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Psychosocial influences that motivate young offenders to engage in a non-custodial community intervention

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Abstract

Offender programmes do not fully consider how psychosocial factors influence individual engagement within interventions. While factors associated with offending behaviour are well-known, their influence on motivational engagement is not clear. The present study of 109 adolescent offenders in a non-custodial community intervention explored the influence of aggression, antisocial behaviour in the community, problematic and disruptive behaviour in school, parental bonding and self-esteem on reported motivation to engage with a non-custodial intervention. Regression and correlational analysis revealed relationships between these variables and four subtypes of motivation (i.e. intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, identified regulation and amotivation), although results in respect of self-esteem were mixed. The findings highlight the multidimensional and complex nature of motivation, and support the need to internalise extrinsic motivations through the promotion of self-autonomy and competence within intervention programmes in order to maximise engagement.

Keywords: engagement, intervention, motivation, offender rehabilitation, young offenders

Psychosocial influences that motivate young offenders to engage in a non-custodial community intervention

The last decade has seen an interest in understanding motivations that underlie behavioural change within the context of rehabilitation efforts (McMurran, 2009; McMurran & Ward, 2004). This plays a key role within criminal justice systems, where the assessment and maintenance of motivation has become an important task for practitioners who view it as integral to the effectiveness of intervention programmes (Jones, 2002; Palmer, Heggs & Sellen, 2013). Typically, offender interventions are considered to be successful if attrition and recidivism rates are low (Ryan, Plant & O'Malley, 1995). Given that non-completion rates for therapy can be as high as 46 percent in offender community samples alone (McMurran & Theodosi, 2007), this area is of concern for academics, practitioners and policy makers. The success of rehabilitation is therefore dependent on a clearer understanding of the nature of motivation.

Motivation is a complex construct. It can be conceptualised as 'why' behaviours occur through the direction, intensity and maintenance of energy (Maehr & Meyer, 1997). This has shaped the development of process models such as the transtheoretical model (TTM; DiClemente & Hughes, 1990), which describe how individuals move from a state of inaction towards recognition of their problems and taking action in order to facilitate change. Engagement is often understood within a motivational context, interacting with one's competencies and expectations leading to behavioural outcomes (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Steel & König, 2006), although the distinction between motivation and engagement is not clear according to others (see Appleton, Christenson, Kim & Reschley, 2006). In forensic settings, motivation is often associated with treatment outcomes as "the presence of characteristics (states or dispositions) within either the client or therapeutic situation, which

are likely to promote engagement in therapy" (Day, Casey, Ward & Howells, 2010, p. 6). Motivation to participate in therapeutic interventions often informs outcomes upon release. According to one meta-analysis of 16 cognitive-behavioural offender treatment studies which included 1,595 completers and 1,329 non-completers in community and institutional programmes (McMurran & Theodosi, 2007), those motivated to complete programmes were less likely to recidivate. The authors speculate that characteristics such as a lack of confidence might explain programme attrition. In the extant motivational literature, the potential factors that shape motivation are poorly understood.

The fluid nature of motivation means that it is a useful target for intervention. Efforts in this area have increased partly due to the growth of the "What Works" literature (e.g. Prior & Mason, 2010) that has influenced ways to promote engagement. These developments provide practitioners with evidence-based parameters from which to tailor interventions to their offending population. Despite this, it is clear that the approach does not always attend to the characteristics of the individual which may affect their engagement with intervention programmes (Jones, 2002). If the aims of these programmes are to reduce recidivism and promote desistance, it is suggested that they account for the dispositional and situational circumstances of the individual (Ward & Laws, 2010).

Various psychosocial factors, such as an unstable family environment, attentional deficits and poor emotional regulation are established predictors of offending behaviour (Craig, Gannon & Dixon, 2013; Leschied, Chiodo, Nowicki & Rodger, 2008), yet their influence on motivation to engage with programmes is unknown; studies that explore whether an association exists cannot be readily found. The lack of research might be in part due to a fundamental attribution error which emphasises individual motivations to change, while downplaying the role of external factors that may contribute to cognitive distortions and

offence-related behaviour (Marusha & Mann, 2006). Motivation appears to be rooted within a milieu of environmental influences; research suggests that young people with low parental involvement and negative school experiences are generally less motivated to achieve their aspirations (Lupton & Kintrea, 2011). Thus, life experiences can mediate the development of antisocial behaviours (Iselin, Mulvey, Loughran, Chung & Schubert, 2012). It is therefore likely that individual circumstances may influence motivation to engage with programmes before intervention efforts have even began.

These individual factors could be examined in more detail to ascertain possible relationships with motivation. Both aggression (Broidy et al., 2003) and hostile attributions (Chambers, Eccleston, Day, Ward & Howells, 2008) are characteristic of emotionally dysregulated behaviour which may complicate an individual's ability to participate in an activity. Self-esteem is also a target for therapeutic intervention programmes (Hubbard, 2006). Although low self-esteem is associated with negative social experiences, its relationship with offending is contentious; researchers argue for (Donnellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt & Caspi, 2005) and against an association with delinquent behaviour (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger & Vohs, 2003). It is therefore possible that young offenders with aggressive tendencies are less likely to be motivated in intervention programmes, as they may be resistant of rehabilitation efforts.

Historical behaviour may also be related to an individual's motivation to change. It has been noted that causing disruption, truancy and a lack of support in school (Alivernini & Lucidi, 2011; Broidy et al., 2003), criminality and unstable living arrangements in the community (Mason & Prior, 2008; Ward et al., 2004) are not only risk factors for offending, but may also be symptomatic of lower motivation brought about by feelings of exclusion from a person's environment (Libbey, 2004). Such feelings of alienation can also be

experienced by young offenders who lack parental support, leading to increased behavioural difficulties (Chambers, Power, Loucks & Swanson, 2001) and the modelling of hostile attributions (MacKinnon-Lewis et al., 1994). Conversely, the motivation and aspirations of young people appear to be elevated when parents take an active role in their child's life (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012). Emotional and interpersonal deficits are reportedly salient in offenders (Agnew, Brezina, Wright & Cullen, 2002); it is possible that these factors may impinge on willingness to participate in therapy and may be useful as part of an assessment to determine barriers to motivational engagement (Burrowes & Needs, 2009).

An individual's willingness to engage with activities is also shaped by their personal goals, competencies, values and expectations of success or failure (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Meece, Glienke, & Burg, 2006; Sansone & Thorman, 2006). Self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000) posits that both internal and external determinants act upon an individual to facilitate or hinder engagement, ranging from the least to the most self-determined behaviours. Intrinsic motivation is characterised by self-derived interest, which requires supportive conditions in order to secure cognitive and social development. Extrinsic motivation refers to external pressures applied on the individual in order to exact a specific outcome, and thus does not derive from any inherent satisfaction with the activity. Extrinsic motivation also encompasses identified regulation, which is behaviour that is driven by a recognition of the value of an activity, and hence an endorsement of the reason for engagement. Amotivation represents a state where there is no intention to act, or acts without specific intentions, which arise from a lack of value placed upon an activity or feelings of incompetency. However, SDT has not been routinely applied to explore motivational engagement within intervention programmes. Although such programmes are thought to be more successful when offenders are intrinsically motivated (McMurran, Theodosi & Ward, 2006), it is assumed that offenders will be extrinsically motivated in therapy, due to the use of

rewards and punishment within the criminal justice system (McMurran & Ward, 2004). This limits the opportunity for offenders to become self-motivated individuals. With this in mind, the factors that relate to young offender motivation are poorly understood.

Work that explores youth offender motivation increasingly recognises the role of individual characteristics. An understanding of how such factors influence motivation could improve the success of these interventions. The present study is an exploratory investigation into the effects of a range of psychosocial factors including self-esteem, parental style, problematic school and antisocial community behaviour, and aggression on intrinsic motivation, identified regulation, extrinsic motivation and amotivation within a non-custodial intervention.

Method

Participants

109 young offenders sampled from an Attendance Centre run fortnightly by the UK National Probation Service volunteered to take part in the study. The Centre (located in the north of England) is a non-custodial requirement for young offenders, where various activities are held to raise awareness of victim perspectives and pro-social behaviour. Of those who agreed to participate, 102 were male and seven were female. All participants were between 18 and 25 years of age (M = 20.58; SD = 1.83) who engaged in offences such as assault, criminal damage, public disorder and theft.

Procedure

Participants were approached over an 18 month period at the Attendance Centre and invited to complete the study. Completion of the questionnaires took place over a month into their sentence, after they had attended their first two sessions. The voluntary nature of the

research and right to withdraw were fully explained before informed consent was obtained from the young people. Although data was recorded anonymously, limits to confidentiality were in place; if sensitive disclosures were made, participants were encouraged to discuss this with an appropriate person. All participants completed the five questionnaires at the Centre, or by the researcher on behalf of the person if requested to do so.

Measures

Five measures were employed to assess the psychosocial variables of interest in this study.[1] Reliability statistics are reported in Table 1.

Situational Motivational Scale (SIMS; Guay, et al., 2000): Motivation to participate with the intervention was assessed using the SIMS. The 16-item questionnaire consists of four subscales of motivation: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, identified regulation and amotivation, rated on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = "not at all" to 7 = "exactly") and measures the extent to which the person is engaged in the present activity (the Attendance Centre in this instance). Example items include "because I think the activity is interesting" (intrinsic motivation), "because I am doing it for my own good" (identified regulation), "because I don't have any choice" (extrinsic motivation) and "I don't know, I don't see what this activity brings me" (amotivation). Higher scores on the subscales are associated with greater motivation in that aspect of situational motivation. The SIMS is an established measure of behavioural intentions, perceived competence and concentration (Guay et al., 2000), that has been validated in samples of offenders on probation (Skeem, Louden, Polascheck & Camp, 2007).

[1] Copies of the questionnaires can be obtained from the first author.

Current Thoughts Scale (CTS; Heatherton & Polivy, 1991): State self-esteem is measured using the CTS. It is a 20-item measure compromising of three subscales of appearance, performance and social self-esteem, which measure the extent of how confident an individual perceives in their physical appearance, performance in tasks and in social situations, respectively. Respondents indicate how much a statement applies to them on a five-point Likert scale (1 = "not at all" to 5 = "extremely"), such as "I feel unattractive" (appearance self-esteem), "I feel confident about my abilities" (performance self-esteem) and "I am worried about looking foolish" (social self-esteem). Elevated scores reflect greater perceived self-esteem. The scale has demonstrated good psychometric properties (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991).

Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI; Parker, Tupling & Brown, 1979): The PBI is a measure of parental styles as perceived by the child in the first 16 years of their life. Using a four-point scale ranging from "very like" to "very unlike", respondents rate the extent of how they felt towards their mother and father, consisting of 25 items each. The items are measured across two subscales of parental care (e.g. "made me feel I wasn't wanted") and control/overprotection (e.g. "tried to control everything I did") for both mother and father. The PBI has shown to be a reliable instrument across many studies with discriminatory ability regarding offending behaviour (Chambers et al., 2001).

School Information (Khan & Cooke, 2008): Problems in school were assessed using a self-report questionnaire taken from a longer interview schedule to assess inter-sibling violence in a sample of young offenders. Ten items, such as "did you have trouble concentrating?" and "did you get into fights at school?", are rated on a five-point scale (0 = "never" to 4 = "always"). Problematic behaviour is reflected in participants with higher scores.

Behaviour out of the Family (Khan & Cooke, 2008): Antisocial behaviour in the community was measured using a ten-item questionnaire, also taken from the same interview schedule of Khan and Cooke (2008). Items on the measure, such as "did you vandalise things?" and "did you use a weapon to injure another person?", are also rated on a five-point scale (0 = "never" to 4 = "always"). Higher scores are indicative of engagement in more disorderly behaviour.

Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Perry, 1992): This 29-item questionnaire assesses four dimensions of aggression: anger, hostility, physical aggression and verbal aggression. Respondents rank statements on a five-point Likert scale (1 = "extremely uncharacteristic of me" to 4 = "extremely characteristic of me") according to how much they agree with the item, such as "I have become so mad that I have broken things". Higher scores reveal a more aggressive predisposition. The scale has demonstrated acceptable validity and reliability within offender samples (Ireland & Archer, 2004).

Results

Data analysis

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations and alpha coefficients of the responses for the measures used in this study. Internal consistency was generally high across all variables, falling within acceptable to excellent ranges (George & Mallery, 2003). While 97.2% of the young people in the sample reported contact with their mother, analysis could not be performed on the paternal styles, as 38.5% of individuals did not report any contact with their father, limiting any conclusions. Dichotomous dummy variables were subsequently created to account for individuals who reported contact or no contact with their mother and father, and also for gender.

Insert Table 1 Here

Aggression and motivation to participate in the intervention

Given that the sample and predictor variables in the study exceeded the required 10:1 ratio required for multiple regression analysis (Brace, Kemp & Snelgar, 2009), the standard enter method was used to explore if the aggressive subtypes of anger, hostility, physical and verbal aggression predicted intrinsic motivation, identified regulation, extrinsic motivation and amotivation. Subsequent regressions for the sub-scales were non-significant, and so bivariate correlations were conducted to explore for any undetected associations. The correlations indicated significant findings for all but extrinsic motivation, and are summarised in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 Here

Demographics, school and community behaviour and motivation to participate in the intervention

A second regression model was run to explore whether age, gender (dummy coded), behaviour at school and behaviour in the community predicted the four sub-scales of motivation. Although model fits were poor, significant models emerged for intrinsic motivation [F (4, 104) = 4.63, $p < .01$, $R^2_{adj} = .12$], identified regulation [F (4, 104) = 3.24, p

< .05, R^2_{adj} = .08] and amotivation [F (4, 104) = 4.67, p < .01, R^2_{adj} = .12]. Of all demographic variables, gender most significantly predicted amotivation [β = -.29, t(104) = 3.08, p < .01], while age was non-significant for all motivational types. School behaviour significantly predicted intrinsic motivation [β = -.28, t(104) = -2.17, p < .05] and extrinsic motivation [β = -.35, t(104) = -2.56, p < .05]. A bivariate correlation also revealed that school behaviour was associated with identified regulation [r(107) = -.31, p < 0.1]. In addition, analysis revealed that antisocial community behaviour significantly predicted extrinsic motivation [β = .33, t(104) = 2.40, p < .05], and correlations indicated moderate associations with intrinsic motivation [r(107) = -.33, p < .01], identified regulation [r(107) = -.29, p < .01] and amotivation [r(107) = -.23, p < .05]. There were no concerns in relation to multicollinearity for the variables as they fell within acceptable ranges.

Parental bonding, self-esteem and motivation to participate in the intervention

A final set of regressions were carried out to assess the contributions of the self-esteem subtypes and caring and controlling maternal styles on the sub-scores of motivation. The proportion of variance contributed by the care and control maternal predictors towards the motivational sub-scales is summarised in Table 3.

Insert Table 3 Here

To some degree, the models accounted for a proportion of the variance in reported motivational scores. Intrinsic motivation as the criterion indicated a significant model [F (2, 102) = 15.13, p < .001, R^2_{adj} = .21], as did identified regulation [F (2, 102) = 12.61, p < .001,

R^2_{adj} = .18], extrinsic motivation [F (2, 102) = 7.86, p < .01, R^2_{adj} = .12] and amotivation [F (2, 102) = 21.72, p < .001, R^2_{adj} = .29]. Inspection of VIF and Tolerance figures indicated no problems with multicolinearity. The self-esteem subscales did not predict any subtype of motivation as indicated by non-significant findings. Bivariate correlations revealed mixed findings, as reported in Table 4. Whilst social self-esteem had small but significant associations with all four motivational subtypes, appearance and overall self-esteem only correlated with identified regulation and extrinsic motivation. Performance self-esteem had no significant relationships with any of the criterion variables.

Insert Table 4 Here

Results summary

The aggressive subtypes were all positively associated with amotivation and, with the exception of hostility, negatively associated with intrinsic motivation and identified regulation. School behaviour was a predictor of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and negatively associated with identified regulation. Antisocial behaviour in the community significantly predicted extrinsic motivation and had negative linear relationships with intrinsic motivation, identified regulation and amotivation. With regard to parental attachment, regressions revealed that maternal care styles were predictors of intrinsic motivation, identified regulation and amotivation, whilst control or overprotective styles predicted all four motivational subtypes. Finally, while self-esteem did not significantly predict any of the four motivational subtypes, the social subscale was negatively associated with intrinsic motivation and identified regulation and positively associated with extrinsic

motivation and amotivation. Appearance and overall self-esteem was negatively related to identified regulation and positively related to extrinsic motivation.

Discussion

The current study assessed the contribution of several psychosocial variables on reported motivation in a non-custodial intervention for young offenders.

Aggression and motivation to participate in the intervention

In line with other offender literature (Craig et al., 2013), this sample recorded high levels of aggressiveness. Although aggressive traits did not predict motivation to participate in the activities at the Centre, reported aggression was moderately associated with the young person's internal affective state; individuals who scored high for aggressiveness were less intrinsically motivated and more amotivated overall. This was the pattern for all subtypes of aggression and total aggression, except for hostility, and broadly supports the idea that an offender's affective control is an indicator of their readiness to engage in psychological interventions (Ward et al., 2004). Yet, the findings suggest that no particular dimension of aggression is closely related to motivational subtypes. Nonetheless, the modest correlations reflect the multidimensional nature of motivation and aggression. This is worthy of pre-treatment assessment, particularly as lower aggression could suggest greater competency (Ward et al., 2004) which is necessary to develop autonomous motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vansteenkiste & Sheldon, 2006).

Intrinsic motivation usually occurs in the absence of strain (Agnew et al., 2002). Therefore, it is possible that high levels of aggression in the sample were associated with an unfavourable view of the intervention and disengagement from the activity. This may also reflect the participant's strong beliefs about the use of aggression. Yet, the non-significant

results for aggression and extrinsic motivation are not surprising, given that the Attendance Centre is a compulsory intervention. Unlike the other subtypes, hostility was not related to motivation to participate in the activity, but was more closely associated with amotivation. Hostile attributional biases may evoke the offender to view the activity with suspicion and therefore lead to disengagement (Chambers et al., 2008), while the scores as a whole reflect a lack of willingness to engage throughout the sample. In contrast, the young people who were more intrinsically motivated were also less aggressive with lower amotivation. This suggests greater perceived competence on the part of the young person, increased value attached to the activity and the presence of affective control mechanisms (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Ward et al., 2004).

Demographics, school and community behaviour and motivation to participate in the intervention

Although not central to the current study, gender and age demonstrated mixed relationships with motivational engagement at the Attendance Centre. Males were more amotivated than females, though this finding is likely a function of the gender-imbalanced sample. Analysis revealed that age did not contribute towards engagement motivation, which is contrary to other developmental research that suggests a shift to maturity and goal perception in later adolescence (Iselin et al., 2012). However, this study consisted of a youth offender sample relatively close in age that only remained at the Centre for several weeks until their sentence was completed, and so it was not possible to study developmental effects.

The young person's experiences of school inversely predicted their motivation to engage with the intervention; individuals who displayed fewer problematic behaviours were more intrinsically and less extrinsically motivated. This is indicative of parallels between their school behaviour and engagement at the Attendance Centre, and is supported by

findings from pedagogic research (see Alivernini & Lucidi, 2011). The association of school behaviour with identified regulation confirms that those who are internally motivated also appreciate the value and utility of the present intervention (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).

Motivational engagement was also shaped by previous antisocial behaviour in the community. Participants who recorded more disruptive behaviour were typically motivated by external factors and less so by internal compulsion. This is supported by findings that indicate that motivations, aspirations and goals are influenced by the individual's environment (Libbey, 2004). Specifically, the demonstration of adverse behaviours is a reaction of individuals to strain in their lives, and can negatively affect the ability to establish meaningful goals (Agnew et al., 2002). It is therefore likely that when an individual is engaged in antisocial behaviour, they exhibit less internal motivation to modify their actions and this may explain why they were also poorly motivated overall at the Attendance Centre. In addition, the presence of conflicting goals can be problematic for engagement with interventions and thus is an appropriate target for treatment (Burrowes & Needs, 2009). However, as with the findings from the aggression analysis, the poor explanatory power of the regressions indicate that antisocial behaviours alone are not the only likely predictor of motivational engagement, nor do they necessarily determine whether or not the young person will engage in future interventions.

Parental bonding, self-esteem and motivation to participate in the intervention

The findings confirm the importance of parental involvement in young peoples' lives by shaping their motivations and self-regulation (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012). The sample was characterised by one-parent families or dysfunctional upbringings, as is common with samples of this type (Chambers et al., 2001). Maternal care was closely associated with the individual's intrinsic motivations and amotivation, whilst maternal control influenced all

motivational subtypes. Parker et al. (1979) view young people in environments characterised by low care and high control at a greater risk of adopting maladaptive behaviours in adolescence. Accordingly, individual's with mothers who adopted less caring and more authoritative styles felt less inclined to engage, perhaps through a lack of pro-social modeling or encouragement to develop self-determined goals. However, intrinsic motivation also increased along with maternal control to an extent, indicating that external pressures can also help to facilitate interest in the activity, for example, through a desire to avoid further sanctions (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012). At the same time, it is likely that too much parental control can undermine efforts to foster internal motivations, as those who had experienced high control in the parental environment failed to see the value of the activity, which is essential for positive engagement (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). This can lead to disengagement and poor responsivity to interventions when offenders are primarily extrinsically motivated (McMurran, 2009; Ward et al., 2004). Model fits were improved compared to previous regressions, suggesting that attachment styles were a better indicator of motivational engagement.

The sample generally recorded high levels of self-esteem across all domains of appearance, performance and social self-esteem. The relationship between self-esteem and motivation appears somewhat ambiguous in this sample; while it did not directly predict any engagement at the Attendance Centre, the subtypes - with the exception of performance self-esteem - were associated with different aspects of motivation. The findings reflect the complex nature of self-esteem; individuals who were more confident with their appearance and in social situations were less intrinsically and more extrinsically motivated to engage with the intervention. This is in contrast to notions that greater self-esteem is associated with higher intrinsic motivational levels, as people aim to bring themselves closer towards the person they aspire to be (Iselin et al., 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Social desirability may be a

factor in self-esteem responses, where there are tendencies for people to exaggerate personal abilities (Baumeister et al., 2003). Of particular interest is the apparent resistance towards intrinsic motivation. In DiClemente and Hughes' (1990) study of alcohol outpatients, their 'pre-contemplation' group featured individuals who endorsed the lowest means for self-efficacy compared to the other stages in the TTM. The high self-esteem reported in the current study may represent a defensive quality in the way they view themselves as having no difficulties, and as such they see no intrinsic need to change their situation.

Implications for motivational engagement in practice

The present study provides evidence for the influence of psychosocial variables on the motivational engagement of adolescent offenders in intervention programmes. The findings support the view that interventions could be more beneficial for the young person if their extrinsic motivations are internalised and intrinsic motivations are encouraged (McMurran et al., 2006). This study extends this idea further by identifying specific factors that are linked to engagement, although it does not attempt to link this to treatment outcomes. It is clear that this can be achieved if practitioners consider individual characteristics, not only in the context of risk factors, but in matching the delivery of interventions to the idiosyncrasies of the young person to increase responsivity (MacDonald et al., 2012; McMurran & Ward, 2010). Ideally, young offender's should be viewed as agents of change with goals and aspirations, rather than enforcing change solely through external means (Ward & Laws, 2010). Moreover, it is important to recognise that motivation is a fluid state (Sansone & Thorman, 2006), therefore reasons to engage vary among adolescent offenders. It has been argued that pre-treatment interventions can serve to assess motivation among people serving probation orders in a community setting (Palmer et al., 2013). These interventions could take the form of motivational interviewing in order to encourage autonomous motivation. While motivational

interviewing can lead to increased engagement and retention in treatment programmes (McMurran, 2009), variations among its use restrict any conclusions about its effectiveness. However, informed by SDT and motivational interviewing concepts, any potential barriers to engagement in programmes could be addressed to facilitate intrinsic motivation. For example, providing conditions that support autonomy, competency and relatedness may encourage a shift from non-engagement to engagement (Burrowes & Needs, 2009; Vansteenkiste & Sheldon, 2006).

Limitations and future research

There are a number of weaknesses in the present study. As the data collected via self-report, it is possible that the participants may have exaggerated or minimised responses on the measures. Responses may also be biased by a perceived power imbalance or the use of an incentive, although participants generally indicated mixed views of the intervention regardless. Furthermore, responses are limited by the individual's ability to reflect on their own behaviour. Given the imbalanced gender and young age of the sample that is representative of this intervention, the generalisability of the findings is limited to adolescent male offenders, and future studies should consider the wider offending population and offence types. As such, there is cause for the study of gender influences on offender motivation and engagement. Educational research has alluded to the moderating effects of socioeconomic status, sex-typed roles and ethnicity on gender differences in achievement motivation in school (Meece et al., 2006). Whether such factors are equally significant for motivation in offender programmes should be addressed in future studies.

The cross-sectional study examined only a few variables that mediate the development of motivation in the sample and did not explore the outcomes of this motivation, such as subsequent levels of non-attendance or recidivism. Participants completed measures

in the initial stages of their Attendance Centre requirement, and so it possible that levels of reported motivation will vary if sampled at different time-points. As recent integrated motivational theories draw attention to the time taken in order to reach our desired expectations (Steel & König, 2006), longitudinal research would be best placed to answer these questions.

The moderate amount of variation captured in the analysis is not surprising as there may be additional interrelated factors that contribute towards engagement in programmes. Future studies should consider the role of variables such as substance use, psychopathology, programme content and therapeutic relationships as they are often included in the measurement of successful interventions (Craig et al., 2013; Mason & Prior, 2008). However, the study highlights the lack of understanding around the precise role of affective and cognitive processes in the field of motivation, although the latter has received more attention in the literature (Chambers et al., 2008). Prospective studies could benefit from pedagogic research for suggestions on improving motivation; as attendance at school and non-custodial interventions are compulsory, and the cognitive processes that underpin motivation to engage with both are of interest to researchers (Vansteenkiste & Sheldon, 2006), the benefits of a multidisciplinary approach to enhance autonomous, goal-directed motivations should be considered.

In conclusion, there is a plethora of existing evidence that implicates motivation as a key determinant in shaping the success or failure of offender intervention programmes with respect to outcomes. However, this study draws attention to determinants of that motivation and the relationships with programme engagement. By recognising these potential influences on engagement motivation, interventions can serve as a pathway towards desistance in the actualisation of prosocial goals.

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