Gender-Informed Risk Assessment: Is it Responsive to the Needs of Girls?

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, sufficient evidence has emerged indicating that gender should, and does matter in offender assessment and intervention. Given the significance to the lives of those most impacted, fair and reliable risk assessment is an important task for effective corrections. Consequently, this study examines the predictive and convergent validity of the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI, Orbis Partners, 2000), a gender-informed risk-need-strength tool in a sample of 254 justly involved youth from central and eastern Ontario. Participants were either on probation, remand, in open or secure custody, or had been referred to a mental health centre through the courts at the time of the initial YASI assessment. The YASI was scored from face and/or closed custody files. Though innate to the prediction, logistic regression, and receiver operator characteristic (ROC) analysis, the overall predictive accuracy of the YASI was moderately predictive (.63 < AUC < .71) of general recidivism. Together the results support a gender-informed risk assessment approach that brings together important items posited from a gender neutral and gender responsive approach.

INTRODUCTION

Women are coded as ‘0’. Addressing recidivism risk in addition to risk of violence is essential, especially for girls given the differential weighting of variables to improve precision, accuracy and replication. To this end, we explore the strength and weaknesses of existing risk assessment tools, such as the YASI and its derivatives, in predicting the recidivism risk of girls.

The focus of the current study is to evaluate the validity and reliability of the YASI (Orbis Partners, 2000) including predictive and convergent validity, calibration, and discrimination of assessment model.

METHOD

Sample

254 justice-involved youth (106 females and 148 males) recruited from court ordered mental health assessment units, probation, and open and closed custody facilities in Ontario.

- Mean age of females 17.1 years and 17.6 for males
- Majority of females were Caucasian (62.3%) and majority of males were non-Caucasian (64.2%; Black, Indigenous, or Other).

Measures

- Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI, Orbis Partners, 2000)
- Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI 2.0, Hoge & Andrews, 2011)
- Psychopathy Checklist: Youth Version (PCL: YV, Forth, Kosson, & Hare, 2003)
- Recidivism – general and violent; 2 year fixed follow-up from Ministry of Correctional Services (Ontario) and RCPM Analysis

Overview of Key Findings

- The overall predictive accuracy of the YASI in both formats (pre-screen and full assessment) was found to be moderately predictive (.63 < AUC < .71) of general recidivism and violent recidivism.
- All measures (YASI, YLS/CMI, and PCL:YV) demonstrated good calibration with both general and violent recidivism, as expected.
- Large correlations (r > .50) between most domains scores on the YASI/YASI-CI and corresponding domains on established risk measures (YLS/CMI & PCL-YV).
- Domain level analysis
  - Risk domains
    - Family history, education, substance use, attitudes, and social/cognitive skills were male specific for general recidivism, criminal history and social networks predictive of general recidivism for both males and females.
    - Large effect for social networks (female salient), moderate effect for attitudes (female specific) and small effect for education (male specific) for violent recidivism, criminal history, social networks, substance use, and violence and aggression predictive of violent recidivism for males and females.
  - Strength domains
    - All domains moderately predictive of general recidivism (males) except education, peers, attitudes, and employment predictive for females.
    - Attitudes, employment, and (lack of) violence and aggression predictive of violent recidivism both males and females; school, social/cognitive skills, and social networks (male specific).

RESULTS

Table 1. Bivariate Predictive Validity of Total Scale Scores for General Recidivism Using 2-Year Fixed Follow Up by Gender

Next Steps: Additional study at the individual indicator level and dissect results for both males and females.

- Differential weighting of variables to improve precision accuracy and replication.
- More primary research - continue the momentum gained with women and girls!