

Actuarial Assessment of Child Pornography Offenders

Child Pornography Offender Risk Tool – V2 (CPORT-V2)

The CPORT-V2 (Seto & Eke, 2015) is a structured risk checklist designed to predict sexual recidivism in adult male sexual offenders with a conviction for child pornography offenses (N = 286; follow-up $M = 8.3$ years). All the subjects were convicted by courts in Canada of at least one count of possession of child pornography (over 90%), accessing (21%), distribution (37%), or production (23%). A fifth (21%) had a contact sex offense against a child. The authors of the CPORT-V2 recommend using the instrument for ranking an individual's risk as compared to other non-contact child pornography offenders. Although actuarial tables are being developed, for the time being the authors recommend interpreting general rank for risk without referencing recidivism probabilities.

Correlates of Admission of Sexual Interest in Child Scale (CASIC)

In the *Scoring Guide for the Child Pornography Offender Risk Tool – v. 2* (CPORT-V2, 6/15/18), Eke, Helmus and Seto note;

“In the CPORT-V2, admission of sexual interest in child is a risk factor for predicting any sexual recidivism. The concern for this type of item is its vulnerability to faking or refusal to respond, especially in high-stakes situation such as being investigated for child pornography offenses, sentencing and so forth. This led to our interest in potential correlates of sexual interest in children (Eke & Seto, 2013) and the development of a 6-item scale we called the Correlates of Admission of Sexual Interest in Children Scale” (CASIC; Seto & Eke, 2017. p.9)

In the development of the CPORT-V2, the authors identified the following behavioral correlates of admission of sexual interest in children:

1. Never married (54%)
2. Child abuse videos (64%)
3. Content included sex stories involving children (31%)
4. Evidence of interest in child pornography spanning a time frame of two years or longer (55%)
5. Volunteered with children before or during the index offence (7%)
6. Engaged in sexual communication with a minor (or undercover officer posing) (10%)

When summed, the average score on CASIC is 2.21 out of a possible 6, and the CASIC score was significantly associated with admission of sexual interest in children ($AUC = .71$). Results indicate that a score of 3 or more on the CASIC can allow item #5 on the CPORT-V2 to be scored as a “yes”.

Risk Assessment: Offender Characteristics That Increase Future Risk

Quantitative reviews of sex offender follow-up research have confirmed that many risk factors for sexual recidivism fall into one of the two major risk dimensions of antisociality and sexual deviance (Doren, 2004; Hanson & Bussiere, 1998; Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Quinsey et al., 2006).

Antisocial

- Younger age at first contact with the criminal justice system
- Extent of prior criminal history
- Failure on conditional release
- Substance abuse
- Antisocial personality traits – particularly psychopathy
- Lifestyle instability

Sexual Deviance

- Sexual paraphilias. Those with multiple paraphilic interests pose the greatest risk of sexually reoffending (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2004, 2005). Significant minorities of sex offenders with child victims have also engaged in exhibitionistic or voyeuristic behavior or sexually assaulted adults as well (Abel, Becker, Cunningham-Rathner, Mittleman, & Rouleau, 1988; Bradford, Boulet, & Pawlak, 1992)
- Sexual arousal to children or sexual violence

Socially Incompetent - Carl Hansen suggests there is a third dimension – poor interpersonal competence that contributes to sex offender risk for recidivism. (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2004, 2005). This third dimension can include;

- Disrupted attachment
- Failure at adult relationships
- Emotional congruence with children - feeling more comfortable and preferring the company of children.

Criminal History - Child pornography offenders with any kind of prior criminal history - including nonsexual offenses such as theft, possession of narcotics, or assault - were at a significantly greater risk of sexual recidivism during the average follow (approximately 30 months). (Seto & Eke, 2005). The researchers repeated this study in 2011 to extend the time follow-up. In the second study (Eke, Seto, & Williams, 2011), a third of the total sample of child pornography offenders committed any kind of new offense during follow-up. 4% of offenders committed new contact sex offenses. An additional 2% of offenders were charged with historical contact sex offense (i.e., previously undetected offending that came to light following the index child pornography conviction, or what is called “pseudo-recidivism”). 7% of offenders committed a new child pornography offense. As in the previous study, the authors found criminal history variables predicted recidivism. They also found younger age at first charge predicted sexual recidivism. This is consistent with general forensic psychology that finds that young offender age and criminal history are two of the best established risk factors for future offense.

The research suggests that age at first contact with the criminal justice system is a better predictor of recidivism than age at time of release, suggesting that age at release is less important than some researchers have argued.

Child pornography offenders who already had a history of contact sexual offending have higher sexual recidivism rates than the expected base rates for typical sex offenders reported by A.J.R. Harris and Hanson (2004). Those who have no history of contact offending almost never committed such offenses during the follow-up, despite the fact that a majority were likely to be sexually interested in children (Seto, Cantor, & Blanchard, 2006).

Poor Impulse Control - In the context of online sexual offending, the fact that child pornography offenders are likely to be pedophiles may cause evaluators to assume they are at high risk of contact sexual offenses involving children in the future, because pedophilia is a strong predictor of sexual recidivism among identified sex offenders (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005). The “*motivation-facilitation*” model of sexual offending against children suggests, however, that only those child pornography offenders who have poor self-control of their pedophilic or hebephilic interest would act on them. Poor inhibitory control is revealed in relatively high scores on measures of risk taking, impulsivity, or similar antisociality traits, or it occurs situationally because of alcohol or drug intoxication, high levels of stress, or depressed mood.

Static Variables - Structured or actuarial risk assessments are recommended as best practice guidelines by the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers. The developers of the Static 99R/2002R have suggested that solicitation offenders who had attempted to meet a minor in real life (even if they actually met an undercover police officer) can be scored using their instrument.

“The developers of the Static–99 have suggested that solicitation offenders who have attempted to meet a minor in real life (even if they actually met an undercover police officer) can be scored using this measure, though users are cautioned in the Static–99 guidelines that there were few such offenders in the development samples, and it is unclear whether the probabilistic estimates would apply (A. J. R. Harris, Phenix, Hanson, & Thornton, 2003). Any dual offender can be

confidently scored using the Static–99 or another established actuarial risk measure because they already have a contact sexual offense in their history, and such offenders comprised most of the development samples.

The Static–99 includes a “noncontact offense history” item that would apply to online offenders and individuals who have committed exhibitionism or voyeurism offenses. This is similar to the Risk Matrix 2000 (Thornton et al., 2003), a risk measure widely used in the United Kingdom and discussed in more detail in Applying Established Risk Measures later in this chapter.

It is not yet clear how to proceed in the risk assessment of pornography offenders with no history of contact or attempted contact offending, or in the assessment of fantasy-driven solicitation offenders.” (Seto, 2013, p.203)

Dynamic Factors - In contrast to static risk factors, dynamic risk factors can change over time and may therefore be more effective in assessing shorter-term fluctuations in risk to reoffend. Dynamic factors may also be more amenable to intervention. Alcohol use can illustrate the distinction between static and dynamic risk.

The most prominent dynamic sex offender measure is the Stable – 2007. This assesses 16 factors that can change over time (months or years) that are related to the probability of officially detected recidivism (Hansen et al., 2007). Each of these 16 factors is rated on a three-point scale, with zero indicating no problem, one indicating some concern, and two indicating but the problem is present. The 16 Stable-2000 risk factors can be rationally organized into six domains;

- The **significant social influences** domain represents the balance of positive and negative influences in the person's social world, particularly family and friends.
- The **intimacy deficit domain** represents the stability of intimate relationships, including loneliness or social rejection, a lack of concern for others, emotional identification with children, or hostility towards women.
- The **sexual self-regulation domain** represents problems in regulating sexual behavior, including high sex drive or sexual preoccupation common maladaptive use of sex as a way of coping with negative mood or other concerns, and deviant sexual interest.
- The **attitudes supportive of sexual assault domain** represents offense supportive attitudes and beliefs, including sexual entitlement, attitudes tolerant of rape and adult-child sex.
- The **cooperation with supervision domain** represents compliance and cooperation with supervision requirements.
- The **general self-regulation domain** represents problems with general regulation of behavior, including impulsivity, poor cognitive problem-solving skills, and negative emotionality or hostility.

First, Webb, Craissati, and Keen (2007) found the Stable-2007 significantly predicted probation failure and “risky sexual behavior” after a follow-up period of 18 months. Risky sexual behaviors included accessing adult pornography on a daily basis but did not include new sexual offenses because none were observed in this study during this timeframe.

Internet Content - There is some evidence that offending specific variables predict child pornography and any sexual recidivism (Seto, 2009). These factors include the ratio of greater boy-to-girl child pornography content and having non-digital child pornography. Other Internet specific variables have been proposed, i.e., total amount of child pornography and time spent online.

A Validation Study of the Child Pornography Offender Risk Tool (CPORT).

Eke, A. W., Helmus, L. M., & Seto, M. C. (2019).

Sexual Abuse, 31(4), 456–476. <https://doi-org.lopes.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/1079063218762434>

Abstract

The Child Pornography Offender Risk Tool (CPORT) is a seven-item structured tool to assess the likelihood of future sexual offending over a 5-year fixed follow-up. The current study examined 5-year fixed follow-up data (15% any new sexual offense, 9% any new child pornography offense) for a validation sample of 80 men convicted of child pornography offense(s). Although statistical power was low, results were comparable with the development sample: The CPORT had slightly lower predictive accuracy for sexual recidivism for the overall group (area under the curve [AUC] = .70 vs. .74), but these values were not significantly different. Combining the development and validation samples, the CPORT predicted any sexual recidivism (AUC = .72) and child pornography recidivism specifically (AUC = .74), with similar accuracies. CPORT was also significantly predictive of these outcomes for the child pornography offenders with no known contact offenses. Strengths and weaknesses of incorporating CPORT into applied risk assessments are discussed.

The Development and Validation of the Cognitions of Internet Sexual Offending (C-ISO) Scale.

Paquette, S., & Cortoni, F. (2020).

Sexual Abuse, 32(8), 907–930. <https://doi-org.lopes.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/1079063219862281>

Abstract

Tools designed to measure the cognitions of individuals who engage in sexual activities with children over the Internet are either based on knowledge about men who had committed contact sexual offenses or cognitive phenomena not specifically associated to offending behaviors. Thus, there is no validated tool specifically designed to assess the offense-supportive cognitions of men who use the Internet to sexually offend children. This study developed and validated the Cognitions of Internet Sexual Offending (C-ISO) scale. A sample of 241 men with online and contact sexual as well as with nonsexual offenses completed the C-ISO scale and its psychometric properties, and latent structure was analyzed using both Classical Test Theory (CTT) and Item Response Theory (IRT), resulting in a final version containing 31 items. The analyses indicate that the C-ISO has excellent psychometric properties and discriminates men with online sexual offenses from those with contact sexual and nonsexual offenses. Implications of the findings for clinical practice and future research are discussed.