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Religion and Rehabilitation in Colombian and South African Prisons: A Human Flourishing Approach

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Abstract

This paper examines whether and how religion contributes to prisoner rehabilitation—conceptualized as a prosocial change in self-identity, existential belief, and character based on identity theories of criminal desistance, the "Good Lives Model" of offender rehabilitation, and the concept of human flourishing. For this study, we conducted a quasi-experimental study assessing a faith-based program, "The Prisoner's Journey" (TPJ). We hypothesized that participation in TPJ increased religiosity, which in turn contributed to rehabilitation, measured by identity transformation, a new sense of meaning and purpose in life, and virtue development. It was also hypothesized that prisoner rehabilitation enhanced emotional well-being and reduced the risk of interpersonal aggression. To test our hypotheses, we applied structural equation modeling to analyze data from 506 prisoners in Colombia and South Africa, who participated in pretest and posttest surveys. As hypothesized, we found that completion of TPJ increased religiosity, which in turn fostered motivation for identity change, the perception of meaning and purpose in life, and the virtues of forgiveness, accountability, and self-control. In addition, the increased perception of meaning and purpose in life and two virtues (forgiveness and self-control) decreased negative emotions and the risk of interpersonal aggression. The implications and limitations of our study are discussed.

Keywords

prison, rehabilitation, religion, Colombia, South Africa

Introduction

Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) studies of prisoners released in 30 states in 2005 reported that about two-thirds (67.8%) were rearrested for a new crime within three years, and the rate of recidivism increased to 76.6% and 83.4% by the end of the fifth and ninth years, respectively

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(Alper et al., 2018; Durose et al., 2014). The three-year rearrest rate was not much different from the rates of state prisoners released 11 (67.5%) and 22 years earlier (62.5%) (Beck & Shipley, 1989; Langan & Levin, 2002), and more than half (56.7%) of the rearrests within five years of release occurred in the first year following release (Durose et al., 2014). In spite of these dismal statistics, a majority of Americans support rehabilitation as a principal goal of the correctional system (Cullen, 2013; Cullen et al., 2000).

It would be unfair to place the entire blame for high recidivism rates on correctional facilities. Various factors encountered by prisoners after release play a significant role in contributing to elevated rates of reoffending. Nonetheless, correctional institutions often fail to provide prisoners with sufficient access to much needed rehabilitative programming. Indeed, most American voters (85%) believe that incarceration without effective rehabilitation programs is counterproductive to public safety (Clarke, 2018). An obvious reason for the paucity of rehabilitative programs is simply the issue of cost. Spending on rehabilitative programs is estimated to be, on average, less than 10% of state prison expenditures (Mai & Subramanian, 2017), which means treatment programs tend to be available only to a small percentage of prisoners (e.g., 6% in Florida; see Mahoney, 2019). The current state of limited programs in support of rehabilitation is unlikely to change in the near future given projected state budget cuts and deficits due to COVID-19's economic fallout (McNichol & Leachman, 2020; Pew Research Center, 2020).

In a time of ever-tightening correctional budgets, it is important to note that religion has a rich and positive history of contributing to the rise of rehabilitation as a philosophical goal going back to the outset of the American correctional system (Cullen, 2013). The notion that religion continues to be a rehabilitative change agent is obvious from the sheer number of religiously oriented rehabilitative resources present within prisons. Faith-based prison programs tend to rely almost exclusively on volunteers and private resources. The rehabilitative effect of religion on prisoners has been empirically established (Johnson, 2011), and some researchers have explained *how* religion helps rehabilitate prisoners (Hallett et al., 2017; Kerley & Copes, 2009; Maruna et al., 2006). To contribute to the growing literature on religion and rehabilitation, we conceptualize the salutary effect of religion from a human flourishing perspective (VanderWeele, 2017, 2020; VanderWeele et al., 2020), applying the "Good Lives Model" of offender rehabilitation and identity theories of criminal desistance (Giordano et al., 2002, 2007; Jang & Johnson, 2017; Paternoster & Bushway, 2009; Ward, 2002).

To empirically examine the impact of religion on prisoner rehabilitation, we conducted a quasi-experiment on an international faith-based program, called "The Prisoner's Journey," using a total sample of 506 prisoners (357 males and 149 females) in Colombia (255; all males) and South Africa (251; 102 males and 149 females). Conceptualizing rehabilitation as prosocial changes in self-identity, existential belief, and character, we hypothesized that program-increased involvement in religion or religiosity contributes to identity transformation, a new sense of meaning and purpose in life, and virtue development. We also hypothesized that the prosocial changes improved emotional well-being and reduced the risk of aggression among program participants. To test these hypotheses, we applied manifest-variable structural equation modeling to analyze data from pretest and posttest surveys.

This paper begins with the human flourishing concept and its application to offender rehabilitation, followed by a review of prior research on religion and rehabilitation in prison. We then conceptualize rehabilitation and present hypotheses, after which the faith-based program and our research contexts (i.e., prisons in Colombia and South Africa) are briefly described. Next, we explain our research design, sample, measurement, and analytic strategy before reporting our results and discussing the substantive and practical implications of the findings as well as the limitations of our study.

Human Flourishing and Offender Rehabilitation

According to VanderWeele (2017, p. 8149), human flourishing can be defined as "a state in which all aspects of a person's life are good" and refers to "doing or being well in the … five broad domains of human life": happiness and life satisfaction; health, both mental and physical; meaning and purpose; character and virtue; and close social relationships.[1] Each domain tends to be viewed as an end in itself and nearly universally desired by humans. While VanderWeele (2020) uses the concept of human flourishing in the realm of epidemiology, it is applicable to criminology, as individuals high on flourishing in all or most domains of life are less likely to commit crime than those low on flourishing. Since crime is attributable in part to a lack (or low levels) of flourishing, the concept is applicable to corrections. Specifically, Ward and colleagues (Ward, 2002; Ward & Maruna, 2007) applied the idea of human flourishing to offender rehabilitation and developed the "Good Lives Model" (GLM), where their "primary human goods" correspond quite well to VanderWeele's (2017) life goals of human flourishing.

Primary human goods are "actions, states of affairs, characteristics, experiences, and states of mind that are intrinsically beneficial to human beings and therefore sought for their own sake" (Ward & Brown, 2004, p. 246). The GLM assumes that offenders as human beings are goal-directed (Emmons, 1999) and live their lives according to a prioritized set of "11 classes of primary goods: (a) life (including healthy living and functioning), (b) knowledge, (c) excellence in play, (d) excellence in work (including mastery experiences), (e) excellence in agency (i.e., autonomy and self-directedness), (f) inner peace (i.e., freedom from emotional turmoil and stress), (g) friendship (including intimate, romantic, and family relationships), (h) community, (i) spirituality (in the broad sense of finding meaning and purpose in life), (j) happiness, and (k) creativity" (Ward et al., 2012, p. 95).[2]

The GLM suggests that crime is the result of individuals lacking internal capabilities (e.g., social skills) and external conditions (e.g., opportunities for employment) that are necessary to pursue primary goods, or having problems with a good life plan (e.g., a lack of scope within the plan or incoherence among goals). Thus, for GLM, rehabilitation should have dual goals: the "approach goal" of promoting human goods by equipping offenders with the ability to secure the goods in socially acceptable and personally meaningful ways, and the "avoidance goal" of reducing risk for reoffending.[3] Ward and Maruna (2007) argue that promoting the approach goal helps achieve the avoidance goal.

The GLM's emphasis on agency and self-reflection is consistent with criminal desistance theorists' focus on "critical events that create a sense of crisis in offenders and ultimately prompt them to re-evaluate their lives and reconstruct their identities" (Ward, 2010, p. 58). For Giordano et al. (2002), the critical events are "hooks for change" (i.e., turning points) that are catalysts for cognitive transformations, which may result in a new identity (i.e., a conventional "replacement self"). The crisis is likely to be in part existential as offenders are confronted with the reality that their lives have no meaning or purpose (Jang & Johnson, 2017). Paternoster and Bushway (2009) call the cognitive process of reevaluation "crystallization of discontent" (Baumeister, 1994), where offenders attribute their failures and dissatisfactions in life (e.g., not being a good parent) to their criminal identity, and are thereby motivated to engage in self-change.

The GLM process of helping offenders locate the primary goods that are most important to them contributes to constructing their "practical identities" and eventually new narrative identities. For example, Maruna (2001) found that desisting ex-offenders created a "redemption script," where they found a way to "make sense" out of their past lives and even see redeeming value in lives of being in and out of prisons and jails (McNeill et al., 2012). Offenders reinterpreted their negative past experiences as offering a pathway to create a new identity that engenders recovering a sense of agency and control over life, as well as discovering their "true self" (i.e., a good person). This process results in a desire to be productive and put negative experiences "to good use" by giving

something back to the community and assisting others with the same problems with which they themselves have struggled (Ward, 2002), which Maruna (2001) called "generativity."[4] On the other hand, persistent active offenders lived their lives according to a "condemnation script," whereby they see themselves as victims of deterministic forces and an impoverished sense of agency with very little chance of positive change.

The GLM suggests that the rehabilitation goal of goods promotion should be given "at least equal weight" as that of risk management (Ward et al., 2012, p. 98). For the model's critics, however, such emphasis on the offender's non-criminogenic needs is problematic since it is likely to result in overlooking crime prevention by failing to pay enough attention to criminogenic needs (Andrews et al., 2011). Since clinical professionals in the criminal justice system are already overburdened with the basic task of treatment, critics argue, asking them to add goods promotion to their task is simply unrealistic, and mixing such contrasting goals is likely to muddle the situation (Dickey & Smith, 1998). Thus, the critics of GLM suggest that helping offenders fulfill their non-criminogenic needs should be the task of service systems besides the criminal justice system (Andrews & Dowden, 2007).

Since faith-based organizations and faith-motivated volunteers are ubiquitous in prisons, it makes sense that they would be an obvious candidate for meeting the non-criminogenic needs of offenders. Goods promotion is a natural by-product of the work of faith-based groups. Moreover, faith-motivated volunteers do not add financial burdens to already constricted correctional budgets, since religious organizations are willing to bring outside financial and human resources into prisons to contribute to the correctional goal of rehabilitation. Previous studies provide evidence and theoretical explanations of religion helping prisoners rehabilitate, thereby reducing their emotional and behavioral problems (Johnson et al., 2021).

Prior Research

Previous studies provide preliminary evidence that religion helps prisoners adjust to prison, and reduces misconduct and recidivism. For example, Clear and Sumter (2002) found inmate religiousness was inversely related to depressive symptoms, and Koenig's (1995) and Aday et al.'s (2014) studies reported the salutary effect of religion on mental health among older men and women in prison. Kerley et al. (2005) found inmate exposure to religion via a faith-based program was inversely related to not only negative emotions but also misconduct (but see Johnson, 1987; Pass, 1999). Similarly, Jang et al. (2018b) reported an inverse relationship between inmate's religious conversion and disciplinary convictions. Finally, Johnson (2004) found that frequent participation in Bible studies in state prisons reduced the hazard rate of rearrest during the second and third year after release, and Young et al. (1995) reported that a group of federal inmates who participated in a religious leadership seminar showed a higher survival rate for a longer period of time, being arrested at a slower rate after release from prison, than a matched control group over an 8-to-14-year follow-up period (but see Mowen et al., 2018; Stansfield et al., 2018).

Reduced negative emotions, misconduct, and recidivism, however, are not synonymous with rehabilitation but are instead affective and behavioral byproducts of rehabilitation. To conceptualize rehabilitation, we need to focus on what religion restores in a prisoner's life. In other words, we need to identify explanatory mechanisms of the relationship between religion and the outcomes of rehabilitation. To this end, Johnson conducted in-depth interviews with prisoners who made a successful transition back to society in a two-year post-release study (Johnson & Larson, 2003), which revealed "five spiritual transformation themes," characterized by a new identity, commitment to prosocial norms and virtues, a new sense of meaning in life, and finding a purpose in a generative goal.[5] These themes are indicators of rehabilitation, and other researchers have applied them to explain how religion helps reform prisoners.

For example, based on 75 life story interviews with prisoner "converts," Maruna et al. (2006, p. 174) found religious conversion led prisoners to develop self-narrative that: (1) "[c]reates a new social identity to replace the label of prisoner or criminal"; (2) "[i]mbues the experience of imprisonment with purpose and meaning"; (3) "[e]mpowers the largely powerless prisoner by turning him into an agent of God"; (4) "[p]rovides the prisoner with a language and framework for forgiveness"; and (5) "[a]llows a sense of control over an unknown future." These changes are likely to enhance emotional well-being and reduce misconduct in prison and reoffending after release (see also Maruna, 2001). Similarly, Kerley and Copes's (2009) study of 63 inmates who had religious conversion revealed that converts created a new sense of self, applied a new faith-based outlook to reinterpret their current situation into something positive, and sought supportive relationships with other religious individuals through religious activities (and avoid negative ones), which all, in turn, were likely to reduce negative emotions and misconduct.

The Present Study

A Conceptualization of Rehabilitation

Building on prior research, we conceptualize rehabilitation as a *process* of prosocial change in self-identity, existential belief, and character, focusing on VanderWeele's (2017) two domains of human flourishing—"meaning and purpose" and "character and virtue"—and the GLM's two classes of primary goods—"excellence in agency," which contributes to identity change, and "spirituality (in the broad sense of finding meaning and purpose in life)." At the same time, we treat VanderWeele's domain of mental health or the GLM's class of "inner peace (i.e., freedom from emotional turmoil and stress)" (Ward et al., 2012) as an affective consequence of rehabilitation and a reduced risk of prison misconduct as its behavioral outcome.

Identity transformation. Upon entrance into prison, an offender's sense of self-worth is threatened, and their identity becomes mortified as a result of a series of degradations of self in the "total institution" (Goffman, 1961). The mortification of self, along with a sense of guilt and shame, is likely to thrust a prisoner into a crisis, where they question their current, criminal identity as "a contrast between what is and what might be me" (Maruna et al., 2006, p. 17). For those who want to change, the crisis becomes "an opportunity for identity work" and for rewriting their personal narrative (O'Donnell, 2014, p. 258). In offering a chance to replace an "old self" with a "new self" (James, 2007), religion helps prisoners write a narrative that allows a new start in life built on the new self. Identity transformation via religion is a cognitive process that involves a change in self-concept and worldview, based on a new "living narrative" (Smith, 2003). It is also an affective process, which includes dealing with the prisoner's guilt from their criminal past and the anger and depression associated with imprisonment and the losses it caused (Clear et al., 2000).

Giordano et al.'s (2002) symbolic interactionist theory posits that four types of "cognitive transformations" are necessary for desistance from crime: (1) one's openness to change (a general cognitive readiness for change), (2) one's exposure to a particular hook (or set of hooks) for change, (3) one's construction of a conventional "replacement self" or new identity, and (4) one's perception of crime to be negative, unviable, or personally irrelevant. Identity transformation also involves "emotional transformations" that lead to "an increased ability to regulate their emotions in socially acceptable ways" (Giordano et al., 2007, p. 1610), thereby reducing the likelihood to identify oneself with negative emotions. For Giordano et al. (2002), religion is a major hook for change among offenders, as it functions as a catalyst that provides a highly prosocial replacement self and positive emotions (Giordano et al., 2008).

Paternoster and Bushway's (2009, p. 1123) rational choice theory of desistance posits that offenders are fine with their criminal identity so long as it is perceived to be beneficial rather than harmful, but it becomes problematic as they see "failures or dissatisfactions across many aspects of [their] life [being] *linked together* and attributed to the criminal identity itself." This cognitive process, "crystallization of discontent," (Baumeister, 1994), weakens offenders' attachment to their criminal identity and motivates them to engage in a deliberate act of self-change toward a new, anti-criminal identity. Here again, religion can contribute to the identity change. The process of repentance and self-reflection involves the crystallization of discontent, as prisoners attribute their failures in life to their old self (e.g., being a sinner) and criminal identity.

Jang et al.'s (2018b) study provides evidence that religion contributed to cognitive and emotional transformations and crystallization of discontent (see also Hallett et al., 2017). Specifically, using survey data from 2,249 inmates at America's largest maximum-security prison, the Louisiana State Penitentiary (a.k.a., "Angola"), they found that an inmate's religious conversion was positively related to cognitive transformation and crystallization of discontent. They also reported that inmate religiosity was positively related to emotional transformation.

Meaning and purpose in life. Humans are existential beings in the sense that they have an innate need for meaning in life—defined as "the sense made of, and significance felt regarding, the nature of one's being and existence" (Steger et al., 2006, p. 81). Purpose, an "intention, some function to be fulfilled, or goals to be achieved" (Reker et al., 1987, p. 44), is closely related to this concept, as life's meaning largely derives from having a goal (or goals) and striving for it. As humans, prisoners likewise have an innate need to live a meaningful life, even if they might feel as though they have failed to do so. Being incarcerated is likely to aggravate their lack of meaning in life, as prisons are places of exclusion and isolation. Indeed, prior research confirms an inverse relationship between incarceration and the perception of life as meaningful (Stillman et al., 2009).

Although life's meaning could be claimed based on anything, Frankl (1984) suggests, that the "true meaning of life" should be self-transcendent (i.e., discovered outside of an individual). For this reason, religion—which involves a transcendent being (e.g., God)—is a major source of meaning in life for many, though meaning can also come from outside of religion, like close relationships with family or other loved ones (Costin & Vignoles, 2020; Routledge, 2020). In correctional institutions, religion is readily available to offer a time-honored system of meaning to prisoners, helping them develop a new sense of meaning and purpose in life.

Prior research shows a positive association between religiosity and a sense of meaning and purpose in life among prisoners, as well as among people in general populations (Costin & Vignoles, 2020; Jang, 2016; Routledge, 2020; Steger & Frazier, 2005). In a study of 163 male inmates at three maximum-security prisons in Texas, Jang et al. (2018a) found that inmate religiosity was positively related to perceived meaning in life (see also Jang et al., 2018b). Using data collected in a non-Western country, Jang et al. (2021) replicated this positive relationship. Specifically, analyzing data from a survey with 425 inmates (245 males and 180 females) housed in four South African prisons, they found that more religious inmates were more likely to report a sense of meaning and purpose in life than their less or non-religious peers. This positive relationship was found among both male and female inmates, showing that the relationship was gender-neutral as well as cross-culturally applicable.

Virtue development. Since all major religions place a high value on virtues like forgiveness, accountability, and self-control (Evans, 2019; Rye et al., 2000), religious involvement is expected to increase personal virtues. First, religion not only emphasizes but also sanctifies virtues, teaching adherents to adopt and practice divine-like qualities (Rye et al., 2000). In theistic religions, for example, forgiveness is a way to imitate God who forgives, carry out God's plan beyond self-pity and resentment, and

enhance one's relationship with God. In non-theistic religions, forgiveness is a way to attain divinity or reach nirvana. Second, religion provides adherents with a spiritual or self-transcendent narrative, whereby virtue (e.g., self-sacrifice or forgiveness) has meaning even when it goes against human instincts (e.g., self-preservation) or counteracts a natural tendency (e.g., vengefulness). Religion also provides contexts where narratives and orientation toward the divine are fostered. Finally, religious communities strive to stimulate virtue development as they collectively engage in practices (e.g., worship) that promote the connection between a transcendental narrative and virtuous behavior (Schnitker et al., 2019).

Prior research provides evidence that religion fosters virtues among individuals in the general population (Batson et al., 1999; Emmons & Paloutzian, 2003; Krause, 2018; McCullough et al., 2000; Rye et al., 2000). While research on religiosity and virtues among prisoners is scant, Jang et al. (2018a) found that more religious inmates reported higher levels of forgiveness, compassion, and gratitude than their less or non-religious counterparts. Similarly, religiosity was found to be positively related to forgiveness, gratitude, and self-control among prisoners in South Africa, both males and females (Jang et al., 2021).

Consequences of Rehabilitation

Religiously motivated rehabilitation is likely to have affective and behavioral consequences, addressing two major issues among prisoners: emotional maladjustment and misconduct. First, a prosocial change in identity is expected to reduce negative emotional states and thereby decrease the likelihood of infractions among prisoners, as emotional transformations increase a sense of self-worth and enable offenders to disassociate themselves from negative emotions that they used to identify with (Giordano et al., 2002, 2007; Paternoster & Bushway, 2009). Second, fostering virtues among prisoners is expected to enhance emotional well-being (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; McCullough, 2000), since virtue is a central component of "eudaemonic" happiness, as Aristotle argued (VanderWeele, 2017; Ward & Maruna, 2007). Finally, a new sense of meaning and purpose in life is likely to decrease an inmate's negative emotions and misconduct as the new existential belief leads them to strive for conventional life goals and to manage their behaviors accordingly (Jang, 2016; McKnight & Kashdan, 2009; Steger & Frazier, 2005; Vanhooren et al., 2017).

Research on prisoner rehabilitation and its affective and behavioral consequences is limited, but two recent studies provide supportive evidence. First, Jang et al. (2018b) found crystallization of discontent and emotional transformation were inversely related to disciplinary convictions among prisoners. They also found that inmates' perceived presence of meaning in life and virtues (forgiveness, compassion, and gratitude) were inversely related to negative emotional states (depression and anxiety) and the likelihood of aggression toward another inmate. Second, the virtue of self-control was also inversely related to negative emotional states and the risk of aggressive misconduct (Jang et al., 2021).

Hypotheses

To empirically examine whether religion contributes to rehabilitation, we conducted a quasi-experiment on a faith-based program, "The Prisoner's Journey" (TPJ), run in prisons of Colombia and South Africa. This longitudinal study allowed us to examine relationships among *changes* in religious involvement, rehabilitation, and affective and behavioral consequences of rehabilitation among prisoners over time. However, since the program was expected to increase inmate involvement in religion, we first hypothesize the following.

Hypothesis 1: Participation in TPJ increases inmate religiosity.

Based on the literature reviewed above, we propose to examine whether religion contributes to prisoner rehabilitation, which in turn addresses emotional and behavioral issues among inmates. Since rehabilitation is a process of prosocial change in self-identity, existential belief, and moral character, it can be observed in terms of degree. Thus, prisoners ahead of others in their progress toward rehabilitation are likely to show signs of prosocial change compared to those who are making less progress toward rehabilitation. Thus, we hypothesize as follows:

Hypothesis 2: A change in religiosity is positively related to a change in (a) identity transformation, (b) a sense of meaning and purpose in life, and (c) virtues.

Finally, we hypothesize that rehabilitation has affective and behavioral consequences.

Hypothesis 3: A change in identity transformation, a sense of meaning and purpose in life, and virtues are inversely related to a change in (a) negative emotions and (b) the risk of interpersonal aggression.

The Program and Research Contexts

The Prisoner's Journey

"The Prisoner's Journey" (TPJ) is a faith-based program of Prison Fellowship International, an international prison ministry organization. TPJ is a small group Bible study that meets once a week for eight weeks and is being administered in 655 prisons in 38 countries at the time of writing this paper. It is facilitated by volunteers from local churches as well as inmates who have both completed the study and been trained to lead it. The curriculum consists of eight, two-hour sessions and intends to "transform the lives of prisoners, from the inside out" through "restorative relationship with … Jesus the Prisoner" (Prison Fellowship International, 1996).[6] TPJ teaches that prisoners have rejected God, though they were created to live in a relationship with God. Thus, they need to restore this relationship in order to live a fulfilled life by accepting God's gift of forgiveness offered through Jesus Christ. TPJ is based on the notion that participating inmates are likely to not only increase religious involvement but also adopt a new identity (e.g., a child of God), have a sense of meaning and purpose in life via God's plan for their lives, and become virtuous imitating Jesus.

Prisons in Colombia and South Africa

In Colombia, 132 prisons are managed by the National Penitentiary and Prison Institute (Instituto Nacional Penitenciario y Carcelario, INPEC). They have an official capacity of 82,296 but have an occupancy level of 118.7%, or a total prison population of 97,655 as of October 2021 (Institute for Crime & Justice Policy, 2021). Colombian prisons have problems with deficient infrastructure and violence. Since the Colombian government adopted the United States' punitive penal policy as a part of "Plan Colombia" launched by the Clinton administration in 1999, inmates' access to rehabilitation programs has decreased for decades, as the portion of INPEC's budget for such programs remained small (De Dardel & Söderström, 2018; Iturralde, 2016).[7] In this context, religion has a great potential for contributing to rehabilitation among inmates, though little research has been conducted to assess the effectiveness of faith-based programs in Colombian prisons.

In South Africa, the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) manages 243 prisons, characterized by aging and outdated infrastructure, gangsterism, and overcrowding (Booyens, 2020). In 2019/

2020 the DCS had a total inmate population of 154,449 with approved bed space of 120,567, operating at a 128.1% level of capacity. In addition, South African prisons are ruled by the so-called "number gangs" (26s, 27s, and 28s gangs), which use violence to compete for power and control and to sell illegal substances or basic necessities (Grobler & Hesselink, 2015). Despite these obstacles, offender rehabilitation is at the core of the activities of the DCS, as inmates serving a sentence of 24 months and longer are offered various programs, such as anger management programs and substance abuse correctional programs. Inmates also have access to spiritual care programs including worship services, scripture studies, and prayer sessions. According to the DCS, 98% of inmates benefited from these programs during 2018/2019. However, the effectiveness of spiritual care programs has not been empirically studied.

Methods

Research Design and Sample

We conducted a quasi-experimental study to assess the effectiveness of TPJ after the Baylor University Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and waived approval (IRB Reference #: 1164812 and 1164746 for studies in Colombia and South Africa, respectively). Our study in South Africa was also reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of DCS (no approval number was assigned). Colombia and South Africa were chosen for study because the program had been administered longer than other countries (since 2015 and 2014, respectively). Since a key anticipated outcome of participation in TPJ was an increase in religious involvement, data from pretest and posttest surveys enabled us to examine whether increased religiosity had rehabilitative effects on self-identity, existential belief, and character among inmates.

Recruitment for TPJ began with inviting prisoners to a promotional event, where they watched a short video and then were asked to enroll in the eight-session course. All prisoners who signed up for TPJ were accepted to the program, and we invited them to participate in our study, providing an informed consent form. Those who agreed by signing the consent form completed a pretest survey. After graduating from TPJ, inmates were asked to participate in a posttest survey. Although each session was supposed to be covered weekly, it usually took longer than eight weeks due to various schedule interruptions (e.g., security lockdowns). Like the treatment group, the control group was a convenience sample of inmates housed at a prison where TPJ was not offered, located relatively close to the treatment prison. Pretest and posttest surveys were conducted over a 22-month period between February 2018 and November 2019.

In Colombia, two male prisons were selected, one for the treatment group (Bellavista Prison in Medellín) and the other for the control group (Puerto Triunfo Prison in Puerto Triunfo) with the former being a maximum-security prison and the latter a medium-security one.[8] The treatment and control groups consisted of 212 inmates each who participated in the pretest survey. Almost half (97, 45.8%) of the treatment group inmates and three-quarters (158, 74.5%) of the control group inmates completed the posttest survey. Thus, a total of 255 (60.1%) of 424 inmates participated in both surveys.

In South Africa, five prisons were selected. Three treatment prisons consisted of two male prisons (Modderbee and Baviaanspoort Maximum Security Correctional Centres) and one female prison (Johannesburg Female Correctional Centre), located in Gauteng Province. Two control prisons included one male prison (Baviaanspoort Medium Security Correctional Centre) and one female prison (Kroonstad Female Correctional Centre, located in Free State Province). A total of 437 inmates (267 males and 170 females) participated in the pretest—312 (189 males and 123

females) in the treatment group and 125 (78 males and 47 females) in the control group. About six out of 10 (251) pretest participants (102 males and 149 females) also completed the posttest—182 (63 males and 119 females) in the treatment group and 69 (39 males and 30 females) in the control group.

In sum, while 861 inmates (691 males and 170 females) participated in the initial survey, 506 (357 males and 149 females) of them participated in the posttest as well as pretest surveys.

Measurement

The key exogenous variable, participation in *TPJ*, is dichotomous (0 = not participated, 1 = participated and completed).[9] Other exogenous variables are sociodemographic and offending backgrounds: *age*, sex (0 = female, 1 = *male*), *education* (1 = illiterate, 2 = primary school, 3 = secondary school, 4 = technical degree, 5 = higher education, 6 = postgraduate degree), marital status (being *single* with the reference category including being married or in common law marriage, divorced, separated, and widowed), and religious affiliation (*no religion* with the omitted category consisting of being Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, and an adherent of Eastern, native, or other religion).[10] Also controlled for were country (0 = South Africa, 1 = *Colombia*) and offense of the current incarceration (dummy variables of *property*, *sex*, *drug*, and *other offenses* with violent offense being the reference category).

The first endogenous variable is inmate's *religiosity*, measured by creating a scale summing standardized scores of five items: two items of subjective religiosity (perceived closeness to God and importance of religion) and three items of objective religiosity (frequency of religious service attendance, praying outside of religious services, and reading the Bible or other sacred text in private). Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) generated a single-factor solution with moderate-to-high loadings, larger than .5 with one exception (.469 at the posttest), and the five items had good inter-item reliability with Cronbach's α being .717 and .728 at the pretest and posttest, respectively (see Appendix A).

The next endogenous variables involve prisoner rehabilitation: identity transformation, a sense of meaning and purpose in life, and virtues. First, identity transformation was operationalized by cognitive transformation, emotional transformation, and crystallization of discontent, each of which was measured by three items that were loaded on a single factor with moderate-to-high factor loadings and acceptable-to-good internal reliability at both tests with a few exceptions observed at the pretest (see Appendix A). Second, to measure an inmate's sense of meaning and purpose in life, we used Steger et al.'s (2006) two items of the *presence of meaning*, which had acceptable-to-good inter-item reliability (α = .692 and .792). Third, three scales of virtue were created. Three items of forgiveness were loaded on a single factor with moderate-to-high loadings and acceptable-to-good internal reliability at pretest (from .545 to .692, α = .674) and posttest (from .519 to .773, α = .717), whereas two items of accountability had internal reliability lower than our minimum cutoff, .600, at both tests (α = .583 and .522). To measure self-control, we used reverse-coded four items of Grasmick et al.'s (1993) Low Self-Control Scale, which had acceptable-to-good loadings on a single factor and acceptable internal reliability at both pretest (from .494 to .768, α = .697) and posttest (from .487 to 659, α = .650).

The final endogenous variables were two likely outcomes of religiosity and its associated prisoner rehabilitation, one affective and the other behavioral. The affective outcome was *negative emotions*, measured by four items of state depression, anxiety, anger, and frustration. All four items loaded on a single factor with high loadings and good-to-high reliability at both pretest (from .541 to .823, α = .747) and posttest (from .698 to .773, α = .835). Next, the behavioral outcome was measured in terms of behavioral intention, an inmate's self-reported likelihood of engaging in interpersonal aggression, or, in short, *intended aggression*. To measure this, we used the vignette method, in which inmates were first asked to read the following scenario.

> It's Sunday afternoon. Miguel is watching a World Cup soccer game on television with other inmates. During a halftime break, Miguel goes to the restroom. When Miguel comes back, David is in his seat. Miguel asks David to leave because it is his seat. David says he can sit anywhere he wants. Miguel asks David to leave one more time. This time David ignores Miguel. Feeling not only dissed but also that he is right, Miguel gets into an argument with David, yelling and screaming.

Inmates were then asked to indicate how likely it was that they would do the same as Miguel (Michael in South African survey), using a 6-point scale (1 = not likely at all [0%], 2 = very unlikely, 3 = unlikely, 4 = likely, 5 = very likely, 6 = certainly [100%]).[11]

Analytic Strategy

To test our hypotheses, we applied a manifest-variable structural equation modeling approach to analyze data from the pretest and posttest. The modeling approach enabled us to not only simultaneously estimate for 10 endogenous variables (i.e., seven mediating and two ultimate endogenous variables as well as religiosity), but to also test the statistical significance of mediation. For model estimation, we employed Mplus (Version 8.5) that incorporates Muthén's (1983) "general structural equation model" and full information maximum likelihood (FIML) estimation. As concepts were measured by ordered categorical and continuous variables, we used the estimation option of MLR, which generates maximum likelihood estimates with standard errors that are robust to non-normality and non-independence of observations. To treat missing data, we used FIML, which tends to produce unbiased estimates similar to multiple imputations (Baraldi & Enders, 2010; Graham, 2009). Finally, statistical significance ($\alpha = .05$) was generally assessed using two-tailed tests, but we also applied one-tailed tests for the hypothesized relationships since their directions were *a priori* predicted.

Results

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics of variables used in the analysis.[12] Six out of 10 (60.9%) study participants in the pretest sample ($n = 861$) were TPJ graduates, and the participants were, on average, about 36 (35.702) years old, with the youngest and oldest being 19 and 72, respectively. The samples were 80.0% male, 53.1% single, and 94.6% adherent of religion with a large majority (86.3%) being affiliated with Christianity (53.8% Protestant, 32.5% Catholic, not shown in the table) and the remainder with other religions (1.8% Islam, 0.3% Eastern religion, 1.7% native religion, and 4.6% other religion). While treatment group inmates were different from their control group counterparts in some background characteristics—being older and more likely to be female, South African, and violent, property, or sex offenders—they were comparable at the pretest except for two endogenous variables: TPJ inmates were higher on forgiveness and lower on the risk of aggression than non-TPJ inmates.

Of the 861 inmates who completed the pretest, 355 (41.2%) did not participate in the posttest due in part to transfer or release from prison (i.e., the response rate of 58.8%), including 245 in the treatment group ($n = 524$) and 110 in the control group ($n = 337$) (i.e., the response rates of 53.2% and 67.4%, respectively). To compare the posttest participants and non-participants, we conducted t-tests and found they were different (see Appendix B). For example, the participants were more likely to be control group inmates, older, female, less educated, and sex offenders than the non-participants. In addition, the former reported higher levels of cognitive transformation, crystallization of discontent, forgiveness, and accountability, and lower risk of interpersonal aggression compared to the latter: that is, inmates who participated in the posttest tended to be relatively prosocial at the pretest.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Variables Used in Analysis and Attrition Analysis.

	Total sample (n = 861)					Control group (n = 337)			Treatment group (n = 524)			*t*-test
Variable	*n*	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	*n*	Mean	SD	*n*	Mean	SD	*p*
TPJ	861	.609	.488	0	1							
Age	571	35.702	10.258	19	72	282	34.422**	10.269	289	36.952**	10.109	.003
Male	850	.800	.400	0	1	336	.860**	.347	514	.761**	.427	.000
Education	545	3.024	.940	1	6	274	3.055	.910	271	2.993	.970	.441
Single	589	.531	.499	0	1	282	.521	.500	307	.541	.499	.637
No religion	766	.054	.225	0	1	291	.055	.228	475	.053	.224	.889
Violent offense	495	.327	.470	0	1	231	.255**	.437	264	.390**	.489	.001
Property offense	465	.314	.465	0	1	223	.265**	.442	242	.360**	.481	.027
Sex offense	465	.230	.421	0	1	223	.170**	.377	242	.285**	.452	.003
Drug offense	496	.349	.477	0	1	231	.307	.462	265	.385	.487	.070
Other offense	421	.242	.429	0	1	212	.231	.423	209	.254	.436	.592
Colombia	861	.493	.500	0	1	337	.629**	.484	524	.405**	.491	.000
Religiosity T1	830	.391	2.384	−11.152	4.527	316	.335	2.686	514	.426	2.180	.612
Religiosity T2	494	.393	2.555	−15.226	4.199	221	−.027**	3.062	273	.734**	1.997	.002
Cognitive transformation T1	852	3.531	.523	1	4	331	3.526	.562	521	3.534	.497	.838
Cognitive transformation T2	496	3.658	.499	1	4	222	3.627	.535	274	3.683	.468	.213
Emotional transformation T1	848	2.384	.867	1	4	330	2.330	.890	518	2.418	.852	.152
Emotional transformation T2	496	2.563	.884	1	4	220	2.414**	.893	276	2.681**	.860	.001
Crystallization of discontent T1	855	3.384	.609	1	4	334	3.368	.635	521	3.395	.592	.529
Crystallization of discontent T2	500	3.460	.621	1	4	223	3.381**	.629	277	3.523**	.609	.011
Presence of meaning T1	841	5.820	1.388	1	7	325	5.709	1.471	516	5.890	1.331	.073
Presence of meaning T2	488	6.148	1.201	1	7	214	6.084	1.125	274	6.197	1.257	.303
Forgiveness T1	855	3.286	.709	1	4	332	3.165**	.721	523	3.363**	.691	.000
Forgiveness T2	497	3.453	.628	1	4	220	3.332**	.644	277	3.550**	.598	.000
Accountability T1	847	3.439	.635	1	4	328	3.477	.606	519	3.415	.651	.160
Accountability T2	486	3.489	.604	1	4	218	3.420**	.622	268	3.545**	.584	.023
Self-control T1	841	3.597	.872	1	5	328	3.641	.887	513	3.568	.862	.236
Self-control T2	494	3.731	.836	1	5	219	3.724	.836	275	3.737	.837	.863
Negative emotions T1	816	2.760	1.002	1	5	320	2.841	.967	496	2.708	1.021	.064
Negative emotions T2	488	2.653	1.097	1	5	223	2.693	1.051	265	2.619	1.135	.463
Intended aggression T1	781	2.762	1.813	1	6	302	2.930**	1.887	479	2.656**	1.759	.039
Intended aggression T2	446	2.572	1.702	1	6	205	2.766**	1.772	241	2.407**	1.626	.026

* $p < .05$ (one-tailed test), ** $p < .05$ (two-tailed test).

While the higher participation rate among more prosocial inmates was not unexpected, the difference between the participants and non-participants needs to be kept in mind in interpreting posttest results.

Table 2 shows our model estimated for hypothesis testing (standardized coefficients are presented). We found completion of TPJ was positively related to religiosity at the posttest or Time 2 (.072). Since religiosity's Time 1 or previous (pretest) measure (religiosity T1) was controlled for, the positive relationship can be interpreted as causal: that is, participation in TPJ *increased* religiosity between the pretest and posttest. Thus, Hypothesis 1 received empirical support. Next, religiosity T2 was found to be positively related to one of three variables of identity transformation—crystallization of discontent (.135), a sense of meaning and purpose in life (.224), and all three measures of virtue: forgiveness (.320), accountability (.093), and self-control (.121). These positive relationships between religiosity and the indicators of rehabilitation at the posttest, while controlling for their pretest measures, indicate that TPJ-increased religiosity contributed to inmate's cognitive motivation for identity transformation, perceived presence of meaning and purpose in life, and virtue development. That is, we found empirical support for Hypothesis 2a and, to a greater extent, Hypotheses 2b and 2c.

The last two columns show that each ultimate endogenous variable had three significant predictors. First, emotional transformation decreased negative emotional states among prisoners (–.321). Also, the perceived presence of meaning in life (–.137) and self-control (–.339) contributed to emotional well-being by lowering the levels of depression, anxiety, anger, and frustration among inmates. Second, the risk of interpersonal aggression was reduced by three virtues: forgiveness (–.182), accountability (–.118), and self-control (–.156). It made sense that forgiveness (forgiving self and others for wrongdoing and asking others for forgiveness) and accountability (a sense of responsibility to others) decreased the likelihood of engaging in aggression toward another inmate, as they are both likely related to empathy toward other people and so inconsistent with being aggressive toward them. The inverse relationship between self-control and intended aggression is also consistent with Gottfredson and Hisrchi's (1990) general theory of crime.[13] In sum, Hypotheses 3a and 3b equally received partial support.

When it was examined whether an inmate's religion had significant indirect effects on negative emotions and intended aggression via prisoner rehabilitation, we found that two of the three predictors of each ultimate endogenous variable significantly mediated the effects of religiosity on the endogenous variable (see the bottom panel of Table 2). Specifically, the presence of meaning (–.031) and self-control (–.041) mediated the effect of religiosity on negative emotions, whereas the effect of religiosity on intended aggression was mediated by forgiveness (–.058). In addition, completion of TPJ decreased negative emotions indirectly through emotional identity transformation (–.025).

Finally, we conducted a supplemental analysis to explore whether TPJ had differential effects on the program's primary outcome, religiosity, between the two countries. For this analysis, we created a multiplicative interaction term of two dummy variables, (TPJ × Colombia). Results from estimating a model including the interaction term showed that the interaction was significant in the positive direction (.147): that is, TPJ was more likely to increase religiosity among Colombian than South African inmates (complete results are available upon request).[14] While it is difficult to explain why TPJ was less effective for South African inmates without additional data, it was our impression that many inmates who signed up for TPJ in South Africa may have already been religious compared to those in Colombia. Indeed, we found the dummy variable of Colombia was inversely correlated with religiosity at the pretest (–.170). Consequently, we explored whether the weak effect of TPJ on religiosity among them was due in part to their already high levels of religiosity before they participated in the program.

Specifically, we examined whether religiosity was more likely to increase among inmates who were initially less than more religious at the pretest. First, the sample (n = 437 including six

Table 2. A Model of TPJ Participation, Religiosity, Prisoner Rehabilitation, and Affective and Behavioral Outcomes Among Colombian and South African Inmates (n = 861).

Variable	Religiosity T2	Cognitive transf. T2	Emotional transf. T2	Crystal. of discont. T2	Presence of meaning T2	Forgiveness T2	Accountability T2	Self-control T2	Negative emotions T2	Intended aggression T2
Age	−.037	.008	.046	.089	−.060	.002	.127**	.015	−.107	−.039
Male	.025	−.080	−.092	−.104**	−.046	−.112**	−.083	.072	−.068	.154**
Education	−.065	.073	.129	.093	.167	−.042	.039	.228**	.073	−.084
Single	−.070	−.038	.030	−.025	−.049	.025	.013	−.121**	−.090	.026
No religion	−.026	−.048	.071	−.039	.047	−.014	−.047	−.109**	−.003	.003
Property offense	.010	−.071	.015	.102	−.151	−.002	−.005	.165	.092	.058
Sex offense	.065	−.165	.018	.043	−.198	.075	−.146	.170	.131	.102
Drug offense	−.068	−.216	.104	−.009	−.003	.001	.051	−.050	−.030	.122
Other offense	−.037	−.021	.062	−.031	−.193	−.108	−.091	.055	.036	.001
Colombia	−.154	.284**	.156	.178	−.234	−.068	−.055	.339	.149	.104
Religiosity T1	.591**	.025	.010	−.109**	−.041	−.105	−.046	−.075	.119**	−.008
Cognitive transf. T1	.001	.034	.031	.007	.037	.080	.074	−.021	−.029	−.011
Emotional transf. T1	−.059	.034	.255**	.012	.048	.088	−.041	.052	−.003	.065
Crystal. of discontent T1	.018	.102	.053	.326**	.081	.005	.126**	.020	.037	−.010
Presence of meaning T1	.085**	.154**	−.019	−.023	.316**	.049	.051	.069	.056	.074
Forgiveness T1	.014	.059	.013	.039	.043	.327**	.060	−.023	.049	.034
Accountability T1	−.046	.034	−.011	.116*	.153**	−.006	.238**	−.018	−.011	−.052
Self−control T1	.030	−.001	.158**	.048	.027	.013	.041	.355**	.041	−.077
Negative emotions T1	−.029	.051	−.100**	.021	.003	.040	−.070	−.072	.188**	.006
Intended aggression T1	−.042	.044	.018	−.005	.033	−.026	.034	−.083*	.056	.269**
Participation in TPJ	.072*	.054	.079*	.062	.015	.005	.063	.009	.007	−.004
Religiosity T2		.043	.013	.135**	.224**	.320**	.093*	.121**	−.041	−.084
Cognitive transf. T2									−.007	.135**
Emotional transf. T2		_−.008_							−.321**	−.043
Crystal. of discontent T2		_.424**_	_.019_						−.044	.079
Presence of meaning T2		_.186**_	_−.004_	_.171**_					−.137**	.056
Forgiveness T2		_.233**_	_.132**_	_.123**_	_.179**_				.013	−.182**
Accountability T2		_.294**_	_.046_	_.299**_	_.132**_	_.263**_			−.021	−.118**
Self−control T2		_.005_	_.222**_	_−.035_	_.085_	_.088*_	_.026_		−.339**	−.156**

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

Variable	Religiosity T2	Cognitive transf. T2	Emotional transf. T2	Crystal. of discont. T2	Presence of meaning T2	Forgiveness T2	Accountability T2	Self-control T2	Negative emotions T2	Intended aggression T2
R^2	.444	.265	.202	.212	.332	.317	.215	.308	.421	.266
Indirect effect of Relig. T2										
via Pres. of meaning T2									−.031**	
via Forgiveness T2										−.058**
via Self–control T2									−.041**	
Indirect effect of TPJ										
via Emo. Transf. T2									−.025*	

Note. Standardized coefficients are presented, and coefficients in italics refer to residual correlations among the variables of rehabilitation.
*$p < .05$ (one-tailed test), **$p < .05$ (two-tailed test).

missing cases) was split into two groups, "low" and "high" religiosity at the pretest, using the mean. Then paired samples *t*-test was conducted separately for each group to see whether there was any difference in a change in religiosity between the pretest and posttest. The results were consistent with our suspicion. That is, religiosity significantly increased from .444 to .644 among initially less-religious inmates, whereas it *decreased* from .967 to .908 among their more-religious counterparts. We found the same when the median instead of mean was used to create two groups. In fact, we found the same pattern among Colombian inmates. That is, religiosity increased from –3.820 to –2.695 among below-average religious inmates but *decreased* from 2.398 to 1.706 among the other inmates although a significant change (decrease) was observed only among inmates whose religiosity was the median or higher.

Discussion

Religion was a major contributing factor to the emergence of corrections in America at the end of the 17th century. William Penn, who was motivated by his humanitarian Quaker beliefs, revised the Pennsylvania Colony's criminal code (which abolished the death penalty for all crimes except for murder) and ordered a new institution (a county jail) be built to replace the brutal practices and harsh public punishment. After almost 60 years of setbacks following his death, Pennsylvania again adopted Penn's code in 1776. Led again by Quakers, they engaged in prison reform and built a separate wing of Philadelphia's Walnut Street Jail to house felons in solitary cells (called the penitentiary house). This was a forerunner of the Pennsylvania state prison, the Western and Eastern Penitentiaries, which would be built in the early 19th century. For supporters of the Pennsylvania system, the penitentiary was truly a place to do penance, as criminals were meant to reflect on the evils of crime and to seek reform. By the 1870s, the system's solitary confinement ended, as New York's Auburn system (congregate confinement) prevailed and spread throughout the United States (Rubin, 2013).

Since the end of the Pennsylvania system, prison reform efforts have not included lessons learned from faith-based approaches, despite the prominent role of religion within prisons and the empirical evidence of the benefits of faith-based prison programs (Johnson, 2011). This oversight may in part be due to the increasing secularization of American society. Nonetheless, religion remains an invaluable resource for American corrections, by enhancing prisoner rehabilitation and reducing recidivism (Hallett et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2021). Religiously motivated volunteers continue to provide prisoners with non-religious (e.g., adult basic education, anger management, and entrepreneurship) as well as religious programs. The work of faith-based groups and individuals comes at a time when prison administrators find it increasingly difficult to fund educational, vocational, and rehabilitative programs due to constricting budgets. At the same time, an emerging body of evidence confirms that inmate involvement in religion is related positively to emotional well-being and inversely to prison misconduct (Clear & Sumter, 2002; Jang et al., 2021; Kerley et al., 2005, 2011).

In this paper, we conceptualized rehabilitation as a prosocial change in self-identity, existential belief, and moral character from a human flourishing perspective (VanderWeele, 2017), operationalizing it in terms of identity transformation, a new sense of meaning and purpose in life, and virtue development. Our conceptualization is also consistent with the "Good Lives Model" (GLM) of offender rehabilitation (Ward & Brown, 2004; Ward & Maruna, 2007; Ward & Stewart, 2003). Results from analyzing data from a quasi-experimental study assessing a faith-based program, "The Prisoner's Journey" (TPJ), showed TPJ-increased religiosity contributed to identity transformation via crystallization of discontent, enhanced the perception of meaning and purpose in life, and fostered the virtues of forgiveness, accountability, and self-control among prisoners in Colombia and South Africa. These indicators of rehabilitation in turn were found to reduce

negative emotional states and the risk of interpersonal aggression. These findings are consistent with what previous studies found based on data from Western countries, mostly the United States (e.g., Hallett et al., 2017; Jang et al., 2018a; Kerley & Copes, 2009; Maruna, 2001; but see Jang et al., 2019). Thus, our study shows that religion has cross-cultural effect on prisoner rehabilitation.

The present finding provides empirical evidence of religion's contribution to prisoner rehabilitation from a human flourishing perspective. In addition to risk factors, we need to consider offenders as potential health assets and begin to focus on a broader range of health-related states among prisoners. As "wounded healers," prisoners have the capacity to help others in a process of restoration and human flourishing that is consistent with the GLM. First, a fundamental change in self-identity from criminal to conventional self is essential to rehabilitation as identity theories of criminal desistance posit. In addition, it is necessary to help prisoners understand how a lack of life goals or unmet primary human needs led them to live a life of crime, as they are goal-directed beings (Emmons, 1999). We found religion helped prisoners meet two intrinsic human needs, a sense of "meaning and purpose" (which GLM calls "spirituality") and "character and virtue" (VanderWeele, 2017, p. 8149), which in turn improved their emotional well-being and behaviors—as is consistent with prior research (Jang et al., 2018a, 2021). These "spiritual" and virtuous effects of religion imply that prisoners are existential and moral as well as goal-directed beings like their peers in a general population (Smith, 2003) and that they should be thought of as potential assets of human flourishing rather than liabilities simply to be managed.

Religion provides prisoners with a narrative of repentance, responsibility-taking, and redemption, which gives them hope for a new start with a clean slate, enabling them to replace their old criminal identity with a new conventional one (Anderson et al., 2022). As a system of meaning, religion can offer the incarcerated a sense of meaning and purpose in life. In addition, religion can help prisons operate as truly "correctional" institutions by fostering virtues among prisoners. For example, by utilizing a faith-based prison community such as the Prison Fellowship Academy, Cullen et al. (2014, p. 74) illustrated how a "virtuous prison"—whose mission is "to use offenders' time of incarceration to cultivate moral awareness and the capacity to act virtuously"—might be possible.[15] Research evaluating this prison initiative, which was first established in Texas and Minnesota, reported that program participants and especially graduates had lower recidivism than the non-participants (Duwe & King, 2012; Johnson & Larson, 2003), indicating that the religion-based virtuous prison is a realistic idea (Johnson et al., 2021).

State and federal government bodies, whether criminal justice or social service agencies, are not allowed to fund religious programs to rehabilitate prisoners. However, they are constitutionally mandated to protect a prisoner's First Amendment right to practice his or her choice of religion. In *Cutter v. Wilkinson*, 544 U.S. 709 (2005), the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously upheld the constitutionality of the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA) of 2000, which was passed by Congress to reinforce the protection (Pew Research Center, 2005). Thus, prisons can take advantage of the salutary function of religion for prisoner rehabilitation by allowing outside organizations, including churches, to make religious programs available to prisoners, ensuring that the programs are run within this constitutional boundary. Additionally, inmate-led or peer-to-peer religious programs should be considered alongside volunteer-led efforts, given the evidence for their effectiveness (Hallett et al., 2017; Jang et al., 2019).

Although our quasi-experimental study is a rare examination of religion's influence on prisoner rehabilitation from a human flourishing perspective, it is necessary to acknowledge key limitations so our findings can be interpreted with these shortcomings in mind. A first limitation concerns

selection bias due in part to a lack of random assignment.[16] Since the equivalence of treatment and control groups could not be established, particularly, with respect to inmate's previous religious involvement, the observed effect of TPJ on religiosity may not be fully attributed to the program. Another source of selection bias is a difference in security level between the treatment and control prisons, which might have resulted in a conservative test of programming effect since TPJ inmates were more serious offenders and thus could have been less susceptible to religion than non-TPJ inmates as religion might have been seen as a sign of weakness, opposite to a central feature of their prison code, toughness. Although we found the two groups were not significantly different at the pretest in most endogenous variables, selection bias should be kept in mind in interpreting our results.

A second limitation is a nontrivial attrition: that is, about four out of 10 pretest participants did not return for the posttest. While older, female and more prosocial and religious inmates participating in the second survey is not surprising, TPJ's impact on religiosity or the effect of religiosity on rehabilitation might have been overestimated to the extent that the returning inmates were more motivated to change themselves than the dropouts, if they had not overreported their progress in rehabilitation. The possible overestimation, however, should be weighed with our supplemental finding in mind that the faith-based program was more likely to increase religiosity among less or non-religious than more religious inmates. That is, posttest participants being more religious than non-participants might have made it more difficult to observe significant religious effects at the posttest.

Third, we did not examine how the presence of gangs in both countries' prisons affected the impact of religion and TPJ on prisoner rehabilitation. For example, inmates who were gang members might have weakened the impact through ridicule, threat, or even violence in reaction to TPJ participants getting religiously involved, resulting in an underestimation of the impact. Given prior research on the effects of religion, especially, evangelical Christianity on El Salvador prison and street gang members (Cruz et al., 2018; Cruz & Rosen, 2020), we call for research to examine under what circumstances prison gangs might restrict or enhance the rehabilitative effect of religion and faith-based programs, like TPJ. Fourth, our findings are not generalizable because this study was based on non-representative samples, and inferences are not allowed even about other prisons in Colombia and South Africa given the non-random selection of our research sites. Finally, while it was worth testing differences in the effect of TPJ on religiosity or religiosity on rehabilitation between male and female inmates given mixed findings about gender differences in the effect of religion (Sherkat & Ellison, 1999; Jang et al., 2021), we could not examine the difference because many female inmates had missing information about background characteristics. This is a worthy topic for future research.

Despite these limitations, we believe our study contributes to the criminological literature on religion and offender rehabilitation by testing whether inmate religiosity, which is increased by completing a faith-based program, leads to prisoner rehabilitation, conceptualized from a human flourishing perspective and measured in terms of identity transformation, a sense of meaning and purpose in life, and virtue development. Data from a quasi-experimental study of prisoners in Colombia and South Africa provide empirical evidence of religion's rehabilitative effects on those prisoners' self-identity, existential belief, and character. This finding is consistent with the Good Lives Model that rehabilitation efforts should promote human goods as well as manage risk factors for reoffending. In sum, the present study suggests that it would be prudent for prison administrators to be open to religious programs like "The Prisoner's Journey," for the sake of not only protecting an inmate's right to practice religion but also helping them achieve reform and even flourish before returning to society.

Appendix A

Table A1. Factor Loadings and Inter-Item Reliability of Items Used for Scales.

Variable	Pretest	Posttest
Religiosity		
a. How close do you feel to God most of time? (1 = not close at all, 2 = not very close, 3 = somewhat close, 4 = pretty close, 5 = extremely close)	.543	.469
b. How often do you currently attend religious services at a place of worship? (1 = never, 2 = less than once a year, 3 = once or twice a year, 4 = several times a year, 5 = once a month, 6 = 2-3 times a month, 7 = about weekly, 8 = several times a week)	.657	.663
c. About how often do you currently pray outside of religious services? (1 = never, 2 = only on certain occasions, 3 = once a week or less, 4 = A few times a week, 5 = once a day, 6 = several times a day)	.569	.597
d. In general, how important is religion to you? (1 = not at all, 2 = somewhat, 3 = fairly, 4 = very, 5 = extremely)	.552	.556
e. Outside of attending religious services, about how often do you currently spend private time reading the Bible, Koran, Torah, or other sacred book? (1 = never, 2 = less than once a year, 3 = once to several times a year, 4 = once a month, 5 = 2-3 times a month, 6 = about weekly, 7 = several times a week, 8 = everyday)	.581	.668
(Cronbach's α)	(.717)	(.728)
Cognitive transformation		
How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree)		
a. I am open to change.	.620	.703
b. I have a good new self that replaced my old bad self.	.470	.566
c. I am willing to have myself changed completely.	.689	.765
(Cronbach's α)	(.595)	(.704)
Emotional transformation (reverse-coded)		
How likely is it you would use each word below to describe yourself (e.g., "Angry Jose," "Nervous Bob") regardless of how you feel right now? (1 = very unlikely, 2 = unlikely, 3 = likely, 4 = very likely)		
a. Depressed (or Sad)	.728	.753
b. Angry (or Frustrated)	.666	.788
c. Nervous (or Worried)	.669	.736
(Cronbach's α)	(.729)	(.802)
Crystallization of discontent		
How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree)		
a. I would face a miserable future unless I change.	.554	.690
b. A life of offending will do more harm than good to me.	.626	.619
c. I have made a conscious decision to improve myself.	.351	.484
(Cronbach's α)	(.507)	(.613)
Presence of meaning		
How true or untrue is each of the following statements? (1 = absolutely untrue, 2 = mostly untrue, 3 = somewhat untrue, 4 = can't say true or false, 5 = somewhat true, 6 = mostly true, 7 = absolutely true)		
a. I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful.		
b. I have found a satisfying reason why I was born.		
(Cronbach's α)	(.692)	(.792)
Forgiveness		

(continued)

Table A1. (continued)

Variable	Pretest	Posttest
Please indicate how often you have done each of the following. (1 = never, 2 = seldom, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often)		
a. To forgive myself for things I have done wrong	.545	.519
b. To ask for forgiveness from those whom I have hurt	.683	.773
c. To forgive those who hurt me	.692	.751
(Cronbach's α)	(.674)	(.717)
Accountability		
How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree)		
a. I care about doing what is right even if nobody watches me.		
b. I am willing to accept my responsibility even if it costs me.		
(Cronbach's α)	(.583)	(.522)
Self-control (reverse-coded)		
How often would you say you do each of the following? (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = always)		
a. Act on the spur of the moment without stopping to think	.494	.541
b. Test myself by doing something a little risky	.537	.487
c. Try to get what I want even if it causes problems for others	.768	.589
d. Lose my temper	.633	.659
(Cronbach's α)	(.697)	(.650)
Negative emotions		
During the past week, how often have you experienced each of the following? (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = always)		
a. Felt angry	.564	.759
b. Felt depressed or sad	.686	.773
c. Felt frustrated	.823	.764
d. Felt nervous, anxious, and on edge	.541	.698
(Cronbach's α)	(.747)	(.835)

Appendix B

Table B1. Attrition Analysis.

	Posttest non-participants (n = 355)			Posttest participants (n = 506)			
Variable	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*n*	Mean	*SD*	*t*-test *p*
TPJ	355	.690**	.463	506	.551**	.498	.000
Age	222	34.572**	9.601	349	36.421**	10.606	.036
Male	346	.939**	.239	504	.704**	.457	.000
Education	217	3.180**	.943	328	2.921**	.925	.002
Single	225	.516	.501	364	.541	.499	.545
No religion	319	.060	.237	447	.049	.217	.531
Violent offense	193	.342	.476	302	.318	.466	.578
Property offense	173	.324	.469	292	.308	.463	.729
Sex offense	173	.173	.380	292	.264	.441	.020
Drug offense	194	.345	.477	302	.351	.478	.898

(continued)

Table B1. (continued)

Variable	Posttest non-participants (n = 355)			Posttest participants (n = 506)			t-test
	n	Mean	SD	n	Mean	SD	p
Other offense	160	.213	.410	261	.261	.440	.257
Colombia	355	.476	.500	506	.504	.500	.421
Religiosity T1	341	.186**	2.517	489	.534**	2.278	.038
Cognitive transformation T1	351	3.458**	.546	501	3.582**	.500	.001
Emotional transformation T1	348	2.372	.886	500	2.392	.855	.733
Crystallization of discontent T1	353	3.307**	.631	502	3.439**	.587	.002
Presence of meaning T1	351	5.731	1.413	490	5.884	1.369	.115
Forgiveness T1	352	3.214**	.736	503	3.336**	.685	.013
Accountability T1	348	3.388**	.643	499	3.475**	.626	.050
Self-control T1	346	3.532	.894	495	3.642	.854	.073
Negative emotions T1	347	2.781	.916	469	2.745	1.061	.610
Intended aggression T1	319	2.918**	1.789	462	2.654**	1.823	.045

*$p < .05$ (one-tailed test), **$p < .05$ (two-tailed test).

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Notes

1. A sixth domain is a necessary condition for flourishing to continue: sufficient stability and financial resources.

2. On the other hand, "instrumental or secondary goods" are concrete means or activities undertaken in pursuit of primary human goods (e.g., quality education and persistent employment).
3. Maintaining that the avoidance goal was the primary focus of the risk-need-responsivity (RNR) model developed earlier (Andrews et al., 1990; Bonta & Andrews, 2017), Ward and colleagues proposed the GLM as complementary to the RNR model (Ward & Maruna, 2007; Ward et al., 2012). However, their claimed complementarity was questioned by the authors of RNR model who argued that the GLM added little to their model (Andrews et al., 2011). This debate over the complementarity is beyond the scope of this paper.
4. This is consistent with VanderWeele's (2020) cognitive exercise of imagining one's best future self.
5. The five themes were: (1) "I'm not who I used to be," (2) "spiritual growth," (3) "God versus the prison code," (4) "positive outlook on life," and (5) "the need to give back to society."
6. The eight sessions are: (1) What is Christianity?; (2) Identity: Who is Jesus?; (3) Mission: Why did Jesus come?; (4) Mission: Why did Jesus die?; (5) Mission: Why did Jesus rise from the dead?; (6) Call: Grace; (7) Call: So what?; and (8) Call: Listen carefully.
7. For example, in 2006 only 1.4% of INPEC's budget was allocated for rehabilitation programs (Iturralde, 2016).
8. Although we had planned to select a comparable, maximum-security prison for control group, we could not find one (near Bellavista Prison) that was open to our study. The same happened in South Africa.
9. Program participation was operationalized in a binary manner because we could not collect data on the number of sessions attended, which would have allowed us to examine the TPJ's "dosage effect."
10. Being single (53.1%) and married or in common law marriage (43.1%) were the two modal categories with others combined being a small minority (3.9%), so we dichotomized marital status. Similarly, by affiliation, 86.3% of the sample were Christian (53.8% Protestant and 32.5% Catholic), so it was dichotomized as well. When the minor categories of both variables were included as separate dummy variables in analysis, model estimation failed.
11. We acknowledge that intended aggression was not the same as actual aggression since it might have been a biased, specifically, socially desirable response. The vignette method, however, has been used in criminological research, and previous studies found a strong correlation between intended and actual behaviors when a scenario was created to reflect locally relevant details (Jang et al., 2018a; Mazerolle et al., 2003; Nagin & Paternoster, 1993). We created a vignette of a specific situation likely to happen in prison and found reported probability was distributed across the six response options, though somewhat positively skewed—not likely at all (37.4%), very unlikely (17.5%), unlikely (11.9%), likely (11.7%), very likely (7.8%), and certainly (13.8%), implying that their responses were not completely biased.
12. The table shows that about one third to a half of the sample have missing data on control variables except for sex, religion, and country. While the missing data were treated using FIML for unbiased estimation, the substantial number of missing cases was the result of one of the two countries' national agency, despite their initial written agreement, deciding not to provide background information because "the offender's Profile Reports cannot be sent out of the country" (personal communication, February 8, 2021), according to a person who communicated with the agency on our behalf. Subsequently, we tried to collect the information via survey *ex post facto* but could do so with only about 70 pretest participants since many were not available due to transfer, release, or some other reason.
13. Cognitive transformation also had significant effect on intended aggression (.143), but it was opposite in direction, increasing rather than decreasing the risk of aggression. While it is difficult to explain this counterintuitive finding, it might be a methodological artifact due in part to limited measurement of the concept.
14. See Jang et al. (in press) for a separate analysis based only on Colombia data.
15. The Prison Fellowship Academy was formerly known as the InnerChange Freedom Initiative.
16. Conducting a longitudinal study in a developing country's correctional system is a significant challenge, to say the least, and we faced many obstacles in the course of research. For example, despite arriving early in the

morning with a document showing a national criminal justice agency's approval for our research, we often had to wait for two to three hours before a regional superintendent would approve our entry. We also had to make multiple visits, exchange numerous emails, and schedule several Zoom meetings to get responses to our requests (e.g., see footnote 12). In such an environment, random assignment was simply not possible.

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