

## Abstract

Sex offenders have been noted to deny or minimize their offending behaviours and related-attitudes in local and overseas correctional institutions. Such a tendency was defined as their defensiveness. This study explored the relationships between sex offenders' defensiveness in reporting cognitive distortions, their general social desirability response tendency in terms of impression management and self-deception, and other psychosocial factors including face and shame-proneness. The participants comprised of 51 incarcerated sex offenders and 49 control participants with no offending history. They completed two sets of questionnaires in an honest and a fake-good condition. Defensiveness, the dependent variable, was operationally defined by subtracting participants' endorsement of sexual cognitive distortions in the honest condition from that in the fake-good condition. The results showed that sex offenders did not score significantly different from the non-offenders across all psychological measures. They were also not significantly more defensive

than the non-offenders. Overall speaking, shame-proneness was the most important predictor to sex offenders' defensiveness. However, no significant association was noted for non-offenders. These results, though preliminary and limited by the small sample size, shed light on the psychological processes underlying defensiveness among sex offenders. Treatment programs targeting their sense of shame would facilitate honest disclosure, which may improve the validity of assessment and strengthen the treatment outcome in the long run.