

Violent and Disruptive Behaviour in the Irish Prison Service: An Examination of Current Management



Orla Gallagher^{1,2}, Prof. Gary O' Reilly¹, Dr Emma Regan²

¹ School of Psychology, University College Dublin; ² Psychology Service, Irish Prison Service



1. Background

What is violent and disruptive prisoner (VDP) behaviour?

The Irish Prison Service (IPS) VDP policy¹ defines violent and disruptive prisoner behaviour as that which:

- involves serious repetitive violence towards staff and/or other prisoners
- poses a significant risk of violence towards others
- poses particular operational issues for the prison system

What are the consequences of VDP behaviour?

The consequences of VDP behaviour are vast, varied, and related.^{2,3}

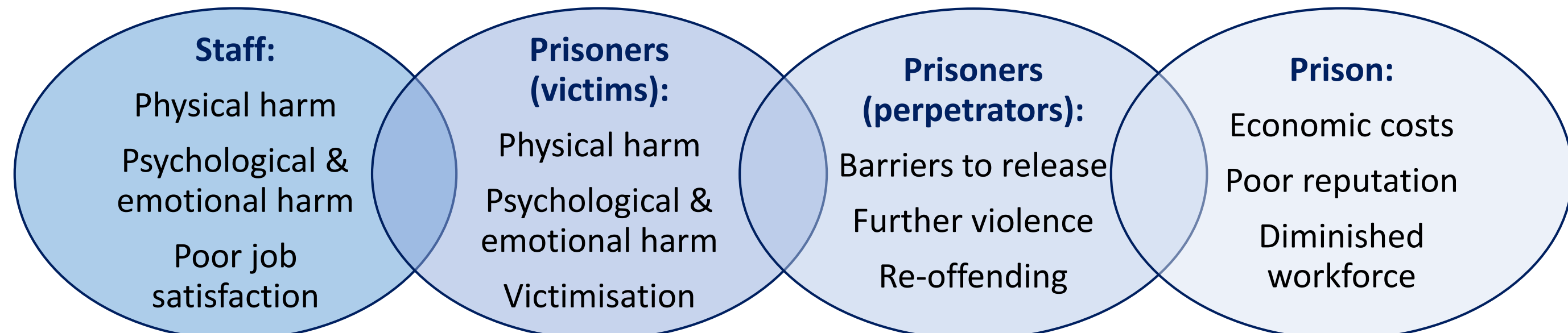


Figure 1. Consequences of VDP Behaviour

How is VDP behaviour currently managed in the IPS?

- A small cohort of prisoners with behaviour meeting the above criteria ($n = 5$) are managed under the IPS VDP policy.
- These prisoners are managed separately from the general prison population in highly secure locations with restrictive regimes and minimal association with others.
- A designated panel of Prison Officers are involved in managing these prisoners. These Officers are highly trained in Control & Restraint (C&R) procedures, and must use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), such as body armour and recording equipment, for all interactions with prisoners.
- An estimated 15-25 prisoners in the IPS, at any one time, are engaged in serious, repetitive violent and disruptive behaviour.⁴ Those prisoners who are not managed under the VDP policy are managed similarly.

What are the consequences of managing VDP behaviour in this way?

- Paradoxically, managing VDP behaviour through restrictive means (e.g. long-term solitary confinement) can have negative consequences similar to those of VDP behaviour, illustrated in Figure 1.⁵
- This study will examine the specific consequences of managing VDP behaviour in the IPS, for prisoners and staff.
- Prison systems are being encouraged to develop alternative means of managing VDP behaviour. The IPS are currently developing a psychologically-informed unit for the assessment, management and treatment of VDP behaviour.

2. Aims

This study aims to:

- Describe the experiences of prisoners managed in this way due to their violent and disruptive behaviour, and Prison Officers involved in implementing this management, by examining:
 - What current management involves
 - Why current management is this way
 - How current management is working
 - How current management could be improved
- Inform the development of a new unit for managing VDP behaviour in the IPS, by:
 - Generating results and recommendations to guide practice and policy in the unit
 - Generating results to be later compared with similar research on the unit

3. Method

Participants

- Participants include prisoners and Prison Officers meeting the below criteria (Figure 2).
- Governors of all 13 IPS prisons were asked to complete templates containing these criteria, based on records of prisoners and Prison Officers in their respective prisons.

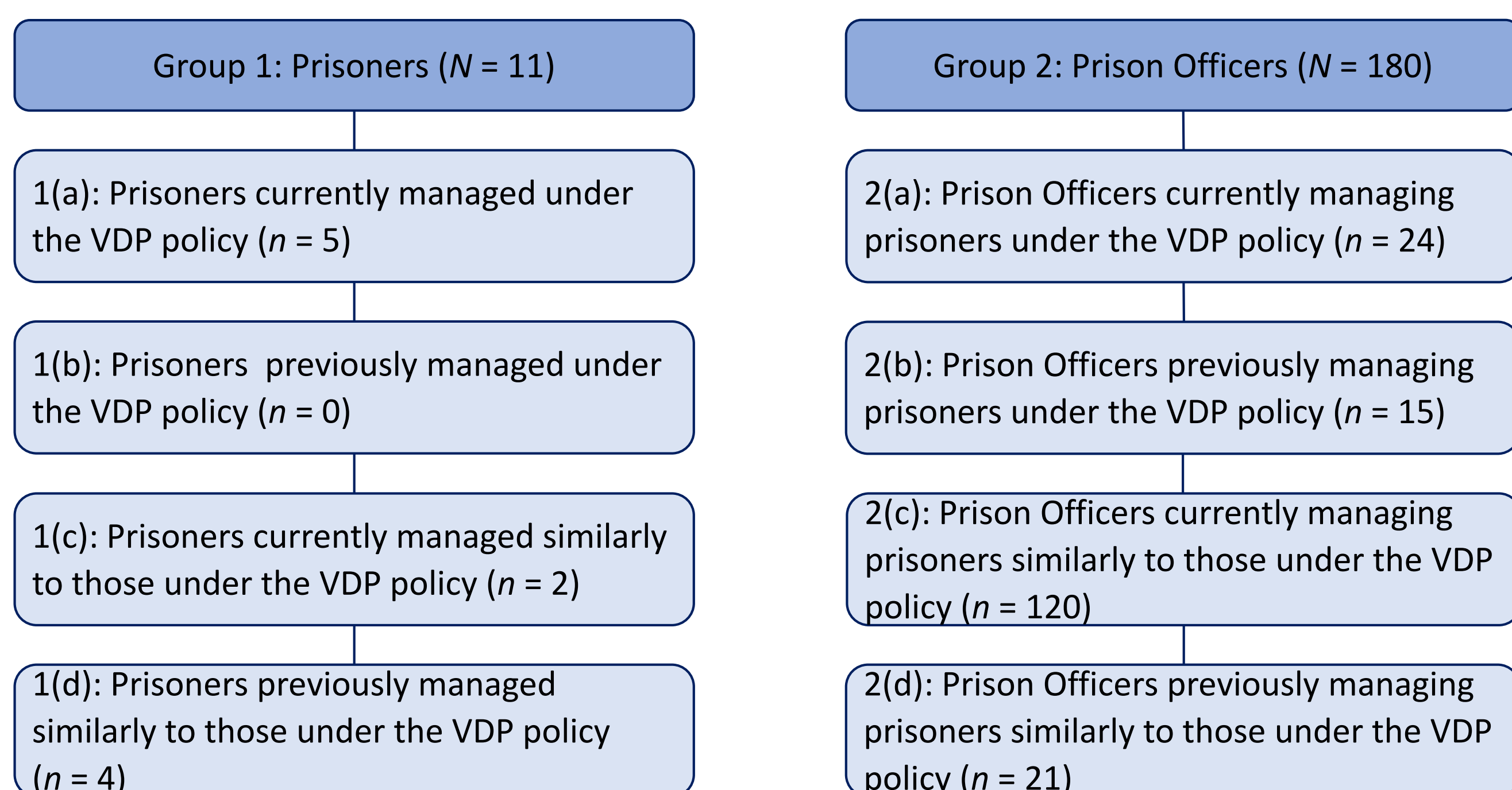


Figure 2. Breakdown of Sample Criteria and Sizes

- A maximum of 15 participants in each group will be recruited:
 - All prisoners in Group 1 will be asked to participate
 - The following recruitment procedure (Figure 3) will determine which Prison Officers in Group 2 will be asked to participate

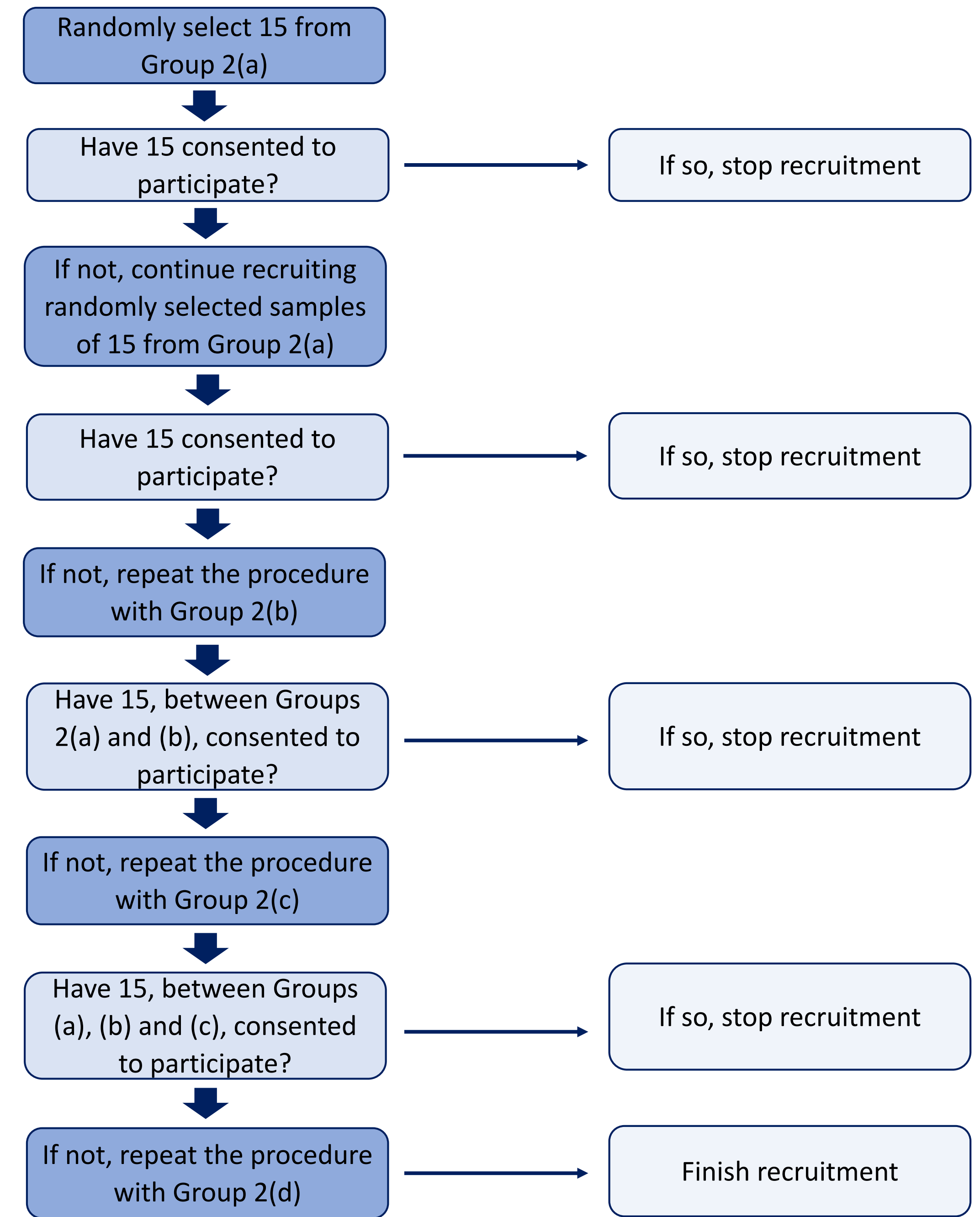


Figure 3. Prison Officer Recruitment Procedure

Methodology and Measures

- Mixed qualitative and quantitative methods will be used, in collecting data for both prisoners and Prison Officers (Table 1).
- Qualitative data will be thematically analysed, to generate key themes, following guidelines generated by Braun & Clarke.⁶
- Quantitative data will be statistically analysed, to generate descriptive statistics, using SPSS Version 24.

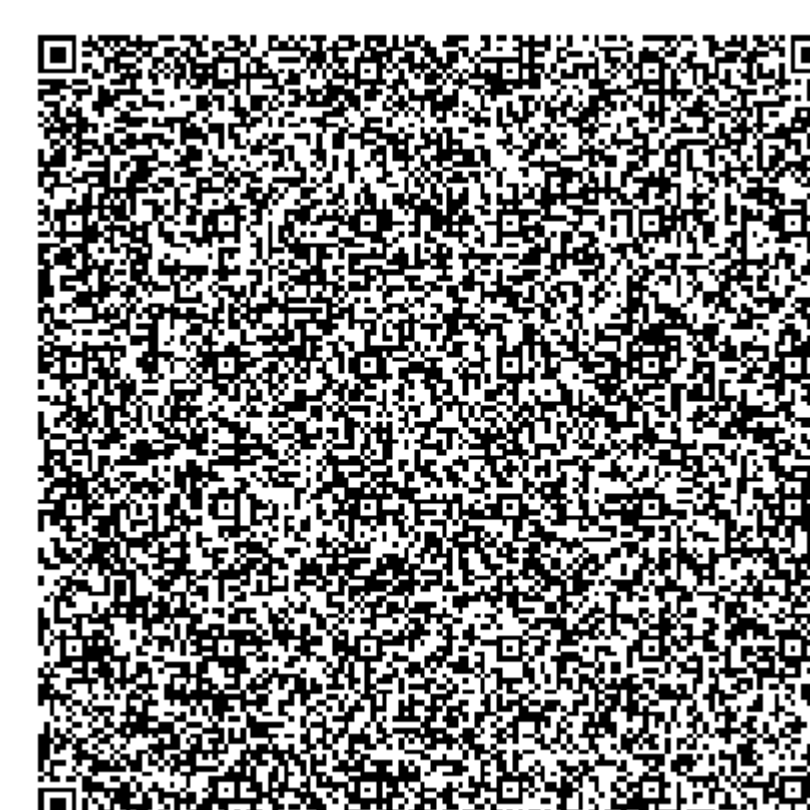
Table 1. Methods and Measures of Data Collection

Participants	Method	Measure	Purpose
Prisoners	Qualitative	Semi-structured interviews	Produces in-depth descriptions of experiences
		Essen Climate Evaluation Schema (EssenCES) – Prison Version ⁷	Measures the prison social climate
	Quantitative	Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWBS) ⁸	Measures psychological well-being
		Prison Locus of Control Scale (PLOCS) ⁹	Measures perceptions of control in prison
		Maudsley Violence Questionnaire (MVQ) ¹⁰	Measures cognitions towards violence
		IPS Prison Information Management System (PIMS)	Provides prisoner demographic and criminogenic characteristics
Prison Officers	Qualitative	Semi-structured interviews	Produces in-depth descriptions of experiences
		Demographic Questionnaire	Provides Prison Officer demographic characteristics
	Quantitative	EssenCES – Prison Version	Measures the prison social climate
		HSE Management Standards Indicator Tool ¹¹	Measures occupational well-being and stress

4. Results & Conclusions

- Data collection is currently in progress. Thus, results are not yet available.
- Qualitative and quantitative results will be triangulated to generate complete descriptions of the experiences of prisoners managed in this way due to their violent and disruptive behaviour, and Prison Officers involved in implementing this management.
- Findings will be appropriately and effectively communicated to IPS management, to guide practice and policy in the new unit.
- Findings will also be made available to prisoners and Prison Officers who participated in the study.

5. References



6. Acknowledgements

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7. Contact

Orla Gallagher, PhD Student
 School of Psychology, University College Dublin
 orla.gallagher3@ucdconnect.ie
 @NiGhallachoirO
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/gallagherorla/>