

Autonomy in a time of war:

The psychopathological perspective of rehabilitation programmes for child combatants

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Research Question:

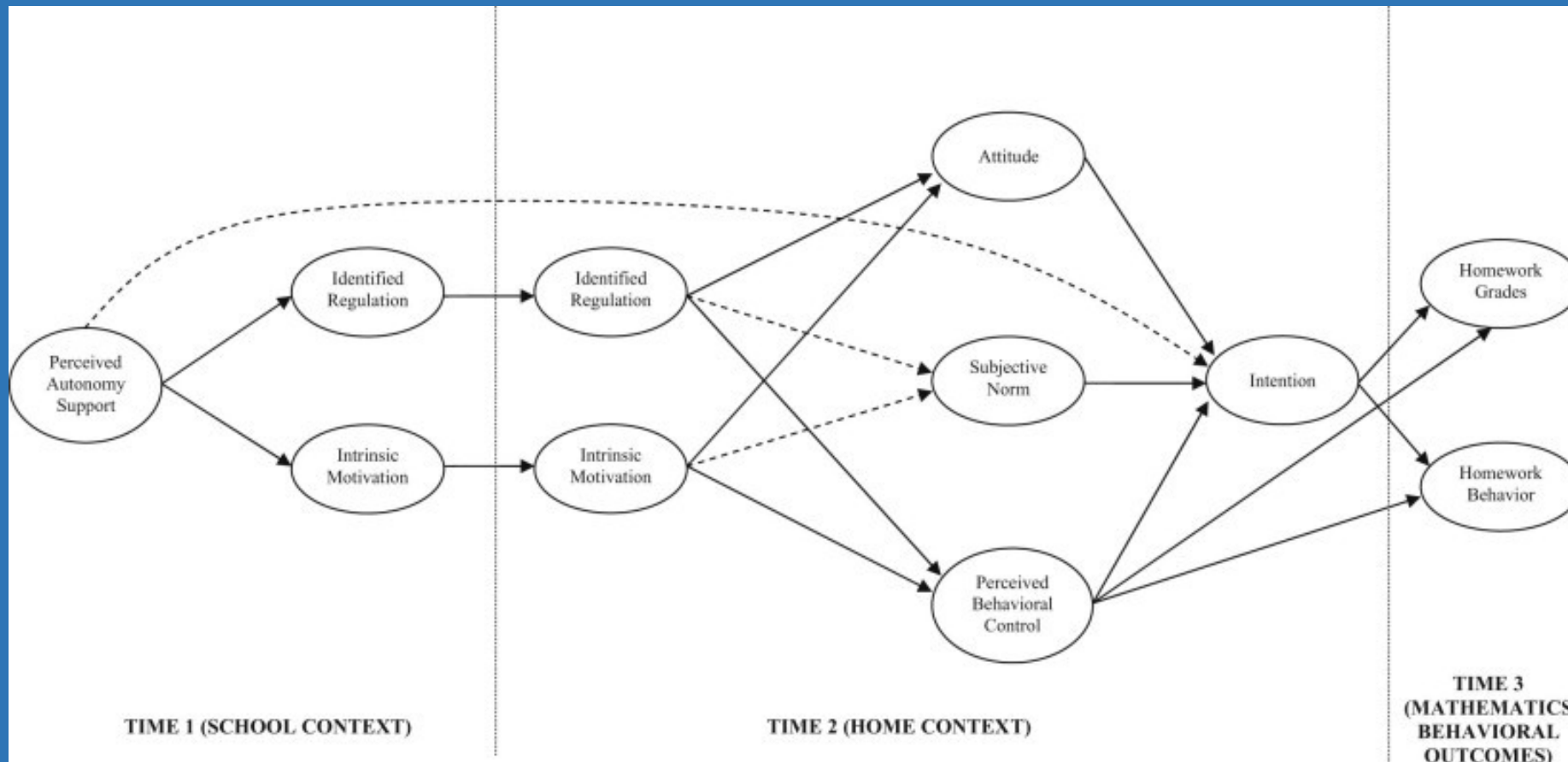
How could applying an increased understanding of autonomy in children improve the end results for former child combatants in rehabilitation programmes?

*Autonomy and
the former
child combatant*

Photo credit: Pierre Holtz/ UNICEF CAR



Autonomy Support Networks



*How child combatants'
autonomic expression
differs in ideological
conflicts*

*(ISIS vs e.g. Sub-Saharan
Africa)*



Photo credit: Banksy

“Offering former child soldiers a viable alternative to bearing a weapon may be the most important aspect of reintegration”

(Office of the Special Representative, 2018)

“You have to provide an alternative to living by the gun.”

(Rackley, 2007)

Recommendation:

Restructure the reintegration phase into a separate short-term reinsertion stage and a long-term rehabilitation stage.

Phase 1: Disarmament

Phase 2: Demobilisation

Phase 3: Reinsertion

Phase 4: Rehabilitation

Recommendation:



*Develop culturally-
appropriate
autonomy support
systems*

Recommendation:

*Assign key workers
for each participant
in a DDR
programme.*



Photo credit: UNICEF/ UN0202141/ Rich

Recommendation:

*To encourage autonomous expression and to provide children protection from indoctrination, **education centres must be provided** for child combatants and must be made safe-spaces.*

Recommendation:

Inclusion of the child's voice:

Organisations should consciously adopt an 'active participant' policy when considering former child combatants, and an organisational attitude that encourages inclusion of the child's voice.

“Child soldiers are little more than human chattel-beaten, drugged, sexually assaulted and cast aside when their usefulness ends. If a child soldier does manage to survive such an ordeal, he or she is often left as an outcast and social pariah, disowned by their community... [m]any cannot read or write... [m]any never know love.”

- (Nagle, 2011)