



Harm, Progression and Addiction: A Systematic Review of Reviews on Offence-Supportive Cognitions in Online Child Abuse Material Offenders

Problem

- Technological developments over the past two decades provide a unique environment for offenders to access, store, share and produce child abuse material (CAM)
- The Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation reports the production and availability of CAM online has increased by over 60% from 2015 to 2018 in Australia

Aims

- Synthesise the current body of qualitative research on offence-supportive cognitions in online CAM offenders
- Explore how online CAM offenders overcome inhibitions towards offending
- Examine how the online environment impacts offence cognitions

Methodology

- Systematic review of reviews using open-source data systematically collected from online databases published between 2000-2020
- 3 systematic reviews and 18 individual studies included in review of reviews

Key Findings

- 83% of studies showed offenders often perceived their offending behaviour as harmless
- 77% of studies detailed a progression narrative, describing a movement from normative adult pornography to CAM and an escalation to more extreme material
- 55% of studies indicated offenders experienced difficulty with self-regulation and controlling their engagement with CAM
- The online environment plays a pivotal role in creating a heightened sense of perceived anonymity and breaking down barriers in accessing CAM
- Offenders felt more comfortable exploring deviant sexual interests whilst online

Implications and Recommendations

- Online CAM offenders are a heterogeneous group and diverse intervention programs will be required to combat this crime phenomenon
- Interventions that increase the awareness of the harms in consuming CAM may be beneficial in increasing inhibitions towards offending
- Prevention efforts should focus on general sexual education programs that promote positive sexuality, healthy sexual outlets and address deviant sexual interests
- Psycho-educational strategies that address problematic Internet use and empower offenders to take control of their lives and decisions may be important in achieving desistance
- Prevention efforts should focus on making the online environment less attractive to potential offenders