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Issue 3

# Insight:

## Correctional Rehabilitation Research Bulletin

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Hong Kong Correctional Services

# **Insight:**

## **Correctional Rehabilitation**

### **Research Bulletin**

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## *Foreword*



Evidence-based corrections employ the best available research to guide practice and policy-making in correctional rehabilitation. Integrating insights from international studies and conducting localised research accomplish the Department's mission to foster desistance from crime, enhance crime prevention and uphold public safety.

*“What Works: How Research Can Help in Offender Rehabilitation”* remains the theme of this issue. We begin with valuable insights from Dr LEUNG Kin-ip Kenneth, our honorary advisor and former Deputy Commissioner (Rehabilitation and Management), who shared with us the pursuit of correctional excellence through research, staff expertise and perspectives of persons in custody (PICs) in the digital era. This issue then introduces technology-assisted psychological interventions which have shown promising preliminary outcomes. Furthermore, the launch of the Digital Well-Being Psycho-Education Programme has demonstrated the effectiveness in helping young PICs cultivate balanced use of social media, thereby fostering their psychological well-being. Additionally, a local study has supported the implementation of rehabilitative security in young offender institutions as evident from a trial run at the Sha Tsui Correctional Institution which underscored its potential in enhancing correctional practices.

I hope this research bulletin provides meaningful insights and fosters collaboration, knowledge sharing and professional exchanges across multiple disciplines within our Department, reinforcing our steadfast commitment to correctional excellence.

Dr. Yvonne LEE

Senior Clinical Psychologist

Coordinator of Correctional Rehabilitation Research Unit

Hong Kong Correctional Services Department



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# **What Works?**

## **How Research Can Help in Offender Rehabilitation**

## Article 1

# A Professional Dialogue with Honorary Advisor Dr. LEUNG Kin-ip, Kenneth: What Works to Achieve Excellence in Correctional Services



**Dr. Yvonne K.S. LEE<sup>1</sup>, Mr. W.S. LAU<sup>2</sup>,  
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## *Introduction of our Honorary Advisor Dr. LEUNG Kin-ip, Kenneth*

Dr. LEUNG Kin-ip, Kenneth, CSDSM, the former Deputy Commissioner (Rehabilitation and Management), has been appointed the Honorary Advisor on rehabilitation services following his retirement from the Correctional Services Department (CSD). With nearly 30 years of experience in the Rehabilitation Division and the Operations Division, Dr. LEUNG is well-recognised for his

strategic leadership, extensive expertise in correctional services and academic achievement – a Doctoral Degree in Social Work, which together positions him as a leading figure in the field. Dr. LEUNG was invited to an exclusive interview with Senior Clinical Psychologist, Dr. Yvonne LEE to share insights into the continuous evolution of rehabilitation for persons in custody (PICs), explore advancements in correctional rehabilitation researches, and examine best practices, emerging challenges and future directions within this pivotal domain.

**Dr. LEE: As you're the driving force behind the establishment of the Correctional Rehabilitation Research Unit, it is our honour to seek your insights into the promotion of an evidence-based approach in correctional rehabilitation. In your view, how does professional research advance the Department's vision, mission and values?**

**Dr. LEUNG:** While defining successful rehabilitation is inherently complex, **research serves as the backbone** for enhancing the effectiveness of rehabilitation services for PICs. By providing evidence-based insights, research tells us what works for diverse offender populations with distinct characteristics - including short-termers, lifers and others. Updated literature on Risk-Needs-Responsivity Model, Good Lives Model and Desistance theories also allows for the refinement of intervention methods tailored to their specific needs.

Besides, research enables the CSD to evolve as a **learning organisation**, integrating academic knowledge and practical experience to devise strategic approaches that address PICs' needs - even at an individualised level. This multidisciplinary, holistic framework ensures that rehabilitation initiatives are not only grounded in robust research but also responsive to the unique needs of local PICs and correctional settings.

By combining local research findings with correctional staff expertise, the CSD can **formulate long-term strategies to develop individualised, effective and sustainable rehabilitation services**, reinforcing its commitment to rehabilitative success and upholding its core values.







*Leveraging professional research, staff experience and PICs' perspective to enhance excellence in correctional services*

**Dr. LEE:** The Department has devoted substantial efforts and resources to addressing PICs' needs, focusing on reducing re-offending and ensuring appropriate rehabilitation programmes during incarceration. Could you share your thoughts and experiences in handling PICs' rehabilitative needs?

**Dr. LEUNG:** Before designing rehabilitation programmes, it is essential to conduct **thorough research** to gain a comprehensive understanding of the diverse characteristics of PICs. This principle initiated the Study on Risks and Needs Assessment and Management Protocols for Offenders in Hong Kong two decades ago as well as the subsequent review study in recent years. **Collecting information directly from PICs** using these locally developed tools is of paramount importance, as effective rehabilitation has to be handled on a case-by-case basis, even among individuals of similar ages, offences, personalities, etc. The process involves **analysing offence patterns, identifying underlying reasons for the criminal behaviour, assessing re-offending risks and evaluating their specific rehabilitative needs.** The **"one-size-fits-all" approach is inadequate**, as effective rehabilitation requires interventions tailored to each PIC's background, motives of offence and criminogenic needs.

**Dr. LEE:** Yes, research provides valuable insights into effective rehabilitation. However, given the financial strain, scarcity of resources in

**prisons and manpower shortage, what measures would you consider helpful for our correctional services?**

**Dr. LEUNG:** To address these challenges, correctional services must evolve with the times by embracing technological advancements that enhance security, efficiency and rehabilitation outcome. Innovations such as **digitalised visits, e-messaging, robot patrols and unit management** offer us opportunities to streamline prison operations within the existing financial and manpower constraints. Thanks to modern technologies, we have introduced innovative services to strengthen family connections for PICs, improve surveillance and optimise administrative processes. By integrating technological solutions to provide support for PICs who are detained under a stressful custodial environment, both individuals and society can benefit as a whole, paving the way for more effective and humane correctional services.

**Dr. LEE:** Correctional officers are often described fulfilling dual roles as “Society’s Guardian” and “Rehabilitation Facilitator”. Beyond ensuring safety, security and good order within correctional institutions, they also contribute to the rehabilitation of PICs. In this regard, what advice would you give our staff to meet these expectations?

**Dr. LEUNG:** Prison is a miniature of society, where PICs interact with our staff in their everyday lives, building up complex relationships. Adopting **rehabilitative security approach** empowers correctional officers to supervise PICs with a balance of discipline and support, thereby fostering their successful reintegration into society. This approach also enhances officers’ job satisfaction as they take pride in contributing to changing lives for the better (Lee, Hung, Tam & Chau, 2023). Programmes like the **Ethics College** play a vital role by reinforcing education and job opportunities, instilling prosocial values, and most importantly, providing opportunities for upward mobility for PICs upon their release.

Practically speaking, to establish a rehabilitative culture within correctional facilities, we are required to shape an environment where correctional officers act as case managers. This entails maintaining supervision while providing care, similar to how **good parents raise children with structure while fostering growth and development**.

**Dr. LEE:** Our services rely heavily on our frontline staff, as they interact with PICs all the time. What recommendations would you give the management on how to support our frontline staff so that they could perform their duties



**without undue stress?**

**Dr. LEUNG:** **Staff training** is crucial to equipping correctional officers with the necessary skills in security, rehabilitation and counselling for fostering the reintegration of PICs. Drawing inspiration from the movie Good Will Hunting 《驕陽似我》, we see the transformative power of empathetic mentorship in unlocking the potential of PICs and guiding them towards a bright future.

In addition, **motivation** is a key drive for both PICs and our staff. For PICs, incentives like education or reduced sentences encourage commitment to rehabilitation; as for our staff, recognition and purposefulness make their dedication sustainable.

**Counseling skills** that emphasise active listening and empathy help build trust, address trauma and promote a constructive relationship between staff and PICs, which altogether create an environment conducive to positive changes. On the contrary, stereotyping PICs as merely “criminals” should be avoided, as such labelling dehumanises individuals and provokes rebellious, anti-social behaviour.



A rehabilitative security training session delivered by clinical psychologists in HKCSA

**Dr. LEE:** **Correctional literature highlights a strong relationship between the job satisfaction of correctional staff and the successful rehabilitation of PICs. Do you have any comments on how to enhance staff morale in the current circumstances?**

**Dr. LEUNG:** Staff well-being is undoubtedly invaluable - not only to the organisation but also to PICs who strive for reintegrating into society. One effective initiative is the implementation of humanity-focused workshops under “**Project E**”. These workshops aim to **improve staff well-being, reduce stress**, and at the same time **foster a more rehabilitative environment** by promoting empathy and understanding towards both colleagues and PICs.

Furthermore, we should let **frontline staff share their success stories**, showcasing their dedication and value of their services. This approach raises awareness, reduces stigma, and highlights the impact of their efforts. Adapting this model could involve structured sessions where staff reflect on transformative moments – whether helping PICs with reintegration or overcoming personal challenges. When it comes to job satisfaction, providing staff with opportunities to speak out for themselves will let them feel being recognised, find meaning in their roles and rediscover the worthiness of their work.

**Dr. LEE:** Thank you very much, Dr. LEUNG, for sharing your views on how to use research evidence to enhance our rehabilitation services. As most of correctional staff do not have regular access to academic journals, how can we effectively share research findings with our colleagues, particularly from the perspectives of correctional staff?

**Dr. LEUNG:** The Correctional Rehabilitation Research Unit can establish a research library with a collection of journal articles relevant to our correctional services. To facilitate learning, we can also encourage correctional officers to engage in research initiatives or make presentations to senior officers, bridging theoretical knowledge with practical application and seamlessly integrating research findings into **staff training**. Fostering intellectual engagement boosts **staff motivation** - recognising officers’ contributions instils a sense of autonomy and competence, effectively mitigating burnout. I sincerely hope that a vibrant research culture will gradually flourish within the Department. I look forward to receiving updates on this progress.

**Dr. LEE:** Of course, we are always eager to share our progress with you. We hope this will not take away your well-deserved time pursuing your hobbies such as first-person view drone piloting and physical fitness courses. We sincerely appreciate your time and invaluable wisdom, which give meaningful directions for our research unit to make impactful contributions. Thank you again for your unwavering support and insightful guidance.



## ***Insights***

### **1. Research as Backbone**

Research serves as evidence-based foundation for rehabilitative policies and practices, driving the department's development into a learning organisation that fosters continuous professional growth among correctional staff.

### **2. Insights from Real Life Experiences**

To understand the rehabilitative needs of PICs, nothing works better than firsthand insights from frontline staff and PICs, whose lived experiences reveal the daily challenges and the concealed needs.

### **3. Embracing Innovation in Prison Management**

Given the ever-evolving needs of PICs - just like how needs of children are always changing - prison management must uphold an open mindset, embracing the latest research insights and making good use of modern technology to enhance rehabilitative efforts

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## Article 2

# Application of Modern Technology in Psychological Interventions: What Works for the Rehabilitation of Persons in Custody



**Ms. Daisy H.M. YEUNG, Clinical Psychologist, CSD**  
**Ms. Backy H.Y. TONG, Clinical Psychologist, CSD**

The Correctional Services Department (CSD) is committed to meeting the custodial and rehabilitative needs of persons in custody (PICs) through the application of innovative technology. Over the past decade, technological advancements have essentially taken psychological assessment and treatment to a new era. This article discusses the major types of technology-assisted psychological interventions currently used in the CSD.

### *Virtual Reality (VR) Role-playing*

#### *What is VR?*

VR uses computer modelling and simulation to enable a person to interact with an artificial three-dimensional environment (Lowood, 2025). Its immersive and interactive virtual environment allows users to practise skills or be exposed to different stimuli in a realistic yet safe manner. VR also has the advantages of simulating situations that are difficult to access, as well as ensuring the consistent delivery of stimuli.

#### *Scenario-based VR role-play system*

As a pioneering attempt, Psychological Services Section 1 (PSS1) developed the first scenario-based VR role-play system in 2017, which is one of the earliest





locally developed VR programmes for psychological interventions in Hong Kong. The current version of the system consists of five different VR scenarios for role-playing based on the themes of anger management (AM) and relapse prevention (RP).

The VR system offers PICs opportunities to practise and consolidate skills learnt in psychological treatment through role-playing, which prepare them for future challenges they may encounter in the community. In the AM scenario, PICs are subject to provocation by a virtual character in a work setting. They are expected to apply previously learnt anger management techniques to respond calmly and assertively. In the RP scenario, PICs are tempted by a virtual character to engage in high-risk or offending behaviour, e.g. abusing drugs, gambling or making money through illicit means. They are then instructed to firmly refuse the virtual character's invitation by applying their skills of challenging maladaptive thinking and resisting negative peer pressure assertively. The diagram below gives an overview of how the VR system works. Clinical psychologists (CPs) will review with PICs their performance in the role-play, so that PICs can receive feedbacks on their skill level and identify room for improvement.

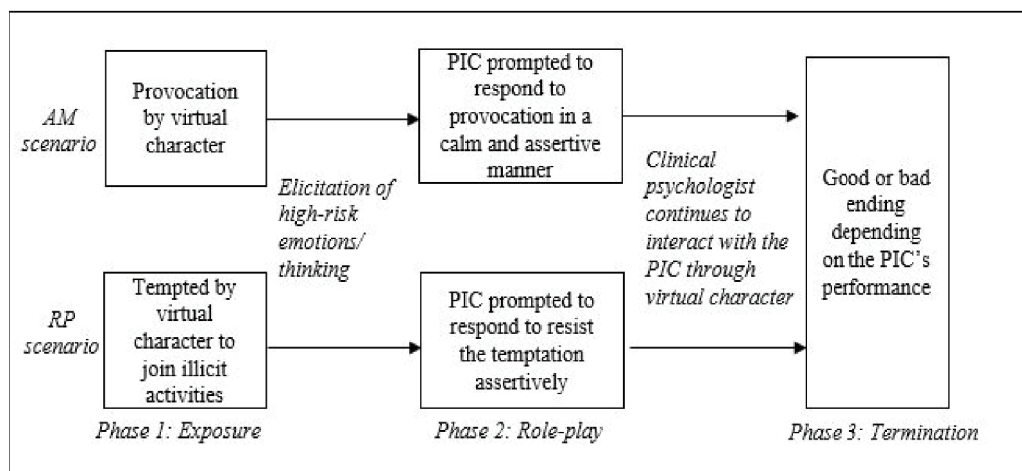
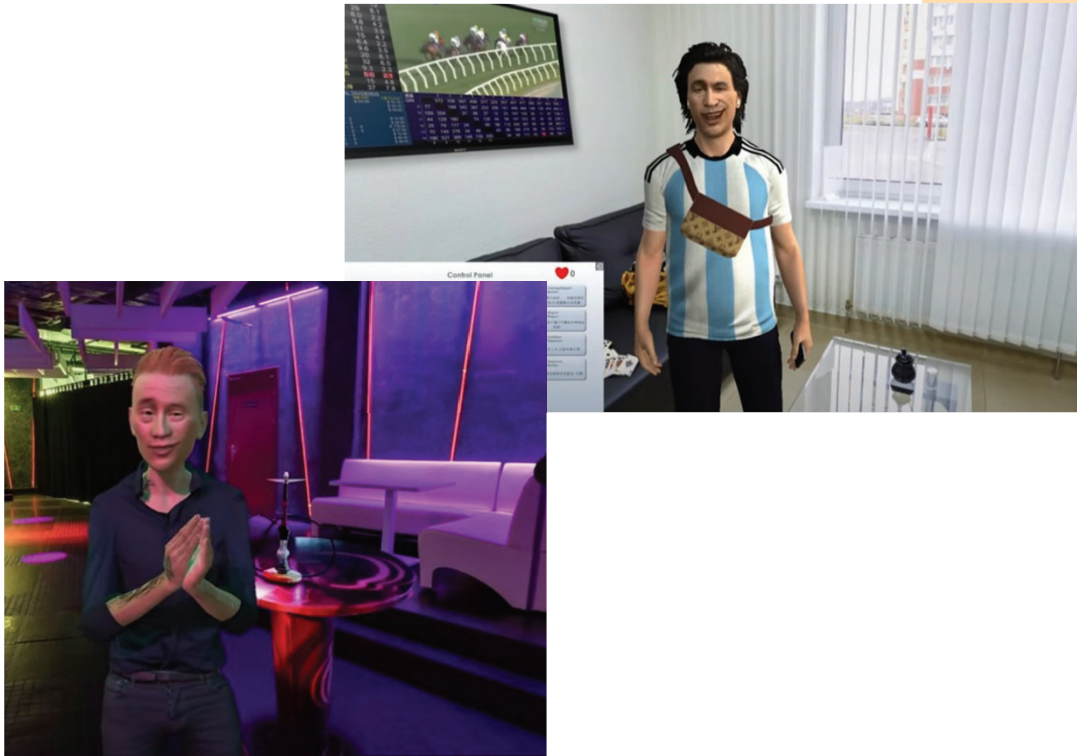


Figure 1. Structure of the VR scenarios



*Figure 2. RP – Substance Abuse VR scenario (left) and RP – Gambling VR scenario (right)*

In late 2024, a new feature known as the “Scenario Generator” was added to our VR system. Its user-friendly interface enables PSS staff to easily create VR scenarios and customise the background, virtual character and verbal responses of any existing VR scenario according to individual PIC’s needs. This feature brings great flexibility and unlimited possibilities to future VR role-playing.

A group of 38 PICs in Stanley Prison and Shek Pik Prison have shared their feedbacks regarding the VR role-playing experience. On the User Experience Questionnaire, which asked PICs to rate the VR system on different descriptors using a scale of 0-7, it was found that “practical” ( $M = 5.81$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ) and “leading-edge” ( $M = 5.76$ ,  $SD = 1.55$ ) were the descriptors with the highest ratings. Besides, when PICs were asked whether they agreed that “VR role-playing is more effective than conventional role-playing” on a scale of 0-10 (0 = totally disagree, 10 = totally agree), PICs ( $n = 66$ ) generally agreed with the statement ( $M = 7.21$ ,  $SD = 2.76$ ), which strongly supports the use of VR role-playing in correctional settings.



## *Digitalised Psychological Programmes*

*What are digitalised psychological programmes?*

Literally psychological programmes delivered via digital technology, which can be self-help or guided. The emerging consensus is that guided interventions tend to be more effective than self-help programmes (Taylor et al., 2020).

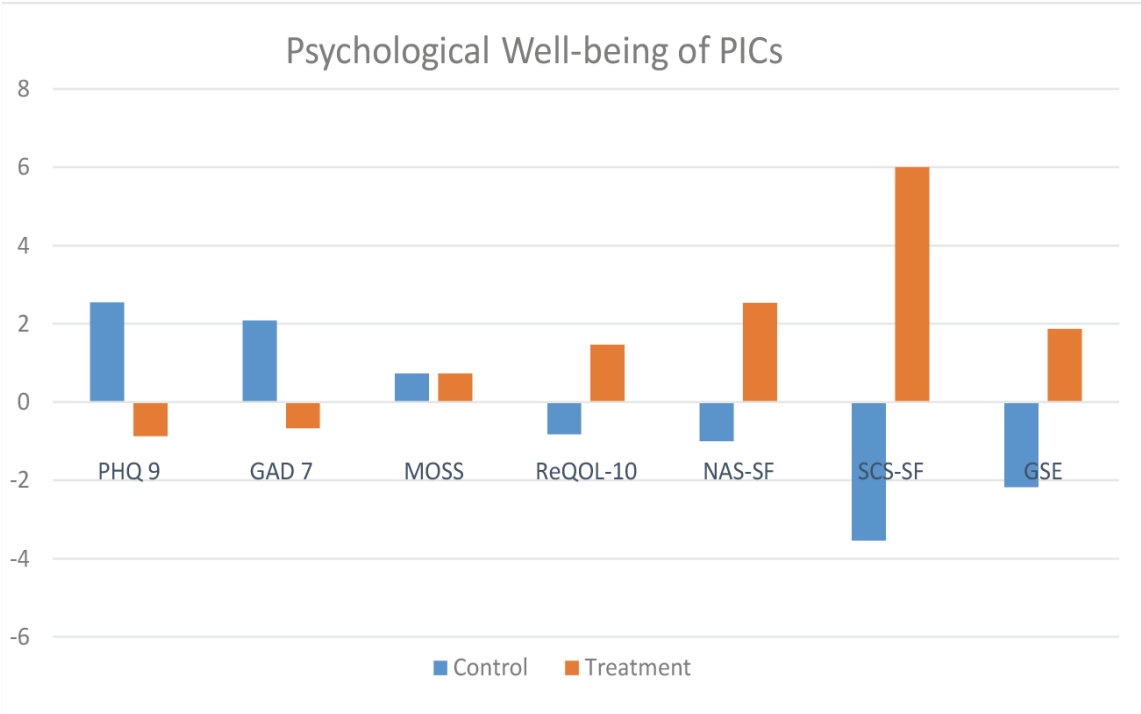
*“Psyber Space” and “Living With Heart”*

PSS1 developed its first digitalised psychological programme “Psyber Space” for PICs in 2020. Delivered via an electronic tablet, Psyber Space features therapeutic modules as well as multimedia psychological resources. PICs can learn from the programme at their own pace under the guidance of CPs. The interactive elements of the programme aim to enhance PICs’ learning experience. Furthermore, rewards such as music tracks and games can be unlocked by PICs after completing assigned materials, which enhance their motivation to participate in the programme.



*Learning through multimedia modality enhances treatment motivation*

A mindfulness-based digitalised programme named “Living with Heart” (LWH) was further introduced in 2024. In collaboration with The Chinese University of Hong Kong, this self-help programme was designed to enhance PICs’ stress coping ability and psychological well-being by cultivating awareness of the present moment and a non-judgemental attitude. Preliminary data of a small sample of adult male PICs in control group (n = 11) and treatment group (n = 15) were collected. The effectiveness of the programme on PICs’ psychological well-being was measured by the self-report measures on their own quality of health, anxiety level, quality of sleep, quality of life, self-compassion, non-attachment and self-efficacy. The results were promising at this initial stage. While all measures showed an improvement trend, there was significant enhancement in self-compassion ( $t(24) = 2.85$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and self-efficacy ( $t(24) = 1.87$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The improvement trends of the scales are shown in Figure 3.



PHQ 9: Patient Health Questionnaire 9  
GAD 7: General Anxiety Disorder 7  
MOSS: Medical Outcomes Study Sleep Scale  
ReQOL-10: Recovery of Quality of Life-10

NAS-SF: Non-attachment Scale-Short Form  
SCS-SF: Self-compassion Scale-Short Form  
GSE: General Self-efficacy Scale

*Figure 3. Psychological well-being of PICs in treatment group (i.e. having completed LWH programme) and control group*





PICs learning from the LWH programme under CP's guidance

### *What is telepsychology?*

Telepsychology is the provision of psychological services using telecommunication technologies such as telephone, mobile devices, videoconferencing (VC), etc. (Joint Task Force for the Development of Telepsychology Guidelines for Psychologists, 2013). Telepsychology via VC has been shown to have the same outcome and satisfaction as in-person psychotherapy, with additional advantages such as convenience and stigma reduction (Thomas et al., 2021).

### *Project “Breakthrough”*

Launched by the Evaluation and Treatment Unit (ETU) – Psychological Programmes for Persons with Sexual Offending Behaviours at Siu Lam Psychiatric Centre in 2023, Project “Breakthrough” aims at bringing the vision of a good life closer to PICs through the application of technology. Under this project, a total of five rehabilitated persons who have completed ETU treatment and returned to the community have shared their experiences of community reintegration with 120 PICs serving at ETU via VC so far.

PICs have benefited from the tried-and-true tips on topics such as rebuilding self-confidence at work, managing sexual preoccupation and deviant sex urge, etc. presented by rehabilitated persons. The latter's genuine sharing of their struggles and subsequent success in rehabilitation is powerful in instilling hope and optimism in PICs. At the same time, rehabilitated persons' new identity as guest speakers who can contribute to society strongly reinforces their prosocial orientation. They also receive appreciation and

recognition for their rehabilitative efforts and positive changes. This is important as desistance research has posited that discharged offenders tend to stay away from crime when they are geared towards their prosocial selves (Maruna & Toch, 2015).

Last but not least, since allowing rehabilitated persons to visit correctional institutions and make direct contact with PICs incurs security risks, using VC for sharing by rehabilitated persons can greatly minimise such risks while yielding positive impacts.



Sharing by rehabilitated persons with PICs, facilitated by CPs

## ***Conclusion***

Incorporating technology into psychological interventions has become a norm in the Information Age. Our experience shows that the application of innovative technology has clearly enriched the psychological services for PICs. To further study and develop technology-assisted psychological interventions, the PSS has set up the Modern Technology Working Group in 2024. We believe continuous exploration in this area will open up exciting possibilities in the psychological assessment and treatment of PICs, thereby benefiting more PICs in need in the future.

# Insights

## 1. Practical and Innovative

PICs found the VR role-play system developed by PSS1 “practical” and a “leading edge”. Most of them also considered VR role-playing more effective than conventional role-play in preparing them for dealing with future high-risk situations.

## 2. Enhanced Self-Compassion and Self-Efficacy

PICs who have completed the digitalised psychological programme “Living with Heart” show significant enhancement in self-compassion and self-efficacy.

## 3. Supporting Desistance and Hope Instillation

Through enabling rehabilitated persons to share their experience in community reintegration with PICs via VC, Project “Breakthrough” supports the former’s desistance and instils hope in the latter.

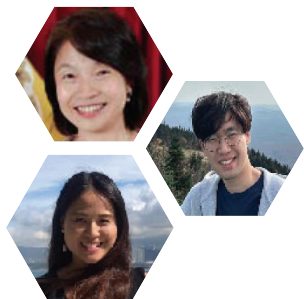
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## Article 3

# Digital Well-Being Psycho-Education Programme: What Works for Young Persons in Custody



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In today's digital era, smartphones, social media and digital entertainment have become an integral part of modern life. To support young persons in custody (PICs) in navigating the digital world more healthily and responsibly, the Digital Well-Being Psycho-Education Programme was introduced in young offender institutions namely Pik Uk Correctional Institution, Sha Tsui Correctional Institution and Lai King Correctional Institution in 2023. This article explores the rationale behind launching this initiative in young offender institutions, provides an overview of the programme's objectives, demonstrates its effectiveness and discusses its future direction in fostering digital resilience among young PICs.

## *What is Digital Well-Being?*

Digital well-being is about maintaining a healthy relationship with technology — using digital devices and platforms in a way that enhances life rather than distracts from it. It involves managing screen time, staying mindful of online interactions, maintaining a balance between the virtual and physical world and ensuring that tech-



nology supports mental, emotional and social health rather than causing stress or distraction.

## ***Why is Digital Well-Being Important for the Youth?***

Maintaining digital well-being is particularly vital for young individuals because their brains – especially the pre-frontal cortex that governs social skills, decision-making and emotion regulation - are still developing. A review by The University of Edinburgh for the Scottish Sentencing Council documented that human brain typically reaches full development between ages 25 and 30 (O'Rourke et. al., 2020). This ongoing maturation makes them more vulnerable to the following effects of excessive or unhealthy digital engagement.

**Mental Health:** Adolescents are at higher risk of anxiety, depression and stress due to social media pressure, online comparison and cyber-bullying. A local study found that excessive social media use (more than 3 hours each day) was associated with higher levels of depression, anxiety and stress among Hong Kong adolescent youth during the Covid-19 pandemic (Yu & Du, 2022). Balanced digital use helps them navigate online spaces in a way that protects their self-esteem and mental health.

**Social Development:** Adolescence is a critical time for learning communication and relationship-building skills. Overreliance on digital interaction can reduce face-to-face communication and hinder the ability to form deep, meaningful connections in the real world, leading to social isolation in the end (Yang et al., 2024).

**Academic Performance:** Excessive screen time can lead to distraction, procrastination and sleep deprivation, resulting in adverse impact on school performance. Balancing technology use ensures they stay focused and engaged in learning.

## ***How is the Digital Well-Being of Young PICs in Hong Kong?***

The Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS; Andreassen et al., 2016), a widely recognised 6-item tool for assessing social media addiction, was administered to 52 young PICs participating in the Digital Well-Being Psycho-Education Programme. All of them reported daily social media use prior to their admission to correctional institutions. On the BSMAS, 26.9% of these young PICs scored 19 or above, indicating problematic social media use,

with no significant difference observed between the male and female PICs.

## ***What is Digital Well-Being Psycho-Education Programme?***

The Digital Well-Being Psycho-Education Programme is designed to help young PICs develop balanced digital media usage while leveraging digital technology in their daily lives. The programme is conducted in small groups of three to six participants, providing an environment conducive to interactive discussions and in-session exercises to ensure meaningful learning.

Through four structured sessions, participants learned to engage in mindful social media use, foster healthy social relationships both online and offline, cultivate critical thinking skills for assessing online information, as well as make a concrete plan for their future balanced social media use. The programme aims to minimise risks associated with internet addiction, social impairment and misleading online information, thereby equipping young PICs with essential digital literacy and self-regulation strategies.



*Running Digital Well-Being Psycho-Education Programme for young female PICs.*

## ***How Effective is the Digital Well-Being Psycho-Education Programme?***

To evaluate the effectiveness of the Digital Well-Being Psycho-Education Programme, the young PICs were given pre-tests on their knowledge of social media and self-efficacy in resisting excessive use during the first session. In the last session, they were asked to complete post-tests to measure the progress.



**Knowledge Test** The pre- and post-knowledge tests each comprise 8 items designed to evaluate the participants' knowledge of social media, including the negative impacts of imbalanced use, influence on social relationships and receiving misleading information.

**Self-Efficacy Test** Another pre- and post-self-efficacy tests each consist of 8 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale, designed to assess the self-efficacy in limiting their time spent on social media, maintaining balanced online and offline relationships, filtering faulty online information, as well as setting concrete and feasible goals for future balanced use of social media.

Pre- and post-tests comparison revealed significant improvements in social media knowledge and self-efficacy in resisting excessive use among young PICs participating in the programme. For the Knowledge Test, post-test scores showed a significant increase in the mean score of 1.58 (SD = 2.63,  $p < .001$ ), while for the Self-Efficacy Test, the mean score rose significantly by 5.73 (SD = 5.59,  $p < .001$ ) upon completion of the programme.

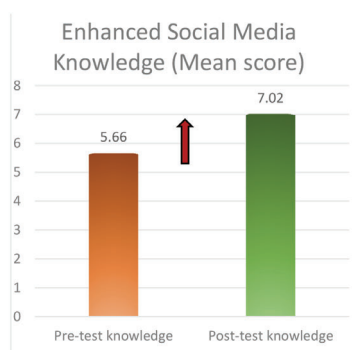


Figure 1. Comparison of mean scores in the Knowledge Test before and after the programme

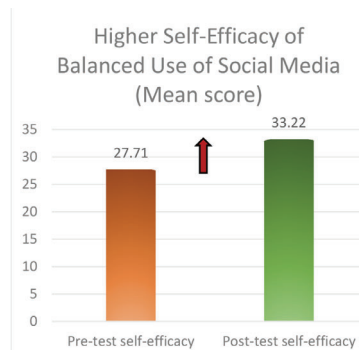


Figure 2. Comparison of mean scores in the Self-Efficacy Test before and after the programme

Gender-based analysis suggested a gender difference. Male PICs showed improvement in their understanding of social media and self-efficacy in resisting excessive use after participating in the programme, whereas female PICs gained higher self-efficacy of balanced use of social media, though the social media knowledge levels remained unchanged.



Male PICs showed significant improvement in both knowledge (Mean = 2.17, SD = 2.18,  $p < .001$ ) and self-efficacy (Mean = 7.83, SD = 1.47,  $p < .001$ ).

Female PICs showed significant improvement only in self-efficacy (Mean = 3.85, SD = 4.24,  $p < .001$ ), with no statistically significant difference in knowledge.



## ***What is the Future Development of Digital Well-Being Psycho-Education Programme?***

Preliminary findings support the continued and enhanced implementation of the Digital Well-Being Psycho-Education Programme which has proven effective in enhancing young PICs' knowledge of social media use and their self-efficacy in maintaining balanced usage. These improvements are believed to make a significant contribution to youth mental health. As participants reported exposure to potential offence-related content, including victim-related information, online fraud and illegal gambling opportunities, it is recommended to enrich the programme to heighten young PICs' awareness of the risks associated with crime-related content on social media. This approach aligns with a crime prevention perspective, aiming to reduce vulnerabilities and promote responsible digital engagement.

### ***Insights***

#### **1. Safeguarding Digital Well-being for Young PICs**

Digital well-being is essential for young PICs as their developing brains make them more vulnerable to the adverse effects of excessive or unhealthy digital use.

#### **2. Effective Digital Well-Being Psycho-Education Programme**

The programme has proven effective in enhancing young PICs' knowledge of social media and their subjective self-efficacy in maintaining balanced use of social media.

#### **3. Including Crime-related Content to Enhance Digital Awareness**

Future programme enhancements can focus on educating young PICs about the risks associated with crime-related content on social media, aiming to reduce their vulnerabilities and promote responsible digital engagement.

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## Article 4

# Enhancing Job Satisfaction among Staff and Reducing Disciplinary Violations among Persons in Custody: What Works in Rehabilitative Security



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### *Objective*

Prior research documents that job satisfaction reduces staff turnover intent, and among correctional staff, rehabilitation orientation can enhance job satisfaction. Western prison research indicates that rehabilitative security can improve correctional staff's rehabilitation orientation and job satisfaction, as well as persons' in custody (PICs) institutional behaviours. This study examines whether similar phenomenon can be observed in the local correctional context where rehabilitative security has been put into the trial implementation.

### *Introduction*

Rehabilitative security (RS) is a promising direction of prison culture development that has been proven to raise staff morale, lower staff sickness, improve staff retention and reduce violence in prison. RS postulates that security and rehabilitation are most effective when they work together. Physical and interpersonal security help people feel safe with trust in fairness and respect, and thus foster rules compliance, peace and harmony. With RS, greater legitimacy of correctional staff is attained through prosocial modelling. Staff members engage PICs in an empathetic relationship, which reinforces prosocial behaviours and attitudes.

There is research evidence showing that staff training on Five Minute Intervention (FMI) of RS, such as “building trust & confidence” and “moving from the negative to the positive”, has a causal impact on staff perceptions of own ability to support offenders' rehabilitation (Barkworth *et al.*, 2021). Of equal importance is

Procedural Justice (PJ), which is not about changing the outcomes of decisions, but about explaining how decisions are made to ensure that people feel being treated fairly. When staff feel fairly treated, they have less burnout, better life and greater job satisfaction. PICs who feel treated with PJ also tend to have lower levels of violence, better well-being and lower reoffending after release.

The present research enquires whether the introduction of the above-mentioned RS principles (FMI and PJ) to a correctional institution for young PICs can improve staff's work-related psychological qualities, as well as PICs' institutional behaviours.

## ***Trial Implementation of Rehabilitative Security (更生伴「理」行) in Sha Tsui Correctional Institution***

The Hong Kong Correctional Services Department put RS into its first trial implementation in Sha Tsui Correctional Institution (STCI) in 2024. The objective was to encourage positive behaviour and rehabilitative progress among young PICs through: 1) staff training on RS, and 2) setting up of a new incentive scheme of PIC management exhibiting PJ with rewards contingent on PICs' behaviours.



The logo of RS highlights a commitment to legal, rational and empathic approaches to managing PICs and supporting their rehabilitation journey.

### **1) Staff Training on Rehabilitative Security**

From June to July 2024, four half-day training sessions were conducted for frontline staff by senior officers and clinical psychologists (CP) in STCI. The training consisted of the following elements:

- a. A middle management staff introduced the Do's (i.e. humanistic treatment) and Don'ts (i.e. different forms of aggression) in managing PICs, and fostered collaboration among staff across levels;



*A management staff of STCI introduces some listening skills in handling PICs*

- b. The management encouraged staff to be role models for young PICs, caring for and guiding them towards positive behavioural changes, and to work lawfully and ethically to uphold departmental values;
- c. A frontline staff shared about the successful management of two challenging cases and illustrated how early intervention, consistent encouragement, clear communication of limits and humane treatment can lead to improved and law-abiding behaviour in PICs;
- d. CPs highlighted the benefits of implementing RS, and then delivered psycho-education on FMI and PJ.



*Clinical Psychologist Candy HUI introduces basic rehabilitative skills under "five-minute intervention".*



## 2) “Virtue and Learning: Advancement Rewards Programme” (VLARP) (品學為本計劃)

Since May 2024, the management has implemented an incentive scheme, the VLARP, which encourages all PICs to actively participate in rehabilitation programmes. “Advancement points” and “reward notes” are linked up with residential length.

## *Measurement of Outcomes*

### 1. Job-related Psychological Qualities of Staff in STCI

#### a. Psychological Measures

Three measures were used to track changes in work-related psychological qualities before and 6-7 months after the trial implementation of RS in STCI.

##### i) Rehabilitation Orientation (Tellier *et al.*, 2001)

It measures whether an individual supports rehabilitation attempts as the most effective way of crime control. This scale consists of 9 items such as “I rarely concern whether PICs would rehabilitate or not”.

##### ii) Job Satisfaction (Baxi & Atre, 2024)

It refers to an individual’s subjective evaluation of his/her work experience, encompassing feelings of contentment, fulfilment and happiness. There are 5 items about their liking or feelings towards the job, such as “I can find joy in my job”.

##### iii) Perceived Job Meaningfulness (Kubiak, 2022)

This scale consists of 4 items on perceived meaningfulness of the job, such as “My job is important to PICs’ life and well-being”.

Among the 36 pairs of completed tests collected from staff of STCI, 33 of them were found to be valid. Using a statistical package of computer software, namely SPSS, paired-sample t-tests were conducted to compare the pre-implementation (pre-I) and post-implementation (post-I) scores of the three psychological measures.

## 2. Institutional Behaviours of PICs in STCI

As an indicator for institutional behaviours, frequencies of disciplinary reports and major incidents in STCI over the second half of 2024 was compared with such over the first half of 2024 to investigate the effectiveness of RS implementation.

## ***Results***

### 1. Job-related Psychological Qualities of Staff in STCI

#### i) Rehabilitation Orientation

Results of the paired-sample t-test show that the average post-I score ( $M = 28.24$ ,  $SD = 3.36$ ) was greater than the average pre-I score ( $M = 26.42$ ,  $SD = 3.60$ ), and the difference was statistically significant ( $t = 2.39$ ,  $p = .02$ ), indicating that staff tend to become more supportive of rehabilitation attempts in STCI in general.

#### ii) Job Satisfaction

Results of the paired-sample t-test show that the average post-I score ( $M = 15.70$ ,  $SD = 3.07$ ) was greater than the average pre-I score ( $M = 14.42$ ,  $SD = 2.33$ ), and the difference was statistically significant ( $t = 2.22$ ,  $p = .03$ ), representing an improvement in overall job satisfaction among staff.

#### iii) Perceived Job Meaningfulness

Results of the paired-sample t-test show that the average post-I score ( $M = 12.24$ ,  $SD = 1.77$ ) was also greater than pre-I score ( $M = 11.12$ ,  $SD = 1.67$ ), and the difference was also statistically significant ( $t = 2.72$ ,  $p = .01$ ), indicating that staff generally perceive their jobs as more meaningful than before.



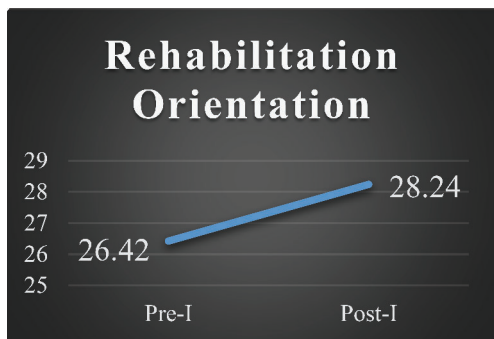


Figure 1. Mean scores of rehabilitation orientation before and after the sessions



Figure 2. Mean scores of job satisfaction before and after the sessions

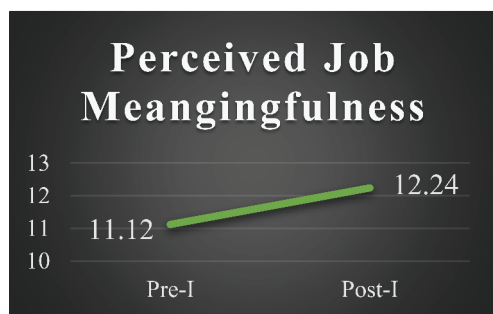


Figure 3. Mean scores of perceived meaningfulness before and after the sessions

## 2. Institutional Behaviours of PICs in STCI

- a. The number of disciplinary reports decreased from 22 to 15. No reports were recorded in July and September 2024, in contrast to the first half of the year when cases were reported every month;
- b. Violent infractions under PR61(f) decreased from 8 to 4 cases;
- c. No serious or major incidents were reported in the second half of 2024.



This graphic is for illustrative purposes only.

## *Summary and conclusion*

RS was put into trial implementation in STCI in the second half of 2024. Training on RS concepts and skills was provided to frontline staff. An incentive scheme was launched to encourage PICs to actively participate in rehabilitation programmes. A comparison of scores in psychological measures and indicators of PICs' institutional behaviours show that staff have shown improvement in rehabilitation orientation, job satisfaction, and perceived job meaningfulness, whereas PICs have shown improvement in overall discipline. The results suggest that the introduction of RS in prison may produce positive changes among both staff and PICs.

## *Insights*

### **1. Introduction of Rehabilitative Security Concept**

- Rehabilitative security, an emerging prison management concept incorporating respect and empathy from authority is believed to be beneficial not only to staff morale but also to prisoner rehabilitation.

### **2. Benefits of Rehabilitative Security to Staff**

- After rehabilitative security has been implemented for half a year, psychological measures indicated that staff attitudes towards prisoner rehabilitation have become more affirmative, while their job satisfaction and perceived job meaningfulness have been enhanced.

### **3. Benefits of Rehabilitative Security to Institutional Behaviours**

- Despite the fact that rehabilitative security cultivates more humane and non-aggressive treatment on PICs, the “softer approach” adopted has improved institutional order and discipline, as reflected by a reduction in disciplinary reports, violent infractions and major incidents.



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