

Summary

After termination of the PIJ-order. Predictive factors for acceptance of voluntary aftercare and recidivism

[Vrij na een PIJ. Voorspellende factoren van vrijwillige nazorg en recidive na een PIJ-maatregel]

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This study examined the risk factors that might predict the acceptance of voluntary aftercare after termination of the PIJ order (Placement in a judicial Institution for Juveniles). This is based on the idea there is a relationship between success factors and acceptance. The main point of this study was the expectation that the acceptance of voluntary aftercare would occur more often after a stay in a judicial institution for juveniles with a relatively positive social climate (Andrews & Bonta, 2006; Erkenningscommissie Gedragsinterventies Justitie, 2006, van der Helm, 2010). Therefore, this study aimed to gain insight into the importance of the social climate as a success factor of the PIJ order. To this end, data was collected of all serious juvenile offenders whose PIJ order was terminated in 2008, 2009 or 2010 (the research population, N = 494).

Acceptance of aftercare may also be related to recidivism-predictors which are present prior to the PIJ order (import factors). The expectation was that voluntary aftercare would be rejected more often by juveniles who entered the judicial institution with adverse import factors. For juveniles who showed problematic behaviour during their stay we have equal expectations. This study therefore encompasses import factors and indicators of problem behaviour during the implementation of the PIJ order. Other factors that might influence the acceptance of voluntary aftercare, such as the proposed procedure of aftercare, have been taken into account.

This study distinguishes three social climate categories (low, moderate and high risk of an unsafe social climate). These social climate categories have been established in accordance with the risk judgments stated in the report of combined inspections (Inspectie Jeugdzorg et al, 2007). Allocation of a respondent to a social climate category is based on the judicial Institution for Juveniles in which the respondent stayed during

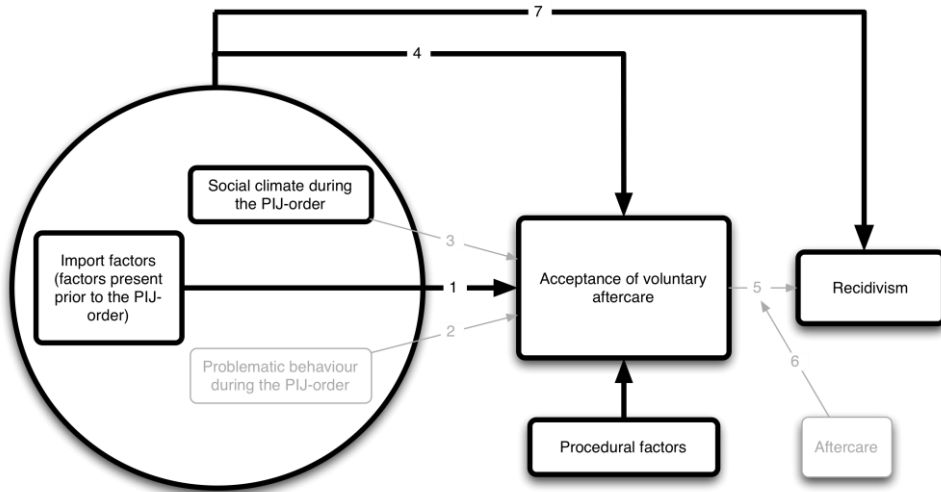
the final year of the PIJ order. To get a more qualitative overview of the perceived social climate, a subset of the juveniles in the research population was interviewed.

A second expectation was that serious juvenile offenders who accept voluntary aftercare after the termination of the PIJ order would reoffend less often and less immediately. This was expected due to having received aftercare and having experienced a more positive social climate in the judicial institution for juveniles. Therefore, recidivism data for the sample was collected throughout the first six months after termination of the PIJ order. Recidivism was operationalised as having contact with a probation officer after custody (called 'vroeghulp') within six months after termination of the PIJ order. Early intervention is not an optimal measure of recidivism because there is no conviction (as yet), but we opted for this measure because the data was available for the whole sample.

This study aimed to answer seven research questions which are presented graphically in the diagram below (Fig.1). First, we aimed to find out which factors show correlation with acceptance of voluntary aftercare (arrows 1, 2 and 3). Our second aim was to find out the predictive values of these factors for the acceptance of voluntary aftercare (arrow 4) and recidivism (arrow 7), while allowing for some procedural factors and the effect of receiving aftercare (arrows 5 and 6). The research questions for which a significant association was found are displayed on the diagram in bold-type.

Analysis of the overall sample did not show a significant relationship between social climate whilst under the PIJ order and acceptance of voluntary aftercare (arrow 3). The same goes for problematic behaviour during the first year of the PIJ order (arrow 2). Only family-related import factors were correlated and had predictive value for the acceptance of aftercare (arrows 1 and 4). Serious juvenile offenders who accepted aftercare after the termination of the PIJ order more often had absent, abusive, or neglectful parents. The likelihood of accepting voluntary aftercare was three times greater for juveniles who had been seriously neglected by their parents prior to the PIJ order. Possibly, these juveniles do not expect help or support from their parents when the PIJ order is terminated, so are more in need of and inclined to accept aftercare. No relationship was found between acceptance of aftercare and recidivism (arrow 5).

Diagram Fig.1: Research questions in diagram



In accordance with Mulder (2010), this study shows that having more severe past offences predicts a higher chance of recidivism (arrow 7), especially if the past offences include non-violent offences at a low onset age. The results did not indicate that import factors have an indirect predictive effect on recidivism, regardless of whether or not voluntary aftercare was accepted. However, it is apparent that the value of past offences in predicting recidivism varied across the three social climate categories. Past offences were the strongest and most significant predictor of recidivism within the high risk category of social climate. A less strong and significant effect of this was found within the moderate risk category, and it was absent in the low risk category. This is consistent with the meta-analysis by Lipsey (2009), which showed that juvenile offenders who experience a more therapeutic climate do not reoffend. It might be that judicial institutions for juveniles with a positive social climate have a bigger impact on preventing the criminogenic effects of past offences. A possible explanation is that treatment in judicial institutions with a positive social climate leads to better results, as a consequence of increased motivation of juveniles through more responsive group workers.

The difference in treatment motivation possibly antecedes the finding that the risk of recidivism seems to be reduced by two thirds when aftercare is completed, given that the juveniles spent their time in a judicial institution for juveniles amidst a positive social climate. However, this effect was not found to be significant (arrow 6), possibly due to the small amount of respondents for which this could be tested.

A significant finding which appeared time and time again is the much greater chance of juveniles accepting aftercare when it is offered by the *Leger des Heils*, rather than by any other rehabilitation organisation (arrow 6, part of procedural variables). Possibly the approach of the *Leger des Heils* is more suited to motivating juveniles who are less open to accept aftercare. This could also be an explanation for the finding that no *Leger des Heils effect* is found for juveniles who left a judicial Institution for Juveniles with a positive social climate, perhaps because these juveniles are more open to assistance.

Former serious juvenile offenders with a PIJ order proved an accessible, informative and quite benevolent source. The 12 juveniles who were interviewed face-to-face, were generally not solely negative about their stay in the judicial institution for juveniles. Respondents often have positive memories of sports and recreation activities. According to the respondents, the perfect group worker shows commitment by talking and listening carefully to the juveniles. These perfect group workers do exist, but certainly not all group workers fit the picture. The respondents said that their lives, when compared with those prior to the PIJ, had improved.

The response to the pictures of common situations in judicial institutions for juveniles, which were used in the interview, showed that individual conversations with the mentor or therapist were perceived as negative. The words "this is useless" were common. So there seems to be room for improvement. There was also considerable variation in the grades awarded to the stay in the judicial institution for juveniles, with grades ranging from 4.5 to 8+. Respondents scored relatively neutrally on the four social climate factors, which were measured using the Prison Group Climate Instrument (PGCI; Van der Helm, 2011).

This study aimed to understand the relevance of social climate as a success factor of the PIJ order. For that reason we tried to find out which factors can predict the acceptance of voluntary aftercare, based on the idea that there is a relationship between success factors and acceptance. In this study we found some support for this idea. Acceptance of aftercare was primarily related to negative family factors, which some juveniles have on entering into the PIJ order, making them more inclined to accept help as soon as the measure ends. Recidivism was primarily related to past offences. The predictive value of family history and past offences amongst juveniles who are in the final year of a PIJ order, staying in a judicial institution for juveniles with a more positive social climate, is not present. Potential success factors in this particular category of judicial institution for juveniles for serious juvenile offenders must be sought.