

INTRODUCTION

- Research on sex offenders is strengthened by information about criminal history, victim characteristics, and demographic variables, which is typically coded from official files, such as police reports, criminal records, and assessment reports. However, such file reviews are time consuming and limited by the quality and availability of relevant file information.
- Although there is often skepticism about offenders' self-reports (e.g., Hare, 1985; Holden et al., 1992; Schretlen et al., 1990), research with general offenders suggests high agreement between self-reported and file-coded criminal history information (e.g., Kroner et al., 2007) and that some self-report risk assessment measures predict recidivism (e.g., Campbell et al., 2009).
- Similarly, research with sex offenders indicates self-report measures can assess deviant sexual interests with reasonable accuracy (Worling, 2006; Laws et al., 2000).
- Purpose: Examine agreement between scores on a widely used sex offender risk assessment instrument (Static-99) when scored solely from self-report information versus by prison staff using official information.

METHOD

- 21 adult male sex offenders ($M = 39.95$ years, $SD = 8.51$) who were serving federal sentences within medium and maximum security prisons in Ontario.
- Nine were currently in prison for child molestation and 12 for rape.
- The Static-99 (Hanson & Thornton, 1999, 2000) is a ten item actuarial scale used to assess risk of male sex offenders.
- Data were collected as part of a larger project.

Procedure:

- Self-report information was given under conditions of confidentiality
- Participants were scored on the Static-99 by prison staff as part of formal assessments. The prison staff were blind to the self-reported Static-99 scores collected for this study.
- Self-report information was not available to score Item 3 and Item 6.
- Some of the self-report items were not exact matches, for example Item 5 of the Static-99 is scored from both charges and convictions, however only convictions were used for self-report.

RESULTS

- Self-report and official Static-99 item and total scores are presented in Table 1. Although total scores were slightly lower for the self-report Static-99, they had high agreement. Agreement of total scores can be seen in Figure 1.
- As shown in Table 2 moderate to substantial concordance between self-report coded and file-based Static-99 scores was found for most items.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Item Scores on Self-Report and Official Static-99

Item	Self-report		Static-99	
	n	%	n	%
1. Young age	0	0	2	9.5
2. Never married	12	57.1	11	52.4
4. Prior non-sexual violence convictions	14	66.7	12	57.1
5. Prior sexual convictions				
None	10	47.6	9	42.9
1	1	4.8	1	4.8
2 to 3	7	33.3	5	23.8
4 or more	3	14.3	6	28.6
7. Any non-contact offences	8	38.1	4	19
8. Any unrelated victims	18	85.7	18	85.7
9. Any stranger victims	8	38.1	8	38.1
10. Any male victims	4	19	15	23.8
Total	M = 4.19 SD = 2.06		M = 4.23 SD = 1.89	

- Reliability for Item 1 could not be calculated as the self-reported scores were constant.
- Participants tended to under and over report approximately equally (Table 2) and the self-report information had an average of 86% agreement to file information.
- Therefore in this sample 14% of the self-report information was mismatched from the file-based information.

Table 2. Agreement of Self-Report and Static-99 Scores

Static-99 Item	Self-Report				
	K ^b	ICC ^c	Under (%)	Agree (%)	Over (%)
1. Age	-- ^a		9.5	90.5	0
2. Ever lived with partner 2+ years	.90		0	95.2	4.8
4. Prior non-sexual violence convictions	.60		4.8	81	14.2
5. Prior sexual offence		.95	19	81	0
7. Non-contact offences	.55		0	80.9	19.1
8. Unrelated victims	.22		9.5	81	9.5
9. Stranger victims	.59		9.5	81	9.5
10. Male victims	.85		4.8	95.2	0
Total		.96	19	62	19

Note. K= Kappa. ICC= Intra-Class Correlation

^aReliability was not computed for age as the self-report values were constant.

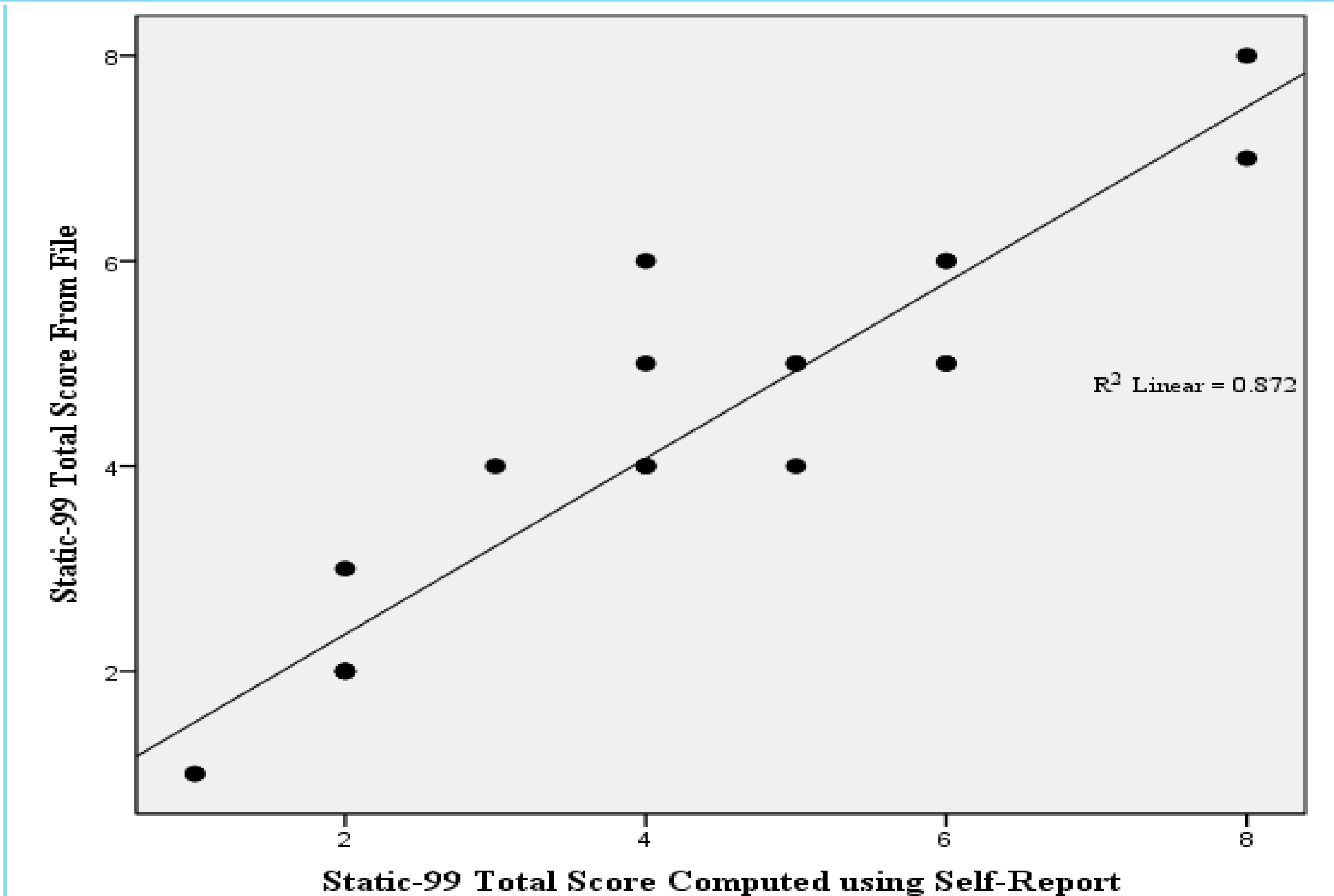


Figure 1. File based Static-99 Total Score Compared to Self-Report Static-99 total Scores, Excluding Items 3 and 6.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

- Over all the self-report information coded into Static-99 variables had relatively high agreement to the file-based information. Offenders tended to accurately report 86% of information on average and under or over report almost equally.
- Offenders reported this information under the condition of confidentiality for research purposes only. Studies using information gathered as part of a formal assessment may report differing findings. However, previous studies on general offenders which used this method found similar agreement to this study (e.g., Kroner et al., 2007) and research by Loza et al., (2007) found results using a self-report measure the SAQ that did not differ under conditions of confidentiality and formal assessments.
- Despite the high agreement found here it is important to note that these results should not be taken to suggest that self-report should replace file-information as the basis for formal risk assessments.
- This study was limited by the fact that two Static-99 items were missing from analyses and not all items directly matched self-reported items. Inclusion of these may affect the agreement between self-report and file based scores.
- Lastly this study is limited by the small sample size; however, the strong agreement is encouraging. Future research should address these limitations.
- Despite these limitations this study suggests that file review may not be necessary and that self-reported risk is valid under these research conditions and can replace file review when they are not possible.