

CHAPTER 6

A PROFILE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN RECIDIVIST

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 5 the data from the quantitative phase of this study was presented and integrated with literature. This chapter will present the conclusions based on the key findings of the quantitative study. Derived from the conclusions a profile of the South African recidivist will be compiled.

6.2 CONCLUSIONS OF THE QUANTITATIVE PHASE OF THIS STUDY

In this section conclusions based on the interpretation of the findings on individual constructs, namely biographical composition, social functioning and functioning within society will be discussed.

6.2.1 Biographical composition

Conclusions regarding the age, qualifications, employment history, marital and family history of the recidivist will be presented.

- **Age**

From the findings it can be concluded that recidivism is a phenomenon that is not primary affected by age but rather by pro-criminal cognitions and behaviour patterns (See Chapter 5; point 5.3.1.1). The researcher is of the opinion that a reciprocal behaviour pattern exists between the disruptive influences of

crime and a lack of completion of developmental tasks. Just as crime disrupts expected developmental tasks, incomplete developmental tasks can in turn contribute to criminality (compare Siegel and Senna, 2000: 185- 186).

In conclusion it can be stated that even though no direct correlation could be established between recidivism and age, there seems to be a link between age, developmental tasks and recidivism.

- **Educational qualifications and employment history**

From the literature study (see Chapter 3, point 3.4) it was apparent that there is a strong link between unemployment and recidivism as well as between a lack in formal education and recidivism (compare Bartollas & Miller, 1998:104 and Maguire *et al.*, 1997:575).

The apparent lack of making use of educational opportunities offered in correctional centres is furthermore an indication that the recidivist focus on the here-and-now as opposed to long-term goals. It seems as if the challenge of personal development is perceived as being overwhelming, resulting in feelings of frustration and helplessness (Compare Siegel & Senna, 2001:59-60, Miller, 1998:104, Maguire *et al.*, 1997:383, Zamble & Quinicy, 1997:48, Jones & Sims, 1997:336). This in turn could lead to the recidivist denying him or herself the opportunity for self-development.

- **Marital and family history of respondents**

Findings from the quantitative study as well as literature (see Chapter 3, 3.4) indicated that recidivists have a diminished ability to form meaningful emotional relationships and attachments with a partner as well as their children. The lack of attachment to stable support systems could lead to feelings of isolation from society (compare Siegel & Senna, 2001:59-60, Miller, 1998:104, Maguire *et al.*, 1997:383, Zamble & Quincy, 1997:48, Jones & Sims, 1997:336). It could therefore be concluded that the lack of stable emotional support systems and the isolation from conventional society could act as risk indicators for recidivism.

The recidivist's absence as a parent could create the predisposition for behavioural problems in their children. According to Bartollas (1997:86) and Maguire *et al.* (1997:375) the probability of transference of predisposed criminal behavioural patterns is furthermore strengthened by parental imprisonment.

6.2.2 Social functioning of the recidivist

Conclusions were reached regarding both positive and negative indicators of the recidivist's social functioning.

6.2.2.1 Positive indicators of social functioning

Conclusions of the constructs perseverance, satisfaction, future perception, problem solving ability and moral values will next be presented.

- **Perseverance**

Findings (see Chapter 5, 5.4.1) indicated that recidivists have an unrealistic perception regarding their ability to persevere in the achievement of set goals. These unrealistic perceptions have a negative impact on the recidivists' social functioning insofar that it is based on projected perceptions of themselves in relation to reality. It can be concluded that recidivists lack perseverance as well as the willpower to achieve goals, for example, educational qualifications. They tend to focus on the here-and-now and instant gratification of needs instead of perseverance to achieve long-term goals (Siegel & Senna, 2000:182).

- **Satisfaction**

Findings (see Chapter 5, point 5.4.1) indicated that there are areas that can be associated with dissatisfaction within the respondents' social functioning, i.e relationships with children and friends.

The researcher concludes that the diminished levels of satisfaction that the respondents experience within their everyday functioning can be associated with contradicting cognitions and perceptions. An example of these contradictions is evident in the

recidivists' perceived level of perseverance as well as their future expectations.

- **Future perceptions/ expectations**

Findings (see Chapter 5, point 5.4.1) indicated that recidivists have an unrealistic positive perception and expectations of the future. This can be ascribed to the tendency that recidivists focus almost exclusively on the positive aspects in their everyday social functioning whilst ignoring the negative areas (compare Zamble & Quinsey, 1997:48). Findings from this study furthermore indicated that recidivists tend not to participate in future building activities, e.g. acquiring educational of qualifications, and tend to ignore their personal responsibility in the building of a realistic and achievable future.

- **Problem solving ability**

Findings (see Chapter 5, point 5.4.1) indicated that recidivists perceived their ability to deal with problems and challenges as exceptionally good. In this regard it can be concluded that their perception regarding their problem solving ability is over estimated and unrealistic. It was furthermore found that recidivists experience problems to cope with mundane daily activities as these are perceived by them as being stressful challenges (compare Maguire *et al.*, 1997:395). This often results in the recidivists utilizing crime as a problem resolution tool.

- **Moral values**

Findings (see Chapter 5, point 5.4.1) indicated that recidivists are of the opinion that they have high moral values. The researcher is of the opinion that recidivists are socialized by community systems to adhere to pro-criminal values. This has a negative impact on their ability to experience empathy and to interpret social situations (Lykken, 1995:8). In conclusion it can be stated that the recidivists' pro-criminal value system has a negative impact on their ability to be integrated into society as well as to conform to the expectations of society.

From the above discussion of the positive indicators of social functioning, it can be concluded that there is a discrepancy between the respondents' perceived functioning in relation to the reality of their current situation and past offending history. The researcher is of the opinion that this can be ascribed to the projected emotions and cognitions reflecting how the recidivists would like to perceive themselves and be perceived by others. It is furthermore an indication that recidivists are over compensating for dysfunctional areas that affect their social functioning negatively.

6.2.2.2 Negative indicators of social functioning

Conclusions were based on the findings of the negative indicators of social functioning, namely anxiety, guilt feelings, isolation,

stigma, lack of self-worth, frustration, helplessness and substance abuse.

- **Anxiety**

From the findings (see Chapter 5, point 5.4.2) it can be concluded that recidivists experience high levels of anxiety. These high levels of anxiety reflect a dysfunction in areas of the recidivist's social functioning (Zamble & Quinicy, 1997:43). The researcher is of the opinion that it is highly unlikely to have an exceedingly high future expectation whilst simultaneously experiencing excessively high levels of anxiety. These feelings instil uncertainty within the recidivist on their ability to succeed.

- **Guilt feelings**

From the findings (see Chapter 5; point 5.4.2) it can be concluded that recidivists' guilt feelings are projected based on their perception of what is expected from them by society. Their lack of ability to experience empathy, as well as an inability to interpret social situations, highlights the dividedness between their projected emotional competencies and real life experiences (compare Hill, 2002:145). In this regard it can furthermore be concluded that there is a gap between their projected guilt feelings and their ability to take responsibility for their anti-social behaviour.

- **Isolation**

From the findings (see Chapter 5, point 5.4.2) it is clear that feelings of isolation have a negative effect on the recidivists' social functioning. A clear link was found to exist between the feelings of isolation and loneliness that recidivists experience as well as their inability to experience empathy (compare Jones & Sims, 1997:336 and McWhirter *et al.*, 2002:70-71). It can furthermore be concluded that recidivist's feelings of isolation reinforce their lack of integration and attachment with meaningful systems in society (compare Chapter 2; point 2.3.4).

- **Stigma**

From findings (Chapter 5, point 5.4.2) it can be concluded that respondents experienced themselves as being negatively labelled and stigmatised by society. Their internalisation of the acquired label impacts on their ability to form meaningful relationships with society as well as contributes to the establishing of pro-criminal behavioural patterns (compare Bartollas, 1997:184). It can therefore be concluded that a reciprocal relationship exists between social isolation, stigmatisation and recidivism.

- **Lack of self-worth**

Although findings (Chapter 5, point 5.4.2) indicated that respondents perceive themselves as not having feelings that could be associated with a lack of self-worth, it was contradictory to findings in the constructs stigma, anxiety and isolation. It can

therefore be concluded that recidivist's lack of self-worth is actually a projected emotional cognition, which is rooted in how they would like to perceive themselves and be perceived by others (compare Faul and Hannekom, 2002:16).

- **Frustration**

Findings (Chapter 5, point 5.4.2) indicated that feelings of frustration have a negative impact on the respondents social functioning. A link was established between the recidivists' inability to resolve problems effectively and the high levels of frustration they experience (Zamble & Quincy, 1997:34). It can be concluded that the recidivists' external locus of control as well as their inability to solve problems contribute to feelings of frustration (Faul, 1995:219). These feelings of frustration could act as a trigger mechanism for resolving a problem by means of pro-criminal actions.

- **Helplessness**

Findings (Chapter 5, point 5.4.2) indicated that recidivists experience excessive levels of feelings of helplessness. These feelings can be associated with an external locus of control as well as their inability to resolve problems effectively (compare Faul, 1995:219 and Maguire *et al.*, 1997:145). They tend to view themselves as the victim based on their assumption that the world is an unfair place. These cognitions together with their ineffective problem resolution skills and feelings of helplessness are typical of

characteristics that can be associated with a recidivist (compare Bartollas & Miller, 1998:104, Bartollas, 1997:84; Jones & Sims, 1997:336 and Zamble & Quinicy, 1997:41).

- **Alcohol and drug abuse**

Findings (Chapter 5, point 5.4.2) indicated that specifically alcohol abuse had a negative impact on the respondents social functioning. A direct link between alcohol as risk factor for criminal causation was established (compare Conklin, 2001: 316-317). Findings indicated that drug abuse did not affect the respondents' social functioning. This is in contrast with findings from literature, namely that drugs and crime are part of a common lifestyle or sub-culture. This lifestyle can be associated with interaction between drug using offenders (compare Conklin, 2001:319 and Barkan, 1997:431). The researcher is of the opinion that alcohol and drugs are tools whereby the recidivists compensate for inadequacies in their social functioning. These inadequacies are for instance feelings of anxiety, isolation and lack of self-worth. It can therefore be concluded that alcohol and drugs becomes a coping mechanism and problem-solving tool to address inadequacies in the recidivists' social functioning. It can furthermore be associated with the recidivists' pro-criminal lifestyle.

From the discussion of the negative indicators of social functioning it can be concluded that several of the negative indicators, for example guilt feelings, isolation and stigma, are rooted in the

recidivists' interaction with, and their perception of their interaction with environmental systems. Findings indicated that they tend to project feelings of how they would like to be perceived by themselves and others. The discrepancy between these projections and the reality manifests itself in feelings of anxiety, helplessness and frustration. Ineffective coping mechanisms and inadequate problem solving skills furthermore strengthen these negative feelings. Recidivists often abuse alcohol and drugs in order to cope with these feelings as well as to compensate for inadequacies in their social functioning.

6.2.2.3 Functioning within the environment

The respondents' interaction with meaningful systems, namely family, care givers, partner, child, colleagues and friends will henceforth be discussed. Conclusions regarding the impact of peer pressure and a social support system as well as the respondents' perception of their responsibility towards others and integration into society will be presented.

- **Relationship with meaningful systems**

Findings (see Chapter 5, point 5.4.3) indicated that respondents tend to project positive feelings regarding their relationships with environmental systems giving an indication of their desired relationship with these systems (compare Faul & Hannekom, 2002:16). Recidivist's lack of social ties and the unrealistic perception regarding these relationships are reflected in their

feelings of isolation and stigma they experience. It can be concluded that the recidivists' lack of relationships with meaningful systems, and the absence of social support systems in their lives, has a negative impact on their social functioning.

- **Peer pressure**

Findings (see Chapter 5, point 5.4.3) indicated that recidivists associate with friends that adhere to pro-criminal values. It was established by Siegel & Senna (2000:169) that friends could act as a powerful socialization agent in the learning of pro-criminal behaviour and attitudes. The respondents regard friends as a causative factor of their offending behaviour. It can therefore be concluded that peer pressure has a negative impact on the recidivists' social functioning.

- **Social support**

From findings (see Chapter 5, point 5.4.3) it could be concluded that recidivists do not always have stable support systems.

- **Responsibility for others**

As in the case with the construct *guilt feelings*, the respondents' perception regarding their responsibility towards others are also over activated (compare Faul & Hannekom, 2002:16). This is an indication that it is a projection of what the recidivist perceive as socially acceptable behaviour. The recidivists' lack of an ability to experience empathy was discussed in Chapter 3, point 3.2.2.

The recidivists' perception of responsibility towards others can also be associated with "pleasing behaviour" which supports the findings regarding the negative influence that peer pressure has on the recidivists' social functioning (compare Brown, 2001:258 and Bartollas & Miller, 1998:120).

- **Integration into society**

Findings (see Chapter 5, point 5.4.3) indicated that the recidivists' perception regarding their integration into society is based on projected feelings, which reflect how they would like their relationships ideally to be with the community.

The lack of contact that the respondents have with conventional society is supported by findings from the measuring of the constructs *isolation* and *stigma* (compare Chapter 5, point 5.4.2). The researcher is of the opinion that it is highly unlikely for the respondents to feel integrated in the community and at the same time experience intense feelings of isolation and stigmatisation.

From the abovementioned findings regarding the respondents' relationship with environmental systems it can be concluded that recidivists tend to over emphasise the positive part of their social functioning in order to rationalize the negative feelings they have regarding their lack of relationships, as well as the lack of

emotional and social ties with individuals and systems in the community.

The discussed conclusions will henceforth be utilized to compile a profile of the South African recidivist.

6.3 PROFILE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN RECIDIVIST

The profile of the recidivist is based on characteristics that can be associated with behavioural patterns that are typical of the recidivist. In Chapter 2 (point 2.2.1) the researcher highlighted the inconsequent use of recidivism as a label. She further emphasised the negative effect that labelling has on the social functioning of a person who has been labelled as a recidivist. The negative effect of labelling was further explored in Chapter 4, point 4.4.

Being aware of the negative impact of labelling, the researcher acknowledges the possible labelling effect that a profile of a recidivist could have. However, the aim of this profile is not to label an offender as a recidivist but rather to act as a tool to assist with the prevention and management of recidivism. In this regard the researcher concurs with Zamble and Quinsey's (1997:5): "What is needed is a better understanding of the role of current factors in the causation of new offences". The researcher is of the opinion that the road to this challenge lies within the profile of the recidivist.

The predominant characteristics of recidivists are their habitual re-offending. This stems from following a pro-criminal life style and multi-dimensional, anti-social behavioural patterns that recidivists adhere to. From the literature as well as quantitative study it was found that their life style is commonly rooted in pro-criminal socialization and is based furthermore on delinquent moral values and cognitions. These pro-criminal attributes and cognitions are enmeshed and present themselves by means of typical characteristics that could be associated with recidivism as a phenomenon. These characteristics act as risk factors that could contribute to the maintaining of recidivistic behavioural patterns. It is therefore of importance to note that it is not individual characteristics but the dynamic interaction between these characteristics that underlies a recidivistic life style and profile.

According to the researcher, the profile of the South African recidivist can be depicted as follow:

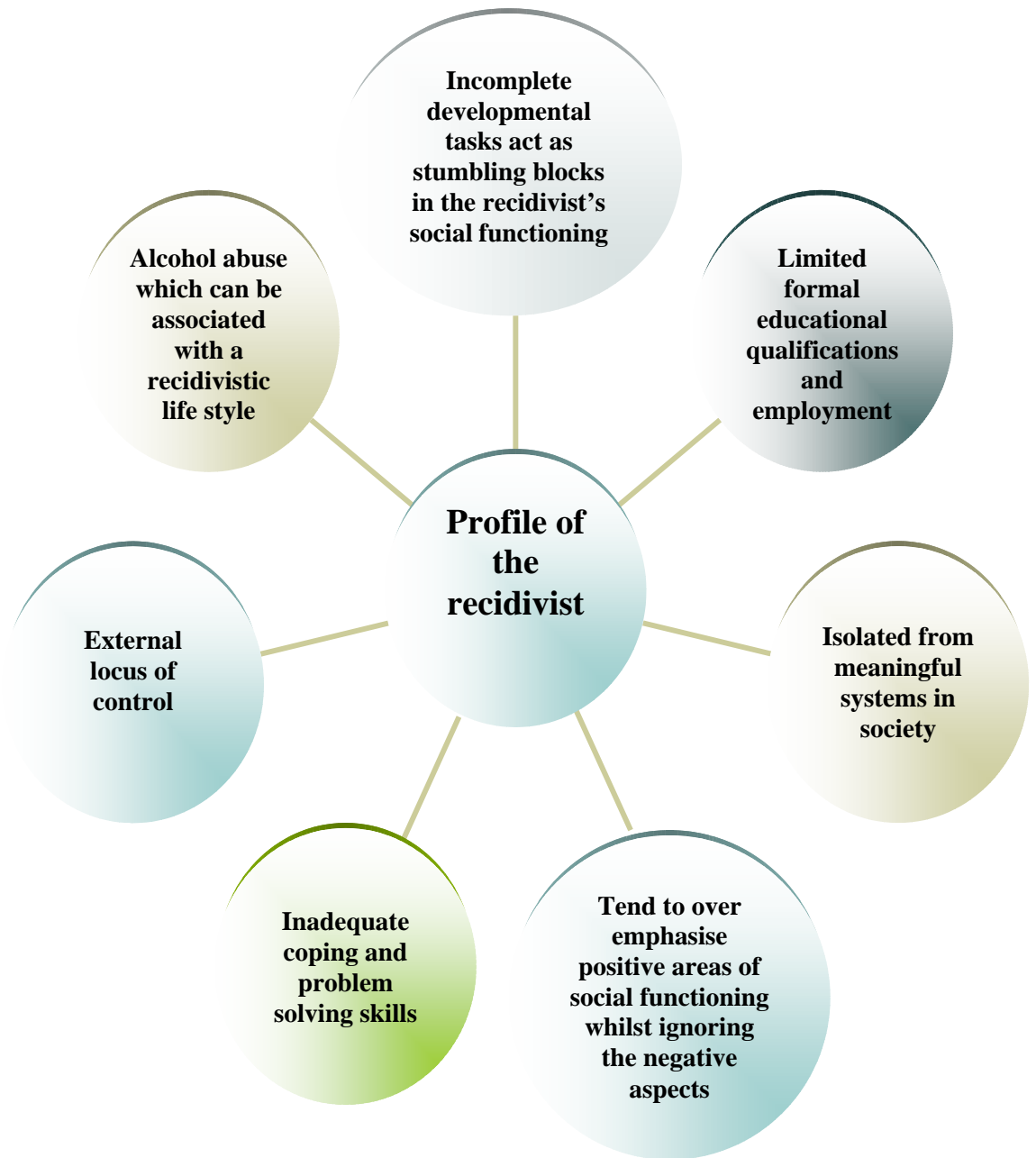


Figure 16: Profile of the South African recidivist

Figure 16 depicts characteristics which reflects the typical profile of the South African recidivist. Each characteristic will henceforth be discussed.

- **Characteristic 1**

Findings indicated that recidivism is not age bound. The emphasis rather falls on the reciprocal influence of incomplete developmental tasks in relation to the formation of recidivistic behavioural patterns and life style. Incomplete developmental tasks, such as the absence of formal educational qualifications affect future tasks, amongst others, the obtaining of employment and financial independence. These incomplete developmental tasks act as a developmental stumbling block which in turn affect the recidivist's social functioning negatively. These incomplete developmental tasks could act as a risk factor that can be associated with the causation of crime.

- **Characteristic 2**

The recidivist has limited basic formal educational qualifications as well as a lack of employment related skills. The lack of these qualifications and skills limit employment prospects and lead to unemployment as well as affect the recidivist's scope of financial income. Unemployment could furthermore be linked with idleness and boredom, creating the opportunity for offending. The interactional dynamics between the recidivist's educational and employment skills as well as unemployment, poverty and idleness act as risk factors that could contribute to criminal causation.

- **Characteristic 3**

The recidivist tends to be isolated from meaningful systems in society and lack relationships with support systems. Recidivists often view the community as a hostile environment within which they are stigmatised. The internalisation of these perceived negative labels further act to isolate the recidivist from society.

Recidivists furthermore lack the ability to form and maintain emotional relationships with support systems. The recidivists' relationship with support systems are often characterised by their unrealistic perceptions regarding these relationships. This leads to the projection of their perceptions of how they would like their relationships with support systems to be. These unrealistic perceptions further strengthen the feelings of isolation they experience.

The recidivist's lack of integration into conventional society as well as the absence of stable support systems act as risk factors that could be associated with criminal causation.

- **Characteristic 4**

The recidivist characteristically tends to over emphasise the positive areas of their social functioning whilst ignoring the negative aspects. Their self-perceptions are based on how they would like to perceive themselves as well as how they would like to

be perceived by others. This is also evident in their future perception and expectations where they have an unrealistically positive perception regarding the future. In reality these positive expectations are built upon projected needs. It was indicated by the findings that recidivists do not take responsibility for developmental tasks in order to work towards realizing their perceived future expectations. This results in a hiatus between their projected perceptions and expectations, which results in experiences of dissatisfaction with their social functioning.

- **Characteristic 5**

Recidivists tend to have inadequate problem solving abilities. They furthermore tend to experience daily challenges as stressful problematic situations. This affects their abilities to cope with everyday mundane activities. Due to their pro-criminal socialization as well as delinquent life style they tend to resolve problems in an anti-social manner. They also lack the ability to anticipate the outcome of their actions.

- **Characteristic 6**

Findings (compare Faul, 1995:219) indicated that the recidivist has an external locus of control, which means that they perceive themselves as not being in control of their own lives. Feelings of anxiety, helplessness and frustration that they experience in this regard have a negative impact on the recidivists' social functioning.

Their external locus of control combined with their inability to resolve problems act as a risk factor that could be associated with criminal causation.

- **Characteristic 7**

Substance abuse, specifically alcohol abuse, was found to be associated with the recidivistic criminal life style. The abuse of substances acts as a tool for the recidivist to address and cope with inadequacies in their social functioning (compare Kuperminc & Allen, 2001:598, 615).

In conclusion, with regard to the profile of the South African recidivist, it should be emphasised that these characteristics should not be seen in isolation since they all form part of various recidivistic behavioural patterns. These behavioural patterns can in turn be associated with an anti-social life style.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions from the quantitative findings of the study, the researcher proposed the profile of the South African recidivists. The South African profile of a recidivist concludes phase one, the quantitative research phase of this study. Recommendations following from these conclusions are as follows:

- An assessment scale should be developed to assist with the risk prediction of re-offending;

- Therapeutic intervention strategies and programmes should be developed based on the profile of the recidivist; and
- Further research should be conducted on a national basis in order to develop a profile that could be generalized to all South African offenders.

6.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the conclusions based on the findings and interpretation of the quantitative data were presented. From the mentioned conclusions a proposed profile of the South African recidivist was compiled. In Chapter 7 findings of the qualitative data, i.e. phase two of the research study, will be presented and discussed.