**Locus of Control, Self-Esteem and Normative Perceptions among paroled Arab and Jewish during Employment Supervision Program**

**Abstract**

The present research is aimed at examining how participation in Israel's Prisoner Rehabilitation Authority support and employment supervision program for paroled prisoners can reinforce locus of control and self-esteem, while boosting normative perceptions and positive expectations regarding the future, given the cultural diversity in the mix of Jewish and Arab prisoners. Research participants included 169 paroled prisoners who had taken part in the program during 2019-2020. The program appears to have made a positive contribution to locus of control, particularly among the Jewish prisoners. As regards the Arab prisoners, the program's contribution is evident principally in alleviating apprehensions about a return to prison. The program also appears to strengthen normative perceptions and positive expectations regarding the future in both populations.

**Keywords:** **Locus of Control, self-Esteem**, **Supervision Programs, Rehabilitation**, **Culture-sensitive Care**

**Introduction**

Every year sees about 7,500 prisoners in Israel being released and returning to their communities, some of whom are on parole following reduction of one-third of their sentences and are under the supervision of the Prisoner Rehabilitation Authority. In this framework, and with a view to assisting their reintegration into society, the prisoners are required to participate in a program that offers support and employment supervision. The program includes oversight, rehabilitation and therapy in the framework of the community, with the emphasis on placement in employment and support during the period of parole (Peled-Laskov, Shoham, Cojocaru & Bialer, 2018). Every released prisoner who participates in the program is required to work as well as take part in a therapeutic framework which is generally geared to the type of offence he committed, his criminal background and his personality. Following his consent to join the program, his undertaking to comply with all its requirements, and approval of his early release by the Parole Committee, he is freed as a prisoner on parole (Efodi, 2014). The support component of the program includes psychotherapy, a framework that includes individual and group meetings, aimed at engendering behavioural, emotional, personality and conceptual changes in the prisoner that would eventually lead to his desistance from criminal activity (Ward & Maruna, 2007). Prisoner therapy poses multiple challenges for the Authority, including, among others, care that is cultural-sensitive given the mixed population of Jews and Arabs (Lee, 2017; Nadan & Ben-Ari, 2013).

The present research seeks to examine the manner in which participation in the employment support enterprise can reinforce positive feelings with respect to locus of control and self-esteem, alongside normative perceptions regarding the future, while taking into account the cultural diversity existing among the Jewish and Arab prisoners. Reference is made in the literature to these personality indices and perceptions (Shoham & Peled-Laskov, in print) as significant elements that can be strengthened, thus helping desistance from crime and integration in regular employment and society.

According to rehabilitative approaches that focus on desistance from crime, true rehabilitation involves a complete change in the lawbreaker's way of life and self-perception. Desistance from crime is a process of change that the individual undertakes by himself, albeit at times with the assistance of specialists acting in the framework of enforcement and corrections systems (Bersani & Doherty, 2018; Broidy & Cauffman, 2017; Ward & Maruna, 2007). The research literature points to a number of factors that help the delinquent to abandon his criminal way of life, among them, psychotherapy, boosting of motivation, acquisition of maturity, stoppage of drug use, affiliation with a normative social group, and integration in regular employment (e.g. Bersani & Doherty, 2018; Cook et al., 2015; Duwe & Clark, 2017; Maruna, 2010; Peled-Laskov et al., 2019; Redcross et al., 2012; Rodermond et al., 2016).

A theoretical benchmark with respect to the importance of employment and psychotherapy in the process of rehabilitation may be found in the Good Life Model (GLM) (Ward & Stewart, 2003). According to this model, rehabilitation of criminals is intended to focus on providing them with normative ways and means in order to guide them into leading a good life and, in parallel, lower or eliminate risks (see Ward & Maruna, 2007). Ward & Gannon (2006) call for implementing a "desistance from crime" rehabilitative approach that enhances the mental welfare of lawbreakers, enabling them to aspire to ends that are of interest to them and allowing them the means to meet their needs and live a full, happy life that is not injurious to others in society (Galnander, 2020).

The above model is associated with positive criminology (Ronel & Elisha, 2011), and more specifically with the theory of desistance from crime, involving a gradual process that culminates in the relinquishment of criminal activity (Bersani & Doherty, 2018; Broidy & Cauffman, 2017; Farrall & Calverley, 2006; Farrall et al., 2014; LeBel et al., 2008; Maruna, 2001; Nugent & Schinkel, 2016; Segev, 2018). A distinction is made between "initial" desistance, which is in effect a temporary hiatus in criminal pursuits, and "secondary" desistance, involving abandonment of the criminal life style and criminal identity (Maruna & Farrall, 2004). One of the key elements in secondary desistance from crime is integration in intervention programs that prepare the individual for normative life. The theory assumes that it is not enough to ascertain whether the individual is involved in delinquent activity but rather to examine his overall life style as a consequence of the intervention program (Petersilia, 2003; Rhine et al., 2017). McNeill (2016) adds societal recognition (tertiary desistance) as an imperative step in achieving a long-term change, with acceptance to employment being viewed as part of this recognition (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016).

Normative, regular work constitutes one of the principal building blocks in prisoner rehabilitation. Employment enables the released prisoner to lead a respectable life and earn an honest livelihood, while observing a schedule and eschewing idleness. In addition, work allows the released prisoner to be a creative citizen, contributing to society and forming positive social relationships (Efodi & Dahan, 2015). Employment and professional training also appear to improve the prisoner's self-image, enhance his self-confidence, raise his optimism regarding the future, and better his chances of rehabilitation (Davis et al., 2013; Efodi & Dahan, 2015; Haseimi et al., 2015; Timor et al., 2017).

A key question posed by professionals engaged in prisoner rehabilitation is whether a therapeutic framework can indeed bring about a change in thought processes and behaviour (Shoham & Timor, 2014). This question is highly relevant in all aspects of psychotherapy for lawbreakers (Ward & Maruna, 2007), the aim of the employment supervision and support program in this case being to reinstate prisoners in society as employed individuals and law-abiding citizens who have adopted accepted perspectives and norms (Yates et al., 2010). It appears that not everyone is suited to a therapeutic framework and the possibility of achieving success through therapy depends on several factors, among them motivation to undergo change, age and cultural outlook (Elizur et al., 2016; Gideon, 2009; Timor, 2011). One of the aims of therapy in general, and group therapy in particular, is to identify mistaken concepts and beliefs (e.g. those related to an external locus of control) and try to correct them (Efodi, 2014; Shoham et al., 2019).

The concept of locus of control, developed by Rotter, refers to the extent of people's belief in their own level of responsibility with regard to events in their lives. Individuals with an internal locus of control believe that they are responsible for their destiny, in contrast to those with an external locus of control, who believe that life events are determined by luck, chance and other external factors (Rotter, 1966). A condition for proper adaptation is the willingness of an individual to make changes in his way of life so as to be in sync with changing circumstances. People with an external locus of control will find it difficult to adapt to a changing reality and will acclimatize less easily, to the extent of seeing no point in doing so since, in their opinion, there is no connection between their actions and results on the ground (Adorian & Chui, 2014). Thus they do not confront challenges and are unable to assume adaptive behaviour.

In contrast, when events are perceived as a result of personal conduct, an internal locus of control is at play. People with an internal locus of control will adapt to a changing environment on seeing that earlier behaviour did not meet requirements (Rotter, 1966; Van Tongeren & Anson, 2007). This is in essence adaptive behaviour, embodying a flexibility that facilitates compatibility with surrounding influences. Thus a prisoner with an internal locus of control will have a higher likelihood of successful rehabilitation, and accordingly efforts are directed towards helping prisoners develop these feelings (Shoham & Peled-Laskov, in print; Van Tongeron & Anson, 2007). It was found, for example, that prisoners with an internal locus of control tend to be more optimistic and determined with respect to their ability to succeed outside the prison (Adorian & Chui, 2014). However, if a negative life experience is encountered, the locus of control becomes increasingly external and the level of optimism drops (Hand, 2004). Recidivistic prisoners (Ouma et al., 2012) and prisoners serving long sentences tend to have an external locus of control, in contrast to prisoners working outside the prison walls, whose internal causal reference point is at a higher level (Blatier, 2000).

A correlation was found between social status and locus of control: a more external locus of control characterizes members of a lower social status, in comparison with individuals belonging to a higher social stratum (Stander, 2014). Research studies have found that an external locus of control tempers emotional responses and behaviour having negative results (Maier & Seliman, 2016), while individuals with an internal locus of control are less sensitive to failure and have a lower proclivity towards receiving rewards (Mancinelli et al., 2020). Locus of control was also found to be associated with differences in learning and decision-making patterns.

A positive correlation was also found between locus of control and finding employment (Conell-Price & Jamison, 2015) and functioning in the workplace: the more external the locus of control, the greater the dysfunctional career thoughts. With therapeutic intervention, however, a rise was found in the ability to perform career tasks (Henderson, 2009).

Empirical studies point to the fact that prison life and the assumption of prisoner status have a negative effect on self-esteem, self-confidence and hope regarding the future. The longer the prisoner spends in prison, the lower his self-esteem drops (Blatier, 2000). Research has also found that participation in educational programs in prison and in the community encourage the adoption of a critical view of oneself, thereby devaluing the stigma of wearing a criminal label (Evans et al., 2018), raising self-esteem, and improving re-entry into society (Evans et al., 2018; Timor & Oppenheimer, 2007). In addition, it was found that employment that offers an opportunity for developing contact with other law-abiding citizens can help in improving the prisoner's self-esteem (Davis et al., 2013). It also appears that the higher the self-esteem, the higher the optimism with respect to a return to society (Visher & O'Connell, 2012) and the lower the recidivism (Blatier, 2000; Boduszek et al., 2013; Davidsky & Volk, 2011).

As regards perceptions about the future and the ability to determine one's fate, Ray et al. (2016) found a correlation between prisoner perceptions regarding employment and the concrete results of their efforts to find work. They found that prisoners who believed they were being labelled and judged negatively by employers due to the fact that they were ex-convicts used defensive strategies in looking for work and were therefore less successful in securing a job. These findings suggest that an improvement in prisoner perceptions regarding their future following release can enhance the likelihood that they will find work, thus reducing the risk of recidivism (LeBel et al., 2008; Maruna, 2001).

It appears that a somewhat large number of prisoners hold negative perceptions with respect to their future and expect to encounter discrimination and rejection on the part of employers and the community in general. They believe that most employers would rather not hire released prisoners and that certain elements in the population would not agree to have an ex-convict study together with their children (Cherney & Fitzgerald, 2016; Nugent & Schinkel, 2016). On the other hand, Benson et al. (2011) found that more than 75% of all the prisoners who participated in their study asserted that they would not return to prison, with two-thirds claiming that they would not have a problem finding work following release. Moreover, about 90% stated that as soon as they found a job they would not have a problem persevering in it. Benson et al. (2011) also found that most of the prisoners who participated in their study believed that they would not bear any stigma following their release and displayed considerable confidence with respect to their eventual integration in the community. The optimism encountered was found to be in line with the findings of Farrall et al. (2014), according to which a sense of hope was characteristic of the initial stages following desistance from crime.

Arabs in Israel comprise a religious-national-ethnic minority group constituting about one-fifth of the country's population (Hadad- Haj-Yehi & Assaf, 2017; Zussman et al., 2016). As a rule, it may be stated that this society is characterized by a feeling of ongoing alienation from Israeli society as a whole, which is largely Jewish, based on problems of acceptance (Ronen, 2010).

A review of the literature reveals a relatively small number of research studies that address the issue of culture-sensitive care and rehabilitation among released prisoners (e.g. Haj-Yahia, 2000; Jarisi, 2012; Naaran & Hansen, 2016). Reintegration of prisoners in the community following release and the attempt to leave the cycle of crime take place as part of an unrelenting struggle (Maruna, 2001; Nugent & Schinkel, 2016). The reintegration process is accompanied by complex interaction, with the released prisoner being shunted from one supervisory institution to another within the community while having to attend to family needs, among other obligations.

Difficulties and missteps in basic areas, such as language, employment, family and society, affect the self-esteem of the released prisoners, causing them to seek social and financial alternatives, frequently in the company of other released prisoners, often culminating in the perpetration of offences as part of a self-fulfilling prophesy (Maguire & Raynor, 2006). The difficulty in integrating into society following release is intensified when the prisoner is from an ethnic minority group that is disadvantaged relative to the general population, with the result that it constitutes a high-risk group in terms of recidivism (Hartney & Vuong, 2009; Listwan et al., 2003). Certain minority groups have a disproportional involvement with the law enforcement system and representation in prisons vis-à-vis the population as a whole (Toys, 2019).

Ethnic and cultural differences relative to the dominant ethnic and cultural background in society raises multiple questions regarding the type of care and methods of intervention in these specific populations in general, and in the rehabilitation of lawbreakers in particular. Some maintain that ethnic groups have different needs and respond differently to care services and methods, thereby necessitating the construction of programs geared to their particular uniqueness (Al-Issa, 1995; Alkrinawi, 2002; Ayalon, 2018).

A research study that examined care administered in prison, as perceived by Arab prisoners, found that a difficulty exists in requesting care due to the clash with the gender and patriarchal attitudes held by the prisoners (Gueta et al., 2019). Jamal-Abood & Balit-Cohen (2019) claim that a request for care on the part of an Arab male is perceived by Arab society as a violation of key values and norms, possibly inhibiting the willingness to request help and share personal issues. According to Goldberg (2018), however, Arab prisoners take an active part in all programs organized by the prison authorities.

In sessions with the Prisoner Rehabilitation Authority, which manages the support and employment supervision program, additional challenges come to the surface with released Arab prisoners relative to those encountered by their Jewish counterparts. A large percentage of released Arab prisoners return to life in villages that suffer from unemployment. Due to the nature of Arab society and the reliance on the extended family, even the requirement for an employer who is not a family member, as stipulated by the Parole Committee, is one with which is very difficult to comply (Shoham & Peled-Laskov, in print).

In therapeutic sessions with an individual from a traditional patriarchal, collective and authoritarian culture, such as Arab culture, the therapist who has been educated in Israeli or Western institutions could find himself in a conflict, both on the personal and interpersonal level, with his Arab client. Such encounters can give rise to misunderstandings and misinterpretations, serving as a fundamental obstacle in therapeutic relations and in the therapeutic process that the therapist intends to carry out. A therapist who maintains an emotional distance (by observing silence), for example, could be perceived as indifferent, uninterested and unhelpful. Another example is eye contact: whereas in Western countries this is an expression of interest and respect, the therapist could interpret it as avoidant or oppositional. Again, lateness and non-adherence to schedules are interpreted by the Western therapist as resistance while this is a routine phenomenon in Arab culture, which does not attach excessive importance to time (Jarissi, 2012).

According to Alkarnawi (2002), patients from Arab society tend to attribute the root of their problems to external factors (external locus of control) and accordingly tend to use language that could be construed by the therapist as a refusal to accept responsibility. In the face of a Western style of communication, characterized by directness and extraversion, Arab patients find it difficult to share their problems openly lest they injure their reputation or the good standing of their family. The Arabic language is highly metaphoric, allowing patients to resort to indirect means to describe their situation and reality. Thus knowledge or lack of knowledge of the language plays an important role in this extremely important context, since it is a medium with a function, meaning and boundaries, and contains a plethora of ideological content, reflecting those it serves (Shoham, 2012).

Culture-sensitive care gains even greater importance in the case of group therapy, a framework that includes a series of sessions in which the participants express themselves freely and spontaneously on the subject of the therapy in general, or the session in particular, airing their opinions and especially their emotions. Group therapy is considered to be effective with different at-risk populations (Cohen et al., 2018). For the Arab patient, participation in therapy with a large group of people could arouse apprehensions and tension.

The problem that could arise as a result is that Arab patients will tend to downplay their emotions and personal attitudes within the group, only to release them outside the group with a loss of control that could be injurious to those around them as well as to themselves.

In conclusion, the effectiveness of the support and employment supervision program operating in the framework of the Prisoner Rehabilitation Authority has to date been evaluated using objective quantitative indices, principally in terms of perseverance in employment during and after the period of supervision (Bialer & Peled-Laskov, 2011; Peled-Laskov, Shoham, Cojocaru & Bialer, 2018). In contrast, this research seeks to examine, pursuant to the guidelines of the desistance from crime approach, whether participation by released prisoners in the support and supervision program also helps them to bolster feelings relating to locus of control, self-esteem and normative, positive perceptions with respect to the future, vis-à-vis released prisoners who have not participated in the program.

The research hypothesis is that among paroled prisoners who have taken part in the supervision program (for a period of at least six months), there is a higher level of self-esteem and locus of control, as well as a higher level of normative perceptions and positive expectations of the future, in comparison with paroled prisoners who have only just started the program. An additional hypothesis is that owing to the cultural diversity between Jews and Arabs in connection with therapy and employment, the Arab population will benefit less from participation in the program in comparison with the Jewish population.

**Materials and Methods**

**Participants**

The participants in the study included a total of 169 paroled prisoners who had been in the support and employment supervision program under the aegis of the Prisoner Rehabilitation Authority in the Tel Aviv and Jerusalem districts during the period 2019-2020. The ages of the participants ranged from 21 to 65, with an average age of 35.90 and a standard deviation of 10.37. The time spent in the supervision program varied from 0.2 to 36 months. Altogether 32% of the participants were in the first month of their entry into the program and 35% had spent at least six months in the program.

Questionnaires were distributed to all 169 participants, even though the research design called for the distribution of questionnaires only to new parolees who had just started the program and to veteran parolees who had been in the program for at least six months and over (average of 11.6 months, standard deviation 7.85). Accordingly, of all the respondents, 35% (n=59) had participated in the program for more than six months, 32% (n=54) were at the start of the program, and 33% (n=56) had participated in the program for two to five months and were not included in the comparison. Tables 1 and 2 present the socio-demographic characteristics of participants from the two groups: the veteran group, which had participated in the program for more than six months (n=59) and the group that was just starting the program (n=54).

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Insert Table 1 about here

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Table 1 shows that no significant differences exist with respect to most of the parameters between the veteran group that had participated in the program and the group that had just started the program, with the exception of the number of months in prison. Released prisoners from the veteran group who had participated in the program had spent a significantly longer time in prison than the comparison group.

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Table 2 shows that no significant differences exist in terms of socio-demographic variables between the veteran group that had participated in the program and the group that had just started the program.

**Tools and Procedure**

In order to verify the hypotheses, four self-reporting questionnaires were distributed to the released prisoners, as follows:

*Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (SES)* (Rosenberg, 1965): The questionnaire, including 10 questions, measures the level of self-esteem. The questions are rated according to the Likert scale from 1 (definitely do not agree) to 4 (definitely agree). The self-esteem score is the total of the ratings for all the questions. The questionnaire was translated into Hebrew by Nadler et al. (1985) and the reliability of the indices was α = .78. The reliability of the questionnaire as tested on the current sample was α = .712.

*Locus of Control Questionnaire* (Levenson, 1981)*:* The questionnaire was checked and validated by a population of addicts in Israel (Amram, 1996). This questionnaire emphasizes three common indices for locus of control: internality – the degree to which a person believes he has control over his life; powerful others – the degree to which a person believes that others control events in his life; and chance – the degree to which a person believes that chance influences his experiences and their results. The questionnaire includes 24 items, and each of the three indices contains eight items. The locus of control score is calculated as the average of the answers to the questionnaire. The reliability of the questionnaire as checked on the current sample was α = .832.

*Questionnaire on Normative Perceptions and Positive Expectations of the Future:* The aim in this questionnaire was to examine to what degree prisoners adopt normative perceptions and how they view their chances of integrating into normal society following the period of supervision. The questionnaire was constructed based on a review of the literature and on input from supervisors in the Prisoner Rehabilitation Authority. Developed for the purpose of research by Shoham et al., (2014), it has a reliability of α = .71. It contains a total of 13 items, of which nine address normative perceptions, such as "I feel I belong in a normal society outside prison", and four that refer to expectations regarding integration into normal society, such as "I believe I will succeed in life". Item number 12 "I fear a return to prison" lowered the reliability of the questionnaire to 0.66 and it was therefore eliminated from the general analysis.

A socio-demographic questionnaire was also distributed to the prisoners, asking brief informative questions about personal, family and criminal background, as well as questions about the period of supervision, duration of supervision, and others. It should be noted that all the questionnaires were translated into Arabic using the double translation method in order to render them suitable for the Arab population as well.

The researchers coordinated their visit to the Prisoner Rehabilitation Authority with the group moderators. The research assistant approached the participants and requested their consent to take part in the research. They were told that they were not being forced to cooperate and that non-cooperation would not in any way jeopardize their chances of succeeding in the program. After they signed a form of conscious consent and were assured of complete anonymity, the research assistant distributed the questionnaires and sat with each participant for about half an hour until he completed his task.

**Results**

As stated, the present study seeks to ascertain whether participation in the support and employment supervision program contributes to improving self-esteem, internal locus of control, normative perceptions, and positive expectations regarding integration into society. It also examines whether participation in the program reveals differential results with respect to Jewish and Arab prisoners.

In order to examine the relationship between participation in the program and ethnic affiliation on the one hand, and self-esteem, locus of control, normative perceptions, and positive expectations regarding integration into society on the other, two-way analysis of variance were carried out for each dependent variable separately. The duration of imprisonment was introduced as a control variable in the first analysis. When this was not found to influence the dependent variables, it was eliminated from the analysis.

**Relationship Between Participation in the Program, Ethnic Affiliation and Locus of Control**

In order to examine the locus of control the research used a questionnaire composed of three sub-scales (with the scale of the first sub-scale inverted), in which a higher score was indicative of greater internal control. Since the initial analysis showed a similar influence by participation in the program and ethnic affiliation on each of the three sub-scales, the locus of control questionnaire was treated as a single unit.

Analysis showed a significant interaction effect between participation in the program and the released prisoner's ethnic affiliation  . A simple effects analysis showed that among the group comprising released Jewish prisoners who had participated in the support and employment supervision program for at least six months, the mean internal locus of control index was distinctly higher (M=3.95, SD=0.49) compared to the group of released prisoners who had just started the program (M=3.70, SD=0.38), p<.05. In contrast, no significant difference was found in locus of control between released Arab prisoners who had participated in the program and those who had just started the program.

In addition, among the group that had just started the program no significant difference was found in the mean internal locus of control between released Jewish prisoners (M=3.70, SD=0.38) and released Arab prisoners (M=3.59, SD=0.53). This is in contrast to the group of released prisoners who had participated in the program for at least six months: the mean internal locus of control among the released Jewish prisoners (M=3.95, SD=0.49) was significantly higher in comparison with that of the released Arab prisoners (M=3.39, SD=0.43), p<0.01.

**Participation in the Program, Ethnic Affiliation, Self-Esteem and Normative Perceptions**

In examining participation in the Prisoner Rehabilitation Authority program and self-esteem, no significant main effect of Prisoner Rehabilitation Authority program on self-esteem was found . In addition, no difference was found between released Jewish and Arab prisoners, nor interaction effect between the independent variables on self-esteem .

In examining the relationship between participation in the program and ethnic affiliation on normative perceptions, a near significant main effect of participation in the program was found : as regards the group that had participated in the program (M=30.09, SD=2.19) and the group that had just started the program (M=28.96, SD=3.83). No significant difference was found between Jews and Arabs in normative perceptions and no significant interaction effect between the independent variables .

However, on performing a comparison with respect to this index between prisoners (both Jewish and Arab) in the group that had participated in the program for more than seven months (n=39) and prisoners who had just started the program, a significant increase was seen in normative perceptions , the group that had participated in the program having a significantly higher mean value (M=30.44, SD=1.82) in comparison with the group that had just started the program (M=28.96, SD=3.83).

The research also sought an answer to a single question, namely, the apprehension felt by paroled prisoners over re-incarceration. The analysis showed that 27% of the Arab prisoners who were part of the group that had participated in the program for at least six months expressed concern about a return to prison, compared to 73% of the Arab prisoners who had just started the program . In contrast, no significant difference was found between the veteran and novice Jewish prisoners in the program with respect to the apprehension of returning to prison (54% vs. 56%, respectively) .

Table 3 presents the correlations between the three common indices for locus of control (internality, powerful others and belief in chance) on the one hand, and self-esteem and normative perceptions on the other.

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Table 3 shows that a significant positive correlation exists between internality and self-esteem (r=.528) and between internality and normative perceptions (r=.191). In other words, the more internality is felt, the higher are both self-esteem and normative perceptions. In addition, as expected, a significant positive correlation was found between the feeling of others being in charge of events (powerful others) and a belief in chance (r=.674). However, no significant correlation was found between internality and powerful others or belief in chance.

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A separate examination of Jews and Arabs also showed that in both the groups a significant positive correlation exists between internality and self-esteem (r=.572 and r=.449, respectively). A significant positive correlation was also found between the feeling of others being in charge (powerful others) and belief in chance (r=.593 in the case of the Jewish group and r=.726 in the case of the Arab group). In addition, a significant positive correlation was found between self-esteem and two scales of locus of control – powerful others (r=.306) and belief in chance (r=.280) –among the Jewish prisoners. It should be noted that in each locus of control sub-scale a higher number means greater internality and less belief in chance or powerful others. With the Arab group a significant positive correlation was found between self-esteem and normative perceptions (r=.314) and unexpectedly, a weak, but significant, negative correlation between internality and powerful others (r=-.308).

**Discussion**

The present research is aimed at examining whether participation in the support and employment supervision program brings about a change in personality indices such as locus of control and self-esteem, in addition to the stated aims of integration in employment and desistance from criminal activity. The study also seeks to examine whether the program encourages the development of normative perceptions and positive expectations regarding integration in normal society among released prisoners from different ethnic backgrounds, in the present case, Jewish and Arab.

The program appears to make a positive contribution to locus of control, in particular among the population of released Jewish prisoners, whereas among the Arab prisoners the program's contribution lies chiefly in tempering the apprehension they have of a return to prison (this could be viewed as a positive contribution that does not clash with the principle of deterrence).

It is also apparent that the program reinforces normative perceptions and positive expectations regarding the future in both the populations, while a significantly positive correlation was found between internality and self-esteem: the greater the feeling of internality, the higher the self-esteem, and vice versa. Among the Arab population a positive correlation was also found between self-esteem and normative perceptions. At the same time, no correlation was found between participation in the program and ethnic affiliation on the one hand, and self-esteem on the other.

The support and employment supervision program managed by the Prisoner Rehabilitation Authority is intended, among other things, to impart to the prisoners prosocial values, a locus of control and self-esteem (Chandler et al., 2009) based on the belief that these elements will contribute to their rehabilitation (Adroian & Chui, 2014; Davis et al., 2013; Hasisi, 2015; Van Tongeren & Anson, 2007). The impression gained from the findings of this preliminary research is that the program does indeed achieve its aims, even if only partially.

The finding that stands out most is the positive result achieved in locus of control with the veteran group in the program. This finding is in line with those of Tønseth et al. (2019), who reported a correlation between an educational program in prison, employment by prisoners and preparation for release on the one hand, and improvement in the sense of control on the other. Similarly, Stander (2014), who conducted his research in South Africa, found a positive correlation between improved levels of education and locus of control in individuals, as also a correspondence between this index and race and social status.

The present research too found interrelationships between internality and ethnic affiliation, with a significantly positive correlation between internality and Jewish prisoners participating in the program, but not Arab prisoners. Apparently, the difference found between the populations cannot be attributed only to differences in culture and status (Alkrinawi, 2002; Stander, 2014) but also, and more so, to the different contribution made by the program to the different populations. This explanation is in keeping with the assumption that different ethnic groups react differently to caregiving services and methods (Alkrinawi, 2002; Al-Issa, 1995) and that different cultural needs are not always met in the framework of care (Ben David & Rabin, 1999; Gueta et al., 2019; Jamal-Aboud & Balit-Cohen, 2019; Mirsky, 2012).

As regards the findings relating to the three sub-scales comprising the internality questionnaire, as expected, a significant positive correlation is found between locus of control, a sense of powerful others and belief in chance. Contrary to expectations, however, among the Arab population a negative correlation is found between internality and powerful others (Mancinelli et al., 2020). This can possibly be explained by the fact that the prisoners are in a state of crisis, typical of the period of release from imprisonment. It is common knowledge that the return to society is accompanied by a host of difficulties and challenges, especially when the population involved belongs to a disadvantaged minority group (Hartney & Vuong, 2009; Listwan et al., 2003) and experiences apprehensions with respect to the law enforcement system and its representatives, at a time when trust in the system is in any event at a low ebb (Ronen, 2010). Thus, despite the sense of internality, a higher weight is assigned to powerful others controlling events in their lives. It appears that during times of crisis even people with self-confidence and a perception of internality seek an outlet in the form of powerful figures who can give them a feeling of strength.

It was also found that with both the Jewish and Arab prisoners, participation in the support and employment supervision program contributed to augmenting their normative perceptions and positive expectations for the future. This finding is in keeping with research studies that show the correlation between participation in rehabilitation programs and both normative perceptions and positive expectations regarding the future (e.g. Visher & O'Connell, 2012). The finding is of importance with respect to the issue of desistance from criminal activity (Bersani & Doherty, 2018; Broidy & Cauffman, 2017; Farral & Calverley, 2006; Farrall et al., 2014; LeBel et al., 2008; Maruna, 2001; Segev, 2018) since the literature shows that optimistic expectations regarding the future help in predicting success in the social integration of released prisoner (Adorjan & Chui, 2014).

Nevertheless, it must be borne in mind that characteristic of the initial stages in desistance from crime is hope (Farrall et al., 2014), this being a time when the aims of the individual undergoing rehabilitation are still unclear and unconsolidated and he is preoccupied principally by what he does not want to do (return to prison, disappoint those around him). Later, as the rehabilitation process advances, and with the help of support agents, the expectations and goals regarding the future begin to take shape (Farrall & Calverley, 2006), and the more these are fulfilled, the more hope soars and begins to be part and parcel of the rehabilitation process (Galander, 2020). In contrast, a failure to achieve the aims (pains of desistence) can drive the individual in rehabilitation to despair (Nugent & Schinkel, 2016).

As regards the concerns over a return to prison, the program is specifically adapted to the Arab population by reassuring them in the face of these concerns, which are already uppermost in mind (Wietzer, 2017). The fears in this connection are perhaps based on the existing gap between Arab and Jewish prisoners/detainees, with the Arabs having a greater likelihood of returning to prison than the Jews (Hartney & Vuong, 2009) and having a representation in prison that is disproportional vis-à-vis their population as a whole (Toys, 2019).

Apart from the possible contribution of the program to boosting normative perceptions and strengthening internality, the occupational component of the program could also constitute a contribution to moulding and bolstering positive feelings. The literature shows that employment of prisoners plays an important role in enhancing self-esteem, normative perspectives, and outlook regarding the future (e.g. Davis et al., 2013).

A less positive result was found in connection with self-esteem, with no significant correlation between participation in the program, ethnic affiliation and self-esteem. It was not possible to determine whether the research design, which was based on short-term rather than long-term indices, did not allow an improvement in self-esteem to be examined or whether the makeup of the program itself, which focuses to a large extent on issues of employment (Shoham & Peled-Laskov, in print), is not geared to effecting fundamental changes in self-esteem. At the same time, the literature shows that intervention programs can spearhead changes in self-esteem; accordingly, great importance is attached to this index as part of the support and rehabilitation process (Evans et al., 2018; Timor & Oppenheimer, 2007) since low self-esteem could amplify the risk of non-adaptation and criminal activity (Shoham, 1995). The fact should not be ignored that a change in this element can take time, and even with optimal care, results may not necessarily be seen in the short term.

Although the present research did not find a significant difference in self-esteem between participants who had just joined the program and the veteran participants, the findings do point to a correlation between self-esteem and locus of control. In other words, prisoners with high self-esteem also believe in their ability to determine their destiny, for better or for worse. Thus the significant difference found in internal locus of control between the newcomers to the program and the veterans could suggest that a positive process is taking place as a consequence of the care being administered. The process could be of future assistance in advanced stages of desistance from criminality.

**Limitations of the Research and Future Research**

The present research examines the possible contribution of the support and employment supervision of the program run by the Prisoner Rehabilitation Authority to self-esteem, internal locus of control, and normative perceptions among released prisoners from diverse cultural and social backgrounds.

A reservation regarding the findings of the research may be expressed to the effect that any research design of an essentially descriptive nature limits the internal validity of its findings. This being the case, an attempt was made to address the problem by the use of statistical tests to compare the groups. An additional limitation with respect to the research method, which could to a certain extent undermine the internal validity of the findings, is the fact that it is based on measurement at a single point in time (see Mary Scale of Scientific Method – MSSM, in Seiter & Kadela, 2003).

Nevertheless, despite the limitations of the research, also associated to a considerable extent with the fact that data on the various processes taking place in the Prisoner Rehabilitation Authority have not been computerized, it is felt that the study findings could make a significant contribution to culture-sensitive care. An issue that has not received extensive academic documentation, alongside normative employment as an important component in desistance from crime, a subject that has been addressed widely.

In light of the present research findings, there is room for additional research studies based on quasi-experimental design. It is also proposed to incorporate in a future study additional personality elements (such as a willingness to ask for help), something that is viewed as relevant in the eyes of the caregivers in the Prisoner Rehabilitation Authority.

**Conclusions**

In summation, despite the limitations of the research, due principally to the relatively small number of released prisoners and the focus on short-term indices, it appears that the care and rehabilitation program of the Prisoner Rehabilitation Authority, which has been found in previous quantitative research studies to contribute to integration in employment and lessen the likelihood of a return to prison, has the potential to effect a change in personality and perceptional characteristics, which are necessary factors for integrating in society. In addition, the study findings suggest that thought should be given to culture-sensitive care and to focus on elements that were not found to change in the present research.

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**Tables**

**Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of Participants – Mean and Standard Deviation**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **The veteran group (n=59)** | | **Group starting the program (n=54)** | |  |
|  | **M** | **SD** | **M** | **SD** | **t(111)** |
| **Age** | 37.81 | 11.46 | 37.02 | 9.81 | .34 |
| **No. of children** | 2.24 | 2.58 | 2.57 | 2.45 | .71 |
| **No. of years of education** | 11.39 | 2.83 | 11.58 | 1.79 | .44 |
| **No. of incarcerations** | 1.49 | .9 | 1.62 | 1.16 | .64 |
| **No. of months in prison** | 51.14  (median=33) | 52.03 | 30.96  (median=20) | 35.13 | Mann-Whitney  U=690.5\*\* |

\*\* p<.01

**Table 2: Distribution of Socio-demographic Variables (in Percentages) (Categorical Variables)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | **Group that had participated in the program (n=59)** | **Group starting the program (n=54)** | ***df*** |  |
| **Religion** | Jewish | 61% | 48% | 1 | 1.89 |
|  | Moslem | 39% | 52% |  |
| **Marital status** | Single | 33% | 23% | 2 | 1.28 |
|  | Married | 47% | 54% |  |
|  | Divorced | 21% | 23% |  |
| **Military service** | None | 59% | 69% |  | 1.15 |
|  | Partial or full service | 41% | 31% | 1 |

**Table 3: Correlations between Locus of Control Indices (Internality, Powerful Others and Belief in Chance), Self-Esteem and Normative Perceptions among paroled Arab and Jewish from both groups (n=113)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1.Self-esteem | - |  |  |  |  |
| 2. Internality | .528\*\* | - |  |  |  |
| 3. Powerful others | .151 | .052 | - |  |  |
| 4. Belief in chance | .168 | .048 | .674\*\* | - |  |
| 5. Normative perceptions | .147 | .191\* | -.204 | .007 | - |

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01

**Table 4: Correlations between the three Locus of Control Scales (Internality, Powerful Others and Belief in Chance), Self-Esteem and Normative Perceptions among paroled Jews (n=62) and Arabs (n=51)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Arabs | 1.Self-esteem | - |  |  |  |  |
|  | 2. Internality | .449\*\* | - |  |  |  |
|  | 3. Powerful others | -.091 | -.308\* | - |  |  |
|  | 4. Belief in chance | -.025 | -.195 | .727\* | - |  |
|  | 5. Normative perceptions | .221 | .314\* | .066 | -.087 | - |
| Jews | 1. Self-esteem | - |  |  |  |  |
|  | 2. Internality | .572\*\* | - |  |  |  |
|  | 3. Powerful others | .306\* | .196 | - |  |  |
|  | 4. Belief in chance | .280\* | .140 | .593\* | - |  |
|  | 5. Normative perceptions | .090 | .103 | -.169 | .013 | - |

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01