

Personal Attitudes of Young Men Prosecuted for Commission of Sexual Offences

Yulia A. Tokareva

Ural Federal University named after the first President of Russia B. N. Yeltsin,
Yekaterinburg, Russia

Elena M. Dzuman

Nizhnevartovsk Psychoneurological Hospital,
Nizhnevartovsk, Russia

Установочно-смысловые детерминанты у юношей, привлеченных к уголовной ответственности за совершение сексуальных преступлений

Юлия А. Токарева

Уральский федеральный университет имени первого Президента России Б. Н. Ельцина,
Екатеринбург, Россия

Елена М. Дзюман

Нижевартовская психоневрологическая больница,
Нижевартовск, Россия

Corresponding author. E-mail: ulia.tokareva@yandex.ru

Abstract. The problem of attitudes of a person who commits sexual crimes is of particular interest to personality psychology, since it does not contain open destructions and signs of personality disorders. The purpose of the study is to identify the features of the installation and semantic determinants in young men brought to criminal responsibility for committing sexual crimes. Personality attitudes are stable psychological processes that cause not only stable, but also reactive behavioral reactions. The attitudes associated with values and meanings and laid down in adolescence are guiding in relation to oneself and others. The research presents data demonstrating the semantic determinants of young men convicted of sexual crimes undergoing the procedure of clinical and psychological examination. A qualitative analysis showed that young men accused of committing sexual assaults are already initially inclined to interpret the gestures of their communication partner as more aggressive than their own. The leading attitude that the partner is more active and initiative in communication and

that they are responsible for the emergence of problems and conflicts, creates the basis for a hostile perception against the background of the value of “friendly relationship.” The results of the study allow to conclude that one’s own destructiveness acts as an attempt to resist the pressure of a partner, no matter who they are (male or female). The low level of their own communication activity, suspicion are the basis of the attitude to transfer responsibility for interaction to the communication partner.

Keywords: personal attitudes; value orientations; personal semantic orientations; aggressiveness; suspicion; conflict; sexual offences

Аннотация. Проблема установок человека, совершающего сексуальные преступления, представляет особый интерес для психологии личности, поскольку личностные установки не содержат открытых деструкций и признаков расстройств личности. Цель исследования — выявление особенностей установки и смысловых детерминант у юношей, привлеченных к уголовной ответственности за совершение преступлений сексуального характера. Личностные установки — это устойчивые психологические процессы, которые вызывают не только устойчивые, но и реактивные поведенческие реакции. Установки, связанные с ценностями и смыслами и заложенные у человека в подростковом возрасте, являются руководящими по отношению к себе и другим. В исследовании представлены данные, демонстрирующие семантические детерминанты молодых мужчин, осужденных за сексуальные преступления и проходящих процедуру клинико-психологического обследования. Качественный анализ показал, что молодые люди, обвиняемые в совершении сексуальных посягательств, уже изначально склонны интерпретировать жесты своего партнера по общению как более агрессивные, чем их собственные. Изначальная установка на то, что партнер более активен и инициативен в общении и что он несет ответственность за возникновение проблем и конфликтов, создает основу для враждебного восприятия на фоне ценности «дружеских отношений». Результаты исследования позволяют сделать вывод, что собственная деструктивность выступает как попытка противостоять давлению партнера, кем бы он ни был (мужчиной или женщиной). Низкий уровень собственной коммуникативной активности, подозрительность обуславливают передачу ответственности за взаимодействие партнеру по общению.

Ключевые слова: установки личности; ценностные ориентации; смысловые ориентации личности; агрессивность; подозрительность; конфликтность; сексуальные преступления

Introduction

At the current stage of humanities knowledge, development the researchers’ attention is focused on interdisciplinary phenomena, characterizing a human as a sovereign individual. These phenomena are reflected in such concepts as readiness to decide, autonomy and self-determination, resiliency, rational efficiency and other phenomena, disclosing mechanisms of human self-realization. These categories have a common denominator.

It is a human capability, based on internal control and value-semantic orientations of behavior in the broad context of life implementation and individual internality. The central issues for personality psychology are the issues of human decisions and actions. It is determined by different factors of human nature including human being (Asmolov, 2002; Remschmidt, 1994).

The diversity of psychological approaches to solution of these issues is connected with the diversity of perceptions about a human and an individual (Stepanova, 2010). According to Vygotsky, the core concept is that “acquisition of own behavior by various means” is an essential psychological characteristic of the individual and “the decision is the most specific for acquisition of own behavior” (Vorontsov, 2014, p. 11).

The problem of mental reflection selectiveness is showed in Vygotsky’s work. It is considered that a human always makes a choice and all mental health is based on it. In the context of positive side of mental health, it is based on an intentional attitude toward subject (Vygotsky, 1983). Any of psychological concepts, even ignoring the principle of activity, implicitly contain the idea about a human, who has to make a decision (Rerke & Glazkova, 2019; Praizendorf & Morozova, 2019; Tarchenko, 2019).

The attitude of an individual committing criminal acts is the problem, which is particularly relevant for modern personality psychology. Not only the number of crimes is increasing, but also the severity of committing offences. It is always considered that a person, who don’t have any psychological disturbances, make own decisions (Ford Kellan & Beach Frank, 2001; Bratus, 1988; Bruno, 2019).

The offences connected with actions of sexual nature are related to special category of personality problems originating from family relations. In case, when offences are committed by young men from non-needy families, it is necessary to see the reasons particularly (Dozortseva, 2000; Klochko & Galazhinskiy, 2009, Kudryakov, 1996; Kuznetsova, Abramova, Efremov, & Enikolopov, 2019). Unified determinant, reliance on opinion of legal psychology about personality characteristics of criminals, who are convicted of committed sexual offence, is unlikely to help practical psychology choose an effective way of preventing and correcting of personality disorders.

Methodology and Methods

The research about personal attitudes of young men, who are prosecuted for commission of sexual offences, is based on general methodological foundation of the theory about culture-historical personality development and psychical functions (Vygotsky, 1983), the general principles of psychological activity theory (Leontiev, 1997; Rubinstein, 2007): the principle of the unity of consciousness and activity, the principle of object-orientedness, the principle of the unity of affect and intellect, the principle of internalization and externalization. According to Vygotsky’s works and other researchers as E. V. Galazhinskiy and B. E. Klochko (2009), A. A. Kirikov (2017), O. V. Lukyanov (2007), our work is included the concept of the individual as culture-historical and

meaning system process, process of selective and directive human interaction with social environment and self-interaction.

As practical aspects the research is based on the idea of active and meaningful nature of consciousness (Vygotsky, 1983; Zhdan, 2008), the theory of attitudes, understanding of attitudes and adjusting meaning regulation role in the sustainability management (Asmolov, 2002), the idea of subjectivity as an essential personal characteristic, the conception of world vision as comprehensive meaning system of human including subjectivity in the capacity of core integrative principle (E. U. Artemeva, V. P. Serkin, S. D. Smirnov), understanding of a personal choice as an act of uncertainty resolution (Kornilova & Smirnov, 2019; Leontiev, 1997). The research is carried out by taking into account scientists' ideas of depth psychology (G. Allport, V. Frankl, R. May, A. Maslow, C. Rogers) about individual decision and responsibility in human's life, the concept of humans as optional creatures, that are able to analyze themselves (Korzhovala, 2006; Rerke & Glazkova, 2019; Yunusova, 2008). The research works of psychoanalytic tradition about the law of psychosexual stage, mechanisms of normal or neurotic personal conditions within the framework of human capability to make own decision, were taken into consideration.

In total, 135 young men, aged 17–20, took part in this research. Male minors accused of committing sexual assaults: mainly rape (Article 131 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation), violent acts of a sexual nature (Article 132 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation), and in 7 cases by a combination of articles. The study was carried out as part of forensic psychological evaluations and clinical and psychological examinations at the Nizhnevartovsk Neuropsychiatric Dispensary (as part of the Program of Psychological Support for Young People from 2018).

Research methods were chosen due to the aim, especially identifying of personal attitudes: questionnaire, the Rokeach Value Survey (M. Rokeach), the Test of Life-Purpose Orientation (D. A. Leontiev), the Ratio Level of Value and Availability in Various Life Spheres (E. B. Fantalova), the projective technique Hand Test (Kurbatova & Mulyar, 2001); U-Mann–Whitney test, W-Wilcoxon test.

The Results of Research

Two groups participated in the study: 1 group, young men convicted of committing sexual crimes, 2 group “norm.” The results of questionnaire survey showed that young men committed sexual offences consider that they were accused unfair and committed these offences with partner agreement (50 %). 100 % of young men confirm that a man takes the lead in sexual relations. So that a woman can be emotionally distant from a man, although she wants to have a relationship with a man. Forcing and insistence are taken as a game in sexual relationships.

The results obtained on the Rokeach Value Survey demonstrate the lack of values shape (97 %). According to psychological interpretation, the unformed value system is an argument of personal immaturity. It means that young men committed sexual of-

fences have contradictory in value orientations. It entails inconsistency and unpredictability of human behavior. Immaturity of value orientations defines infancy, domination of extrinsic stimulus in personal behavior and therefore conformism and anonymity. The lack of formed value orientations describes a person as immature.

The results of the ratio level of value and availability in different life spheres 1 group, young men convicted of sexual offences (E. B. Fantalova) are shown in *Table 1*.

Table 1

The results of learning “value” and “availability,” group 1, average values

Variables	Value	Availability	Difference between Value — Availability
Active life	3.3	6.3	–3
Health	8.9	4.1	4.8
Interesting job	5.3	5.3	0
Beauty of nature and art	3.4	7.5	–4.1
Love	6.6	5.8	.6
Material wealth	7.4	2.7	4.7
Having loyal friends	6.2	5.7	.5
Self-confidence	5.4	7.1	–1.7
Cognition	2.7	5.9	–3.2
Freedom as independence of actions	5.6	6	–.4
Happy family life	10.1	6.9	3.2
Creative work	1.2	2.7	–1.5
$R = \sum Value - Availability $			27.7

Analyzing the results, it is shown that the most valuable spheres are love and having good friends — 40 %, material wealth — 50 %, health — 26.7 %. This is due to the fact that love and having good friends are the main life spheres for young men from group 2 (norm). Besides, they also consider that the main condition is material wealth.

The least important life spheres are art, cognition, active life and beauty of nature. But the most available spheres for them are beauty of nature, active and happy family life, self-confidence.

The next stage was the research method, identifying young men’s attitudes and actions.

The researchers of this method have a theory that the total number of responses is connected with having so called *tendency to action*, which reflects action potential and personal degree of activity. Young men prosecuted for commission of sexual offences have a low level of activity (on average 14.73 — high frame of low values). Moreover, they describe their friends as more active than themselves (22.43 and 19.15). The total number

of responses, which are shown in other three interpretations, is lower ($p \leq .05$), although in quantitative terms action potential is found in female gestures interpretations.

It is worth mentioning there is intensity of attitude to communication, which points to person’s communicative activity. In interpretations of male partner’s, female partner’s and enemy’s gestures the reactions are in the ratio 3 : 1. But in own and friendly gestures interpretations it is in the ratio 1.5 : 1, that is below normal for adolescence aimed at communication.

As a result, it demonstrates that young men show a tendency to attribute high activity and initiative to strangers (men or women) and enemies.

The group of young men prosecuted for commission of violent offences is characterized by an average level of psychic activity. It was identified from higher total number of responses (the amount of responses is on average 22.20). However, significant difference in the number of different subjects’ responses wasn’t identified. There is also a high level of communicative activity: it is in ratio 3 : 1, that points to high interest in communication.

The average values of attitudes common rate have negative sign, that show attitudes to conflict behavior.

The next stage is the qualitative research in interpretations of nonverbal behavior. The research results of the men’s group prosecuted for commission of sexual offences, are shown in *Table 2*.

Table 2

Group values of interpretation of gestures of young men convicted of sexual crimes, average values

Interpretation of gestures	Agg	Dir	Com	Aff	Dep	F	Act	Pas	Des	Ex	Crip	Ten
Own	17.14	20.52	7.66	8.65	3.43	3.65	9.40	12.57	9.57	2.06	4.03	1.31
Partner	29.28	21.38	18.07	3.17	2.95	1.81	15.98	1.12	1.46	4.58	.19	
Woman	28.77	22.25	15.35	3.24	5.10	2.61	10.82	3.38	2.23	5.67	.57	
Enemy	29.43	21.21	18.00	2.88	2.87	1.52	16.59	1.15	1.46	4.90	.00	
Friend	10.32	18.10	9.01	16.60	7.14	3.90	7.54	14.05	8.20	1.37	3.78	
Average	22.75	20.78	13.08	7.73	4.46	2.70	12.06	6.42	4.58	3.72	1.71	

Note. Agg, Dir = readiness for an open aggressive behavior, unwillingness to adapt to the social environment; Com = readiness for communication; Aff = the ability for an active social life, the desire to cooperate with other people; Dep = the need for help and support from other people; F = ability to resist open aggressive behavior; Act, Pas = social sensitivity, sensitivity in interpersonal relationships, human anxiety; Des = emotional ambivalence, a tendency to contemplate, comprehend, experience; Ex = correlates with hysterical personality traits, with an indefatigable and persistent desire to be in the center of events; Crip = feeling of physical inadequacy, fear of one’s own weakness or physical disabilities; Ten = personality anxiety or “neuroticism.”

This table demonstrates that young men have high level of similarity between own interpretation and friendly non-verbal behavior interpretation ($p \leq .05$).

On the other hand, the interpretations of enemy's gestures have the same similarity because it's connected with an abstractive partner and a woman ($p \leq .05$). The results are presented in graphs in *Figure*. So that both strangers and women are perceived as enemies, but friends are identified with themselves.

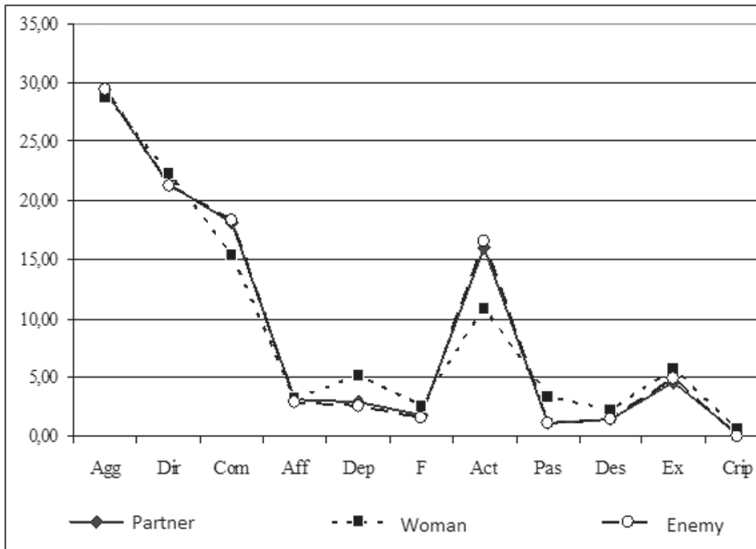


Figure. Indicators of Hand Test in different interpretations, such as partner, woman and enemy gestures. The vertical axis is an indicator of aggressiveness. Decoding of scales see *Table 2*

The qualitative research of certain indicators shows that young men accused for committing sexual offences have a tendency to interpret partner's gestures more aggressive than their own. The indicator of partner's aggressiveness is higher than the comparable indicator in own gestures interpretation ($p \leq .05$). Aggressiveness, attributed to an enemy, is much higher. The lowest indicator of this category is in friend's gestures interpretation. The significant difference and other indicators gain 99 % level in other interpretations.

It is believed that the results are explained with the effect of defense mechanisms. The young men of this group attribute activity and initiative of communication to others (strangers, women, enemies). So that they are responsible for problems and conflicts. Their actions lead to the high level of destructiveness. Their own destructiveness is an attempt to resist aggressive actions of other people.

Meanwhile, these men have higher level of gestures directive estimation than the indicator of aggressiveness, according to their own and friend's gestures interpretations. The number of directive responses is about the same in all interpretations, but the difference is within a range of statistical uncertainty. In men's opinion, interaction, including

in the category of directiveness (psychological pressure, commands and instructions) plays an important role in any communication.

In fact, these men have a low percentage of responses in the category of communication (*group averages* are 13.08). Moreover, there is the lowest communication estimation in own gestures interpretation and the highest in stranger's and enemy's gestures interpretation ($Com_{stranger} = 4.96$; $Com_{enemy} = 18.35$; $p \leq .01$). The same indicator of friend's gestures interpretation is also lower than interpretation of abstractive partner's, woman's and enemy's nonverbal behavior ($p \leq .05$). They have a tendency to interpret own and friendly gestures as showing emotions to other people ($Aff_{own} = 10.15$; $Aff_{other} = 14.82$). They have a high level of fears ($F_{own} = 3.97$; $F_{other} = 3.79$). But these indicators ($Aff_{own} = 6.57$; $F_{enemy} = 1.78$) are lower in partner's gestures interpretation than in own gestures interpretation ($p \leq .05$).

Interpretations of own and friendly gestures have a high percentage of responses in the category of *inactivity* ($Pas_{own} = 11.53$; $Pas_{other} = 14.05$) and *characterization* ($Des_{own} = 10.77$; $Des_{other} = 8.47$). But interpretations of partner's and enemy's nonverbal behavior have more responses estimated by the category *impersonal activity* ($Act_{partner} = 18.20$; $Act_{enemy} = 15.76$). Besides, interpretations of partner's and enemy's gestures have higher responses rate in the category of *ostentation* ($Ex_{partner} = 4.81$; $Ex_{enemy} = 4.35$). There is a small percentage of responses in own gestures interpretations, but interpretations of friend's gestures have a low level (the indicators are 0.71 и 2.14). So, a partner is a person, who is aggressive, more active and readier to demonstrate own domination. These young men consider that their own nonverbal behavior is passive, emotional and filled with fears.

What is interesting in this data is that the interpretations of one's own and friendly gestures reveal a large percentage of responses in which the "hand" is perceived as damaged (sick, crippled, deformed). As noted by T. N. Kurbatova and O. I. Mulyar (2001), this fact indicates a concern about the appearance and the impression that the subject makes on others. While the corresponding indicators in the interpretation of partner and enemy gestures are low.

Thus, the analysis allows us to conclude that a group of young men accused of committing sexual assaults shows a generally negative attitude to communication, a low level of communicative activity and insufficient communicative competence. The complex of these manifestations is the basis of the attitude to transfer responsibility for interaction to the communication partner.

Conclusion

The study of the set-semantic determinants of young men convicted of sexual assaults and undergoing a clinical and psychological examination showed that the majority have negative attitudes towards the other, with signs of protective ones. Thus, the revealed high level of suspicion in relation to a communication partner, a high level of rivalry and readiness to resist, is associated with the attitude towards greater activity of the partner

and readiness to resist the conflict. Even before entering into interaction with other people, the attitude of young men that the other is inclined to manifest open aggression affects the character and style of communication. When engaging in communication, young men tend to interpret the non-verbal behavior of a stranger as hostile. At the same time, the image of the enemy is formalized: it is perceived by them as a real threat — an active aggressor, ready to demonstrate his superiority and incapable of manifesting positively oriented reactions.

Despite the existing lack of trust in another young man, accused of committing sexual assaults show a high interest in sincere emotional contacts, as evidenced by the values identified in them (the value of *having friends* is 40 %). Summarizing the data obtained, it is now possible to state that only those who fulfill certain conditions can count on a positive emotional attitude, according to the group of studied young men. These conditions can be traced in the interpretation of the gestures of the other: the absence of aggressiveness, the active expression of a positive emotional attitude and the ability to empathize. The attitudes and interpretation of a woman's non-verbal behavior reveals similarities with the interpretation of the enemy's gestures. That is, in the minds of these young men, a woman is aggressive, dominant, active and, ultimately, hostile. It can be assumed that young men accused of sexual assaults have difficulties in communicating with women and problems in finding constructive solutions to the complications that arise in such situations.

References

- Asmolov, A. G. (2002). *Personality psychology: Principles of general psychological analysis*. Moscow: Smysl, Akademiya. [In Russian]
- Bratus, B. S. (1988). *Personality anomalies*. Moscow: Mysl. [In Russian]
- Bruno, V. V. (2019). Risky sexual behavior of modern teenagers in Russia. Part 2. *Sociological Science and Social Practice*, 1(25), 113–125. <https://doi.org/10.19181/snsp.2019.7.1.6273> [In Russian]
- Dozortseva, E. G. (2000). *Abnormal personality development in adolescents and young men with delinquent and criminal behavior* (Abstract of doctoral dissertation). [In Russian]
- Ford Kellan, S., & Beach Frank, A. (2001). Human sexual behavior in comparative perspective. In D. N. Isaev (Ed.), *Sexology* (pp. 386–396). Saint Petersburg: Piter. [In Russian]
- Kirikov, A. A. (2017). Psychosexual deviations and their manifestation in isolation. *World of Science. Pedagogy and psychology*, 5(4), 1–9. Retrieved from <http://mir-nauki.com/PDF/05PSMN417.pdf> [In Russian]
- Klochko, V. Y., & Galazhinskiy, E. V. (2009). Investigation of innovative potential of a personality: Conceptual grounds. *Siberian Journal of Psychology*, 33, 6–12. Retrieved from http://journals.tsu.ru/psychology/en/&journal_page=archive&id=982&article_id=19929 [In Russian]
- Kornilova, T. V., & Smirnov, S. D. (2019). *Methodological foundations of psychology* (2nd ed.). Moscow: Yurayt. [In Russian]
- Korzhova, E. Yu. (2006). *Psychology of human life orientations*. St. Petersburg: RHGA. [In Russian]

- Kudryakov, Yu. N. (1996). Motivation for serious sexual homicides. In *Psychology today*. Vol. 2 (pp. 83–91). Moscow: RPS. [In Russian]
- Kurbatova, T. N., & Mulyar, O. I. (2001). *Projective personality research method "Hand-test."* St. Petersburg: IMATON. [In Russian]
- Kuznetsova, S. O., Abramova, A. A., Efremov, A. G., & Enikolopov, S. N. (2019). The study of the auto-aggressive behaviour in individuals who survived sexual abuse in childhood. *National Psychological Journal*, 3(35), 88–100. Retrieved from <http://npsyj.ru/articles/detail.php?article=8181> [In Russian]
- Leontiev, D. A. (1997). *Essay on personality psychology*. Moscow: Smysl. [In Russian]
- Lukyanov, O. V. (2007). The actuality of studying transtemporal aspects of social and psychological experience. *Vestnik Tomsk State University*, 298, 179–185. Retrieved from <http://vital.lib.tsu.ru/vital/access/manager/Repository/vtls:000395409> [In Russian]
- Praizendorf, E. S., & Morozova, I. S. (2019). Specific aspects of sexual identity of senior adolescents. *The Bulletin of Irkutsk State University. Series «Psychology»*, 27, 89–100. <https://doi.org/10.26516/2304-1226.2019.27.89> [In Russian]
- Remschmidt, H. (1994). *Adolescence and youth: Problems of formation of a personality* (G. I. Loydina, Trans.). Moscow: Mir. [In Russian]
- Jerke, V. I., & Glazkova, T. V. (2019). The status of psychological intimacy in adolescence: Study and correction. *Pedagogical IMAGE*, 13(3(44)), 476–488. Retrieved from <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/status-psihologicheskoy-intimnosti-v-yunosheskom-vozraste-izuchenie-i-korreksiya> [In Russian]
- Rubinstein, S. L. (2007). *Fundamentals of general psychology*. St. Petersburg: Piter. [In Russian]
- Stepanova, L. G. (2010). The development of gender identity in modern boys and girls in the context of socio-psychological development of personality. *Psychological-Educational Studies*, 2, 1–10. Retrieved from http://psyedu.ru/files/articles/psyedu_ru_2010_2_Stepanova.pdf [In Russian]
- Tarchenko, V. S. (2019). Students' sexual behavior: A sociological analysis. *Vestnik of Lobachevsky University of Nizhni Novgorod. Series: Social Sciences*, 4, 159–164. Retrieved from <http://www.vestnik-soc.unn.ru/ru/nomera?anum=10905>
- Vorontsov, D. V. (2014). Gender ideology and sexual attitudes of the personality as factors of vulnerability of Rostov region students to HIV-infection. *Severo-Kavkazskiy psikhologicheskij vestnik*, 12/2, 10–14. [In Russian]
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1983). *Collected works*. Vol. 3. *Mental development problems*. Moscow: Pedagogika. [In Russian]
- Yunusova, R. A. (2008). *Gender-role identification of adolescents at risk* (Abstract of doctoral dissertation). [In Russian]
- Zhdan, A. N. (2008). Creative work of O. K. Tikhomirov: Historical-psychological view. *Moscow University Psychology Bulletin*, 2, 9–25. [In Russian]

Original manuscript received December 21, 2020

Revised manuscript accepted May 05, 2021

To cite this article: Tokareva, Yu. A., & Dzuman, E. M. (2021). Personal attitudes of young men prosecuted for commission of sexual offences. *Lurian Journal*, 2(2), pp. 86–96. doi: 10.15826/Lurian.2021.2.2.6