



An Explorative Study into Novel Psychoactive Substances and the link to Violence and Impulsivity

*Rachael Mason, Michelle Smith, Amanda Roberts &
Tochukwu Onwuegbusi*

Novel Psychoactive Substances in Prisons

New or Novel Psychoactive Substances (NPS or PS)

Synthetic Cannabinoids – “Spice” and “Mamba”

“New Normal”

Violence in Prisons

27% increase in violence and rising

Institutional violence

Due to NPS use

Consequence of prison environment

NPS, Violence and Impulsivity

NPS use is widespread and causes a multitude of problems

Synthetic cannabinoids are the most prevalent with younger prisoners

NPS users are more impulsive than other drug users

Limited evidence to support this statement

What causes the NPS related violence?

Aims

Scope	Scope the prevalence of substance use within the selected prison
Identify	Identify factors that may distinguish NPS users from other drug and non-drug users
Investigate	Investigate the links between NPS use, violence and impulsivity
Explore	Explore the prisoners' perceptions on what causes NPS related violence

Design & Materials

Self-report paper based questionnaire

5 Sections: Demographics, Substance Use, Violence, Perceptions of Violence, Impulsivity

Questionnaire pack under cell doors & 2nd opportunity during education and work sessions

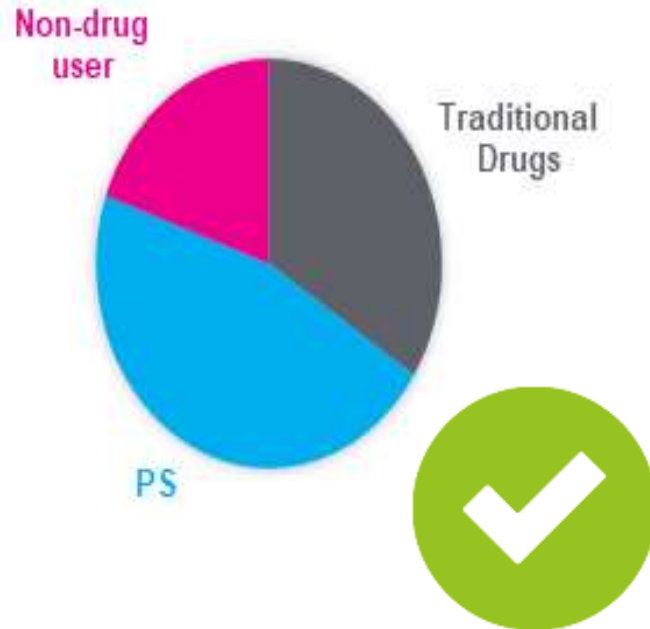
159 – 19.95% response rate

Mean age – 34.82, White – 77.85%, Single – 54.43%

Scope

NPS would be the primary substance used within the prison compared to other illicit substances

SUBSTANCE USE ON SENTENCE



	Used on sentence	Seen substance used
NPS	47	97
Cannabis	40	79
Alcohol	32	71
Barbiturates	19	48
Opiates	16	46
Crack cocaine	15	41
Cocaine	14	37
Heroin	10	33
Ecstasy	6	25
Amphetamines	1	26
Psychedelics	0	14
Solvents	0	14

Scope

Top 5 NPS used

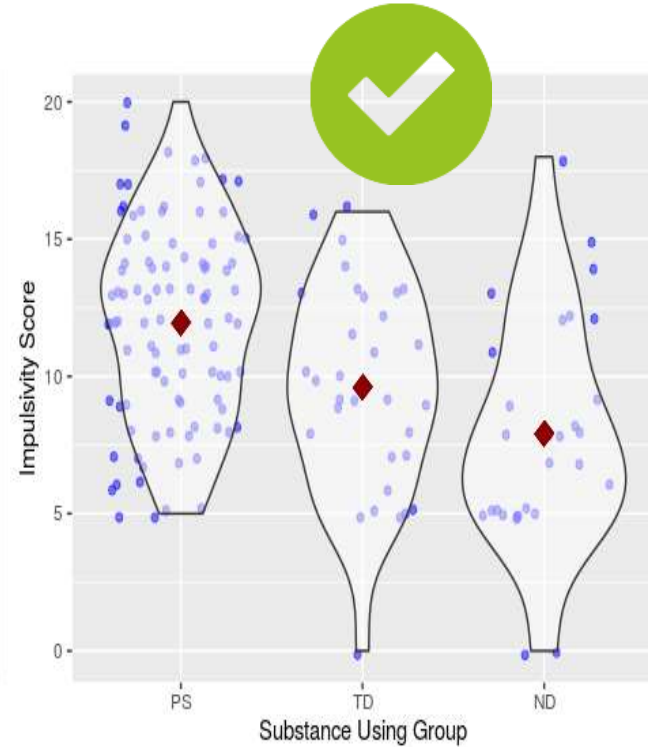
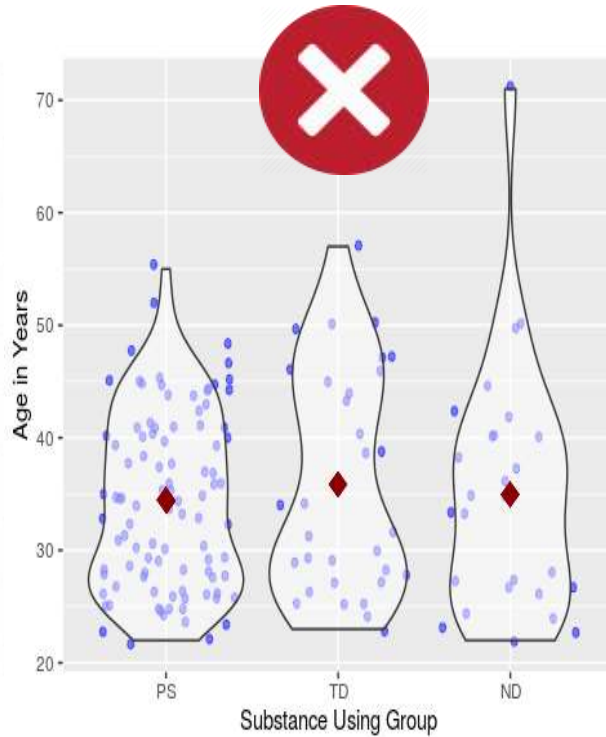
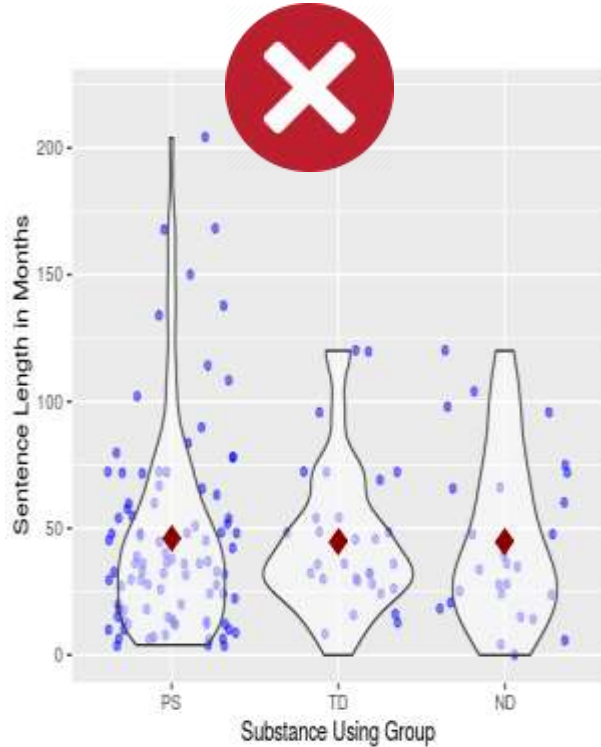
NPS name	Number of participants used on sentence
Spice	66
Mamba	23
Fentanyl	9
M-Cat	7
Benzo-furry	4

Primary method of use



Identify

A younger age, serving a shorter sentence length and having a high impulsivity score would increase the chance of a person being an NPS user



Violence in prison

	Participated in the act	Victim of the act	Witnessed the act
Physical Assault to Prisoner	35 (22%)	39 (25%)	107 (68%)
Physical Assault to Prison Officer	12 (8%)	8 (5%)	77 (49%)
Physical Assault to Other Staff	5 (3%)	2 (1%)	45 (28%)
Verbal Assault to Prisoner	44 (28%)	39 (25%)	101 (64%)
Verbal Assault to Prison Officer	44 (28%)	20 (13%)	93 (59%)
Verbal Assault to Other Staff	22 (14%)	7 (4%)	81 (51%)
Sexual Assault to Prisoner	2 (1%)	4 (3%)	18 (11%)
Use of Weapons	19 (12%)	21 (13%)	79 (50%)
Damage to property	23 (15%)	11 (7%)	101 (64%)
Stealing	9 (6%)	27 (17%)	84 (53%)

Investigate

NPS users would be more likely to engage in institutional violence towards other prisoners, staff and property than traditional drug users and non-drug user

Rates of violence

Physical Assaults	52 (33%)
Verbal Assaults	110 (70%)
Violence to prisoner	100 (63%)
Violence to staff	83 (53%)
Property	32 (20%)

Prisoner

- Increased odds for PS users compared to traditional and non-drug users



Staff

- Increased odds for PS users compared to non-drug users



Property

- Increased odds for PS users compared to traditional and non-drug users



Explore

NPS use would be linked to violence equally due to behavioural change and due to the social circumstances associated with substance use



70% of perceived violence was due to NPS use



Being an NPS user, violent in prison, convicted of violent or substance related crime, and having a high impulsivity score –
No impact

Reasons for violence – individual factors

Reason category	Number of comments
Money and debt issues	53
Reputation of the person including arguments and revenge	22
Arguments with people from when they were outside prison	22
Where the person is from	6
Offences the person is in prison for	6
Issues with family or social circumstances outside of prison	3
Withdrawing from or not obtaining drugs	2
Learning difficulties or mental health issues	2

Reasons for violence – staff related

Reason category	Number of comments
Staff relations including attitude, communication and treatment	38
Staffing including numbers and experience	10
Time taken on code blues for spice	1

Reasons for violence – environment related

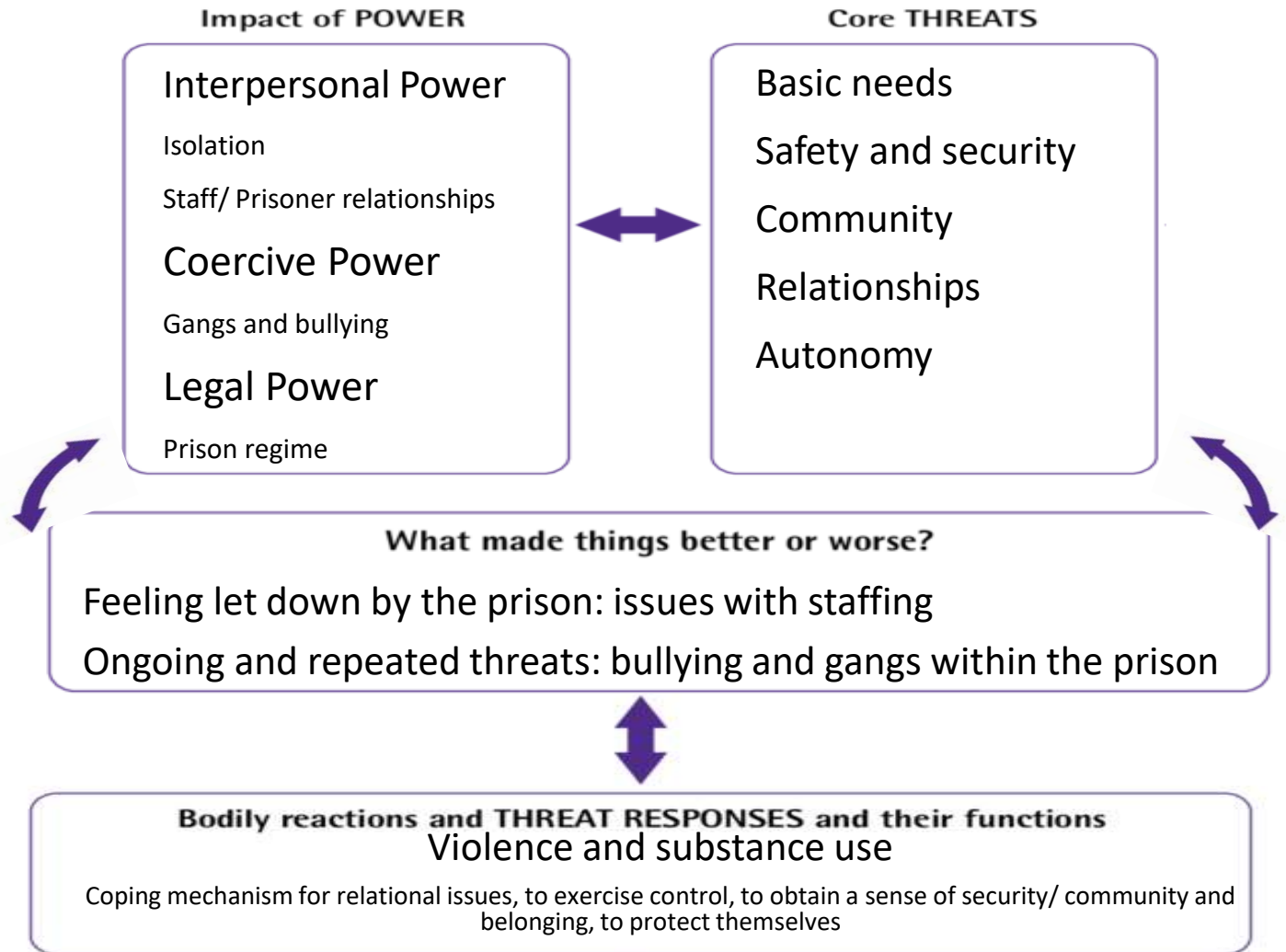
Reason category	Number of comments
Regime and facilities the prison including association time, TV reception, visits, missed healthcare/medication and showers	26
Stress and frustration including placing angry men together and fear of the unknown	17
Gangs within the prison	17
Bullying	13
Lack of chances for rehabilitation and punishment not effective	10
Arguments over belongings including phones	7
Smoking Ban	6
Boredom	6
Drug dealers forcing violence	5
Lack of (well paid) work opportunities	3
Gambling	1
Isolation	1

Explore

Top Reasons for Violence

Reason category	Number of comments
Prisoner relations and gang culture	98
Money and debt issues	54
Regime and facilities	52
Staffing, experience, and staff relations	48
Emotions and mental health	25

Power Threat Meaning Framework



Implications of Results

Treatment programmes to focus on impulsive thinking, aggression and social factors

Rehabilitative environments and holistic approaches

Caution: Limitations - this may just be with this sample, in this prison, using self-reports

How to take it forward?

Implications of Covid on NPS use

Impact of setting

Social climate, rehabilitation efforts, staff-prisoner relations

NPS specific treatment programme

Ideas?

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