

Research Paper

Substance Abuse, Criminal Attitudes and Behavioural Patterns among First Time and Repeated Male Offenders

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ABSTRACT

The primary objective of the current study was to examine whether the level of substance abuse, criminal attitudes and behavioural patterns related to higher level of offending among first time and repeated male offenders. Substance abuse, criminal attitude and behavioural patterns are some of the prominent features of explanation of crime, particularly in repeated offending. This paper aims to report a study that compared few of the criminogenic needs such as substance abuse, criminal attitudes and behavioural patterns. The sample of the study consisted of 100 first time male offenders and 100 repeated male offenders. Data were obtained from the participants with the help ORAS CST research tool developed by the University of Cincinnati. Analysis showed the whole majority of the sample studies had low levels of substance abuse and moderate levels of criminal attitudes and behavioural patterns. In substance abuse, repeated offenders had higher level of substance abuse than first time offenders. Repeated offenders expressed higher level of criminal attitudes and behavioural patterns than first time offenders.

Keywords: *Substance Abuse, Criminal Attitudes, Behavioural Patterns, First Time Offender, Repeated Offender*

Within the field of correctional institutions and research the substance abuse, criminal attitudes and behavioural patterns have been recognised as possible facilitators and potentially important intermediaries of understanding, prediction and treatment of antisocial behaviour (Andrews & Bonta, 2006). Criminal sentiments represent attitudes and beliefs which constitute the proximal personal and interpersonal cognitive support for engaging in offending behaviour (Andrews & Bonta, 1990). Since substance abuse, criminal attitudes and behavioural patterns are common among first time and repeated offenders; it is especially relevant to conduct a study into these few aspects of these criminogenic needs of first time and repeated offenders.

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Received: March 5, 2018; Revision Received: March 9, 2018; Accepted: March 15, 2018

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A repeated offender in this study refers to a person's relapse into criminal behaviour often after the person receives sanctions or undergoes intervention for a previous crime and first time offenders means those who had been convicted once and there is no previous criminal history. Antisocial personality pattern is described as impulsive, adventurous, pleasure seeking, generalised trouble (multiple persons & settings), and restless aggressive, callous disregard for others. For this risk factor, the dynamic need to be targeted is weak self-control, weak anger management skills, and poor problem solving skills. Anti-social attitude have been identified as one of the most important criminogenic risk factors (Andrews et al., 1990). This includes attitudes, values, beliefs, rationalizations and a personal identity that is favourable to crime. For this risk factor the dynamic need to be targeted is reduction of antisocial thinking and feeling, and through building and practicing less risky tough and feelings (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). Substance abuse includes problems with alcohol or drugs. For this risk factor, the dynamic need to be targeted is reducing substance abuse, reduce personal and interpersonal supports for substance oriented behaviour and enhance alternatives to substance abuse (Andrews & Bonta, 2010).

The present study was intended to test the differences of substance abuse, criminal attitudes and behavioural patterns among first time and repeated male offenders. The following hypotheses were formulated.

H₁: There is a significant difference between the first time and repeated male offenders in their level of substance abuse.

H₂: There is a significant difference between the first time and repeated male offenders in their level of criminal attitudes and behavioural patterns.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The offenders sample (n=200) consisted of two subgroups, one of first time male offenders (n=100) and one of repeated male offenders (n=100). The offenders sample was taken from the Kerala State Crime Records Bureau and collected with the help of Station House Officers, Kerala Police. The first time offenders had a mean age of 32.4 years (range (22-54), while the repeated male offenders had a mean age of 34.8 years (23-58).

Research Tool

The Ohio Risk Assessment System – Community Supervision Tool (ORAS –CST) was used for this research. The University of Cincinnati (Latessa et al., 2009) developed the Ohio Risk Assessment System, which assesses individuals at several points in the criminal justice system. The Community Supervision Tool consist of 35 items from seven domains, such as criminal history; education, employment and financial situation; family and social support; neighbourhood problems; substance abuse; peer association; criminal attitudes and behavioural patterns. In the present study we only used the two domains such as substance abuse; and criminal attitudes and behavioural patterns that consist of 12 items.

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In risk/needs assessment, concurrent validity involves comparing the validity of an assessment tool to other known and established instruments. To assess concurrent validity of the ORAS, individuals in each sample were assessed on the Level of Service Inventory – revised (LSI-R) and Wisconsin Risk/Needs instrument. For consistency, scores were divided into low, moderate and high risk groups based on each instrument's specified requirement. The tests had revealed that the ORAS has relatively strong concurrent validity, which is evidenced from the larger r value and larger differences in recidivism between groups. All three instruments are significantly related to recidivism (CST $r=.362$, $p<.05$; LSI-R $r = .156$, $p<.05$; Wisconsin Risk/Needs $r = .212$, $p<.05$), but the LSI-R and Wisconsin Risk/Needs failed to provide large differences in recidivism between moderate and high risk groups. On the other hand, the CST provides large differences in recidivism between groups, 29 percentage between low (20%) and moderate (49%) risk groups and 17 percentage points between moderate (49%) and high (66%) risk groups. These results suggest that the CST has strong concurrent validity, performing better than the LSI-R and the Wisconsin Risk/Needs Assessment (Latessa et al., 2009).

Procedures

The first time and repeated male offenders list were collected from the Kerala State Crime Records Bureau, from the list samples were collected using stratified random sampling method. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants and whoever voluntarily agrees to participate in the study interviewed with the help of Station House Officers, Kerala Police. Structured interview schedule administered with the help of ORAS CST tool to collect the data.

Scoring

Each assessment item scored using specific criteria that is gathered through the interview. Based on these criteria, the defendant is assigned a scoring range from 0-2 depending on the item. The total score is a summed product of each of the individual items creating a range between 0-13. The higher the score, the greater the risk of individual poses. In the present study we have only used two sub domains of ORAS CST tool, substance abuse, criminal attitudes and behavioural patterns. The substance abuse domain contains 5 items with a score range of 0-6, individual who scores 0-2 are classified as low risk defendants, 3-4 is medium risk and 5-6 high risk defendant. The second domain criminal attitudes and behavioural patterns contains 7 items with a score range of 0-13, individual who scores 0-3 are classified as low risk defendants, 4-8 is medium and 9-13 high risk defendants.

RESULTS

Tables 1 and 2 present comparison between the first time and repeated male offender groups on extent of substance abuse, Criminal attitudes and behavioural patterns.

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Table.1 Frequency per cent values on extent of substance abuse among male repeated and one time offenders and results of chi-square test

Extent of substance abuse		Offending		Total
		Repeated	First time	
Low	Frequency	55	66	121
	Per cent	55.0%	66.0%	60.5%
Moderate	Frequency	28	30	58
	Per cent	28.0%	30.0%	29.0%
High	Frequency	17	4	21
	Per cent	17.0%	4.0%	10.5%
Total	Frequency	100	100	200
	Per cent	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Test statistics: Chi-square=9.117; df=2; p=.010				

On the whole, we find that majority of the offenders irrespective of their frequency of offending, had low levels of substance abuse (60.5%), followed by 29.0% of them had moderate levels of substance abuse and remaining 10.5% of them had high levels of substance abuse. However, when repeated and first time offenders were compared for their extent of substance abuse, a significant association was observed ($X^2=9.117$; $p=.010$), where we find that repeated offenders had higher levels of substance abuse than first time offenders.

Table.2 Frequency per cent values on extent of Criminal attitudes and behavioural patterns among male repeated and one time offenders and results of chi-square test

Extent of Criminal attitudes and behavioural patterns		Offending		Total
		Repeated	First time	
Low	Frequency	29	33	62
	Per cent	29.0%	33.0%	31.0%
Moderate	Frequency	38	54	92
	Per cent	38.0%	54.0%	46.0%
High	Frequency	33	13	46
	Per cent	33.0%	13.0%	23.0%
Total	Frequency	100	100	200
	Per cent	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Test statistics: Chi-square=11.736; df=2; p=.003				

In the case of criminal attitudes and behavioural patterns, we find that on the whole, 46.0% of them expressed moderate levels of criminal attitudes and behavioural patterns, followed by 31.0% of them expressed low level and remaining 23.0% of them had high levels of criminal attitudes and behavioural patterns. However, when repeated and first time offenders were compared for their extent of Criminal attitudes and behavioural patterns, a significant association was observed ($X^2=11.736$; $p=.003$), where we find that repeated offenders had higher levels of criminal attitudes and behavioural patterns than first time offenders.

DISCUSSION

Major findings of the study

1. On the whole majority of the sample studies had low levels of substance abuse and moderate levels of criminal attitudes and behavioural patterns.
2. In substance abuse, repeated offenders had higher levels of substance abuse than first time offenders.
3. Repeated offenders expressed higher levels of criminal attitudes and behavioural patterns than first time offenders.

The purpose of the study was to explore the differences between the substance abuse, criminal attitude & behavioural pattern of first time and repeated male offenders. The between-group comparison of the first time and repeated male offenders groups did find substantial differences on the various measures of criminal attitude and behavioural pattern. Although significant differences in substance use were evident between first time and repeated male offenders.

H₁ stated as there is a significant difference between the first time and repeated male offenders in their level of substance abuse is accepted. H₂ stated as there is a significant difference between the first time and repeated male offenders in their criminal attitudes and behavioural patterns is accepted.

The current results provide further support to improve our understanding, assessment and possibly treatment of repeated offenders and reduce recidivism. Clearer differences between the two groups were found in the domains of substance abuse, criminal attitudes and behavioural patterns, confirming the earlier findings in the literature (Matia et al., 2017; Marta et al., 2011; Andrea & Clive, 2012; George et al., 2008; Deborah & Jason., 2012, Sylvian 1999), our research brought further evidence for the association of these criminogenic needs among the offenders. The result therefore gives some indication that repeated offenders may have higher substance abuse, criminal attitudes and behavioural patterns; this is in accordance with the suggestion that recidivists have higher level of criminogenic needs and that promote reoffending behaviour (Tania & Fernandes, 2015; Lawrence et al., 2016; Milko et al., 2001).

CONCLUSION

Instruments such as ORAS could possibly be used as a complimentary aid in the dynamic risk assessment and management within the correctional institutions in India. This kind of risk assessment will raise questions for practitioners and convey the need for adequate correctional programs that can be employed to reduce reoffending. Based on the finding of the study, it was recommended that treatment programs should focus on the substance abuse, criminal attitudes and behavioural patterns of the offenders. The other criminogenic needs must also be considered to reduce reoffending behaviour. This will have a significant effect of the prediction of crimes, rehabilitation of offender and to reduce reoffending.

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How to cite this article: Rajan R & D'Souza L (2018). Substance Abuse, Criminal Attitudes and Behavioural Patterns among First Time and Repeated Male Offenders. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, Vol. 6, (1), DIP: 18.01.064/20180601, DOI: 10.25215/0601.064