

# Internet, contact and mixed youth who have engaged in sexual abuse (YESA):

## A comparative study

Mélissa Thibodeau (M.A candidate<sup>1,2,4</sup>), Julie Carpentier (Ph.D.<sup>1,2,4</sup>) & Jo-Annie Spearson Goulet (Ph.D.<sup>3,4</sup>)

<sup>1</sup>Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières

<sup>2</sup>Centre international de criminologie comparée (CICC)

<sup>3</sup>Université du Québec à Montréal

<sup>4</sup>Institut national de psychiatrie légale Philippe-Pinel (INPL)

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### Introduction

- Online sexual offenses have been steadily increasing since 2014 (Statistics Canada, 2022).
- In Quebec (Canada), accused juveniles are the most affected by this increase (Ministère de la Sécurité publique, 2021).
- Results of a meta-analysis (Babchishin & al., 2015) among adults showed that the mixed group (both online and contact offenses) was especially problematic compared to contact and Internet groups (e.g.: in terms of sexual deviance).
- Despite a growing number of studies being published on adult perpetrators of online offenses, those on YESA online remain limited. This lack of knowledge makes it difficult for clinicians to adopt an evidence-based practice since it is unclear if their needs are the same as those who engaged in contact sexual offenses.

### Objectives

- Describe characteristics of YESA on the Internet;
- Compare contact, mixed (both), and Internet YESA based on variables from the Risk-Needs-Responsivity (RNR) model (Andrews & Bonta, 2006).

### Method

#### Sample

- 107 male YESA (12-22 y.o) referred to the INPL outpatient programs (Quebec, Canada) for adolescents and adults who have engaged in sexually abusive behavior :
  - 45 YESA with contact **only**
  - 32 mixed YESA (Internet + contact offenses)
  - 30 YESA on the Internet **only**
- The average age was 16,9 (SD=1,89), the majority were Caucasian (77,6%) and in pre-sentencing context (56,1%).

#### Procedure

- Retrospective data were collected from archived files.

#### Analysis

- Descriptive (percentage, average) and comparative (chi-square test, comparison of means) analyses were performed.

### Results

Table 1 : Comparison between YESA on static factors (RISK)

	Contact (n=45)	Mixed (n=32)	Internet (n=30)	Total (N=107)	p	χ <sup>2</sup>	V
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)			
<b>Prior official criminal record</b>	12 <sub>a</sub> (26,7)	12 <sub>a</sub> (37,5)	1 <sub>a</sub> (3,3)	25 (23,4)	0,595	1,040	0,200
<b>Prior sentencing</b>	6 <sub>a</sub> (13,3)	10 <sub>a</sub> (31,3)	3 <sub>a</sub> (10,0)	19 (17,6)	0,054	5,828	0,233
<b>Relationship with victims</b>							
Intrafamilial	26 <sub>a</sub> (57,8)	12 <sub>a</sub> (37,5)	2 <sub>b</sub> (6,9)	40 (37,7)	<0,001	19,432	0,428
Known extrafamilial	10 <sub>a</sub> (22,7)	7 <sub>b</sub> (24,1)	4 <sub>c</sub> (14,3)	21 (20,8)	<0,001	28,139	0,515
Unknown extrafamilial	3 <sub>a</sub> (6,7)	10 <sub>b</sub> (31,3)	24 <sub>c</sub> (82,8)	37 (34,9)	<0,001	45,208	0,653
<b>Victims' age<sup>1,2</sup></b>	9,49 <sub>a</sub> (3,37)	12,04 <sub>b</sub> (3,74)	8,52 <sub>a</sub> (4,65)	10,06 (4,02)	0,004	10,984	
<b>Age of first sex. offense<sup>1</sup></b>	13,44 <sub>a</sub> (2,74)	14,75 <sub>a</sub> (1,93)	16,38 <sub>b</sub> (2,03)	14,64 (2,61)	<0,001	24,599	

<sup>1</sup>Mean and standard deviation are presented.

<sup>2</sup>Internet & mixed groups are calculated without child pornography offenses considering the difficulty to track the victims' age. The Internet group is calculated from the following sample (n=23).

Unless otherwise indicated, the variables were studied dichotomously (YES/NO).

Table 2 : Comparisons between YESA on dynamic factors (NEEDS)

	Contact (n=45)	Mixed (n=32)	Internet (n=30)	Total (N=107)	p	χ <sup>2</sup>	V
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)			
<b>Relationship with parents</b>							
Feels rejected/distant	34 <sub>a</sub> (79,1)	15 <sub>b</sub> (53,1)	10 <sub>b</sub> (33,3)	59 (56,2)	<0,001	16,639	0,398
Parents failed to provide warmth	22 <sub>a</sub> (46,7)	10 <sub>a</sub> (31,3)	9 <sub>a</sub> (30,0)	40 (37,4)	0,091	8,013	0,193
<b>Antisociality</b>							
Poor self-regulation	30 <sub>a</sub> (71,4)	26 <sub>a</sub> (83,9)	16 <sub>a</sub> (69,6)	72 (75,0)	0,377	1,949	0,142
Insensitive towards others	16 <sub>a</sub> (45,7)	16 <sub>a</sub> (57,1)	9 <sub>a</sub> (30,0)	40 (49,4)	0,665	0,816	0,100
Pro-criminal attitudes	5 <sub>a</sub> (14,7)	5 <sub>a</sub> (16,7)	3 <sub>a</sub> (10,7)	13 (14,1)	0,803	0,438	0,069
<b>Substance consumption</b>	21 <sub>a</sub> (46,7)	17 <sub>a</sub> (51,6)	14 <sub>a</sub> (46,7)	52 (48,6)	0,847	1,383	0,082
<b>Sexuality</b>							
Deviant sex. interests	15 <sub>a</sub> (39,5)	16 <sub>a</sub> (53,3)	14 <sub>a</sub> (51,9)	45 (47,4)	0,450	1,596	0,130
Obsessive sex. interests	11 <sub>a</sub> (27,5)	20 <sub>b</sub> (66,7)	11 <sub>a,b</sub> (39,3)	42 (42,9)	0,004	10,942	0,334
Consensual sex.	23 <sub>a</sub> (51,1)	24 <sub>a</sub> (75,0)	16 <sub>a</sub> (55,2)	63 (59,4)	0,094	4,727	0,211
Number of sex. partners <sup>1</sup>	1,15 <sub>a</sub> (1,892)	3,52 <sub>b</sub> (3,754)	2,50 <sub>a</sub> (3,727)	2,18 (3,193)	0,001	13,170	

<sup>1</sup>Mean and standard deviation are presented.

Unless otherwise indicated, the variables were studied dichotomously (YES/NO).

Table 3 : Comparison between YESA on responsivity factors

	Contact (n=45)	Mixed (n=32)	Internet (n=30)	Total (N=107)	p	χ <sup>2</sup>	V
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)			
<b>Denial/minimization</b>	32 <sub>a</sub> (71,1)	26 <sub>a</sub> (81,3)	21 <sub>a</sub> (70,0)	79 (73,9)	0,405	4,007	0,195
<b>Lack of empathy</b>	27 <sub>a</sub> (62,8)	20 <sub>a</sub> (71,4)	13 <sub>a</sub> (56,5)	66 (66,7)	0,535	1,252	0,115
<b>Insecure living arrangement</b>	9 <sub>a</sub> (25,0)	8 <sub>a</sub> (29,6)	2 <sub>a</sub> (7,4)	19 (21,1)	0,103	4,548	0,225
<b>Any prior victimization</b>	30 <sub>a</sub> (66,7)	20 <sub>a</sub> (62,5)	9 <sub>b</sub> (30,0)	59 (55,1)	0,005	10,783	0,317
<b>Mental health disorder (Dx)</b>							
Conduct disorder	9 <sub>a</sub> (20,0)	4 <sub>a</sub> (12,5)	5 <sub>a</sub> (16,7)	18 (16,8)	0,686	0,753	0,084
Personality disorders	11 <sub>a</sub> (24,4)	10 <sub>a</sub> (31,3)	9 <sub>a</sub> (30,0)	30 (28,0)	0,775	0,509	0,060
Neurodev. disorders	26 <sub>a</sub> (57,8)	19 <sub>a</sub> (59,4)	17 <sub>a</sub> (56,7)	62 (57,9)	0,977	0,047	0,021
Paraphilic disorders	6 <sub>a</sub> (13,3)	6 <sub>a</sub> (18,8)	6 <sub>a</sub> (20,0)	18 (16,8)	0,707	0,693	0,080

Unless otherwise indicated, the variables were studied dichotomously (YES/NO).

### Results

#### Static factors (RISK)

- Internet group had fewer intra-familial victims and more unknown victims than the other two groups.
- Victims of the Internet & contact groups were younger compared to the mixed group.
- Internet group was older than the other two groups when they first committed a sexual offense.

#### Dynamic risk factors (NEEDS)

- Internet & mixed groups felt less rejected by their parents.
- Mixed group had more obsessive/preoccupied sexual interests than the two other groups.
- Mixed group had more sexual partners than the two other groups.

#### Responsivity factors (RESPONSIVITY)

- The Internet group was less victimized (particularly in terms of child neglect) compared to the other two groups.
- ≠ differences in terms of prior sexual, physical & psychological victimization.

### Discussion

#### Static factors (RISK)

- No differences were found in terms of prior criminal offenses. However, some were found regarding relationship with victims'. The choice of victims' seemed to be linked to the type of sexual crimes committed (with contact or on the Internet).

#### Dynamic risk factors (NEEDS)

- Mixed group did not present greater empathy deficits nor greater sexual interests in children which differs from results among adults (Babchishin & al., 2015).

#### Responsivity factors (REPONSIVITY)

- Internet group also presented less childhood victimization (Babchishin & al., 2015).

#### Main findings

- Lower rate of sexual victimization than what is usually found (e.g. : Seto & Lalumière, 2010).
- YESA on the Internet share common characteristics with other groups, but have less prior victimization, a better relationship with their parents, and began sexual offending older than contact and mixed YESA.
- Our results suggest that mixed YESA may be overinvested in their sexuality (more obsessive/preoccupied with their sexuality and more sexual partners).

#### Direction for future research

- Further studies should be conducted to see if the Internet group is really a homogeneous group (e.g.: differences between youths who possesses child pornography and youths who are child luring).
- How to properly assess risk with the Internet group?

#### Limitations of the study

- Small sample
- Data used came from archived files in a forensic outpatient program:
  - Access to limited information.
  - Cases can be more severe and may not include all unreported sexual abuse.

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### Contact:

Mélissa Thibodeau, M.A candidate

melissa.thibodeau@uqtr.ca