Social Assistance of Women in Prison

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Abstract: Life in the penitentiary is absolutely a life in a group where all intimacy is annulled, everything is done in front of others, and this leads to the censorship of sensitivity, to the conviction that everything is privative, that here the interpersonal relationship is a drain, a waste and cannot hide from the evil side of the conduct of those around. The penitentiary is a closed space, a field of forces in an eternal misunderstanding based on a strict regularity, with psychological consequences on the detainee and the penitentiary staff. The community of each penitentiary, taken apart, is an anonymous world of people preserved by social prestige. The objective of the research was to conduct an analysis of the consequences of deprivation of liberty on women as well as their behaviour. An original questionnaire of 10 questions was applied to a sample of 23 women aged 20 to 60. It took into account: profession, studies, civil status, committed deed, activities carried out in the penitentiary, the need for counselling, the level of integration into prison life. The consequences of deprivation of liberty and the influence of the penitentiary environment on women call for specialists to develop educational programs aimed at rebalancing and socially recovering detainees, preparing for social reintegration, and preventing the passing on of future generations of violent behavioural patterns.

Keywords: *women in prison; deviant behavior; penitentiary life; educational programs.*

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Introduction

Deprivation of liberty in the penitentiary environment constitutes, for any human being, a broad resonance in his way of life, both during detention and afterwards in freedom. In order to better understand this, we need to analyze the group of people deprived of their liberty. Life in prison is a tough life, here is all intimacy canceled, everything is in sight for others. An important place is the interpersonal relations within the groups of detainees, which are heterogeneous groups. Relationships of attraction - rejection - indifference appear.

In many cases, the impact of deprivation of liberty on personality components is dramatic, generating and maintaining behaviors different from those previously experienced in the free environment.

Carceral space or penitentiary can be considered as a subsidiary system / group due to its structure and functionality because it divides the prison population into two groups on both sides of the grace. It can be said that it is a dichotomous space, and from a legal point of view it is a criminal space of "criminal discipline", of limiting experience, for detainees if man is considered to be a being for freedom (Buzducea, 2017).

Prisons contain multiple meanings for certain categories of citizens, so that those imprisoned can distinguish two worlds: "the outside world" and "the world inward." Prisons are recognized as an isolated environment, they are the best-kept places in the country and have various security systems where detainees spend their time in detention.

The penitentiary is known to be an institution that contains a set of stable legal rules where a number of negative deviants of society have almost identical situations and together lead a life cycle restricted by formal prohibitions in carrying out various activities for a certain period of time. In order to protect, preserve and promote certain personal or collective interests of individuals and social groups, the penitentiary is the institution that regulates a field of social relations (Faur, 2017).

The European Union is very concerned about prison conditions for both women and men, as well as respect for human rights under incarceration. The European Prison Rules are the main reference for the correct management of deprivation of personal liberty in the European Union. They require all persons deprived of their liberty to be treated with humanity and with respect for human dignity. That is why the European Prison Observatory, which operates in 8 countries of the EU, has been commissioned to conduct research into prison conditions in these countries. The research conducted in 2012 analysed the present conditions of the

national prison systems and the related systems of alternatives to detention in Europe, underlining their peculiarities and weaknesses, and comparing these conditions to the international norms and standards relevant for the protections of inmates' fundamental rights (Maculan, Ronco, Vianello, 2013).

The time spent in prison is a time of forced inactivity, as there is no useful activity. Inaction is exhausting and unpleasant to prisoners, even dull - this feeling of boredom or inconvenience is the visible expression of collective anxiety. Some prisoners design "time-filling" strategies through various debates, gambling, or simply for sleeping longer.

In the context of re-education, in prisons there are employed persons, specialized in any dimension, who are at the disposal of detainees with various programs for the purpose of education in the penitentiary environment. As a result of his deprivation of liberty, the detainee is legally constrained, having the knowledge that he is in prison against his will; here he feels the loss of freedom, and within him there are a series of psychological phenomena, these being outlined by frustrations, incompleteness and contradictions.

The consequences of frustration are serious, depending on the nature of the obstacle and lead to aggression, and prisoners adapt, following frustrations, to different behaviors, such as: *aggressive behavior* - characterized by open resistance to prison life, releasing real crises manifested by aggressive behaviors, directed at other detainees, or even the staff, and self-aggression, mutilation and attempted suicide; *defensive behaviors* - which means internalization, isolation of the primary prisoner from the community of the other detainees, and life in the penitentiary, he being in an imaginary world where he tries to flee; *conscientious behaviors* - which means the passive compliance of the convict with the rules and norms of the penitentiary, the observance of which is done in a formal manner so as not to impose additional sanctions; *integration behaviors* - according to which the detainee is actively related to the other detainees and to the detention environment; this form of adaptation is visible, especially to long-term convicted detainees (Durnescu, 2009).

The women's positive images of themselves are undermined by institutional constraints which encourage them to exhibit traditional, passive, feminine behaviour at the same time as their identities and responsibilities as mothers, wives, girlfriends and sister are denied. Women in prison – and in the community, are expected to conform to a particular ideal of feminine behaviour, which is predicated upon a silencing of their desire of autonomy.

Women in prison manage to resist the 'pains of imprisonment' by a number of ways in which they constitute an alternative self-identity to the

passive femininity fostered by the institution. Despite their seeming passivity women constantly engaged in strategies to reduce the pains of imprisonment (Bosworth, 2017).

The person deprived of liberty is assessed on the basis of contradictory identities and moral values. In fact, they have to juggle between their identity and values when they were free, and those present in the penitentiary. Even within the institution, they are caught between their identity and their convictions, on the one hand, the personal identity and the values they have to show in front of the staff, on the other. The convict get to reconsider their former values. They must make to coincide their past values (for example, adherence to capital punishment) with those that allow him to communicate with individuals for whom they would otherwise have demanded "an exemplary punishment," which of course applies to their case: they need to reconsider their crime, the present situation in relation to values outside the penitentiary and / or the inside. At the same time, they respond to the obligation to live in promiscuity with aliens and criminals (that is, to practice the prison values and to conform to his social identity). They have to comply with the expectations of the staff regarding their conduct in the prison space (to show the values and to adopt the identity that are imposed), thus integrating contradictory values, being caught between the oppressive logic of detainees and the logic of complying with the requirements of the staff (Buzducea, 2010).

The obligation to live together determines the person deprived of liberty, in the idea of collective survival, to assign a common identity, to integrate collective moral values. For personal survival, a person deprived of liberty has to build an identity that distinguishes him from his neighbor. The need to leave the penitentiary, in order to find the outside society, obliges the convict to leave this collective identity to get closer to the one recommended by the staff, to lose his judicial identity in order to reach a conforming identity. He has to show coherence and self-consistency. As prisoners women must negotiate discourses of punishment and responsibility, while as women they are subject to notions of femininity. The effects of imprisonment are not uniform. The collective and individual identities of the women are active and changing, constantly under formation and never complete (Bosworth, 2017).

Fedock in an article from march 2017 outlines the specific implications for theory development and social work research, practice, and policy directions. The author underlines that with the increasing number of women in prison, understanding incarcerated women's psychological health is a timely and necessary line of research to guide policy and practices within

prisons. This understanding influences prison design, service coordination, and intervention development. Two main theories commonly shape the examination of women's psychological health during incarceration: deprivation theory and importation theory. Deprivation theory posits that aspects of the prison's environment, such as type of correctional facility, institutional crowding, and type of supervision, influence women's psychological health. In contrast, importation theory focuses on offender-level variables, such as demographics and adversity histories, in connection to incarcerated women's psychological health. This article reviews key research findings from these two theoretical perspectives. An integration of these theories may advance the field of knowledge about women's mental health in prison (Fedock, 2017).

Life in the penitentiary implies great instability of the social identity of people deprived of their liberty. The degree of assurance of a person's identity depends on a stable environment, capable of providing him with landmarks that allow him to anticipate reality and have the opportunity to act accordingly. Differences in identification of the convict are done in an unstable context. This instability stems both from the continuous movements that shake the carceral universe, and from the fact that the person deprived of liberty ignores the effective date of his release. First, a series of mental transformations takes place, since the leakage of time implies condemned to progressively change moral values, followed by physical movements caused by the functioning of the institution itself, with the continuous departures of one or the other. Personnel who also assign an identity to him / her are moving according to their professional career, but to the contrary (Dumitrascu, 2011).

One of the most important approaches in the treatment of delinquency is the mixed, criminal and therapeutic model, also called the model of conflict negotiation and regulation. The main orientation and the dominant purpose in this model are the reinsertion and rehabilitation in the family and community context in which the social actors have developed. In order to achieve these, specific skills are needed for the social worker (communication, relationship, management, teamwork, etc.), but it is vital that he / she should master the different levels and modalities of the intervention (at administrative level group and individual intervention) (Rachieru, 2010).

The researches related to the different modalities of intervention into incarcerated women are still at the beginning. Fedock, Kubiak and Bybee (2017) tested a gender-responsive, trauma-informed intervention (*Beyond Violence*) and examined changes in incarcerated women's mental health and

anger expression. Significant positive outcomes were found for all women for some anger measures, and women who had been in prison for less than 10 years started with higher scores on multiple measures and showed significant changes over time. Their study offers insight into social work practice, policy advocacy, and research for this population of women.

Research Methodology

Objectives

The overall objective of this research was to develop a database and analysis on the consequences of women's deprivation of liberty and their behavior, which would allow for the sizing and adaptation of the necessary intervention programs to the specific needs of this type of population.

Methods of research

In carrying out the research, the following methods were used as research methods, techniques and tools: interview (direct and indirect), questionnaire. It was made a questionnaire of 10 questions which took into account: profession, studies, civil status, committed deed, activities carried out in the penitentiary, the need for counseling, the level of integration into prison life.

Questionnaire data could be graphically represented in tables and figures. The interview data was interpreted more qualitatively, considering that they related more to the feelings and attitudes of detainees related to life in prison and their lives in the society prior to incarceration. The interviews took place in several stages due to the time limit granted by the institution for meeting with each detainee. Women took the opportunity to have for the first time an extensive cathartic discussion with a specialist.

The interviews took place in several stages due to the time limit granted by the institution for meeting with each detainee. Women took the opportunity to have an extensive cathartic discussion for the first time, with a specialist. Because of this the interviews became very bushy and very personal, the data obtained can not be analyzed statistically. It was considered that interpretation of the interviewed data in Grounded Theory light is more appropriate to the situation.

Grounded Theory research aims at anchoring social theory into perceived reality being sensitive to the social context in which the individuals built their own reality. Through Grounded Theory one can notice the ways in which individuals perceive their own social interactions (Sandu, 2018, p.191)

Sample

The research was done at the level of the Arad High Security Penitentiary in the women's section. The sampling units were represented by the females aged between 20 and 60. It was decided to apply the questionnaire to a sample of 23 detainees, non-respondent was 13.05%, 3 out of 23 refused participation.

Results and discussions

The results were obtained from questionnaires and other specific tools. The results of the applied questionnaire are presented in the tables and graphs below.

Table 1 and 2 show the distribution of women in terms of schooling and qualifications. We can see that the level of education of detainees ranges from primary education to higher education. In the penitentiary, a woman with a higher education degree, an economist who committed the embezzlement, and another, with primary education, closed for infanticide, is detained. Although it is said that at the time of committing the offense, most offenders do not have jobs or have no occupation, we can see that one person in the penitentiary in Arad did not have an occupation, one was a pupil and two were unemployed. From this situation it can be deduced that it does not matter the schooling or the qualification to be deprived of freedom.

Table I. The sample distribution according to schooling

Schooling	Number
No studies	0
Primary studies	4
Gymnasium studies	7
Professional studies	3
High-school studies	5
Higher education	1

Table 2 The sample distribution according to occupation before arrest

Occupation	Number
Stable work place	10

Unstable job	6
Unemployed	2
Without any job	1
Pupil/Student	1
other situation	0

From the analysis of the place of origin of the subjects it was found that in the rural area the number of offenders is higher. In the penitentiary in Arad, 50% of the detainees are from the rural area, 40% from the urban area, and the remaining 10% are not sure of their belonging.

In the following graph (Figure 1) the situation of the civil status of women deprived of liberty, from the Arad penitentiary is represented for those who have responded positively to the participation in the present research. From this graph we can see that married women are the most who have committed a crime, compared to the unmarried or widowed, who are in the penitentiary. Married women commit more crimes because they want to provide the family with the best possible living conditions and for that they are tempted to do anything.

Figure 1. The situation of the civil status of women deprived of liberty

Most detainees in the Arad penitentiary are convicted of theft or complicity of theft. They are also convicted of other more serious or less serious offenses. Depending on the deed committed, women owned or not benefit from certain services and programs. Figure 6 exemplifies the distribution of detainees according to the committed offense.

Figure 2. The distribution of detainees according to the committed offense

Figure 3 represents the most important items missing from persons deprived of their liberty. These items were identified following the application of the questionnaire and the discussions with the detainees. The family, at a rate of 4 cases and the children, in 7 cases, are the things that most are missing women, due to the fact that most of them are married.

Figure 3. The most important items missing from persons deprived of their liberty

Thus, the data obtained correspond to those in the literature on this topic. Corcoran (2006) quotes Mandaraka-Sheppard's studies and points out that the specifically "feminine losses", such as isolation from family and children and the invasion of their personal privacy led to either withdrawal an ritualistic compliance, or defiance and individualistic rebellion.

Figure 4 shows the activities provided by the penitentiary in order that the detainees can adapt more easily to the environment or to help them overcome the situation and to reintegrate into society after leaving the penitentiary. These activities also aim to make detainees realize the

seriousness of their deed and to stop them from recurring (through psychological and social counseling). Most women are involved in lucrative activities - garment making, various items for various holidays, kitchen work or maintenance of green spaces etc. These activities help women to get over the situation easier because they have an occupation. Depending on their behavior and their involvement in lucrative or other activities, women receive various rewards, from pay to the permission to leave for a couple of days the penitentiary. Rewards motivate women to be as disciplined and as involved as possible in what they have to do. Even some of them say they prefer to work as much for a home permission time to see their loved ones or for a small amount of money to send home.

Figure 4. The activities provided by the penitentiary

A significant number of women are involved in religious activities. This means their involvement in religious life. Women have provided a place of prayer in the penitentiary where religious services are performed by a priest. Depending on behavior and religious orientation, women can visit different religious places outside the penitentiary. In monasteries or cathedrals, it depends on where they go, women discuss with the nuns or priests, pray, rebel, take holy water. Women confess that they have come close to God between the walls of the penitentiary. Penitentiary exits have a significant impact on detainees.

A great number of women are also involved in educational activities. These activities are meant to contribute to the reintegration of people who have violated the rules of cohabitation in society and their spiritual development. Women are delighted with these activities because they have a

reading room where they have different teaching materials, magazines, books and a TV.

A large number of detainees need psychological counseling after entering the penitentiary. The staff of the penitentiary provides them with all the conditions for conducting a counseling session. Persons deprived of their liberty also benefit from social counseling, the social assistant of the penitentiary permanently liaising with the detainee's town hall of origin and with various organizations and institutions for social reintegration after leaving the penitentiary. Counseling has a very important role for women, many of whom are finding it hard to get over the situation they are in.

From figure 5 it can be noticed that the fair share of women in prison has been integrated into the penitentiary. Most who have succeeded in doing so are those who have a longer period of time and have greater sentences. The main activities contributed to the integration into the penitentiary environment.

Figure 5. The integration in penitentiary

Figure 6 summarizes women's ideas about changes that could be made in penitentiary for a better life and for better conditions.

Figure 6. What the women want to change in penitentiary

Almost half of the women detained answered nothing, surprisingly, but it was found that they are the ones who have been in prison for the longest time. All they want is for the time to pass as soon as possible and leave home. They are detained who have been granted permission, and this has marked them, wanting to repeat these things. Women who have recently arrived in the penitentiary are not accommodated with the environment and the conditions here, so they do not even know exactly what they want to change. It can be noticed that depending on the period of detention, the behavior and mentality of the detainees also differs.

It was considered that the research carried out was a qualitative one with a comprehensive phenomenological epistemological orientation, referring to a level of microsocial, local, contextual realities. The nature of the reality that has been referred to was one procesual and socially built by the actors. Relevant of the point of view in explaining and understanding reality was the subjects' world of meanings and daily interpretations (after Ilut, 1997 p. 53). „The entire GT research process seeks to achieve the credibility of the constructed theoretical models and not the statistical validity of the data (Sandu, 2018, p.190).

It is very difficult to compare with other countries in the European Union because there are very large differences between prisons in different countries. As with other state institutions (eg residential care homes for the elderly), the conditions in Romanian penitentiaries and the mentalities of the population related to the penitentiary system are so different from other countries that they are hardly comparable.

It is appreciated that the results obtained are credible and they are consistent with the results of other research in the field (see Mandaraka-Sheppard's research). However, their validity is limited to a restricted area that can not be generalized on the one hand because of the small number of subjects and on the other hand due to the specific conditions in the Arad Penitentiary of maximum security where the research was carried out.

Conclusions

The analysis of the data obtained from the application of the questionnaires shows that:

- more than half of the interviewed detainees have a low schooling level;
- there is an increased rate of those without any qualifications;
- more than half of the detainees declare that they lived in the urban area before the detention period;

- in the penitentiary there are persons deprived of their liberty sentenced to punishment between one year and 25 years;
- the majority of detainees are satisfied with the conditions of existence in the penitentiary;
- the detainees perform educational, religious, lucrative activities;
- most of the detainees encountered difficulties entering the penitentiary; and so on

The consequences of the deprivation of liberty and the influence of the penitentiary environment on persons deprived of their liberty presuppose changing the mentality that assisting persons deprived of their liberty is limited to surveillance and control activities;

Specialists need to develop educational programs with concrete messages aimed at rebalancing and social recovery of detainees, preparing for social reintegration, and preventing the passing of next generation of violent behavioral patterns. Such examples of programs could be: personal development programs; cognitive behavioral therapy programs; experimental therapy programs; programs to combat female delinquency behavior; special programs for high-sentence convicts, especially those with life sentences - existential therapy, etc.

In the same time the staff of the penitentiary must: encourage people deprived of their liberty to suggest topics of discussion, and finalizing themes (conferences etc) to consider their options; stimulate associations / foundations / organizations concerned in improving the situation of persons deprived of their liberty to carry out social projects / programs; provide support and assistance to people deprived of their liberty after leaving the penitentiary in order to facilitate their social reinsertion and reduce reoffending.

The penitentiary institution needs also some changes: organizing institutional departments - services in which detained individuals are counseled, directed and supported; the existence of adequate personnel in numbers, professional categories (psychiatrists, general practitioners, psychologists, sociologists, social workers, legal counselors, etc.), good experienced and trained practitioners; discussions between educators and small groups of individuals deprived of their liberty on themes of interest to them.

Acknowledgement

We hereby state that the subjects involved in our research were informed about the voluntary character of participation in this research, about the

understanding of information and of that fact that withdrawal from research is possible at any time without negative consequences upon the participant. The research complied with all ethical research standards, the research participants/participants` guardians giving their consent to participate in the research.

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