Sexual Assaulters of Children and Adolescents: An Exploratory Study on its Biopsychosocial Characteristics in Northern Brazil

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ABSTRACT – The objective was to identify the main biopsychosocial characteristics among sexual aggressors of children and adolescents listed in 250 legal cases processed in the Court for Crimes against Children and Adolescents, in municipalities located in the North of Brazil. The variables analyzed: previous crimes, severity of the aggression, age of the perpetrator, and sex and age of the victim. The χ test was used for descriptive analysis and association. The results demonstrate acts of greater severity with adolescents and less severe acts without penetration with children. Younger people more often victimized unrelated teenagers, while older people preferred to victimize children belonging to the same family. The results demonstrated the establishment of a trend in terms of its biopsychosocial characteristics.

KEYWORDS: Sexual assault, children and adolescents, biopsychosocial characteristics.

Autores de Agressão Sexual de Crianças e Adolescentes: um Estudo Exploratório Sobre suas Características Biopsicossociais em Processos Jurídicos no Norte do Brasil

RESUMO – O objetivo foi identificar as principais características biopsicossociais entre agressores sexuais de crianças e adolescentes arrolados em 250 processos judiciais tramitados em Juizado de Crimes contra Crianças e Adolescentes, em municípios localizados no Norte do Brasil. As variáveis analisadas: prática de crimes anteriores, severidade da agressão, idade do autor e sexo e idade da vítima. Utilizou-se o teste χ para análise descritiva e associação. Os resultados demonstram atos de maior severidade com adolescentes, e os de menor severidade atos sem penetração com crianças. Os mais jovens vitimaram em maior proporção adolescentes sem parentesco, enquanto os mais velhos preferiram vítimas crianças pertencentes à mesma família. Os resultados demonstraram o estabelecimento de uma tendência em termos das suas características biopsicossociais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Agressão sexual, crianças e adolescentes, características biopsicossociais.

The increased social visibility of the phenomenon of sexual violence against children and adolescents has driven a gradual increase in studies on the characteristics and psychosocial condition of the people involved. However, publications that portray these characteristics have mainly focused on describing the profile of the victims (Costa, *et al.*, 2018). The gap regarding studies on authors that study sexual assault (Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents), is partly caused by, as Costa *et al.* (2018) argue, the difficulty of accessing the information of these individuals since they are invariably found in documents made available by judicial bodies and/or the criminal justice system that make up the legal proceedings.

A set of recent scientific studies (Costa, *et al.*, 2018; Lã- Branca, 2012; McMunn, 2019; Verônico, 2015) shows that Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents have multiple and heterogeneous characteristics, whose origin can be explained by the presence of a diversity of factors biopsychosocial factors that may have contributed to the manifestation of this aggressive behavior with different degrees of severity. This means that there is a multiplicity of interdependent factors capable of potentiating sexually aggressive behavior among individuals susceptible to hostile social and family environments, with a threat to human dignity, poverty of affective relationships, neglect and

mistreatment, without necessarily having their perpetrators present psychopathological disorder (Reis & Cavalcante, 2019; Verônico, 2015).

Although typologies or classification schemes that make it possible to distinguish the different types of perpetrators of aggression are relevant to reduce the recurrence rate of the act committed and assist in understanding their motivations and the phenomenon of sexual assault, among other objectives, the existing typologies are unsatisfactory and reproduce the generalist bias. Thus, new research is necessary to signal biopsychosocial characteristics found with each new investigation and its variations in each population, making it possible to map those that are prominent in a given society or region.

It is known that sexual aggression against children/adolescents is a multidetermined phenomenon, which can be explained or understood by the association, with different levels of severity, between personal and contextual predictive variables (negligence, physical aggression, psychology, sexual, alcohol use), dysfunctional families, among others). However, it is understood that these variables considered in isolation do not have the same effect on the individual's behavior. However, studies have shown that, when examined in an articulated manner, such variables tend to increase their potential to influence aggressive behavior (Lã-Branca, 2012; Levenson, et al., 2015; McMunn, 2019; Verônico, 2015). In brief, they can create a favorable environment for the manifestation of sexual aggression behavior and with this lead the individual to become more susceptible to the practice of sexual aggression in children and adolescents.

The mere presence of a variable associated with the practice of sexual aggression in certain groups or individuals, for example, distorted thoughts about the sexuality of children and adolescents (Nunes & Jung, 2012), does not result in an Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents. However, the presence of this type of variable has led its scholars to better understand the diversity present in the phenomenon of sexual assault and to look for patterns, similarities, trends that stand out in the systematic description of a population that is very heterogeneous in its composition.

In this sense, Burgess et al. (2007) and Martins (2017) reinforce the importance of identifying the prevalent characteristics or hegemonic patterns among Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents. These identified patterns would allow a less simplistic understanding of these individuals and, consequently, would increase the capacity to predict their behaviors in specific contexts. To do so, it is necessary that the identification of these characteristics can consider the use of any or all information, from those that are part of the scene where the violence in question occurred, to those that are proper to its protagonists - authors and victims (Burgess, et al., 2007; White, 2015; McMunn, 2019). The idea is to assume the heterogeneity of this population, but without failing to understand the importance of having consistent knowledge about the most common traits in this population.

Thus, recent studies point to a tendency to gather similar characteristics, collected from a set of attributes that can distinguish this group of individuals from others formed by authors of non-sexual crimes, inspiring new investigations on localized patterns. Considering these terms, there are several characteristics described in literature studies, and they can be organized around the following categories: biological (sexual excitement, age, sex), psychological (self-esteem, use of alcohol and/or other drugs, attachment style and cognitive distortion) and social (dysfunctional family dynamics, degree of relatedness, age and sex of the victim, among others).

Among the biological characteristics, sexual excitement can be mentioned. This characteristic, however, is not a consensus among researchers in the area, as demonstrated by Marshall (2014) and Michaud and Proulx (2009). For Michaud and Proulx (2009), not all Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents demonstrate sexual preferences considered deviant. Of the fourth profiles analyzed in this study, one group developed deviant sexual preference associated with pubescent girls, however, without the presence of physical violence; the second group revealed that deviant sexual preferences were directed at pre-pubertal children of both sexes, involving sexual contacts with and without physical violence; the third group showed a preference for undifferentiated age and, exclusively, for sexual contacts without physical violence; and finally, the fourth group revealed non-deviant sexual preferences associated with adult women. Such study demonstrates that heterogeneity is also present in the description of these specific characteristics referring or not to the presence of deviating physiological factors, among others studied.

In addition to sexual excitement another biological characteristic referred to in studies on Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents is age. Several reviewed surveys (Jeglic, et al., 2012; Pincolini & Hutz, 2014; Titcomb et al., 2012) have shown that this population is generally between 30 and 50 years old. The research developed by Titcomb et al. (2012), which involved sexually abusive biological and non-biological parents (stepfather), as assaulters, identified that the average age of these individuals at the time of the first aggression was 36,31 years old (DP=7,5), with an interval between 20 and 68 years old.

Similar findings were reported by Jeglic et al. (2012), who found that the majority (59%) of the participants were between 41 and 64 years old, followed by 26% who were between 25 and 40 years old, and another 12% over 65 years old. In the study performed by Simons, Wurtele and Durham (2008), comparing Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents with adult rapists, and data revealed that there was no significant association with this variable despite the average age of Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents s being greater than 30 years old.

Recent research (Schaaf, et al., 2019) also used color/ethnicity as biological variables in their investigations, having found as a result in the researched sample that black Sexual

assaulters of children and adolescents are often classified as having lower social skills, being more attracted to adults when compared to Caucasian and Latin aggressors, while Caucasian aggressors, although they also have lower social skills, demonstrated being sexually more attracted to children when compared to black assaulters.

Another biological characteristic explored in the literature concerns the sex of Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents. Studies, such as those published by Carvalho and Nobre (2013), Langevin and Curnoe (2012), and Simons *et al.* (2008) had exclusively Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents as male participants. Several studies (Costa, 2011; Grattagliano, *et al.*, 2012; Grotpeter & Elliott, 2002; Martins, 2017; Ribeiro & Cordeiro, 2012; Simons, 2015; Vieira, 2016) demonstrated the exclusivity or predominance of males among Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents s. In the work of Costa (2011), it was verified that the male sex is a prominent feature, however, his research brought important contributions about female Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents. Such results allow us to suggest that, although the most robust analyses focus on studies that investigated male Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents, research with women is possible and necessary, even because they are less common.

According to Campos *et al.* (2018), the derogatory conception of female victims is stimulated by a society that encourages the socialization of men based on values related to aggressiveness and competitiveness, stimulating the idea that sexual intercourse involves aggressive and instinctive behavior practiced by men. This social imaginary can shape a behavior that has a natural availability for sexual initiative, to take possession of the body of the one who presents greater weakness and sexual fragility, whether an adult woman or a female or male child (Machado, 1998).

According to their different psychological profiles, Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents may still have low self-esteem, problems with substance abuse, an inability to manage feelings of anger, and a dysfunctional mood (Robertiello & Terry, 2007). The study by Sanfelice and De Antoni (2010) indicated that, in terms of psychological characteristics, this population may have a deficit in intimacy and loneliness, and sexual assault can be used as a strategy to control people and reduce emotional loneliness.

Another aspect highlighted in the research concerns the history of sexual assault or child abuse suffered by this population. Regarding their own experiences as victims of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, more than half of the 112 Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents investigated by Titcomb *et al.* (2012) had this information available in their records, and of these, 8.9% had testified and 43.8% were victims of physical or emotional abuse before the age of 16. The largest proportion of Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents had been witnesses (5.3%) or had been victims (62.1%) of sexual abuse before the age of 16 (Titcomb *et al.*, 2012). In the research of Simons *et al.*

(2008), Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents were also more numerous (73%) and reported having experienced sexual abuse in childhood, compared to adult rapists (43%).

Experiences of sexual assault among adult rapists were less frequent and less severe (that is, 85% consisted of caresses). Rapists reported that their victims were mostly female (66%), acquaintances (27%), and family members (14%). From the participants who reported a history of sexual assault (155), Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents experienced this form of violence significantly earlier than those who sexually assaulted adults (Titcomb *et al.*, 2012).

Recent research (Fox *et al.*, 2015; Levenson, *et al.*, 2015; Wolff *et al.*, 2016), especially in criminology, have found correlations between adverse childhood experiences and delinquent behaviors in adult life, including sexual assault against children and adolescents. According to Levenson *et al.*, (2015), psychological, social, and neurological evidence suggests that adverse experiences such as poverty, family dysfunction, substance abuse of parents and family, and physical, sexual, and psychological abuse in childhood are common among Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents .

In addition to these characteristics, another psychological attribute that occupies a prominent place in research involving Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents are those that can produce cognitive distortions capable of explaining and justifying their aggressive behavior. Studies on the cognitive distortion of Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents have presented the presence of these diverse forms of thinking among this population, from those that tend to deny the act practiced as those related to denial and/or minimizing the action in general (Nunes & Jung, 2012). Despite having a series of studies on cognitive distortion, studies are still recent and need more research, to identify the systematic presence of this type of thinking, which has led to a lack of consensus among researchers.

Considering the attributes related to social variables, scientific data suggest that Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents generally come from families with dysfunctional dynamics and that sometimes there are inconsistencies in educational practices (Robertiello & Terry, 2007). In addition to these characteristics, other ones are commonly reported in the literature: degree of relatedness and the victim's sex (Langevin & Curnoe, 2012).

What are the biopsychosocial characteristics of AASCA in legal processes in Northern Brazil and how they are associated with the practice of previous crimes; severity and severity of sexual assault; author's age; typification regarding the victim's sex; and classification regarding the age of the victim?

Therefore, this study sought to identify the main biopsychosocial characteristics among Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents listed in legal proceedings processed in a Crimes against Children and Adolescents Court, in municipalities located in the North of Brazil.

METHOD

Sample

The study used secondary data from the examination of documents that make up lawsuits concerning men and women, over 18 years old Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents, sentenced for the crime of sexual assault of children and adolescents, between 2012 and 2014, in three municipalities in the state of Pará -Brazil: Belém, Abaetetuba and Parauapebas. The size of sample considered the number of legal proceedings located in each municipality. Thus, 47 proceedings were found in Abaetetuba and the sample calculation indicated 17 samples for examination. Likewise, in Belém, 555 proceedings were located and the sample involved 206; in Parauapebas, 73 proceedings were identified, 27 of which were analyzed. In the end, data collection involved 250 proceedings that met the criteria established by the research. To conduct the sample calculation, the data were stratified considering the total number of valid processes in each region or municipality surveyed.

Instrument

The form for the biopsychosocial characterization of Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents and the victim was developed by the research group and aimed to collect: (a) identification data (seven items), (b) biopsychosocial data from Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents, and its victim (34 items), (c) procedural data from the author (20 items) and (d) from the victims (15 items).

Ethical Considerations

The research project was approved according to the opinion of the Center for Tropical Medicine-NMT/Federal University of Pará (UFPA), issued on 04/30/2014, registered under number 650.210.

Procedures for collection.

The collection of data in the files of the judicial bodies consisted of reading the procedural documents and lasted approximately four months, from March to July 2014, performed by the research team.

Procedures for analysis.

For the analysis of the 250 legal proceedings, a database was organized to store the data extracted from them, which later underwent statistical treatment, with exploratory and descriptive analysis. For the assessment of exploratory data, the data were systematized based on the analysis of five biopsychosocial characteristics of Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents, that have been studied constantly in the literature: the previous crimes they practiced (Pincolini & Hutz, 2014), the severity of sexual assault (Grotpeter & Elliott, 2002; Ribeiro & Cordeiro, 2012), their age (Fisher *et al.*, 1999) and the characteristics of the victims, such as sex and age (Marshall, *et al.*,1986).

Therefore, the following biopsychosocial characteristics were analyzed: (a) description according to the practice of previous crimes: Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents with crimes (ACC) and without previous crimes (ASC); (b) severity of sexual assault, with Hands off ("less" severe sexual assault, such as exhibitionism and verbal abuse-HOFF) and Hands on (sexual assault with the use of force and/or other severe coercion-HON); (c) age of the assaulter: below 30 years old (<30) and above 30 years old (≥30); (d) typification regarding the victim's sex: Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents for boys (A♂) and girls (A♀); and (e) classification as to the victim's age: authors of sexual assault against children (AASC) and adolescents (AASA).

For the exploratory and descriptive analysis, the χ^2 test was used to perform the association between the five characteristics of Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents and the other variables identified in the procedural records, 74 variables referring to the characteristics of Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents (dichotomous variables Yes = 1, No = 0), 43 variables related to the victim (dichotomous variables Yes = 1, No = 0) and another 22 variables related to the procedural situation (dichotomous variables Yes = 1, No = 0). In all analyses, a significance level of 5% was adopted. The analyses were performed using the statistical *software* SPSS version 20.0 for Windows.

RESULTS

Prior convictions

In the exploratory data analysis, according to the practice of previous crimes, the characteristics of ACC and ASC did not show to be significantly associated with the other analyzed variables. That is, there was no statistically significant association between this group of Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents and having or no history of previous crimes.

The severity of sexual assault

Another analyzed characteristic refers to the severity of sexual assault, that indicated the statistically significant association between the HOFF and HON categories with the following variables: procedural situation ($X2=4,55$, *p-value*$=0,03$, gl=1), age of the victim ($X2=5,33$, *p-value*$=0,02$, gl=1), other types of violence, different from sexual assault ($X2=15,22$, *p-value*$=0,001$, gl=1), psychological violence ($X2=11,33$, *p-value*$=0,008$, gl=1), physical violence ($X2=11,33$, *p-value*$=0,0007$, gl=1), rubbing or touching the victim ($X2=15,70$, *sex*$=0,0001$, gl=1), vaginal sex ($X2=39,60$, *p-value*$=0,0001$, gl=1) and anal sex ($X2=16,90$, *p-value*$=0,0001$, gl=1), as shown in Table 1.

Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents HON were significantly associated with adolescent victims, with other types of violence such as psychological and physical violence during sexual assault and vaginal penetration as the most prevalent act. However, HOFF were significantly associated with child victims, without the prevalence of psychological and physical aggression, and mostly associated with acts such as rubbing or touching the victim.

Age of the assaulters

Another analyzed characteristic was the age of Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents s, which indicated a statistically significant association between the categories <30 and ≥ 30 years old, and the following variables: marital status ($X2=8,72$, *p-value=0,003*, gl=1), having children ($X2=28,83$, *p-value=0,001*, gl=1), degree of relatedness ($X2=16,58$, *p-value = 0,001, gl = 1*), confessed the aggression ($X2=11,54$, *p-value=0,007*, gl=1), and vaginal sex ($X2p=12,71$, *p-value=0,0004*, gl=1), as shown in Table 1.

Younger Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents (<30 years old) tend to be unrelated victims, are mostly single, and with no children. While older Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents (≥30 years old) preferred victims with a degree of relatedness, practiced less vaginal sex than younger Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents (<30 years old), mostly had some type of intimate relationship, and had children.

Sex of the victim

According to data on the victim's sex, there was a statistically significant association between categories A♀ and A♂ and the following variables, such as ethnicity/color of the author ($X2p=5,01$, *p-value=0,02*, gl=1) and the victim's religion ($X2=5,36$, *p-value=0,02*, gl=1), as shown in Table 1.

The data revealed a prevalence of Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents of ethnicity/black color among those related to the victim's sex. The A♀ preferred Catholic victims while the A♂ preferred non-Catholic victims.

Age of the victim

Another analyzed characteristic relates to the victim's age, which indicated a statistically significant association between the categories AC and AA with the following variables: age of who committed the first sexual assault ($X2=5,11$, *p-value=0,02*, gl=1), degree of relatedness ($X2=8,48$, *p-value=0,003*, gl=1) and confession of aggression ($X2=5,35$, *p-value=0,02*, gl=1), as shown in Table 1.

In general, the results showed that Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents preferentially perpetrated the first sexual assault when they were over 30 years old and denied the acts committed. ACs are those who preferred known victims and/or family members, as opposed to AAs who preferred those who were not related or inserted in extrafamilial contexts. The data on the biopsychosocial characteristics analyzed in this section were compared and organized in Table 1.

The results obtained revealed a significant association between the variables considered, demonstrating that the Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents had a variety of biopsychosocial characteristics. It should be noted that the results demonstrated the establishment of a trend in terms of biopsychosocial characteristics that need to be analyzed using inferential statistics in future research.

Table 1

Statement of significant association analyses

Variables	Categories	HOFF	HON	X²	p-value
Procedural Situation	Not arrested	66	123	4,55	0,03
	Arrested	12	49		
Age of the victim	Child	51	84	5,33	0,02
	Adolescent	27	88		
Other Types of Violence, besides sexual assault	No	49	61	15,22	0,001
	Yes	29	111		
Psychological Violence	No	60	93	11,33	0,008
	Yes	18	79		
Physical Violence	No	72	127	11,53	0,0007
	Yes	6	45		
Rubbing or touching the victim	No	33	120	15,70	0,0001
	Yes	45	52		
Vaginal Sex	No	64	68	39,60	0,0001
	Yes	14	104		
Anal Sex	No	68	106	16,90	0,0001
	Yes	10	66		
Variables	Categories	<30	≥30	*X²*	*p-value*
Marital Status	No Spouse	37	67	8,72	0,003
	With Spouse	25	114		
With Children	No Children	38	40	28,83	0,001
	With Children	22	131		
Degree of Relatedness	No Relatedness	50	85	16,58	0,001
	Relatedness	16	99		
Confession of the act of Aggression	No	49	91	11,54	0,007
	Yes	17	93		
Vaginal Sex	No	22	110	12,71	0,0004
	Yes	44	74		
Variables	Categories	A♀	A♂	*X²*	*p-value*
Assaulter's ethnicity/color	White	9	6	5,01	0,02
	Black	124	17		
Victim's Religion	Not Catholic	28	9	5,36	0,02
	Catholic	62	*4*		
Variables	Categories	AC	AA	X²	P-value
Age that Committed the 1ˢᵗ Aggression	<30	30	41	5,11	0,02
	≥30	104	72		
Degree of Relatedness	No Relatedness	61	74	8,48	0,003
	Relatedness	74	41		

Note. HOFF ("less" severe sexual assault, such as exhibitionism and verbal abuse), HON (sexual assault with the use of force and/or other severe coercion). (<30), below 30 years old and (≥30), above 30 years old. Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents for boys (A♂) and girls (A♀). Assaulters of child (AC) and adolescent (AA) sexual assault.

DISCUSSION

The characterization of Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents is not a simple task, since these individuals are part of a group that presents a clear heterogeneity in their features (Costa 2011; Pereira, 2007; Vieira, 2010). Thus, there are types of Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents that can be discussed, because they have distinct and heterogeneous characteristics.

The results presented in this exploratory study showed that the characteristics of Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents were significantly associated with a variety of interdependent biopsychosocial characteristics. Such results demonstrated a description of these attributes, by contributing to a preliminary explanation of the most prevalent characteristics found in the data of legal proceedings.

The analysis of the exploratory research revealed that: the AC and AA showed a significant association with the variable age ≥30 years old when they committed the first sexual assault. Such data are rejected by the literature when they reveal that Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents s are individuals that have a higher incidence in the age group of 30 and 50 years old (Titcomb *et al.*, 2012; Vieira, 2010).

In another analysis, the results showed that the variable denial of aggression was associated with AC and AA, as well as those who are older (≥30 years old) or younger (<30 years old). The literature shows that most Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents deny the act of which they have been accused or try to minimize its importance. These forms of denial can be related to a series of factors that together act directly to lead the perpetrator to deny the facts, even when the act has been legally proven. Among the branches of studies on the denial of the practiced act, there is an area of study that demonstrates that cognitive distortions are characterized by dysfunctional beliefs and that they can be expressed by attempts to deny or minimize the acts or their consequences (Nunes & Jung, 2012).

Another attribute identified was the association with the type of severity of the act, HOFF and HON, and the following result was obtained: the author HOFF was associated with the child victim, while the author HON with the adolescent victim. The results show that more severe attacks or involved in acts of cruelty, such as physical aggression, tend to be more targeted at victims in adolescence. However, the less severe acts were more frequently directed at child victims.

According to White (2015), for some victims, sexual assault is an isolated event, for other victims, there is an overlap with other types of aggression, such as domestic violence, emotional abuse and, unfortunately, this will be part of an ongoing situation, that is, perpetrators practice other types of offenses, in addition to sexual assault. White (2015) further describes in this study that about 90% of victims who suffered more severe sexual assaults were perpetrated by individuals who used other types of aggression.

As for the types of aggression and the act practiced, the data were presented as follows: most of the HON authors were associated with psychological and physical aggression, and the practice of vaginal penetration, while the author HOFF concentrated on acts such as rubbing yourself on the victim and touching their body.

In the studies made by Rebocho and Gonçalves (2012) that studied the typology of aggressive sexual behavior, two types of profile were identified, regarding the severity of the aggression, with two types of profile: Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents with a manipulative or opportunistic character. For researchers, manipulative Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents are more likely to not use physical force or weapons during the practice of sexual assault. They do not cause serious harm to their victims (physical, for example); their relationship with them is most often of a non-hostile nature, and they do not tend to force the victims to have sex. Penetration is most often associated with, or replaced by, other sexual contacts. On the other hand, opportunistic Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents may use physical force more frequently. They are more likely to establish a hostile relationship with the victim and inflict serious harm, penetration may be the only sexual act performed against the victim.

The variable vaginal sexual act also appeared in the exploratory analysis related to the age of Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents, with people of ≥30 years old not having vaginal sex and among people of <30 years old there was this prevalence. In the studies analyzed, no data equivalent to this association between the age of Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents and variable vaginal sex was found in the literature. Associating the type of act practiced with the age of Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents may be subject to analysis in future research and makes it possible to signal any difference in terms of severe (or serious) acts.

The results obtained with the exploratory analysis also signaled significant associations related to variables such as family relationships, marital status, religion, and ethnicity/color of the victim. The results pointed out the presence of a degree of relatedness between the Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents regarding the victim's age, with the majority of the ACs being the perpetrator of victims with some degree of relatedness, while the AAs were those who mostly do not have a degree of relatedness.

In general, ACs were more associated with sexual aggression that occurred in the intrafamily context, while AAs were more associated with aggression in the extrafamilial context. Studies have reported that intrafamily Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents make more victims compared to extrafamilial Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents (Souza & Adesse, 2005). The study performed

by Baía *et al.*, (2013) indicated that intrafamily Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents were the majority in the notifications made in specialized health services than extrafamilial Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents.

For Souza and Adesse (2005), the research data indicates that the Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents were known by most children and unknown by most adolescents. Among children, the most common AC was their biological relative, a data refuted by the research by Baía *et al.* (2013) and Pincolini and Hutz (2014); among adolescents, the neighbor stands out as the predominant AA, followed by the biological father, stepfather, and uncle.

In Brazil, according to the National Human Rights Ombudsman - Brazil (2019), parents and stepfathers appear as Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents S, then as the most important individual categories, responsible for approximately 40% of the records. Together with the uncles, this family group accounts for more than 50% of the reports of sexual assault against children and adolescents recorded by this channel.

The variable degree of relatedness was also associated with Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents' age. The data revealed that Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents aged <30 were those without a family relationship with the victim (extrafamilial), while Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents aged ≥30 were associated with a victim with a family relationship (intrafamily). In the research developed by Marshall *et al.* (1986), the extrafamilial Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents were younger when compared to the control group, while the intrafamily Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents were older when compared with them.

In turn, the marital status variable was associated with the age of <30 years old and was concentrated in individuals without a spouse and children, while the assaulter of ≥30 years old was associated with the variable with spouse and children. The results of the research (Gonçalves and Vieira, 2005) on Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents presented the variable marital status obtained the following result in their research: 35.1% of the participants were single, 28.7% were married or lived maritally and 36.2% were divorced or were separated. The results obtained show that, on average, the perpetrators of all criminal groups were married or lived maritally, however there was no significant difference.

As for the characteristics of the Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents related to the victim's sex, the data from this research demonstrated that the A♀ and A♂ were associated with black Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents, with the A♀ being associated with victims who were Catholic and the A♂ related to victims who belonged to other religions. The victim's sex was identified in the literature of the area as an important variable of sexual recurrence (Hanson & Bussiere, 1998).

Therefore, it is possible to realize that even with different characteristics, even in some moments presented in dichotomous ways reading this research, it can only be done by understanding the interaction between biological and social factors. In this study, it is considered necessary to understand more the interaction between these variables and their effect on the composition of the different characteristics in each trajectory, for each individual, and whether the variables approached or not in their way.

In theory, this study raised the discussion about the specificities of the characteristics of Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents, based on a systemic theory that understands that the characteristics alone or isolated do not reflect the heterogeneity of these individuals. In the social sphere, research brings, as a contribution, the need to promote effective forms of intervention, especially in recovery centers, from a new and more human perspective, with more restorative and less punitive practices. This debate expands towards a consolidation of more effective public policies targeted at this specific population.

The investigation of the Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents' characteristics presented a series of limitations: the first one, was a study without a national parameter since there was little research in the Brazilian scenario and little scientific production on the characteristics of Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents. Besides this aspect, insufficient or superficial information in the documents collected, especially regarding the psychological characteristics of Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents, may signal problems of generalization, pointing out that more studies should be conducted on different sources of information. It is also worth mentioning that these studies need to consider the diversity of biopsychosocial characteristics and the existing relationships between them, to avoid reductionism in terms of the social appeal that seeks to propose a unique profile for Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents, linked to pedophilia.

Lastly, the general issues related to under-reporting of sexual crimes lead to the problem typically seen in research on the characteristics of Sexual assaulters of children and adolescents, that is, the absence of a Brazilian matrix to study them, which limits the ability to achieve significant differences between research and comparison groups.

For future research, it is recommended that studies use rigorous scientific methods and that researchers are encouraged and supported with more investments for such an initiative.

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Conflict of interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

Data availability statement

The data supporting the findings of this study can be requested from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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