Development and Course

Community individuals with paraphilias have reported a mean age at onset for masochism of 19.3 years, although earlier ages, including puberty and childhood, have also been reported for the onset of masochistic fantasies. Very little is known about persistence over time. Sexual masochism disorder per definition requires one or more contributing factors, which may change over time with or without treatment. These include subjective distress (e.g., guilt, shame, intense sexual frustration, loneliness), psychiatric morbidity, hypersexuality and sexual impulsivity, and psychosocial impairment. Therefore, the course of sexual masochism disorder is likely to vary with age. Advancing age is likely to have the same reducing effect on sexual preference involving sexual masochism as it has on other paraphilic or normophilic sexual behavior.

Functional Consequences of Sexual Masochism Disorder

The functional consequences of sexual masochism disorder are unknown. However, masochists are at risk of accidental death while practicing asphyxiophilia or other autoerotic procedures.

Differential Diagnosis

Many of the conditions that could be differential diagnoses for sexual masochism disorder (e.g., transvestic fetishism, sexual sadism disorder, hypersexuality, alcohol and substance use disorders) sometimes occur also as comorbid diagnoses. Therefore, it is necessary to carefully evaluate the evidence for sexual masochism disorder, keeping the possibility of other paraphilias or other mental disorders as part of the differential diagnosis. Sexual masochism in the absence of distress (i.e., no disorder) is also included in the differential, as individuals who conduct the behaviors may be satisfied with their masochistic interest.

Comorbidity

Known comorbidities with sexual masochism disorder are largely based on individuals in treatment. Disorders that occur comorbidly with sexual masochism disorder typically include other paraphilic disorders, such as transvestic fetishism.

Sexual Sadism Disorder

Diagnostic Criteria **302.84 (F65.52)**

A. Over a period of at least 6 months, recurrent and intense sexual arousal from the physical or psychological suffering of another person, as manifested by fantasies, urges, or behaviors.

B. The individual has acted on these sexual urges with a nonconsenting person, or the sexual urges or fantasies cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

Specify if:

In a controlled environment: This specifier is primarily applicable to individuals living in institutional or other settings where opportunities to engage in sadistic sexual behaviors are restricted.

In full remission: The individual has not acted on the urges with a nonconsenting person, and there has been no distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other areas of functioning, for at least 5 years while in an uncontrolled environment.

Diagnostic Features

The diagnostic criteria for sexual sadism disorder are intended to apply both to individuals who freely admit to having such paraphilic interests and to those who deny any sexual interest in the physical or psychological suffering of another individual despite substantial objective evidence to the contrary. Individuals who openly acknowledge intense sexual interest in the physical or psychological suffering of others are referred to as "admitting individuals." If these individuals also report psychosocial difficulties because of their sexual attractions or preferences for the physical or psychological suffering of another individual, they may be diagnosed with sexual sadism disorder. In contrast, if admitting individuals declare no distress, exemplified by anxiety, obsessions, guilt, or shame, about these paraphilic impulses, and are not hampered by them in pursuing other goals, and their self-reported, psychiatric, or legal histories indicate that they do not act on them, then they could be ascertained as having sadistic sexual interest but they would *not* meet criteria for sexual sadism disorder.

Examples of individuals who deny any interest in the physical or psychological suffering of another individual include individuals known to have inflicted pain or suffering on multiple victims on separate occasions but who deny any urges or fantasies about such sexual behavior and who may further claim that known episodes of sexual assault were either unintentional or nonsexual. Others may admit past episodes of sexual behavior involving the infliction of pain or suffering on a nonconsenting individual but do not report any significant or sustained sexual interest in the physical or psychological suffering of another individual. Since these individuals deny having urges or fantasies involving sexual arousal to pain and suffering, it follows that they would also deny feeling subjectively distressed or socially impaired by such impulses. Such individuals may be diagnosed with sexual sadism disorder despite their negative self-report. Their recurrent behavior constitutes clinical support for the presence of the paraphilia of sexual sadism (by satisfying Criterion A) and simultaneously demonstrates that their paraphilically motivated behavior is causing clinically significant distress, harm, or risk of harm to others (satisfying Criterion B).

"Recurrent" sexual sadism involving nonconsenting others (i.e., multiple victims, each on a separate occasion) may, as general rule, be interpreted as three or more victims on separate occasions. Fewer victims can be interpreted as satisfying this criterion, if there are multiple instances of infliction of pain and suffering to the same victim, or if there is corroborating evidence of a strong or preferential interest in pain and suffering involving multiple victims. Note that multiple victims, as suggested earlier, are a sufficient but not a necessary condition for diagnosis, as the criteria may be met if the individual acknowledges intense sadistic sexual interest.

The Criterion A time frame, indicating that the signs or symptoms of sexual sadism must have persisted for at least 6 months, should also be understood as a general guideline, not a strict threshold, to ensure that the sexual interest in inflicting pain and suffering on nonconsenting victims is not merely transient. However, the diagnosis may be met if there is a clearly sustained but shorter period of sadistic behaviors.

Associated Features Supporting Diagnosis

The extensive use of pornography involving the infliction of pain and suffering is sometimes an associated feature of sexual sadism disorder.

Prevalence

The population prevalence of sexual sadism disorder is unknown and is largely based on individuals in forensic settings. Depending on the criteria for sexual sadism, prevalence varies widely, from 2% to 30%. Among civilly committed sexual offenders in the United States, less than 10% have sexual sadism. Among individuals who have committed sexually motivated homicides, rates of sexual sadism disorder range from 37% to 75%.

Development and Course

Individuals with sexual sadism in forensic samples are almost exclusively male, but a representative sample of the population in Australia reported that 2.2% of men and 1.3% of women said they had been involved in bondage and discipline, "sadomasochism," or dominance and submission in the previous year. Information on the development and course of sexual sadism disorder is extremely limited. One study reported that females became aware of their sadomasochistic interest as young adults, and another reported that the mean age at onset of sadism in a group of males was 19.4 years. Whereas sexual sadism per se is probably a lifelong characteristic, sexual sadism disorder may fluctuate according to the individual's subjective distress or his or her propensity to harm nonconsenting others. Advancing age is likely to have the same reducing effect on this disorder as it has on other paraphilic or normophilic sexual behavior.

Differential Diagnosis

Many of the conditions that could be differential diagnoses for sexual sadism disorder (e.g., antisocial personality disorder, sexual masochism disorder, hypersexuality, substance use disorders) sometimes occur also as comorbid diagnoses. Therefore, it is necessary to carefully evaluate the evidence for sexual sadism disorder, keeping the possibility of other paraphilias or mental disorders as part of the differential diagnosis. The majority of individuals who are active in community networks that practice sadistic and masochistic behaviors do not express any dissatisfaction with their sexual interests, and their behavior would not meet DSM-5 criteria for sexual sadism disorder. Sadistic interest, but not the disorder, may be considered in the differential diagnosis.

Comorbidity

Known comorbidities with sexual sadism disorder are largely based on individuals (almost all males) convicted for criminal acts involving sadistic acts against nonconsenting victims. Hence, these comorbidities might not apply to all individuals who never engaged in sadistic activity with a nonconsenting victim but who qualify for a diagnosis of sexual sadism disorder based on subjective distress over their sexual interest. Disorders that are commonly comorbid with sexual sadism disorder include other paraphilic disorders.

Pedophilic Disorder

Diagnostic Criteria **302.2 (F65.4)**

A. Over a period of at least 6 months, recurrent, intense sexually arousing fantasies, sexual urges, or behaviors involving sexual activity with a prepubescent child or children (generally age 13 years or younger).

B. The individual has acted on these sexual urges, or the sexual urges or fantasies cause marked distress or interpersonal difficulty.

C. The individual is at least age 16 years and at least 5 years older than the child or children in Criterion A.

Note: Do not include an individual in late adolescence involved in an ongoing sexual relationship with a 12- or 13-year-old.

Specify whether:

Exclusive type (attracted only to children)

Nonexclusive type

Specify if:

Sexually attracted to males
Sexually attracted to females
Sexually attracted to both

Specify if:

Limited to incest

Diagnostic Features

The diagnostic criteria for pedophilic disorder are intended to apply both to individuals who freely disclose this paraphilia and to individuals who deny any sexual attraction to prepubertal children (generally age 13 years or younger), despite substantial objective evidence to the contrary. Examples of disclosing this paraphilia include candidly acknowledging an intense sexual interest in children and indicating that sexual interest in children is greater than or equal to sexual interest in physically mature individuals. If individuals also complain that their sexual attractions or preferences for children are causing psychosocial difficulties, they may be diagnosed with pedophilic disorder. However, if they report an absence of feelings of guilt, shame, or anxiety about these impulses and are not functionally limited by their paraphilic impulses (according to self-report, objective assessment, or both), and their self-reported and legally recorded histories indicate that they have never acted on their impulses, then these individuals have a pedophilic sexual interest but not pedophilic disorder.

Examples of individuals who deny attraction to children include individuals who are known to have sexually approached multiple children on separate occasions but who deny any urges or fantasies about sexual behavior involving children, and who may further claim that the known episodes of physical contact were all unintentional and nonsexual. Other individuals may acknowledge past episodes of sexual behavior involving children but deny any significant or sustained sexual interest in children. Since these individuals may deny experiences impulses or fantasies involving children, they may also deny feeling subjectively distressed. Such individuals may still be diagnosed with pedophilic disorder despite the absence of self-reported distress, provided that there is evidence of recurrent behaviors persisting for 6 months (Criterion A) and evidence that the individual has acted on sexual urges or experienced interpersonal difficulties as a consequence of the disorder (Criterion B).

Presence of multiple victims, as discussed above, is sufficient but not necessary for diagnosis; that is, the individual can still meet Criterion A by merely acknowledging intense or preferential sexual interest in children.

The Criterion A clause, indicating that the signs or symptoms of pedophilia have persisted for 6 months or longer, is intended to ensure that the sexual attraction to children is not merely transient. However, the diagnosis may be made if there is clinical evidence of sustained persistence of the sexual attraction to children even if the 6-month duration cannot be precisely determined.

Associated Features Supporting Diagnosis

The extensive use of pornography depicting prepubescent children is a useful diagnostic indicator of pedophilic disorder. This is a specific instance of the general case that individuals are likely to choose the kind of pornography that corresponds to their sexual interests.

Prevalence

The population prevalence of pedophilic disorder is unknown. The highest possible prevalence for pedophilic disorder in the male population is approximately 3%–5%. The population prevalence of pedophilic disorder in females is even more uncertain, but it is likely a small fraction of the prevalence in males.

Development and Course

Adult males with pedophilic disorder may indicate that they become aware of strong or preferential sexual interest in children around the time of puberty—the same time frame in which males who later prefer physically mature partners became aware of their sexual interest in women or men. Attempting to diagnose pedophilic disorder at the age at which it first manifests is problematic because of the difficulty during adolescent development in differentiating it from age-appropriate sexual interest in peers or from sexual curiosity. Hence, Criterion C requires for diagnosis a minimum age of 16 years and at least 5 years older than the child or children in Criterion A.

Pedophilia per se appears to be a lifelong condition. Pedophilic disorder, however, necessarily includes other elements that may change over time with or without treatment: subjective distress (e.g., guilt, shame, intense sexual frustration, or feelings of isolation) or psychosocial impairment, or the propensity to act out sexually with children, or both. Therefore, the course of pedophilic disorder may fluctuate, increase, or decrease with age.

Adults with pedophilic disorder may report an awareness of sexual interest in children that preceded engaging in sexual behavior involving children or self-identification as a pedophile. Advanced age is as likely to similarly diminish the frequency of sexual behavior involving children as it does other paraphilically motivated and normophilic sexual behavior.

Risk and Prognostic Factors

Temperamental. There appears to be an interaction between pedophilia and antisociality, such that males with both traits are more likely to act out sexually with children. Thus, antisocial personality disorder may be considered a risk factor for pedophilic disorder in males with pedophilia.

Environmental. Adult males with pedophilia often report that they were sexually abused as children. It is unclear, however, whether this correlation reflects a causal influence of childhood sexual abuse on adult pedophilia.

Genetic and physiological. Since pedophilia is a necessary condition for pedophilic disorder, any factor that increases the probability of pedophilia also increases the risk of pedophilic disorder. There is some evidence that neurodevelopmental perturbation in utero increases the probability of development of a pedophilic interest.

Gender-Related Diagnostic Issues

Psychophysiological laboratory measures of sexual interest, which are sometimes useful in diagnosing pedophilic disorder in males, are not necessarily useful in diagnosing this disorder in females, even when an identical procedure (e.g., viewing time) or analogous procedures (e.g., penile plethysmography and vaginal photoplethysmography) are available.

Diagnostic Markers

Psychophysiological measures of sexual interest may sometimes be useful when an individual's history suggests the possible presence of pedophilic disorder but the individual denies strong or preferential attraction to children. The most thoroughly researched and longest used of such measures is *penile plethysmography*, although the sensitivity and specificity of diagnosis may vary from one site to another. *Viewing time,* using photographs of nude or minimally clothed persons as visual stimuli, is also used to diagnose pedophilic disorder, especially in combination with self-report measures. Mental health professionals in the United States, however, should be aware that possession of such visual stimuli, even for diagnostic purposes, may violate American law regarding possession of child pornography and leave the mental health professional susceptible to criminal prosecution.