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Comparison of Accuracy and Precision of Sexodiagnostic Methods of Penile Plethysmography and Viewing Time

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Abstract

The diagnosis of pedophilia denotes (according to ICL 10) the erotic preference for prepubescent or early pubescent children. Penile plethysmography (PPG) measures the reaction of these men in response to either visual stimuli or to erotic narrative stories including child objects. Penile plethysmography is quite an intrusive assessment method, so viewing time (VT) might be a good alternative if it is shown to be comparatively accurate. Several studies in the past have shown inconsistent data, therefore more research is needed to confirm its validity in distinguishing responses to the preferred age category of pedophilic men.

Method: Participants were 30 self-referred admitting paedophiles aged between 18 and 55 in the experimental group and 30 heterosexual gynephile men in the comparison group. A set of photographs depicting naked adults in addition to male and female children across 6 age categories ranging from young infants to adolescents was used; the same set of 38 stimuli were used to measure PPG (first) and VT(after). PPG apparatus was used to measure penile reactions. VT was measured with use of a special software. Participants were instructed to rate all stimuli on the scale 1-6, with 1 being low attractiveness. Besides the participants in the experimental group were asked to fill in a 31— items questionnaire stating their preferred age and sex category of the child object and also facts from their history (experience of sexual abuse or rape, preferred sexual activities etc.)

Results: Data obtained from PPG and VT were analysed using separate repeated measures ANOVAs for patients and control group in order to test the difference between preferred, non-preferred and neutral stimulus categories using maximum PPG recorded during stimulus presentations and VT. For paedophiles, maximum ppg was significantly different between the three categories, with greatest response during preferred stimuli. For the control group, preferred stimuli was only found to significantly differ compared to neutral stimuli. In the patients group longer VT was recorded for preferred stimuli than to non-preferred and neutral stimuli. No significant difference however, was found between the VT of the control group in relation to the three stimulus categories.

Conclusions: PPG max measurement of sexual arousal in reaction to nude photographs appears to show a discriminant arousal in response to preferred age category of admitting paedophiles. Viewing time was also able to distinguish between the preferred age categories for patients and could be used as a less intrusive alternative for diagnostic purposes.

Key Words: Penile plethysmography; Viewing time Paedophilia; Hebephilia, Sexual Arousal; Paraphilia