Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to summarise the available risk and assessment tools for child abuse material (CAM) offenders. Noting the rise of internet-based offences surrounding CAM, it has been proposed that there may be substantial differences between internet only (IO) offenders, contact only and mixed profile sexual offenders.

Design/methodology/approach – Through online searches, risk assessment tools for sexual offenders were identified. Scoring manuals were consulted for applicability to IO offenders.

Findings – Nine risk assessment tools for sexual offenders were included. Risk assessment tools for sexual offenders use cautionary language regarding the application of sexual offence risk assessment tools to IO offenders. An additional five tools were identified specifically addressing IO offenders. Three of these tools address risk assessment and two assess cognitions and behaviours.

Research limitations/implications – Limitations include the identification of static and dynamic risk factors and the application of structured professional judgement.

Practical implications – By drawing together existing tools and recommendations for use with the IO offender population, a gap is identified for CAM specific risk assessment tools.

Originality/value – Appropriate risk assessment, case planning and treatment will contribute to the appropriate management and treatment of the IO offender population.

Keywords Assessment, Exploitation, Abuse, Risk, Child, CAM

Paper type General review

Introduction

Following the rise of the internet from a specialised scientific research tool in the 1980s to a network available to over 90 per cent of the Australian population, sexual offence types have altered over time. For example, child abuse material (CAM) has become more accessible. Prior to the internet, individuals with deviant sexual interests had to network face-to-face and obtain illegal images in person or via mail order. Subsequent to common usage internet, those individuals are able to remain in the privacy of their own home. Further, they are able to maintain some level of secrecy as to their identity and their actions, and only risk exposure by accident, betrayal or when traced and identified by a law enforcement agency.

This paper is concerned with internet only (IO) offenders, those who have acquired CAM images of children not known to themselves via the internet. Possible methods of acquisition include peer-to-peer downloads, searches on the mainstream internet or the Dark Web (see Owen and Savage, 2015 for further discussion), noticeboard downloads, trading with other CAM users on chat boards, and via e-mail or webcam.

Whilst IO offenders do not have a victim with whom they have had direct contact, they are contributing to the worldwide sexual exploitation of children. The demand for CAM material is encouraged by ongoing downloading and trading of such images, with likely devastating consequences for the child victims (see Rogers, 2008). While much of the CAM material is free...
and relatively easily accessible, there do remain sites requiring payment for images and/or videos, or live webcam streaming of such abuse. Identification through credit card usage is only one of a range of ways in which local and international law enforcement agencies track and arrest such offenders (Wolak et al., 2014).

Types of offences

In Australia, internet-based CAM offences fall under the legal jurisdiction of Commonwealth law. In order to understand the differentiation between IO, contact only (CO) and mixed profile offenders, as discussed by Babchishin et al. (2014), the following summary may assist. IO offenders are defined as those who use the internet to acquire CAM material of children not known to themselves, compared to CO offenders, those who commit child sexual offences but do not use the internet for CAM material. Those who commit both internet-based and contact child sexual offences are known as mixed profile offenders.

Whilst the definitions here are from Australian law, it is noted that the United Nations Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography has 121 state signatories and 173 parties. With a total of 193 member states (United Nations, 2002), all have similar legislation. As such, and noting individual differences in laws between jurisdictions, this research can be applied to many states and countries.

There are differences in legal terminology and other terms used in the comparative literature, so, CAM will be used in this paper and clarity provided when indicated. Australian Commonwealth law uses the term “child pornography”, and a child is defined to be, or, if age is unknown, appear to be, under the age of 18 years, also noting the age for sexual consent is 16 years in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia, and 17 years in Tasmania and South Australia. These discrepancies between the age of sexual consent and images of children under 18 years of age have resulted in some jurisdictions in Australia not recording convictions against young people in consensual relationships exchanging sexualised images with their partner, or “sexting” (see Crofts and Lee, 2013). Contact sexual offences and some telephony offences are predominantly dealt with under state and territory legislation, whereas online internet offences are legislated under Commonwealth law.

The Crimes Legislation Amendment (Telecommunications Interception and Other Measures) Act (No. 2) 2004, Sections 474.19 to 474.23 define each offence type and sentencing penalties for accessing and possessing CAM.

**Using a carriage service for child pornography**

This offence regards the imposition of an offender in using a telecommunication network to access, transmit, make available or distribute illegal CAM material. Further, it accounts for the offender’s active use of the carriage service to perform the action of downloading the CAM material. The maximum penalty is imprisonment for ten years.

**Possessing, controlling, producing, supplying or obtaining child pornography material for use through a carriage service**

This offence pertains to the possession and/or supply of CAM images, with no requirement to identify the source of the images. The images can be photographs or videos of a child victim taken by the offender. Alternatively, they may be images downloaded from the internet of child victims who are of no acquaintance to the offender. The maximum penalty is also imprisonment for ten years.

It is noted that the Act further differentiates offences between “child pornography” – material depicting a person who is or appears to be under the age of 18 years engaged in or appears to be engaged in sexual pose or activity – and “child abuse material” – material depicting a person who is, or appears to be, under the age of 18 years who is, or appears to be, the victim of torture, cruelty or physical abuse.
IO offender management

Once an individual is sentenced by a court for CAM offences, they may be subject to period of supervision by a corrective services agency. This supervision may include assessment and treatment conditions specific to the type of offending. Offender management typically includes an assessment of risk and development of a case plan. The case plan is likely to include strategies and interventions specific to the identified areas of risk. For IO offenders, this may include internet restrictions and/or monitoring, relationship constructs and addressing sexual deviance (if relevant).

Risk assessment

With regard to criminal reoffending, assessing the likelihood of an offender recidivating has long been the goal of assessors. Accurate prediction of recidivism can lead to appropriate levels of intervention, treatment and monitoring, and the protection of members of the community from becoming victims of subsequent crimes. Over a period of decades, risk assessment has progressed through three stages including unstructured opinion (or, clinical judgment), actuarial assessment, and empirically guided assessment (or, dynamic assessment) (see Palk et al., 2008; Brown and Singh, 2014).

Standard risk/needs assessment tools for general reoffending, such as the Level of Service Inventory-Revised, do not address specific offence types. Rather, the focus is on generalised areas of potential risk, such as past criminal history, accommodation, health and education (Andrews and Bonta, 1995). Risk assessment for sexual offenders has been relatively statistically sound, with tools such as the Static-99/R, RRASOR and the SVR-20 among others in common usage. Numerous studies have reached the same conclusions: actuarial risk assessment tools to predict risk of sexual reoffending tend to be statistically robust and provide information necessary for informed decision making regarding the management of sexual offenders. However, through a survey of 22 forensic psychologists in Australia, Palk et al. (2008) found approximately 40 per cent of the target population amended actuarial risk assessment levels based on the clinical judgement. It is noted that the small population in this study may artificially inflate this result. It is also important to note that actuarial risk assessment tools may not account for dynamic information unique to each offender’s modus operandi.

The aforementioned rise of IO sexual offences has raised a new area for assessment, as tools in common usage are either not tested on such populations (e.g. see Static-99 Coding Rules Revised: Harris et al., 2003), or have failed to provide acceptable levels of predictability (e.g. see Osborn et al., 2010). This leaves open an area for further research and development, to accurately assess, manage and treat IO offenders and contribute to the community safety of children.

Static vs dynamic risk

Static risk factors are factual and historical factors that cannot be changed: for example, age and prior criminal history. The predictive value of a static actuarial assessment relies on identifying commonalities through analysis of collected data to form statistical norms. An individual’s risk of reoffending is based on the comparison of their number of identified risk factors to that of the normed group sample.

Second, dynamic risk factors are usually assessed by informed clinical judgements. Dynamic risk factors are psychological or behavioural factors that can alter over time. Whilst guidelines can provide structure to such assessments, the individual specificity of each risk factor and the subjectivity of subsequent analysis remain open to each professional’s interpretation. Fluidity and an individualised focus are of vital importance, though the lack of structure can result in well-meaning yet inappropriate conclusions by some assessors.

Ward and Beech (2015) further encourage caution in the interpretation of dynamic risk assessment, and propose ongoing research to clarify theoretical and practical applications of dynamic risk in assessing sexual offenders.

**IO offenders**

Returning to Babchishin et al.’s (2014) use of IO, CO and mixed offender types, research to date has made attempts to differentiate risk factors within these profiles.

Demographic variables identified as common within the IO offender population to date include younger age, higher levels of education and employment and lower relationship functioning (Henshaw et al., 2015). Psychological variables identified include higher interpersonal and affective deficits, higher fantasy and sexual deviancy (Henshaw et al., 2015). Offence specific variables identified include higher levels of victim empathy and sexual deviance (Babchishin et al., 2014) and lower offence supporting beliefs (Henshaw et al., 2015). These categories represent both static and dynamic risk factors. Research has yet to significantly link the contribution of these variables to the risk assessment of the IO offender population.

**Cautions**

Notwithstanding research that has focussed on the behavioural or offending pathway an individual may take to commit CAM offences (see Krone, 2004), the predictive validity of such pathways has, in many ways, yet to be tested. Whether or not IO offenders are also at risk of committing contact sexual offences against children remains a question with two answers: yes for some users and no for other users. What contributes to this diverging pathway appears to be as individual as each pathway, but remains the topic of current attempted quantification by researchers.

Questions remain as to whether IO offenders are truly a unique group who have not committed contact child sexual offences. Bourke and Hernandez (2009) have raised doubts after a studying a population of 155 offenders convicted of CAM offences in the USA. Prior to treatment, 26 per cent of the population also recorded contact child sexual offences. After treatment, this number rose to 85 per cent with self-disclosures. Further, Riegals’ (2004) study of 290 paedophilic males indicated 95 per cent self-reported ongoing use of CAM, and 59 per cent of these admitting frequent ongoing uses.

There is an obvious difference between self-reported and detected data for CAM offences, adding to the complexity of risk assessment for IO offenders. Research by Seto et al. (2011), summarised in Brown and Kebbell (2013), has found less than 5 per cent of IO offenders in the study had committed a further offence in a 1.56 year period. The relatively short follow up period may have influenced these findings. Similarly, Endrass et al. (2009) established a 7.7 per cent rate of reoffending when applying broad definitions including investigations, charges and convictions for violent and/or sex offences. Endrass et al. (2009) concluded past convictions for CAM possession offences only are not a risk factor for future contact sexual offences. Although these numbers are low when compared to rates of general re offending, estimated in Australia as between 40 and 50 per cent in 2012-2013 (Steering Committee for the Review of Commonwealth/State Service Provision, 2014), it is nonetheless a vital area for continuing research.

**Current research**

The current research aims to provide a summary of available risk and assessment tools with a target population of IO offenders. As IO offenders are sexual offenders, risk assessment tools for sexual offenders are also reviewed for their use with IO offenders. This summary will provide background and a platform to highlight the current gaps in applicability of general sexual offender risk assessment tools to an IO offender population. Finally, future pathways for areas of research and development will be proposed.
Method

To identify risk assessment tools for use with sexual offenders and articles considering the risk assessment applicability of the identified tools, electronic searches were undertaken using a range of available databases, including PsychARTICLES, psychology and behavioural sciences collection, PsychINFO, Medline, ProQuest, Google and Google Scholar. Articles were also identified through reference lists of articles returned by the above searches. Many tools were already known to the author through clinical experience.

Search terms used included internet offender, CSEM, risk assessment, child pornography, risk assessment tool, sex offender, online only sex offender, STATIC-99, STATIC-99R, Risk Matrix 2000, Risk Matrix 2000R, RRASOR, SVR-20, SORAG, MnSOST-R, RSVP, VRS-SO and combinations of the above terms. Full names for abbreviated risk assessment tool names were also used as search terms.

First, risk assessment tools for sexual offenders were included if they were identified through either scoring manuals or research papers to have commentary on their use with IO offenders.

Second, all risk and assessment tools for IO offenders were included as identified through the above search terms.

A review of the instruments, their scoring manuals (if available) or scoring information, and relevant articles was undertaken and results collated.

Results and discussion

Risk assessment tools for sexual offenders

Using the above search terms, a total of nine risk assessment tools for sexual offenders were identified as being in common use. The target population and assessment type (actuarial, dynamic or structured risk assessment) were identified for each tool (see Table I).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Target population</th>
<th>IO offenders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actuarial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Static-99/R</td>
<td>Hanson and Thornton (2000)</td>
<td>Males over 18 years of age with at least one proven sexual offence</td>
<td>Excluded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Matrix 2000/R</td>
<td>Thornton et al.</td>
<td>Males over 18 years of age convicted of a sex offence</td>
<td>Included but not in original sample so caution advised and conservative scoring occurs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapid Risk Assessment for Sex Offence Recidivism (RRASOR)</td>
<td>Hanson (1997)</td>
<td>Males convicted of a sexual offence</td>
<td>IO offenders not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Offender Risk Appraisal Guide (SORAG)</td>
<td>Quinsey et al. (1998)</td>
<td>Males who have committed at least one contact sexual offence</td>
<td>IO offenders not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota Sex Offender Screening Tool – Revised (MnSOST-R)</td>
<td>Epperson et al. (2003)</td>
<td>Males convicted of at least one sexual offence</td>
<td>IO offenders not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence Risk Scale-Sexual Offenders (VRS-SO)</td>
<td>Wong et al. (2003)</td>
<td>Males convicted of at least one sexual offence</td>
<td>IO offenders not mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stable-2007 and Acute 2007</td>
<td>Hanson et al. (2007)</td>
<td>Male or female who have committed at least one sexual offence</td>
<td>Research only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structured professional judgement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Violence Risk-20 (SVR-20)</td>
<td>Boer et al. (1997)</td>
<td>Male or female who have committed or allegedly committed an act of sexual violence</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk for Sexual Violence Protocol (RSVP)</td>
<td>Hart et al. (2003)</td>
<td>Males or females 16+ with known or suspected history of sexual violence</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A 2007 study by Langton, Barbaree, Seto, Peacock, Harkins and Hanson found that the predictive accuracy of the Static-99, Static-2002, SORAG, RRASOR and the MnSOST-R to be as designed when applied to the applicable populations as detailed in scoring guidelines and summarised in Table I.

Osborn et al. (2010) tested the STATIC-99, Risk Matrix 2000 and Risk Matrix 2000R on a UK population of 73 community-based offenders convicted of online CAM offences. Comparing reconviction data over a period of four years, this was cross validated with the predictive category and normative data as per the assessed risk on each of the three tools tested. Despite none of the total sample being convicted of any sexual offences during the four year window period, the STATIC-99 assessed 91.4 per cent of the sample to be moderate-high and high risk of sexual reoffending. The RM2000 assessed 27.4 per cent of the sample as high or very high risk of sexual reoffending. Use of the RM2000R indicated 5.5 per cent of the sample to be at high risk, with none meeting the threshold for very high risk of reoffending. Osborn et al. (2010) concluded it was not possible for an individual convicted of CAM offences to obtain a low risk of reoffending assessment on either of these tools. All three tools significantly over predict CAM users risk of sexual reoffending. This research clearly highlights the necessity for appropriately targeted risk assessment tools for CAM offences.

The VRS-SO and Stable-2007 were tested on a population of 180 incarcerated offenders in Canada (Snowden and Olver, 2016). Retrospectively, both tests were scored pre- and post-treatment and compared with ten-year post release reoffending data. Significant pre- and post-treatment scoring differences were found. In relation to predictions of reoffending, VRS-SO scores were significantly associated with reductions in a range of violent and general reoffending rates. In contrast, the Stable-2007 was not found to significantly predict any reduction in reoffending. Snowden and Olver (2016) do note that the VRS-SO, despite named as such, was not found to predict reductions in sexual reoffending. It is noted that the use of pre- and post-treatment ratings is subjective to the intervention provided and cannot be easily generalised to populations who undertook different or no treatment intervention.

Initially published in 1997, the SVR-20 moved away from pure statistical analysis of risk and incorporated structured professional judgement. Rettenberger et al. (2011) found that the SVR-20 demonstrated good predictive accuracy for their overall sample of 493 Austrian males released from prison, and for the subgroups “rapist” and “child molester”. Additionally, this study considered the differences in predictive accuracy for different subscales of the SVR-20. They found that the Psychosocial Adjustment subscale to be more accurate in predictions than the History of Sexual Offences and Future Plans subscales. See Rettenberger et al. (2011) for a summary of eight further studies of the predictive accuracy of the SVR-20.

Also a structured professional judgement tool, the RSVP added a case management dimension to the data collection and evaluation components of risk assessment. Limited research has been conducted into the validation of the RSVP to date. Darejee et al. (2016) applied the RSVP to a sample of 109 participants who posed a risk of sexual violence in Scotland. Results indicated that the RSVP was predictive of serious offending, including sexual and violent offences, with strong correlations with scores from the RM2000. Darejee et al. (2016) concluded that the RSVP shows good prospects as a case management tool for serious offenders and encourages further research.

2016 updates to the STATIC-99R scoring guidelines continue to state the tool cannot be used with offenders only charged or convicted of IO offences in the absence of a real identifiable child victim (see STATIC-99R Coding Rules Revised 2003 and in press, November 2016). Additionally, the RRASOR, SORAG and MnSOST-R currently present no guidelines on application to IO offenders. With publication dates pre-dating common internet usage by the general population, it is likely that these tools were designed around known types of sexual offences at the time of development.

Given the plethora of risk assessment tools available for sexual offenders, the application of these to IO offenders remains in infancy stages. To date, several new tools have been developed solely for IO offenders, including the Child Pornography Offender Risk Tool (CPORT) and Kent Internet Risk Assessment Tool (KIRAT).
Risk assessment tools for IO offenders

Using the above search terms, a total of five assessment tools inclusive of internet-based sexual offenders were identified as being in common use. The target population and assessment type (actuarial or dynamic) were identified for each tool (see Table II). It is noted that no structured risk assessment type tools specific to IO offenders were identified at this time.

It is noted that the Children, Internet and Sex Cognitions (CISC) Scale and the Internet Behaviours and Attitudes Questionnaire (IBAQ) are not risk assessment tools per se. Both have been included in this review as they provide assessment of a range of cognitions and behaviours relevant to CAM offenders. The information obtained may be indicative of areas of risk.

CPORT

Developed through data analysis of the police files of 286 male sexual offenders in Canada, the CPORT (Seto and Eke, 2015) is subsequently divided into three comparison groups – IO, IO plus non-sexual non-violent offending, dual offenders (or, mixed – internet and contact sexual offence) based upon reviews of file data. A seven-item scale, the CPORT comprises the four static predictors and three pertaining to the content of identified CAM material. The first four static predictors are reportedly broadly indicative of antisociality, and the remaining three are broadly indicative of atypical sexual interests.

With each item scored as 0 or 1, final scores range between 0 and 7, with higher scores indicating higher levels of risk of recidivism. With statistical analysis of the data set and a follow up period of five years, Seto and Eke (2015) found that the CPORT to be a reliable predictor of any recidivism, and of contact sexual recidivism. However, further analysis indicated that the CPORT does not statistically predict sexual recidivism for IO offenders but does predict recidivism for dual offenders. Finally, Seto and Eke (2015) suggest that antisociality, access to children and beliefs supportive of sexual contact with children are worth considering as possible risk factors in future research regarding risk of reoffending by IO offenders.

Additionally, Helmus et al. (2016) applied the CPORT to 86 male offenders convicted of IO offences. Results indicated that the CPORT was accurate in predicting sexual offence recidivism via contact, non-contact and IO offences.

Research continues into the application of the CPORT, with the scoring guide only recently (December 2016) available.

KIRAT and KIRAT-2

Developed by the Kent policing area in the UK, the KIRAT assists police forces prioritise casework based on identified risk factors for contact sexual offending by those being investigated for CAM offences, but does not replace professional judgement. Whilst not a risk assessment tool for

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table II</th>
<th>Assessment tools for IO offenders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tool</strong></td>
<td><strong>Author</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actuarial risk assessment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Pornography Offender Risk Tool (CPORT)</td>
<td>Seto and Eke (2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent Internet Risk Assessment Tool (KIRAT and KIRAT-2)</td>
<td>Long et al. (2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Sex Screening Test (ISST)</td>
<td>Delmonico and Miller (2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dynamic assessment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children, internet and Sex Cognitions Scale (CISC)</td>
<td>Kettleborough and Meridian (2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Behaviours and Attitudes Questionnaire (IBAQ)</td>
<td>O’Brien and Webster (2007)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
predicting reoffending, the KIRAT has proven to be statistically robust (Long et al., 2016) for police force workload prioritisation.

Long et al. (2016) reviewed the formulation of the KIRAT and noted the tool assists police forces to prioritise workloads based on the results to a 17-item questionnaire. The KIRAT variables focus on pathways including past convictions for or allegations of CAM use, access to children, engagement with CAM and past criminal, domestic or substance abuse history.

The KIRAT tool is unavailable for public review at this time.

**Internet sex screening test (ISST)**

This tool has been designed to identify if internet-based sexual behaviours are clinically problematic behaviours. Delmonico and Miller (2003) examined that whether the ISST held any validity when results from a sexually compulsive group were compared to a non-sexually compulsive group. It is noted that this scale is not specific to those engaging in online illegal behaviours, however does include one subscale of relevance. Using an anonymous survey conducted on a specific website over a period of approximately two years, data cleaning resulted in a final sample size of 5,005 males and 1,083 females. Of the male sample, 2,992 were identified as sexually compulsive, and 2013 were identified as non-sexually compulsive. Of the female sample, 530 were identified as sexually compulsive, and 553 were identified as non-sexually compulsive.

Consisting of 22 items comprising seven subscales, the ISST is a self-report scale:

1. online sexual compulsivity (six items);
2. online sexual behaviour – social (five items);
3. online sexual behaviour – isolate (four items);
4. online sexual spending (three items);
5. interest in online sexual material (two items);
6. non-home computer use for online sexual behaviours (one item); and
7. accessing illegal material (one item).

After one way between-subjects multivariate analysis of variance, a significant difference was found with the sexually compulsive sample spending more time online in the pursuit of sexual behaviours proportionally greater when compared to their total time spent online.

Of particular relevance to IO offenders, the final subscale (accessing illegal material) consisted of one item with results presented as percentages. Of the total sample population, 52 per cent of males and 37 per cent of females admitted accessing “child pornography” online. Although noting this is self-report data, Delmonico and Miller (2003) do make the final point that the relationship between online and offline sexual behaviour is not clearly understood. With regard to CAM use, it could be suggested that if the time spent online accessing illegal material is proportionally greater when taken as a proportion of total time spent online, this could indicate a clinically problematic behaviour.

**IBAQ (O’Brien and Webster, 2007)**

A total of 76 items comprised of two scales – behaviour and attitude – the IBAQ measures self-reported behaviours in conjunction with attitudes towards CAM material by those who have been convicted of related offences.

Testing of the IBAQ in conjunction with the Pauhus Deception Scale, a test for deceptive, or “faking good”, (O’Brien and Webster, 2007) found that the IBAQ participants who scored higher internet behaviour scores also scored significantly higher on attitudinal scale.

Initial results indicate a high level of internal consistency, based on two phases of testing on 40 and 123 internet sexual offenders in the UK (O’Brien and Webster, 2007). Results indicated participants who recorded higher scores were also those who self-disclosed higher numbers of internet-based offending behaviours.
**CISC scale**

The CISC scale (Kettleborough and Merdian, 2013) comprises 108 items rated by IO offenders on a six-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Primarily concerned with measuring the offence supporting cognitions of people who use CAM, the CISC scale has suggested these cognitions may differ to those exhibited by contact sexual offenders (Kettleborough, 2015).

This tool remains in the research realm at this time and, as such, no further publications have been identified.

**Recommendations and conclusion**

Although there are a plethora of risk assessment tools targeting contact sexual offenders, there remains a dearth of tools applicable to IO offenders. There is a scope for the addition of risk assessment tools specific to IO offenders as a small number remains in the early to mid-stages of development. It is probable no one risk assessment tool will suffice. When considering static and dynamic risk factors in conjunction with structured professional judgement, it may be possible to refine the predictability of recidivism by IO offenders.

An important identified gap is the applicability of risk assessment tools for sexual offenders to IO offenders; specifically, the variability in the applicability of static and dynamic risk factors from available sexual offender risk assessment tools to the IO offender population. This indicates that IO offenders are likely to emerge from different theoretical bases, have different risk factors and subsequently have different treatment needs when compared to contact sexual offenders. With different types of IO offenders identified, the question of predictability requires further research.

With robust and reliable tools for the sexual offender population such as the STATIC-99/R, Risk Matrix 2000/R, VRSO-SO and SVR-20 (among others) in common usage, research indicates either over estimation, underestimation or untested application to the IO offender population. In relation to IO offenders, the development and testing of tools including, but not limited to, the CPORT and KIRAT remain in the early stages with limited data yet available. It is possible that future assessment and comparisons with more generalised internet and sexual behaviours tools such as the ISST and IBAQ may highlight similarities and differences between types of sexual offenders.

A further key development area is the theoretical basis for IO offending, an area outside this research, however, fundamental to the formulation of risk assessment tools. Ongoing research continues to contribute towards a consensus of underlying risk factors specific to IO offenders; these can be used for specialised risk assessment and management. In response to informed risk assessment, sentencing courts and supervision by correctional services can impose practical restrictions on IO offenders appropriate to individual circumstances and in line with best practice. Whether for practitioners in private practice or treatment in a correctional service, targeted formulation of case management planning and treatment may contribute to reductions in recidivism. Ultimately, the appropriate identification of treatment and management needs and implementation for the IO offender population will contribute to community protection, both online and offline.

**References**


Wong, S., Olver, M.E., Nicholaichuk, T.P. and Gordon, A. (2003), The Violence Risk Scale – Sexual Offender Version (VRS-SO), Regional Psychiatric Centre and University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

Further reading


Corresponding author
Catherine Garrington can be contacted at: u3014776@uni.canberra.edu.au

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:
www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm
Or contact us for further details: permissions@emeraldinsight.com