



Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences Section – 2011

15 Sexual Sadism: Its Association With Paraphilia and Psychopathy Traits

Nicholas Longpré*, 10492 Avenue des Recollets, Montreal, QC H1H4E7, CANADA; Jean-Pierre Guay, PhD, University of Montreal, CP 6128, Succ. Centre-ville, Montréal, QC H3T 1J4, CANADA; and Raymond A. Knight, PhD, Brandeis University, Department of Psychology, MS 062, Waltham, MA 02454-9110

After attending this presentation, attendees will have a better knowledge of sexual sadism and its association with other paraphilias and psychopathy. There will be additional clarification on how sadistic fantasies and behavior coalesce.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by shedding further light on how to discriminate between sexual sadism and other disorders in order to facilitate its assessment.

Introduction: Sexual sadism can be described as the experience of sexual pleasure produced by acts of cruelty and bodily punishment (Krafft-Ebing, 1886). Characteristics such as torture, mutilation, humiliation, and sadistic sexual interest are often associated with sexual sadism. It is almost impossible to determine the true prevalence of sexual sadism due to a lack of reliability and validity. One reason behind this lack of reliability and validity is the overlap of sexual sadism with other disorders such as psychopathy and other paraphilias.

Hart and Hare (1997) assumed a relationship between psychopathy and sadism. Since then, little research has been conducted on this topic, which is surprising considering the commonalities between psychopathy and sexual sadism. According to Porter and Woodworth (2006), the relationship between these two disorders is sexual pleasure derived from violent acts. At the affective level, sexual sadists and psychopaths share a number of characteristics such as a lack of remorse, a lack of guilt and a lack of empathy. In other words, they are cold hearted and emotionally detached. According to Cooke (2001), most sadists are likely to show significant psychopathic traits, while not all psychopaths are sadists.

On the other hand, sexual sadism is commonly co-morbid with other paraphilias. Sexual sadism is classified by the DSM IV TR (Diagnostic and Statistical of Mental Disorders) as a paraphilia, on axis I. Early works from Abel and al. (1988) show that most paraphiliacs have significant experience with as many as ten different types of deviant sexual behaviors. However, there is a tendency of some research to disagree with this assumption (Marshall, 2007; Nietschke, Blendl, Otterman, Osterheider & Mokros, 2009).

Material and Methods: The research was conducted on a sample of adult sexual offenders ($n = 528$) who were assessed in forensic institutions located in Massachusetts and Minnesota with the Multidimensional Inventory of Development, Sex and Aggression (MIDSA). The MIDSA is a computerized, self-report inventory that provides a clinical report to support therapeutic interventions with sexual offenders. Three dimensions (12 sub-scales) from the MIDSA were used: the sexual sadism (sadistic fantasy & sadistic behavior), the psychopathy-related and hypermasculinity scales (lack of empathy, lack of perspective taking, cunning and superficial charm, impulsivity, negative masculinity/toughness & hostility towards women) and the paraphilia scales (voyeurism, exhibitionism, transvestism, scatologia & fetishism).

Results: *Sadism Scales:* Analysis on the sadism scales shows a strong correlation ($r(526) = 0.793$, $p < 0.001$) between the presence of sadistic fantasies and behavior.

Psychopathy-related/Sadism Scales: The analyses shows small to moderate correlations between the presence of sadistic fantasies and lack of perspective taking ($r(526) = 0.361$, $p < 0.01$), impulsivity ($r(526) = 0.377$, $p < 0.01$) and the presence of callous-unemotional ($r(526) = 0.334$, $p < 0.01$) and cunning traits ($r(526) = 0.381$, $p < 0.01$). Similar correlations were observed between sadistic behaviour and lack of perspective taking ($r(526) = 0.408$, $p < 0.01$), impulsivity ($r(526) = 0.355$, $p < 0.01$) and the

presence of callous ($r(526) = 0.336$, $p < 0.01$) and cunning traits ($r(526) = 0.380$, $p < 0.01$).

Paraphilia/Sadism Scales: The analysis shows fairly high correlations ($r(526) = 0.532$, $p < 0.01$) between sadistic fantasies and behavior and the presence of other paraphilia. A moderate correlation was obtained between sadistic fantasy and voyeurism. Moreover, similar correlations ($r(526) = 0.469$, $p < 0.01$) were observed between sadistic behavior and voyeurism.

Conclusion: This study presents interesting points which clarify the concept of sexual sadism. Sadistic fantasy and behavior seem to work in similar fashion and correlate with the same scales. The diagnosis of sexual sadism is often associated with severe sentences, such as the designation of Dangerous Offender (Canada) or Civil Commitment (USA). Therefore, it is necessary to have a better understanding of sexual sadism in order to adequately assess the risks and needs of offenders. Accurate diagnosis is essential for effective treatment of any condition.

Sexual Sadism, Psychopathy, Paraphilia