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**‘’Describe and evaluate theoretical explanations for pedophilia’’**

Pedophilia derives from the greek word ‘’child lover’’. In accordance to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition (American Psychiatric Association,2013) an individual is diagnosed as a pedophile if over the period of at least 6 months they experience intense, recurrent and sexually arousing behaviours, urges or fantasises towards a pre-pubescent child (usually aged 13 or younger). The individual must be at least 16 years old and at least 5 years older than the child victim.

Pedophilia can be described as a paraphilia which means that it is classified with masochism, sadism and other sexual acts that are regarded as perversions. The key characteristics are an individual being highly sexually aroused by the presence of inappropriate objects or individuals over a long period of time, having erotic fantasises, a pressure to act upon those fantasies and a sexual dysfunction during sexual acts with their partner such as problems with arousal or orgasm. Many paraphiliacs experience their sexual fantasy as an intrusive and undesired action. (Levine, Risen and Althof, 1990). A pedophile will offend in an intrafamililal setting where the victim is within their immediate family, usually their daughter or step daughter. (Harris&Rice, 2002). They can also choose their victim from a extrafamilial setting where child sexual molestation happens with members outside the immediate family.This essay will provide theoretical explanations for pedophilia by the use of the pre condition model (Araji & Fiklehor 1985) , Implicit Theories (Ward&Keenan,1999) and sexualisation model (Howitt,1995).The theories will be evaluated and described in detail. Within this essay the prevalence of pedophilia will also be discussed with a focus on the Berlin Male Study (Schaefer et al., 2003; Englert et al., 2007) This essay will also describe the classification model of child sex offenders in accordance to Groth and Birnbaum (1978), draw onto the distinction between pedophilic and non-pedophilic child sexual abusers, and provide a conclusion on the topics discussed throughout.

Pedophilia remains a flexible concept where the behaviour of an offender can be normal, perversive, legal or illegal. It is very important to make a distinction between pedophilic and non- pedophilic child sexual abusers. Not all individuals who sexually abuse children are pedophiles. Pedophilia is a sexual preference of children, but it does not necessarily lead to child sexual abuse; the pedophile may engage in different activity such as viewing child pornography or indecent images. (Camilleri & Quinsey, 2008).

Groth and Birnbaum (1978) classify child sex offenders into two categories: the fixated and regressed offender.

Fixated offenders have a permanent fixation on their sexual and social interest in children. These types of offenders are socially immature and dependent on others. A fixated pedophile feels most comfortable relating to children and their social background lack evidence of dating peers. They may have had sexual contact with adults before, but this contact is only coincidental, not intentional. This is due to the fact that peer relationships are not an integral part of their sexuality.

Regressed offenders are men who have matured in their sexuality however, return to a lower level of psychosexual development. Their childhood and adolescence were normal, and their sexual history shows primary interests in peers or adults rather than younger individuals. Interest in children seems to reflect a reversal to child-like sexuality. Their background will often include alcohol abuse, lack of employment and divorce.

It may be logical to assume that adult men who engage in sexual relationship with adult women may be classified as a ‘regressed offender’ when they finally sexually abuse a child. However, some offenders target women with children for the sole purpose of gaining access to the child. Howitt (1995) describes this as being accompanied by a pedophile sexual fantasy.

There have been vital differences found between fixated and regressed offenders such as only 12% of fixated offenders are married or have been married, in comparison to 75% of regressed offenders. It is important to point out that fixated offenders most commonly offend against strangers or acquaintances whereas regressed offenders tend to offend within their close circle of relatives and friends (Howitt, 1992).

However, both regressed and fixated offenders showed the same sort of sexually abusive acts; penetration being the most common as well as *modus operandi* (the rates of seduction, threat, intimidation and force used were the same)

In addition, Groth and Birnbaum (1978) argue that homosexual men can never be regressed offenders due to the fact that stress and sexual privation do not affect homosexuals the same way they affect heterosexuals. However, their implication has never been clearly supported therefore, cannot be assumed as being true.

Pedophilia can be explained through the precondition model developed by Araji and Fiklehor (1985,1986). This model categorises factors of offender characteristics and the circumstances that lead to their offending. The model assumes that the offender is diverted from adult relationships. When reviewing empirical research Araji and Finklehorn (1985,1986) have categorised explanations of pedophilia into four basic types.

*Emotional congruence.* A pedophile has difficulty in relating to adults therefore they have a emotional need to relate to children. In most cases children meet the emotional needs of a pedophile in ways that adults cannot. Evidence which supports this factor includes; a pedophile lacks dominance therefore they are attracted to children in order to fulfil their dominance needs, pedophiles are socially immature and lack self-esteem, pedophiles have experienced childhood sexual abuse which leads to them identifying with the perpetrator and offence repetition, pedophiles are also emotionally centred and narcissistic.

*Sexual arousal.* This type focuses on why children are sexually arousing to pedophiles. Evidence for this includes; Laboratory tests show that some pedophiles experience an erection when shown deviant children images, childhood sexual abuse provides a deviant sexual behaviour pattern model, hormone abnormalities, pedophiles interpret psychological arousal as sexual arousal and are socialised by child pornography or child advertising as sexual objects.

*Blockage.* This type concerns the things that make adult sexual/emotional relationships and gratification unavailable to a pedophile. Aspects of pedophilia relevant to blockage are; unresolved oedipal complex, sexual anxiety, deficient social skills and difficulty in relating to adult females.

*Disinhibition.* Why are some adults not deterred by normal prohibitions against sex with children? alcohol abuse, situational stress, senility, impulse disorder, tolerance of incest within their culture and mental retardation.

 According to Howells (1991) without evidence of the motivations behind pedophiles attraction to children the notion of emotional congruence becomes self-evident truism. Finklehor (1985) only regards sexual arousal to children as a possible, not essential factor in offending. The assumption that child nudity is a feature of sexual arousal may be wrong despite seeming reasonable. Howitt and Cumberbatch (in press) have found that a sexuality arousing material for a pedophile can in most cases be legal material. For example, a TV programme aimed at children which features children playing might be a sexual ‘turn on’ whereas child pornography may be of no interest to the pedophile. Therefore, certain aspects of arousal may be ignored in a laboratory setting which measures ‘erection’. Howells (1991) implies that Finklehor’s preconditions suggest different forms of treatment. If adult relationships are blocked the pedophile can receive skills and assertiveness training in order to improve their relationships with adults.

Araji and Finklehor were aware that the precondition model poses a bias on understanding. This is due to the collection of evidence from offender and prisoner populations in order to develop the four pre-condition types. Furthermore, the samples that were selected from a prisoner population might only portray the characteristics of pedophiles who get caught therefore, stereotype them as shy and passive. Those who do not get caught might have a different profile.

McCaghy (1967) found that pedophiles who have been in therapy gave different reasons for their offending such as oedipal complex. According to Araji and Finklehor (1985) a institutionalised offender may have an incentive such as an early release in order to provide the researcher with answers they would like to hear. However, if control groups were to be used, they frequently consist of prisoners however, some of the control group participants may actually be pedophiles that were convicted with a difference offence.

Ward and Keenan (1999) have developed implicit theories (ITs) which can also be used in order to provide a theoretical explanation for pedophilia. These theories are casual and are hypothesised to modify the experience of social world. Ward (2000) outlines that implicit theories develop during childhood where individuals learn to understand and predict the actions of others. Therefore, Ward (2000) concludes that these theories can be adaptive for example by a child avoiding the abuse of a carer by learning to predict their intentions.

Ward and Keenan (1999) propose that the majority of cognitive distortions articulated by pedophiles can be arranged into five underlying ITs;

*Children as sexual beings.* This IT focuses on the belief that a child has sexual needs and the capacity to make decisions about sex. ‘’The child seduced me’’ (Ward&Keenan, 1999, p.832) can be an example used to associate the cognitive distortion of a pedophile.

*Nature of harm.* This theory incorporates two sets of beliefs. First being that sexual behaviour with a child is only harmful and abusive if there is threat or force used. Secondly according to nature of harm sexual acts are beneficial therefore, cannot be harmful. ‘’it was only a little bit of fun’’ (Ward&Keenan, 1999) can be a cognitive distortion generated by the ‘nature of harm’ IT.

*Uncontrollability.* This IT is built on a belief that the pedophile’s behaviours and actions are out of his control and are based on being exposed to external factors such as their own experience of childhood abuse.

*Dangerous world*. There are two variants to this IT. The first variant relates to perceiving the world as a hostile place where dominance of others needs to be achieved. The second variant is focused on how the world is a dangerous place; in these variant children are seen as more trustworthy than adults and make non-threatening, reliable and attractive sexual partners.

*Entitlement*. This is the final IT which is based on the belief that offenders’ sexual needs should be accommodated at all costs and regardless of the impact on others.

Marziano et al. (2006) provide empirical support for Ward and Keenan’s (1999) implicit theories. Marziano et al. (2006) have conducted 22 interviews with child molesters in order to understand their offence chains when the offence took place. They categorised the interviewees cognitions in order to compare them to Ward and Keenans Implicit Theory model. The study has found that 10% of the participants cognitive distortions corresponded to the ‘’entitlement’’ IT, 26% to the ‘’uncontrollability’’ IT, 28% to the ‘’child as sexual being’’ IT, 14% to the ‘’nature of harm’’ IT and 22% to the ‘’dangerous world’’ IT. 18 out of the 22 participants showed consistent cognitive distortions with all five ITs.The remaining 4 participants only matched with four of the five ITs. Participants who have experienced childhood sexual abuse where more likely to show a distorted cognition which matched the ‘’dangerous world’’ theory. There was no difference in the ITs found of intrafamilial and extrafamilial offenders however, offenders who victimised males viewed the ‘’dangerous world’’ and ‘’child as sexual being’’ ITs more frequently.

Lastly, the sexualisation model by Howitt (1995) describes pedophilia as an orientation which develops out of a characteristic early childhood sexual experience especially the experience of sexual abuse. Childhood sexual abuse is the start of a process which ends in pedophile activity. A pedophile will see adult-child sexual contact as normal due to only having that experience. Howitt (1995) points out that not all abuse is likely to lead to the victim engaging in pedophilic activity but sexual abuse by females and penetrative sex are more likely to have this effect. This approach sees pedophilia as a developmental process which continues through childhood to adolescence into adulthood. Furthermore, sexual activity or experiences during childhood with older children may also be an influential factor when exploring the sexualisation model. Howitt (1998) highlights that boys who were abused by females are more likely to offend.

Puupponen and Crittended (1999) point out that ‘Physically abused children tend to commit physically violent crimes whereas sexually abused children are prone, in adulthood, to sexual violence, including pedophilia, child molestation and rape’ (p.98). Vizard, French, Hickey and McCrory (2007) have studied a sample of 300 children which have been referred to a national treatment and assessment service for young people who perpetrate sexually harmful behaviours. In 54% of the cases sexually abusive behaviour began before the age of 10. 57% of the offenders have committed a sexual offence on at least one victim who was five or more years younger than them. 88% of the children have abused female victims and 57% have abused male victims. Vizard et al. argue that during the Childs development there is a matrix of risk factors which contribute to the emergence of sexually abusive behaviours. The childhood of the sample children has involved emotional deprivation, emotional and physical abuse and family disfunction. 50% of the children were abused at the age of seven where 38% of them experienced anal penetration. 44% had easy access to sexually explicit material.When assessed only 5% of the children lived with their biological parents and 76% have been removed from their homes into care. The sexualisation model however, poses a crucial problem being that not all children who have been sexually abused become abusers themselves. This model only assumes that the more extreme forms of abuse have greater effects.

Seto (2009) suggests that pedophilia prevalence within the general population is between 3% and 5%. In a penile setting the prevalence of pedophilia can be between 30% for men who have committed one sexual offence against children to 61% for men with 3 or more sexual offences against children (Blanchard, 2010; Seto, 2009).

The Berlin Male Study (BMS) was the first population-based study which examined the prevalence of pedophilia. (Schaefer et al., 2003). In the first phase of the study a total 1915 men took part and 373 were further invited to participate in a sexological study where the participants had to respond to an extensive questionnaire about their sexual experiences and behaviours. 57% of the men recognised at least one paraphilia as a form of arousal and part of their fantasies, 46.9% used those fantasies for arousal during masturbation. 14 men out of the study acted out on a pedophilic preference. (Ahlers et.al., 2011). However, pedophilia was not strictly assessed in this sample; thus, this prevalence should be interpreted with caution.

Briere and Runtz (1989) have studied 193 male college students through an anonymous self-report study. 21% admitted that they have some sexual interest in children, 9% had sexual fantasies which involve children, 5% admitted to masturbating due to these fantasies and 9% admitted they would have sex with a child only if it was guaranteed they would not get caught. It is important to note that the study investigated sampled fantasy not preference of pedophilia.

In conclusion, Pedophilia can be defined as an ongoing sexual attraction toward pre-pubescent children (Freund, 1963, 1967). The DSM-V criteria diagnoses an individual as a pedophile if over at least 6 months the individual has experienced sexual fantasies, urges or behaviours towards a child usually of the age 13 or younger. In accordance to Groth and Birnbaum (1978) a pedophile can be classified into two categories; the fixated and regressed offender which provides an insight into a pedophile’s personality and social background. It has been noted that both typologies have the same *modus operandi.*

One of the theoretical explanations for pedophilia is the pre conditions model developed by Araji and Fiklehor (1985,1986). This model describes a pedophile as an individual who has a need to relate to children and their adult to adult relationships are blocked therefore, they cannot engage with their peers. Howells (1991) implies that Finklehor’s preconditions suggest different forms of treatment. If adult relationships are blocked the pedophile can receive skills and assertiveness training in order to improve their relationships with adults.

However, Howitt and Cumberbatch (in press) have found that a sexuality arousing material for a pedophile can in most cases be legal material. This model poses a bias on understating due to being developed out of evidence gathered from offender and prisoner populations and therefore, portray the characteristics of pedophiles who get caught. In addition, Implicit Theories (Ward and Keenan, 1999;2000) describe pedophilia as an issue which develops during childhood. The Marziano et al., (2006) study provides great support for this theory. Lastly, the sexualisation model by Howitt (1995) describes that pedophilia is an orientation which develops out of a characteristic early childhood sexual experience especially the experience of sexual abuse. A pedophile will see adult-child sexual contact as normal due to only having that experience.

Thus, it can be concluded that pedophilia can be described through various models however, the most common theme is that a pedophile engages in sexual activity with a child due to a lack of relation to their peers and abused experienced during their own childhood. An individual who has been abused during childhood will only seek adult-child relationships. Not all individuals who are pedophiles will engage in illegal sexual activity, their turns on can be legal material such a child at play in the park or televised children shows. All models pose limitations such as the setting of the study, participants examined and assumptions about the effects.

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