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Joy Bringers Program

The benefits of values-based programming in a Nigerian prison

Agency: Nigeria Prisons Service (NPS) Maximum Security Prison (Lagos, Nigeria)

Project Duration: 09/17/18–12/17/18

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Context
Evidence supports the links between high-quality programming, behavior, and reductions in recidivism; however, programming is scarce in most prisons.

Key Finding
Pre- and post-intervention surveys document that participants in the ethics program had increases in self-confidence, perceived self-agency, and awareness of ethical values such as personal integrity and compassion.

*BetaGov provides ongoing training to agency personnel to become research-savvy "Pracademics" who can lead trials.

Background

The Nigeria Prisons Service runs 144 prison facilities across the country, which house about 68,000 residents. Conditions are generally poor, with overcrowding, a lack of resources, and few programs offered. An education-in-ethics program is currently being offered in four facilities in Lagos by Joy Bringers, a nonprofit, faith-based organization. Joy Bringers offers an intensive three-month program that teaches values and helps residents understand and manage life challenges. The maximum-security facility in Lagos administered surveys to determine whether this program helps improve perspectives among incarcerated men.

Design

Program participants were recruited via word of mouth. Volunteers were randomly assigned to an intervention (n=35) or a waitlist control group (n=41). Surveys were administered to both groups before (Time 1) and after (Time 2) the Joy Bringers program.

Lessons Learned

Not all participants who completed the Time 1 survey also completed the Time 2 survey due to resident movement out of the prison. This attrition resulted in smaller sample sizes and in Time 2 survey estimates that do not represent the original sample. Maintaining anonymity made it impossible to match participants' Time 1 and 2 responses; instead, all Time 2 responses (within groups) were compared with Time 1 responses. Another limitation is that the waitlist control group was expanded over time and the Time 2 survey was administered to the full waitlist, making it impossible to isolate responses from the original randomized control group. Instead, we report outcomes for the intervention group and a comparison group consisting of the original control group plus additional waitlist residents. Survey

analyses show that the intervention group realized improvements in self-esteem: 60% agreed that they had good qualities at Time 1, with 100% agreeing at Time 2 (p<0.01). The intervention group also reported significant improvements in internal locus of control (believe that what happens in their lives is within their control) from Time 1 to Time 2 and reported greater internal locus of control at Time 2 compared to those in the comparison group (96% vs. 68%; p<0.05)(see graph).

Next Steps

This project marked an important first step to assess the feasibility of conducting research within the NPS given no prior experience with research. Much was learned about the challenges of gathering administrative data to determine whether program participation is linked to resident behaviors such as prosocial activities and misconducts. Future efforts will ensure that study procedures are more closely controlled and will expand outcomes measures. Given the completion of this project and the willing cooperation of prison and program staff, we anticipate that this project will serve as a springboard for future research with NPS.

Internal Locus of Control, by Group at Time 2

Comparison: 68%
Intervention: 96%
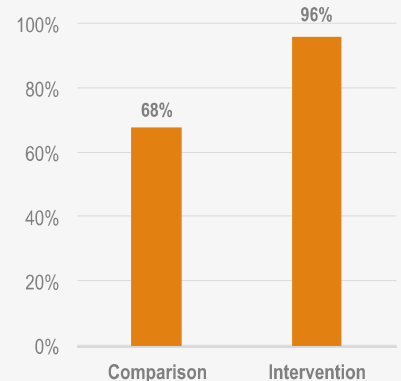
Why BetaGov Spark?

Sometimes a rigorous trial of an innovative idea just isn't possible, but with a Spark project a practitioner can learn important information about the idea, the agency, and the sample. What's more, a positive signal may inform a future randomized controlled trial and more definitive results. Spark projects meet Pracademics where they are comfortable—giving them the opportunity to learn about research and apply that learning to internal research projects.