Blame Attribution Styles and Rape Myth Acceptance in Male Child and Adult Sex Offenders

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Abstract

This study investigates the cognition of sex offenders in their interpretation and making sense of convicted crimes and how they perceived themselves as contributors to the crime in their self-to-self-reflection perspective. The study was also designed to access their interpretation of other people's attitude regarding rape. Three hundred and eighty-four incarcerated Thai sex offenders from eight Central Prisons across Thailand were examined for their cognitive processing in their committed crimes against child and adult victims using two self-report instruments: (1) Gudjonsson Blame Attribution Inventory-Revised (GBAI-R: Gudjonssan & Singh, 1989); and (2) Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance-Short Form (IRMA-SF: Payne, Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1999) which is used to examine their attitude toward the appropriateness regarding sexual intercourse also shaped by the general perception from society that they are embedded in. The impact of these contributing factors in nurturing the rape-supportive attitudes and beliefs are hypothesized to be reflected in their styles of blame attribution. Adult sex offenders reported a higher external attribution score than child sex offenders. There are no differences in the mental attribution and guilt scores between child sex offender and adult sex offender groups. Rape myth acceptance total mean score is positively correlated with the external attribution score in both child sex offender and adult sex offenders while the rape myth subscales reveal a different correlation to the blame attribution subscales. Rape myth acceptance statements and external blame attribution functioned to reduce guilt in adult sex offenders while it did not reduce guilt in child sex offenders but rather provided the content in their statements in justifying their criminal action to external and mental factors. There was no difference between child sex offenders and adult sex offender groups in the rape myth total mean score and seven rape myth subscales, which could be reflecting the more common thinking pattern among the child sex offenders and adult sex offenders.

Keywords

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Research Background

Sexual assault is a common, widespread and insidious problem that has serious physical, psychological, emotional and social consequences (WHO, 2000). Sexual assault is increasing in Thailand. From July 2015 Department of Corrections report the statistic of sex-related offenders remains constantly as high as 2.12% over the years and the recidivism rate continued to increase from 6.74 % (268 male prisoners) in the year 2014, up to 19.4% in 2015 (880 male prisoners). The Annual Report of Thai police (2014) reported 2,932 cases from 2013 to 2014, 1,907 were arrested but not all were prosecuted. Despite several protective measures being addressed by the law enforcers, non-profitable organizations, as well as increasing public involvement in condemnation of sexual violence, seem to have limited deterrence effect against sexual violence. This ongoing ineffectiveness in the Criminal Justice System needs individuals to handle sex offenders and to protect the life of the people more effectively while lower the sense of fear of crime, fear of rape, with a long-lasting result.

Previous research on sex crimes have focused on identifying different risk factors that lead to sexual violence, ranging from heightened deviant sexual arousal, intimacy deficit, empathy deficit and low self-esteem. However, several contradictions exist among the findings. Williams and McCarthy (2014) reasoned that researchers on sex crime may be blindsided by publicized high profile sex crimes that colored our vision of the characteristics of sexual offenders. They argued that research can be distinguished into two stereotypical theories: (1) Deficit perspectives, a set of theories emphasizing dysfunctional sexual experiences, social and psychological deficits are the main contributors to sexual violence (Beech & Ward, 2004; Finkelhor, 1984; Marshall & Barbaree, 1990; Ward & Siegart, 2002), which argues that childhood, sexual abuse, deviant sexual activity, a lack of sexual self-control, and social isolation contribute to sex offending behavior; and (2) Entitlement perspective, a set of theories emphasizing the positive and perhaps inflated self-image, as well as social success are more important sources (Baumeister, Cantanese & Wallace, 2002; Sanday, 2007). Hence, the results of research findings are largely inconclusive.

This current study was designed to examine different aspects, the interpretation process adopted by sex offenders in making casual explanation for their convicted behaviors, and their styles of blame attribution (Gudjonsson, 1984). It also hypothesized that their attitude toward sexual intercourse was shaped by their general perceptions from the society they were embedded in. Also, the extent these contributing factors nurtured their rape-supportive attitudes are believed to be reflected in their styles of blame attributions (Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999).

Literature Review

Attribution theory

Blame attributions are defined as explanations that people construct to facilitate their understanding of their previous behaviors of themselves or of others. Attribution theory proposes that people are actively interpreting the events in their lives and use logical models of sense making when explaining events (Heider, 1958). This is thought to serve the purpose of helping individuals to understand and control the world around them. Heider's (1958) attribution theory proposed that people have a tendency to attribute behaviors of themselves and others whether to personal disposition (internal properties) or to social environmental factors (external forces) for a given act.

Debuyst (1985) stated that all crimes involve an attribution process, i.e. an offender's personal attribution style is imposed upon their perception of the event occurring in their lives and the lives of others. Attribution also serves a self-enhancing function that allows the offenders to maintain a positive sense despite their reprehensible behaviors. Casual attributions vary along several dimensions (Maruna & Mann, 2006). Different types of offenders tend to use different attribution styles to explain their criminal behavior (Gudjonssan & Bownes, 1992; Gudjonssan & Petersson, 1991). Gudjonssan and Bownes (1992) found that sex offenders have higher level of guilt and lower external attribution. Violent offenders have higher external and mental element that other offenders (Gudjonssan & Petersson, 1991).

Gudjonsson and Sigardsson (1990) studied batterers, rapists and child molesters and found that rapists and batterers scored higher than child molesters on psychopathy scales while child molesters scored higher on social desirability and were more introverted than non-sexual offenders. Blumenthal (1999) found that those sex offenders who offended against adults have the highest level of external attribution, whereas those offending against children had the strongest feelings of guilt. Mental element attribution was associated with alcohol intoxication during the commission of the offence. Gudjonssan and Burn (1999) found that child sex offenders made more internal attribution for relationships than rapists and adult sex offenders, child sex offenders also have a higher guilt score on the blame attribution inventory when compared to violent and adult sex offenders. This suggests that the more an abuser can socially justify the idea of offending, the more likely the abuser is to blame a victim or other circumstances. Hall and Hirschman (1991) explained that a general societal view of rape is more acceptable than child sexual abuse. Thus, child sex offenders have less cultural support and, therefore make more internal attribution.

Gudjonssan and Singh (1988) showed that violence against women was often associated with negative attitudes and beliefs towards women, rationalization of abusive

behaviors, minimization and externalization of blame and a need to control and dominate in a relationship.

Rape myth acceptance

Rape myths can be defined as "prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists- in creating a climate hostile to rape victim" (Burt, 1980). However, Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994, p.134) redefined and re-conceptualized the rape myth construct, and proposed, "rape myths are attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women." Burt (1980) also suggested that rape myth acceptance may function as psychological releasers or neutralizers, allowing a potential rapist to turn off social prohibition against the injuring of others and justify men's behavior when they used force in sexual interaction. O'Donohue (2013) argues that rape myths are cognition to make liable conduct ethically acceptable, minimize the consequences of behavior that devalue the victim.

Rape myths focus on shared beliefs and cultural function, in which such rape-prone attitudes are not limited to men who sexually offend against women (Scully & Marolla, 1984) but permeate into the general population, including women and their victims. There are little attitudinal differences among rapists and other types of convicted offenders to non-offenders (Drieschner and Lange, 1990). Offenders often hold attitudes/beliefs or engage in defensive mechanisms supported by external support systems, such as family/ communities and socio-cultural myths and values. By blaming others, the aggressor manipulates the victim and justifies the exercise of force on the basis that women's behavior must be disciplined or punished.

Research exploring the impact of rape myth acceptance has revealed that rape myth influences a variety of aspects within attribution processes. A core finding that has been revealed is that those individuals with high rape myth acceptance are more likely to attribute the blame to victim and less responsible to the perpetrator. These findings demonstrated the bias which is inflicted when observers process information about the rape scenario, in the form of cognitive schema which influences and guides the way information is processed and casual attribution are made (Grubbs & Turner, 2012). Bohner *et al.*(1998) suggested that beliefs in rape myths have a casual influence on men's proclivity to rape, in which high rape myth may cause greater rape proclivity by neutralizing in advance norms that oppose sexual violence; Conversely, a high proclivity towards raping may lead to the endorsement of rape myths as a means of justifying post hoc existing behavioral tendencies.

Johnson and Beech (2017) examined studies of rape myths among convicted sex offenders and found that there is no difference in the level of rape myth endorsement among subgroups of sex offenders. Bumby (1996) found no different in RAPE, the assessment designed to assess the general rape myth against women, but the MOLEST instrument

which was designed to access distorted thoughts about having sex with children can be used to distinguish child sex offenders from adult sex offenders.

Methodology

This research was a quantitative study. It used mainly paper—and –pencil based self-reported psychometric assessments to access two constructs related to the cognition of the sex offenders. The purpose of this research was to gain an overall perspective on the cognitive distortions and related mechanisms, and the rape-supportive attitudes with correlated levels of rape myth endorsement among the sex offender population in Thailand.

The study was designed to assess all types of sex offenders. The participants in this study were convicted Thai male incarcerated prisoners in Central Prisons guilty of sex-related crimes. Prior to the sampling procedures, the characteristics of the participants were insured using the criminal code of which they are being convicted of. There were five criminal codes selected to represent the crime characteristics. They, were selected for their specificity in ensuring the participants will be of the inclusion criteria. Section 276 is concerned with victims of raped aged 18 and above, while section 277 is concerned with victims of aged under 18. Both 276 and 277 differ in the age of victim. These two criminal codes also include the usage of a weapon or multiple perpetrators involved in the convicted rape. The level of aggression being done upon the victim were identified from the severity of the physical harm to the death of the victim, identified under 277 bis and ter, and lastly, under section 285 is used as identification of the relationship between the offenders and their victim, where intrafamilial or whether the victims are being under the guardianship of the offenders.

The requested statistic report for the population with the above inclusion criteria was received from the Department of Correction in February 2016. There were two types of database information received: (1) the total prisoners under all sexual crimes under section IX, and (2) the list of prisoners requested according to this current study design's inclusion criteria with 5 criminal code (276, 277, 277 bis, 277 ter and 285). The second list was subtracted for the first list to eliminate those convicted other than subjects with inclusion characteristics. Of the 3931 of the total population of incarcerated male sex offenders, sample size estimation was performed using Taro Yamane. The estimation of sample size was 363. Concerning the dropping out rate, 400 participants were required to be collected for the current study.

Sampling

Stratified sampling used the 10 sub-divisions is selected to get the representative areas and purposive sampling: within the selected areas, the population that fit the inclusion criteria male, convicted, under incarceration, sex offender) were recruited. Then, random

simple sampling was used to select the sample that was representative of each stratified geographic.

From the online statistic monthly report from the website of the Department of Correction, there are 199 prisons or penitentiary and rehabilitation unit. The inclusion criteria included only Central Prisons, where only those convicted as guilty of high crimes were being incarcerated. The rationality is that, several individuals may be suspected (being accused, or in the process of investigation, or asking for plead, or re-trial). It would therefore be unjust to invite them as participants for they could be innocent for the crime accused against them. Likewise, within the 199, of which included female criminals as well, as well as those under pre-released or low violent crimes, these could distort the actual number of populations of interest. Thus, the 33 Central Prisons were selected for further random sampling.

Under the Department of Corrections, there are four main prison categories, with 33 Central prisons responsible for convicted offenders, with prison time at least 10 years. Stratified sampling from the 10 sub-divisions was selected to get the representative areas. Purposive sampling: within the selected areas, the population that fit the inclusion criteria male, convicted, under incarceration between December 2015 to December 2016, sex offenders will be recruited. Of the 9 regions and Bangkok, region 8 and 9 were subsumed to represent one region from the Southern part of Thailand. With the total of 9 divisions, each central prison was drawn. The total number at the location being drawn were listed. Before the proportion to which it made up of the total 400 sample size was calculated, resulted in the final number of the sample size to be collected for each of the selected locations.

Bangkwang Central Prison, Central Prison was selected for the instrument validation. Eight targets central prisons were randomly sampled across Thailand to represent each major sub-division. They were Klong Prem Central Prison, Samut Prakarn Central Prison, Chonburi Central Prison, Ubon Rachatani Central Prison, Udonthani Central Prison, Pitsanulok Central Prison, Rachaburi Central Prison and Nakorn Srithummarat Central Prison.

Instrumentation

The Gudjonssan Blame Attribution Inventory-Revised (GBAI-R; Gudjonssan & Singh, 1989) is a common instrument used for assessing the level of attribution in a criminal population. GBAI-R is a 42-item dichotomous (yes or no) with three attributional dimensions: external-element attribution (15 items), mental-element attribution (9 items) and guilt-feeling attribution (18 items). The external dimension of GBAI-R measures the extent to which individuals blame the victim or society for their crime. It includes statements such as "I do not deserve to get caught for this act," mental element designs to measure the degree to which an individual attributes the blame for their actions to personal internal factors such as mental illness or perceived loss of control (statements such as "I have no control over my action").

Guilt attribution on the GBAI-R measures remorse regarding a criminal behavior, with sentences such as "I will never forgive myself for what I have done". Descriptive analysis for the sum of scores are computed for three subscales, with a guilt feeling possible score from 0 to 18; external attribution score from 0 to 15; and mental attribution scores from 0 to 9. The current study found the moderate to high reliabilities scores for all three subscales, with reliability for external attribution scale (pretest $α$ = .72 and posttest $α$ = .66), for mental attribution (pretest $α$ = .56 and posttest $α$ = .55); and guilt feeling (pretest $α$ = .56 and posttest $α$ = .72).

Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale – Short Form (IRMA-SF; Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999) is a 20-item scale developed by Payne *et al.* (1999) to assess the extent to which a person endorses the rape myths. IRMA-SF consists of seven stable and interpretable components of rape myth acceptance, which are (1) she asked for it (SA); (2) it wasn't really a rape (NR); (3) he didn't mean to (MT); (4) she wanted it (WI); (5) she lied (LI); (6) rape is a trivial event (TE); and (7) rape is a deviant event (DE), with additional three filler items (FI) to help control response sets. It includes statements related to rape myths, such as "If a woman doesn't physically fight back, you can't really say that was rape". Items are scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (very much disagree) to 7 (very much agree). A participant's rape myth acceptance score was the mean of the added sum of their responses to various item to obtain a total mean of IRMA-SF score. A higher score indicates strong endorsement of rape myths while a low score indicates a low degree of rape myth endorsement. The $α$ for IRMA-SF is .87, and the corrected item-to-total correlations of the IRMA-SF is range from .34 to .65. For the current study, the $α$ for IRMA_SF (17-item) were .83 at pretest and .87 at posttest. The Cronbach's alpha for seven subscales at pretest ranged from .21 to .80 and at posttest ranged from .47 to .74. The overall scales process good psychometric properties ensuring the content validity of the scale. The current study used the total mean score of IRMA-SF (R-17) as well as the seven subscales for analysis, since each subscale were used to present the more specific content of the distorting thoughts regarding difference aspects on rape.

Demographic questionnaire

The demographic questionnaire comprised of 10 items asking personal characteristics, their criminal histories, victim characteristics, and their relationship to the victims. Sex offenders' characteristics (age arrested and age participated in the current study, education level, any previous criminal records, career, relationship status prior to being arrested), offense characteristics (alone or as group, homicide victim, weapon usage in crime commission), and victim's characteristics (age, gender, and number of victims). In this study, a 'child' is defined as a person below the age of 18. Thus, sex offenders who assaulted a victim

who was 18 or older than 18 were categorized as adult sex offenders (ASO), while child sex offenders (CSO) were categorized as those who assaulted a victim under 18 years old.

Ethics

After the IRB-committee had approved the ethical conduct for this study, the researcher contacted the Department of Corrections for permission to collect data. The translated –instruments were then sent to the Board of the Ministry of Corrections to review their appropriateness. This study used quantitative methods, mainly with paper—and –pencil base (since other instruments such as computers would not be allowed to bring into the secured facility). The researcher coded each instrument in the way that double-blind both the participants and the prisoner guards, to protect the participant's privacy and not to disclose their information. The researcher used key-coding for each case to prevent any biases. The collateral information, from newspapers, police reports, and other sources were obtained if available, but were not analyzed prior to statistical analysis, to prevent any distortion in the analyzes of the information.

Prior to the data collection procedure, the researcher introduced the participants to the instruments and the objectives of the study. Informed consent was then granted before any procedure continued. The researcher informed participants that they were free to stop at any time they felt uncomfortable or did not want to participate. The survey answered sheet was immediately secured in envelope to ensure the protection of privacy. The participants were told that there was no profit from their participation. The researcher also ensured that the officers at the prisons understood the procedure and that any force for participation was not needed.

Data analysis

Missing values

Four hundred of the returned questionnaires were from 8 central prisons across Thailand, nine were blank, and one was incomplete. Therefore,10 were excluded from the analysis. For the victim age items, 20 were not answered however the parallel item asking participant to identify if their victim were a child or an adult, 14 of them can be retrieved by categorizing age below 18 years old as child victims, leaving the total of 384 questionnaires with identified types of victims for further analysis. The Gudjonssan Blame Attribution Inventory-Revised (GBAI-R)'s item 30 belonging to the guilt subscale had more than 5% missing value, nevertheless, as advised by the author of the instruments, and imputation could lead to bias in interpretation, thus all three subscales for GBAI-R were summarized without any manipulation. Under demographic items, weapon usage and homicide items had more than a 5% missing value.

Statistical analyses

The IBM SPSS Statistic (version 20.0) was used for statistical analysis in this study. Descriptive statistics for demographic characteristics of the participant (age at participation, age at arrest, age of their victim) were presented as mean and standard deviation (SD) for normally distributed continuous variables, while the percentage for categorical variables were presented for criminal characteristic, aggression index, relationship between offender and their victim, and the victim's characteristics. The independent sample *t*-test was used to find the differences in the mean scores. The Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was used to determine the correlation within GBAI-R 's three subscale, IRMA-SF's subscale, and between GBAI-R and IRMA-SF in child sex offender (CSO) and adult sex offenders (ASO) separately.

Background characteristics of the samples.

Child sex offenders (CSO)

From Table 1, the mean age of child sex offenders (CSO) was 38.87 (*SD* = 13.25, range 20-84) years old, their mean age when they were arrested was 32.92 (*SD* = 12.62, range 14-79) years old. The mean age of their victim was 13.79 (*SD* = 2.56, range 3-17) years old. For criminal history: one hundred and ninety (59.2%) of the CSO group reported their crime as first offences, 93 (29%) reported having criminal records, 26 (8.1%) reported with conflicting answers, and 12 (3.7%) did not answer this item. One hundred and forty-nine (48.1%) of the CSO group reported having a primary school level of education, 88 (28.4%) attended in lower secondary school, 38 (12.3%) attended higher secondary school, and 35 (11.3%) of the CSO reported having received higher education (bachelor's diploma and/or master's degree). One hundred and fifty-three (49.2%) of the CSO group reported being single, 121 (38.9%) identified themselves as in relationship, while 37 (11.9%) reported being in a problematic relationship. Item on the level of trust was used to identify the relationship between CSO and their victims: Thirty-five (11.2%) committed a crime against intra-familial victims, 98 (31.3%) committed a crime against those they were closed to, 115 (36.7%) committed a crime against victims they had seen before, and 65 (20.8%) committed a crime against a total stranger. Two hundred and eight (66.7%) of the CSO group reported they were a solo rapist, while among those who committed in a gang rape, the mean number of accomplices was 2.02 (*SD* = 2.33, range 1-30). Two hundred and eighty-nine (95.1%) of the CSO group did not use a weapon during their crime, and two hundred and ninety-seven (99.0%) of the CSO group did not kill their victims. Nineteen (6.1%) of the CSO group reported having more than one victim, and 1 of them had victims of both genders, 314 (98.7%) of their victims were female, and 3 (0.9%) of their victims were male.

Table 1 Descriptive Baseline: Sex offender's Demographic

	Child sex offenders (CSO)	Adult sex offenders (ASO)
Age at participation (*M, SD*)	38.87 (13.25)	38.67 (9.70)
Age at arrested (*M, SD*)	32.92 (12.62)	32.57 (9.41)
Victim age (*M, SD)*	13.79 (2.59)	26.73 (10.58)
Education level		
none-primary	149 (48.1%)	25 (42.4%)
lower sec	88 (28.4%)	19 (32.2%)
higher sec	38 (12.3%)	6 (10.2%)
diploma-bachelor-master	35 (11.3%)	9 (15.3%)
Relationship status		
single	153 (49.2%)	37 (58.7%)
lover	121 (38.9%)	19 (30.2%)
problem love	37 (11.9%)	7 (11.1%)
Criminal history		
None	190 (59.2%)	37 (58.7%)
Yes	93 (29.0%)	23 (36.5%)
Conflict answers	26 (8.1%)	N/A
No answer	12 (3.7%)	3 (4.8%)
Weapon		
No weapon	289 (95.1%)	47 (81.0%)
Weapon	15 (4.9%)	11 (19.0%)
Homicide		
Victim alive	297 (99.0%)	61 (87.9%)
Victim death	3 (1.0%)	7 (12.1%)
Numbers of Rapists		
mean (*SD*)	2.02 (2.33)	1.63 (1.54)
Solo	208 (66.7%)	46 (74.2%)
Gang	104 (33.3%)	16 (25.8%)

Table 1 Descriptive Baseline: Sex offender's Demographic (continued)

	Child sex offenders (CSO)	Adult sex offenders (ASO)
Level of Trust		
Incest intra-familial	35 (11.2%)	9 (14.5%)
Closed	98 (31.3%)	12 (19.4%)
Superficial	115 (36.7%)	15 (24.2%)
Total Stranger	65 (20.8%)	26 (41.9%)
Gender		
male	3 (0.9%)	2 (3.2%)
female	314 (98.7%)	58 (93.5%)
both	1 (0.3%)	2 (3.2%)
Numbers of Victims		
One	290 (93.9%)	54 (91.5%)
More than one	19 (6.1%)	5 (8.5%)

Adult sex offenders (ASO)

From Table 1, the mean age of adult sex offenders (ASO) group was 38.67 (*SD* = 9.70, range = 21-59) years old, the age when they were arrested was 32.57 (*SD* = 9.41, range 17-53) years old, and the mean age of their victims was 26.73 (*SD* = 10.58, range 18-63). For criminal history: 37 (58.7%) of the adult sex offenders reported their crimes as first offences, 19 (30.2%) reported having criminal records, and 7 (11.1%) did not respond on this item. Twenty-five (42.4%) of the adult sex offenders reported having primary school level of education, 19 (32.2%) in lower secondary school, 6 (10.2%) in higher secondary school, and 9 (15.3%) reported having a higher level of education (bachelor diploma and master's degree. Thirty-seven (58.7%) of adult sex offenders reported being single, 19 (30.2%) reported having romantic partners, and 7 (11.1%) reported being in a problematic relationship. Regarding level of trust, nine (14.5%) ASO committed crimes against intrafamilial victims, 12 (19.4%) committed crimes against victims they were close to, 15 (24.2%) committed crimes against victims they encountered prior the offences and 26 (41.9%) of the adult sex offenders group committed crimes against a total stranger. Forty-six (74.2%) of adult sex offenders committed their crime alone, while the rest committed their crime as a gang with the mean number of accomplices of 1.63 (*SD* = 1.54, range = 1-11). Forty-one (81.0%) reported no weapon usage and 61 (87.9% of the adult sex offenders did not kill their victims. Five of the adult sex offenders (8.5%) reported having more than one victim, and two of them (3.2%) had victims of both genders, 58 (93.5%) of their victims were female and 2 (32%) of their victims were male.

Firstly, the study examined the differences between three GBAI-R subscale and IRMA-SF total mean score and the seven rape myth subscales using the independence sample t-test. Table 2 revealed a significant difference in the external attribution scores, while ASO had higher external attribution scores (*n* = 60, *M* = 6.77, *SD* = 2.89) compared to CSO (*n* = 295, *M* = 5.74, *SD* = 2.59), *t*(353) = -2.75, *p* = .01. There is not enough evidence to support that there were differences statistically in the guilt score and the mental attribution scores. The independent sample *t* -test revealed that there is no statistical difference in the total rape myth score (R-17) and in seven rape myth subscales. (Table 2). The child sex offenders and adult sex offenders share a similar level of rape myth total mean scores, seven rape myth subscales, mental attribution and feeling of guilt. Adult sex offenders reported higher external attribution scores compared to child sex offenders.

Table 2 Independent sample *t*-test GBAI-R and IRMA-SF between child sex offender (CSO) and adult sex offenders (ASO)

		n	*M*	*t(df)*	*p*
Gudjonssan Blame attribution)GBAI-R(					
Guilt	CSO	291	10.28)3.13(	*t*)348(= 1.36	0.18
	ASO	59	9.66)3.54(		
External attribution	CSO	295	5.74)2.59(	*t*)353(= -2.75	.01*
	ASO	60	6.77)2.89(		
Mental attribution	CSO	297	4.46)2.00(	*t*)356(= -0.21	0.84
	ASO	61	4.52)2.43(		
Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance)IRMA-SF(					
Rape myth total mean score	CSO	320	3.93)0.65(	*t*)381(= -1.79	0.07
	ASO	63	4.09)0.70(		
She asked for it	CSO	316	4.50)1.27(	*t*)376(= -1.10	0.27
	ASO	62	4.70)1.40(		
It was not really a rape	CSO	319	4.43)1.54(	*t*)380(= -.93	0.35
	ASO	63	4.63)1.70(		
He didn't mean to	CSO	316	4.87)1.38(	*t*)377(= -.33	0.74
	ASO	63	4.94)1.43(		
She wanted it	CSO	316	2.92)1.34(	*t*)75.32(= -.47	0.64
	ASO	61	3.02)1.69(		
She lied	CSO	319	5.02)1.45(	*t*)379(= -.18	0.86
	ASO	62	5.06)1.58(		

Note. ** *p* < .001; * *p* < .01
Table 2 Independent sample *t*-test GBAI-R and IRMA-SF between child sex offender)CSO(

and adult sex offenders)ASO(. (continued)

Secondly, the study explored the relationship within GBAI-R blame attribution three subscales. Sex offenders, both those who offended against children or adults, shared similar

		n	*M*	*t(df)*	*p*
Rape is trivial event	CSO	319	5.36)1.29(	*t*)379(= -.36	0.72
	ASO	62	5.43)1.42(		
Rape is deviant event	CSO	315	4.07)1.23(	*t*)375(= 1.06	0.29
	ASO	62	3.89)1.44(		

Note. ** *p* < .001; * *p* < .01

attribution styles regarding their convicted crimes. When sex offenders attributed their crime to external factors, they felt less guilt and placed the blame less to their mental factors at the time of crime commission (Table 3). CSO: Two hundred and eighty-six participants from the CSO group were surveyed about their level of external blame attribution (M = 5.74, SD = 2.59) and guilt (M = 10.28, SD = 3.13). A Pearson's r data analysis revealed a moderate negative correlation, r = -.52, p < .001. CSO participants reported higher external blame attribution would show lower guilt score. Two hundred and eighty-nine participants from the CSO group were examined about their level of external attribution scores and mental attribution scores (M = 4.46, SD = 2.00). A Pearson's r data analysis revealed a weak negative correlation, r = -.21, p < .001. Two hundred and ninety-four participants from CSO group were examined about their level of mental attribution and guilt scores. A Pearson's r data analysis revealed a moderate positive correlation, r = .46, p < .001.

Table 3 Pearson correlation coefficient Gudjonssan Blame Attribution Inventory-Revised (GBAI-R)

	Child sex offenders (CSO)			Adult sex offenders (ASO)		
	BAI-G	BAI-E	BAI-M	BAI-G	BAI-E	BAI-M
Guilt (BAI-G)	X			X		
External attribution (BAI-E)	-.52**	X		-.65**	X	
Mental attribution BAI-M)	.46**	-.21**	X	.55**	-.27*	X

Note. ** *p* < .001; * *p* < .01

ASO: Fifty-eight participants from the ASO group were surveyed about their level of external blame attribution (M = 6.77, SD = 2.89) and feeling of guilt (M = 9.66, SD = 3.54). A Pearson's r data analysis revealed a moderate negative correlation, r = -.65, p < .001. ASO participants reported more external blame attribution which showed a low guilt score. Sixty participants from the ASO group were examined about their level of external attribution scores and mental attribution scores (M = 4.52, SD = 2.43). A Pearson's r data analysis

revealed a weak negative correlation, r = -.27, p < .05. ASO participants reported more external blame attribution showed low mental attribution score. Fifty-nine participants from ASO group participants from ASO group were examined about their level of mental attribution and guilt scores. A Pearson's r data analysis revealed a moderate positive correlation, r = .55, p < .001. ASO participants reported a high mental attribution which showed a high feeling of guilt score. Thai sex offenders, whether having committed their sex offence against a child or adult, shared similar blame attribution styles. Those who blamed external factor would use mental blame less and feel less guilt or remorse for their committed crimes.

Lastly, the study examined the relationship between external attribution and its association with rape myths. Its function was hypothesized to be similar patterns, where external attribution negatively associated with guilt and mental attribution. Table 4 displays the result for the Pearson correlation data analysis for the blame attribution variables and the rape myth acceptance subscales. According to Table 4, in child sex offenders there is no significant relationship between the BAI-G and rape myth total mean score, but there is an association with the two rape myth subscales: a significant weak negative correlation between BAI-G and she wanted it (WI), r = -.18, p = .003 and she lied (LI), r = -.12, p = .04. There is no significant correlation found in the other 5 rape myth subscales. The findings also revealed the BAI-E is significant weak positively correlated same rape myth subscales, she wanted it (WI), r = .23, p < .001 and she lied (LI), r = .26, p < .001. The premise that the more the sex offender could place the blame to external factors, could help reduce their guilt, when they use the rape myth statement from the content of she lied (LI) and she wanted it (WI) subscales. The external blame also showed a significant weak positive correlation with the total rape myth score, r = 13, p = .02 and it wasn't really a rape (NR), r = .15, p = .01 and to she asked for it (SA) at r = .23, p < .001. Nevertheless, the blaming external factors using the content of these subscales are not sufficient enough for the child sex offenders to reduce their guilt. This finding suggested that CSO relied on the content of rape myths by placing blame on external factors. Surprisingly, the correlation between total rape myth score and mental blame showed, r = .13, p = .02. Also, the mental blame correlated with another two subscales: a weak positive correlation between the BAI-M and He didn't mean to (MT), r = .17, p = .003; and a weak positive correlation between the BAI-M and rape is a deviant event (DE), r = .19, p = .001. This is quite surprising since the rape myth acceptance inventory is often associated with victim blaming and projecting to external factors. This suggested that child sex offenders also use the content of rape myth subscale to blame their crime on their mental state.

Table 4 Pearson correlation between blame attribution subscales and Illinois rape myth score and seven subscales in child sex offenders and adult sex offenders

	Child sex offenders			Adult sex offenders		
	BAI-G	BAI-E	BAI-M	BAI-G	BAI-E	BAI-M
Rape myth total mean score (R-17)	-.02	.13[*]	.13[*]	-.41[**]	.38[**]	-.05
She asked for it (SA)	-.11	.23[**]	.05	-.36[**]	.25	-.12
Not rape (NR)	-.09	.15[*]	.02	-.38[**]	.40[**]	-.13
He didn't mean to (MT)	.08	-.05	.17[**]	-.01	.02	.14
She wanted it (WI)	-.18[**]	.23[**]	.07	-.33[*]	.25	-.02
She lied (LI)	-.12[*]	.26[**]	.02	-.46[**]	.34[**]	-.20
Rape is trivial event (TE)	-.06	.06	.02	-.07	.04	.12
Rape is deviant event (DE)	-.002	.09	.19[**]	-.10	.14	.11

Note. ** $p < .001$; * $p < .01$

In the adult sex offender group, the Pearson's r correlation revealed a significant moderate negative correlation between a feeling of guilt and the total rape myth score, $r = -41$, $p = .001$. A feeling of guilt also had a significant negative correlation moderate with another 4 of the rape myth subscales. This finding suggests that through endorsing rape myths such as She asked for it (SA), $r = -36$, $p = .01$; It isn't rape (NR), $r = -38$, $p = .003$; She wanted it (WI, $r = -33$, $p = .01$; and She Lied (LI), $r = -46$, $p < .001$, adult sex offenders can effectively reduce their guilt regarding their convicted crime.

CSO can only rely on She wanted it (SA) and She lied) to reduce guilt. Within the adult sex offender group, the Pearson's r correlation revealed the relationship between external blame attribution and rape myth acceptance subscale in an expected pattern. External blame and rape myth total scores are moderately positively correlated at .38, $p = .003$. The higher the rape myth endorsement by the adult sex offenders, the more they blame external attribution. At a subscale level, external blame showed a significant moderately positively correlated with Not rape (NR), $r = .40$, $p = .001$; and she lied (LI), $r = .34$, $p = .01$. The higher the rape myth endorsement in NR and LI, the more assault sex offenders blame external factors. This suggests that the adult sex offenders used the content of the not raped and she lied subscale to place blame on external factors such as in victim blaming There is no significant correlation found between mental blame attribution and rape myth, total score or at subscales level, among adult sex offenders. This suggests that endorsing rape myths does not provide the adult sex offender enough reasons for them to blame their convicted

crime on mental factors. Unlike child sex offenders whom manipulate the content of rape myth to put blame on to their mental states at time of their crime.

Discussion

Firstly, the study explored for any significant difference in the blame attribution subscales and rape myth scores between child sex offender and adult sex offenders. The findings revealed that adult sex offenders had a significantly higher external attribution score than child sex offenders. There is not enough evidence to support that the different scores found in the guilt score and mental attribution score are statistically significant. Blumenthal (1999) found that those sex offenders who offended against adults have the highest level of external attribution, whereas those offending against children had the strongest guilt feeling attribution. This research shared similar findings that those sex offenders who offended against adults have higher level of external attribution scores. However, there was no significant difference in the mental attribution scores or the feeling of guilt reported in the child sex offender group. Gudjonsson suggested that the greater the degree of social disapproval for an offence, the more feelings of guilt following transgression. Thus, he proposed that child sex offenders are likely to report more guilt than those who offend against adults. However, the current findings found no significant difference in the guilt score. The different findings could mean that Thai culture, where the legal code on the age of victim is ambiguous, causes offenders to view the child victims as adults, thus no different in the guilt or level of their remorse when compared to the adult victims. It also reflects the traditional age of marriage in the rural provinces is at a younger age compared to those living in the city. Thus, it may differ in social norms which support young age marriage. The age of victims was not significant for child sex offenders to feel remorse or guilt for their action compared to adult sex offenders. The first reason was in the lack of legal knowledge while the second reason could rely on cultural differences.

The current study also explored if all sex offenders report having high levels of rape myth acceptance despite the age of their raped victims. Based on the previous finding that the adult sex offender would report higher rape myth, since the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance –a Short Formed Inventory was constructed which focused upon adult victims. Child sex offenders and adult sex offenders do share certain sets of beliefs for them to be capable of rape. But raping children would need another set of beliefs to overcome social disapproval. The results from this study revealed that there is no evidence to support that adult sex offenders have a higher rape myth score than child sex offenders. No significant difference in seven rape myth subscales between child sex offenders and adult sex offenders were found. Child sex offenders reported higher in the "Rape is a deviant event" subscale, but this finding was not statistically significant. In cooperating with the similar rape myth endorsement level to the distinct pattern in blame attribution style used by child sex offenders

and adult sex offenders. The adult sex offenders could external attribution of blame relied on the rape myth, which sufficiently reduced their guilt. The child sex offenders, however, relied on the same level of rape myth. They may therefore utilize the content blaming of both the external and mental element. Blaming the mental element resembled partially the taking of responsibility, thus it did not sufficiently reduce guilt as seen in adult sex offenders.

Secondly, the study explored whether the child sex offenders and adult sex offenders used similar blame attribution styles to explain their criminal behaviors. The current findings support the pattern in both child sex offenders and adult sex offenders, where when the external blame is high, guilt and mental attribution score are low. Thai sex offenders, whether having committed a sex offence against a child victim or adult victim, shared similar blame attribution styles, those who blamed external factors would blame themselves less and feel less guilt or remorse for their committed crimes. There is considerable evidence that there is a positive association between a reported guilty feeling and mental element attributions but a negative association between a guilty feeling and external attribution (Gudjonsson & Bownes, 1992; Gudjonsson & Petursson, 1991; Gudjonsson & Singh, 1989).

Lastly, this study explored the relationship between external blame attribution and rape myth scores. It was hypothesized that the higher the sex offender endorsed rape myth scores, the higher the sex offenders would make more external attribution. If this hypothesis was proven, the rape myth attitude would function in a similar pattern as to the external attribution would in reducing the guilt scores, likewise the mental attribution score would be reportedly low, since rape myth would sufficiently provide enough external blame and thus avoiding placing blame on personal mental factors. The current study found that among the adult sex offenders, where the external attribution was high, the rape myth was also high while guilt was reported low. This suggests that the more an abuser can socially justify the idea of offending, the more likely the abuser is to blame on victim or other circumstances. For instance, within the rape myth subscale of "She wanted it", which constitute of statements appointing the role of victim's consent in wanting the sexual intercourse, through the utilization on the mutual consent, adult sex offenders would not have to feel guilty about the sexual act even though it broke the law. Likewise, through relying on the mutual sexual desire of the children, the child sex offenders utilized the content to excuse their behavior in helping to gratify the child's sexual desire, thus there was no remorse or guilt, even when the victim's age was under the legal definition. Within the subscale "She lied," the perpetrators placed negative blame directly to the victim's credibility. Thus, viewing the victim as the bad actor, it was casual factors that were interpreted and attributed to external factors such as, the victim's lied about the crime convicted upon them, thus the guilt is reduced, and there is nothing to blame their mental capability during the crime.

Likewise, in the rape myth subscale on "It wasn't really a rape," is the definition on what constitutes a rape and legal sexual consent. The higher the distortion on the concept of rape and legal sexual intercourse, the more the sex offenders could rationalize their act using the content of rape myth to place blame on external circumstances, which effectively reduce the feeling of guilt in adult sex offenders. For the child sex offenders, the definition offered the rationalization to place blame to external factors yet could not reduce the guilt. There was no correlation with the mental attribution since the content of this rape myth does not concern the mental capability of the agents at the time of the crime.

An interesting pattern was observed among the child sex offenders in which they appeared to selectively rely on certain rape myth subscale to the content of their justification/excuse/rationalization their crime through external attribution, while utilized the content in "He didn't mean to" and "Rape is a deviant event" to make mental attribution. Mental attribution and "He didn't mean to" rape myth subscale of which constitute of statements concerning the uncontrollability of sexual urges. Since, child sex offenders relied more on mental attribution, rather than placing blame to external factors as often reported in adult sex offenders, the content of mental attribution were clarified in this study. While some studies have suggested that mental attribution may be associated with self-blame, to alcohol, or even in aggression in interpersonal violence domestic partners (Gudjonsson & Petursson, 1991), the styles of placing mental attribution through utilization the content of rape myth have not been explored. Here, mental blames are associated with the statement that share common implicit thinking pattern of "Uncontrollability" (Ward and Keenan, 1999), thus, not being in-control during a crime, one does not see how oneself as the agent of authentic in carrying the crime commission, thus, through dismissing the role in capability to control the situation, one do not feel guilt or remorse, or see the necessity to learn to take control of the "driving forces" of their sexual urges that result in a sexual act/ rape in young children under 18 years old. In adult sex offenders, this subscale content does not provide enough excuses to place blame to external factors or in reducing guilt.

Conclusion

The blame attribution styles of both the child sex offender and adult sex offender group support Heider's attribution styles. When the sex offenders capable of placing blame to external factors, they feel less guilt and they do not need to blame their convicted crime to mental factors, since external factor is already enough for their justification and neutralization in their mental processing regarding their own convicted crimes. The rape myth acceptance statements and external attribution blame functioned to reduce guilt in adult sex offenders. While these statements were incapable of reducing guilt in child sex offenders, these rape myth acceptance statements served to provide the content in their statements in justifying their criminal actions to both external and mental factors. There are no differences in rape

myth scores which could reflect the more common belief systems in sex offenses against younger victims. This is no surprise since in this era, the media often sexualize young children in advertising campaigns. The rape myth acceptance scores could reflect the general view on rape in that given society as well.

Limitations and Future Recommendation

Several limitations exist. For instance, since the instrument validation for Gudjonssan Blame Attribution Inventory-Revised (GBAI-R) was developed for specific types of population, the criminal offenders, our instrument validation step was only carried out in the tryout 30 participants. With limitation and restriction issues, the tryout sample constituted only of those who were convicted for sex-related crimes, and was unable to determine other types of the criminal offenses. Further replication of the study in comparison to other types of criminal offenses could help to reveal more complex underlying cognitive mechanisms among sex offenders. The cultural setting is also another issues since there is no other similar research design within a Thai cultural setting. The comparison of the findings could be difficult to interpret, yet they do give some insight on cultural differences and the impact on the study design, such as the non-standardization of the legal code at an international level among the research field within sexual offenders.

The lack of life-course developmental perspectives that could lead to bias in the interpretation of the findings, and most important highlight is the common minimalize style of research filed in using the psychometric instruments such as in using Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance -Short Formed (IRMA-SF)'s total means score without considering the construct of the subscale and its underlying mechanisms. This suggested more precision and more consideration in the future research designs within the sex crime research field to counter the ongoing contradiction and arguments among academic scholars worldwide.

Policy implementation in terms of reporting rape cases should deter crime, not promote copycat criminals as often seen after traumatizing rape cases that are spread through the news and media. The similar rape myth acceptance scores between child sex offenders and adult sex offenders could also imply the way in which that given society views rape cases as well as reflecting the social norm on what is acceptable and not acceptable regarding consensual sexual intercourse. Education programs should enhance the knowledge on which conduct is legal and the illegal boundaries should be emphasized as well. Overall, this study revealed only some perspectives on the cognition of the Thai sex offenders, future studies are needed to further decode their mind of the sex offenders.

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