

ISSN: 1889-1861

***THE EUROPEAN JOURNAL
OF
PSYCHOLOGY APPLIED
TO
LEGAL CONTEXT***



Volume 3, Number 2, July 2011

*The official Journal of the
SOCIEDAD ESPAÑOLA DE PSICOLOGÍA JURÍDICA Y FORENSE
Website: <http://www.usc.es/sepjf>*

The European Journal of Psychology Applied to Legal Context, 2011, 3(2)
Eur. j. psychol. appl. legal context, 2011, 3(2), 89-176, ISSN: 1889-1861
www.usc.es/sepjf

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Official Journal of the *Sociedad Española de Psicología Jurídica y Forense* (www.usc.es/sepjf)

Published By: SEPJF.

Published in: Santiago de Compostela (Spain)

Volume 3, Number 2.

Order Form: see www.usc.es/sepjf

Frequency: 2 issues per year (January, July).

E-mail address: ejpalc@usc.es

Postal address: The European Journal of Psychology Applied to Legal Context, Facultad de Psicología, Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, E-15782 Santiago de Compostela (Spain).

ISSN: 1889-1861.

D.L.: C-4376-2008

DRUG ABUSE AND CRIMINAL FAMILY RECORDS IN THE CRIMINAL HISTORY OF PRISONERS

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(Received 4 January 2011; revised 23 March 2011; accepted 25 March 2011)

Abstract

The relationship between criminal behavior and the risk factors, family criminal records and drug use, has been firmly established. With the aim of defining the role of these risk factors in the initiation and evolution of criminal behavior, a field study with prison inmates was designed. A survival analysis with the age at which the first unsanctioned crime was committed and the age at which entered by first instance into prison was applied to the data of 157 prison inmates in Villabona (Asturias, Spain). The results of a survival analysis showed that drug abuse re-offenders initiated in criminal acts at an earlier age (13 years) than the primary offenders (16 years); re-offenders from family criminal records began his/her criminal activity earlier (13 years) than primary ones (16 years); re-offenders with non-criminal family records, initiate in criminal acts at 14 years, whereas primary at 16; the recidivist drug abusers enter by first instance into prison earlier (19 years) than the primary ones; non-drug consuming primary offenders enter prison for the first time at the age of 24 whereas recidivists do so at the age of 19; the first entrance into prison of the recidivist with family criminal records occurs early (19 years), than for the primary offenders (23 years); and the recidivist prisoners of non-family criminal records cross the threshold of the prison by first time youngsters (21 years) than the primary inmates (26 years). The implications of these results may lead towards a more effective intervention against crime.

Keywords: Prisoners, Recidivism, Crime, Drugs, Socialization, Family criminal records.

Resumen

La relación entre el comportamiento criminal y los factores de riesgo, como el registro delictivo familiar y el consumo de drogas, ha sido establecida. Con el objetivo de definir el papel de estos factores de riesgo en el inicio y la evolución de la conducta criminal, se diseñó un estudio de campo con presos. Se aplicó a los datos de 157 reclusos en Villabona (Asturias, España) un análisis de supervivencia relacionado con la edad en que se cometió el primer delito no sancionado y la edad en la que entró por primera vez en la cárcel. Los resultados del análisis muestran que los reincidentes con abuso de drogas se iniciaron en actos delictivos a una edad más temprana (13 años) que los delincuentes primarios (16 años); los reincidentes con antecedentes penales en la familia comenzaron su actividad criminal a una edad anterior (13 años) a los primarios (16 años); Los reincidentes de familias sin antecedentes penales se iniciaban en actos delictivos a los 14 años, mientras que los primarios a los 16; los reincidentes con dependencia a las drogas entran por primera vez en la cárcel antes (19 años) que los primarios. Los delincuentes primarios que no consumen drogas ingresan en la cárcel por primera vez a la edad de 24 años, mientras que los reincidentes a la edad de 19; la primera entrada en prisión de los reincidentes con antecedentes penales de la familia se produce antes (19 años), que en los delincuentes primarios (23 años), y los presos reincidentes sin antecedentes penales de la familia cruzan el umbral de la cárcel por primera vez a una edad más joven (21 años) que los internos primarios (26 años). Las implicaciones de estos resultados pueden orientar una intervención más eficaz contra la delincuencia.

Palabras clave: Presos, Reincidencia, Delito, Drogas, Socialización, Antecedentes penales familiares.

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Introduction

Transgressive behavior, understood and valued in terms of normative conflict and consideration of others, is characterized by disobedience of social rules. In turn, it reflects the immaturity associated with the period of development during which this behavior occurs, normally adolescence (Baron, 2003; Ibabe, Jaureguizar, & Díaz, 2009). It may remain an isolated act, possibly unsanctioned, or derive into deviance insofar as it breaks with societal expectations or legally sanctionable acts which convert the individual into a delinquent (Arce, Seijo, Fariña, & Mohamed-Mohand, 2010; Benda, 1997).

The first of the derivations could be interpreted as a pattern –a persistent discrepancy between behavior and the reigning norms– which is irresponsible and antisocial and which begins at a young age and continues into adult life. Here we are concerned with individuals who do not respect social norms and who repeatedly behave in an antisocial manner which may end up in an offence categorized in the Penal Code. The initial derivation therefore belongs to the field of the behavioral sciences and entails a more general conceptualization, namely reiterated violation of social norms of behavior. The second derivation pertains to the field of law, and is thus more restrictive, i.e., to a concrete act (Gottfredson, Kearley, Najaka, & Rocha, 2007; Rodríguez & Paíno, 1994).

Delinquency in this framework is not an act, rather a complex behavioral form which is difficult to distill into a working hypothesis. Past positions on delinquents –and it should be highlighted that there is no universally accepted definition, although there is increasing confirmation of the impact of individual differences– referred to a static personality, the alternative focus being on persons who commit offenses in certain conditions (Baron, 2003; Levitt & Lochner 2001; Valverde, 1996). Here, there is increasing documentation on a clear relation with the process of socialization (Musitu, Moreno, & Murgui, 2007; Rodríguez, Paíno, & Moral 2007) and the learning of social norms (Borum, 2000; Clemente, Espinosa, & Vidal, 2009). The “unadapted” person is socially constructed and, generally speaking, arises from the way the person seeks to defend himself from others, who have no consideration for him/her or who condemn him/her, leading him/her to consider the social environment as a source of “aggressions” in his/her socializing process (Rodríguez & Paíno, 1994).

Criminal behavior in this framework has been explained through a series of parameters which involve the personal-biological, family and social spheres of individuals, where no single one of these can be considered as the only cause nor do they all as a whole completely explain errant behavior (Arce & Fariña, 2007; Arce, Seijo, Fariña, & Mohamed-Mohand, 2010). In general, it is well documented that the deficiencies, both at a personal and social level, of the individual in terms of his socialization have an influence in the appearance of maladjusted behavior (Baron, 2003). Also influential are the age bracket and the cognitive maturity of the youth, although this will also depend on the intensity and frequency with which a series of factors appear (Borum, 2000; Clemente et al., 2009).

The increase in juvenile delinquency in Spain in recent years has led to this accounting for 10% of overall delinquency (Hidalgo & Júdez, 2007). Moreover, it has been revealed that antisocial behavior which appears before the age of 15 has a repercussion on interpersonal and social relations as well as on norms of coexistence, thereby constituting a clear predictor of adult delinquency. It has for instance been shown that the age at which transgressive activity begins is an important factor in predicting recidivism (Trulson, Marquart, Mullings, & Caeti, 2005).

Ending up in prison as a result of criminal behavior has been related to life history in the context of the family (Romero, Luengo, & Gómez-Fraguela, 2000), which is considered to be the first socializing medium through which beliefs, values and norms of behavior are transmitted. Studies on the role of the family and its influence on criminal behavior have multiplied in recent years, although not all studies find significant relations between family structure and delinquency (Crespo, Perles, & San Martín, 2006).

In the sphere of the family, attention has been given to the socializing structure or organization of the family associated with conditions of poverty, social marginalization or underprivileged social situations, and research has highlighted the existence of criminal records or the consumption of controlled substances within spaces of coexistence (Baron, 2003; Benda, 1997; Herrero, 2002; Hidalgo & Júdez, 2007; Rodríguez, Paíno, Herrero, & Cuevas, 1997). This has been associated with lack of affection and inadequate educational styles in family relations (Espada & Méndez, 2002; Musitu et al., 2007; Nunes & Jóluskin, 2008), which in turn has been related to antisocial behavior at early ages. Depending on its seriousness and its distance from social norms, this behavior can be considered as a predictor for juvenile and adult

delinquency, and there has even been discussion of an intergenerational problem in the sense of a transmission of distorted norms and/or lack of social control (Bringas, Rodríguez, Gutiérrez, & Pérez, 2010; Clemente et al., 2009; Demuth & Brown, 2004; Gottfredson et al., 2007; Ibabe et al., 2009).

However, account should be taken of the different forms a crime can take, that is, there is a need to differentiate between an unsanctioned antisocial act which remains as a one-off action and becomes part of teenage development, and an act that can be characterized as criminal and which leads on to crime and occasional delinquency or crime and persistent delinquency (Jessor, 1993; Musitu et al., 2007).

Having assumed the importance and variety of risk factors associated with the appearance and consolidation of criminal behavior at young ages, this study focuses on two variables which may define a trajectory towards criminal behavior: drug consumption, that is, addiction to multiple drugs as a personal factor (Isorna, Fernández-Ríos, & Souto, 2010; Rodríguez et al, 1997), family criminal record variable and criminal records as a family variable (Demuth & Brown, 2004). Thus, the aim of the study was to establishing the evolution of criminal behavior from the perpetration of the first admitted unsanctioned crime (transgressive behavior) to the first entry into prison, taking into account drug consumption and the criminal records of family relations of the convict as well as the degree of recidivism.

Method

Participants

The participants in this study consists of 157 inmates in the penitentiary centre in Villabona (Asturias, Spain), the vast majority of which were males ($n = 149$), accounting for 94.9% of the total. The ages of the inmates ranged from 19 to 49, with a mean of 30.71 ($SD = 7.445$) and a mode of 23. First-time convicts, i. e. primary, made up 43.4% of the sample, with the remaining 56.7% being recidivist prisoners, i. e. re-offenders; 65.6% of the inmates were multiple-drug addicts, with no differences in age $\chi^2(1) = 39.852$, *ns*, between addicts and non addicts, and 38.9% came from families with criminal records.

Procedure and design

The study was carried out using the Life History Interview (Paíno, 1995), which consists in a semi-structured interview technique to gather information on socio-demographic, family and drug-consumption variables, as well as variables related to their adaption to prison and their criminal history in terms of detected and undetected crimes. In light of the objectives of the study, the following variables were considered: the age at which the first unsanctioned transgressive action took place; the status of the inmate according to his/her criminal and prison record, i. e., primary (first time in prison) and recidivist inmates (two or more times in prison); drug consumption, i. e., in the sense of whether or not the individual has consumed or is consuming multiple legal and /or illegal drugs, i.e., multiple-drug abuse; and the existence or not of criminal histories in the primary family.

The data were analyzed carrying out a survival analysis using the Kaplan-Meier procedure with the aim of comparing the risk periods, that is, the age at which the first unsanctioned crime was committed and the age at which entry into prison took place for the first time as a result of this criminal behavior. The method of analysis is appropriate in that it uses precise survival times, yielding exact proportions. Moreover, to provide better discrimination in the analysis, two levels of control were used: a variable as a factor (degree of offending: primary or re-offender) and strata variables (drug- or not-addiction and the existence or not of a family criminal history).

Results

Table 1, which deals with the age that inmates committed their first unsanctioned transgressive act, shows that recidivist inmates who are drug abusers started their criminal career at an earlier age (13 years old) whereas drug-abusing prisoners who are primary offenders began at the age of 16. On the other hand, recidivist inmates who are not drug abusers start their criminal career at the age of 16 whereas non-drug abusing primary offenders started at the age of 14.

Tabla 1. Median survival times.

Multiple drug Abuser	Recidivism	Medians			
		Estimation	Standard error	95% Confidence interval	
		Lower bound	Upper bound	Lower bound	Upper bound
No	Primary	16.00	.50	15.01	16.98
	Recidivist	14.00	.82	12.37	15.62
	Global	15.00	.67	13.67	16.32
Yes	Primary	16.00	.57	14.87	17.12
	Recidivist	13.00	.45	12.11	13.88
	Global	15.00	.55	13.90	16.09
Global	Global	15.00	.41	14.19	15.80

As shown in Table 2, the chi-squared statistic illustrates significant differences in the age at which the first criminal act took place for primary and recidivist drug abusing inmates, but no such differences were found for non-drug abusers. These results are also supported by the survival function (see Figure 1) which reveals no crossing of lines, implying that recidivist prisoners who are drug consumers commit their first criminal act at an earlier age than primary offenders.

Table 2. Global comparisons.

Multiple drug abusers		χ^2	gl	p
No	Log Rank (Mantel-Cox)	1.107	1	.293
	Breslow (Generalized Wilcoxon)	.796	1	.372
	Tarone-Ware	.954	1	.329
Yes	Log Rank (Mantel-Cox)	22.95	1	.000
	Breslow (Generalized Wilcoxon)	22.68	1	.000
	Tarone-Ware	23.07	1	.000

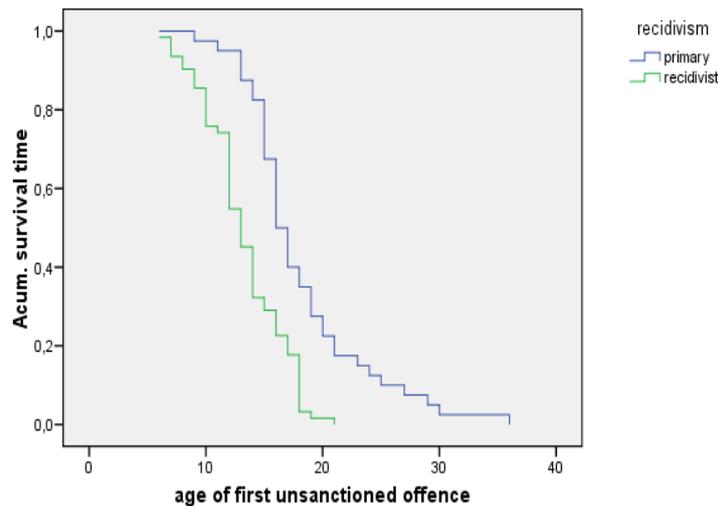


Figure 1. Survival functions for the age of the first unsanctioned crime as a function of recidivism among drug abusers.

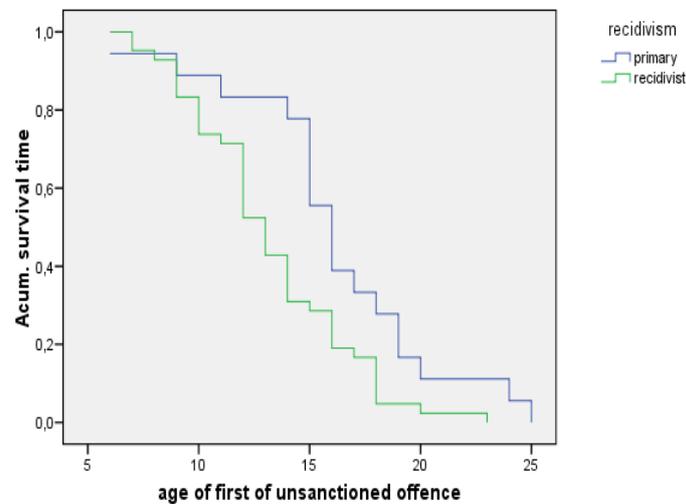
As for the family criminal records, the results (see Table 3) illustrate that recidivist offenders began their criminal activity earlier than primary offenders. Recidivist offenders from families with criminal records began transgressive behavior at the age of 13, while primary offenders from families with criminal records initiated such behavior at the age of 16. Furthermore, recidivist offenders with no family criminal records began at the age of 14, whereas primary offenders began at the age of 16. Table 4 shows significant differences for the family criminal record factor, and these are illustrated in Figures 2 and 3.

Table 3. Median survival times.

Family criminal records	Recidivism	Medians			
		Standard error	Estimation	Standard error	
		Lower bound	Upper bound	Lower bound	Upper bound
No	Primary	16.00	.49	15.02	16.97
	Recidivist	14.00	.60	12.80	15.19
	Global	16.00	.36	15.28	16.71
Yes	Primary	16.00	.68	14.64	17.35
	Recidivist	13.00	.53	11.95	14.04
	Global	14.00	.64	12.74	15.25
Global	Global	15.00	.44	14.13	15.86

Table 4. Global comparisons.

Family criminal records		χ^2	gl	p
No	Log Rank (Mantel-Cox)	6.57	1	.010
	Breslow (Generalized Wilcoxon)	6.77	1	.009
	Tarone-Ware	6.90	1	.009
Yes	Log Rank (Mantel-Cox)	6.30	1	.012
	Breslow (Generalized Wilcoxon)	5.95	1	.015
	Tarone-Ware	6.31	1	.012

**Figure 2.** Survival functions for those with family criminal records.

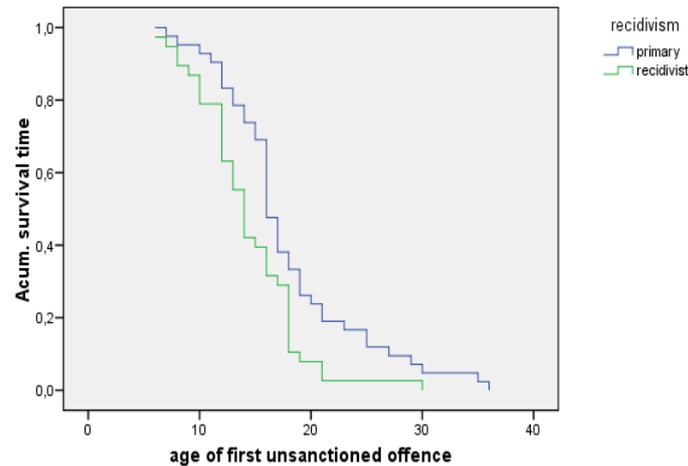


Figure 3. Survival functions for those with no family criminal records.

Among drug abusers, primary and recidivist prisoners enter prison for the first time at different ages. As can be seen in Table 5, recidivist prisoners enter prison for the first time at the age of 19 compared to the age of 25 for primary offenders. On the other hand, non-drug consuming primary offenders enter prison for the first time at the age of 24 whereas recidivists do so at the age of 19. The Chi-squared statistics (Table 6) reveal significant differences, and this is illustrated by the survival functions (Figures 4 and 5).

Table 5. Medians of survival times.

Multiple drug abuser	Recidivism	Medians			
		Standard error	Estimation	Standard error	
		Lower bound	Upper bound	Lower bound	Upper bound
No	Primary	24.00	.74	22.53	25.46
	Recidivist	19.00	.72	17.57	20.42
	Global	22.00	.91	20.20	23.79
Yes	Primary	25.00	.78	23.45	26.54
	Recidivist	19.00	.79	17.44	20.55
	Global	21.00	.67	19.67	22.32
Global	Global	21.00	.55	19.91	22.08

Table 6. Global comparisons.

Multiple drug abuser		χ^2	gl	p
No	Log Rank (Mantel-Cox)	8.30	1	.004
	Breslow (Generalized Wilcoxon)	10.64	1	.001
	Tarone-Ware	9.86	1	.002
Yes	Log Rank (Mantel-Cox)	27.72	1	.000
	Breslow (Generalized Wilcoxon)	26.36	1	.000
	Tarone-Ware	27.46	1	.000

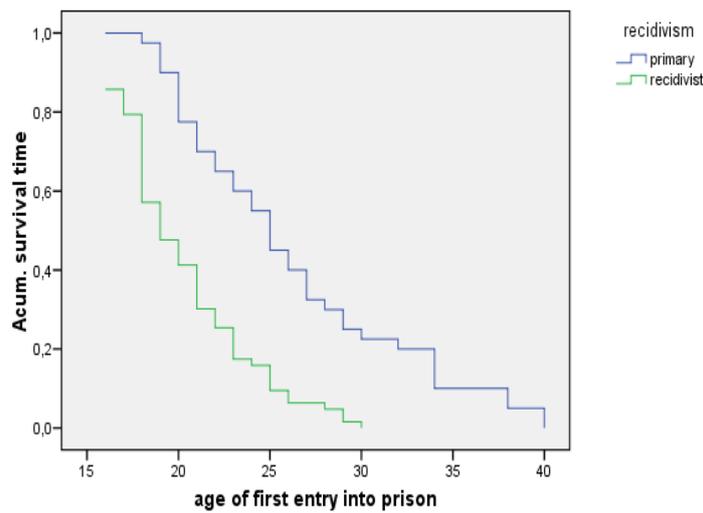


Figure 4. Survival functions for drug consumers.

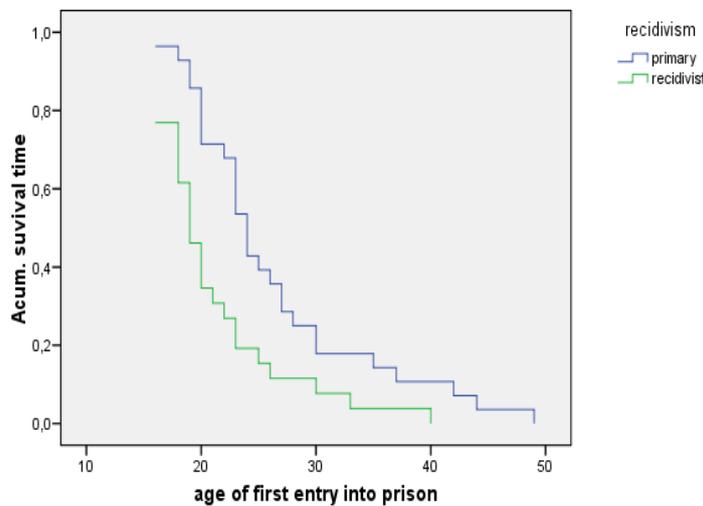


Figure 5. Survival functions for non-consumers of drugs.

Finally, the first entry into prison for those whose family had criminal records (see Table 7) occurs at an earlier age (19 years) for recidivist offenders than for primary offenders (23 years). Of those with no family criminal records, recidivist offenders first enter prison at the age of 21 compared to the age of 26 for the primary offenders. The Chi-squared statistics (Table 8) and the survival functions (see Figures 6 and 7) illustrate significant differences in the ages of the first entry into prison between the primary and recidivist offenders with family criminal records and between the primary and recidivist offenders with no family criminal records.

Table 7. Medians of survival times.

Family criminal records	Recidivism	Medians			
		Standard error	Estimation	Standard error	
		Lower bound	Upper bound	Lower bound	Upper bound
No	Primary	26.00	1.08	23.87	28.12
	Recidivist	21.00	1.02	18.99	23.00
	Global	23.00	.74	21.53	24.46
Yes	Primary	23.00	1.05	20.93	25.06
	Recidivist	19.00	.65	17.72	20.27
	Global	20.00	.55	18.91	21.08
Global	Global	21.00	.66	19.69	22.30

Table 8. Global comparisons.

Family criminal records		χ^2	gl	Sig.
No	Log Rank (Mantel-Cox)	20.98	1	.000
	Breslow (Generalized Wilcoxon)	19.03	1	.000
	Tarone-Ware	20.18	1	.000
Yes	Log Rank (Mantel-Cox)	5.41	1	.020
	Breslow (Generalized Wilcoxon)	8.18	1	.004
	Tarone-Ware	7.24	1	.007

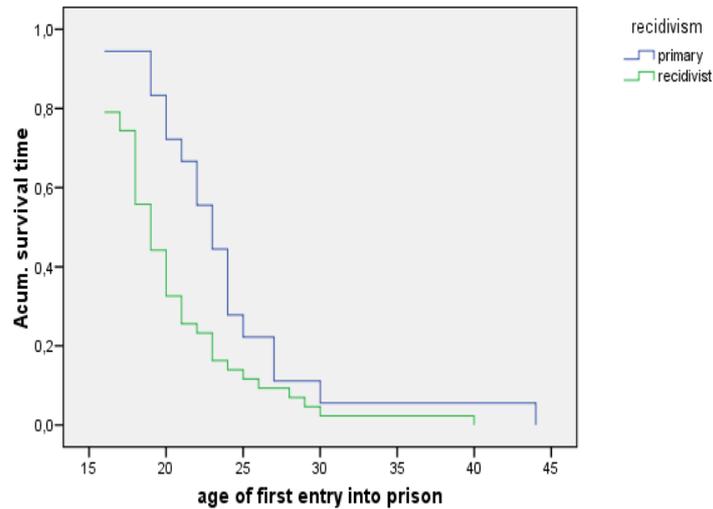


Figure 6. Survival functions for those with family criminal records.

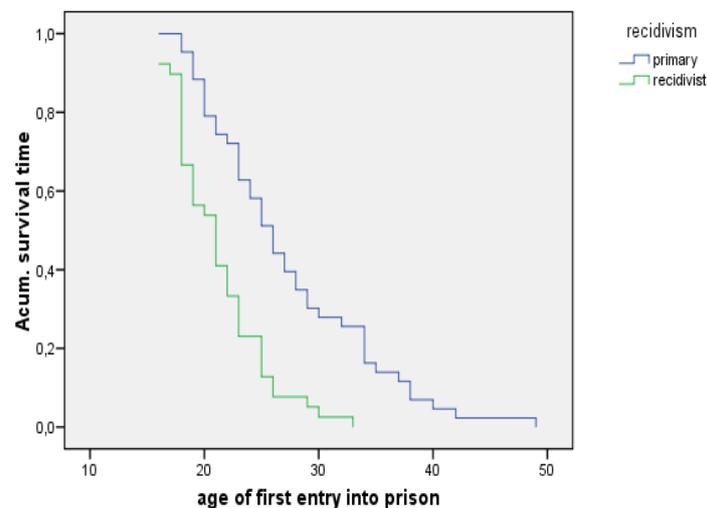


Figure 7. Survival functions for those with no family criminal records.

Discussion

Criminal acts are carried out by human beings, who become converted into delinquents. They are suspected of breaking the law, charges are brought against them, and when convicted attempts are made to resocialize them. At the same time, we accept that systems of formal control take charge of pursuing, condemning and sending to prison the perpetrator of the crime. These systems are not concerned with incorporating the results of research on juvenile and adult delinquency which have been highlighting the presence of several factors which influence the initiation into and continuation of

criminal behavior and which point to transgressive behavior being a result of life history (Arce, Seijo, Fariña, & Mohamed-Mohand, 2010; Baron, 2003; Clemente et al., 2009; Rodríguez & Paíno, 1994).

Criminal behavior is recognized to be a complex phenomenon which cannot be attributed to a single cause. As such, it is polygenetic in nature and defies simplistic and generalized interpretations underlying predictive models which purport universal validity. Thus, satisfactory results can only be achieved with the incorporation of surrounding realities while recognizing the difficulties involved in identifying the responsibility attributable to each individual factor in the development of criminal behavior (Benda, 1997; Gottfredson et al., 2007; Levitt & Lochner, 2001).

For this reason, our study attempts to contribute towards establishing the importance of particular moments of the criminal trajectory in the life history of a sample of prison inmates. This has been done taking into account the evolution of their criminal behavior from the time of their first, possibly unsanctioned, transgressive act to the age at which they first entered prison, analyzing some of the factors which may have precipitated this, namely drug consumption and the existence of criminal records in the family (Bringas et al., 2010). Besides this, attempts are made to identify differences with regard to entry into prison according to the type of prison record –primary or recidivist prisoners.

Although the data on transgressive behavior in the normalized population should be interpreted with caution as no information is available regarding either the seriousness of the acts or the extent to which they may be somewhat transitory (Hidalgo & Júdez, 2007), the behavioral realities of the prison population usually indicate precocious initiation (Bringas et al., 2010). In line with this, for our sample of inmates it has been found that this occurs at the beginning of adolescence, a period when social control relaxes. At the same time, this study has shown that among drug abusers there are differences between primary and recidivist offenders. Recidivist prisoners admit to having committed unsanctioned transgressive acts for the first time at a younger age than the primary prisoners, and they also enter into prison for the first time for a sanctioned crime at the earlier age than the primary prisoners.

Results reveal that primary and recidivist inmates who were non-drug abusers initiate in transgressive behavior at the same age, but into drug abusers it was observed a higher tendency for recidivist offenders to commit the first criminal act an earlier age as well as to enter prison at a significantly earlier age, than the primary offenders. This

goes in line with the studies which have pointed out that drug consumption is associated with a lifestyle which increases for youngsters the probability of carrying out transgressive acts and which favors the initiation of a criminal trajectory (Gottfredson et al., 2007; Ibabe et al., 2009; Rodríguez et al., 1997).

Along the same lines and taking into account the history of criminal records in the family, the first unsanctioned transgressive act was again self-reported as having occurred at an earlier age for recidivist offenders than for primary offenders. Recidivist offenders with family criminal records also enter prison for the first time at an earlier age. Likewise, recidivist offenders with no criminal records in the family enter prison for the first time and initiate criminal behavior at younger ages than inmates who are primary offenders.

These results are in line with recent studies on the importance of the role of the family, and in particular of the importance of the history of criminal records in the family in transgressive behavior among youngsters (Baron, 2003; Bringas et al., 2010; Nunes & Jólluskin, 2008), which as years go by becomes a risk factor for entry into prison. Our findings, moreover, are in line with those found by Hidalgo and Júdez (2007), who highlighted that deviant behavior before the age of 15 predicts future antisocial behavior. Similarly, this is in accordance with the fact that the reiteration of criminal acts is significantly related with the carrying out of transgressive acts at earlier ages and entry into prison at an earlier age which coincides with the theoretical end of adolescence. This implies a need to highlight more aspects of the socio-family history of the inmates, oriented towards understanding the possible causes of initiation into and evolution of criminal behavior (Baron, 2003; Clemente et al., 2009; Gottfredson et al., 2007; Levitt & Lochner, 2001) with the aim of guiding a more efficacious and efficient intervention.

It would also be opportune to know the school trajectories of the convicts, comparing them according to the degree of recidivism of criminal behavior, as the ages at which first infractions were admitted to occur seem to indicate that they have not adapted well to school and experience difficulties in attaining a level of social competence adapted to the context in which their life history takes place (Rodríguez et al., 2007). It is necessary to take a step further in the analysis of criminal trajectories, along the lines of the theoretical approach of Jessor (1993), to link the interrelation of risk factors to the appearance of adult criminal behavior (transitory and persistent

trajectories) in order to configure a realistic intervention. A line of research which needs to be emphasized, therefore, is the investigation into the role played by psycho-social variables that favor the committing of sanctionable transgressive acts from an early age, the reiteration of which will lead to an antisocial behavior that forms the base for transitory and recidivist criminal behavior.

Acknowledgements

This study forms part of a research Project financed by the University of Oviedo, Spain (Reference UNOV-10-MA-3).

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