

ARMIDILO-S Manual

Boer, Haaven, Lambrick, Lindsay, McVilly, Sakdalan, and Frize (2012)

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Introduction

1. Preface

The Assessment of Risk and Manageability for individuals with Developmental and Intellectual Limitations who Offend Sexually (ARMIDILO-S) is a group effort that evolved from an article that Douglas Boer, Susan Tough, and James Haaven wrote at the request of Bill Lindsay in 2004. Since that time, the "test" or "guideline" or "instrument" (and we use these terms interchangeably) has been under continuous revision and trialing and we finally feel comfortable with the data gathered to date to release the test for public consideration for use with ID sex for two reasons. One, is that it was designed for this exact job. It is not a modification of a test or a cross-validation of a test designed for use with mainstream (non-ID) sex offenders. Two, we now have some UK data to allow us to suggest that the instrument has good predictive validity and perhaps most importantly, the current data shows that ARMIDILO-S does a better job of estimating new offending than a number of commonly used risk assessment measures. This website has links to that research.

We are often asked if the ARMIDILO-S can be applied to a non-ID population or a youth or a female offender population or forensic mental health (ID or not) with some changes. We don't know if it can, but we do note that there is not data for every application just yet. We are in the process of modifying the test for ID youth application and we are always looking for collaborators to help us validate the instrument for local populations of intellectually disabled (ID) sex offenders.

For all persons reading this information, please note that there is no manual to purchase. The components of the website is the manual and all are free to download. We do caution all users to ensure that they have been adequately trained by a colleague who has been trained in a workshop that follows our training guidelines (see User Qualifications and Training Guidelines). Plus, the manual is one that will evolve. When you use the test, make sure you cite the download date (or version) so that when you are asked questions about your findings or the instrument, you can state with accuracy which version you used.

Besides the current section (i.e., the Introduction), the website contains User Qualifications, Item Rationales, Scoring Criteria, the Scoring Sheet, some Example Reports, Research Summaries, a section on Collaboration listing our collaborators and projects that are underway. There are relevant links in some sections and also a separate Reference section of all the citations.

The following sections of the Introduction provide an overview of risk assessment methodologies, a short depiction of how the ARMIDILO-S evolved, and some acknowledgements to those who helped us along the way.

2. Risk Assessment and Application to Intellectually Disabled Sex Offenders

Risk assessment is an integral part of clinical practice with all offender populations including those with intellectual disabilities. It is used for several purposes such as making decisions on a client's current status, determining their suitability for treatment and rehabilitation programmes, assessment of present and future placement, level of staffing required, and determination of the level and intensity of support required to safely manage the client's risks in a secure facility or in a community setting (Lindsay & Beail, 2004). However, the main reasons for conducting risk assessments are to promote public safety and to guide the management of the offender both in institutional and community settings.

There is a large literature regarding the reliability and validity of various risk assessment instruments for use with violent and sex offenders. However, there is a paucity of research carried out with regards to their reliability and predictive validity specifically with the ID offender population. This reality raises contentious issues around the use of current risk assessment measures in the development of risk management plans for this offender group (McMillan, Hastings, & Coldwell, 2004).

Numerous services which cater to individuals with ID have moved towards developing their own risk assessment protocols due to lack of standardized ID risk assessment tools. Consequently, accurate identification of risks and risk communication between professionals are compromised. Furthermore, comparisons of risk assessment findings across settings are limited as they identify different set of risk factors and generate varying levels of risk depending on what instruments are used (Lindsay & Beail, 2004).

Given these considerations, we felt it was imperative that an instrument be developed to assess risks specifically for the ID offender population. It was also envisioned that an ID-specific tool would be better able to indicate appropriate levels of supervision for these offenders as the tools would be more accurately tailored to their needs. ID offenders are often costly to support and risk assessment and management tools could help in the appropriate utilisation of resources for individuals and generate more targeted treatment and supervision resources while safely and effectively managing a client's risk (Lindsay & Beail, 2004). Furthermore, an instrument designed for this population group would provide a common language across different services in terms of describing the level of risk that a particular client presents, that can be understood, translated, and implemented across different settings (Harris & Tough, 2004).

Actuarial risk assessment

There are a variety of risk assessment methodologies available in the current offender literature. Actuarial tests generally numerically categorize an offender's risk according to static or historical risk factors which are unchanging past characteristics of the individual or events that cannot be altered. These instruments generate scores which are compared against a statistical reference

group (usually the test development sample) and make use of fixed and explicit rules which are clear, preset, and must be applied consistently and uniformly across cases. No expert judgment is required to determine the level of risk. The available literature provides little support for the use of actuarial risk assessment instruments as a stand-alone risk assessment protocol for the prediction of risk of violence and sexual recidivism with ID offenders. The research that has been done generally uses small samples and sometimes altered test protocols in cross-validation studies of well-known actuarial tests with ID offenders. This practice basically assesses whether the actuarial test in question is "good enough" for use with ID offenders. The problem is that the variables in such tests were derived via non-ID offender groups and may be much less than optimal in determining the risk of ID offenders, sexual or otherwise.

Actuarial risk instruments carry several limitations. They assign an individual to a category of risk without being able to say if that person will manifest the risk. They also ignore variation in risks, disregard clinically malleable variables, and minimize the role of professional judgement (Dempster, 2004). Furthermore, most of these instruments have not been validated against intellectually disabled offenders. Given such consideration, should we use these instruments to predict risk of violence with this group of clients? There have not been any published studies which supports the finding that risk factors in ID offenders are radically different from non-ID offenders. Hence, clinicians and researchers have agreed that it is not unreasonable to use these instruments on this client group (Lindsay & Beail, 2004). Mc Millan, Hastings, & Coldwell (2004) examined the clinical and actuarial prediction of violence in a forensic ID setting showed that both these approaches can predict the risk of violence at a level that is much better than chance. Furthermore, Hanson & Harris (2001) asserted that predictions provided by actuarial risk instruments such as the RRASOR, Static-99, and the VRAG, can be improved by considering a range of dynamic risk factors related to behaviour while on community supervision.

In our scoring criteria, we have suggested that the actuarial tool used to provide a risk baseline should be either the RRASOR or the Static-99. There is not a lot of research support for either with ID sex offenders, but there is even less with the Static-99R to our knowledge.

Dynamic risk assessment

Dynamic or proximal risk factors refer to factors that can change over time. It is further divided into acute and stable dynamic factors. Acute dynamic risk factors can be considered more volatile and hence, are sensitive to personal and environmental changes. On the other hand, stable dynamic risk factors tend to remain unchanged for longer periods of time (Lindsay & Beail, 2004). There is a very limited research conducted in the use of dynamic risk assessments specifically with the ID offender population. In addition, the majority of dynamic risk assessment measures have not been designed for use with ID offenders, rather the usefulness of such instruments is again via cross-validation, proving possible validity, but not optimizing sensitivity or specificity.

Structured professional judgment approach

The structured professional judgement (SPJ) approach to risk assessment has gained popularity in the past two decades because of the growing evidence around their predictive validity with forensic and psychiatric populations and their practicality and usefulness in clinical forensic

settings. It has also been more commonly used with the ID offender population mainly due to a lack of actuarial data with this group of clients (Johnston, 2002). This approach combines empirical findings on risk factors with professional clinical judgement (Dolan & Doyle, 2000).

The SPJ risk assessment instruments aim to combine the use of empirically-based risk factors and clinical judgement to arrive at decisions with regards to an individual's level of risk (e.g., Boer, Hart, Kropp, & Webster, 1997). While SPJ instruments and actuarial tests are often contrasted in research in terms of which sort of test has the best predictive validity, the SPJ tests warrant the same criticism as the actuarial tests - none of them have been designed with the specific needs or risk issues of the ID offender population in mind. Rather, the usefulness of such tests has been by extrapolation, i.e., cross-validation.

To partially address this shortcoming, Boer and colleagues (2008a, b) developed some guidelines for the use of the HCR-20 and the SVR-20 with ID violent and sex offenders. However, the authors acknowledged the lack of empirical support for these guidelines and the need for empirical validation for their use with this group of clients.

Convergent Approach to Risk Assessment and Risk Manageability of ID Sex Offenders

Boer, Tough and Haaven (2004) proposed a convergent approach to assess risk manageability with ID sex offenders. This approach makes use of actuarial risk instruments and dynamic risk factors (further divided into client and environmental variables) for the purpose of developing risk management strategies. It recommended the use of the RRASOR and the PCL-R, particularly for those who show psychopathic traits, in order to provide a risk baseline or risk estimate. Due to conflicting information regarding the efficacy of the PCL-R with ID populations, we no longer suggest using the PCL-R in establishing a baseline. The risk estimate can provide direction towards making decisions around treatment intensity level and supervision intensity level. Furthermore, the authors asserted that this can be used to anchor prognostications after a treatment programme.

The authors argued that it would be difficult to determine with certainty through the use of structured clinical guidelines whether the persons current risk level has been reduced. Hence, it would be more appropriate to refer to the level of risk in terms of the "client's manageability" has declined or improved with the consideration of his/her baseline risk level. This approach considered empirically-based stable dynamic and acute dynamic risk factors that are relevant to ID sex offenders. The authors' effort to develop this approach has given birth to the development of the instrument for Assessment of Risk and Manageability for Individuals with Developmental and Intellectual Limitations who Offend - Sexually (the ARMIDILO-S).

Essentially the ARMIDILO-S is a new sort of SPJ that uses only dynamic risk factors - some that change slowly (hence denoted as "stable") and some that change quickly (commonly called "acute"). The risk factors are divided into "client" and "environmental" variables to emphasize that the client is embedded in a context that is not risk-neutral. All aspects of the client's environment, from friends to parents to staff, family homes to group-homes to prisons, all either contribute to helping the client manage risk (i.e., are risk-reducing) or are detrimental to the client's ability to manage risk (i.e., are risk-increasing).

The ARMIDILO-S has been through dozens of iterations to the present day and will continue to evolve as our evidence and user base develops. Users are advised to check the website to make sure they are using the most up-to-date version. The research basis for the instrument is also developing quickly and the reader is advised to access this section to find empirical evidence supporting the use of the instrument. Until we have validation data for the utility and validity of the S version with non-sexual offenders we can only advise that users use appropriate caveats and caution if applying the instrument on non-sexual offenders as an "aide-memoire" or guide to clinical judgement for non-sexual forensic ID cases.

3. Evolution of the ARMIDILO-S

The ARMIDILO-S itself reflects a convergence of thought and work by the author group that has expanded over time to include a broad range of persons who have brought unique skills and backgrounds to the instrument.

Following our paper in 2004, the author group expanded from James Haaven and Douglas Boer to include Bill Lindsay, Frank Lambrick, and Keith McVilly - all well-known scholars in the ID field, and then more recently Joseph Sakdalan and Matt Frize.

The main two leaders in putting the ARMIDILO-S together to date have been Douglas Boer and James Haaven. As early as 2004, James Haaven started consulting for the Office of Behavioral Services (OBS) in New Mexico in developing a state-wide system for identifying and managing persons with developmental disabilities (DD) who sexually offend. At Bill Lindsay's invitation, Douglas Boer and James Haaven, in collaboration with Susan Tough, wrote an article (Boer, Tough, & Haaven, 2004), which depicted the first stages of development of a risk management tool for persons with intellectual disabilities who sexually offend.

Since 2004, James Haaven has been worked closely with Jill Ryan, Ph.D. and, currently, with Jason Buckles, M.A. in providing continued input to modifications of the ARMIDILO-S. Currently the ARMIDILO-S is the primary tool as stated in policy for triaging risk and management planning for DD person who sexually offend in New Mexico and within the oversight of the New Mexico Office of Behavioral Services. From 2006 to 2011, James Haaven served as a consultant to the Network180 agency in Grand Rapids, Michigan, which provided an opportunity to field test modifications of the ARMIDILO-S and develop various ways the tool could be used in managing risk for moderate to high risk persons with developmental disabilities with sexual offending problems. Currently, the ARMIDILO-S is the primary tool used for identifying risk and supervision planning for clients served in Network180, InVision Human Services, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Mountain Lake Services in Port Henry, New York.

Also since 2004, Doug Boer has been revising the manual, collaborating with various students, trialing the test, and promoting research in various locations to develop data to support the use of the ARMIDILO-S. To date, the best supporting data has been provided by graduate students in the UK under the auspices of Tony Beech and more recently Bill Lindsay. All of the remaining co-authors have provided background information, editorial feedback, data, research collaborations, writing assistance, literature work, help with developing new forms of the

ARMIDILO (especially Matt Frize who is doing his PhD on the "G" or general version) and innovative suggestions (e.g., by Ruth Pappas) that have helped the ARMIDILO-S evolve to its present state.

4. Summary and Conclusions

There are relatively few methodologically sound studies that validate the use of existing risk assessment instruments with the ID population. The need to develop objective and valid risk assessment tools in the field of ID has become imperative (Lindsay & Beail, 2004). There is definitely an urgent need for risk assessments that will identify appropriate levels of supervision for ID offenders more accurately tailored to their needs. It is essential that these risk assessment instruments be validated and standardized to the ID offender population.

Boer, Haaven and Tough (2004) initially outlined a total of nine staff and other environmental variables posited to have a dynamic relationship of either a stable or acute nature to risk and risk manageability by ID sex offenders. The ARMIDILO which initially focussed on ID sex offenders received feedback from various professionals which resulted in the widening of the scope of the instrument to include all ID clients who exhibit violent and challenging behaviours (including sexual), and who may or may not have been charged with an offence in regard to their violent behaviour.

Since 2004, the ARMIDILO-S has been continuously evolving and has been repeatedly been presented at ATSA conferences and other international conferences since that time. Every iteration since the original instrument (2004) has been made freely available from the first two authors (Boer and Haaven) who have been most instrumental in the design and elucidation of the ARMIDILO-S up and including the present version. The current version of the instrument has a much wider scope than what was proposed in the previous article (Boer, Tough, & Haaven, 2004) and has further expanded the environmental variables to include a wide range of issues (e.g., staff attitudes towards ID individuals, communication amongst supervisory staff, client knowledge by staff, supervision consistency, environmental consistency, victim availability and access, availability of intoxicants, social support changes, use of structured daily activity plans). The authors believe that by contextualizing risk for ID individuals (i.e., offenders and those with "challenging" behaviours alike) by the use of dynamic environmental variables along with dynamic client variables that they we would be able to not only assess risk more accurately but it would also better inform risk management plans for the individual client (Boer, McVilly, & Lambrick, 2007).

We hope you find the instrument useful for the assessment and management of your ID sex offender client cases. If you have any suggestions or questions, please contact us.

5. Authors' Acknowledgements:

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