



Pro-social modelling in probation

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Abstract

This article analyzes pro-social modelling from a theoretical point of view, emphasizing its importance in the field of probation, but also has a practical component, presenting the result of a sociological survey based on a questionnaire. In the field of probation, one of the methods of working with criminally convicted persons is pro-social modelling, this being an intervention technique that helps the social rehabilitation of persons who have committed crimes. By means of this technique, the goal is to redefine the dysfunctional behaviours of criminally convicted persons, in a positive way.

Keywords: pro-social modelling; probation; sociological survey.

About pro-social modelling

In theory we find pro-social behavior linked to a series of aspects, and empathy is one of these aspects. Psychologists have argued that "empathy underlies prosocial behavior and that its absence typically results in aggressive and acquisitive behaviors that ignore the rights or suffering of others" (Feshbach, 1987; Miller & Eisenberg, 1988). It seems that "empathic people are more prosocial than those who have a relative lack of empathy" (Zahn-Waxler and Robinson 1995; Zelazo and Paus 2010) and those who lack empathy tend to be more aggressive (Eisenberg 2000)(Marshall and Marshall 2011).

"The pro-social approach works because it is a method for discouraging and challenging anti-social comments and behavior in a positive setting". This reinforces the view that people learn best through encouragement rather than discouragement. And, from the perspective of probation counselors in relation to probationers, they make judgments about what they want to encourage and influence their clients' behavior (Trotter 2009). Trotter believes that pro-social modeling works, but certain characteristics of the people you work with must be taken into account, such as: „optimism, punctuality, fairness, and honesty and reliability" (Trotter 2009).

Social learning theory is a concept used to explain deviant behaviors (Akers and Jensen, 2011; Akers and Jennings, 2016; Ilie 2017). The starting point is that "deviant and antisocial behavior is shaped by the same processes that shape positive behaviors within a social context". Individuals learn both positive and negative behavior from others. "This process is based on the following four interrelated constructs: differential association,

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definitions, differential reinforcement, and imitation" (Kabiri, (Shamila) Shadmanfaat, Smith and Cochran 2020: 1-20).

Social learning (Serban and Ilie 2014) theory has been used to explain a series of deviant behaviors such as: alcohol and drug use, interpersonal aggression and violence and cheating. Thus it is observed that the behavior is influenced by the learning of certain patterns, but a series of factors and contexts must be taken into account when we talk about this approach (Kabiri, (Shamila) Shadmanfaat, Smith and Cochran 2020).

Another explanation and approach to deviance is made by theorists who analyze the theory of social control. This theory emphasizes "the importance of coercion and direct control during childhood" but also during adulthood. So, "both youthful and adult offenders may be coerced into becoming involved in prosocial behavior patterns that can increase their investments in conformity and their attachments to other people, employment, school, or the community". The theory explains that "the direct control of behavior through legal coercion is predicted to increase compliance with conventional norms, rules, and prosocial activities" (Mackenzie and Brame 2001: pp. 429-448).

So, coercive interactions are useful for decreasing the probability of criminal behavior. We can talk here about the "coercion of offenders to engage in prosocial behaviors". And involvement in pro-social activities leads to a decrease in the recidivism rate (Mackenzie and Brame 2001).

In the paper "Community supervision, prosocial activities and recidivism" of Doris Layton Mackenzie and Robert Brame, concluded that "offenders in intensive supervision programs are coerced, into participating in these prosocial activities such as accepting responsibility for actions, achieving financial and residential stability, making satisfactory progress in treatment and education programs, and job stability" (Mackenzie and Brame 2001).

In the paper "Community supervision, pro-social activities and recidivism", the authors made a two-stage process: "1. A positive relationship between the duration of supervision an individual receives and that person's level of involvement in prosocial activities; and 2. An inverse relationship between pro-social activities and revocation". In short, Layton Mackenzie and Robert Brame, concluded that implication in prosocial activities leads to a decrease in the revocation rate (Mackenzie and Brame 2001).

In the field of criminal justice, emphasis is placed on the theory of learning and the theory of social control, when analyzing pro-social modeling, because it is considered that positive behaviors can be learned even when this learning is done through a person who represents the authority.

In short, pro-social modelling refers to the way a person models pro-social values and pro-social behavior to another person. The terms „pro-social practice,, or „pro-social model,, are often used to describe a "broader approach to the supervision of offenders which includes collaborative problem solving and role clarification" (Trotter 1999, 2004: Trotter 2009: pp. 142-152).

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Chris Trotter observed what are the main skills of probation counselors that have an effect on reducing the recidivism rate, as follows: "Pro-social Modelling and Reinforcement; Problem Solving and Using Cognitive Techniques" (Trotter 2013).

In probation, pro-social modeling requires that the probation counselor should have a certain attitude in relation to the supervised person: "to be punctual, to respect his appointments, to be honest and reliable, to fulfill his tasks, to respect the feelings of other

people, to express views on the negative effects of criminal behaviour, express views on the value of social activities such as friends with non-criminal behaviour, good family relationships and the value of work'. The pro-social attitude also implies that "the counselor should be open about problems that the counselor had and are similar to those of the supervised person, here we find a bit of the concept of peer-mentoring (Ilie Goga 2019; Ilie Goga 2018). Moreover, a pro-social attitude "implies optimism in approach, implies giving rewards for positive and legal actions" (Trotter 2009: pp. 142-152).

Seven of eight studies that were analyzed by Chris Trotter in the article "Reducing recidivism through probation supervision: what we know and don't know from four decades of research", which examined the practices of probation officers, whether through examining file notes or audiotapes of interviews or by direct observation, have found that "when probation officers use evidence-based practice skills their clients have lower recidivism" (Trotter 2013: pp. 43-48).

As Trotter observes after analyzing the studies done in the field, both in Canada (Andrews et al. 1979) and in Australia (Trotter 1996, 2004) many probation counselors with pro-social behavior positively affected the behaviors of probationers. Trotter highlights examples of pro-social practices used in probation: keeping appointments, punctuality, the execution in legal conditions of the obligations imposed by the court, and among the pro-social actions of the supervised persons, Trotter highlights: acceptance of responsibility for the crimes committed, awareness of the negative effects that the criminal act has, showing empathy for the victim, etc. (Trotter 2009). Trotter said that counselors with a pro-social behavior must speak appreciatively about positive values such as: the family, the group of friends that is not involved in delinquent acts, involvement in gainful activities, attending school courses or professional training courses, involvement in recreational activities, etc., all these doing them while exhibiting an open, optimistic attitude (Trotter 2009). According to Trotter, the pro-social probation counselor can use rewards, which come as a confirmation of a positive attitude of the supervised person, rewards such as reducing the frequency of meetings, using praise, preparing positive reports for the court, active involvement in finding a job or professional training courses, more time for counseling (Trotter 2009). It is noted that one of the most powerful rewards available to the probation officer is the ability to reduce the frequency of meetings, but it is important for the probationer to be aware that the reduced frequency of meetings comes as a reward for pro-social behavior (Trotter 2009).

On the other hand, as Trotter points out, it is also important to mention that the use of criticism and excessive negative attitude towards a client has not been proven to bring positive effects in counseling (Trotter 2009). Thomas Mowen, Eric Wodahl, John Brent and Brett Garland, in the article "The Role of Sanctions and Incentives in Promoting Successful Reentry. Evidence From the SVORI Data", concluded that "it is likely the probation officer to use incentives and sanctions together", but, the research "suggests that That "integrating positive reinforcement into supervision may lead to lower levels of negative behaviors, compared to the counseling model that emphasizes only the use of sanctions" (Mowen, Wodahl, Brent and Garland 2018).

In short, prosocial modeling involves the activity of the supervisor acting as a positive role model, encouraging or "pushing" individuals towards prosocial expression or action, using praise, encouragement and support to reward them (Rex 1999). The quality of the supervisory relationship is also important to reinforce this type of antisocial patterning (Rex 1999).

We note that it is preferable in probation to use a prosocial attitude based on the use of rewards, to the detriment of an attitude based on the use of sanctions.

An empirical analysis on pro-social modeling in probation

This chapter includes the analysis of the results of a sociological research conducted in 2022 within the Probation Service Dolj. The sample consisted of 336 persons supervised by the probation service Dolj, 302 men (90% of the sample) and 34 women (10% of the sample), sample established using the quota sampling method, with a calculation made for a confidence level of 95% and an error rate of +/-5%. The men-to women ratio was equivalent to real-life ratio (2400 men and 276 women).

We start from the hypothesis that most of the counselors show towards the supervised persons, an attitude that denotes elements of pro-social modeling and most of the supervised persons find this attitude useful in identifying and addressing some pro-social attitudes.

Please give a score from zero to five (where "zero" means that it "does not have the presented attribute at all" and "five" means that it "very much has that attribute") for the following attributes and actions of the probation counselor- case manager:

	0 Not at all	1 Very small measur e	2 Small measur e	3 Mediu m level	4 Large measur e	5 Very large measur e	I can't appreciat e	I do not answe r
Compliance with appointments					6	325		5
Punctuality				1	5	330		
Honesty					11	320	3	
The trustworthy person				4	20	310	2	
Proper performance of job duties				2	30	302	1	1
Respect other people's feelings				2	2	330	1	1
Show empathy				2	7	325	2	
Communicate in a positive				7	8	318	2	1

manner								
He is actively involved in solving the supervised person's problems				7	27	301	1	
Allow enough time for meetings				2	33	299	1	1

We will make an average of the answers provided by the interviewees for all the attributes and actions of probation counselors that denote a pro-social attitude.

We observe from the answers given by the supervised persons interviewed at the level of the Dolj Probation Service that the behavior of the probation counselors mostly denotes elements of pro-social modeling, thus, 316 respondents (average) consider that to a great extent the counselors show pro-social attributes and actions, 15 persons (average) consider that they manifest this type of behavior to a large extent and 3 people (average) consider that these attributes are manifested by counselors to an average extent.

When asked if they consider that the actions and attitude of the probation counselor helped them to make positive changes on a personal level, a percentage of 91% appreciated that they made positive changes in their lifestyle, aspect that confirms that pro-social modeling works in the activity of the probation counselor, having positive effects on the behavior of supervised persons.

We can conclude that the use of pro-social techniques by the probation counselors and directing the supervised persons to pro-social actions will increase their possibility to correct their behavior by learning and imitating positive behaviors.

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