

Paraphilic Disorder Diagnoses in Sexually Violent Predator Proceedings: A Meta-Analysis

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Sexually Violent Predator (SVP) laws allow for the civil commitment of high-risk sex offenders diagnosed with a 'mental abnormality.' Frequently, forensic experts use paraphilic disorder diagnoses as evidence this criterion in SVP proceedings, with the two most common *DSM-IV* diagnoses being pedophilic disorder and paraphilic disorder not otherwise specified (currently unspecified paraphilic disorder [UPD] or other specified paraphilic disorder [OSPD] in the *DSM-5*; e.g., Perillo et al., 2014). Historically, there has been much debate surrounding the reliability and validity of paraphilic disorder diagnoses (Marshall, 2007). Parallel to the issues regarding the psychometric properties of paraphilic disorders, ethical concerns have been raised given that these disorders are used to restrict civil rights (i.e., lengthy civil commitment; Winters et al., 2019). Given the controversial nature of the mental abnormality criterion, it is necessary to garner a sufficient understanding of the extent to which various diagnoses are being used by forensic experts in SVP cases. To this end, the present meta-analysis will examine the prevalence of paraphilic diagnoses, as well as other 'mental abnormalizes,' in SVP proceedings.

Method. Online searches for articles were conducted through PsycINFO, PubMed, Criminal Justice Abstracts with Full Text, and Medline Complete using seven search terms (representing terms used by all of the states' SVP laws). A total of 1,211 articles resulted from the initial search. These articles were screened using a review of titles and abstracts, which resulted in 81 articles. Following a full-text review of the articles, 17 articles met criteria for inclusion in the present meta-analysis. In order to be included in the present study, the article had to: 1) utilize a sample of sex offenders evaluated for SVP civil commitment; 2) provide frequencies or percentages for at least one paraphilic disorder; and 3) be published in a peer-reviewed journal in English. These 19 studies will be coded for the following variables: 1) publication date, 2) sample characteristics (e.g., state, sample size, gender, age, race, relationship status, education, offense history, incarceration length), 3) victim characteristics (e.g., gender, age, number of victims), 4) method (e.g., evaluator type, *DSM* edition), and 5) frequencies/percentages of paraphilic disorders, mental illness diagnoses, personality disorders, cognitive and learning disorders, and substance use disorders.

With the 17 selected articles, we plan to first analyze the study descriptives (e.g., sample and victim characteristics, method, frequencies of mental abnormality diagnoses). Subsequently, we will calculate the effect size indicator for proportions (ES_p) for all diagnoses, using the following equation: $ES_p = k/n$, where k is the frequency of the diagnosis and n is the total sample size (Lipsey & Wilson, 2001). Findings across the studies will be aggregated using the Random Effects meta-

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analysis. To examine the variability of findings across the included studies, Cochran's *Q* statistic will be utilized.

Discussion. The findings from this study will have important implications for policy, research, assessment, and treatment. Specifically, the results of the meta-analysis will shed light on the most common diagnoses used to qualify the mental abnormality requisite for SVP proceedings. This will provide a better understanding of the frequency of paraphilic disorders and related constructs (e.g., nonconsent, hebephilia) that have been the center of recent debate. These findings may promote the need for critical reflection about the clinical validity and utility, as well as legal admissibility of these controversial disorders. Likewise, it will inform treatment providers about the mental abnormalities these offenders present with upon civil commitment, as this information is vital to target in treatment as a means of moving an SVP towards eventual release. Finally, it is our hope these findings will stimulate further research into empirically-supported assessment and treatment methods for individuals convicted of sexual offenses.

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