

APPROACHES AND METHODS IN THE QUALITY OF PRISON LIFE ASSESSING – MEASURING SOCIAL AND MORAL CLIMATE IN PRISONS

Ljeposava Ilijić, Milena Milićević, & Olivera Pavićević

Institute of Criminological and Sociological Research, Belgrade, Serbia

SUMMARY

One of the most important topics in contemporary criminology refers to the functioning of penitentiary systems. Special emphasis is on the role of environment and the impact that environmental factors have on the behaviour of convicts and successfulness of their social reintegration, as the imprisonment purpose. Within this framework, one possible approach involves exploring the concepts of both the quality of prison life and social and moral climate in prisons with the introduction of standard methods for assessing or measuring them. Concept of the quality of prison life, as a multidimensional construct, and the effect of social and moral climate on the overall and future behaviour of prisoners are discussed in this study. Definitions and operationalizations are presented, followed by the presentation of Measuring the Quality of Prison Life survey as a valid tool for understanding the contemporary experience of imprisonment. The systematization of knowledge on the about the interdependence of these concepts was conducted through a review of available literature. This study might encourage the initiation of further exploration of the dynamics of prison life in Serbia. That way, by promoting an expanded and systematical research focus on the quality of prison life, it would be possible to improve both prisoner treatment and superintendence.

Key words: quality of prison life, prison social climate, crime, prison conditions, rehabilitation, social reintegration, resocialization

INTRODUCTION

Believing in the potential for socialization, many scholars in recent decades have turned their attention to discovering the conditions and factors that contribute to the achievement of success in the execution of prison sentences. Analysing and explaining the consequences and impact that imprisonment has on the future behaviour of a former convict should be an important task not only for prison professionals (those implementing treatment programs) but also for the general public, penologists, criminologists, sociologists and policymakers. This multidisciplinary approach is necessary in order to eliminate all negative factors arising out of the prison environment and to summarize the knowledge necessary for successful social reintegration.

Extensive research has been published aimed at examining the effects of the moral and social climate in prison on the imprisonment, in the broadest sense. Major advances in the study of the effects of imprisonment, among other, include a growing understanding that desistance from crime is a process that involves changes in behaviour and identity, besides an effort to re-establish a place among other members of the moral and social community (Auty & Liebling, 2020; Ilijić, 2019; Pavićević, Bulatović, & Ilijić, 2019).

Focusing on the negative consequences resulting from prison deprivation and their prevention, while at the same time endorsing the positive interpersonal relationships, could prevent adverse outcomes and violence in prison communities. However, social forms and habits condition prison life. It is crucial for prisoners how staff treat them, with particular emphasis on respect, humanity and fairness (Liebling, Hulley, & Crewe, 2011). Extreme disrespect, along with dishonest or humiliating treatment, causes psychological suffering, anger, anxiety and depression (Liebling, 2011b).

One of the first questions that arise is whether convicts would respond more favourably to treatment if they felt that the quality of life in prison was good enough. These settings raise several other key questions regarding what is perceived as the quality of life in prison, what determines whether the quality of life is perceived as higher or lower, and which entities or agents are relevant to it. The perception of the quality of life in prison and the preservation of the mental health of prisoners are highly important, with far-reaching consequences on the future behaviour of former convicts, including the successfulness of social reintegration. Here, environment and environmental factors have profound impact. Lastly, there is a question of the impact that quality of life in prison can have on rehabilitation (Park, 2018).

Back in 1995, Lösel has pointed to the “major deficits” in studies that had evaluated correctional treatment and its effects. In summary, this attitude was substantiated by the lack of an adequately grounded theory and purposeful measurement of characteristics associated with the prison social climate at the time (Lösel, 1995). As Auty & Liebling (2020) have noted, the initial premise was that treatment was the only variable important for the success of treatment, thereby limiting the research fields of study previously conducted. Accordingly, it turned out that some wider aspects of the social and moral climate in prisons needed to be taken into consideration, as well as their impact on the outcomes of the treatments used.

Despite the increasing interest of criminologists in the subject of the concept of quality of life in prison over the last decade, there is still a lack of theoretical and empirical research on prison conditions and quality of life in prison (Park, 2018). One of the more recent but rare surveys conducted in the region has been published in 2017. The research was aimed at the relationships between the moral quality of prison life, the mental health of prisoners and the risk of exposure to violence in the main prison for adults in Dubrava Correctional Centre in Kosovo (Skar et al., 2019). It turned out that higher levels of respect, fairness, humanity and good relations between staff and prisoners were related to lower levels of violence. Based on all this, it was indicated that improvement of quality of prison life and mental health of prisoners could make a prison atmosphere tolerable and safer.

However, in order to understand the need for exploring the quality of prison life and the concept of quality of prison life, the prison's both social and moral climate need to be explained, mostly through the behaviour of prisoners and prison staff. In Serbia, the research on the characteristics of the social and moral climate in prisons and the quality of prison life is scarce. Therefore, this study focused on the concept of the quality of prison life, as a multidimensional construct, and the effect of social and moral climate on the overall and future behaviour of prisoners. The systematization of

knowledge on the about the interdependence of these concepts was conducted through a review of available literature.

Prison social and moral climate

As a term, the social climate is difficult to define and operationalise (Day, Casey, Vess, & Huisy, 2011). Despite the great appeal of ideas about the therapeutic institutional setting, organization's culture or social climate, it has proved difficult to define and operationalize what is meant by these terms in a criminological context (Beech & Hamilton-Giachritsis, 2005; Day et al., 2011; Waters & Megathlin, 2002). Thus, the distinction between the terms "culture" and "climate" needs to be made more precisely. These two terms are often used interchangeably, although there are some complex distinctions in their implied meaning. As Melnick, Ulaszek, Lin, & Wexler (2009) have summarized, organizational culture is most usually recognised as the overall, key values and activities and condition of an organization or set of shared beliefs among members of an organization. Organizational culture has a central role in determining the attitudes, perceptions, goals of the organization, and behaviour of members of the organization. On the contrary, Day, Casey, Vess, and Huisy (2011) have reminded us that climate usually relates to an organization's perceptions at the operational level, and that is its capacity to be supportive to new ideas and its receptiveness and responsiveness to change.

The literature review reveals a large number of different terminological definitions and determinations of the term "social climate", generally agreeing that it is a multidimensional construct. Auty and Liebling (2020) have reintroduced the definition set by Moos in 1989, which stated that "the material, social, and emotional conditions of a given unit and the interaction between such factors". Furthermore, they have reminded us that in 1990 Ajdukovic has described the climate through the way that members of an organization perceived "a set of properties or conditions" that was related to the internal environment of that organization (Auty & Liebling, 2020).

The initial assumption is that a supportive atmosphere in prison wards is the first prerequisite for successful rehabilitation (Schalast, Redies, Collins, Stacey, & Howells, 2008). Moreover, the prison social climate is confirmed as a potential moderator of treatment effects (Schalast et al., 2008). In high-security settings, as prisons are, key features of the social climate relate to whether the climate is seen as a support to therapy and therapeutic change and whether there is the mutual support characteristic for therapeutic communities. Also, the level of tension and perceived threats of aggression and existing violence is among those characteristics, too (Schalast et al., 2008). Provision of the opportunities for learning new skills and prosocial behaviour is constitutional to the social climate, likewise (Tonkin, 2016). Hence, it is of great importance to find a way to assess the extent to which the climate is perceived as supportive of therapy, as well as to therapeutic change. According to the definition set by Wright (1993, as cited in Day et al., 2011, p. 9), the social climate is distinctive for each organization individually, it lasts for a longer time and effects the behaviour of members in the organisation, both staff members and prisoners. At the same time, the social climate is conditioned by workplace development and can be subjected to change. It is not surprising that the

concept of social climate, except in the contemporary context of prison life, can be found in both management, work and organizational psychology and medical literature (Day et al., 2011).

In addition, some authors emphasize the need to enhance the definitions by introducing the moral aspect of the prison's environment (Auty & Liebling, 2020). One of the definitions outlines the moral dimension of the prison's environment as "a prisoner's mainly interpersonal and material treatment that render a term of imprisonment more or less dehumanizing and/or painful" (Liebling & Arnold, 2004, p. 473, as cited in Auty & Liebling, 2020). The aforementioned refers to the qualities such as decency, honesty, humanity, relationship with staff and use of authority (Liebling, 2011b). The absence of negative manifestations of these qualities are seen as psychologically painful and can lead to depression, suicide and/or anger, frustration and violence (Auty & Liebling, 2020; Liebling, 2011b). As reported by Johnsen, Granheim, and Helgesen (2011), Liebling (2004a, 2007) has noticed that the prison's moral climate is under the influence of the mental attitude of staff and consequently, their attitude towards prisoners.

Within an institutional environment, social climate may also have the potential effects on other aspects of prison life, in addition to the mentioned influence on rehabilitation. Among some of the factors listed as correlates of social climate are the following: quality of training, environmental stress level, the sufficiency of staffing, adequacy of supervision, lines of authority in terms of organization and coordination, current policy and up-to-date regulations. What needs to be emphasized, the general quality of life was cited as key features, too (Day et al., 2011).

Summarizing the findings of previous studies, among others things, it was concluded that perceptions of social climate were associated with the readiness to use of force by prison officers and correctional staff, but also with the incidence of prison riots, disturbances, and general disorder (Day et al., 2011). Three dimensions of climate influenced expressed readiness to use force, namely, authority, fear of victimisation and quality of supervision were found to be significant predictors on the readiness to use force against inmates (Griffin, 1999). On the other hand, there is an empirical basis to support the connection of social climate and staff productivity, job performance, and work stress (Day et al., 2011).

The concept of quality of prison life and its assessment

Over the last three decades, interest in research quality of life continues, whereas the intensification of interest in this concept is also noticeable within the national scientific and professional public (Milićević, 2017). The concept of quality of life in prisons is commonly associated with rehabilitation in terms of a causal relationship. This starting point is explained by assuming that prisoners may respond better to treatment in correctional institutions if their satisfaction is at a higher level. Numerous authors have analysed the importance of the quality of prison life through its relation to re-socialization and reduction of recidivism or risk of crime, listed as the ultimate goal of rehabilitation. Moreover, they have also tried to determine the influence of factors that may be related. The empirical research evidence of the relationship between the quality of prison life and the response to a certain type of rehabilitation treatment has

yielded unexpected results (Park, 2018). A distinction should be made with regard to the quality of life of an individual, which is a complex and multidimensional construct most commonly defined as an individual experience of satisfaction with all aspects of life, that is, a perception of one's own well-being and satisfaction with life. Quality of life includes physical, social, economic and psychological well-being, a sense of positive social inclusion and the ability to realize one's potential, and includes the psychosocial domain (emotional, social) and the physical or health-related domain (Milićević, 2015). On the other hand, the everyday life of prison staff and prisoners is conditioned by a wider social context about what constitutes the purpose of prison. A transition from rehabilitative or corrective to a pragmatic and managerial approach (Pavićević, Ilijić, & Stepanović, 2020), whereas the conceptualization of goals and organization of prison life occurred in the 1980s and is evident in the follow-up work of several authors in the US and the UK (King & McDermott, 1995; Logan, 1992; Saylor, 1984; all as cited in Liebling et al., 2011). This transition has included an increased emphasis on less aspirational "custodial" goals such as security and order. In addition, shifting focus from social and individual change has worked in favour to developing relatively precise concepts suitable for operational use and empirical measurement, thereby losing the experience of prisoners (Liebling et al., 2011, p. 359).

Many limitations of measurement and evaluation techniques have been identified based on conceptual limitations. Consequently, the measurement of quality of life in prisons could not have been substantially improved. An attempt to conceptualize the answer to the question of how prison experience should be presented in empirical research has highlighted the importance of perception and experience. At the same time, an effort was made to avoid a narrow managerial and correctional framework. This is what makes a range of humanistic values crucial to the experience of prison life (Liebling, assisted by Arnold, 2004 as cited in Liebling et al., 2011).

One of the first criminologists to focus research on the quality of life in prisons is Alison Liebling (Park, 2018). As a researcher, she attempted primarily to provide empirical support of the impact that the behaviour of prison staff had on prisoners' quality of life. A series of empirical and theoretical research focused on the quality of life in prison attempts to do just this: to provide a conceptual and methodological foundation for understanding prison life, including nature, quality, management and effects of prisons (Liebling, 2012, p. 3).

The complexity of this multidimensional construct has resulted in the emergence of numerous instruments designed to evaluate it (Milićević, 2017). The "MQPL" (Measuring the Quality of Prison Life) survey is designed in an attempt to provide valid tools for understanding the contemporary experience of imprisonment. This questionnaire was created as a refined result of several research projects aimed at improving the overall understanding of prison life and experience and their influences (Liebling et al., 2011). More importantly, the "MQPL" was designed analytically and empirically through comprehensive explorations on what matters in prison, in which both staff and prisoners were included (Liebling, 2012; Liebling et al., 2011). Given its "research-for-knowledge" nature, appropriate measurement of a prison's quality, in addition to the accurate and authentic description, explanation, and conceptual clarity, are listed as primary goals of several research projects successively research conducted from 2001

to 2011 (Liebling, 2012). The analytical approach applied in the original study of quality of life in prison is turned to begin prisoner and staff experiences in prison by examining it based on organized observation and in-depth interviews conducted in five prisons over one year. This new type of research addresses the identification and relationships of complex and important aspects of prisoners' lives by identifying the values that complex aspects of prison experience have for them. The prison experience is seen as a multidimensional and primarily relational category. Methodological and conceptual difficulties in researching the quality of life in prison communities are present and not small because what is measurable is often not the most important for prisoners. The primary task of the research was to identify what was important to prisoners and why, and this was achieved in two ways.

The first part of the research was based on appreciative inquiry (AI). Concisely, this AI method can be described as the search for something that triggers life, brings well-being, and something that is perceived as painful in order to move the research beyond "existing reified patterns of discourse" (Ludema et al., 2001; Elliott, 1999; Liebling, assisted by Arnold, 2004; all as cited in Liebling et al., 2011). At the time, it was an innovative way of looking at the work of prison officers. It was developed on the basis of the concept of sensitivity and lived experience, narratives and meaning (Liebling, Price, & Elliott, 1999)^a. More precisely, it is an inductive process that begins with exercises aimed at imaginative conversation and continues with a loosely structured interview. The method is creative and mostly qualitative. Discussing on the method of AI and relationships in prison, Liebling, Price, and Elliot (1999) concluded that it has a distinct power and relevance in the prison setting. They have drawn several conclusions about staff-prisoner relationships and the AI method.

A staff-prisoner relationship was listed first, as it is influential in multiple ways in prison. Empirically speaking, a staff-prisoner relationship was emphasized since it is very complex. The latter is particularly noticeable in the duality between the formal and the informal aspect of officers' work, with differences grouped into three domains (relationships, rules and procedures, privileges). Lastly, prison officers are in charge of social control, which includes conflict-avoiding, tensions resolving and the use of discretion, and they are responsible for decision-making related to order and peace (Liebling et al., 1999).

Regarding the AI method as a research method conducted in a maximum-security prison, Liebling et al., (1999) noticed a restricted range of used language. This led them to conclude that prison setting restrains language and imagination, possibly through authority or control, through everyday routines and developed insensitivity and indifference. Consequently, it is not surprising that it appeared that language was unevenly restricted, reflecting the institutionalized negativity and weak responsiveness to success. Finally, there was a conclusion about approaches to prisons research, given that the AI method is action research.

The workgroup exercises were conducted in close cooperation with groups of staff and prisoners. The identification of topics was achieved through this process. On this basis, several dimensions were identified, which were highlighted by the

a symbolic interactionism

study groups as important. The first round created a list of important but difficult to measure conceptual dimensions, such as “respect”, “humanity”, “security”, “trust”, with a high degree of consensus in identifying the relevant dimensions. This allowed the transition to the second phase of quantitative “measurement”. Key dimensions identified are respect, humanity, staff- prisoner relationships, support, trust, fairness, order, safety, well-being, personal development, family contact, power, meaning, and decency. Respect and humanity were almost always appeared as the most highlighted dimension (Liebling et al., 2011, p. 360).

The second part of the research was deductive. It was based on a detailed quality of life survey founded and supplemented by the AI method and structured around the dimensions previously identified (Liebling et al., 2011). Dimensions of the quality of prison life were a sociologically imaginative and empirically rich, but well-defined, method for quantitative measurement based on qualitative analysis. It should be noted that these dimensions were both empirical and theoretical constructs, with quantification retaining meaning, depth, and individual contact in qualitative interviews. The aim was to develop the principles of general applicability under prison conditions. This outcome was referred as a measure of the “moral performance” of prisons (Liebling, assisted by Arnold, 2004, as cited in Liebling et al., 2011, p. 362).

The revision of the “MQPL” survey has brought some changes. First, prison privatisation was taken into account and private sector prisons were included. Such improvement is logical and unsurprising. In the 1980s and 1990s, the private sector has documented greater success compared to the public sector when it comes to providing humane and reasonable treatment (Liebling, assisted by Arnold, 2004, as cited in Liebling et al., 2011, p. 362). Hence, this was a seven-prison survey-based study that included two public and five private sector prisons.

The “MQPL” survey working dimensions during the study included the following: entry support, distress on entry into custody, assistance for the vulnerable, individual care, dignity and material needs, relationships, respect, fairness, order and security, physical safety, care and safety, policing and sub-culture, meeting needs, personal development, family contact, personal autonomy, wellbeing, frustration, compliance/resistance, and relationships with peers (Liebling et al., 2011, p. 365).

A total sample included 1147 prisoners. Initial principal components analysis was conducted on 148 items, resulting in the occurrence of 32 factors. Repeated principal components analysis was conducted only on those initial factors that had eight items or more loaded. Finally, a combination of conceptual and statistical methods was performed through a process of theoretical reflection on the factors generated through field experience and interviews and finally validated through statistical verification. The final dimension set is thematically grouped into five overarching categories. Those were the following categories: *harmony dimensions*; *professionalism dimensions*; *security dimensions*; *conditions and family contact dimensions*; and *wellbeing and development dimensions*. The aforementioned and other dimensions examined in this research represent a carefully balanced conceptual framework for re-thinking the moral quality of prison based on the prisoner’s experience. This survey is a tool for reflection and analysis, as well as for “identification of symptoms” that are indicators of moral failures and the pursuit of legitimacy (Liebling et al., 2011).

The *harmony dimensions* represent mainly interpersonal and relational aspects of the prison experience. This category consists of *entry into custody, respect/courtesy, staff-prisoner relationships, humanity, decency, care for the vulnerable, as well as help and assistance*.

The largest differences between prisons were found in *professionalism dimensions*. The professionalism dimensions refer to essential features of the prison work as a job, which include communication skills, competence, knowledge, experience, and expertise, internalised and organisational values. Professionalism dimensions are composed of *staff professionalism, bureaucratic legitimacy, fairness, and organisation and consistency*.

The *security dimensions* incorporate *prisoner safety, prisoner adaptation, and drugs and exploitation*. In other words, those are the rule of law, proper use of authority, behaviour regulation, and the provision of safety. Next, *regime decency* and *family contact* are the aspects of the *conditions and family contact dimensions*.

The *wellbeing and development dimensions* are associated with *personal development, personal autonomy, wellbeing, and distress*. Overall, it is related to how prisoners perceive their wellbeing, what is their capacity to act autonomously, what is the level of support for their personal development, etc.

What is the relationship between prison social and moral climate, prisoner experience and behaviour and the quality of prison life?

Prisons differ in the manner the staff treats prisoners, in addition to the feeling of safety, trust and power that prevails through the institution (Liebling, 2011b). The idea to explore prison quality arose from the attempt to operationalize “differences that matter”, previously determined by a qualitative research approach that included both staff and prisoners. There are several basic dimensions recognised as fundamental when it comes to interpersonal treatment, and these are the following: respect, humanity, fairness, order, safety and staff-prisoner relationship (Liebling, 2011b, p. 534). It is noteworthy that when the prisoners’ perception of the quality of prison life was further analysed, the prisoner-staff relationship was verified as more important than other (more material) aspects of prison quality (Johnsen et al., 2011).

Evaluation of the policy of incentives and earned privilege in prisons in England and Wales is another example (Liebling, 2008). This study pointed to the prison staff discretion, relationships with prisoners, and fairness as the factors influencing the prison life, among others. It was also indicated that, at the time, such a prison policy had a mainly negative effect on the behaviour of prisoners and their perceptions of fairness and relationships with prison staff (Liebling, 2008). The results showed that the prisoners who felt they were treated unfairly became indignant, as a direct negative impact on their perception of the quality of life. While suggesting that certain types of prison policies may have an impact on the quality of life and, therefore, prison stability, there was an emphasis on the psychological well-being of prisoners as an important part of rehabilitation, and that it was partly in the hands of prison staff.

A study revealed that prison staff behaviours are influential for prisoners’ perceived quality of life, even more than material or prison factors. Such behaviours need to be balanced to some extent to enable positive outcomes (for instance, improved social

skills). In this regard, overpopulation in prisons, cynical views among officer and/or overly permissive staff determine a more unsatisfactory outcome for prisoners, suggesting that further examination must be very cautious when considering the relationships between these factors (Liebling, 2011a). Similarly, Johnsen, Granheim, and Helgesen (2011) called attention to the role that prison workers' attitudes have in the shaping of prisoners' views on the quality of prison life.

A number of studies have also considered the size of the prison, especially since the late 1970s when the need to increase prison capacity has become indicative (Johnsen et al., 2011). Liebling (2008, as cited in Johnsen et al., 2011) has explained that results of research on morale, leadership, safety and quality of prison life question the legitimacy of building large prisons based on presumable cost-effectiveness and efficiency. Quality of life in prison was mostly positive, as rated by prisoners in small prisons. On the other hand, prisoners in medium-sized and large prisons had a mostly negative perception of prison life (Johnsen et al., 2011). Furthermore, prisoners in small prisons had a mostly positive perception of relationships with staff, general treatment and well-being. These three dimensions accounted for more than half of the variance in prisoners' views on the quality of prison life (Johnsen et al., 2011).

When the moral, relational and organizational quality of prison life for prisoner were measured and compared with the proven reoffending, it turned out that higher moral quality of life was related to better outcomes for prisoners on release (Auty & Liebling, 2020).

In research on distinctions and distinctiveness in the work of prison officers, Liebling (2011a) demonstrates that "the moral quality of prison life is enacted and embodied by the attitudes and conduct of prison officers", using different terms to describe the moral and social climate of prison. Certain dynamics shape the prisoners' experience of prison, which includes frustration, pain, well-being or the sense of purpose. That experience can be explained by the work of prison officers.

As suggested elsewhere, prisoners report considerable variations in the moral and emotional climate of similar types of prison (Liebling, 2011b). These differences were related to interpersonal relationships and the treatment and use of authority, leading to extensive differences in perceptions of fairness, security, and different outcomes for prisoners, including suicide rates. Concerning the suicide of prisoners, better treatment leads to the greater well-being of convicts, lower rates of disciplinary offences and lower rates of suicide. Interconnection between high levels of distress and suicide rates in this kind of institutions can be interpreted through significant variations in levels of respect, fairness and humanity of prison staff (Liebling, 2011b, p. 532–533). Prisoners clearly articulate that important differences are those related to interpersonal relationships and treatment, dignity, humanity, and legitimate use of authority and power. All this

b Survey results indicate that prison deprivation is an inevitable product of imprisonment, but also that the intensity of experiencing deprivation depends on the general prison conditions and the regime of execution as personal characteristics of the convicts (demographic, sociopsychological, penological and criminological) (Ilijić, 2014). Imprisonment regime reinforces the sense of deprivation, which, with prior victimization, has been labelled a factor that increases the risk of suicide in female prisoners (Ilijić & Pavičević, 2019, p. 152)

might further leads to great differences in perceptions of the dimension of justice and security, but also of different treatment outcomes (Liebling, 2011b).

Discussing the quality of life of prisoners in Norwegian prisons, given the size of the prison, (Johnsen et al., 2011) concluded that the relationship between officers and prisoners was more positive in small than in medium and large prisons. Furthermore, officers had a more positive view of their relationships with prisoners, except in some of the small prisons where the prisoners' ratings of their relationships with officers were highest.

The prison social climate is also reflected in the degree of (dis)respect for order and discipline (Day et al., 2011). When types of individual aggressive incidents in a male prison population were tested, situational factors were confirmed as predictors of incidents of violence, whether the occurrence of an infraction involved aggressive behaviours directed at staff, another inmate, self, or property (Steinke, 1991). However, it was emphasized that background or personality factors only with situational factors could provide a complete insight into the issue of violence in prisons. When it comes to the level of institutional violence, among the important regime factors are communication between staff and prisoners, staff training, staff experience and staff morale (Cooke, 1992).

There are several basic dimensions recognised as fundamental when it comes to interpersonal treatment, and these are the following: respect, humanity, fairness, order, safety and staff-prisoner relationship. Different types of deprivations of liberty exist, as well as different experiences of the loss of liberty. The subjective sense of the prisoner's loss of liberty can vary considerably not only in relation to institution and jurisdiction but in relation to culture and historical period, too (Liebling, 2011b, p. 546).

Society's orientation towards combating and preventing crime and reducing the rate of recidivism, whether by prevention or rehabilitation, is largely achieved through prison culture and order (Mastrobuoni et al., 2014). Yet, it seems contradictory, but traditional prison conditions appear to be criminogenic. Empirical data suggest a correlation between the reduction of recidivism rates and imprisonment in a mainstream prison, on the one hand, versus imprisonment in an environment radically different from those of other prisons, on the other hand (Mastrobuoni et al., 2014).

CONCLUSION

The functioning of penitentiary systems is one of the most important topics in the criminology, as a scientific research field. Imprisonment has far-reaching consequences on the behaviour of convicts. Further investigations of the impact and the role of environment and environmental factors on the successfulness of their social reintegration could provide additional answers. Concerns about the nature, effects and purpose of imprisonment are justified. In pursuance of the goals of imprisonment, finding the most effective approach to an individual convict is indicated. Within that, both quality of life in prison and social and moral climate should have a central place, not only in future research but also in practical implementation.

This study might support the initiation of further exploration of the dynamics of prison life in Serbia. That way, by promoting an expanded and systematical focus on the quality of prison life, it would be possible to improve both prisoner treatment and management.

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CIP - Катаогизација у публикацији
Народна библиотека Србије, Београд

376-056.26/.36(082)

615.8(082)

316.614(082)

APPROACHES and models in special education and rehabilitation [Elektronski izvor] : thematic collection of international importance / [editors Goran Nedović, Fadilj Eminović]. - Belgrade : University, Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation, Publishing Center of the Faculty, 2020 (Beograd : Fakultet za specijalnu edukaciju i rehabilitaciju). - 1 elektronski optički disk ; 12 cm. - (Edition Monographs and papers / Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation, Belgrade)

Sistemski zahtevi: Nisu navedeni. - Tiraž 150. - Preface / editors. - Napomene i bibliografske reference uz svaki rad. - Bibliografija uz svaki rad. - Registri.

ISBN 978-86-6203-139-6

а) Дефектологија -- Зборници б) Рехабилитација (медицина) -- Зборници
в) Инклузивно образовање -- Зборници г) Социјална интеракција -- Зборници

COBISS.SR-ID 17739273