

## **The Role of Psychologist in the Penitentiary Environment to Provide the Recovery Conditions and Social Integration of the Prisoners**

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**Abstract:** Freedom is a right that today's man is born with or acquires at birth, a right that some of our fellow citizens end up losing, at least temporarily, because of their behaviour or committed acts. Loss of freedom involves a constraint on the enjoyment of certain citizenship rights, and this constraint has a strong impact on the individual in detention, so the role of the psychologist is very important in the detention environment. The psychologist's objective is to provide the detainee with psychological comfort to get him to accommodate, to accept his new condition and more than that to go through a process of awareness of his deeds that will later help him to revise his behaviour, to change his vision of life, all for the purpose of his social reintegration.

**Keywords:** penitentiary; prisoners; social integration; freedom; emotional disturbances

Nowadays, penitentiary units continue to evolve, modernize and adapt to requirements under new rules or adopted laws. However, in some cases, conditions inside penitentiaries are far behind, far from imagination and those seen on television. With imprisonment, the lives of individuals deprived of their liberty are completely changed, and now they face problems such as inadequacy, stigmatization, isolation, labelling, negative attitudes, and hostile, operating in the detainees' subconscious, slowly but surely turning in vulnerable people, more capable or future recidivists. For this reason, imprisonment should be seen as a punishment in itself, and the difficulties encountered by detainees represent, for the most part, abuses or low levels of attention, interest and involvement.

From the point of view of the penitentiary administration, we know that the period of execution of sentences is divided into three: quarantine, actual execution and the period of preparation for freedom. Each of them has different characteristics and

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requirements. The quarantine period extends beyond the 21 days until the newly deposited detainee reaches an acceptable lifestyle; a series of signs appear to those who come for the first time: they lose weight, have insomnia, cry, have lower limb pain, are disoriented over time, and the shock is directly proportional to the pre-existing emotional disturbances: those with a weak Ego, affective and social immature, as well as the sick, generally suffer the most. The second period - the actual execution includes most of the punishment in which prisoners are modelled, most of the convicts have built up on the main issues, have found their place in group relationships, the violation of formal rules is increasingly rare, the hardships come from inside the groups of convicts, from the relations established between detainees.

The penitentiary records a strong reconfiguration of the personality of the individual, and the modified perception of the actual degree of guilt diminishes the prisoner's consciousness, and can often assist in changing the position of punishment: if the prisoner initially considers punishment to be the measure of the crime, later they find it too harsh. Frequently there is a passive adaptation to the conditions of life in prison by adopting a philosophical attitude or avoiding concentrating on some awkward issues. Even though many detainees had got a robust personality before entering the penitentiary, a progressive sensitivity to the environment occurs during the execution of the prison sentence, an emotional intolerance, aggravated by the lack of possibility to escape the reality through the imaginary.

In the contact with the other detainees, the remorse, the self-criticism declared or even sincere during the criminal trial is quickly replaced by justifications of the committed deeds invented in the penitentiary, to which the individual adheres because it offers him the possibility of excusing himself. Consequently, the subjective diminution of guilt makes the prisoner's conscience easier, and seldom occurs a change in the position of punishment: if initially the punishment is seen by the deed, it is rather quick to regard it as too harsh. As a result, from passive, subjected, penitent behavior, the detainee moves to an active one in which personal interest, selfishness and self-preservation prevail. In the plan of conduct, the detainee passes from the conformist attitude based on guilt to frustration based on group beliefs on the causes of crimes, the "fate" of man in the world, the attitude towards work, family, law and the future and, implicitly, the way of life in penitentiary.

In the penitentiary, I consider that the *psychologist* is a “resource person”, whose contribution is significant to the functionality of any type of institution. Throughout his activity, the psychologist facilitates the proximity to him of the prisoner, establishes the relationship between the crime and the constants of his personality, prepares the ground for a new reference to social values after the execution of the punishment. The psychologist spends much time and energy assessing the risk of relapsing or aggressive behaviour in the penitentiary, and in this case all staff working directly with the detainees has a crucial role in providing the psychologist with the information necessary to assess the risk for each case part.

The way of communication is also specific, as a complex process, with possible failures on one side and the other. The psychologist carefully observes the behaviour of the detainee, the gesture and mimics that accompanies the speech, the way of expression, the vocabulary used, the monologue’s rhythm and intensity changes, the accentuated themes, the repetitions. On the basis of all this information, as well as on those resulting from the psychological examination and the social investigation, the image that the offender has about himself and the others is reconstructed, as well as his position on life, the intimate connection between the crime and his personality .

The psychologist must give the offender some psychic comfort, dominated by optimism, so talks about the current state of the prison, about the prisoner's future plans can be held. There must be a broad approach to the relationships that are established between prisoners (positive and negative) and their long-term implications. In this case, the chances of behavioural re-education of detainees are much higher than when obstacles arise (between detainees, between detainees and psychologists) that will “facilitate” the development of an insecure and frustrating environment. Under the conditions specific to the detention environment, efforts for individual progress must be preceded by efforts to improve the group of detainees. In this respect, detainees could be trained in specially designed programs related to the mechanisms of group interaction under detention conditions, the optimal position of those with responsibilities, concrete ways of preventing conflicts and maintaining a good atmosphere.

The role of the psychologist in the penitentiary system can therefore also be a mediator between different approaches and professional categories. In other words, the efficiency of penitentiary psychologists in the whole recuperative process of persons deprived of their liberty can be understood differently.

When the prisoner comes to the penitentiary, we need to know as much about him as possible, and especially about the needs he has, in order to change his behaviour from criminal to social. In addition to the personality traits of the convict, his or her danger, the risk of relapse or the commission of a new offense, the risk of escape and of suicide or self-mutilation are assessed. Following the evaluation, the psychologist recommends the individual program that each must undertake in the process of change for the better. This also identifies people with negative behaviour, from whom we can expect violent actions or disciplinary misconduct, leaders, easily influential, impulsive or aggressive people. Particular attention is paid to the psychological condition of the convicted person. Here they have to adapt to certain conditions, understand how they will punish their punishment and how they will live on. I believe that society should be made aware of the detainees. They are judged and punished for what they have done. We are told of cases when they are convicted, but no one notices how that person lives when he becomes aware of his guilt, when he wants to change, become a better person. We look only from one side.

Promoting constructive relationships will reduce the tension inherent in any prison environment, strengthen control and security, reduce sanctions, and create a climate favourable to the quality of psychosocial rehabilitation services for detainees. A balanced, satisfactory work program (work, education, sports, etc.) is of particular importance for the welfare - the physiological, psychological and psychological health of detainees. The detainee must be supported, encouraged to analyze (make an insight into his or her own life) the conditions, past experiences, awareness of their impact, inadequate attitudes to behaviour, understand and accept that all these experiences, past representations cannot be an apology for their act. They must be helped to understand that they have the potentially latent human resources that would help them reconsider their attitude towards the world, life, themselves, redesign processes decision and control, coming out of the past experiences that tragically marked (influenced their way of thinking, feeling and action) their existence.

An important moment in the re-education of detainees is their preparation for release, considered also the end of the re-education process. This activity involves informing them about the legal possibilities they have for socio-professional reintegration, debating with detainees the ways of overcoming inherent difficulties after release from the penitentiary, thus preventing the phenomenon of relapse. Of

course, the issue of prison release preparation is far more comprehensive and needs to be adapted to each individual case.

Finally, it should be noted that success in the difficult activity of re-educating detainees also depends on the material conditions existing in the penitentiary, the degree of qualification, the quality of the personnel and, last but not least, the observance of the legal provisions.

The social attitude in relation to the former prisoner released from prison is particularly important. The positive or negative reactions of the institutionalized or non-institutionalized community sometimes contribute decisively to the success or failure of post-penetrating normative and functional integration of the former offender.

I conclude with a quote by MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. who said, "Psychological freedom, a firm sense of self-esteem, is a powerful weapon against a long night of psychological slavery."

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