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Personal quality of life factors among imprisoned repeat offenders

Streszczenie

Celem badań było określenie poziomu poczucia jakości życia wśród więźniów ponownie odbywających karę pozbawienia wolności oraz wyłonienie układu podmiotowych czynników, które wiążą się z wyżej wymienioną właściwością.

Przebadano 100 więźniów wielokrotnie odbywających karę pozbawienia wolności, używając następujących metod: Kwestionariusz Poczucia Jakości Życia; Kwestionariusz Inteligencji Emocjonalnej; Inwentarz Perspektywy Czasowej Zimbardo; Skala Uogólnionej Własnej Skuteczności GSES; Test Orientacji Życiowej – LOT-R.

Uzyskano następujące wyniki: poziom poczucia jakości życia więźniów jest w 32% niski, 59 % przeciętny, a 9% wysoki. Badano następujące podmiotowe uwarunkowania poczucia jakości życia: inteligencja emocjonalna, orientacja temporalna, poczucie własnej skuteczności oraz optymizm. Więźniowie mają obniżony poziom inteligencji emocjonalnej (41% wyników niskich), przeciętny poziom optymizmu (66% wyników średnich) oraz wysoki poziom poczucia własnej skuteczności (42% wyników wysokich). Negatywnie oceniają własną przeszłość, fatalistycznie terażniejszość, są silnie skoncentrowani na przyszłości. Ponad-

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to wykazano silne korelacje pomiędzy: poczuciem jakości życia (PJŻ) (wynik globalny) a inteligencją emocjonalną; przyszłością; optymizmem. Wyniki badań mogą być wartościową wskazówką dla programów resocjalizacyjnych dla osób osadzonych.

Abstract

Our objective was to demonstrate the level of life quality among recidivist prisoners and to determine the personal factors associated with that feature.

In our research 100 prisoners participated. Used in the measurement were The Questionnaire of Sense Of Quality of Life, Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire INTE, Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory, Generalized Self Efficacy Scale (GSES), and Life Orientation Test- Revised – LOT-R.

The measured quality of life levels were as follows: 32% prisoners obtained low; 59% average and 9% high scores. These persons had low levels of emotional intelligence (41% low scores), an average level of optimism (66% average scores) and high self-efficacy (42% high scores). Prisoners negatively evaluated their past, fatalistically evaluated their present, and firmly focused on the future. The study indicates a strong correlation between sense of life quality and emotional intelligence, and future time perspective and optimism. This information might be important in creating rehabilitation programs for prisoners.

Keywords: sense of quality of life, emotional intelligence, time perspective, self-efficacy, optimism

Introduction

Our analysis of the prisoners' dispositional (personal) factors is to provide empirical data for creating new rehabilitation programs for prisoners. Niewiadomska (2007, p. 257), based on her review of 400 meta-analyses, states that "the reduction of recidivism indicators, as a result of correctional measures, ranges between 5-15%". This may result from focusing on negative factors, which hinder rehabilitation, and underestimating positive factors (which may amplify this process). Previous studies show that rehabilitation is influenced by personality disorders, a history of mental illness, low mental development, psychotic disorders, substance and alcohol abuse, and affective disorders (Machel, 2003). More recent research indicates that a good predictor for effective psychological correctional measures is, among others personality (provided that these measures are adapted to the individuals' characteristics, for example: for extraverts - group therapy; for introverts - individual; alternative therapies - for people with high openness towards experience; conventional - for people with low levels of the above men-

tioned variables (Niewiadomska, 2007). Most recent studies examined the effectiveness of alternative resocialization measures, such as martial arts (Konovaluk, Nikitin, 2010) or yoga (Jaworska, 2009).

The quality of life can be analysed in many ways. In this paper we assume a holistic concept by Starś-Romanowska (2005). In this theory quality of life is defined as the content of life experiences, coupled with their subjective cognitive and emotional evaluation. The concept is divided into four dimensions: psychophysical, psychosocial, personal and metaphysical (Straś-Romanowska, Frąckowiak, 2007b). The psychophysical is fundamental; it is the biological basis for a sense of identity, consciousness, volition and other human psychological experience. The psychosocial dimension is associated with feeling safe, a result of adaptation to the given environment. The personal sphere is associated with such manifestations as self-identity, sense of individuality, need for freedom and self-determination (realizing personal goals), a need for creative activity, and self-realization (Straś-Romanowska, Frąckowiak, 2007b). However, metaphysical spheres look for a sense of life despite experienced setbacks, go beyond material values, and also concentrate on universal and transcendent values. A high life quality level correlates with many positive aspects. Persons who are happy have close and satisfying relationships (Myers, 2004); and also have a higher economic status (after: Czapiński, 2004). They are less likely to lose their jobs, can better withstand unemployment situations and have a better chance to be re-employment. (Verkley, Stols; after: Czapiński, 2004). Research indicates that lack of personal success is one of the most common causes for criminal offence by young men, already marginalized economically and racially (for: Short, 1998). Life quality also correlates with the level of conflicts in prison (Alzúa, Rodriguez, Villa, 2010).

Previous studies (eg, Brackett, Mayer, 2003; Zaleski, Cycon, Kurc (after: Boniwell, Zimbardo, 2007), Oishi, Wyer and Colcombe, 2000) show that such dispositional factors are emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, temporal orientation and optimism. Therefore, the relationship between these character traits and the sense of quality of life was analysed in our present study.

Emotional intelligence, as understood according to Salovey and Mayer (after: Śmieja, Orzechowski, 2008), is the ability to understand one's own and others' emotions and to use these emotions in thought and action. A negative correlation has already been demonstrated between this trait and antisocial behaviour (Salovey, Mayer and Caruso, 2004), and between substance abuse, and deviant behaviour (Brackett, Mayer and Warner, 2004).

Time perspective is a constant personality feature, which is defined as past, present or future cognitive dominance (Boniwell, Zimbardo, 2007). Zimbardo and Boyd (2009) distinguish five main temporal orientations: past perspective (nega-

tive and positive), present perspective (fatalistic and hedonistic) and future perspective. Previous studies show that the most unfavourable orientations are past-negative and present-fatalistic. These orientations are associated with higher rates of depression and anxiety and a greater tendency to react with anger and aggression. A person for whom this time perspective is dominant has a negative self-image. It has a negative effect on this person's ability to act constructively (Zimbardo and Boyd, 1999).

Self-efficacy is a belief that the individual is able to organize and perform in a given field. It represents the strength of the general beliefs about effectively coping with difficult situations and obstacles (Juczyński, 2009). Research (Jasicki, Kozub, 1971, after: Niewiadomska, 2007) indicates that prisoners have a low sense of self-efficacy. They are not able to find success in their past and treat imprisonment as a failure. Self-efficacy correlates positively with quality of life (Jachimowicz and Kostka, 2009).

Optimism is defined by Scheier and Carver (after Carr, 2009) as a dispositional (personal) feature. Optimistic people expect more positive than negative events in their lives. Optimism negatively correlates with substance abuse (Baker, 2007) and using concentrated emotive strategies to cope with stress (Billingsley, Waehler, Hardin, 1993). Research indicates a positive correlation between optimism and life satisfaction (Oishi, Wyer and Colcombe, 2000) and between using stress coping strategies that concentrate on the problem (Billingsley, Waehler, Hardin, 1993).

Our research

In our research we set two main targets. The first was to determine the level of sense of life quality among repeatedly imprisoned prisoners. The second was to determine the personal factors associated with this variable.

We analysed the following personal traits: emotional intelligence, temporal orientation, self-efficacy and optimism.

We attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What is the overall level of sense of life quality among respondents/prisoners, and what is this variable's level psychophysically, psychosocially, personally and metaphysically?
2. What is the emotional intelligence in the group, and what is the relationship between this variable and a sense of quality of life (global score)?

3. What is the respondents' dominant time perspective (how is it arranged) and what is the relationship between this factor and sense of quality of life (global score)?
4. What is the self-efficacy level among respondents/prisoners and what is the relationship between this variable and sense of quality of life (global score)?
5. What is the group's level of optimism, and how does this variable correlate with the sense of quality of life (global score)?
6. What are the predictors of sense of quality of life (global score)?

Method

The study's participants were 100 repeat offenders incarcerated in Prison No. 2 in Wrocław. The study was conducted in June 2011, the test procedure was group based. Statistical analysis was undergone on the results of only 59 participants, since about 40% of the test sheets were incomplete. Participants were aged between 21 to 55 years (mean age 33 years). Results within the variables a sense of quality of life, emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, and optimism were compared to the results reported in the literature (for temporal orientation no Polish norms have been grouped; therefore a control group was introduced, consisting of 51 male students from Wrocław University, aged 20 to 34 years (mean age 24 years).

Participants completed the following measures:

- Questionnaire of Sense Of Quality of Life by Straś-Romanowska, Oleszkowicz and Frąckowiak (2004);
- Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire INTE by Schutte, Malouff, Hall, Haggerty, Cooper, Golden and Dornheim (after: Jaworowska, Matczak, 2001);
- Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI; Zimbardo and Boyd 2009);
- Generalized Self Efficacy Scale GSES; Polish version by: Schwarzer, Jerusalem and Juczyński (after: Juczyński, 2009);
- Life Orientation Test- Revised – LOT-R by Scheier, Carver and Bridges, in its Polish adaptation by Poprawa and Juczyński (after: Juczyński, 2009).

Results

Prisoner characteristics of

Sense of quality of life.

The average level of sense of quality of life was 183 (min. 131, max 230) and the standard deviation was 20.7. Compared with norms (after Frackowiak, unpublished thesis), 32% prisoners obtained low scores; 59% average, and 9% high scores. For the different dimensions of the questionnaire about life quality, no statistical norm exists; so the percentages of low, average and high scores were determined based on a comparison inside the group (based on the mean and standard deviation). In the psychophysical sphere the lowest score was 41 points, and average score 55 points. Seventeen per cent of inmates received low scores, 68% average, and 15% high. Psychosocially mean scores ranged from 36-49 points and covered 73% of prisoners. Fifteen per cent obtained low results and 12% high. In the personal sphere 17% received low scores, 63% were average, and 20% high. Metaphysically 14% received low scores, 76% medium and 10% high. The average level of sense of quality of life in various areas in the examined group were psychophysically 47.97, psychosocially 42.37, personally 46.68; and metaphysically 46.14. The group profile is discordant - the psychosocial sphere is significantly lower than the other spheres (statistical parameters are presented in Table 1).

Table 1. Prisoner results from Sense of Quality of Life Questionnaire SQLQ (global score and each dimension), N = 59

	Average	Median	Min.	Max.	Standard deviation	Slant
SQLQ – global score	183	186	131	230	20.7	-0.17
SQLQ – psychophysical sphere	47.97	49	31	60	7,26	-0,4
SQLQ – psychosocial sphere	42,37	42	27	56	6,13	-0,1
SQLQ – personal sphere	46,68	47	31	58	6,67	-0,11
SQLQ – metaphysical sphere	46,14	46	32	60	6,37	0,17

Emotional Intelligence. The average level of emotional intelligence among the prisoners was 118 points, and the standard deviation was 21 (min. 69, max. 154). In comparison with prisoner norms, 41% received low scores (1-3 stents), 33% medium (4-7 stents) and 26% high (8-10 stents).

Time perspective. Among the five time perspectives (Past - Positive, Past-Negative, Present-Fatalistic, Present-Hedonistic, Future), only Present-Fatalistic was significantly lower than other orientations ($p < .05$). Comparative prisoner results with a control group showed that the prisoners evaluated their past more negatively than students and had a more fatalistic view of the present ($p < .05$). Students had higher results in Past Positive and Present Hedonistic Time Perspective ($p < .05$). There were no differences between groups in the assessment of their future ($p = .16$).

Self-efficacy. Minimum score was 19 points and maximum 40. Group average was 31.9, and the standard deviation 5.23. In comparison with standardization, 2% of inmates received low scores (1-3 stents), 56% average results (4-7 stents) and 42% high scores (8-10 stents).

Table 2. Prisoner Emotional Intelligence, Time Perspective, Self-efficacy, Optimism, N=59

Personal Factors	Average	Median	Min.	Max.	Standard deviation	Slant
Emotional Intelligence	118	119	69	154	21	-0.27
TP* Past – Negative	3.3	3,4	1,6	5	0,69	-0,16
TP Past – Positive	3,2	3,2	1,2	4,6	0,63	-0,25
TP Present – Hedonistic	3,2	3,1	1,8	5	0,62	0,34
TP Present – Fatalistic	2,8	2,8	1	5	0,8	0,17
Future	3,3	3,2	1,6	4,5	0,61	-0,36
GSES	31,9	32	19	40	5,23	-0,14
LOT- R	13,54	13	0	24	4,23	0,08

* TP – Time Perspective

Optimism. The average level of optimism was 13.54, the standard deviation 4.23 (min 0, max 24). In comparison with norms, 22% of inmates obtained low results, 66% mean, and 12% high scores.

Statistical parameters of the above-described factors are presented in Table 2.

In order to determinate a relation between sense of life quality (and its dimensions) and dispositional (personal) factors-- emotional intelligence, time perspective, self-efficacy and optimism -- their correlation was analysed. At an accepted level of significance ($\alpha = 0.05$) sense of life quality(global score) had a strongl positive correlation with emotional intelligence, future, and optimism ($r < 0.52, 0.61 >$); moderate with past-Ipositive, self- efficacy ($r < 0.46, 0.48 >$); and noticea- ble with present-fatalistic ($r = -0.32$). Correlationswith past-negative and present-hedonistic were not significant. Detailed results are presented in Table 3. As for

Table 3. Correlation in the prisoner group between sense of quality of life (global score and its spheres) and emotional intelligence, time perspective, self-efficacy, and optimism.

	SQLQ – global score	SQLQ – psycho- physical sphere	SQLQ – psy- chosocial sphere	SQLQ – personal sphere	SQLQ – meta- physical sphere
Emotional Intelligence	r=0,60	r=0,31	r=0,51	r=0,55	r=0,54
TP* Past – Negative	-0,13*	-0,09	r=-0,33	-0,08	0,09
TP Past – Positive	r=0,46	0,02	r=0,67	r=0,43	r=0,40
TP Present – Hedonistic	0,21	0,17	r=0,25	0,19	0,05
TP Present – Fatalistic	r=-0,32	r=-0,31	r=-0,31	r=-0,27	r=-0,10
Future	r=0,61	r=0,28	r=0,43	r=0,60	r=0,61
GSES	r=0,48	r=0,32	r=0,38	r=0,47	r=0,36
LOT- R	r=0,52	r=0,27	r=0,56	r=0,51	r=0,33

* Correlation is not significant of statistical level.

individual lower dimensions, only relationships characterized by high strength and clarity ($r > 0.55$) were worth mentioning: relationships in the psychosocial area-- past-positive and optimism-- and in the subjective -- metaphysical and future.

In order to find quality of life predictors, regression analysis was used. The regression model was significant ($F(5,53) = 11.549, p < 0.000$), and all predictors together explained 48% of the variable (adjusted $R^2 = .48$). The multiple correlation coefficient $R (= 0.72)$ indicated that there was a strong correlation between the quality of life sense and dispositional (personal) factors. However, the only statistically significant variable was future time perspective ($t = 2.550, P = 0.014$). This arrangement of results may indicate that the correlations between the different variables are too high, which makes it necessary to consider critically the resulting regression model.

Discussion

Our aim was to demonstrate the level of sense of life quality among repeated imprisoned offenders and to determine the configuration of their personal factors associated with that trait. Results show that the level of global sense of life quality is average (59%), and low (32%). Research results confirmed previous studies which indicate that there is a strong correlation with personal success (having close relationships, high economic status; Myers, 2004; Czapiński, 2004), which imprisoned people often lack (Jasicki and Kozub, 1971, after: Niewiadomska, 2007). Analysis within the group shows that the psychosocial sphere is significantly lower than the other dimensions. The results can be justified on the basis of the Straś-Romanowska theory. The psychosocial trait is associated with choice and realized social roles, and due to that a feeling of safety (Straś-Romanowska, 2004). The prisoner is not voluntarily in prison, and is often not safe (prisoners often commit criminal acts against other prison inmates (Ciosek, 2001)).

The level of emotional intelligence in the group is low (41%), which means that participants have reduced emotional perception, assessment, and expression. This result is confirmed by previous studies, which showed negative correlations of emotional intelligence with unacceptable social behaviour (Slovev, Mayer and Caruso, 2004; Brackett, Mayer, Warner, 2004). A low level of emotional intelligence may influence difficulty in understanding and controlling emotions, which may secondarily impair cognitive activity and adaptation (Slovev, Mayer and Caruso, 2004). This can be one reason for recidivism. On the other hand emotional intelligence can be developed – thus these results can be a basis for new rehabilitation programs such as emotive training.

In comparison with the control group, prisoners have significantly higher results in two time perspectives: past-negative and present-fatalistic, which means that the inmates negatively evaluate their past and base the influence on their lives on such external factors as fate or the government. The results are consistent with the analysis presented above (Zimbardo and Boyd, 1999). In other time perspectives-- past-positive and present-hedonistic -- prisoners have significantly lower scores than students. They do not positively evaluate their past and do not acknowledge much success in their lives (which has also been confirmed in previous studies [eg. Jasicki and Kozub, 1971, after: Niewiadomska, 2007]). Concerning the last time perspective-- future -- there was no difference between the prisoners and the control group. That contradicts a previous study by Zimbardo, Keough, and Boyd (1997), where they found a negative correlation between risky activities/crime and future temporal orientation. An explanation for this disparity may be Niewiadomska's thesis (2007). She claims, that prisoners sometimes create idealistic visions of the future, construct unrealistic goals, and their thinking is more wishful and lacks real aspiration. Empirical analyses show that committing crimes decreases levels of intelligibility. So they have difficulties in adequately assessing situations, locating the cause of their behaviour in themselves, reflecting on their behaviour, or formulating, planning and achieving goals.

The level of self-efficacy in the group averages 56%, with a high of 42%. These results are inconsistent with data described in the literature, such as in Jasicki and Kozub's (1971, after: Niewiadomska, 2007). They indicate that prisoners have low levels of self-efficacy. This discrepancy can be explained by referring to social and cultural conditions. The impact of culture is clearly visible when one looks at the years in which these two studies were conducted: socialism (considering individuals less significant than the collective), and individualism (glorifying the impact that individuals have on their own lives). Such reasoning is also confirmed by Bandura's theory (2007), which states that self-efficacy is a result of social learning.

On the optimism scale prisoners' results are average. Optimists, even in difficult situations, continue with started actions, consequently striving to accomplish their goals (Carr, 2009) by using constructive stress coping strategies (Billingsley, Waehler and Hardin, 1993), and by caring for their own health (Baker, 2007). The result thus can be treated as the personal resource of the group. But we have to remember that this property should remain at a moderate level. Too much optimism can lead to unrealistic optimism (which means overestimating positive outcomes and underestimating adverse ones) (Worm, 2010). Perhaps such unrealistic expectations have led those prisoners to further incarcerations.

Our study indicates strong, positive correlations between the sense of life quality (global score) and emotional intelligence, future time perspective and optimism. These correlations are important from a practical standpoint because they indicate the direction for therapeutic interventions. In the case of emotional intelligence various types of emotional training might prove effective. The prisoners can see and control their emotional states, which can indirectly affect the crime rate of committed by these people. Other factors that correlate strongly, such as optimism and future time perspective, should also be considered. These therapeutic measures should teach prisoners to create realistic and specific plans for their future life and evaluate their options and possibilities adequately. In particular, they should be applied to people leaving prison; they should help them to adapt to a life in freedom. The proposed measures are at the same time propositions for further research, because we must be able to empirically verify the effectiveness of such measures.

Summary

The level of sense of quality of life among prisoners is average to low. These people have low levels of emotional intelligence, an average level of optimism, and a high level of self-efficacy. Prisoners negatively evaluate their past, fatalistically evaluate the present, and focus firmly on the future. The strong relationship between the sense of the quality of life and emotional intelligence, future time perspective and optimism indicate that these factors may be particularly useful when creating new rehabilitation programs.

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