



I6 Prevalence of Asphyxial Games in Sadomasochists and Nonsadomasochists

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By attending this presentation, attendees will understand that asphyxial games are often practiced among consensual sadomasochists but also among non-sadomasochists (at a rate of 6.5%). Nevertheless, one must take care to distinguish between consensually acting and non-consensually acting sadomasochists; a current case example (involving first degree murder) will demonstrate why.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by showing that asphyxial games are performed relatively often in some communities but are only a danger if performed alone or in a non-consensual manner.

In a large questionnaire study ($n = 1627$, age 13–80 years, mean age 31.2 years), correlations between different styles of sadomasochistic behavior and personality traits consistent with experience-seeking were checked (among other items). Experiences the respondents had with asphyxial sexual games were also checked, which include using hands or ropes to compress the neck, wrapping plastic bags around the head, obstructing the mouth and nose, etc. Seventy percent of the participants were sadomasochists, 30% were non-sadomasochists. The participants were recruited in German-speaking parts of Europe (Germany, Austria, and parts of Switzerland). Sadomasochists were recruited through Internet-based, specialized newsgroups and chat rooms related to sadomasochism; non-sadomasochists were contacted through general interest groups on the Internet.

More than half of the female sadomasochists reported experiences with asphyxial play (54%), whereas only 4.8% of non-sadomasochistic females had such experiences. Forty percent of male sadomasochists reported experiences with asphyxial games compared with only 8.3% of the male non-sadomasochists.

There was a significant correlation between experience-seeking and sadomasochistic behavior. This correlation was strongest in “switchers” (persons switching between active and passive roles), followed by masochists (switchers: OR 6.8; masochists: OR 6.6). Sadists had lower scores (OR 6.5); compared to non-sadomasochists (OR 6.1); these were, however, not significant (ANOVA).

Persons with higher scores in experience-seeking also had a significantly higher number of sexual partners ($p > 0.01$) and of diversity of sexual practices, such as needle play, asphyxial play, bondage, and different types of penetration ($p > 0.01$).

The levels of neuroticism were lowest in switchers (1.8) and sadists (1.5; significant), and highest in masochists (2.0) and non-sadomasochists (2.0). This suggests that sadists are in significantly better control of their emotions than all other groups.

These results are relevant because, to our knowledge, there were no accidents ever reported during such games (except if performed alone or non-consensually). One must therefore distinguish between consensually acting and non-consensually acting sadomasochists. A current first-degree murder case (offender: German scientist; victim: sadomasochistic photo model; final verdict pending) will illustrate this concept.

Asphyxia, Strangulation, Sadomasochism