THE SEXUAL ABUSER, CHARACTERISTICS AND RISK FACTORS – LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

Objective. The objective of this study was to examine some dimensions of personality encountered among people with difficulties in controlling sexual impulses, depending on the gender of the aggressor, as well as to highlight the main predictors regarding the probability of committing sexual abuse.
Material and methods. 48 studies were analyzed, of which 13 qualitative and 35 quantitative. The qualitative researches were mainly based on observation or semi-structured interview, and the quantitative ones were based on descriptive statistics, correlational tests. The size of the samples ranged from 51 to 2950 participants. The search covered the period from 1997 to 2020.
Results. Men and women who have committed sexual offences have both common characteristics such as mental disorders, inadequate sexual style, lack of remorseful or empathetic feelings towards the victim, tendency towards criminal behavior, and differences. These were represented by the way they approach the victim, while men tend more towards the use of manipulation, women choose dissimulation. The risk factors in the occurrence of this crime were: the close relationship between the aggressor and the victim, the age specific to the aggressor's youth stage, spatio-temporal factors correlated with the time of year and the time of day, the existence of a preferential pattern and dysfunctions of the social environment.
Conclusions. A customized intervention is required, depending on the specificity of the clinical frame, on the type of socioeconomic and educational environment of origin and on the experiential history of each person in this criminal category. In the case of men, the approach must keep in mind the relational-value side, and in the case of women the affective sphere, taking into account the involvement of a wide range of emotions.

Keywords: sexual assault, pedophilia, personality, rape, risk.

Introduction

According to the literature, the term sexual violence refers to "*any sexual act with a person who has not given his consent*" (Babchishin, Curry, Fedoroff, Bradford, & Seto, 2017, p. 5) or to "*the penetration of certain body parts using the penis, fingers or other objects, inappropriate caresses and kisses, sexual harassment and coercion*" (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, & Zwi, 2002, p. 6). The association for the treatment of sexual abusers in the United States of America (2011) considers sexual violence to be a world-class problem, a complex phenomenon that involves individual interaction, as well as social factors. Having long-term consequences, this phenomenon is represented as a "*serious public health problem*", affecting people of all ages, and, therefore, both women and men can be victims of this phenomenon.

The Council of Europe (2011), through the statistics of several countries (France, Great Britain, Spain) brings to attention the increase in the rate of sexual assaults. According to them, millions of such cases are reported every year, especially on women and girls. The United Nations also underlines the universality of this phenomenon, taking into account that no country in the world excludes the manifestation of violence in various forms (as cited in Agency for Fundamental Rights [FRA], 2014).

From the point of view of the prevalence of this phenomenon, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) states that at least one in three women were forced to have sexual relations, one fifth was sexually abused before the age of 15, and in most cases, the aggressor is the life partner or a family member. The countries with the highest rate at which women experienced at least one incident of sexual violence by their intimate partner are Ethiopia (58.6%), Bangladesh (49.7%) and Peru (46.7%). Similarly, the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men in Brussels (2015) mentions that in Belgium 1.1% of the country's population over the age of 15 has been a victim of domestic violence, and 1.3% of the population in the age group 18-74 years old has been a victim of marital violence. According to this institution, the most affected category is the one between 45-54 years old.

Regarding the relationship between the aggressor and the victim, according to the report of the European Union's Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014, p. 12) based on the interviews of 42,000 women from 28 Member States of the European Union, 32% indicated that "*the aggressor was a colleague, a boss or a client*".

Regarding sexual assaults on children, the World Health Organization (2020) points out that sexual abuse in childhood is reflected in an extremely high proportion, estimating that in 2019, up to one billion children between the ages of 2 and 17 suffered physical, sexual, emotional assault or neglect. According to this report, the author was represented by parents, persons in charge of their care, colleagues, romantic partners or strangers.

Although sexual violence can affect women at any stage of life, most cases of sexual assault occur during adolescence and childhood, the consequences in this age group being quite serious, given the correlation with the transition stage and numerous psycho-behavioral changes (McElroy et al., 2016).

In Romania, one in three women said she had been abused by her life partner. At the same time, it seems that "827,000 women have experienced domestic violence in various forms, 739,000 have been subjected to threats, humiliation, and over 70,000 women have been abused, including sexually. Therefore, 30% of them say that they have experienced physical violence at least once in their lives, 24% that they have been assaulted by their life partner, and 14% by other people" (FRA, 2014, p. 8). In the first months of 2019 alone, the General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police (2019) reported a total of 11,456 acts regarding sexual assaults, of which 10,621 were male aggressors, 870

women, 73 boys and 13 girls. Most of the events took place at home, and in terms of the area of origin there is some balance, as 48% took place in urban areas and 52% in rural areas.

The social perception of the sexual abuser differs depending on his or her gender. Collecting data from 342 men and 375 women, aged between 18 and 63, the results of Sommer's study (2015) indicate that when the sexual aggressor is a man and the target is a woman, the male aggressor is perceived much more negatively as opposed to the female aggressor, who watches sexual intercourse with a man who does not want it. Also, in their research on students in Spain, Oswald and Russel (2006) indicated that male sexual abusers are perceived as aggressive and female abusers as promiscuous.

Although the implications of sexual assaults have often been the objective of numerous scientific researches, at present it is necessary to continue studying the control of sexual impulses, taking into account the fact that, globally, the phenomenon is registered with a continuous increase.

Therefore, given that sexual abuse is the most serious crime on sexual freedom, the purpose of this study is to carry out an analysis on personality factors, but also on the main predictors regarding the probability of committing this crime, becoming useful not only to facilitate the understanding of the phenomenon, but also for its prevention.

Material and methods

General objectives

This review of literature has two objectives:
O1. To elaborate a high quality analysis of the existing information in the specialized literature, regarding the dimensions of personality encountered in the sexual aggressor;
O2. To carry out a high quality analysis of the existing data in the specialized literature on the factors associated with high risk situations, regarding the probability of occurrence of the phenomenon of sexual abuse.

Research questions

1. What personality characteristics does the male sexual abuser have?
2. What are the main personality characteristics of women who have committed acts of sexual assault?
3. What are the risk factors involved in committing crimes against sexual freedom and integrity?

The strategy for the selection of specialized studies

The current revision of the literature has been developed through a total of 48 studies, found in the following databases: *PsychInfo, Science Direct, Web of Science and Google Scholar*.

The search terms used for each database were *sexual assault, pedophilia, personality, rape, and risk.* Through these keywords, 203 records were identified.

The selection of studies was carried out in two distinct stages. In the first stage of selection, the studies were examined on the basis of the title and the information presented in the abstract. The inclusion criteria were aimed at reporting quantitative and/or qualitative empirical research, and the focus should be on the phenomenon of sexual assault. Those that did not make exact reference to the crime of sexual assault were excluded. Following the first selection, 85 studies were removed. The second stage of selection consisted in studying the entire material, where possible. Attention was

mainly focused on the analysis of studies whose results were supported by statistical data. The inclusion criteria aimed at the fact that the part intended for discussions and conclusions to refer both to the identified risks and to certain needs found at the level of society, in the context of the existence of this phenomenon. The contents that mainly analysed the consequences suffered by the victims of sexual assaults were excluded, considering that this is a topic on its own, which requires a separate analysis. After the second stage of selection, 70 studies were excluded. The articles analyzed for this study can be seen in Tables 2 and 3 at the end of the article.

The search covered the period from 1997 to 2020.

Figure 1

The procedure for the selection of the studies
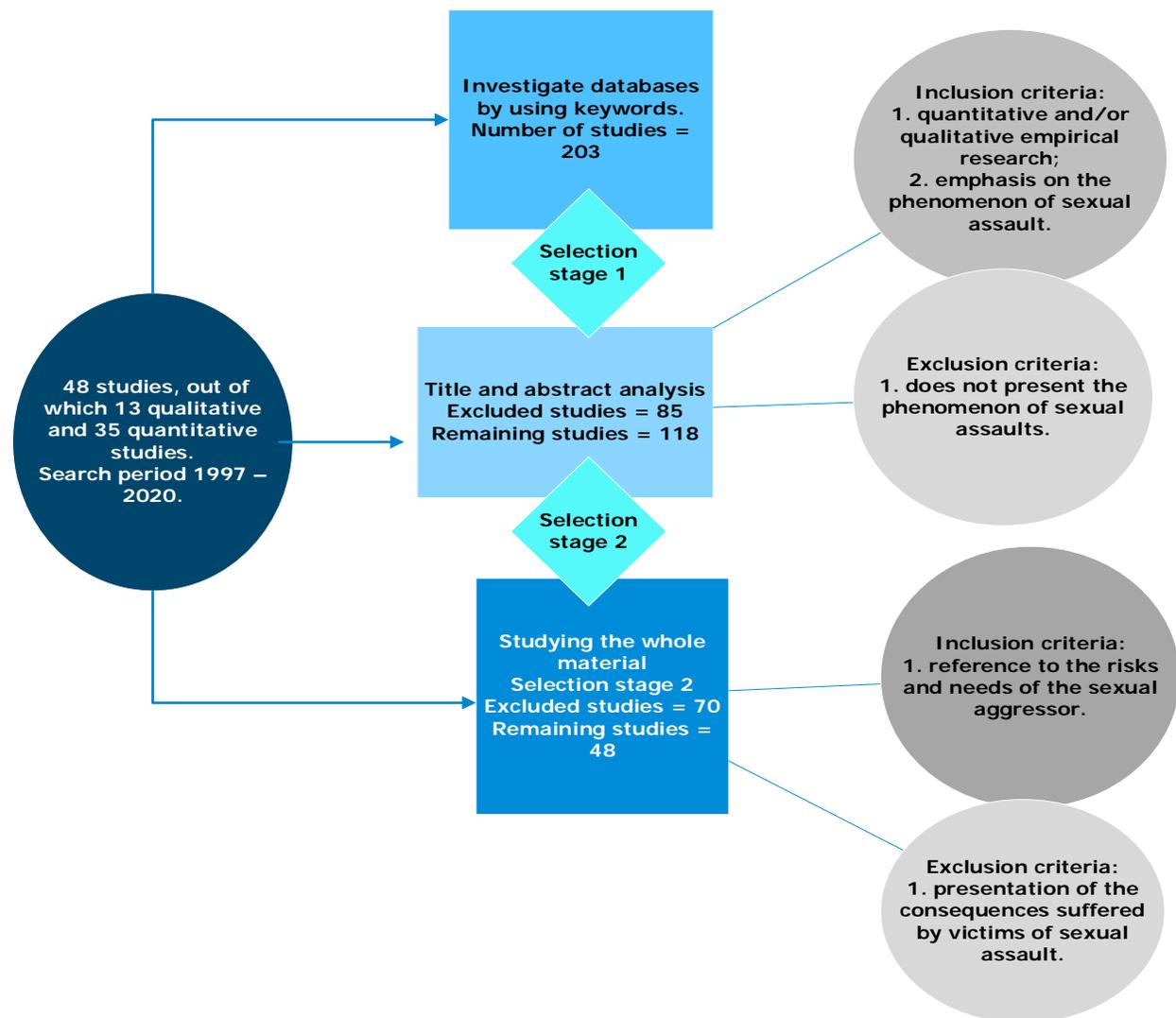
Data extraction

In order to capture a theoretical framework as complex as possible, it was intended that the data from this revision be demonstrated by qualitative or quantitative studies. In this respect, a number of 13 qualitative studies and 35 quantitative studies were retained.

Qualitative research was mainly based on observation or semi-structured interview. These were longitudinal, exploratory, investigative studies. Most of the time, the results were reported in terms of percentage or as qualitative description.

Quantitative researches have revealed descriptive statistics such as frequency distributions correlational tests (Person test), comparison of averages (T test), dispersions (Test F), analysis of multiple linear and linear regression. The sample size ranged from 51 to 2950 participants.

Results

The following aspects will be described in the presentation of the results: the characteristics of men and women who have committed sexual abuse, followed by an exposure of risk factors.

The main characteristics of men who committed sexual abuse of children, young people and adults were: *the ability to manipulate* (dissimulation, concealment of true intentions); *psychopathy* (lack of feelings of guilt, remorse, responsibility or empathy towards the victim, feelings of disregard); *criminal behavior* (criminal record, carceral history); *deviant sexual style* (sexual fantasies that consist of causing pain or suffering to another person or involving children); *mental disorders* (personality disorders, dissociative, anxious, addictive behavior on substance abuse); *neurological abnormality* (difficulty in the functioning of the brain). At the same time, acceptance of the rape myth and schemes of incompetence were identified.

The emotional dimension highlights the following: lack of responsibility, remorse, emotional connection with the victim's feelings. Becker points out that the aggressors make statements like "*The kid didn't say no, when I started*" or "*Someone did it to me when I was a kid and I thought it was okay for me to do it too. I love this child very much*" (as cited in Pascaru, 2020, p. 6). This insensitivity and lack of emotions identified in clinical research leads to an increased severity of symptoms and a hostile personality pattern (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2016).

The instrumental-operational dimension refers to the delinquent skills manifested by a repeated behavior against social norms. Johansson and Fremouw (2009) conducting a research with 31 male participants convicted of sexual assault, from the United States of America, presents as a defining characteristic for male sexual abusers the criminal behavior and the existence of criminal records.

From the point of view of the relational-value side, persuasion presents itself as another characteristic of sexual abusers. Found especially in cases of online sexual abuse, persuasion strategies have proven to be often used by them. Starting from a framework of social influence, Gámez, Almendros, Calvete and De Santisteban (2018), demonstrates that persuasion was the main factor associated with sexual solicitation from the abuser.

Paraphilic or personality disorders, dissociation or anxious disorders are inscribed in this personality frame of the male sexual aggressor. Intense sexual interest, which for satisfaction involves actions with a risk of harming others, due to the resulting negative consequences, are quite common in this criminal category.

The presence of dissociative disorders is generally due to a reaction to a traumatic event, which has the role of removing traumatic memories from the field of consciousness. According to Gewirtz

and Lahav (2020), sexual abusers who had a history of traumatic risk, reported increased levels of dissociation. These levels have been correlated with the use of sex for intimidation purposes. In fact, in order to cope with negative emotions, the aggressors use forced sex to intimidate the victim and create their own perception that they are in control of the situation.

Anxious disorders are often manifested by fear of awkwardness and fear of failure. Of a total of 161 male students in Portugal, 35 reported sexual assaults against women, completed individually. The same cross-sectional study revealed that unlike the control group, they experienced significantly more erectile and orgasm difficulties, sexual inhibition and fear of failure. At the same time, they showed schemes of incompetence and undesirableness (Carvalho, Quinta, & Nobre, 2013). Most individuals who practice such behaviors do not show discomfort about their sexual interests, and many of them present conditions that are included in the differential diagnosis, namely antisocial personality disorder, substance use disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder (APA, 2016, pp. 649-682).

From a neurological point of view, following specialized studies, Cluda presents as characteristics of people who commit sexual abuse of children a lower volume of white and gray matter, functional abnormalities of the brain and an abnormality in terms of neurological development (as cited in Pascaru, 2020). A grouping of all these aspects can be seen in Figure number 2.

Figure 2

Personality characteristics of the male sexual aggressor
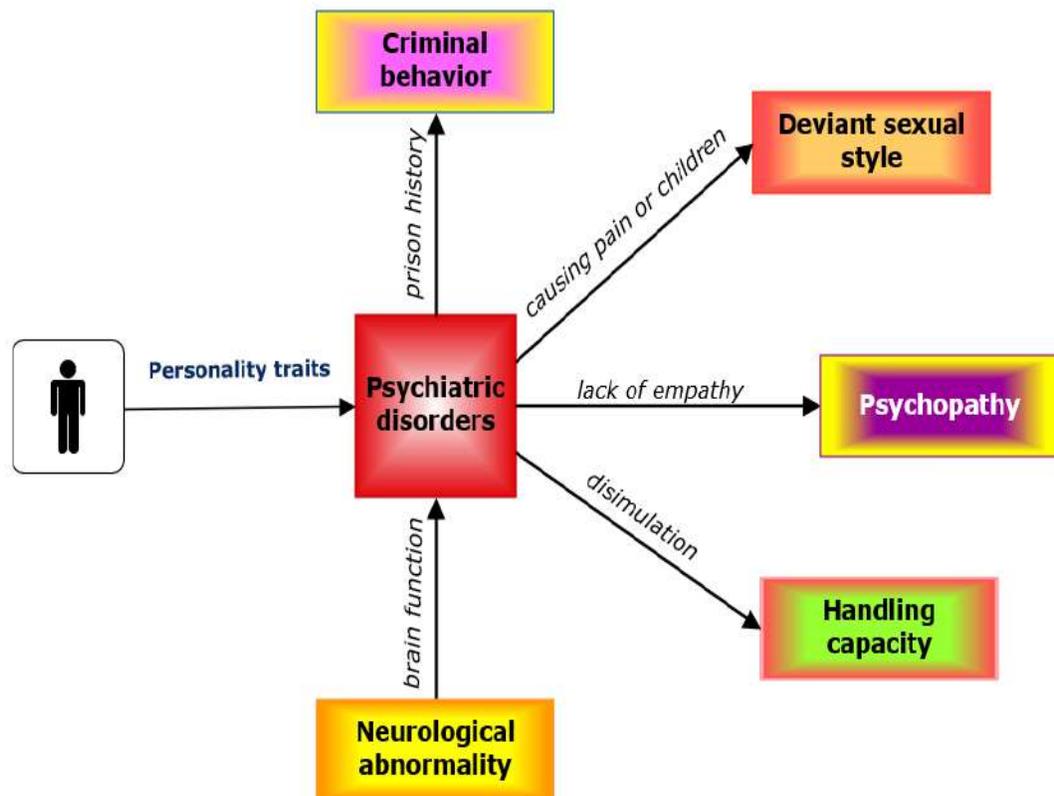
For women who committed acts of sexual assault, the elements identified were: *criminal behavior* (criminal history, carceral history*); mental disorders (*personality disorders in cluster B, bipolar, narcissistic disorder, mood disorders, substance-related disorders); *inappropriate sexuality* (paraphilias, sexual fantasies and pornography that portray children or involve causing pain and suffering to others); *emotional vulnerability* (emotional imbalance, sexual victimization in the past); *hostile personality pattern* (dominant behavior, manipulative attitude*).*

The sphere of affectivity involves various emotions, so Ciesla, Ioannou and Hammond (2019, p. 5) point out that they fall into two categories. Either they perceive the crime as a positive experience, with feelings of "*pleasure, exaltation and enthusiasm*," or they perceive the facts as a "*normality, a part of life, planned events*". In the same sense, it seems that sexually abusive women can show feelings of revenge "*It was the only thing to do*", "*Miserable*", "*I didn't care what would happen*", feelings that are meant to normalize the action "*There was nothing special about what happened*" or feelings of pleasure "*It was fun*", "*It was exciting*".

Another side of the personality is outlined by the presence of psychic problems, respectively of psychological disorders. Russell, Doan and King (2017) talk about personality disorders in cluster B, elements of narcissistic personality disorder, poor impulse control, anger, low empathy and feelings of grandeur.

It seems that women with a high level of narcissism are more prone to sexual coercion actions and to aggressive reactions, through an irritating perseverance, when refused (Blinkhorn, Lyons, & Almond, 2015; Gewirtz, 2017; Zeigler, Besser, Morag, & Campbell, 2016).

At the same time, the control disorders are highlighted. One of the associated elements that support this diagnosis of sexual impulse control disorders is the extensive use of pornographic material, which involves the suffering of other people or which depicts children of prepubertal age.

Cognitively, according to researchers Fox, Brook, Heilbronner, Susmaras and Hanlon (2019), women who commit sexual abuse exhibit cognitive schemes similar to people who committed acts of murder. Associations refer to impulsive behavior and to a weaker level of verbal abilities.

Also, the demand for attention from the partner, excessive emotional behavior and inappropriate sexual behavior were attributed to women, who met their sexual needs, including through abuse (Hughes, Brewer, & Khan, 2020).

A grouping of all these aspects can be seen in Figure number 3.

Figure 3

Personality characteristics of the female sexual aggressor
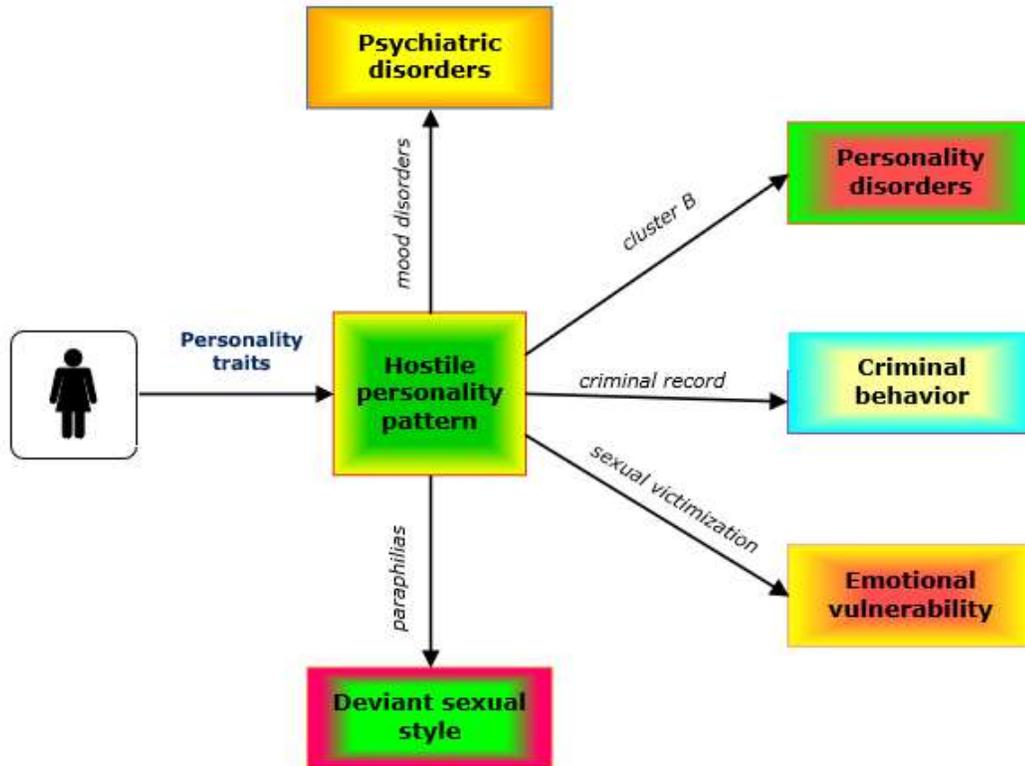
The risk factors regarding the probability of occurrence of the phenomenon of sexual assault were the following: *the relationship with the victim* (the existence of a close relationship between the aggressor and the victim); *the age of the aggressor and the instructive-educational level* (youth); *space-time factors* (in winter or in summer, at the victim's home or in places considered safe, at night); *aggressiveness as a personality trait* (physical strength); *preferential pattern* (boys aged 7-12 years, girls aged 13-18 years, higher probability that women will abuse biological children or children they care for, compared to men abusing stepchildren or close relatives); *dysfunctions of the social environment* (risk of relapse, stigmatization and social labeling, difficulty finding a job, type of support environment and influence of the group of belonging).

Relationship with the victim. According to the literature, there is a higher probability that the crime of violation of sexual rights and freedoms will unfold when the aggressor is in a relationship with the victim, and even more so that the relationship will negatively influence his denunciation.

Preferential pattern. Ludmila Mun states that pedophiles follow a certain pattern. Either they are looking for a child who meets certain criteria regarding age, clothing, or they do not have any particular preference, the only thing that matters is the access to the child (as cited in Pascaru, 2020). Freeman and Sandler (2008) states that women are more inclined towards victims of the opposite

gender. At the same time, women are more likely to choose victims under the age of 12, and men between the ages of 13 and 17. According to West, Friedman and Kim (2011) women are more likely to abuse biological children or the children they care for, while men abuse stepchildren or close relatives. According to Lungu Madan, Șarpe and Tighineanu (2017, p. 7) "*boys are more exposed to sexual assault between the ages of 7-12, and girls between 13-18 years old.*"

Aggression as a personality trait Dice (2018) emphasizes the importance of behavioral responsiveness and the physical strength that the aggressor has, which can be risk factors. According to him, students who practice sports regularly are more likely to commit sexual violence, as opposed to their non-athlete counterparts. One possible explanation is that those predictors of aggression who are oriented towards a socially accepted expression, that is, through sports, can sometimes be responsible for sexual violence. Those sexual impulses are supported by the perception that, through the physical force they have, they can more easily have control over the victim.

Age and educational level. Regarding the age of sexual aggressors, an exploratory and descriptive study based on the data from 335 cases registered at a support centre for women victims of sexual violence in Brazil, revealed that in 98.8% of cases the aggressor fell into the age group of 18-35 years. It was also noticed that 58.8% of them had an elementary educational level (Ribeiro & Leite, 2016). Another study that investigated the perpetrators of sexual assaults in the period 2012-2013 in the Teresina region, found that their average age was 33.2 years, that they were inhabitants of the area and that they were monthly income was minimum wage. A grouping of all factors can be seen in Table number 1.

Table 1

Risk factors that may increase the probability of committing the crime

Risk factors	Dimensions
The relationship with the victim	*step parents* *loving relationship* *kingship relationship*
Spatio-temporal factors	*winter or summer* *at the victim's home* *in places cinsidered safe* *at night*
Preferential pattern	*boys 7-12 years* *girls 13-18 years*
The age and aggresion as a trait	*youth* *pshysical force*
Social dsyfunctions	*influence of the group* *risk of recurrence* *social labeling* *difficulty finding a job* *support environment*

Discussions

Personality aspects of male aggressors

The difficulties regarding the control of sexual impulses may start as early as the preschool period, but the significant symptoms manifest themselves closer to adolescence. The evolution of these disorders is variable, therefore many people fail to achieve an adequate level of social adaptation. If at first, behavioral manifestations tend to be less severe, with the physical development of the individual they can increase in intensity (APA, 2016, pp. 685-686).

These skills oriented towards a delinquent behavior were also noticed by Proulx and his collaborators (1997). At the same time, Freeman and Sandler (2008) conducting an investigation into 390 people convicted of crimes against sexual freedom in New York, concludes that people convicted of rape already had a prison record.

Another aspect is represented by the manipulative attitude of the sexual abuser, his ability to use psychological manipulation techniques. In general, this type of aggressor can be seen in the context of a love affair with the victim. Either he is the type of aggressor that causes the victim to have feelings of guilt about a possible break-up of the relationship (Smith et al., 2018; Fuertes, Carcedo, Orgaz, & Fuertes, 2018), either he is the guy who uses more subtle tactics that involve seduction and a warm emotional tone (Beltrán, Valor, & Expósito, 2019; Camilleri, Quinsey, & Tapscott, 2009). In both categories, the aggressor manipulates the victim and induces her states of fear about the loss of the love relationship.

Using a sample of 304 Spanish subjects, out of which 33.2% are men and 66.8% are women, Garrido, Valor and Expósito (2020) concluded that the type of tactic used by the aggressor has a direct impact on assigning responsibility to the victim. The results indicated that the aggressor was able to assign more responsibility when the tactic was aggressive in nature.

In the case of pedophilia, manipulation can be seen through the fact that pedophiles often spend a lot of time with children in order to gain their trust. They play with them and buy them gifts. By manifesting an immaturity both in behavior and in the fashion style, they manage to get closer to the victim faster, even there being a direct relationship between his intellectual level and the age of the child who becomes a victim. Ponseti states that "*The more infantile the pedophile, the younger his victim*" (as cited in Pascaru, 2020, p. 7).

Mental disorders stand out as the main characteristic, thus highlighting the disorder of sexual sadism. When the individual causes suffering to another person or pedophilia disorder, namely sexual intercourse for children, these are closely related to the presence of specific sexual fantasies. The implementation of these sexual fantasies causes the victim to have a mental discomfort or a clinically significant dysfunction in important areas of functioning (APA, 2016, pp. 695-697). Following the analysis of deviant sexuality in a group of 160 sexual abusers in Peru, Langevin, Proulx and Lacourse, (2018) suggests that deviant sex life is a characteristic that influences their modus operandi.

Therefore, sexual deviance favors the commission of this type of crime. Also, Hales (2019) through a study of English students (n = 259), brings to attention statistically significant relationships between the presence of sexual fantasies and the acceptance of the rape myth. This rape myth, namely the perception that the sexual abuse of the victim is justified by the need for sexual gratification of the aggressor, increases the likelihood of the implementation of these sexual fantasies.

The results of a research on 448 men in Peru revealed that male aggressors manifest sexual fantasies or impulses that involve obtaining sexual arousal, through the pain and suffering of another person (Moyano, Monge, & Sierra, 2017).

In the case of acts of pedophilia, according to Proulx, Perreault and Ouimet (1999) it seems that the specific sexual fantasies influence the premeditated character of the deed and the duration of the act. Out of the 44 participants existing in the study, 30 did not plan their deed, and the remaining 14 did. Those who did not have a previous plan, used psychoactive substances before committing sexual assault, and the deed was short-lived (less than 15 minutes). The other category who planned their crime, used pornography that contained deviant sexual fantasies before it was committed, and the deed lasted more than 15 minutes.

Personality aspects of female aggressors

Regarding the *personality aspects of female aggressors*, Krahé and Berger (2017) considers that they have different characteristics than men, and that even the ways of putting the facts into practice differ depending on the gender of the aggressor. However, West et al. (2011) bring to the attention the fact that women, not just men, also exhibit criminal behavior, based on breaking the rules and disregarding the rights of others. Thus, it appears that most of the women involved in sexual offences had a criminal record, as well as a carceral history.

Regarding the way of relating, if in men, the relationship is based primarily on dissimulation, in women manipulation is achieved through deception - drugging of the victim, sexual coercion being one of the main techniques used (Hoffmann & Verona, 2018; Muñoz, Khan, & Cordwell, 2011; Struckman, Struckman, & Andreson, 2003).

Among the associated elements are the disorder related to substance use or bipolar personality disorder. Johansson and Fremouw (2009) notes addictive behavior as a defining characteristic of women who have committed sexual abuse, and Annison, Byng and Quinn (2019) bring to attention, in addition to substance abuse, the state of vulnerability, as well as emotional imbalance. Walker, Shaw, Turpin, Reid and Abel (2017) presents self-injurious behavior, impulsive tendencies, and Edwards, Albertson and Verona (2017) highlights elements of borderline personality disorder.

Other elements of disorder such as the practice of sexual acts with the immobilization of the victim by binding or beating, or by domination and submission of persons who do not consent, are part of the category of paraphilic sexual fantasies found in these women (APA, 2016, pp. 461-480).

Alin Leş (2020) using a sample of 816 women from Romania, emphasizes that the female interest in sexuality is quite high, and among their sexual fantasies is also intercourse with a boy. Although some authors state that they use pornography when they are alone rather than when they are with a partner (Kohut, Balzarini, Fisher, & Campbell, 2018), others state that the probability is higher when women are together with another person (Ševčíková & Daneback, 2014).

As it can be seen, these women manifest a hostile personality pattern, dominant behavior and manipulative attitude (Ménard, Hall, Phung, Ghebrial, & Martin, 2003; Kernsmith & Kernsmith, 2009; Russell & Oswald, 2002).

It was concluded that the need for control and power, normative beliefs about sexual coercion, alcohol consumption and sexual orientation were significant characteristics in the case of sexual assaults, for both sexes (Fuertes et al., 2018).

Risk factors

The study conducted by Bessa and her collaborators (2019) on a number of 311 cases of pregnancy, 1% resulting from incest and 55.9% through rape, suggests the existence of a love relationship between the aggressor and the victim. Also, Blake and his collaborators (2015) emphasize

this aspect regarding the sexual aggressor, who is part of the family or the circle of acquaintances, being recorded correlations linking the existence of a relationship between the aggressor and the victim and the existence of a developed pregnancy in the victim. A possible explanation can be given by the family's perception of such cases, that "family secret" that hinders open communication and referral to the competent bodies.

There are reports according to which the aggressor tends to show physical aggression towards the victim, since by inducing fear, his purpose can be achieved faster (Bessa et al., 2019). At the same time, Nascimento and his collaborators (2020) found that most of the women who were subjected to a sexual assault had bodily injuries which indicated the increased level of aggression of the aggressor.

As for the time with the higher probability of occurrence, there seems to be a higher risk in moments with low light than in the presence of it. In the same sense, Ribeiro and Leite (2016) concludes that the higher risk of committing the criminal act is at night (30.7%), at the victim's home (43.6%) and by a known person (87%). Lungu et al. (2017) found that winter is the time of year when most cases took place, followed by summer. This can be associated with the fact that winter gets dark earlier, thus representing a favorable context, and in summer the level of supervision from parents is lower, given the holiday period. In their study of adolescent girls subjected to sexual assault, Bessa and her colleagues (2019) identified that in 92% of cases the events were initially considered as being safe or private, the aggressor taking advantage of the vulnerability of the victim, given by age. In the case of child sexual abuse, according to Zambon, de Ávila Jacintho, de Medeiros, Guglielminetti and Marmo (2012), 72.6% of cases occur in a domestic environment, involving relatives living in the same home. The results of the research conducted by Yildirim and his collaborators (2014) on a sample of 43 cases of incest in Turkey, highlight the fact that the most common is father-daughter incest, followed by the brother-sister.

Regarding the risk of relapse in the case of women, using in-depth interviews with 37 incarcerated women, but also post-vacated from the USA, Berg and Cobbina (2017) suggests that the cognitive-type commitments built during the detention period, are strongly influenced by the disadvantaged social environment in which they return. For both women and men, the risk of relapse is closely linked to the activity carried out in the penitentiary environment, as well as to the support of the reference environment. According to several researchers, the effect of reintegration programs on the recidivism rate is directly influenced by the level of risk that the person deprived of liberty presents and the social environment from which he/she comes. Thus, a disadvantaged social environment can be a risk factor both in terms of committing such a crime and in the rehabilitation process of the respective person (Grommon, Davidson, & Bynum, 2013; Bahr, Harris, Fisher, & Harker, 2010). Another risk factor is the transition from the life of the condemned to that of a free man, the stigmatization and social labelling of the offender, the rapist, the difficulty of finding a job, the support environment and the influence of belonging to a certain group (Ricciardelli & Mooney, 2018).

Conclusions

This revision of the literature has highlighted both characteristic aspects of the sexual aggressor according to his gender and the predictive factors involved in committing this type of crime.

As it have seen, men and women who have committed sexual offences, although they have certain common characteristics, also have differences in this respect. With regard to the category of common characteristics, in both cases, mental disorders have been identified, a deviant sexual style manifested by specific sexual fantasies, lack of remorse or empathy towards the victim and criminal

behavior. The differences between the two categories are given by the way they approach the victim: men rather tend towards manipulation, while women choose concealment. Also, in men there were rather anxious disorders, while in women there were those from cluster B. Risk factors emphasized first of all the existence of a relationship between the aggressor and the victim, of a preferential pattern regarding the victim, as well as certain aspects regarding the aggressor's perception about the criminal act.

According to the information presented, the pattern of the sexual aggressor implies the presence of manipulation skills, which denotes good capacities of planning, patience and persuasion, manifested in order to achieve the goal. All these aspects can increase the probability of committing the criminal act, so that in the individual interventions of the psychological assistance type, analyzing the cognitive patterns regarding the sexual act and the significance attributed by the aggressor, constitutes an element of interest. Misconception about the consequences of a rape increases the likelihood of criminal behavior. The aggressor attributes positive meanings to the event itself, perceiving it as the image of an activity aimed to compensate for sexual inhibition, erectile and orgasm difficulties, thus providing feelings of strength and control. At the same time, the concept of morality and the way of appropriation in one's own system of values and norms represents an element that can bring useful information in the process of psychological counseling for the sexual aggressor. Another element of interest is the type of existing sexual fantasies. Identifying their triggering mechanism, which is the source for the need of child pornography, the suffering of other people, are also factors that need to be analyzed in psychotherapy sessions.

A customized intervention, depending on the specificity of the clinical frame, the type of social environment from which one originates, but also on the experiential history of each person who manifests difficulties in managing sexual impulses, could lead to a decrease in relapse, for this criminal category. In terms of intervention at the level of society, a main element may be represented by the social campaigns addressed to the whole community. Given that in most cases the sexual abuser is in a relationship with the victim, the existence of campaigns aimed at diminishing cultural customs such as the *shame* caused by the fact that you were the victim of sexual abuse, can increase the denunciation process and, thus, stop the phenomenon.

From the perspective of the competent authorities, a useful aspect in this context may be the integration of the risk factors regarding the possibility of occurrence of crime, in the elaboration and development of administrative policies regarding the professional practice. As is known, the effectiveness of the reintegration programmes is correlated with the level of risk manifested by the detainee. An explanation could be given by the conditions imposed by the execution regime of the convicted person. An increased level of risk implies increased restrictions on freedom of movement and more time devoted to social reintegration programmes, while a low level of risk leads to custody in an enforcement regime that allows for greater freedom of movement, including gainful activities, so the person's availability for reintegration programmes may be reduced. In this situation, the intensification of programs and activities aimed at diminishing sexual impulses in the first period of execution of the sentence must be a priority for the competent authorities. Regarding the facilitation of the process of preventing crimes such as sexual assault, rape, it is considered to be necessary a complex intervention, both from the perspective of individual specialized approaches and those at the level of society.

Acknowledgements

The articles analyzed for this study (table 2, 3).

Table 2

Studies based on qualitative analysis and descriptive analysis

Study and year	N	Relevant Information
Pathways in the offending process of extrafamilial sexual child molesters, (1999).	44	The existence of a direct relationship between the time dedicated to committing sexual assault and the presence/ absence of sexual fantasies.
Evaluation of social and demographic characteristics of incest cases in a university hospital in Turkey, (2014).	43	Father-daughter incest is most common in such situations.
Aspects of sexual violence against women: profile of the aggressor and the violent act, (2016).	335	The higher probability of committing the criminal act is at night (30,7%), at the victim's home (43,6%) and by a known person (87%).
Women offenders: Promoting a holistic approach and continuity of care across criminal justice and health interventions, (2019).	21	Women convicted of sexual assault often show anger, emotional imbalance, and addictive behavior.
Cognitive transformation, social ecological settings, and the reentry outcomes of women offenders, (2017).	37	The disadvantaged background is a key factor in the risk of relapse of women convicted of sexual assault.
Neuropsychological and criminological features of female homicide offenders, (2019).	27	There is an association in cognitive schemes between women who have committed sexual abuse and people convicted of murder.
Addressing pedophilia as a form of sexual violence against children, (2020).	-	Pedophiles choose their victim according to their intellectual age.
Compulsive infidelity during the pandemic: female and male sexual phantasms, (2020).	818	The presence of phantasms and sexual fantasies regarding sexual intercourse with a minor.
Sexually coercive tactics used by university students: A clear role for primary psychopathy, (2011).	-	Women who manifest characteristics of psychopathy, may aim to obtain sex through forms of manipulation and coercion.
Female pornography use and sexual coercion perpetration, (2009).	-	Women involved in acts of sexual coercion reported the use of pornography.

Table 3

Studies based on quantitative analysis, correlations and averages.

Study and year	N	Relevant Information
An examination of gender of aggressor and target (un) wanted sex and nonconsent on perceptions of sexual (un) wantedness, justifiability and consent, (2015).	717	Differences in the aggressor's perception depending on their gender.
Female sex offenders: A controlled comparison of offender and victim/crime characteristics, (2009).	31	The hypothesis that sexual abusers were victims of childhood abuse was tested through the Chi square test. There were significant group differences, $x^2 = 15.23$, $p =.002$, Cramer's $V = .35$
Domestic violence against children and adolescents: a challenge, (2012).	43	There was an association between rape and age (10 to 15 years, $p = 0.01$) and between the incestuous perpetrator and the duration of abuse.
Assessing the propensity for sexual coaxing and coercion in relationships: Factor structure, reliability, and validity of the Tactics to Obtain Sex Scale, (2009).	419	There have been identified significant correlations between the presence of psychopathy elements and the commission of the criminal act of sexual assault.
Characterization of adolescent pregnancy and legal abortion in situations involving incest or sexual violence by an unknown aggressor, (2019).	311	The existence of a link between the degree of closeness to the sexual aggressor and the period of access to medical services and the notification of the police.
Static and dynamic predictors of recidivism in sexual aggressor, (1997).	382	Child abusers had higher pedophilic indices, a higher number of previous sexual charges, and a higher percentage of them lived alone.
The sexual functioning profile of a nonforensic sample of individuals reporting sexual aggression against women, (2013).	161	The existence of a link between the need to commit sexual assaults and feelings of anxiety about sexual performance.
Female and male sex offenders: A comparison of recidivism patterns and risk factors, (2008).	390	Male aggressors are more likely to have a carceral history as opposed to women aggressor, women are more inclined towards victims of the opposite gender.
The national intimate partner and sexual violence survey: 2015 data brief–updated release, (2018).	-	In the USA, one in 5 women are subjected to the phenomenon of physical or sexual assault.
Sexual coercion perpetration and victimization: Gender similarities, and differences in adolescence, (2018).	1242	The need for control and power, the normative beliefs about sexual coercion, were significant predictors of committing the act of sexual assault for both sexes.
Sexual Aggression in UK Higher Education: A treatment needs analysis of male students, (2019).	259	There have been significant correlations between feelings of hostility towards women, acceptance of the rape myth and the presence of sexual fantasies.

Study and year	N	Relevant Information
Predictors of sexual aggression in adolescents: Gender dominance vs. rape supportive attitudes, (2017).	448	Male aggressors show supportive attitudes towards rape, considering the act as something ordinary.
Sexual aggressors against women's sexual lives: A latent class analysis, (2018).	160	Deviant sex life is a common feature that facilitates the commission of this type of crime.
Persuasion strategies and sexual solicitations and interactions in online sexual grooming of adolescents: Modeling direct and indirect pathways, (2018).	196	Sexual abusers use persuasion to convince their victims online.
Childhood Sexual Abuse and Sexual Motivations–The Role of Dissociation, (2020).	365	In order to be able to cope with negative emotions, the aggressors use forced sex in order to intimidate the victim.
The WORSHIP II study: a pilot of psychodynamic interpersonal therapy with women offenders who self-harm, (2017).	113	Women convicted of acts against sexual freedom exhibit self-harming behavior.
A randomized trial of a multimodal community-based prisoner reentry program emphasizing substance abuse treatment, (2013).	100	The effectiveness of reintegration programs depends on the degree of risk of the convicted person ($F(1, 509)=50.79$, $p <.01$).
Successful reentry: What differentiates successful and unsuccessful parolees?, (2010).	51	Men are less likely than women to be released on parole from penitentiary ($p = .059$).
Women offenders' criminal narrative experience, (2019).	128	Female sexual abusers may experience feelings of exaltation, pleasure, revenge, or feelings that normalize the action.
Sexual offences against children in Chisinau municipality (2017).	100	The periods of the year with the highest probability of sexual assault are winter and summer.
Partner-specific dependency and guilt as predictors of forgiveness in Spanish university women, (2019).	173	Sexual abusers use their partners' emotional dependence.
Men and women as perpetrators and victims of sexual aggression in heterosexual and same-sex encounters (2013).	2149	Sexual abusers use different techniques of coercion depending on tFhe sex of the aggressor.
Psychopathic traits and sexual coercion against relationship partners in men and women, (2018).	300	Women who exhibited psychopathic traits were more likely to engage in sexual coercion actions.
Tactics of sexual coercion: When men and women won't take no for an answer, (2003).	381	There are differences in the techniques of emotional manipulation and sexual coercion between men and women.
Sexually violent women: The PID-5, everyday sadism, and adversarial sexual attitudes predict female sexual aggression and coercion against male victims, (2017).	592	Sexual abusers use different techniques of coercion depending on the sex of the aggressor.

Study and year	N	Relevant Information
The Dark Triad and sexual harassment proclivity, (2016).	642	There are links between the personality traits of The Dark Tirad and sexual harassment.
The ultimate femme fatale? Narcissism predicts serious and aggressive sexually coercive behavior in females, (2015).	329	There were correlations between exhibitionism and emotional manipulation ($p < 0.05$).
Why do narcissistic individuals engage in sex? Exploring sexual motives as a mediator for sexual satisfaction and function, (2017).	256	Feelings of grandeur have been identified as the main reason for engaging in sexual intercourse for narcissistic individuals.
Gender differences in sexual harassment and coercion in college students, (2003).	278	There were statistically significant correlations between sexual coercion and alcohol consumption <0.01.
Sexual coercion and victimization of college men: The role of love styles, (2002).	173	People involved in sexual abuse claimed the use of pornography.
Online pornography use in adolescence: Age and gender differences, (2014).	2950	Individuals use online pornography in accordance with their psychosexual development.

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