

Improving risk assessment:
exploring risk and protective factors in
relationship with ethnic diversity in
Romanian Probation System

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Assessing risk to reoffend - Romanian Probation Service case study

- Clinical judgment/empirically-informed clinical judgment (1998-)
- Validated assessment tool - Risk and Needs Assessment Scale (2019-)
(*Scale for the Evaluation of Risk-Needs (SERN)*)
 - Correctional Service of Canada (adaptation of 'Static Factors' and 'Dynamic Factors', components of CSC's assessment processes (Motiuk, 2018))
- Clinically Adjusted Actuarial risk assessment (2019-)

Scale for the Evaluation of Risk-Needs (SERN)

- 1) Static Risk Factors (12 criminal history items and risk level rating);
- 2) Dynamic Risk Factors or criminogenic needs (9 domains with 2 items each totaling 18 items and needs level rating); and
- 3) Special Needs and Summary (priority needs, overall risk-needs and motivation)

Scale for the Evaluation of Risk/Needs (SERN)

Section 1: Static Risk Factors		Section 2: Criminogenic Needs	
Under age?	yes/no/unknown	<i>Education:</i> Less than 10? Less than 12 or eq?	yes/no/unknown/asset yes/no/unknown/asset
Previous adult conviction(s)?	yes/no/unknown	<i>Employment:</i> Unemployed? Lacks work skills?	yes/no/unknown/asset yes/no/unknown/asset
Violent criminal offence(s)?	yes/no/unknown	<i>Family Background:</i> Family attachment limited? Family members criminally active?	yes/no/unknown/asset yes/no/unknown/asset
Earlier probation term(s)?	yes/no/unknown		
Pre-release failure-technical(s)?	yes/no/unknown	<i>Social Contacts:</i> Affiliated with crime groups? Criminal friends?	yes/no/unknown/asset yes/no/unknown/asset
Pre-release failure-new crime(s)?	yes/no/unknown	<i>Substance Abuse:</i> Abuses alcohol? Uses drugs?	yes/no/unknown/asset yes/no/unknown/asset
Earlier prison term(s)?	yes/no/unknown	<i>Community Functioning:</i> No fixed accommodation or changes residence frequently? Difficulties with financial management?	yes/no/unknown/asset yes/no/unknown/asset
Escape/attempt/unlawfully at large?	yes/no/unknown		
Confinement for disciplinary reasons?	yes/no/unknown	<i>Thinking/Behavior:</i> Linking actions to consequences is limited? Has difficulty with self-control?	yes/no/unknown/asset yes/no/unknown/asset
Less than six months since last incarceration?	yes/no/unknown	<i>Criminal Attitude:</i> Negative attitude towards legal system? Denies crime or uses excuses to minimize?	yes/no/unknown/asset yes/no/unknown/asset
No crime-free period of one year or more?	yes/no/unknown	<i>Value Orientation:</i> Disrespect for the person or property? Supports use of violence?	yes/no/unknown/asset yes/no/unknown/asset
Co-convicted?	yes/no/unknown		

Present study

Research objectives

- to explore the similarities and differences in risk and protective factors of reoffending among an ethnically diverse sample of offenders convicted to a community sentence (exploratory study)
 - to observe factors such as education and employment in particular
- to explore and understand the ethnocultural specificities in order to efficiently assess and manage risk
- to support assimilation of fundamental European strategies and regulations for data collection and analysis in the field of ethnicity (Farkas, 2017)

Operationalization of concepts

- Ethnocultural specificity
 - "Ethnocultural refers to an ethnic identity supported by cultural practice and tradition; members of the group identify with some cultural heritage shared by people of certain national, religious, or language backgrounds or all three." (Hall, 2005)
- Risk assessment
 - "Risk assessment is the process of evaluating individuals to (1) characterize the likelihood they will commit illegal acts and (2) develop interventions to manage or reduce that likelihood" (Hart, 1998)

Operationalization of concepts

- Risk factor & protective factor
 - risk factors – item that can increase the likelihood of reoffending
 - protective factor – item that can reduce the likelihood of reoffending

Research design

- comparative structure / 3 groups

Sampling

- Participants randomly selected (findings are not statistically representative)
 - ✓all participants actively registered in Romanian probation Service - Cluj Probation Service, executing a community sentence
 - ✓Romanian citizens
 - ✓voluntary participation
 - ✓accepted to declare ethnicity
- Total cohort of 90 adult probationer participants
 - fell into 3 ethnic groups: Romanians, Hungarians, Roma (Moldavians excluded, not statistically relevant)

Data collection & analysis

- Structured interviews
- Document analyses
 - probation files - structured guide
 - SERN documents
- Statistical analyses
- Case study

Data analysis

- extraction & analyses of 16 relevant variables
 - 14 risk and protective factors
 - static & dynamic: age, previous convictions, level of education, employment, criminal activity between family members, crime group affiliation/antisocial friends, substance abuse, social skills, neighborhood, thinking, attitude towards crime, attitude towards work, family attachment/functioning, motivation
 - risk to reoffend SPJ (Structured/Clinical Professional Judgement)
 - risk to reoffend SERN

Results

Declared ethnicity & Type of offence

<i>Declared ethnicity</i>	<i>Type of offence</i>								Total
	driving without a licensed	driving while intoxicated	theft	robbery	violent offence	sexual offence	drug related offence	economic/ financial offence	
Romanian	6	13	1	0	2	0	2	6	30
Hungarian	5	17	2	0	1	0	2	3	30
Roma	9	3	8	1	4	2	1	2	30
Total	20	33	11	1	7	2	5	11	90

- Romanians – driving offences, and economical offences
- Hungarians – driving offences
- Roma – offences against property, sexual offences (sexual act with a minor)

Results

Declared ethnicity & Age

<i>Declared ethnicity</i>	<i>Age</i>					<i>Total</i>
	18 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 - 59	over 60	
Romanian	10	7	7	5	1	30
Hungarian	3	14	8	5	0	30
Roma	11	12	2	4	1	30
Total	24	33	17	14	2	90

- Age report: Hungarians (mean 2.50), Romanians (mean 2.33), and Roma (2.07)

<i>Declared ethnicity</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Grouped Median</i>	<i>Sum</i>
Romanian	2.33	2.21	70
Hungarian	2.50	2.45	75
Roma	2.07	1.83	62

Results

Correlations

		Declared ethnicity	Criminal history	Education	Employment	Penal record family	Antisocial peers	Addictive behavior	Neighbourhood	Neutralization techniques	General thinking/values/attitude	Social skills
Declared ethnicity	Pearson Correlation	1	.056	-.471**	.100	.589**	.133	-.210*	.239*	.137	-.278**	.217*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.597	.000	.351	.000	.210	.047	.023	.198	.008	.040
	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90

Risk factors - differences

- priors between family members
- education
- general thinking/values/attitude

- neighbourhood
- social skills
- addictive behaviors

Results

Correlations

		Declared ethnicity	Criminal history	Education	Employment	Penal record family	Antisocial peers	Addictive behavior	Neighbourhood	Neutralization techniques	General thinking/values/attitude	Social skills
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	N	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90

Risk factor - no differences

- criminal history
- employment
- antisocial peers
- neutralization techniques

Results

Multiple comparisons

- groups & highly different variables (penal record family members, education, general thinking/values/attitude)

Variable	(I) Declared ethnicity	(J) Declared ethnicity	Mean Difference (I-J)
Penal record family	Romanian	Hungarian	-.067
		Roma	-.600*
	Hungarian	Romanian	.067
		Roma	-.533*
	Roma	Romanian	.600*
		Hungarian	.533*
Education	Romanian	Hungarian	.233
		Roma	.700*
	Hungarian	Romanian	-.233
		Roma	.467*
	Roma	Romanian	-.700*
		Hungarian	-.467*
General thinking/ values/attitude	Romanian	Hungarian	-.100
		Roma	.267*
	Hungarian	Romanian	.100
		Roma	.367*
	Roma	Romanian	-.267*
		Hungarian	-.367*

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Results

- Penal record family members (60% members of Roma group vs 7%, 0%)

		Penal record family		Total
		no	yes	
Declared ethnicity	Romanian	30	0	30
	Hungarian	28	2	30
	Roma	12	18	30
Total		70	20	90

- Education (47% members of Roma group less than 8 grades vs 10%)

		Education				Total
		un schooled	1-7 grades	8-12 grades	university studies	
Declared ethnicity	Romanian	0	3	20	7	30
	Hungarian	0	3	27	0	30
	Roma	3	11	16	0	30
Total		3	17	63	7	90

- General thinking pattern/values/attitude (40% vs 13%, 3%)

		General thinking/attitude		Total
		criminal thinking/values	pro-social thinking/values	
Declared ethnicity	Romanian	4	26	30
	Hungarian	1	29	30
	Roma	12	18	30
Total		17	73	90

Results

Groups & moderate significant variables (neighbourhood, substance misuse, social skills)

- neighborhood (20% Roma member group vs 3% other groups)

		Neighbourhood		Total
		no	yes	
Declared ethnicity	Romanian	29	1	30
	Hungarian	29	1	30
	Roma	24	6	30
Total		82	8	90

- substance misuse (40% Romanian member group vs 16% members of Roma group)

		Substance misuse		Total
		no	yes	
Declared ethnicity	Romanian	18	12	30
	Hungarian	21	9	30
	Roma	25	5	30
Total		64	26	90

- social skills (23% Roma member group vs 3% Hungarian group)

		Social skills		Total
		yes	no	
Declared ethnicity	Romanian	28	2	30
	Hungarian	29	1	30
	Roma	23	7	30
Total		80	10	90

Results

Protective factors

Correlations

		Family attachment/ support	Work attitude	Motivation
Declared ethnicity	Pearson Correlations N	-.033	.300*	.400*

Variable	(I) Declared ethnicity	(J) Declared ethnicity	Mean Difference (I-J)
Family attachment/support	Romanian	Hungarian	-.033
		Roma	.000
	Hungarian	Romanian	.033
		Roma	.033
	Roma	Romanian	.000
		Hungarian	-.033
Work attitude	Romanian	Hungarian	.133
		Roma	-.167
	Hungarian	Romanian	-.133
		Roma	-.300*
	Roma	Romanian	.167
		Hungarian	.300*
Motivation	Romanian	Hungarian	-.067
		Roma	.333
	Hungarian	Romanian	.067
		Roma	.400*
	Roma	Romanian	-.333
		Hungarian	-.400*

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Results

Protective factors

Family attachment – no differences between groups

		Family attachment/support		Total
		yes	no	
Declared ethnicity	Romanian	27	3	30
	Hungarian	26	4	30
	Roma	27	3	30
Total		80	10	90

Work attitude – Hungarian group members highly value work

		Work attitude		Total
		yes	no	
Declared ethnicity	Romanian	26	4	30
	Hungarian	30	0	30
	Roma	21	9	30
Total		77	13	90

Motivation – Hungarian group members show high levels of motivation

		Motivation			Total
		small	medium	high	
Declared ethnicity	Romanian	0	12	18	30
	Hungarian	0	10	20	30
	Roma	4	14	12	30
Total		4	36	50	90

Results

Multiple comparisons

- groups & risk (SPJ risk, SERN risk)

Multiple Comparisons			
Variable	(I) Declared ethnicity	(J) Declared ethnicity	Mean Difference (I-J)
SPJ risk	Romanian	Hungarian	.567
		Roma	-.700
	Hungarian	Romanian	-.567
		Roma	-1.267*
	Roma	Romanian	.700
		Hungarian	1.267*
SERN risk	Romanian	Hungarian	.467
		Roma	-1.267*
	Hungarian	Romanian	-.467
		Roma	-1.733*
	Roma	Romanian	1.267*
		Hungarian	1.733*

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Results

Risk to reoffend – Structured Professional Judgment

- means: Roma (3.03), Romanian (2.33), Hungarian (1.77)

		Declared ethnicity & SPJ risk					Total
		small	small-medium	medium	medium-high	high	
Declared ethnicity	Romanian	9	10	5	4	2	30
	Hungarian	15	8	6	1	0	30
	Roma	2	7	11	8	2	30
Total		26	25	22	13	4	90

Risk to reoffend – Scale for the Evaluation of Risk-Needs

- means: Roma (3.30), Romanian (2.03), Hungarian (1.57)

		Declared ethnicity & SERN risk					Total
		small	small-medium	medium	medium-high	high	
Declared ethnicity	Romanian	11	10	7	1	1	30
	Hungarian	19	6	4	1	0	30
	Roma	2	4	13	5	6	30
Total		32	20	24	7	7	90

Discussion

Differences between groups

- Education
- Penal record family members
- General thinking/values/attitude

- Motivation
- Work attitude/experience
- Addictive behavior
- Social skills
- Neighborhood

Similarities between groups

- Criminal history
- Employment
- Family attachment/support

- Neutralization techniques
- Antisocial peers

Discussion

Hungarian member group	Romanian member group	Roma member group
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- all members have a positive attitude towards work- 60% have a high motivation to change	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 40% are facing substance misuse problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 60% have at least one family member with criminal convictions- 47% have less than 8 grades- 40% show a pattern of antisocial thinking- 23% have social skills deficiencies- 20% live in neighborhoods with high crime rates

Discussion

Education & Employment

Declared ethnicity & Education

		Education				Total
		unschooled	1-7 grades	8-12 grades	university studies	
Declared ethnicity	romanian	0	3	20	7	30
	hungarian	0	3	27	0	30
	roma	3	11	16	0	30
Total		3	17	63	7	90

Declared ethnicity & Employment

		Employment				Total
		contract	no contract	day labourer	no job	
Declared ethnicity	romanian	23	1	4	2	30
	hungarian	26	1	0	3	30
	roma	17	6	5	2	30
Total		66	8	9	7	90

Discussion

Education - case study

32 yers old, male, dropped out of school after 6th grade (age 12), started accompanying father to work (mother home with younger siblings), selling self-made products (woodworking) or other products in various fairs in the region. In late years, mainly worked abroad. In a relationship for 16 years, 3 children. Convicted for driving while intoxicated, suspension under supervision. (considered old enough to work, and having a sufficient level of education)

54 years old, female, abandoned school after 4 grades. "I was coming from a wealthy family, I didn't need to go to school. At 14 I got "married" and at 15 I became a mother".

Discussion

Cultural diversity

- early marriage
- early parenthood
 - precociously assuming responsibilities of adulthood
- clear separation between family roles
- traditional activities: handicrafts, manufacturing objects, metal smiths (iron, copper) woodworking/carpentry, trading, specially horse trading – informal activities

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Cluj Probation Service

