

# Disorders of sexual preference in the perception of the general public

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**Abstract** Disorders of sexual preference are so-called paraphilias. It is a condition that is characterized by permanent disposition or compulsive urge to unusual and socially unaccepted sexual objects or activities. In the research, carried out on the basis of the grant of College of Polytechnics Jihlava, perceptions of the general public on the topic of paraphilia were analyzed. The research was conducted by quantitative research using the technique of the survey. The results of this research showed that general public consider the information in the media about paraphilias as somewhat biased. The public perceives paedophilia as the biggest danger.

**Key words** paraphilia, sexual preference disorders, sexuality, general public

## 1. DISORDERS OF SEXUAL PREFERENCE

The disorders of sexual preference are sexual problems where the sexual arousal is in response to objects or stimuli not associated with normal sexual behaviour patterns and that may interfere with the establishment of normal sexual relationships. (Berger, 2005) Paraphiliac tendencies can be realized in masturbation fantasies and practices in partner sexual life. The subject may be forced to commit sexual offense. (Zvěřina, 2003)

The number of people who suffer from a paraphilia is thought to be difficult to gauge for a number of reasons. Many people with one of these disorders suffer in secret or silence out of shame, and some are engaging in sexual offending behaviours and so are invested in not reporting their paraphilia. Therefore, many of the estimates on the prevalence of paraphilia are gained from the number of people involved with the criminal-justice system due to paedophilia. (Dryden-Edwards, 2015)

According to Weiss (2010) sexual preferences can be primarily divided to deviation in activity and deviation in object.

### 1.1 Deviation in activity

Deviations in activity can be defined as a disorder in the way of achieving sexual arousal and gratification. Among the main representatives of this group exhibitionism, voyeurism, sadism and masochism, toucherism and others are included. (Weiss, 2010)

**Exhibitionism** is a tendency, when arousal is achieved through exposure of the genital to the opposite sex. It is not always associated with the exhibition of an erigated penis and masturbation of the exhibitionist. After the exhibition, most exhibitionists are

aware of the social and legal implications of their actions and have feelings of guilt. (Veselský, 2009) Exhibitionism is one of the most common sexual deviations. (Zvěřina, 2013)

**Voyeurism** is a deviation, when the excitement is achieved by watching the intimate behaviour of unsuspecting subjects. Tracking of copulating couples, masturbating women or even undressing without awareness of the observed are considered to be such intimate behaviour. (Weiss, 2002) This observation commonly leads to sexual excitement and masturbation. (WHO, 2014)

**Frotteurism** is a condition when the arousal is achieved by rubbing the anonymous, unknown female objects in crowded places, usually in queues or in vehicles. Frotteurs usually pretend to be touching their victims with erect penis by accident. This activity, however, makes them excited and happy, and the whole event often ends in ejaculation on the dress of the object. (Uzel, 2010)

**Sadomasochism** is a preference for sexual activity which involves two completely opposite elements, i.e. sadistic and masochistic. Dominance and total control of the object for sadism result in attainment of excitement. A sadist experiences the excitement in connection with the physical and mental suffering of victims, which is associated with a feeling of absolute control over the victim. (Weiss, 2010) Excitement reached by absolute submission to the partner and acceptance of suffering and humiliation are typical for masochism. An individual can behave in both ways – sadomasochism. (Veselský, 2009)

**Toucherism** is a disorder when the person reaches the excitement by touching the intimate parts of anonymous female subjects. A toucher touches an unknown woman as if by accident on her breast, buttocks or genitals. This activity usually takes place from behind of the victim. (Uzel, 2010)

### 1.2 Deviation in object

Deviation in object can be defined as a qualitative disorder of sexual motivation characterized by inadequate focus of erotic desire, therefore, what the person's sexual desire is oriented to. Among the main representatives of this group fetishism, fetishistic transvestism and paedophilia are included. (Weiss, 2010)

**Fetishism** is erotic focus on an inanimate object or body parts, which represent normal sexual object for this person. (Weiss, 2002) Many fetishes are related to the human body, such as clothing or footwear. Fetishes vary in their importance for the individual. (WHO, 2014)

**Fetishistic transvestism** is wearing clothes of the opposite sex, in order to obtain sexual excitement and to reach the appearance of a person of the opposite sex. Fetishistic transvestism varies from

transsexual transvestism in its clear association with sexual arousal and the strong desire to remove the clothing once orgasm arrived and sexual arousal decreases. (WHO, 2014)

**Paedophilia** is a disorder when the excitement is achieved by focusing on objects of prepubertal age. (Veselský, 2009) Paedophiles are people who prefer physical immaturity of the object, which lies in the absence of secondary sexual characteristics and childhood behaviour. (Zvěřina, 2013)

## 2. DISORDERS OF SEXUAL PREFERENCE IN GENERAL PUBLIC PERCEPTION

Disorders of sexual preference are one of the sensitive topics that the society discusses very little. The society learns about them mostly through media, which follow these cases. The cases usually describe disorders of sexual preference that disrupt social habits, objectively harm the people or their interests. In this way, a significantly distorted view of such persons is created.

The aim of the research was to conduct a survey of opinions and attitudes of the general public in relation to the issue of sexual preference disorders. This research was funded by the grant from the College of Polytechnics in Jihlava.

### 2.1 Research Methodology

The survey was designed as a quantitative research using the technique of the survey. Data were collected in electronic and physical form using the snowball method. The questionnaires consisted of 27 closed or semi-open questions. The actual implementation of data collection took place in March 2015.

### 2.2 The research group

The research sample consisted of 970 persons in the age range from 15 to 70 years. The gender composition of the research sample was 77% of women and 23% of men. Regarding respondents' residence, 68% of respondents indicated they lived in cities and 32% in the countryside.

### 2.3 Research results

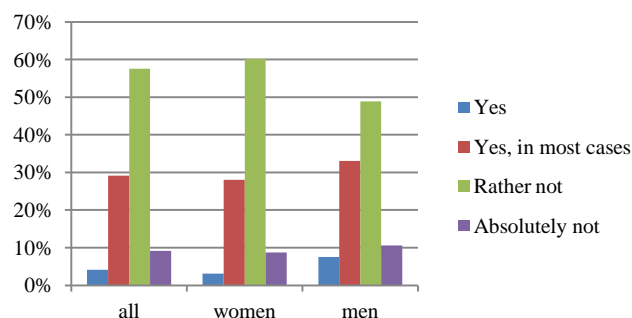
#### Objectivity of information interpreted by the media

Media is currently one of the most important sources of information. Plenty of varied forms have the ability to hit a large part of our population. Context and form of interpretation relating to sensitive issues have a significant impact on general opinion, but also on persons directly concerned by the topic.

What are the ways the general public views the objectivity of the media presented information about paraphilia? The research results show that a minimum, a total of 4% of respondents, considered the presented information to be relevant. It is surprising that women looked at the objectivity of the information more sceptically than men. 60% of women and only 49% of men considered presented information as rather false. Overall, 9% of respondents considered the media information about paraphilias as completely biased.

These results show that the public is aware of the misrepresentation, which is interpreted by the media about paraphilias. On the other hand, it is the only source of information on this topic for a large part of the population.

#### Objectivity Information



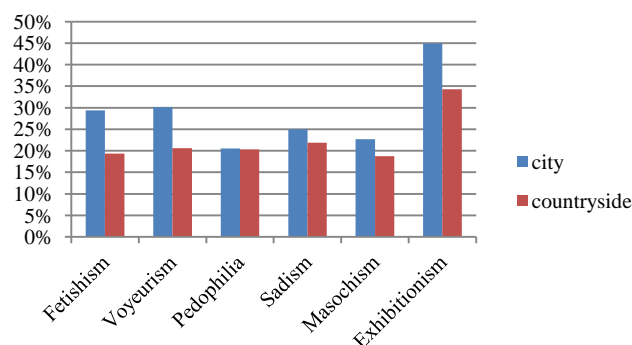
Graph no. 1: Objectivity of information about paraphilias interpreted by the media

#### Meeting a person with paraphilia

Real experience with some phenomena or groups of persons affects our views on these groups. In case this is a positive experience the perception of the whole group is usually shifted to more positive approach and vice versa.

The largest proportion of respondents stated that they had met an exhibitionist in their real life. For other types of disorders there are noticeable differences. An interesting outcome is that, comparing respondents from villages and cities, significantly more people living in cities encounter with disorders of sexual preference.

#### Meeting with Various Types - yes



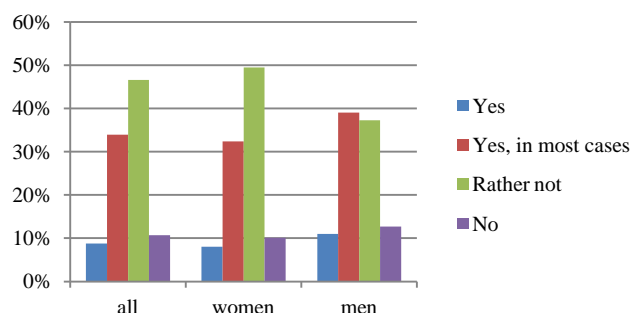
Graph no. 2: Meetings with selected disorders of sexual preference

#### Public awareness about paraphilias

It is necessary to have enough information to get an objective view on the topic of paraphilias. The general public is in most cases dependent only on the information presented by the media.

Almost half of the respondents perceive the awareness of the general public concerning paraphilias as rather poor. On the contrary, it is considered to be sufficient by only 9% of respondents. This assertion is supported by the results of the research by Tomáš Petr from 2008, which dealt with the question of informing the public about paraphilias. His results show that the majority of respondents (63%) of the general public have only a shallow understanding of this topic. (Petr, 2008)

### The Level of Awareness



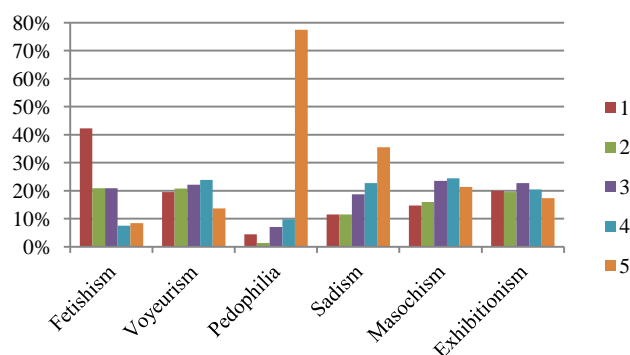
Graph no. 3: Public awareness of paraphilia

### The attitude of the general public to selected types of paraphilias

Paraphilias are a phenomenon that has a wide variety of forms. This is associated with different severity of these disorders and their impact on society. In the questionnaire survey respondents determined the level of their attitudes towards persons with paraphilia on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 marking an easy-going attitude of the respondent, and vice versa 5 marking an extremely negative attitude towards the disorder.

The results showed that fetishism is the least conflicting according to the perception of the public. On the other hand, more than 75% of respondents consider paedophilia to be an extreme issue. Another very negatively assessed disorder is sadism with a considerable distance of more than 40%.

### Stance - all



Graph no. 4: Attitudes of the general public to selected types paraphilias

### 3. CONCLUSION

The issue of sexual preference disorders is a topic that is very sensitive because it is an integral part of the topic touching every

person, i.e. human sexuality. Currently, the subject of sexuality is no longer a taboo as in the past. However, the topic of paraphilias remains shrouded in mystery for a considerable part of the general public.

The conducted research showed that Czech general public is able to have a critical opinion of the information brought up by the media. This allows them to create their objective view of this issue without succumbing to tabloid pressure. At the same time they also recognize that the overall awareness of the public is not sufficient in the Czech Republic.

Public attitudes towards the different types of disorders are also an interesting outcome. At least tolerated group proved to be paedophiles, while the high tolerance is manifested in relation to the issue of fetishism. Regarding a real contact with some of the types of paraphilias, most respondents met with a person of an exhibitionist.

The society will also face the issue of sexual preference disorders in the future. Therefore, it would be appropriate to focus more on raising awareness in this area.

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