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Coming across a hidden problem in an excluded population: a qualitative study of professionals' experiences of young migrants' disclosures of sexual violence

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- Professionals perceived young migrants to be vulnerable to sexual violence as part of a larger structural vulnerability and as a result of their marginalised position in society.
- Professionals felt a great deal of responsibility to meet the many and varied needs that they perceived contributed to young migrants' vulnerabilities.

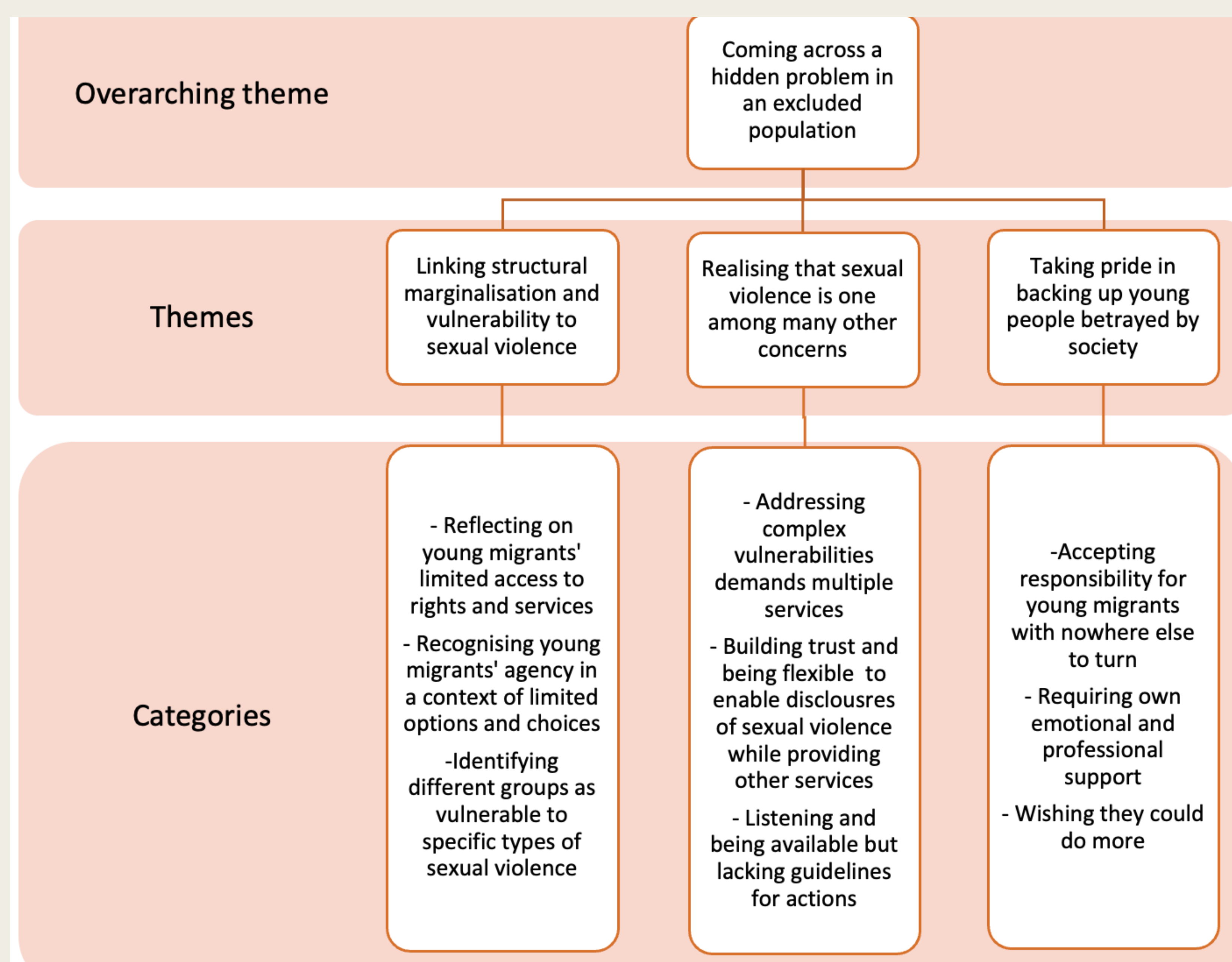
Background and Aim

Growing evidence suggests that young migrants are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence. As young migrants often lack family and social networks, professionals are often the recipients of disclosures of sexual violence. **This study aimed to explore how professionals experience meeting young migrants disclosing experiences of sexual violence.**

Methods

14 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with a range of professionals from the public sector and civil society in southern Sweden. All participants had experienced disclosures of sexual violence from young migrants. Data were analysed using qualitative content analysis resulting in manifest categories and latent themes of professionals' experiences.

Results



"Lacking basic rights opens up the possibility of being exploited. It is actually quite obvious; they have to meet their basic needs in some way. It also makes having any form of risk assessment difficult. You might have to sleep somewhere where you are not safe or at an unsafe person's place. Or to make money. You end up in a very risky environment."

"My level of responsibility felt is great as the trust placed in me is great - we are their family, community and only network in Sweden [...] I feel like I am perceived as being omnipotent. For some of them I am their last resort."

"It (sexual violence) is also structural; there is something violent in betraying children and young people in the way we have in the welfare state. Not that the Migration Agency or social workers are abusive but the structure that puts people in situations where they can be exploited, that is the problem".