

Chapter 19

An Update on Theories and Treatment of Sex Offenders

Rejani Thudalikunnil Gopalan
Gujarat Forensic Sciences University, India

Amrita Arvind
Maharaja Sayajirao University, India

ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to provide an overview of the theories and treatments of sex offenders. Sex offence is a major public health and social problem, a violation of human right and has innumerable consequence for the victim, including the community at large. It becomes important for health service providers and policy makers to understand this problem, which is not yet clearly understood. This chapter discusses the concept and definitions of sex offences, briefing on the main theories of sexual offence and treatments. Though many theories and treatments are available, more researches are required for the causes, prevention and interventions of sexual offences to have better clarity in the causes and effectiveness of treatments.

INTRODUCTION

Sex crimes often elicit moral outrage from the public and they carry the notion that a sex offender is incurable and beyond any redemption which is not backed by evidence. The public expects and deserves evidence-based practices when it comes to safety. Sex offenders are a heterogeneous group of people who are not easily identifiable. They come from all types of social, income, racial, ethnic and religious groups (James, 1996). Offenders can be married or not, employed or unemployed have children and partners or not. Probably the only generalisations that can be safely made about sex offenders are that they are almost always male and they are almost always known to their victims (ABS, 1996, 2004).

Sexual offending can vary along a broad spectrum of behaviours, from non-contact offences such as exhibitionism to rape. Much of the research on the nature of sexual offending has focused on one end of this spectrum, concentrating on understanding offences such as rape, incest and child molesting. According to legal dictionary, sex offenders are persons who have been convicted of a sex-related crime,

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or of attempting to commit a sex-related crime. Also referred to as a “sex abuser,” or “sexual offender,” an individual convicted of a sex crime is, in most cases, required to register with the state’s sex offender registry, which monitors and places restrictions on their activities. Any illegal act that involves illegal, forced, or coerced sexual conduct against another person is considered a sex crime. While this definition takes many forms, crimes that are known to classify a perpetrator as a sex offender include: sexual assault, sexual conduct with a minor, molestation of a child, continuous sexual abuse of a child, sexual assault of spouse, rape, statutory rape, infamous crimes against nature, sodomy or Bestiality (in some jurisdictions), genital mutilation, lewd and lascivious acts, indecent exposure and public sexual indecency, child pornography, prostitution (in some circumstances), sex trafficking, transporting a person across jurisdictions with the intent of engaging in sexual activities, incest, kidnapping, aggravated assault, murder, unlawful imprisonment, and burglary (when the offense includes evidence of sexual motivation).

In the best of the studies on recidivism of sex offenders, the definition of ‘sex offender’ is divided into three categories: Sex offenders who commit crimes of sexual violence against adults (commonly grouped together as ‘rapists’); Sex offenders who commit crimes of sexual violence against children within their own families (usually known as ‘intra-familial child molesters’ or ‘incest offenders’); and Sex offenders who commit crimes of sexual violence against children who are not within their family group (usually known as ‘extra-familial child molesters’ and sometimes divided according to the gender of the victim) (Gelb,2007) .

Prevalence

Based on NCVS data, an estimated 243,800 rape/sexual assault victimizations occurred in the United States in 2011, a rate of 0.9 victimizations per 1,000 persons age 12 and over (Truman & Planty, 2012). Offenders arrested for rape in 2009 were predominantly young, white, and overwhelmingly male. Only 1 percent of the offenders arrested for rape in 2009 were female. About 15 percent of the nation’s rape arrestees in 2009 were under the age of 18, and 37 percent were 18–29 years old. (FBI, 2009). According to the Justice Department’s most recent statistics, sex offenses are still very much a man’s crime. Female sex offenders are very rare: 96 percent of the sex assaults reported in 1999 involved male perpetrators. Women were most commonly involved in sex abuse cases involving victims under age 6, making up 12 percent of those offenders. Women were involved in 3 percent of the sex cases involving victims age 6 through 12, and 3 percent for victims ages 13 through 17. Because they are so rare, experts are not able to draw an accurate profile of a typical female sex offender. Teenage female offenders may commit their crimes when they are experimenting or discovering their sexuality. Many cases tend to involve women who are in a position of power over children, such as teachers. According to *Perpetrators of Child Sexual Abuse*” (2012) one third of offenders are juveniles. A general population survey of children 0 to 17 years of age in the US showed a 1% decline in aggregate sexual assault from 2011 to 2014 (Finkelhor et al.,2015). Studies also noted the rates of female sexual offenders, it is important to explore this area though rate was found less at present.

Among highly personal and sensitive behaviors and experiences, including other forms of interpersonal violence, rape and other forms of sexual violence are probably the most difficult experiences to measure. They are rarely observed and occur in private places (Cook et al., 2011, p. 203). Creating a complete and accurate accounting of the extent of sexual offending is challenging. First, there is no single definition of sexual offending. Finally, rate comparison can be problematic given the different ways in which the sample being studied is measured. An accurate accounting is virtually impossible because so many sex

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