Understanding the barriers to prisoners’ participation in sport activities

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Overview

• Introduction
• Methodology
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• Conclusion
Introduction
Introduction

• Prisoners may not be excluded from normal services provided to society
  – Prisoners have to right to have access to sport activities (Standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners, European prison rules)

• International literature concerning sport in correctional institutions is scarce
  – Predominantly focus on benefits (Meek, 2014)
    • Improvement of physical health (Gallant et al., in press; Vaiciulis et al., 2011)
    • Improvement of psychological functioning (Martos-Garcia et al., 2009)
    • Fewer complaints about insomnia (Elger, 2009)
    • ...
Introduction

• Given the multiple benefits, it is crucial to identify the factors that might lead to greater participation:
  
  – Take mind of their situation, relax, fight against boredom, release energy (Condon et al., 2008; Martos-Garcia et al., 2009)
  
  – Passing time, a mean of getting through the day (Martos-Garcia et al., 2009; Sabo, 2001)
  
  – Alternative to drugs use (Martos-Garcia et al., 2009)
  
  – Opportunity to form social bonds with other prisoners (Condon et al., 2008)
Introduction

• Studying the motivating factors, also involves studying the opposite phenomenon: barriers that impede participation

  – Literature is fragmented and almost non-existent (Brosens, 2013)

→ Aim of the present study: get insight into the barriers that impede prisoners’ participation and into the predictors of the experience of these barriers
Introduction

• A manner to classify the barriers to participation in sport activities outside correctional institutions: ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

  – Someone’s behaviour is affected by the environment in which a person lives

    • Micro
    • Meso
    • Exo
    • Macro
Introduction

- Adoption of the ecological model to explain participation in sport (Gyurscik et al., 2006; McLeroy, et al., 1988; Sallis et al., 1998)
  - Micro
    - Intrapersonal factors
  - Meso
    - Interpersonal factors
  - Exo
    - Institutional factors
  - Macro
    - Community factors
    - Public policy
Introduction

• Barriers to participation in sport programs in prison
  – Limited number of scholars who focus explicitly on barriers
    (Meek; Meek & Lewis, 2014a) and some implicitly
    (Leigey, 2007; Condon et al. 2008)
  – The barriers in a broader ecological model:
    • Micro – intrapersonal:
    – Lack of interest
    – Negative attitudes towards sports
    – Physical health reasons
    – Considering these activities as a form of punishment
    • Meso – interpersonal:
    – Not want to compete with other prisoners
    • Exo – institutional:
    – No activities available in which they want to take part
    – Not having sufficient time
    – Not being unlocked from their cells in time
    – Not being allowed to participate
    – Having different activities on the same time
Introduction

- Research has shown that sport participation of prisoners
  - Differ according to age and gender (Lewis & Meek, 2012; Meek, 2014)
  - Is not related with ethnicity and time served (Meek, 2014)

- Having insight into the profile is one aspect
- Research on the factors that influence the experience of barriers that hinder prisoners’ participation is scarce
Methodology
Research questions

• What barriers to participation in sport activities do prisoners experience?
• What are the individual and prison-related predictors connected to the different types of barriers?
Participatory research

• Recently, the added value of participatory research in prison is acknowledged (Burdon et al., 2011; Walsh et al., 2014)

• Co-construction of research through the formation of a steering committee (Jagosh et al., 2012)

• Development of aim and research questions out of the convergence of perspectives of academics and practitioners (Bergold & Thomas, 2012)

• Input of institutional stakeholders in all aspects of the research
Participatory research

• Different steps
  – Forming a partnership
  – Getting insight into the various expectations and needs
  – Quantitative research
    • Development of questionnaire
    • Survey phase (October 2012)
      – Available in 13 languages
      – Self-administering in classrooms in presence of a researcher or volunteer (in total: 20 volunteers and 6 researchers)
Respondents

- Prisoners from the prison of Antwerp (N=486, response rate = 73.97%)
  - 432 male prisoners, 54 females
  - Aged between 17 and 67 years old (M=32.99, SD=10.48)
  - Ethnically diversity: 39.4% Belgian nationality, 60.6% foreign nationals
  - Low educated people were overrepresented
Data analysis

- Bivariate analyses (to make comparisons between participants and non-participants)
- Binary logistic regression analysis (only non-participants)
  - Dependent variables: 5 different categories of barriers
    - Intrapersonal barriers (micro) (0=no; 1=yes)
    - Having other preferences (micro) (0=no; 1=yes)
    - Interpersonal barriers (meso) (0=no; 1=yes)
    - Institutional barriers (exo) (0=no; 1=yes)
    - Informational barriers (exo) (0=no; 1=yes)
  - Independent variables:
    - Individual characteristics
    - Prison-related characteristics
Results
Comparison participants and non-participants

• 40.5% of the prisoners had done sport outside their cell in the past month, while 59.5% did not take part.

• Participants of sport activities
  – Are younger
  – Have a better social functioning inside prison
  – Do more frequently prison work
  – Are in prison for a longer time compared to non-participants

• Participants and non-participants do not differ in terms of gender, nationality, numbers of school years, understanding of the Dutch language, feelings of anxiety and depression, expected time of release and whether or not someone is a first-time inmate.
## Overview of barriers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preferences (micro)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I prefer to work</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I prefer to see visitors</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I prefer to go outside for fresh air</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I prefer to do something else</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I prefer to attend my religious service</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutional (exo)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wrote a report note but I never received an answer</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to, but the sport activities were full</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m not allowed to take a shower after playing sports</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sport activities are not interesting</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There were no sport activities outside my cell</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can’t play sports at the moment because I’ve been suspended</td>
<td>.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Overview of barriers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intrapersonal (micro)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t feel like it</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t like sports</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m too tired to play sports</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m not fit enough because I’m overweight</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpersonal (meso)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t want to get into a fight</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t want to be a burden for the supervisors</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t like the atmosphere</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t like to play sports in a group</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other inmates bully or threaten me</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve heard some bad things about the sport coaches</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informational (exo)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know how to sign up</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wasn’t aware of the possibility to take part in sports</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Predictors of experiencing barriers on micro-level (N=124)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Micro</th>
<th>Meso</th>
<th>Exo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intrapersonal</td>
<td>Preferences</td>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exp(B)</td>
<td>Exp(B)</td>
<td>Exp(B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.985</td>
<td>1.031</td>
<td>1.071**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (Ref=men)</td>
<td>1.790</td>
<td>2.879</td>
<td>.491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>.535</td>
<td>1.218</td>
<td>.849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-European</td>
<td>.468</td>
<td>.324</td>
<td>.725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of Dutch</td>
<td>.772</td>
<td>.932</td>
<td>2.776*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current mental health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety &amp; depression</td>
<td>1.002</td>
<td>1.004</td>
<td>1.024**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social dysfunctioning</td>
<td>1.002</td>
<td>.993</td>
<td>.1016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of confinement</td>
<td>1.435**</td>
<td>1.411**</td>
<td>.801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working inside</td>
<td>.405</td>
<td>3.137**</td>
<td>2.508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-time inmate</td>
<td>.815</td>
<td>.974</td>
<td>4.420**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>.168</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>.001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cox &amp; Snell $R^2$</td>
<td>.077</td>
<td>.228</td>
<td>.168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagelkerke $R^2$</td>
<td>.119</td>
<td>.308</td>
<td>.281</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion
Ecological model

• Not participating in sport activities is especially determined by
  – Having preferences for other activities
  – Institutional barriers
• First study to link certain characteristics with experiencing the different kinds of barriers
• Further research
  – Integration of our categories of barriers and those of Meek (2014) and Meek & Lewis (2014)
  – Include diverse prison populations
Recommendations for policy makers and activity organisers

- Exo-level: role of organisations
  - Informational barriers
    - Language skills
      - Dutch language can be developed by taking part in sports (Doherty & Taylor, 2007)
      - Make use of multi-channel communication
    - Special attention for older prisoners and those who recently arrived in prison
  - Institutional barriers
    - Further research into the reasons why activity providers not always respond to report notes
    - Eliminating the waiting lists is difficult
Recommendations for policy makers and activity organisers

- Micro-level
  - Intrapersonal barriers
    - Separate sport moments for older prisoners
    - Having preferences for other activities
      - Different activities take place at different times
  - Meso-level
    - Difficult
    - Sensitization of prison guards
Thank you for your attention!

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