

Motivation to change and volitional competence as predictors for individual and social development after incarceration

Christiane Bosold

Criminological Research Institute of Lower Saxony, Hanover

Successful individual and social development after imprisonment require persistence in goal-directed behaviors while facing deprivation and failure. There is still a lack of research investigating personal resources that influence coping with unfavorable life conditions after release. Recent approaches in psychological action theory differentiate between several motivational and volitional components that support goal maintenance and self-integrity (see Kuhl & Fuhrmann, 1998). Some of these factors such as delay of gratification (Mischel, 1974) are already part of current relapse prevention programs for offenders, but longitudinal studies investigating these postulated effects are still rare.

In this study the functions of motivation to change, delay of gratification and planning skills for individual development (e.g. normative attitude, alcohol consumption, legal probation) and social integration (e.g. job, partnership, leisure activities) are examined. In order to investigate this hypothesis, data were taken from the longitudinal Hanover Prison Study with 2.405 young men who were incarcerated for the first time in their life. Participants were interviewed at least two times during detention and one time after release. Results indicate that motivational and volitional components have an impact on individual and social development of former inmates, although there seem to be some moderating factors (e.g. type of offense). Practical and theoretical implications of the results as well as restrictions of the study were discussed.

Reference

Bosold, C. (2005). *Motivation to Change and Volitional Competence as Predictors for Individual and Social Development after Incarceration*. Paper presented at the 9th European Congress of Psychology in Granada, Spain (7th of July 2005).