

THE COPING STRATEGIES, ADJUSTMENT AND WELL BEING OF MALE INMATES IN THE PRISON ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

The research area of imprisonment and its effects on inmates has had a long and complex history over the past decades, with researchers having varying opinions. Early researchers suggested that imprisonment had negative psychological and physical effects on its inmates, leading to psychological deterioration. More recent research, on the other hand, has suggested that imprisonment is not as detrimental as first thought. This review aims to provide an overview of the coping strategies, adjustment and well being of male inmates in the prison environment. Additionally, a systematic review methodology is adopted to examine the relationships between coping strategies, adjustment and well being of male inmates. The objectives of this review were, firstly, to determine if coping strategies affect the adaptation, adjustment and well being of inmates and, secondly, to determine if institutional changes can improve inmate adjustment and coping. The results were mixed, but demonstrate that there is a complex relationship between the coping strategies, adjustment and well being of male inmates and that institutional opportunities and changes can be beneficial. The review concludes that there is a link between coping strategies, adjustment and well being of male inmates and that therapeutic communities, such as those at HMP Grendon, would be useful in conventional prisons to help inmates adjust and reform.

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Introduction

The research area of imprisonment and its effects on inmates has had a long and complex history over the past decades, with researchers having varying opinions. Many early researchers concluded that imprisonment had negative psychological and physical effects on its inmates, leading to psychological deterioration. These effects included emotional withdrawal (Clements, 1979), depression (Cooper, 1974; Walker, 1983), suicidal thoughts or actions (Flanagan, 1980) and increasing levels of hostility (Bolton et al., 1976a). One of the earliest and most criticised studies about imprisonment, by Cohen and Taylor (1972), suggested that long term prisoners have an obsessive fear of deteriorating due to imprisonment. However, some other researchers around this time also found that inmates themselves did not see imprisonment as a fundamental threat to their psychological health (Richards, 1978) and that, in fact, there is an increase in verbal intelligence with imprisonment (Bolton et al., 1976b). Despite these mixed opinions, studies which focused on the general psychological effects of imprisonment have mostly found that inmates experience the most difficulty at the beginning of their sentences (for example, MacKenzie and Goodstein, 1985 and Sapsford, 1978)

Traditionally, researchers who studied the psychological effects of imprisonment searched for uniform effects across inmates in general (Smyth et al., 1994). More recent research, on the other hand, now attempts to examine the differential impact of imprisonment on individual inmates or subpopulations, such as ‘lifers’ or those who attempt suicide (Smyth et al., 1994). Newer research has generally suggested that imprisonment is not as detrimental as first thought, and could also have some positive impacts on its inmates. For example, Bonta and Gendreau (1990) found little evidence to support the conclusion that long term imprisonment necessarily has detrimental effects.

Modern research also seems to conclude that the most damaging factor to an inmate is the loss of their life in the outside world and relations with family, rather than the actual regime or conditions of imprisonment (Yang et al., 2009; Mackenzie and Mitchell, 2005). Although prisons constrain behaviour considerably, they actually provide few contingencies that would lead to progressive changes in behaviour (Zamble and Porporino, 1990). Furthermore, it has been argued that any harm caused by imprisonment can only be seen upon release, mainly due to the stigma created by a period of imprisonment (Schnittker and John, 2007). Recent decades have also seen an increase in primary research with inmates, including interviews and questionnaires (for example, Zamble, 1992 and Rokach, 1997, among others) in comparison to older research studies, improving their validity.

Prison Statistics

Her Majesty’s Prison Service serves the public by keeping in custody those admitted to the courts. Their duty is to “look after them with humanity and help them lead law-abiding and useful lives in custody and after release” (Ministry of Justice, 2012a). As of April 2012, according to the Ministry of Justice (2012b), the prison population in England and Wales is 87,433, making it the highest prison population in Europe. This population is made up of 83,202 males and 4,231 females, spread across 140 establishments (International Centre for Prison Studies, 2012a). Currently, the operational capacity of prisons in England and Wales is 89,548 (Ministry of Justice,

2012b), which shows that prisons are dangerously close to reaching this capacity. The prison population rate is 156 per 100,000 of the national population (ICPS, 2012a), which is based on an estimated national population of 55.9 million in March 2012 (Office for National Statistics Figures, 2012).

The Federal Bureau of Prisons protects society by “confining offenders in the controlled environments of prisons and community-based facilities that are safe, human, cost-efficient, and appropriately secure, and that provide work and other self improvement opportunities to assist offenders in becoming law-abiding citizens” (Federal Bureau of Prisons, 2012). In contrast to the England and Wales prison population, the US prison population was 2,266,832 in 2010 (US Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2010). These are the latest figures available, although the population continues to increase. This makes it the largest prison population in the world. This population is spread across the 4,575 establishments (ICPS, 2012b) in the USA. The prison population rate is 730 per 100,000 of the national population which is based on an estimated national population of 310 million at the end of 2010 (ICPS, 2012b).

Overcrowding

Prison overcrowding is the “mismatch between prison capacity and the number of prisoners to be accommodated” (Council of Europe, 2000). It is a complex issue which presents a huge problem to prison administrations and the Criminal Justice System. The issue of overcrowding, in particular, has been blamed for much of the harm caused to inmates during imprisonment. The impact of crowding “seems to be the most deleterious in such institutions where movement and programme access are severely restricted” (Clements, 1979). Similarly, Toch (1985) argues that overcrowding leads to “warehousing”, where inmates are denied correctional rehabilitation, along with other services, raising questions about the quality of programs and opportunities offered to inmates whilst in prison, and the need for changes. Furthermore, this lack in opportunities as a result of overcrowding creates idleness among inmates, which can lead to violence and other ‘interpersonal frictions’, along with a lowering of self esteem and loss of skills (Clements, 1979). This suggests that inmates who are inactive or underutilised cope less effectively with a crowded environment.

Several studies support the idea that the struggles for resources and space associated with prison overcrowding, create an atmosphere which impedes adaptation to prison life and increases the likelihood of suicide (McNulty and Huey, 2005). Similarly, other studies have found that crowding has been related to aggressive behaviour (Paulus and McCain, 1983) and reduced levels of psychological well being (Lawrence and Andrews, 2004). Since the prison population around the world continues to rise, and the prison capacity continues to be pressured, measures should be taken to alleviate the consequences of overcrowding.

Inmate Well Being

The psychological well being of inmates is perhaps an under researched topic. According to Wooldredge (1999) psychological well being is conceptualised as “reflecting inmate perceptions of insecurity, stress, depression, anger, low self esteem and loneliness felt during incarceration”. Particular aspects of the prison environment may lessen some of the negative psychological effects of incarceration, such as

depression and alienation, but they depend on the unique need of the inmates (Toch, 1977).

Depression and Anxiety

Research has shown that inmates exhibit higher levels of anxiety and depression than the general population, along with lower levels of self esteem, specifically among certain groups of inmates (Castellano and Soderstrom, 1997). This suggests that programs need to be in place to improve inmates self esteem. Furthermore, the threat or persistent fear of victimisation among inmates that is presented in the prison environment can lead to hypervigilance. Hypervigilance is the “sustained heightened cognitive and affective arousal in the service of scanning the environment for threats” (Boxer et al., 2009) and is a key component of anxiety related syndromes.

Suicide

Liebling (1992) found a clear link between the pain of imprisonment and harm, both self inflicted injury and suicide. However, relatively little is known about which aspects of the prison experience and its environment contribute to suicide ideation, attempts or completion (Dye, 2010). According to Towl (2003), the most powerful predictor of suicide in prisons is the amount of time spent at the particular institution; 10% of those who commit suicide do so within 24 hours of their arrival, suggesting a high risk period. Between 1978 and 2003 suicide in male prisoners in England and Wales was roughly 5 times more common than in the general male population of similar ages (Fazel et al., 2005), highlighting the disproportionality between the populations.

The deprivation theory predicts that “prisons in which inmates experience a greater loss of freedom, have lesser control over daily routines, and are denied access to rehabilitative programs will have a higher incidence of suicide” (McNulty and Huey, 2005). Furthermore, there are certain factors which can predispose inmates to suicide when they face crisis situations such as imprisonment. These include: recent excessive drinking or use of drugs, loss of stabilising resources, guilt or shame, mental illness, a history of suicide or an approaching court date (Hayes and Blaauw, 1997). This shows there is a complex relationship between imprisonment and harm caused to inmates and that individual differences must be considered.

Contributory Factors

There are many factors which can contribute to negative reactions to imprisonment. Hayes and Blaauw (1997) suggest that certain features of the prison setting can negatively affect coping and adjustment to imprisonment. These include: fear of the unknown, distrust of authoritarian environment, lack of apparent control over the future, isolation from family, the shame of imprisonment and the dehumanising effects of imprisonment.

Coping Strategies

The ability to mentally cope with imprisonment has implications for institutional programs and for reducing the violence that results from anxiety and depression amongst inmates (Wooldredge, 1999). Coping strategies refer to the efforts made to “master, reduce or tolerate the demands created by stress” (Weiten et al., 2011). Since prison

inmates have higher levels of stress, anxiety and suicide than the general population, it is important for institutions to aid the coping of inmates.

It has been found that inmates who are new to prison, but anticipate serving long sentences in prison, experience the most stress. Inmates who had received long sentences and had already served a lengthy time in prison, on the other hand, experience less stress (MacKenzie and Goodstein, 1985). This suggests that those inmates who have served time in prison develop a method of coping with the experience. Therefore, this needs to be researched.

Figure 1 shows ‘constructive coping methods’ which can aid healthy adaptation and adjustment to stressful situations, classified by Moos and Billings (1982, in Weiten et al., 2011). For inmates, however, there are not many behavioural coping strategies available, due to the strict prison environment. As a result, problem focused coping is likely to be less effective for inmates as they cannot undo the crime and solve the problem. Therefore, emotion focused coping is more effective and has a beneficial impact on psychological well being (Van Harreveld et al., 2007). The social manner of emotion focused coping involves sharing feelings with others in the social network. The cognitive manner of emotion focused coping, on the other hand, involves redefining the perception of the situation (Van Herreveld et al., 2007).

Furthermore, when privacy and adequate personal space are denied to male inmates, they become particularly stressed. This stress creates an increase in aggression, both physically and verbally, as a way of coping. This style of coping is then adopted in order to emphasise their dominance to other inmates (Clements, 1979). However, other research has shown that structural aspects of imprisonment are less predictive of psychological health than the individual differences in ways in which inmates cope with prison life (Bonta and Gendreau, 1990). It is key to understand that inmates react differently to the pressures of the prison environment and that some may adapt successfully to such an environment.

Appraisal-focused Strategies	Problem-focused Strategies	Emotion-focused Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detecting and disputing negative self talk • Rational thinking • Using positive reinterpretation • Finding humour in the situation • Turning to religion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active problem solving • Seeking social support • Enhancing time management • Improving self-control • Becoming more assertive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Releasing pent-up emotions • Distracting oneself • Managing hostile feelings and forgiving others • Exercising • Meditating • Using systematic relaxation procedures

Figure 1. The classification of Constructive Coping Methods

Prison Adjustment

Adjustment refers to the “psychological processes through which people manage or cope with the demands or challenges of every day life” (Weiten et al., 2011). Therefore, prison adjustment refers to the processes through which inmates manage and cope with the demands of the prison environment and its experiences. The extent to which an inmate’s adjustment to imprisonment is influenced by the prison environment itself (indigenous) or influenced by the prisoner’s ‘preprison characteristics’ (imported) has long been of considerable debate (Dhami et al., 2007).

Social isolation experienced by inmates is one of the main factors which affect their adjustment to imprisonment. Research has found that disconnection from family is a primary reason given for suicide attempts in prison (Kupers, 1999). Many other studies have also found a link between frequent visits from family and friends and positive prison adjustment (for example, Cobean and Power, 1978). Similarly, inmates seem to adapt better to imprisonment when they are allowed some measure of control over their immediate environment (McNulty and Huey, 2005), suggesting that lower security prisons allow for better adjustment.

Maladaptation to imprisonment is characterised by violence, aggression, anxiety, depression, distress and suicide (Dye, 2010). One measure of poor adjustment to prison is high rates of disciplinary infractions and time spent in solitary confinement (McShane and Williams, 1989). In their study, McShane and Williams (1989) used 6 concepts to measure adjustment: outside contact, unit assignment stability, good-time earning ability, security classification, work history and disciplinary history.

Prisonization

The term ‘prisonization’ refers to the adoption of “folkways, mores, customs and general culture of the inmate subculture” (Clemmer, 1940). It was also believed that inmates suffer certain influences, called ‘universal factors of prison life’, which prepared inmates to enter the prisonization process (Paterline and Petersen, 1999). This prisonization process is part of the adaptation and adjustment to prison life.

Justification

The effects of imprisonment on human inmates has, arguably, been an under researched area until recent decades. Additionally, research that has been conducted has produced conflicting findings, making it difficult to draw overall conclusions. Therefore, this review is being conducted to further investigate the interactions between the coping strategies, adjustment and well being of male inmates and to improve awareness about the needs of the human inmate in the prison environment.

This review will only consider research conducted on male inmates, because the majority of the world prison populations are males. By only considering males, it means that there are opportunities for larger sample sizes in such studies. Additionally, there is a greater wealth of studies conducted using male prisoners compared to studies using female prisoners.

The studies used in this review will be from various countries. The majority of those studies used will be based on both the United States of America and England and

Wales. This is because the USA has the largest prison population in the world and England and Wales has the largest prison population in Europe, therefore they provide the best opportunities for prison research. Although there may be cultural and structural differences between countries, it is more advantageous to consider more than one area.

A systematic review has been chosen to research the areas of adjustment, coping strategies and well being in male inmates. For the purpose of this thesis, it would have been impractical to carry out primary research due to limited time constraints and the size of the prison population. Furthermore, the sensitive nature of the topic and population also made primary research seem impractical.

Aims and Objectives

This review aims to provide an overview of inmate coping styles and adjustment to imprisonment, and investigate how these may affect their well being. The main objectives are to determine if:

1. Coping strategies affect the adaptation, adjustment and well being of inmates
2. Institutional changes can improve inmate adjustment and coping

Method

A systematic approach was adopted to identify the empirical research which has investigated adjustment, coping strategies and well being in male inmates. A search strategy was also used in order to identify all relevant publications. The databases PsychInfo and PsychArticles were searched using the key terms in Box 1. Reference lists and bibliographies were also manually searched for any additional articles which could be useful.

Box 1. Search terms used in online databases

Inmate coping, adaptation to imprisonment, emotions in inmates, coping strategies in prison, coping behaviour in inmates, prison adjustment, prison coping, inmate well being, prison adaptation

A total number of 392 references were obtained from the database searches using the key terms in Box 1. A further 7 studies were identified from manually searching existing bibliographies. There were 7 duplicate references between the searches, which were removed from the systematic review. Duplicates within the individual searches were removed automatically by the database. From the remaining 392 studies, 362 had no relevant information and could therefore not be considered for the review. Studies which looked at female inmates and inmates with disabilities and mental disorders, such as

schizophrenia, were specifically removed. From these 30 remaining studies, the titles and abstracts were manually searched to identify which studies were relevant to the current review. Sixteen papers were found to examine the coping strategies, adjustment and well being of male inmates. These are the papers which will be critiqued in this review.

Results

Table 1 provides a summary of the findings from the studies which examined the coping strategies, adjustment and well being of male inmates. It was found that 5 papers investigated the coping strategies and styles of male inmates. Eight papers investigated the adjustment and adaptation to imprisonment of male inmates. Three papers specifically investigated the well being of male inmates. Of these 16 papers, 4 papers investigated combinations of coping styles, adjustment and well being in male inmates, rather than just one variable. Eleven of the 16 studies were conducted in the USA, 3 studies were conducted in England, 1 study was conducted in Amsterdam and the final study was conducted in Australia. A detailed account of these studies is outlined in the following table.

Table 1. Findings from studies that have examined adjustment, coping strategies and the well being of male inmates

Authors, year and country of study	Participants and length in prison at time of study	Sample Size	Assessment used by researcher	Variable	Findings
1. Wooldredge (1999) (USA)	Male inmates (length ranging from 0 – 304 months)	581	Survey questions	Inmate well being	<p>Inmates tended to be more depressed, anxious and stressed when they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spent less time in structured activities • Received fewer visits each month • Had been recently victimised by aggravated assault <p>The time remaining until an inmate’s parole hearing was a significant predictor of adjustment.</p>
2. Zamble (1992) (USA)	Male inmates (mean length = 7.1years)	41	<p>Longitudinal Study over 7 years. Structured interview Written questionnaires Instruments such as the Beck Hopelessness scale and the Beck depression inventory Institutional files</p>	Coping and adaptation in prison	<p>Inmates’ emotional states, health and conduct in the institutions generally improved over time. Adaptation improved during the prison term.</p>

Authors, year and country of study	Participants and length in prison at time of study	Sample Size	Assessment used by researcher	Variable	Findings
3. Rokach (1997) (USA)	Male offenders (mean length = 4 weeks) and males from the general population	257 145 offenders and 112 from general pop	Loneliness questionnaire	Coping strategies for loneliness in prison	Offenders cope differently with loneliness than do the general population. Offenders indicated a preference for coping strategies involving self development and increased daily activity. The coping strategies of offenders did not differ regardless of the duration of their loneliness.
4. Smyth, Ivanoff and Jang (1994) (USA)	Male inmates (mean length = 5.7 years) who engaged in parasuicide in prison	33	Structured interviews on entry and 1 year later	Psychological maladaptation in inmate parasuicides	Significant decreases in depression and suicidal ideation and increases in perceived quality of life between the interviews. Inmates experience initial transition shock and the majority then experience lessening of maladaptive psychological states.
5. Flanagan (1981) (USA)	Male long term inmates (mean length = 95 months)	59	Structured interviews	Adaptive strategies of long term inmates	Long term prisoners find it more difficult to maintain extra prison relationships than short term prisoners. The inmates struggled to maintain self esteem and a self image in prison. Many long term prisoners develop a 'perspective' to guide their actions which consists of attitudinal principles and behavioural expectations. Like situated inmates form groups.

Authors, year and country of study	Participants and length in prison at time of study	Sample Size	Assessment used by researcher	Variable	Findings
6. Zamble & Porporino (1990) (USA)	Male inmates (length ranging from 2 – 10 years)	133	<p>Longitudinal study over 1.5 years. Structured interviews Self report questionnaires Institutional disciplinary and medical files</p>	Coping strategies of inmates	<p>Coping efforts of inmates were unsystematic, scattered, sporadic and unplanned. The majority of coping efforts were evaluated as ‘entirely ineffective’. Efficacy of coping is higher in prison than in the community. No indication of deterioration in coping skills over time. Quality of coping in prison varied inversely with the amount of prior prison experience. Coping and behavioral failures are a central part of offenders’ relapses into recidivism.</p>
7. Van Harreveld, Van Der Pligt, Claassen & Van Dijk (2007) (Amsterdam)	Males inmates who volunteered (mean length = 18.23 months)	30	<p>Structured interviews Questionnaire Measures such as Life Orientation Test, the Positive and Negative Schedule and UCLA loneliness scale.</p>	Emotion coping, psychological and physical well being of inmates	<p>Well being can benefit from emotion coping strategies. Psychological well being is related with physical well being. More specific negative emotions, such as disappointment and regret are related to both psychological and physical health. Suppressing negative feelings can have adverse consequences. Loneliness is related to reduced levels of psychological and physical well being.</p>

Authors, year and country of study	Participants and length in prison at time of study	Sample Size	Assessment used by researcher	Variable	Findings
8. McShane & Williams (1989) (USA)	Juvenile male offenders and adult male offenders (mean length = 37.5 months)	146 55 juvenile males and 91 adult males	Structured interviews Institutional records	Prison adjustment of juvenile offenders	Juvenile offenders exhibited significant adjustment problems in the institutional environment. While the adult males adjusted to the prison surroundings, the juveniles were being placed under greater restriction. Juvenile offenders were twice as likely to be problem inmates than the adults.
9. Dhimi, Ayton & Loewenstein (2007) (England)	Male federally sentenced inmates (mean length = 4.39 years)	712	Four part survey entitled 'Life in Prison and a Future Outside'	Adaptation to imprisonment – is it indigenous or imported?	Prisoners participated in more programs as they spent more time in prison. Prisoners with a poor quality of life before prison were charged with more disciplinary infractions in prison than those who had a good quality of life. Prisoners who had spent more time in prison felt more hopeless and were more frequently charged with disciplinary infractions. Limited support for the idea of adaptations to imprisonment being either indigenous or imported.

Authors, year and country of study	Participants and length in prison at time of study	Sample Size	Assessment used by researcher	Variable	Findings
<p>10. Ireland, Brown and Ballarini (2006) (England)</p>	<p>Adult male inmates (low, medium and high security)</p>	<p>141</p>	<p>3 Questionnaires: Coping Styles Questionnaire General Health Questionnaire International Personality Disorder Examination Screening Questionnaire</p>	<p>Maladaptive personality traits, coping styles and psychological distress in male prisoners</p>	<p>Maladaptive personality traits are associated with psychological distress in prisoners. Increased traits = increased psychological distress. Dependent and avoidant personality, maladaptive coping and depression are not empirically distinct from each other in a prison setting. Antisocial maladaptive personality was not linked to distress through the mediation of coping.</p>
<p>11. Sappington (1996) (USA)</p>	<p>Adult male inmates (high security, in anger management program) (mean length = 5.6 years)</p>	<p>48</p>	<p>Survey Brief Affect Adjective Checklist Brief Novaco Anger Scale Institutional files</p>	<p>Prison adjustment, beliefs and coping styles in male inmates</p>	<p>Response-outcome and self-efficacy beliefs correlated with adjustment. Cognitive coping strategies are related to adjustment. Time served and age affected beliefs and cognitive coping style. Causal direction of these relationships (beliefs, coping style and cognitive coping styles) is difficult to determine.</p>

Authors, year and country of study	Participants and length in prison at time of study	Sample Size	Assessment used by researcher	Variable	Findings
12. Lutze (2001) (USA)	Adult male inmates (from a shock incarceration program and minimum security traditional prison setting) (length ranging from 1 week to 6 months)	<p style="text-align: center;">377</p> 271 from shock incarceration program and 106 from minimum security prison setting	<p>Longitudinal study</p> Surveyed at 2 weeks and 6 months later Survey State-Trait Anxiety Inventory The Victim Scale Conflict with Inmate/Staff Scale	Influence of shock incarceration program on inmate adjustment and attitudinal change	Increased sense of helplessness over time. Both groups became more prisonized and identified less with staff over time. Both groups became less positive towards staff and programs, reported less of a work ethic, and became more assertive and more likely to support hard drugs over time. Stress decreased over time for both groups.
13. Paterline & Petersen (1999) (USA)	Adult male inmates (maximum security)	<p style="text-align: center;">239</p>	Structured personal interviews Likert-like scales	Determinants of prisonization	Inmates were more likely to be prisonized: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The greater their opposition to the prison institution and staff • The more positive their attitudes toward the use of violence • The greater their feelings of alienation • The lower their post release expectations The more times one had been arrested, the greater degree of prisonization. The greater the number of months an inmate was employed for before entering prison, the lower the degree of prisonization. Those who had greater feelings of self efficacy had a lower degree of prisonization.

Authors, year and country of study	Participants and length in prison at time of study	Sample Size	Assessment used by researcher	Variable	Findings
14. Brown & Ireland (2005) (England)	Male adolescent prisoners (medium security) (mean length = 8.36 days)	133	Questionnaire within 2 weeks of arrival and again at 6 weeks. The Coping Style Questionnaire Middlesex Hospital Questionnaire	Coping style and distress in newly incarcerated adolescent males	Significant decreases in anxiety and depression during the 6 weeks following incarceration. Reduction in emotion coping and increases in detachment coping to reduce anxiety. Causality between coping styles and distress cannot be determined.
15. MacKenzie (1987) (USA)	Adult male inmates (medium and maximum security) (length ranging from 0 – 12 months)	755	Questionnaire Inmate Conflicts scale State-Trait Anxiety Scale Fear of Others Scale Assertive Interactions Scale Fear of Victimization Scale	Age and adjustment to prison in male inmates	Prisoner conflicts and guard conflicts peaked in the early 20's and declined with age. Rapid decline in misconducts from teenage to 20's, thereafter, a more gradual decline. Assertive interactions and fear of victimisation peaked in the 20's and declined thereafter. Assertive ages had a strong positive relationship with interpersonal conflicts for all ages.

Authors, year and country of study	Participants and length in prison at time of study	Sample Size	Assessment used by researcher	Variable	Findings
<p>16. Gullone, Jones & Cummins (2000) (Australia)</p>	<p>Adult male inmates (mean length = 1.73 years)</p>	<p>81</p>	<p>Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory Beck Depression Inventory State-Trait Anxiety Inventory Comprehensive Quality of Life Scale for Adults Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations</p>	<p>Coping Styles as predictors of well being in male inmates</p>	<p>Emotion focused coping is the most important predictor, particularly for trait anxiety, depression and self esteem. Avoidance focused coping is significant for anxiety and subjective quality of life. Inmates have a higher level of anxiety and depression amounting to a severely compromised psychological well being. Male prisoners are more likely to engage in emotion and avoidance focused coping behaviours. Emotion focused behaviours are likely to maintain their low levels of well being.</p>

Summary of Results

The current review examined 16 studies which have investigated the coping strategies, adjustment and well being of male inmates and their experiences in prison. From the 16 studies, 5 papers investigated the coping strategies and styles of male inmates. Seven papers investigated the adjustment and adaptation to imprisonment of male inmates. One paper specifically investigated the well being of male inmates. Three papers investigated combinations of coping styles, adjustment and well being in male inmates.

Of the 16 studies, 4 used random sampling, 6 studies used inmates that had volunteered and one study used stratified random sampling. In the other 5 studies, the participants were hand picked by the researcher, based on sentence length, offence or experiences whilst in prison. The majority of studies used structured interviews and questionnaires as methods to investigate coping strategies, adjustment and well being in male inmates. The questionnaires that were used in the studies used different measures. These included: the coping styles questionnaire, the Coopersmith self esteem inventory, the state-trait anxiety scale, the Beck hopelessness scale, the Beck depression inventory, the life orientation test and loneliness scales, amongst others.

Although all 16 studies used male inmates as their main participants, they used a range of inmates from this population for their investigations. For example, the studies investigated juveniles and older inmates, inmates who engaged in parasuicide, inmates who participated in shock incarceration programs and long term inmates. This allows an understanding of the different subpopulations of the prison population and highlights its complexity.

The current review aimed to specifically consider the following objectives:

1. To determine if coping strategies affect the adaptation, adjustment and well being of inmates.

Of the 5 studies which investigated coping strategies in male inmates, 2 studies found that offenders cope differently to the general population with stressful situations, such as loneliness in the prison environment (for example, Rokach, 1997). However, one of the remaining 3 studies found that there was no evidence for any real differences in actual coping behaviour between inmates and the general population, despite the differences in the problems and experiences they encountered.

From all of the 16 studies which investigated coping strategies, adjustment and well being of male inmates, 4 studies (Zamble, 1992; Sappington, 1996; Brown and Ireland, 2006; MacKenzie, 1987) found that coping strategies specifically influenced adjustment to imprisonment. Tendencies to blame others, dwell on problems or blame oneself were associated with poorer adjustment. The majority of inmates in one of those 4 studies largely withdrew from socialising with other inmates, as a coping strategy, allowing them to control their own behaviour and adapt to the environment better. Another study found that aggressive behaviour can reflect an inability to cope with the demands of the prison environment. However, time served in prison and age can affect coping strategies.

Of all 16 studies that were investigated, 4 studies (Van Herreveld et al., 2007;

Ireland et al., 2006; Brown and Ireland, 2005; Gullone et al., 2000) found that coping strategies specifically influence the well being of male inmates. Both the psychological and the physical well being of inmates are associated with emotion coping strategies whilst in prison. Maladaptive coping is also linked to depression, and, therefore, reduced well being, in the prison setting. However, it is difficult to distinguish the causal direction of relationships that have been found in these studies.

Some of the 16 studies note the individual differences involved in the coping strategies and adaptation of inmates. One study found that maladaptive personality traits in inmates were associated with maladaptive coping and greater psychological distress. However, only certain personality types show these traits, which emphasises individual differences.

2. To determine if institutional opportunities or changes can improve inmate adjustment and coping.

Of the 16 studies critiqued in this review, 4 studies (Wooldredge, 1999; Zamble and Porporino, 1990; Dhimi et al., 2007; MacKenzie, 1987) found that specific institutional opportunities or changes can affect inmate adjustment and coping. It was found that inmates tended to be more depressed, anxious and stressed when they: spent less time in structured activities; received fewer visits each month and had been recently victimised by aggravated assault. Therefore, more opportunities and visiting time for inmates can improve their adjustment and coping, as well as their well being. Similarly, prisoners were found to participate in more programs, the more time they spent in prison, allowing them to adapt better to the environment.

It was also found that the fear of victimisation whilst in prison can negatively affect well being, and that this fear peaks in the inmates 20's. Therefore, changes need to be made to prevent victimisation and the fear of it. Furthermore, coping and behaviour failures were found to be a central part of offenders' relapses into recidivism.

Overall, all 16 studies highlight that the amount of institutional opportunities available for inmates can affect how they cope with the prison experience, along with how institutional changes can improve how they cope. However, they do this indirectly as part of their discussions, whereas the 4 mentioned above noted these points specifically as part of their results.

This review has generally produced mixed results regarding coping strategies, adjustment and well being in male inmates. Some researchers have found significant differences between the coping strategies of inmates and the general population, yet others suggest there are no differences. It seems that coping strategies are associated with adjustment and the well being of male inmates, but this relationship is perhaps more complex than first thought. Furthermore, institutional opportunities and changes are instrumental in how inmates cope and adjust to the prison environment.

Discussion

The current review aimed to provide an overview of the coping strategies and adjustment to imprisonment of male inmates, and investigate how these may affect their well being whilst in prison. The review aimed specifically to answer two main objectives: firstly, to determine if coping strategies affect the adaptation, adjustment and well being of male inmates and, secondly, to determine if institutional opportunities or changes can improve inmate adjustment and coping.

This review considered whether coping strategies affect the adjustment and well being of male inmates in the prison environment. Of the 16 studies critiqued, 4 studies found that coping strategies specifically affect the adjustment and adaptation of male inmates to the prison environment. A further 4 studies found that coping strategies specifically affect the well being of male inmates whilst in prison. It is also evident from the studies critiqued in this review that there is a relationship between all three variables: coping strategies, adjustment and well being. However, causality cannot be inferred from such results. Furthermore, the studies have highlighted the complex relationship between the variables and the effects of individual differences. These 8 studies seem to meet the first objective, but the other 8 studies seem to produce mixed findings.

Because of the mixed findings on the effects of the prison environment on male inmates and the possible lack of research on coping strategies, adjustment and well being of male inmates, it is difficult to form particularly strong links with existing research in these areas. However, the studies in this review suggested that imprisonment and coping strategies used to deal with the environment can affect the well being of inmates. Schnittker and John (2007) found that imprisonment can have powerful effects on health, especially if it instills stigma, therefore suggesting that it is important for inmates to learn how to cope with the prison environment, to preserve their health. They also found, however, that these effects are only visible after release, which is a subject which has not been investigated in this review and should be investigated in the future.

In this review it was found that adaptation to imprisonment improved during the prison term (Zamble, 1992) and that depression and suicidal ideation decreased over the period of a year (Smyth et al., 1994). This shows that adaptation and adjustment can change over time and suggests that inmates use some sort of coping mechanisms to enable this adjustment. Therefore, programs need to be in place to encourage the use of constructive coping methods to aid their adjustment. There also needs to be an independent person for inmates to talk to confidentially, should they feel depressed or suicidal whilst in prison.

Furthermore, it has been found in this review that inmates experience an initial transition shock (Smyth et al., 1994) which supports the idea that there is a high risk period for suicide within the first 24 hours of arrival into prison (Towl, 2003). This suggests that any programs or help that are put into place need to be done so quickly and effectively to lessen the maladaptive psychological states of the inmates and aid adjustment to the environment.

As a way of coping with prison life, emotion coping strategies have been shown to be more effective than other strategies (Van Herreveld et al., 2007). This is particularly important because negative emotions such as disappointment and regret are related to psychological and physical health. Suppressing these negative emotions can also have adverse consequences. This suggests that some sort of program or group work which encourages inmates to share their feelings, rather than suppressing them, could be

beneficial, the work of therapeutic communities at HMP Grendon will be discussed later to emphasise this point.

Secondly, from the 16 studies critiqued in this report, 4 studies found that specific institutional opportunities or changes can affect inmate adjustment and coping, and also inmate well being. It was found that the number and quality of programs available to inmates affected their mood, beliefs and adjustment to imprisonment. The remaining 12 studies in this review, on the other hand, did not explicitly find links between institutional opportunities and inmate adjustment and coping. However, those 12 did highlight the importance of programs and opportunities for inmates during their prison sentence in their discussions.

To a certain extent, these results correspond with the findings of literature on overcrowding. Overcrowding is one of the main reasons for a lack of opportunities and programs for inmates, and is a problem which is affecting a large number of prisons. The lack of activities for inmates to participate in creates idleness and boredom which can result in aggression (for example, Clements, 1977). In addition, in the literature, overcrowding has been linked to physiological stress (Bonta and Gendreau, 1990) which corresponds with the impacts on well being of male inmates found in this review. However, overcrowding is a huge and very current issue for prisons. It could be argued that the only practical options to reduce overcrowding are to use crime prevention methods, to increase the use of community sentences and 'tagging' or to rehabilitate offenders and prevent recidivism in the first instance.

Loneliness seems to be a persistent issue which affects the well being and adjustment of inmates (Harreveld et al., 2007). The loneliness of incarcerated individuals is qualitatively different to the general population because they are separated from their families and the rest of society and their daily activities are controlled by the prison authorities (Rokach and Koledin, 1997). This suggests that measures need to be in place to maintain contact and visitation with family and friends, particularly because many prisoners are imprisoned a long distance away from home. Similarly, it could be beneficial to allow prisoners more control over their environment and daily routine, such as at HMP Grendon. Programs and activities which encourage group work or friendships may also be of benefit to inmates, particularly as research suggests that offenders are usually "quite dependent on a mate" (Rokach and Koledin, 1997).

This review has found that, in particular, long term prisoners find it more difficult to maintain extra prison relationships than short term prisoners (Flanagan, 1981). These inmates also struggle to maintain self esteem and a self image in prison, suggesting that they have poorer well being compared to short term prisoners. This suggests that long term prisoners experience prison differently to short term prisoners and may have different needs to those short term prisoners which need to be accounted for.

Similarly, it was found in this review that juvenile offenders exhibit significant adjustment problems in the institutional environment and are twice as likely to be problem inmates than older offenders (McShane and Williams, 1989). This shows adjustment differences between older and younger offenders. Perhaps younger offenders should be given extra support, specifically when they first enter the prison environment. Additionally, they should be encouraged to enter constructive programs which could discourage them from 'problem behaviour'.

Prisonization is the adoption of "folkways, mores, customs and general culture of the inmate subculture" (Clemmer, 1940). This review found that the more times an offender had been arrested and imprisoned, the greater the degree of prisonization

(Paterline and Petersen, 1999). Although prisonization is a way of adjusting to the prison environment, it is actually a negative aspect of imprisonment. Inmates should be discouraged from adopting the customs and culture of inmates because it will be more difficult to adapt to the outside environment post release. Therefore, some sort of program which encourages individuality and prepares inmates for release should be adopted by prisons.

One of the main aims of prisons in England and Wales and the USA is to turn their inmates into law-abiding citizens whilst in prison and upon release. However, recidivism rates are higher for those that are imprisoned than those who are punished in the community (Travis, 2010), suggesting a failure of prisons in general. In this review it was found that coping and behavioural failures are a central part of recidivism (Zamble and Porporino, 1990). This suggests that, if prisoners are to be rehabilitated by their time in prison, programs and workshops which improve coping strategies and behaviour need to be in place. Zamble and Porporino (1990) suggest that there should be training in a variety of specific coping skills such as: negotiation, objectification or situations and cognitive re-evaluation, provided for inmates, particularly because the coping efforts of inmates were unsystematic, scattered sporadic and unplanned. These changes could not only rehabilitate an offender, they could also reduce crime rates in the future.

Limitations

There is a number of limitations of this review which need to be addressed. Firstly, the review is susceptible to several biases. For example, there is bias in the selection process of the chosen publications for this, along with publication bias. Secondly, when using the databases to search for studies, they were limited to English language publications which limits the sources and the studies available for this review. Furthermore, the review did not examine the quality of the studies and their methods, which, therefore, limits the quality of the review to a certain extent.

This thesis is a systematic review of research studies which have investigated the coping strategies, adjustment and well being of male inmates whilst in prison. Therefore, no primary research has been conducted by the author. A systematic review provides a summary of many studies which allows the reader to take into account a bigger range of research findings. In addition, the process can establish whether findings are generalizable across populations and settings, and if findings vary between subgroups. Combining data from a number of well-conducted primary studies can provide the reader with more precise results and conclusions.

However, there are many limitations of systematic reviews which need to be appreciated. Firstly, the summary provided in the systematic review is only as reliable as the methods used in the original studies. The studies critiqued in this review used questionnaires and structured interviews to obtain their results. Both of these methods, however, are self report measures. This means that the participants may have been dishonest when answering questions or using rating scales on the questionnaires which could influence the findings and any conclusions that are made. Despite this, however, there seems to be no other more practical or reliable way to investigate the coping strategies, adjustment and well being of male inmates whilst they are in prison.

In addition to this, the interpretation of summarised results is subjective and the comparison can be difficult. The review process identifies studies that are diverse in their methods, participants and their design. For example, the studies used in this review used a

range of scales and measures in their questionnaires and used a range of different subpopulations from the general prison population. Furthermore, the studies were from different countries, which may make it difficult to generalise findings from inmates in one country and prison system to another.

Opportunities for Further Research

There are many opportunities for further research on the topic of coping strategies, adjustment and well being of male inmates. This is because it is a relatively under researched area and the research which has been conducted has produced mixed findings overall. Firstly, this review only critiqued studies which had used male inmates as participants, mainly because females only make up a small minority of prison populations. However, female inmates need equal opportunities and care as male inmates. An opportunity here would be for the adjustment of male and female inmates to imprisonment to be compared to highlight any differences between the two. This could have implications for the prison care of the different genders.

Secondly, it has been noted that there is an aging prison population both in England and Wales and in the USA (for example, Aday, 1994). This is due to longer sentences being handed to offenders and also due to an increase in older first time offenders. Therefore an interesting opportunity here would be to compare the coping strategies, adjustment and well being of older inmates and younger inmates, particularly juvenile inmates. Mackenzie (1987) attempted to do this, but further research would be beneficial as the prison system will need to accommodate its changing population.

Furthermore, the average custodial sentence length for most crimes has increased recently (Ministry of Justice, 2009) and there has been an increase in life sentences without parole in the USA. This means that there is an increase in long term prisoners, again highlighting the changes in the prison population. The opportunity here for further research, therefore, is to compare the coping strategies, adjustment and well being of long term inmates to those of short term inmates to see how they may change and develop with time spent in prison.

Of the research that has been conducted on the effects of imprisonment on an inmate, there seems to be a lack of studies which look into the effects of imprisonment on an inmate post release, when they are released back into society. It could be argued that this is really when any harm caused by imprisonment will manifest itself. Therefore, further research needs to be conducted to investigate the effects of imprisonment overall, particularly post release, not just when an inmate is serving their sentence in the institution.

Finally, in order to test whether programs improve the coping strategies, adjustment and well being of male inmates, a further study with a mixed methods design could be conducted. The researcher could use semi structured interviews and quantitative psychometric measures, such as the General Health Questionnaire. This would give both qualitative and quantitative results, making it easier to compare the results and reach more specific conclusions. Inmates could be assessed on entry to prison, at 6 months into their prison sentence, and again at 12 months. This design would enable the researcher to compare answers between these time periods, to assess the success of institutional programs and the level of adjustment experienced by inmates.

Implications for Practice

The review findings have implications for institutional practice in prisons. It has been shown that the more opportunities are available for inmates, the better they will adjust to the prison environment, if they participate in them. Furthermore, it has been found that it is more beneficial and practical for inmates to use emotion-focused coping strategies to deal with the prison environment. This suggests that therapeutic groups and communities, which allow inmates to share their feelings instead of internalising them, would aid inmate adjustment and, therefore, their well being. Therapeutic communities constitute a large part of the regime at HMP Grendon.

HMP Grendon was opened in 1962 as a psychiatric prison and “has since evolved into a collection of therapeutic communities using the principles developed by Maxwell Jones” (Shine, 2011). Inmates must apply for entry to the prison themselves on a voluntary basis. The general environment of HMP Grendon is very different to the conventional prison; there is mutual respect between staff and inmates and inmates are called by their first names (Brookes, 2010), something which is unusual for those inmates who have served time in a conventional prison. As part of the regime, there are community meetings twice a week and a small group meeting once a week. These meetings give the inmates chance to talk about “day-to-day issues and problems that arise and how best to deal with them” (Brookes, 2010). This discourages violence and aggression in prisoners, behaviours which are common in the conventional prison.

Research suggests that inmates who remain in therapy at Grendon for at least 18 months seem to make the greatest changes (Shine, 2001). Inmates who have experienced the Grendon regime admit that it is a more challenging environment and that it requires prisoners to adopt a different approach to prison life (Brookes, 2010) to improve adjustment. This, therefore, is evidence for the success of therapeutic communities in improving inmate coping and adjustment, but most importantly, their success in rehabilitating offenders; a main aim of the prison service. However, the regime at Grendon is not suitable for every prisoner and can sometimes be difficult to handle, therefore prisoners can be transferred back to their original prison.

According to Wilson (2011), the “two-year reoffending rate for prisoners who stay at Grendon for more than 18 months is 20%, compared to 50% for those serving time in conventional prisons”. This clearly suggests that the therapeutic communities adopted by HMP Grendon are much more successful than the regimes in the average prison. Therefore, this regime should be adopted by other prisons to improve the coping strategies, adjustment and well being of male inmates, and most importantly, to rehabilitate them.

Conclusions

Overall, this systematic review has produced mixed findings regarding the coping strategies, adjustment and well being of male inmates. This seems to correlate with the mixed findings in general about the effects of imprisonment and prisonization on inmates over the past decades. From the studies in this review, it seems that coping styles do affect the adjustment to imprisonment and the well being of male inmates, during their prison sentence. However, the relationship between all of these variables is much more complex than expected and the causal direction cannot be distinguished. Individual differences also play a huge part in coping strategies, adjustment and behaviour whilst in prison.

The findings of this review also suggest that institutional changes could improve coping techniques to reduce loneliness, boredom and aggression whilst in prison. In addition to this, therapeutic groups and communities are important for inmates' adjustment and coping in prison. Furthermore, institutional opportunities and programs are beneficial for inmates; therefore more need to be provided in order to make the prison experience as beneficial as possible. However, even if a substantial number of opportunities and programs are available, it is the choice of the inmate to participate in them. This review has also recommended that Grendon prison is the only successful prison in Britain. This suggests that more prisons need to adopt the regime of Grendon prison, if they plan to succeed in their aim of rehabilitating offenders.

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