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Paper · November 2018


DOI: 10.1080/15240353.2018.1501140


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CRIMINAL CAREER OF SEX OFFENDERS: RESULTS FROM A CROATIAN STUDY

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1. INTRODUCTION

- ❑ Criminal career can be defined as a longitudinal series of criminal offenses committed by an individual¹
- ❑ Sex offenders are a diverse group of criminal offenders
- ❑ The existing research is predominately based on data from the United States
- ❑ This study describes the characteristics of criminal careers of sex offenders in Croatia

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

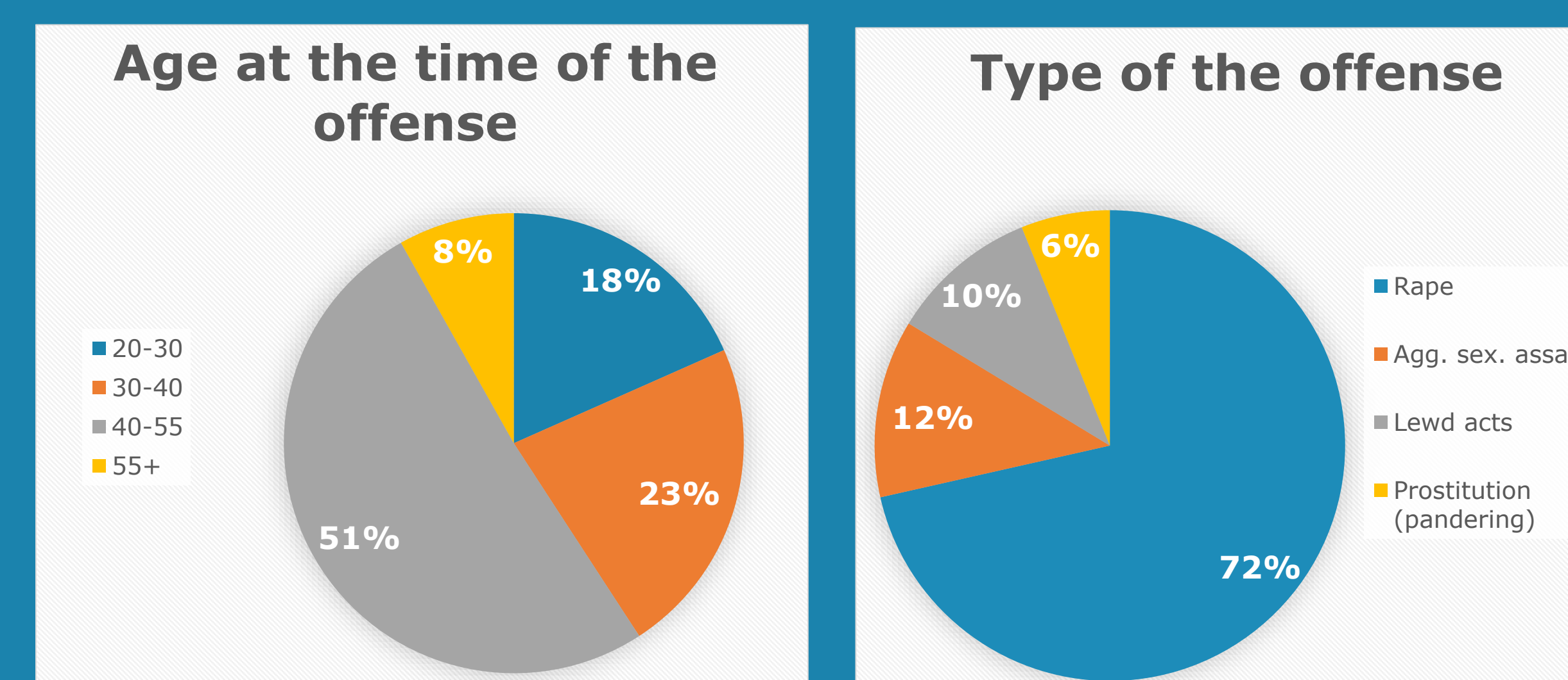
- ❑ Theoretical explanations of sex offending:
 - Biological (brain, hormones, genetics)
 - Psychological/ psychosocial (personality, cognition, learned behavior)
 - Multifactor explanations²
- ❑ Characteristics of the offense:
 - Violence (overt or covert), victim-offender relationship, opportunity, motivating factors (gratification, anger, revenge, power, fixation)³
- ❑ Predictors of sex offending:
 - Age, sex, SES, marital status, drug use, social competence, behavioral disorders, psychopathy⁴
- ❑ Criminal career factors:
 - Age of onset, duration, frequency of offending (λ), escalation, specialization/diversity in offending, desistance⁵
- ❑ Criminal careers of sex offenders:
 - Onset in adulthood, career peaks either in adolescence or mid to late 30s, generalists, continuity of general offending and antisocial behavior, low continuity in sex offending, small number of offenders commit a large number of offenses, less likely to include a co-offender⁶

3. METHODS

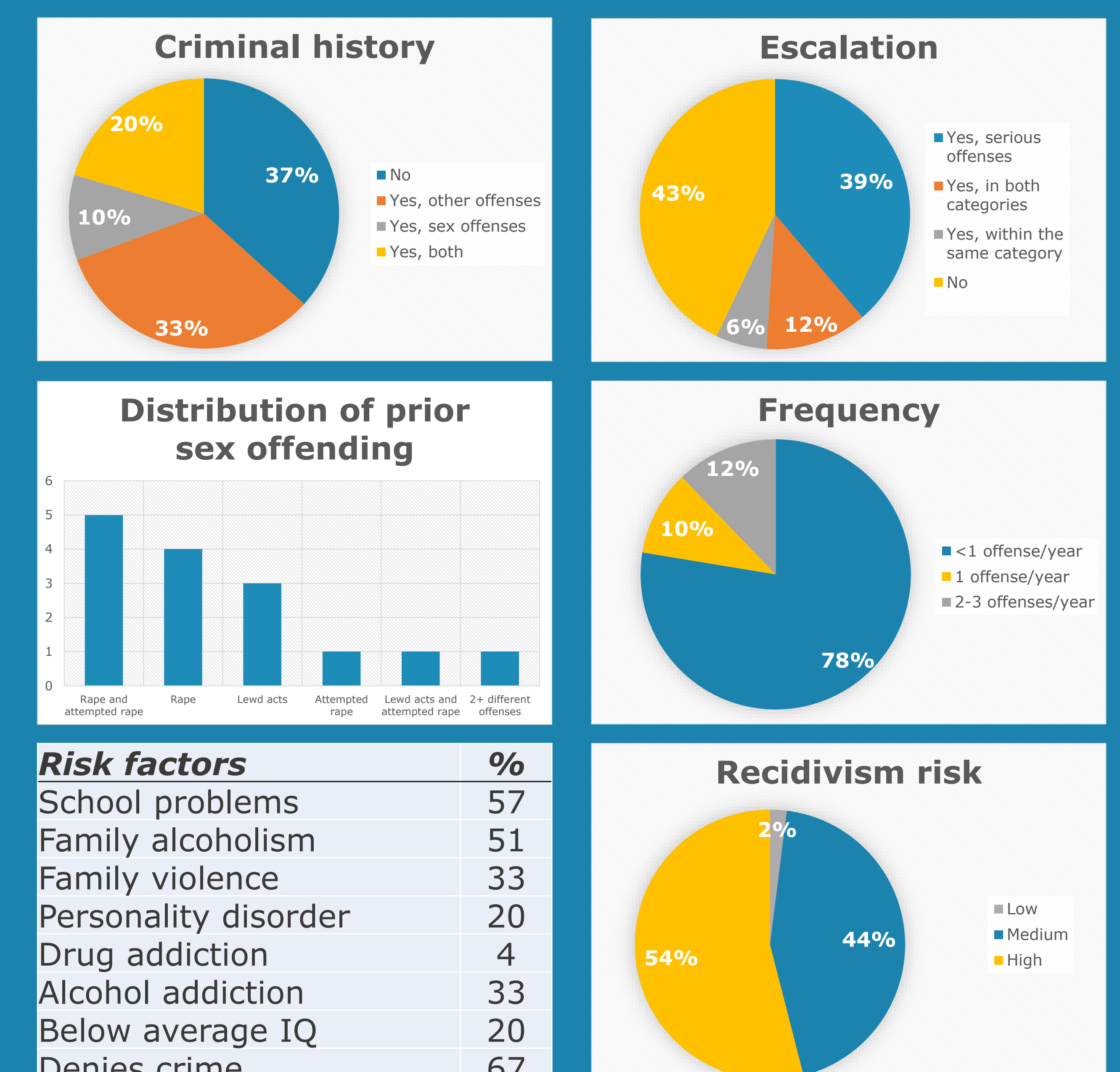
- ❑ Data
 - ❑ Data were collected at a maximum security prison in Croatia
 - ❑ The source of data are official prison records
 - ❑ The data collection instrument included items about the offender's demographic background, criminal history, characteristics of the current offense and sentence, risk factors, and criminal career
- ❑ Sample ($n=49$)
 - ❑ Convicted male sex offenders incarcerated during 2016-2018
 - ❑ $M(\text{age})= 48.5$; $SD= 11.29$; Range= 24-76

4. RESULTS

Variable	M	SD	Range
Criminal career			
Prior convictions	4.27	4.68	2-17
Age of onset	30.40	15.21	12-64
Offense characteristics			
Co-offender	.18		
Violence	.86		
Mental incapacity	.26		
Drugs/alcohol	.43		
Age of the victim (years)	43.3	29.7	18-71
Sex of the victim (1=female)	.98		
Relationship w/ victim (1=known)	.75		
Victim resistance	.61		
Sentence characteristics			
Sentence length (years)	10.4	7.7	1-37
Mandatory treatment	.20		



4. RESULTS



5. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

- ❑ Limitations: small sample, official and incomplete data, cross-sectional design
- ❑ Cross-national comparisons may be difficult due to cultural and legal differences
- ❑ Similarities with other studies⁷ were found regarding age, mental health and alcohol abuse, attitude towards the offense, co-offending, relationship with the victim, criminal history, specialization (53% are generalists), frequency
- ❑ More research is needed to investigate non-reported offending (self-reports) and desistance, and to explore criminal careers of sex offenders against children and adults separately

¹ Blumstein, 1986
² Hall & Hirschman, 1991; Knight & Sims-Knight, 2004
³ BJS, 2012; Bruinsma, 1995; Groth, 1979; Knight & Prentky, 1990

⁴ Gannon & Ward, 2008; Langstrom, Sjostedt & Grann, 2004; Porter et al., 2000
⁵ Piquero, Farrington, Blumstein, 2003
⁶ Farrington, 2003

⁷ Master et al., 1997; Muzinic et al., 2010; Molnar et al., 2001; Harris et al., 2009; Van Mastrigt & Farrington, 2009