

Research Brief

Dynamics of wellbeing and needs satisfaction among people in prison

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AIM To explore experiences of wellbeing and needs satisfaction among people in prison, and how these are associated with their perceptions of correctional centre climate in addition to measurable rehabilitation outcomes.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Surveys were administered via in-cell digital tablets to n = 208 men and women housed at two correctional centres in NSW. Measures of wellbeing and needs satisfaction had strong positive correlations, and satisfaction of specific needs relating to autonomy, competence, and relatedness were also highly correlated. Ratings on these measures did not vary significantly as a function of Aboriginal cultural background, gender, or age.

Ratings of wellbeing and needs satisfaction in prison showed correspondence with perceptions of correctional climates, and were positively correlated with factors of the Essen Climate Evaluation Schema (EssenCES). Scores were most strongly correlated with inmate cohesion and progressively weaker for safety and staff support. Conversely, ratings on the measures were not significantly associated with time spent in prison. Wellbeing and needs satisfaction were also not significantly predictive of program completion in prison, post-release recidivism outcomes, or actuarial indicators of recidivism risk.

We concluded that people's experiences of wellbeing and needs satisfaction in prison are closely related, and appear to be responsive to features of the correctional climate. However, there was little evidence that such factors were related to rehabilitative outcomes. This does not preclude the importance of these factors in behaviour change processes, although raises implications for the utility of assessing relevant constructs in understanding an individual's rehabilitation pathway. Regardless, wellbeing and needs satisfaction are fundamental human goods that warrant advancement in correctional climates, in concert with further research to explore how they contribute to outcomes for people in prison.

INTRODUCTION

Maintaining or improving the subjective wellbeing of people in prison has been increasingly recognised as an important objective of correctional agencies. People in prison comprise a psychologically vulnerable population, with high rates of mental illness and other psychosocial disadvantage (e.g., Fazel & Seewald, 2012; Lobo & Howard, 2021). This can translate into both personal and organisational challenges in the prison environment, such as risk of self-harm or other maladaptive expressive behaviours; indeed, seminal research on prison social climate has been oriented towards understanding contextual influences on wellbeing and how this corresponds to likelihood of suicide (e.g., Liebling & Ludlow, 2016). While poor psychological health often precedes imprisonment, these issues are often aggravated by prison environments (Dye, 2010; Gullone et al., 2000; Liebling, 2011; Slotboom et al., 2011).

A relevant consideration is the extent to which prisons permit people to satisfy basic psychological needs such as autonomy, relatedness and competence (Bunce, 2019; Galouzis et al., 2023; van der Kaap-Deeder et al., 2017). Due to their necessarily restrictive and regimented environments, people in prison often have limited opportunities to exercise control over their decisions and actions, maintain relationships or connect with loved ones, and develop or demonstrate mastery in their interests. Satisfaction of these needs has been described as a fundamental and universal human good that is central to subjective experience of wellbeing (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

There is also a growing interest in how wellbeing and associated positive psychological constructs may be related to rehabilitation and reoffending outcomes. The literature identifies a number of potential causal mechanisms for this relationship, largely focused on the individual's motivation and capacity to engage in processes of prosocial change. For example, Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000) asserts that needs satisfaction is a critical precondition for intrinsic motivation towards goal-oriented behaviours. Similarly, the Risk Need Responsivity (RNR; Bonta & Andrews, 2017) model identifies psychological states underlying motivation as a key responsivity factor for engagement in behaviour change interventions. It is well established that rapport between agents of change and participants of programs and services to address criminogenic needs is an important driver of outcomes, which has been partly associated with promotion of the participant's wellbeing and agency (Dowden & Andrews, 2004; Horvath & Symonds, 1991; King, 2013). The psychology literature also relates positive states such as wellbeing, hope, self-confidence and agency to cognitive conditions for change, including improved flexibility of thinking and capacities for decision-making (Gergen & Gergen, 2005; see also Day et al., 2022; Driessen et al., 2023; King, 2013; Woldgabreal et al., 2014). Consistent with this, a study by Woldgabreal and colleagues (2016) found that people on community supervision orders who experienced more positive psychological states were less likely to be breached, reconvicted or imprisoned over a 12-month follow up period.

In turn, recent studies have sought to examine how the psychological conditions of prisons, and of people in prison, could contribute to development of correctional climates that foster rehabilitation. In their causal model of rehabilitative prison environments, Galouzis and colleagues (2023) identified individual perceptions and experiences of needs satisfaction while imprisoned as a critical psychological driver of change. They argued that the rehabilitative potential of prisons is optimised when the process of change is self-determined, or the result of individual motivation and choice afforded by higher levels of autonomy, relatedness and competence. This psychological precondition then interacts with opportunities for skills and knowledge to be developed, and staff and culture level support for prosocial identity and change, within the prison environment to influence rehabilitation outcomes.

While there has been minimal research into how people’s experience of wellbeing and other psychological states within prisons affects their rehabilitation, there are indications that these factors are both relevant and amenable to organisational change. For example, a study by van der Kaap–Deeder and colleagues (2017) found that inmates’ perceptions of autonomy were significantly associated with their subjective wellbeing and quality of life in prison, and this was mediated by perceived choice in their routine activities. The literature on prison social climate also highlights the influence of factors related to inmates’ wellbeing, such as safety from victimisation as well as relationships with staff, including those that inspire hope and motivation for change (e.g., Bennett & Shuker, 2018; Day & Vess, 2017; Liebling & Kant, 2018; Schalast et al., 2008). In turn, studies have found associations between the quality of prison social climates and individual outcomes such as therapeutic gains achieved from behaviour change programs (e.g., Day et al., 2011; Woessner & Schwedler, 2014) and reoffending (Auty & Liebling, 2020).

AIMS

This study aimed to explore inmates’ experiences of wellbeing and related psychological constructs, and how these are associated with their perceptions of correctional centre climate in addition to measurable rehabilitation outcomes. To achieve this, we conducted surveys with inmates housed at two correctional centres in NSW, which included established psychometric measures of subjective wellbeing and needs satisfaction. Analyses focused on how wellbeing and needs satisfaction correspond with local environmental factors in addition to more stable socio–demographic factors, and their association with indicators of rehabilitation from both risk–relevance and responsivity perspectives, as well as the psychometric characteristics of underlying measures. In doing so, this study aims to contribute to the developing theoretical literature on rehabilitative correctional climates and related organisational objectives such as assessment and management of associated constructs.

METHODS

The sample for this study included people in prison who completed a survey on in–cell digital tablets in August 2021 as part of the pilot implementation of the tablet technology at two correctional centres in NSW, being John Morony Correctional Centre and Dillwynia Correctional Centre. A total of 208 people completed the survey out of an aggregate centre population of 632 people who were invited to participate (response rate = 32.9%). An overview of demographic characteristics of the sample is given in Table 1.

A detailed overview of the survey methodology can be found in Barkworth et al. (2022). In brief, links to online surveys were distributed to all people in custody at the pilot correctional centres. Respondents were first asked a series of questions relating to their experience of using the new digital tablets and how access to the tablets impacted upon their experience of life in prison. They then completed a number of psychometric measures which assessed their experiences of the social climate of prison in addition to their current wellbeing and needs satisfaction. Self–report measures administered in the survey included:

- Wellbeing
The Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) is an instrument for assessing the mental wellbeing of a population (Taggart et al., 2015). It was developed to have a single underlying structure, encompassing a broad range of attributes associated with mental health and wellbeing (e.g., “I’ve been feeling optimistic about the future”). It comprises 14 items asking how often the respondent experiences each state, measured on a 5–point Likert scale. Higher

scores represent more positive wellbeing. This study found good internal consistency for this measure with a Cronbach's alpha of .93.

- Needs satisfaction

The Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale (BPNSFS) was developed by Chen et al. (2015) based on Basic Psychological Needs Theory, and aims to assess dimensions of both frustration of basic needs as well as satisfaction of needs. The scale comprises 24 items assessing need domains of autonomy, relatedness and competence, with each domain including four items about needs satisfaction (forward-scored), and four about needs frustration (reverse-scored). Internal reliability alpha statistics were .76 for autonomy, .84 for relatedness, and .86 for competence factors, and .91 for the 24-item total needs satisfaction composite score.

- Social climate

The Essen Climate Evaluation Schema (EssenCES; Schalast et al., 2008) assesses essential characteristics of the social atmosphere of prisons and other forensic settings. It includes 15 items, as well as unscored opening and closing items, covering three identified dimensions of social climate: support from staff (5 items; e.g., "Staff members take a lot of time to deal with inmates"), inmates' social cohesion and mutual support (5 items; e.g., "There is good peer support among inmates"), and experienced safety (5 items; e.g., "There are some really aggressive inmates in this unit"). Cronbach's alpha statistics were .90 for cohesion, .77 for safety, and .71 for support.

Table 1. Selected characteristics for all survey respondents

Characteristic	M (SD)	%
Age at survey completion	35.27 (10.32)	-
Gender		
Male	-	50.5
Female	-	49.5
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander		
Yes	-	26.4
No	-	73.1
Unknown	-	0.5
Relationship status (at reception)		
Not in a relationship	-	64.9
In a relationship	-	33.2
Unknown	-	1.9
Dependent children (at reception)		
Yes	-	63.5
No	-	35.6
Unknown	-	1.0
Time in custody for index episode (years)	1.27 (2.16)	-
Total time in custody (years)	2.71 (3.66)	-

Respondents who completed the survey were asked to give identifying information, which allowed for extraction of additional variables from the Corrective Services NSW Offender Integrated Management System (OIMS), including demographic and custodial episode characteristics, actuarial assessments of recidivism risk, and program completion outcomes. Data on reoffending were derived from the NSW

Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) Reoffending Database (ROD) and calculated for all eligible respondents (n = 115) who had been released between the survey administration date and the data censoring period for the current study. Reoffending was defined as any finalised reconviction following release from the index custodial episode.

Analyses of the relationships between the wellbeing and needs satisfaction measures and other variables of interest were largely conducted using a series of bivariate correlations and univariate means comparisons. Analyses of relationships between measures and outcomes of program completion and reoffending involved a series of binary logistic regression and Cox proportional hazard regression models, respectively. It is noted that sample sizes varied across many analyses due to factors such as rates of valid measure completion, allocation to programs, and eligibility for reoffending analyses, and will be reported accordingly.

FINDINGS

How are measures of wellbeing and needs satisfaction associated with each other?

Table 2 shows a series of bivariate correlations between wellbeing and each of the needs domains, in addition to the composite BPNSFS total index of needs satisfaction. For measures of association, a recommended convention for interpreting effect size r is $0-.29 =$ weak or small correlation; $.30-.49 =$ moderate correlation; $.50+ =$ strong or large correlation (Cohen, 1988). It can be seen that the wellbeing measure has strong and statistically significant positive correlations with satisfaction across each of the needs, in addition to the composite BPNSFS total score.

In turn, each of the domains of need on the BPNSFS were highly positively correlated with each other, and also with the BPNSFS total score. Each individual domain had a correlation with the BPNSFS composite score of higher than $r = .8$, indicating that the large majority of variance in any given need was shared with or accounted for by global ratings of needs satisfaction. Given this high degree of collinearity we opted to use only the BPNSFS total score as a global index of needs satisfaction in subsequent analyses.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations between wellbeing and needs satisfaction measures

Measure	M (SD)	1	2	3	4
1. Wellbeing	3.15 (.96)				
2. Autonomy	3.31 (.66)	.614**			
3. Relatedness	3.75 (.72)	.583**	.598**		
4. Competence	3.72 (.75)	.594**	.528**	.680**	
5. BPNSFS total	3.59 (.61)	.698**	.815**	.890**	.869**

Note. ** $p < .01$

Are wellbeing and needs satisfaction associated with individual characteristics?

Table 3 shows average (mean) scores on the wellbeing and needs satisfaction measures as a function of gender and Aboriginal cultural background. For Aboriginal respondents, women tended to give slightly higher scores on both wellbeing and needs satisfaction compared to men. For non-Aboriginal respondents, however, women tended to give lower scores on both measures than men. There was minimal variation in average scores as a function of Aboriginal status.

A series of 2x2 ANOVAs were used to assess the significance of differences in responses as a function of gender and Aboriginal status. For wellbeing, there were no significant differences in scores between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people ($F = .011$; $p = .92$), between men and women ($F = .007$; $p = .93$), or as an interaction of both Aboriginal status and gender ($F = 1.89$; $p = .17$). Similarly, analyses of the BPNSFS total score indicated no significant main effects of Aboriginal status ($F = .10$; $p = .75$) or gender ($F = .005$; $p = .95$), or the interaction of these two factors ($F = 2.09$; $p = .15$).

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for wellbeing and needs satisfaction measures as a function of Aboriginal background and gender

Measure	Aboriginal				Non-Aboriginal			
	Men		Women		Men		Women	
	n	M (SD)	n	M (SD)	n	M (SD)	n	M (SD)
Wellbeing	24	3.02 (1.18)	21	3.26 (.97)	65	3.27 (.86)	69	3.05 (.98)
Needs satisfaction	21	3.48 (.64)	17	3.65 (.58)	58	3.68 (.60)	66	3.53 (.61)

Additional analyses were carried out to assess the associations between identified psychosocial variables and ratings of wellbeing and needs satisfaction¹ while in prison. Respondents who did not have children tended to give marginally higher ratings of wellbeing compared to those who did have children ($M = 3.32$; $SD = .84$ vs $M = 3.07$; $SD = 1.02$; $F = 2.76$; $p = .09$). There was no association between having children and ratings of needs satisfaction ($M = 3.69$; $SD = .60$ vs $M = 3.54$; $SD = .61$; $F = 2.11$; $p = .15$).

Similarly, respondents who were not in a relationship at the time of their reception into custody did not give significantly different ratings compared to those who were in a relationship, on measures of both wellbeing ($M = 3.11$; $SD = .98$ vs $M = 3.21$; $SD = .95$; $F = .44$; $p = .51$) or needs satisfaction ($M = 3.54$; $SD = .63$ vs $M = 3.69$; $SD = .56$; $F = 2.29$; $p = .13$).

A series of bivariate correlations indicated that the respondent's age at the time of completing the survey had weak and statistically non-significant associations with ratings of wellbeing ($r = .03$; $p = .69$) and ratings of global needs satisfaction ($r = .06$; $p = .44$).

How are wellbeing and needs satisfaction related to experiences of custody?

To assess the extent to which wellbeing and needs satisfaction may be influenced by people's experience of the custodial environment, we first examined associations with their ratings of prison climate on the EssenCES scale. As can be seen in Table 4, both wellbeing and the BPNSFS total score were positively and significantly correlated with ratings of inmate cohesion, safety, and support on the EssenCES. That is, respondents who indicated higher wellbeing and needs satisfaction also tended to have better perceptions of support from custodial staff, cohesion and support among other inmates, and safety in the prison environment. Interestingly, the magnitude of these associations varied, so that ratings of wellbeing and needs satisfaction were most strongly correlated with inmate cohesion, although had moderate-to-weak correlations with safety and weak correlations with staff support.

¹ We acknowledge that these associations may be sensitive to the specific need being assessed, with particular emphasis on effects on relatedness. All analyses were replicated with individual needs as well as the global needs satisfaction score, and were found to have similar patterns of results.

Table 4. Bivariate correlations between wellbeing and needs satisfaction measures, and prison social climate factors as measured by the EssenCES

Measure	EssenCES factor		
	Cohesion	Safety	Support
Wellbeing	.443**	.279**	.203**
Needs satisfaction	.406**	.311**	.225**

Note. ** $p < .01$

As an alternative measure of people’s experiences of custody, we also examined associations between time spent in prison for the index custodial episode and ratings of wellbeing and needs satisfaction. The relationships between these variables are illustrated graphically in Figure 1². It can be seen that ratings of wellbeing and needs satisfaction tended to show minimal variation as a function of time since reception into custody; in particular, there did not appear to be marked changes in these factors over the initial months as people acclimatised to the prison environment. Consistent with this, bivariate correlations showed weak and non-significant associations between time spent in custody and wellbeing ($r = .09$; $p = .21$) or needs satisfaction ($r = .02$; $p = .81$).

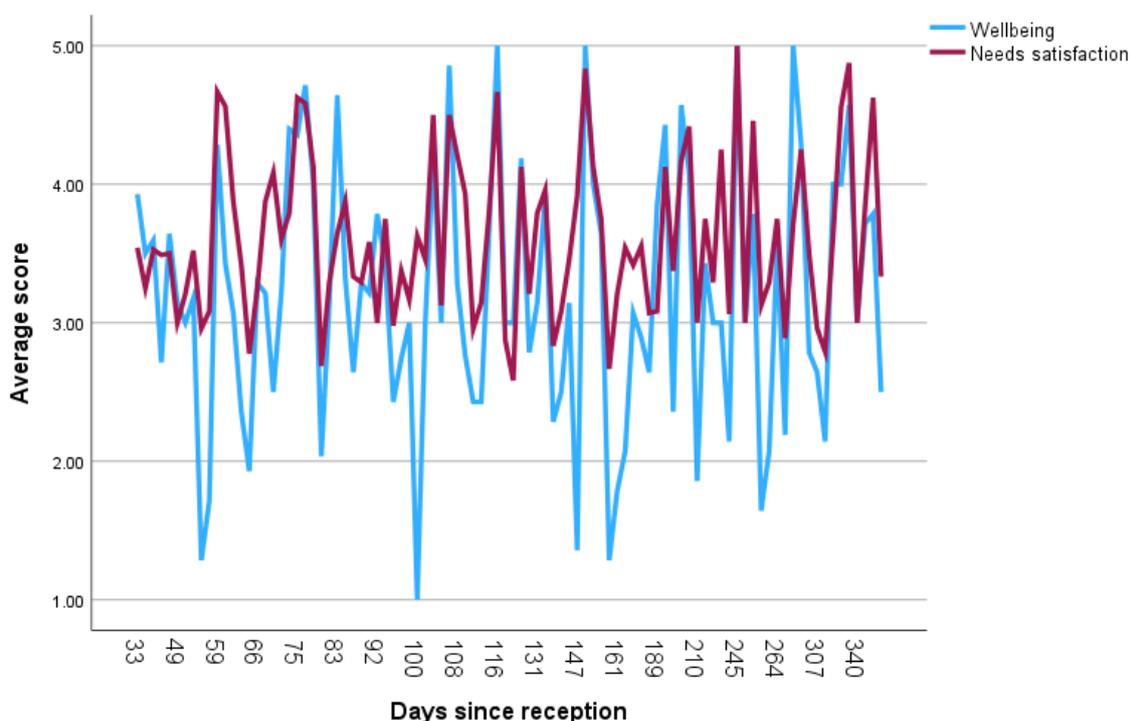


Figure 1. Associations between mean wellbeing and needs satisfaction scores and days since reception into custody

² To assist interpretation, Figure 1 shows data for respondents who had up to one year since reception into custody. This comprised 77.8% of the sample; the remainder had been in custody for 370-4992 days at the time of the survey.

Are wellbeing and needs satisfaction responsivity factors for program engagement?

The following analyses were designed to explore whether respondents' perceptions of wellbeing and needs satisfaction had a relationship with their completion of behaviour change programs. To achieve this, we identified the program most recently entered relative to completion of the study survey, among those who had attended programs during their index custodial episode. To account for the dynamic nature of respondents' experiences of wellbeing and needs satisfaction, only program activities that occurred within 6 months of the survey were included in the analysis. A total of 83 respondents met these criteria, with 12 being recorded as completing their program and 71 failing to complete.

A series of binary logistic regression models indicated that wellbeing was a non-significant predictor of program completion outcomes among this sample (odds ratio³ = .655; 95% CI = .359 - 1.195; $p = .17$). Global rating of needs satisfaction was also not significantly associated with program completion (odds ratio = 1.048; 95% CI = .342 - 3.207; $p = .94$). These results indicate that respondents' experiences of wellbeing and needs satisfaction were not significantly related to their likelihood of completing behaviour change programs.

Are wellbeing and needs satisfaction risk-relevant?

As an initial test of the risk-relevance of wellbeing and needs satisfaction, we examined associations between these measures and actuarial estimates of recidivism risk. To do this we applied risk scores derived for the index custodial episode of all respondents on the Custody Triage Risk Assessment Scale (Custody TRAS), which is an automated tool developed by Corrections Research Evaluation and Statistics to assess an individual's probability of any return to custody with a new conviction within two years among people who have received custodial orders in NSW (Raudino et al., 2019).

Figure 2 shows relationships between respondents' ratings of wellbeing and needs satisfaction as a function of their probability of recidivism, as estimated by the Custody TRAS. It can be seen that ratings on these measures tend to be largely stable across estimated recidivism risk, or with a slight tendency towards increasing ratings of wellbeing and needs satisfaction as estimated risk increases. Measures of association indicated that associations between Custody TRAS scores and ratings of both wellbeing ($r = .08$; $p = .29$) and needs satisfaction ($r = .03$; $p = .74$) were weak and statistically non-significant.

We also examined whether ratings of wellbeing and needs satisfaction were associated with observed reoffending outcomes, as indicated by finalised reconvictions following release from the index custodial episode. Of the total of 115 respondents who were released prior to the data censoring date and were eligible for reoffending analysis, 31 (27.0%) were observed to reoffend during the follow up period.

A series of Cox proportional hazard regression models indicated that wellbeing was not a significant predictor of reoffending after adjusting for variance in survival time (hazard ratio = 1.167; 95% CI = .775 - 1.756; $p = .46$). Similarly, needs satisfaction was not significantly associated with reoffending (hazard ratio = .972; 95% CI = .483 - 1.955; $p = .94$). As may be expected from the above pattern of results, these factors were also non-significant predictors of reoffending in additional covariate-controlled regression models which estimated the extent to which wellbeing (hazard ratio = 1.102; 95% CI = .741 - 1.637; $p = .63$) and needs satisfaction (hazard ratio = .892; 95% CI = .460 - 1.729; $p = .73$) explained unique variance in outcomes after accounting for actuarial assessments of recidivism risk.

³ Odds ratios and hazard ratios can be interpreted so that values higher than 1 indicate increases in the predictor variable are associated with increased likelihood of the outcome, and values lower than 1 indicate increases in the predictor variable are associated with decreased likelihood of the outcome.

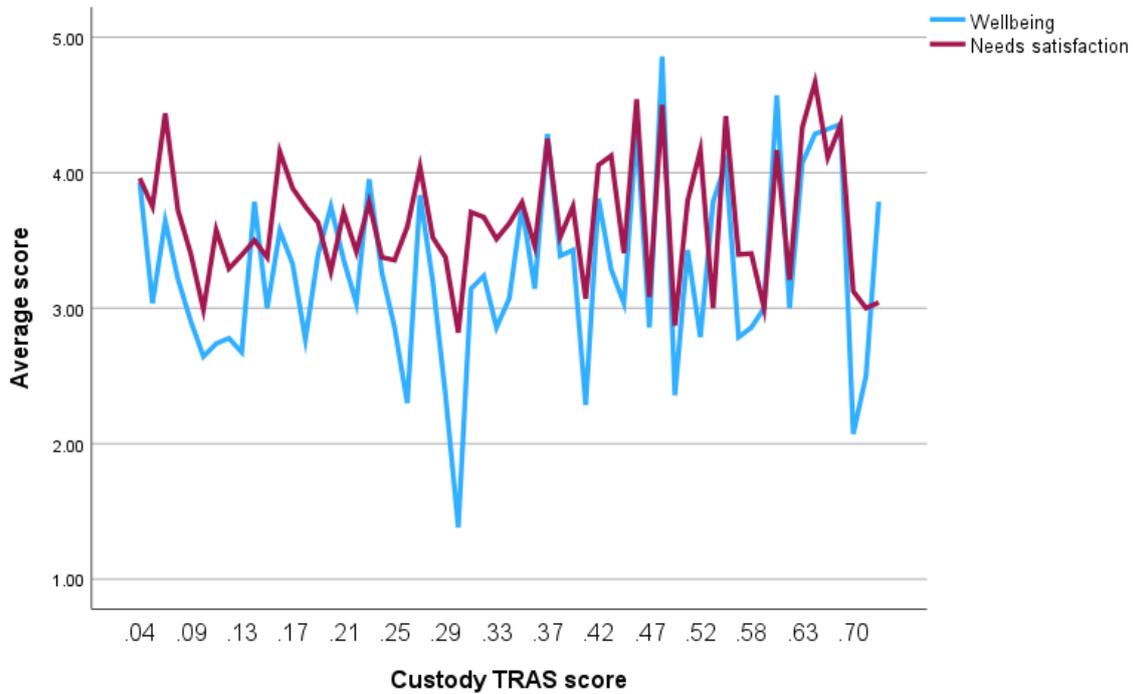


Figure 2. Associations between mean wellbeing and needs satisfaction scores and assessed risk of recidivism on the Custody TRAS

CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to conduct a preliminary exploration of people’s experiences of wellbeing and needs satisfaction in prisons, and how these are associated with features of the correctional centre climate as well as rehabilitative outcomes such as program completion and reoffending. Our results indicated that wellbeing and needs satisfaction were highly correlated, which is consistent with previous literature on the centrality of needs such as autonomy, relatedness and competence to psychological health (Chen et al., 2015; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Satisfaction of the individual needs was also highly correlated, to the extent that ratings of specific needs explained limited unique variance over and above a global index of needs satisfaction. This may suggest common influences on each of the needs among people in prison, although may also be indicative of respondents’ difficulties distinguishing the individual needs. In either case, the observed results have implications for the measurement and discrimination of individual needs among people in prison.

We found indications that ratings of wellbeing and needs satisfaction covaried with experiences of correctional centre climate, with both measures being significantly correlated with the EssenCES scale. This is consistent with other research on the importance of prison social climate for individual wellbeing (e.g., Liebling & Ludlow, 2016) and adds to limited evidence for the potential influence of opportunities for needs satisfaction within that climate (van der Kaap–Deeder et al., 2017). Interestingly, positive psychological states appeared to be most strongly associated with prison climate factors of relationships and cohesion with other inmates, and correlations were progressively weaker for perceptions of safety and relations with custodial staff respectively. It may not be unexpected that interactions with other inmates are influential in this regard, given the relational aspects of wellbeing and psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000). It is possible that weak associations with staff relationships could reflect the mainly administrative or compliance-oriented focus of their interactions. In this case, there is the potential that the impact of staff–inmate relationships on wellbeing and needs satisfaction could improve following

implementation of initiatives that encourage custodial staff to adopt agent of change roles using more relational approaches, such as Five Minute Interventions (FMI; e.g., Barkworth et al., 2021, 2023). The observed pattern of correlations between psychological states and EssenCES factors also give promising indications for the construct validity of underlying measures, in that wellbeing and needs satisfaction appear to be differentially sensitive to features of the prison social climate.

Conversely, we found that ratings of wellbeing and needs satisfaction had minimal associations with how long the individual had been imprisoned, as well as more stable sociodemographic features such as gender, Aboriginal cultural background, and family relationships. Importantly, we also found that ratings of wellbeing and needs satisfaction in prison were not associated with indicators of risk–relevance, including the respondent’s assessed risk of recidivism or their observed reoffending outcomes. The available literature suggests that wellbeing and needs satisfaction may be more relevant to aspects of responsivity rather than criminogenic need; for example, by improving intrinsic motivation for change (Bonta & Andrews, 2017; Galouzis et al., 2023; van der Kaap–Deeder et al., 2017). However, we also found that neither of the measures were significantly associated with a key conceptualisation and index of responsivity, which is completion of behaviour change programs following initial commencement of the program.

One potential explanation of the results is that they reflect the contribution of wellbeing and needs satisfaction as necessary but not sufficient for rehabilitative change. Enhancement of positive psychological states may act as a precondition for change, but have limited effects on desistance without the resources and capacities required to identify and achieve prosocial avenues of change (Galouzis et al., 2023; McNeill, 2009). In this case, associations between these psychological states and rehabilitation outcomes are confounded because they do not account for individuals’ orientations towards prosocial or other goal–directed behaviour. Another explanation is that wellbeing and needs satisfaction are highly time– and context–specific dynamic states, and global ratings of these states in prison may not generalise to people’s experiences of specific situations such as participation in behaviour change programs. It has been suggested that the influence of positive psychological states on longer–term desistance outcomes requires sustained improvement and maintenance as part of ongoing case management (King, 2013; Maruna, 2001). We also recognise that effective detection of associations between wellbeing or needs satisfaction and rehabilitation outcomes may be affected by error in assessment of related constructs, as well as the common influence of administrative or logistical as compared to individual factors on program completion and attrition in the prison environment (e.g., Mahajan et al., 2021).

Some other limitations are noted. While this study examined whether individual ratings of wellbeing and needs satisfaction covaried with perceptions of prison climate, it did not isolate the causal effects of correctional centre climates on these psychological states or how this contributes to site–level influences on outcomes such as program completion or recidivism. Given the research design it was not possible to assess the extent to which experiences of wellbeing and needs satisfaction are idiographic or shared among people in a specific prison context, or the environmental conditions that may influence shared variance in these factors. It is noted, however, that ratings were not significantly associated with gender, which implies that average experiences did not differ significantly across the two correctional centres included in this study which housed men and women separately. We also acknowledge that the limited variance in respondents’ prison placements, in addition to the relatively low overall sample size, may have affected statistical power to detect some associations of interest.

Notwithstanding these limitations, this study makes a novel contribution to the literature examining dynamics of people’s experiences of wellbeing and needs satisfaction while in prison. While we found indications that these factors were responsive to features of the prison environment, our results highlight

that their relationships with rehabilitative outcomes such as program completion or recidivism are nuanced. In this regard, assessment of these factors may have limited utility towards understanding an individual's rehabilitation pathway or the extent to which prisons contribute to that process. At the same time, we do not intend to conclude that wellbeing and needs satisfaction are not relevant to people's experiences of prison. Such states are fundamental human goods that are important targets for correctional agencies in their own right, and may also assume an influential role in realising the objectives of initiatives to improve rehabilitative culture and resourcing within prisons (Galouzis et al., 2023). There is a case for continued efforts to promote wellbeing and needs satisfaction through all custodial staff and climates, in addition to further research to better understand how they contribute to rehabilitative outcomes.

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