

Issue of Pedophilia; is it a mental disorder or a sexual orientation?

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Pedophilia, which is considered as a mental disorder, can be simply defined as the fantasy or act of sexual activity with prepubescent children. A "pedophile" is a person who has a sustained sexual interest towards children, generally aged 13 or younger (APA, 2013). The American Psychiatric Association (APA) considers "pedophilia" as a mental disorder in its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders since 1968. In DSM-5, "pedophilia" has been grouped with other paraphilia. Research studies have clearly shown that pedophilia is a result of neurobiological, environmental, and psychological facts.

Though DSM-5, ICD-10 and other manuals of mental disorders consider pedophilia as a mental disorder, a considerable number of research studies try to prove that pedophilia is a "sexual orientation." Sexual orientation is a term used to describe a person's patterns of emotional, romantic, and sexual attraction - and a person's sense of personal and social identity based on those attractions. There are three sexual orientations.

Heterosexual: attracted to individuals of the opposite sex

Bisexual: attracted to members of either sex

Homosexual: attracted to individuals of one's own sex

Considering several research findings, many psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, forensic psychologists, scientists etc. had to accept that pedophilia is a sexual orientation. However, the idea that sexual attraction to children is an "orientation" is highly controversial as it suggests that offenders cannot change. Further, social and cultural opinions on pedophilia remain the same and so does the law. So, we are left with the alarming question: if someone is born pedophile, what should society do with him or her? This issue should be addressed soon and authorities have to take a decision soon as a considerable number of people in the world are pedophiles. Using a literature review of the research studies done on "pedophilia" the topic "Issue of Pedophilia; is it a mental disorder or a sexual orientation?" will be critically discussed.