



Staff qualifications and support

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Introduction

- Staffs reactions to the job: a critical occupation
- Explanations of the offense
- How do the explanations affect staff?
- Need for knowledge, training and support
- Effective approaches

Competency

”Treatment success with individuals convicted of a sexual offense probably stands or falls on the quality of the staff delivering it - more than any other variable”

(Marshall, 2005; Fernandez & Mann, 2009)



Critical occupation

The individuals' explanations can negatively affect:

- the professional
- the working alliance between the professional and the convicted individual

Critical factors:

Transgressiv behavior and traumatic events

Dissonant explanations

Disclaiming responsibility

No motivation for change

Explanations of the offence

“What themes and trends can be identified in crime explanations of inmates convicted of a sexual offence?”

J. Simonsen 2020

Survey:

Herstedvester Prison,
Denmark

211 pre treatment
interviews with
individuals convicted
of a sexual offence

48 % refused the
offence

The victim's fault ...

Victime-traits are presented as an underlying premis by presenting accusations that the childs fantasy and sexual behavior is enough to be sentenced for a sexual offense.

"When it has happened to me, it can happen to everybody"

Because of circumstances...

”I guess she reported me because her family would get furious if they knew she had voluntarily had sex with me outside marriage”

Because of social changes

"I have fooled her, but it was not to get sex. Rather it was a ravenge because she cheated on me while we were dating."

Because of structural factors...

”I have difficulties setting borders for children ; I want to listen to them and protect them, but I get too close to them. I was refused sexological treatment, which made me frustrated and I felt rejected”.

Because of individual factors.....

”I started viewing animated child pornography, but it exceeded to a dependency on all kinds of material of children. I had fantasies of girls which really frightened me and I am ashamed of.”

Summary

All interviewed explain being aware of what is right and wrong, both confessors and refusers.

Among refusers, focus is often on the victim's fault and credibility.

J. Simonsen 2020:

“... explanations tend to reduce personal responsibility through the recognition and acceptance of the stigma as sexually deviant”

Professionals' reactions to explanations of sexual offending

A pathology perspective - a dysfunction within the person.

Such a perspective may not be helpful **for those seeking to desist** from sexual offending and **reintegrate** into society



Desistance

“Desistance research suggests that a core element of the process involves the development of explanations of why an individual did what he did - and yet is no longer the same person as the one who committed the crimes”,

Paternoster, 2009

Skills in rehabilitative work:

- The individual is an expert on him self
- Recognize his explanations
- Active listening – do not draw conclusions on pattern recognition
- Adjust to individuals’ responsivity

Stigma management

“We argue that, whether true or not, participants utilized these situational explanations as a form of stigma management to allow them to develop a positive identity as a non-offender.”

Farmer et al., 2015



Potential for desistance ?

J. Simonsens and Farmer's studies show both deniers and admitters explain the sexual offense as:

- not representative for their personal values and moral
- all interviewed dissociate from the offense they are convicted of

Expressed prosocial identity and values - potential for desistance proces.

Denial a risk factor?

No support for the idea that denial of offending, externalizations, and situational excuses for sexual offending are predictive of recidivism

“It is possible that such persons may be less likely to become “secondary deviants,” that is, persons who accept and seek to justify their sexual deviance.”

Roger Hood et al. (2002).

Staff support

Continuously:

- Evidence base for static and dynamic risk factors
- Causes for denial and neutralizations
- Attitudes towards the individual and the offensive behavior
- Awareness of staff's emotional reactions
- Skills in rehabilitative work



Effective approaches

- Mutual respect and trust
- Denial and neutralizations are responsibility challenges – not risk-factors
- Do not confront denial or neutralization; enhanced responsibility should be the aim
- Interventions are strength-based, ex. strengthbased group-programs, peer support work



Support prosocial identity

“If the reduction of stigma and self-loathing is associated with reduced recidivism ... then it would seem that this is an idea worth pursuing”,

Perrin et al. (2018)



Literature

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