

Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth (SAVRY)

Presentation

The Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth (SAVRY) is a structured assessment tool that helps measure a young person's risk for future violence, aggression or any other forms of behaviour considered to be serious. All items addressed in SAVRY are drawn from scientific research on the risk and protective factors involved in the development of violence and aggression in youth. SAVRY emphasizes dynamic factors and is designed to be useful in intervention planning and monitoring of ongoing progress. This includes the formulation of clinical treatment or intervention plans, conditions of community supervision and release/discharge planning.

Age group

This tool is intended for adolescents aged 12 to 18 who: have been detained; or have been referred for a comprehensive, in-depth assessment of violence risk.

Context and procedure for use

SAVRY should be used by professionals with assessment and/or supervision experience regarding violence risk in youth. At a minimum, those who use the SAVRY should have expertise (i.e., training and experience) in conducting individual assessments, child/adolescent development, and in youth violence.

SAVRY is coded on the basis of several sources of information: police or probation reports, mental health and social services records, and multiple interviews with the young person and family. The greater the number of information sources used, the more complete and reliable the assessment will be. The time required to gather this information will vary, but once this stage is completed, coding all the SAVRY items typically takes 10 to 15 minutes.

Components and items assessed

SAVRY is composed of 30 items, of which 24 are associated with risk factors and 6 with protective factors. The 24 risk items are divided into three categories, namely historical, social/contextual and individual/clinical risk factors, as follows:

Historical Risk Factors

History of Violence

History of Nonviolent Offending

Early Initiation of Violence

Past Supervision/Intervention Failures

History of Self-Harm or Suicide Attempts

Exposure to Violence in the Home

Childhood History of Maltreatment

Parental/guardian Criminality

Early Caregiver Disruption

Poor School Achievement

Social and Contextual Risk Factors

Peer Delinquency

Peer Rejection

Stress and Poor Coping

Poor Parental Management

Lack of Personal/Social Support

Community Disorganization

Individual/clinical Risk Factors

Negative Attitudes

Risk Taking/Impulsivity

Substance-Use Difficulties

Anger Management Problems

Low Empathy/Remorse

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Difficulties

Poor Compliance

Low Interest/Commitment to School

Protective factors

In addition to these risk factors, SAVRY also assesses the presence of six protective factors, as follows:

Prosocial Involvement

Strong Social Support

Strong Attachments and Bonds

Positive Attitude Toward Intervention and Authority

Strong Commitment to School

Resilient Personality Traits

Each risk factor has a three-level coding structure with specific rating guidelines ("low", "moderate", or "high"). Protective factors are rated as either "present" or "absent". The SAVRY manual contains specific guidelines for rating each item. Once items are rated, the administrator must rigorously assess the risk and protective factors and make a judgement on the future risk of adopting violent behaviours.