

Blatníková, Šárka – Faridová, Petra – Vranka, Marek:
Kriminální styly myšlení: Inventář PICTS-cz
Criminal Thinking: Inventory PICTS-cz
ISBN 978-80-7338-156-1

Summary

This expert monograph presents a summary of research findings about the concept of criminal thinking and the criminal lifestyle, and acquaints the reader with the tool - Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles – designated for mapping the thinking styles in the criminal population. The subjects of research were convicted offenders, criminal thinking styles and the aforementioned Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles (PICTS). The main objective was to assess the possibility of identifying criminal thinking styles in the Czech prison population, to evaluate the option of using the inventory in the conditions of forensic and penitentiary practice and to describe, or rather clarify the structure of the PICTS. Quantitative procedures, multivariable statistical methods and document analyses in particular were used.¹

Irrational or erroneous beliefs, which have little or no support in evidence, can commonly be encountered even among members of the majority, non-criminal population. However, the fundamental difference is that they usually appear in an increased degree among criminals, are strongly emphasised/in an increased degree and intensity among criminals and relate to socially undesirable or downright antisocial behaviour. In the first part of the publication, we apply to the theoretical background of criminal thinking as conceived by Glenn Walters and his integrative-interactive theory of criminality, which combines a dispositional and situational approach. He identifies mental constructs, representing perceived reality, as belief systems.

Criminal thinking occurs across the criminal population, regardless of the given type of crime. Research, comparing the results between groups of perpetrators of various crimes, respectively various types of criminality, is currently minimal. However, the intensity of criminal attitudes differs substantially between groups of perpetrators, sorted according to various aspects of their criminal history, such as the age of criminal onset and the extent of

¹ The core part consisted of empirical surveys – onsite data collection – that served to adapt the technique to Czech conditions, which was conducted within the research project “Violent sexual criminality in the Czech Republic with a focus on its current forms, on increasing the effectiveness of exposure and sanctioning its offenders and on the possibility of protecting society from sexually motivated violence”, which was granted special-purpose support within the Security Research Program of the Czech Republic in 2012-2015 (BV II/2-VS), project identification code VG20122014084.

criminal career (high scores on the PICTS scales are associated with a richer criminal history and earlier onset of the criminal career – the sooner an individual starts their criminal career, the more intensive and profoundly rooted criminal attitudes they show). The same applies to the number of prior convictions according to empirical research – the higher number of earlier convictions the individual has, the more maladaptive attitudes can be expected of them.

There are several methods used for the partial identification and description of criminal thinking – interviews, content analysis of testimony, or analysis of statements obtained within certain projective techniques. Foreign expert literature mentions the existence of a number of questionnaires or inventories directly concerning criminal cognition, in the sense of criminal thinking, beliefs, attitudes, cognitive distortions and other similarly defined or related concepts. These tools are generally designated for the criminal population as a whole, or apply to the perpetrators of a specific type of criminal activity, most often sexually motivated offences. In the Czech Republic, the offer of similarly focused tools is entirely different; most often it is possible to use only some personality inventories, which may simultaneously depict certain aspects of criminal thinking, albeit only very marginally. In the course of 2012 – 2015, our research team at the Institute of Criminology and Social Prevention, with the consent of the author Glenn D. Walters, worked on adapting to the Czech environment the Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles (PICTS), which is considered one of the most thoroughly elaborated tools for “measuring” criminal thinking. The first version of the inventory was created by Walters in 1995 and at present it offers eight thinking style scales, four factors scales, two content and two composite scales. It also offers a one special scale— Fear of change scale – and a general criminal thinking score. What we consider important about this method (instrument) is the inclusion of validity scales, which help identify the respondent’s response style and depict their attitude to the test situation. Based on a whole range of performed studies, it may be observed that this is an instrument with repeatedly proven reliability (in the sense of internal consistency, inter-item correlation and test-retest reliability) and validity; the predictive validity of the inventory was proven in relation to institutional adjustment and recidivism. Another important factor for practical application of the tool is its incremental validity, respectively the incremental validity of its individual scales (ability of the PICTS instrument to contribute to predicting recidivism). According to Walters, author of the technique, the eight thinking styles, despite their mutual correlations, represent the sufficiently distinguished and independent primary cognitive aspects of a criminal lifestyle. The reference for formulating the eight thinking style scales was above all the observation and study of “thinking errors” that appeared in the description of criminal

conduct, as presented by the perpetrators. The PICTS instrument is thus considered one of the few empirically based, respectively empirically referenced tools for assessing criminal thinking styles.

Adaptation of the instrument to the Czech prison population as conducted in 2011 – 2015 and the **Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles (PICTS-cz)** now constitutes a fully standardized test. To ensure the objectivity of the method/instrument, standard conditions, process of administration, scoring, evaluation and interpretation were defined. The Czech version largely preserves the procedures stipulated in the original questionnaire. The individual steps of adapting the technique fully respected the basic principles set by the author, including the method of distributing this psychodiagnostic tool. According to available results, the Czech version of the questionnaire corresponds to the original version of the instrument, which is a widely accepted instrument for detecting the occurrence and intensity of criminal attitudes among adult criminals (criminal population), respectively the adult prison population. PICTS-cz shows satisfactory basic psychometric properties, comparable with the results of studies carried out on the author's/original standardization sample. Tests of reliability and indicative proofs of validity of the inventory indicate the possibility of employing it as a useful tool in the diagnostic practice of prison psychologists and expert witnesses in psychology.

We believe that the core of using PICTS-cz, which we have presented in this publication, lies primarily in the penitentiary area, not just in the prediction of the individual's institutional/disciplinary adjustment to the conditions of a prison environment, respectively prediction of the prison misconducts (risk of disciplinary offences). We also see the possibility of using this tool in the field of intervention, or psychological/psychotherapeutic work with offenders, following the example from abroad. In this area, it can serve to define the level/intensity and dominant characteristics of criminal thinking, assess the possibility of changing these attitudes, and subsequently detecting the achieved change (e.g. after finishing a specific intervention program); this is where we believe the technique's potential to be the strongest. However, applicability of the concept for practice of expert witnesses, consisting mainly of assessing the risk of recidivism or resocialization prognosis, should not be omitted. Verification and use of the technique when measuring effectiveness of intervention programs for the prison population/assessing the effectiveness of programs for treating the prison population would be a suitable step for further work.

Překlad: PRESTO - Překladačské centrum s.r.o.