

The Influence of Social Factors on the Formation and Development of Pedophilia

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Abstract: Pedophilia is a psychological disorder which causes the patient to experience abnormal sexual arousal towards children. In the last three decades, psychologists and psychiatrists have made a number of progress and explorations on the individual causing factors of pedophilia. Through reviewing the previous literature, this paper mainly discusses the external factors that affect the formation and development of pedophilia, i.e., environmental factors. This paper first introduces the concept of pedophilia and the public's opinion on pedophiles. Then it analyzed the effects of stigmatization on how the symptoms deteriorates because patients are repressing their arousals to avoid judgement from the public. Differences in tolerance levels between cultures can intensify the development of pedophilia. Furthermore, the tendency of male's dominance in the society explains the why the pedophiles tend to sexually abuse children, a relatively weaker portion of the society. Additionally, the role of the internet and globalization is to provide a platform for the pedophiles to communicate. Not only does the paper aim to analyze the root causes. A further goal is to bring the eliminate the stigmatization of pedophiles from the general public, as society plays such a crucial role.

1. Introduction

Pedophilia, a psychiatric disorder, is a person who is sexually attracted to prepubertal children. The factors causing pedophilia are always a heated topic for essays and discussion among people. Experts from many fields had been trying to come up with various explanations of why any adult would develop such arousal feelings towards children. In a report made by NCVIC, the National Center for Victims of Crime, the statistics of self-report studies show that 20% of adult females and 5% to 10% of adult males recalled a childhood sexual assault. The physical scars may be removed by medical treatments, but the traumatic experience will be carved in one's childhood memory and will probably never be removed.

Through the research on relevant papers and experiments, it can be concluded that the factor contributing to this disorder can be sorted into two groups: Psychological and Biological. Psychological cause, any factor that causes pedophilia besides having the brain physically damaged, can be further divided into the individual cause and social cause. However, it is spotted that compared with the biological and psychological factors that lead to pedophilia, little research has been done on the topic of social motives. Hence, this paper aims to give a revision of the past papers which talk about social and cultural facets, and to figure out how can the objects and ideologies from the whole society could contribute to one's abnormal sexual urges.

One of the earliest studies on facets of pedophilia, the four-factor model, is established in 1986 [1]. The model generally is an aggregation of proposed theories about why adults become sexually interested in children. It consists of four categories of theories: emotional congruence, sexual arousal, blockage, and disinhibition [1]. Each category is subdivided into psychological and biological factors and social factors. This essay applies only the social factors of the four-factor model except for the one

under “blockage”, repressive norms about masturbation, and extramarital sex. But the rest three factors are well analysed and extended in the essay with more perspectives.

Apart from the four-factor model, this paper includes other points. The role the internet is playing in triggering pedophilia is crucial. On one hand, cyber predators developed means of sending and receiving illegal images of children [2]. And because the internet has features of anonymity, rapid transmission, and unsupervised nature, the Internet has become a prime choice for cyber predators to receive and trade child pornography [3]. Besides, pedophiles have more access to approach the prepubescent through virtually undetectable ways. For instance, a pedophile perpetrator can pretend to be a heterosexual peer of his or her target, and invite the target into a chat room. The pedophile, as an adult, is very likely to be more adept in communicating skills, a relationship is thus established between the pedophile and the target child. The pedophile usually has the child’s trust, and may manipulate the child or even demand him or her to ‘do him or her a favor’. Criminal exploitation can also happen to the child, which is the worst case.

On the other hand, the ones with filthy intentions also find the platform a perfect way of satisfying their self-interest, which, in specific, is spreading pornography to make profits. The victim, children, are exploited through many means. For example, online grooming is the process of forcing a child to have sex online and/or offline, with an adult [4]. According to research, it is found that around 200 million prepubescent girls and 100 million prepubescent boys are unfortunately the victims of sexual exploitation. By knowing this, people may link the perpetrator of child pornography with pedophilia. Yet a pedophile is a person who is being sexually attracted to prepubertal children, who is not necessarily an exploiter of children because the desire in most times can be repressed. This is the stigmatization of pedophiles, which will be discussed in the essay later as it is a factor that makes pedophilia deteriorate. But when it comes to perpetrators of children on the internet, the harm they cause, the pain they exert to victims are real problems. Then, this can be linked to the significance of doing research on the topic of pedophilia. By conducting experiments or medical examinations, experts are capable of finding, evaluating, and sorting the potential causes. Finally, with the given information, society can be aware of the disorder and set up specific precautions. And from the perspective of treatment for pedophiles who are troubled by their ‘distorted’ sexual interest in children and are actively looking for non-medical treatment, experts can consider analyzing the correlation between social and cultural factors and pedophilia.

2. Image of pedophilia in society

2.1. The conception of pedophilia

Most studies of pedophilia have different interpretations of the term. Many studies accept that all offenders convicted of “child molestation” are diagnosed as pedophiles [5]. There is confusion between the concept of pedophiles and non-pedophiles who molest children. It is a controversial issue whether pedophilia should be defined as a crime. Pedophilia is precisely known as a persistent interest in adolescent children. The ICD-10 defines pedophilia as “A sexual preference for children, boys or girls or both, usually of prepubertal or early pubertal age” that persists for at least six months [6]. The most important harm of pedophilia preference is that some people will lead to Child sex offending (CSO) (present in about 50% of convicted offenders) [7]. Pedophiles are distributed in various fields in the society.

2.2. The influence of stigmatization of pedophilia on the causal factor

Nowadays, according to relevant research, mass in society cannot really realize the existence of “pedophilia”, and even have serious conceptual confusion about “pedophiles” and “child sexual abusers”. The key protection of children by law makes social groups hostile to people and things that are threatening and aggressive to children. Although “pedophiles” have not done anything harmful to children, their “special love” for children in their brains has not been understood by the public. In fact, most of the time, people will confuse “child sex offenders” with “pedophiles”, and believe that “pedophiles” will cause substantial harm to children. Therefore, the public's cognition of pedophile

groups is generally simple and rigid, and cannot clearly understand the “pedophile” itself. Benard’s (1985) conducted a survey on a small number of groups who perceived themselves as “pedophiles”: a quarter of the population had sexual fantasies about children at an early age [8]. The link between children and sexual attraction is a shameful and controversial topic in human society. Malicious public opinion in society has a great impact on pedophiles' special preferences for themselves. Most pedophiles do not have the courage to confess and face up to their sexual fantasies about children, because of the misunderstanding and disgust of pedophiles. According to the estimation of current actual risk assessment tools such as us stable 2007, pedophiles' sexual desire for children may be alleviated or significantly changed. It can be inferred that the groups that have shown slight pedophilic tendency in the early stage have accumulated children's Sexual Fantasies for a long time, resulting in their sexual desire for children or being affected by the sexual orientation of surrounding people, so as to completely alleviate the symptoms; Or perhaps because the sexual desire of pedophiles has been suppressed, it is difficult to be released on adult partners, and the frontal output responsible for inhibition in their brain has been damaged [9], so the sexual desire of children is infinitely amplified in the suppression. Fortunately, some treatments have been proved to improve the symptoms of sexual hypersexuality in some people. Pedophiles can prevent further symptom progression by paying attention to their symptoms and alleviating them through treatment [10]. In this regard, the public's correct understanding of pedophilia is of great help to reduce the further deterioration of pedophiles' symptoms.

3. Child pornography and commercial sexual exploitation of children

3.1. Define the industry of sex trafficking of children

Besides psychological factors (traumatic sexual experience in childhood, lack of self-esteem, etc.) and biological factors (the oversecretion of testosterone due to disease), society as a whole plays a part in facilitating and tolerating pedophilic behaviors too. Globalization and the development of the economic market have brought many benefits to modern society. However, they also create serious social problems which remain in existence.

In the past 30 years, people began to raise awareness of this concealed and profitable industry—Sex trafficking of children. Sex trafficking of children involves child pornography, commercial sexual exploitation of children, and sexual tourism of children. The second large sex trafficking market is in the United States [11]. Throughout the country, the approximate number of children involved in sex trafficking is between 100,000 and 3 million [12]. The commercial sexual exploitation of children is a classic example of using commercialization to escape from children protection laws, [13], which is an appealing industry for pedophiles because of the lack of law and regulations in certain areas and the easy access to their victims.

3.2. Child pornography triggers potential pedophiles

According to American Psychiatric Association, the common feature shared between children pornography offenders and pedophiles is that they both report consistent sexual interest in prepubescent children because of the stigmatization of pedophiles. Patients are likely to intentionally lie about the details during treatment, which indicates that sometimes the information clinicians gain from the cases might present relatively lower validity. Therefore, in order to gain further insight on the correlation between pedophiles and child pornography offenders, in 2006, Seto et al. from the center for Addiction and Mental in Toronto conducted a study on this topic [14]. In the experiment, 685 pedophilic patients were grouped based on whether they had a history of sexual offenses against children or not and were being interviewed on personal information such as their ethnicity and education level. Most importantly, the questionnaire asks about their previous experiences while watching child pornography and sorted the samples into “Child pornography with “No victims” and “Child pornography with victims”. Finally, the team was able to conclude that being a child pornography offender can be a strong and valid indicator of clinical diagnosis of pedophilia. Additionally, they stated that the number of victims does not play a major role in deciding whether the

offender is pedophilic or not. Besides sexual preference, pedophilia can be also grouped by the type of sexual attraction itself. Clinical reports have shown that pedophiles who have a sexual interest in children and adults are different than those who are only attracted to children. The former can repress his sexual urges by being with an adult partner, therefore it is relatively unlikely for them to commit the crime of sexual assault against children compares to those who are only attracted to children. However, under particular circumstances, the repressed urges might be “activated” again. For instance, the category of child pornography is mixed with adult pornography on certain websites. The mixed contexts can open the “gate of the repressed subconscious sexual urges”, and it might cause people who originally do not find children sexually attractive to find them arousing. The influx of child pornography on the internet can also lead someone who initially has no sexual feelings towards children to find them arousing, the excess intake of pedophilic information causes hallucination which one will eventually develop a pedophilic tendency.

3.3. The contribution of the internet in encouraging pedophilic actions

The introduction of the internet also plays a significant role in speeding up the process of the transition of illegal context—child pornography. One of the many individual characteristics of pedophilia is the lack of self-esteem and confidence [1]. As a result, the discrimination and stigmatization of this psychological disorder can leave serious effects on them. However, one of the various reasons why people began to pay attention and speak for victims of sexual assault is the introduction of the internet. Under the cover of a fake identity, pedophiles can reach out to people who share the same “interest” with them all around the world. By creating encrypted chatrooms and websites, the patients can communicate with each other about their urges, the latest sexual experiences with children, and different tactics they use when committing the crime. Once the first website was introduced, the industry went viral because pedophiles have been searching for a way to communicate without being judged by society. Furthermore, this unhealthy environment also leads to competition among the patients which deteriorates their level of illness [15].

4. The connection between pedophilia and male status in relationships

4.1. Male socialization to dominance

Male socialization, from the point of view of feminism, is a social and cultural factor in the four-factor model for pedophilia and a sector in the theory of emotional congruence. As for the definition of male socialization, it can be seen as the ideologies boys start to learn, and behaviors they start to mimic at a young age. A few examples of male socialization are masculinity, heterosexism and, stoicism. The part of male socialization is men’s dominance in sexual relationships. To be more specific, it is the culture that encourages men, or to say brainwashes them to be powerful, and playing the role of initiator in their relationships with women [16, 17]. Common examples of this can be the match of a young girlfriend and a rich old man [18]. What’s more, the depiction of male characters in *Twilight*, in which the female protagonist is ‘weak’ whereas her boyfriend is powerful, strong, and protective. And, the popular degree of the *Twilight* series confirms the assumption that in the public stereotype, a man is stronger than his partner in a relationship by default. This stereotype still exists, and the mode of men being powerful is still a mainstream cognition. As a result, growing up in the cultural environment of this suggests to men that they should choose a partner that is younger and weaker than them. Then, Children fit in the role requirements, or simply inevitably suits as an extension [1].

Another evidence that can prove the statement of ‘male socialization is a factor that leads to the generation of pedophiles’ is an experiment carried out by Fishero et al. in 1969 [19]. The participants are pedophiles who prefer female to male children, or the so-called “female object pedophiles” and those who prefer male children, the “male object pedophiles”. All of the pedophiles took a scoring test. It was found that female object pedophiles scored higher than the other type of pedophiles on achievement, autonomy, change, heterosexuality, and aggression. According to the conductor of the experiment, Howell, female object pedophiles have low scores on deference may indicate that

pedophiles have problems dealing with their desire for dominance. But Howell does not state the reason or give an explanation on why pedophiles with the problem of dominance prefer female children. However, it can be given an assumption that deviating their desire towards children makes pedophiles feel better about their power. Through interacting with children, pedophiles have more space to adjust their domination desire to the manipulation of children. And this allows them to attain a greater sense of fulfillment.

4.2. Instinctive tendency to identify male social status in relationships

The tendency to relate male status in relationships with male socialization is an instinctive way. That is to say, the values on partnerships of men are affected by the culture circle they are in, and these values are rooted in men's beliefs in a rooted, instinctive means. This tendency is much alike with the male socialization to dominance. However, the main difference is that the latter gives an overall explanation on why children are an inevitable extension of role requirements of men's partners, and the former explains how men's status reflects their interest in children.

Male socialization tells that men's values are in an agency, which is their ability to act, take charge, control, win, achieve [20]. When these values are reflected in their sexual relationships, in most cases, men expect themselves to be the initiator or the 'on top' one. Thus, the hypothesis can be, are men who are far away from being satisfied with their needs of dominants more likely to be interested in children? Or do men from cultures that worships masculinity be attracted by children than those from cultures that not that much worships masculinity? Unfortunately, few research has been done about these assumptions, yet developing perspectives is a possible way to think of, still.

5. Global cultural toleration in child pornography

In different regions, people are compatible to develop their own distinct culture. In other words, the composition of the causing social factors of pedophilia may vary from culture to culture. For instance, in a culture that has developed a patriarchal society, it is more likely that a pedophile commits a crime due to his desire to prove his social status and dominance over a weaker individual. In a culture that has tourism as its main industry, there is a lack of effective regulation of child trafficking and sexual exploitation. It is highly probable that child sex tourism is developing in this culture and earning economic benefits. The illegal social issue has been happening in the Philippines, Thailand, and other countries in South East Asia in the past decades [21]. Ukraine is also an example of tolerance towards child trafficking and sexual exploitation in Europe. However, one cannot assert that most child trafficking and sexual exploitation are happening in developing countries. According to the document from UNICEF to address the issue of global child sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation, child prostitution is prevalent in both countries that have lower GDP or higher GDP. Therefore, there are gaps in the laws and regulations in each culture, which tolerant the existence of child sexual assault.

5.1. The tolerance of different cultures towards pedophilia

In different cultural backgrounds, non-pedophiles have different views on pedophiles. Some countries adopt a neglectful and inclusive attitude towards pedophilia and child sexual abuse. The Netherlands, the world's most tolerant country for sex and pedophilia, is valued by the child pornography film commercial company in Amsterdam, which owns the headquarters of the world child pornography website and sells British boys. Meanwhile, child pornography businessmen in other countries also use the neglect of pedophilia in the Netherlands to sell children or engage in child pornography. The Dutch child pornography industry owes its growth not only to the tolerance of child trafficking and pedophilia, but also to the mafias in the Dutch royal family, banks, and political elite, as well as to the big Dutch crime syndicates [22]. This shows that the Netherlands is negligent and lax about child pornography. Child pornography is spread in the Netherlands, and although not all Dutch people are completely comfortable with the sexual fantasies of children, the tolerance of different sexual orientations in the Netherlands has enabled child pornography organizations in the Netherlands to gradually make a lot of money. The number of local groups consuming child pornography has grown considerably under its influence. The rampant child pornography culture in the Netherlands has

indirectly led to a change in the number of people who fantasize about children. Another example concerns Afghanistan's attitude towards pedophiles. Women in Afghanistan are marginalized. In Afghanistan, men's sexual love for boys and sexual entertainment is secretly accepted in Afghan culture [23]. Bacha Bazi is the general term for this act. Even though there are some Afghans and scholars from other countries who oppose this practice, the underlying "culture" in Afghanistan has not been completely improved. From this perspective, Afghanistan is more accepting of pedophilia than the Netherlands. In Afghanistan, pedophilia is even reflected in their culture, rather than being seen as an aberration. The clandestine culture of "boy's play" among powerful men in Afghanistan may force powerful men who are not pedophiles or who want to climb the social hierarchy to adapt to the behavior in order to fit into the culture and not be ostracized. After a long period of sexual contact with boys, they develop emotion passively with children about sex. culture has a significant influence on pedophilia. Orientation can be affected by the original and widespread culture in an invisible way.

5.2. Impact on the victims of child sexual assault and the Abused-Abuser theory

The tolerance can leave a more serious problem, and it may never be solved. The effect of being sexually assaulted in childhood may be long-lasting and the scar may never be cured. During childhood, it is one of the most critical stages for an individual to make cognitive developments. Especially in early childhood, children learn to build healthy relationships with family members, friends, and teachers while exploring the world around them, they develop a tendency of mimicking others in the way they treat each other. In fact, imitation is one of the most common learning strategies used by children and infants. Not only does it allow children to learn from one another, but it also allows them to fulfill the need of belonging to a group [24]. Thus, being sexually assaulted as children may cause one to eventually develop similar pedophilic feelings, especially in 93% percent of the cases recorded by RAINN (a nonprofit organization known as Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network), child victims know the perpetrator. And in 34% percent of the cases, a family member has sexually assaulted a child. The statistics indicate that it is likely that the child victim has spent a certain amount of time with the perpetrator, and unconsciously learns or imitates their behavior patterns and morals. This hypothesis is called the Abused-abuser hypothesis which suggests that the victims of child sexual abuse have a greater tendency in becoming abusers compared to those who aren't sexually assaulted in childhood. In order to test the hypothesis, M. Aebi, from the University Clinics of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry in Switzerland, and his coworkers conducted an experiment testing this hypothesis. In the spring of 2009, they selected 10,000 ninth-grade students from public schools in Switzerland as their participants. They were given "yes or no" surveys including questions about whether they have sexually offended anyone and whether they have been sexually offended in the past. As a result, they found a strong correlation between being the sexual abuser and being sexually abused.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the main findings of this paper can be understood as an assembly of social and cultural factors included in the four-factor model, as well as considering the influence of the Internet as a factor. Meanwhile, the paper extends from the factors discussed and gives explanations about how they are linked with bringing negative impacts on the pedophiles as well as the victims.

In the factor of stigmatization of pedophilia, the paper argues that because of the lack of knowledge, overall disgust and misunderstanding generate. Individuals might also confuse the idea of a child molester and a pedophile, the difference of which lies in whether they will bring harm to children. Then most pedophiles are discouraged to confess and face up to their genuine sexual needs. The way they choose is to suppress their desire, which, however, amplifies it.

Besides, the internet environment plays a role in facilitating and tolerating pedophilic behaviors. The most serious example might be sex trafficking of children, which includes child pornography and sexual exploitation for commercial uses etc. In this case, child pornography triggers potential pedophiles. Because of the mixed contents of child pornography and the adult one on particular websites, their repressed urges might be "activated" again. And for the ones who originally are not pedophiles, they may find the content arousing. Finally, the intake causes hallucination which one will

tend to become a pedophile. Furthermore, the introduction of the internet provides a platform for pedophiles to cover their unspeakable desire behind fake identities. Children's safety is definitely threatened, which is a concerning issue, but from the pedophiles' perspective, their levels of pedophilia will deteriorate. Because they can use the cover to reach out to the ones who have the same fantasies, communicate with them, or even compete with each other.

Then move to the factor of male socialization. The argument indicates that men are tended to be dominant in relationships, in which way their partners are set to be weaker and younger people. These values on partnerships are affected by the culture circle male pedophiles are in, and these values are rooted in their beliefs in a rooted, instinctive way. Children thus become an inevitable choice. In addition, deviating their desire and manipulation towards children makes paedophiles have a feeling of power and taking control.

Global cultural toleration towards child pornography is an influential factor, for the neglectful and even inclusive attitudes of government indeed foster industries. Moreover, the paper takes the incentive to imitate children into consideration. Imitation, as one of the most common learning strategies used by children and infants, endows children the ability to learn from each other, whereas the morality of behaviors they mimic is never guaranteed. So that if a child experienced child molestation in childhood, it is likely for the child to assault others when the child enters adulthood.

The purpose of this study is to further explore the social and cultural factors that lead to pedophilia. The target audience is not only the pedophile community looking for treatments to correct sexual preference, but also the community with a different view of pedophilia and friends and relatives of the pedophile community. Cases of child molesters continue to emerge, and the public's perception of the perpetrators remains limited to the still-false association of each offender with pedophilia. Persistent stigma has made it impossible for the general public to alleviate misconceptions about all groups of pedophiles any time soon. Unfortunately, the relevant materials and literature for our topic are limited. There may be some deficiencies in our research on this topic. To make progress, the continuity of studying the various aspects of pedophilia, factors and, solutions is necessary, since it brings us closer to the truth.

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