WHY DARK PERSONALITIES MISBEHAVE IN PRISONS? THE ROLE OF PRISON SOCIAL CLIMATE

Janko Međedović, Svetlana Pavlović[✉]
Institute of Criminological and Sociological Reserach, Belgrade, Serbia

Unfavorable social prison climate is a risk factor for various dysfunctional behaviors that thwart successful resocialization and rehabilitation. On the other hand, dark personality traits are linked to a range of negative and harmful social consequences. In this study, we examined the links between Dark Tetrad Traits (Sadism, Psychopathy, Machiavellianism and Narcissism), contextually-dependent experiences reflected in the prison social climate (measured by prisoners' quality of life - MPQL) and institutional misconduct (measured as various forms of sanctions in prison: disciplinary corrections, special measures, solitary confinements, and control measures). The sample was consisted of 582 convicts (86.1% males) who served their sentences in five Serbian prisons.

All dark traits showed negative correlations with measures of the prison social climate and had positive links with the indicators of misconduct in prison. Also, the prison social climate showed negative associations with misconduct. We set four regressions models with the measures of institutional misconduct as the criteria measures. In all regressions models, MQPL was the strongest predictor of institutional misconduct; Machiavellianism and Sadism each made independent contributions to the prediction as well. Our main analysis was based on a structural model where dark traits were the predictors, prison social climate was analyzed as mediator while institutional misconduct was the criterion measure (all these variables were analyzed as the latent ones in the structural model). Testing the direct and indirect effect showed support for the mediation hypothesis: the path from MQPL to misconduct is statistically significant; Sadism and Machiavellianism have significant direct paths to misconduct together with significant paths to MQPL and also significant indirect effects. Psychopathy and Narcissism do not have significant paths in our model.

Individuals with more level dark traits perceive their prison surroundings more negatively, likely actively contributing to stressful, hostile, and volatile prison climates. Consequently, this leads to a higher frequency of imposed sanctions on them.

Our study enhances the criminological field by demonstrating that the endeavors of prison staff and state authorities to foster a positive social climate within prisons yield numerous benefits for correctional facilities and the overall rehabilitation process.

This research is realized as a part of PrisonLIFE project (No. 7750249; Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia).

Ključne riječi / keywords: Dark Tetrad; prison social climate; measuring the Quality of Prison Life; prison misconduct; disciplinary corrections

---

[✉] pavlovic.sc@gmail.com