

# Sexual Violence and Aggressive Behavior Among Teenage Boys In The General Population and In Juvenile Prison, In Russia: A Descriptive Analysis

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## Abstract

### English:

*The present research analysed the prevalence and consequences of sexual violence experienced by teenage males in two separate samples. One sample was drawn from the general school population and the other was drawn from the juvenile prison population in the Bashkir Republic of Russia. The data comes from an author-designed questionnaire about aggressive behaviour experienced by schoolboys and imprisoned young men. Seventy percent of schoolboys, who reported being sexually abused, were sexually abused in their childhood (3-11 years). Only 23% of imprisoned boys, who admitted being sexually abused, reported being abused in their childhood. The consequences of the sexual abuse of boys consisted primarily of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms, autoaggression, disturbances of sexual identity, and emotional instability. Psychological trauma as a consequence of sexual violence led to an increase in aggression for some teenagers. Almost all the cases of reported sexual aggression experienced by young men in this sample were homosexual, both in childhood and in prison. These victims of sexual violence were marked by high levels of depression, suicide, mental disorders, the use of alcohol and drugs, difficulties in familial relations, and sexual problems.*

### Spanish:

*El presente estudio analiza la prevalencia y consecuencias de violencia sexual experimentada por jóvenes hombres adolescentes en dos muestras de sujetos diferentes. Una muestra fue adquirida de la población general de la escuela y la otra de la población de la prisión juvenil de Bashkir, Republica de Rusia. Los datos proceden de la encuesta desarrollada por el autor sobre comportamiento agresivo experimentado por jóvenes hombres en las escuelas y jóvenes hombres en prisión. Setenta por ciento de los jóvenes en la escuela, que reportaron ser abusados sexualmente, fueron abusados durante su infancia (3-11 años). Sólo 23% de los jóvenes en prisión que reportaron ser abusados sexualmente, fueron abusados durante su infancia. Las consecuencias del abuso sexual de los niños consisten en síntomas del Desorden Post-traumático de Estrés. Los cuales incluyen auto-agresión, problemas de identidad sexual, e inestabilidad emocional. Trauma psicológico como consecuencia de violencia sexual llevó a que los mismos jóvenes sufran de una mayor agresividad. Casi todos los casos reportados de agresión sexual experimentada por los jóvenes eran ataques homosexuales, tanto en prisión como durante su infancia. Estas víctimas de violencia sexual fueron marcadas por altos niveles de depresión, suicidio, desordenes mentales, el uso de alcohol y drogas, dificultades en relaciones familiares, relaciones y problemas sexuales.*

**Key words:** Adolescence, aggression, sexual abuse, delinquency, juvenile prison

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## Introduction

### *Sexual Violence Toward Children and Adolescents*

Sexual violence is a problem worldwide. The prevalence of childhood maltreatment in the United States (US) has reached more than 1.6 million new cases per year (Putnam & Trickett 1997). A breakdown of the reported cases of childhood abuse revealed that 52% are from neglect, 25% from physical abuse, 13% from sexual abuse, and 10% from other sources (Putnam & Trickett). Putnam and Trickett

reported that the maltreatment of female children in the United States is a significant risk factor for numerous subsequent psychiatric conditions and behaviors, including: borderline personality disorder, conduct disorder, antisocial personality disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), eating disorders, dissociative identity disorder, substance abuse, somatization disorder, suicide, depression, and self-mutilation. Nearly 1% of a cohort of more than 8,000 French high school students reported they were raped at some point during their childhood or adolescence. The teens who

had histories of being raped had a higher prevalence of delinquency, substance abuse, and somatic complaints, compared with peers who did not have such histories (Goldman, 1999).

Choquet, Darves, Borno, and Ledoux (1997), reported that rape victims, especially boys, have more behavior problems and health problems than nonrape victims. The authors suggested that adolescents who have run away from home, attempted suicide, or manifested violent behavior should be systematically asked about rape. DuRant, Krowchuk, and Sinal (1998) found that 8.7% of male adolescents in the US reported one or more male sexual partners. The number of male sexual partners reported by male adolescents correlated with experiencing a higher frequency of general victimization, use of violence, and drug use at school. Frequency of suicide attempts and fighting outside of school were also correlated with the number of same-sex sexual partners. It was not clear from the findings what percentage of the same-sex encounters was consensual. Therefore, the negative effects could be a result of direct sexual victimization or the negative impact of being homosexual in the US culture.

The results of a study of sexually abused boys and girls in the Netherlands indicated that the experience of sexual abuse carried far more consequences for boys than for girls regarding the use of alcohol, aggressive/criminal behavior, use of drugs, and the amount of truancy, suicidal thoughts, and suicidal behavior (Garnefski & Arends, 1998). For example, 2.6% of non-abused boys reported a former suicide attempt; the percentage was virtually 10 times higher (25.5%) for sexually abused boys. In another study male sex offenders in the US reported experiencing high rates of sexual, but not physical, abuse (McElroy, et. al., 1999). Past victimization and recent perpetration were also significantly correlated for incarcerated adolescents in the US who admitted to sexual offending (Burton, 2000).

#### ***Russia Today***

In the epoch of Soviet totalitarianism the authorities tried to establish complete control over a person. Deindividualization of a person implied the eradication of his erotic origin. The country lived with the slogan "There is no sex in the USSR". The photographs of Venera Miloskaya were reported to be pornography and censors were cutting out enormous pieces from western films. After the perestroika of Mr. Gorbachov formerly taboo subjects such as sexuality started to be discussed in the society.

However, Soviet Puritanism was changed by another cultural phenomena – the abrupt degradation of manners (Antonyan, Tkachenko, & Shostakovich, 1999). Pornography and violence were widely spread in the press and on TV. Increases in prostitution, STIs

sleep disturbance, depression, suicidality, aggression, and HIV-infection, and the birth of illegitimate children, along with the deterioration of the physical and mental health of the population, especially of the young were increasing in Russia at a rapid pace (Antonyan, Tkachenko, & Shostakovich). Now, one can encounter the advertisement of sexual services in all newspapers, even the most respectable. There are illegal brothels in every town. The quantity of crimes connected with prostitution has dramatically increased (Antonyan, Tkachenko, & Shostakovich). There is also the illegal trafficking of prostitutes from the countries of the former socialist union to other countries. As a result, some government officials have even proposed to legalize prostitution (Antonyan, Tkachenko, & Shostakovich). Antonyan, Tkachenko, & Shostakovich concluded that the problem of sexual criminality is related to these other negative occurrences and that its prevalence among all forms of criminality is equal to 2-5%.

#### ***Purpose***

The purpose of this report is to provide evidence of the prevalence and consequences of sexual violence among teenage boys in the general school population and in juvenile prison in the Bashkir Republic region of Russia.

#### **Methods**

There is no "institutional review board" or "human ethics committee" in Bashkortostan. This study was carried out with the permission of the Ministry of Education and the Head Office of Punishment Execution at the Ministry of Justice of Bashkortostan (Ufa). All subjects were given the outline of procedures, were informed that they had the right to refuse, and assured that their refusal to participate would not influence their status. The research records were not made available to the school or parole staff.

#### ***The Sample***

Of the original estimated sample of approximately 2000 pupils in the general student population, 1621 (81%) were included in the final data set. The main reasons for sample attrition were rejection of data due to non-compliance with instructions (12%), parental nonconsent (2%), pupil absenteeism (3%), and questionnaires rejected because of excessive missing data (2%).

The sample of the general student population was comprised of 1621 inner city 7-11 grade students (41.52% boys and 58.48% girls) who completed questionnaires in the classroom with their teachers present to answer any procedural questions. Subjects took approximately 45 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The boys in the sample (N = 673) ranged in age from 12 to 17 (mean 14.03, SD 1.63). All participants were White and Russian speaking.

All participants lived and studied in public schools in Ufa. Ufa is the industrial centre and the capital of the Bashkir Republic, which is located in Ural, in central Russia. The population in this city is 1.1 million persons. The sample included 58.48% Russians, 26.34% Tartars, 8.70% Bashkirs and 6.48% other ethnic groups. The subjects were recruited from five ordinary Russian junior high schools in five different districts in Ufa from the list presented by personnel of Ministry of Education. Most of the adolescents were from middle class families (88.65%). In 7.53% of the cases the adolescents were from families with low social-economic status (SES), and in 3.82% of the cases the adolescents were from families with high SES.

The incarcerated juvenile male offenders (N = 623) were serving their sentences in reformatories No. 1 and No. 2 in Sterlitamak, Russia. The inmates' ages ranged from 14 to 20 (mean 16.89, SD 0.91). Their committed offences ranged from theft to murder. In most cases it was theft (58.43%) or robbery (26.97%). The sample of prisoners included 67.09% Russians, 16.21% Tartars, 9.15% Bashkirs, 2.41% Chuvashs and 5.14% other ethnic groups. Most of the adolescents were from middle class families (62.76%). In 34.51% of the cases the adolescents were from families with low social-economic status (SES), and in 1.28% cases the adolescents were from families with high SES.

#### **The Instrument**

The study utilized an author-designed questionnaire that included adolescent's self-reported life history, disruptive behavior, development, psychological functioning, and aggressive and criminal behaviour.

The self-report questionnaire consisted of newly constructed scales based, in part, on previous literature (e.g., Farrington, 1973; Moffit and Silva, 1988; Pedersen and Wichstom, 1995) and in part on the principal investigator's prior clinical experience. One portion of the scale gathered data on life history, development, and disruptive behavior and consisted of items relating to conduct problems, norm violations and illegal acts. The second portion of the scale measured aggression and criminal behavior (e.g., fighting, bullying and cruelty to animals), crime (e.g., shoplifting, vandalism, robbery, auto theft, and rape), covert antisocial behaviors (e.g., stealing from family, truancy, graffiti, and running away), status acts (e.g., smoking and drunkenness), and school opposition (e.g., sent out of class, sent to head teacher, suspension from school, and cheating). The final portion of the scale measured psychological functioning (e.g., depression, emotional instability, and suicidal ideation). A pilot study with 25 adolescent males was conducted to provide face, content, and construct validity.

#### **Data Analysis**

Prevalence data, descriptive analysis, and interrelationships of the experience of the endured sexual violence with subsequent psychological functioning and aggressive sexual behavior among the general population of male students and among imprisoned young men have been analyzed in the present research.

#### **Limitations**

Recall bias, social desirability, and anxiety could have influenced the responses of the subjects. Additionally, reading comprehension, PTSD symptoms, and other psychological disturbances may have also biased the responses. The questionnaire development process did not test for instrument reliability. Item generation should have been more systematic, with only reliable and valid items gleaned from prior research. In addition, a factor analysis of the new instrument should have been conducted to test for sub scales. Finally, the program used to provide the calculations of percents was created specifically for this study and further analysis of the data through SPSS or other commercial programs is not possible.

#### **Results**

One hundred and thirty four (8.27%) of 1621 7-17 year old pupils of public schools in the Bashkir Republic (Russia) were reported to be the victims of sexual violence, of which 17 were boys. This number represents 12.5% of all victims and 2.5% of the total population of schoolboys. Schoolboys abused in their childhood (ages 3-11) were more often sexually abused by strangers (71%). Schoolboys abused between 12-17 years old were as likely to be subjected to sexual violence by a boy friend (27%), or acquaintance (20%), than an unknown adult (23%). Only 1 reported case of sexual violence experienced by 3-11 year schoolboys (N=12) was heterosexual and in 6 cases – homosexual. In 5 cases the gender of the sexual offender was unknown. All the reported cases of sexual violence experienced by 12-17 year schoolboys (N=5) were homosexual.

Sexually abused schoolboys experienced multiple problems with their behavior and family. Ten of the seventeen sexually abused boys (59%) also experienced significant physical abuse. Fifteen of the sexually abused boys (88%) reported parental aggression in relatively light forms (e.g., psychological or light physical violence). The mother of two boys left their family, the mother of one boy died, the parents of two boys suffered from mental illness or were deprived of parental rights. Five sexually abused boys (29%) had relatives with alcoholism and 2 boys (12%) had relatives who committed suicide. One boy (6%) was being brought up by his parents as a girl, one boy (6%) liked to disguise himself as a girl, three boys

(18%) thought they did not correspond to the male gender and would like to change their gender with the aid of surgical operations.

The majority of the sexually abused schoolboys reported experiencing mental disorders or other serious problems. Of the 17 sexually abused schoolboys 4 (24%) attempted suicide, 12 of the 17 boys (71%) had symptoms of emotional instability and excitability, 3 (18%) had opium withdrawal symptoms, 1 (6%) abused synthetic drugs, 1 (6%) was a pot smoker, 1 (6%) ran away from his home, 1 (6%) suffered from pyromania, 3 (18%) committed self-injuries, 2 (12%) began to drink alcohol while under 10 years of age, 2 (12%) abused alcohol, 4 (24%) took part in a robbery, and 2 (12%) took part in an arson. About 1/3 of all abused boys were highly aggressive. Of the 17 boys 3 (18%) had zoosadism (cruelty towards the animals), 2 (12%) exhibited aggressive and sadistic imagination, 5 (29%) fought because of jealousy, 2 (12%) took part in group fights, 3 (18%) fought with the police and teachers, 1 (6%) had the symptoms of pathological aggression (i.e., amnesia, vague consciousness, and convulsions), and 2 (12%) reported frequently watching films with violence and cruelty.

Of 623 imprisoned young men between 14-20 years old, 52 (8.35%) revealed being the victims of sexual violence. Of those who revealed victimization, 23% reported being abused between the ages of 3-11 years (before they were imprisoned) and 15% were abused by senior boys (also before imprisonment), 15% were abused in prison (10% by convicted young men, 2% by an unknown man, and 2% by a teacher or a governess).

The comparison of sexually abused and non-abused imprisoned young men revealed that sexually abused young men were more often marked by low weight, face asymmetry, low levels of intellect and memory; problems in communication, homosexual attraction or sexual aggression towards the other imprisoned; low self-appraisal, suicidal attempts, or attempts to escape from prison; aggressive fantasies or obsessive fears; low status, and less convenient places in the dining-room and bedroom.

Before their imprisonment boys who experienced sexual abuse in prison were more likely to have experienced sexual and physical violence in their childhood; they showed the signs of damage to their sexual identity; a lag in development in comparison with persons of the same age; they were more likely to have abused alcohol and different kinds of drugs; they were more likely to be beaten by their parents or did not have parents at all; and they were less likely to participate in sports. Sexually abused young men were more likely to suppose that they were not masculine and to exhibit the symptoms of chronic stress and depression.

Of 623 imprisoned young men 25 (4.01%) were arrested because of committing a rape, in 44% of the cases the rapes were committed by a group of young men. The rape victims in 64% of the cases were under 18 years old. The imprisoned young men who committed a sexual crime, as a rule, accused the victim of the provocation for the sexual violence. Sexual violence was usually accompanied by threats but not severe physical aggression.

Analysis revealed some differences between the imprisoned young men who committed sexual versus non-sexual crimes. The majority of sexual criminals (72%) were born and brought up in small towns and were older than the young men who committed non-sexual crimes.

In addition, before imprisonment, sexual offenders when compared to non-sexual criminals were more likely to experience ( $p < .05$ ): their father's imprisonment and drug taking by siblings; traumatic brain injury and a delay in mental and physical development; boxing or karate studies; sadistic inclinations, systematic fights, and conflicts with teachers; multiple sexual partners and alcohol and drug taking; risk behaviors and games of chance; frequent lies, verbal aggression, aggressive fantasies, and thefts during childhood.

## Discussion

Slightly over 8% of imprisoned young men, and 2.5% of boys in normal school, in this sample of Russian school aged boys, had experienced sexual abuse. In a review of studies about the sexual abuse of male children in North America, Peters, Wyatt, and Finkelhor (1986) cited sexual abuse rates for male children ranging from 3% to 31%. The percent reported for this sample of schoolboys is below their lowest estimate and for imprisoned young men is toward the low end of prevalence reports for the sexual abuse of boys in North America. These differences may represent cultural differences, reporting biases, or differences that resulted from the different time periods when the data was gathered.

Among abused schoolboys in Bashkir, 70% (.7% of the total population of schoolboys) reported being abused between the ages of 3-11 years and most of their abusers (71%) were strangers. Carlstedt, Forsman, and Soderstrom (2001) reported that 62.5% of the men in their sample of Swedish men, who reported being abused as minors, were abused by strangers. Among abused imprisoned young men in Bashkir, only 23% (1.9% of the total population of imprisoned young men) admitted being abused between the ages of 3-11 years. These percents are also quite low when compared with prevalence rates reported from the United States of between 2.5% and

8.7% of men being abused as children (Finkelhor, 1984).

The reporting difference in the Bashkir sample of almost 50% between the school boys and the imprisoned young men admitting to childhood sexual abuse could be explained by reporting bias on the part of the respondents. It would appear from the data that the imprisoned young men faced significant problems in their lives, including: developmental delays, problems with parents, multiple risk taking behaviors, and continued victimization while in prison. Perhaps admitting to childhood abuse placed these young men at a disadvantage while in prison and therefore they were even more likely to underreport their victimization than men are in general (Hunter, 1990; Watkins and Bentovim, 1992). It has also been reported that reports of sexual victimization in childhood can be inconsistent over time (Aalsma, Zimet, Fortenberry, Blythe, and Orr, 2002). Perhaps both groups of boys were reporting inconsistently.

### Conclusions

The sexual abuse of boys in both the general school population and in prison is closely connected with parental aggression and psychopathology, alcoholism, and general trouble in the family. These family problems manifest in the form of sexual trauma early on in a boy's life as over 1/3 of all abused boys were abused between 3-11 years old and all were abused by the age of 17. The negative consequences of sexual victimization include emotional instability, suicidal ideation and attempted suicide, autoaggressive tendencies and risk taking, aggression toward others and specifically among imprisoned young boys, sexual aggression toward others, and damage to the boy's sexual self consciousness that points to the presence of a post-traumatic stress disorder. However, the imprisoned boys had a higher risk of subsequent homosexual attraction and low status among the imprisoned that intensified PTSD symptoms. The young men who were convicted of sexual violence demonstrated a higher level of serious earlier criminal aggression in different forms and more addictive behavior. In addition, the neglect or abuse that they suffered, especially at the hands of their parents or guardians, places them at greater risk of becoming imprisoned again after release (Tollett & Benda, 1999).

These victims of sexual violence were marked by high levels of depression, suicide, mental disorders, the use of alcohol and drugs, difficulties in familial relations, and sexual problems. In Russia and throughout the world, the abuse of boys is a serious social problem that contributes significantly to negative consequences in the lives of the abused boys and ultimately results in negative consequences for us all.

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