**Assessing Attitudes towards Rehabilitation during the COVID-19 Pandemic:**

**A Natural Comparative “Intervention”**

**Summary of Revisions**

We thank the editor and reviewers for the time spent reviewing our manuscript and for their insightful comments and suggestions for improving the manuscript.

We are grateful for the opportunity to revise and resubmit our work. We have attempted to address all critiques, recommendations, and suggestions, and believe that, as a result, the current revised manuscript is a much stronger and improved product that will be more suitable for an international audience. We therefore hope it will meet with your approval.

In accordance with the instructions to authors, we have provided point-by-point responses regarding changes made, as well as responses to critiques and requested revisions with which we respectfully took issue.

Below is a list of detailed revisions made in response to the reviewers’ comments and suggestions. Changes in the manuscript are highlighted.

**Reviewer 1**

In my assessment this is excellent research and writing from start to finish on an important topic. The data analysis is not sufficiently justified, nor is the selection of the participants.

***Response***: We thank the reviewer for his supportive comment. Per the reviewer’s suggestions, we added information to justify the data analysis. Specifically, we added a new, detailed section, just before the Findings section, titled:Statistical Analysis Procedure (pp. 13-14).

A basic descriptive analysis was conducted to capture the characteristics of the sample in terms of their experiences of isolation, and to examine the differences between Israeli and American students regarding their emotional response to isolation. Next, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. Specifically, we used hierarchical regression to examine the rehabilitative attitudes and to assess the effect of isolation as proxy to the feeling/ affective component, along with other factors such as the knowledge component, gender, age, marital status and country. Hierarchical regression models are suitable to examine the contribution of previously known predictors (e.g., age, gender, marital status, and knowledge), while adding new predictors that were not examined in previous studies, in a specific order. The order in which the predictors were added in models 2 and 3 (Table 1), were determined according to the theoretical explanation presented in this paper, according to which attitudes are determined by knowledge and feeling/ affective components. This is a methodological theory that guides public opinion studies (Hornik, 1988). Specifically, the models in Table 1 examine the rationale by which exposure to forced isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic is associated with support of rehabilitation and less support for incarceration and isolation as punishment. Using this approach, we aimed to obtain a nested-structure as the factor/ predictors from the first model will become nested within the more complex models presented in the second and third models of the analyses, allowing us to improve our ability to explain the variance of our dependent variable—rehabilitative attitudes—by the independent predictors examined in each of the three models analyzed. We discuss these models in more detail in the Findings section (pages 13-14).

**Reviewer 2**

***Comment 1***

Topic: The topic is misleading. This is because there is no experiment conducted in

this study, neither is it an experimental design study.

***Response***

­We appreciate this comment. There are several causality designs that are, at times, referred to as experimental. In our study we aimed at the “after-only” causality design, which is considered a pre-experimental design. Per the reviewer’s comment, we revised the title of the manuscript to read as follows: “Assessing Attitudes towards Rehabilitation During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Natural Comparative “Intervention”

***Comment 2***

Abstract: The abstract lacks information on  
a. Approach of the study; b. Design of the study; c. Sampling method/technique; d. Statistical instrument

***Response***

The reviewer alerts us to the lack of information about the overall study methodology in the manuscript’s abstract. We appreciate this comment, and in response added the requested information. Specifically, we added that we used: (a) web-based surveys to measure rehabilitative and punitive attitudes, quantitative data from 192 undergraduate students were examined and analyzed; (b) an after-only pre-experimental design that uses a natural event; (c) non-probability, voluntary web-based sampling of eligible students who are enrolled in academic programs at the examined institutions and are at least 18 years of age; and (d) descriptive statistics and hierarchical regression. This information is now included in the abstract section of the manuscript.

***Comment 3***

Introduction  
a. The problem is not well articulated.

***Response***

Thank you for this comment. While we do find it to be a bit contradictory to the comment of the first reviewer who wrote “excellent research and writing from start to finish”, we have taken the second reviewer’s comment in heart. We clarified that previous studies examining attitudes toward punishment, incarceration, and rehabilitation tend to focus on the knowledge/cognitive component. To the best of our knowledge, no previous studies have examined the feeling/ affective component as it relates to exposure to isolation, which emulates some of the “pains of incarceration”. While it is unethical to impose such conditions on people in order to get their opinion on isolation, the COVID-19 pandemic presented a unique opportunity to examine such a component, as people were forced to isolate in their homes. Thus, the study is unique in that it enables to examine the potential connection of isolation to attitudes toward incarceration and rehabilitation using the feeling component. This section has been added to the manuscript (p. 3, second page of the introduction).

b. The study lacks clearly outlined objectives; and c. The study lacks clearly stated hypotheses. The supposed hypotheses are composite and unclear what seems to be tested.

***Response***

Per our response to a comment by the second reviewer, we do have a clear outlined research objective, and clear research hypotheses. We edited and enhanced the text as needed so that the objectives and hypotheses are more clearly presented. Specifically, we added clarification on the second page of the introduction, in the second and third paragraphs. For example: “The objective of the present study is an attempt to bridge the gap in previous studies…” The hypotheses are clearly stated and explained in the last paragraph before the Method section: “From the above previous research and in correspondence with the current study’s objectives mentioned earlier, it is hypothesized that time spent in isolation, marked by social distancing or severance, and associated with high levels of anxiety, depression, and distress, will influence the level of support expressed by the research subjects for punitive measures (i.e., incarceration and social isolation) or rehabilitation. This is based on the premise that isolation replicates the conditions of incarceration, thereby providing a unique opportunity to examine the affective (emotion) component of attitude and the manner in which it influences support for punishment or rehabilitation. In addition, it is hypothesized that knowledge (cognitive component), will be strongly and positively related to attitudes that are supportive of rehabilitation, as knowledge gained through education tends to reduce stereotypes.” Both comments (b & c) are now clearly addressed in the text.

***Comment 4***

Methods

a. What sampling method/technique was used?

***Response***

The information is now clearly presented in the first line of the Methods section under the Participants sub-section: “The non-probability sample (e.g., volunteer sample) of students was constructed by inviting students to participate in an online survey using Qualtrics software”.

b. How was the final 192 sample size representative of the total population?

***Response***

We clearly state that the sample is a non-probability volunteer sample of students. We do not claim it is a representative sample, and accordingly, we do not propose any generalization, but argue that it is important to examine the feeling component along with the knowledge component.

c. How were the missing values (if any?) responses resolved?

***Response***

We only collected and analyzed the surveys that were completed. We have added a short explanation to clarify this at the end of the first paragraph of the Participants subsection section of the Methodology: “About 19% (N = 46) of the original participants failed to complete the survey, thus preventing their inclusion in the analysis. We did not deal with missing values associated with these respondents. We only analyzed the 192 fully completed surveys that had responses for all items.” (see page 10, 1st paragraph).

d. How many sections were in the questionnaire?

***Response***

We thank the reviewer for this request for clarification. The questionnaire had four sections: Attitudes towards punishment/ rehabilitation, knowledge of criminology, socio-demographics and COVID-19 related questions (feelings, the impact of isolation…). We reorganized the text in the Tools and Procedure section (pp. 10-11).

e. Was the instrument adopted or adapted?

***Response***

The instrument was both adopted and adapted. The following explanation was added under Tools and Procedures: “The instrument was modified from its original version (adapted). It was supplemented by additional knowledge questions that had been tested and validated in previous studies (the author's previously published work), as well as some demographic questions. The modification was done to reflect findings from more recent studies and to prepare it for use as an online survey (i.e., Qualtrics). In addition, the instrument was approved (adopted) by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the first author’s institution (page 10, first paragraph under the Tools and Procedures section).

f. Was there any pilot and or pretest conducted since the questionnaire was used in a different context?

***Response***

No pilot or pretest was given. We relied on prior research to validate the questions and the tools (Gideon & Sherman, 2014; Roberts & Stalans, 1998; Zalency & Kirsch, 1989). These references appear in the first and second sections that describe the tool used along with Cronbach Alpha values for the items in our study and in previous studies (pp. 11-12).

g. In terms of the Israeli students, was the questionnaire translated into Jewish language or it was still in English?

***Response***

Thank you for the request to clarify this important methodological item. The first and second authors are proficient in both English and Hebrew, were educated in both Israeli and American institutions, and made sure that the questions were equivalent in both languages and examined the exact same concepts. Specifically, we added the following text as clarification: “The translation into Hebrew was done by the first and second authors, who are both fluent in English and Hebrew, and was examined for both content and cultural context.” (see page 11, 1st paragraph).

h. How were the item loadings determined to sufficiently measure each of the  
construct in the instrument?

***Response***

Per our response to comment “f” above, we assume the comment refers to the measures of punitive/ rehabilitation score, knowledge score, feeling component, etc. Items were examined following previous research and findings. There was no data-reduction procedure that eliminated certain survey items, and all items identified were taken into consideration in the analysis of the main variables discussed above. We added the following sentence for clarification: “As such, no data-reduction procedure, such as confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), or exploratory factor analysis (EFA) were needed.” (page 11).

i. Did this study conduct Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor  
Analysis (CFA) to confirm the items that actually measure each construct in the  
instrument?

***Response***

We did not use EFA or CFA. The items were used based on previous studies (see also our response to comment f by Reviewer 2). We added a sentence to clarify: “As such, no data-reduction procedure, such as confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), or exploratory factor analysis (EFA) were needed."

***Comment 5***

Findings

a. How was homogeneity of variance determined and appropriate reporting done  
for the t-test?

***Response***

We added the degree of freedom to t statistics (see page 15, last paragraph)***.*** Equal variances was assumed (F(33,157) = 1.02 , p = .313)

b. It is difficult to validate the t-test results since the difference between the sub-sample sizes of US and Israeli students were very huge (82.3% vs. 17.7%). This difference makes the comparison problematic due to the huge uneven samples.

***Response***

Yes, we agree and state this as one of the limitations of the study. Nevertheless, we believe that the study results make a very strong argument, and clearly illustrate the importance of the feeling component to the examination of attitudes regarding punishment and rehabilitation.

c. The type of regression used was not justified. What were the assumptions  
underlying its usage?

***Response***

We wanted to show that adding the feeling component improves the model’s ability to explain attitudes toward rehabilitation. Most previous studies that examine attitudes regarding punishment and rehabilitation ignore the feeling component. In this study, we had the unique opportunity, presented by the pandemic, to explore the effects of this important variable, and we show its importance in the hierarchical regressions presented. As noted in our response to Reviewer #1, we added a Statistical Analysis Procedure section that clearly explains the justification for our analyses (p. 13).

Further, attitudes toward rehabilitation were assessed for normality to ensure that the data conformed to basic statistical hypotheses.

d. Hierarchical regression is used to generate theory-driven evidence or test a  
theory. Which theory underpinned this study to be verified?

***Response***

Thank you for this comment. We clarified that we used a methodological theory of the components essential to measuring attitudes. We added a section (p. 13), that clearly explains the justification and theory, with a reference to Hornik (1988) for the theory to which we refer.

***Comment 6***

Discussion  
What were the clear implications of the findings of this study on both policy and practice?

***Response***

Although we did not explicitly use the words “implication” or “policy” in our original manuscript, we did discuss implications and potential policy. In response to the concern raised by the reviewer, we added a paragraph (p. 20, second paragraph), that clearly discusses the implications on policy and practices. The new text reads: “From the above findings, it is clear that measuring attitudes must take account of both knowledge and feeling/ affective components. Measuring attitudes and opinions are associated with the development of policies, and in the case of the current study, punitive and rehabilitative policies that are social reactions to law breakers. As such the implication and policy that stem from the present study calls for more responsible adoption of public attitudes and public opinion surveys that are being taken into consideration when considering social reaction policy revisions to current punitive policies. Specifically, the current study raises the importance of understanding the limitations of public opinion and public attitude surveys, while offering a more holistic approach to how we can better, and more accurately, measure the opinions and attitudes of citizens."

**Reviewer 3**

***Comment 1***

A limitation of the study seems to be in the results that the subjects in the study the numbers were uneven to me swayed the results. e.g. people in Israel are use to a system   that does not use rehabilitation then public opinion seems to support less use of rehabilitation.

***Response***

Thank you for this comment. We acknowledge the difference in response between Israeli and American students as a limitation of our study. We added the following on page 21, first paragraph: “Further, the lack of balance in study the group between Israeli and American students may have swayed the results of the study, as discussed. As this study was based on voluntary participation, we were unable to achieve a matched number of American and Israeli students. Future studies may attempt to achieve a more representative and equal number of participants to allow a more balanced analysis.”

***Comment 2***

The same thing with the limitation of the makeup of the groups. It was mentioned as a limitation to age, gender and whether a criminology students was first year or 4th year.  It was mentioned but needs to be emphasized more as a limitation.

***Response***: We are not sure what else is needed to further emphasize this limitation, after all, the reviewer does acknowledge that we have mentioned this. We clearly state that the study sample is not representative and does not allow us to make generalizations. The following was added to the Limitations section (p. 20, first paragraph): “As the present research rests on a non-probability sample of criminology and criminal justice students who volunteered to participate in the study, the results of the research do not necessarily encompass the entire student population studying for a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice and/or criminology, and as such does not allow any generalization. It is also worth noticing that the overall level of measured level of knowledge pertaining to sentencing, punishment and rehabilitation is not representative of the entire student population.”

***Comment 3***

The manuscript did not have a Conclusion section and I think would be helpful to separate Limitations and another Section Conclusion and Future Research.

***Response*** A Conclusion section was added on page 22.

***Comment 4***

Also on page 18 at the bottom states, "Many Israelis see this as being excessively lenient at times and this has reduced public confidence in the "county's" criminal justice system. I think it was meant to be "country's" and not "county's"

***Response***

Thank you for alerting us to this typo, we have now corrected it to read “country’s”.

**Editor's Comments**

***Comment 1***

In the first place, the author did not comprehensively explore and explain the study design. What exact methodology was adopted to sample the study participants? Why was this procedure adopted, and what are the epistemological foundations?

***Response***

Per the comments of the reviewers and editor, we have expanded and revised the Methods section to clarify and provide additional information on the participants, tools, data collection, and statistical analysis procedure (pp. 10-14). Specifically, we explain that the sample was constructed by inviting students to voluntarily participate in an online survey using Qualtrics (p. 10). We also explain why we used Qualtrics, and the COVID-19 restrictions that were in place (p. 12). We agree that more detail was need so we added the following: “Since the study aimed to examine the effects of isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, data collection took place when institutions of higher education turned to remote teaching; therefore we had to rely on an online survey methodology, and used Qualtrics.”

***Comment 2***

As observed by one of the reviewers, describing the study as an experiment suggested by the manuscript's topic is misleading since the author did not represent an experimental procedure. To consider this paper's approach an experimental study –specific initial facts should be stated. For instance, what values describe the general attitudes towards rehabilitation in both countries before the pandemic – for the students or participants within the defined age range of students? Can these be compared to the students' attitudes examined after the pandemic? Such an approach would make this paper a before-after experimental study with the pandemic as a treatment. The author should reconsider the topic of the manuscript.

***Response***

We agree with this comment and changed the title of the manuscript and adjusted the language accordingly. The study used a pre-experimental design of “after-only”. We did not have the ability to predict the pandemic and thus were unable to examine the group’s “before” values. However, we present this study as an innovative approach to the understanding of attitudes while examining the effect of the feeling/ affective component. This important factor was not previously examined regard to attitudes towards punishment and rehabilitation. This is why we initially used the term “experimental” since the COVID pandemic presented us with a natural “intervention”. The provisional new title is: ***Assessing Attitudes towards Rehabilitation During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Natural Comparative “Intervention”***

***Comment 3***

The author did not describe the types of analysis intended for the study and why. However, it states findings without providing a basic foundation of the analytic processes. This approach would probably blindside the reader in considering the adopted procedure and analysis. For instance, in the described methodology, 'tools and processes,' where did the paper describe model 1, model 2, and 3 as mentioned or listed in that order? Where in the methodology did the manuscript describe the regression equations mentioned in paragraphs 3 and 4 of page 15, lines 34 and 51 under the 'Findings' section? Where is the multivariable model between the genders mentioned in paragraph 1 of page 15 described in the methodology? The author should describe the paper's analytic processes as part of its methodology.

***Response***

In response to Reviewers 1 and 2, we added a section on the statistical analysis procedure (pp. 13-14), in which we explained in detail the justification of our analysis. Specifically, we conducted a basic descriptive analysis to capture the characteristics of the sample in terms of their exposure to isolation and to examine the differences between the Israeli and American students in their emotional response to isolation. To examine the effect of isolation and proxy to the feeling/ affective component, along with other factors such as knowledge component, gender, age, marital status and country we used hierarchical regression to examine rehabilitative attitudes. We used hierarchical regression to examine the contribution of previously known predictors (e.g., age, gender, marital status, and knowledge), while adding new predictors that were not examined in previous studies, in a specific order. The order in which the predictors are added in models 2 and 3, are determined according to the theoretical explanation presented earlier in the paper, according to which attitudes are determined by knowledge and feeling/ affective components. This is a methodological theory that guides public opinion studies (Hornik, 1988). Specifically, the models examine the rationale by which exposure to forced isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic is associated with support for rehabilitation and less support for incarceration and isolation as punishment. Using this approach, we aimed to obtain a nested-structure, as the factor/ predictors from the first model will become nested within the more complex models presented in the second and third models of the analyses, improving our ability to explain the variance of our dependent variable—rehabilitative attitudes—by the independent predictors examined in each of the three models analyzed. We discuss these models in more details in the findings section.

***Comment 4***

The reviewers also recommended that the author delineate the study's conclusion from the general body of the manuscript. The specific identification of a conclusion section would further improve the quality of the paper for publication. I suggest that the author includes a 'conclusion' section.

***Response***: As requested, a conclusion section was added (p. 22).

We hope that our responses presented in this letter and the revisions incorporated in the manuscript address all the concerns raised by the reviewers, making our manuscript suitable for publication in your journal.

Once again, we are grateful for your consideration and for the opportunity to revise the manuscript.

We look forward to hearing from you regarding further steps.

Respectfully,