             | 166             | 2.03 (1.36)    | 201  | U = 2397.00 0.094 0.202 |
| Perpetrator(s)                    |              |                    |                         |                 |                |      |     |
| Main perpetrator                  |              |                    |                         |                 |                |      |     |
| Intra-familial                   | 32 (91.4 %)  | 35                 | 129 (76.3 %)            | 169             | 161 (78.9 %)   | 204  | 0.016 0.146 |
| Extra-familial                   | 8 (4.7 %)    |                     | 8 (4.7 %)               |                 | 8 (3.9 %)      |      |     |
| Unknown                          | 1 (0.6 %)    |                     | 1 (0.6 %)               |                 | 1 (0.5 %)      |      |     |
| No perpetrator                    | 3 (8.6 %)    |                     | 31 (18.3 %)             |                 | 34 (16.7 %)    |      |     |
| Trajectory CCCAN                 |              |                    |                         |                 |                |      |     |
| Personal contact victim          | Yes          | 20 (57.1 %)        | 113 (65.7 %)            | 172             | 133 (64.3 %)   | 207  | 0.016 0.067 |
|                                  | No           | 15 (42.9 %)        | 59 (34.3 %)             |                 | 74 (35.7 %)    |      |     |
| Personal contact family/person involved | Yes     | 22 (62.9 %)        | 136 (79.1 %)            | 172             | 158 (76.3 %)   | 207  | 0.016 0.143 |
|                                  | No           | 13 (37.1 %)        | 36 (20.6 %)             |                 | 49 (23.7 %)    |      |     |
| Personal contact (co-)perpetrator| Yes          | 18 (51.4 %)        | 112 (65.1 %)            | 172             | 129 (62.3 %)   | 207  | 0.016 0.128 |
|                                  | No           | 17 (48.6 %)        | 60 (34.9 %)             |                 | 78 (37.7 %)    |      |     |
| Diagnosis                        | Yes          | 15 (42.9 %)        | 114 (66.3 %)            | 172             | 129 (62.3 %)   | 207  | 0.016 0.128 |
|                                  | No           | 20 (57.1 %)        | 58 (33.7 %)             |                 | 78 (37.7 %)    |      |     |
| Advise/support to family/non-professionals | Yes  | 13 (40.6 %)        | 67 (41.4 %)             | 162             | 80 (41.2 %)    | 194  | 0.016 0.006 |
|                                  | No           | 19 (59.4 %)        | 95 (58.6 %)             |                 | 114 (58.8 %)   |      |     |
| Report to judicial authorities   | Yes          | 3 (8.6 %)          | 26 (15.1 %)             | 172             | 29 (14 %)      | 207  | 0.016 0.071 |
|                                  | No           | 32 (91.4 %)        | 146 (84.6 %)            |                 | 178 (86 %)     |      |     |

Note. All continuous variables were non-normally distributed so the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was used. If the assumption of the Chi-square test was violated, the Fisher's Exact test (only p-value) or the Fisher-Freeman-Halton Exact test (fe) was used. Bold p-values are significant at the 0.05 level. Only variables with <10 % missing values were analyzed.

CCCAN = confidential center of child abuse and neglect, CAN = child abuse and neglect.

Lockdown: 13/03/2020–14/05/2020. Pre-lockdown is the sum of all pre-lockdown periods: 2 months prior to lockdown (12/01/2020–12/03/2020), 1 year prior to lockdown (13/03/2019–14/05/2019), 2 years prior to lockdown (13/03/2018–14/05/2018), 3 years prior to lockdown (13/03/2017–14/05/2017).
3.2.2. Allegations

During the lockdown period, there were significantly less regular allegations (lockdown: 28.6 % vs. pre-lockdown: 68.6 %) but more social exigency reports (lockdown: 51.4 % vs. pre-lockdown: 31.4 %; \( p < .001 \)). Reporters were significantly more the helpline (lockdown: 22.9 % vs. pre-lockdown: 6.4 %), police and judicial authorities (lockdown: 48.6 % vs. pre-lockdown: 10.5 %) and significantly less the daycare, (after)school facilities (lockdown: 11.4 % vs. pre-lockdown: 32.6 %), health/youth care and welfare organizations (lockdown: 17.1 % vs. pre-lockdown: 50.6 %; \( p < .001 \)). Reporters were significantly more likely to ask for social exigency investigations (lockdown: 51.4 % vs. pre-lockdown: 31 %) and significantly less for advice (lockdown: 8.6 % vs. pre-lockdown: 22.8 %; \( p = .036 \)). Allegations were significantly more likely to involve female (lockdown: 78.1 % vs. pre-lockdown: 54.7 %; \( p = .013 \)), Dutch-speaking (lockdown: 100 % vs. pre-lockdown: 85.5 %; \( p = .016 \)), victims during the lockdown period. Victims were also significantly older at time of the current (\( \text{M}_{\text{lockdown}} = 121.29, \text{SD}_{\text{lockdown}} = 65.59; \text{M}_{\text{pre-lockdown}} = 93.94, \text{SD}_{\text{pre-lockdown}} = 56.69; p = .016 \)) and first report (\( \text{M}_{\text{lockdown}} = 113.86, \text{SD}_{\text{lockdown}} = 65.80; \text{M}_{\text{pre-lockdown}} = 85.75, \text{SD}_{\text{pre-lockdown}} = 55.87; p = .015 \)). During the lockdown, there was less personal contact with a direct caregiver or family member of the minor (lockdown: 62.9 % vs. pre-lockdown: 79.1 %; \( p = .040 \)). Less diagnoses were reached (lockdown: 42.9 % vs. pre-lockdown: 66.3 %; \( p = .009 \)) (see Tables 5 and 6).

4. Discussion

The current study investigated the impact of the COVID-19-lockdown on CAN in Brussels by examining administrative data regarding reports of CAN filed to the Brussels CCCAN.

No significant difference regarding the number of reports (advisory questions or allegations) was found between the lockdown and the pre-lockdown period. This is consistent with only a few studies during the current health crisis (Mühlmann & Pothmann, 2020). Typically, more or fewer reports were found (e.g. Baron et al., 2020; Mairhofer et al., 2020; Welch & Haskins, 2020). This result suggests that despite the COVID-19-lockdown, reports regarding CAN still found their way to the CCCAN. For example, during lockdown, professionals working with children and their families still sought advice despite the changed situation and closure or reduced activities of many health and welfare organizations (Opvroeiien, 2020). The fact that the number of allegations did not change during the lockdown, does not confirm that neither the prevalence of CAN nor the profile of families and CAN reported on remained unchanged during the lockdown. On the contrary, the results of this study show that the profile of the reports did change during the lockdown. Thus, it is likely that some reports were missed during the lockdown but were compensated by other type of reports, leaving the total number of reports unchanged. However, based on these results, no statement can be made regarding the dark number of CAN cases and how this evolved during the lockdown.

During the lockdown, advice was sought on more serious situations than before the lockdown. The risk assessment was higher, the advisory questions evolved more often into social exigency investigations and there were more referrals to judicial authorities. This result is consistent with previous findings that physical abuse was more severe during the lockdown (Schmidt and Natanson, 2020). One possible explanation for the increased severity is that situations remained undetected longer due to the limited contacts with traditional reporters during the lockdown (Welch & Haskins, 2020). On the other hand, it could also be that reporters assessed situations more seriously because of the lockdown in which families are harder to reach and less (qualitative) help can be offered. Consequently, the judicial system was called in more quickly/often for these cases. The referrals to judicial authorities can also be the result of a limited willingness to cooperate in social exigency investigations during the lockdown.

Concerning the allegations, differences regarding the reporters and the trajectory at the CCCAN were observed. Allegations were more likely to come from police and judicial authorities, the violence and (child) abuse helpline, and the primary environment during the lockdown. This is not surprising given that the minors had less contact with reporters such as teachers, health and welfare workers who report most in 'regular times (FOD Volksgezondheid, 2020; VK Brussel & Nupraatikerover.be, 2019; Vinck et al., 2016). These results show that citizens took their responsibility during these troubling times and expressed their concerns through the helpline, police and judicial authorities. Citizens partly took over the role of traditional reporters during the lockdown as the total number of reports remained approximately unchanged. Furthermore, there were significantly more social exigency investigations during the lockdown. These results confirm the idea that situations were assessed more seriously during the lockdown when families were harder to reach.

During the lockdown, less personal contact between CCCAN staff members and family members or persons involved, and fewer diagnoses were reached by the CCCAN. Although personal contact with the victims and (co-)perpetrators also decreased, it seemed even more difficult to involve other parties involved like family members during the lockdown. Limited digital literacy or access to technology of family members may explain this (Tener et al., 2021). There are multiple explanations for the reduced amount of reached diagnoses during lockdown. For example, it may be that the assessment process was not finished at the time the dataset was constructed. Due to a processing time of several months, some cases from the lockdown period had not yet been closed. Furthermore, the lockdown may have led to more doubt and uncertainty, which might have made it more difficult for CCCAN staff members to take decisions (Desair & Stroobants, 2020). Finally, this may also be due to a lack of (objective, diagnostic) information usually obtained through other professionals involved that is needed to make a correct assessment.

In terms of handling the allegations and counseling the families during the lockdown, more social exigency investigations and less advice were requested by the reporters. In addition, family members and non-professionals were offered more advice and support during treatment. These findings point to the fact that child protection workers had to make choices regarding treatment and support offered during the lockdown due to limited access to clients and a reduced offer of support by traditional partners (i.e., youth care and welfare organizations) (Desair & Stroobants, 2020).

Finally, it seems that mainly Flemish modal families were involved with CPS during the lockdown. Allegations involved older
(average 10 years), Dutch-speaking female victims. These results are somewhat similar to results from Bullinger, Raissian, et al. (2020). They found an increased prevalence of CAN in neighborhoods with the least traditional risk factors such as low poverty rates, high income, and fewer racial minority groups. While at first glance these may seem strange results, taking into account the etiology of CAN, the lockdown may offer an explanation for these cases. Both parents and children were at home during the lockdown due to home working or unemployment and school closures. With parents working from home and at the same time having to take care of their children who were not at school, this caused a lot of stress on families increasing the likelihood of emotional and physical neglect (Bullinger, Raissian, et al., 2020). Advisory questions during the lockdown involved significantly more often emotional CAN. This may confirm the hypothesis that parents did not have enough time or mental space to provide adequate (emotional) care to their children due to the stressors of the lockdown (Bradbury-Jones & Isham, 2020). Emergency physicians in New York, for example, reported an increase in injuries from accidents involving bicycles, trampolines, etc. because parents cannot provide constant supervision. These results support the idea that the lockdown impacts all families, including those who previously managed to provide safe and consistent care (Bullinger, Raissian, et al., 2020). Indeed, Leslie and Wilson (2020) and McCrary and Sanga (2021) reported an increase in domestic violence following the introduction of lockdown in households with no history of domestic violence. Finally, it is not surprising that prospective adolescents are targeted in the allegations. The lockdown has a particularly strong impact on the social life of this group due to the closure of schools and leisure activities during a life stage where friends and peers take on an increasingly important role (De Kinderombudsman, 2020; Rageliene, 2016). Continuously being at home with a lack of recreation possibilities led to conflicts and troubling situations in a lot of families (Bradbury-Jones & Isham, 2020; Lee & Ward, 2020; The Alliance et al., 2020).

4.1. Limitations and strengths

The current research has a number of strengths and limitations. Administrative data provide a great deal of information on advice questions and reports. However, the numbers are sometimes very small so that coincidence cannot be excluded (59 advisory questions in the lockdown period (vs 270 pre-lockdown); 35 allegations in the lockdown period (vs 172 pre-lockdown)). Due to the exploratory nature of the study, a high number of tests were conducted which augments capitalization of chance and results thus should be interpreted with caution. Furthermore, for a number of variables the number of missing data was very high (up to 50 %), so analysis were only performed on variables with <10 % missing values. In addition, our dataset only included reports from the Brussels CCCAN whereas the helpline for violence and (child) abuse also receives reports. Nonetheless, the CCCAN receive the most reports (including referrals from the helpline) and thus this data paints the most complete picture.

4.2. Implications and future directions

Some implications for policy and practice, as well as suggestions for follow-up research can be formulated. Since the profiles of reports during the lockdown differed significantly from the reports before the lockdown, efforts should be made to reach families that are traditionally considered at-risk (low socio-economic status) but are more difficult to reach during the lockdown. To replace the traditional channels, a possibility is to focus on sensibilization of citizens and professionals who still have contact with children despite the containment measures such as pharmacists, general practitioners and store vendors and involve them more in the reporting process (The Alliance et al., 2020).

Current results also showed the informal network to be important in reporting CAN and partly taking over the role of traditional reporters. Although we cannot exclude that the actual prevalence increased during the lockdown, we can already conclude that the number of reports did not decrease and more reports were made through the helpline and police/judicial authorities. Focusing even more on citizens and the primary environment through sensibilization, specifically in high-risk neighborhoods, could help prevent reports from being missed in future crises (The Alliance, 2020). This can also contribute to early detection that was limited during lockdown. Moreover, it is appropriate for professionals who traditionally work with children such as youth care workers to have an eye for known high-risk families during a crisis situation and to monitor them so that troubling situations are quickly detected.

Current research was limited only to two months at the start of the crisis. It would be interesting to find out what the state of reporting is in the months following the crisis. Finally, although the results obtained are specific to the Brussels context, it is likely that these recommendations will also be useful for other regions in Belgium or even beyond due to the exploratory nature of the research.

5. Conclusion

The number of reports (advisory questions and allegations) did not increase or decrease during the lockdown. During the lockdown, advisory questions more often involved emotional CAN. The risk was assessed as being higher, the advisory questions evolved more often into a social exigency investigation and reports were more often referred to judicial authorities. The allegations more often involved social exigency investigations that more often turned out not to be a social exigency situation. Reports were more often filed by non-traditional reporters. The profile of victims and families appeared more often to be Flemish modal families for allegations.

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Declaration of interest

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Data availability

The data that has been used is confidential.

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