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Dissertation thesis: Selected personality traits and proactive behaviours in persons deprived of liberty

Key words: proactivity, proactive behaviours, prison environment, compulsory penalty of isolation, temperament, moral attitudes, sense of coherence.

Summary:

In recent years there has been an expansion of the knowledge concerning proactive behaviours in many areas of human activity (Bańka, 2015; Fuller, Marler, 2009; Grant, Rothbard, 2013; Strauss, Griffin, Rafferty, 2009). The research focusing on various social groups has also included studies on proactive behaviours of persons subjected to compulsory isolation from society owing to the fact that they had committed crimes (Kwiatkowski, 2016; 2017).

The necessity to stay in prison causes a number of negative consequences both for the prisoners and society. Persons deprived of liberty have difficulty meeting the majority of their basic needs, among which the possibility of sovereign and discretionary action is fundamental. Innate personality predispositions of prisoners may mitigate the negative consequences of the penalty of isolation and support the process of planning and setting goals. This role is played by proactivity interpreted as a personality trait that allows one to change oneself or one's surroundings according to one's abilities and personal needs (Crant, 2000). The term proactivity is connected with intentionally undertaken activities that contribute to the achievement of future goals despite environmental barriers and constraints. Both proactivity and intentional proactive behaviour support the process of adaptation to new conditions but, above all, they prepare the person to effectively cope in difficult or even extreme situations.

In this dissertation the main goal was to demonstrate a connection between proactivity of convicted men and the proactive behaviours they undertake. The research's aim was also to determine whether there is a relationship between selected personality traits of the convicts

(temperament, values, moral attitudes, sense of coherence), their current age, the length of the sentence of deprivation of liberty and proactivity and proactive behaviour. An additional outcome of the conducted research was to show the differences in the degree of proactivity and the applicability of specific proactive behaviours in the examined population of prisons.

The procedure for measuring dependent and independent variables was conducted through the use of standard psychological tests as well as the author's research questionnaire concerning the issue of proactive behaviour of persons deprived of liberty. 200 convicted men serving their sentences in two different semi-open penal facilities joined the trial. The first group was made up of 100 prisoners staying in prison for the first time, while in the second group there were 100 penitentiary recidivists. All men were in the mid-adult period (35 to 55 years) and at the same time served a penalty for non-violent crimes ranging from 3 to 5 years. In the selected population of prisoners there were no persons directly admitted to the penitentiary unit and those who were to leave the prison within the next few months due to the end of the sentence.

In the conducted study, it was possible to prove that the pro-activity of people punished for the first time as well as recidivists is related to the proactive behaviours they undertake. There was no statistically significant difference between the examined groups in the general degree of proactivity and proactive behaviours. It was only established that one of the pro-activity factors of the prisoners (projection adaptive pro-activity) is significantly higher in the recidivist population. Among prisoners who were punished for the first time, there was a connection between the general degree of proactivity and the components of temperament (activity and sociability), sacred values, moral attitudes relating to helping other people and vindictiveness, as well as a sense of coherence. The sum of proactive behaviours in this group is also related to activity and sociability, while it does not significantly correlate with values, moral attitudes or a sense of coherence. Among recidivists, it was observed that the features of a pro-active personality are related to their sociability and a feeling that something is sensible which is a factor in the sense of coherence. Undertaking proactive behaviour in recidivists is connected with their emotionality (dissatisfaction and fear), sacred values and the length of the sentence imposed.

The achieved results of research on proactivity and proactive behaviours of prisoners may be used to improve the existing rehabilitation activities in Polish penitentiary units. The acquired research material may be particularly useful for educators and psychologists, for whom reintegration and social re-adaptation of convicted persons remain the fundamental goal.