

# **RISK ASSESSMENT OF OFFENDERS IN KOREA — FOR A SUCCESSFUL EVIDENCE-BASED TREATMENT —**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

A released prisoner may suffer from readaptation into society. If they fail at their efforts to reintegrate into society, they are likely to commit a crime again. As the recidivism rate is not better, the rehabilitation of released prisoners becomes a very important issue. For successful rehabilitation, proper treatment in facilities and the community is essential. But if we under- or over-evaluate the offender's risk, the proper treatment for each individual offender cannot be determined.

In Korea, evidence-based treatment of offenders is not a widespread concept. But there are many studies and investigations to assess offender risk in Korea and many treatment programmes are related to evidence-based treatment. Therefore, this paper will introduce some risk assessment methods and consider their relationship with proper treatment programmes.

## **II. RISK ASSESSMENT**

### **A. Theory**

Objective risk assessment instruments have been developed to assess the risk factors associated with criminal behaviour. According to Austin, there are mainly two categories to assess risk factors of offenders. One is the prison-based classification system and the other is the community-based risk assessment system (Austin, J. (1986) Objective prison classification systems).

At the prison-based-classification-system level, the most important thing is to assign inmates to the proper institution and to classify appropriate treatment grades. This is related to concerns about the possibility of correctional rules violation and escape. Therefore, preventing accidents in facilities is the purpose of the prison classification system. We can treat offenders effectively by deciding treatment levels, contents of educational programmes, and designating cells based upon the prison classification system.

The community-based risk assessment system focuses on factors that are related to criminal activity. In correctional institutions, public-risk assessment is used to identify inmates who have the potential of recidivism. We use this system in probation and parole to screen inmates who have high risk factors in the community. This system is not used in deciding or designating cells or locating facilities.

Evidence-based treatment is also prison based and community based, but they are all interconnected such that success (or failures) in one area have impacts on another (from Ralph C. Sering - Evidence-based practice).

### **B. Classification**

#### **1. Objective Classification**

For successful risk assessment, appropriate classification in facilities is essential. We can manage offenders effectively and choose proper treatment programmes for each individual offender through classification. To achieve these goals, it is necessary to develop objective classification methods. Because somewhat subjective classification conducted by officers and clinical experts has been criticized, the needs for objective treatment classification have increased. The following are important factors of objective classification:

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(i). Criminal behavior indicators

- Demographic characteristics: sex, age, marital status, job record
- Criminal-related behaviour: type of crime, criminal record, history of escape, offense history

(ii) Psychological Assessment indicators

For more quantitative ways to measure the psychological aspect associated with criminal activity, standardized tools for psychological testing are being developed. It provides more accurate risk-assessment and recidivism predictions.

2. Classification in Korea

Korean correctional service uses investigation for risk assessment in the admission stage for a more objective and accurate classification.

(i) Classification investigation

Classification investigations are performed to determine the accommodation class according to the classification rules of prisoners, and the details of the classification investigation are described below.

- Growth Process
- Education and Career
- Living Environment
- Personality/state of mind
- Criminal History/Contents
- Consulting Details
- Self-improvement Will
- Plan after release

(ii) Determination of classification groups

There are four classification grades:

- Confinement grade: a grade on the basis of facility where the prisoner is to be confined
- Improvement grade: a grade on the basis of reformation. This grade determines the scores that each inmate needs to earn in order to be promoted to the next step.
- Security grade (management grade): a grade on the basis of security
- Treatment grade: a grade on the basis of appropriate treatment. Inmates would be housed in a different section according to the result of the classifying examination so that inmates can be prevented from deterioration and can be more effectively rehabilitated.

(iii) Progressive Treatment

In progressive treatment, depending on the degree of the offender's classification and his/her behaviour and work attitude, the prison term is divided into several phases to give gradual improvement of the treatment. The purpose of this treatment is to urge an inmate to exert himself/herself to be reformed and not to lose his/her hope for the future, encouraging them to improve based on their own will.

(iv) Limit of Classification Investigation

Korea correctional service is able to utilize the results of classification investigations for proper treatment in facilities. But the method is intended to assess inmate's risks related to prison adaptation rather than community rehabilitation. So we need more detailed assessments to determine inmates' potential for rehabilitation or the possibility of recidivism.

**C. DETAILED ASSESSMENT: KOREAN CORRECTIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL INVENTORY**

1. What Is the Korean Correctional Psychological Inventory (KCPI)?

The Korean Correctional Psychological Inventory (KCPI) measures the criminal tendency of prisoners as an objective risk evaluation developed by the joint research of the Ministry of Justice and the academic world. It is performed to establish an individual treatment plan for new prisoners and prisoners having less than three months of their prison term remaining.

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KCPI is a self-response inspection tool including a total of 7 groups (categories) and 175 yes/no-type inquiry items, and measures misconduct habits, attack tendency, criminal thought tendency, and self-abandonment, suicide tendency, and fantasy-thinking tendency. While the KCPI for a new prisoner corresponds to a correction classification stage, the KCPI for a prisoner having less than three months of their prison term remaining is closer to the public-risk evaluation.

**Chart 1. The Examples of KCPI Questions.**

Groups	Content of Question Responses
Habit of Delinquency	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. One of my friends was a trouble maker; he was arrested on some charges.</li> <li>2. In the past, I was so close to those who'd had previous convictions or belonged to a gang.</li> <li>3. When I was young, there used to be group fights in which I was always involved.</li> <li>4. I used to be punished (probation, suspension, expulsion) often in school.</li> <li>5. I used to steal things with a few guys.</li> </ol>
Aggression tendency	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. If someone raises his voice, I respond with a louder voice.</li> <li>2. If someone behaves annoyingly, he deserves to be punched.</li> <li>3. If I get angry, I think I could beat up someone.</li> <li>4. If someone hits me first, I could punch him back.</li> <li>5. While arguing, I'm likely to raise my voice.</li> </ol>
Criminal attitude	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The only way to make a fortune is for me to steal.</li> <li>2. I could violate the law whenever I need to buy some adult entertainment and materials.</li> <li>3. In order to survive this harsh world, I couldn't help stealing something from others.</li> <li>4. As long as you're so poor that you hope to end your own life, you're allowed to steal something.</li> <li>5. It appears to me that only people having less money are punished in the same situation.</li> </ol>
Desperation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. My life is so miserable.</li> <li>2. I feel like sometimes there's nobody that likes me.</li> <li>3. I often think of myself as useless.</li> <li>4. My family and friends almost gave up on me.</li> <li>5. I'd like to give up on my life.</li> </ol>
Suicidal wishes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I thought about how to end my life.</li> <li>2. I wondered if I had the guts to end my life on my own.</li> <li>3. I imagined what my will would be like.</li> <li>4. There've been lots of days I feel like dying and crying.</li> <li>5. I once imagined my funeral.</li> </ol>
Delusional tendency	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I behave strangely and weirdly without noticing it.</li> <li>2. There have been many spiritually confusing experiences that have happened in my life.</li> <li>3. Several times, I have been in a fantasy and illusion all the day long.</li> <li>4. It feels like something frightening is about to happen.</li> <li>5. I once made a fuss all by myself without any specific reason.</li> </ol>

## 2. The Evaluation of the Assessment

It was reported that classification investigation and KCPI can somewhat predict the possibility of accident-causing and reoffending after release from the prison. One study shows that the crime prediction of psychological correction test shows excellent prediction ability compared to a typical MMPI test (Inhee, Lee, 2006. The study about assessing risk factor through Correctional Inventories.).

## 3. Practical Problems

- i) KCPI is a risk prediction tool based on the psychological state of the prisoner. It doesn't consider other factors like circumstance, family, and education. Therefore, we need more comprehensive

assessment tools.

- ii) Particularly, a prison officer directly managing prisoners still performs risk-factor evaluation and imprisonment treatment based more on subjective experience and feeling than on objective evaluation indicators.
- iii) When the possibility of danger has been predicted for prisoners, individual treatment programs are not appropriately performed due to the deficiency of manpower and budget.

**D. NEW GENERATION ASSESSMENT METHOD FOR PREDICTING RECIDIVISM : CO-REPI**

**1. Process for New Assessment Tool**

In 2011, the Corrections Headquarters of the Department of Justice established the “Re-offense Assessment Tool Intervention Plan.” The Plan organized T/F teams (T/F is an abbreviation for special task force teams which are aimed at making a new assessment tool for predicting recidivism) with 8 personnel consisting of Headquarters employees, clinical counselors and psychologists working at front line correctional agencies. The Plan identifies 146 assessment items consisting of both *dynamic factors* and *static factors*. Dynamic factors grant scores based on clinical judgements; static factors were estimated by static options after analyzing related thesis papers, number of reoffence assessment tool and newspaper through 3 T/F meetings and individual study.

**Chart 2. Survey assessment items of CO-REPI**

<b>S T A T I C</b>	Regular- penalty related	Accusation, relationship to the defendant, recovery from the damage, mental status when committing the crime, total term of imprisonment, expected age at the time of release, number of penalties received, (more than a degree of warning), security treatment level and score.
	Previous-crime related	Term of imprisonment, numbers of times imprisoned, recent accusation, amount of fines charged, age at first imprisonment, age at which the first delinquency was committed, interval of recidivism, the age of release from imprisonment by the previous criminal behaviour, number of punishments, parole eligibility, eligibility for pardon or reduction of sentence.
	Family relations	Marital status, number of family members, number of children, inmates among family members, parent’s child-rearing attitude, the survival of the parents before the offender reached the age of 14.
	Growth- process related	Level of education, punishment in school days, peer relationships, abuse by parents, history of treatment by mental facilities or hospitalization.
	Financial status before the imprisonment	Occupation, economic status, residential status, employment, terms of employment.
<b>D Y N A M I C</b>	Relations with family members	Family stability, mutual relationship between family members, emotional feelings about their parents, bonding with siblings or relatives, continuity of contact, relations with children.
	Economic condition	Job planning after release. Improvement of the economic conditions.
	Offense in general	Degree of crime temptation, mental status when committing the crime, controlling crimes.
	Verdict related	Convincement on the verdict, emotional feelings on victim.
	Violent trait	Violent control, ability to handle the violence-provoking situations.
	Tendency for sex offense	Sex desire, motivation for the sex offense, behaviour types regarding sex offense.
	Theft related	Basic disposition of theft, judging the possibility of recidivism.
	Drinking related	Drinking capacity, judging the possibility of recidivism.
Drug use	Willingness to abstain from drugs and judging the possibility of recidivism.	

To continually extract correlation between related factors and recidivism, there was a survey from June to October 2011 targeting 2,541 prisoners who were subjected to basic classification as new inmates, which classified *Rehousing Dangerousness* by converting proven 23 factors proven to predict the possibility of successful rehousing into a score (Total score 48pts = Static factor 33 pts + Dynamic factor 15pts). This score classifies the prisoners into one of five different grades. The CO-REPI grades are set forth below in Chart 3.

**Chart 3. Grades of CO-REPI**

Prediction Indicator Score (Sample rate)	Danger Grade	Rehousing Evaluation
0~6pts (15.5%)	REPI-1	Have no risk, enough ability to adapt to society (imprisoned one time, no criminal experience)
7~10 pts (17.3%)	REPI-2	Have a little risk, possible to grow ability to adapt to society with social treatment (imprisoned one time)
11~16 pts (26.2%)	REPI-3	Have risk, need to grow ability to adapt to society with social support, number of education programs (imprisoned 2~3 times)
17~21 pts (18.2%)	REPI-4	Have high risk, need remedy plan for living adaptation for facility (imprisoned 4~5 times)
Over 22 pts (22.8%)	REPI-5	Have very high RD, need professional therapy or require participating in problem action program (imprisoned above 6 times)

\* Given grades using Dangerous-Grade-distinction criteria to foreigners, physical disabled, mentally disabled, and the illiterate who are not easy to use Co-REPI [Ex. imprisoned 3 times : REPI-3, imprisoned one time, no criminal experience: REPI-1]

## 2. Indicator Proving By Analysis

As a result of statistical regression analysis of the information gathered from the 2,541 survey respondents, Rehousing Prediction shows very high correlation of 83.4%, which shows prominent prediction accuracy as an assessment tool. Accordingly, a CO-REPI score of 11 was used as a distinction standard, or in other words a dividing line between low and high risk.

Next, the calculated result of accumulated probability and rehousing probability from releasing to rehousing use the score 11, in the case of prisoners having lower score than 11 (962 prisoners) shows 9% were rehoused within 3 years and 11% to be rehoused within 5 years. However in the case of prisoners having scores higher than 11 (1,579 prisoners) rehousing rates show that 72% were rehoused within 3 years and 78% within in 5 years.

**Chart 4. The prediction percentage of rehousing through CO-REPI**

Recidivism Prediction Score	Rehousing Percentage in 3 years	Rehousing Percentage in 5 years
below 11 (n=962)	9%	11%
same or more than 11 (n=1,579)	72%	78%

## 3. Utilizing CO-REPI

This research result was proven by the Institute of Criminology Prevention Treatment Research Center, Classification section of the Department of Justice. The result will be applied when the “Classify Treatment Work Guide” and “Parole Work Guide” are changed by using this method for predictions in treatment plans, rejudgement, parole judgements and the recidivism dangerousness of prisoners, and will also be used in the probation field as a part of rehousing tracking record by actively using CO-REPI.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

For an effective assessment for reducing recidivism and rehabilitation of offenders, it is crucially essential to use the appropriate risk assessment method. The Korean Correctional Service has used some risk-assessment methods based on psychological and social factors. And now we are trying to use a comprehensive tool to predict recidivism.

Unfortunately, in the Korean correctional system the result of the assessment has not been strongly connected to proper treatment programmes until now. We utilize various treatment programmes to rehabilitate offenders, but those programmes are performed randomly or en bloc without considering each offender's risk factors. With the developing tools for risk assessment, I expect that more correlative treatment programmes will be utilized in Korean correctional facilities.