

POSTER

Misperceptions of Juvenile Sexual Offenders about their School Functioning and Psychosocial Adaptation

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Studies often refer to the poor social skills of sexual offenders (Finkelhor, 1984; Davis, & Leitenberg, 1987; Marshall, & Barbaree, 1990; Ward & Siegert, 2002). In the field of juveniles sexual offenders (JSO), we do know that JSO of children have little or no relationship with peers, which could be attributable to psychosocial deficits such as lack of social skills and that could lead them to feel lonely (Miner & Munns, 2005; Van Wijk et al., 2005; Beauchemin, & Tardif, 2005). Daleiden et al. (1998) suggest that those psychosocial deficits could partly explain why they don't have a lot of sexual experiences and why they turn to nonconsensual partners. Auclair, Carpentier, & Proulx (2012) indicate that integration in the school environment can be a difficult step for the majority of the JSO evaluated at their clinic and that 84.5% of them show some degree of learning backwardness. Seto and Lalumiere's (2010) meta-analysis also indicates that JSO have significantly more learning problems or disabilities than non sexual offenders. Regarding adolescents, functioning in school can be either a good measure of adaptability, social skills, academics performance and self-esteem or an indicator of learning difficulties or cognitive function deficiencies. School life offers key socialization opportunities that constitute the foundation of kid's social development (Hinshaw, 1992). Research has indeed shown that underperformance or poor results in primary school are linked with dropping out, affiliation with deviant peers, substance abuse and risky sexual behavior (Janosz, et al., 2000). Taking that into that conclusive data on the subject is scarce, it seems relevant to explore teenagers' perception of their own social skills. Considering developmental theories point out that the two main areas of socialization for kids and adolescents are family and school, it seems relevant explore the psychosocial deficits of JSO in parallel with the academic.

This poster will include preliminary findings from ongoing research exploring multiple facets of juvenile sexual offending (Tardif, Hebert, Tourigny & Guay, 2013). In the present study, we sought to explore the school functioning as a factor associated with the psychosocial adaptation. Data was collected from 112 males, aged 11-18 years old, using self-report measures. School and social functioning as well as self-esteem measures were based on questions from a survey on health conducted with high school teenagers by the Quebec government (Sante Quebec, 1999). Behavioural and emotional problems, including social problems, were measured using the Youth Self Report (YSR) (Achenbach, 1991). Participants were recruited from six specialized treatment center and three youth center in the province of Québec (Canada). Participants were divided into the following groups of JSO; (a) intrafamilial child abuse ($n=50$), (b) extrafamilial child abuse ($n=33$), (c) intrafamilial and extrafamilial child abuse ($n=7$) and, (d) peer abuse (victims aged 12 or older, $n = 22$). Preliminary results indicate a higher rate of failure leading to repeating a year compared to the general population and a lower rate of school difficulties recognition. Our results suggest that despite their serious learning difficulties, a large proportion of juvenile sexual offenders support a self-image that does not correspond to their

academic performance and show an inflated sense of self-confidence. The misperceptions of juvenile sexual offenders seem to fail to recognize their learning difficulties and possibly some behavior issues in order to preserve their self-esteem. The persistence of their inflated sense of self-confidence is inevitably confronted to increasing deficiencies in their relationships with other youth and their social implication. The impact of school difficulties on the socialization process and self-esteem, link to narcissistic personality traits among other things is to be explored, as well as clinical implications and directions for future research.