

Validation of a multifactorial model of sexual sadism

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Introduction

The DSM-V Sexual Sadism definition (APA, 2013)

In the latest version of the DSM, Sexual Sadism is described as a paraphilic disorder.

To be diagnosed, it requires

- **A)** Over a period of at least 6 months, recurrent and intense sexual arousal from the physical or psychological suffering of another person, as manifested by fantasies, urges, or behaviors.
- **B)** The individual has acted on these sexual urges with a nonconsenting person, or the sexual urges or fantasies cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.
- **Specify if:**
- In a controlled environment: This specifier is primarily applicable to individuals living in institutional or other settings where opportunities to engage in sadistic sexual behaviors are restricted.
- In full remission: The individual has not acted on the urges with a nonconsenting person, and there has been no distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other areas of functioning, for at least 5 years while in an uncontrolled environment.

Severe sexual sadism scale (SESAS; Nitschke, J., Osterheider, M., & Mokros, A., 2009)

1. Offender is sexually aroused by sadistic acts
2. Offender exercises power/control/domination over victim
3. Offender humiliates or degrades the victim
4. Offender tortures victim or engages in acts of cruelty on victim
5. Offender mutilates sexual parts of victim's body
6. Offender engages in gratuitous violence or wounding toward victim
7. Offender keeps records (other than trophies) or trophies (e.g., hair, underwear, ID)
8. Offender mutilates nonsexual parts of victim's body
9. Victim is abducted or confined
10. Evidence of ritualism in offense
11. Insertion of object into bodily orifices

Source : Nitschke, J., Osterheider, M. et Mokros, A. (2009). A cumulative scale of severe sexual sadism. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 21(3), 262-278.

The dissensus in the psycho-behavioral profile of the sexual sadist

Proulx et al. (Proulx, Blais & Beauregard, 2005; Proulx & Beauregard, 2014; Proulx, James & Langevin, 2017, p. 163-201)	Knight and others (Dietz et al., 1990; Gratzner & Bradford, 1995; Knight & Prentky, 1990; Prentky & Knight, 1991)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schizoid and avoidant personality disorder• Lifestyle characterized by social isolation• Maintains a deviant fantasy world	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Narcissitic and antisocial personality• Lifestyle characterized by criminality, substance abuse and other type of marginalized behaviours• Coercitive sexuality: ranging from psychological and verbal pressure to the use of physical force from a partner to another to engage in sexual behaviours

Hypotheses that could explain this dissensus.

1) Related to methodology

- The sexual arousal profiles of sadistic rapists are not different from the profiles of other types of rapists.
- Just like sadistic rapists, opportunists have high scores on the offense- planning scale
- Sadistic rapists are characterized by a high tendency towards social isolation, which is absent in psychopaths.
- Sadistic Offenders personality, defined as psychopathy, mostly based on clinical judgements (Dietz, 1990)
- Results are difficult to transpose due to a non-representative sample of the sadistic offender's profile.

2) These results are all valid and, in fact, they highlighted heterogeneity in sadistic sexual aggressors

- Knight concluded in 2010 that both psychopathic sadists as well as schizoid-avoidant sadists were two possible and coherent sadistic profiles
- Two distinct modes of functioning: 1) the schizoid-avoidant profile which is characterized by social isolation and sadistic sexual fantasies; 2) the antisocial-narcissistic profile which is characterized by impulsivity and sensation seeking

Longpré, Guay et Knight (2018)

Recently, Longpré, Guay, and Knight (2018) examined the heterogeneity found in the literature regarding sadistic sexual offenders.

By examining the developmental trajectories of 518 sex offenders, the authors identified three developmental trajectories that lead to the commission of sadistic sexual behaviours:

- (1) The disinhibition path ;
- (2) The schizoid path ;
- (3) The narcissistic-meanness path.

***The results of this study permit to solve the apparent dissensus in the literature by highlighting heterogeneity in sadistic sexual aggressors

The research's problematic

Despite the fact that Longpré, Guay and Knight (2018) identified three developmental trajectories leading to the commission of sadistic behaviours, which solved the dissensus, they did not question whether or not each of these trajectories led to the same sadistic behaviours. In other words, they did not question whether the sexual sadism of individuals in the disinhibition path manifested itself in the same way as those in the schizoid path or those in the narcissistic-meanness path.

- If there are different pathways that lead to sadistic behaviour, wouldn't there also be different manifestations of sadism associated with each of these path?

The research's problematic

Accordingly, the objectives of this research can be stated as follows:

1. To analyse the diversity of combinations of behavioural manifestations of sexual sadism, i.e. the elements that characterise the offence ;
2. To study the path to these combinations, i.e. to examine the pathways of Longpré, Guay and Knight (2018) associated with each of them.

Methodology

Sample

Sample: 218 sexual offenders (43 sexual murderers and 176 sexual offenders) who received a sentence of 2 years or more between 1995 and 2000 in (Quebec) Canada for committing at least one contact sexual crime.

Sample characteristics:

- The majority of the participants were Francophone (89%), Caucasian (86.2%), single (53%) and unemployed (63%).
- They had an average of 9.3 years of schooling.
- At the time of their assessment, their average age was 33.6 years (SD = 9.1 years).
- We decided to consider only the first victim of our participants, to avoid problems related to differences in numbers of victims

Instruments

Questionnaire informatisé sur la délinquance sexuelle (QIDS)

Severe Sexual Sadism Scale (SeSaS)

- Utilized to measure the presence of sexual sadism in the sample

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual forth edition (DMS-IV)

- Used to evaluate the presence of paraphilia

Procedures

- All participants in this study were at the Regional Reception Center (RRC) at the time of their assessment. The RRC is a maximum security prison located in Sainte-Anne-des-Plaines, Quebec.
- All participants were signed a consent form, which stipulated that any information collected would be used strictly for research purposes only
- Each of the participants underwent a series of psychometric tests and several semi-structured interviews during their evaluation
- The information collected was supplemented with official information
- When the official information did not agree with the information provided by the subject, the official information took precedence over the latter.

Data and analysis strategies

Two types of analyses were conducted:

- First, we performed a latent class analysis on the 11 items of the Severe Sexual Sadism Scale (SESAS) to identify combinations of manifestations of sexual sadism.
- Second, we performed ANOVA or Chi-Square analysis on latent class found with variables equivalent to those of Longpré, Guay, and Knight (2018).

Results

Results: Latent class analysis

The three latent classes

The 11 elements of SESAS	Opportunistic	Vindictive	Sadistic
1) Offender is sexually aroused by sadistic acts	35.3%	15.1%	100%
2) Offender exercises power/control/domination over victim	25.6%	65%	13%
3) Offender tortures victim or engages in acts of cruelty on victim	19.7%	86.4%	76.3%
4) Offender humiliates or degrades the victim	14.9%	74.4%	100%
5) Offender mutilates sexual parts of victim's body	0%	7.9%	26.4%
6) Offender mutilates nonsexual parts of victim's body	0%	3.9%	23.8%
7) Offender engages in gratuitous violence or wounding toward victim	20.5%	89.6%	0%
8) Insertion of object into bodily orifices	0%	9%	100%
9) Ritualistic behavior Victim is abducted or confined	0%	0%	13.2%
10) Victim is abducted or confined	7.9%	8.7%	7.9%
11) Taking Trophies	2.3%	4.1%	10.5%
Average total SESAS score	1,15	3,64	3,74
Number of subjects	N = 75 (34,4%)	N = 105 (48,1%)	N = 38 (17,4%)

Results: Childhood and Adolescence

Childhood Behavioral Problems

Variables	Opportunistic	Vindictive	Sadistic	Sig. (Chi-square)
Presence of paraphilia	M : 1.4% N : 73	M : 1.9% N : 105	M : 14.3% N : 35	0.002

Serious problem behaviours: adolescence

Variables	Opportunistic	Vindictive	Sadistic	Sig. (Chi-square/ANOVA)
Juvenile history contact sex (total number of sentence)	M : 0,285 N : 14	M : 0,000 N : 18	M : 0,000 N : 10	0.010
Rebellious attitude	M : 41.1% N : 73	M : 61% N : 105	M : 60% N : 35	0.024

Results: Lifestyle

Avoiding Lifestyle

Variables	Opportunistic	Vindictive	Sadistic	Sig. (Chi-square)
Poor self-image	M : 52.8% N : 72	M : 36.5% N : 104	M : 60% N : 35	0.020
Social isolation	M : 38.9% N : 72	M : 34.6% N : 104	M : 57.1% N : 35	0.061

Results: Lifestyle

Substance abuse

Variables	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Sig. (Chi-square)
Regular drug abuse	M : 40% N : 75	M : 53.8% N : 104	M : 64.9% N : 37	0.033
Drugs before the offense	M : 29.3% N : 75	M : 44.7% N : 103	M : 56.8% N : 37	0,014
Alcohol before the offense	M : 46.7% N : 75	M : 70.5% N : 103	M : 83.8% N : 37	0,000

Results: Life context

Life context: 1 year before the offense

Variables	Opportunistic	Vindictive	Sadistic	Sig. (Chi-square)
Male specific interpersonal conflict	M: 8% N: 75	M: 1.9% N: 104	M: 17.1% N: 35	0,006
Devaluation: psychological image	M: 44% N: 75	M: 34% N: 103	M: 80% N: 35	0,000
Devaluation: image of the body	M: 14.7% N: 75	M: 8.7% N: 103	M: 51.4% N: 35	0,000
Relationship problems and family difficulties	M: 10.7% N: 75	M: 6.8% N: 103	M: 22.9% N: 35	0,030
Relationship problems and marital difficulties	M: 24% N: 75	M: 37.9% N: 103	M: 20% N: 35	0,050

Results: Disinhibitors

Disinhibitors (48h prior to the offense)

Generalized conflict	M: 17.3% N: 75	M: 37.3% N: 102	M: 45.7% N: 35	0,003
Devaluation: psychological image	M: 29.3% N: 75	M: 26.2% N: 103	M: 54.3% N: 35	0,007
Devaluation: image of the body	M: 12% N: 75	M: 6.8% N: 103	M: 34.3% N: 35	0,000
Relationship problems and perception of rejection-abandonment	M: 23.8% N: 42	M: 16.3% N: 43	M: 44.8% N: 29	0,024
Relationship problems and marital difficulties	M: 9.3% N: 75	M: 26.2% N: 103	M: 8.6% N: 35	0,004
Relationship problems and separation of the partner	M: 5.3% N: 75	M: 22.3% N: 103	M: 11.4% N: 35	0,005

Results: Sexual Deviant Fantasies

Sexual deviant fantasies prior to the offense

Variables	Opportunistic	Vindictive	Sadistic	Sig. (Chi-square)
Fantasies excluding the victim 1 year and 48 hours prior to the offense	18.9% N : 74	21% N : 100	37.1% N : 35	0.087

Results: Personality

Presence of Personality Disorder and Traits (DSM-IV)

Variables	Opportunistic	Vindictive	Sadistic	Sig. (Chi-square)
Paranoid personality	5.3% N : 75	15.2% N : 105	14.3% N : 28	0.108
Schizoid personality	1.3% N : 75	1% N : 105	7.1% N : 28	0.095
Schizotypal personality	0% N : 75	0% N : 105	0% N : 28	--
Antisocial personality	40% N : 75	61.9% N : 105	42.9% N : 28	0.009
Borderline Personality	22.7% N : 75	27.6% N : 105	35.7% N : 28	0.403
Histrionic personality	2.7% N : 75	1% N : 105	7.1% N : 28	0.162

Results: Personality

Presence of Personality Disorder and Traits (DSM-IV)

Variables	Opportunistic	Vindictive	Sadistic	Sig. (Chi-square)
Narcissistic personality	28% N : 75	25.7% N : 105	42.9% N : 28	0.201
Avoiding personality	13.3% N : 75	13.3% N : 105	14.3% N : 28	0.991
Obsessive-compulsive personality	2.7% N : 75	1% N : 105	14.3% N : 28	0.002
Passive-aggressive personality	13.3% N : 75	16.2% N : 105	3.6% N : 28	0.221
Dependent Personality	32% N : 75	43.8% N : 105	28.6% N : 28	0.157

Discussion

Sadistic aggressors

- **SeSaS Items:** Total score 3.7 (Sexual arousal by sadistic acts, insertion of objects, mutilation, torture, humiliation)
- **Childhood and adolescence:** paraphilia, rebellious attitudes
- **Lifestyle Adulthood:** social isolation, low self-esteem
- **Life context:** conflict with males, family problems
- **Disinhibitors:** perception of rejection, alcohol consumption, sadistic fantasies

Discussion

Vindictive aggressors

- **SeSaS Items:** Total score 3.6 (Power and domination, expressive violence, torture and humiliation)
- **Childhood and adolescence:** rebellious attitudes
- **Lifestyle Adulthood:** drug abuse
- **Life context:** marital problems
- **Disinhibitors:** marital problems, separation of the partner
- **DSM-IV Personality Disorder:** antisocial

Discussion

Opportunistic aggressors

- **SeSaS Items:** Total score 1.2 (sexual arousal)
- **Childhood and adolescence:** hands-on sexual offense
- **Lifestyle Adulthood:** no specific characteristic
- **Life context:** no specific characteristic
- **Disinhibitors:** no specific characteristic

Thank you!



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