SELF-DECEPTION IN COLOMBIAN PRISON POPULATIONS: RELATIONSHIPS WITH CRIME TYPE, DRUGS CONSUMPTION, SOCIAL SUPPORT AND HEALTH

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Abstract: **Introduction:** Self-deception is a relevant variable in people with drug abuse or dependence problems, but there are not any studies about this topic in a Colombian population. **Method:** Three studies with non-randomized Colombian offenders were carried out with regards to self-deception and relationships with crime type, drug abuse, recidivism, social support and mental health indicators. **Results:** high levels of self-deception 1) were associated with thefts, illegal drugs trafficing and portrait gun related offenses, 2) were founded in recidivist offenders in comparation with casual delinquents and non-delinquents, and 3) were associated with both low social support levels and high health related problems levels. **Conclusions:** Colombian offenders' institutional evaluation and intervention among Colombian offenders should include self deception as a main variable.

Key Words: self-deception, prisoners, crime, recidivism, family

Introduction: Self-deception (SD) is an unconscious type of social desirability to avoid anxiety, guilt and shame that the individual feels when he/she often lies. SD´s main function is to maintain a liar´s positive self-concept (Sirvent, 2007). On the other hand, research in the criminology and criminal profiling psychology shows offenders often sustain cognitive distortions in order to justify their offenses. So, sex aggressors (Burn y Brown, 2007), driving offenders (Ruiz, Beltrán, Gómez y Lamus, 2013) or batterers (Leigh Paglione, s.f) say often victims are the ones truly responsible for their injuries and offenses. The concern of this paper, is wheter offenders' cognitive distortions and drug abusers' SD are similar. What SD level does offenders present? These questions result interesting because self-deception is a relevant variable on drug-abuse treatment, and it could be the same for offenders treatment.

Study 1

Method: n=190 Colombian prisoners; mean age: 34,07 (9,35); 63,8% men. Instrument was IAM-40 (Self deception and Mystification Inventory, Sirvent, 2007), 40 ítems with five response options (total disagree to total agreement), and higher score show high self-deception. Cronbach α was 0,88. Highest possible score is 5. *Results:* groups of illegal drug trafficing and weapons possesion, theft and offenses group planning offenders showed highest levels of self-deception. (table 1) No differences betwen men and women were found.

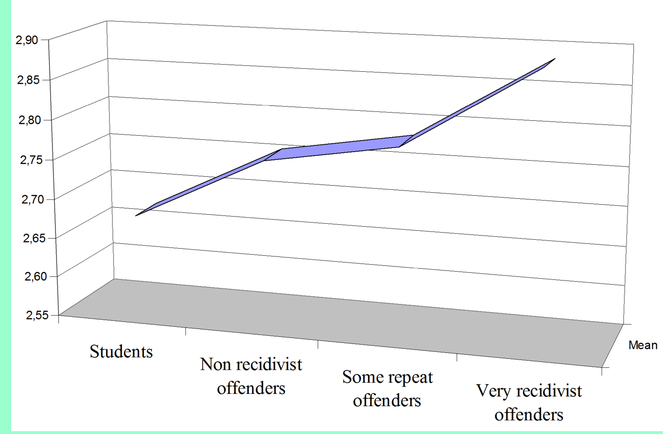
Table 1. Self-deception differences between crime type groups

Crime type	n	Mean	SD
Offenses group planning	4	2,91	0,43
White collar	3	2,49	0,33
Homicide	34	2,67	0,52
Theft	11	3,13	0,30
Drugs traffic	29	2,76	0,52
Illegal possesion of weapons	6	3,15	0,39
Kidnapping	3	2,46	0,49
Others offenses	16	2,54	0,42
Kruskall-Wallis (7)=16,79*			

Study 2

Method: n=710: 19,6% university students, 28,9% first time offenders, 28,7% some repeat offenders and 22,8% very repeat offenders. Mean age: 34 (SD=9,33). 73,2% men. 45% of offenders groups had a university negree. Instrument was IAM40, as study 1. *Results:* self deception level was compared between delinquency level and sex. Recidivist offenders showed highest levels of self-deception -F(3,620)=5,66, p=.001-(See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Self deception mean and delinquency level



Study 3

*Method:*n=35 "guerrilla" and "paramilitares" offenders and 53 university students. Mean age:28,6 (SD=9,45). 32,1% women (7,6% offenders and 56,9% students). *Instruments:* IAM40, EuroQol and Social Support Scale (Ruiz & Rodriguez, 2011).
Results: Two new scores from EuroQol were obtained with principal component analysis: Global Dysfunction and Activitties-Self care (% total varianze: 50,4; eigenvalues 2,18 and 1,35): Spearman correlations were calculated between this factors, self deception and a total social support score (Table 2). Above the line scores are correlations from offenders, below the line are from students.

Table 2. Spearman correlations between self-deception, social support and EuroQol factors.

Variables	Self-deception	Social support	Global Dysfunction	Activities and self-care
Self-deception	1000	-0,567**	-0,212	-0,023
Social Support	-0,103	1000	-0,02	-0,267
Global dysfunction	0,371**	-0,475*	1000	-0,141
Activities and self-care	0,335*	-0,76	0,296*	1000

* p <.05; ** p <.001; n 19 thru 65, according pair correlations

Conclusions:

Results,show that self-deception is a relevant variable for several prisoners groups. Among Colombian prisoners' population, often thelft is the main offense of drug-abusers. SD can lead to acquired sociopathy (Sirvent, 2007). This construct and psychopaty have some commun characteristics –lies, manipulation, i.e.– So, SD level could be used like a recidivism predictor, like PCL scores. Also, according to study 3 results, SD scores can be indicators of health problems, (students) and the indirect correlation with social support shows the breaking impact of SD on relationships with relatives (offenders), spouse/wife and friends. So, SD should be measured in prison context in order to desing offenders treatments.

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