Legitimacy and Order in Prisons: Slovenian Experience

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The presence of order in prisons is a necessary precondition of all forms of treatment of prisoners, regardless of the aims of punishment. In modern prison systems, the maintenance of order is no longer based on traditional control strategies, where the prison staff achieve compliance from prisoners by "carrot and stick" strategies, including the [threat of] use of force, but on legitimacy. Achieving order based on legitimacy is a tremendous task that requires relinquishing a significant part of authority and control power from prison workers, and their internalisation of "soft power" approaches to control prisoners. The paper focuses on achieving order in prisons based on prisoners' perception of prison staff's legitimacy. First, a theoretical framework of legitimacy and its antecedents, as well as different natures of legitimacy, are presented. Following the theoretical discussion on order and legitimacy, a review of Slovenian research on legitimacy in the prison context is provided. In conclusion, the Slovenian contribution to the existing knowledge on legitimacy and order in prisons, as well as limitations and future research prospects, are discussed.

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Introduction

Traditional strategies for managing prisons have been based on the element of coercion, through which prisoners are subjugated to the established rules and order is maintained. Achieving and maintaining order is the primary

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objective of every prison system/administration or rather individual prisons, regardless of the aims of punishment (Logan, 1992). Liebling (2004) defined order as the level of structure, stability, predictability and acceptability of the prison environment. Put differently, order in prison is defined by the prison rules that reflect the internal situation of prisons, primarily the treatment of prisoners and level of security, and wider moral norms of society (Brunton-Smith & McCarthy, 2016).

Almost three decades ago Sparks and Bottoms (1995) drew attention to the alternative path for achieving order in the prison environment that departs from the elements of coercion and focuses on the concepts of legitimacy. The fundamental element of the legitimacy-based approach is that achieving prisoners' compliance with prison rulers and prison staff's instructions/orders is not [solely] based on coercion (i.e., fear of sanctions in cases of misconduct) but on their voluntary compliance (i.e. internalised sense of obligation to obey), which is achieved through prison staff's fair treatment and establishing genuine relations (Reisig & Meško, 2009). The presence of legitimacy influences internal order that is "stronger and more resistant" to the effects of everyday "situations" in prisons (Hacin & Meško, 2020; Liebling in Price, 2001; Sparks et al., 1996).

The empirical research of legitimacy in criminal justice has predominately focused on police legitimacy, based on Tyler's (1990) work *Why People Obey the Law*, in which he exposed the importance of procedural justice in police-citizens interactions for achieving police legitimacy. Based on this pioneering work, it can be argued that the legitimacy of power-holders derives from an individual's voluntary compliance, which is conditioned by the legality and moral values of the authority. Individuals who consider actions against them by power-holders (e.g., police officers, prison officers, etc.) as just, possess positive emotions towards authority regardless of the outcome. Tyler's (1990) model presumes authority's neutrality of processes and procedures as well as respect for the rights, feelings and dignity of individuals. Similarly, most penological studies on legitimacy in prisons (e.g., Brunton-Smith & McCarthy, 2016; Crewe, 2011; Hacin & Meško, 2020) were based on procedural justice models used to measure police legitimacy (Bottoms & Tankebe, 2012; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler, 2003; Tankebe, 2013). Approximately a decade ago, deriving from the philosophical works of Max Weber (1978), Bottoms and Tankebe (2012, 2013) presented a new dimension of legitimacy – self-legitimacy. They argued that legitimacy is dialogical in nature, consisting of the perception of the legitimacy of authority (i.e., power-holders) by the governed and power-holders' perception of self-legitimacy (i.e., power-holders' belief that the authority they possess is morally valid). In the prison context,

building a prison staff's legitimacy in relation to prisoners is possible when prison workers come to believe in the legitimacy of their own power (Hacin & Meško, 2020). As the number of legitimacy studies in non-western prisons (e.g., Akoensi, 2016; Akoensi & Tankebe, 2020; Reisig & Meško, 2009; Hacin & Meško, 2020) grew, the dependence on the dialogical nature of legitimacy in the place and time, in which they occur, became obvious (Bottoms & Tankebe, 2021). As legitimacy research in recent years has presented new: 1) dimensions of legitimacy, 2) theoretical models, and 3) variables, attempts were made to synthesise all of the accumulated knowledge into a single theoretical framework (Hamm et al., 2022). However, as Trinkner and Reisig (2022, p. 164) wrote: "The field will only benefit if this creativity is leveraged to an even greater extent moving forward. In this respect, calls for an integrated theory and common understanding will only serve to stifle development."

The paper focuses on the presence of legitimacy in the prison context as an alternative [and more humane] path to achieving and sustaining order. In the first part, different dimensions of legitimacy in the prison context are presented, followed by a review of Slovenian research on legitimacy in prisons. In conclusion, the Slovenian contribution to the existing knowledge on legitimacy and order in the prison environment is highlighted and future prospects for research are delineated.

Legitimacy and Self-legitimacy in the Prison Environment

Prison is a special social institution that the wider society recognizes as legitimate and morally justified. Costa (2016) highlighted the dialogic nature of legitimacy, where the external (in relation to the wider society) and internal (in relation to prisoners) justification of existing penal policies and practices must be ensured. The first form refers to the wider social legitimacy that is necessary for the existence of prisons as a morally justified form of punishment in modern society, while the second form, that is internal legitimacy, is established within prisons between prisoners and the prison staff (Bottoms & Tankebe, 2012; Sparks & Bottoms, 1995). The latter is the subject of the following theoretical discussion.

Perception of Legitimacy in the Prison Context

Relations between prison workers and prisoners have advanced greatly since the 1980s, when McDermott and King (1988) described them as a culture of mutual contempt and hostility (see for example Crewe, 2011; Weinrath, 2017). In recent decades, a reconstruction of penal power in the prison environment (i.e., most modern prison systems) has taken place, moving away from traditional coercive power towards the use of a "soft-power" approach based on quality relationships between prison staff and prisoners. This innovative approach represents a broader form of neo-paternalism, in which the use of coercion is unnecessary (Crewe, 2009, 2011; Nye, 2004). Jackson et al. (2010) highlighted the importance of alternative paths of establishing and maintaining order in prisons, since the prison environment is dangerous and maintaining order through coercion and/or the use of force does not encourage the voluntary cooperation of prisoners and their willingness to respect prison rules. The presence of legitimacy in the prison environment presents an alternative to traditional control strategies based on coercion, where prison workers build relationships with prisoners based on justice, equal treatment and respectful behaviour.

Reiter (2014) argued that building and maintaining legitimacy in prison as a special social group is a challenging process, as it represents a structurally and bureaucratically closed environment. The concept of legitimacy in such a context can be defined as the willingness of prisoners to voluntarily submit to the power-holders (i.e., authority of the prison staff through which prisoners are subjugated to prison rules) due to their characteristics and behaviour, which influence prisoners' awareness of the obligation to obey and follow the rules and instructions (Franke et al., 2010; Tyler, 2003). In other words, the duty of prisoners to submit to prison workers is the result of abandoning their own moral beliefs and acting for their own benefit, as they perceive authority as a subject to whom they are obliged to behave in an exemplary manner and the way that is required of them. Sparks et al. (1996) wrote that a certain level of internal legitimacy can be achieved in prisons if it is based on fair and respectful relations between prison workers and prisoners.

The experience of imprisonment can be positive, or at least neutral if prisoners perceive the authority's procedures as fair (Franke et al., 2010). Tyler (2010) highlighted that prisoners will perceive prison workers as fair regardless of the outcome of decisions (obtaining benefits or sanctions) if: (1) they are given/allowed a "voice" (i.e., the opportunity to express their opinion) and (2) the decisions of prison workers are neutral and their

behaviour towards prisoners is respectful and dignified, showing concern for the well-being of prisoners. Such perceptions of treatment reflecting procedural justice affect prison workers' perception of prison staff's legitimacy and, consequently, adapting their behaviour according to the rules and laws (Tyler, 2010). Respectful and honest relations between prison workers and prisoners result in lower stress levels and better well-being for everyone (Barkworth, 2021; Liebling & Arnold, 2004; Molleman & van Ginneken, 2015). Prisoners who perceive prison workers as compassionate, supportive and open to resocialization perceive their own situation in prison more positively and are less likely to violate prison rules or be involved in violent confrontations with prison workers or other prisoners (Beijersbergen et al., 2015; Molleman & Leeuw, 2012).

The Concept of Self-legitimacy

Every power-holder seeks confirmation of his own legitimacy from the individuals over whom he exercises authority. Confirmation is sought in dialogues about legitimacy that are influenced by the specifics of the place and time in which they occur (Bottoms & Tankebe, 2021). Legitimacy in prison is not a fixed phenomenon but rather depends on an eternal discussion (i.e., continuous dialogues) between power holders and recipients (Bottoms & Tankebe, 2012). In other words, the nature of legitimacy in prisons is dialogical and based on interactions between prisoners and prison workers. In interactions with prisoners, prison workers confirm their status as legitimate holders of authority. However, the legitimacy of authority is also "fluid" or unstable, as it varies, due to the behaviour of prison workers toward prisoners or the influence of wider factors in prison (Bottoms & Tankebe, 2012, 2013; McNeill & Robinson, 2013). Acceptance of power holders requires appropriate relations with the recipients as well as fair treatment and behaviour of power holders, or, as Woolf (1991) pointed out, prisons must seek legitimacy from prisoners.
Self-legitimacy of prison staff is the foundation of a successful dialogue between prison workers and prisoners. Self-legitimacy can be defined as the confidence of power holders in the legitimacy of their own authority or position (Bottoms & Tankebe, 2013; Tankebe, 2019). Tankebe (2014) argued that self-legitimacy is a process of building, confirming, or resisting a certain self-image of a power holder. Individuals enter the legitimacy dialogue with the audience with an image of themselves as self-confident and just holders of authority/power. This type of dialogue in prison is primarily based on the quality of the relationships between the prison staff and prisoners, as well as the quality of the relationships with colleagues and

superiors, which are formed through daily interactions. Within this form of legitimacy, power holders seek confirmation through "internal conversation" that the authority they hold is morally justified (Akoensi & Tankebe, 2020; Archer, 2003). Building and maintaining the legitimacy of authority in prisoners' eyes is only possible if prison workers believe in the eligibility and moral justification of their position as power-holders. Prison workers seek confirmation of their own position or the power they possess from prisoners who represent the "audience" (Barker, 2001). The nature of legitimacy in an unpredictable, closed and stressful prison environment is unstable, as it is based on relationships between prison actors, which (at least between prisoners and prison workers) are unpredictable and quickly "break down".

Prison workers must achieve the status of trustworthy individuals with prisoners if they want to achieve their compliance on a normative level. In order to achieve such compliance, prison workers actively enter into relationships with prisoners, in which they look for an opportunity to present their attitudes and trustworthy behaviour. Positive outcomes of these interactions confirm to prison workers their "right to rule" as holders of authority (i.e., prisoners through their behaviour express compliance with prison workers' authority). A positive perception of one's own legitimacy affects the efficiency and professionalism of prison workers and has a positive impact on the implementation of prison tasks, relations between prison staff and prisoners, treatment of prisoners and maintenance of order (Hacin & Meško, 2020).

The interactions of power-holders with their colleagues, superiors and audiences represent moments for learning about legitimacy, as they represent an opportunity to validate already formed possible selves (Tyler & Blader, 2000). Bottoms and Tankebe (2013) argued that power-holders interact with audiences to project and seek validation of a particular self-identity that believes to be the rightful holder of authority. Tankebe (2019) called the search for confirmation of their own legitimacy the triad of recognition since prison workers primarily seek confirmation of the legitimacy of their position from superiors, colleagues and prisoners (i.e., core variables/antecedents of self-legitimacy).

Slovenian Research on Legitimacy and Order in Prisons

The study of legitimacy in criminal justice began in 2007 when Meško and Klemenčič (2007) published a chapter focusing on rebuilding legitimacy and police professionalism in the former socialist environment of Slovenia, in which they discuss the challenges of Slovenian police to implement legitimate [democratic] policing. Empirical studies on police legitimacy and self-legitimacy of police officers soon followed, and developed significantly over the years, resulting in first comparative studies (Hacin & Meško, 2022; Meško & Hacin, 2023a, 2023d, 2024; Reisig et al., 2014, 2021). While research on police legitimacy has put Slovenia on the world map, the research on the different dimensions of legitimacy in prisons has placed it in the company of leading countries in the field (e.g., United Kingdom, USA, and the Netherlands). The empirical penological research in Slovenia has been well-developed (see Hacin, 2015), however, the studies focusing on legitimacy in the prison context began 15 years ago.

Prisoners' Perception of Legitimacy

In 2009, Reisig and Meško conducted the first empirical study focusing on legitimacy in the largest Slovenian prison Dob, deviating from the established pattern where empirical studies on legitimacy predominately focused on police legitimacy. Their findings, based on interviewing 103 prisoners, provided empirical evidence on the dependence of legitimacy on cultural and legal contexts, as Tyler's social-psychological framework was identified as not best suited for the Slovenian prison environment. In addition, an important link between fair and respectful treatment of prisoners and their engaging in misconduct and violating fewer institutional rules was identified, exposing the role of procedural justice and the legitimacy of prison staff in maintaining order in the prison setting (Reisig & Meško, 2009).

Building on Reisig and Meško's (2009) findings, future research on legitimacy in the prison context focused on using mixed methods and enlarging the sample size that would not only significantly increase the reliability of results but also enable generalisation, testing new antecedents of legitimacy, and the influence of legitimacy on prisoners' willingness to cooperate with prison workers. In 2015 and 2016 Hacin and Meško carried out the first comprehensive study on legitimacy in the Slovenian prison system. Based on a survey of 328 prisoners from all prisons and a correctional home, Hacin (2018b) identified procedural justice, distributive justice, trust in authority, the effectiveness of prison workers, relations with

prisoners, relations with prison staff, obligation to obey as antecedents of prisoners' perception of legitimacy. The findings deviated from Tyler's social-psychological model and Bottoms and Tankebe's (2012) model comprising lawfulness, distributive fairness, procedural fairness, and effectiveness, as relations between prison workers and prisoners were exposed as an important correlate of prisoners' perception of prison staff legitimacy. In addition to certain sociodemographic variables, prison regime was identified as an important correlate of legitimacy, as prisoners in open and semi-open departments perceive the legitimacy of prison staff more positively than those in closed departments. Confirming the importance of setting on perception of legitimacy in the prison context. In addition, Meško and Hacin (2019b) highlighted that prisoners who were in prison for the first time in contrast to recidivists perceived the legitimacy of prison staff more positively.

Hacin and Meško's (2018) qualitative study, based on 193 interviewed prisoners in the entire Slovenian prison system, confirmed the findings of quantitative studies on the important role of distributive justice, procedural justice, quality of prison staff–prisoner relations, and the effectiveness of prison workers on prisoners' perception of prison staff legitimacy. The study demonstrated that normative compliance deriving from the internalised feeling of obligation to obey is not present with most prisoners, who follow prison rules and comply with prison staff's instructions due to fear of sanctions, which can be described as instrumental compliance.

Meško and Hacin (2019a) conducted a comparative study, in which they focused on legitimacy, procedural justice and violent subculture as predictors of social distance between prisoners and prison workers. Using samples from Reisig and Meško's (2009) and Hacin's (2018b) studies, they provided empirical evidence that social distance and its correlates vary over time and across different prison settings. The study presents the first comparative study of prisoners' perception of prison staff legitimacy in Slovenia, and the first attempt to expand the research on legitimacy into a longitudinal study, following the example of measuring social climate in Slovenian prisons, research periodically implemented since 1980 (Brinc, 2011).

Self-legitimacy of the Prison Staff

Meško et al. (2014) conducted the first empirical study on self-legitimacy in the Slovenian prison context, in which they compared antecedents of police and prison officers' self-legitimacy. Findings, based on the samples of 529 police officers and 101 prison officers confirmed: (1) the suitability of Bottoms and Tankebe's (2012, 2013) model for measuring self-

legitimacy in a former socialist cultural environment of Slovenia, (2) that the proposed model, originally drawn for measuring police officers' self-legitimacy can also be applied to measure self-legitimacy in the prison context, and (3) the existence of relatively small differences in perception of self-legitimacy between the groups. In addition to supervisors' procedural justice, relations with colleagues and audience legitimacy (i.e., the triad of recognition), Meško et al. (2017) also identified distributive justice as a correlate of prison officers' self-legitimacy, as well as their organisational commitment. Prison officers who positively perceived their legitimacy were more inclined towards fair treatment of prisoners (Meško et al., 2016, 2017).

Deriving from the findings of early empirical studies on self-legitimacy, in 2015 and 2016, Hacin and Meško conducted the first comprehensive study on prison workers' self-legitimacy in Slovenia using a mixed methods approach. The statistical analysis of the quantitative data gathered by surveying 243 prison workers from the entire Slovenian prison system, revealed the importance of relations between prison workers and prisoners, as well as relations with colleagues, supervisors' procedural justice, audience legitimacy, satisfaction with salary, and certain sociodemographic variables on prison workers' perception of self-legitimacy (Hacin, 2018a). Comparison between prison officers' and treatment workers' perception of self-legitimacy and its antecedents revealed that only the internalisation of prison workers subculture varies in different groups of prison workers, exposing the stability of self-legitimacy in the Slovenian prison context (Hacin & Meško, 2017). In contrast, using the samples of Meško et al.'s (2014) and Hacin's (2018a) studies Hacin et al. (2019) highlighted the unstable nature of self-legitimacy, as it varied over time and between different groups of prison workers. Additionally, the impact of self-legitimacy on prison workers' attitudes and behaviour toward prisoners was tested. Meško and Hacin (2020) exposed the interconnectivity between self-legitimacy and the use of force, as prison officers' who perceived their own legitimacy more positively expressed greater willingness to use force upon prisoners, indicating that some prison officers believe they represent a higher level of normative validity than the state, which reflect in their retributive stance in relation to prisoners, importantly effecting the overall order in prisons. Once again, the comparative study between prison officers and police officers was carried out, using samples from 2013/2014 and 2016. While the stability of police officers' self-legitimacy was confirmed the same cannot be said for prison officers, as factors influencing their perception of self-legitimacy varied over time (Hacin & Meško, 2021). The findings of the study presented the

first indication that model(s) for measuring self-legitimacy, primarily designed to measure the self-legitimacy of police officers, may not be best suited for the prison environment.

The qualitative analysis of interviews with 139 prison workers from all Slovenian prisons and a correctional home, confirmed the findings of statistical analysis and provided much-needed insight into the complexity of self-legitimacy. Meško et al. (2019) argued that the self-legitimacy of prison workers presents the basis for a successful dialogue between them and the prisoners. Their findings revealed that: (1) the self-esteem of prison workers derives from the confidence in their own capabilities and expertise, (2) the identity crisis is present among prison workers, especially prison officers who have been structurally embroiled in role conflict (providing security and treatment of prisoners), (3) deteriorations of relations with colleagues resulted in widespread cynicism among prison workers, and (4) differences in prison workers' perception of supervisors' procedural justice are present, as lower- and middle-level supervisors are appreciated, while upper management is perceived as disinterested in the problems with which prison workers are faced in "the trenches".

The comprehensive study of self-legitimacy in the prison environment set the course for further research that focused on comparative (longitudinal) measurement of prison workers' self-legitimacy, and introducing new variables. New variables were introduced as possible antecedents of self-legitimacy, as well as outcomes. In 2022, the second measure of prison workers' self-legitimacy in the Slovenian prison system took place. By surveying 322 prison workers from all six prisons and a correctional home Hacin et al. (2022) identified relations with prisoners, prison staff subculture, prison workers' competencies, and satisfaction with payment, as the strongest correlates of prison workers' self-legitimacy. In addition, this study revealed that legitimacy is inherently unstable over time, as contrary to previous studies, traditional variables (i.e., supervisors' procedural justice, relations with colleagues, and audience legitimacy had no impact on self-legitimacy). An in-depth analysis of this phenomenon was performed in the form of comparative studies using samples from 2016 and 2022, and results still need to be published. In this latest measure of prison workers' self-legitimacy, Hacin and Meško (2024) also focused on the outcomes of self-legitimacy, especially its impact on prison workers' attitudes and behaviour. Findings showed that self-legitimacy has no influence on prison workers' support for resocialisation and harsh treatment of prisoners, as the prior was influenced by the low presence of prison staff's subculture, feelings of obligation toward prisoners, and gender, while poor relations with

correctional clients, lack of cooperation between prison services and achieved level of education influenced the latter (Hacin & Meško, 2024).

Conclusion

Studies focusing on legitimacy in criminal justice underwent a revolution in the recent decade(s), empirically testing predominately Western theories in the Western countries and "abroad", and introducing new dimensions of legitimacy. Slovenian contribution to the field was not insignificant. Over the years different theoretical models were tested in Slovenian and other non-Western environments, only to reveal that they need to be modified for use in non-Western cultural environments, as well as in different organisations within criminal justice. Similar findings were revealed by prison studies on self-legitimacy in Ghana (see Akoensi, 2016; Akoensi & Tankebe, 2020) and legitimacy studies focusing on police organisations in Asian countries (e.g., Sun et al., 2017, 2018). While the role of procedural justice was significant, other variables, mainly authority's effectiveness and power holders-recipients relations were identified as important predictors of legitimacy in non-Western countries. It is possible that proposed theoretical models for studying legitimacy and self-legitimacy developed in Western countries and deriving predominately from Anglo-Saxon legal and political legacy are not fully applicable in countries (i.e., criminal justice systems) with different cultural, legal, and political histories of development.

As legitimacy studies have been predominately implemented in police organisations, the suitability of models, first developed to measure the legitimacy and self-legitimacy of police officers, was tested in Slovenia. Comparison of perception of self-legitimacy with police officers and prison officers revealed significant differences (Hacin & Meško, 2021; Meško et al., 2014; Meško & Hacin, 2023c)), confirming that while both services are under the umbrella of the criminal justice system, differences deriving from the nature of work are profound influencing individuals' perception of their own legitimacy. Certain differences were also identified among different services within prisons (Hacin & Meško, 2017; Hacin et al., 2022), however, these were minor, indicating that used models to measure the self-legitimacy of prison workers are suitable. It has to be emphasised that caution should be applied in interpreting the results, as the effect of "too much" fragmentation can be counter-productive in the drive towards a comprehensive theory on different dimensions of legitimacy.

Slovenian tendencies to develop comparative and longitudinal studies produced results that revealed or, better yet, confirmed "suspicions" about

the unstable nature of legitimacy. Findings of the latest measurement of prison workers' self-legitimacy (Hacin et al., 2022) showed that not only the legitimacy is fluid in nature, but also that our own proposed and empirically tested models need further work, as new antecedents of self-legitimacy were identified, while at the same time the impact of traditional "core variables" was practically zero (Hacin & Meško, 2024). The advantage of the smallness of the prison system enables us to implement national studies, allowing us to generalise the results and, at the same time, with greater certainty, confirm, refute or better yet, contribute to the theoretical premises delineated [mostly] abroad. Nevertheless, the results of comparative studies should be interpreted with much caution, acknowledging the social context and the broader changes that affect the prison system. For example, the situation in Slovenian prisons deteriorated significantly in the period 2016–2022 due to significant increases in foreign prisoners, violent prisoners, addiction among prisoners, overcrowding, and a lack of recruits, leading to greater work overload and burnout negatively influencing self-legitimacy of prison staff. Also, specific methodological issues remain, especially concerning causality.

In general, it can be said that what began as a proposal of a modified theoretical model that would suggest the simultaneous study of legitimacy and self-legitimacy to be implemented in Slovenian prisons (Hacin & Fields, 2016) grew to be the first comprehensive study of the dual nature of legitimacy in the prison environment in the world. The study's findings deepened our understanding of legitimacy and self-legitimacy in the prison context and provided much-needed empirical support for theoretical claims on the interconnectedness of both natures of legitimacy based on prison staff-prisoners relations (Hacin & Meško, 2020). While the proposed dual model of legitimacy and self-legitimacy that derives from prison staff-prisoners relations was operationalised and tested (in 2016 on prisoners and prison staff, and in 2022 on prison staff) these are still early days. Specifically, the proposed model lacks testing in other non-western environments, which would increase its validity and is still in the process of development, as new factors/variables are being formulated for further testing. It has to be noted that in comparison with prison studies focusing on legitimacy and self-legitimacy in other countries, Slovenia has several advantages that could be seen in representative national samples, the robustness of applied methodology, application of mixed methods, as well as several comparative studies, which increase the validity and reliability of the results. In contrast, the size and characteristics of the Slovenian prison system present a disadvantage in the broader perspective, as findings are simply not that interesting for "big players", such as the USA

or Great Britain. Nevertheless, the foundation of legitimacy research in Slovenia is strong, and the course of research towards comparative/longitudinal was set, which can be of great significance not only for Slovenian criminal justice studies and practice but also for legitimacy theory in general (e.g., Hacin et al., 2022; Meško & Hacin, 2023b).

Despite being a relatively small country, Slovenia has achieved much in the last 15 years in the field of legitimacy research. While the research on police legitimacy has been complex and broad, research on legitimacy and self-legitimacy in the prison context offered the first comprehensive and comparative studies on national samples. The latter are valuable, however, to fully understand the dynamics of legitimacy and self-legitimacy, additional studies must be implemented to enable the "jump" from comparative to longitudinal research. The latter is one of the principal goals for future research on legitimacy in Slovenia. In addition, the proposed [modified] model(s) of the dual nature of legitimacy in the prison context still needs to be tested in other cultural environments, remaining a challenge for the future.

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