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A PROFILE OF YOUNG SEX OFFENDERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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A PROFILE OF YOUNG SEX OFFENDERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Objective. The aim of this study was to establish a profile of the salient psychological and sociological characteristics among young male sex offenders in South Africa. Method. Twenty participants were selected who had been referred by both the legal system and the health and welfare system. The participants were all male, aged between seven and 15 years. Data were collected using structured interviews with the participants' caregivers and semi-structured interviews with the participants. Any other available documentation pertaining to the sexual offence and the participant's life history, including legal dockets, hospital files, police reports, victim and witness statements and social worker reports was reviewed and utilised as another source of data. The data were analysed utilising descriptive statistics such as frequencies to explore the salient psychological and sociological characteristics within the sample. Results. Results showed that half the sample had committed prior sex offences. The majority of young sex offenders had a history of consenting sexual interactions, had committed a non-sexual offence and experienced behavioural problems. Half the sample reported a history of physical or sexual abuse. Typically, the young sex offender was sexually naive and had not received any suitable sex education. He was usually a scholar although his school attendance was often infrequent and he was likely to have failed one or more years. He tended to be either socially isolated and socially anxious or alternatively reported having a number of friends and appeared to have adequate social skills. His home environment was characterised by overcrowding, alcohol abuse and domestic violence. A significant male relative of his was likely to have committed a criminal offence. In his community environment, he regularly witnessed violence and sexual activity. The sex offences were usually carried out with a co-offender in a variety of venues. The victim was usually known and younger than the offender. The overall results suggest that young sex offenders commit an array of sexual offences that do not represent sexual experimentation, but rather indicate a developing pattern of sexual deviance. Conclusion. The study was the first of its kind in South Africa and thus represents innovative research into the characteristics of young sex offenders, their victims and the offences. Furthermore, the profile of young sex offenders in South Africa which developed out of this research provides the foundation for the development of appropriate preventative and treatment programmes.
INTRODUCTION

While the nature and possible causes of sex offences have been central themes in investigative and forensic psychology, it is only recently that attention has been directed towards the problem of sex offences committed by children and adolescents. Research has shown that approximately 50 percent of adult sex offenders report first committing a sex-related crime as adolescents (Becker, Cunningham-Rathner & Kaplan, 1986; Davis & Leitenberg, 1987). More specifically, it has been reported (Knopp, 1985) that the average number of victims for a sex offender under the age of 18 is seven, whereas the average number of victims for an adult sex offender is 380. Thus, sex offending behaviour in children might serve as early indicators of patterns of deviant sexual behaviour in later life. Groth and Lorendo (1981) argue that to dismiss and minimize these early indicators is to lose out on an opportunity where the individual might be more accessible and responsive to interventions than when the deviant cycle has already been well-established. The goal of early intervention in aiming to prevent recidivism can only be achieved if young offenders are identified, assessed and placed into appropriate treatment programmes.

In South Africa, the need for research in this field is particularly salient. Cases involving young people committing sexual offences have increasingly come to the attention of both the legal system and the health and welfare system in South Africa. Professionals within these systems appear to resist the idea that young sex offenders can engage in sexually exploitative behaviour. Instead their behaviour is often described as just “sex play,” “sexual experimentation” or “adolescent adjustment reaction”. Westaway (1996) highlights that young sex offenders’ behaviour is often minimalised without a thorough assessment of the likelihood that the offender will re-offend. In November 1997, a group of concerned organisations and individuals met to discuss possible strategies to address the problem of young sex offenders in South Africa. A working group was formed with the aim of researching and developing appropriate interventions for young sex offenders.1

Information regarding this population group in South Africa is scarce. At present only one study has been conducted on a South African population of young sex offenders (Westaway, 1996). There is, however, a broad reference base of the characteristics of young sex offenders in literature originating from other countries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of literature suggests that while young sex offenders do not constitute an homogeneous sociodemographic group, there do seem to be variables common to most young sex offenders, particularly regarding offence, victim and offender characteristics.

1 SAYSTOP (South African Young Sex Offenders Programme). This project is currently run by a collaborative partnership of 3 organisations, namely: (1) Institute of Criminology, University of Cape Town; (2) Community Law Centre, University of the Western Cape; and (3) NICRO.
Offence Characteristics

There is evidence in the literature both for young sex offenders carrying out the offence on their own (Awad & Saunders, 1989; Groth, 1977), and for offending with one or more co-offenders (Vinogradov et al, 1988). The offences were mainly perpetrated in either the offender's or the victim's place of residence (Ageton, 1983; De Jong, 1989; Groth, 1977; Vinogradov et al, 1988). On the whole, studies have shown that the majority of perpetrators rely on verbal means of coercion (Ageton, 1983; Becker et al, 1986; Deisher et al, 1982; Fehrenbach, et al., 1986; Ryan et al, 1996; Vizard, Monck & Misch, 1995) rather than direct force or weapons which are seldom used. Likewise, Davis and Leitenberg's (1987) review found that young sex offenders were rarely intoxicated during the offence. Offender's tended to deny and/or minimise their role in the offence and most blamed either the victims or their co-offenders (Awad & Saunders, 1989; French, 1988; Ryan, et al, 1996; Shoor, Speed & Bartelt, 1966; Steen, 1994).

Victim Characteristics

The literature highlights that young sex offenders selected both male and female victims (Awad & Saunders, 1989; Davis & Leitenberg, 1987; Deisher et al, 1982). Most of the victims were acquaintances or relatives of the offender, and two thirds of these victims were younger than the perpetrator (Davis & Leitenberg, 1987).

Offender Characteristics

Research has found that the majority of the young sex offenders do not reside with both natural parents at the time of the offence, and that they come from dysfunctional families characterised primarily by violence, sexual and physical abuse of the children, alcohol and/or drug abuse by the parents and/or caregivers, and criminal activity (Awad & Saunders, 1989, 1991; Becker et al, 1986; Brannon, Larson & Doggett, 1989; Burton, Nesmith & Badten, 1997; Deisher, et al, 1982; Friedrich et al, 1992; Johnson, 1988; Longo, 1982; Ryan, 1989, 1991b; Ryan et al., 1996; Van Ness, 1984; Watkins & Bentovim, 1992). Researchers have further reported that young sex offenders may have a history of being victims of sexual abuse and/or experienced other forms of childhood victimisation outside of their family environment (Awad & Saunders, 1989, 1991; Brannon et al, 1989; Deisher et al, 1982; Friedrich et al, 1992; Johnson, 1988; Longo, 1982; Ryan, 1989, 1991b; Watkins & Bentovim, 1992). The literature regularly reports that young sex offenders typically have a history of social isolation and restricted social skills (Awad & Saunders, 1989, 1991; Blaske et al, 1989; Deisher et al, 1982; Fehrenbach et al, 1986; Groth 1977; Katz, 1990; Shoor et al, 1966). Ageton (1983), on the other hand, found that young sex offenders had higher exposure to delinquent peers. They have a history of prior sexual and/or non-sexual offences as well as a number of consensual sexual relationships (Awad & Saunders, 1989, 1991; Deisher et al, 1982; Fehrenbach et al, 1986; Groth, 1977; Longo, 1982; Ryan et al, 1996). Becker et al (1986) argue that the sexual behaviour exhibited by the young sex offenders appears to be indicative of the development of deviant patterns of sexual interest and not merely sexual experimentation. Finally, it was found that the young sex offenders have histories of poor academic achievement and experience behavioural problems.
It is important to assess whether similar or different factors to those indicated above are significant in the South African context. As a result, a pilot study (Wood, 1998) was conducted. This paper will present the pertinent findings from this pilot study.

**RESEARCH AIM**

The aim of the study was to draw up a descriptive profile of young sex offenders in South Africa, including the patterns and circumstances of the offences, the characteristics of the offenders, and the victims selected. This would reveal data about the kind of young person that is likely to commit a sex offence in the South African context.

**DEFINITIONS**

1. A profile is defined as a descriptive representation of the important psychological and sociological characteristics that are found to occur as common themes within a specific sample.

2. A young sex offender is defined as "a minor who commits any sexual act with a person of any age, (1) against the victim's will, (2) without consent, or (3) in an aggressive, exploitative, or threatening manner" (Ryan, 1991, p. 3). For the specific purposes of this study, this definition was narrowed down to include non-aggressive hands-on behaviours, including fondling, oral-genital contact and penetration where the offender used his authority to gain access to the victim, as well as aggressive hands-on behaviours which encompass the previously listed behaviours engaged in under some form of threat, for example use of force or weapons, and which are performed despite the victim's resistance (Monastersky & Smith, 1985).

**METHOD**

The study comprised 20 participants who had been referred by the Directorate of Public Prosecutions (formerly the Attorney-General's Office) and a local Child and Family Unit of a Government children's hospital. The participants were all male, between the ages of seven and 15 years who had committed any aggressive and/or non-aggressive hands-on sexual offence in terms of the definition provided. The sample was equally drawn from both rural and urban areas in the Western Cape, South Africa.

Informed and voluntary consent was obtained from the participants after the purpose and procedure of the research had been explained to all the participants and their caregivers. Confidentiality was guaranteed and participants were free to refuse to participate in the study. Furthermore, it was made clear to subjects that participation or non-participation in the research would in no way influence the handling of their case. Three of the young sex offenders who were approached refused to participate.
Data were collected by means of a structured interview with the participants’ caregivers and a semi-structured interview with each of the participants. Furthermore, the researcher consulted various documents pertaining to the sexual offence and the participant’s life history, including legal dockets, hospital files, police reports, victim and witness statements, social worker reports and school reports. These informed another source of data.

The analysed data produced descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies which enabled the researcher to explore the salient psychological and sociological characteristics within this sample of young South African sex offenders.

**RESULTS**

**Demographic Data**

The ages of the young sex offenders ranged from seven years eight months to 14 years 11 months. The mean age of the offenders was 12 years. Ninety percent of the sample was living with at least one of their biological parents. Thirty five percent of the young sex offenders had either extremely infrequent or no contact with their fathers. Sixty percent of the young sex offenders were judged to reside in an over-crowded house. Domestic violence was reported to occur regularly in 40 percent of the households and to occur sporadically in 20 percent of the households. Eighty percent of the participants reported that they regularly witnessed violence within their community. Furthermore, over a third of the sample had witnessed someone being murdered.

In 75 percent of the cases one or more of the family members abused alcohol. Both parents were reported to abuse alcohol in 40 percent of the cases. In addition, alcohol abuse was reported in 35 percent of the relatives living in the same place of residence as the young sex offenders. In 55 percent of the young sex offenders’ families, 30 percent of the fathers had committed a crime. These included (in order of frequency): theft and housebreaking, assault, domestic assault, murder, cannabis possession and rape.

**Characteristics of the Offence**

All the participants had engaged in sexual behaviour with a non-consenting partner. The most frequently occurring referral offence was rape (45 percent), followed by sodomy (30 percent), fondling (20 percent) and attempted sodomy (five percent).

The majority of the young sex offenders offended with one or more co-offenders. Three offenders carried out the offending behaviour with one other peer. Nine of the boys offended in larger groups, ranging from three to eleven boys per group. The remaining eight young sex offenders operated individually. The majority of the young sex offenders selected female victims (65 percent). However, in 35 percent of cases male victims were selected. The ages of the victims ranged from five years to 12 years. The mean and modal victim age was seven years. There was no difference in the mean ages of
the male and female victims. On average the young sex offenders were five years older than their male victims and four years older than their female victims. The young sex offenders who committed the offence with one or more co-offenders were more likely to select a female than a male victim. All the offenders knew their victims: a schoolmate (48 percent), lived in the same neighbourhood (26 percent), a relative (17 percent), a friend of the family (nine percent).

Thirty eight percent of the offences occurred in outdoor isolated areas. One third occurred at the school that both the victim and the offender attended. The rest occurred either at the offender’s or the victim’s place of residence.

Most of the young sex offenders (65 percent) used verbal coercion to get the victim to engage in the sexual behaviour with them. Thirty five percent of the participants used physical force to coerce the victim, for example using body strength, getting a co-offender to hold the victim down and/or hitting the victim. None of the participants used a weapon.

Sixty percent of the young sex offenders denied their involvement in the referring sexual encounter while 95 percent minimised their involvement. Their accounts were inconsistent with other supporting documentation, however. In 50 percent and 40 percent of the cases respectively, the participants blamed their victims and/or the co-offenders for initiating the behaviour. Fifty five percent of the sample reported that they were aware that the victim was scared of them during the sexual interaction in that s/he told them to stop, cried or was extremely still and quiet. The youngest offender reported that it felt “nice” to make his victims scared, as being able to do this made him feel powerful. Those offenders younger than 12 years six months were more likely to express remorse for what they had done.

Victimisation Experiences

Twenty percent of the sample reported that they had been sexually abused. The perpetrators of their sexual abuse were all known, older adolescents (both male and female) at their school. Under-reporting of sexual abuse was strongly suspected. Thirty percent of the young sex offenders reported that they were being physically abused at home by their stepfather, biological father, an uncle, an aunt or older adolescent boys. Two thirds of those offenders who were being physically abused operated individually. Two of the young sex offenders had been abducted - sexual abuse was strongly suspected in both these cases.

Sexual History

Sixty percent of the young sex offenders reported that they had previously engaged in consenting sexual interactions with females. Just under a half of the sample had or were dating a female peer. Twenty percent reported that they had been involved in heavy petting and simulated sex with a consenting partner. Thirty five percent reported that they had previously had sexual intercourse with one or more consenting partners. Only 30 percent of the sample reported any prior consenting homosexual experiences. It was apparent during the interviews that there was a large discrepancy between the
offenders' sexual experience and their sexual maturity. The offenders often became shy and appeared genuinely naive when asked questions of a sexual nature. Seventy percent of the participants had not received any formal sex education from their parents or teachers. Rather, older peers, witnessing older adolescents and adults having sexual intercourse (55 percent), and pornographic material (50 percent) were commonly cited as the main sources of information about sex.

Prior sexual and non-sexual offences history

Half the sample of young sex offenders reported that they had previously committed a sexual offence, including 70 percent who fell between the ages of 12 years seven months and 15 years had previously committed a sexual offence. Thirty percent of the offenders had previously committed the same offence with the same victim. One quarter of the sample reported that they had offended with one other victim prior to the referring offence. None of the young sex offenders had been charged for any of the above offences. Over half the sample (55 percent) reported that they had committed at least one prior non-sexual offence including (in order of frequency) shoplifting, housebreaking and theft. One of the young sex offenders was concurrently attending court for a case of attempted murder.

Behavioural problems

The most common behavioural problems reported were: tantrums and becoming easily angered (55 percent); impulsivity (45 percent); regularly involved in fights (45 percent); bed wetting (30 percent); difficulty falling asleep and nightmares (25 percent); occasionally involved in fights (25 percent) and cruelty towards animals (25 percent).

It was rare for the young sex offenders to report any substance abuse and/or possession of a weapon. Only one participant reported owning a knife. He reported that he used this knife to intimidate the other children at his school. Four participants admitted to smoking cigarettes, two participants reported drinking alcohol on the weekends, and one participant reported that he smoked cannabis occasionally. Two of the participants reported that they had sniffed glue.

Peer relationships and social skills

The majority of the sample (55 percent) reported having many friends, that is, more than five friends including a few close friends. Thirty percent reported only having a few friends and 15 percent reported that they were loners. One fifth of the young sex offenders reported that they belonged to a gang. Half the sample was judged to have adequate social skills and were quite charming and socially gregarious throughout the interview. Twenty percent of the young sex offenders were evaluated as being immature and lacking appropriate social skills. The other 15 percent presented as quiet and withdrawn.

Schooling

The distribution of standards that the young sex offenders were in ranged from not attending school to Grade Eight. The mean current standards were Grade Five and Grade Seven. One quarter of the sample
was in a special or adaptation class. A notable finding was that 95 percent of the sample had failed one or more standards. Forty five percent had failed once, 30 percent twice and 15 percent three times. One of the young sex offenders had failed five times. Forty five percent of the sample had a history of truancy.

DISCUSSION

Profile of a South African Young Sex Offender

These results reveal a number of salient psychological, sociological, behavioural and interpersonal characteristics of the South African young sex offender. These inform a profile of the young South African male sex offender which includes the following variables: 12 years old, Afrikaans speaking, living in an environment characterised by overcrowding, alcohol abuse, domestic violence and crime. The modal age for victims is seven years. The victim is usually female (although it is not uncommon for a male victim to be selected) and the assault typically involves penetration into either the victim’s vagina or anus. The young sex offender typically carries out the offence in an outdoor isolated area, at the school or the home of either the victim or the offender. The offenders are more likely to carry out this offending behaviour with one or more co-offenders than to operate on their own.

The offender may not have a previous conviction for committing a sexual offence but has been involved in previous incidents of sexual abuse: one in three young sex offenders have sexually abused the victim in the referring offence more than once. The offender may have been a victim of sexual or physical abuse. He has engaged in consenting sexual interactions with a female prior to the offence. He does not report any homosexual tendencies. He is sexually naive and has not received any suitable sex education. He has most probably committed a non-sexual offence (e.g. shoplifting) prior to the referring sexual offence.

The young sex offender attends school, although he has failed one or more times. Behaviourally, the young sex offender is easily angered, has poor impulse control, plays truant, picks fights, wets his bed, experiences difficulty falling asleep and can be cruel towards animals. He seldom abuses drugs and/or alcohol and does not own a weapon.

He is likely to live in a community environment where he regularly witnesses violence, including murder. He is likely to have witnessed others engaging in sexual intercourse.

Comparisons between the profile of South African young sex offenders and previous research

A comparison of the findings of this pilot study on South African young sex offenders with those resulting from other research into young sex offenders in other countries provides valuable insight into the South African context and exposes the significance of the findings of this pilot study.
Offence Characteristics

The current study obtained support for the finding in the literature that young sex offenders have committed a sexual offence prior to their referring sexual offence (Awad & Saunders, 1989, 1991; Fehrenbach et al, 1986; Groth, 1977; Ryan et al, 1996). Most of the repeat sex offenders reported that they had previously committed the same offence with the same victim. This finding demonstrates, as other studies (Becker et al, 1986; Deisher et al, 1982; Groth, 1977) have, that sexual offences are often not one-off experimental occurrences, rather they may be early indicators of a developing pattern of deviant sexual behaviour.

A few studies (Awad & Saunders, 1989; Groth, 1977) have reported that most young sex offenders carried out the offence on their own. The current study, however, found that the majority of the young sex offenders carried out the referring sexual offence with one or more co-offenders, whom they would often blame for initiating the offence. This was supported in the literature by Vinogradov et al (1988).

The current study also found a difference in the locations of the offence selected by the offenders. While previous studies have found that nearly all the sexual offences have taken place in either the offender's or the victim's place of residence (Ageton, 1983; De Jong, 1989; Groth, 1977; Vinogradov et al, 1988), this study found that only one third of the sexual assaults were carried out in these locations. Instead, the majority of the sexual offences were found to occur at either a school or in an outdoor isolated area.

Previous research (Ageton, 1983; Becker et al, 1986; Davis & Leitenberg, 1987; Deisher et al, 1982; Fehrenbach et al, 1986; Ryan et al, 1996; Vizard et al, 1995) supports the finding of this study that the majority of young sex offenders rely on verbal threats to coerce their victims. Similarly, there were no reported incidents of intoxication while carrying out the offence, nor was a weapon used to ensure the victim's compliance.

Victims selected

In agreement with the literature (Ageton, 1983; Davis et al, 1987; De Jong, 1989; Fehrenbach et al, 1986; Johnson, 1988), this study found that young sex offenders typically selected younger victims, who were known to them. Furthermore, the victims chosen can be male or female (Awad et al, 1989; Davis et al, 1987; Deisher et al, 1982).

Characteristics of the Offender

The average age of the young sex offenders in this sample was 12 years. Taking the age range of the sample into account, this mean age appears to be reasonably comparable to the mean age of young sex offenders reported in the literature. The findings of this study are consistent with other known research studies in that the majority of young sex offenders come from dysfunctional family backgrounds in which offenders are witness to domestic violence, live with family members who abuse alcohol and/or drugs and engage in criminal activities (Ageton, 1983; Awad & Saunders, 1989, 1991; Becker et al, 1986; Burton et al, 1997; Johnson, 1988; Ryan, 1991b; Ryan et al, 1996; Smith & Israel, 1987).
A review of the research literature revealed that sexual victimisation (in terms of sexual abuse) of the young sex offenders varies between 20 and 70 percent (Vizard et al., 1995; Watkins et al., 1992). Only 20 percent of the offenders in this study reported a history of sexual victimization. Awad and Saunders (1989, 1991) and Seghorn, Prantky and Boucher (1987) found that child molesters had an increased tendency to report a history of sexual victimization. This study also provided support for the findings that both physical victimization and witnessing domestic violence are more commonly reported in the histories of young sex offenders than sexual victimization (Awad & Saunders, 1991; Ryan et al., 1996; Williams & New, 1996).

A significant finding of this study, that does not appear to be reported elsewhere in the literature, is that the majority of young sex offenders are frequently exposed to extremely aggressive and sexual behaviours within their broader communities. Further studies are needed to explore whether this causes some young sex offenders to act-out sexually. Studies are also needed to investigate what factors mediate against other children growing up in similar environments from engaging in sexually offensive behaviour.

Data regarding the young sex offenders' history of consenting sexual experiences were also comparable with those reported by other studies, particularly with regards to the following: the offenders reported having had consenting sexual interactions prior to the offence; they appeared sexually naive; had not received suitable sex education and did not report homosexual tendencies (Deisher et al., 1982; Longo, 1982; Shoor et al., 1966).

On the one hand, this study's findings are comparable with the literature in that some of the young sex offenders appeared to be socially isolated and presented as socially anxious (Awad & Saunders, 1989, 1991; Blaske et al., 1989; Deisher et al., 1982; Fehrenbach et al., 1986; Groth, 1977; Shoor et al., 1966). However, half the sample in this study reported having a number of friends and came across as having adequate social skills. Investigations into the histories of these young sex offenders revealed that they had often committed a previous non-sexual criminal offence - of a similar type to that reported in the literature (Awad & Saunders, 1989, 1991; Fehrenbach et al., 1986; Ryan et al., 1996) - with their friends, were involved in regular fights, were more likely to abuse substances and were more likely to belong to a gang. Thus it appeared that, as Ageton (1983) found, a large number of the young sex offenders regularly socialized with a delinquent peer group. Furthermore, they were also reported to display other behavioural problems such as aggression, poor impulse control and cruelty towards animals. This study, thus, also demonstrates that young sex offenders do not constitute a single diagnostic classification group.

Evaluation of the study

The data were obtained primarily through interviews with the offenders. This dependence on participant's accounts inevitably influences the reliability and validity of findings which rely upon the honesty of the participants. In order to obtain the most accurate data, additional sources of information,
when available, were consulted to validate the offenders account of the situation. All attempts to uphold the ethical considerations which usually accompany research with human participants were undertaken, particularly in terms of obtaining informed consent from the participants and guaranteeing their confidentiality. Despite this, however, the honesty of the participant’s accounts cannot be assumed due perhaps to a general mistrust of the guarantee of confidentiality or possible shame associated with the offence/s they had committed. The use of an interpreter in many of the interviews is a common concern which must be considered in terms of threats to validity. These are just some of the issues which may have affected validity and reliability in the context of this study.

Limitations

The study is limited in a number of ways. The results of this study should, therefore, be interpreted within the context of its limitations.

The difficulties experienced in obtaining participants for this study combined with the fact that it was a pilot study meant that only a small sample was selected. The resultant profile of young sex offenders in South Africa which emerged from the study, therefore, must be considered in terms of these difficulties and the small number of participants.

The generalisability of the findings of this pilot study are limited by three factors. Firstly, the size of the sample makes it difficult for one to generalise the profile of young sex offenders that emerged to the entire population of young sex offenders in South Africa. Secondly, the sample represents a self-selected and voluntary group of participants which has implications for the kind of young sex offender who participated in the study and who fits the profile developed. Thirdly, no control group was included. As a result, no statements can be formulated as to whether the young sex offenders in this sample are different from other children and adolescents in South Africa who do not engage in criminal activity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study attempted to highlight the problem of young sex offenders in South Africa, and to motivate for increasing recognition of this problem. In order to improve the awareness, early recognition and intervention of young sex offenders, the establishment of a centralised system for identifying, assessing and placing young sex offenders into an appropriate treatment programme needs to occur. A large-scale database needs to be established in order to allow for the continual development of information regarding this population of offenders. Furthermore, this study also recommends that prevention programmes are urgently developed in order to foster community awareness around the serious nature of this problem. Finally recommendations are made as to the areas within this field where further research is needed, specifically in terms of research into the heterogeneity of young sex offenders and the implications of different typologies for treatment strategies. Furthermore, the limitations of this study which have been described expose a strong recommendation for research aimed at developing a profile of young sex
offenders in South Africa to include a much larger sample which would increase the generalisability of the findings.

CONCLUSION

This pilot study is the largest known study to have been carried out with a population of young sex offenders in South Africa, which makes it the first known study to establish a profile of the salient psychological and sociological characteristics prevalent among young sex offenders in South Africa. Participants were selected from both rural and urban areas. This represents a concerted attempt to yield reliable and valid data about youths in South Africa who are likely to commit a sex offence. The data can be used for the identification and assessment of young sex offenders, and the development of appropriate treatment programmes in South Africa.

REFERENCES


