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**Risk and protective factors in the resettlement of
prisoners and their families:**

Families' Post-Release Expectations & Experiences

Karen A. Souza, Lucy Markson, Caroline Lanskey, and Friedrich Lösel
Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge

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Brief Overview

There are many **individual and social obstacles** that ex-prisoners have to overcome to integrate back into their families and society after their release.

For example:

- **Financial and material hardship** are most highly cited problems for ex-prisoners during resettlement (e.g., May, Sharma & Stewart, 2008)
- 55 per cent of prisoners have **substance abuse** problems (Prison Reform Trust, 2010)

- Prisoners' **marital and family relationships** are often fragile before their imprisonment, and the conflict and difficulties that the families experience tend to persist beyond his release (McDermott & King, 1992; Noble, 1995).
- Longer prison sentences can have **negative outcomes for children**. It can also have negative implications for fathers' parenting abilities (e.g., Hairston, 1989) as well as attachment relationships (Edin, Nelson & Paranel, 2004).

Expectations & experiences of families affected by imprisonment:

- The anticipation of a partner or fathers' upcoming release can be either a relief or stress for the families involved.
- Past studies have found that prisoners are highly optimistic about their experiences after release (Visher, La Vigne & Castro, 2003) and unrealistically optimistic about their chances of reoffending (Dhami et al., 2006).
- Families might actually support desistance from crime and *protect against* risk of adversity (Lösel & Bender, 2003).

Limitations of past research:

- cross-sectional
- largely descriptive and qualitative in nature
- focus only on the perspectives of prisoners, (ex)partners, or children separately

The present study takes an **integrative approach** by providing ***longitudinal*** (quant. and qual.) data on ***family sets*** of imprisoned fathers, their (ex)partners and their children, during imprisonment (Time 1) and after release (Time 2).

Present aims:

- 1) To compare fathers' and mothers' **expectations before and experiences of fathers after release** (7 “difficulties” items, quality of relationship, and involvement with children)
- 2) To examine the relationship between “expected difficulties” and **nine key outcomes for fathers** at Time 2 (living together, quality of relationship, family problem-solving, employment, alcohol units, drug use, stigma, resilience, and overall adjustment)

Recruitment:

- Recruitment took place at 13 HM Prisons, but the final sample was drawn from eight prisons in the Eastern region.
- Due to considerable variations in the prison policies and regimes of the prisons in our sample, it was necessary to employ different methods of recruitment.

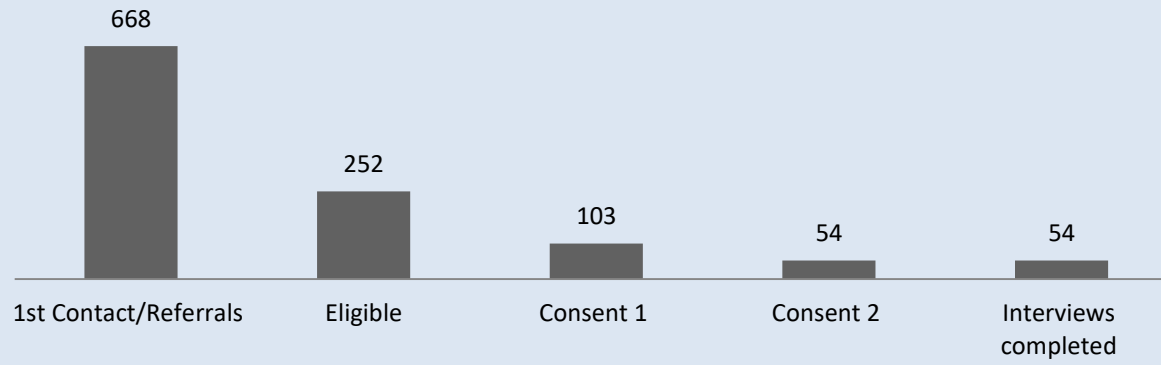


Figure 1. Recruitment statistics for Time 1.

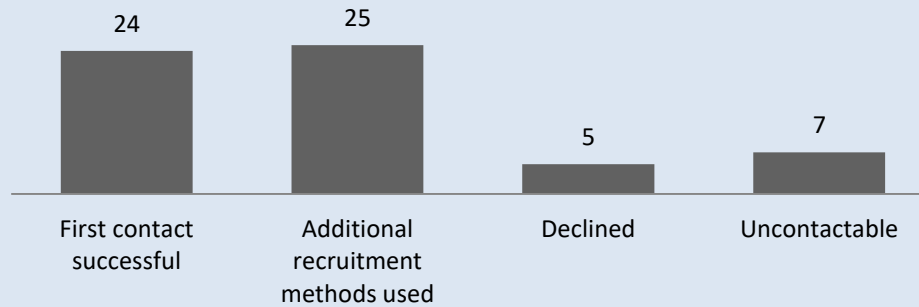


Figure 2. Recruitment statistics for Time 2.

Table 1. *Retention Rates for Fathers, Mothers, Children and Family Sets from Time 1 to Time 2*

	Time 1	Time 2	Retention
	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	rate (%)
Fathers	54	40	74
Mothers	54	49	91
Children included	90	71	79
Children interviewed	45	39	87
Family sets	54	40	74

Sample characteristics:

Fathers

- Mean age = 31.88 ($SD = 10.43$), range from 19 to 56
- 77.5% White British
- 35.0% convicted for violence against person, 27.5% acquisitive crimes, 17.5% drug offences
- Mean sentence length = 2.32 years ($SD = 1.27$)

Mothers

- Mean age = 29.20 ($SD = 8.22$), range from 19 to 45
- 82.5% White British
- 25% did not finish school

Children

- Data provided for 68 children (45 interviewed)
- 48.5% boys, 51.5% girls
- Mean age = 6.24 ($SD = 4.48$)
- 77.3% White British

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations for Fathers' and Mothers' Time 1 Expectations and Time 2 Experiences

	Time 1 Expectations			Time 2 Experiences		
	Fathers	Mothers	t-value	Fathers	Mothers	t-value
	M (SD)	M (SD)		M (SD)	M (SD)	
Fathers' difficulties^a with:						
Money	2.78 (1.22)	2.92 (1.11)	.55	2.97 (1.11)	2.97 (1.18)	.00
Finding accommodation	2.05 (1.39)	1.71 (1.25)	-1.13	1.95 (1.51)	1.87 (1.28)	-.23
Finding a job	2.86 (1.42)	3.44 (1.40)	1.76*	3.12 (1.23)	3.54 (1.25)	1.43
Alcohol use	1.34 (.68)	2.18 (1.19)	3.55***	1.58 (1.15)	1.92 (1.36)	1.15
Drug use	1.39 (.71)	2.39 (1.42)	3.42***	1.53 (1.14)	2.11 (1.37)	1.87*
Maintaining relationships	1.73 (1.03)	1.95 (1.15)	.88	1.79 (1.15)	2.18 (1.27)	1.41
Criminal activity	1.69 (1.00)	2.45 (1.23)	2.98***	1.66 (1.17)	2.03 (1.40)	1.24
Fathers' involvement with the children^b	3.28 (.80)	2.76 (.86)	-2.79***	3.85 (1.10)	3.36 (1.29)	-1.83*
Overall quality of relationship^c	4.28 (.78)	4.21 (.99)	-.31	3.68 (1.09)	3.44 (1.43)	-.85

* $p < .10$, ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$. Note. ^aDifficulties scales ranged from 1 = *Not at all difficult* to 5 = *Extremely difficult*. ^bScale range was 1 = *Never*, 5 = *Always*. ^cScale range was 1 = *Not at all good*, 5 = *Extremely good*.

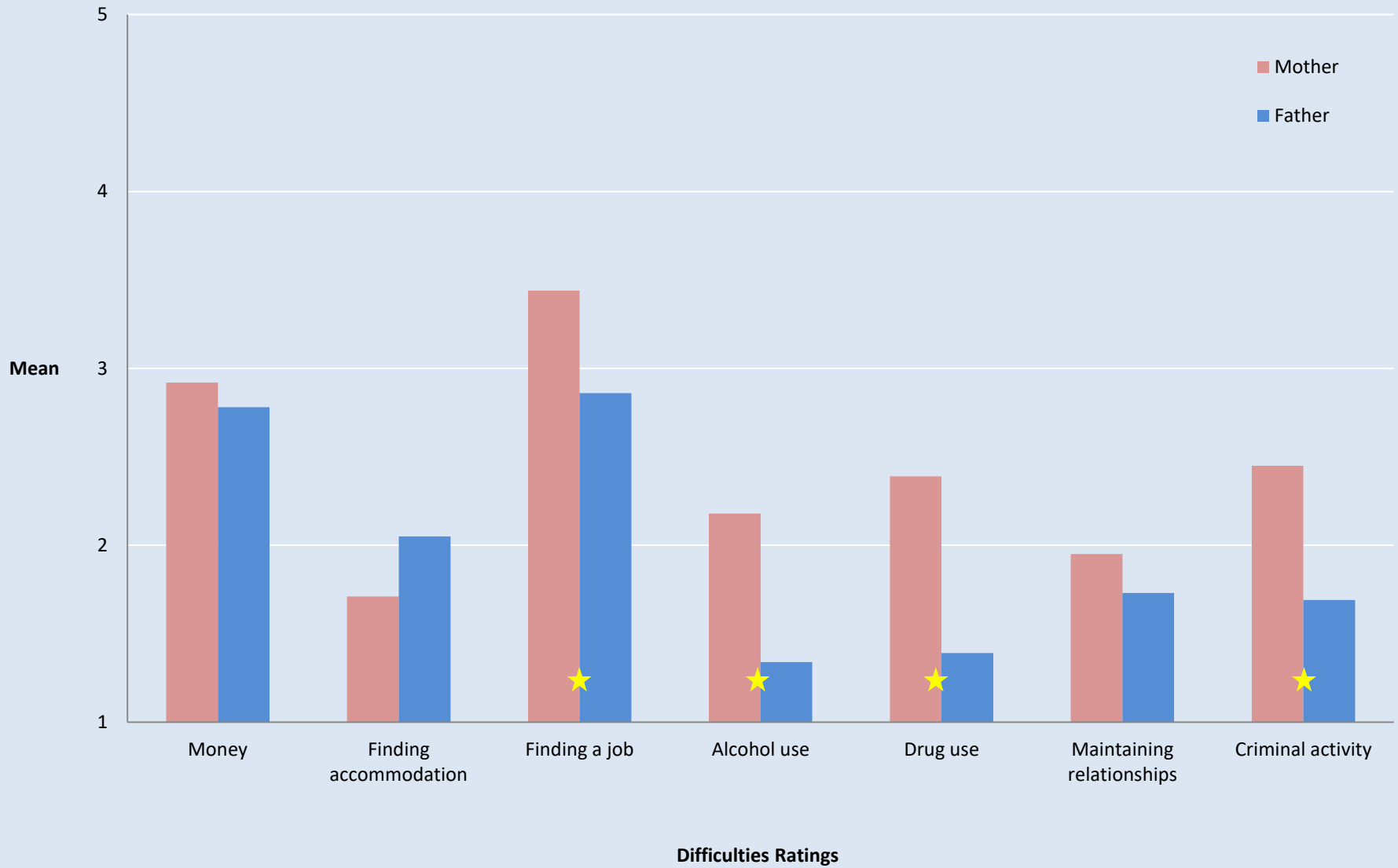


Figure 3. Mean ratings of fathers' and mothers' expected difficulties at Time 1 for fathers post-release.

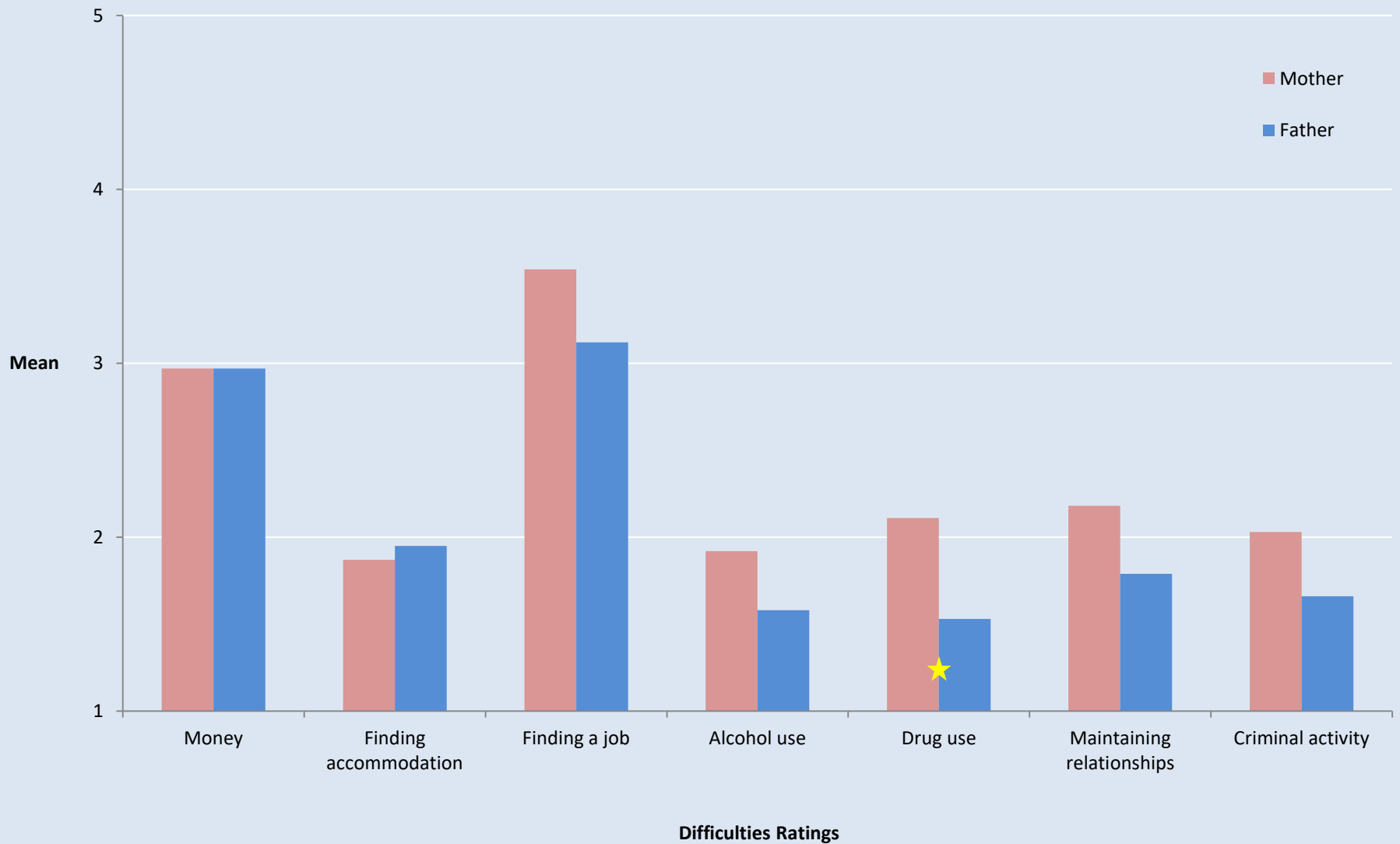


Figure 4. Mean difficulties ratings for fathers' experiences at Time 2.

Possible explanations:

Both parents' high ratings of fathers' difficulties with "finding a job:"

- consistent with past research highlighting practical difficulties

Fathers' low ratings of expected and experienced alcohol and drug use:

- 60% had taken programmes in prison
- no job = less income = less substance use?

Mothers' low ratings of fathers' difficulties with "finding accommodation:"

- living situation largely controlled by mothers

Parents' Relationship & Fathers' Role

Time 1 Expectations

- both parents expected their relationship to be “*very good*” after his release (fathers' $M = 4.28$, $SD = .78$, mothers' $M = 4.21$, $SD = .99$)
- both parents expected fathers to be “*somewhat*” involved with the children after his release (fathers' $M = 3.28$, $SD = .80$, mothers' $M = 2.76$, $SD = .86$)★

Time 2 Experiences

- rating of quality of relationship had **decreased** after his release (fathers' $M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.09$, mothers' $M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.43$)
- his involvement with the children **increased** after his release (fathers' $M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.10$, mothers' $M = 3.36$, $SD = 1.29$)★

Fathers were **more involved** with their children than both groups had anticipated at Time 1.

- 45% (n=18) had taken parenting/fatherhood courses while in prison
- 72.2% (13 out of 18) indicated that it had influenced their role as a father
- two-thirds were unemployed and therefore, had more time

Qualitative findings:

*“Helps me to **communicate better** with my partner and helps me to understand the **needs of my family**”*

*“I was thinking of other things before. Now my son has become a **priority**”*

*“**Learned patience**, first time being a parent”*

*“Learned how I’ve missed out on a lot of their **important stages**. I want to be there for them all the time when I get out”*

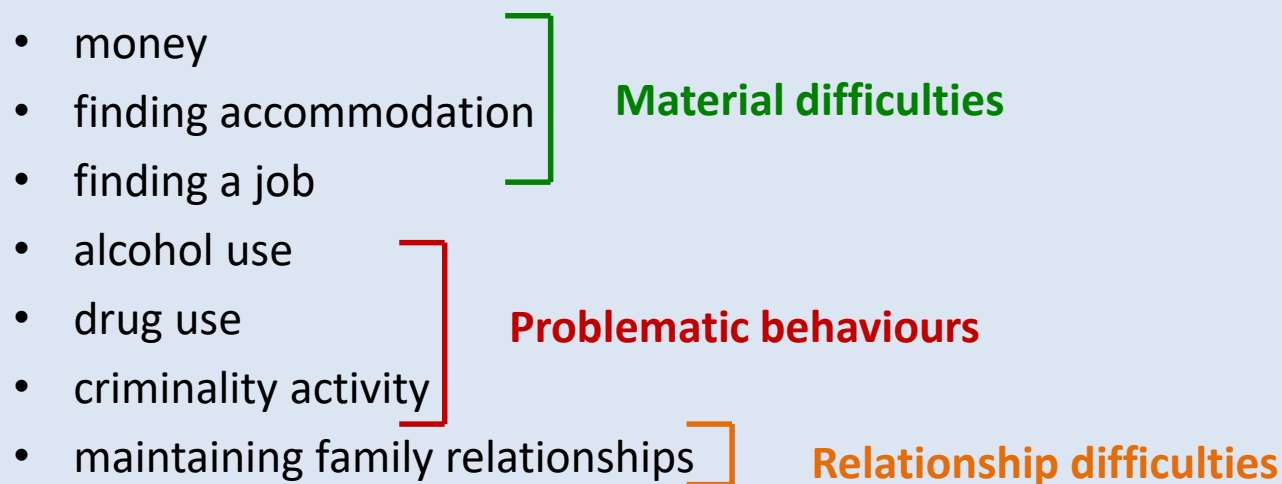
Table 3. *Bivariate Correlations of Fathers' and Mothers' Time 1 Expectations of Difficulties and Time 2 Resettlement Outcomes for Fathers*

Time 2 outcomes		Living together	Quality of relationship ^b	Family Problem-Solving	Employment	Alcohol units	Drug use	Stigma	Resilience	Overall adjustment ^c
Time 1 Expected Difficulties ^a										
Money	(F)	-.22	-.40**	-.55***	.11	.33**	.33**	.18	-.18	-.20
	(M)	-.22	-.33**	-.53***	.24	.42***	.48***	.03	.01	-.39**
Accommodation	(F)	-.26	-.28*	-.49***	.01	.25	.38**	.02	-.05	-.28*
	(M)	-.49***	-.30*	-.33*	.10	.30*	.02	-.02	-.14	-.18
Finding a job	(F)	-.04	-.14	-.20	-.23	.02	.19	.34*	.14	.09
	(M)	-.00	-.18	-.09	-.21	-.04	.23	.30	-.28	-.05
Alcohol use	(F)	-.40**	-.38**	-.29	-.02	.62***	.23	.19	-.23	-.29*
	(M)	-.62***	-.33*	-.29	-.17	.45***	.24	.30	-.23	-.30*
Drug use	(F)	-.11	-.09	-.13	.07	-.11	.38**	.21	.12	.09
	(M)	-.08	-.49***	-.62***	.16	.25	.61***	.27	.09	-.18
Maintaining relationships	(F)	-.41**	-.16	-.26	-.09	-.02	.21	-.03	-.44***	-.03
	(M)	-.02	-.41**	-.52***	.36**	.14	.29*	-.10	-.21	-.29
Criminal activity	(F)	-.04	.14	-.11	-.01	-.09	.23	.15	.19	.11
	(M)	-.16	-.52***	-.52***	.10	.20	.45***	.13	-.11	-.21

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < .05$, and *** $p < .01$, two-tailed. *Note.* ^aDifficulties scales ranged from 1 = *Not at all difficult* to 5 = *Extremely difficult*. ^bScale range was 1 = *Not at all good*, 5 = *Extremely good*. ^cScale range was 1 = *Not at all well*, 5 = *Extremely well*.

Regression analyses

Time 1 Predictors (“expected difficulties”):

- money
 - finding accommodation
 - finding a job
 - alcohol use
 - drug use
 - criminality activity
 - maintaining family relationships
- Material difficulties**
- Problematic behaviours**
- Relationship difficulties**
- 

(Fathers) Time 2 Outcome variables:

- quality of relationship
- family problem-solving
- drug use

Regression analyses cont...

Mothers' (Time 1) expected difficulty ratings predicted:

- **Her own rating of quality of relationship** at Time 2
($R^2 = .17$, $F(3, 35) = 2.45$, $p < .10$)
- **Fathers' rating of quality of relationship** at Time 2
($R^2 = .33$, $F(3, 34) = 5.66$, $p < .01$)
- **Fathers' self-reported drug use** at Time 2
($R^2 = .34$, $F(3, 35) = 5.99$, $p < .01$)
"Problematic behaviours" ($\beta = .64^{**}$)

Fathers' (Time 1) expected difficulty ratings predicted:

- **His own reported drug use** at Time 2
($R^2 = .28$, $F(3, 34) = 4.46$, $p < .05$)
"Material difficulties" ($\beta = .35^{**}$), "Problematic behaviours" ($\beta = .29^*$)

Implications & Conclusions

- Overall, expectations with regards to upcoming problems were mostly realistic
- Fathers were economically worse off than before prison
- With regards to problems of father's criminality, alcohol and drug use, mothers' expectations were more skeptical, but his experiences after release were more positive and similarly rated by both partners
- Moderate to strong negative correlations between expected post-release difficulties and fathers' relationship with (ex)partners
- Moderate to strong positive correlations between expected post-release difficulties and fathers' alcohol and drug use
- Value in promoting and fostering family communication during imprisonment
- Highlights the importance of including the mothers' views in release planning and resettlement

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