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**Managing Serious Violence in the Irish Prison Service:
Exploring the Experiences of Prisoners and Prison Officers
through the Lens of the Power Threat Meaning Framework**

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This thesis is submitted to University College Dublin in fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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September 2023

Table of Contents

List of tables	4
List of figures	5
List of appendices	6
Thesis abstract	7
Statement of original authorship	9
Acknowledgments	10
Publications and conference presentations	11
Chapter 1: Thesis introduction	14
Thesis outline	14
The Irish Prison Service	14
Violence in the IPS	17
The prison violence literature	22
The Power Threat Meaning Framework	24
Thesis rationale and aims	28
Chapter 2: Preface	30
Chapter 2: The Power Threat Meaning Framework 5 years on - A scoping review of the emergent empirical literature	31
Abstract	31
Introduction	32
Method	34
Results	37
Discussion	55
Funding	60
Chapter 3: Preface	61
Chapter 3: The operationally-driven management of serious violence and disruption in the Irish Prison Service - Exploring the experiences of prison officers and prisoners under the previous Violently Disruptive Prisoner policy	62
Abstract	62
Introduction	63
Method	69
Results	74
Discussion	83

Chapter 4: Preface	92
Chapter 4: Understanding serious violence using the Power Threat Meaning Framework - Exploring the perspectives of prisoners in the National Violence Reduction Unit	93
Abstract	93
Introduction	94
Method	100
Results	103
Discussion	114
Chapter 5: Preface	122
Chapter 5: Understanding serious violence using the Power Threat Meaning Framework: Exploring the perspectives of prison officers in the National Violence Reduction Unit	123
Abstract	123
Introduction	124
Method	130
Results	133
Discussion	146
Chapter 6: Preface	154
Chapter 6: Discussion	155
Chapter outline	155
Key findings	155
Implications and future directions	163
Strengths and limitations	168
Conclusion	171
References	173
Appendices	188

List of Tables

Table 1: Eligibility criteria and rationale for study selection (Study 1)	34-35
Table 2: Characteristics of included studies (Study 1)	49-51
Table 3: Key findings and critical appraisals of included studies (Study 1).....	52-55
Table 4: Descriptive statistics related to prisoners' current and previous offending behaviour (Study 2)	70
Table 5: Frequencies of characteristics related to prisoners' current offending behaviour (Study 2)	71
Table 6: Frequencies of prison officer demographic and occupational characteristics (Study 2)	72
Table 7: Themes, sub-themes and codes resulting from descriptive TA (Study 2)	74-77
Table 8: Comparison of number and characteristics of misconducts during comparable periods before transfer to the NVRU and in the NVRU (Study 3).....	104-105
Table 9: Themes, sub-themes and codes resulting from qualitative analysis (Study 3)	105-108
Table 10: Frequencies of prison officer demographic and occupational characteristics (Study 4)	131-132
Table 11: Themes, sub-themes and codes resulting from qualitative analysis (Study 4).....	134-138

List of Figures

Figure 1: PRISMA scoping review flow-chart	38
Figure 2: Thematic map of prisoners' qualitative results from study 3	253
Figure 3: Thematic map of prison officers' qualitative results from study 4	265

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Study 1 critical appraisal forms	188
Appendix B: PRISMA scoping review checklist	230
Appendix C: Study 2 interview schedules	232
Appendix D: Study 2 ethical documents	236
Appendix E: Study 3 interview schedule	247
Appendix F: PTMF codebook for deductive thematic analysis	249
Appendix G: Thematic map of prisoners' qualitative results from study 3	253
Appendix H: Study 3 ethical documents	254
Appendix I: Study 4 interview schedule	262
Appendix J: Thematic map of prison officers' qualitative results from study 4	265
Appendix K: Study 4 ethical documents	266

Thesis Abstract

Background: The opening of the National Violence Reduction Unit (NVRU) in November 2018 represented a significant shift in how serious violence is managed under the Violently Disruptive Prisoner (VDP) policy in the Irish Prison Service (IPS). Previously, practice under the VDP policy was operationally-driven, and focused primarily on containing the violence of these prisoners through isolative, restrictive and physically secure measures. Contrastingly, current practice in the NVRU, now home to all VDP policy prisoners, aims to be psychologically-informed in various ways. In January 2018, the British Psychological Society's (BPS) Division of Clinical Psychology (DCP) published the Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF). The PTMF aims to provide a holistic way of understanding the origins, experiences and expressions of emotional distress and troubled/troubling behaviour, which contrasts to the dominant psychiatric diagnostic model. The related literature has also advocated for more holistic understandings of prison violence, with most existing theories (e.g. importation theory, deprivation theory) stratified to singular levels of understanding.

Objectives: This thesis had dual theoretical and applied aims. It aimed to explore the empirical utility of the PTMF, primarily as a holistic alternative for understanding the origins, experiences and expressions of prison violence. Simultaneously, it aimed to explore prisoners' and prison officers' experiences and perspectives of the previous and current VDP policy, through the lens of the PTMF.

Methods: This thesis is comprised of four studies. Study one involved a scoping review of the empirical PTMF evidence-base which has emerged in the five years since its publication ($n = 17$). Study two qualitatively explored prisoners' ($n = 4$) and prison officers' ($n = 13$) experiences of the previous VDP policy, using thematic analysis (TA) to generate a detailed description of what the previous VDP policy was like, why it was like this, how it was working, and how it could change. Study three qualitatively explored NVRU prisoners' ($n = 3$) self-understandings of the origins, experiences and expressions of their violent behaviour. It used a hybrid inductive and deductive approach to TA to identify both a priori elements of the PTMF, and novel additions, in these narratives. Study four adopted the same methodology as study three, this time exploring NVRU prison officers' ($n = 13$) understandings of the prisoners with whom they worked.

Results: Study one identified a diverse empirical evidence-base which used the PTMF in five main ways: (1) PTMF-informed data collection, (2) PTMF-informed data analysis, (3) exploring experiences of/views on the PTMF, (4) evaluating PTMF-informed formulation, and (5)

evaluating PTMF-informed interventions. Study two described the previous VDP policy through nine themes: (1) describing VDP policy prisoners, (2) staff characteristics and approaches, (3) describing the VDP policy regime, (4) the social environment, (5) the occupational environment, (6) function of the VDP policy, (7) impact of the VDP policy, (8) factors influencing violence, and (9) responding to violence. Studies three and four described prisoners' and prison officers' respective understandings of the origins, experiences and expressions of violence through six themes: (1) power, (2) threat, (3) meaning, (4) threat response, (5) function of threat response, and (6) moderating factors. These studies offer both unique contributions and integrated learnings, including the complexity of violence; intertwined cycles of adversity, trauma and violence; and the unique contributions and shared insights of prisoners and prison officers.

Conclusions: These findings are contextualised within the strengths (e.g. novel theoretical framework, innovative methodology) and limitations (e.g. sample sizes and profiles, timeline of research) of this thesis. Potential implications and future directions for theory (e.g. value of holistic understandings), research (e.g. importance of adaptive methodologies), policy (e.g. benefits of psychologically-informed aims) and practice (e.g. value of prison officer perspectives) are considered.

Statement of Original Authorship

I hereby certify that the submitted work is my own work, was completed while registered as a candidate for the degree stated on the Title Page, and I have not obtained a degree elsewhere on the basis of the research presented in this submitted work.

Signature:

Orla Gallagher

04-09-2023

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Publications and Conference Presentations

Listed below are works, based on this thesis, which have been published in academic journals or bulletins; have been submitted for publication; have been presented at academic conferences, or accepted for presentation at such conferences.

Academic Journal Articles

Gallagher, O., Regan, E.E., & O'Reilly, G. (2024). 'Violence is all he knew, and it seemed to work': Using the power threat meaning framework to explore prison officers' understandings of violence in Irish prisons. *Psychology, Crime & Law*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2024.2303485>

Gallagher, O., Regan, E., & O'Reilly, G. (2023a). 'I've lived and bred violence my whole life': Understanding violence in the Irish Prison Service through the lens of the power threat meaning framework. *Psychology, Crime & Law*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2023.2228967>

Gallagher, O., Regan, E.E., & O'Reilly, G. (2023b). *The power threat meaning framework 5 years on: A scoping review of the emergent empirical literature* [Manuscript submitted for publication]. School of Psychology, University College Dublin.

Gallagher, O., Regan, E., & O'Reilly, G. (2022). Serious violence in the Irish Prison Service: Exploring the experiences of prison officers and prisoners under the violently disruptive prisoner policy. *Psychology, Crime & Law*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2022.2096885>

Academic Bulletins

Gallagher, O., Regan, E., & O'Reilly, G. (2019). Addressing serious violence in the Irish Prison Service: Exploring the perspectives of prisoners and prison officers. *The International Association of Correctional and Forensic Psychologists Newsletter*, 50(40), 1-3.

Academic Conference Presentations

Gallagher, O., Regan, E., & O'Reilly, G. (2023, November 8-10). *The power threat meaning framework as a tool to understand violence: Exploring the perspectives of prisoners and prison officers in the national violence reduction unit in the Irish Prison Service* [Oral presentation]. Psychological Society of Ireland Annual Conference, Cork, Ireland.

- Gallagher, O., Regan, E., & O'Reilly, G. (2023, November 8-10). *Addressing serious violence in the Irish Prison Service: Exploring the perspectives of prisoners and prison officers through the power threat meaning framework* [Oral presentation]. British Psychological Society Division of Forensic Psychology Annual Conference, Belfast, Northern Ireland.
- Gallagher, O., Regan, E., & O'Reilly, G. (2023, October 22-27). *Towards the humane management of prison violence in the Irish Prison Service* [Oral presentation]. International Corrections and Prisons Association Annual Conference, Antwerp, Belgium.
- Gallagher, O., Regan, E., & O'Reilly, G. (2023, June 15-16). *"I've lived and bred violence my whole life": Understanding violence in the Irish Prison Service through the lens of the power threat meaning framework* [Oral presentation]. 14th North South Criminology Conference, Dublin City University, Ireland.
- Gallagher, O., Regan, E., & O'Reilly, G. (2020, June 16-18). *Addressing serious violence in the Irish Prison Service: Exploring the perspectives of prisoners and prison officers through the power threat meaning framework* [Symposium]. British Psychological Society Division of Forensic Psychology Annual Conference, Solihull, UK. (Conference cancelled).
- Gallagher, O., Regan, E., & O'Reilly, G. (2020, May 12-14). *Experience of prison officers in the national violence reduction unit* [Oral presentation]. 3rd International Correctional Research Symposium, Porto, Portugal. (Conference cancelled).
- Gallagher, O., Regan, E., & O'Reilly, G. (2019, October 12). *Addressing serious violence in the Irish Prison Service: Exploring the perspectives of prisoners and prison officers* [Oral presentation]. 6th Annual Psychological Society of Ireland Early Graduate Group Conference, Maynooth University, Ireland.
- Gallagher, O., Regan, E., & O'Reilly, G. (2019, May 2). *Addressing serious violence in the Irish Prison Service: Exploring the perspectives of prisoners and prison officers* [Oral presentation]. College of Social Science and Law Graduate Research Student Symposium, University College Dublin, Ireland.
- Gallagher, O., Regan, E., & O'Reilly, G. (2019, June 18-20). *Managing serious violence and disruption in the Irish Prison Service: Prisoner and prison officer experiences* [Oral presentation]. British Psychological Society Division of Forensic Psychology Annual Conference, Liverpool, UK.

Gallagher, O., Regan, E., & O' Reilly, G. (2018, October 21-26). *Violent and disruptive behaviour in the Irish Prison Service: An examination of current management* [Oral presentation]. International Corrections and Prisons Association 20th Annual AGM and Conference, Montréal, Canada.

Gallagher, O., Regan, E., & O' Reilly, G. (2018, June 19-21). *Violent and disruptive behaviour in the Irish Prison Service: An examination of current management* [Poster presentation]. British Psychological Society Division of Forensic Psychology Annual Conference, Newcastle, UK.

Gallagher, O., Regan, E., & O' Reilly, G. (2018, June 19-21). *Managing violent and disruptive behaviour in the Irish Prison Service: A 4-year research project* [Poster presentation]. British Psychological Society Division of Forensic Psychology Annual Conference, Newcastle, UK.

Chapter 1: Thesis Introduction

Thesis Outline

This thesis presents an integrated programme of novel and original research exploring the management of serious violence in the Irish Prison Service (IPS), through the lens of the Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF). This first, introductory chapter will introduce the IPS and the issue, and subsequent management of, violence within the service. It will briefly contextualise this issue within the wider prison violence evidence-base. It will critically introduce the PTMF as the theoretical framework underpinning this thesis. It will end by summarising the rationale for this thesis, and stating its aims. Chapter two will present a scoping review of the emergent empirical literature utilising the PTMF since its initial publication in January 2018. Chapter three will present a qualitative study exploring the experiences of both prisoners and prison officers under the previous Violently Disruptive Prisoner (VDP) policy in the IPS, before its transformation in November 2018. Chapter four will focus on the prisoners' held under the transformed VDP policy in the National Violence Reduction Unit (NVRU). It will present a qualitative study which used the PTMF to explore prisoners' self-understandings of the origins, experiences and expressions of their violent behaviour. Chapter five presents a similar study, whereby the PTMF was used to qualitatively explore NVRU prison officers' understandings of the origins, experiences and expressions of the violent behaviour of the prisoners with whom they worked. Finally, this thesis will conclude with chapter six, a critical and integrative discussion of the original research presented previously, and its potential implications.

Irish Prison Service (IPS)

To begin, it is essential to position the original research which follows within the context of the IPS, including the Irish prison estate, the Irish prison population, the Irish prison staff population, the IPS as an organisation, its resulting culture, and relevant national and international legislation.

Irish Prison Estate

The IPS prison estate comprises 13 custodial institutions, including one high-security prison, 10 medium-security prisons, and two low-security open centres. Two medium-security prisons house female prisoners only, and all other prisons house male prisoners only (IPS, 2021a).

Irish Prison Population

At the time of writing, these institutions were home to 4,612 prisoners (IPS, 2023)¹. Contextualised amongst the prison populations of other European jurisdictions, Ireland has continuously experienced a relatively low imprisonment rate, currently at 91 people per 100,000 in the population² (World Prison Brief, 2023). However, the Irish prison population has fluctuated considerably in recent years. Since 1994, this population increased gradually from 2,141 each consecutive year, before peaking at 4,390 in 2011. Between 2011 and 2017 it began to slowly reduce and stabilise, before increasing again in 2018, with numbers regularly exceeding 4,000 at this time (IPS, 2019a). In 2020, these numbers were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically the knock-on effect of community restrictions on crime and its detection; the suspension of court services; and a planned programme of temporary release implemented by the IPS to better manage infection control within its prisons. This culminated in a 29% decrease in committals between 2019 and 2020, and a significantly reduced prison population of approximately 3,600 (IPS, 2021a; IPS, 2020). However, with the removal of these restrictions, and a return to relative normality, the prison population has grown drastically, with 2023 seeing the highest numbers in IPS history, and the prison estate currently operating at a capacity of 105% (IPS, 2023). Recently, the profile of the Irish prison population reflects an older/aging population, an increased number of remand prisoners, and a larger contingent of female prisoners compared to previous years (IPS, 2019a).

The most recently available statistics (IPS, 2021a) show that of the 3,792 imprisoned (on average) in 2021, 55% were sentenced, 43% were on remand or awaiting trial, and the remaining 3% were held under other conditions including immigration detention, European arrest extradition, and indefinite contempt of court. Of the 5,179 persons committed to Irish prisons in 2021, 4,692 were male and 487 were female. Most committed persons were aged 25-34 (41%), followed by 35 to 44 year olds (26%), 18 to 24 year olds (16%), 45 to 54 year olds (12%), and those aged over 55 years (5%). The average age of prisoners was 37 years. Of the 3,941 sentenced prisoners in Irish prisons in 2021, most (22.4%) were sentenced for burglary, theft, robbery and related offences, followed by offences against the government, justice procedures and organisation of crime (14.5%); homicide, attempts/threats to murder, assaults &

¹ Accurate as of 04/09/2023, according to statistics published by the IPS: <https://www.irishprisons.ie/information-centre/statistics-information/2015-daily-prisoner-population/2023-prison-population/>

² Accurate as of 04/09/2023. See below for ranking of European prison populations from highest to lowest: https://www.prisonstudies.org/highest-to-lowest/prison_population_rate?field_region_taxonomy_tid=14

harassments (13.8%); damage to property/the environment and public order/social code offences (11.7%); road and traffic offences (10.1%); controlled drug offences (8.5%); weapons and explosive offences (4.4%); sexual offences (3.1%); dangerous or negligent acts (2.0%); fraud/deception and related offences (2%); unclassified offences (1.2%); and kidnapping and related offences (0.5%). Most prisoners were serving sentences of five to ten years (24.42%), followed by sentences of three to five years (21.82%); one to three years (21.41%); life sentences (12.04%); sentences under one year (11.94%); and sentences over ten years (8.36%).

IPS Staffing and Organisational Structure

At the end of 2021, 3,474.35 full-time staff were employed by the IPS, including prison staff, civilian staff, and IPS headquarter (HQ) staff (IPS, 2021a). The greatest number of staff in any prison are uniformed prison officers who, reflecting the hierarchical nature of prison staffing, receive oversight from promoted officers in junior (e.g. assistant chief officer), middle (e.g. chief officer), and senior management (e.g. governor) grades. Additional staff occupy administrative (e.g. clerical officers), operational (e.g. search, escorts) and multi-disciplinary (e.g. healthcare, psychology, education, welfare) roles (Office of the Inspector of Prisons [OIP], 2015). Irish prisons experience one of the most favourable staff to prisoner ratios in Europe (1:1.5). However, they still experience considerable staff shortages which negatively impact prisoners' access to healthcare, activities and overall out-of-cell time. This has been observed most frequently towards the end of each working quarter, where overtime hours are typically no longer available. It has also been noted that the large volume of uniformed staff required to conduct escorts largely impacts on staff shortages (Council of Europe [CoE], 2020).

Compared to the historical standing of many of Ireland's prisons, the IPS as an organisation is relatively young, having only been established in 1997. The IPS is a non-statutory executive office of the Department of Justice, with ultimate responsibility lying with the Minister for Justice³. It is led by a director general, who is supported by five directors of: (1) human resources, (2) custody, security & operations, (3) finance and estates, (4) corporate services, ICT, health & safety, and (5) care and rehabilitation. In comparison to prison staff, the majority of whom are prison officers, IPS organisational staff are largely civil servants, most of

³ A proposed Irish Prison Service Bill was published on 04/08/2023, which if implemented would establish the IPS as a statutory agency

whom work at the IPS HQ, based in Co. Longford (OIP, 2015). Previous reports on the IPS, conducted by external bodies, have observed a distinct and disconnected culture in the IPS, particularly between prison staff and HQ staff. Prison staff have generally perceived HQ staff to have little knowledge or experience of prison work, with HQ staff generally perceiving prison staff to be dubious of the progressive initiatives they aim to implement (OIP, 2015; Porporino, 2015). However, improving organisational culture has become an area of strategic importance within the IPS in recent years (IPS, 2019a).

IPS Legislative Context

The IPS operates in line with national and international legislation. The day-to-day work of the IPS is primarily guided by the Irish Prison Rules (2007), and their subsequent amendments in 2014, 2017 and 2020. Containing 122 rules in 16 parts, the Prison Rules (2007) dictate how the IPS must operate in relation to the reception/registration of prisoners; the treatment of prisoners; control, discipline and sanctions; young prisoners; and remand prisoners. Parts seven and eight dictate the duties of prison governors and prison officers, respectively. Parts 10 to 15 regulate the provision of services including healthcare, probation, education, psychology and chaplaincy. Additional Irish legislation guiding the work of the IPS include the Prisons Act (2007, 2015); the Prisons (Visiting Committees) Act (1925); the Criminal Justice Act (1960, 2007); the Criminal Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (1997); and the Transfer of Sentenced Persons Act (1995, 1997) (IPS, 2021a). The IPS also takes due account of various international human rights standards including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the European Convention on Human Rights; the United Nations (UN) Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners; the European Prison Rules (2006); the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (IPS, 2021a). The IPS additionally takes account of the recommendations made by the Office of the Inspector of Prisons (IPS, 2021a).

Violence in the IPS

To understand and interpret the original programme of research presented in this thesis, it is first necessary to contextualise the topic of violence in Irish prisons by discussing the rates of violence observed in Irish prisons, and the various ways in which violence is managed,

including rule 62 of the Prison Rules (2007), the P19 disciplinary system, the VDP policy, and the NVRU.

Rates of Violence in Irish Prisons

Concerns have previously been raised about relatively high levels of violence in Irish prisons, internally by the IPS, and externally by both the European and United Nations (UN) Committees for the Prevention of Torture (CPT). The number of prisoner-prisoner assaults were at their highest (715) in 2012, and prisoner-staff assaults reached their highest point (151) shortly after in 2014. However, in the past decade these rates have been steadily declining, with the most recently available statistics noting 249 prisoner-prisoner and 91 prisoner-staff assaults in 2021 (IPS, 2021b). Indeed, following their 2019 visit to Irish prisons, the European CPT commended the declining rates of violence, and the measures taken by the IPS to address the root issue of gang feuds within prisons. However, they also commented on the over-use of protective regimes, under rule 63 of the Prison Rules (2007), to manage such feuds. While rule 63 is intended to provide protection for vulnerable prisoners, it typically involves separation from the general population with restricted access to out-of-cell activities, which presents additional issues, most notably the adverse impact of isolation on prisoner wellbeing (CoE, 2020). Comparatively, in their 2015 review of prisoner-staff assaults, the State Claims Agency (SCA) observed that the majority of staff assaults were carried out by a relatively small group of prisoners (approx. 15-25) who presented with challenging behavioural issues and complex mental health needs. Indeed, the SCA observed evidence of these prisoners, even when managed in isolation (under rule 62 of the Prison Rules) and with the use of a Control and Restraint (C&R) team, still managing to seriously assault staff (SCA, 2016).

The Management of Violence in Irish Prisons

The P19 Disciplinary System. All misconduct (including violence) in Irish prisons is managed in accordance with the Prison Rules (2007), and locally using the P19 system. When a prisoner breaches a prison rule, the observing member of prison staff must report this to the prison governor. The governor is not required to hold an official inquiry into the infraction, but should record the reasons for not doing so if this is the case. In most cases, the governor will hold a disciplinary inquiry, occurring within seven days of the infraction, which the prisoner has the right to attend. The prisoner will be advised of this inquiry in writing, on a form called a P19. During this inquiry the governor will inform the prisoner of the rule(s) they have broken, and provide them with an opportunity to respond to the allegation. Should the governor conclude that

the prisoner is guilty of the alleged infraction, and they choose to impose sanctions on the prisoner, this must be done in accordance with part 13 of the Prison Rules (2007). Sanctions may only be applied for specified amounts of time, not exceeding the upper limits dictated by the Prison Rules, and may include the issue of a caution; the prohibition of activities, outside contact and/or material possessions; the postponement/forfeiture of gratuities; and in-cell confinement. In some cases, the IPS may pursue criminal prosecution, which if successful would result in an additional conviction, and possibly sentence (Irish Penal Reform Trust [IPRT], 2021). During their review, the SCA discovered that prison staff were dissatisfied with the P19 process, expressing that it was over-used, thus diluting more serious offences. They also felt that the process was slow, and if sanctions were eventually imposed, that these were not worthy of the effort of engaging in the process. Staff noted many ongoing legal challenges by solicitors on behalf of prisoners who were issued with P19s, which further diminished its effectiveness as a deterrent. Additionally, staff had limited understanding of the criminal prosecution process, and were reluctant to pursue this course of action as a result (SCA, 2016).

Rule 62 of the Prison Rules (2007). Prisoners who engage in a level of violence and disruption which threatens the good order of the prison may be placed under rule 62 of the Prison Rules (2007). This rule permits the removal of prisoners from the general prison population, and thus structured activities and association, to separate designated areas (e.g. Challenging Behaviour Units [CBUs]). The prison governor is required to review a prisoner's placement under rule 62 every seven days, with periods exceeding 21 days requiring approval from the director general. Concerns have been raised about the limited oversight of rule 62, the considerable discretion afforded to prison governors, and the lack of an upper limit for periods of isolation (CoE, 2019; Martynowicz & Moore, 2018).

The Violently Disruptive Prisoner (VDP) Policy. A small subset of these violent prisoners (< 10), who are repeatedly engaged in serious violence and disruption, are managed under the VDP policy⁴. VDP policy prisoners are also held under rule 62 of the Irish Prison Rules (2007), and thus segregated from the general prison population. The original VDP policy was published by the IPS in January 2014, with a minor revision following in September 2016. The primary aim of the original VDP policy was to protect others from the risk posed by these

⁴ While the VDP policy does not specify that it applies to male prisoners only, to date no female prisoner has been designated under the VDP policy, and the VDP is only implemented in male prisons

prisoners. It was operationally-driven, focused on containment and physical security rather than intervention, progression and relational security. A defining characteristic of the original VDP policy was the regular use of C&R teams in almost all interactions with VDP policy prisoners. This practice was referred to locally as 'barrier handling' (IPS, 2014, 2016). The second study in this thesis (chapter three) presents a qualitative exploration of prisoners' and prison officers' experiences of the previous VDP policy, and provides a detailed description of what practice looked like, why it was like this, how it was working, and how it could change.

Shortly after the implementation of the original VDP policy, its shortcomings became evident, including the escalation of the violence of some prisoners, and the adverse impacts of isolation on prisoners. Following internal and external concerns (e.g. the Inspector of Prisons), the IPS began reviewing their practice and looking for alternative ways to manage this challenging cohort of prisoners. In 2016, the IPS formed a working group to this effect. This working group looked to practices in prisons across England and Wales, identifying a model similar to the Close Supervision Centre (CSC) system as a possible alternative for Irish prisons. CSCs manage a cohort of prisoners similar to those under the VDP policy, but in a more psychologically-informed way. The IPS working group proceeded to visit multiple CSCs across England and Wales, before recommending that a similar unit be developed in the IPS. In 2017, the IPS established an implementation group to oversee the development of this unit. Ultimately, the NVRU was implemented by the IPS in November 2018 (Black, 2016a, 2016b). Simultaneously, the implementation group worked to revise the original VDP policy, with the most recent version finalised in August 2019. The new VDP policy contains more robust criteria, specifying that for a prisoner to be designated as a VDP policy prisoner they must: (1) engage in serious repetitive or escalating violence towards others in custody, and/or (2) carry out or orchestrate a single serious or significant act of violence or disorder, and/or (3) demonstrate behaviour that is significantly dangerous to others, and where there is evidence that deems this risk/threat is credible. The aims of the new VDP policy move beyond just the protection of others to additionally include reducing the violence of these prisoners, and improving their psychological health, wellbeing and pro-social behaviours (IPS, 2019b).

The National Violence Reduction Unit (NVRU). Since its implementation in 2018, all VDP policy prisoners, and prisoners undergoing the assessments required in order to be designated under the VDP policy, are housed in the NVRU. The NVRU is located on the C1 right landing in the Midlands prison. While the Midlands prison is the largest in Ireland, with a capacity of 875 prisoners, the NVRU is one of the smallest units in the IPS, with only 10 accommodation

cells and a capacity to hold nine prisoners at any one time. The NVRU additionally consists of a close supervision cell, a special observation cell, two professional consultation rooms, one visiting room, one multi-purpose room, one search room, one indoor gym, and two outdoor exercise yards. The NVRU is a stand-alone unit, with its own management and staffing structures. The NVRU is co-led by an assistant governor and a senior psychologist, and supported by one chief officer and two assistant chief officers. It is staffed by 20 prison officers, 10 on each side of the staffing roster, and one full-time staff grade psychologist. The NVRU receives oversight from the NVRU Committee (NVRUC), a national, multi-disciplinary committee with representatives from the care and rehabilitation and operations directorates, the psychology service, and the Midlands prison (IPS, 2018).

The NVRU was modelled off the CSC system in England and Wales, and informed by other psychologically-informed initiatives in this jurisdiction, including Psychologically-Informed Planned Environments (PIPEs), Enabling Environments (EEs), and the Offender Personality Disorder Pathway (OPDP). The aims of the NVRU align with the high-level aims of the OPDP, and reflect the aims of the VDP policy. As such, the NVRU aims to: (1) reduce repeat violent offending, (2) improve the psychological health, wellbeing and pro-social behaviour of prisoners managed on the unit, and enhance relational outcomes for them, (3) develop a centre of excellence where staff demonstrate a high level of competence and expertise in dealing with prisoners with complex needs, and (4) through this specialisation introduce a high quality of service, increased efficiencies and cost effectiveness across the prison estate (IPS, 2018). To achieve these aims, the NVRU has taken steps to ensure that practice in the NVRU is psychologically-informed at the policy (e.g. focus on intervention/progression); organisational (e.g. oversight by multi-disciplinary NVRUC); management (e.g. co-led by senior psychologist); environmental (e.g. enhanced provision of facilities/services/activities); staff (e.g. initial and ongoing psychological training for prison officers); and prisoner (e.g. intensive psychological assessment and intervention) levels (IPS, 2018).

The third and fourth studies of this thesis, which explore the experiences of prisoners and prison officers in the NVRU respectively, detail these practices. Through exploring both groups' understandings of the origins, experiences and expressions of violence, these studies also shed some light on the progress the NVRU has made towards its aims during the first year of its implementation. Since its implementation in November 2018, the NVRU has been subject to some additional internal and external evaluation. In September 2021, the IPS published an internal report assessing the NVRU's progress over the previous three years. This report noted

reductions in the use of close observation cells and P19s, reflecting a steady decrease in assaults over time. Despite being the only unit in the IPS to be provided with extendable batons, officers only deployed batons on one occasion. Prisoners' uptake of psychological support was mixed, as was the 'success' of prisoners released to the community (IPS, 2021c). During their 2019 visit, the European CPT commended the highly motivated staff in the NVRU, and the design of a regime intended to facilitate as much out-of-cell time as possible. However, they observed that prisoners still regularly spent 23+ hours alone in their cells. They also questioned the counterproductive use of screens or bars when interacting with prisoners, and the redundancy of placing VDP policy prisoners under rule 62 when the NVRU resembled an 'end point' with regards their escalation of violence, with responsibility for de-selection from the NVRU lying with the NVRUC. Overall, the European CPT expressed that the aims and approach of the NVRU were positive, and it had the potential to develop into the envisaged centre of excellence for managing challenging prisoners. However, they also cautioned that if mismanaged, the NVRU could also become just another segregation unit (CoE, 2020).

The Prison Violence Literature

It is important to contextualise the above discussion of violence in Irish prisons within the existing theoretical and empirical prison violence evidence-base. The relevant prison violence literature is considered in detail, and in turn, in chapters three, four and five of this thesis. Thus, it will be briefly summarised here.

Stratified Understandings of Prison Violence

Chapter three discusses the various factors identified as influencing prison violence, and the various theories developed to understand these influences. Much of this literature has focused on the individual level, and consistently identified various demographic (e.g. younger age), criminogenic (e.g. gang membership) and psychological (e.g. mental illness) factors as influencing prison violence (Schenk & Fremouw, 2012; Steiner et al. 2014; Steiner & Wooldredge, 2020; McGuire, 2018). An individual explanation of prison violence is offered by importation theory, which proposes that prison violence can be attributed to the various individual experiences, characteristics, beliefs and values that one brings with them into prison (Edgar et al., 2003). Though under-explored by comparison, other literature has focused on the environmental level, identifying interactional (e.g. staff mistreatment), institutional (e.g. overcrowding) and organisational (e.g. inconsistent treatment) factors in the influence of prison violence (Schenk & Fremouw, 2012; Steiner et al. 2014; Steiner & Wooldredge, 2020; McGuire,

2018). In explaining this, deprivation theory posits that prison violence can be attributed to the 'pains' of the prison environment one experiences upon imprisonment (Edgar et al., 2003). More recently, there has been growing consensus that individual and environmental factors likely interact to influence prison violence (Edgar et al. 2003). For example, general strain theory suggests that the experience of imprisonment presents many strains, including the denial of positively valued goals, the removal of positively valued stimuli, and the presentation of noxious stimuli. Whether one copes with these strains in conventional or deviant ways, however, depends on their personal characteristics and values (Blevins et al., 2010).

Impact of Restrictive Regimes for Managing Prison Violence

Chapter three also considers the large volume of literature which has explored the impact of restrictive regimes - which are often used to manage prison violence - on the prisoners held under these regimes, and the prison officers working under these regimes. This literature comes to overwhelming consensus regarding the adverse effects of such regimes on prisoners, particularly serious psychological harms, including confusion; impaired concentration and memory loss; hallucinations, illusions and paranoid ideas; emotional reactions; impulsive actions; and overall debilitation (Scharff Smith, 2006). Paradoxically, such regimes can result in increased frustration and aggression, resulting in a vicious cycle of violence and containment (Haney, 2009). Chapter three also highlights that, while the literature concerning prison staff is considerably less than that concerning prisoners, there is some evidence to suggest that working under restrictive regimes can also have adverse impacts on prison staff. Crucially, such regimes can facilitate a distinct staff sub-culture, whereby negative sub-cultures can exacerbate the adverse impacts of these regimes on prisoners, and positive sub-cultures can ameliorate against these adverse impacts (Akerman et al., 2018; Scharff Smith, 2006).

Origins, Experiences and Expressions of Violence

Chapter four considers the origins, experiences and expressions of violence more generally. In addition to the individual and environmental factors introduced above, chapter four highlights that, more recently, our understandings of human behaviour and outcomes have begun to pay due focus to the influence of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). While links have been made between various ACEs and various types of offending behaviour, these links are yet to become truly embedded within forensic research and practice (Hocken et al., 2022; Smith, 2022; Willmot, 2022; Willmot & Jones, 2022). In relation to experiences of behaving violently, while acknowledging that much literature has duly focused on the experiences of

victims, chapter four highlights the traumatic impact that engaging in violence can have on the perpetrator (Fritzon et al., 2021; Gray et al., 2003; Pink & Gray, 2022; Ternes et al., 2020). A cycle of trauma and violence can be created, whereby perpetrating an act of violence may have traumatic impacts, which can increase the likelihood of committing further violence, and potentially confinement in a traumatising or re-traumatising institution. Considering expressions of violence, both generally and in prison specifically, chapter four highlights the importance of considering such violence in relation to the various functions it may serve for the individual. The existing prison violence literature has identified both strategic (e.g. deterring victimisation, obtaining better treatment in prison) and psychological (e.g. protecting identity, self-esteem and masculinity) functions (Butler, 2008; Butler & Drake, 2007; Butler & Maruna, 2009; Edgar et al., 2003). Overall, chapter four emphasises the importance of understanding the origins, experiences and expressions of prison violence, if attempts to reduce it are to be successful.

The Prison Staff Literature

Chapter five pays due attention to prison staff. Within the context of an already limited evidence-base, chapter five focuses on the further limited literature exploring prison staffs' psychological understandings of the prisoners with whom they work. Much of this primarily qualitative literature originates from specialised prison environments in England and Wales, including PIPEs, Therapeutic Communities (TCs), Dangerous and Severe Personality Disorder (DSPD) units, and the OPDP. This literature has focused on staffs' understandings of prisoners' more generally (Bond & Gemmell, 2014; Bowers et al., 2005; Bowers et al., 2006; Cooke et al., 2017; Jeffcote et al., 2020; Knauer et al., 2017; McMullan et al., 2014; McMurrin & Delight, 2017; Radcliffe et al., 2018; Ramsden et al., 2014; Shaw et al., 2012; Walker et al., 2018). However, some recent research has explored prison staffs' understandings of violence specifically, in various environments (Hemming et al., 2020; Kramarz et al., 2023; Nikospachos et al., 2023). Taken together, this evidence-base concludes that prison officers hold considerable psychological knowledge about the prisoners with whom they work. Importantly, strategies to enhance these psychological understandings (e.g. team formulation training) are highly valued by staff, and appear to be effective. Thus, prison officers may be an 'untapped resource', whose experience and expertise should be valued and utilised (Atkinson & Mann, 2012).

The Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF)

Having already introduced the IPS and the existing prison violence evidence-base, it is necessary to further contextualise this thesis within the theoretical framework which underpins it.

Development of the PTMF

The PTMF was published by the British Psychological Society's (BPS) Division of Clinical Psychology (DCP) in January 2018, following a commitment by the DCP to fund and develop an alternative multi-factorial, contextual, service-user informed approach to understanding emotional distress and troubled/troubling behaviour. The PTMF is presented in detail in a main document (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018a) and summarised in an overview document (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b). Both documents were lead-authored by Dr Lucy Johnstone and Prof. Mary Boyle, and received contributions from numerous additional authors with diverse professional backgrounds, including experts by experience. These documents are available on the DCP PTMF webpage, alongside some additional advisory documents, including a short summary of the principles and aims of the PTMF; an overview of the PTMF patterns; an informational PTMF leaflet; some presentation slides from the launch of the PTMF; reflections and responses to the PTMF one year on; and a guide to using the PTMF to support narrative construction. Spanish, Italian and Norwegian translations of the PTMF have also been developed. The PTMF webpage also includes sub-sections containing PTMF training materials; research and publications pertaining to the PTMF; and applied 'good practice' examples which draw on the PTMF.

Aims and Core Components of the PTMF

The PTMF aims to provide both professionals and service-users with an alternative way of understanding the origins, experiences and expressions of emotional distress and troubled/troubling behaviour. This framework of thinking is intended to differ from that embedded within the psychiatric diagnostic model, which has long dominated our understanding of such phenomena. Instead of pathologising human experiences and behaviours, the PTMF aims to position these within the biological, social and psychological contexts which surround them (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018a). The holistic structure of the PTMF lends itself to understanding a wide range of phenomena, including offending behaviour and violence, hence its applicability to this research.

The PTMF contains four core components which can be translated into four core questions: (1) power – what has happened to you? (2) threat – how did it affect you?, (3) meaning – what sense did you make of it?, and (4) threat response – what did you have to do to

survive?. The PTMF provides numerous examples of each of these components, and further organises them into seven general patterns: (1) identities, (2) surviving rejection, entrapment, and invalidation, (3) surviving disrupted attachments and adversities as a child/young person, (4) surviving separation and identity confusion, (5) surviving defeat, entrapment, disconnection, and loss, (6) surviving social exclusion, shame, and coercive power, and (7) surviving single threats. The authors highlight that patterns will likely exist within these general patterns, and individuals will vary in their 'fit' to these patterns. Crucially, these patterns do not represent discrete clusters, are not one-to-one replacements for diagnostic labels, and do not provide universal explanations for specific types of threat responses (or 'symptoms'). The PTMF also highlights the moderating role of various exacerbating and ameliorating factors throughout the power-threat-meaning-response process. Finally, it emphasises the importance of considering individual strengths, particularly when using the PTMF in therapeutic practices (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018a).

Reception to and Uptake of the PTMF

Since its initial publication in January 2018, the reception to the PTMF has been considerable. Within the first fortnight of its publication over a dozen blogs pertaining to the PTMF emerged, and the PTMF has been cited over 100 times to date on Google Scholar (Harper & Cromby, 2022; Johnstone et al., 2019). The PTMF webpage reflects the continuous growth of the PTMF, with many additional, accompanying materials developed over the past five years, and numerous research projects drawing on the PTMF underway. The global interest in the PTMF is evident in the numerous talks and trainings that the lead authors of the PTMF have delivered worldwide (Harper & Cromby, 2022; Johnstone et al., 2019; Ramsden, 2019). Most importantly, perhaps, the PTMF has resonated with professionals and service-users in a variety of settings (see special PTMF issue of the Clinical Psychology Forum for examples).

The PTMF authors themselves have noted the considerable interest stemming from the forensic psychology field. In their invited editorial regarding the uptake of the PTMF in forensic settings, Ramsden (2019) attributes this interest to the injustices felt by both professionals and service-users within forensic contexts. They argue that service delivery and therapy models within such settings are often built on an implicit biomedical model, which positions troubled/troubling human behaviour as pathological symptoms which necessitate pharmacological and/or psychological treatment. Many of those working within these services feel constrained by this approach, which is perhaps inappropriate and/or ineffective in understanding, and thus managing and reducing, offending and violent behaviour. In their recent

book on trauma-informed forensic practice, Willmot and Jones (2022) draw on the PTMF throughout, highlighting its alliance with a recent and gradual shift towards trauma-informed practices in these settings. Willmot and Evershed (2018) also outline the utility of the PTMF, specifically in working with individuals diagnosed with personality disorders in forensic settings. In doing so, they suggest that the PTMF helps us better understand personality disorder as a set of learned survival strategies for keeping physically and psychologically safe in environments perceived as threatening. They report that this understanding has been widely accepted by both clinicians and clients, as it has helped them make sense of troubled/troubling behaviour in a non-stigmatising way.

Notwithstanding the considerable positive reception to the PTMF, and its growing body of advocates, some critical commentaries have also emerged. The authors have responded to many of these critiques, most comprehensively in their reflection on the PTMF one year after its publication (Johnstone et al., 2019). Two main criticisms have dominated these discourses. Firstly, some critics have claimed that the PTMF is not sufficiently evidence-based, including concerns that the limited evidence on which it has been developed is not scientifically robust, and that the PTMF did not undergo sufficient peer-review throughout its development. In response, the authors have highlighted that the PTMF draws on an extensive range of evidence, but that this evidence, in keeping with the underlying assumptions and aims of the PTMF, transcends the disciplines, epistemologies and methodologies typically considered valid within positive paradigms (Johnstone et al., 2019). Indeed, it has been noted that while the PTMF itself provides a more explicit, radical and well-articulated framework of understanding, the vast and diverse evidence-base on which it is built is 'nothing new' (Ramsden, 2019). With regards to peer-review, the authors have reminded critics of the considerable, and variable, range of authors who contributed to the project, as well as its provisional nature, with subsequent development both welcome and necessary (Johnstone et al., 2019).

Secondly, some critics have argued that in wanting to replace psychiatric diagnostic labels, the PTMF is ablest towards those who find these labels helpful. Others have argued that the general patterns suggested by the PTMF are not entirely different to current diagnostic labels. In response, the PTMF authors have re-emphasised that the PTMF is not intended to replace psychiatric diagnoses, but rather provide an alternative way of understanding emotional distress and troubled/troubling behaviour for those who do not find these labels to be helpful. What remains most important is that service-users are given agency in deciding how they wish to understand their own experiences, and that professionals respect these choices. With regards

the general patterns contained in the PTMF, the authors again highlight their provisional nature, and argue that they are not simply one-to-one replacements for psychiatric diagnoses, or universal explanations of groups of symptoms. Rather, they offer a starting point as the PTMF begins to be implemented within policy and practice, and a way of working within settings which, at least for the moment, continue to be dominated by systems which operate on the basis of patterns of 'symptoms' (Johnstone et al., 2019).

Position of the Thesis

This thesis acknowledges both the positive responses and constructive criticisms which have emerged since the initial publication of the PTMF. Similar to the resonance experienced by forensic professionals, having completed the first set of original data collection in this programme of research, it became obvious that in order to understand the ways in which violence was/is managed in the IPS, it was essential to first holistically understand the origins, experiences and expressions of violence for this specific cohort of prisoners. Thus, the PTMF was chosen to develop these understandings. In doing so, the position of this thesis was to, with neutrality, explore the empirical utility of using the PTMF in this way.

Thesis Rationale and Aims

Having positioned this thesis within the context of the IPS, the related prison violence evidence-base, and the theoretical framework of the PTMF, it is important to clarify its rationale and aims.

As indicated in the previous section, this thesis aimed to explore the empirical utility of the PTMF. Despite its largely positive reception, the PTMF remains a relatively new and novel framework, and as such warrants empirical exploration. Given the considerable attention it has received within the field of forensic psychology, empirical exploration within forensic contexts is essential. While existing theories of prison violence (e.g. importation and deprivation theory) have identified important risk factors for violence, they are each confined to singular levels (e.g. individual and environmental). Despite some recent attempts to integrate these levels (e.g. general strain theory), it has been argued that prisons are not necessarily unique environments which require unique theories to understand them, and that holistic theoretical frameworks can offer greater utility (Edgar et al., 2003; Steiner et al., 2014). Thus, this thesis adopted the PTMF to holistically understand the origins, experiences and expressions of serious violence in Irish prisons. In line with the values underpinning the PTMF, this thesis adopted a primarily qualitative

methodology, in order to appropriately and genuinely represent the voices of both prisoners and prison officers as key stakeholders. The voices of prison officers have been particularly absent from the existing literature. Having previously demonstrated the value of listening to these voices, this thesis paid due attention to the perspectives of prison officers, alongside prisoners. Throughout this thesis, much of the existing literature considered originates from England and Wales, just as the development of the NVRU has too been informed by this context. Though necessary in the absence of relevant Irish research, this evidence-base is not directly applicable to the Irish penal context, which has some marked differences (e.g. unique historical, political and cultural context, smaller prison network with lower rates of imprisonment and greater staff to prisoner ratios). This thesis contributes original, empirical research conducted within Irish prisons, thus advancing this evidence-base. Relatedly, it has been highlighted that much of what we know about the management of prison violence stems from inspectorial and evaluative work, and that more original, empirical research is necessary (Clare & Bottomley, 2001). This thesis, in containing three original, empirical studies, helps to fill this gap.

To conclude this first chapter, the over-arching aims of this thesis are as follows:

1. To explore the empirical utility of the PTMF. This aim is met by conducting a scoping review of the existing empirical PTMF literature (chapter two), and using the PTMF to inform data collection, data analysis, and the overall understandings of prisoners and prison officers in chapter four and chapter five, respectively.
2. To explore the experiences and perspectives of prisoners and prison officers under the previous VDP policy in the IPS. This aim is met through the qualitative study in chapter three.
3. To explore NVRU prisoners' self-understandings of the origins, experiences and expressions of their violent behaviour. This aim is met through the qualitative study in chapter four.
4. To explore NVRU prison officers' understandings of the origins, experiences and expressions of the violent behaviour of the prisoners with whom they work. This aim is met through the qualitative study in chapter five.

Chapter 2: Preface

The first, introductory chapter of this thesis set the scene of what is to follow. It introduced the Irish Prison Service (IPS), the organisation within which this thesis is rooted. It presented the issue of violence in Irish prisons, and the various ways in which this has been managed to date. It summarised the relevant prison violence literature, which will be presented in more detail in each chapter which follows. It outlined the Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF) as the theoretical framework underpinning this thesis. Finally, it concluded with stating the rationale for this thesis, and its related aims.

Chapter two below presents the first study of this thesis. This study involved a scoping review of the relevant empirical evidence-base which has emerged in the five years since the publication of the PTMF in January 2018.

Chapter two is an adaptation of an article which has been submitted for publication in an academic journal:

Gallagher, O., Regan, E.E., & O'Reilly, G. (2023b). *The power threat meaning framework 5 years on: A scoping review of the emergent empirical literature* [Manuscript submitted for publication]. School of Psychology, University College Dublin.

The authors of this submission had the following roles:

Orla Gallagher (lead author) was involved in the inception of the idea of the study, designing the study, collecting and analysing data, writing the study, and submitting it for publication.

Dr Emma Regan (second author) was involved in the inception of the idea of the study, designing the study, providing feedback throughout the data collection, data analysis and writing processes, and providing supervision for the overall study.

Prof. Gary O'Reilly (third author) was involved in the inception of the idea of the study, designing the study, providing feedback throughout the data collection, data analysis and writing processes, and providing supervision for the overall study.

Chapter 2: The Power Threat Meaning Framework 5 Years On - A Scoping Review of the Emergent Empirical Literature

Abstract

Background: Since its initial publication in January 2018, the Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF) has received considerable interest and uptake. However, there have been no attempts to review the scope of the relevant emergent empirical literature to date.

Objectives: This scoping review aimed to fill this gap by identifying and synthesising: (1) all empirical research conducted since January 2018 which directly and intentionally utilised the PTMF in their methodologies, (2) the characteristics of each of these studies, (3) the different ways in which these studies utilised the PTMF in their methodologies, and (4) the key findings of these studies.

Method: This scoping review was conducted in line with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) scoping review extension ([PRISMA-ScR]). Following systematic searches of academic databases and the grey literature, 17 studies which met eligibility criteria were included in the review. These papers were subject to critical appraisal, data charting, and narrative synthesis.

Results: This scoping review identified five different uses of the PTMF: (1) PTMF-informed data collection, (2) PTMF-informed data analysis, (3) Experiences of/views on the PTMF, (4) PTMF-informed formulation, and (5) PTMF-informed intervention. This primarily qualitative evidence-base has demonstrated the merits of utilising the PTMF in empirical research across a diverse range of disciplines, settings, and populations. However, this heterogeneity also presents challenges in attempting to synthesise, and draw meaningful conclusions from, this evidence-base.

Conclusions: Implications for research (e.g. importance of coherent and consistent approach to research) and practice/policy (e.g. professional training, collaboration, service-level barriers) are considered. This scoping review ends with a reflection on the state of the evidence after the first five years of the PTMF's lifespan, and ideas for what the next five years should entail.

Introduction

In 2013, the British Psychological Society's (BPS) Division of Clinical Psychology (DCP) published a position paper outlining their concerns regarding the dominance of the psychiatric diagnostic model in relation to the classification of human behaviours and experiences. Recommendation three of this paper was to develop an alternative multi-factorial and contextual approach, in collaboration with service-users. The DCP funded a project to this effect (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018a). In January 2018, the outcome of this project – the Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF) – was published. The PTMF consists of a main document (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018a) and summary document (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b), both of which were lead-authored by Dr Lucy Johnstone and Prof. Mary Boyle, and received contributions from numerous additional authors with diverse professional backgrounds, including experts by experience.

The stated aim of the PTMF is to provide a holistic framework for identifying patterns in the origins, experiences and expressions of emotional distress and troubled/troubling behaviour. The framework of thinking presented by the PTMF is intended to differ from the dominant psychiatric diagnostic model of such phenomena. Where the latter tends to focus on pathologising human experiences and behaviours, in line with the medical roots of psychiatry, the former aims to position human experiences and behaviours within the various biological, psychological and social contexts which surround them (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018a).

In order to do so, the PTMF contains four core concepts, which can be translated into four core questions: (1) power – what has happened to you?, (2) threat – how did it affect you?, (3) meaning – what sense did you make of it?, and (4) threat response – what did you have to do to survive? The PTMF provides numerous examples of each of these components, with various combinations provisionally grouped into seven general patterns: (1) identities, (2) surviving rejection, entrapment, and invalidation, (3) surviving disrupted attachments and adversities as a child/young person, (4) surviving separation and identity confusion, (5) surviving defeat, entrapment, disconnection, and loss, (6) surviving social exclusion, shame, and coercive power, and (7) surviving single threats (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018a).

Since its publication in January 2018, the PTMF has received a considerable response, with both favourable and critical positions emerging. In a reflection on the first year of the PTMF, the PTMF authors noted that the PTMF stimulated interest and debate in a way they could not have foreseen, with a dozen blog posts related to the PTMF appearing within a fortnight of its publication (Johnstone et al., 2019). This trend has continued, with the framework having been

cited over 100 times to date on Google Scholar (Harper & Cromby, 2022). The PTMF continues to be implemented in research and practice with various populations, across various settings, and within various disciplines⁵. The PTMF has thus far been translated from English into four additional languages, and the authors have been invited to deliver training and talks worldwide (Harper & Cromby, 2022; Johnstone et al., 2019; Ramsden, 2019). Criticisms of the PTMF have also been emerging, ranging from concerns regarding the evidence-base upon which the PTMF has been built; querying if the general patterns proposed by the PTMF truly differ from diagnostic labels; and accusing the PTMF of having ablest undertones and socio-political motivations. Inexcusably, some critical commentary, particularly on social media, has constituted hostile, abusive and sexist behaviour (Harper & Cromby, 2022; Johnstone et al., 2019; Ramsden, 2019). The divisive impact of the PTMF thus far perhaps reflects its challenging yet important nature, as a modern development within psychological theory.

Despite this, interest in and uptake of the PTMF has continued to grow, particularly within the context of empirical research. For example, the 'Research and Publications' section of the PTMF webpage currently lists 37 completed empirical publications and 12 ongoing research projects⁶. To the authors' knowledge, this is the first paper to conduct a scoping review of this literature. We note that Milligan (2022) recently conducted a review of some PTMF literature. However, Milligan's (2022) review focused on the various literature (including empirical and commentary) documenting the different ways in which the PTMF has been used by educational psychologists and other researchers and practitioners within and beyond psychology. The current scoping review focuses specifically on the empirical literature. Furthermore, reflecting our differing aims and approaches, while all 15 studies included by Milligan (2022) were also identified by the current scoping review, only three were selected for inclusion following eligibility screening and full-text review. The current scoping review also included a number of studies written since the publication of Milligan's review in 2022, reflecting the rapid growth of literature in this area. While this trend is promising, it is important to remain cognisant of the relative recency of the PTMF's introduction. Indeed, the PTMF authors themselves emphasise the provisional nature of the framework, which they envisage developing in line with the emergent

⁵ See *Clinical Psychology Forum* Special Issue (313) on PTMF for examples: <https://explore.bps.org.uk/content/bpscpf/1/313>

⁶ <https://www.bps.org.uk/power-threat-meaning/research-publications>

literature. Thus, five years on from the initial publication of the PTMF, a scoping review of the emergent empirical literature is timely.

In summary, the current scoping review is both necessary and important considering the relative novelty of the PTMF and the recency of its publication, the rapid growth of its emergent evidence-base in this short time, and the lack of an existing scoping review in this area. Broadly, this scoping review aimed to identify the scope of the emergent empirical PTMF literature since its initial publication in January 2018. Specifically, it aimed to identify and synthesise:

1. All empirical research conducted since January 2018 which directly and intentionally utilised the PTMF in their methodologies
2. The characteristics of each of these studies, including literature types, disciplines, aims, settings, participants, methodologies, methods of data collection, and approaches to data analysis
3. The different ways in which these studies have utilised the PTMF in their methodologies
4. The key findings of these studies

Method

This scoping review was conducted in line with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) scoping review extension ([PRISMA-ScR]; Tricco et al., 2018). Due to time constraints, no formal protocol was registered in advance of conducting this study. This scoping review aimed to identify, include and integrate all primary research utilising the PTMF, since its publication in January 2018. Specific eligibility criteria, and their respective rationale, are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

Eligibility Criteria and Rationale for Study Selection

Characteristic	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria	Rationale
Literature type	Empirical literature including primary studies of any methodology and design	Commentary literature (e.g. clinical guidelines, reflections, explanation/elaboration of PTMF concepts, opinion)	Scoping review aims to identify empirical uses of PTMF only; Quality of commentary literature variable
Publication status	Published and unpublished	Conference materials (e.g. abstracts, poster)	Manuscripts and theses likely subject to degree of quality assurance

	manuscripts, including theses	presentations, oral presentations)	(e.g. peer-review, university assessments); Conference materials subject to less quality assurance, less likely to contain all relevant information
Use of PTMF	Direct and intentional use of the PTMF in methodology	Superficial inclusion of PTMF in literature (e.g. brief mention of PTMF in introduction/discussion)	Scoping review aims to identify empirical uses of PTMF only
Discipline	Any discipline/ field of study	N/A	Necessary to include all disciplines to establish scope of PTMF research
Focus	Any topic/ outcomes/ experiences	N/A	Necessary to include all topics to establish scope of PTMF research
Setting	Any settings	N/A	Necessary to include all settings to establish scope of PTMF research
Population	Any population	N/A	Necessary to include all populations to establish scope of PTMF research
Location	Any location	N/A	Necessary to include all locations to establish scope of PTMF research
Language	English only	Languages other than English	Authors only fluent in English

Searching

Relevant academic databases (Social Sciences Citation Index, ProQuest, Academic Search Complete, PsycINFO) were searched using the following search string: “Power Threat Meaning Framework” OR “PTM Framework” OR “PTMF”. Searches were limited to titles, abstracts and keywords. No limits were set on dates of coverage, and all identified articles were published following the PTMF’s initial publication in January 2018. All searches were conducted

on July 12th, 2023. Methods of obtaining relevant grey literature included searching the research and publications section of the PTMF webpage, contacting the PTMF lead authors, and utilising personal knowledge and contacts.

Screening

References identified by academic database searches were managed using Covidence software⁷, and references identified by grey literature searching were managed using EndNote software⁸. Upon importation, Covidence automatically detected and removed 110 duplicate references. A further 14 duplicates were manually detected and removed by the lead author, in both Covidence ($n = 4$) and EndNote ($n = 10$). The lead author screened the titles and abstracts of the remaining 156 references against the eligibility criteria outlined in Table 1, with 130 references excluded for irrelevance, and 26 references sought for retrieval. Three references could not be retrieved by the lead author, as they were part of ongoing doctoral research projects which had not yet reached completion. The lead author reviewed the full-texts of the remaining 23 references against the eligibility criteria, excluding eight references which did not utilise the PTMF in their methodologies. Additionally, the lead author identified that two of the doctoral theses meeting inclusion criteria contained four empirical studies which warranted individual consideration. A final sample of 17 studies were included in the scoping review.

Data Charting

A data charting form was developed using Microsoft Excel, and included the following items: (1) manuscript characteristics (authors, lead author contact details, country, publication date, funding source, declared conflicts of interest, citation details); (2) study characteristics (discipline, research question, setting, participant recruitment, sample characteristics, study design, methodology, use of the PTMF, data collection, data analysis); and (3) study results (outcomes of interest, key findings). The lead author applied the data charting form to all studies, and tabulated all relevant data in Microsoft Excel⁹. It was not necessary to obtain or confirm any data from original investigators.

Critical Appraisal

⁷ <https://www.covidence.org/>

⁸ <https://endnote.com/>

⁹ <https://www.microsoft.com/en-ie/microsoft-365/excel>

The PRISMA-ScR protocol notes that the critical appraisal of included studies is optional when conducting scoping reviews, as they are typically more concerned with providing an overview of the existing evidence regardless of methodological quality or risk of bias (Tricco et al., 2018). However, the inclusion of critical appraisal processes was deemed important in this scoping review, considering the relative novelty and recency of the PTMF; the limited empirical research generated since its publication five years ago; the comparative and considerable volume of commentary literature which has emerged in this time; the diverse foci and variable degrees of quality of such literature; and the controversial impact the PTMF has had within and beyond the field of psychology. As such, the following critical appraisal tools were used: (1) the Specialist Unit for Review Evidence ([SURE], 2018a) checklist for qualitative studies; (2) the SURE (2018b) checklist for case series studies; (3) the SURE (2018c) checklist for cross-sectional studies; (4) the SURE (2018d) checklist for experimental studies; (5) the SURE (2018e) checklist for systematic reviews; and (6) the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool ([MMAT], Hong et al., 2018). Critical appraisal tools were only used to highlight the quality of included studies, and were not used to exclude any studies from the review.

Data Synthesis

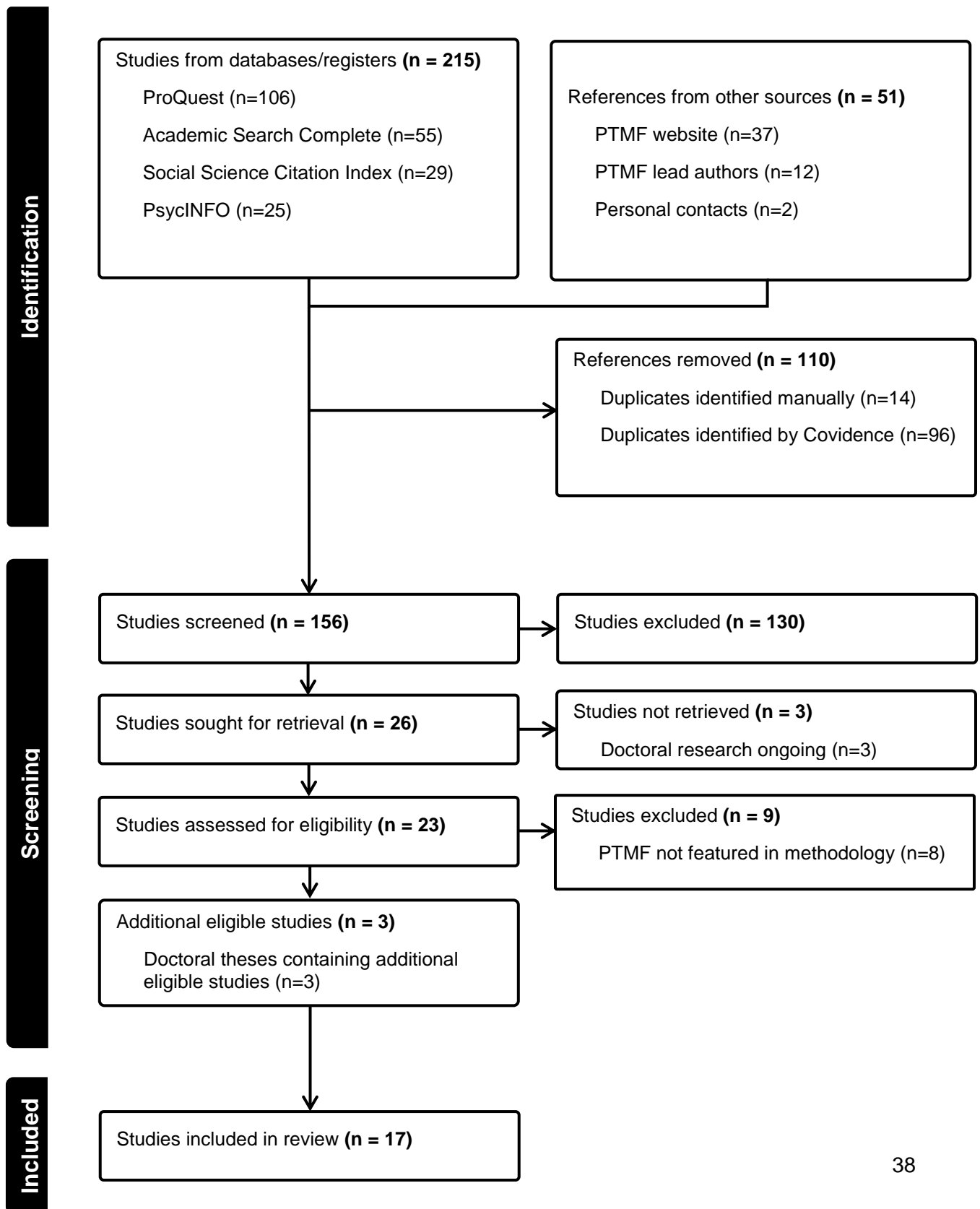
Given the diverse nature of this scoping review, narrative synthesis was used to organise, summarise, synthesise and interpret included studies, in order to ‘tell their story’ (Popay et al., 2006).

Results

A total of 17 studies were included in this scoping review. A PRISMA-ScR flow-chart illustrating the selection process is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

PRISMA Flow Chart



Study Characteristics

An overview of the characteristics of included studies is presented in Table 2. Studies had diverse foci, and were conducted across a variety of settings with a variety of populations. Most studies were reported in published manuscripts ($n = 10$), with one reported in a manuscript currently submitted for publication, and six studies reported within three different doctoral theses. Most studies were conducted within the discipline of psychology, with the sub-disciplines of clinical psychology ($n = 7$), forensic psychology ($n = 3$) and educational psychology ($n = 1$) represented. Three studies focused on mental health more broadly, and three studies focused on education.

Studies varied in how they utilised the PTMF in their methodologies. Six studies used the PTMF to inform data analysis (e.g. PTMF-informed coding templates), and four studies used the PTMF to inform both data analysis and collection (e.g. PTMF-informed interview questions). Three studies explored experiences of using the PTMF and/or views on the PTMF, one study tested a PTMF-informed formulation, and three studies examined PTMF-informed interventions.

Most studies adopted qualitative methodologies ($n = 13$), with remaining studies adopting quantitative ($n = 3$) and mixed ($n = 1$) methodologies. Most qualitative studies collected data using semi-structured interviews only ($n = 10$), with one additionally incorporating a focus group, and one additionally incorporating arts-based activities. One qualitative study collected data during intervention activities. The mixed methods study utilised semi-structured interviews and psychometric scales. Quantitative studies collected data using surveys ($n = 2$) and service records ($n = 1$).

Most qualitative studies utilised thematic analysis (TA), including inductive TA ($n = 2$), deductive TA ($n = 1$), and combined inductive and deductive approaches ($n = 8$). One study did not specify which type of TA they used, and two studies did not specify what kind of analyses they conducted at all. All quantitative studies produced descriptive and inferential statistics ($n = 4$).

Study Quality

The critical appraisal tools selected for this scoping review do not involve calculating quality scores, but rather flag and summarise any identified quality issues. Furthermore, no studies were excluded from this scoping review on the basis of quality. All critical appraisals are available in Appendix A. Table 3 presents the key findings of each study, alongside the

outcomes of their respective critical appraisals. Of the studies which were appraised using SURE critical appraisal tools ($n = 16$), 14 met most quality criteria and were deemed to be reliable and useful. Concerns were raised about two studies (Barnwell et al. 2020; Reis et al., 2019), which contained limited methodological and analytical detail. It is noted that both studies were published in the same periodical (Clinical Psychology Forum), which limits manuscripts to a maximum of 3,500 words¹⁰. It was concluded that in their current form, the reliability and utility of these studies were limited. The final study appraised using the MMAT met most quality criteria and was deemed to be reliable and useful.

Narrative Synthesis

As demonstrated above, the included studies were largely heterogeneous, and multiple approaches to narrative synthesis were possible. While the PTMF was adopted as the underpinning theoretical framework in all studies, the ways in which these studies employed the PTMF in their methodologies varied. Thus, the included studies are organised according to these varying strategies, including: (1) PTMF-informed data collection, (2) PTMF-informed data analysis, (3) Experiences of/views on the PTMF, (4) PTMF-informed formulation, and (5) PTMF-informed intervention. Key findings are also presented in Table 3.

PTMF-informed Data Collection and Data Analysis

This section details four studies which used the PTMF to inform both their data collection and data analyses.

In their qualitative study with prisoners ($n = 3$) residing in the National Violence Reduction Unit (NVRU) in the Irish Prison Service (IPS), Gallagher et al. (2023a) used the PTMF to explore prisoners' self-understandings of the origins, experiences and expressions of their violence. Prisoners participated in face-to-face semi-structured interviews, with questions developed from the core PTMF concepts of power, threat, meaning and threat response. The reflexive TA of these accounts adopted a hybrid inductive (i.e. data-driven) and deductive (i.e. theory-driven) approach. This began with the latter, which involved the development of a codebook of a priori codes extracted from the PTMF, followed by the former, which resulted in the identification of additional, novel elements. This process resulted in six themes (power, threat, meaning, threat response, function of threat response, moderating factors), which

¹⁰ <https://explore.bps.org.uk/content/bpscpf>

contained 35 sub-themes and 101 codes. While most themes, sub-themes and codes contained a priori PTMF elements, the authors note some novel elements of particular relevance to this sample, including: (1) the imposition/adoption of violent identities, (2) feeling hated, (3) a sense of normality in relation to adverse experiences, (4) identifying the positives out of adverse experiences, (5) feelings of tension and fearlessness as additional threat responses, (6) the use of violence as a learned survival strategy, (7) substance (ab)use as an exacerbating and ameliorating factor, and (8) self-belief and hope for the future as additional ameliorating factors.

Gallagher et al. (2024) applied the same methodology to a sample of prison officers working in the NVRU ($n = 13$), aiming instead to explore their understandings of the prisoners with whom they worked. The authors re-identified the same six themes, this time containing 39 sub-themes and 167 codes. Again, while most themes, sub-themes and codes contained a priori PTMF elements, additional novel elements included: (1) the imposition/adoption of both violent and macho identities, (2) feeling conflicted about experiences, (3) a negativity bias in thinking about experiences, (4) a sense of normality in relation to adverse experiences, (5) antisocial behaviour, bravado, egotism, tension, hatred, resentment and emotional sensitivity as additional threat responses, (6) difficulty in identifying the function of violence for some prisoners, (7) the lack of pro-social alternatives to violence for some prisoners, (8) substance (ab)use as an exacerbating factor, and (9) hope for the future as an ameliorating factor.

Leeming et al. (2022) qualitatively explored the experiences and challenges of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions for people living in the community with long-term mental health problems, in a local authority area in the North of England ($n = 15$). Semi-structured telephone interviews contained questions framed by the PTMF, focusing on what had happened to participants during lockdown, how this had affected them, the meaning of this, and what they did to cope. These accounts were similarly analysed using a hybrid approach to TA, but inductive analysis was conducted prior to deductive analysis. This resulted in the development of three themes, each containing a number of sub-themes: (1) threats to the many threads of recovery (incl. threats against physical wellbeing, lived time, lived space, connections with others, meaningful roles), (2) facing threat from a disempowered position (incl. material and financial restrictions, limited access to valued roles, limitations to embodied power and mobility, legacy of previous abusive relationships and trauma, helplessness/dependence in relation to services, technological disenfranchisement), (3) surviving in the face of threat (incl. maintaining human connections, managing time, self-soothing strategies).

In their qualitative study, Paradiso & Quinlan (2021) explored the experiences of informal mental health caregivers in Australia ($n = 10$). Semi-structured interviews, conducted via telephone and video-call technologies, were guided by the PTMF. Participants were asked about the operation of power in the context of their caregiving roles, the kinds of threats this posed, the meaning of these situations and experiences, and what they had to do to survive. Participants were provided with definitions of these core concepts prior to each question, to ensure that they understood each question in the context of the framework. These accounts were analysed using a purely deductive approach to TA, in line with the authors' constructionist positionality. This resulted in four themes, containing 14 sub-themes: (1) power (incl. power dynamics in the caregiving role, the power of nurturing, institutional barriers, empowerment through advocacy), (2) threat (incl. mental health difficulties, grief/loss, disconnect from community), (3) threat response (incl. seeking interpersonal support, self-care strategies, use of coping strategies, regaining control), and (4) meaning (incl. connection to care receiver, growing as a person, giving back).

PTMF-informed Data Analysis

While the four studies in the previous section used the PTMF to inform both data collection and analyses, this section details six studies which used the PTMF to inform data analysis only.

Through the multiple studies of their doctoral thesis, Devenney qualitatively explored various stakeholders' experiences of and views on school-refusal within second-level education in Ireland. To first explore the views of education professionals ($n = 17$), Devenney (2021a) conducted semi-structured telephone interviews. These accounts were analysed using a hybrid inductive and deductive approach to TA. Like Leeming et al. (2022), inductive analysis was conducted prior to deductive analysis. This resulted in five themes and four sub-themes: (1) emotional distress in school refusal, (2) socio-economic status, family and resources, (3) challenges in academic achievement and performance, (4) strained relationships in school and home environments (incl. teacher-student relations, family and school relations), and (5) school responses to school refusal (incl. school policies and school refusals, challenges in working with support services).

Devenney's next study (2021b) qualitatively explored parents' experiences of supporting their child through school refusal through semi-structured face-to-face interviews. Following the same analytic approach as the previous study, Devenney identified four themes and two sub-

themes: (1) young peoples' experiences relating to school refusal (incl. experiences of emotional distress, adversities in the home and school environments), (2) parental challenges in accessing support services, (3) impact of academic demands on families and young people, and (4) coping with school refusal – prospects for the future.

Devenney's final study (2021c) qualitatively explored young peoples' experiences of school refusal using narrative arts-based sessions, which involved the young person developing three art pieces (self-portrait, relational map, timeline), and discussing these with the researcher. These discussions were audio-recorded, and analysed following the same approach as the previous two studies. This resulted in four themes: (1) experiences and responses to emotional distress, (2) adverse effects of life circumstances on school experiences, (3) school characteristics and the constraints of academic pressure, and (4) moving beyond school refusal.

In their qualitative study, Newton et al. (2022) explored the impact of poor quality housing during the COVID-19 pandemic on private renters in the North of England ($n = 40$). Following the completion of semi-structured telephone interviews, Newton et al. adopted a hybrid approach to TA, first conducting inductive analysis, and then deductively amending these codes in line with the PTMF. The final result was four themes and nine sub-themes: (1) social and material stressors and threats associated with COVID-19 lockdown (incl. increased exposure to poor housing conditions, increased financial concerns, loneliness and isolation, magnified sense of relentless and ongoing stress, reduced scope for positive behaviours and coping), (2) limited power to deal with stresses and threats (incl. feelings of helplessness and lack of control), (3) anxiety and depression as a survival response to current stresses and threats, and (4) coping strategies (incl. spatial strategies, social strategies, psychological strategies, taking control).

Jagasia et al. (2022) qualitatively explored the experiences of self-identified adult children of narcissistic parents living in Australia. Six participants completed semi-structured video-call interviews. These accounts were analysed using TA, though the authors did not specify which approach to TA they employed. Nonetheless, the PTMF was used to inform this analysis, which resulted in one overarching theme (journey of healing), four main themes, and seven sub-themes: (1) 'it's a brutal way to live' (incl. 'home was a scary place', 'it was under the radar'), (2) 'a way forward: it was them and not me!' (incl. 'it wasn't my fault', 'nothing's changed but I'm a lot stronger now'), (3) 'I see the tentacles of how deep and far and wide it goes' (incl. 'it never leaves you, you carry the baggage always', 'it affects my relationships', the broken system), and (4) the lost ideal (e.g. loss and grief for childhood).

Barnwell et al. (2020)¹¹ qualitatively explored experiences of climate-related distress amongst members of the South African platinum mining community of Rustenburg. Ten community members participated in semi-structured interviews, and four of these members further participated in a focus group. The authors did not specify what type of analysis they used to generate their results, but presented two findings: (1) perceived environmental threats (incl. the extractive industry, climate change, water scarcity, environmental pollution, biodiversity loss), and (2) asymmetrical power dynamics (incl. racial injustice, legal power, discourse power, social power).

Experiences of/Views on the PTMF

This section details three studies which explored psychology professionals' experiences of using, and views on, the PTMF.

In the second study of their doctoral thesis, Milligan (2022) qualitatively explored educational psychologists' (both trainee and qualified) experiences of using the PTMF in their work ($n = 7$). Educational psychologists participated in semi-structured video-call interviews, and their accounts were analysed using inductive TA. This resulted in two overarching themes (it takes a village to raise a child, and the individual matters) containing seven main themes and three sub-themes: (1) context as an under-acknowledged cause, (2) need for collaboration, (3) striving for professional identity, (4) the power and influence of educational psychologists is constrained (incl. remote work just isn't the same, time is a luxury educational psychologists don't have), (5) empowered individuals can be agents of change, (6) importance of storytelling (incl. diagnosis as a contentious part of the story), and (7) it's easier for individuals to change than systems.

Travers (2022) similarly explored the experiences of professionals using the PTMF in their work in their doctoral thesis, but instead focused on clinical psychologists working in adult mental health settings in the UK ($n = 11$). Travers qualitatively explored these experiences through semi-structured video-call interviews, and analysed these accounts using inductive TA, resulting in four themes and six sub-themes: (1) having an alternative framework of distress is valued, (2) PTMF enhances sense making (incl. PTMF invites reflections on power, a more meaningful perspective, PTMF facilitates more compassionate care), (3) systemic change

¹¹ Limited reliability and utility, see Appendix A.

needed to implement PTMF (incl. incompatibility with other systems, threat to the status quo, need for training and resources), and (4) working alongside other perspectives as key to influencing practice.

Raskin et al. (2022) also explored psychologists' views of the PTMF and other alternatives (International Classification of Disorders [ICD], Research Domain Criteria [RDoC], Psychodynamic Diagnostic Manual-2 [PDM], Operationalized Psychodynamic Diagnosis [OPD], Hierarchical Taxonomy of Psychopathology [HiTOP]), in comparison to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-5 (DSM-5). They did so quantitatively through the administration of an online survey, completed by 703 qualified psychologists registered as members of various relevant divisions of the American Psychological Association (APA). Responses were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. These revealed the following results: (1) 88.1% of participants used the DSM-5 directly/indirectly at least once per month, (2) most participants used the DSM-5 because it was required by third-party payers (62.32%) and/or to make a differential diagnosis (59.46%), (3) participants were generally dissatisfied with the DSM-5, (4) the main perceived advantage of the DSM-5 was its diagnostic codes, and the main perceived disadvantages were its application of medical labels to psychosocial problems, obscuring individual differences, and disagreement over what categories belong in the manual, (5) on average, participants felt that the DSM-5 had not affected diagnosis of psychologists, (6) participants supported the development of alternatives to DSM-5, (7) participants were unfamiliar with most alternatives to DSM-5, particularly the PTMF, (8) participants indicated a significant lack of support for alternatives, but did not prefer the DSM-5 over these alternatives, and (9) participants agreed that the DSM-5 relies too heavily on medical semantics and too little has been done to promote a scientific alternative to the DSM-5.

PTMF-informed Formulation

Only one study using the PTMF to inform formulation was identified. Seery et al. (2021) aimed to investigate whether presenting psychosis in terms of a schizophrenia diagnosis (derived from DSM-5) versus a formulation (informed by the PTMF) would affect stigma and treatment attitudes in the general public. They did so quantitatively, using an experimental case vignette of a fictional, gender-neutral individual - 'Charlie'. 351 members of the general public completed an online survey where they were randomly allocated to either the diagnosis or formulation condition, were presented with the corresponding vignette, and then completed psychometric measures of desired social distance (Social Distance Scale [SCS]), negative

attributions (Attribution Questionnaire [AQ-9]), mental help seeking attitudes (Mental Help Seeking Attitudes Scale [MHSAS]), and attitudes towards treatment options (Attitudes Towards Treatment Options Scale [ATTOS]). Responses were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results revealed no impact of condition on AQ-9 scores (i.e. negative attributions), MHSAS scores (i.e. mental help seeking attitudes), and ATTOS scores (i.e. attitudes towards treatment options). While medical care was rated as the least helpful treatment option, participants in the diagnosis condition perceived it to be slightly more helpful than those in the formulation condition. Finally, participants in the diagnosis condition scored higher on the SCS, indicating a greater desire for social distance.

PTMF-informed Interventions

This section details three studies which developed psychological interventions informed by the PTMF.

Nikospachos et al. (2023) examined the impact of the introduction of a trauma-informed care (TIC) model in a mental health unit in a North London hospital on incidences of self-harm, restraint and seclusion. The TIC model, introduced to the setting from July 2018 onwards, comprised of PTMF formulation and psychological stabilisation training for staff. PTMF team formulation training was delivered to the inpatient multi-disciplinary team (MDT) in a weekly one-hour meeting. Meetings were facilitated by senior MDT members who were designated as 'TIC champions'. Psychological stabilisation training involved the delivery of a stabilisation manual, comprising one introductory session and 10 intervention sessions focusing on self-compassion, soothing and safety, mindfulness, effective communication, breathing and relaxation, food and sleep, distraction and distancing, valued activity, grounding, and maintaining wellbeing. This training was similarly facilitated by and delivered to MDT staff in weekly one-hour sessions. Nikospachos et al. (2023) quantitatively examined the impact of the TIC model by extracting and comparing incidences of self-harm, restraint and seclusion recorded on the hospital's incident reporting system (Datix) before (July 2017 – June 2018) and after (July 2018 – June 2022) the introduction of the TIC model. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, and revealed that statistically significant reductions in incidences of self-harm (55.91%, very large effect size), seclusion (28.66%, large effect size), and restraint (19.82%, medium effect size) could be observed following the introduction of the TIC model.

In their doctoral thesis, Sapsford (2021) designed a brief intervention informed by the PTMF, and examined its utility, feasibility and outcomes with an adult experiencing multiple

complex needs. The intervention took the form of a workbook, which was delivered in six 45-minute sessions which introduced the PTMF, and explored the role of power, threat, meaning, threat responses and strengths in the individual's life, concluding with the narrative development of the individual's story. In line with a single exploratory case study design, Sapsford (2021) delivered the intervention via telephone to one individual who was experiencing multiple complex needs, including homelessness and a history of offending. Sapsford (2021) evaluated the intervention using mixed methods. The participant completed three psychometric measures of agency (Sense of Agency Scale [SoAS]), empowerment (Empowerment Scale [ES]) and wellbeing (Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale [WEMWBS]) at three time-points – pre-intervention, mid-intervention, and post-intervention. Qualitative data was generated from the audio-recording of each session, the completion of the Helpful Aspects of Therapy (HAT) form by the participant after each session, and a semi-structured change interview conducted within two weeks of the final intervention session.

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, and revealed the following results: (1) a positive significant reliable change in the power, optimism and anger subscales of the ES at the end of the intervention, (2) a slight increase in positive agency and slight decrease in negative agency on the SoAS at the end of the intervention, and (3) no change on the WEMWBS at the end of the intervention. Qualitative data were analysed using a hybrid inductive and deductive approach to TA. This data identified a number of therapeutic processes at play during the intervention, including (1) thinking about experiences from new perspectives, (2) connecting to past experiences can be helpful, (3) having the opportunity to talk through experiences, (4) positive clinician-client alliance. Extraneous variables were also identified, including the impact of telephone technology and interruptions; suitability of the individual's environment for therapeutic intervention; and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The change interview resulted in seven changes to the intervention workbook, in order to enhance its acceptability and feasibility: (1) disclaimer regarding discussing upsetting life events added to first session, (2) a space for participant notes at the bottom of each session, (3) changes to the format of the power session, (4) changes to the format of the threat session, (5) changes to the format of the meanings session, (6) changes to the format of the threat responses session, (7) changes to the 'your story' session. Contents of the strengths session remained unchanged due to positive feedback.

Reis et al. (2019)¹¹ described the results of a PTMF-informed group intervention – the 'surviving prison' group - delivered to prisoners on the London Pathways Unit (LPU) – a

treatment and progression unit at HMP Brixton. Seven men completed the group, which comprised of eight 90-minute sessions jointly delivered by a forensic psychologist, an assistant psychologist and an LPU prison officer. Throughout the group, and through the lens of the PTMF, participants explored (1) initial experiences of long-term imprisonment, (2) the impact of long-term imprisonment, and (3) individual narratives. For the first and second of these topics, participants were provided with a piece of paper containing the core questions of the PTMF, and asked to write down their answers. Participants discussed their responses within the group, and the facilitators organised these thematically on a board. For the third topic, participants were encouraged to integrate their discussions into an individual narrative using the question 'what is your story?', which could be shared with the group visually, verbally, or in written form. The authors did not specify their approach to qualitative analysis, but reported a number of themes. In relation to their experiences of long-term imprisonment, participants discussed the most difficult elements of imprisonment (incl. trust, power structures, uncertainty, isolation, failure), their biggest challenges in prison (incl. age, change, being judged, fear), how they make sense of their sentence (incl. denial, loss of hope, feeling bad inside, worry about the ability to cope with sentence), and how they make sense of still being in prison (incl. own behaviours, change is a conscious choice). Further exploration using the PTMF confirmed the presence of many a priori PTMF elements in the experiences of participants, including power (incl. power by force, legal, social, ideological, relational), threat (incl. bereavement, loss, abandonment, injustice, powerlessness, against identity/self-esteem), meaning (incl. anger, it's a game, uncertainty, vulnerability), and threat responses (incl. withdrawal, self-harm, panic, making your own rules, fighting the system, protesting, drug dealing, denial of offence, violence). Participants identified threat against sense of self as an additional novel element.

Table 2*Characteristics of Included Studies*

Citation	Literature Type	Discipline	Focus	Use of PTMF	Participants	Methodology	Data Collection	Data Analysis
Gallagher 2023a Ireland	Published manuscript	Forensic psychology	Prisoners' self-understandings of violence	Data collection & analysis	3 male prisoners M age=28.33 (SD=2.31)	Qualitative	Interviews	Inductive & deductive thematic analysis
Gallagher 2024 Ireland	Unpublished manuscript	Forensic psychology	Prison officers' understandings of prisoners' violence	Data collection & analysis	9 male & 4 female prison officers age range = 30-46	Qualitative	Interviews	Inductive & deductive thematic analysis
Seery 2021 Ireland	Published manuscript	Clinical psychology	Influence of diagnosis vs formulation on attitudes towards psychosis	Formulation	110 male, 225 female, 9 non-binary & 4 undisclosed members of general public M age = 29.16 (SD=9.69)	Quantitative	Survey	Descriptive & inferential statistical analyses
Devenney 2021a Ireland	Doctoral thesis	Education	Education professionals' perspectives on school refusal	Analysis	8 male & 9 female education professionals	Qualitative	Interviews	Inductive & deductive thematic analysis
Devenney 2021b Ireland	Doctoral thesis	Education	Parents' experiences of child school refusal	Analysis	1 male & 9 female parents	Qualitative	Interviews	Inductive & deductive thematic analysis
Devenney 2021c Ireland	Doctoral thesis	Education	Young peoples' experiences of school refusal	Analysis	5 female young people age range = 15-19	Qualitative	Interviews & arts-based activities	Inductive & deductive thematic analysis
Nikospachos 2023 UK	Published manuscript	Clinical psychology	Influence of trauma-informed care on self-harm,	Intervention	1,201 episodes of inpatient care with males &	Quantitative	Service records	Descriptive & inferential

			restraint and seclusion			1,125 episodes with females 4 male & 11 female individuals in community M age = 54	Qualitative	Interviews	statistical analyses Inductive & deductive thematic analysis
Leeming 2022 UK	Published manuscript	Mental Health	Influence of COVID-19 pandemic on experiences of those with long-term mental health needs	Data collection & analysis					
Newton 2022 UK	Published manuscript	Mental Health	Impact of housing inequality on private renters during the COVID-19 pandemic	Analysis	16 male & 24 female private renters age range = 18-70	Qualitative	Interviews	Inductive & deductive thematic analysis	
Travers 2022 UK	Doctoral thesis	Clinical psychology	Clinical psychologists' experiences of using the PTMF in practice	Views on the PTMF	3 male & 8 female clinical psychologists modal age range = 30-39	Qualitative	Interviews	Inductive thematic analysis	
Milligan 2022 UK	Doctoral thesis	Educational psychology	Educational psychologists' experiences of using the PTMF in practice	Views on the PTMF	7 educational psychologists	Qualitative	Interviews	Inductive thematic analysis	
Sapsford 2021 UK	Doctoral thesis	Clinical psychology	Impact of PTMF-informed intervention on individual with multiple complex needs	Intervention	1 male with multiple complex needs age = 54	Mixed methods	Psychometric scales & interview	Descriptive & inferential statistical analyses; Inductive & deductive thematic analysis	

Reis 2019 UK	Published manuscript	Forensic psychology	Prisoners' experiences of a PTMF- informed intervention	Intervention	7 male prisoners age range = 44-58	Qualitative	Intervention activities	Not specified
Jagasia 2022 Australia	Published manuscript	Clinical psychology	Experiences of adult children of narcissists	Analysis	1 male & 5 female adult children of narcissists age range = 18-70	Qualitative	Interviews	Thematic analysis
Paradiso & Quinlan 2021 Australia	Published manuscript	Mental Health	Experiences of informal mental health caregivers	Data collection & analysis	3 male & 1 female caregivers age range = 23-70 years	Qualitative	Interviews	Deductive thematic analysis
Barnwell 2020 South Africa	Published manuscript	Clinical psychology	Experiences of climate-related distress	Analysis	7 male & 3 female community members M age = 58	Qualitative	Interviews & focus groups	Not specified
Raskin 2022 USA	Published manuscript	Clinical psychology	Psychologists' perspectives on the diagnostic model and it's alternatives	Views on the PTMF	344 male, 339 female, 3 non- binary & 17 undisclosed psychologists M age = 57.41 (SD=14.73)	Quantitative	Survey	Descriptive & inferential statistical analyses

Table 3*Key Findings and Critical Appraisals of Included Studies*

Citation	Key Findings	Critical Appraisal Tool	Critical Appraisal Outcome
Gallagher 2023a Ireland	6 main themes, 35 sub-themes, 101 codes Main theme 1: Power Main theme 2: Threat Main theme 3: Meaning Main theme 4: Threat response Main theme 5: Function of threat response Main theme 6: Moderating factors	SURE - Qualitative	Reliable & useful in current form
Gallagher 2024 Ireland	7 main themes, 39 sub-themes, 167 codes Main theme 1: Power Main theme 2: Threat Main theme 3: Meaning Main theme 4: Threat response Main theme 5: Function of threat response Main theme 6: Moderating factors	SURE - Qualitative	Reliable & useful in current form
Seery 2021 Ireland	No sig. difference between diagnosis vs formulation conditions on negative attributions, mental help-seeking attitudes, or attitudes towards treatment options Greater desire for social distance observed in diagnosis condition Medical care perceived as slightly more helpful in diagnosis condition	SURE - Experimental Studies	Reliable & useful in current form
Devenney 2021a Ireland	5 main themes, 4 sub-themes Main theme 1: Emotional distress in school refusal Main theme 2: Socioeconomic status, family & resources Main theme 3: Challenges in academic achievement & performance Main theme 4: Strained relationships in school & home environment Main theme 5: School responses to school refusal	SURE - Qualitative	Reliable & useful in current form
Devenney 2021b Ireland	4 main themes, 2 sub-themes Main theme 1: Young peoples' experiences relating to school refusal Main theme 2: Parental challenges in accessing support services Main theme 3: Impact of academic demands on families and young people Main theme 4: Coping with school refusal - prospects for the future	SURE - Qualitative	Reliable & useful in current form
Devenney 2021c Ireland	4 main themes Main theme 1: Experiences and responses to emotional distress	SURE - Qualitative	Reliable & useful in

	<p>Main theme 2: Adverse effects of life circumstances on school experiences</p> <p>Main theme 3: School characteristics and the constraints of academic pressure</p> <p>Main theme 4: Moving beyond school refusal</p>		current form
Nikospachos 2023 UK	<p>Sig. reduction (very large effect size) in self-harm incidents following introduction of TIC model</p> <p>Sig. reduction (large effect size) in seclusion incidents following introduction of TIC model</p> <p>Sig. reduction (medium effect size) in restraint incidents following introduction of TIC model</p>	SURE - Case Series	Reliable & useful in current form
Leeming 2022 UK	<p>3 main themes, 14 sub-themes</p> <p>Main theme 1: Threats to the many threads of recovery</p> <p>Main theme 2: Facing threat from a disempowered position</p> <p>Main theme 3: Surviving in the face of threat</p>	SURE - Qualitative	Reliable & useful in current form
Newton 2022 UK	<p>4 main themes, 9 sub-themes</p> <p>Main theme 1: Social & material stressors & threats associated with COVID-19 lockdown</p> <p>Main theme 2: Limited power to deal with stresses & threats</p> <p>Main theme 3: Anxiety & depression as a survival response to current stresses & threats</p> <p>Main theme 4: Coping strategies</p>	SURE - Qualitative	Reliable & useful in current form
Travers 2022 UK	<p>4 main themes, 6 sub-themes</p> <p>Main theme 1: Having an alternative framework of distress is valued</p> <p>Main theme 2: PTMF enhances sense making</p> <p>Main theme 3: Systemic change needed to implement PTMF</p> <p>Main theme 4: Working alongside other perspectives key to influencing practice</p>	SURE - Qualitative	Reliable & useful in current form
Milligan 2022 UK	<p>2 overarching themes, 7 main themes, 3 sub-themes</p> <p>Main theme 1: Context as an under-acknowledged cause</p> <p>Main theme 2: Need for collaboration</p> <p>Main theme 3: Striving for professional identity</p> <p>Main theme 4: Power & influence of educational psychologists' is constrained</p> <p>Main theme 5: Empowered individuals can be agents of change</p> <p>Main theme 6: Importance of storytelling</p> <p>Main theme 7: It's easier for individuals to change than systems</p>	SURE - Qualitative	Reliable & useful in current form
Sapsford 2021 UK	<p>Sig. improvement on Empowerment Scale post-intervention; Enhanced empowerment confirmed in qualitative narrative</p> <p>Slight improvement on Sense of Agency Scale post-intervention; Enhanced agency confirmed in qualitative narrative</p>	MMAT	Reliable & useful in current form

<p>Reis 2019 UK</p>	<p>No improvement on Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale post-intervention; Qualitative narrative indicates positive and negative impacts of intervention on wellbeing Therapeutic processes of intervention identified in qualitative narrative Extraneous variables influencing intervention identified in qualitative narrative Feasibility and acceptability of intervention workbook assessed during change interview; 7 changes made to workbook 3 main outcomes Main outcome 1: Initial exploration of the experience of long-term imprisonment Main outcome 2: Further exploration using the PTMF Main outcome 3: Exploring individual narratives</p>	<p>SURE - Qualitative</p>	<p>Reliability & utility limited in current form</p>
<p>Jagasia 2022 Australia</p>	<p>1 overarching theme, 4 main themes, 7 sub-themes Main theme 1: "It was a brutal way to live" Main theme 2: "A way forward: It was them not me!" Main theme 3: "I see the tentacles of how deep and far and wide it goes" Main theme 4: The lost ideal</p>	<p>SURE - Qualitative</p>	<p>Reliable & useful in current form</p>
<p>Paradiso & Quinlan 2021 Australia</p>	<p>4 main themes, 14 sub-themes Main theme 1: Power Main theme 2: Threat Main theme 3: Threat response Main theme 4: Meaning</p>	<p>SURE - Qualitative</p>	<p>Reliable & useful in current form</p>
<p>Barnwell 2020 South Africa</p>	<p>2 main themes Main theme 1: Perceived environmental threats Main theme 2: Examples of asymmetrical power dynamics</p>	<p>SURE - Qualitative</p>	<p>Reliability & utility limited in current form</p>
<p>Raskin 2022 USA</p>	<p>Large majority used DSM-5 directly/indirectly at least once per month Mostly used DSM-5 as required by third-party payers, and/or to help make a differential diagnosis Overall dissatisfaction with DSM-5 (small effect size); Levels of satisfaction varied by theoretical orientation Main advantage of DSM-5 is diagnostic codes Three main disadvantages of DSM-5 were application of medical labels to psychosocial problems, obscuring individual differences, & disagreement over categories belonging in DSM-5 DSM-5 did not affect psychologists' diagnoses; Varied by theoretical orientation Supportive of development of alternatives to DSM-5 (large effect size)</p>	<p>SURE - Cross-Sectional</p>	<p>Reliable & useful in current form</p>

Familiar with ICD, but not other alternatives,
particularly PTMF

Supportive of ICD, but not other alternatives,
particularly PTMF

DSM-5 relies too heavily on medical semantics & too
little has been done to develop scientific alternatives

Discussion

This scoping review aimed to identify and integrate the relevant empirical evidence-base which has emerged since the publication of the PTMF in January 2018. This scoping review identified 17 empirical studies meeting eligibility criteria. While these studies were largely heterogeneous in their characteristics and findings, they all intentionally and directly utilised the PTMF in their methodologies. They did so in five main ways: (1) PTMF-informed data collection, (2) PTMF-informed data analysis, (3) exploring experiences of/views on the PTMF, (4) evaluating a PTMF-informed formulation, and (5) evaluating PTMF-informed interventions. The characteristics and key findings of each study are described in detail in the results section of this review. Here, we integrate the learnings from these studies to identify potential implications for research, practice and policy.

Implications

Research

The 17 studies included in this scoping review were conducted across a variety of disciplines (e.g. clinical psychology, forensic psychology, mental health, education) and with a variety of populations (e.g. prison officers, prisoners, psychology professionals, service-users, general public). The diversity observed here perhaps reflects the holistic focus of the PTMF, which despite being developed within the field of clinical psychology, has clearly resonated in a variety of settings. Although a notable strength of the framework, this diversity also contributes to a largely heterogeneous evidence-base, which is difficult to meaningfully synthesise and interpret. As such, despite a surprising volume of relevant PTMF research emerging within the first five years of its publication, the conclusions which can be drawn from this diverse evidence are limited.

The evidence-base identified by this scoping review certainly has merit, and the inclusion of the PTMF appeared to offer value to researchers and/or participants. Five years on from the

publication of the PTMF, to have a clear understanding of how the PTMF can be used in empirical research is beneficial. Researchers utilising the PTMF to date have largely gravitated towards qualitative methodologies. Of the qualitative studies included in this scoping review, four used the PTMF to inform both data collection and analysis, and six studies used the PTMF to inform data analysis only. Indeed, eight of these studies developed bespoke hybrid inductive and deductive approaches to TA. However, in the absence of existing guidelines for using the PTMF as a research tool, these approaches were developed in isolation. This is reflected in the variation between these approaches. For example, while most researchers conducted inductive analysis before deductive analysis, Gallagher et al. (2023a; 2024) conducted analysis in the opposite order. Some analytic results (e.g. Paradiso & Quinlan, 2021) were named according to the core components of the PTMF (e.g. power, threat, meaning, response), while other themes appeared to have been developed from the broader ideas of the PTMF (e.g. Jagasia et al., 2022). Studies also differed in what they considered to be core components of the PTMF, for example with Gallagher et al. (2023a; 2024) including function of threat response and moderating factors as distinct elements. While Devenney (2021a; 2021b; 2021c) and Gallagher et al. (2023a; 2024) published the deductive PTMF codes they had developed a priori, others did not. Though most studies reported main themes and sub-themes (e.g. Leeming et al., 2022) some studies additionally reported overarching themes (e.g. Milligan, 2022), and some studies also reported the codes which made up their themes (Gallagher et al., 2023a; 2024). The latter were also the only researchers to distinguish between a priori and novel PTMF elements in their results. Some studies (e.g. Barnwell et al., 2020; Jagasia et al., 2022; Reis et al., 2019) did not specify what kind of thematic analysis they conducted.

Thus, while a provisional trend can be observed from the initial research emerging from the publication of the PTMF, there remains considerable variability in the approaches adopted, and the detail in which these approaches have been reported. Researcher autonomy is essential, and indeed the broad nature and provisional status of the PTMF lends itself to autonomous explorations of various human phenomena. However, in the absence of coherent and consistent guidelines to conducting and reporting this research, its quality and value can be diminished, and the likelihood of efforts being replicated, and possibly made redundant, increases. While the PTMF webpage provides a place for ongoing and complete research to be listed, and indeed states some ideas for future research projects, a coherent and consistent approach to PTMF research is necessary moving forward, so to enhance the effectiveness and

efficiency of this evidence-base as it continues to develop. An independent oversight group, internal or external to the BPS, should be established to maintain responsibility for this.

Practice and Policy

From the studies included in this scoping review, it is evident that the PTMF has already begun to be implemented in (primarily psychological) practices. Milligan (2022) and Travers (2022) explored the experiences and perspectives of educational and clinical psychologists in the UK, respectively, while Raskin et al. (2022) surveyed a variety of psychologists working clinically in the USA. Taken together, findings from these three studies suggest that psychologists are dissatisfied with the dominant psychiatric diagnostic model used in clinical practice, and are interested in alternative frameworks. However, psychologists thought that, despite its value, the uptake of an alternative like the PTMF may be hindered without investment in training, professional collaboration and service-level change.

With regards to training, it is interesting to note that much of the literature identified through our systematic search, and eight of the studies included in this review, originated from doctoral theses. This could indicate a general interest in alternative frameworks of understanding amongst the newest generation of psychologists, and/or reflect the implementation of teaching on the PTMF in some doctoral programmes. Both possibilities are positive, and perhaps present an opportunity for applications of the PTMF to research and/or practice to be further explored by this cohort.

Psychologists in Milligan's (2022) and Travers' (2022) studies highlighted the importance of professional collaboration if attempts to implement the PTMF into clinical practice are to be successful. While professional collaboration in clinical settings, which are typically multi-disciplinary in nature, is essential, collaboration with service-users is equally important. Only one study in this scoping review (Sapsford, 2021), explored a service-user's experience of the PTMF, through a psychological intervention. This participant reported both positive (e.g. connecting feelings to past experiences) and negative (e.g. triggering distressing emotions) impacts of this PTMF-informed intervention. Crucially, this participant suggested a number of changes to the PTMF-informed intervention, following his participation, to enhance the intervention workbook. Following this example, any attempts to implement the PTMF into clinical practice should both acknowledge and value service-user perspectives. Relatedly, in keeping with the values of the PTMF, the agency of service-users is most important. Service-users must

be given a choice in how they wish to understand their emotional distress and troubled/troubling behaviour (e.g. psychiatric diagnosis, PTMF), and this choice must be respected.

With regards service-level change, psychologists in all three studies (Milligan, 2022; Travers, 2022; Raskin et al., 2022) emphasised that systemic change in clinical practice is difficult, and that despite growing interest in alternative models of working, service-level barriers (e.g. funding and policy requirements) may protect dominant models of working (i.e. the psychiatric diagnostic model), and hinder change. While the PTMF has resonated with many professionals and service-users, and there certainly appears to be an appetite for change in this direction, this appetite alone is not sufficient to drive such change. However, with modern clinical practice aiming to be evidence-based, change can be furthered by a coherent, high-quality body of evidence regarding the utility and effectiveness of the PTMF.

The field of psychiatry is notably absent from the empirical PTMF evidence-base. It is interesting to reflect on why this may be. It could be that the PTMF has simply not resonated within the discipline of psychiatry, or that the PTMF inherently challenges the underlying assumptions of psychiatry. As the stated aim of the PTMF is to provide an alternative framework of understanding to the psychiatric diagnostic model, explorations of the utility of the PTMF in areas dominated by this model would be beneficial. In doing so, and regardless of whether such research supports or challenges the PTMF, a more complete understanding of both the empirical and clinical utility of the PTMF would be generated.

Four additional studies highlighted how the PTMF has been, or could be, further implemented in clinical practice. Seery et al. (2021) conducted the only study utilising a PTMF-informed formulation. While the testing of formulations grounded in the PTMF would certainly be useful, the experimental case vignette design employed by Seery et al. (2021), although conducted to a high standard, hinders the ecological validity of these findings. As such, particularly considering that formulation is the cornerstone of much psychological practice, further research utilising PTMF-informed formulations is necessary.

Three studies developed and delivered PTMF-informed interventions in clinical settings. Reis et al. (2019) described a PTMF-informed group intervention for prisoners experiencing long-term imprisonment. While the intervention was valued by participants, and the authors reported some interesting insights developed throughout the group, in the absence of concrete evaluation the utility of this paper is limited. Nikospachos et al. (2023) developed, implemented and evaluated the impact of a TIC model in an inpatient unit, which included PTMF formulation

training, and observed a decrease in self-harm, seclusion and restraint incidents thereafter. Sapsford (2021) developed, implemented and evaluated a PTMF-informed psychological intervention for individuals with multiple complex needs, observing both positive and negative impacts of the intervention. The development of PTMF-informed interventions is promising, and certainly reflects the value placed on the PTMF by therapeutic professionals. However, it is essential that, in due course, all such interventions are subject to appropriate regulation and evaluation, for example using the UK Medical Research Council and National Institute for Health Research complex intervention research framework (Skivington et al., 2021).

Limitations

The limitations of each included study are presented in the critical appraisal forms in Appendix A. Fifteen studies were deemed to be useful and reliable, and concerns were raised about the utility and reliability of two studies (Barnwell et al., 2020; Reis et al., 2019) in their current forms. While this scoping review rigorously followed the PRSIMA-ScR protocol (see Appendix B), due to time constraints a protocol was not publicly registered in advance. Future scoping reviews should do so in order to enhance transparency and reduce potential duplications of work (Tricco et al., 2018). While all authors discussed scoping review processes and decisions throughout, due to time constraints, key review tasks (i.e. searching, screening, data charting, critical appraisal, narrative synthesis) were conducted solely by the lead author. Future scoping reviews would benefit from more collaborative processes in order to enhance credibility. This scoping review aimed to identify only empirical literature using the PTMF, thus excluding any commentary literature (e.g. clinical guidelines, reflections, explanation/ elaboration of PTMF concepts, opinion). Perhaps reflecting both the interest and debate the PTMF has sparked since its initial publication, a considerable amount of literature identified during our systematic searching was indeed commentary. Despite its absence from the empirical evidence, opinions and reflections stemming from psychiatry were evident within this commentary. The exclusion of this literature in this review may limit our true understanding of the scope of the PTMF evidence-base. A future scoping review specifically focused on this commentary literature could prove informative and interesting. However, given the diverse nature of this evidence-base, it is important that this literature is subject to a degree of quality assurance, for example utilising the Joanna Brigg's Institute (JBI) critical appraisal tool for text and opinion (JBI, 2017).

Conclusions

Through the synthesis of 17 studies, this review has established the scope of the emergent empirical PTMF literature since its initial publication in January 2018. We have described the relevant characteristics of these selected studies, the ways in which they have directly and intentionally utilised the PTMF, and their key findings. We have done so rigorously, by adhering to the PRISMA-ScR protocol (see Appendix B). Most importantly, perhaps, we have produced key learnings for research, practice and policy.

In the first five years of the PTMF's lifespan we have observed considerable interest and debate across a variety of disciplines. It is promising that the PTMF has begun to be utilised in empirical research and clinical practice, and in a variety of ways. In the next five years of the PTMF's lifespan, a deepening of the science is essential. A consistent and coherent approach to research utilising and/or evaluating the PTMF is necessary, for example by establishing an independent oversight group, internal or external to the BPS. This research should be conducted across a diverse range of disciplines, particularly those which may challenge the PTMF (e.g. psychiatry). Psychologists in training may prove to be a valuable resource in furthering the PTMF evidence-base. Collaboration amongst professionals, and most importantly with service-users, is essential if the PTMF is to genuinely impact psychological practices. The autonomy and agency of service-users must be protected and respected. Finally, any new psychological practices, particularly interventions, informed by the PTMF must be subject to appropriate regulation and evaluation.

Funding

The included studies declared funding by the following sources: (1) Irish Prison Service (Gallagher et al., 2023a; Gallagher et al., 2024), (2) South African Medical Research Council (Barnwell et al., 2020), (3) University of Huddersfield School of Human and Health Sciences Strategic Research Investment Fund: Rapid Response COVID-19 Related Research and Seed Funding (Leeming et al., 2022), and (4) University of Nottingham, University of Lincoln & Nottinghamshire NHS Foundation Trust (Sapsford, 2021). The remaining 13 studies did not declare any funding details.

The PhD research project, of which this scoping review is part of, has been funded by the Irish Prison Service. The funders had no role in study design, data collection or analysis, decision to publish, or preparation of the manuscript.

Chapter 3: Preface

Chapter two presented a scoping review of the relevant empirical literature which has emerged in the five years since the publication of the PTMF. This review identified and synthesised 17 empirical studies, conducted across a diverse range of disciplines, including clinical psychology, forensic psychology, mental health, and education. These studies utilised the PTMF in their methodologies in five main ways: (1) PTMF-informed data collection, (2) PTMF-informed data analysis, (3) experiences of/views on the PTMF, (4) PTMF-informed formulation, and (5) PTMF-informed interventions.

Chapter three below presents the first original, empirical research study of this thesis. This study qualitatively explored the experiences of prisoners ($n = 4$) and prison officers ($n = 13$) under the previous VDP policy, before its transformation in 2018.

Chapter three is an adaptation of a published journal article:

Gallagher, O., Regan, E., & O' Reilly, G. (2022). Serious violence in the Irish Prison Service: Exploring the experiences of prison officers and prisoners under the violently disruptive prisoner policy. *Psychology, Crime & Law*. Advance online publication.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2022.2096885>

The authors of this publication had the following roles:

Orla Gallagher (lead author) was involved in the inception of the idea of the study, designing the study, collecting and analysing data, writing the study, submitting it for publication, and completing any revisions requested by the journal.

Dr Emma Regan (second author) was involved in the inception of the idea of the study, designing the study, providing feedback throughout the data collection, data analysis and writing processes, and providing supervision for the overall study.

Prof. Gary O'Reilly (third author) was involved in the inception of the idea of the study, designing the study, providing feedback throughout the data collection, data analysis and writing processes, and providing supervision for the overall study.

Chapter 3: The Operationally-Driven Management of Serious Violence and Disruption in the Irish Prison Service - Exploring the Experiences of Prison Officers and Prisoners under the Previous Violently Disruptive Prisoner Policy

Abstract

In the Irish Prison Service, prisoners repeatedly engaged in serious violence are managed under the Violently Disruptive Prisoner (VDP) policy. With the development of the National Violence Reduction Unit (NVRU), practice has shifted from being operationally-driven to psychologically-informed. Part of an ongoing evaluation of this changing practice, this study explored the experiences of VDP policy prisoners ($n = 4$) and the prison officers ($n = 13$) who were working with them before practice changed. Descriptive thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews identified nine themes: (1) describing VDP policy prisoners, (2) staff characteristics and approaches, (3) describing the VDP policy regime, (4) the social environment, (5) the occupational environment, (6) function of the VDP policy, (7) impact of the VDP policy, (8) factors influencing violence, and (9) responding to violence. Results are interpreted in light of comparable research and the Power Threat Meaning Framework. Implications for policy, practice and research in the NVRU are considered.

Keywords: Prison, Violence, Power Threat Meaning Framework, Qualitative Research

Introduction

In the Irish Prison Service (IPS), a small cohort of prisoners, repeatedly engaged in serious violence, are managed under the Violently Disruptive Prisoner (VDP) policy. Until recently, practice under the VDP policy has been operationally-driven, focused primarily on containment and risk management. In November 2018, the National Violence Reduction Unit (NVRU) was developed to integrate a psychological perspective to the management and rehabilitation of these prisoners. As part of an ongoing research project evaluating this change in practice, this study aims to describe the experiences of VDP policy prisoners and the prison officers working them before the establishment of the NVRU. Firstly, however, this paper briefly summarises what we know about the nature, extent, causes and correlates, consequences and management of prison violence, in Ireland and internationally.

Both the United Nations (UN) and European Committees for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) have noted the high levels of violence in Irish prisons (Martynowicz & Moore, 2018). In 2019, the Irish Penal Reform Trust (IPRT) reported 110 incidents of prisoner-staff assaults, 418 incidents of prisoner-prisoner assaults, and 27 alleged incidents of staff-prisoner assaults in the IPS. In 2015, following numerous serious prisoner-staff assaults, the State Claims Agency (SCA) were asked to identify if a new culture of violence was developing in Irish prisons. They found that most violent incidents could be attributed to less than 1% of the approximate 3,722 individuals imprisoned in 2015. Presenting with significant mental health problems and challenging behaviours, these prisoners pose a substantial threat, with some seriously injuring staff despite the use of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and Control and Restraint (C&R) procedures – a practice referred to locally as ‘barrier handling’. VDP policy prisoners represent a smaller subset of this cohort. This is consistent with the international literature, and indeed findings in Northern Irish prisons, which highlights that it is usually a small cohort of prisoners, typically with multiple and complex needs, that engage in repeated violence and disruption in prison (Butler et al., 2021a).

Much of the literature exploring prison violence has focused on identifying the factors influencing it, primarily at the individual level where various demographic (e.g. male, younger age), criminogenic (e.g. previous offending history, gang membership) and psychological (e.g. mental illness, personality disorder) variables have been consistently reported (McGuire, 2018; Schenk & Fremouw, 2012; Steiner et al., 2014). Some interactional (e.g. feeling threatened/unsafe/mistreated by staff), environmental (e.g. overcrowding, limited structured

activities) and organisational (e.g. poor administrative control, inconsistent treatment) level factors have too been identified (Gadon et al., 2006; McGuire, 2018; Steiner et al., 2014). While these situational variables have been under-explored by comparison, they have been paid due attention more recently, for example with the development of the Promoting Risk Intervention by Situational Management (PRISM) approach to forensic violence risk assessment (Cooke, 2020). Furthermore, although the literature exploring risk factors for prison violence is vast, it is largely confined to the North American context. The importance of considering cultural context was recently highlighted by Butler et al. (2021b), who in exploring risk factors for violence in Northern Irish prisons did not confirm many of the risk factors consistently reported in the international literature, but identified additional risk factors which may be unique to the Northern Irish context (e.g. nationality, religion).

The consequences of prison violence can be stratified similarly to its risk factors. At the individual level, victims of prison violence experience substantial physical and psychological harm (McGuire, 2018), while those who perpetrate violence are subject to longer periods of imprisonment and are more likely to re-offend (Gadon et al., 2006; McGuire, 2018; Steiner et al., 2014). The prison environment is perceived as less safe (Steiner et al., 2014), while the organisation suffers from short-term financial repercussions (e.g. staff absenteeism, sick pay) and long-term reputational damage (e.g. diminished staff satisfaction, morale and loyalty; Gadon et al., 2006).

While the terminology varies (e.g. segregation, solitary confinement), most prison systems use some form of restrictive and isolative practice to manage violence and misconduct (Martynowicz & Moore, 2018). Although conditions similarly vary, they can generally be characterised by increased control over prisoners (e.g. increased staffing levels, handcuffs, screened visits; Martynowicz & Moore, 2018; Shalev & Edgar, 2015); reduced environmental input (e.g. inadequate space/light/ventilation, limited access to therapeutic/educational/vocational programs; Martynowicz & Moore, 2018; Shalev & Edgar, 2015); and restricted social interaction (e.g. minimal staff contact, indirect interaction with peers; Scharff Smith, 2006; Shalev & Edgar, 2015). Human rights literature concludes that experiencing these conditions for 22 hours or more per day constitutes solitary confinement (with 15 consecutive days being considered prolonged solitary confinement), while other prisoners may experience similar conditions under different labels (Martynowicz & Moore, 2018). Although sometimes used for a limited time to punish breaches of prison discipline, restriction and isolation are often used as administrative tools to manage specific groups of prisoners. This

includes the small cohort of prisoners found in most prison systems, who due to their repeated serious violence have proved too challenging to manage in the general prison population, and are segregated to protect the good order of the prison (Scharff Smith, 2009).

In the US, these prisoners are managed in supermax facilities, often considered to be the most extreme and harmful variation of prolonged solitary confinement. Conditions are further impoverished (e.g. regular use of PPE, no windows, no peer interaction) and technological advances (e.g. intercom systems, mechanical gates, video-link visits) reduce human contact to an absolute minimum. While supermax facilities aim to reduce overall levels of violence in the prison system, research suggests they are ineffective in doing so (Shalev, 2009).

The management of these prisoners in England and Wales is given more consideration here due to comparability with the Irish context, though earlier developments in Scotland (e.g. the Barlinnie Special Unit) may also interest the reader (see Wilson & Brookes, 2021). In 1984, following a concerning trend of serious prison violence, the Control Review Committee (CRC) made the first systematic attempt to manage such prisoners with the publication of their influential report (Home Office, 1984). Ultimately, they recommended that a series of small, specialist units which catered to the complex needs of these prisoners be developed, with a Research Advisory Group (RAG) enlisted to coordinate and monitor (see Bottomley & Hay, 1991; Bottomley et al., 1994; Walmsley, 1991). Following the initial years of their implementation, the RAG began to report some undesirable outcomes arising from the units, for prisoners (e.g. difficulty coping), staff (e.g. stress) and management (e.g. difficult relationships between units and host prisons) alike. It became evident that the units were not working as envisaged, and in 1998 they were ultimately replaced by the current Close Supervision Centre (CSC) system (Her Majesty's [HM] Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2015).

CSCs aim to both contain the most violent prisoners in the system, while psychologically intervening with them to reduce their violence. While conditions have always fared much better than those found in supermax facilities, the development of the CSC system has not been seamless (see HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 1999). However, since their implementation in 1998, CSCs have made gradual and consistent progress towards becoming a system based on sound psychological principles (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018). CSCs are expected to adhere to the principles of Psychologically Informed Planned Environments ([PIPEs]; HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2015), one of many initiatives implemented across the prison system in England and Wales which places due emphasis on social climate and context (see Akerman et

al., 2018). PIPEs are contained but enabling environments co-led by clinical and operational management figures and staffed by psychologically-trained prison officers. The social and interactional environment is valued and honed in order to address the needs and progress the development of prisoners (National Offender Management Service [NOMS], 2012; Turley et al., 2013). In Ireland, a cohort of prisoners comparable to those managed in CSCs are managed under the VDP policy (Irish Prison Service [IPS], 2019). The former VDP policy operated a restricted regime, focused primarily on containment. However, having learned from developments in the management of serious violence in England and Wales over time, particularly the CSC system, the revised VDP policy and practice in the NVRU have shifted towards a joint operational and psychological approach.

Having considered the consequences of prison violence, it is important to also consider the consequences of managing prison violence in different ways. Research exploring the impact of isolation on prisoners, whether in the short-term (e.g. solitary confinement following a violent incident) or the long-term (e.g. supermax facilities) comes to overwhelming consensus on its adverse effects. These related physical and psychological harms include physiological reactions (e.g. headaches, weight loss); confusion, impaired concentration and memory loss; hallucinations, illusions and paranoid ideas; emotional reactions (e.g. depression, anxiety); impulsive actions (e.g. self-harm, suicide); and overall debilitation. The risk of harm is thought to increase with every day spent in isolation, and while some prisoners show signs of 'recovery' shortly after it is removed, others struggle to adapt to social environments within and beyond prison (Scharff Smith, 2006). Paradoxically, the conditions of isolation can result in increased frustration and aggression, resulting in a vicious cycle of violence and containment (Haney, 2009).

Though under-explored by comparison, research suggests that working with violent prisoners under special regimes can also negatively impact prison officers. Regular confrontation with actual and potential violence can be stressful, over time resulting in psychological burnout (Fenwick & Bennett, 2009). Indeed, some prison officers working in CRC units complained of work-related stress and poor working conditions (Clare & Bottomley, 2001). Prison officers working more therapeutically (e.g. in PIPEs) have reported many positive professional outcomes, including increased understanding of complex prisoners, enhanced interactional skills, greater empathy and compassion, and positive attitude change. However, some staff have struggled to adjust to this less traditional way of working, at times undermining the therapeutic work being done by other officers and excluding them from the wider staff culture

through resistance, mistrust and ridicule (Benefield et al. 2018; Bennett & Tew, 2018; Paget & Woodward 2018; Turley et al. 2013)

While there has been no distinct research into the impact of working in CSCs, it has been acknowledged that working with the most complex and challenging prisoners on a daily basis has clear implications for staff wellbeing, and subsequently support needs (Vince, 2015). These regimes also facilitate the development of a distinguishable staff sub-culture, typically characterised by social separation from the wider prison community, group solidarity, an orientation towards security and control, and machismo (Fenwick & Bennett, 2009; Shalev & Edgar, 2015). This sub-culture can also impact prison officers, resulting in emotional hardening, cynicism and anger, which in turn may negatively impact the prisoners with whom they work. However, just as negative social climates and staff sub-cultures can exacerbate the impact of such regimes on prisoners, positive social climates and staff sub-cultures may ameliorate it (Akerman et al., 2018; Scharff Smith, 2006). For example, prisoners and staff in CSCs have described 'good' prison officers as firm but fair, calm and confident, empathetic and patient, respectful, resilient, and ultimately agents of change (Shalev & Edgar, 2015).

This aligns with the concept of legitimacy, which has been extensively researched in the penal literature (see Brown & Toyoki, 2013 and Ryan & Bergin, 2022). Prisoners have consistently reported similar moral traits as being of value to them, ultimately influencing their perceived legitimacy of their treatment and resulting in positive outcomes, such as order, compliance and wellbeing. Conversely, where such traits are absent or manifested negatively, prisoners perceive their treatment as less legitimate, resulting in negative outcomes such as frustration, anger, misconduct and violence (Auty & Liebling, 2020; Butler & Drake, 2007).

Current Study

The RAG evaluating the CRC units noted that in order to begin evaluating new and innovative prison developments, it is essential to first generate or obtain a detailed description of what they entail (Walmsley, 1991). Following their evaluation of the CSC system, Clare and Bottomley (2001) highlighted that much of what we know about the management of violence through restrictive practices has emerged from evaluative and inspectorial work, ultimately calling for more original, empirical research. This study, being the first empirical work to explore the management of serious violence under the VDP policy in the IPS, aims to produce this detailed description. In doing so, and noting their diminished presence in the existing literature, it pays due attention to the experiences of prison officers, in addition to prisoners. Research into

prison violence has been criticised for conceptualising prisons as unique environments which necessitate specific theories to understand them. While theories of prison violence (e.g. importation and deprivation theory) have identified important risk factors for violence, they are each confined to certain levels (e.g. individual and environmental). While there have been recent attempts to integrate these levels, for example general strain theory (Butler et al., 2021a), more holistic theoretical frameworks can offer greater utility (Edgar et al., 2003; Steiner et al., 2014). The Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF) is used to interpret participant experiences in the current study.

The PTMF provides a framework for understanding the origins, experiences and expressions of emotional distress and troubled/ troubling behaviour, through four core elements – power, threat, meaning and response (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018a). Not dissimilar to the concept of legitimacy, the PTMF proposes that the negative operation of various types of power (e.g. coercive, legal) threatens different types of core human needs (e.g. relational, emotional). The individualised, subjective meaning of these experiences, shown through beliefs, feelings and bodily reactions, is emphasised. Subsequently, individuals use learned and evolved threat responses (e.g. paranoid thoughts, violence), all of which serve a function (e.g. regulating overwhelming feelings, protection from danger). The PTMF groups together various types of power, threat, meaning and response into seven patterns. Although developed as an alternative framework for understanding mental illness, by focusing more broadly on emotional distress and troubled/ troubling behaviour, the PTMF has considerable relevance for criminal justice settings. The PTMF highlights pattern six – ‘surviving social exclusion, shame and coercive power’ – as a useful perspective for exploring experiences of incarceration and expressions of violence.

Since its publication, the reception and uptake of the PTMF has been very encouraging (Harper & Cromby, 2022; Ramsden, 2019). The framework has particularly resonated with forensic psychologists (Johnstone, 2022), with many already applying it to practice and research (see Ramsden, 2019; Reis et al., 2019, Willmot & Evershed, 2018). However, and as the authors of the PTMF themselves acknowledge, the core ideas of the PTMF have been long evident in other contextual approaches to understanding human behaviour, including prison violence. For example, in Akerman et al.’s edited book (2018), which gives a comprehensive overview of such approaches, Jones (2018) illustrates how the conditions of the prison environment, which may mirror adverse conditions experienced in early life, can trigger a ‘fight, flight or freeze’ trauma response for prisoners, enacted through violence. Needs and Adair-Stantiall (2018) also highlight the well-established and central roles of low-self-esteem, shame

and threatened identities in such behaviour. Butler, too, has extensively discussed how experiences and feelings of shame, humiliation and disrespect are important catalysts to prison violence. This may explain why in a landscape where violence is not unusual, some prisoners, with identities sensitised to shame, engage in more violence than others. This violence can serve a number of related functions including demonstrating masculinity, demanding respect, achieving status, deterring victimisation, relieving frustration and protecting self-esteem (Butler & Drake, 2007; Butler, 2008; Butler & Maruna, 2009). Indeed, in their dedicated book on prison violence (2003), Edgar et al. also consider violence as a functional behavioural response to threats against prisoners' basic needs within the unique social and interpersonal contexts of the prison. They also highlight the importance of understanding the perspectives of those engaged in violence, and what violence means to them.

To conclude, the research questions of the current study are: (1) what are the experiences of VDP policy prisoners, and (2) what are the experiences of prison officers working with VDP policy prisoners? In addressing these questions, this study aims to generate a detailed description of life under the VDP policy before practice changed, which can inform best policy and practice as the newly established NVRU continues to develop.

Method

Participants

This study aimed to recruit VDP policy prisoners and the prison officers working with them. Prisoners eligible for inclusion were those: (1) currently managed under the VDP policy, (2) previously managed under the VDP policy, (3) currently managed similarly to VDP policy prisoners, and (4) previously managed similarly to VDP policy prisoners. Similar management was defined as long-term containment under a restricted regime with continuous barrier handling. With only five prisoners designated under the VDP policy at the time of this study, those managed similarly ($n = 8$) were also recruited to increase the potential sample size. For ease, throughout the remainder of this paper all participating prisoners are referred to as VDP policy prisoners, describing experiences of the VDP policy. Eligibility criteria were mirrored for prison officers to include those: (1) currently working with VDP policy prisoners, (2) who had previously worked with VDP policy prisoners, (3) currently working with prisoners similar to VDP policy prisoners, and (4) who had previously worked with prisoners similar to VDP policy prisoners.

To recruit participants, the researcher emailed the governors of all 13 prisons in the IPS, who returned the names of all prisoners and prison officers in their institution meeting eligibility criteria. A database of eligible prisoners ($n = 13$) and prison officers ($n = 180$) was developed. In each prison, a psychologist or prison officer met with eligible prisoners to explain the study, ascertain their interest in participating, and obtain their written consent. Staff identified any psychological (e.g. acutely mentally unwell) and operational (e.g. significant risk of violence) barriers to participation, wherein participation was to be postponed to a more appropriate time. Given the volume of eligible prison officers, only those currently working with VDP policy prisoners ($n = 41$) and those who had previously done so ($n = 15$) were invited to participate. The researcher contacted prison officers directly via their IPS email and letters posted to their respective prisons.

The final sample included 17 participants. Four prisoners participated in the study, two of whom were currently being managed under the VDP policy, and two who had previously been managed similarly. Of the nine prisoners who did not participate, six declined to do so, two were transferred to hospital and unavailable, and one prisoner was not permitted to participate by the governor for security reasons. All participating prisoners were male, white, Irish and single. The mean age of prisoners was 31.50 years ($SD = 8.54$), and the mean age prisoners left school was 13.25 years ($SD = 2.50$). Descriptive statistics related to their current and historic offending behaviour are presented in Table 4 and Table 5.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics Related to Prisoners Current and Previous Offending Behaviour

Variable	Min.	Max.	Sum	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Current custodial period					
Number of sentenced offences	1	13	36	9.00	5.48
Number of incidents of prison misconduct	31	87	209	52.25	25.13
Number of prison rules broken	62	256	465	116.25	93.33
Number of prison transfers	5	32	74	18.50	14.48
Previous custodial periods					
Number of sentenced offences	6	28	42	14.00	12.17
Number of periods of imprisonment	1	2	5	1.67	0.58
Number of incidents of prison misconduct	35	184	265	88.33	83.03
Number of prison rules broken	36	189	298	99.33	79.83

Table 5*Frequencies of Characteristics Related to Prisoners Current Offending Behaviour*

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Legal status		
Sentenced	3	75.00
For trial	1	25.00
Types of sentenced offences		
Assault offences	16	44.44
Robbery/burglary/theft offences	8	22.22
Criminal damage offences	3	8.33
Weapons offences	2	5.56
False imprisonment	2	5.56
Violent disorder in a public place	2	5.56
Possession of mobile phone in prison	2	5.56
Murder	1	2.77
Types of prison rules broken		
Abusive language/behaviour	155	33.33
Non-compliance	92	19.78
Harming others	83	17.85
Any other	43	9.25
Prohibited articles	40	8.60
Property damage	37	7.96
Collective indiscipline	12	2.58
Substances	3	0.65
Types of sanctions administered		
Prohibition on activities	145	36.07
Prohibition on outside contact	109	27.11
Caution	71	17.66
Prohibition on material possessions	38	9.45
Not stated	29	7.21
Postponement/forfeiture of gratuities	8	2.00
Confinement in cell	2	0.50

Thirteen prison officers participated in the study, including eight who were currently working with VDP policy prisoners, and five who had previously done so. Of the 43 who did not participate, four declined and 39 did not respond. Frequencies related to the demographic and occupational characteristics of participating prison officers are described in Table 6.

Table 6*Frequencies of Prison Officer Demographic and Occupational Characteristics*

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Male	13	100.00
Female	0	0.00
Age (years)		
31-35	1	7.69
36-40	3	23.08
41-45	7	53.85
46-50	2	15.38
Time working in IPS (years)		
6-10	3	23.08
11-15	4	30.77
16-20	5	38.46
21-25	1	7.69
Time working with VDP policy (years)		
0-5	9	69.23
6-10	4	30.77
Grade		
Prison Officer	10	76.93
Assistant Chief Officer	2	15.38
Assistant Governor	1	7.69

Data Collection

Prisoners participated across three prison sites: Prison A ($n = 2$), Prison B ($n = 1$) and Prison C ($n = 1$). All interviews were conducted in either screened ($n = 3$) or open ($n = 1$) conditions, dependent on guidance from prison managers. Only the researcher and prisoner were present in the room, though prison staff remained outside at all times. Prison officers participated across five prison sites: Prison A ($n = 5$), Prison B ($n = 5$), Prison C ($n = 1$), Prison D ($n = 1$) and Prison E ($n = 1$). All interviews took place in private rooms.

All data were collected by the researcher, which involved conducting interviews, administering questionnaires, and extracting data from prison records. During semi-structured interviews participants were asked open-ended questions about the VDP policy. These were organised into four categories, aimed at describing: (a) what practice looks like (e.g. how would you describe the regime?), (b) why practice is like this (e.g. what do you think is the purpose of

the regime?), (c) how practice is working (e.g. what impact does the regime have on you?), and (d) how practice could change (e.g. what would be the ideal regime?). Interview schedules remained as similar as possible for prisoners and prison officers, and are available in Appendix C. Interviews were audio-recorded, lasting an average of 50 minutes. Prison officers completed a brief demographic and occupational questionnaire, and relevant demographic and offending data were extracted from prisoners' records on the Prison Information Management System (PIMS).

Data Analysis

In the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 24, statistics were generated to describe the demographic and offending backgrounds of prisoners (Table 4; Table 5), and the demographic and occupational backgrounds of prison officers (Table 6).

Interview data were qualitatively analysed following Braun and Clarke's (2006) reflexive approach to thematic analysis (TA). Braun and Clarke distinguish between descriptive and interpretative TA. The broad research questions of this study, and the absence of existing data on the topic, warranted the use of descriptive TA. Throughout an iterative six-phase process, incorporating the entire dataset, patterned responses were identified and summarised. In phase 1 (familiarisation), the researcher transcribed audio files verbatim and read interview transcripts in-depth, noting initial impressions of the data. Phase 2 (coding) involved identifying and labelling segments of data relevant to the research questions. The researcher coded inductively at the semantic level (i.e. focusing exclusively on the surface-level meanings expressed by participants), before collating all data extracts for each code. In phase 3 (searching for themes) the researcher organised similar codes into broad categories, using themes and sub-themes to structure the data. In phase 4 (reviewing themes) the researcher reviewed themes in terms of the codes they contained and how they related to the entire dataset. In phase 5 (naming and defining themes) the researcher created names for themes and sub-themes, accompanied by definitions specifying their focus and scope. In phase 6 (producing the report) the researcher produced an illustrative narrative around the thematic results, using data extracts to evidence and emphasise important findings.

An external researcher performed a credibility check on the data, indicating the extent to which they agreed that 126 randomly selected extracts matched each of the identified 126 codes. The external researcher completely agreed with 84.92% of extract-code matches,

partially agreed with 8.73%, and was unsure about 6.35%. Following discussion with the researcher, complete agreement reached 95.24%.

Reflexivity

In qualitative research, it is important to make explicit any researcher characteristics which could potentially bias the research (Yardley, 2008). In contrast to participants, the researcher is female, with no prior personal or work-related experience of prison. An educational background in forensic psychology informed data collection and analysis. While not their employee, the researcher is funded by the IPS to complete independent research on the management of violence in prison, and is kept informed of developments with the VDP policy.

Results

Descriptive TA resulted in nine themes, which are presented in Table 7 with their sub-themes and corresponding codes. Importantly, superscript letters denote where a code was identified by prison officers only (^a), prisoners only (^b), or both groups (^c). Each theme is briefly discussed below with participant extracts to evidence and emphasise findings. Prisoner quotes are identified by the abbreviation 'P' and prison officer quotes by 'PO', followed by participants' ID numbers. Italics denote sub-themes.

Table 7

Themes, Sub-themes and Codes Resulting from Descriptive TA

Theme	Sub-themes	Codes
1. Describing VDP policy prisoners	1.1. Prisoner characteristics	Potential to kill ^a 'Bad' ^c Easily triggered/influenced ^a Limited insight/control ^a Unpredictable ^c Manipulative/opportunistic ^c Issues with authority ^a Mental health issues ^c Adverse childhood experiences ^c
	1.2. Function of violence	Causing harm ^a Release ^a Defence mechanism ^a Escape ^c Better treatment ^a
2. Staff characteristics & approaches	2.1. Differences	Treating violent prisoners differently ^c Different types of staff ^c Inconsistency ^c
	2.2. The 'right' staff	Caring ^c

		Fair ^c Experienced ^c
	2.3. The 'wrong' staff	Misconduct ^c Punitive ^a Antagonistic ^c Egotistical ^a Machismo ^b
3. Describing the VDP policy regime	3.1. Restrictive	Enclosed environment ^c Limited out of cell time ^c Lack of routine ^c Lack of autonomy ^c Lack of privacy ^b
	3.2. Solitary	Limited human contact ^c Isolated environment ^b
	3.3. Controlled	Secure environment ^c Structured ^a Staff-intensive ^a Barrier handling ^c
	3.4. Facilities, services & activities	Limited ^c Beneficial ^c Prisoner engagement ^c Staff engagement ^a
	3.5. Negative	Lack of positive features ^b Room for improvement ^a
	3.6. (In)appropriateness	Safety ^a Punishment ^c Physical security ^c Mental illness ^a
	3.7. (In)consistency	Organisation ^a Institution ^b Management ^a Staff ^c Prisoners ^c
4. The social environment	4.1. Prisoner-prisoner interaction	Restricted ^c Indirect ^c Carefully managed ^c
	4.2. Staff-prisoner interaction	Minimal ^c Professional ^c Mutual influences ^c Building relationships ^c Prison officers vs 'other' staff ^c
	4.3. Staff team dynamics	'Tight' ^a Camaraderie ^a Dependency ^a
	4.4. Management-staff dynamics	Inappropriate management figures ^a Staff excluded ^a Staff under-valued ^a
5. The occupational environment	5.1. Staff role	Vast ^c Busy ^a

		Autonomous ^a
	5.2. Staff motivation & morale	Willingness ^a Incentive & reward ^a Enjoyment & reward ^a Influenced by prisoners ^a
	5.3. Staff training	Limited ^a De-escalation & communication ^c Mental health ^a Control & restraint ^a
6. Function of the VDP policy	6.1. Placement under the VDP policy	Repeated violence towards others ^c Risk ^c Staffing ^c
	6.2. Purpose of the VDP policy	Protection ^a (Not) deterring violence ^c Containment ^c Intervention ^a
7. Impact of the VDP policy	7.1. On prisoners	Violence ^a Status ^a Wellbeing ^c Isolated ^c Fear ^c Humiliation ^c Surreal ^b Misunderstood ^b Others unconcerned ^c Coping ^c Positive change ^c
	7.2. On prison officers	No impact ^a Wellbeing ^a Exposure to violence ^a Tension ^a Coping ^a
8. Factors influencing violence	8.1. Individual	Adverse childhood experiences ^c Drugs ^c Medication related issues ^c
	8.2. Interactional	Staff misconduct ^b Staff crossing boundaries ^b Antagonistic staff ^c Unfair staff ^a Negative staff-prisoner interactions ^c Other prisoners ^a Gang related issues ^c
	8.3. Environmental	Imprisonment ^c Lack of structure ^a Lack of transparency ^a Inconsistency ^c Staff shortages ^c
9. Responding to violence	9.1. From reaction to prevention	Meeting violence with violence ^b Early recognition ^a De-escalation ^c

9.2. Contracting behaviour	Enforcing the rules ^a Reviewing behaviour ^a Flexibility & balance ^c (Appropriate) punishment & reward ^a
9.3. From containment to intervention	Containment ^c Intervention ^c
9.4. Looking to the future	Progression ^c Post-release support ^c

Note. ^a refers to codes identified by prison officers only. ^b refers to codes identified by prisoners only. ^c refers to codes identified by both groups.

Describing VDP Policy Prisoners

In describing VDP policy prisoners, participants identified generally negative *prisoner characteristics*, including being easily triggered and influenced, unpredictable, manipulative and opportunistic, with limited insight into and control over their behaviour, and possessing a serious potential to kill: ‘These are some of the worst people in the country, and they’re in here for a reason, and things can go [participant clicks fingers] from bad to worse, ya know.’ (PO5). While most prison officers believed these prisoners were ‘just bad’, prisoners expressed that they had both ‘good’ and ‘bad’ sides: ‘I’m a good bloke, but I can be a bad bloke as well’ (P1). Participants identified common experiences amongst VDP policy prisoners, including issues with authority, mental health issues and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs): ‘See, a lot of prisoners in here are from bad backgrounds and mad abusive backgrounds’ (P3). In discussing the *function of violence* for VDP policy prisoners, prison officers highlighted psychological functions such as gaining enjoyment from causing harm, self-defence against low self-esteem and relieving tension: ‘If you’re caged, your natural reaction is to become more aggressive and difficult’ (PO10). Prison officers and prisoners also identified that violence can be used strategically to escape the general prison population and secure better treatment: ‘When I was on drugs, we used to go to the block to get away from that [...] it’s like goin’ to treatment’ (P3).

Staff Characteristics and Approaches

Under the sub-theme *differences*, participants acknowledged that staff treat VDP policy prisoners differently to the general prison population: ‘You know, I become a different officer on that side of the door than I was on the main landing’ (PO1). Participants also identified two types of staff, the ‘right’ and the ‘wrong’, with the stark differences between them resulting in the inconsistent treatment of VDP policy prisoners. Participants emphasised the importance of having *the ‘right’ staff* working with VDP policy prisoners, who they described as experienced,

fair and caring: 'Fellas that are fair, fellas that are firm, fellas that are approachable' (PO4). Participants also stressed that having *the 'wrong' staff* working with VDP policy prisoners can be problematic, describing them as punitive, antagonistic and egotistical: 'There's a lot of people who want to go on it 'cause it makes them feel big' (PO11). Prisoners noted the issue of machismo, finding it easier to interact with female staff: 'I see my old social worker, I see the teacher, I see the psychologist. They're all female. They're not like you know that macho man, "I'm the f*ckin biggest, I'm the best"' (P4).

Describing the VDP Policy Regime

Participants described the various characteristics of the VDP policy regime, and how they felt about these features, in numerous sub-themes. Participants highlighted the *restrictive* nature of the regime, which involved limited out-of-cell time in an enclosed environment, with prisoners experiencing a lack of privacy, routine and autonomy as a result: 'My freedom's taken away from me [...] like I understand I have to be here, but I don't understand being locked in a hole like' (P2). Participants highlighted that the regime was incredibly *solitary*, involving minimal human contact in an isolated environment: 'The only people that come to your door are a load of people in suits and with a visor on [...] it's not really human contact' (P2). Participants described the regime as extremely *controlled*, with physical security, evident in both the physical environment and the procedures implemented, being the predominant feature: 'It was a full C&R regime, so any movement of the prisoner, any time the door was unlocked, a team had to be present' (PO10). Prison officers commented on the highly structured nature of the regime, which involved a lot of planning, preparation and paperwork, with increased staffing levels and input: 'Like you have to prepare everything before you go near the door' (PO11). Participants expressed that the *facilities, services and activities* available to prisoners were extremely limited, despite offering benefits: 'Someone under that regime needs to have something to do, needs to have something to occupy their time' (PO10). Prisoners' willingness to engage with facilities, services and activities seemed to vary, with some wanting 'to get up and get out of bed and have somewhere to go' (PO3) and others expressing the opposite: 'I don't even want to talk to anyone else, I don't want to know any of these people in here' (P1). Similar variance was apparent with staff engagement, for example with some prison officers reluctant to engage with the psychology service, whilst others acknowledged the benefits of increased information-sharing with psychologists: 'Just a bit more interaction from the psychologists to say look it, he's having a bad day today, or this is what's going on with him' (PO13).

Participants reflections on the regime were generally *negative*, with prisoners struggling to identify any positive features, and prison officers noting substantial room for improvement: 'There's a certain amount of it that's working well, but you know, like there's so much that can be improved with it' (PO6). Participants discussed the *appropriateness* of the regime, and while there was consensus that safety comes first, some felt that the regime was overly severe, whilst others expressed the opposite: 'If you didn't have to have any interaction with them at all it would be better' (PO5). Prison officers also emphasised that the regime was not appropriate for prisoners with mental illness. Participants highlighted that while consistent implementation of the regime was important, this was rarely achieved. *Inconsistency* was evident at multiple levels, including how different prisoners under the same (VDP) policy were managed, how different staff teams (i.e. different sides of the roster) treated prisoners, how different prisons implemented the regime, and how different managers made decisions. Overall, and at the organisational level, participants emphasised that practice under the VDP policy deviated considerably from what it said on paper: 'On paper it's great, but not in practice' (PO1).

The Social Environment

Participants discussed the various interactions occurring within the context of the VDP policy under four sub-themes. Participants described *prisoner-prisoner interaction* as extremely restricted, characterised by indirect communication: 'He gets to talk to fellas through the door, that's it' (PO8). Where prisoners were permitted to interact with one other prisoner, this was carefully managed by staff: 'I'd make the decision who can mix together when they go out to the yard, who's to be isolated' (PO3). Participants described *staff-prisoner interaction* as minimal and largely professional: 'You're trained to be dealing with him in suits, and sort of be stone-faced' (PO13). Participants acknowledged that both staffs' willingness to engage and prisoners' behaviour influenced the nature and level of interaction, but that positive working relationships could be built over time. Participants also noted that prisoners' interactions with 'other' prison staff (e.g. psychologist, teacher) tended to be more positive: 'They're just kind people. That's all. Just genuinely, one hundred per cent kind people. You can just tell straight away' (P4). Commenting on *staff team dynamics*, prison officers believed that their teams were 'tight', involving a lot of camaraderie and dependency: 'More so than anywhere else in the jail we would kind of have a panel that's fairly rock steady' (PO1). However, *management-staff dynamics* were less positive, as some officers felt that management figures occupied the role inappropriately, with limited ability to manage VDP policy prisoners: 'Management are weak. Even if they're not weak, they're not trained properly. And especially now that they're bringing management in from

the wrong places' (PO1). Prison officers, having extensive experience of working with VDP policy prisoners, felt excluded and under-valued by management: 'The people on the floor know a hell of a lot more than the people that are in charge, even though the people in charge don't like to hear that' (PO12).

The Occupational Environment

The occupational world of prison officers was captured under three sub-themes. Participants commented on the vastness of the *staff role*, attributing this to the fact that VDP policy prisoners were housed with other prisoners managed under various regimes. Consequently, prison officers often struggled to fulfil their duties, having to 'pressure [prisoners] into having a shower quicker, into cleaning their cell quicker' (PO2). Prison officers also described working with VDP policy prisoners as more autonomous: 'Downstairs for the most part it is better because the staff structure it ourselves' (PO1). Reflecting on *staff motivation and morale*, prison officers discussed the varying levels of willingness to get involved in the role, which was often influenced by prisoner behaviour: 'And the panel, it gets a bit longer when there's been no trouble. But as soon as there's a bit of trouble the panel gets shorter very quick' (PO8). Because the role is voluntary, prison officers felt there should be more incentive and reward for doing it. Many prison officers struggled to identify any enjoyable or rewarding aspects of the role, whilst others identified their staff teams, the challenging environment and ensuring the safety of others: 'When I was there, if all the staff walked away injury free, that's rewarding' (PO12). Prison officers emphasised that *staff training* for the role was extremely limited, with staff drawing on their experience and learning from team members. Participants identified C&R, mental health, and de-escalation and communication as important training needs: 'They've been pushing a course for de-escalation here for years, which is supposed to have been rolled out three years ago and it never happened' (PO3).

Function of the VDP Policy

Participants identified three main reasons for *placement under the VDP policy*, highlighting repeated violence towards others, and the risk that this patterned behaviour poses, as most important: 'They won't stop hitting people' (PO9). Participants believed that staff factors also played a role, with managers having to consider the high staffing levels necessary to implement barrier handling before placing a prisoner under the VDP policy. Participants expressed that some staff might request that certain prisoners are placed under the VDP policy, either directly or through the Prison Officers Association (POA): 'They're happy to keep me in

solitary confinement, because people have problems with me, you know what I mean. They're listening to the POA' (P4). In discussing the *purpose of the VDP policy*, participants emphasised the protection of staff, other prisoners, and the VDP policy prisoner themselves. Participants expressed that while the regime aimed to deter violence, it rarely achieved this: 'They say like it's to stop staff being assaulted or whatever, but I think that's goin' to happen no matter what. Like ya can still attack them when you're on barrier handling' (P2). Relatedly, participants commented that while the stated aims of the VDP policy may have included intervention, it was primarily focused on containment: 'It mirrors putting the child on the bold step for ten minutes. It'll have a short-term effect, but long-term it doesn't do anything' (PO8).

Impact of the VDP Policy

Two sub-themes capture the impact of the VDP policy on *prisoners* and *prison officers*, respectively. Prisoners expressed that being managed under the VDP policy felt surreal, with feelings of humiliation, isolation and fear being predominant, and prisoners' overall wellbeing negatively impacted: 'You can't function really, because you have nothing to function for' (P2). While some prison officers believed that the VDP policy provided prisoners with status, prisoners often felt misunderstood: 'That's a big thing to me, being branded as this monster, this animal, this psycho' (P3). Prisoners developed various ways of coping with the impact of the VDP policy, including material (e.g. shop orders) and psychological (e.g. resilience) strategies, but some prison officers expressed a lack of concern about the impact on prisoners: 'You can go on and talk about what it's doing to the prisoner, but that's another story like, you know. Am I overly concerned about that? Not really' (PO4). While the regime made a positive impact on some prisoners, thus reducing their violence, there was consensus that the VDP policy often had the opposite effect: 'You're just creating a monster' (PO2).

Although many prison officers expressed that the role had no impact on them, others acknowledged that staff would be reluctant to admit to this: 'It would take a very resilient person for it to not have an impact on them. But I'd say if you were to talk to a group of people, they would never admit that' (PO10). Some prison officers noted a negative impact on their overall wellbeing, highlighting increased tension and being exposed, and subsequently de-sensitised, to violence: 'If I was walking down the street and I seen someone stabbed [...] it just wouldn't be a big shock to me' (PO2). Prison officers relied on staff camaraderie, talking, and having a good home life to cope with this impact, but highlighted a lack of organisational support in this regard:

'There's a mental wellbeing that needs to be checked, you know and that's never checked' (PO6).

Factors Influencing Violence

Participants identified factors influencing violence at three levels, captured by three sub-themes. At the *individual* level, participants discussed the influence of ACEs, medication related issues (e.g. non-compliance) and drugs on violence. Notably, participants highlighted both drug use and drug dealing and debt as important: 'It's going to contribute to violent incidents because people owe money for drugs, it also leads to kind of erratic behaviour' (PO9). At the *interactional* level, participants identified that staff engaging in misconduct, crossing boundaries, and being unfair and antagonistic influenced violence: 'Sometimes they do look for reactions like, and they get them most of the time like' (P2). Participants highlighted that while negative staff-prisoner interactions easily influenced violence, positive staff-prisoner interactions helped prevent it: 'If you treat someone as a person, and you treat them the way you would like to be treated yourself, it is a very, very, very, very unique individual that would not reciprocate that in the same fashion to you' (PO10). Participants highlighted the prominence of gang-related issues, with prison officers noting that these prisoners are particularly susceptible to the influence of high-status prisoners: 'Roaring and shouting out windows and telling him "you got to go, and you got to do this", so then they have to show face' (PO11). At the *environmental* level, participants expressed that the experience of being imprisoned itself influenced violence: 'Most of the stuff I've done in here to end up in the block I wouldn't even think about doin' on the outside, 'cause ya can just walk away' (P2). Staff shortages, through hindering the availability of facilities, services and activities, also influenced violence, while the lack of structure, consistency and transparency in the implementation of the VDP policy also played an important role: 'Don't lie to prisoners. If you're lying to prisoners, it's going to create conflict' (PO6).

Responding to Violence

Participants discussed current and preferred responses to violence under four sub-themes. Participants expressed that the management of violence should shift *from reaction to prevention*. Prisoners perceived the current approach, with the continuous use of barrier handling, as meeting violence with more violence. Participants expressed that focusing on de-escalation is preferable, with prison officers already possessing the skills to recognise early signs of violence: 'We can read their body language, we can read the way they're talking, the way they're acting. It's our job and we're good at it' (PO8). Participants discussed that reducing

violence can be achieved through *contracting behaviour* with prisoners, which involves fairly and consistently enforcing the rules, and regularly reviewing prisoner behaviour. Participants highlighted the importance of a flexible approach, which responds and adapts to behaviour changes: 'If they start playing ball, certain things can be relaxed, slightly. Not much, but a little bit. But if they're not playing ball, then everything stays the same' (PO1). Inherent in this approach is the balancing of an appropriate level of punishment and reward:

If a person is contracted to good behaviour and if their behaviour is working out, then there needs to be some sort of rewards. But it can't go to the stage of the reward surpasses what other individuals in the prison have (PO10).

As previously highlighted with the function of the VDP policy, participants believed that responses to violence should move *from containment to intervention*, where the root causes of violence are addressed to ultimately reduce it: 'Just help people. There's nobody sayin' 'right you done somethin' wrong, we'll help ya work through it' (P2). Participants highlighted the importance of *looking to the future* when responding to violence. Within prison, participants felt that the IPS had a responsibility to progress prisoners off of the VDP policy: 'There's a duty of care there like, we have to release him and he's not going to be dealt with in suits when he gets to the main gate' (PO7). Beyond prison, prison officers emphasised the importance of post-release supports in maintaining progress, but raised concerns about their availability: 'I'm nineteen years in the job this August and I've seen people come back and back and back, 'cause [...] we don't have the proper outside care here, we don't have the proper outside facilities' (PO11).

Discussion

This study explored the experiences of those prisoners managed under the VDP policy in the IPS, and the prison officers working with them, before the establishment of the NVRU. A primarily qualitative methodology was adopted, using semi-structured interviews to collect data. Descriptive TA resulted in nine themes: (1) describing VDP policy prisoners, (2) staff characteristics and approaches, (3) describing the VDP policy regime, (4) the social environment, (5) the occupational environment, (6) function of the VDP policy, (7) impact of the VDP policy, (8) factors influencing violence and (9) responding to violence. The synthesis of these themes provides a comprehensive picture of what practice looked like, why it was like this, how it was working, and how it could change.

While prisoner and prison officer data is analysed together in this study, it is important to briefly acknowledge the unique contributions of each group. Overall, prisoners tended to speak negatively of their experiences with the VDP policy, particularly in terms of how they have been treated. Understandably, these prisoners may view their treatment through a particularly negative cognitive and emotional lens due to previous adverse life experiences. They highlighted an interesting paradox whereby they felt both isolated by the prison, but at the same time lacked privacy. They demonstrated something similar to an external locus of control, whereby they focused on the (negative) actions of others, namely staff, when discussing their violent behaviour. Prisoners reported feeling misunderstood by others, and feelings of helplessness and hopelessness are evident throughout their accounts.

Prison officers appeared to have more balanced viewpoints. For example, while they described prisoners in quite negative terms, they demonstrated an understanding of their violent behaviour by identifying the functions of it, which prisoners did not do. Prison officers, in addition to commenting on the prisoner variables influencing violence, noted the influence of others, both staff and other prisoners, in incidences of violence. Overall they spoke positively of staff, but they did not avoid discussing the negative characteristics of some, and spoke about their negative experiences with management. They identified that while the management of violent prisoners was primarily concerned with containment, it also made attempts towards intervention. However, they also noted that being managed in this way likely facilitated rumination, frustration and ultimately aggression and violence. In responding to this violence, prison officers highlighted the importance of balancing control and care.

Existing Literature

It is important to consider the findings of this study in relation to the existing literature, particularly that examining CSCs, the closest comparison to the VDP policy. Descriptions of VDP policy prisoners aligned with the profile of supermax and CSC (and previously CRC) prisoners, considered to be the most challenging in the system (Scharff Smith, 2009). Consistent with existing literature, participants commented on the strategic and psychological functions of violence. In line with Butler (2008), participants spoke of relieving frustration and self-defence against low self-esteem, while enacting violence for enjoyment could evoke similar feelings to enacting violence to gain respect or status, and using violence to escape the general prison population could also be a means of deterring victimisation. Participants created binary categories of the 'right' and the 'wrong' staff, while CSC research (Shalev & Edgar, 2015) and

PIPE research (Turley et al., 2013) identified a mix of staff attitudes. In line with the core conditions of isolative practice, participants characterised the VDP policy regime as restrictive, controlled and solitary (Martynowicz & Moore, 2018). Inconsistent implementation of the VDP policy emerged as a prominent issue, while consistency has been identified as positively influencing prisoners' perceptions of legitimacy (Ryan & Bergin, 2022). This finding perhaps reflects the Irish context where VDP policy prisoners were previously managed in separate prisons, as opposed to the purpose-built units of the CSC system and supermax facilities. The quantity and quality of prisoner-prisoner and staff-prisoner interaction can be situated between the minimal human contact in supermax facilities (Shalev, 2009) and the increased social interaction in CSCs (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018). Prison officers reported feeling excluded and under-valued by management. Similar management issues were evident in the early days of the CSC system (Clare & Bottomley, 2001), but these improved over time (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018). Research on the CRC units reported other managerial issues, including difficult relationships with the host prison and headquarters, the reluctance of managers to engage in the referral process, and poor staff continuity (Walmsley, 1991). Prison officers identified similar training needs to CSC staff, who also highlighted the importance of training as a group to enhance bonding (Shalev & Edgar, 2015). In line with the existing literature, repeated violence and disruption was cited as the primary reason for placement under the VDP policy (Scharff Smith, 2009), while participants also noted the influence of staffing factors in these decisions. Consistent with the extensive literature, participants reported adverse effects of the VDP policy on prisoners' wellbeing (Scharff Smith, 2006). Some prison officers also identified the negative personal impact their work has had, for example increasing stress, similar to CRC staff (Clare & Bottomley, 2001). Contrastingly, staff working in enabling environments (Bennett & Tew, 2018) and PIPEs (Benefield et al., 2018; Turley et al., 2013) spoke of more positive professional impacts. Factors influencing violence were identified at various levels, but with less focus on individual factors and increased focus on interactional and environmental factors (Gadon et al., 2006; McGuire, 2018; Schenk & Fremouw, 2012; Steiner et al., 2014). This is in contrast to the Northern Irish prison context where individual factors were more prevalent (Butler et al., 2021b), but supports the contributions of contextual and situational approaches more prevalent in England and Wales. Consistent with CSC staff (Shalev & Edgar, 2015), and general consensus in the IPS (SCA, 2016), prison officers reported a preference for verbal over physical techniques when responding to violence. Overall, though the aims of both the former VDP policy and CSCs reflect both containment and intervention, the VDP policy was

primarily focused on the prior, whilst CSCs have made more progress towards the latter (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2018).

The PTMF

The PTMF provides a novel way of understanding the origins, experiences and expressions of distress and troubled/troubling behaviour (e.g. violence), and offers an interesting interpretation of the experiences documented in this study (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018a). While participants briefly commented on experiences prior to imprisonment (e.g. ACEs), this was not the focus of this study, and so the PTMF is applied to the prison context only. Participants' accounts demonstrate that prisoners in particular experienced the negative operation of various types of power. For instance, they experienced the negative operation of legal power through imprisonment in general and management under the VDP policy specifically. Participants' reflections on the inappropriateness of the regime, and the lack of autonomy and privacy experienced by prisoners, suggests that their sense of justice, fairness, agency and control is threatened – similar to well-documented perceptions of illegitimate treatment. The negative operation of material power was evidenced by the impoverished environment and conditions of the VDP policy regime, hindering prisoners' abilities to meet basic physical needs. The negative operation of social and interpersonal power was perhaps most prominent. VDP policy prisoners were managed separately from the general prison population and one another, thus threatening their sense of belonging to a social group. Minimal staff-prisoner interaction resulted in further isolation, while the use of barrier handling, and the characteristics and approaches of the 'wrong' staff, sometimes resulted in controlling and hostile interactions, at times crossing prisoners' boundaries. This aligns with Butler's finding that disrespect, especially in interactions between staff and prisoners, can be a crucial catalyst for violence in prison, where prisoners already feel devalued by the very nature of their incarceration (Butler & Drake, 2007; Butler, 2008; Butler & Maruna, 2009).

The PTMF centralises the subjective meaning of these experiences for the individual, evident in beliefs, feelings and bodily reactions, and how these shape one's life narrative. In line with examples contained in the PTMF, prisoners reported feelings of fear, isolation and humiliation, while Butler has previously highlighted that experiences of humiliation, both outside and inside prison, feature prominently in the narratives of violent prisoners (Butler & Drake, 2007; Butler & Maruna, 2009). Comments around feeling misunderstood and neglected by the

IPS reflected feelings of hopelessness and unfairness, again highlighting the central role of legitimacy in prisoners' narratives.

Just as Edgar et al. (2003) and Butler (2008) have previously done, the PTMF highlights the importance of understanding threat responses in relation to the functions they serve. Participants identified psychological and strategic functions of violence, suggesting that violence is used to preserve self-esteem, meet emotional needs (e.g. relieving tension), preserve a place in the social group (e.g. status of the VDP label), and elicit better treatment. The PTMF additionally suggests that violence may be used to protect oneself from perceived physical danger, regulate overwhelming feelings, and maintain a sense of control.

While the PTMF provides a useful way of understanding the origins, experiences and expressions of the violence of VDP policy prisoners, the experiences of staff must also be considered. The PTMF recognises that when staff occupy the same space as those they care for, they can also be impacted by the negative operation of power. In this study, prison officers acknowledged that whilst a prisoner is being managed under the VDP policy they are in essence living together – 'they're living with us for that time period, and we're living with them for that time period' (PO3) – and as such prisoners and staff share the same environment: 'A prisoners living conditions is an officers [working] conditions' (PO12). Prison officers highlighted the personal impact of the job (e.g. exposure to violence, tension), while the PTMF suggests that, subsequently, staff may be less able to fulfil their caring duties. This is in line with suggestions that staff factors may ameliorate or exacerbate the outcomes of isolation for prisoners (Scharff Smith, 2006). In this study, prison officers reported a lack of organisational support in dealing with the impact of the job, which the PTMF suggests is necessary to enable staff to work with the high levels of distressed and troubled/troubling behaviour they encounter. Thus, just as prisoners' perceptions of legitimate treatment by staff are important in understanding their experiences, perhaps prison officers' perceptions of legitimate treatment by management are equally important, with both potentially influencing one another.

Strengths and Limitations

Original, empirical research allowed for the focused exploration of participant experiences, as opposed to the broader overview achieved through inspectorial or evaluative work. As the first study to examine practice under the VDP policy, broad research questions and descriptive TA ensured that detailed descriptions of the VDP policy could be generated, and that these were appropriately grounded in the experiences of prisoners and prison officers. Equal

attention was paid to both of these experiences, with the integration of these sources to understand the same phenomenon (i.e. triangulation) increasing the dependability of findings. Dependability was further enhanced through the consideration of potentially biasing researcher variables (i.e. reflexivity), while the credibility of results was increased through an external researcher check. Detailed description of the participants, setting and circumstances of the research allow the reader to assess the transferability of findings to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Limitations of the study, particularly the unfortunate under-representation of prisoner perspectives, must also be considered. We encountered difficulties in recruiting an already limited prisoner sample, with many declining to take part ($n = 6$), and others not permitted to do so ($n = 3$). As such, less prisoners ($n = 4$) participated than prison officers ($n = 13$), and less codes were identified for prisoners only ($n = 9$) than prison officers only ($n = 53$). While analysing data from both participant groups together is in many ways a strength of the current study, it is possible that this approach dilutes the prisoner viewpoint. Unfortunately, due to the small prisoner sample size, and concerns about protecting their anonymity in the data, it was not possible to analyse their data separately from that of prison officers. However, every effort was made to manage the representation of both groups as best as possible. For example, Table 7 identifies which codes were identified by prison officers only, prisoners only or both groups. A brief synopsis of the unique contributions of both groups is provided in the discussion. In addition to their own experiences, prison officers also spoke to the experiences of prisoners, reflected in the large proportion of codes ($n = 65$) shared by both groups.

Additional limitations related to the study sample include the possibility that the 'right' as opposed to the 'wrong' staff would be willing to voluntarily participate in a study closely examining their work, the exclusion of prisoners with acute mental health difficulties and an immediate risk of violence whose contributions would have been valuable, and the differing profile of prison officer (experiences of the VDP policy only) and prisoner (experiences of the VDP policy and similar management) groups.

Implications

Policy and Practice

With the development of the NVRU, the IPS has begun to positively progress the management of VDP policy prisoners to integrate a psychological perspective. Further learning

should draw from the increasing number of prisons and units in England and Wales adopting contextual, therapeutic approaches (see Akerman et al., 2018). The findings of the current study are integrated here to inform recommendations in four key areas, applicable to both the NVRU and the management of serious violence in comparable prison systems.

Firstly, participants highlighted the importance of the 'right' staff (e.g. experienced, caring, fair) working with violent prisoners, with the literature consistently identifying that prisoners value similar moral traits. Efforts should be made to both recruit staff who demonstrate these traits, and to further develop these traits through training, team building and supervision.

Secondly, participants repeatedly discussed the crucial role staff-prisoner relationships play in the management of violent prisoners. Participants identified that factors related to staff-prisoner interactions (e.g. staff crossing boundaries, staff misconduct, antagonistic staff) are perhaps most influential in violent incidents. As such, in order to make real attempts to reduce violent behaviour, and enhance the psychological wellbeing of prisoners, it is essential that positive staff-prisoner relationships are encouraged and facilitated.

Thirdly, just as prisoners' perceptions of the legitimacy of their treatment are largely influenced by staff, so too are prison officers' perceptions of the legitimacy of their treatment influenced by management. Prison officers reported a lack of faith in management, and feeling over-excluded and under-valued. The literature has highlighted the pivotal role of negative or positive staff dynamics in the negative or positive treatment of prisoners in these areas. Indeed, the PTMF has emphasised the importance of organisational support for staff working with troubled/troubling individuals. As such, positive management-staff relationships should be paid due attention in order to improve the experiences and outcomes of prison officers, and subsequently prisoners.

Fourthly, participants described the VDP policy as operationally-driven, confined to the short-term, and focused on physical security and containment. However, they identified a clear place for psychology in the management of these prisoners, with practice focused on relational security and intervention to address violence in the long-term. Relatedly, they highlighted the importance of truly understanding violence, for example by acknowledging its potential roots (e.g. issues with authority, mental health issues, ACEs) and viewing it as a functional behaviour.

While the PTMF is well-placed to further develop such understandings of violent behaviour, and could be beneficial in developing practice in the NVRU and beyond, there are

some important considerations. It has been noted that the PTMF has the potential to contribute to professional divides in the mental health realm, for example between psychology and psychiatry, which could be counter-productive to achieving its aim of a more humane approach to understanding distress and troubled/ troubling behaviour (Ramsden, 2019). It would be wise to be mindful of similar divides developing between operational and psychological prison staff, in the NVRU or indeed any prison environment, particularly given the scepticism of and difficulty adjusting to a more therapeutic role experienced in similar units (Benefield et al. 2018; Bennett & Tew, 2018; Paget & Woodward 2018; Turley et al. 2013). Additionally, it is important to acknowledge the difficulty of addressing issues of power in an environment with an inherent power imbalance, and where staff are often required to exercise their power in order to fulfil their job of maintaining order and safety. It is crucial that staff are provided with appropriate supervision and support in order to navigate this complex dynamic (Ramsden, 2019).

Research

As part of an ongoing research project evaluating the changing management of serious violence in the IPS, this study created a cross-sectional, descriptive snapshot of practice under the VDP policy before it changed. However, subsequent studies in this planned programme of research have been afforded the valuable opportunity to longitudinally follow the experiences of prisoners and prison officers in the NVRU, from the very beginning and as the unit continues to develop. In doing so, future research can gain more in-depth understandings of these complex experiences, for example through interpretative TA (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This research should also consider how these experiences align or differ from those in the current study, while evaluating the effectiveness of the NVRU in achieving its aims in its initial years.

The PTMF prioritises individual subjectivity in understanding the origins, experiences and expressions of distress and troubled/troubling behaviour. As such, it is well-placed to act as a lens through which this planned programme of research can explore experiences in the NVRU, and through which future related research can explore similar experiences or environments. Given the recency of its publication, applications of the PTMF in research are so far limited. However, and as acknowledged by the authors, the core concepts of the PTMF have been developed from a vast and diverse evidence-base supporting contextual approaches in understanding human behaviour. The application of such approaches to understanding offending and violent behaviour has been well-documented in this article, and this literature should continue to be drawn upon in future related research. Additionally, while some have

criticised the PTMF for failing to employ rigorous scientific methodologies, the authors have highlighted that the positivist principles underpinning the scientific method, and indeed the dominant biomedical model, are at odds with the aims of the PTMF (Ramsden, 2019). As such, they argue for greater recognition of the legitimacy and value of alternative research methodologies (e.g. qualitative approaches). It is important that those conducting future related research consider adopting such approaches, and that those funding, evaluating and implementing such research recognise their value.

Conclusion

To conclude, this study demonstrated the value of giving voice to prisoner and prison officer perspectives. Doing so not only provides insight into their individual and shared experiences, thus developing our understanding of serious prison violence, but also ensures that its management is informed by those whom policy and practice most directly impacts.

Chapter 4: Preface

Chapter three presented a qualitative exploration of the experiences of prisoners ($n = 4$) and prison officers ($n = 13$) under the previous VDP policy, before its transformation in 2018. This study identified nine themes: (1) describing VDP policy prisoners, (2) staff characteristics and approaches, (3) describing the VDP policy regime, (4) the social environment, (5) the occupational environment, (6) function of the VDP policy, (7) impact of the VDP policy, (8) factors influencing violence, and (9) responding to violence. Taken together, these themes provide a detailed description of what practice under the previous VDP policy looked like, why it was like this, how it was working, and how it could change.

Chapter four below presents the second original, empirical research study of this thesis. This study qualitatively explored NVRU prisoners' ($n = 3$) self-understandings of the origins, experiences and expressions of their violent behaviour. It did so through the lens of the Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF).

Chapter four is an adaptation of a published journal article:

Gallagher, O., Regan, E., & O'Reilly, G. (2023a). "I've lived and bred violence my whole life": Understanding violence in the Irish Prison Service through the lens of the power threat meaning framework. *Psychology, Crime & Law*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2023.2228967>

The authors of this publication had the following roles:

Orla Gallagher (lead author) was involved in the inception of the idea of the study, designing the study, collecting and analysing data, writing the study, submitting it for publication, and completing any revisions requested by the journal.

Dr Emma Regan (second author) was involved in the inception of the idea of the study, designing the study, providing feedback throughout the data collection, data analysis and writing processes, and providing supervision for the overall study.

Prof. Gary O'Reilly (third author) was involved in the inception of the idea of the study, designing the study, providing feedback throughout the data collection, data analysis and writing processes, and providing supervision for the overall study.

Chapter 4: Understanding Serious Violence using the Power Threat Meaning Framework - Exploring the Perspectives of Prisoners in the National Violence Reduction Unit

Abstract

In 2018 the Irish Prison Service (IPS) opened the National Violence Reduction Unit (NVRU), which became home to the small amount of prisoners managed under the Violently Disruptive Prisoner (VDP) policy, who were repeatedly engaged in very serious violence in prison. The NVRU shifted practice under the VDP policy to a joint operational-psychological approach, with the aim of understanding the violent behaviour of these prisoners and working with them to reduce it. This study explored NVRU prisoners' understandings of the origins, experiences and expressions of their violent behaviour through the lens of the Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF). Despite difficulties engaging this cohort, half ($n = 3$) of all prisoners residing in the NVRU during its first year participated in semi-structured interviews. Six themes were identified: (1) power, (2) threat, (3) meaning, (4) threat response, (5) function of threat response, and (6) moderating factors. In doing so they identified many a priori elements of the existing provisional PTMF, whilst also contributing novel elements related to their specific and subjective personal experiences. These findings are interpreted in the context of existing empirical research. Implications for future research, and policy and practice within and beyond the NVRU, are suggested.

Keywords: Prison, Violence, Power Threat Meaning Framework, Qualitative Research

Introduction

Violence and misconduct are not uncommon in prisons or other custodial settings. For example, most recent statistics published by the Irish Prison Service (IPS) revealed that 249 prisoner-prisoner and 91 prisoner-staff assaults were recorded in Irish prisons in 2021 (IPS, 2021b). Despite a relatively small (but growing) prison population¹², the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and the United Nations (UN) have previously commented on seemingly high levels of violence in Irish prisons (Martynowicz & Moore, 2018). In 2015, having made similar observations, the Irish State Claims Agency (SCA) conducted a review of violent incidents. They identified that most violent incidents at this time could be attributed to less than 1% of the imprisoned population, who presented with complex backgrounds and needs – a finding which has also been observed in Northern Irish prisons (Butler et al., 2021a).

Since 2014, the IPS have managed an even smaller subset of these prisoners under the Violently Disruptive Prisoner (VDP) policy; but the nature of their management has changed drastically during this time. In their recent study, Gallagher et al. (2022) qualitatively explored previous practice under the initial VDP policy through the experiences of VDP policy prisoners and prison officers. Participants described previous practice as operationally-driven, focusing primarily on containing the risk these prisoners posed. They characterised the regime as restrictive (e.g. limited out of cell time, lack of autonomy), solitary (e.g. isolated environments, limited human contact) and controlled (e.g. staff-intensive, barrier handling¹³). They cautioned the negative impact the ‘wrong’ staff (e.g. punitive, antagonistic) could have on VDP policy prisoners, and emphasised issues of inconsistency and inappropriateness in the management of these prisoners. Participants discussed the negative impact they felt the previous VDP policy had on prisoners (e.g. psychological wellbeing, humiliation, feeling misunderstood), consistent with the extensive existing literature (Scharff Smith, 2006). They also observed a paradox, whereby the violence of VDP policy prisoners seemed to increase as a result of their management. This is in line with an earlier observation by the SCA that, despite the use of isolative and barrier handling practices, some particularly challenging prisoners have still seriously assaulted staff (2016).

¹² 4,612 on 1st August 2023: <https://www.irishprisons.ie/information-centre/statistics-information/2015-daily-prisoner-population/2023-prison-population/>

¹³ Barrier handling is a local term, referring to the use of Control & Restraint procedures and Personal Protection Equipment in the management of VDP policy prisoners.

Acknowledging the negative consequences of managing prisoners in this way, and the emerging evidence pointing to its ineffectiveness, the IPS established the National Violence Reduction Unit (NVRU) in November 2018. Contrastingly, practice in the NVRU aimed to be psychologically-informed in multiple ways at the policy (e.g. focus on intervention and progression), management (e.g. national oversight by a multi-disciplinary committee, co-led by an operational governor and senior psychologist), environmental (e.g. informed by Psychologically Informed Planned Environment [PIPEs] and Enabling Environment [EEs] initiatives), staff (e.g. specialised selection and training, annual health checks) and prisoner (e.g. intensive psychological assessment and intervention) levels.

Continuing a designated programme of research evaluating the changing management of VDP policy prisoners in the IPS, this paper, through the lens of the Power Threat Meaning Framework ([PTMF] Johnstone & Boyle, 2018a), explores NVRU prisoners' subjective understandings of their violence. Firstly, however, it briefly summarises our existing theoretical and empirical understandings of the origins, experiences and expressions of prison violence, and violent and offending behaviour generally, and highlights how the PTMF may aid these understandings.

Origins of Violent Behaviour

The vast literature exploring the causes and correlates of prison violence can generally be divided into two lines of thinking. Importation theory proposes that prison violence can be attributed to the various individual experiences, characteristics, beliefs and values one brings with them into prison (Edgar et al., 2003). Indeed, the empirical literature has consistently identified various demographic (e.g. male, younger age), psychological (e.g. substance use, mental health issues) and criminogenic (e.g. violent index offence, multiple convictions) risk factors for prison violence (Schenk & Fremouw, 2012; Steiner et al. 2014; Steiner & Wooldredge, 2020; McGuire, 2018). Contrastingly, deprivation theory proposes that prison violence can be attributed to the 'pains' of the deprived prison environment one experiences upon imprisonment (Edgar et al., 2003). Though less-explored, some environmental (e.g. poor physical conditions), interactional (e.g. mistreated by staff) and organisational (e.g. illegitimate treatment) factors have also been reported (Gadon et al., 2006; McGuire, 2018; Steiner & Wooldredge, 2020). More recently, however, integrated models have acknowledged that both types of factors are likely to interact to influence prison violence (Edgar et al., 2003). For instance, general strain theory proposes that the experience of imprisonment presents many

strains, including the denial of positively valued goals (e.g. restricted participation in programmes and services), the removal of positively valued stimuli (e.g. limited contact with family and friends) and the presentation of noxious stimuli (e.g. overcrowding). Whether one copes with these strains in conventional (e.g. seeking out job assignments) or deviant (e.g. violence) ways, however, depends on their personal characteristics (e.g. age) and values (e.g. connection with family [Blevins et al., 2010]). More recently, Steiner and Wooldredge (2020) have proposed a multi-level social control-opportunity framework for understanding prison violence, which integrates the influences of individual (i.e. prisoner or prison officer), environmental (i.e. prison) and managerial (i.e. exercised power and its perceived legitimacy) factors alongside social control and lifestyle theories.

Butler et al. (2021b) highlighted the importance of considering cultural context in their studies of violence in Northern Irish prisons. Many well-evidenced risk factors were not identified in these samples, while additional unique factors (e.g. religion, nationality) of particular importance in the Northern Irish cultural context were, concluding that 'cultural context matters when attempting to generalise the potential causes and correlates of [violent] behaviour from one jurisdiction to another'. Generally, individual risk factors were found to be most influential in Northern Ireland, despite increasing emphasis on the importance of environmental considerations in England and Wales (see Akerman et al., 2018). Butler et al. (2021c) also found that prison violence was more often attributed to individual factors, while prison misconduct was more often attributed to environmental factors. In the Republic of Ireland, although some individual and environmental factors were also reported, prisoners and prison officers involved with the previous VDP policy identified interactional factors as most influential to prison violence and disruption (Gallagher et al., 2022). However, these stratified understandings of prison violence have been criticised for conceptualising prisons as unique environments requiring specific theories, where more holistic frameworks which focus on violence, and indeed human behaviour, more generally may offer greater utility (Edgar et al., 2003; Steiner et al., 2014).

Recently, our understanding of human behaviour and outcomes has paid due focus to the influence of various lifetime adversities, perhaps prompted by Felitti et al.'s (1998) seminal adverse childhood experiences (ACE) study, and the vast body of literature which has followed. Indeed, this literature consistently evidences clear links between various types of adversity and various types of offending behaviour, including violence (Hocken et al., 2022; Smith, 2022; Willmot, 2022; Willmot & Jones, 2022). Despite this, these links are yet to become truly embedded within forensic research and practice (Hocken et al., 2022; Willmot & Jones, 2022).

Numerous barriers to change have been suggested, including negative societal attitudes towards and the stigmatisation of offenders, penal systems which focus on harm caused over harm experienced and prioritise containment over care, and a lack of funding to make genuine efforts towards the provision of rehabilitation (Hocken et al., 2022; Willmot & Jones, 2022). Nonetheless, some good progress has been made. For example, the Good Lives Model (GLM) promotes a shared understanding of offending behaviour (and violence) grounded in the identification of unmet, or ineffectively met, human needs throughout life (Smith, 2022; Willmot & Siddall, 2022). Innovative approaches to managing prisoners and prison violence, particularly in England and Wales, have too made significant progress towards becoming trauma-informed, such as the Enabling Environments (EE) framework, Rehabilitative Culture initiatives, Psychologically Informed Planned Environments (PIPEs), and Therapeutic Communities ([TCs]; see Akerman et al., 2018; Willmot & Jones, 2022). The NVRU represents a similar effort in the Republic of Ireland. Additionally, the PTMF highlights the Offender Personality Disorder Pathway (OPDP) as a 'good practice example' which embeds PTMF principles (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b). Indeed, forensic professionals have argued the PTMF is well-positioned to further trauma-informed approaches in forensic settings (Smith, 2022; Willmot & Siddall, 2022). Central to this process, and also advocated by the PTMF, is the genuine involvement of service-user voices, for example through qualitative methodologies (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018a; Willmot & Jones, 2022).

Experiences of Behaving Violently

Most literature exploring experiences of violence has duly focused on the experiences of victims. However, to truly understand violence, it is essential to consider how engaging in violence may be experienced by perpetrators. Reinforcing what we have long understood about the origins of violence, recent empirical literature has consistently noted very high rates of adversity, trauma symptomology and diagnoses of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and/or Complex PTSD among prison populations (Facer-Irwin et al., 2019; Facer-Irwin et al., 2021; Fritzon et al., 2021; Gray et al., 2003; Ternes et al., 2020). This is particularly the case amongst seriously violent offenders, with prevalence rates of offence-related trauma ranging from 33% to over 50% (Pink & Gray, 2022). While a large proportion of violent perpetrators are also victims of violence themselves, the second most traumatising event experienced by this cohort is the committal of their own violent offence(s) (Ternes et al., 2020). Several mediating factors have been suggested to help explain this relationship. In committing serious violence, one may alter their self-perception, ultimately losing control and perceiving themselves as a

threat (Fritzon et al., 2021). Altered mental states, particularly amongst perpetrators with mental health issues, have also been identified as an important mediating factor (Gray et al., 2003). Additionally, in perpetrating serious violence, offenders are also witnesses of said serious violence (Pink & Gray, 2022; Ternes et al., 2020). Moderating factors have too been identified, including the closeness of the perpetrator's relationship to the victim (Ternes et al., 2020), and whether the perpetrator feels justified or guilty about the offence (Gray et al., 2003).

Understanding one's experiences of behaving violently is crucial, considering not only the substantial adverse effects trauma can have on the individual, but also its likelihood of increasing violence and aggression (Facer-Irwin et al., 2019; Pink & Gray, 2022). Recognising that acts of violence increase the likelihood of imprisonment or re-imprisonment, and that these institutions are often traumatising or re-traumatising (Hocken et al., 2022; Malik et al., 2021), it is not difficult to see how intertwined cycles of trauma and violence can be perpetuated.

Expressions of Violent Behaviour

Prison violence occurs along the continuum of prison misconduct, which involves any breaking of the prisons' rules (Butler et al., 2021c). While examples of prison violence may be easy to identify (e.g. verbal/physical/sexual abuse), defining violence more generally is not so simple. In their comprehensive text on prison violence, Edgar et al. (2003) described violence as a 'slippery' concept that 'evades easy description and fixed definition' (p.23). They highlighted the various types of existing definitions (e.g. wide, restricted, limited), and the various types of perspectives (e.g. psychological, social, legal) they promote. Critically, they emphasised that understandings of violence cannot be confined to singular levels. For example, much violence literature has traditionally contrasted reactive violence (i.e. reacting to a situation, being provoked) and instrumental violence (i.e. planned, a means to an end). There have even been suggestions that as reactive violence is associated with more arousal and negative emotions, these perpetrators are more likely to experience trauma symptomology (Facer-Irwin et al., 2021; Ternes et al., 2020). Subsequent research has not confirmed this, and modern understandings of violence recognise that violent acts likely involve both reactive and instrumental elements (Ternes et al., 2020). Instead, it has increasingly proved more useful to consider expressions of violence in terms of the functions they serve for individuals.

Focusing on prison violence specifically, Edgar et al. (2003) identified self-defence, retaliation, punishment, defending honour, communication and settling differences as important functions for prisoners. Butler (2008) has discussed related functions, including relieving

frustration, deterring victimisation, self-defence, demonstrating masculinity, demanding respect from others, achieving status and protecting identity. Crucially, they have highlighted the central role of shame in these processes (Butler, 2008; Butler & Drake, 2007; Butler & Maruna, 2009). In their previous study of VDP policy prisoners, Gallagher et al. (2022) identified both strategic (e.g. obtain better treatment, removal from general population) and psychological functions (e.g. relieving tension, enjoyment, protecting against low self-esteem) of violence for these prisoners. The PTMF, which centralises the functionality of various threat responses, is well-placed to provide a lens through which to understand the origins, experiences and expressions of violence.

The Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF)

The PTMF, lead-authored by Dr Lucy Johnstone and Prof. Mary Boyle, was introduced by the British Psychological Society (BPS) Division of Clinical Psychology (DCP) in 2018 as a holistic framework for understanding the origins, experiences and expressions of emotional distress and troubled/troubling behaviour. The PTMF considers four core elements: (1) the negative operation of various types of power in ones' life, (2) the threats that this posed, (3) the subjective meaning of these experiences to the individual, and (4) the functional threat responses they used to survive. It also proposes that various exacerbating and ameliorating factors can moderate this process. Taken together, it suggests seven different provisional general patterns of understanding: (1) identities, (2) surviving rejection, entrapment and invalidation, (3) surviving disrupted attachments and adversities as a child or young person, (4) surviving separation and identity confusion, (5) surviving defeat, entrapment, disconnection and loss, (6) surviving social exclusion, shame and coercive power, and (7) surviving single threats. The authors highlight that these patterns cut across the boundaries of what is typically considered 'normal' and 'abnormal', are shaped by social, political and cultural contexts, and that community versions of these patterns will exist. Patterns will likely exist within these general patterns, and individuals will vary in their 'fit' to these patterns. Crucially, these patterns do not represent discrete clusters, are not one-to-one replacements for diagnostic clusters, and do not provide universal explanations for specific types of threat responses (or 'symptoms').

Despite its primary intention of offering an alternative to the traditional diagnostic model of mental illness, the PTMF has lent itself to forensic psychology through its broad focus on distress and troubled/troubling behaviour, and its alliance with recent shifts towards trauma-informed understandings and practices (see Willmot & Jones, 2022). Indeed, the PTMF

accommodates many recommendations from the existing prison violence literature outlined above in that it provides a holistic framework which is not confined to any one level of understanding, it highlights the importance of considering individual meaning, and it centralises the role of functionality in human behaviour. Reis et al. (2019) were first to explore the utility of the PTMF in a forensic context, using it to co-create personal narratives of imprisonment with men on the OPDP. These men emphasised the negative operation of legal (e.g. injustice in prison) and interpersonal (e.g. bullied by other prisoners) power, which threatened their relational outcomes and identities, leaving them angry, vulnerable, uncertain and hopeless. As a result, they relied on a range of related threat responses, including violence, to survive imprisonment. More recently, and also focused on time in custody, Gallagher et al. (2022) demonstrated the utility of the PTMF in interpreting prisoners' and prison officers' experiences of the previous VDP policy in the IPS. In addition to highlighting the psychological and strategic functions of violence, participant narratives illustrated the negative operation of material (e.g. impoverished prison environment) and interpersonal (e.g. isolative prison conditions) power, threatening various core human needs (e.g. agency, human interaction), and leading to meanings embedded with feelings of fear, injustice, humiliation and neglect.

Current Study

Building on the foundation laid by the first study in this integrated programme of research (Gallagher et al., 2022), the overall aim of this qualitative study was to gain an understanding of the origins, experiences and expressions of the violent behaviour of NVRU prisoners, from the perspectives of these prisoners. It aimed to generate this understanding through the lens of the PTMF. In doing so, it aimed to identify what elements of the existing – and provisional - PTMF could be identified by this specific cohort. Relatedly, it aimed to identify what, if any, novel features related to the origins, experiences and expressions of violence could be identified by these prisoners, and perhaps added to the application of the PTMF, through research and practice, in other forensic settings and/or with similar cohorts.

Method

This study received full ethical approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (Humanities) at University College Dublin, and the IPS Research Office.

Participant Recruitment

Criteria for referral to the NVRU include: (1) engagement in serious repetitive or escalating violence towards others in custody, and/or (2) carrying out or orchestrating a single serious or significant act of violence or disorder, and/or (3) demonstrating behaviour that is significantly dangerous to others, where there is evidence that deems this risk/threat is credible. Upon observing any of these criteria, a governor may submit a standardised referral form to the National NVRU Committee (NVRUC). If the NVRUC deem the referral to be appropriate, the prisoner transfers to the NVRU to undergo an assessment period. Assessment periods are estimated to last four months, but vary depending on multiple factors (e.g. prisoner needs and engagement, staff resources). Thereafter, following discussion between the NVRUC and the internal NVRU multi-disciplinary team (MDT), the prisoner either remains in the NVRU and commences their individualised intervention period there, or is transferred elsewhere in the prison estate with recommendations for their management. The NVRUC and NVRU MDT may discuss and agree on the de-selection of prisoners from the NVRU where: (1) there is clear evidence of a reduction in violence risk factors using a structured risk assessment tool, (2) evidence of sufficient self-management skills to enable the individual to cope without violence in a less secure setting, and (3) sustained behavioural changes evidenced through the achievement of care and management plan goals, and where any further progress cannot be demonstrated in the NVRU (IPS, 2019b).

This study aimed to recruit prisoners residing in the NVRU during the first year of its implementation. All prisoners who were transferred to the NVRU during this time ($n = 6$) were eligible to participate. It was planned that each prisoner would be invited to participate in the study at three time-points: Time 1) the mid-point of their estimated assessment period, Time 2) the mid-point of their estimated intervention period, and Time 3) just before exiting the NVRU. These timelines were advised by the Senior Psychologist in the NVRU. The aim was not to compare data at different time-points, but rather capture prisoners' journeys throughout the NVRU. A similar study involving prison officers working in the NVRU during its first year was conducted concurrently to this study, as part of the same research project and by the same authors. This data is analysed in a separate paper (Gallagher et al., 2024)

All eligible prisoners were invited to participate at these time-points by either a Psychologist or prison officer, who explained the research, ascertained their interest in participating, and obtained their informed consent. Any operational (e.g. significant risk of violence) and psychological (e.g. acutely mentally unwell) barriers to participation were identified at this time, with invitations to participate postponed to a more appropriate time, if necessary and

possible. Three prisoners (P1, P2 & P3) participated at Time 1, and one prisoner (P1), who also participated at Time 1, participated at Time 3. P1 was not invited to participate at Time 2 due to the short amount of time remaining on their sentence after their Time 1 participation. P2 and P3 declined to participate in subsequent time-points following their Time 1 participation. The other three prisoners residing in the NVRU during this time declined to participate in the research in its entirety. Thus, 50% of eligible NVRU prisoners successfully participated in the study.

Data Collection

Prisoners participated in semi-structured interviews, conducted by the lead author, in private visiting rooms in the NVRU. All meetings were conducted in either completely closed (i.e. behind Perspex screens; $n = 2$), semi-closed (i.e. behind metal bars; $n = 1$) or completely open (i.e. no physical separation; $n = 1$) conditions, dependant on advice from NVRU staff. In line with the time-points outlined above, all interviews were conducted between December 2019 and February 2020. Semi-structured interview schedules included open-ended questions informed by the PTMF which aimed to identify experiences of the negative operation of power, the threats these posed, the meaning of these experiences to prisoners, the threat responses they used to survive, and any moderating factors (i.e. exacerbating and ameliorating factors) which influenced this process. The interview schedule (Appendix E) remained the same at all time-points. Interviews were audio-recorded, lasting an average of 35 minutes. Relevant demographic and offending data were also extracted from prisoners' records on the Prison Information Management System (PIMS) by the lead author, for the purpose of describing the sample.

Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 24 was used to analyse quantitative PIMS data and produce descriptive statistics. Qualitative data analysis was informed by Braun and Clarke's (2022) reflexive thematic analysis approach - both deductive and inductive variations - whilst also incorporating elements of codebook approaches, such as framework and template analysis. The lead author first familiarised themselves with both the PTMF and the interview transcripts. The main PTMF document (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018a) was reviewed to identify and extract 7 different types of power, 9 different categories of threats, 22 different kind of meanings, and 54 examples of threat responses serving 9 different types of functions, moderated by 16 exacerbating and 16 ameliorating factors. These elements were imported into a codebook (Appendix F). The lead author then familiarised themselves with participant transcripts through manual verbatim transcription, reading, and noting initial

impressions. Once familiar with both the PTMF and participant transcripts, the lead author searched each transcript, line by line, to identify any a priori PTMF elements, guided by the developed codebook. This process aligned with Braun and Clarke's deductive variation of reflexive thematic analysis, which involves the selective identification of theoretical and researcher-driven codes in particular aspects of a dataset. Thereafter, Braun and Clarke's inductive variation of reflexive thematic analysis was integrated, whereby the lead author searched each transcript once more, identifying any additional elements which were not accounted for by the PTMF a priori codes, but were of interest to the research question. These novel, data-driven codes (indicated by asterisks in the results section) were added to the codebook, which then underwent several phases of data reduction, revision and refinement, documented by an audit trail. A credibility check was also conducted with an external researcher, who was provided with an excel file containing all 101 codes, accompanied by 101 participant extracts illustrating these codes. The external researcher was asked to indicate on the excel file if they agreed with, disagreed with, or were unsure of each code-extract match. Where they were unsure or disagreed, they were asked to provide a comment explaining this in a designated column, before returning the excel file. The external researcher initially agreed with 95% of code-extract matches, and were unsure of 5% of matches. Both researchers discussed areas of uncertainty, guided by the comments of the external researcher, leading to minor amendments to the data (e.g. renaming, removal or merging of codes). The external researcher then reviewed the amended code-extract matches, and agreed with 100% of code-extract matches.

Reflexivity

The lead author is female, with no previous personal experiences of the criminal justice system or imprisonment. She has been funded by the IPS to conduct independent research on the management of serious violence in Irish prisons since 2017. She has completed one previous study as part of this project (Gallagher et al., 2022) which explored the experiences of VDP policy prisoners (and the prison officers working with them) before the implementation of the NVRU. Two prisoners in the current study also participated in this previous study. Findings of the previous study were discussed in the context of the PTMF, which highlighted the utility of the PTMF in this area. This led to the decision to use the PTMF to explore the violent behaviour of prisoners in the NVRU in more depth.

Results

Quantitative Data

The mean age of participating prisoners ($n = 3$) was 28.33 years ($SD = 2.31$). All prisoners were single, white, Irish males. All prisoners were sentenced at the time of data collection. On average, prisoners were convicted of 13 offences ($SD = 5$) during their current custodial periods, including index offence(s) and subsequent offences committed in prison. These included assault offences ($n = 23$), theft/robbery/burglary offences ($n = 6$), weapons offences ($n = 3$), criminal damage offences ($n = 2$), false imprisonment ($n = 1$) and murder ($n = 1$). During their periods of incarceration, prisoners committed an average of 65.33 incidents of misconduct ($SD = 19.73$), during which they broke on average 162 prison rules ($SD = 82.71$), and as a result received an average of 151.33 ($SD = 30.02$) sanctions. A comparison of prison misconducts and sanctions during comparable time periods prior their transfers to the NVRU, and during their first year in the NVRU, is presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Comparison of Number and Characteristics of Misconducts During Comparable Periods Before Transfer to the NVRU and in the NVRU

	Pre-NVRU				In-NVRU			
	PA	PB	PC	Total prisoners	PA	PB	PC	Total prisoners
Types of prison rules broken								
Abusive language/behaviour	6	7	6	19	0	4	5	9
Non-compliance	8	7	4	19	0	6	10	16
Harming others	4	12	3	19	0	10	9	19
Any other	4	3	3	10	0	4	5	9
Prohibited articles	3	0	0	3	0	0	4	4
Property damage	3	0	2	5	1	1	9	11
Collective indiscipline	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
Substances	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	30	29	18	77	1	25	42	68
Types of sanctions administered								
Prohibition on activities	3	15	4	22	0	6	3	9
Prohibition on outside contact	6	21	3	30	0	6	2	8
Caution	1	10	5	16	1	7	6	14
Prohibition on material possessions	1	10	2	13	0	3	2	5
Not stated	1	0	0	1	0	1	12	13

Postponement/forfeiture of gratuities	0	0	1	1	0	0	3	3
Confinement in cell	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
Total	14	56	15	85	1	23	28	52

Qualitative Data

Qualitative data analysis resulted in six themes, 35 sub-themes and 101 codes. These are presented in Table 9 and discussed below, accompanied by illustrative participant extracts where participants are identified by P1, P2 and P3. Sub-themes are underlined. Results are additionally illustrated in the thematic map in Appendix G.

Table 9

Themes, Sub-themes and Codes Resulting from Qualitative Analysis

Theme	Sub-themes	Codes
1. Power	1.1. Embodied	Substance (ab)use Disability
	1.2. Coercive	Violence throughout life-course Violence in society Violence from authority figures
	1.3. Legal	Abuse of authority status Systemic injustice in prison Isolative prison conditions
	1.4. Material	Untreated mental illness Homelessness
	1.5. Interpersonal	Parental loss & separation Strained family relationships Bullying Manipulation
2. Threat	2.1. Relational	Bereavement Lack of protection Abandonment & neglect Boundary crossing Shaming & humiliation Hostility Control Isolation

	2.2. Emotional	Emotional overwhelm
	2.3. Social	Injustice & unfairness Social defeat
	2.4. Environmental	Unsafe spaces
	2.5. Bodily	Physical danger Loss of control
	2.6. Meaning construction	Unequal power relations
	2.7. Identity	Violent identities* Sub-ordinate identities Shameful identities De-valued identities
	2.8. Value base	Loss of values & purpose
3. Meaning	3.1. Emotional	Overwhelmed Afraid Guilty
	3.2. Humiliated	Humiliated by peers Humiliated by prison officers
	3.3. Targeted	Injustice & unfairness Hated*
	3.4. Abandoned	Rejected Alienated
	3.5. Different	Alien Misunderstood
	3.6. Helpless	Violent behaviour can't be changed Prison power dynamics can't be changed Life can't be changed
	3.7. Meaninglessness	Indifferent
	3.8. Normality*	Violent experiences Violence cycle Violent identity
	3.9. Identifying the positives*	Resilient Self-development Proving others wrong Helping others Hopeful

4. Threat Responses	4.1. Behaviours	Fight response Violence Impulsivity Suicidal thinking & actions Substance (ab)use Psychosis
	4.2. Thoughts	Paranoia Entitlement Confused self-image Deep thinking
	4.3. Feelings	Emotional numbing Emotional dysregulation Anger Guilt Tension* Fearlessness*
	4.4. Interactions	Isolation & avoidance Distrust
5. Function of Threat Responses	5.1. Regulating feelings & meeting emotional needs	Violence to obtain pleasure Violence to relieve tension Substance (ab)use to relieve tension Psychosis to cope with trauma events
	5.2. Protection from physical danger	Violence to protect from physical danger in prison
	5.3. Maintaining a sense of control	Violence to maintain a sense of control in prison
	5.4. Preserving identity, self-image & self-esteem	Violence to protect against low self-esteem Violence is justified
	5.5. Preserving place in the social group	Preserving place in prison Preserving place in society
	5.6. Communicating distress & eliciting care	Psychosis to communicate distress & elicit care
	5.7. Learned survival strategies*	Violence is a learned & successful survival strategy
	6.1. Exacerbating factors	Adverse childhood experiences

6. Moderating Factors	Lack of support network
	Repeated & long-lasting exposure to threats in prison
	Lack of control in prison
	Intentional interpersonal threats
	Lack of institutional support in prison
Chronicity of threats in all aspects of life	
	Substance (ab)use*
6.2. Ameliorating factors	Good support network
	Supportive prison conditions
	Substance (ab)use*
	Self-belief*
	Hope for the future*

Note. * indicates novel codes or sub-themes identified by participants. All other codes were developed a priori from the PTMF.

Theme 1: Power

Prisoners identified five different types of power which have operated negatively in their lives. Reflecting primarily on life before prison, participants highlighted the influence of embodied power. One prisoner spoke about growing up with a disability, while another discussed their struggles with substance (ab)use: 'I suppose a lot of the drugs I might have been taking when I was outside [...] before I was in prison I was getting into fights sometimes as well' (P2). Material power was also evident before prison. One prisoner spoke of how their mental illness went undetected and untreated for years, while another prisoner noted 'I was homeless [...] before prison' (P3). Coercive power played a central role in the lives of all prisoners, from being surrounded by violence in society, to experiencing violence directly throughout their life-courses: 'I've lived and bred violence my whole life' (P1). Much of this violence was at the hands of authority figures, including state caregivers, police officers, and prison officers: 'They want you to kick off, they want you to be violent, so they can use their violence' (P1). These abuses of authority statuses also evidence legal power. Participants highlighted the related systemic injustice they experienced in prison, with such incidents often experienced as being 'swept under the carpet' (P1). The isolative conditions under which prisoners were held in prison were also emphasised: 'There's a lot of aspects to it like. You could say a hundred and one things, but at the end of the day it comes down to one thing and that's just solitary' (P1). The isolation

experienced in prison was also evident in prisoners' familial relationships, with parental loss and separation, and strained family relationships, demonstrating interpersonal power: 'I don't have a good relationship with my family you know, and it doesn't help when I'm in prison' (P2).

Prisoners also noted experiences of bullying in prison, by both prisoners and prison officers: 'Staff can bully ya as well [...] everyone in here can bully ya' (P3). Additionally, one prisoner described experiences where their peers manipulated them 'for money, for robbing drug dealers and for asking [me] to kill people' (P1). Overall, the experiences reported here by prisoners paint a picture of difficult life circumstances, coloured by the negative operation of multiple types of power: 'That's why I'm here [...] I've had a hard life [...] everyone in here's had a hard life' (P3).

Theme 2: Threat

These experiences threatened prisoners' core human needs in eight different ways. Relational threats included the bereavement and abandonment/neglect prisoners experienced due to parental loss/separation and strained family relationships. Strained family relationships also resulted in hostility, as did the violence experienced from authority figures: '[I] hated the system and hated prison officers and hated anyone that represented authority [...] I seen that as a red flag' (P1). Experiences of violence from authority figures also threatened prisoners' levels of protection and control. Experiences of bullying and being manipulated by others threatened prisoners' boundaries. Prisoners were isolated in these relationships, and by the isolative prison conditions they lived in. Threats of shame/humiliation were central to prisoners' experiences of violence from authority figures and bullying: 'People trying to make an eejit out of ya. Ya get people like that, ya get people that, people try to laugh at ya or trying to pick on ya or bully ya' (P3). The emotional threats arising from these various experiences, particularly experiencing violence from authority figures and being managed under the VDP policy, has left prisoners emotionally overwhelmed: 'I've made [progress] in here, but sometimes I still get wound up, know what I mean. I can hold myself together, I know I can. But sometimes I break down and go crazy' (P3). These same experiences posed social threats to prisoners, due to the injustice and unfairness they encountered. Prisoners also experienced social defeat and environmental threats as they continually found themselves in unsafe spaces, both outside and inside prison: 'It's a big ass bad world out there [...] It's just constant violence. So either you go with it yeah, or you'll be left behind. I'll always go with it' (P1). Prisoners faced bodily threats due to the physical danger evident in incidents of violence from authority figures. One prisoner who experienced substance (ab)use issues also highlighted the loss of control they sometimes experienced as a result: 'Just your judgement isn't there like you know, when you're intoxicated. If you're on drugs

or drink or something you're not really thinking properly you know' (P2). At the core of many of these experiences are unequal power relations, which threatened prisoners' meaning construction:

Everything that happened, happened to me when I was young, then going on to the streets and then being bullied and being around drugs and watching people shootin' up in front of ya. Just like, it's horrible like. You know how do you make sense of that like? I have no idea. It's not easy like (P1).

As a result, subordinate identities were imposed on prisoners. One prisoner adopted a shameful identity, due to his internalised guilt related to his index offence: 'That makes me feel bad about myself [...] I find it a bit hard sometimes you know, living with it' (P2). Another prisoner experienced the imposition of a de-valued identity due to their disability: 'I have that for years, know what I mean. And bullied, and nobody really understood me, nobody really understood me' (P3). Perhaps unique to this cohort, prisoners also discussed adopting violent identities*: 'All I know is violence. I'm good at violence' (P1). Relatedly, prisoners experienced threats against their value base, whereby they experienced a lack or loss of pro-social or moral values. For example, one prisoner described his indifference towards and entitlement to violence: 'You just feel as if you're right like, you know, that it's the right thing, you know. Sometimes, not all of the time' (P2).

Theme 3: Meaning

Participants identified nine different types of meanings they had developed from various (often adverse) experiences they had experienced throughout their lives, expressed through various thoughts, feelings and bodily reactions. Prisoners felt quite emotional about these experiences, which were often overwhelming. One prisoner spoke of their fear of being barrier handled (i.e. managed with staff in riot gear), while another prisoner described the guilt they felt about their past experiences: 'The reason I'm doing [this] sentence, I find it a bit hard sometimes you know. Living with it like, you know' (P2). Prisoners re-iterated feelings of humiliation, due to how they have been treated by prison officers and prisoners. They also spoke of feeling targeted as a result of the unjust and unfair treatment they have experienced in prison, with one prisoner expressing they felt hated* by the IPS: 'There's a lot of hatred for me in the system. A lot, a lot, a lot of hatred' (P1). Prisoners described feelings of abandonment due to the rejection and alienation they have experienced from various others throughout their lives: 'It's me against the world at the moment' (P1). On the one hand, they expressed that these experiences, and the violence they used to help survive them, made them feel different to others, and alien and

misunderstood: 'I'm just totally warped. In prison, in prison, know what I mean' (P3). On the other hand, they felt helpless to change their violent behaviour, prison power dynamics, and overall life circumstances: 'It's all I know. Some things you're just not able to unlearn' (P1). Relatedly, prisoners expressed a sense of meaninglessness and indifference towards their various experiences before and in prison: 'Looking back now I just don't know. I don't really care that much' (P2). They highlighted the normality* of these experiences to them, particularly those where they were subjected to or surrounded by violence, and how they have perpetuated normalised violence cycles and violent identities: 'I was just copying what I seen and what has been done to me. So if you go through that, being violent isn't really hard to follow' (P1). The PTMF proposes an extensive range of negative thoughts, feelings and bodily reactions which can result from the negative operation of power and threats this poses. Interestingly, this cohort identified the positives* that arose for them out of some of these experiences. These included self-development, enhanced resilience, motivation to prove others wrong, and using their own experiences to help others. Ultimately, despite everything they have been through, prisoners managed to remain hopeful: 'I'm looking forward to me future. I have a good future ahead of me, know what I mean' (P3).

Theme 4: Threat Response

Participants identified the various threat responses which have helped them survive the above experiences, including behaviours, thoughts, feelings and interactional responses. Most obviously, one behaviour which has helped prisoners survive is violence. One prisoner described their violence as a fight response to threatening situations, whilst also highlighting its impulsive nature: 'Sometimes I just feel as if I have to, you know, that I have to be violent. Just happens then like, you know. If somethings annoying me or something' (P2). For some prisoners, these experiences have also resulted in mental health related symptoms and behaviours including psychosis and suicidal actions: 'Suicide will always be there, strongly, it's in my core like' (P1). All prisoners have relied on substance (ab)use to survive various experiences throughout their lives: 'Drugs help. They're the only thing that help' (P3). Prisoners have also developed certain types of thinking in response to threats. One prisoner described the paranoid thoughts they developed as a result of their experiences: 'You're in an environment where you're on your own in solitary confinement, and your head is your own worst enemy, and you know paranoid' (P1). One prisoner expressed an entitlement to violence – 'Violence is necessary, know what I mean. It's necessary sometimes, know what I mean. You need it' (P3) – while another prisoner highlighted a more confused self-image regarding their violence: 'You just feel

as if you're right like, you know, that it's the right thing, you know. Sometimes, not all of the time [...] Sometimes you might have a regret' (P2). One prisoner described their deep thinking, including anticipating, imagining and ruminating: 'I tend to focus on that rather than focus on the good, cause' I'm so used to the negative' (P1). In terms of feelings, one prisoner demonstrated both emotional dysregulation when they 'break down and go crazy' and emotional numbing: 'Like I came down here [to the NVRU], it does nothing to me, know what I mean. Does nothing to me. I'm [X number of] years [in prison]' (P3). While one prisoner expressed feeling guilty about their past experiences, another prisoner reported feeling angry about them, particularly their years of management under the VDP policy: 'But even seeing the suits you know, cause' I had them for years like. It just stirs up a lot of mixed emotions for me like. It just makes me very angry' (P1). This same prisoner also expressed that while they regularly experienced, tension* - 'I'm always on the edge, just waiting for something to tip me over' (P1) - they also felt fearless*:

'Very little frightens me. Like I wouldn't be afraid of getting in a fight with a bloke, or I wouldn't be afraid of getting in a fight with five blokes. Cause' if they overpower me so what? Because I've been there, done that, and what? You're going to have to kill me, only way to put me off is kill me, so' (P1).

Prisoners also discussed interactional responses, including a distrust of others, particularly authority figures and those who have bullied them, thus resorting to isolation and avoidance: 'Everyone in here can bully ya, know what I mean. So ya just sit in your cell and do your time and don't come out, know what I mean' (P3).

Theme 5: Function of Threat Response

Participants identified seven different types of functions that their developed threat responses served. Various threat responses worked to regulate feelings and meet the emotional needs of prisoners. One prisoner described how they used violence to obtain pleasure: 'Sometimes you feel good like, you know. You feel good after it like' (P2). One prisoner relied on their violence to relieve tension: 'Just a release, from all the built up tension. Like you feel like your head is going to explode but then you lash out' (P1). Another prisoner resorted to substance (ab)use to achieve this: '[Taking drugs] calms your head down [...] It calms your head right down, know what I mean [...] It's good for your head, yeah' (P3). One prisoner identified that a psychotic episode was their way of coping with a specific trauma event. For them, this also served the function of communicating distress to and eliciting care from prison officers when they needed it: 'They talked to me. The last time I went through a psychosis I got charges [...] this time I went through a psychosis and nothing even happened' (P1). One prisoner viewed violence

as a means of protection from physical danger, particularly in prison, coming from either other prisoners or prison officers: 'It was to avoid getting hit by them most of the time before' (P1). This same prisoner also described how violence makes them feel like they are maintaining a sense of control in prison: 'Makes ya feel powerful. Makes ya feel, even though ya don't have control, it makes ya feel like ya have control, ya know. Prisoner control' (P1). Prisoners sometimes thought violence was justified in order to protect against their identity, self-image and self-esteem:

I cut up Officers before because they were slagging me and laughing at me and they were making an ass out of me, just making a joke out of me. Because I had prisoners [bullying me] as well, so I was violent with them. Ya can't be taking any shit, ya know what I mean (P3).

Prisoners spoke about how violence was used to preserve a place in the social group, both in wider society and in prison: 'You have to be violent in some circumstances like. I could walk out on that landing and boom, have an argument with someone over something, and bang, violence will come out of me straight away' (P1). Ultimately, prisoners expressed that violence was a learned survival strategy* for them, which had proved successful in various difficult experiences throughout their lives: 'Because I know violence so well and it's helped me survive I think it's become second nature for me, you know' (P1).

Theme 6: Moderating Factors

Participants identified a number of factors which moderated the influence of the negative operation of power, and the threats this posed, on their threat responses, specifically their violent behaviour. Exacerbating factors are those which made the violent behaviour of prisoners worse. Prisoners described how many of their difficult life experiences occurred at, and continued from, a young age. They also experienced a lack of a (good) support network, including family and peers, to help deal with these experiences: 'I was talking to my brother [...] and he had a go at me over the phone and really wrecked my head like, you know. And then I was fighting after that like' (P2). The interpersonal and intentional nature of the bullying and abuse of authority statuses experienced by prisoners also exacerbated their violence. In prison, a lack of control and the repeated and long-lasting threats they experienced under the continued management of the VDP policy too exacerbated their violence:

Like if someone came in to you and started punching the hell out of you once, the next time it happens to ya you go 'well I've been through it once, it's not too bad'. But then when it happens three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten times yeah, you start to say 'is that all you have? Is that all you got? Is that it?'. You become, you dish out what they've done to you, to them, so it becomes a never ending cycle' (P1).

Relatedly, prisoners reported experiencing a lack of institutional support, primarily evident in how they felt they were treated by some prison officers: 'The way you're treated by prison officers sometimes isn't good, ya know what I mean [...] [they] manipulate ya and wind ya up' (P3). Ultimately, prisoners suffered the chronicity of various threats in various aspects of their lives, throughout their lives, further exacerbating their violence. One prisoner noted how substance (ab)use made their violence worse, while another prisoner identified this as an ameliorating factor that helped them to not be violent: 'Drugs is something that makes it easier, yeah' (P3). Prisoners identified some internal, or personal, ameliorating factors, including remaining hopeful for the future, and developing self-belief: 'I'm also comfortable speaking [...] you have the choice now of saying like here, why are you being like this' (P1). They also identified some external, or environmental, ameliorating factors, such as having a good support network: 'I'm always good around me family. I love me family more than anything, know what I mean' (P3). Overwhelmingly, however, prisoners identified the support they have received in the NVRU as the most influential protective factor against their violence. One prisoner commented on the 'peaceful' social climate, while others discussed the contained but supportive nature of the regime, highlighting access to the gym and mental health support as beneficial: 'Talking to someone about certain things, you know' (P2). One prisoner reflected that although it felt strange to have positive relationships and interactions with prison officers for the first time, this was a hugely influential ameliorating factor against their violence:

They come and talk to ya, they don't come in and fold ya up, they actually talk to ya and talk ya down to a level of where you are like on the same level. And they're being human towards me, which is something alien to me like (P1).

Discussion

This study explored the origins, experiences and expressions of the violence, and other related behaviours, of prisoners residing in the NVRU in the IPS. It did so through the perspectives of these prisoners, framed by the PTMF. Adopting a primarily qualitative methodology, these prisoners participated in semi-structured interviews. Data analysis integrated reflexive thematic analysis and codebook approaches to identify both a priori and novel elements of the PTMF in these accounts, resulting in six themes: (1) power, (2) threat, (3) meaning, (4) threat response, (5) function of threat response, and (6) moderating factors. Notably, novel elements included the imposition and/or adoption of violent identities, feeling hated, a sense of normality in relation to adverse experiences, identifying the positives out of

adverse experiences, feelings of tension and fearlessness as threat responses, the use of violence as a learned survival strategy, substance (ab)use as both an exacerbating and ameliorating factor, and self-belief and hope for the future as additional ameliorating factors. These results move beyond the semantic-level description of prison life for VDP policy prisoners obtained previously by Gallagher et al. (2022), to a more latent-level and whole-life understanding of the origins, experiences and expressions of the violence of NVRU prisoners, from their own perspectives.

PIMS data was extracted and descriptively analysed for the purpose of contextualising this sample, and did not lend itself to inferential statistical testing. While conclusions regarding the NVRU cannot be drawn from this data, it does offer some interesting observations. Rates of violent incidents before and during their time in the NVRU appeared to vary from prisoner to prisoner, with PA demonstrating a reduction in violence, PC an increase, and PB's violence remaining about the same. Overall it appears that in the NVRU less sanctions were imposed on these prisoners, though it also appears that PC experienced increased sanctions. The sanctions seem to have focused less on prohibition, particularly of contact with the outside world, and no participating prisoners experienced in-cell confinement as punishment. However, this data is clouded by the increased number of unstated sanctions administered to these prisoners in the NVRU. Overall, the quantitative data presented here may point to the individualistic nature of prisoners' violence reduction journeys, which perhaps warrant nuanced management.

The qualitative results produced in this study are considered in light of the relevant existing literature, including that concerning prison violence, trauma in forensic contexts, the application of the PTMF in these contexts, and the core components of the PTMF - particularly pattern six, 'surviving social exclusion, shame, and coercive power', which is proposed as characteristic of many men in the criminal justice system (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018a). Like those typically described by this pattern, prisoners in this study reported multiple experiences of the negative operation of almost all forms of power. Just as the prisoners in Reis et al. (2019) study had done, they highlighted the legal power initiated by their imprisonment and furthered by their experiences of systemic injustice in prison. While the prisoners in Reis et al. (2019) study noted the coercive power they experienced at the hands' of other prisoners, participants of the current study emphasised abuse by authority figures, inside and outside prison. In failing to fulfil their roles of safety and protection, these abuses of authority statuses also involved the negative operation of both social and interpersonal power. Indeed, pattern six in the PTMF highlights the prominence of social and relational threats experienced by this group. Threats against identity

were also evident in this study. Like those in Reis et al.'s (2019) study, prisoners in this study discussed the imposition of subordinate and de-valued identities, while additionally noting the violent identities they have adopted as a result of their experiences.

Prisoners in this study identified a range of meanings they have developed from their various life experiences, consistent with the existing evidence-base. While the many adversities they experienced should not be typical of one's life-course, they highlighted the normality of these experiences to them, and thus the normality of violence as a means to survive. Indeed, the cycle of violence, where victimisation and offending become intertwined - initiated by the negative operation of coercive power from early life - is well-documented (Utting & Woodall, 2022). In this study, prisoners thought that this cycle of violence followed them into prison, where they believed it was further perpetuated by the sense of injustice and unfairness they felt as a result of their treatment. Just like the prisoners in Reis et al.'s (2019) study, this led to an overwhelming feeling of helplessness and powerlessness. Unlike those in Reis et al.'s (2019) study, prisoners in this study also identified positives they have taken from their various experiences, such as enhanced resilience and hope for the future. However, it is important to acknowledge that these positive features were limited both quantitatively and qualitatively, and that the positive framing of negative experiences may also be an adaptive threat response.

Indeed, and consistent with existing evidence, prisoners identified a vast spectrum of 18 different threat responses they have used to survive. These include violence, which is likely their most learned, practiced and successful threat response, amongst many other behaviours (e.g. suicidal thinking and actions, substance abuse), thoughts (e.g. paranoia, confused self-image), feelings (e.g. emotional numbing, fearlessness) and interactional responses (e.g. isolation and avoidance, distrust). The range and amount of threat responses identified by these prisoners emphasises the importance of not viewing violent behaviour in isolation, but rather exploring the network of related threat responses an individual may draw from to survive threatening situations. Also of importance is considering the various functions these threat responses serve. As previously mentioned, the functionality of prison violence has been well-evidenced (Butler, 2008; Edgar et al., 2003). Prisoners in Reis et al.'s (2019) study focused primarily on the strategic functions of their threat responses, whereas, similar to Gallagher et al. (2022) previous study of this cohort, prisoners in this study identified both strategic (e.g. self-protection, eliciting care) and psychological (e.g. regulating feelings and meeting emotional needs) functions of violence and related threat responses. In line with Butler, who has highlighted shame as an important catalyst for prison violence, prisoners in this study discussed their use of violence to

preserve identity, self-image and self-esteem (Butler, 2008; Butler & Drake, 2007; Butler & Maruna, 2009).

Participants in this study confirmed a well-acknowledged observance in the prison literature, in that many elements of prison life can have exacerbating and/or ameliorating effects. For instance, P3 viewed their substance (ab)use as an adaptive threat response, and something which helped them to not be violent, while P1 viewed their substance (ab)use as a maladaptive threat response, and something which made their violence worse. Similarly, participants noted that having a good personal support network helps them to refrain from violence, while a lack of personal support often had the opposite effect. Consistent with literature exploring the effects of staff sub-cultures on prisoners (see Akerman et al., 2018; Hocken et al., 2022), participants highlighted both the exacerbating effects of negative staff characteristics and approaches, and the ameliorating effects of positive staff relationships and interactions, on their violence.

Implications

Theory and Research

The authors of the PTMF highlight its provisional nature, and 'testing' of its utility as a research tool has been limited, even more so in the forensic context. This study used the PTMF to explore the perspectives of a specific cohort in a unique environment. It proved useful, and some additional novel elements were contributed to the framework as a result. Further research should continue to utilise the PTMF in similar and different contexts, drawing and developing on the codebook produced by this study. In doing so, and as the PTMF authors themselves emphasise, it is important to recognise that while the framework itself is new, the vast and diverse evidence-base on which it is built is not (Ramsden, 2019; Willmot & Evershed, 2018). Indeed, considering the core elements of the PTMF in forensic contexts, clear links can be identified with well-researched concepts in the criminological literature (e.g. the functionality of prison violence). Future research should continue to acknowledge this evidence-base, incorporating it into the framework of understanding that the PTMF provides. As advocated by the authors of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018a) and those promoting the utility of the PTMF in forensic contexts (Reis et al., 2019; Willmot & Evershed, 2018; Willmot & Jones, 2022), and demonstrated in this study, qualitative methodologies are best placed to explore the origins, experiences and expressions of distress and troubled/troubling behaviour. This study aimed to represent the voices of prisoners through semi-structured interviews and a holistic analytic framework. Learning from patient and public involvement (PPI) initiatives in health research,

future research in forensic psychology should explore more collaborative qualitative methodologies, whereby service-users, the primary stakeholders of any research, are more intrinsically involved in the research process. Equally, for such research to meaningfully implicate policy and practice, it must be valued and encouraged at organisational levels.

Policy and Practice

The underpinning values of the PTMF align well with the joint psychological and operational approach implemented in the NVRU, and similar contexts. Thus, it can have valuable implications for both psychological and operational practices in these settings. The PTMF can be used as a therapeutic tool as much as a research tool. However, those utilising the PTMF in therapeutic spaces should remain mindful that the PTMF offers just one way of understanding the origins, experiences and expressions of distress and troubled/troubling behaviour, and the understandings that make most sense to the service-user are most valuable. To this end, the PTMF can, and should, be adapted to suit individual needs, as demonstrated in the diverse good practice examples contained in appendices 2 to 14 of the PTMF overview document (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018b). Appendix 1 of this document also includes a guide to using the PTMF in therapeutic spaces to co-create personal narratives, which may then inform therapeutic interventions. Reis et al. (2019) demonstrated the benefits of using the PTMF in this way in their study with men experiencing long-term imprisonment. Willmot and Evershed (2018) highlighted the ways in which the PTMF can aid clinical interviews with forensic clients given diagnoses of personality disorders.

The holistic nature of the PTMF can help facilitate in-depth psychological formulations of harmful behaviour, including violence – a crucial first step in any efforts to reduce it. Formulations with similar client groups can be informed by the results presented here, particularly the novel additions to the PTMF which are perhaps unique to seriously violent prisoners. For example, this study emphasised the cycle of violence experienced by participants, initiated by the negative operation of coercive power in early life, maintained by the normality of these experiences to these prisoners and the violent identities they have adopted, and further perpetuated by their use of violence as a multi-functional survival strategy. While the PTMF may be well-placed to guide inputs from psychological services, participants in this study also reported experiences of serious mental illness, addiction, disability and homelessness, which necessitate multi-disciplinary and multi-agency working with a range of therapeutic services.

Similar joint working with operational staff is imperative to the success of any efforts to understand and reduce violence in prison settings. Such efforts, within and beyond the NVRU, should pay special attention to moderating factors. Participants in this study identified elements of prison life which they felt exacerbated (e.g. negative staff-prisoner relationships/interactions,) and ameliorated (e.g. peaceful/supportive social climate) their violence. Many of these factors are controllable, and prison authorities should prioritise addressing these in the short-term, alongside developing in-depth understandings of these prisoners in the long-term, to make genuine progress towards reducing prison violence. Relatedly, the pivotal role of operational staff in the lives of these prisoners should not be underestimated. Participants in this study discussed various negative experiences with authority figures from early life, who in abusing their authority statuses posed many relational threats for these prisoners. Unfortunately, these experiences were mirrored for some participants in prison, who reported maltreatment by some prison staff, before coming to the NVRU. Fortunately however, and despite their relatively short time in the NVRU, prisoners reflected on the positive relationships they have begun to build with prison officers. Observing a shift from physical security to relational security, prisoners reported an increase in both the quantity and quality of their interactions with prison officers. They highlighted that NVRU prison officers seemed motivated to work with VDP policy prisoners in a different way; to help, not hurt. The compassion and empathy they experienced, particularly in one-to-one interactions with personal officers, allowed them to see prison officers as human beings for the first time. One prisoner expressed disbelief at being able to laugh and joke with NVRU prison officers, representing a stark contrast from previous interactions he had experienced. It is reasonable to assume that the psychologically-informed managerial style (e.g. co-led by operational governor and senior psychologist), training (e.g. bespoke psychological training prior to joining the NVRU) and development (e.g. annual health checks) practices in the NVRU played a role in driving this shift. These observations are consistent with the extensive legitimacy literature, which has continually highlighted how the exercise of power at managerial and prison officer levels, and how this is perceived by prisoners, can influence prisoner behaviour and outcomes (see Liebling et al., 2011). As such, prison officers in the NVRU and other similar environments should be mindful of the importance of their interactions and how prisoners may experience them, and should be appropriately supported to continuously foster positive relationships with prisoners.

Strengths and Limitations

Building on the descriptive, semantic foundation laid in the first study of this cohort (Gallagher et al., 2022), this study aimed to generate a more in-depth, latent understanding of these prisoners. While previous research was confined to exploring experiences in prison, the current research adopts a whole-life perspective, whereby participants reflected on their lives before and in prison. This study explored these reflections through a holistic framework – the PTMF – thus not limiting understandings to singular levels or theories. Although the PTMF has begun to gain traction in forensic psychology, this study is the first to fully apply the PTMF to this specific cohort of prisoners, ultimately demonstrating its utility in this area. At the same time, detailed description of the participants, setting and circumstances of this research allows others to assess the transferability of these findings to other settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Furthermore, this study complimented the use of the PTMF with an appropriate qualitative methodology, recognising that these are best-placed for exploring in-depth and subjective understandings and meanings. Recognising that no ‘one size fits all’ in qualitative research, this study integrated both reflexive thematic analysis and codebook approaches to best address its research questions. Doing so allowed for the identification of both a priori and novel elements of the PTMF, thus contributing to the further development of this provisional framework. The quality of this adapted methodology was ensured through the transparency of its description, a detailed audit trail, and an external researcher check. Though prison officers in the NVRU participated in concurrent research exploring their understandings of the prisoners they work with, it was deemed most appropriate to analyse and present these understandings separately, so as to ensure that prisoners’ voices, being considerably less in number, were adequately represented.

Though half of all men residing in the NVRU during its first year successfully participated in this study, the small sample size ($n = 3$) must still be acknowledged. We encountered significant difficulties recruiting an already limited prisoner sample, with three of the six eligible NVRU prisoners declining to participate in the research. While no reasons were provided for non-participation, NVRU staff emphasised the difficulty of engaging this cohort of prisoners. In order to capture prisoners’ understandings throughout their NVRU journeys, it was planned that all prisoners would participate in the research at multiple time-points during their first year in the NVRU. However, only one prisoner (P1) consented to repeat participation. While this prisoner is understandably over-represented in the data, we ensured – as much as possible - that prisoners were equally represented by extracts in our results, and only selected extracts from P1’s subsequent participation where these accounts added something novel to the data. Although prisoners were given time to adjust to their new environments in the NVRU before being invited

to participate in the research, the new approach experienced by prisoners in the NVRU starkly contrasted how they were previously managed (see Gallagher et al., 2022), and apprehension and guardedness would not be unsurprising. Future research in the NVRU may benefit from the assimilation of prisoners to the NVRU, and the assimilation of the NVRU to the wider IPS context.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study explored the origins, experiences and expressions of the violence of prisoners residing in the NVRU in the IPS. It did so novelly, using an adapted qualitative methodology informed by the PTMF. Importantly, it gave voice to these prisoners, acknowledging the value of their self-understandings in facilitating the understandings of others. These understandings of the origins, experiences and expressions of violence may provide a foundation from which violence reduction efforts can be built.

Chapter 5: Preface

Chapter four presented a qualitative exploration of NVRU prisoners' ($n = 3$) self-understandings of the origins, experiences and expressions of their violent behaviour. It did so through the lens of the Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF). This study identified six themes: (1) power, (2) threat, (3) meaning, (4) threat response, (5) function of threat response, and (6) moderating factors. These themes confirmed the presence of many a priori PTMF elements in the narratives of these prisoners, whilst also identifying many additional, novel elements in their understandings.

Chapter five below presents the third (and final) original, empirical research study of this thesis. This study qualitatively explored NVRU prison officers' ($n = 13$) understandings of the origins, experiences and expressions of the violent behaviour of the prisoners with whom they work. It did so through the lens of the Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF).

Chapter five is an adaptation of a published article:

Gallagher, O., Regan, E.E., & O'Reilly, G. (2024). 'Violence is all he knew, and it seemed to work': Using the power threat meaning framework to explore prison officers' understandings of violence in Irish prisons. *Psychology, Crime & Law*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2024.2303485>

The authors of this submission had the following roles:

Orla Gallagher (lead author) was involved in the inception of the idea of the study, designing the study, collecting and analysing data, writing the study, submitting it for publication, and completing any revisions requested by the journal.

Dr Emma Regan (second author) was involved in the inception of the idea of the study, designing the study, providing feedback throughout the data collection, data analysis and writing processes, and providing supervision for the overall study.

Prof. Gary O'Reilly (third author) was involved in the inception of the idea of the study, designing the study, providing feedback throughout the data collection, data analysis and writing processes, and providing supervision for the overall study.

Chapter 5: Understanding Serious Violence using the Power Threat Meaning Framework - Exploring the Perspectives of Prison Officers in the National Violence Reduction Unit

Abstract

In 2018 the Irish Prison Service (IPS) opened the National Violence Reduction Unit (NVRU), becoming home to all prisoners managed under the Violently Disruptive Prisoner (VDP) policy, who were repeatedly engaged in serious violence in prison. Embedded in the NVRU is a joint operational-psychological approach, aiming to understanding the violence of these prisoners, and work with them to reduce it. This study explored NVRU prison officers' understandings of the origins, experiences and expressions of the violence of NVRU prisoners, through the Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF). Prison officers ($n = 13$) participated in semi-structured interviews at two time-points: six months after the NVRU opening ($n = 13$), and 12 months after the NVRU opening ($n = 11$). From these aggregated transcripts ($n = 24$), six themes were identified: (1) power, (2) threat, (3) meaning, (4) threat response, (5) function of threat response, and (6) moderating factors. Prison officers confirmed many a priori elements of the existing provisional PTMF, whilst also contributing novel elements related to their subjective understandings of this specific cohort. These findings are interpreted in the context of existing empirical research. Implications for future research, and policy and practice within and beyond the NVRU, are suggested.

Keywords: Prison, Violence, Power Threat Meaning Framework, Qualitative Research

Introduction

In the Irish Prison Service (IPS), a small cohort of prisoners, who are repeatedly engaged in serious violence and disruption, are managed under the Violently Disruptive Prisoner (VDP) policy. Practice under the VDP policy was previously operationally-driven, focusing on containing the risk these prisoners posed through restrictive, isolated and controlled measures (see Gallagher et al., 2022 for an overview). However, in November 2018 the IPS implemented the National Violence Reduction Unit (NVRU), which became home to all VDP policy prisoners. Following in the footsteps of similar environmental developments in England and Wales (e.g. Close Supervision Centres [CSCs], Psychologically-Informed Planned Environments [PIPEs], Therapeutic Communities [TC's], the Offender Personality Disorder Pathway [OPDP]), practice in the NVRU is psychologically-informed at multiple levels, aiming to work with these prisoners to better understand their violence, and ultimately make efforts to reduce it. Adapting the high-level aims of the Offender Personality Disorder Pathway (OPDP), the NVRU not only aims to reduce violence and improve psychological wellbeing and relational outcomes for prisoners, but also enhance the competence, confidence and attitudes of its staff, in relation to working with a complex and challenging cohort of men (Moran et al., 2022).

Violently Disruptive Prisoner (VDP) Policy Research

These staff outcomes are the focus of this study, which is the third in a programme of related research exploring the transformation of the VDP policy in the IPS. The first of these studies (Gallagher et al. 2022) explored prisoners and prison officers' experiences under the previous VDP policy (before the development of the NVRU), identifying nine themes: (1) describing VDP policy prisoners, (2) staff characteristics and approaches, (3) describing the VDP policy regime, (4) the social environment, (5) the occupational environment, (6) function of the VDP policy, (7) impact of the VDP policy, (8) factors influencing violence, and (9) responding to violence. Through this research the importance of deeply understanding the violence of these prisoners, so that attempts to reduce it may be successful, became apparent. As such, the authors recommended that subsequent research explores this understanding, perhaps through the lens of the new and novel Power Threat Meaning Framework ([PTMF] Johnstone & Boyle, 2018a).

The PTMF, lead-authored by Dr Lucy Johnstone and Prof. Mary Boyle, has been introduced as a holistic framework for understanding the origins, experiences and expressions of distress and troubled/troubling behaviour, and an alternative to the traditional diagnostic model

of mental illness. The PTMF has also gained traction in forensic psychology due to its broad focus on distress and troubled/troubling behaviour, and its alliance with recent shifts towards trauma-informed understandings and practices in forensic settings (see Willmot & Jones, 2022). The PTMF proposes that four core components are integral to understanding distress and troubled/troubling behaviour: (1) the negative operation of various types of power in ones' life, (2) the threats that this poses, (3) the subjective meaning of these experiences to the individual, and (4) the functional threat responses they use to survive. It also notes that various exacerbating and ameliorating factors can moderate this process.

Thus, the second study in this programme of research (Gallagher et al., 2023a) used the PTMF to qualitatively explore NVRU prisoners' self-understandings of their violence. Through its resulting themes of (1) power, (2) threat, (3) meaning, (4) threat response, (5) function of threat response and (6) moderating factors, it provides a comprehensive insight into prisoners' self-understandings of the origins, experiences and expressions of their violence. While a detailed discussion of these results is beyond the scope of this paper, findings of note include accounts of systemic injustice, abuses of authority statuses, threatened identities, the chronicity and normalisation of adversity, the vast range of related threat responses used to survive, the emotional regulatory function of these responses, and the dual exacerbating and ameliorating influence of prison life.

While some results were thought to be unique to VDP policy prisoners (e.g. experiences of barrier handling¹³ in prison), these findings broadly aligned with the extensive literature base documenting what we already know about the origins, experiences and expressions of violence. Briefly, existing evidence suggests that violence can originate from a variety (and likely combination) of experiences and factors at the individual (e.g. demographic and criminogenic variables) and situational (e.g. interactional, environmental and organisational variables) levels (Edgar et al., 2003; Gadon et al., 2006; McGuire, 2018; Schenk & Fremouw, 2012; Steiner et al. 2014; Steiner & Wooldredge, 2020). The influence of previous trauma such as adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) has been emphasised (Felitti et al. 1998; Hocken et al., 2022; Smith, 2022; Willmot, 2022; Willmot & Jones, 2022). Experiences of behaving violently have also been found to be potentially traumatising or re-traumatising (Fritzon et al., 2021; Gray et al., 2003; Pink & Gray, 2022; Ternes et al., 2020). Literature concerning the expression of violence, particularly prison violence, has focused on the function(s) (e.g. self-defence, demonstrating masculinity, communication) it may serve for the individual (Butler, 2008; Butler & Drake, 2007; Butler & Maruna, 2009; Edgar et al., 2003).

The current study explored the understandings that participating NVRU prison officers' held about the origins, experiences and expressions of the violence of the prisoners with whom they worked. As such, the following literature review focuses specifically on the (limited) evidence-base concerning prison staffs' understandings of prisoners' backgrounds and behaviours.

The Prison Staff Literature

The paucity of research concerning prison staff, especially in comparison to that concerning prisoners, has been consistently highlighted (Barry, 2013; Crawley, 2004; Liebling et al., 2011). However, with the publication of two influential and comprehensive texts focusing on the experiences of prison officers in England and Wales, academic interest in this area has begun to increase in recent years (Barry, 2013; Crawley, 2004; Fenwick & Bennett, 2009). In their text 'The Prison Officer', Liebling et al. (2011) explore the prison officer role; the modern complexities of the job; occupational culture; the integral role of power in prison work; and the centrality of staff-prisoner relationships. Crawley (2004) also discusses these topics in her text 'Doing Prison Work', with an additional focus on the domestic and emotional features of prison work. Subsequent research concerning prison officers has continued to focus on these themes.

This upward trend has not gained comparative traction in the Irish context, where much of what we know about the work of Irish prison officers has developed from organisational reports (see Office of the Inspector of Prisons, 2015) and job descriptions (Roche, 2016). Indeed, even within broader studies of Irish prisons, which are greater in quantity, prison officers are paid insufficient consideration (Barry, 2013). Some notable recent exceptions include explorations of the impact of prison work on prison staff (Roche, 2016), the occupational culture and identities of prison staff (Garrihy, 2021; 2018), prison officers' experiences of deaths in custody (Barry, 2020; 2017), and prison officers' experiences of the VDP policy (Gallagher et al., 2022; 2024).

Despite sharing some similarities with neighbouring England and Wales (e.g. geographical proximity, historical links, shared language, similar systems of government), the Irish penal context also has some marked differences (Roche, 2016). A unique historical and political context has contributed to the 'stop-start' nature of penal policy-making (Barry, 2013). A comparatively diminutive population has resulted in a smaller network of lower capacity prisons, staffed with fewer prison staff, but with generally higher staff-prisoner ratios (Barry, 2013; Roche, 2016). As such, the Irish penal context is unique, and it is not sufficient nor appropriate to view

Irish prison staff solely through the lens of research emerging from other jurisdictions (Barry, 2013; Roche, 2016). However, without the existence of relevant research in the Irish context, researchers must do so.

Within an already deprived evidence-base, prison officers' understandings of the prisoners with whom they work, particularly their understandings of the origins, experiences and expressions of violence, have been even further neglected. The limited related literature exploring staffs' understandings of challenging behaviour and complex prisoners is reviewed here. This primarily qualitative literature mainly originates from specialised prison environments in England and Wales.

Bond and Gemmell (2014) explored the experiences of five prison officers working on a PIPE designated for life-sentenced prisoners. The resulting theme of growth, of which understanding was a key element, highlighted the personal journey of enlightenment undertaken by prison officers since joining the unit. Prison officers emphasised how learning about the intimate details of prisoners' lives and their offences, and gaining the psychological knowledge to understand these through staff training and supervision, allowed them to develop closer relationships with these prisoners.

Similarly, in a study of seven prison officers working in a TC within a category B (i.e. local or training) prison, participants highlighted that increased knowledge of prisoners' backgrounds allowed them to develop greater understanding of, and thus empathy for, prisoners, which they thought was essential to the therapeutic process (Walker et al., 2018).

Bowers et al. quantitatively (2006) and qualitatively (2005) explored changes in prison officers' attitudes during their time working in (now reconfigured) Dangerous and Severe Personality Disorder (DSPD) units. The quantitative study revealed that both positive and negative attitude changes over time could be attributed to a variety of change events (Bowers et al., 2006). In the qualitative study, prison officers discussed how learning about prisoners' backgrounds, and making links between these experiences and prisoners' current behaviours, resulted in a greater understanding of these prisoners and more positive attitudes towards them. Again, they believed that the education they received in relation to personality disorder and challenging behaviour helped facilitate this change (Bowers et al., 2005).

In 2011, all DSPD units were replaced by the OPDP, which encompasses both prison and probation services, and a number of studies have been conducted with staff in both.

Described as the 'cornerstone' of OPDP services, much of this research has concentrated on the role of case formulations and consultations (Knauer et al., 2017). Prison staff in McMullan and Delight's study (2017) emphasised that a psychological understanding of prisoner behaviour, particularly its functions, was an important mechanism of prisoner change, and that this understanding had been developed by the case formulation training they had received. Similarly, in Cooke et al.'s (2017) study of multi-disciplinary staff working in a category A (i.e. high security) OPDP unit, despite varying levels of theoretical understanding amongst participants, understanding the client was seen as integral to their work. Increased psychological knowledge of their clients was thought to increase their understandings of them, their ability to do their jobs well, and their enjoyment of their roles. While prison officers who struggled with the psychological aspects of their role felt more stressed, those with a particular interest in these aspects reported greater job satisfaction. Evidencing the enhanced psychological knowledge that staff working in these services tend to have, Jeffcote et al. (2020) found that the quantity and quality of case formulations amongst triads of prisoners, prison officers and clinical staff were remarkably similar.

Including probation staff, in addition to prison staff, McMullan et al. (2014) qualitatively explored the positive and negative impacts of team consultations in these services. The most frequently reported positive impact, by both groups, was an enhanced awareness and understanding of their clients. They highlighted how formulation training allowed them to make links between theoretical psychological knowledge and clients' backgrounds, to help make sense of their current behaviours. The positive impact of case formulation training was similarly highlighted by Ramsden et al. (2014) and Knauer et al. (2017). Radcliffe et al. (2018) not only observed similar improvements, but also highlighted that staff who had been working on OPDP services the longest produced the highest quality formulations, suggesting that perhaps more experience facilitates more understanding. In Shaw et al.'s (2012) examination of probation staffs' self-reported competency in working with personality disorder, participants reported a greater understanding of the links between personality disorder and violent offending specifically, as a result of training, supervision and support.

Moving beyond the specialised environments explored in the above studies, but focusing specifically on violent behaviour, Atkinson and Mann (2012), through their staff focus groups across high security prisons, identified striking similarities between prison officers' everyday observations of prisoner behaviour, and well-established violence risk factors. Thus, they argued that prison officers are an 'untapped resource', whose observations could meaningfully improve

formal violence risk assessments. Hemming et al. (2020) qualitatively explored prison staffs' understandings of the role of emotions in violence in English prisons. Participants revealed they had in-depth and nuanced understandings of the role of emotions in violence, highlighting prisoners' difficulties in identifying, understanding and communicating feelings; experiences of sudden and intense emotions as a result of these deficits; and violence as a maladaptive but functional strategy for coping with such emotions. They also understood that these emotional deficits likely originated from adverse experiences in early life, and that prison life can sometimes mirror these experiences.

Moving beyond prison entirely, Kramarz et al. (2023) qualitatively explored multi-disciplinary staffs' understandings of challenging behaviour on acute psychiatric wards in England. They found that team consultation contributed to more holistic understandings of patients, their life stories and their behavioural patterns. Participants reported that this enhanced understanding provided them with insight into what might have led to patients' current difficulties, thus allowing them to be more trauma-informed, empathetic and tolerant in their care. While these authors highlighted the alignment of these findings with the PTMF, Nikospachos et al. (2023) directly and quantitatively examined the effectiveness of PTMF-informed formulations with multi-disciplinary staff in similar wards. They observed a reduction in incidences of self-harm and the use of restraint and seclusion over five years, following the introduction PTMF-based team formulations, as well as staff stabilisation training.

The Present Study

The current research posed the question - what do NVRU prison officers understand about the origins, experiences and expressions of violence for NVRU prisoners? This question, and this research, is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, the paucity of research exploring prison staffs' understandings of violence, or indeed challenging behaviour more generally, has been demonstrated. While the evidence reviewed above makes important contributions, to the authors' knowledge, no such research has yet been conducted in the Irish context. Having previously outlined the unique landscape of the Irish penal context, and the necessity of conducting original research within this context, this study makes a crucial step in this direction. Secondly, the PTMF is a new and novel framework, and its utility in different types of research studies in various fields warrants exploration. Whilst the authors' have previously explored its utility in framing NVRU prisoners' self-understandings of the origins, experiences and expressions of their violent behaviour, the understandings of NVRU prison officers warrant

exploration in their own right. Thirdly, the understandings held by staff can have valuable impacts. As demonstrated above, enhancing psychological understandings of complex and challenging behaviour can facilitate more tolerant, empathetic and overall positive staff-prisoner relationships (Kramarz et al., 2023; Walker et al., 2018). Staff also reap the benefits of this enhanced knowledge, and report feeling more competent in their roles and experiencing greater job satisfaction (Cooke et al., 2017). Additionally, having been neglected from prison research for some time, prison officers appreciate being provided with opportunities to share their experience and expertise (Bowers et al., 2005). Finally, it is important to return to the NVRU's stated aim of enhancing the competence, confidence and attitudes of its staff. Not unlike the prison staff in the specialised environments discussed above, NVRU staff have received in-depth psychologically-informed training, reinforced through regular individual and group check-ins. A personal officer scheme sees select prison officers working intently and intensely with specific prisoners. All staff contribute toward 'know your prisoner' and behavioural monitoring activities. Just as these initiatives aim to enhance NVRU prison officers' understandings of the prisoners with whom they work, so too did the present study aim to explore these understandings in-depth.

Method

Ethical Approval

This study received ethical approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee (Humanities) at University College Dublin and the IPS Research Office.

Participants

This study aimed to recruit prison officers working in the NVRU during the first year of its implementation. Assistant Chief Officers (ACO's), who occupy junior management positions, were also eligible to participate. However, for the purpose of clarity, all participants are referred to as prison officers throughout this paper. Eligible prison officers were invited to participate in the research at two time-points: Time 1) six months after the opening of the NVRU, and Time 2) 12 months after the opening of the NVRU. The aim was not to compare data at different time-points, but rather capture prison officers' experiences throughout their first year of working in the NVRU. A similar study involving NVRU prisoners was conducted concurrently to this study, as part of the same research project and by the same authors. This data is analysed in a separate paper (see Gallagher et al., 2023a).

At both time-points, eligible prison officers were invited to participate in the study by the lead author via the NVRU staff email account. Information sheets and consent forms were provided, and the opportunity to ask questions was offered. Prison officers were assured that participation in the research was voluntary, and to consent or not consent would not have any implications for their role in the NVRU. They were advised that participation at Time 1 did not necessitate subsequent participation at Time 2, and informed consent would be sought again. They were assured that all data would be held confidentially by the lead author, and not shared with colleagues or superiors in the NVRU.

Of the 22 prison officers working in the NVRU during the first year of its implementation, 13 participated at Time 1, and 11 of these same prison officers participated again at Time 2. Prison officers' demographic and occupational characteristics are presented in Table 10.

Table 10

Frequencies of Prison Officer Demographic and Occupational Characteristics

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Male	9	69.20
Female	4	30.80
Age (years)		
30-35	7	53.82
36-40	4	30.80
41-46	2	15.38
Time working in IPS (years)		
8-11	5	38.50
11-14	5	38.50
17-20	3	23.00
Previous involvement with VDP policy prisoners before NVRU		
Yes	4	30.80
No	9	69.20
Time working with VDP policy prisoners before NVRU (years)		
0-3	4	100.00
Role		
Prison Officer	11	84.60
Assistant Chief Officer	2	15.40
Personal Officer		
Yes	10	76.90
No	3	23.10

Note. *Each prisoner in the NVRU is allocated two Personal Officers, one based on each side of the staff roster. Personal Officers act as key workers for prisoners.

Data Collection

At both time-points prison officers participated in semi-structured interviews conducted by the lead author. All interviews took place in a private office in the Irish Prison Service College (IPSC). The IPSC is located on the same campus as the NVRU in the Midlands of Ireland. All necessary arrangements were made with management in the NVRU to allow prison officers to attend their data collection appointments in the IPSC. Time 1 data collection occurred in June 2019, and Time 2 data collection occurred in December 2019. Semi-structured interview schedules (Appendix I) included open-ended questions informed by the PTMF, and varied slightly from the interview schedules used in the prisoner study. While prisoners were asked questions pertaining to the origins, experiences and expressions of their violent behaviour, prison officers were asked questions pertaining to the origins, experiences and expressions of the violent behaviour of the prisoners they worked with in the NVRU. Participants were advised that their responses could be informed by a particular prisoner they worked closely with, or by the cohort of NVRU prisoners as a whole. They were assured that any identifiable prisoner details would be kept confidential by the lead author, and removed during the transcription process. Prison officer interview schedules remained the same at both time-points. Interviews were audio-recorded and lasted an average of one hour. Following the interview, the lead author turned off the recorder and left the room to allow participants to complete a brief demographic and occupational questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Quantitative questionnaire data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 24 to produce descriptive statistics. Qualitative interview data was analysed using a combined codebook and reflexive thematic approach. The lead author first reviewed the main PTMF document (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018) to identify and extract seven different types of power, nine different categories of threats, 22 different kind of meanings, 54 examples of threat responses, nine different types of functions, 16 exacerbating factors, and 16 ameliorating factors. These elements were imported into a codebook (Appendix F). The lead author then familiarised themselves with participant transcripts through manual verbatim transcription, reading, and noting initial impressions. Once familiarisation processes were

complete, the lead author conducted line by line coding of each transcript to identify any a priori PTMF elements, guided by the codebook. This process aligned with Braun and Clarke's (2022) deductive variation of reflexive thematic analysis, which involves the selective identification of theoretical and researcher-driven codes in particular aspects of a dataset. Thereafter, Braun and Clarke's (2022) inductive variation of reflexive thematic analysis was integrated, whereby the lead author coded each transcript once more, identifying any additional elements which were not accounted for by the PTMF a priori codes, but were of interest to the research question. These novel, data-driven codes (indicated by asterisks in Table 11) were added to the codebook. The codebook then underwent several phases of data reduction, revision and refinement - documented by an audit trail - resulting in 167 codes. Finally, a credibility check was conducted with an external researcher, who indicated the extent they agreed that these 167 codes matched the 167 randomly selected participant extracts they were presented with. The external researcher initially agreed with 96% of code-extract matches, and were unsure of 4%. Both researchers discussed the latter, and following some minor amendments to these codes, and a subsequent review by the external researcher, final agreement reached 100%.

Reflexivity

The lead author is female and has no personal experience of imprisonment. She has been funded by the IPS to complete a programme of independent research evaluating changing practice under the VDP policy in the IPS. She has previously completed one study exploring prisoners' and prison officers' experiences of the previous VDP policy (Gallagher et al., 2022), and one study exploring the experiences of prisoners in the NVRU (Gallagher et al., 2023a). None of the participants in this study have participated in any previous research conducted by the lead author. At the time of data collection she was known to many prison officers in the NVRU through their facilitation of prisoner data collection, and her brief introduction at the commencement of the NVRU staff training.

Results

Qualitative data analysis resulted in six themes, 39 sub-themes and 167 codes, presented in Table 11, with novel codes are denoted by asterisks. In the narrative below, prison officer extracts are labelled by participant ID's (e.g. PO1, PO2, PO3 etc.) and time-points (i.e. T1 or T2). Sub-themes are underlined. Results are additionally illustrated in the thematic map in Appendix J.

Table 11*Themes, Sub-themes and Codes Resulting from Qualitative Analysis*

Theme	Sub-themes	Codes
1. Power	1.1. Embodied	Substance (ab)use ^a
		Mental health issues ^a
		Brain injury ^b
		Biologically bad ^a
	1.2. Coercive	Physical abuse ^a
		Sexual abuse ^a
		Barrier handling ^a
	1.3. Legal	Poor social/children's services ^b
		Limited duty of care ^a
		VDP policy ^b
		Barrier handling ^a
		Isolative conditions ^a
		Limited services & facilities ^a
		Deprived liberties ^a
Over-crowding & under-staffing ^a		
Inconsistent prison treatment ^a		
1.4. Material	Institutionalisation ^a	
	Lack of post-release support ^b	
	Poverty ^a	
1.5. Social	Homelessness ^b	
	Untreated mental illness ^a	
	Low social class ^b	
1.6. Interpersonal	Limited formal education ^a	
	Limited social supports & opportunities ^a	
	Unstable family environment ^a	
	Family rejection & separation ^a	
	Parental loss ^a	
	Parental neglect ^a	
	Parental adversities ^a	
Bullying ^a		
1.7. Ideological	Antisocial peer pressure & manipulation ^a	
	Lack of pro-social role models ^a	
		Stereotypes ^a
		Stigmatisation ^b

	Built up by IPS ^a Discarded by society ^b
2. Threat	2.1. Relational Bereavement ^a Disrupted attachments ^a Abandonment, neglect & rejection ^a Lack of protection ^a Control ^a Boundary crossing ^a Shaming & humiliation ^a Hostility ^a Isolation ^a
	2.2. Emotional Emotional overwhelm ^a Fear ^a Hopelessness ^a
	2.3. Social Injustice & unfairness ^a Social exclusion ^a Social defeat ^a
	2.4. Environmental Unsafe spaces ^a Loss of connection to home ^a Entrapment ^a
	2.5. Material Inability to meet basic needs ^a Untreated mental illness ^a
	2.6. Bodily Physical danger ^a Loss of control ^a Loss of capacity ^a Addiction ^a Non-compliance with medication ^a Mental & physical deterioration ^a Hindered brain & cognitive development ^a
	2.7. Meaning construction Limited social supports & opportunities ^a Unequal power relations ^a Incorrect meaning interpretation ^a Imposition of violent status & reputation ^a Violence is learned ^a
	2.8. Identity Sub-ordinate identity ^a Macho identity* ^a Violent identity* ^a

	2.9. Value base	Lack/loss of pro-social values ^a Lack/loss of purpose ^a	
3. Meaning	3.1. Emotional	Overwhelmed ^a Afraid ^a Guilty ^a Conflicted* ^a	
	3.2. Emptiness	Emotionally empty ^b Hopeless ^a Meaninglessness ^a	
	3.3. Powerlessness	Helpless ^a Trapped ^a Defeated ^a	
	3.4. Targeted	Controlled ^a Invaded ^a Injustice & unfairness ^a Negativity bias* ^a	
	3.5. Othered	Different ^b Alien & dangerous ^a	
	3.6. Rejected	Abandoned ^a Alienated ^a Betrayed ^a	
	3.7. Less than	Shamed & humiliated ^a Failed & inferior ^a Worthless ^a	
	3.8. Normality	Normality* ^a	
	4. Threat Responses	4.1. Behaviours	Fight response ^a Drive response ^a Psychosis ^a Difficulty coping ^a Self-neglect ^b Substance (ab)use ^a Violence ^a Antisocial behaviour* ^a Bravado* ^a Childishness* ^a
		4.2. Thoughts	Paranoia ^a Entitlement ^a

		Self-blame ^a Confused self-image ^b Deep thinking ^a Egotism* ^a Negativity bias* ^a
	4.3. Feelings	Emotional numbing ^a Emotional dysregulation ^a Anger ^a Guilt ^a Hopelessness ^a Reduced empathy ^a Tension* ^a Hatred & resentment* ^a Emotional sensitivity* ^a
	4.4. Interactions	Isolation & avoidance ^a Maintaining emotional distance ^a Seeking control & dominance ^a Seeking care & attachments ^a Taking on care roles ^b Distrust ^a Submitting & appeasing ^a Clinging ^a
5. Function of Threat Responses	5.1. Regulating feelings & meeting emotional needs	Violence to regulate feelings & meet emotional needs ^a Violence to relieve tension & frustration ^a Violence to obtain pleasure ^a Violence to cope with the pains of imprisonment ^b Substance (ab)use to regulate feelings & meet emotional needs ^b
	5.2. Protection from physical danger	Violence to protect from physical danger ^a
	5.3. Maintaining a sense of control	Violence to maintain a sense of control ^a Seeking dominance over others to maintain a sense of control ^a
	5.4. Seeking attachments	Seeking attachments by clinging to staff ^a
	5.5. Preserving identity, self-image & self-esteem	Violence to protect against low self-esteem ^a Violence to preserve violent identity ^a Violence to assert machismo ^a

	5.6. Preserving place in the social group	Violence to preserve place amongst antisocial peers ^a
	5.7. Communicating distress & eliciting care	Violence to communicate distress & elicit care ^a Violence to meet material needs & wants inside & outside prison ^a Psychosis to communicate distress & elicit care ^b
	5.8. Lack of pro-social alternatives*	Relying on violence due to a lack of pro-social alternatives ^a
	5.9. Difficult to identify*	Difficult to identify function of violence for some prisoners ^a
6. Moderating Factors	6.1. Exacerbating factors	Adverse childhood experiences ^a
		Lack of support network ^a
		Repeated & long-lasting exposure to threats inside & outside prison ^a
		Lack of control over threats inside & outside prison ^a
		Limited escapability from threats inside & outside prison ^a
		Physical invasiveness of abusive experiences ^a
		Threats against sense of self ^a
		Intentional interpersonal threats ^a
		Lack of institutional support inside & outside prison ^a
		Perceived social threats ^a
		Threats within emotional/attachment relationships ^a
		Chronicity of threats in all aspects of life ^a
		Substance (ab)use* ^a
		6.2. Ameliorating factors
Secure & supported sense of self ^a		
Supportive prison conditions ^a		
Social safety & support ^a		
		Hope for the future* ^b

Note. * indicates novel codes not identified a priori by the PTMF

^a refers to codes identified by prison officers at both Time 1 and Time 2

^b refers to codes identified by prison officers at Time 1 only

Theme 1: Power

Prison officers described the negative operation of seven different types of power which they have recognised in NVRU prisoners' life stories. They noted various types of embodied power, including brain injury, substance (ab)use and mental health issues: 'He's very, very, very mentally unwell. The most mentally unwell prisoner I've seen, ever' (PO12, T1). Some participants wondered if these prisoners may be biologically 'bad': 'Like is it a nature nurture

thing, I don't know. I used to think it was more nurture, but I think some people just have [badness] in them, I don't know' (PO9, T1). Experiences of coercive power seemed to span the lives of these prisoners, including physical and sexual abuse in early life, and barrier handling under the previous VDP policy in prison: 'We've done it [...] whenever anything happened we were violent towards them. We go in and restrain them as best we can, but it is still violent' (PO1, T2). Prison officers explained how experiences of legal power appeared to follow a similar trajectory, perhaps stemming from poor social and children's services in early life:

Prison, we can only manage them when they get to us, it's everything that happens before that, its identifying the problems in children when they're in school, it's getting those services in line. And then maybe there mightn't be as many problems following them into adulthood (PO5, T1).

Various features of imprisonment were thought to further perpetuate the negative operation of legal power, including deprived liberties, over-crowding and under-staffing, the previous VDP policy, barrier handling, isolative conditions, limited services and facilities, inconsistent treatment, and ultimately a limited duty of care: 'What some of these guys have experienced within the Prison Service, they should never have gone through, it's ridiculous that some of those situations were even allowed to exist' (PO10, T1). Prison officers expressed concern about the institutionalisation of these prisoners, exacerbated by a lack of post-release supports after prison: 'There's no real support for them when they leave. There really isn't like' (PO4, T1). Experiences of material power were also described, including poverty, homelessness and untreated mental illness: 'Like he was suffering from mental health issues, but he was in a system that wasn't really looking after him, it was just going to get worse and worse' (PO11, T1). Prison officers also recognised the negative operation of social power, including low social class, limited formal education and limited social supports and opportunities: 'If I have an issue I've known and learned from society to talk to someone, I think they've known and learned from their background to lash out' (PO1, T2). Prison officers identified elements of interpersonal power in prisoners' relationships with both their parents and peers. Participants described experiences of parental loss, neglect and adversities, family rejection and separation, and overall unstable family environments: 'He came from an abusive family, he would have seen his mother being beaten, a lot of alcohol, moved [around], father killed himself. Like that's a lot for a young fella to take on' (PO4, T2). In their social circles, bullying and antisocial peer pressure and manipulation also appeared to be prevalent: 'Bad peer groups, you know their friends could be violent, egging them on to do things' (PO5, T1). Ultimately, prisoners experienced a distinct lack of pro-social role models throughout their lives: 'I can feel sorry for any child [...] that didn't have a strong role

model or someone to curb the other influences. I've got to know the extended families of these guys and there's no support there' (PO10, T2). In terms of ideological power, prison officers felt that prisoners had been discarded by society, perhaps due to the stereotypes and related stigmatisation they had experienced: 'Always being labelled, not being given a chance [...] that builds up frustration' (PO8, T1). Some participants feared that the IPS have further contributed to this labelling, and 'built up' these prisoners:

[The NVRU] is a badge of honour for them [...] it shouldn't be a badge of honour for them, but it is because it's a violent disruptive unit, it was built especially for these few prisoners. So they now have a persona that they feel like if they ever get out, that they have to live up to (PO7, T1).

Theme 2: Threat

Prison officers described nine different categories of threats, posed by the negative operation of the above types of power in the lives of NVRU prisoners. Relational threats, evident in their relationships with their families, peers and professionals, before and during their lives in prison, have included bereavement, disrupted attachments, abandonment, neglect and rejection, and a lack of protection: '[They] just didn't have good family lives and they didn't have a core group of people looking after them' (PO7, T2). Participants also noted threats against prisoners sense of control, experiences of hostility, boundary crossing, and shaming and humiliating interactions: 'Some of them react because they think you're making a fool out of them, even though you're not, it's just their interpretation of the situation' (PO6, T1). Overall, prison officers observed that prisoners have been continually isolated by others: 'He's just this lost soul, he has no-one really, he's on his own' (PO4, T2). Fear, hopelessness, and general emotional overwhelm were identified as emotional threats: 'God love him, he has all of these emotions going on in his head at once like' (PO13, T2). Social threats were also discussed, including social exclusion, social defeat, and a sense of injustice and unfairness, particularly in prison:

They're so wound up now, it's so embedded that the systems against them, that they didn't get [something] because I'm [a VDP policy prisoner]. Like everything is revolved around them not getting stuff, and the IPS, and it must be just consuming them on the inside (PO6, T1).

Environmental threats, especially those occurring in prison, were also described, including the presence of unsafe spaces, a loss of connection to home, and entrapment: 'They're on the phone to their family, they might hear things going on, that might affect them, make them more violent. Cause' they can't do anything about it inside, and sure we'll hit out at someone in here' (PO3, T1). Material threats identified by prison officers included prisoners' inability to meet basic

needs, and experiences of long-standing mental illness going untreated: 'The amount of time he was in prison and he was never diagnosed, they just thought that he was mad, mad and bad' (PO8, T1). The negative operation of embodied power throughout the lives of these prisoners was thought to pose many bodily threats, including hindered brain and cognitive development, addiction, non-compliance with medication, loss of capacity, loss of control, and overall physical and mental deteriorations: 'He was so mentally unwell that we felt that we were his carers as opposed to anything else. It was just a really, really bad deterioration, and it just wasn't nice to see it' (PO7, T1). Additionally, various experiences of coercive power, such as barrier handling, have posed physical danger to these prisoners: 'Through the years, when something goes wrong they're met with violence. [...] what anyone in fairness would class as a violent act, but it's a controlled manoeuvre as such' (PO1, T2). Prisoners' meaning construction was also threatened, with limited social supports and opportunities and unequal power relations thought to impact this. Thus, participants highlighted that these prisoners often make incorrect meaning interpretations: 'They can read into things wrong as well' (PO9, T1). They also discussed how the imposition of violent statuses and reputations has taught these prisoners to be violent:

It's the default, it's what they learned, so violence as a learned behaviour is coming across loud and clear as well. And if it's worked for them all the way through their childhood and adolescence, it's the same patterns repeating again (PO10, T2).

In describing threats against identity, prison officers discussed the imposition and adoption of sub-ordinate, macho and violent identities* amongst these prisoners:

Some of them wear their experiences as a badge of honour, they're a hard man, 'I've been dealt with like this in prison, and I've had to be barrier handled' [...] it's really heart-breaking that they've got to that stage where they see it themselves as just normality and something to be proud of (PO5, T1).

Finally, participants discussed threats against these prisoners' value bases, including a lack and/or loss of purpose and pro-social values:

You could tie up the use of violence with their own values. I don't think any of them are sitting down and saying I value human compassion, or I believe in service, or I believe in family. They're not thinking along those lines, but we can do work with them to help them identify those things (PO10, T1).

Theme 3: Meaning

Prison officers identified eight different types of meaning that NVRU prisoners may have drawn from the various experiences outlined above, observed from their supposed thoughts, feelings and bodily reactions. They noticed that NVRU prisoners seemed emotional about some of these experiences (e.g. afraid, guilty), as well as emotionally overwhelmed and emotionally

conflicted: 'They hate officers, but we're the only ones that can help them as well. So I'm sure they're torn, like with wanting to hate you and needing you' (PO7, T1). They observed an emptiness amongst these prisoners, who perhaps feel a sense of meaninglessness and hopelessness: 'They might just think that that's their destiny, to have bad stuff all the time' (PO9, T1). They also recognised a sense of powerlessness, with prisoners perhaps feeling helpless, trapped and defeated: 'He really didn't have a chance, when he came into the world violence was all he knew' (PO6, T2). Prison officers noticed that prisoners felt targeted, that they have been controlled and invaded: 'He won't come out of his cell now 'cause there's too many staff around him and he just can't cope with a crowd of people' (PO7, T2). Participants re-iterated the sense of injustice and unfairness these prisoners felt, whilst also highlighting the negativity bias* they hold: 'If something negative happens he'll focus on the negative more. Because on the unit everything's kind of been positive, he'll keep positive' (PO11, T1). Prison officers noted how prisoners may feel othered, and that they are different, and alien and dangerous: 'I know we work with these lads and we say violent and disruptive and worst of the worst and all this type of stuff, it's only feeding into it' (PO10, T2). A sense of rejection was evident in participants' narratives, with feelings of being betrayed, alienated and abandoned prevalent: 'I presume he would have felt isolated and unwanted as well, that would have been a lot of it' (PO4, T2). Likewise, prison officers thought that prisoners may feel less than, having perhaps internalised feelings of shame and humiliation, failure and inferiority, and worthlessness:

If you were to spend the majority of your childhood and the majority of your life feeling rejected and useless and worthless and no good to anybody or for anything, then you know there comes a point then where you don't see yourself as anything other than that (PO13, T2).

Ultimately, prison officers thought that prisoners viewed their various adverse life experiences, and their resulting use of violence, as normal*: 'Violence is all he knew, and it seemed to work you know. I suppose it's as normal for him to be violent as it is for me to not be violent (PO9, T1).

Theme 4: Threat Responses

Prison officers identified four different types of threat responses that NVRU prisoners have used to survive. They noted various behaviours, with violence perhaps being their most tried and tested survival strategy: 'I've seen his violence and I've seen the extent of his violence, and it's very scary' (PO5, T1). They differentiated between threatened and enacted violence,

and opportunistic, impulsive, pre-meditated, and vindictive violence. For some, violence was seen as a fight response, whereas for others it represented a drive response:

Because you have enemies you nearly have to toughen up a bit, you have to nearly be more dangerous. It's kind of, okay you've done something small to the first fella, but then to avoid the second, third and fourth fella ya nearly have to up the ante a bit, and it kind of just spirals (PO1, T1).

Other behavioural threat responses recognised by prison officers included antisocial behaviours*, substance (ab)use, psychotic episodes, difficulty coping and self-neglect: '[He was] living like an animal. Wasn't washing himself for weeks on end, wasn't eating' (PO12, T1). They also identified both bravado* and childishness* in the behaviours of prisoners:

I find like a lot of lads in there in their late 20's, 30's, 40's, act the same way as a 17 year old boy would [...] it's like they've just been frozen in time [...] they're kind of just Peter Pans (PO9, T1).

Participants described different types of thinking that prisoners have demonstrated, including paranoia, a sense of entitlement, self-blame, confused self-image, and deep thinking, such as imagining, interpreting, anticipating, meaning-making, and rumination: 'If these guys are sitting in their cells and they're ruminating and they're wondering when the next person is going to let them down, that has to be exhausting for them' (PO10, T1). Prison officers again highlighted the negativity bias* evident in prisoners' thinking, as well as egotism*: 'They're very self-centred, they're very egotistical, they're very selfish, it's them, it's them, it's them. So they take anything that is said as something against them' (PO7, T1). In identifying the different feelings experienced by these prisoners, prison officers highlighted their emotional sensitivity: 'He's a very, very, very sensitive individual, who needs very carefully managing. Em, he will take offence to the slightest little thing, so he will' (PO13, T1). They noted various feelings, including anger, guilt, hopelessness, tension* and hatred and resentment*: 'He holds a grudge against anyone with a uniform' (PO7, T1). While prison officers observed reduced empathy and emotional numbing amongst these prisoners, they also noticed emotional dysregulation: '[Sometimes] his mood is so high that you have to be so vigilant and careful with him, that you feel he could explode at any time' (PO5, T2). Participants described the many relational strategies different prisoners employ in their interactions with others, with some taking on caring roles and seeking care and attachments, others seeking control and dominance, and others utilising isolation and avoidance to maintain emotional distance: 'A lot of them are declining to speak to the psychologist so it's hard to say if that's going to be any help either, you know. They don't go out

too often, and that's their own choice' (PO2, T2). While some prisoners remain distrustful of others, others have engaged in submitting, appeasing and clinging in the NVRU:

He had been having his sessions with [the psychologist] and that was all going really well. And then she had to take a leave of absence and he deteriorated from that [...] he actually started acting out, 'cause I think he felt that she's after going leaving him now as well, after him making a connection with her (PO13, T2).

Theme 5: Functions of Threat Responses

Prison officers noted that prisoners typically relied upon these threat responses due to a lack of pro-social alternatives*, and that sometimes the functions of prisoners' threat responses were difficult for them to identify*: '[I] don't know what he gets out of it really, I don't think he even knows himself' (PO4, T1). Nonetheless, they described seven different types of functions that prisoners' threat responses may serve. Participants thought that both substance (ab)use and violence worked to regulate overwhelming feelings and meet emotional needs. They noted that prisoners may use violence to cope with the pains of imprisonment, obtain pleasure, and relieve tension: 'They get annoyed or angry very quickly, and straight to the violence, they don't know how to cope with that. They don't know how to talk through whatever their issues are, so they just get violent' (PO2, T1). They also acknowledged that some prisoners may rely on violence as a means of self-protection from physical danger:

I think specifically one of them would be to protect themselves, big time. Like knowing that no-one can, I'm an adult now, I'm not that little kid anymore, you can't, I can protect myself now, I can fight back. To have maybe the upper hand almost (PO9, T1).

Prison officers recognised prisoners' use of violence and relational strategies (e.g. seeking dominance over others) to maintain a sense of control in their lives, particularly in prison:

There is like a power play amongst them. Like there's one that just thinks he's in charge, and wants to be in charge. And if things don't go his way he will kick up a fuss to get everyone down to his door (PO7, T2).

They thought that while some prisoners clung to NVRU staff as a means of seeking attachments, others used violence to communicate distress and elicit care: 'Their use of violence is a form of communication, whether they're trying to get your attention or trying to push you away and say leave me alone' (PO10, T2). Additionally, prison officers described how some prisoners may use violence to preserve a place in the social group, particularly amongst their antisocial peers in prison:

I think he's badly influenced from another prisoner, I think he's trying to impress him all the time, and he's done a few things to impress him. So if the other lad kicks off, he'll kick off. Just to, obviously to impress him, or solidarity with him (PO3, T2).

Relatedly, prison officers thought that some prisoners aimed to preserve their identity, self-image and self-esteem, by using violence to assert their machismo, re-inforce the violent identities they have developed, whilst ultimately combatting the low self-esteem they were thought to experience: 'It's a survival thing for them as well you know, not to be seen to have any weakness' (PO8, T1).

Theme 6: Moderating Factors

Participants identified factors which they thought moderated the complex interactions between the negative operation of power, their accompanying threats, the meaning of these experiences to NVRU prisoners, and the functional threat responses they developed to survive. In identifying exacerbating (i.e. risk) factors, prison officers noted the prevalence of ACEs across these prisoners' stories: 'Their adulthoods are products of their childhoods, and their childhoods were horrendous' (PO10, T2). Substance (ab)use*, the physical invasiveness of abusive experiences, threats against one's sense of self, and perceived social threats were also identified as exacerbating factors: 'Certain parts of society will turn around and think that these guys are great guys. There's other parts of society that live in fear of them' (PO8, T2). Relationally, a lacking or limited support network, intentional interpersonal threats, and threats occurring within attachment relationships were all thought to exacerbate prisoners' outcomes: 'They had no-one there for them when they were growing up, they had no-one to guide them, no-one to say yes or no to them, no-one to pull in the reins when they need to be pulled in' (PO6, T1). Prison officers discussed how a lack of institutional support before prison (e.g. social/children's services), after prison (e.g. lack of post-release support), and during imprisonment, can also exacerbate outcomes for these prisoners. This was mostly evident in how prisoners were managed under the previous VDP policy, before the implementation of the NVRU:

Better we manage the situation safely and securely [in the NVRU] rather than have people in suits and body armour all over the state. That's horrible, I mean that's just violence begetting violence. And it doesn't have to be punches, and kicks, and bites, and head-butts. There's something violent about standing there in body armour. You know, it is oppressive (PO10, T1).

However, some features of practice in the NVRU, such as limited facilities, services and activities, the challenging integration of operationally-informed and psychologically-informed

approaches, and resuming the use of barrier handling to manage some prisoners, also constituted a lack of institutional support: 'That's the biggest challenge at the moment, the PPE. Like you can't be breaking barriers down with people when you're putting barriers up to take them from a cell. It just goes against what we're doing' (PO5, T2). Ultimately, prison officers highlighted the chronic, repeated and long-lasting exposure to often uncontrollable or inescapable threats across the life-courses of these prisoners:

He's never had a break from this like. He was abused when he was younger which led him to violence, now because the Prison System had no way of dealing with that it led to violence, and now it's kind of rolling and rolling (PO6, T1).

In identifying ameliorating (i.e. protective) factors, prison officers emphasised the importance of support, including a good support network, social safety and support, and a secure and supported sense of self, which they aimed to provide in the NVRU:

There is definitely an improvement in violence and a reduction in violence [in the NVRU], because their needs to be seen as people have actually, they're being met. And for the first time in their lives they're actually being listened to, not just viewed as this entity who has to be contained or he's going to lash out and hurt somebody (PO13, T1).

Participants described the other ways in which the NVRU offered institutional support, in comparison to treatment under the previous VDP policy and on general population landings, such as providing a contained but supportive environment, increased access to facilities, services and activities, and the facilitation of post-release supports upon release from the NVRU:

Literally the last time [he] was released it was 'there you go, thanks, bye', and he [re-offended shortly after]. Whereas this time we're trying to set him up with a proper home, proper facilities, proper support agencies, a job (PO1, T1).

Prison officers believed the relational approach embedded in the NVRU, through the prioritisation of relational security and the relationships fostered by personal officers, played a particularly important role in reducing the violence of these prisoners:

My mind has been changed around to when they're acting [violent], if you come in being more compassionate, more kind, and have a little bit of empathy for them and try understand why they're doing it, it de-escalates them a lot quicker, and you're getting a lot more good out of them. You're getting them then to maybe understand why they were doing that (PO5, T1).

Ultimately, prison officers believed that the work they were doing in the NVRU could help instil hope for the future* in the prisoners they worked with: 'He's seeing the light kind of at the end now' (PO11, T1).

Discussion

This study explored NVRU prison officers' understandings of the violence (and related threat responses) of NVRU prisoners, through the PTMF. NVRU prisoners participated in semi-structured interviews six months ($n = 13$) and 12 months ($n = 11$) after commencing their role in the NVRU. These transcripts were combined ($N = 24$) and qualitatively analysed using an integrated codebook/deductive and thematic/inductive approach, to identify both a priori and novel elements of the PTMF in these narratives. This resulted in six themes: (1) power, (2) threat, (3), meaning, (4) threat response, (5) function of threat response, and (6) moderating factors. Notably, novel elements (denoted by asterisks in Table 11) identified by participants included the imposition/adoption of both macho and violent identities; feeling conflicted about experiences; a negativity bias in thinking about experiences; a sense of normality regarding adverse life experiences; antisocial behaviour, bravado, childishness, egotism, tension, hatred, resentment and emotional sensitivity as additional threat responses; the difficulty in identifying the function of violence for some prisoners, and the lack of pro-social alternative threat responses prisoners may experience; substance (ab)use as an exacerbating factor; and hope for the future as an ameliorating factor.

While the comparison of prison officers' understandings at Time 1 (six months) and Time 2 (12 months) was not the aim of this study, there are some useful observations to note here. Superscript letters in Table 11 differentiate which codes were identified by prison officers at Time 1 only, and which codes were identified at both Time 1 and Time 2. 90% of codes were identified at both time-points, and 10% of codes were identified at Time 1 only. In reviewing the latter, it became apparent that most of the codes not subsequently re-identified at Time 2 had been primarily discussed at Time 1 in relation to specific prisoners who were no longer in the NVRU at Time 2, due to temporary transfer for mental health treatment (e.g. self-neglect, substance (ab)use to regulate feelings and meet emotional needs), and release from prison (e.g. poor social/children's services, homelessness, stigmatisation, being discarded by society, confused self-image, taking on caring roles, violence to cope with the pains of imprisonment, psychosis to communicate distress and elicit care, hope for the future). Thus, it is possible that at Time 2, prison officers only reflected on the prisoners currently in their care in the NVRU. No codes were identified at Time 2 only, which could possibly reflect either a saturation or stall in learning by Time 2. At Time 1, when discussing the negative operation of legal power, prison officers primarily reflected on issues with the previous VDP policy, before the development of the NVRU. At Time 2, however, prison officers noted how many of these issues had begun to infiltrate practice in the NVRU. Examples provided included the continued lack of association between

NVRU prisoners resulting in isolative conditions; the difficulty in filling Psychologist vacancies resulting in lesser mental health support than had been imagined; the resumed use of barrier handling to manage one challenging prisoner, which was deemed necessary following risk assessments, but was subject to ongoing review; and overall inconsistencies in how practice operated in the NVRU. These observations are again reflected in differing accounts of the moderating factor of institutional support at Time 1 and Time 2.

NVRU prisoners' self-understandings of the origins, experiences and expressions of their violence are presented in a separate paper (Gallagher et al., 2023a). Again, while comparing the understandings of prisoners and prison officers was not the focus of this study, given the availability of both datasets, it seems worthwhile to note some interesting observations. The majority of codes and sub-themes identified by both prisoners and prison officers, across all six thematic domains, were vastly similar. However, both groups offered different insights in some instances. In relation to the negative operation of legal power, and imprisonment specifically, where prisoners seemed preoccupied with the feeling of systemic injustice, prison officers identified the specific elements constituting this injustice. The sub-themes of social and ideological power were identified by prison officers only. It is possible that the social adversities (e.g. low social class, limited formal education), and related ideological consequences (e.g. stereotypes, stigmatisation) experienced by prisoners were perceived as normal by them, and thus not identified as possible contributing factors to their violence. The assumed contrast of these experiences to the comparatively 'normal' social circumstances of prison officers, perhaps prompted their identification in the current study. Where prisoners did not disclose more painful and shameful experiences (e.g. sexual abuse), these were identified and reflected upon by prison officers. Prison officers also noted how feelings of shame and humiliation perhaps prompted prisoners to adopt macho identities, and use violence as a means of preserving these identities. Overall, both groups differed in their framing of experiences. Paradoxically, while prisoners tended to identify the positives from their experiences in their narratives (e.g. developed resilience, fearlessness), prison officers thought that prisoners held negativity biases, and tended to focus on the negatives.

Existing Evidence-Base

Origins, Experiences and Expressions of Violence

In reflecting on the origins of violence for these prisoners, prison officers identified many of the experiences well-established in the existing evidence-base. For example, they

commented on the role of various ACEs (e.g. physical and sexual abuse, parental adversities, family separation and rejection, parental loss and neglect), and also noted how the occurrence of these experiences at an early developmental stage potentially exacerbated their influence on negative outcomes for these prisoners (Felitti et al., 1998). Existing literature also demonstrates that experiences of behaving violently can be traumatising or re-traumatising for perpetrators of violence (Fritzon et al., 2021; Gray et al., 2003; Pink & Gray, 2022; Ternes et al., 2020). While reflections on experiences of behaving violently were obviously more prominent in prisoners' narratives (e.g. feelings of guilt after violence), prison officers in this study did recognise the re-traumatising potential of some violent experiences in prison (e.g. barrier handling). Prison officers' discussions of the many functions of violence, and related threat responses, for these prisoners mirror the various strategic and psychological functions already noted in the literature, such as self-defence, retaliation, punishment, deterring victimisation, settling differences, obtaining better treatment, communication, relieving frustration, obtaining pleasure, protecting against low self-esteem, defending honour, demonstrating masculinity, demanding respect from others, achieving status and protecting identity (Butler, 2008; Butler & Drake, 2007; Butler & Maruna, 2009; Edgar et al., 2003; Gallagher et al., 2022). In line with Butler's work, prison officers in this study emphasised the central roles of shame, humiliation and threatened identities in these functions (Butler, 2008; Butler & Drake, 2007; Butler & Maruna, 2009).

Prison Officers' Understandings of Prisoners' Violence

As demonstrated in the introduction, there is an unfortunate paucity of empirical research which directly explores what prison officers understand about the violence of prisoners. However, many commonalities can be observed between the narratives of prison officers in this study, and those in Hemming et al.'s (2020) qualitative exploration of prison staffs' understandings of the role of emotion in violence in English prisons. In line with Hemming et al.'s (2020) findings, prison officers in this study discussed how the negative operation of interpersonal power (e.g. parental neglect, parental adversities, lack of pro-social role models) may have resulted in limited opportunities in early life to learn appropriate ways of identifying, understanding and communicating their emotions. These experiences may then contribute to heightened emotionality (e.g. emotional overwhelm, 'fight' response) and/or diminished emotionality (e.g. emptiness, emotional numbing). With a lack of learned pro-social alternative ways of coping, these prisoners may have turned to maladaptive strategies (e.g. violence, substance (ab)use) in order to regulate their feelings and meet emotional needs, and communicate their distress in order to elicit care. Prison officers in Hemming et al.'s (2020) study

commented on the further inhibition of normative emotional expression in prison environments. Similarly, prison officers in this study identified bravado as a threat response amongst these prisoners, which alongside violence may work to preserve their identity, self-image and self-esteem, as well as their place in the social group in prison.

Pattern Six of the PTMF: Social Exclusion, Shame and Coercive power

In the PTMF, various combinations of power, threat, meaning and functional threat responses are organised into seven provisional patterns. While the identification of these patterns was not the aim of this study, it is worth highlighting that participants identified elements evident in every one of the seven provisional patterns proposed by the PTMF. The authors of the PTMF propose that pattern six - 'surviving social exclusion, shame and coercive power' – may be characteristic of many men involved in the criminal justice system, including those imprisoned and engaged in violent behaviour (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018a), and the current findings certainly support this. As suggested by pattern six, prison officers confirmed that many NVRU prisoners had experienced the negative operation of almost all types of power, with their experiences of legal power (e.g. imprisonment) particularly noteworthy. These experiences were thought to pose a range of environmental (e.g. entrapment, loss of connection to home), material (e.g. inability to meet basic needs), bodily (e.g. physical danger) and relational (e.g. abandonment, shame and humiliation) threats. Participants in this study additionally emphasised identity related threats including the imposition and/or adoption of subordinate, violent and macho identities. In line with pattern six, prison officers reflected on the meanings these experiences may have imparted to prisoners, including a sense of powerlessness and emptiness, and feeling targeted and 'less than'. Pattern six identifies violence as a common threat response, while participants in this study described the different types of violence (e.g. opportunistic, impulsive, pre-meditated, vindictive) NVRU prisoners employed. In discussing the various functions of violence for these prisoners, prison officers in this study not only confirmed the range of functions suggested in pattern six, but perhaps delved a little further. For example, participants not only confirmed the suggestion in pattern six that violence may work to regulate overwhelming feelings and meet emotional needs, but identified the specific overwhelming feeling of tension, and the specific emotional need of pleasure.

Implications

This study has numerous implications for theory, research, policy and practice. The authors of the PTMF have highlighted its provisional nature, and the 'testing' of its utility as a

research tool in this specialised forensic setting has demonstrated its value. The extraction of core PTMF elements into the codebook used in this study, and the ready availability of this codebook (Appendix F), is hoped to add ease to future research adopting the PTMF. It is also hoped that the identification of additional novel elements (see asterisked codes in Table 11) can inform both the further development of the PTMF itself, and its application in similar specialised forensic settings.

This research has highlighted the value of the 'untapped resource' of prison officers' understandings of the prisoners with whom they work (Atkinson & Mann, 2012). Thus, future research attempting to understand challenging behaviour, particularly violence, both within and beyond prison environments, should make genuine efforts to explore the perspectives of staff.

Though beyond the scope of this paper, previous research has demonstrated that enhanced psychological understandings of the prisoners they work with can have both positive (e.g. compassion satisfaction, job satisfaction) and negative (e.g. compassion fatigue, burnout) implications for prison officers (Bond & Gemmell, 2014; Bowers et al., 2005; Bowers et al., 2006; Walker et al., 2018). While this study was limited to exploring the understandings of NVRU prison officers only, subsequent research on the NVRU should explore the impacts of these understandings, and indeed the job overall, on NVRU prison officers, and identify the best ways in which they can be supported. Indeed, this should be an additional focus of any future research exploring staffs' understandings of complex clients and challenging behaviours.

Acknowledging the value that staff perspectives can offer, genuine efforts should be made to utilise their perspectives in practice, both within the NVRU and in other similar specialised forensic environments. In the NVRU, prison officers are involved in behavioural monitoring and 'know your prisoner' activities. The findings of this study not only support the continued involvement of staff in these exercises, but also suggest that staff could perhaps play a more involved role in formal risk assessment. Additionally, the effectiveness of using the PTMF to frame the understandings of prison officers in this study suggests that using the PTMF to underpin these understandings in practice (e.g. case formulation) could be beneficial. Again, the collaborative involvement of prison officers in such activities is imperative. To ensure the success of such initiatives it is vital that staff are adequately supported to enhance potential positive implications (e.g. initial and ongoing training) and mitigate potential negative implications (e.g. group and individual supervision).

Strengths and Limitations

A notable strength of this study lies in its focus on the experiences, perspectives and understandings of prison officers. In doing so it not only utilises a largely 'untapped resource' (Atkinson & Mann, 2012), but also acknowledges the value of this resource. Prisoners and prison officers' understandings were analysed and presented separately, so to maintain the richness of the learning offered by both sets of narratives. However, this learning was integrated, compared and contrasted earlier on in this discussion. As advocated by the lead authors of the PTMF (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018a), this study adopted a qualitative methodology to develop these narratives. Recognising that no 'one size fits all' in qualitative research, or indeed explorations of human experiences, this study integrated both codebook/deductive and thematic/inductive approaches in order to best address its research questions. Notably, this resulted in the identification of numerous novel PTMF elements, of potential relevance to subsequent explorations of similar cohorts/contexts, thus further developing this provisional framework. Various measures were employed to enhance the transferability (e.g. detailed description of research context), credibility (e.g. external researcher check), dependability (e.g. analytic audit trail) and confirmability (e.g. reflexivity statement) of findings, thus enhancing the overall quality of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

A regrettable limitation of this study is the lack of comparative prison officer narratives. Comparisons of the narratives of NVRU prison officers obtained in this study, with narratives of other prison officers working elsewhere in the prison estate, could have helped determine if the former are unique in some way, perhaps reflecting their motivations for joining the NVRU in the first place, or the impact of the psychologically-informed approach embedded in the NVRU,. Indeed, the inclusion of earlier (e.g. before induction training) and later (e.g. 18, 24, 36 etc. months after commencing work in the NVRU) time-points would have allowed for more concrete inferences to be made about the progression of prison officers' knowledge in the NVRU.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study explored NVRU prison officers' understandings of the origins, experiences and expressions of violence of NVRU prisoners. It did so through an innovative qualitative methodology, underpinned by the core components of the PTMF. The resulting themes contribute to a greater understanding of how power has negatively operated in the lives of these prisoners, the threats that this has posed, the meaning of these experiences to these prisoners, the functional threat responses they have used to survive, and the exacerbating and ameliorating factors which have, and continue to, moderate this process. This study has also

highlighted the valuable insight that staff perspectives can offer, whilst also making concrete suggestions on how these learnings can be maintained and further developed, within and beyond the NVRU, through theory, research, policy and practice.

Chapter 6: Preface

Chapter five presented a qualitative exploration of NVRU prison officers' ($n = 13$) understandings of the origins, experiences and expressions of the violent behaviour of the prisoners with whom they work. It did so through the lens of the Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF). This study identified six themes: (1) power, (2) threat, (3) meaning, (4) threat response, (5) function of threat response, and (6) moderating factors. These themes confirmed the presence of many a priori PTMF elements in the understandings of these prison officers, whilst also identifying many additional, novel elements in their understandings.

Chapter six below is the final chapter of these thesis. It presents an integrative and critical discussion of the key findings of the four studies contained within this thesis. It will consider the strengths and limitations of this thesis, and its potential implications for future research, practice and policy.

Chapter 6: Discussion

Chapter Outline

This thesis presented an integrated programme of original research exploring the management of serious violence in the Irish Prison Service (IPS), through the lens of the Power Threat Meaning Framework (PTMF). Chapter one introduced the IPS, and the issue of violence within the service. It outlined the various ways in which the IPS manage violence, paying particular attention to the violently disruptive prisoner (VDP) policy and the National Violence Reduction Unit (NVRU), due to their direct applicability to this thesis. Chapter one progressed to contextualising the issue, and management, of violence within the wider prison violence evidence-base, and the PTMF as the theoretical framework underpinning the thesis. It concluded by summarising the rationale for, and stating the aims of, this thesis. These were as follows:

1. To explore the empirical utility of the PTMF. This aim was met by conducting a scoping review of the existing empirical PTMF literature (chapter two), and using the PTMF to inform data collection, data analysis, and the overall understandings of prisoners and prison officers in chapter four and chapter five, respectively.
2. To explore the experiences and perspectives of prisoners and prison officers under the previous VDP policy in the IPS. This aim was met through the qualitative study in chapter three.
3. To explore NVRU prisoners' self-understandings of the origins, experiences and expressions of their violent behaviour. This aim was met through the qualitative study in chapter four.
4. To explore NVRU prison officers' understandings of the origins, experiences and expressions of the violent behaviour of the prisoners with whom they work. This aim was met through the qualitative study in chapter five.

This chapter concludes this thesis by summarising and synthesising the key findings from each of these four studies, discussing their potential implications, and contextualising their contributions in terms of the overall strengths and limitations of this thesis.

Key Findings

Study One

The first study of this thesis (chapter two) aimed to determine the scope of the emergent empirical PTMF evidence-base in the five years since its publication in January 2018. It additionally aimed to identify the different ways in which empirical studies had utilised the PTMF in their methodologies, and synthesise the characteristics and key findings of these studies. A scoping review, conducted in line with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) scoping review extension ([PRISMA-ScR]; Tricco et al., 2018), identified 17 relevant studies. This evidence-base was diverse, with studies conducted across a range of disciplines (e.g. clinical/forensic/educational psychology), settings (e.g. inpatient psychiatric wards, prisons, schools) and populations (e.g. clinicians, prisoners, education professionals). These studies featured various methodologies (incl. quantitative, qualitative, mixed), and utilised the PTMF in five main ways: (1) PTMF-informed data collection, (2) PTMF-informed data analysis, (3) Experiences of/views on the PTMF, (4) PTMF-informed formulation, and (5) PTMF-informed intervention.

This review concluded that while this evidence-base has merit, and is a welcome and promising development in the first five years of the PTMF, its heterogeneity makes it difficult to synthesise and draw meaningful conclusions from. Thus, in the next five years of the PTMF's lifespan, a deepening of the science was recommended, whereby a consistent and coherent approach to research utilising and/or evaluating the PTMF is necessary. Future directions for clinical practice and policy were also considered, such as collaboration amongst professionals and with service-users, and the regulation and evaluation of any PTMF-informed interventions.

Overall, study one provided a critical introduction to the PTMF, which, as the theoretical framework underpinning this thesis, was essential. It established the scope of the existing empirical PTMF literature, and critically discussed the strengths and limitations of this evidence-base. In doing so, study one set the scene for further original explorations of the empirical utility of the PTMF throughout this thesis, particularly in study three (chapter four) and study four (chapter five).

Study Two

The second study of this thesis (chapter three) aimed to generate a detailed description of practice under the previous VDP policy, by qualitatively exploring the experiences and perspectives of prisoners ($n = 4$) and prison officers ($n = 13$). The inductive thematic analysis (TA) of 17 semi-structured interview transcripts resulted in the development of nine themes: (1) describing VDP policy prisoners, (2) staff characteristics and approaches, (3) describing the

VDP policy regime, (4) the social environment, (5) the occupational environment, (6) function of the VDP policy, (7) impact of the VDP policy, (8) factors influencing violence, and (9) responding to violence.

Overall, participants described prisoners in mostly negative terms (e.g. manipulative, opportunistic), whilst also highlighting the influence of adverse childhood experiences on the development of their behaviour, and the related psychological (e.g. relieving tension) and strategic (e.g. securing better treatment) functions of their violence. Two types of staff were identified – the ‘right’ staff (e.g. fair) and the ‘wrong’ staff (e.g. antagonistic). The VDP policy regime was also described in negative terms (e.g. restrictive, solitary, controlled), with its inappropriateness and inconsistency highlighted. In describing the social environment, participants revealed that prisoner-prisoner interaction was limited in quantity, and staff-prisoner interaction was limited in quality. Prison officers reported positive staff team dynamics, but less positive relationships with management. In describing the occupational environment, prison officers highlighted the vastness of their role, for which they received limited training. Participants emphasised the operational focus of the previous VDP policy, of which repeated serious violence was the main reason for designation, and protection of others was the main purpose. The previous VDP policy had adverse impacts on both prisoners (e.g. psychological wellbeing) and prison officers (e.g. de-sensitisation to violence), with both groups developing their own coping strategies for dealing with these impacts. In line with the existing prison violence literature, participants identified factors influencing prison violence at the individual (e.g. drugs), interactional (e.g. staff misconduct) and environmental (e.g. staff shortages) levels. Participants ended interviews discussing how they thought violence should be managed in the IPS, which included a shift from reaction to prevention, and from containment to intervention.

Overall, study two provided a detailed description of the previous VDP policy. In the absence of existing research into the VDP policy prior to this thesis, the development of this initial, descriptive foundation was essential so that more in-depth explorations of the current VDP policy could be conducted in studies three and four.

Study Three

The third study of this thesis (chapter four) aimed to build upon the foundation laid by the second study of this thesis. It aimed to gain an understanding of the origins, experiences and expressions of the violent behaviour of NVRU prisoners, from the perspectives of these prisoners, and through the lens of the PTMF. Throughout the first year of the NVRU’s

implementation, three prisoners participated in four semi-structured interviews. These interviews were qualitatively analysed using a hybrid inductive (i.e. data-driven) and deductive (i.e. PTMF-driven) approach to reflexive TA. This resulted in six themes: (1) power, (2) threat, (3) meaning, (4), threat response, (5) function of threat response, and (6) moderating factors. These themes contained 35 sub-themes and 101 codes. Most of these codes were developed a priori from the PTMF, with the remainder being novel codes identified by participants, which were perhaps unique to their experiences.

Prisoners described the negative operation of almost all kinds of power throughout their lives, including embodied (e.g. substance (ab)use), coercive (e.g. violence from authority figures), legal (e.g. systemic injustice in prison), material (e.g. homelessness) and interpersonal (e.g. parental loss & separation) power. These experiences posed nine different types of threats, including relational (e.g. lack of protection), emotional (e.g. emotional overwhelm), social (e.g. injustice & unfairness), environmental (e.g. unsafe spaces), bodily (e.g. physical danger), meaning construction (e.g. unequal power relations), identity (e.g. violent identities), and value base (e.g. loss of values & purpose) threats. Prisoners made sense of these experiences in nine different ways, including feeling emotional, humiliated, abandoned, different, helpless, and meaningless. Prisoners highlighted the normality of these negative experiences for them, but also identified some of the positives they had taken from them (e.g. resilience). To survive these experiences, prisoners developed 18 different threat responses, categorised by behaviours (e.g. violence), thoughts (e.g. paranoia), feelings (e.g. anger) and interactions (e.g. distrust). These threat responses served seven different functions for these prisoners (e.g. regulating overwhelming feelings & meeting emotional needs, maintaining a sense of control). Prisoners identified that, for them, the power-threat-meaning-response process was moderated by various exacerbating (e.g. lack of institutional support in prison) and ameliorating (e.g. good personal support network) factors.

Overall, study three explored NVRU prisoners' self-understandings of the origins, experiences and expressions of their violent behaviour. It not only built upon the descriptive foundations laid in study two, but also contributed a new, original exploration of the empirical utility of the PTMF to the existing evidence-base identified in study one. In doing so, study three presented an innovative method of gathering and analysing participant perspectives using the PTMF, thus setting the scene for exploring prison officers' perspectives in study four (chapter five).

Study Four

The fourth study of this thesis (chapter five) aimed to gain an understanding of the origins, experiences and expressions of the violent behaviour of NVRU prisoners, from the perspectives of the prison officers working with them, and through the lens of the PTMF. Throughout the first year of the NVRU's implementation, 13 prison officers participated in 24 semi-structured interviews. These interviews were qualitatively analysed using the same hybrid inductive and deductive analytic approach utilised in study three. This resulted in the development of the same six themes identified in study three, which this time contained 39 sub-themes and 167 codes. Most of these codes were again developed a priori from the PTMF, with the remainder being novel codes identified by prison officers.

Prison officers re-identified most examples of power, threat, meaning, threat response, function of threat response and moderating factors which prisoners had previously done in study three, whilst also providing some additional insights. Prison officers additionally identified the negative operation of social (e.g. low social class) and ideological power (e.g. stigmatisation) in the lives of NVRU prisoners. Prison officers noted some painful experiences which prisoners did not disclose (e.g. sexual abuse). In discussing imprisonment as an example of legal power, prisoners seemed preoccupied with the feeling of systemic injustice, while prison officers identified the specific elements constituting this injustice (e.g. isolative conditions, deprived liberties). Throughout their accounts, prison officers noted how feelings of shame and humiliation perhaps prompted prisoners to adopt macho identities, and use violence as a means of preserving these identities. Paradoxically, while prisoners tended to identify the positives from their experiences in their narratives (e.g. fearlessness), prison officers thought that prisoners tended to focus on the negatives.

Overall, study four complemented the prisoner perspectives presented in study three, by exploring NVRU prison officers' understandings of the origins, experiences and expressions of the violent behaviour of NVRU prisoners. These understandings were compared and contrasted with those of the prisoners in study three, thus contributing to a balanced integration of the perspectives of both participant groups throughout this thesis.

Integrated Learnings

While each of these four studies make unique contributions to this thesis, they also provide some integrated learnings. These include the complexity of violence; the role of

intertwined cycles of adversity, trauma and violence; and the unique contributions and shared insights of prisoners and prison officers.

The Complexity of Violence. While examples of violence may be easy to identify (e.g. verbal/physical/sexual abuse), defining violence more generally is not so simple. In their comprehensive text on prison violence, Edgar et al. (2003) described violence as a 'slippery' concept that 'evades easy description and fixed definition' (p.23). They highlighted the various types of existing definitions (e.g. wide, restricted, limited), and the various types of perspectives (e.g. psychological, social, legal) shaping these definitions. This thesis has certainly highlighted the complexity in understanding violence, particularly serious prison violence, demonstrating that there are no straight-forward, linear explanations. In line with the growing recognition of the links between various adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and various offending behaviours (Hocken et al., 2022; Smith, 2022; Willmot, 2022; Willmot & Jones, 2022), studies two, three and four of this thesis identified numerous adverse experiences throughout the lives of VDP policy prisoners. These adversities, spanning prisoners' lives before and in prison, represent the negative operation of various types of power, including embodied (e.g. disability), coercive (e.g. physical abuse), legal (e.g. imprisonment), material (e.g. homelessness), social (e.g. limited formal education), interpersonal (e.g. parental loss and separation) and ideological (e.g. discarded by society). Expressions of violence are also not straight-forward, with VDP policy prisoners demonstrating various types of violence (e.g. opportunistic, impulsive, pre-meditated, vindictive), and many other related threat responses, including behaviours (e.g. substance (ab)use), thoughts (e.g. paranoia), feelings (e.g. emotional numbing) and interactional responses (e.g. isolation and avoidance). In line with existing literature, which has emphasised the importance of viewing prison violence in the context of the function(s) it serves for the individual (Butler, 2008; Butler & Drake, 2007; Butler & Maruna, 2009; Edgar et al., 2003), this thesis identified various inter-related functions of violence for VDP policy prisoners. Study two identified some strategic (e.g. removal from general population) and psychological (e.g. relieving tension) functions of violence for prisoners under the previous VDP policy, while these were explored in more depth with prisoners and prison officers in the NVRU (e.g. maintaining a sense of control, seeking attachments, preserving identity/self-image/self-esteem).

Study one, through scoping the diverse existing empirical PTMF literature, highlighted that many of the examples of power, threat, meaning and functional threat responses identified in this thesis are not necessarily unique to understanding violence. Indeed, the prisoner and prison officer narratives generated in studies three and four, respectively, were constructed

mostly by a priori PTMF codes, extracted from the PTMF main document to create the deductive PTMF codebook available in Appendix F. At the same time, this thesis contributed some novel elements to the PTMF, which may be unique in understanding violence, or at least the violence of this specific cohort of VDP policy prisoners (e.g. barrier handling, staff misconduct). Overall, this thesis has demonstrated the value of viewing violence holistically, with the PTMF well-placed to facilitate such perspectives. Importantly, these holistic understandings of violence should not excuse, but rather explain, violent behaviour, so that efforts to reduce it can be appropriately focused.

Intertwined Cycles of Adversity, Trauma and Violence. While causal relationships cannot be inferred from this research, throughout this thesis participants illustrated how intertwined cycles of adversity, trauma and violence were evident throughout the lives of VDP policy prisoners. As mentioned above, participants noted the occurrence of various ACEs in the early lives of these prisoners, including being victims of violence themselves. Prisoners developed a range of related threat responses to survive these experiences, with violence perhaps being their most learned, practiced and successful threat response. For the prisoners who participated in this research, at least some of this violence resulted in imprisonment. Existing literature has highlighted that committing an act of violence can have traumatic impacts on the perpetrator, which can increase the likelihood of committing further violence (Facer-Irwin et al., 2019; Fritzon et al., 2021; Gray et al., 2003; Pink & Gray, 2022; Ternes et al., 2020). Furthermore, prisons have been found to be traumatising and re-traumatising institutions (Hocken et al., 2022; Malik et al. 2021). The existing literature, and this thesis, have noted that prisoners often rely on violence for self-protection, maintaining control, and preserving their place in the social group in prison (Butler, 2008; Butler & Drake, 2007; Butler & Maruna, 2009; Edgar et al., 2003). However, perpetrating violence in prison often results in additional punishments, and sometimes additional convictions and sentences. Even if/when released from prison, ex-prisoners may return to existing adverse environments, and/or encounter new adversities, particularly those stemming from the negative operation of material (e.g. poverty), social (e.g. limited social supports and opportunities), and ideological (e.g. stigmatisation) power. Faced with such adversities, resorting to violence may be the most easily accessible survival strategy.

Thus, it is not difficult to see how intertwined cycles of adversity, trauma and violence can be initiated, perpetuated and maintained. This thesis has demonstrated the potential role the NVRU can play in intercepting this cycle. Despite their relatively short time in the NVRU,

prisoners in study three reflected on the positive relationships that they had begun to build with prison officers. Observing the shift from physical security to relational security, prisoners reported an increase in both the quantity and quality of their interactions with prison officers. They highlighted that NVRU prison officers seemed motivated to work with VDP policy prisoners in a different way; to help, not hinder. The compassion and empathy they experienced, particularly in one-to-one interactions with personal officers, allowed them to see prison officers as human beings for the first time. However, a change in tone was observed between Time 1 and Time 2 NVRU prison officer interviews. At Time 1, prison officers appeared highly motivated, spoke positively of their work on the NVRU, and were optimistic for its future. At Time 2, the motivation, enjoyment and optimism of some prison officers seemed to diminish amidst some 'teething issues' in the NVRU. While prison officers emphasised that these issues were primarily with management, and some prison officer colleagues, they highlighted that negative staff dynamics had the potential to negatively implicate the NVRU's culture, and thus prisoners' treatment and outcomes. Additionally, throughout this thesis, participants emphasised that this cycle cannot be broken by the efforts of the NVRU alone, and that preventative measures in early life (e.g. adequate social/children's services), and post-prison release supports (e.g. housing, employment), are also essential.

Unique Contributions and Shared Insights. Prisoners and prison officers occupy very different roles, and inherently different levels of power, within the prison environment. As such, it is unsurprising that each group contributed some unique, and sometimes contrasting, insights. In study two, prisoners, understandably, had more negative experiences and perspectives of the previous VDP policy, and demonstrated something similar to an external locus of control, whereby they focused on the (negative) actions of others, namely staff, when discussing their violent behaviour. Contrastingly, prison officers in this study appeared to have more balanced viewpoints, for example noting the influence of both prisoner and staff variables on prison violence. Indeed, in study four prison officers noted the negativity biases that these prisoners often hold, while in study three prisoners identified various positives they have taken from their adverse experiences. Additionally, the narratives produced by prisoners in study three were primarily limited to the surface-level, for example by focusing on the overall feeling of systemic injustice they experienced in prison. Contrastingly, prison officers in study four delved a little deeper, for example by naming the specific features of imprisonment which likely contributed to this feeling of systemic injustice.

Notwithstanding these individual contributions, what is most striking, perhaps, is the level of convergence observed between prisoners' and prison officers' experiences and perspectives throughout this thesis. Table 7 in study one demonstrates that over half of thematic codes were identified by both groups. In comparing the prisoner narratives in study three and the prison officer narratives in study four, the majority of codes were also shared by both groups. In study one, prison officers highlighted the communal, and almost domestic, nature of the VDP policy, whereby 'a prisoners living conditions is an officers [working] conditions' (PO12), and 'they're living with us for that time period, and we're living with them for that time period' (PO3). Thus, this thesis has demonstrated the importance of valuing and balancing the unique contributions and shared insights of both prison officers and prisoners, particularly in understanding prison violence.

Implications and Future Directions

The findings reported in this thesis have a number of implications for future theory, research, policy and practice, which will be discussed in turn below.

Theory and Research

The PTMF. The existing prison violence literature has been dominated by attempts to understand its causes and correlates, and these attempts have resulted in singular, stratified theories of prison violence (e.g. importation theory, deprivation theory). It has been argued that prisons are not necessarily unique environments which require unique theories to understand them, and that holistic theoretical frameworks can offer greater utility (Edgar et al., 2003; Steiner et al., 2014). This thesis, particularly studies three and four, explored the utility of a more holistic theoretical framework – the PTMF - for understanding prison violence. The results of these studies demonstrated the utility of the PTMF in this area.

Participant accounts were mostly constructed by codes identified a priori from the PTMF. Indeed, the narratives created by participants closely resembled pattern six of the PTMF - 'surviving social exclusion, shame, and coercive power' - which is proposed as characteristic of many men in the criminal justice system (Johnstone & Boyle, 2018a). These studies also contributed novel elements, which are perhaps unique to understandings of violence. The publication of these novel elements (Table 9 & Table 11), the interview schedules used to facilitate these narratives (Appendix E & Appendix I), and the codebook developed from these studies (Appendix F), help to further develop the PTMF, which the PTMF authors themselves

emphasise as provisional at this early stage. Importantly, these publications can also guide future researchers utilising the PTMF within forensic contexts, which is important considering its resonance, reception and uptake in this area.

Study one additionally explored the empirical utility of the PTMF more generally. This scoping review included 17 studies, which demonstrated how the PTMF has been used empirically across a variety of disciplines, settings and populations. This diversity reflects the holistic nature of the PTMF, highlighting its applicability in multiple areas. While this evidence-base has merit, and is a welcome and promising development in the first five years of the PTMF, its heterogeneity makes it difficult to synthesise and draw meaningful conclusions from. Thus, in the next five years of the PTMF's lifespan, a deepening of the science is recommended. A consistent and coherent approach to research utilising and/or evaluating the PTMF is necessary, for example by establishing an independent oversight group, internal or external to the BPS, to maintain responsibility for this. In order to gain a true understanding of the utility of the PTMF, this research should be conducted across a diverse range of disciplines, particularly those which may challenge the PTMF (e.g. psychiatry).

Research Methodologies. Throughout this thesis, the utility of qualitative methodologies in exploring the origins, experiences and expressions of emotional distress and troubled/troubling behaviour has been highlighted. Indeed, the authors of the PTMF advocate for the use of qualitative methodologies in doing so. Of the 17 studies included in the scoping review in chapter two, 13 adopted purely qualitative methodologies, while one combined qualitative and quantitative methods. These studies also varied in how they utilised the PTMF in their methodologies (e.g. PTMF-informed interviews, PTMF-informed analyses). Studies two, three and four of this thesis also adopted primarily qualitative methodologies. Recognising that no 'one size fits all' in qualitative research, these studies developed innovative and complimentary approaches. Study two, as the first study to empirically examine practice under the VDP policy, complimented its broad research questions with a descriptive qualitative methodology. This involved open-ended interview questions, and using inductive TA to generate semantic-level descriptions grounded in the experiences of participants, confined to the prison context. Studies three and four built upon the descriptive foundations laid by study two, to develop more in-depth understandings. They did so using a bespoke, hybrid inductive and deductive approach to TA, which generated latent-level interpretations of participants' whole-life experiences.

Having highlighted their utility and value, future research should continue to adopt qualitative methodologies, but must be flexible in how they do so, ensuring to appropriately align their research aims and methods. While qualitative methodologies work to ensure that findings are grounded in the experiences of participants, where distinct groups of participants are recruited, strategies must be employed to ensure all voices are heard, balanced and integrated (e.g. separate and combined analyses, noting unique contributions and shared experiences). Future qualitative research should also consider ways in which participants can be more collaboratively and intrinsically involved in the research process, perhaps learning from patient and public involvement (PPI) initiatives in health research.

Notwithstanding the value of qualitative research, the possible integration of quantitative measures in exploring the origins, experiences and expressions of emotional distress and troubled/troubling behaviour should be considered. Quantitative measures and data are often favoured by large organisations (including prison services) due to their ease of administration and interpretation. An effective, integrated approach to research could involve the initial, primary collection and analysis of data using qualitative methods, with the key findings of this research informing the development and/or selection of key quantitative measures, which can be subsequently administered and re-administered to continuously evaluate and re-evaluate the topic of concern over a longer period of time.

Policy and Practice

Managing Serious Violence. This thesis provides compelling evidence towards the management of serious violence using psychologically-informed policies and practices in the IPS. In study two, both prisoners and prison officers reported overall negative experiences/perspectives of the previous VDP policy. In theme nine of this study, they mapped out how they thought serious violence should be managed by the IPS, which involved moving from containment to intervention, and reaction to prevention. Evaluating the effectiveness of the NVRU in achieving its stated aims was not the distinct focus of this thesis. However, from the experiences reported by prisoners and prison officers in the NVRU in studies three and four, clear progress towards these aims was evident.

With regards to prisoners, the NVRU primarily aimed to reduce violent behaviour, and also increase psychological health and wellbeing, and enhance relational outcomes. Though inferential statistical analyses were not possible, the incident reporting data presented in study three (Table 8), combined with the internal NVRU progress report (IPS, 2021c), certainly paint a

picture of reduced serious violence, from VDP policy prisoners, in the IPS. Overall, both prisoners and prison officers' valued the additional psychological inputs (e.g. training, supervision, therapy) in the NVRU, which is reflected in both groups' insights into the origins, experiences and expressions of violent behaviour. The positive development of relationships with prison officers in the NVRU is evident throughout prisoners' accounts in study three, which contrast starkly to their perceptions and experiences of authority figures before the NVRU in study two. However, during their Time 2 interviews in study four, prison officers identified some practices in the NVRU which unfortunately resembled practice under the previous VDP policy, thus contrasting the ethos of the NVRU (e.g. limited psychological input, resumption of barrier handling for one challenging prisoner).

The NVRU also aimed to enhance the competence, confidence and attitudes of its prison officers. Prison officers working under the previous VDP policy expressed feeling limited in their roles, and a desire to gain more psychological knowledge of prisoners. Importantly, they wanted this knowledge to be valued and utilised from the top down. This certainly appears to have been achieved in the NVRU, through various initiatives (e.g. psychological training, individual and group check-ins, 'know your prisoner' and behavioural monitoring activities, personal officer scheme). Throughout their accounts in study four, prison officers demonstrated an in-depth understanding of the origins, experiences and expressions of violence of the prisoners with whom they worked in the NVRU. While the quality of prison officers' understandings of NVRU prisoners had not diminished at Time 2, no new codes were identified at Time 2, which could possibly reflect either a saturation or stall in their learning. Indeed, at Time 2 prison officers noted a reduction in the psychological inputs they were receiving, in addition to other 'teething issues', leading to frustrations amongst and between prison officers and management. As highlighted by prison officers themselves, the development of a negative culture in the NVRU has the potential to distract from the progress prison officers have worked hard to develop with prisoners.

This thesis has highlighted that prison officers have the potential to be an 'untapped resource' (Atkinson & Mann, 2012) in understanding complex and challenging behaviours, particularly serious violence. It is recommended that the NVRU values and utilises this resource, particularly from the top down, and are mindful of extraneous variables (e.g. negative NVRU culture) which could hinder progress. Similar initiatives to enhance staff competence, confidence and attitudes could be developed and implemented throughout the rest of the Irish prison estate, and beyond. In doing so, it is important recognise the potential impact of working with prisoners

in this way. Such impacts are likely to be both positive (e.g. compassion satisfaction) and negative (e.g. compassion fatigue), and it is essential that prison officers are appropriately supported to manage them.

Overall, this thesis recognised that in order to successfully reduce violence in the NVRU, and successfully evaluate violence reduction efforts, it is essential to first generate a deeper understanding of these prisoners, where their violence comes from, and what violence does for them. The in-depth understandings of violence which have been developed in this thesis offer a foundation upon which further evaluations of the NVRU can be built. These findings have utility beyond the VDP policy and NVRU, and could be used to inform policy and practice in the management of other violent prisoners, in addressing other complex needs and challenging behaviours (e.g. addiction, serious mental illness, disability), to inform psychological practices (e.g. formulation, assessment, intervention), and guide policy and practice in similar specialised units (e.g. Close Supervision Centres, Psychologically Informed Planned Environments, Offender Personality Disorder Pathways).

The PTMF. While this thesis primarily explored the utility of the PTMF as a research tool, its potential utility in clinical and therapeutic spaces must also be acknowledged. Five of the studies included in the scoping review (chapter one) developed and/or evaluated clinical practices (e.g. formulation, intervention) informed by the PTMF. Studies three and four of this thesis highlighted how the PTMF can be used to facilitate in-depth understandings of violence within a research context. It is reasonable to assume that the PTMF would similarly benefit the development of understandings in a clinical context, for example by guiding psychological formulations. Appendix 1 of the PTMF overview document includes a guide to using the PTMF in therapeutic spaces to co-create personal narratives, while appendices 2 to 14 contain some good practice examples drawing on the PTMF. The PTMF webpage contains additional clinical guidelines and examples. Thus, the PTMF should continue to be used in psychological practices, to further explore its utility in this area. However, in doing so, it is important to remain mindful of a number of possible issues.

Firstly, the development of any clinical practices informed by the PTMF should be subject to appropriate regulation and evaluation, perhaps using the UK Medical Research Council and National Institute for Health Research complex intervention research framework (Skivington et al., 2021). Secondly, in keeping with the values of the PTMF, the agency of service-users is most important. Service-users must be given a choice in how they wish to understand their

emotional distress and troubled/troubling behaviour (e.g. psychiatric diagnosis, PTMF), and this choice must be respected. Thirdly, the PTMF has the potential to contribute to professional divides, for example between psychology and psychiatry in mental health settings, or between psychological and operational staff in prison settings. Such divides could be counter-productive to the PTMF's aim of a more humane approach to understanding distress and troubled/ troubling behaviour, and so care must be exercised in implementing new ways of working informed by the PTMF. Finally, studies which have surveyed psychology professionals' views on the PTMF have highlighted that despite valuing alternatives to the dominant psychiatric model of working in clinical settings (such as the PTMF), the genuine implementation of such alternatives is dependent on over-coming systemic barriers, including service-level changes, professional collaboration and investment in training (Milligan, 2022; Raskin et al., 2022; Travers, 2022). These participants also acknowledged that individual change is much easier to achieve than systemic change. Thus, individual-level efforts to utilise the PTMF in clinical practice should continue in the short-term, whilst adapting to work within the confines of existing systems in the medium-term, and working towards system-level change in the long-term.

Strengths and Limitations

The strengths and limitations of each study have been considered in turn throughout this thesis. Some additional, over-arching strengths and limitations of this thesis are considered below.

Strengths

The dearth of research conducted within the unique landscape of the Irish penal system, and an over-reliance on research conducted within other jurisdictions, has been noted (Barry, 2013; Roche, 2016). This thesis, in contributing three original, empirical studies conducted within Irish prisons, advances this evidence-base. It has also been highlighted that much of what we know about the management of prison violence stems from inspectorial and evaluative work, and that more original, empirical research is necessary (Clare & Bottomley, 2001). The research contained in this thesis helps to fill this gap.

Adopting the PTMF as the underpinning theoretical framework of this thesis offers two main strengths. Firstly, it progresses our theoretical understanding of prison violence from singular, stratified levels, to a more holistic picture. Secondly, the thorough exploration of the empirical utility of the PTMF throughout this thesis is beneficial, considering the recency of its

publication and its provisional nature; the considerable interest and debate it has generated; and its particular resonance, reception and uptake within forensic psychology. The publication of a codebook containing all a priori PTMF elements, and the contribution of additional novel elements in understanding prison violence, are particularly noteworthy.

Recognising that no 'one size fits all' in qualitative research, the three original, empirical studies contained within this thesis adopted complimentary and innovative methodologies. The quality of this qualitative research was ensured by employing a number of strategies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to enhance transferability (e.g. detailed descriptions of participants and settings), dependability (e.g. analytic audit trail, triangulation of prisoner and prison officer perspectives), credibility (e.g. external researcher checks), and confirmability (e.g. reflexivity statements). Most importantly, perhaps, the qualitative methodologies utilised throughout this thesis ensured that all findings were appropriately grounded in the experiences of prisoners and prison officers, as key stakeholders of the research. Numerous strategies were implemented to integrate the voices of both groups (e.g. combined participant analyses in study two, integration of narratives from studies three and four), while also representing their unique contributions (e.g. noting which participant group codes originated from in study two, separate narratives in studies three and four). Notably, this thesis paid due attention to the experiences, perspectives and knowledge of prison officers, whose voices have often been neglected within the existing literature.

Limitations

Prisoner participation in this research was appropriately voluntary. Prison management advised that engaging this cohort of prisoners would likely be challenging. Indeed, throughout this research project, multiple prisoners on multiple occasions initially consented to participate in the research, and then subsequently declined to meet on scheduled interview days. Some prisoners were prevented from participating by prison management, due to concerns about their mental health and challenging behaviour at the time. Despite employing a nuanced recruitment strategy (e.g. explanation of the research from a designated psychologist/prison officer, opportunities to ask questions in various formats, opportunities to participate in the research at another time), the resulting prisoner sample was small. Four different prisoners participated in study two of this thesis. Two of these same prisoners subsequently participated in study three of this thesis, in addition to one other prisoner. Additionally, one prisoner, who had also participated in study two, participated twice at two different time-points in study three. In sum, throughout this thesis, eight interviews were conducted with five different prisoners. Though smaller sample

sizes are generally accepted in qualitative research, the small prisoner sample in this research has two important implications.

Firstly, the voice of one prisoner, who participated in the research on three separate occasions, was over-represented. Though this was unavoidable, prisoner voices were balanced as much as possible in study two by only selecting extracts from this participant's second participation in study two when these accounts added something novel to the data. Secondly, the voices of prisoners as a whole ($n = 5$) were significantly reduced in comparison to the voices of prison officers ($n = 26$). This was again unavoidable, with the amount of prisoners eligible for participation across all studies ($n = 19$) significantly smaller than the amount of prison officers eligible for participation across all studies ($n = 202$). Proportionally, however, these figures indicate that 26.33% (5 of 19) of all eligible prisoners participated in the research, compared to 12.87% (26 of 202) of all eligible prison officers. Additionally, as outlined in the strengths section above, efforts were made to ensure that prison officer and prisoner voices were balanced throughout this research.

With regards to the prison officer sample, participation was again, and appropriately, voluntary. It is possible that some prison officers were reluctant to participate in the research. In study two, participants described the 'right' (e.g. experienced, fair, caring) and the 'wrong' (e.g. engaged in misconduct, punitive, antagonistic) staff. None of the prison officers participating in this research overtly displayed characteristics of the 'wrong' staff, but rather described working alongside such colleagues. It is reasonable to assume that the 'wrong' staff may be unwilling to voluntarily participate in a study closely examining their work. Prison officers were recruited to work in the NVRU based their motivation and suitability to do so, and received psychological training which prison officers throughout the rest of the IPS do not. Thus, it is possible that that perspectives shared in this research are representative of the 'right' staff, but not the 'wrong' staff. Without comparison with other prison officer groups, the transferability of these findings to other area of the prison estate is limited.

Throughout conducting this research, close working relationships were formed with those involved in developing and managing the NVRU, who were kept informed of the research as it developed, and who provided some guidance. Indeed, NVRU management figures were not permitted to participate in the research due to risk of bias. This research was also funded by the IPS. NVRU prison officers were assured that this research remained independent, and their decision to participate or not would have no implications for their work in the NVRU. During

interviews, they were re-assured that their experiences were being shared confidentially, and would not be shared with NVRU management. Nonetheless, it is possible that, due to the above factors, some prison officers were deterred from participating and/or sharing openly.

A final limitation of this research pertains to the timeline during which it was conducted. Study two was necessarily conducted prior to the opening of the NVRU, and studies three and four were conducted during the first year of the NVRU's implementation. Throughout interviews, many NVRU prison officers commented on the slow pace of progress in the IPS, particularly for those initiatives which contrast so starkly with how things were done previously. Some prison officers thought that that this research was being conducted too early in the lifespan of the NVRU, and that their responses in five years' time would be more insightful. Indeed, a change in tone was observed during Time 2 NVRU prison officer interviews, where the motivation, enjoyment and optimism of some prison officers seemed to diminish amidst some 'teething issues' in the NVRU. Thus, it is possible that conducting this research at a later stage, when such learning curves might be overcome, could facilitate more focused, insightful narratives. Alternatively, it can be argued that conducting this research early in the lifespan of the NVRU can help facilitate learning in subsequent years, and ultimately ensure evidence-based practice is implemented in the NVRU from the very beginning.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis had dual theoretical and applied foci. It adopted the PTMF as its underpinning theoretical framework, and aimed to explore the empirical utility of the PTMF in a forensic context. Simultaneously, it aimed to examine the changing management of serious violence under the VDP policy in the IPS, through the eyes of two main stakeholders – prisoners and prison officers. Thus, an integrated programme of research was developed to this effect. Study one involved a scoping review of the empirical PTMF evidence-base which has emerged since the initial publication of the PTMF in January 2018. Study two qualitatively explored prisoners' and prison officers' experiences and perspectives of the previous VDP policy, before the development of the NVRU in November 2018. Study three explored NVRU prisoners' understandings of the origins, experiences and expressions of their violent behaviour through the lens of the PTMF, while study four explored NVRU prison officers' understandings of the prisoners with whom they worked. These studies offer both unique contributions and integrated learnings, including the complexity of violence; intertwined cycles of adversity, trauma and violence; and the unique contributions and shared insights of prisoners and prison officers.

Overall, this thesis makes a number of important contributions to theory (e.g. value of holistic understandings), research (e.g. importance of adaptive methodologies), policy (e.g. benefits of psychologically-informed aims) and practice (e.g. value of prison officer perspectives).

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Appendix A

Study 1: Critical Appraisal Forms

Specialist Unit for Review Evidence (SURE) Questions to Assist with the Critical Appraisal of Qualitative Studies

Citation: Gallagher, O., Regan, E. E., & O'Reilly, G. (2023a). 'I've lived and bred violence my whole life': understanding violence in the Irish Prison Service through the lens of the power threat meaning framework. <i>Psychology, Crime & Law</i> . https://doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2023.2228967
Study Design: Observational/Descriptive

	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Does the study address a clearly focused question/hypothesis	✓		
Setting?	✓		
Perspective?	✓		
Intervention or Phenomena	✓		
Comparator/control (if any)?			✓ (N/A)
Evaluation/Exploration?	✓		
2. Is the choice of qualitative method appropriate?	✓		
Is it an exploration of eg behaviour/reasoning/ beliefs)?	✓		
Do the authors discuss how they decided which method to use?	✓		
3. Is the sampling strategy clearly described and justified?	✓		
Is it clear how participants were selected?	✓		
Do the authors explain why they selected these particular participants?	✓		
Is detailed information provided about participant characteristics and about those who chose not to participate?	Detailed information about those who chose to participate, but no information about those who did not		
4. Is the method of data collection well described?	✓		
Was the setting appropriate for data collection?	Conditions for data collection not ideal for conducting research, but necessary/ unchangeable		
Is it clear what methods were used to collect data? Type of method (eg, focus groups, interviews, open	✓		

questionnaire etc.) and tools (eg notes, audio, audio visual recording).			
Is there sufficient detail of the methods used (eg how any topics/questions were generated and whether they were piloted; if observation was used, whether the context described and were observations made in a variety of circumstances?	✓		
Were the methods modified during the study? If YES, is this explained?			✓
Is there triangulation of data (i.e. more than one source of data collection)?			Collection of some descriptive quantitative data, but not triangulated here. Authors note similar study (not yet published) conducted with prison officers, but these studies not triangulated here.
Do the authors report achieving data saturation?			✓
5. Is the relationship between the researcher(s) and participants explored?	✓		
Did the researcher report critically examining/reflecting on their role and any relationship with participants particularly in relation to formulating research questions and collecting data).	✓		
Were any potential power relationships involved (i.e. relationships that could influence in the way in which participants respond)?	Unavoidable power dynamics in prison research		
6. Are ethical issues explicitly discussed?	✓		
Is there sufficient information on how the research was explained to participants?	✓		
Was ethical approval sought?	✓		
Are there any potential confidentiality issues in relation to data collection?		None reported	
7. Is the data analysis/interpretation process described and justified?	✓		
Is it clear how the themes and concepts were identified in the data?	✓		

Was the analysis performed by more than one researcher? are negative/discrepant results taken into account?	Core analysis performed by one researcher, but external researcher engaged in credibility check		
8. Are the findings credible?	✓		
Are there sufficient data to support the findings?	✓		
Are sequences from the original data presented (eg quotations) and were these fairly selected?	✓		
Are the data rich (i.e. are the participants' voices foregrounded)?	✓		
Are the explanations for the results plausible and coherent?	✓		
Are the results of the study compared with those from other studies?	✓		
9. Is any sponsorship/conflict of interest reported?	Funding reported, no conflicts of interest declared		
10. Finally...consider:			
Did the authors identify any limitations?	✓		
Are the conclusions the same in the abstract and the full text?		Non-specific conclusions stated in abstract	
<p>Summary Add comments relating to areas of concern that were avoidable and a statement indicating if the results are reliable and/or useful.</p>			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inclusion of a comparator/control was not applicable to the study. 2. Within the bounds of ethical data collection, some more information about those who did not decide to participate would be useful. 3. Reflection on the impact of prison setting on data collection would be useful. 4. Triangulation, or noting plans of triangulation, of prisoner and prison officer data would be useful. 5. Reflection on the impact of prison power dynamics on data collection would be useful. 6. Reflection on possible confidentiality issues would be useful. 7. Inclusion of a credibility check is beneficial to the study. 8. Statement of more specific conclusions in abstract would be useful. 9. Overall, results are reliable and useful.

Citation: Gallagher, O., Regan, E.E., & O'Reilly, G. (2024). 'Violence is all he knew, and it seemed to work': Using the power threat meaning framework to explore prison officers' understandings of violence in Irish prisons. *Psychology, Crime & Law*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2024.2303485>

Study Design: Observational/Descriptive

	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Does the study address a clearly focused question/hypothesis	✓		
Setting?	✓		
Perspective?	✓		
Intervention or Phenomena	✓		
Comparator/control (if any)?			✓ (N/A)
Evaluation/Exploration?	✓		
2. Is the choice of qualitative method appropriate?	✓		
Is it an exploration of eg behaviour/reasoning/ beliefs)?	✓		
Do the authors discuss how they decided which method to use?	✓		
3. Is the sampling strategy clearly described and justified?	✓		
Is it clear how participants were selected?	✓		
Do the authors explain why they selected these particular participants?	✓		
Is detailed information provided about participant characteristics and about those who chose not to participate?	Detailed information about those who chose to participate, but no information about those who did not		
4. Is the method of data collection well described?	✓		
Was the setting appropriate for data collection?	✓		
Is it clear what methods were used to collect data? Type of method (eg, focus groups, interviews, open questionnaire etc.) and tools (eg notes, audio, audio visual recording).	✓		
Is there sufficient detail of the methods used (eg how any topics/questions were generated and whether they were piloted; if observation was used, whether the context described and were observations made in a variety of circumstances?	✓		
Were the methods modified during the study? If YES, is this explained?			✓
Is there triangulation of data (i.e. more than one source of data collection)?	Authors compare results to similar study with same methodology exploring prisoners perspectives		

Do the authors report achieving data saturation?			✓
5. Is the relationship between the researcher(s) and participants explored?	✓		
Did the researcher report critically examining/reflecting on their role and any relationship with participants particularly in relation to formulating research questions and collecting data).	✓		
Were any potential power relationships involved (i.e. relationships that could influence in the way in which participants respond)?	Effort made to reduce any perceived power imbalances between researcher and prison officers		
6. Are ethical issues explicitly discussed?	✓		
Is there sufficient information on how the research was explained to participants?	✓		
Was ethical approval sought?	✓		
Are there any potential confidentiality issues in relation to data collection?			✓
7. Is the data analysis/interpretation process described and justified?	✓		
Is it clear how the themes and concepts were identified in the data?	✓		
Was the analysis performed by more than one researcher? are negative/discrepant results taken into account?	Core analysis performed by one researcher, but external researcher engaged in credibility check		
8. Are the findings credible?	✓		
Are there sufficient data to support the findings?	✓		
Are sequences from the original data presented (eg quotations) and were these fairly selected?	✓		
Are the data rich (i.e. are the participants' voices foregrounded)?	✓		
Are the explanations for the results plausible and coherent?	✓		
Are the results of the study compared with those from other studies?	✓		
9. Is any sponsorship/conflict of interest reported?	Funding reported, no conflicts of		

	interest declared		
10. Finally...consider:			
Did the authors identify any limitations?	✓		
Are the conclusions the same in the abstract and the full text?		Non-specific conclusions stated in abstract	
<p>Summary Add comments relating to areas of concern that were avoidable and a statement indicating if the results are reliable and/or useful.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inclusion of a comparator/control was not applicable to the study. 2. Within the bounds of ethical data collection, some more information about those who did not decide to participate would be useful. 3. Comparison of prison officer and prisoner perspectives (in previous study) beneficial. 4. Steps to minimise any perceived power imbalances between researcher and prison officers (e.g. assurance of voluntary nature, Time 1 participation not necessitating Time 2 participation, not sharing data with project supervisors or NVRU management) were beneficial. 5. Inclusion of a credibility check is beneficial to the study. 6. Statement of more specific conclusions in abstract would be useful. 7. Overall, results are reliable and useful. 		

Citation: Devenney, R. (2021a). *Exploring perspectives of school refusal in second-level education in Ireland: Study 2 – Education professionals' views on school refusal*. [Doctoral thesis, Maynooth University Ireland]. Maynooth University Research Archive Library. <https://mural.maynoothuniversity.ie/15687/>

Study Design: Observational/Descriptive – Study 2 of thesis

	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Does the study address a clearly focused question/hypothesis	✓		
Setting?	✓		
Perspective?	✓		
Intervention or Phenomena	✓		
Comparator/control (if any)?			✓ (N/A)
Evaluation/Exploration?	✓		
2. Is the choice of qualitative method appropriate?	✓		
Is it an exploration of eg behaviour/reasoning/ beliefs)?	✓		
Do the authors discuss how they decided which method to use?	✓		
3. Is the sampling strategy clearly described and justified?	✓		
Is it clear how participants were selected?	✓		

Do the authors explain why they selected these particular participants?	✓		
Is detailed information provided about participant characteristics and about those who chose not to participate?	Detailed information about those who chose to participate (but age not reported), but not possible to provide information about those who did not		
4. Is the method of data collection well described?	✓		
Was the setting appropriate for data collection?	Conducted via telephone, possibly due to COVID-19 pandemic		
Is it clear what methods were used to collect data? Type of method (eg, focus groups, interviews, open questionnaire etc.) and tools (eg notes, audio, audio visual recording).	✓		
Is there sufficient detail of the methods used (eg how any topics/questions were generated and whether they were piloted; if observation was used, whether the context described and were observations made in a variety of circumstances?)		Insufficient detail of how interview questions were developed	
Were the methods modified during the study? If YES, is this explained?			✓
Is there triangulation of data (i.e. more than one source of data collection)?	Two additional studies in this thesis, following a similar methodology, explore the perspective of parents and young people		
Do the authors report achieving data saturation?			✓
5. Is the relationship between the researcher(s) and participants explored?	✓		
Did the researcher report critically examining/reflecting on their role and any relationship with participants particularly in relation to formulating research questions and collecting data).	✓		
Were any potential power relationships involved (i.e. relationships that could influence in the way in which participants respond)?			✓
6. Are ethical issues explicitly discussed?	✓		

Is there sufficient information on how the research was explained to participants?	✓		
Was ethical approval sought?	✓		
Are there any potential confidentiality issues in relation to data collection?			✓
7. Is the data analysis/interpretation process described and justified?	✓		
Is it clear how the themes and concepts were identified in the data?	✓		
Was the analysis performed by more than one researcher? are negative/discrepant results taken into account?		✓	
8. Are the findings credible?	✓		
Are there sufficient data to support the findings?	✓		
Are sequences from the original data presented (eg quotations) and were these fairly selected?	✓		
Are the data rich (i.e. are the participants' voices foregrounded)?	✓		
Are the explanations for the results plausible and coherent?	✓		
Are the results of the study compared with those from other studies?	✓		
9. Is any sponsorship/conflict of interest reported?			No funding or conflicts of interest declared
10. Finally...consider:			
Did the authors identify any limitations?	✓		
Are the conclusions the same in the abstract and the full text?	✓		
<p>Summary Add comments relating to areas of concern that were avoidable and a statement indicating if the results are reliable and/or useful.</p>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inclusion of a comparator/control was not applicable to the study. 2. It would be useful to include the age (range, mean) of participants to the descriptive demographic data. 3. More detail on how the interview schedule was developed would be beneficial. 4. The exploration of the perspectives of different groups/stakeholders in multiple studies is beneficial. 5. Reflection on the impact of telephone interviews on data collection was a useful inclusion. 6. If this research has received any funding, or there are any conflicts of interest, these should be declared. 7. Overall, results are reliable and useful. 	

Citation: Devenney, R. (2021b). *Exploring perspectives of school refusal in second-level education in Ireland: Study 3 – Parents perspectives of school refusal*. [Doctoral thesis, Maynooth University Ireland]. Maynooth University Research Archive Library. <https://mural.maynoothuniversity.ie/15687/>

Study Design: Observational/Descriptive – Study 3 of thesis

	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Does the study address a clearly focused question/hypothesis	✓		
Setting?	✓		
Perspective?	✓		
Intervention or Phenomena	✓		
Comparator/control (if any)?			✓ (N/A)
Evaluation/Exploration?	✓		
2. Is the choice of qualitative method appropriate?	✓		
Is it an exploration of eg behaviour/reasoning/ beliefs)?	✓		
Do the authors discuss how they decided which method to use?	✓		
3. Is the sampling strategy clearly described and justified?	✓		
Is it clear how participants were selected?	✓		
Do the authors explain why they selected these particular participants?	✓		
Is detailed information provided about participant characteristics and about those who chose not to participate?	Detailed information about those who chose to participate (but age not reported), but not possible to provide information about those who did not		
4. Is the method of data collection well described?	✓		
Was the setting appropriate for data collection?	✓		
Is it clear what methods were used to collect data? Type of method (eg, focus groups, interviews, open questionnaire etc.) and tools (eg notes, audio, audio visual recording).	✓		
Is there sufficient detail of the methods used (eg how any topics/questions were generated and whether they were piloted; if observation was used, whether the context described and were observations made in a variety of circumstances?)		Insufficient detail of how interview questions were developed	
Were the methods modified during the study? If YES, is this explained?			✓

Is there triangulation of data (i.e. more than one source of data collection)?	Two additional studies in this thesis, following a similar methodology, explore the perspective of professionals and young people		
Do the authors report achieving data saturation?			✓
5. Is the relationship between the researcher(s) and participants explored?	✓		
Did the researcher report critically examining/reflecting on their role and any relationship with participants particularly in relation to formulating research questions and collecting data).	✓		
Were any potential power relationships involved (i.e. relationships that could influence in the way in which participants respond)?			✓
6. Are ethical issues explicitly discussed?	✓		
Is there sufficient information on how the research was explained to participants?	✓		
Was ethical approval sought?	✓		
Are there any potential confidentiality issues in relation to data collection?			Potential confidentiality issues considered in detail by author
7. Is the data analysis/interpretation process described and justified?	✓		
Is it clear how the themes and concepts were identified in the data?	✓		
Was the analysis performed by more than one researcher? are negative/discrepant results taken into account?		✓	
8. Are the findings credible?	✓		
Are there sufficient data to support the findings?	✓		
Are sequences from the original data presented (eg quotations) and were these fairly selected?	✓		
Are the data rich (i.e. are the participants' voices foregrounded)?	✓		
Are the explanations for the results plausible and coherent?	✓		
Are the results of the study compared with those from other studies?	✓		

9. Is any sponsorship/conflict of interest reported?			No funding or conflicts of interest declared
10. Finally...consider:			
Did the authors identify any limitations?	✓		
Are the conclusions the same in the abstract and the full text?	✓		
<p>Summary Add comments relating to areas of concern that were avoidable and a statement indicating if the results are reliable and/or useful.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inclusion of a comparator/control was not applicable to the study. 2. It would be useful to include the age (range, mean) of participants to the descriptive demographic data. 3. More detail on how the interview schedule was developed would be beneficial. 4. The exploration of the perspectives of different groups/stakeholders in multiple studies is beneficial. 5. Detailed consideration of potential confidentiality issues was a useful inclusion. 6. If this research has received any funding, or there are any conflicts of interest, these should be declared. 7. Overall, results are reliable and useful. 		

Citation: Devenney, R. (2021c). *Exploring perspectives of school refusal in second-level education in Ireland: Study 4 – Young people's' experiences of school refusal*. [Doctoral thesis, Maynooth University Ireland]. Maynooth University Research Archive Library. <https://mural.maynoothuniversity.ie/15687/>

Study Design: Observational/Descriptive – Study 4 of thesis

	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Does the study address a clearly focused question/hypothesis	✓		
Setting?	✓		
Perspective?	✓		
Intervention or Phenomena	✓		
Comparator/control (if any)?			✓ (N/A)
Evaluation/Exploration?	✓		
2. Is the choice of qualitative method appropriate?	✓		
Is it an exploration of eg behaviour/reasoning/ beliefs)?	✓		
Do the authors discuss how they decided which method to use?	✓		
3. Is the sampling strategy clearly described and justified?	✓		
Is it clear how participants were selected?	✓		
Do the authors explain why they selected these particular participants?	✓		

Is detailed information provided about participant characteristics and about those who chose not to participate?	Detailed information about those who chose to participate, but not possible to provide information about those who did not		
4. Is the method of data collection well described?	✓		
Was the setting appropriate for data collection?	✓		
Is it clear what methods were used to collect data? Type of method (eg, focus groups, interviews, open questionnaire etc.) and tools (eg notes, audio, audio visual recording).	✓		
Is there sufficient detail of the methods used (eg how any topics/questions were generated and whether they were piloted; if observation was used, whether the context described and were observations made in a variety of circumstances?)		Insufficient detail of how the selected arts-based methods (i.e. self-portrait, relational map and timeline) were chosen	
Were the methods modified during the study? If YES, is this explained?			✓
Is there triangulation of data (i.e. more than one source of data collection)?	Two additional studies in this thesis, following a similar methodology, explore the perspective of professionals and parents		
Do the authors report achieving data saturation?			✓
5. Is the relationship between the researcher(s) and participants explored?	✓		
Did the researcher report critically examining/reflecting on their role and any relationship with participants particularly in relation to formulating research questions and collecting data).	✓		
Were any potential power relationships involved (i.e. relationships that could influence in the way in which participants respond)?	Potential power relationships considered in detail by author		

6. Are ethical issues explicitly discussed?	✓		
Is there sufficient information on how the research was explained to participants?	✓		
Was ethical approval sought?	✓		
Are there any potential confidentiality issues in relation to data collection?	Potential confidentiality issues considered in detail by author		
7. Is the data analysis/interpretation process described and justified?	✓		
Is it clear how the themes and concepts were identified in the data?	✓		
Was the analysis performed by more than one researcher? are negative/discrepant results taken into account?		✓	
8. Are the findings credible?	✓		
Are there sufficient data to support the findings?	✓		
Are sequences from the original data presented (eg quotations) and were these fairly selected?	✓		
Are the data rich (i.e. are the participants' voices foregrounded)?	✓		
Are the explanations for the results plausible and coherent?	✓		
Are the results of the study compared with those from other studies?	✓		
9. Is any sponsorship/conflict of interest reported?			No funding or conflicts of interest declared
10. Finally...consider:			
Did the authors identify any limitations?	✓		
Are the conclusions the same in the abstract and the full text?	✓		
Summary Add comments relating to areas of concern that were avoidable and a statement indicating if the results are reliable and/or useful.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inclusion of a comparator/control was not applicable to the study. 2. More detail on how the selected arts-based methods (i.e. self-portrait, relational map, timeline) were chosen would be beneficial. 3. The exploration of the perspectives of different groups/stakeholders in multiple studies is beneficial. 4. Detailed consideration of potential power relationships was a useful inclusion. 5. Detailed consideration of potential confidentiality issues was a useful inclusion. 		

	<p>6. If this research has received any funding, or there are any conflicts of interest, these should be declared.</p> <p>7. Overall, results are reliable and useful.</p>
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Citation: Leeming, D., Lucock, M., Shibazaki, K., Pilkington, N., & Scott, B. (2022). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on those supported in the community with long-term mental health problems: A qualitative analysis of power, threat, meaning and survival. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 58(7), 1297-1309. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10597-021-00932-4>

Study Design: Observational/Descriptive

	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Does the study address a clearly focused question/hypothesis	✓		
Setting?	✓		
Perspective?	✓		
Intervention or Phenomena	✓		
Comparator/control (if any)?			✓ (N/A)
Evaluation/Exploration?	✓		
2. Is the choice of qualitative method appropriate?	✓		
Is it an exploration of eg behaviour/reasoning/ beliefs)?	✓		
Do the authors discuss how they decided which method to use?			✓
3. Is the sampling strategy clearly described and justified?	✓		
Is it clear how participants were selected?	✓		
Do the authors explain why they selected these particular participants?	✓		
Is detailed information provided about participant characteristics and about those who chose not to participate?	Detailed information about those who chose to participate, but no information about those who did not.		
4. Is the method of data collection well described?	✓		
Was the setting appropriate for data collection?	Conducted via telephone, due to COVID-19 pandemic and participants' limited access to technology.		
Is it clear what methods were used to collect data? Type of method (eg, focus groups, interviews, open questionnaire etc.) and tools (eg notes, audio, audio visual recording).	✓		

Is there sufficient detail of the methods used (eg how any topics/questions were generated and whether they were piloted; if observation was used, whether the context described and were observations made in a variety of circumstances?)	✓		
Were the methods modified during the study? If YES, is this explained?			✓
Is there triangulation of data (i.e. more than one source of data collection)?			✓
Do the authors report achieving data saturation?			✓
5. Is the relationship between the researcher(s) and participants explored?			✓
Did the researcher report critically examining/reflecting on their role and any relationship with participants particularly in relation to formulating research questions and collecting data).			✓
Were any potential power relationships involved (i.e. relationships that could influence in the way in which participants respond)?		✓	
6. Are ethical issues explicitly discussed?	✓		
Is there sufficient information on how the research was explained to participants?	✓		
Was ethical approval sought?	✓		
Are there any potential confidentiality issues in relation to data collection?		None reported	
7. Is the data analysis/interpretation process described and justified?	✓		
Is it clear how the themes and concepts were identified in the data?	✓		
Was the analysis performed by more than one researcher? are negative/discrepant results taken into account?	Analysis completed by entire research team		
8. Are the findings credible?	✓		
Are there sufficient data to support the findings?	✓		
Are sequences from the original data presented (eg quotations) and were these fairly selected?	✓		
Are the data rich (i.e. are the participants' voices foregrounded)?	✓		
Are the explanations for the results plausible and coherent?	✓		
Are the results of the study compared with those from other studies?	✓		

9. Is any sponsorship/conflict of interest reported?	✓		
10. Finally...consider:			
Did the authors identify any limitations?	✓		
Are the conclusions the same in the abstract and the full text?	✓		
<p>Summary Add comments relating to areas of concern that were avoidable and a statement indicating if the results are reliable and/or useful.</p>			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inclusion of a comparator/control was not applicable to the study. 2. A brief description of how the authors decided to use this method would be useful. 3. Within the bounds of ethical data collection, some information about those who did not decide to participate would be useful. 4. Reflection on the potential impact of telephone interviews was a beneficial inclusion. 5. Reflection on possible confidentiality issues would be useful. 6. The involvement of the entire research team in data analysis was beneficial. 7. Overall, results are reliable and useful.

<p>Citation: Newton, D., Lucock, M., Armitage, R., Monchuk, L., & Brown, P. (2022). Understanding the mental health impacts of poor quality private-rented housing during the UK's first COVID-19 lockdown. <i>Health & Place</i>, 78. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9393172/</p> <p>Study Design: Observational/Descriptive</p>

	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Does the study address a clearly focused question/hypothesis	✓		
Setting?	✓		
Perspective?	✓		
Intervention or Phenomena	✓		
Comparator/control (if any)?			✓ (N/A)
Evaluation/Exploration?	✓		
2. Is the choice of qualitative method appropriate?	✓		
Is it an exploration of eg behaviour/reasoning/ beliefs)?	✓		
Do the authors discuss how they decided which method to use?			✓
3. Is the sampling strategy clearly described and justified?	✓		
Is it clear how participants were selected?	✓		
Do the authors explain why they selected these particular participants?	✓		
Is detailed information provided about participant characteristics and about those who chose not to participate?	Detailed information about those who chose to participate, but not		

	possible to include information about those who did not		
4. Is the method of data collection well described?	✓		
Was the setting appropriate for data collection?	Conducted via telephone, possibly due to COVID-19 pandemic		
Is it clear what methods were used to collect data? Type of method (eg, focus groups, interviews, open questionnaire etc.) and tools (eg notes, audio, audio visual recording).	✓		
Is there sufficient detail of the methods used (eg how any topics/questions were generated and whether they were piloted; if observation was used, whether the context described and were observations made in a variety of circumstances?)		Details about topics included in interview schedule, but not how these were identified	
Were the methods modified during the study? If YES, is this explained?			✓
Is there triangulation of data (i.e. more than one source of data collection)?			Authors note additional data collection with owner-occupiers, but this data excluded from this paper and not triangulated
Do the authors report achieving data saturation?			✓
5. Is the relationship between the researcher(s) and participants explored?			✓
Did the researcher report critically examining/reflecting on their role and any relationship with participants particularly in relation to formulating research questions and collecting data).			✓
Were any potential power relationships involved (i.e. relationships that could influence in the way in which participants respond)?		✓	
6. Are ethical issues explicitly discussed?	✓		
Is there sufficient information on how the research was explained to participants?	✓		
Was ethical approval sought?	✓		
Are there any potential confidentiality issues in relation to data collection?		None reported	

7. Is the data analysis/interpretation process described and justified?	✓		
Is it clear how the themes and concepts were identified in the data?	✓		
Was the analysis performed by more than one researcher? are negative/discrepant results taken into account?	Analysis completed by entire research team		
8. Are the findings credible?	✓		
Are there sufficient data to support the findings?	✓		
Are sequences from the original data presented (eg quotations) and were these fairly selected?	✓		
Are the data rich (i.e. are the participants' voices foregrounded)?	✓		
Are the explanations for the results plausible and coherent?	✓		
Are the results of the study compared with those from other studies?	✓		
9. Is any sponsorship/conflict of interest reported?			No funding reported or conflicts of interest declared
10. Finally...consider:			
Did the authors identify any limitations?	✓		
Are the conclusions the same in the abstract and the full text?		✓	
<p>Summary Add comments relating to areas of concern that were avoidable and a statement indicating if the results are reliable and/or useful.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inclusion of a comparator/control was not applicable to the study. 2. More detail on how the authors decided to use this methodology would be useful. 3. Reflection on the possible impact of telephone interviews would be beneficial. 4. Triangulation, or noting plans of triangulation, of private renter and owner-occupier data would be useful. 5. Inclusion of a reflexivity statement would be beneficial. 6. Reflection on possible confidentiality issues would be useful. 7. Involvement of entire research team in data analysis is beneficial. 8. If this research is funded, and there are any conflicts of interest, these should be declared. 9. Overall, results are reliable and useful. 		

Citation: Travers, Z. (2022). *A systematic review of burnout in trainee mental health professionals and a qualitative exploration of clinical psychologists' use of the power threat meaning framework: Study 2 – Clinical psychologists experiences of using the power threat meaning framework in UK mental health settings: A thematic analysis* [Doctoral thesis, Cardiff University]. Online Research @ Cardiff. <https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/id/eprint/152405/>

Study Design: Observational/Descriptive – Study 2 of thesis only

	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Does the study address a clearly focused question/hypothesis	✓		
Setting?	✓		
Perspective?	✓		
Intervention or Phenomena	✓		
Comparator/control (if any)?			✓ (N/A)
Evaluation/Exploration?	✓		
2. Is the choice of qualitative method appropriate?	✓		
Is it an exploration of eg behaviour/reasoning/ beliefs)?	✓		
Do the authors discuss how they decided which method to use?	✓		
3. Is the sampling strategy clearly described and justified?	✓		
Is it clear how participants were selected?	✓		
Do the authors explain why they selected these particular participants?	✓		
Is detailed information provided about participant characteristics and about those who chose not to participate?	Detailed information about those who chose to participate, but not possible to provide information about those who did not		
4. Is the method of data collection well described?	✓		
Was the setting appropriate for data collection?	Conducted via video-call technology, possibly due to COVID-19 pandemic		
Is it clear what methods were used to collect data? Type of method (eg, focus groups, interviews, open questionnaire etc.) and tools (eg notes, audio, audio visual recording).	✓		
Is there sufficient detail of the methods used (eg how any topics/questions were generated and whether they were piloted; if observation was used, whether the context described and were observations made in a variety of circumstances?)	✓		

Were the methods modified during the study? If YES, is this explained?			✓
Is there triangulation of data (i.e. more than one source of data collection)?			✓
Do the authors report achieving data saturation?			✓
5. Is the relationship between the researcher(s) and participants explored?	✓		
Did the researcher report critically examining/reflecting on their role and any relationship with participants particularly in relation to formulating research questions and collecting data).	✓		
Were any potential power relationships involved (i.e. relationships that could influence in the way in which participants respond)?			✓
6. Are ethical issues explicitly discussed?	✓		
Is there sufficient information on how the research was explained to participants?	✓		
Was ethical approval sought?	✓		
Are there any potential confidentiality issues in relation to data collection?			✓
7. Is the data analysis/interpretation process described and justified?	✓		
Is it clear how the themes and concepts were identified in the data?	✓		
Was the analysis performed by more than one researcher? are negative/discrepant results taken into account?			Core analysis performed by one researcher, but credibility of analysis enhanced by the ongoing discussion of theme development with supervisors and peer researchers
8. Are the findings credible?	✓		
Are there sufficient data to support the findings?	✓		
Are sequences from the original data presented (eg quotations) and were these fairly selected?	✓		
Are the data rich (i.e. are the participants' voices foregrounded)?	✓		

Are the explanations for the results plausible and coherent?	✓		
Are the results of the study compared with those from other studies?	✓		
9. Is any sponsorship/conflict of interest reported?			No funding or conflicts of interest declared
10. Finally...consider:			
Did the authors identify any limitations?	✓		
Are the conclusions the same in the abstract and the full text?	✓		
Summary <i>Add comments relating to areas of concern that were avoidable and a statement indicating if the results are reliable and/or useful.</i>			1. Inclusion of a comparator/control was not applicable to the study. 2. Reflection on the possible impact of the use of video-call technology/the COVID-19 pandemic on data collection would be useful. 3. If this research has received any funding, or there are any conflicts of interest, these should be declared. 4. Overall, results are reliable and useful.

Citation: Milligan, E. (2022b). *Exploring educational psychologists' views and experiences of the power threat meaning framework: Study 2 – Qualitative study*. [Doctoral thesis, University of Essex]. University of Essex Research Repository. <https://repository.essex.ac.uk/33470/>

Study Design: Observational/Descriptive – Study 2 of thesis

	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Does the study address a clearly focused question/hypothesis	✓		
Setting?	✓		
Perspective?	✓		
Intervention or Phenomena	✓		
Comparator/control (if any)?			✓ (N/A)
Evaluation/Exploration?	✓		
2. Is the choice of qualitative method appropriate?	✓		
Is it an exploration of eg behaviour/reasoning/ beliefs)?	✓		
Do the authors discuss how they decided which method to use?	✓		
3. Is the sampling strategy clearly described and justified?	✓		
Is it clear how participants were selected?	✓		
Do the authors explain why they selected these particular participants?	✓		
Is detailed information provided about participant characteristics and about those who chose not to participate?	Detailed information about those who chose to participate, but not		

	possible to provide information about those who did not		
4. Is the method of data collection well described?	✓		
Was the setting appropriate for data collection?	Conducted via Zoom technology, due to COVID-19 pandemic		
Is it clear what methods were used to collect data? Type of method (eg, focus groups, interviews, open questionnaire etc.) and tools (eg notes, audio, audio visual recording).	✓		
Is there sufficient detail of the methods used (eg how any topics/questions were generated and whether they were piloted; if observation was used, whether the context described and were observations made in a variety of circumstances?)	✓		
Were the methods modified during the study? If YES, is this explained?			✓
Is there triangulation of data (i.e. more than one source of data collection)?			✓
Do the authors report achieving data saturation?			Author argues that concept of data saturation has limited utility
5. Is the relationship between the researcher(s) and participants explored?	✓		
Did the researcher report critically examining/reflecting on their role and any relationship with participants particularly in relation to formulating research questions and collecting data).	Reflexivity discussed in detail by author		
Were any potential power relationships involved (i.e. relationships that could influence in the way in which participants respond)?	Potential power relationships, and steps taken to minimise imbalances, discussed in detail by author		
6. Are ethical issues explicitly discussed?	✓		
Is there sufficient information on how the research was explained to participants?	✓		
Was ethical approval sought?	✓		

Are there any potential confidentiality issues in relation to data collection?			Potential confidentiality issues discussed in detail by author
7. Is the data analysis/interpretation process described and justified?	✓		
Is it clear how the themes and concepts were identified in the data?	✓		
Was the analysis performed by more than one researcher? are negative/discrepant results taken into account?			Core analysis performed by one researcher, but credibility of analysis enhanced by discussion of analysis with supervisors and peer researchers
8. Are the findings credible?	✓		
Are there sufficient data to support the findings?	✓		
Are sequences from the original data presented (eg quotations) and were these fairly selected?	✓		
Are the data rich (i.e. are the participants' voices foregrounded)?	✓		
Are the explanations for the results plausible and coherent?	✓		
Are the results of the study compared with those from other studies?	✓		
9. Is any sponsorship/conflict of interest reported?			No funding or conflicts of interest declared
10. Finally...consider:			
Did the authors identify any limitations?	✓		
Are the conclusions the same in the abstract and the full text?	✓		
<p>Summary Add comments relating to areas of concern that were avoidable and a statement indicating if the results are reliable and/or useful.</p>			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inclusion of a comparator/control was not applicable to the study. 2. Reflection on the possible impact of the use of Zoom technology on data collection was beneficial. 3. Reflexivity, power dynamics and confidentiality were considered in detail by the author. This was a beneficial inclusion. 4. If this research has received any funding, or there are any conflicts of interest, these should be declared. 5. Overall, results are reliable and useful.

Citation: Reis, M., Dinelli, S., & Elias, L. (2019). Surviving prison: Using the Power Threat Meaning Framework to explore the impact of long-term imprisonment. <i>Clinical Psychology Forum</i> , 313, 25-32. https://explore.bps.org.uk/content/bpscpf/1/313/25
Study Design: Observational/Descriptive – Programme evaluation

	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Does the study address a clearly focused question/hypothesis	✓		
Setting?	✓		
Perspective?		Findings based on perspective of LPU prisoners, but limited quotes from participants	
Intervention or Phenomena	✓		
Comparator/control (if any)?			✓ (N/A)
Evaluation/Exploration?	✓		
2. Is the choice of qualitative method appropriate?		✓	
Is it an exploration of eg behaviour/reasoning/ beliefs)?	✓		
Do the authors discuss how they decided which method to use?			Limited methodological information
3. Is the sampling strategy clearly described and justified?	✓		
Is it clear how participants were selected?	✓		
Do the authors explain why they selected these particular participants?	✓		
Is detailed information provided about participant characteristics and about those who chose not to participate?	Detailed information about those who chose to participate, but no information about those who did not		
4. Is the method of data collection well described?	✓		
Was the setting appropriate for data collection?	Conditions for data collection not ideal for conducting research, but necessary/ unchangeable		
Is it clear what methods were used to collect data? Type of method (eg, focus groups, interviews, open questionnaire etc.) and tools (eg notes, audio, audio visual recording).	✓		

Is there sufficient detail of the methods used (eg how any topics/questions were generated and whether they were piloted; if observation was used, whether the context described and were observations made in a variety of circumstances?)	✓		
Were the methods modified during the study? If YES, is this explained?			✓
Is there triangulation of data (i.e. more than one source of data collection)?			✓
Do the authors report achieving data saturation?			✓
5. Is the relationship between the researcher(s) and participants explored?			✓
Did the researcher report critically examining/reflecting on their role and any relationship with participants particularly in relation to formulating research questions and collecting data).			✓
Were any potential power relationships involved (i.e. relationships that could influence in the way in which participants respond)?	Unavoidable power dynamics in prison research		
6. Are ethical issues explicitly discussed?		✓	
Is there sufficient information on how the research was explained to participants?		✓	
Was ethical approval sought?		✓	
Are there any potential confidentiality issues in relation to data collection?		None reported	
7. Is the data analysis/interpretation process described and justified?			✓
Is it clear how the themes and concepts were identified in the data?			Limited analytical information
Was the analysis performed by more than one researcher? are negative/discrepant results taken into account?		Limited analytical information	
8. Are the findings credible?		✓	
Are there sufficient data to support the findings?		Limited analytical information	
Are sequences from the original data presented (eg quotations) and were these fairly selected?		Limited participant quotes	
Are the data rich (i.e. are the participants' voices foregrounded)?		Limited participant quotes	

Are the explanations for the results plausible and coherent?		Limited discussion of findings	
Are the results of the study compared with those from other studies?		Limited discussion of findings	
9. Is any sponsorship/conflict of interest reported?			✓
10. Finally...consider:			
Did the authors identify any limitations?	✓		
Are the conclusions the same in the abstract and the full text?		Limited information in abstract	
<p>Summary Add comments relating to areas of concern that were avoidable and a statement indicating if the results are reliable and/or useful.</p>			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inclusion of a comparator/control was not applicable to the study. 2. Findings based on perspective of LPU prisoners, but limited quotes from participants. 3. More detail about how/why the authors chose this methodology would be useful. 4. Detailed information about those who chose to participate, but no information about those who did not. 5. Reflection on the impact of prison setting on data collection would be useful. 6. Reflection on the impact of prison power dynamics on data collection would be useful. 7. Inclusion of a reflexivity statement would be beneficial. 8. Reflection on possible confidentiality issues would be useful. 9. Limited analytical information. 10. Limited discussion of findings. 11. Limited information in abstract. 12. This paper is necessarily short (9 pages) in line with this periodical's submission limitations (max. 3,500 words). A longer paper with more analytical information, and discussion of findings, would be beneficial. 13. In current form, reliability and usefulness of results are limited.

Citation: Jagasia, K., Saunders, P., & Roufeil, L. (2022) "Now I can see things for what they are": The experiences of adult children of narcissists. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10720537.2022.2048285>

Study Design: Observational/Descriptive

	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Does the study address a clearly focused question/hypothesis	✓		
Setting?	✓		
Perspective?	✓		
Intervention or Phenomena	✓		
Comparator/control (if any)?			✓ (N/A)
Evaluation/Exploration?	✓		
2. Is the choice of qualitative method appropriate?	✓		
Is it an exploration of eg behaviour/reasoning/ beliefs)?	✓		
Do the authors discuss how they decided which method to use?	✓		
3. Is the sampling strategy clearly described and justified?	✓		
Is it clear how participants were selected?	✓		
Do the authors explain why they selected these particular participants?	✓		
Is detailed information provided about participant characteristics and about those who chose not to participate?	Detailed information about those who chose to participate, but not possible to include information about those who did not		
4. Is the method of data collection well described?	✓		
Was the setting appropriate for data collection?	Conducted via Zoom, possibly due to COVID-19 pandemic		
Is it clear what methods were used to collect data? Type of method (eg, focus groups, interviews, open questionnaire etc.) and tools (eg notes, audio, audio visual recording).	✓		
Is there sufficient detail of the methods used (eg how any topics/questions were generated and whether they were piloted; if observation was used, whether the context described and were observations made in a variety of circumstances)?	✓		
Were the methods modified during the study? If YES, is this explained?			✓
Is there triangulation of data (i.e. more than one source of data collection)?			✓

Do the authors report achieving data saturation?			✓
5. Is the relationship between the researcher(s) and participants explored?	✓		
Did the researcher report critically examining/reflecting on their role and any relationship with participants particularly in relation to formulating research questions and collecting data).	Reflexivity/bracketing reported, but limited information on what this entailed		
Were any potential power relationships involved (i.e. relationships that could influence in the way in which participants respond)?			None reported, but member checking processes reported
6. Are ethical issues explicitly discussed?	✓		
Is there sufficient information on how the research was explained to participants?	✓		
Was ethical approval sought?	✓		
Are there any potential confidentiality issues in relation to data collection?		None reported	
7. Is the data analysis/interpretation process described and justified?	✓		
Is it clear how the themes and concepts were identified in the data?	✓		
Was the analysis performed by more than one researcher? are negative/discrepant results taken into account?	Core analysis performed by lead author, member checking processes reported		
8. Are the findings credible?	✓		
Are there sufficient data to support the findings?	✓		
Are sequences from the original data presented (eg quotations) and were these fairly selected?	✓		
Are the data rich (i.e. are the participants' voices foregrounded)?	✓		
Are the explanations for the results plausible and coherent?	✓		
Are the results of the study compared with those from other studies?	✓		
9. Is any sponsorship/conflict of interest reported?		No funding reported, no conflicts of interest declared	
10. Finally...consider:			

Did the authors identify any limitations?	✓		
Are the conclusions the same in the abstract and the full text?	✓		
Summary <i>Add comments relating to areas of concern that were avoidable and a statement indicating if the results are reliable and/or useful.</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inclusion of a comparator/control was not applicable to the study. 2. Interviews possibly conducted via zoom due to COVID-19 pandemic. Reflection on how this may have impacted data collection would be useful. 3. More explicit information about reflexivity/bracketing processes engaged would be beneficial. 4. Reflection on possible confidentiality issues would be useful. 5. Inclusion of member checking processes is beneficial. 6. If this research was funded, it is important to name funding source. 7. Overall, results are reliable and useful. 		

Citation:

Paradiso, J., & Quinlan, E. (2021). Mental health caregiver's experiences from the perspective of the power threat meaning framework. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00221678211041789>

Study Design: Observational/Descriptive

	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Does the study address a clearly focused question/hypothesis	✓		
Setting?	✓		
Perspective?	✓		
Intervention or Phenomena	✓		
Comparator/control (if any)?			✓ (N/A)
Evaluation/Exploration?	✓		
2. Is the choice of qualitative method appropriate?	✓		
Is it an exploration of eg behaviour/reasoning/ beliefs)?	✓		
Do the authors discuss how they decided which method to use?			✓
3. Is the sampling strategy clearly described and justified?	✓		
Is it clear how participants were selected?	✓		
Do the authors explain why they selected these particular participants?	✓		
Is detailed information provided about participant characteristics and about those who chose not to participate?	Detailed information about those who chose to participate, but not possible to include information		

	about those who did not		
4. Is the method of data collection well described?	✓		
Was the setting appropriate for data collection?	Conducted via Zoom or telephone, possibly due to COVID-19 pandemic		
Is it clear what methods were used to collect data? Type of method (eg, focus groups, interviews, open questionnaire etc.) and tools (eg notes, audio, audio visual recording).	✓		
Is there sufficient detail of the methods used (eg how any topics/questions were generated and whether they were piloted; if observation was used, whether the context described and were observations made in a variety of circumstances?	✓		
Were the methods modified during the study? If YES, is this explained?			✓
Is there triangulation of data (i.e. more than one source of data collection)?			✓
Do the authors report achieving data saturation?			✓
5. Is the relationship between the researcher(s) and participants explored?	✓		
Did the researcher report critically examining/reflecting on their role and any relationship with participants particularly in relation to formulating research questions and collecting data).	✓		
Were any potential power relationships involved (i.e. relationships that could influence in the way in which participants respond)?			None reported, but member checking processes reported
6. Are ethical issues explicitly discussed?	✓		
Is there sufficient information on how the research was explained to participants?	✓		
Was ethical approval sought?	✓		
Are there any potential confidentiality issues in relation to data collection?		None reported	
7. Is the data analysis/interpretation process described and justified?	✓		
Is it clear how the themes and concepts were identified in the data?	✓		

Was the analysis performed by more than one researcher? are negative/discrepant results taken into account?	Entire research team involved in analysis, member checking processes implemented		
8. Are the findings credible?	✓		
Are there sufficient data to support the findings?	✓		
Are sequences from the original data presented (eg quotations) and were these fairly selected?	✓		
Are the data rich (i.e. are the participants' voices foregrounded)?	✓		
Are the explanations for the results plausible and coherent?	✓		
Are the results of the study compared with those from other studies?	✓		
9. Is any sponsorship/conflict of interest reported?	Authors note there was no funding for this research, and no conflicts of interest		
10. Finally...consider:			
Did the authors identify any limitations?	✓		
Are the conclusions the same in the abstract and the full text?		✓	
Summary <i>Add comments relating to areas of concern that were avoidable and a statement indicating if the results are reliable and/or useful.</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inclusion of a comparator/control was not applicable to the study. 2. Interviews possibly conducted via zoom/telephone due to COVID-19 pandemic. Reflection on how this may have impacted data collection would be useful. 3. Involvement of entire research team in data analysis, and the inclusion of member checking processes, is beneficial. 4. Reflection on possible confidentiality issues would be useful. 5. Overall, results are reliable and useful. 		

Citation: Barnwell, G., Stroud, L., & Watson, M. (2020). Critical reflections from South Africa: Using the Power Threat Meaning Framework to place climate-related distress in its socio-political context. *Clinical Psychology Forum*, 332, 7-15. <https://explore.bps.org.uk/content/bpscpf/1/332/7>

Study Design: Observational/Descriptive – Case Vignette

	Yes	Can't tell	No
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1. Does the study address a clearly focused question/hypothesis	✓		
Setting?	✓		
Perspective?		Findings based on perspective of community members, but limited quotes from participants	
Intervention or Phenomena	✓		
Comparator/control (if any)?			✓ (N/A)
Evaluation/Exploration?	✓		
2. Is the choice of qualitative method appropriate?		✓	
Is it an exploration of eg behaviour/reasoning/ beliefs)?	✓		
Do the authors discuss how they decided which method to use?			Limited methodological information
3. Is the sampling strategy clearly described and justified?		✓	
Is it clear how participants were selected?		Limited methodological information	
Do the authors explain why they selected these particular participants?		Limited methodological information	
Is detailed information provided about participant characteristics and about those who chose not to participate?		Limited methodological information	
4. Is the method of data collection well described?		✓	
Was the setting appropriate for data collection?		Limited methodological information	
Is it clear what methods were used to collect data? Type of method (eg, focus groups, interviews, open questionnaire etc.) and tools (eg notes, audio, audio visual recording).		Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were used, but no additional/ specific details	
Is there sufficient detail of the methods used (eg how any topics/questions were generated and whether they were piloted; if observation was used, whether the context described and were observations made in a variety of circumstances?		Limited methodological information	
Were the methods modified during the study? If YES, is this explained?		Limited methodological information	
Is there triangulation of data (i.e. more than one source of data collection)?		Limited methodological information	
Do the authors report achieving data saturation?			✓

5. Is the relationship between the researcher(s) and participants explored?			✓
Did the researcher report critically examining/reflecting on their role and any relationship with participants particularly in relation to formulating research questions and collecting data).			✓
Were any potential power relationships involved (i.e. relationships that could influence in the way in which participants respond)?		✓	
6. Are ethical issues explicitly discussed?		✓	
Is there sufficient information on how the research was explained to participants?		Limited methodological information	
Was ethical approval sought?		Limited methodological information	
Are there any potential confidentiality issues in relation to data collection?		Limited methodological information	
7. Is the data analysis/interpretation process described and justified?			✓
Is it clear how the themes and concepts were identified in the data?			Limited analytical information
Was the analysis performed by more than one researcher? are negative/discrepant results taken into account?			Author contribution section notes lead author conducted all analyses
8. Are the findings credible?		✓	
Are there sufficient data to support the findings?		Limited analytical information	
Are sequences from the original data presented (eg quotations) and were these fairly selected?		Limited participant quotes	
Are the data rich (i.e. are the participants' voices foregrounded)?		Limited participant quotes	
Are the explanations for the results plausible and coherent?		Limited discussion of findings	
Are the results of the study compared with those from other studies?		Limited discussion of findings	
9. Is any sponsorship/conflict of interest reported?	Funding reported, no conflicts of interest declared		
10. Finally...consider:			
Did the authors identify any limitations?	✓		
Are the conclusions the same in the abstract and the full text?		Limited information in abstract	

<p>Summary Add comments relating to areas of concern that were avoidable and a statement indicating if the results are reliable and/or useful.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inclusion of a comparator/control was not applicable to the study. 2. Findings based on perspective of community members, but limited quotes from participants. 3. Limited methodological information. 4. Limited analytical information. 5. Limited discussion of findings. 6. Limited information in abstract. 7. This paper is necessarily short (9 pages) in line with this periodical's submission limitations (max. 3,500 words). A longer paper with more methodological and analytical information, and discussion of findings, would be beneficial. 8. In current form, reliability and usefulness of results are limited.
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SURE Questions to Assist with the Critical Appraisal of Randomised Controlled Trials and other Experimental Studies

<p>Citation: Seery, C., Bramham, J., & O'Connor, C. (2021). Effects of a psychiatric diagnosis vs a clinical formulation on lay attitudes to people with psychosis. <i>Psychosis</i>, 13(4), 361-372. https://doi.org/10.1080/17522439.2021.1901302</p>
<p>Study Design: Experimental</p>

	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Does the study address a clearly focused question/hypothesis	✓		
Population/Problem?	✓		
Can you identify the setting & eligibility criteria?		Setting noted, but no eligibility criteria	
Intervention?	✓		
Comparator/control?			✓ (N/A)
Outcomes? Can you identify the primary outcome?	✓		
2. Was the population randomised?	✓		
If YES, were appropriate methods used? Eg: random number tables, opaque envelopes Note: The following methods are not appropriate: alternating participants coin toss, birth dates, record numbers, days of the week	✓		
3. Was allocation to intervention or comparator groups concealed?	✓		

Is it possible for those allocating to know which group they are allocating people to? As above, methods such as alternating participants coin toss, birth dates, record numbers, days of the week will not allow appropriate allocation concealment.	✓		
4. Were participants/investigators blinded to group allocation?	Participants blinded, investigators not involved in random allocation, but aware of group status for purpose of analyses		
If NO, was assessment of outcomes blinded?			
5. Were interventions (and comparisons) well described and appropriate?	✓		
Aside from the intervention, were the groups treated equally?	✓		
Was exposure to intervention and comparison adequate?			✓ (N/A)
Was contamination acceptably low?	✓		
6. Was ethical approval sought and received? Do the authors report this?	✓		
7. Was a trial protocol published?			✓ (N/A)
Was a protocol published in a journal or clinical trial registry before participants were recruited?			
If a protocol is available, are the outcomes reported in the paper listed in the protocol?			
8. Were the groups similar at the start of the trial?	✓		
Are baseline characteristics provided and discussed (eg age, sex, social class, life style etc.)?	✓		
Are there any significant differences that may influence study outcomes?			Potentially confounding variables controlled during analyses
9. Was the sample size sufficient?	✓		
Were there enough participants?	✓		
Was there a power calculation? If YES, for which outcome?			✓
Were there sufficient participants?	✓		
10. Were participants properly accounted for?	✓		
Was follow-up ≥ 80%?			✓ (N/A)
Were patients analysed in the groups to which they were randomised?	✓		
Was an Intention to Treat analysis conducted?			✓ (N/A)

Was the follow-up period long enough?			✓ (N/A)
11. Data analysis			
Are the statistical methods well described?	✓		
How missing data was handled	Incomplete data (n = 55) was excluded from analyses		
Were potential sources of bias (confounding factors) controlled for	✓		
How loss to follow-up was addressed.			✓ (N/A)
12. Results			
Were all important outcomes assessed?	✓		
Were outcome measures reliable (eg objective or subjective measures)?	✓		
Are effect sizes, confidence intervals/standard deviations provided?	Standard deviations provided, but no effect sizes		
Were all outcome measurements complete?	✓		
Are the authors' conclusions adequately supported by the results?		Conclusions supported by statistical significance, but no effect sizes	
13. Is any sponsorship/conflict of interest reported?	No funding source noted, authors declared no conflict of interest		
14. Finally...consider:			
Did the authors identify any limitations?	✓		
Are the conclusions the same in the abstract and the full text?	✓		
Summary <i>Add comments relating to areas of concern that were avoidable and a statement indicating if the results are reliable and/or useful.</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Items relating to RCTs not applicable to current study. 2. Inclusion of participant eligibility criteria would be useful. 3. Inclusion of effect sizes would be beneficial. 4. If this study was funded, this should be declared. 5. Overall, results are reliable/useful. 		

SURE Questions to Assist with the Critical Appraisal of Case Series

Citation: Nikopaschos, F., Burrell, G., Clark, J., & Salgueiro, A. (2023). Trauma-Informed Care on mental health wards: the impact of Power Threat Meaning Framework Team Formulation and Psychological Stabilisation on self-harm and restrictive interventions. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1145100>

Study Design: Retrospective Service Evaluation¹⁴

	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Is the study design clearly stated? Consider if retrospective or prospective	Retrospective		
2. Does the study address a clearly focused question?	✓		
Consider: Population	✓		
Exposure or intervention	✓		
Outcomes	✓		
Are these appropriate?	✓		
3. Are the setting, locations and relevant dates provided?	✓		
Consider: Recruitment period	✓		
Follow-up & data collection	✓		
Single or multiple centre	✓		
4. Are there explicit inclusion/exclusion criteria?	✓		
5. Were patients enrolled consecutively?	Data considered over a consecutive 5 year period		
6. Are participant characteristics provided?	✓		
Consider: Sufficient details	✓		
A baseline table is included	✓		
7. Are outcome measures appropriate? Consider if: the methods of assessment are valid & reliable.	Authors reflect on limitations of quantitative service data collection, and note an upcoming complimentary qualitative study which may provide more/a different insight		
8. Are the statistical methods well described? Consider:	✓		
How missing data were handled		Authors note removal of any staff sick days due to COVID-19 pandemic, but no explicit mention of if/how missing	

¹⁴ No appropriate critical appraisal for retrospective service evaluation designs could be identified. This case series critical appraisal tool was deemed most appropriate for appraising this paper.

		data were handled	
Were potential sources of bias (confounding factors) considered/controlled for			Authors reflect on lack of control of possible confounds/control group as a limitation, and recommend use of controlled designs in future research
9. Is information provided on participant flow?	✓		
Consider if following provided:	✓		
• numbers of participants in the series;			✓ (N/A)
• number lost to follow up;			
• details of missing participant data		✓	
• follow-up time	✓		
10. Are the results well described?	✓		
Consider if			
• effect sizes, confidence intervals/standard deviations are provided;	✓		
• the results support the conclusions. Are they the same in the abstract and the full text?	✓		
11. Is any sponsorship/conflict of interest reported?	No funding disclosed, but authors declared no conflicts of interest		
12. Finally...Did the authors identify any limitations and, if so, are they captured above?	✓		
Summary <i>Add comments relating to areas of concern that were avoidable and a statement indicating if the results are reliable and/or useful.</i>			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Once available, triangulation with the corresponding qualitative data would be beneficial. More explicit discussion of if/how missing data were handled would be useful. If this study was funded, it is important to disclose this. Overall, results are reliable/useful.

SURE Questions to Assist with the Critical Appraisal of Cross-Sectional Studies

Citation: Raskin, J. D., Maynard, D., & Gayle, M. C. (2022). Psychologist attitudes toward DSM-5 and its alternatives. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 53(6), 553. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pro0000480>

Design: Cross-sectional - Survey

	Yes	Can't tell	No
1. Is the study design clearly stated?			✓
2. Does the study address a clearly focused question?	✓		
Population	✓		

Exposure (defined and accurately measured?)			✓ (N/A)
Outcomes	✓		
3. Are the setting, locations and relevant dates provided?	✓		
Recruitment period	✓		
Exposure			✓ (N/A)
Data collection	✓		
4. Were participants fairly selected?	✓		
Eligibility criteria	✓		
Sources & selection of participants	✓		
5. Are participant characteristics provided?	✓		
Sufficient details	✓		
A table is included	✓		
6. Are the measures of exposures & outcomes appropriate?		✓	
Consider if the methods of assessment are valid & reliable.		Insufficient detail of how scales were created for this study	
7. Is there a description of how the study size was arrived at?	✓		
8. Are the statistical methods well described?		✓	
How missing data was handled			✓
Were potential sources of bias (confounding factors) considered/controlled for	Authors examined results by theoretical orientation		
9. Is information provided on participant eligibility?	✓		
Number potentially eligible	✓		
Confirmed eligible	✓		
Entered into study	✓		
10. Are the results well described?	✓		
Effect sizes	✓		
Confidence intervals/standard deviations	✓		
The conclusions are the same in the abstract and the full text.	✓		
11. Is any sponsorship/conflict of interest reported?	No funding source noted, but authors declare no conflict of interest		
12. Finally...Did the authors identify any limitations and, if so, are they captured above?	✓		
Summary <i>Add comments relating to areas of concern that were avoidable and a statement indicating if the results are reliable and/or useful.</i>	1. Information regarding exposures not relevant to this study. 2. More detail about how the survey scales were developed for this study would be useful. 3. If this research has been funded, this should be declared.		

	4. Overall, results are reliable/useful.
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Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) - Version 2018

Citation: Sapsford, H. (2021). *Designing and evaluating a psychological intervention for individuals with multiple complex needs*. [Doctoral thesis, University of Nottingham]. Nottingham eTheses. <http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/66137/>

Study Design: Mixed quantitative & qualitative methods – Single case study

Category of study designs	Methodological quality criteria	Responses			
		Yes	No	Can't tell	Comments
Screening questions (for all types)	S1. Are there clear research questions?	✓			Author states research questions clearly and explicitly.
	S2. Do the collected data allow to address the research questions?	✓			Author reflects on the possible limitations of a single case study design, and their original intention to recruit more participants, which has hindered due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
	<i>Further appraisal may not be feasible or appropriate when the answer is 'No' or 'Can't tell' to one or both screening questions.</i>				
1. Qualitative	1.1. Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	✓			Qualitative data provides an insight into the participant's experience of the intervention, which was not captured in the quantitative data alone.
	1.2. Are the qualitative data collection methods adequate to address the research question?	✓			Change interview allowed for the further development of the intervention, grounded in the participant's experience.
	1.3. Are the findings adequately derived from the data?	✓			Clear links between data and findings provided.
	1.4. Is the interpretation of results sufficiently substantiated by data?	✓			The author's interpretation of results are appropriately grounded in the data.
	1.5. Is there coherence between qualitative data sources, collection, analysis and interpretation?	✓			Good coherence between data sources, collection, analyses and interpretations, which is easily accessible to the reader.
4. Quantitative descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	✓			Author makes good arguments for the utility of single exploratory case

				study designs, whilst also acknowledging their limitations, and highlighting need for more evaluation with more participants in the future.
	4.2. Is the sample representative of the target population?		✓	The single participant met the inclusion criteria of experiencing at least two needs, but it is difficult to conclude if a single participant can be representative of a diverse population.
	4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?	✓		Author provides good rationale for the quantitative measures chosen.
	4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?	✓		Participant completed all measures, so no nonresponse bias evident.
	4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	✓		Author appropriately performs descriptive statistical analyses, acknowledging that inferential statistical testing would be inappropriate for this study design.
5. Mixed methods	5.1. Is there an adequate rationale for using a mixed methods design to address the research question?		✓	The quantitative measures utilised in this study measure specific and relevant constructs, and it is useful to pilot their utility. However, they must be cautiously interpreted, given the study design. Qualitative exploration alone may be more appropriate for this design.
	5.2. Are the different components of the study effectively integrated to answer the research question?	✓		Good integration of quantitative and qualitative components throughout data collection, analysis and interpretation.
	5.3. Are the outputs of the integration of qualitative and quantitative components adequately interpreted?	✓		Good interpretation of integrated quantitative and qualitative components and their outputs, which is easily accessible to the reader.
	5.4. Are divergences and inconsistencies between quantitative and qualitative results adequately addressed?	✓		Author reflects on the lack of change observed across quantitative measures, comparing this to the participant's experience documented through qualitative measures.

	5.5. Do the different components of the study adhere to the quality criteria of each tradition of the methods involved?	✓			Both quantitative and qualitative components are conducted to a high quality.
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Appendix B

PRISMA-ScR Checklist

SECTION	ITEM	PRISMA-ScR CHECKLIST ITEM	REPORTED ON PAGE #
TITLE			
Title	1	Identify the report as a scoping review.	30
ABSTRACT			
Structured summary	2	Provide a structured summary that includes (as applicable): background, objectives, eligibility criteria, sources of evidence, charting methods, results, and conclusions that relate to the review questions and objectives.	30
INTRODUCTION			
Rationale	3	Describe the rationale for the review in the context of what is already known. Explain why the review questions/objectives lend themselves to a scoping review approach.	31-33
Objectives	4	Provide an explicit statement of the questions and objectives being addressed with reference to their key elements (e.g., population or participants, concepts, and context) or other relevant key elements used to conceptualize the review questions and/or objectives.	33
METHODS			
Protocol and registration	5	Indicate whether a review protocol exists; state if and where it can be accessed (e.g., a Web address); and if available, provide registration information, including the registration number.	33
Eligibility criteria	6	Specify characteristics of the sources of evidence used as eligibility criteria (e.g., years considered, language, and publication status), and provide a rationale.	33-34
Information sources*	7	Describe all information sources in the search (e.g., databases with dates of coverage and contact with authors to identify additional sources), as well as the date the most recent search was executed.	34-35
Search	8	Present the full electronic search strategy for at least 1 database, including any limits used, such that it could be repeated.	34-35
Selection of sources of evidence†	9	State the process for selecting sources of evidence (i.e., screening and eligibility) included in the scoping review.	35
Data charting process‡	10	Describe the methods of charting data from the included sources of evidence (e.g., calibrated forms or forms that have been tested by the team before their use, and whether data charting was done independently or in duplicate) and any processes for obtaining and confirming data from investigators.	35-36
Data items	11	List and define all variables for which data were sought and any assumptions and simplifications made.	35-36
Critical appraisal of individual sources of evidence§	12	If done, provide a rationale for conducting a critical appraisal of included sources of evidence; describe the methods used and how this information was used in any data synthesis (if appropriate).	36

SECTION	ITEM	PRISMA-ScR CHECKLIST ITEM	REPORTED ON PAGE #
Synthesis of results	13	Describe the methods of handling and summarizing the data that were charted.	36
RESULTS			
Selection of sources of evidence	14	Give numbers of sources of evidence screened, assessed for eligibility, and included in the review, with reasons for exclusions at each stage, ideally using a flow diagram.	36-37
Characteristics of sources of evidence	15	For each source of evidence, present characteristics for which data were charted and provide the citations.	38; 48-50
Critical appraisal within sources of evidence	16	If done, present data on critical appraisal of included sources of evidence (see item 12).	38-39; 185-225
Results of individual sources of evidence	17	For each included source of evidence, present the relevant data that were charted that relate to the review questions and objectives.	38; 48-54
Synthesis of results	18	Summarize and/or present the charting results as they relate to the review questions and objectives.	39-47
DISCUSSION			
Summary of evidence	19	Summarize the main results (including an overview of concepts, themes, and types of evidence available), link to the review questions and objectives, and consider the relevance to key groups.	54
Limitations	20	Discuss the limitations of the scoping review process.	58
Conclusions	21	Provide a general interpretation of the results with respect to the review questions and objectives, as well as potential implications and/or next steps.	59
FUNDING			
Funding	22	Describe sources of funding for the included sources of evidence, as well as sources of funding for the scoping review. Describe the role of the funders of the scoping review.	59

JBI = Joanna Briggs Institute; PRISMA-ScR = Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews.

* Where *sources of evidence* (see second footnote) are compiled from, such as bibliographic databases, social media platforms, and Web sites.

† A more inclusive/heterogeneous term used to account for the different types of evidence or data sources (e.g., quantitative and/or qualitative research, expert opinion, and policy documents) that may be eligible in a scoping review as opposed to only studies. This is not to be confused with *information sources* (see first footnote).

‡ The frameworks by Arksey and O'Malley (6) and Levac and colleagues (7) and the JBI guidance (4, 5) refer to the process of data extraction in a scoping review as data charting.

§ The process of systematically examining research evidence to assess its validity, results, and relevance before using it to inform a decision. This term is used for items 12 and 19 instead of "risk of bias" (which is more applicable to systematic reviews of interventions) to include and acknowledge the various sources of evidence that may be used in a scoping review (e.g., quantitative and/or qualitative research, expert opinion, and policy document).

From: Tricco AC, Lillie E, Zarin W, O'Brien KK, Colquhoun H, Levac D, et al. PRISMA Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA ScR): Checklist and Explanation. *Ann Intern Med.* 2018;169:467–473. doi: 10.7326/M18-0850.

Appendix C

Study 2: Interview Schedules

Prison Officer Interview Schedules

Introduction

- Interviewer introduces self, and thanks the interviewee for agreeing to schedule an interview
- Interviewer goes through information sheet and consent form
 - If interviewee agrees to participate, they are asked to provide written consent
- Interviewer informs interviewee that the interview and audio recording will start when they are ready

Warm-up Questions

1. Could we start by you telling me how long you have been a Prison Officer?
2. How long you have been:
 - (a) managing prisoners under the VDP policy; **OR**
 - (b) managing prisoners involved in violent or disruptive incidents?

Main Body of Interview

What does the current regime look like?

3. Can you describe the current regime for:
 - (a) managing prisoners classified as 'violently disruptive'; **OR**
 - (b) managing prisoners involved in violent or disruptive incidents?
 - *Prompt (P): Physical characteristics - What does the unit/wing look like?*
 - *P: Social characteristics - What are your interactions with the prisoners like? What are your interactions with the other Prison Officers like? What are your interactions with other prison service staff like?*
4. What does your current role involve?
 - *P: describe a typical shift, what are your main tasks and responsibilities?*
5. How is this regime different to other prison regimes?

Why is the current regime like this?

6. Why do you think some prisoners are:
 - (a) managed under the VDP policy; **OR**
 - (b) managed similarly to those under the VDP policy?
7. What do you think is the purpose of:
 - (a) the VDP policy; **OR**
 - (b) managing violent or disruptive prisoners in this way?
 - *P: What does it aim to do?*
 - *P: What does it mean for staff?*
 - *P: What does it mean for prisoners?*
8. What factors do you think contribute to violent or disruptive incidents in prison?
9. What factors do you think might prevent violent or disruptive incidents in prison?

How is the current regime working?

10. What about the current regime do you think works well?
 - *P: For prisoners?*
 - *P: For staff?*
11. What about the current regime do you think does not work well?
 - *P: For prisoners?*
 - *P: For staff?*
12. What do you enjoy most about your role?
13. What do you not enjoy about your role?
14. What impact does the current regime have on you?
 - *P: In terms of your work life?*
 - *P: In terms of your personal life?*
 - *P: How do you deal with this impact?*

How could the current regime change?

15. What do you think would be the ideal regime for managing prisoners classified as 'violently disruptive' in the prison service?
16. What would be the ideal working conditions for you, in managing violently disruptive prisoners?
 - *P: Is there any further support you would like?*
 - *P: Is there any further training you would like?*
17. What is your understanding of the new 'violently disruptive prisoner unit' to be opened in the Midlands Prison?
 - *P: In what ways do you think it will be different to the current regime?*
 - *P: What do you think is the aim/purpose of the new unit?*

Conclusion

Round-up Questions

18. Are there any final thoughts you would like to share on this topic before we conclude this interview?
 - Interviewer informs interviewee that the interview will conclude and that the audio recording will stop
 - Interviewer thanks interviewee for participating in the interview
 - Interviewer provides the interviewee with the questionnaire pack, and asks them to complete it
 - Interviewer provides interviewee with a de-briefing sheet

Prisoner Interview Schedule

Introduction

- Interviewer introduces self, and thanks the interviewee for agreeing to schedule an interview
- Interviewer goes through information sheet and consent form

- Interviewer informs interviewee that the interview and audio recording will start when they are ready

Warm-up Questions

1. Could we start with me asking how long you have been in prison?
2. How long you have been managed under your current regime?

Main Body of Interview

What does the current regime look like?

3. Can you describe your current regime?
 - *Prompt (P): Physical characteristics - What does the unit/wing look like? What does your cell look like?*
 - *P: Social characteristics - What are your interactions (if any) with other prisoners like? What are your interactions with the prison officers like? What are your interactions with other prison service staff like?*
 - *P: Can you describe a typical day for you?*
4. Is your current regime different to other regimes you have experienced?
 - *If so, how?*

Why is the current regime like this?

5. Why do you think you are managed under your current regime?
6. What do you think is the purpose of your current regime?
 - *P: What does it aim to do?*
 - *P: What are the consequences for you?*
 - *P: What do you think might be the consequences for staff?*
7. What factors do you think contribute to violent or disruptive incidents in prison?
8. What factors do you think might prevent violent or disruptive incidents in prison?

How is the current regime working?

9. What about your current regime do you think works well?
 - *P: For you?*
 - *P: For staff?*
10. What about your current regime do you think does not work well?
 - *P: For you?*
 - *P: For staff?*
11. Is there anything about your current regime you like?
 - *If so, what?*
12. Is there anything about your current regime you do not like?
 - *If so, what?*
13. What impact does the current regime have on you?
 - *P: How do you deal with this impact?*

How could the current regime change?

14. What would be the ideal regime for you in prison?

15. Is there anything you would like further support with?

- *P: What do you think needs to happen for you to be managed under a 'normal' regime? What do you think could help you manage the behaviour which means you are currently being managed under this regime?*

Conclusion

Round-up Questions

16. Are there any final thoughts you would like to share on this topic before we conclude this interview?

- Interviewer informs interviewee that the interview will conclude and that the audio recording will stop
- Interviewer thanks interviewee for participating in the interview
- Interviewer informs interviewee that they will schedule another meeting to fill out the questionnaire within the next week or so
- Interviewer informs interviewee that a member of staff will provide them with a de-brief sheet

Appendix D

Study 2: Ethical Documents

Prison Officer Information Sheet



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“Prisoner and Prison Officer Experiences of Violence and Disruption in Prison”

My name is Orla Gallagher, and I am a PhD student currently completing research with the School of Psychology at University College Dublin (UCD) and the Irish Prison Service (IPS). The research, supervised by Prof. Gary O’ Reilly (UCD) and Dr. Emma Regan (IPS), will examine violent and disruptive prisoner behaviour from prisoners’ and Prison Officers’ perspectives. If you think you may be interested in participating in this research, please first read this information sheet and the attached consent form. If then you would like to participate, please contact the researcher to schedule a meeting (details below).

What is this research about?

A small number of prisoners in the IPS are classified as ‘violently disruptive prisoners’, due to (a) engaging in serious repetitive violent acts in the IPS, (b) posing a significant risk of violence towards others, and (c) posing operational difficulties within the IPS. These prisoners are currently managed under the IPS’s violently disruptive prisoner (VDP) policy. This research aims to capture Prison Officers’ experiences of managing violent and disruptive prisoners under this policy, and also violent and disruptive prisoners’ experiences of being managed this way. Some prisoners who have been involved in violent or disruptive incidents may be managed similarly to those classified under the VDP policy. This research also aims to capture the experiences of Prison Officers managing these prisoners, and the prisoners being managed in this way.

Why am I doing this research?

The way in which violent and disruptive prisoners are managed in the IPS is due to change with the development of a new unit for violent and disruptive prisoners in the Midlands Prison. By capturing how violent and disruptive prisoners are currently managed in the IPS, this research and your experience of this can usefully inform how the unit develops, for example staff training and prisoner interventions. Future research will also examine prisoners’ and Prison Officers’ experiences of the unit. As such, the current and future experiences of prisoners and Prison Officers can be compared.

Why have you been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part in the research having been identified as a Prison Officer who:

1. Is currently involved in managing prisoners under the VDP policy; **OR**
2. Has previously been involved in managing prisoners under the VDP policy; **OR**
3. Is currently involved in the management of other violent or disruptive prisoners in the IPS;
OR
4. Has previously been involved in the management of other violent or disruptive prisoners in the IPS.

How will your data be used?

Your data will be analysed to identify common themes in the experiences of Prison Officers involved in the management of violent and disruptive prisoners. These themes will be described in written and oral reports for the purpose of the researcher's PhD thesis, and to provide regular research updates to the IPS. The researcher may also publish and present these reports in academic journals and conferences.

What will happen if you decide to take part?

If after reading this information sheet and the attached consent form you would like to participate in the research, please contact the researcher. The researcher will then schedule a meeting with you. During the meeting, the researcher will first read through the information sheet and consent form, and ask for your written consent. If this is provided, the researcher will conduct an interview with you, asking you some questions about your role and experience of managing violent and disruptive prisoners in the IPS. Please note that the interview portion of the meeting will be audio-recorded. The researcher will then ask you to fill in a brief questionnaire. The researcher will then provide you with a de-briefing sheet, and the meeting will be complete. The meeting is estimated to take approximately 1 hour 15 minutes.

How will your privacy be protected?

During the meeting you are free to skip any questions that you do not wish to answer. The researcher will protect your identity as much as possible. Any identifiable data (e.g. your signed consent form and audio file) will be securely stored by the researcher in a locked filing cabinet and secure laptop. This identifiable data will be destroyed after 6 years. Only the researcher will have access to identifiable data. Any identifiable information (e.g. names, locations) will be removed from your typed interview transcript. Your questionnaire will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and your transcript on a secure laptop. These will be stored by the researcher for 6 years, before being archived by the IPS. However, confidentiality must be breached if during the meeting you: (a) indicate potential harm to yourself or others, (b) disclose any undocumented criminal activity in which you were the perpetrator or victim, and/or (c) disclose being the victim of serious harm from someone else.

What are the benefits of taking part in this research study?

This research provides an opportunity to share your experience of managing violent and disruptive prisoner behaviour in the IPS, which would inform the development of the new unit. However, your participation is completely voluntary, and no incentives or rewards will be offered for your participation. Similarly, there will be no negative consequences for non-participation in the research.

What are the risks of taking part in this research study?

This research may involve the discussion of some sensitive issues (e.g. recalling incidents of violence) which you may find distressing. Please note you are free to skip any questions you do not wish to answer. The researcher will provide you with a de-briefing sheet at the end of the meeting, which will outline ways of receiving further support should you feel you need it, such as the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), your Staff Support Officers (SSOs) and Inspire Workplaces.

Can you change your mind at any stage and withdraw from the study?

If during the meeting you no longer wish to participate in the research, you are free to terminate the meeting and withdraw your consent. In this case, the researcher will dispose of all data collected thus far. If after the meeting you no longer wish to participate in the research, please contact the researcher. If data analysis has not begun, your consent can be withdrawn and your data disposed of.

How will you find out what happens with this project?

The researcher will provide regular research updates to the IPS, and you can also contact the researcher for this information.

Contact details for further information

For more information about the research or to schedule a meeting, please contact the researcher with the below details:

Researcher:

Orla Gallagher

Email: opgallagher@irishprisons.ie

If you would like further information about the research, please contact the project supervisors with the below details:

UCD Project Supervisor:

Prof. Gary O'Reilly

Email: gary.e.oreilly@ucd.ie

IPS Project Supervisor:

Dr. Emma Regan

Email: exregan@irishprisons.ie

Prisoner Information Sheet



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“Prisoner and Prison Officer Experiences of Violence and Disruption in Prison”

My name is Orla Gallagher, and I am a PhD student doing research at University College Dublin (UCD) and the Irish Prison Service (IPS). The research is supervised by one project supervisor at UCD and one project supervisor at the IPS. The research will look at prisoners’ and Prison Officers’ experiences of violence and disruption in prison. If you think you might be interested in sharing your experience of this, please make sure you understand this information sheet and consent form.

What is this research about?

Sometimes when prisoners are involved in violent or disruptive incidents in prison, they can be removed from ‘normal association’ and managed in a different way, for example under rules 62 or 63, with control and restraint procedures, with restricted regimes, etc. This research aims to capture prisoners’ experiences of being managed this way, and Prison Officers’ experiences of working this way.

Why am I doing this research?

This research is being done to better understand how prisoners involved in violent or disruptive incidents are managed. This is important, as it can help the prison service improve their practices, to better manage and support prisoners who are involved in violent or disruptive incidents.

Why have you been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part in the research because you are currently, or have been previously, managed differently from the main prison population, due to your involvement in a violent or disruptive incident in prison.

How will your data be used?

Your data will be combined with that of other prisoners to describe prisoners’ experiences of being managed this way. These findings will also be included in reports which will be used for the researcher’s PhD thesis and to update the prison service on how the research is going. The researcher may also publish or present the research in academic journals or conferences.

What will happen if you decide to take part?

If you understand this information sheet and the consent form and would like to take part in the research, please sign the consent form and return to the staff member assisting you. The staff member will return your consent form to the researcher. The researcher will then work with prison staff to schedule two meetings with you. Please know that some meetings may take place in screened meeting rooms, and that some prison staff will remain outside the door at all times.

During the first meeting, the researcher will first go through the information sheet and consent form to make sure you understand everything. The researcher will then conduct an interview, and will ask you some questions about your management in prison. Please note that the interview portion of the meeting will be audio-recorded and will take approximately one hour.

A few days after the first meeting, the researcher will meet you again. During this meeting you will fill in a brief questionnaire. This meeting will take approximately 30 minutes. After both meetings the researcher will provide you with a de-briefing sheet, and your involvement in the research will be complete.

The researcher will also be collecting some demographic (e.g. your age, nationality) and offending (e.g. offence history, incidents in prison) information about you from the prison service's official records. This information will be used only to describe the group of participants in the research as a whole.

How will your privacy be protected?

During the meetings you are free to skip any questions that you do not wish to answer. The researcher will protect your identity as much as possible. Any data which could identify you (e.g. your signed consent form and audio file) will be securely stored by the researcher in a locked filing cabinet and secure laptop. Only the researcher will have access to this identifiable data. This identifiable data will be destroyed after 6 years. Any information which might identify you (e.g. names, locations) will also be removed from your typed interview responses and demographic and offending information, which will also be stored by the researcher for 6 years on a secure laptop. Your questionnaires will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. After 6 years this information will be archived by the IPS.

However, please know that if you indicate to the researcher (a) that you may cause harm to yourself or others, (b) that you were the perpetrator or victim of an undocumented crime, and/or (c) that you were the victim of serious harm from someone else, then the researcher will be required to report this information.

What are the benefits of taking part in this research study?

This research is an opportunity for you to share your experience of being managed separately to the main prison population. However, participation is completely voluntary, and you do not have to take part if you do not wish. No incentives or rewards will be offered for taking part in the research. Similarly, there will be no negative consequences if you choose not to take part in the research.

What are the risks of taking part in this research study?

During the interview you may talk about some sensitive issues (e.g. recalling incidents of violence) which you may find distressing. Please know you are free to skip any questions you do not wish to answer. The de-brief sheet provided to you after the meeting will have information on how you can seek further support if you wish, such as talking to the Chaplain, GP or a Psychologist.

Can you change your mind at any stage and withdraw from the study?

If during the meetings you no longer want to take part in the research, please let the researcher know and they will finish the meeting early. In this case, the researcher will dispose of all data collected so far. If after the meeting you no longer wish to participate in the research, please let a member of staff know and they will contact the researcher. If the researcher has not begun analysing the data, you can withdraw your consent and all your data will be disposed of.

How will you find out what happens with this project?

If you would like to receive an update on the research, please let a member of staff know and they will contact the researcher on your behalf. The researcher will provide a staff member with a written research update for you.

How to receive more information

You may have questions before deciding if you would like to take part in the research. If this is the case, please let the staff member assisting you know what you would like to find out. They will ask the researcher on your behalf, and the researcher will provide them with an answer for you.

Prison Officer Consent Form



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“Prisoner and Prison Officer Experiences of Violence and Disruption in Prison”

If you would like to participate in this research, please ensure you read, understand and agree to the following points before providing your written consent:

- I have read the information sheet for the research
- I understand why the research is being conducted
- I understand why I have been invited to participate in the research
- I understand how my data will be used throughout and following the research
- I understand what my participation in the research will involve
- I understand that my identity will be protected as much as possible, by the researcher:
 - securely storing my identifiable data
 - destroying my identifiable data after 6 years
 - removing identifiable information from my interview transcript
 - securely storing my interview transcript for 6 years, and then archiving it with the IPS
 - securely storing my questionnaire for 6 years, and then archiving it with the IPS
- I understand that an audio recorder will be used during the interview
- I understand that if I (a) indicate a risk of harm to myself or others, (b) disclose undocumented criminal activity in which I was the perpetrator or victim, and/or (c) disclose being the victim of serious harm from someone else, then the researcher will breach confidentiality by reporting this information
- I understand that participation in the study is completely voluntary
- I understand that no incentives or rewards will be offered for my participation in the study
- I understand that the research may involve discussing sensitive issues
 - I understand that I am free to skip these questions during the interview if I wish

- I understand that the researcher will provide me with a de-briefing sheet with details of further support should I feel I need it
- I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any point during the meeting
- I understand that I can withdraw from the study following the meeting, if the researcher has not begun data analysis
- I understand how I can find out what happens with this project
- I know how to contact the researcher or project supervisors if I should require further information

If, having read and understood the information sheet and consent form, you would like to participate in the study, please provide your written consent by providing the details below:

Signature:

Print Name:

Date:

Prisoner Consent Form



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“Prisoner and Prison Officer Experiences of Violence and Disruption in Prison”

If you would like to take part in this research, please make sure you understand and agree to the following points before providing your written consent:

- I understand why the research is being done
- I understand why I have been invited to take part in the research
- I understand how my information will be used in the research
- I understand what will happen if I take part in the research
- I understand that my identity will be protected as much as possible, by the researcher:
 - securely storing my consent form and audio file
 - destroying my consent form and audio file after 6 years
 - removing some information (e.g. names, locations) from my typed interview responses
 - securely storing my interview responses for 6 years, and then archiving them with the IPS

- securely storing my questionnaire responses for 6 years, and then archiving them with the IPS
- I understand that the interview will be audio recorded
- I understand that if I indicate that (a) I may cause harm to myself or others, (b) I was the perpetrator or victim of an undocumented crime, and/or (c) I was the victim of serious harm from someone else, the researcher will report this information
- I understand that taking part in the research is completely voluntary
- I understand that no incentives or rewards will be offered for taking part in the research
- I understand that the research may involve discussing sensitive issues
 - I understand that I am free to skip these questions during the interview if I wish
 - I understand that a staff member will provide me with a de-briefing sheet after the interview with details of how to get further support if I wish
- I understand that during the meeting I can let the researcher know if I no longer want to take part in the research
- I understand that after the meeting I can withdraw from the research, if the researcher has not already begun data analysis
- I understand how I can find out what happens with this project
- I know how to get more information about the research

If you understand the information sheet and consent form and would like to participate in the study, please provide your written consent by providing the details below:

Signature:

Print Name:

Date:

Prison Officer De-Briefing Sheet



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“Prisoner and Prison Officer Experiences of Violence and Disruption in Prison”

Thank you for participating in this research. Your responses will help provide a better understanding of how violently disruptive prisoners are currently being managed in the Irish Prison Service (IPS), and how staff experience working this way. They will also be useful in informing the development of the new VDP unit in the Midlands prison.

I would also like to assure you once more of the steps taken in this research to protect your privacy. Please know that the researcher will protect your identity as much as possible, and will securely store your data and destroy and archive as appropriate. However, if you have indicated to the researcher that (a) you may harm yourself or others, (a) you were the perpetrator or victim in any undocumented criminal activity, and/or (c) you were the victim of serious harm from someone else, the researcher will breach confidentiality and disclose this. The researcher will have made you aware of any breaches in confidentiality during the interview.

The interview may have involved the discussion of some sensitive topics. If you feel distressed by anything discussed in the interview, I encourage you to seek further support. Below are some support resources:

The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP):

- The EAP is a “high quality non-judgemental support service caring for all members of the Irish Prison Service and their families in a confidential and professional manner that promotes individual health and wellbeing and organisational effectiveness”.
- There is an electronic EAP noticeboard on the IPS Intranet Realtime Information System (IRIS), accessible from any IPS computer.
- This noticeboard contains a wide range of information and resources about IPS employee wellbeing.
- You can also contact the EAP directly by emailing eapsupport@irishprisons.ie or calling 043 3335316

Staff Support Officers (SSOs)

- SSOs are IPS staff, based locally in each prison, who work on a voluntary, part-time basis in accordance with the EAP.
- They act as the first confidential point of contact for staff experiencing problems with their personal wellbeing (e.g. stress).
- They provide advice and guidance to IPS staff who may be experiencing such problems.
- They can also refer staff to the most appropriate internal or external supports.
- You can self-refer to see a SSO, or concerned others (e.g. family member, colleague) may do this on your behalf.
- To find out who your local SSOs are please see the ‘Staff Support Officers’ list on IRIS.
- For more information on SSOs please see the EAP noticeboard on IRIS.

Inspire Workplaces

- Inspire workplaces is an independent counselling service available to all IPS staff.
- The service provides confidential support for various personal or work related concerns (e.g. stress, bereavement, relationships, finances, etc.).
- IPS staff do not need to be referred by EAP or an SSO and can make direct contact with Inspire Workplaces in numerous ways.
- You can call the designated 24/7 freephone helpline at 1800 817 433.
- You can access extensive online support and resources (e.g. on-line tests, a self-help library and useful reports) at www.inspirewellbeing.org. Please note you may need to enter

login details to access some aspects of the website. The login details for the IPS are available on IRIS.

- IPS staff are also eligible to receive up to 6 free sessions of face-to-face counselling.
- For more information on Inspire Workplaces please see the EAP noticeboard on IRIS.

If you would like to know more about the research (e.g. progress updates), please contact the researcher with the below details:

Researcher:

Orla Gallagher

Email: opgallagher@irishprisons.ie

Alternatively, please contact the project supervisors with the below details:

UCD Project Supervisor:

Prof. Gary O'Reilly

Email: gary.e.oreilly@ucd.ie

IPS Project Supervisor:

Dr. Emma Regan

Email: exregan@irishprisons.ie

Prisoner De-Briefing Sheet



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“Prisoner and Prison Officers Experiences of Violence and Disruption in Prison”

Thank you for taking part in this research. Your responses will help provide a better understanding of how prisoners involved in violent or disruptive incidents are managed. They may also help the prison service improve their practices, to better manage and support prisoners who are involved in violent or disruptive incidents.

I would like to remind you once more of the ways that this research will protect your privacy as much as possible. The researcher will protect your identity as much as possible, and keep all your information safe and destroy and archive as appropriate. However, if you have indicated to the researcher that (a) you may cause harm to yourself or others, (b) you were the perpetrator or victim of any undocumented criminal activity, and/or (c) you were the victim of serious harm from someone else, the researcher will have to report this information. The researcher will have let you know during the interview if they will be reporting this information.

The interview may have involved talking about some sensitive topics (e.g. recalling incidents of violence). If you feel distressed by anything that was discussed in the interview, it is important that you try to get some support. Here are some ways you can get some support:

1. Ask the Class Officer on your landing if you can speak to the Chaplain assigned to your landing.
2. Ask the Class Officer on your landing if you can speak to the prison GP.
3. If you are attending Psychology services, you can get support from your identified Psychologist at your next allocated appointment.
4. If you need to speak to your identified Psychologist urgently, please ask a Class Officer on your landing, who will see if they can get you an urgent appointment.
5. If you are not engaging with Psychology services but think you would like to start speaking to a Psychologist, you can self-refer to the Psychology department by asking the Class Officer on your landing, the Governor during Governor's Parade or any Psychologist you see on your landing.

If you would like to receive an update on the research, please let a member of staff know (e.g. the member of staff who told you about the research, or the Governor) and they will contact the researcher on your behalf. The researcher will provide a staff member with a written research update for you.

Appendix E

Study 3: Interview Schedule

Prisoner Interview Schedule

Opening

- Introduce self
- Thank participant for agreeing to take part
- Preamble to research:
 - The main aim of the NVRU is to reduce the violent behavior of certain prisoners
 - The main aim of this study is to find out what impact the NVRU might have on the violent behavior of prisoners in the unit
 - You have been transferred to the NVRU because of your violent behavior in prison
 - I will be asking you some questions about your violent behavior and your experience in the NVRU
 - Taking part in the research means meeting with me a few different times throughout your time in the NVRU
 - This is so you can tell us if being in the NVRU has had any impact on your violent behavior, and if you think your experience in the NVRU changes throughout your time here
 - I will ask you similar interview questions each time we meet
 - There are no right or wrong answers, and I am not here to judge you in any way - I am just interested in hearing about your experience
- Information sheet and consent form:
 - Check if already read and understood
 - Briefly re-iterate main points
- Opportunity to ask researcher any questions
- Begin recording

Warm-up

1. Why were you transferred to the NVRU?

Origins, maintenance and expression of violent behaviour

- As I said earlier, this study wants to find out what impact being in the NVRU might have on the violent behaviour of prisoners
 - It's important that I first get a good understanding of your violent behaviour, so I'm going to start with some questions about this
2. (a) How would you describe your violent behaviour?
(b) What does violence do for you?
 3. (a) What happened in prison that led to you being violent?
(b) What happened in your life outside prison that led you to being violent?
 4. (a) How have these experiences in prison led you to being violent?
(b) How have these experiences in your life outside prison led you to being violent?
 5. (a) Is there anything in prison that makes your violence worse?

- (b) Is there anything in your life outside prison that makes your violence worse?
- 6. (a) Is there anything in prison that helps you to not be violent?
- 7. (b) Is there anything in your life outside prison that helps you to not be violent?
- 8. What do these experiences in prison mean to you? / How do you make sense of these experiences in prison?
 - P: What do you think about these experiences
 - P: How do you feel about these experiences
- 9. What do these experiences in your life outside prison mean to you? / How do you make sense of these experiences in your life outside of prison?
 - P: What do you think about these experiences
 - P: How do you feel about these experiences

Reducing violent behaviour and increasing pro-social behaviour

- I now have a good understanding of how your violent behaviour has developed, within and outside of prison
 - Since the aim of the NVRU is to reduce violent behaviour, I'm interested to hear what you think about changing your violent behaviour
 - We talked earlier about what your violent behaviour does for you
10. What else would do this for you?
 11. What would help you to do this?
 12. What would make it difficult for you to do this?

Experience in the NVRU

- I'd now like to hear a little bit about your experience so far in the NVRU
13. What do you think/how do you feel about being in the NVRU?
 14. How would you describe the NVRU?
 - P: Environment
 - P: Relationships
 15. Has being in the NVRU had any impact on you?
 - P: Violent behaviour
 - P: Psychological wellbeing
 16. What are your hopes for the rest of your time in the NVRU?

Closing

17. Is there anything else you would like to say before we end the interview?
- End recording
 - Thank participant
 - Ask participant how they found the interview
 - Opportunity to ask the researcher any questions
 - Issue de-briefing sheet and re-iterate main points
 - Remind participant that there will be a follow-up interview, and the researcher will contact them about this in due course

Appendix F

Studies 3 & 4: PTMF Codebook for Deductive Thematic Analysis

Theme 1: Power

1. Sub-theme 1: biological/embodied power
2. Sub-theme 2: coercive power/power by force
3. Sub-theme 3: legal power
4. Sub-theme 4: economic/material power
5. Sub-theme 5: social/cultural capital
6. Sub-theme 6: interpersonal power
7. Sub- theme 7: ideological power

Theme 2: Threat

1. Sub-theme 1: relational
2. Sub-theme 2: emotional
3. Sub-theme 3: social/community
4. Sub-theme 4: economic/material
5. Sub-theme 5: environmental
6. Sub-theme 6: bodily
7. Sub-theme 7: knowledge/meaning construction
8. Sub-theme 8: identity
9. Sub-theme 9: value base

Theme 3: Meaning¹⁵

Codes

1. Unsafe, afraid, attacked
2. Abandoned, rejected
3. Helpless, powerless
4. Hopeless
5. Invaded
6. Controlled
7. Emotionally overwhelmed
8. Emotionally empty
9. Bad, unworthy
10. Isolated, lonely
11. Excluded, alienated
12. Trapped
13. Defeated
14. Failed, inferior
15. Guilty, blameworthy, responsible
16. Betrayed

¹⁵ No sub-themes of meaning were identified a priori in the PTMF, only codes. As such, sub-themes were created at a later stage of analysis.

17. Shamed, humiliated
18. Sense of injustice/unfairness
19. Sense of meaninglessness
20. Contaminated, evil
21. Alien, dangerous
22. Different, abnormal

Theme 4: Threat Response¹⁶

Codes

1. Preparing to 'fight'/attack
2. Preparing to 'flee'
3. Freeze response
4. Hypervigilance, startle responses, insomnia
5. Panic, phobias
6. Fragmented memory encoding
7. Memory suppression (amnesia)
8. Hearing voices
9. Dissociating
10. Depersonalisation, derealisation
11. Flashbacks
12. Nightmares
13. NEAD (non-epileptic attack disorder)
14. Emotional numbing, flattening, indifference
15. Bodily numbing
16. Submitting, appeasing
17. Giving up, 'learned helplessness', low mood
18. Protesting, weeping, clinging
19. Suspicious thoughts
20. Emotional regression, withdrawal
21. 'high' or extreme moods, rapid mood changes, 'emotional dysregulation'
22. Holding unusual beliefs
23. Having unusual visual, olfactory, tactile sensations
24. Physical sensations, tension, dizziness, physical pain, tinnitus, sensations of heat or cold, exhaustion, skin irritation, gastrointestinal problems
25. Emotional defences, denying what has happened, idealising people
26. Intellectualisation (avoiding feelings and bodily sensations)
27. Attention/concentration problems
28. Confused/unstable self-image/sense of self
29. Confused/confusing speech and communication
30. Self-injury of various types
31. Self-neglect
32. Dieting, self-starvation
33. Bingeing, over-eating
34. Self-silencing

¹⁶ No sub-themes of threat responses were identified a priori in the PTMF, only codes. As such, sub-themes were created at a later stage of analysis.

35. Self-blame and self-punishment
36. Body hatred
37. Compulsive thoughts
38. Carrying out rituals and other 'safety behaviours'
39. Collecting, hoarding
40. Avoidance of/compulsive use of sexuality
41. Impulsivity
42. Anger, rage
43. Aggression, violence
44. Suicidal thinking and actions
45. Distrust of others
46. Feeling entitled
47. Reduced empathy
48. Distrust
49. Striving, perfectionism, 'drive' response
50. Using drugs, alcohol, smoking
51. Over-working, over-exercising
52. Giving up hope/loss of faith in the world
53. Relational strategies: rejection and maintaining emotional distance, seeking care and attachments, taking on caring roles, isolation/avoidance of others, dominance, seeking control over others
54. Ruminating, reflecting, anticipating, imagining, interpreting, meaning-making

Theme 5: Function of Threat Response

1. Sub-theme 1: regulating overwhelming feelings
2. Sub-theme 2: protection from physical danger
3. Sub-theme 3: maintaining a sense of control
4. Sub-theme 4: seeking attachments
5. Sub-theme 5: preserving identity, self-image and self-esteem
6. Sub-theme 6: preserving a place within the social group
7. Sub-theme 7: meeting emotional needs/self-soothing
8. Sub-theme 8: communication about distress/elicited distress
9. Sub-theme 9: finding meaning and purpose

Theme 6: Moderating Factors

Sub-Theme 1: Exacerbating Factors

1. Early developmental stage
2. Lack of person to support/confide in/protect
3. Multiple kinds of danger
4. Long-lasting/repeated danger
5. Severity of the danger
6. Escapability or 'trappedness'
7. Lack of predictability and control over the threat
8. Physical invasiveness of the threat
9. Closeness in time/co-occurrence to other threats
10. Threat to sense of self
11. Interpersonal and intentional threat

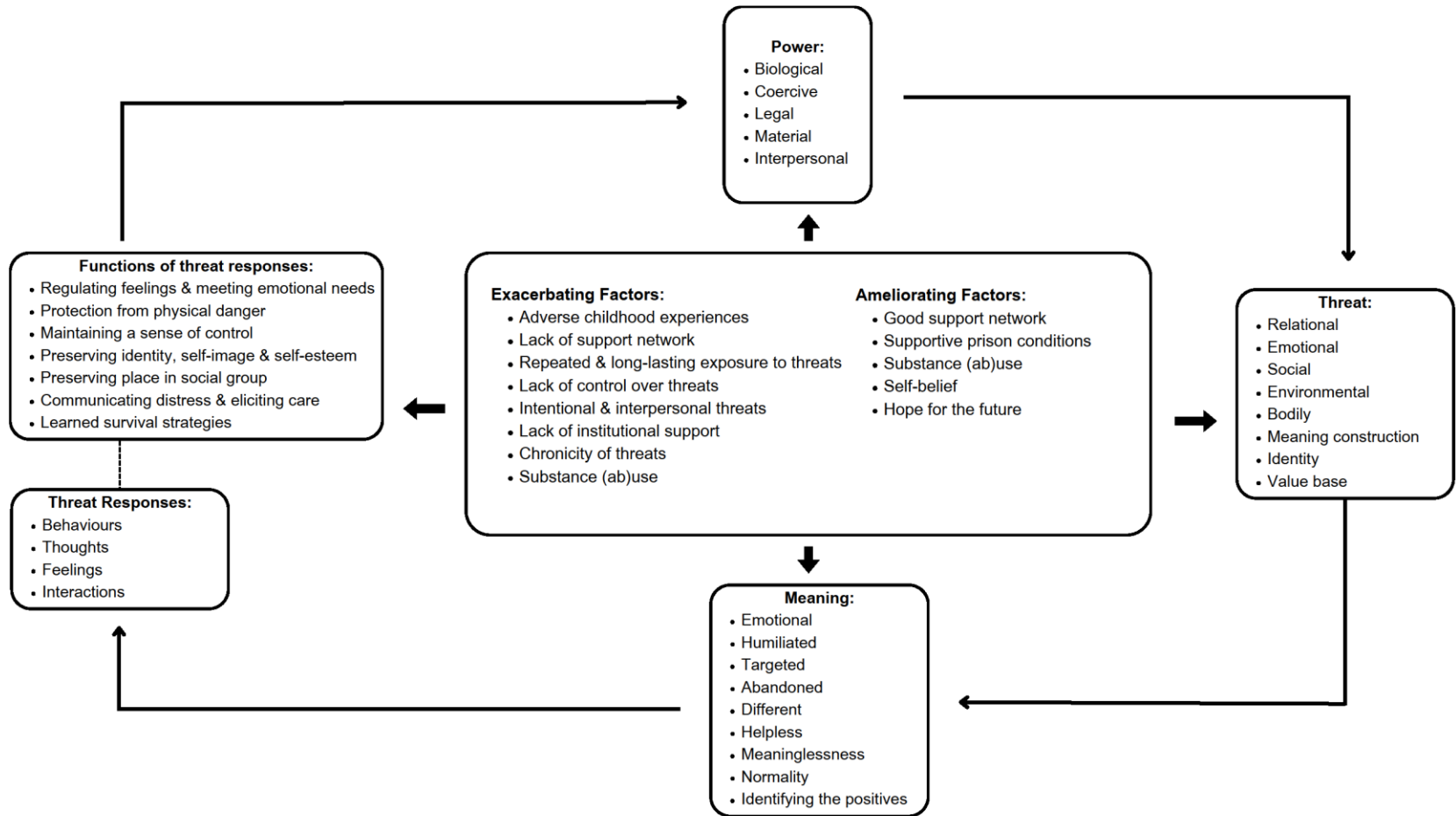
12. Sense of betrayal by individual or institutions
13. Perceived social threat
14. Greater number of perpetrators
15. Threat that occurs within an emotional or attachment relationship
16. Chronicity of background threat, either environmental or personal

Sub-Theme 2: Ameliorating Factors

1. Later developmental stage
2. Having someone to support/confide in/protect
3. Singular/less types of danger
4. Short-lasting/singular occurrences danger
5. Less severe danger
6. Ability to escape from danger/'get out'
7. Ability to predict/control the threat
8. Threat is not/less physically invasive
9. Threats do not occur close together/ at same time
10. No threat to sense of self
11. Not interpersonal or intentional threat
12. No betrayal/being supported by individuals/institutions
13. No social threat
14. Lesser number/singular perpetrator
15. No threat within an emotional/attachment relationship
16. Threat is not chronic, environmentally or personal

Appendix G

Figure 2: Thematic Map of Prisoners' Qualitative Results from Study 3



Appendix H

Study 3: Ethical Documents

Prisoner Information Sheet



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“Addressing Violence and Disruption in the Irish Prison Service: The Experiences of Prisoners and Prison Officers in the National Violence Reduction Unit”

My name is Orla Gallagher, and I am a PhD student doing research at University College Dublin (UCD) and the Irish Prison Service (IPS). The research is supervised by one project supervisor at UCD and one project supervisor at the IPS. The research will look at the experiences of prisoners’ and Prison Officers’ in the National Violence Reduction Unit (NVRU). If you think you might be interested in sharing your experience of this, please make sure you understand this information sheet and consent form.

What is this research about?

The IPS recently developed the NVRU as a new way of addressing violence and disruption in the service. This research aims to explore the experiences of both prisoners and Prison Officers in the NVRU.

Why am I doing this research?

As it is a new development in the IPS, it is important that we understand the experiences of both prisoners and Prison Officers in the NVRU. By exploring these experiences, we can better understand what is working well in the NVRU, and what needs to be improved. This will help the NVRU further develop over the next few years.

Why have you been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part in the research because you are currently in the NVRU.

How will your data be used?

Your data will be combined with that of other prisoners to describe prisoners’ experiences of being in the NVRU. These findings will also be included in reports which will be used for the researcher’s PhD thesis and to update the prison service on how the research is going. The researcher may also publish or present the research in academic journals or conferences.

What will happen if you decide to take part?

You will be asked to take part in the research at various different points during your time in the NVRU. The study is interested in tracking your experience in the NVRU over time, so we would be grateful if you would consider taking part at all time-points. When you are first contacted about the research, you will be asked to provide your written consent to take part. This includes your consent to be contacted to take part in the research again later on. This information sheet, and the accompanying consent form, refer the first time you are being asked to take part in the study.

If you understand this information sheet and the consent form and would like to take part in the research, please sign the consent form and return to the staff member assisting you. The staff member will return your consent form to the researcher. The researcher will then work with prison staff to schedule two meetings with you. Please know that some meetings may take place in screened meeting rooms, and that some prison staff will remain outside the door at all times.

During the first meeting, the researcher will conduct an interview, asking you some questions about your behaviour and experience in the NVRU. The interview will be audio-recorded and will take approximately one hour. A few days after the first meeting, the researcher will meet you again. During this meeting you will fill in a brief questionnaire. This meeting will take approximately 30 minutes. After both meetings, the researcher will provide you with a de-brief sheet, and your involvement in the research will be complete.

With your consent, the researcher will also be collecting some demographic (e.g. your age, nationality) and offending (e.g. offence history, incidents in prison) information about you from the prison service's official records. This information will be used for the purpose of this research only.

How will your privacy be protected?

During the meetings you are free to skip any questions that you do not wish to answer. The researcher will protect your identity as much as possible. Any data which could identify you (e.g. your audio file and signed consent form) will be securely stored by the researcher in a locked filing cabinet and secure laptop. Only the researcher will have access to this identifiable data. Your audio file will be deleted once the researcher's thesis has been examined and PhD awarded, and your signed consent form will be destroyed one year after the study has been published. Any information which might identify you (e.g. names, locations) will also be removed from your typed interview responses and demographic and offending information. This information will be stored by the researcher on a secure laptop, until one year after the study is published. Your questionnaires will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, until one year after the study is published. After this, this data will be archived by the IPS indefinitely. This information will only be used to contribute to future research in the area, being conducted by one or more of the researchers involved with the project.

However, please know that if you indicate to the researcher (a) that you may cause harm to yourself or others, (b) that you were the perpetrator or victim of an undocumented crime, and/or (c) that you were the victim of serious harm from someone else, then the researcher will be required to report this information.

What are the benefits of taking part in this research study?

This research is an opportunity for you to share your experience of being in the NVRU. However, participation is completely voluntary, and you do not have to take part if you do not wish. No incentives or rewards will be offered for taking part in the research. Similarly, there will be no negative consequences if you choose not to take part in the research.

What are the risks of taking part in this research study?

During the interview you may talk about some sensitive issues (e.g. recalling incidents of violence) which you may find distressing. Please know you are free to skip any questions you do not wish to answer. The de-brief sheet provided to you after the meeting will have information on how you can seek further support if you wish, such as talking to your Psychologist or Personal Officer, a Chaplain, or a GP.

Can you change your mind at any stage and withdraw from the study?

If you wish, you can withdraw your consent to take part in the study. If while meeting the researcher you no longer want to take part in the research, please let the researcher know and they will finish the meeting early. If after the meeting you no longer wish to participate in the research, please let a member of staff know and they will contact the researcher. This will be possible up until your audio file has been deleted. You can also request to access and/or remove any of your data from the study, up until your audio file has been deleted.

How will you find out what happens with this project?

If you would like to receive an update on the research, please let a member of staff know and they will contact the researcher on your behalf. The researcher will provide a staff member with a written research update for you. Where possible, the researcher will aim to share the final results of the study once they are ready.

How to receive more information

You may have questions before deciding if you would like to take part in the research.

If this is the case, please let the staff member assisting you know what you would like to find out. They will ask the researcher on your behalf, and the researcher will provide them with an answer for you.

If you would like to write a letter to the researcher with your questions, please give this to the member of staff assisting you and they will pass it on to the researcher. The researcher will provide a letter with some answers to your questions in return.

You can also meet with the researcher more informally to discuss your questions, before deciding if you would like to take part in the research. If you would like to do this, please let the member of staff assisting you know, and they will liaise with the researcher to arrange a meeting with you.

Prisoner Consent Form



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“Addressing Violence and Disruption in the Irish Prison Service: The Experiences of Prisoners and Prison Officers in the National Violence Reduction Unit”

If you would like to take part in this research, please make sure you understand and agree to the following points before providing your written consent:

- I understand why the research is being done
- I understand why I have been invited to take part in the research
- I understand how my information will be used in the research
- I understand what will happen if I take part in the research
- I understand that taking part in the research involves meeting with the researcher at various different time-points, and that I will be contacted about the research in advance of each time-point
- I understand that the research will also access some demographic and offending information from my official prison service record, for the purpose of this research only
- I understand that my identity will be protected as much as possible, by the researcher:
 - securely storing my audio file and consent form
 - deleting my audio file once the researcher's PhD has been examined and awarded
 - destroying my consent form one year after the study has been published
 - removing some information (e.g. names, locations) from my typed interview responses
 - securely storing my typed interview responses and questionnaires up until one year after the study has been published, and after this point they will be archived indefinitely by the IPS to contribute to future research being conducted on this topic, by one or more of the researchers involved with this project
- I understand that the interview will be audio recorded
- I understand that if I indicate that (a) I may cause harm to myself or others, (b) I was the perpetrator or victim of an undocumented crime, and/or (c) I was the victim of serious harm from someone else, the researcher will report this information
- I understand that taking part in the research is completely voluntary
- I understand that no incentives or rewards will be offered for taking part in the research
- I understand that the research may involve discussing sensitive issues
 - I understand that I am free to skip these questions during the interview if I wish
 - I understand that a staff member will provide me with a de-briefing sheet after the interview with details of how to get further support if I wish

- I understand that during the meeting I can let the researcher know if I no longer consent to take part in the research
- I understand that after the meeting I can withdraw my consent to take part in the research, up until my audio file has been deleted
- I understand that I can request to access or remove any of my data, up until my audio file has been deleted
- I understand how I can find out what happens with this project
- I know how to get more information about the research

If you understand the information sheet and consent form and would like to participate in the study, please provide your written consent by providing the details below:

Signature:

Print Name:

Date:

Prisoner De-Briefing Sheet



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“Addressing Violence and Disruption in the Irish Prison Service: The Experiences of Prisoners and Prison Officers in the National Violence Reduction Unit”

Thank you for taking part in this research. Your responses will help us better understand how violent and disruptive behaviour is addressed in the National Violence Reduction Unit (NVRU), and the experiences of prisoners in the NVRU. This is important, so that we can identify what seems to be working well in the NVRU, and also what needs to be improved. As explained to you previously, taking part in this research involves meeting with the researcher at various times. In due course, you will be invited to take part in the research for the second time.

I would like to remind you once more of the ways that this research will protect your privacy. Please know that the researcher will protect your identity as much as possible, and keep all your information safe and destroy and archive as appropriate. However, if you have indicated to the researcher that (a) you may cause harm to yourself or others, (b) you were the perpetrator or victim of any undocumented criminal activity, and/or (c) you were the victim of serious harm from someone else, the researcher will have to report this information. The researcher will have let you know during the interview if they will be reporting this information.

The interview may have involved talking about some sensitive topics (e.g. recalling incidents of violence). If you feel distressed by anything that was discussed in the interview, it is important that you try to get some support. Here are some ways you can get some support:

1. If you feel that you need immediate and urgent support after taking part in this research, speak to an available member of NVRU staff. One of your Personal Officers will be on duty.
2. You can also get support from your Psychologist or Personal Officer at your next allocated appointment.
 - If you need to speak to your Psychologist or Personal Officer urgently, please ask the Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) who will see if they can get you an urgent appointment.
3. If you would like to speak to a Chaplain, ask the ACO to arrange an appointment.
4. If you would like to speak to a GP, ask the ACO to arrange an appointment.

If you would like to receive an update on the research, please let a member of staff know (e.g. your Personal Officer), and they will contact the researcher on your behalf. The researcher will provide a staff member with a written research update for you.

Safety Protocols

The following safety protocols outline how various risky situations will be prevented, and appropriately recognised and managed should they arise. They have been informed by the researcher's previous experience working with forensic populations, the researcher's training in risk reduction and management (e.g. breakaway techniques, personal protection training, self-harm and suicide awareness training), guidance from the project supervisors, guidance from IPS staff and the UCD Home Visits/Face-to-Face Interview Guidelines for Staff/Students.

Protocol 1: Risk of Harm to Researcher

The following measures will be put in place in order to **prevent** risk of harm to the researcher:

- The researcher will check-in with the project supervisors via e-mail before and after each interview with a prisoner takes place
- Project supervisors and some IPS staff will be aware of the time and location of interviews
- The researcher has previously received training in breakaway techniques from the NHS and personal protection training from the IPS
- For interviews with prisoners:
 - At least two Prison Officers will remain outside the interview room for the duration of the interview
 - Based on advice from prison management, interviews may take place in a screened interview room which would separate the researcher and prisoner with a Perspex screen
 - Where possible, the researcher will wear a personal alarm and/or the interview room will have a panic alarm on the wall

Protocol 1(a): Minor Risk of Harm to Researcher

The following signs will be taken to indicate a **minor** risk of harm to the researcher:

- Insulting language
- Threatening language
- Increased tempo or volume of voice
- Tense facial expression (e.g. narrowing of eyes, clenched jaw)
- Tense body language (e.g. clenched fists)

If the participant exhibits the above signs, the following steps will be taken:

1. The researcher will attempt to de-escalate the situation, for example by using calming and reassuring language and body language
2. The researcher will offer the participant a short break if they would like to take some time to calm down
3. If the risk of harm is reduced (i.e. the above signs are no longer present), the researcher will ask if the participant would like to continue
4. If the risk of harm is thought to increase (i.e. the above signs persist or escalate), the researcher will follow protocol 1(b)

Protocol 1(b): Moderate or Severe Risk of Harm to Researcher

The following signs will be taken to indicate a **moderate or severe** risk of harm to the researcher:

- Verbal threats to harm the researcher
- Physical attempts to harm the researcher

If the participant exhibits the above signs, the following steps will be taken:

1. The researcher will terminate the interview
2. The researcher will call for assistance from prison staff by using an alarm or raising their voice for help
3. If possible, the researcher will exit the interview room
4. In the unlikely event a participant could physically attack the researcher, the researcher will self-defend as appropriate, using trained techniques and reasonable force
5. Following the incident, the researcher will inform the Prison Governor and the project supervisors of the incident
6. Following the incident, the researcher will complete the necessary incident reporting procedures for both the IPS and UCD
7. Following the incident, the researcher will discuss the incident during supervision, and seek further support if needed

Protocol 2: Risk of Harm to Others

The following signs will be taken to indicate a risk of harm to others:

- Expression of own desire/intent/plans to harm a named/alluded to individual within or outside of the IPS
- Expression of desire/intent/plans to enlist the assistance of someone else to harm a named/alluded to individual within or outside the IPS
- Disclosure of someone else's desire/intent/plans to harm a named/alluded to individual within or outside the IPS

If the participant exhibits the above signs, the following steps will be taken:

1. The researcher will inform the participant of the necessity of breaching confidentiality, as previously consented to
2. If necessary or most appropriate, the researcher will terminate the interview
 - Following the interview, the researcher will report the disclosed information to the Chief Officer in charge and the Prison Governor
 - If the disclosed information indicates immediate risk (e.g. likely to be carried out by someone else at that moment in time), the researcher will inform the closest member of prison staff (e.g. the Prison Officers outside the interview room door)
 - If the disclosed information includes specific details about harm to others (e.g. victim, means to be used, time, location), this information will be emphasised
3. The relevant IPS staff will take the necessary steps to manage the risk
4. The researcher may re-schedule the interview for another time, if deemed appropriate in consultation with supervisors and IPS management

Protocol 3: Risk of Harm to Self

The following signs will be taken to indicate a risk of harm to self:

- Expression of desire to self-harm or commit suicide
- Threatening to self-harm or commit suicide
- Disclosing plans to self-harm or commit suicide

If the participant exhibits the above signs, the following steps will be taken:

1. The researcher will inform the participant of the necessity of breaching confidentiality, as previously consented
 - The participant will be assured that this is solely for the purpose of their own safety and wellbeing
 - The participant will be encouraged to seek the appropriate support (e.g. self-refer to the Psychology Department, Chaplaincy or Healthcare Team)
2. If necessary or most appropriate, the researcher will terminate the interview
 - The participant will be assured that this is solely for the purpose of their own immediate safety and wellbeing, and that the interview can be re-scheduled if they wish
3. Following the interview, the researcher will report the disclosed information to the Chief Officer in charge and the Prison Governor
 - If the disclosed information indicates immediate risk (e.g. likely to be carried out during or immediately after the interview), the researcher will inform the closest member of prison staff (e.g. the Prison Officers outside the interview room door)
 - If the disclosed information includes specific details about harm to self (e.g. means to be used, time, location), this information will be emphasised
4. The relevant IPS staff will take the necessary steps to manage the risk
5. The researcher may re-schedule the interview for another time, if deemed appropriate in consultation with supervisors and IPS management

Appendix I

Study 4: Interview Schedule

Prison Officer Interview Schedule

Opening

- Introduce self
- Thank participant for agreeing to take part
- Preamble to research:
 - For staff, the main aim of the NVRU is to increase your understanding of and ability to work with violent prisoners
 - The main aim of this study is to explore the experiences of Prison Officers working in the NVRU
 - I will be asking you some questions about your experience working in this role, in this environment, with these prisoners
 - Taking part in the research involves meeting with three different times (Time 1 = 6 months into the NVRU being open, Time 2 = 12 months into the NVRU being open, Time 3 = 18 months into the NVRU being open)
 - I will ask you similar interview questions each time we meet
 - This is so we can see if and how the experiences of Prison Officers change over time
 - There are no right or wrong answers - I am just interested in hearing about your experience
 - Please also be aware that the research plays no role in evaluating your performance in the NVRU
 - Your individual responses will not be shared with the managers of the NVRU, and as outlined in the information sheet, numerous steps are being taken to protect your identity
- Information sheet and consent form:
 - Check if already read and understood
 - Briefly re-iterate main points
- Opportunity to ask researcher any questions
- Begin recording

Warm-up

1. Why did you decide to apply to work in the NVRU?

Origins, maintenance and expression of violent behaviour

- As I said earlier, the NVRU aims to increase Prison Officers' understanding of violent prisoners and their behaviour
 - So, I'm going to start with some questions about your understanding of the violent behaviour of the prisoners in the NVRU
 - You may wish to think about a specific prisoner you have worked with in the NVRU, or your overall experiences with all prisoners in the NVRU so far
2. (a) How would you describe the violent behaviour of these prisoners?

- (b) What does violence do for these prisoners?
- 3. (a) What has happened in prison that has led to these prisoners being violent?
(b) What has happened in their lives outside prison that has led to these prisoners being violent?
- 4. (a) How have these experiences in prison led to these prisoners being violent?
(b) How have these experiences in their lives outside prison led to these prisoners being violent?
- 5. (a) Is there anything in prison that makes the violent behaviour of these prisoners worse?
(b) Is there anything in their lives outside prison that makes the violent behaviour of these prisoners worse?
- 6. (a) Is there anything in prison that helps these prisoners to not be violent?
(b) Is there anything in their lives outside prison that helps these prisoners to not be violent?
- 7. What do you think these experiences in prison mean to these prisoners? / How do you think these prisoners make sense of these experiences in prison?
 - P: What do you think these prisoners think about these experiences
 - P: How do you think these prisoners feel about these experiences
- 8. What do you think these experiences in their lives outside prison mean to these prisoners? / How do you think these prisoners make sense of these experiences in their lives outside prison?
 - P: What do you think these prisoners think about these experiences
 - P: How do you think these prisoners feel about these experiences

Reducing violent behaviour and increasing pro-social behaviour

- I now have a good idea of your understanding of the violent behaviour of prisoners in the NVRU
 - Since the aim of the NVRU is to reduce violent behaviour, I'm interested to hear what you think about these prisoners changing their violent behaviour
 - We talked earlier about what their violent behaviour does for these prisoners
- 9. What else would do this for these prisoners?
 - 10. What would help these prisoners do this?
 - 11. What would make it difficult for these prisoners to do this?
 - 12. Have you noticed any change in any of the prisoners, since they have come to the NVRU?
 - P: Violent behaviour → Prosocial behaviour
 - P: Psychological wellbeing
 - P: Relational outcomes
 - 13. What do you think has helped make these changes?
 - 14. What do you think has hindered change?

Experience in the NVRU

- 15. How would you describe the NVRU?
 - P: Environment
 - P: Relationships
- 16. How would you describe your role as a Prison Officer in the NVRU?
- 17. What do you think/how do you feel about working in the NVRU?

- P: Working in this environment
 - P: Working in this role
 - P: Working with violent prisoners
18. Has working in the NVRU had any impact on you?
- P: Positive &/or negative
 - P: Professional &/or personal
19. What are your hopes for the rest of your time working in the NVRU?

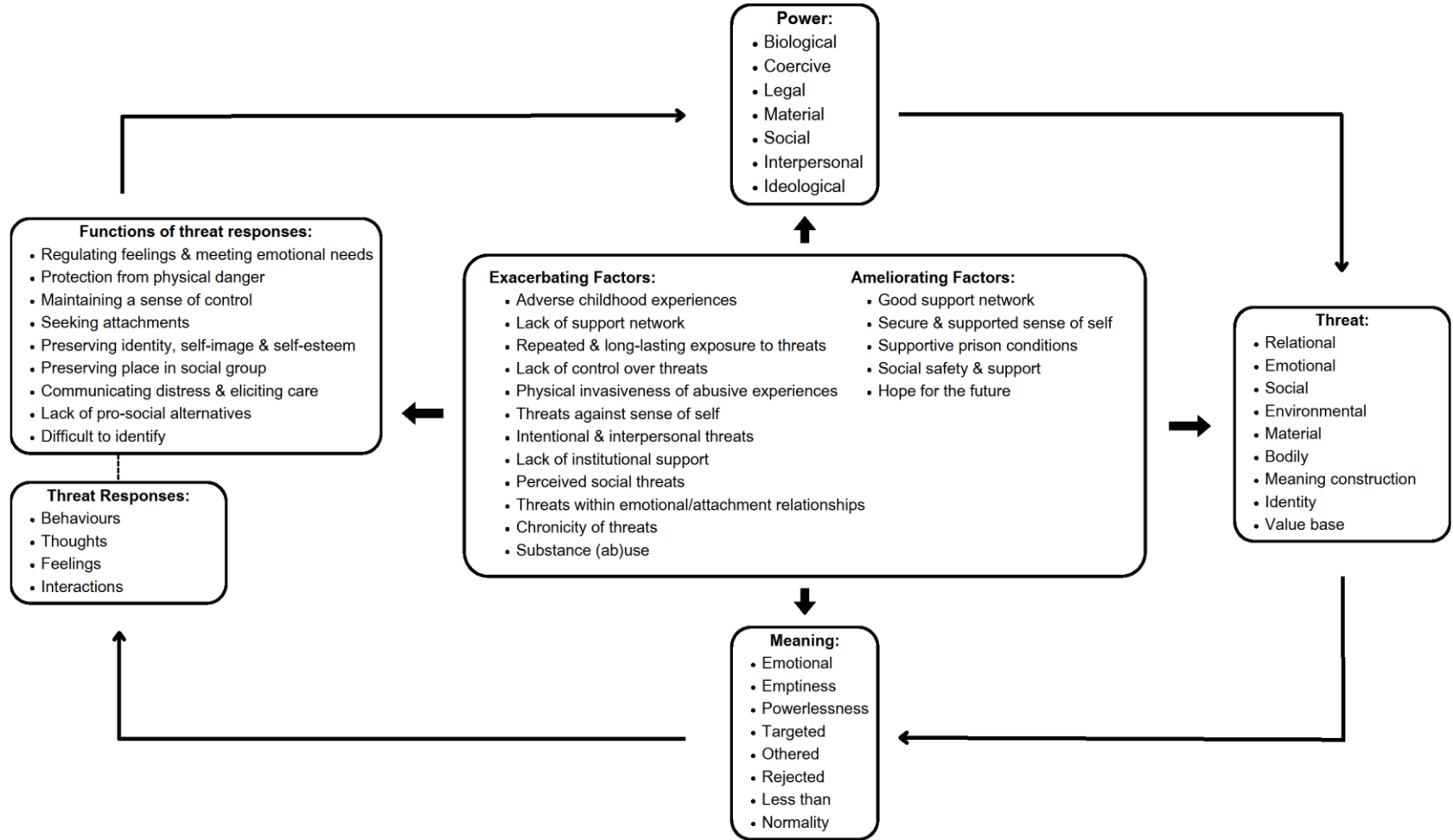
Closing

20. Is there anything else you would like to say before we end the interview?

- End recording
- Thank participant
- Ask participant how they found the interview
- Opportunity to ask the researcher any questions
- Issue de-briefing sheet and re-iterate main points
- Remind participant that there will be another interview in 6 months, and the researcher will contact them about this in due course

Appendix J

Figure 3: Thematic Map of Prison Officers' Qualitative Results in Study 4



Appendix K

Study 4: Ethical Documents

Prison Officer Information Sheet



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“Addressing Violence and Disruption in the Irish Prison Service: The Experiences of Prisoners and Prison Officers in the National Violence Reduction Unit”

My name is Orla Gallagher, and I am a PhD student currently completing research with the School of Psychology at University College Dublin (UCD) and the Irish Prison Service (IPS). The research, supervised by Prof. Gary O’ Reilly (UCD) and Dr. Emma Black (IPS), will explore how violent and disruptive behaviour is addressed in the National Violence Reduction Unit (NVRU), from the perspectives of prisoners and Prison Officers.

If you think you may be interested in participating in this research, please first read this information sheet and the attached consent form. If then you would like to participate, please contact the researcher to schedule a meeting (details below).

What is this research about?

A small number of prisoners in the IPS are designated under the ‘violent and disruptive prisoner’ (VDP) policy, due to:

- a) Engaging in serious repetitive violent acts on staff and/or other prisoners; and
- b) Being associated with a significant risk of violence towards others; and
- c) Posing particular operational difficulties/problems with the prison system; or
- d) Having, in prison in recent days, committed a significant act of violence resulting in serious harm

These prisoners are currently managed in the National Violence Reduction Unit (NVRU), under the remit of the VDP policy. This research aims to explore Prison Officers’ experiences of working with these prisoners in the NVRU, and prisoners’ experiences of being in the NVRU.

Why am I doing this research?

The NVRU is a new development in the IPS, which will continue to develop over the coming years. It is important to generate an evidence-base as this happens, to inform best practice and policy in

the NVRU, and IPS more widely. Both Prison Officers and prisoners are key stakeholders in the NVRU, so it is important that their experiences form the foundation of this evidence-base.

Why have you been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part in the research having been identified as a Prison Officer who is currently working in the NVRU.

How will your data be used?

Your data will be analysed to contribute to an in-depth description of the experiences of Prison Officers working in the NVRU. Findings will be described in written and oral reports for the purpose of the researcher's PhD thesis, and to provide regular research updates to the IPS. The researcher may also publish and present these reports in academic journals and conferences.

What will happen if you decide to take part?

You will be asked to participate in the research at three different time-points. As the study aims to track the experiences of Prison Officers working in the NVRU over time, we would be grateful if you would consider participating at all three time-points. During your first meeting with the researcher (Time 1), you will be asked to provide your written consent, which includes your consent to be contacted by the researcher to participate in the research at Time 2 and Time 3. The researcher will contact you directly and re-issue you with information sheets and consent forms at these times. This information sheet, and the accompanying consent form, relate to your participation at Time 1 of the study.

If after reading this information sheet and the attached consent form you would like to participate in the research, please contact the researcher. The researcher will then schedule a meeting with you. During the meeting, the researcher will go over the information sheet and consent form, and ask for your written consent. If this is provided, the researcher will then conduct an interview with you, asking you some questions about your role and experience working in the NVRU. Please note that the interview will be audio-recorded. The researcher will then ask you to fill in a brief questionnaire. Finally, the researcher will provide you with a de-brief sheet, and the meeting will be complete. The meeting is estimated to take approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes.

How will your privacy be protected?

During the meeting you are free to skip any questions that you do not wish to answer. The researcher will protect your identity as much as possible. Any identifiable data (e.g. your signed consent form and audio file) will be securely stored by the researcher in a locked filing cabinet and secure laptop. Your audio recording will be deleted once the PhD has been examined and awarded, and your signed consent form will be destroyed one year after the study is published. Only the researcher will have access to identifiable data. Your questionnaire will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and your transcript on a secure laptop. Any identifiable information (e.g. names, locations) will be removed from your typed interview transcript. This de-identified data will be stored by the researcher until the study has been published, before being archived by the IPS. Archived data will only be used to contribute to future research in the area, being conducted by one or more of the researchers involved with the project.

However, confidentiality must be breached if during the meeting you: (a) indicate potential harm to yourself or others, (b) disclose any undocumented criminal activity in which you were the perpetrator or victim, and/or (c) disclose being the victim of serious harm from someone else.

What are the benefits of taking part in this research study?

This research provides an opportunity to share your experience of working in the NVRU, which is important for informing evidence-based practice and policy in the NVRU and IPS more widely. However, your participation is completely voluntary, and no incentives or rewards will be offered for your participation. Similarly, there will be no negative consequences for non-participation in the research.

What are the risks of taking part in this research study?

This research may involve the discussion of some sensitive issues (e.g. recalling incidents of violence) which you may find distressing. Please note you are free to skip any questions you do not wish to answer. The researcher will provide you with a de-brief sheet at the end of the meeting, which will outline ways of receiving further support should you feel you need it, such as supports available in the NVRU, the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), your Staff Support Officers (SSOs), your Peer Support Workers (PSWs) and Inspire Workplaces.

Can you change your mind at any stage and withdraw from the study?

You are free to withdraw your consent to participate in the research. If during the meeting you no longer wish to participate in the research, you are free to terminate the meeting and withdraw your consent. After the meeting, you are free to withdraw your consent by contacting the researcher directly. This will be possible up until your audio file is deleted. You also have the right to request the access and/or removal of your data, up until this point.

How will you find out what happens with this project?

The researcher will provide regular research updates to the IPS, and you can also contact the researcher for this information. Once concrete findings from the study available, these will be shared with all participants.

Contact details for further information

For more information about the research or to schedule a meeting, please contact the researcher with the below details:

Researcher:

Orla Gallagher

Email: opgallagher@irishprisons.ie

If you would like further information about the research, please contact the project supervisors with the below details:

UCD Project Supervisor:

Prof. Gary O'Reilly

Email: gary.e.oreilly@ucd.ie

IPS Project Supervisor:

Dr. Emma Black

Email: eeblack@irishprisons.ie

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If you would like to participate in this research, please ensure you read, understand and agree to the following points before providing your written consent:

- I have read the information sheet for the research
- I understand what the research is about
- I understand why the research is being conducted
- I understand why I have been invited to participate in the research
- I understand how my data will be used throughout and following the research
- I understand what my participation in the research will involve
- I understand that participation in the research involves meeting with the researcher at three different time-points, and that the researcher will contact me directly in advance of each time-point
- I understand that my identity will be protected as much as possible, by the researcher:
 - securely storing my identifiable data
 - destroying my audio file after the PhD has been examined and awarded
 - destroying my signed consent form one year after the study has been published
 - removing identifiable information from my interview transcript
 - securely storing my interview transcript and questionnaire up until one year after the study has been published, after which point they will be archived by the IPS to contribute to future research on this topic, being conducted by one or more of the researchers involved with this project
- I understand that an audio recorder will be used during the interview
- I understand that if I (a) indicate a risk of harm to myself or others, (b) disclose undocumented criminal activity in which I was the perpetrator or victim, and/or (c) disclose being the victim of serious harm from someone else, then the researcher will breach confidentiality by reporting this information
- I understand that participation in the study is completely voluntary
- I understand that no incentives or rewards will be offered for my participation in the study
- I understand that the research may involve discussing sensitive issues
 - I understand that I am free to skip these questions during the interview if I wish
 - I understand that the researcher will provide me with a de-briefing sheet with details of further support should I feel I need it

- I understand that I can withdraw my consent to participate in the study at any point during the meeting
- I understand that after meeting with the researcher, I can withdraw my consent to participate in the study up until my audio file has been deleted
- I understand that I can request the access and/or removal of any of my data up until my audio file has been deleted
- I understand how I can find out what happens with this project
- I know how to contact the researcher or project supervisors if I should require further information

If, having read and understood the information sheet and consent form, you would like to participate in the study, please provide your written consent by providing the details below:

Signature:

Print Name:

Date:

Prison Officer De-Briefing Sheet



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“Addressing Violence and Disruption in the Irish Prison Service: The Experiences of Prisoners and Prison Officers in the National Violence Reduction Unit”

Thank you for participating in this research. Your responses will help develop a better understanding of how violent and disruptive behaviour is addressed in the National Violence Reduction Unit (NVRU), and the experiences of Prison Officers working in the NVRU. This is important in terms of identifying what works well in the NVRU, and what needs to be improved. As previously explained, participation in the research involves meeting with the researcher three times. In due course, the researcher will contact you to invite you to take part in the research for the second time.

I would like to assure you once more of the steps taken in this research to protect your privacy. The researcher will protect your identity as much as possible, and will securely store your data and destroy and archive as appropriate. However, if you have indicated to the researcher that (a) you may harm yourself or others, (b) you were the perpetrator or victim in any undocumented

criminal activity, and/or (c) you were the victim of serious harm from someone else, the researcher will breach confidentiality and disclose this.

The interview may have involved the discussion of some sensitive topics. If you feel distressed by anything discussed in the interview, I encourage you to seek further support. Below are some support resources:

The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

- The EAP is a “high quality non-judgemental support service caring for all members of the Irish Prison Service and their families in a confidential and professional manner that promotes individual health and wellbeing and organisational effectiveness”.
- Numerous resources on employee wellbeing are available on the online EAP noticeboard on the Intranet Realtime Information System (IRIS).
- You can contact the EAP centrally by emailing eapsupport@irishprisons.ie or calling 043 3335316.
- You can also access local support, under the remit of the EAP, through your local Staff Support Officers and Peer Support Workers (see below).

Staff Support Officers (SSOs)

- SSOs are IPS staff based locally in each prison, who work on a voluntary, part-time basis.
- They act as the first confidential point of contact for staff experiencing problems with their personal wellbeing (e.g. stress).
- They provide advice and guidance to IPS staff who may be experiencing such problems.
- They can also refer staff to the most appropriate internal or external supports.
- You can self-refer to see a SSO, or concerned others (e.g. family member, colleague) may do this on your behalf.
- To find out who your local SSOs are please see your local noticeboard, or the ‘Staff Support Officers’ list on IRIS.

Peer Support Workers (PSWs)

- If you have been involved in a critical incident in the workplace and need support, you can contact a locally appointed Peer Support Worker (PSW).
- PSWs provide post-incident support to colleagues in the aftermath of a critical incident, under the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) model.
- PSWs are specially trained in group and individual interventions to International Critical Stress Foundation (ICSP) standards.
- All SSOs are trained PSWs, but not all PSWs are SSOs.
- A list of locally appointed PSWs is available on the local EAP noticeboard, and on the online EAP noticeboard on IRIS.

Inspire Workplaces

- Inspire workplaces is an independent counselling service available to all IPS staff.
- The service provides confidential support for various personal or work related concerns (e.g. stress, bereavement, relationships, finances, etc.).
- IPS staff do not need to be referred by EAP or an SSO and can make direct contact with Inspire Workplaces in numerous ways.
- You can call the designated 24/7 freephone helpline at 1800 817 433.

- You can access extensive online support and resources (e.g. on-line tests, a self-help library and useful reports) at www.inspirewellbeing.org. Please note you may need to enter login details to access some aspects of the website. The login details for the IPS are available on IRIS.
- IPS staff are also eligible to receive up to 6 free sessions of face-to-face counselling.
- For more information on Inspire Workplaces please see the EAP noticeboard on IRIS.

Supports in the NVRU

Supervision

- Individual and group supervision, facilitated by Psychology staff in the NVRU, is offered on a regular basis, and attendance is mandatory.
- Supervision has been designed to provide staff working in high risk jobs with an opportunity to discuss their work and its impact in a safe, non-judgemental and supportive environment.
- Supervision has also been designed to be preventative, and is primarily concerned with developing professional and personal skills, rather than emotional support.
- Supervision aims to enhance professional and personal skills, which have been proved to have a beneficial effect on emotional wellbeing.

Annual health checks

- All permanent NVRU staff must receive a health check annually, or when a significant incident or concern about their wellbeing deems this appropriate.
 - The member of staff can raise their own concerns, and initiate a health check.
- Health checks are facilitated by a line manager (Assistant Governor, Chief Officer, or Assistant Chief Officer) and Psychology staff in the NVRU.
- The purpose of a health check is to give both the member of staff and the health check team a chance to talk through any issues and/or concerns.
- It also provides the line manager with an opportunity to provide support and guidance to the member of staff.
- Health checks are not used to address performance issues.

If you would like to know more about the research (e.g. progress updates), please contact the researcher with the below details:

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