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## Selected psycho-social resources and deficits of persons serving a penalty of deprivation of liberty

**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to present selected psychosocial deficits and resources of people serving imprisonment in the following areas: feeling of coherence, ego resilience, depression, fear, curiosity, anger, worry, social support, quality of life, intensity of religious attitude, religious and non-religious ways of dealing with stress. The analysis of the obtained results showed that persons deprived of their liberty experience significantly lower social support in its informational, instrumental, appreciative and emotional aspects in comparison with the control group.

**Key words:** Polish prisoners, resources and deficits of persons serving prison sentences, Polish penal institutions

### Introduction

One of the basic prerequisites for successful educational work is an adequate diagnosis (Wysocka 2007), which should cover both the individual characteristics of the person and his/her environment. Taking into account the individual and social perspective seems to be particularly important in the rehabilitation of criminals (Wysocka 2008). In addition, there is another, very important way of thinking about diagnosis. For some time now, not only have been looking for deficits concerning the individual, but more and more often the research of resources has come to the fore. Such a point of view was applied in the model of

developmental diagnosis by an outstanding Polish psychologist Irena Obuchowska (1997), which comprises, apart from a negative diagnosis, also a positive diagnosis, encompassing the strengths of the diagnosed person. Rapp, on the other hand, argues that a resource-based approach provides customers with new opportunities to test their individual skills, which play a significant role in the problem-solving process (Borton 2006). Thinking in terms of searching for resources in the customer, is present in the latest models of working with lawbreakers, as exemplified by the Good Lives Model by Tony Ward (Ward et al. 2007).

Resource and deficit issues have been present in Polish literature for at least several decades and have been taken up by many researchers. The results of this research will be presented below in chronological order.

Jadwiga Sikora (1973) examined the emotionality of 35 prisoners using the Rorschach Test. Research has revealed the neurotic inhibition of experiencing feelings by pushing them out of the field of consciousness and suppression, which results in the formation of pathological anxiety. Among 74% of the respondents there were symptoms of opposition, rebellion and aggression of various severity, while 83% of the prisoners showed a mechanism of inhibiting aggression with the possibility of turning it into anxiety. Almost in every case (97% of the respondents) anxiety occurred, while in 1/3 of the respondents it was particularly serious. It had the nature of a neurotic dysphoria, and it took the form of a psychological anxiety. According to Sikora (1973), the fear takes the form of a defensive mechanism and suppresses the normal functioning of an individual. In the majority of the respondents, anxiety takes a form of defensive response against the threat, which is triggered in moments of immediate danger, which contributes to being in constant readiness and in tense defensive vigilance. This results in narrowing of the free experience of the emotional and introvert side of mental life. In the case of 66% of respondents, this fear also takes the form of sexual anxiety (so-called sexual shock and sexual response), which results from the inhibition of normal sexual life. Sofropsyche, understood as a system of intelligent will and aspirations, responsible for the control of moods and affections is weakened in case of 77% of respondents. Most prisoners experience sadness, depression, anxiety and irritation (Sikora 1973). A shift of emphasis from a mature and stable feeling to an impulsive feeling was observed in respondents (Sikora 1973). This conclusion applies to 71–80% of the respondents, while in 51% of them it is only a labile emotionality. In 80% of prisoners, vacillation and chimeric nature of feelings and moods, constant tension and anxiety resulting from the constant search for the object of emotional stabilization were observed. Prisoners have problems with emotional contact with other people, despite their desire for it. Sikora (1973) sees these difficulties in feelings and moods swings and weak ability to emotionally involve deeply in a situation. In the case of 23% of prisoners, interaction with the environment is difficult due to affective explosions and impulsive actions. Disorder of social contact has an impact on the interests

and commitment to the world of experience and other people. As much as 47% of the cases are weakened or non-existent, 53% focus on the closest family. In 71% of the respondents there is caution, reluctance and distrust towards sincere contacts or sometimes the need to remove oneself from people. The author summarizes that “the image of the emotional and sensory sphere of the subjects and its current symptoms indicate the existence of strongly developed neurosurgical processes in them” (Sikora 1973, p. 88).

The study by Teodor Szymanowski and Janusz Górski (1982) revealed that relations with the family of the prisoners were good, that only 0.7% of the respondents declared bad relations with their mother and nearly 8% declared bad relations with their father.

In the studies by Tadeusz Kolarczyk, Jacek Kubiak and Piotr Wierzbicki (1984), the level of intelligence of the population of women detained in the study turned out to be lower than average. Slightly more than half of the respondents (54.4%) recorded low results, 20.4% achieved average results and 25.2% recorded high results. Personality surveys did not bring significant diversity. It turned out that 51.7% of women surveyed did not reveal a clear domination of extraversion or introversion. Only 17.7% of the respondents were considered to be clearly extravert, and about 30.6% were considered to be introvert. The results obtained using the Eysenck's Neurotism scale of the MPI Questionnaire confirmed that only 22.5% of respondents can be considered as emotionally balanced (low scores); 31.3% of people achieved average results, and 46.2% of respondents revealed a result indicating a significant emotional balance. According to the authors of the research: “nearly half of the respondents are predisposed to anxiety, hyperactivity, not tolerating difficult situations, irritability, mood variation, impulsive aggression, recklessness” (Kolarczyk et al. 1984, p. 128). The use of the Sanocki's Diagnostic Personality Questionnaire revealed that the highest percentage (57.2%) of people reveal psychopathic disorders, 44.3% show psychotic disorders and less frequent – neurosis disorders.

The sense of life of prisoners (N = 850) was examined by Jan Szałański (1998, p. 410). The author stated that in comparison with the control group, the global indicator of sense of life is significantly lower.

The study by Aleksandra Szymanowska (1998, p. 234) carried out in a group of 337 juvenile sentenced prisoners also showed that the sense of life is significantly lower than in case of the general population of Poles.

The issue of resources and deficits of people leaving prison was also addressed by Henryk Machel (2003). Studies carried out in 2000 in the context of the reasons for the recidivism revealed: difficulties in finding a job or the impossibility to take up a job, inadequate material conditions hindering the existence, family dependency, conflict with the family, lack of housing or any accommodation, unwillingness on the part of the social environment, escaping into alcohol, remaining outside any social control and return to the social criminal environment.

Szymanowska (2003) has studied the method of coping with the difficult situation, however, the aim of the study was to deal with these problematic situations in which the process of realizing the valued and desired values was threatened. The survey used the Ostrowska's Action Strategy Questionnaire, which consists of three strategies: attack, resignation and ruthlessness. The attack strategy is defined as a set of actions, emotional states, beliefs, judgments, aimed at achieving a clearly chosen, important and necessary goal. The person applying this strategy is ready to counteract any obstacles that arise on the way to its implementation. The resignation strategy is a method of solving a task situation characterized by more or less conscious suspension of emotional, cognitive and motor processes in relation to important values. A person who pursues this strategy prefers to wait for favorable circumstances, avoids effort and risky situations, does not cope with stress, but rather has a pessimistic view of the world. The strategy of ruthlessness is related to the lack of empathy, not taking into account moral norms in situations requiring a decision or conflict resolution, material treatment of others, exploitation of others, selfishness (Ostrowska 1998). The highest results in the scale of attack were achieved by juvenile offenders, while the lowest by repeat offenders. On the resignation scale the highest scores were achieved by recidivists, but the difference between them and adolescents was not significant. Statistically significant differences occurred between repeat offenders and adults serving imprisonment for the first time. In Szymanowska's (2003) opinion, the preference for choosing a resignation strategy is understandable and can be explained by the fact that they have many negative experiences, hence they strive for peace. On the absolute scale, juveniles and repeat offenders achieved the highest score. Both groups differ significantly in terms of statistic with the group of adults serving for the first time in prison. In Szymanowska's (2003) studies, the highest feeling of coherence was a characteristic of adults who were serving imprisonment for the first time, while the lowest feeling – of recidivists – both groups differed significantly in terms of statistic. The group of juveniles and those serving prison sentences did not differ. The sense of understanding turned out to be significantly lower in the case of repeat offenders compared to juveniles and men serving imprisonment for the first time, so it is more difficult for them to assess reality. Similar differences occurred in the sense of resourcefulness. All three groups do not differ in their feeling of sensibleness. In all studied groups, the feeling of coherence was negatively correlated with the strategy of resignation and ruthlessness.

Tadeusz Sakowicz (2009) has examined the life situation of prisoners in the context of their family environment. Based on the results of the research, the author came to the following conclusions: 38.1% of prisoners declared their sense of life happiness, while the lack of it 30.3%, others (31.4%) could not assess it. The evaluation of the previous way of life of the examined persons and the desire to change it showed that 35.3% of them consider the previous life to be unhappy and wasted, 40.3% as average, and 24.4% as happy and successful. In

addition, among the preferred values, the prisoners indicated most often the family – 75.8%, parents – 41.5%, work – 35.8%, money – 30.9% and God – 26.5%.

The issue of dependency between the adaptation potential and resources of imprisoned people was undertaken also by Iwona Niewiadomska (2010), who using the RISB test, distinguished three types of adaptation potential of prisoners (prisoners with low adaptation potential as a result of experiencing various problems; prisoners with low adaptation potential as a result of blocking intentional motivation and prisoners with high adaptation potential). The results of the research revealed that the increase in the number of prisoners' adaptation is influenced by the experience of material profits (acquiring appropriate clothes and flats). Moreover, increasing the adaptability of prisoners depends on reducing material losses. Finally, the adaptation potential of the prisoners is generated by the profits of the subject's management capital (skills of creating positive family relations, experience of the senselessness of one's own life and organizational competences) (Niewiadomska, Kalinowski 2010, p. 346). On the other hand, in case of those who left prison, Niewiadomska distinguished three groups of people on the basis of a cluster analysis, depending on the intensity of adaptation: prisoners with a high level of adaptation, medium and low level of adaptation. The data were obtained using the RISB test. Research has shown that the development of adaptability in former prisoners is influenced by the experience of various capital profits. The adaptive potential of people leaving prison is generated by the profits in their personal resources (sense of life, self-esteem, optimism, hope and harmonious functioning in different types of existence). In addition, the adaptability of individuals who leave penal institutions depends on improvement of family relationships and enhancement of their professional status, and finally, the increase in the adaptability of former prisoners is influenced by the experience of profit in the personal management capital (improving the sense/goodness of their own lives, increasing self-esteem, increasing self-assessment, deepening family relationships and increasing the ability to share time with relatives) (Niewiadomska 2010, p. 374–375).

Robert Parol (2011) presented a study on the sense of coherence among people serving prison sentences. The penitentiary recidivism and first time serving a sentence were made the differentiating category. The author has adopted the theory of resource conservation, which assumes that there are often obstacles to the adaptation and process of adapting resources to the requirements of a difficult situation. The functioning and content of resources depends nowadays on the experience of life and everyday stressors. Stress becomes a reaction to difficult life events and disorganizes the functioning of a person if it causes loss of resources, damage to resources, inability to rebuild them or lack of expected growth. The model has an interactive character, as its effect consists in the assessment of environmental requirements, subjective evaluation of resources, personal characteristics and assessment of the interaction between the individual and the environment

in terms of sense of satisfaction. It is impossible to unequivocally differentiate the feeling of coherence based on the obtained results of the study, taking into account the adopted differentiating category.

Grzegorz Banerski's report (2011) prepared as part of the project "Process of professional and social activation of former prisoners" was aimed at diagnosing difficulties in professional activation of prisoners in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship. 1518 prisoners took part in the test, 93% of them were men. A quantitative study shows that for almost 1/4 of the prisoners, the first concern after they are released is that they cannot find a job. However, slightly less people (23%) are not afraid of anything, and almost 1/3 are unable to identify their concerns. Women are much more concerned about the future, which results from a more realistic assessment of their opportunities. Women have concerns about finding a job, reluctance on the part of society, a feeling of rejection, isolation, difficulties in adapting to life at large.

Robert Poklek and Marta Jabłońska (2013) conducted a survey of prisoners (N = 300), which aimed to determine the personality profile of prisoners directed to educate in a prison vocational school. On the basis of their own research, the authors came to the following conclusions: convicted students are characterized by an average level of emotional imbalance and hypersensitivity as well as sociability and activity in interpersonal contacts; low level of openness to experience and reluctance to broaden horizons as well as low level of amicability, readiness to concession and compromise was discovered in case of students; in the studied population there was a high level of conscientiousness.

Jolanta Malina (2013) in turn studied the scope, type, cause and effects of violence and aggression among prisoners staying in prison. According to the studies, 127 (63.5%) respondents from the Prison in Herby and 206 (68.8%) from the Prison in Wojkowice believe that violence and aggression is used among convicted persons, 243 (81%) from the Prison in Wojkowice and 155 (77.5%) from the Prison in Herby saw or heard about violence between convicted persons. In addition, studies shows that economic violence is the most common form of violence in closed and semi-open prisons. The second most frequent occurrence is physical violence. According to the respondents, the main source of conflict and violence and aggression among prisoners is overpopulation in prisons, according to 88 (44%) respondents in Prison in Herby and 136 (45.3%) in Prison in Wojkowice, they are aggravated by lack of activities and boredom. Responders also note that the need for domination and personality traits (susceptibility to aggression) are the main reasons of the violence and aggression between prisoners.

The results of Janina Florczykiewicz's research (2015) proved that a significant proportion of prisoners serving a custodial sentence experience a feeling of guilt, which is evidenced by expressing their regret for the harm done to another person and their awareness of the existence of a victim of crimes committed. A large number of convicted persons declare an apology to the victim, regret the

act and declare that they would not do it again. Moreover, the basis of regret for committing a crime are its negative consequences for the convicted person. In the author's opinion, this indicates the focus of those convicted people on their own position. Reflection on harming the victim rarely appears in their case. According to the researcher (2015), sentenced persons with a high degree of demoralization more often declare awareness of the victim's existence and regret at the fact that the act was committed in comparison with those respondents demoralized to a lesser extent, which may be associated with the awareness of the seriousness of the act committed.

## Method

The aim of the presented research was to determine the resources and deficits inherent in the unit itself, as well as in its surroundings among the prisoners. The following research problems were formulated:

P<sub>1</sub>: what are the differences between prisoners and those who do not live in a penitentiary unit within the scope of: a sense of coherence, ego resilience, depression, anxiety, curiosity, anger, worry, social support, quality of life, intensity of religious attitude, ways of dealing with stress (religious and non-religious)?

P<sub>2</sub>: What is the relationship between coherence and methods of dealing with stress in a group of prisoners?

The study assumes the following research hypotheses:

H<sub>1</sub> – Prisoners, compared to the control group, have a lower sense of coherence and ego elasticity.

H<sub>2</sub> – Prisoners, compared to the control group, are significantly more depressive; they manifest anger more often; they do not differ from the control group in terms of variable: curiosity; in fact, they manifest anxiety more often.

H<sub>3</sub> – Prisoners reveal a significantly lower quality of life.

H<sub>4</sub> – Prisoners sentenced in penitentiary institutions suffer significantly lower social support in comparison with the control group.

H<sub>5</sub> – Prisoners have a significantly lower intensity of religious attitude.

H<sub>6</sub> – Prisoners use considerably often negative religious strategies to deal with stress and considerably less frequently positive strategies.

H<sub>7</sub> – Prisoners use significantly less often active strategies for dealing with stress.

H<sub>8</sub> – There is a relationship between nonreligious strategies for dealing with stress and a sense of coherence.

In order to verify the above hypotheses, the following research tools were used:

1. Perception of Quality of Life Questionnaire by M. Straś-Romanowska, for assessing the general perception of quality of life and its four dimensions: psychophysical, psychosocial, subjective and metaphysical (Straś-Romanowska, Frąckowiak 2007).
2. Life Orientation Questionnaire SOC-29 by A. Antonovsky – to assess the sense of coherence and its three components: a sense of understanding, resourcefulness and sensibility (Antonovsky 1993).
3. Resilience Measurement Scale SPP-25 N. Ogińska-Bulik and Z. Juczyński – to evaluate the overall level of mental resilience and its 5 factors: perseverance and determination in action, openness to new experiences and a sense of humor, personal competence to deal with and tolerate negative emotions, tolerance to failure and treating life as a challenge, optimistic attitude to life and ability to mobilize oneself in difficult situations (Ogińska-Bulik, Juczyński 2008).
4. Social Support Scale (SWS) by K. Kmieciak-Baran – to evaluate general social support and its four types: information, instrumental, value and emotional support (Kmieciak-Baran 1995).
5. Scale of the Intensity of Religious Attitude (SIPR) W. Prężyna – to measure the intensity of the individual's relationship with the subject of religious attitude, which is God (in the understanding of Christian tradition) and the whole supernatural reality (Prężyna 1981; Śliwak, Bartczuk 2011).
6. SPI/TPI questionnaire – C.D. by Spielberger (Spielberger, Reheiser 2009), in Polish adaptation developed by K. Wrześniewski and P. Oleś for measuring anxiety, depression, curiosity and anger as a state (SPI) and characteristic (TPI).
7. RCOPE Questionnaire by Kenneth I. Pargament – for evaluation of religious strategies of dealing with stress.
8. COPE Questionnaire Carver, Scheier and Weintraub (1989) in the Polish adaptation developed by Juczyński and Ogińska-Bulik (2009) for the assessment of stress management strategies.

All the tools used are characterized by high accuracy and reliability rates. The presentation of the psychometric properties of the research tools used was omitted due to volume limits.

## The studied group

A total of 564 people took part in the studies, representing two groups. The first group of 361 people (64%) are male prisoners from penitentiary institutions located within the District Inspectorate of Prison Service in Warsaw, while 203 persons (36%) are students of Warsaw universities (men), including 133 (24%) from Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University and 70 (12%) from Warsaw University. The research on the prisoners took place in the autumn of 2015, the research on



students were conducted in 2013–2015. Table 1 gives details characteristic for the group that participated in the studies.

Table 1. Characteristics of the studied groups: prisoners (N = 361) and students (N = 203) in demographic terms

Variables	Persons placed in penitentiary institutions		Students			
			UW		UKSW	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Marital status						
Married	84	23.3	12	17.1	15	11.3
Divorced	66	18.3	0	0	0	0
Widower	38	10.5	0	0	0	0
Single	123	34.1	58	82.9	118	82.7
Conjugal relationship	50	13.8	0	0	0	0
Education						
Master of Arts/Sciences	14	3.9	0	0	0	0
Bachelor of Arts/Sciences	15	4.2	0	0	1	0.8
secondary, general education	38	10.5	62	88.6	102	76.6
technical secondary education	54	15.0	8	11.4	30	22.6
Vocational	89	24.6	0	0	0	0
Junior high school	38	10.5	0	0	0	0
Primary	113	31.3	0	0	0	0
Age	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
	35.2	9.45	23.2	0.7	22.8	0.9

Source: own study.

The largest group of prisoners are not married men – N = 123 (34.1%) and the smallest – widowers – N = 38 (10.5%). In case of Warsaw University students, the most numerous group are not married men N = 58 (82.9%), similarly in case of UKSW students – N = 118 (82.7%).

In terms of education 63 persons (88.6%) among the students of UW have a general secondary education, while among the students of UKSW, the group consists of 102 people (76.6%). Among the prisoners, 14 people (3.9%) have Master's degrees, 15 people (4.2%) have Bachelor's degrees, 38 people (10.5%) have general secondary, and 54 people (15%) have technical secondary education. In addition, 89 people (24.6%) have vocational education, 38 (10.5%) lower secondary education and 113 (31.3%) basic education (6 grades).

The average age of the prisoners was slightly over 35 years, while among UW students it was 23 years and among UKSW students it was 22.8 years.

## Research results

### Differences in the sense of quality of life

Statistically significant differences between the group of prisoners and the control group were observed within the scope of psychophysical quality of life ( $p < 0.001$ ). Prisoners revealed a higher level of psychophysical quality of life, which is related to the broadly understood carnality and human drive (physical appearance, temperament, vitality), the function of the psychophysical sphere is individual (and genre) survival – preservation of life and health. Another important difference occurred between groups with regard to psychosocial quality of life ( $p < 0.001$ ). Psychosocial quality of life is related to the following dimensions: sense of belonging, safety, social identity, establishing and maintaining links with other people. The control group proved to be a group that revealed a significantly higher level of psychosocial quality of life. There are no differences between groups in terms of personal and metaphysical quality of life and as a result of the overall sense of quality of life.

Table 2. Differences between the examined groups in terms of a sense of quality of life

	Group type	M	SD	t	df	p
Psychophysical quality of life	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	46.69	6.91	8.303	414.61	.000
	control group	41.62	6.99			
Psychosocial quality of life	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	43.25	5.86	-4.981	562	.000
	control group	45.82	5.93			
Subjective quality of life	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	46.08	5.70	-.859	531.71	.390
	control group	46.44	4.05			
Metaphysical quality of life	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	46.26	6.10	-1.038	465.10	.300
	control group	46.77	5.35			
Overall quality of life	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	182.34	19.80	.996	562	.320
	control group	180.652	18.41			

Source: own study.

Therefore, hypothesis  $H_3$  was confirmed partially. Although prisoners have a significantly lower psychosocial sense of quality of life, on the other hand they show a higher sense of psychophysical quality of life. There were also no differences in the personal, metaphysical quality of life and in overall result. Therefore, the results did not confirm the previous research, which concluded that imprisonment reduces the quality of life of people serving prison sentences (Coid 1993; Williams 2003), mainly due to deprivation of many important needs, including above all the need for autonomy and freedom as well as social contacts (Dolińska-Zygmunt, Mokrzyńska 2013; Przybyliński 2006).

### Differences in social support

The results of the studies allow us to conclude that prisoners feel insufficient support in their informational, instrumental, valuing and emotional aspects – in each case the difference in perceived support between the group of prisoners and the control group was at the level of  $p < 0.001$ .

Table 3. Differences between the examined groups in terms of a social support

	Group type	M	SD	T	df	p
General social support	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	58.84	14.51	-12.606	562	.000
	control group	71.99	4.25			
Informational social support	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	14.49	4.34	-5.844	562	.000
	control group	16.37	1.93			
Instrumental social support	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	14.77	4.19	-10.885	562	.000
	control group	18.25	2.39			
Valuing social support	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	14.85	4.08	-13.348	562	.000
	control group	18.88	1.77			
Emotional social support	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	14.72	4.29	-12.370	562	.000
	control group	18.49	.92			

Source: own study.

Hypothesis  $H_4$  about the fact that prisoners sentenced in penitentiary institutions suffer significantly lower social support in comparison with the control group was confirmed. The results of the studies conducted so far are not clear. Szymanowski's and Górski's research (1982) showed that the respondents' rela-

tions with their families were good, but Machel's latest research (2003) confirmed that an important reason for the return of the former convicted persons to crime were: conflict with their families and unwillingness on the part of the social environment.

### Differences in the intensity of religious attitude

The intensity of religious attitude is a factor which does not differentiate the group of people placed in penitentiary institutions from the control group. The difference was statistically insignificant.

Table 4. Differences between groups in the intensity of religious attitude

	Group type	M	SD	t	df	p
Intensity of religious attitude	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	90.30	24.68	-.855	562	.393
	control group	92.39	33.22			

Source: own study.

The results did not confirm Hypothesis H<sub>5</sub>, because prisoners are characterized by a similar intensity of religious attitude. It is difficult to compare the results of these studies with those of others, as the results of similar studies could not be obtained.

### Differences in methods of dealing with stress

The studied groups are also differentiated by some ways of dealing with stress. These are: seeking instrumental support ( $p < 0.001$ ); searching for emotional support ( $p < 0.001$ ); avoiding competitive activities ( $p < 0.001$ ); refraining from action ( $p < 0.001$ ); focus on emotions and their discharge ( $p < 0.001$ ); denial ( $p < 0.001$ ); distraction ( $p < 0.001$ ); discontinuation of activities ( $p < 0.001$ ) and alcohol or other psychoactive agents ( $p < 0.001$ ). Prisoners are significantly less likely to use the strategy of seeking instrumental support and emotional support; they use the strategy of avoiding competitive actions more often. Moreover, prisoners are much more likely to refrain from acting, are less focused on emotions and their discharge; they deny much more often; rather less likely to have a distraction strategy; they are much more likely to stop actions and take psychoactive substances.

Table 5. Differences between tested groups in methods of dealing with stress

	Group type	M	SD	t	df	p
Active coping	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	10.86	2.54	-1.412	562	.159
	control group	11.13	1.45			
Planning	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	11.29	2.78	1.140	561	.255
	control group	11.00	2.90			
Seeking instrumental support	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	10.59	2.80	-4.898	562	.000
	control group	11.75	2.50			
Seeking emotional support	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	9.95	2.78	-7.474	562	.000
	control group	11.86	3.11			
Avoiding competitive actions	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	10.52	2.51	3.869	562	.000
	control group	9.69	2.33			
Turning towards religion	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	8.23	3.43	-.883	562	.378
	control group	8.52	4.41			
Positive reevaluation and development	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	10.63	2.66	-.947	562	.344
	control group	10.85	2.39			
Refraining from action	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	10.03	2.39	3.525	562	.000
	control group	9.32	2.07			
Acceptance	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	9.77	2.68	-.122	562	.903
	control group	9.80	2.50			
Focus on emotions and their discharge	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	9.80	2.84	-5.012	562	.000
	control group	11.01	2.57			
Denial	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	7.78	2.79	3.780	562	.000
	control group	6.93	2.09			
Distraction	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	8.55	2.49	-5.107	562	.000
	control group	9.58	1.94			
Discontinuation of activities	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	7.52	2.60	3.874	562	.000
	control group	6.72	1.82			
Use of alcohol or other psychoactive substances	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	7.61	3.41	4.191	562	.000
	control group	6.46	2.53			
Sense of humor	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	7.88	2.95	.287	562	.774
	control group	7.81	3.12			

Source: own study.

The analysis of the methods of dealing with stress revealed that people living in penitentiary institutions, in comparison to the control group, much more often show passivity in dealing with stress, which to some extent confirms the hypothesis of  $H_1$ . Prisoners are more likely to use unconstructive strategies such as alcohol or drug use, discontinuation of actions or denial. To some extent, therefore, the results of the research correspond to the results of Aleksandra Szymanowska (2003), because the highest results in the scale of resignation, which is characterized by the use of rather passive and unconstructive strategies of coping with a difficult situation, were obtained by repeat offenders. However, direct comparisons are difficult due to the other tool used in the study and the lack of a control group (Szymanowska 2003).

### Differences in the sense of coherence

Among all coefficients of coherence measured using the Antonovsky's questionnaire SOC-29 (Antonovsky 1993), differences between the studied groups were statistically significant only in case of feeling of sensibleness ( $p < 0.05$ ). Prisoners scored a significantly higher result than the control group.

Table 6. Differences between groups in the sense of coherence

	Group type	M	SD	T	df	P
Sense of understanding	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	42.21	10.38	1.443	562	.150
	control group	40.89	10.42			
Sense of manageability	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	45.36	8.23	-1.669	562	.096
	control group	46.60	8.85			
Sense of meaningfulness	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	40.10	8.44	2.368	560	.018
	control group	38.24	9.76			
Sense of coherence – overall result	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	127.71	21.68	.973	560	.331
	control group	125.73	25.57			

Source: own study.

Therefore, hypothesis  $H_1$  in the part concerning the sense of coherence, has not been confirmed, because the feeling of coherence of both groups is similar. The exception is the sense of meaningfulness. The sense of coherence was studied by Szymanowska (2003), however, it is difficult to relate the results of the

presented research to the results of the above mentioned author, as the control group did not take part in them.

### Differences in terms of fear, curiosity, anger, depression and worry

The following variables measuring emotions were included in the study: fear, curiosity, anger and depression. The mentioned emotions were presented as a condition and as characteristic. In the case of a state, the emotion is unstable in time, it is a transient state of feeling tension, while in the case of traits we are dealing with relative stability of maintaining emotions in time. The results of the research showed that there are no differences between the two groups in terms of feeling emotions of anxiety and depression understood both as a condition and as a characteristic. Statistically significant differences between groups were revealed in the scope of anger understood both as a characteristic and as a condition. The intensity of this emotion understood as a feature is significantly higher in the control group than in the group of prisoners ( $p < 0.05$ ). Conversely, anger understood as a condition is significantly higher in the group of prisoners than in the control group ( $p < 0.001$ ). In the case of the last of the emotions, i. e. curiosity understood as a characteristic, there were no statistically significant differences, whereas in the case of curiosity understood as condition, the group of prisoners scored a statistically significantly higher result in comparison with the control group.

Table 7. Differences between groups in terms of anxiety, curiosity, anger and depression

	Group type	M	SD	T	df	p
Anxiety as a characteristic (TPI)	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	21.38	4.56	-1.332	562	.183
	control group	21.92	4.77			
Curiosity as a characteristic (TPI)	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	29.17	5.17	1.608	562	.108
	control group	28.41	5.74			
Anger as a characteristic (TPI)	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	21.34	6.40	-2.061	562	.040
	control group	22.48	6.12			
Depression as a characteristic (TPI)	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	19.75	5.01	-1.609	562	.108
	control group	20.52	6.10			
Anxiety as a condition (SPI)	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	20.79	5.41	.240	562	.811
	control group	20.67	5.78			

	Group type	M	SD	T	df	p
Curiosity as a condition (SPI)	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	29.88	5.02	4.549	562	.000
	control group	27.54	7.12			
Anger as a condition (SPI)	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	20.02	7.21	4.190	562	.000
	control group	17.42	6.80			
Depression as a condition (SPI)	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	20.20	5.63	.116	562	.907
	control group	20.13	7.19			

Source: own study.

The results of the study did not confirm the hypothesis  $H_2$ , because the prisoners are not significantly more depressive or anxious than the control group; they reveal a significantly lower level of anger understood as a characteristic, but higher as a condition. Moreover, they show significantly higher curiosity index in comparison with the control group. The presented results differ from Sikora's research (1973), which showed that most prisoners experience sadness, depression, anxiety and irritation.

### Differences in terms of ego resilience

Table 8. presents basic statistics describing the significance of differences between studied groups in terms of ego resilience. Differences were found in the following variables: perseverance and determination in action ( $p < 0.05$ ); openness to new experiences and sense of humor ( $p < 0.01$ ); personal competence to cope with and tolerate the negative emotions ( $p < 0.05$ ) and optimistic attitude to life and ability to mobilize oneself in difficult situations ( $p < 0.01$ ). The group of people placed in penitentiary institutions is characterized by a significantly higher rate of perseverance and determination in operation. Moreover, the group obtained significantly lower results in terms of openness to new experiences and a sense of humor; it showed significantly higher level of personal competence to cope with and tolerate the negative emotions in comparison with the control group; it is much more optimistic about life and has a significantly higher level of ability to mobilize in difficult situations.



Table 8. Differences between the examined groups in terms of ego resilience

	Group type	M	SD	t	df	p
Resilience – overall result	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	70.12	17.60	.676	562	.499
	control group	69.11	15.87			
Perseverance and determination in action	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	14.19	3.99	2.236	562	.026
	control group	13.38	4.35			
Openness to new experiences and a sense of humor	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	14.18	3.77	-3.027	562	.003
	control group	15.12	3.04			
Personal competence to cope with and tolerate the negative emotions	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	14.02	3.73	1.985	562	.048
	control group	13.38	3.67			
Tolerance of failure and treating life as a challenge	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	14.13	3.80	-1.478	562	.140
	control group	14.62	3.63			
Optimistic attitude to life and ability to mobilize in difficult situations	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	13.58	3.64	2.894	562	.004
	control group	12.61	4.16			

Source: own study.

The results of the study undoubtedly do not confirm the hypothesis  $H_1$ , as prisoners do not show a lower ego resilience level compared to the control group. Therefore, while treating the sense of coherence and the ego resilience as a concept, though not identical, similar, it can be concluded that the results obtained with a tool measuring the ego resilience correspond to the results obtained with a tool measuring the sense of coherence. The sense of coherence of both groups is similar (except for the sense of meaningfulness), the resilience of both groups' egos is similar.

### Differences in religious methods of dealing with stress

The results of the research revealed that religious ways of dealing with stress to a certain extent differentiate the group of prisoners from the control group. Statistically significant differences between the groups were observed with respect to the following variables: changes in life ( $p < 0.05$ ); seeking support ( $p < 0.01$ ); religious concentration ( $p < 0.01$ ); punishing God ( $p < 0.01$ ); demonic re-evaluation ( $p < 0.001$ ); religious inactivity ( $p < 0.001$ ); dissatisfaction with church

and God ( $p < 0.001$ ); questioning the power of God ( $p < 0.05$ ) and negative strategies ( $p < 0.001$ ). Prisoners are more intensively implementing a life change strategy as well as are seeking support. Moreover, they are much more religiously concentrated. On the other hand, however, prisoners are more likely to attribute problems they encounter to the punishing God, blame the Church more often, show religious passivity and question the power of God.

Table 9. Differences between groups in religious methods of dealing with stress

	Group type	M	SD	T	df	p
Life change	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	8.24	6.36	2.054	562	.040
	control group	7.07	6.63			
Submission to the will of God	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	5.61	4.17	-.180	562	.857
	control group	5.68	4.45			
Seeking support	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	5.12	4.46	2.675	562	.008
	control group	4.07	4.48			
Religious focus	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	5.00	4.00	3.414	562	.001
	control group	3.79	4.10			
Cooperation with God	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	5.57	4.27	-.075	561	.941
	control group	5.60	4.86			
Request for direct intervention	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	5.02	3.26	-1.189	562	.235
	control group	5.36	3.18			
Spiritual support	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	5.28	4.16	.007	560	.994
	control group	5.27	4.41			
Fidelity to religious practices	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	10.92	6.75	.537	561	.592
	control group	10.61	6.69			
Positive religious re-evaluation	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	4.56	3.52	-1.625	554	.105
	control group	5.09	3.98			
Punishing God	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	5.48	3.96	3.004	562	.003
	control group	4.41	4.19			

	Group type	M	SD	T	df	p
Independent coping	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	7.40	3.75	.676	562	.500
	control group	7.16	4.38			
Demonic re-valuation	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	4.02	3.64	8.326	562	.000
	control group	1.66	2.34			
Religious inactivity	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	3.99	4.09	6.016	562	.000
	control group	1.96	3.37			
Dissatisfaction with the church and God	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	7.29	5.16	5.802	562	.000
	control group	4.82	4.25			
Questioning of the God's power	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	4.50	3.11	2.052	560	.041
	control group	3.91	3.49			
Dissatisfaction and questioning of the church	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	2.28	1.83	-1.335	562	.182
	control group	2.50	1.90			
Positive religious strategies	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	55.07	37.08	.956	550	.340
	control group	51.83	39.79			
Negative religious strategies	persons placed in penitentiary institutions	34.97	20.03	5.363	560	.000
	control group	26.45	13.87			

Source: own study.

Hypothesis  $H_6$  has been confirmed, as prisoners much more often use negative religious strategies of coping with stress than people from control groups. Results are difficult to refer to other studies, as in Poland there have been no tests of religious methods of dealing with stress applied by prisoners so far.

### A feeling of coherence and methods of dealing with stress

According to Antonovsky's theory (1995), a person with a high sense of coherence does not perceive stress stimuli as stressors, they are rather a challenge. Therefore, a correlation between a sense of coherence and variables measuring strategies for coping with stress should be expected. People with a high level of coherence should use constructive strategies and at the same time avoid the evasive strategies. In most cases, people with a high level of coherence use strategies such as

active management, planning, searching for support (instrumental and emotional), positive re-evaluation and development, avoiding competitive activities. At the same time, people with low levels of coherence use strategies such as denial, distraction, cessation, consumption of alcohol or other psychoactive substances and a sense of humor. Detailed data is contained in Table 9.

Table 9. Relations between a feeling of coherence and methods of dealing with stress

		Sense of understanding	Sense of manageability	Sense of meaningfulness	Sense of coherence – overall
Active coping	r	.075	.250	.315	.251
	p	n.i.	.000	.000	.000
Planning	r	.148	.256	.342	.300
	p	.005	.000	.000	.000
Seeking instrumental support	r	.123	.160	.166	.184
	p	.019	.002	.002	.000
Seeking emotional support	r	.108	.093	.119	.134
	p	.040	n.i.	.024	.011
Avoiding competitive actions	r	.062	.124	.190	.153
	p	n.i.	.018	.000	.004
Turning towards religion	r	-.005	-.128	-.114	-.095
	p	n.i.	.015	.031	n.i.
Positive reevaluation and development	r	.115	.285	.344	.295
	p	.030	.000	.000	.000
Refraining from action	r	-.007	-.013	.021	-.001
	p	n.i.	n.i.	n.i.	n.i.
Acceptance	r	.015	.093	.085	.075
	p	n.i.	n.i.	n.i.	n.i.
Focus on emotions and their discharge	r	-.071	-.081	-.046	-.084
	p	n.i.	n.i.	n.i.	n.i.
Denial	r	-.149	-.361	-.467	-.390
	p	.005	.000	.000	.000
Distraction	r	-.208	-.263	-.279	-.311
	p	.000	.000	.000	.000
Discontinuation of activities	r	-.196	-.423	-.468	-.438
	p	.000	.000	.000	.000

		Sense of understanding	Sense of manageability	Sense of meaningfulness	Sense of coherence – overall
Use of alcohol or other psycho-active substances	r	-.209	-.353	-.444	-.407
	p	.000	.000	.000	.000
Sense of humor	r	-.057	-.204	-.318	-.230
	p	n.i.	.000	.000	.000

Source: own study.

Hypothesis  $H_8$  that there is a relationship between nonreligious strategies for dealing with stress and a sense of coherence has been confirmed in the studies. Thus, Szymanowska's studies (2003) were confirmed, in which the feeling of coherence negatively correlated with the strategy of resignation and ruthlessness in all the examined groups.

## Discussing the results

The aim of this paper was to present selected psychosocial deficits and resources of people serving imprisonment in the following areas: feeling of coherence, ego resilience, depression, fear, curiosity, anger, worry, social support, quality of life, intensity of religious attitude, religious and non-religious ways of dealing with stress. Various research tools have been used in studies, which are characterized by high rates of reliability and accuracy. The in-depth analysis included questionnaires for 564 persons, including 361 (64%) prisoners serving a custodial sentence and 203 (36%) students not serving in a penitentiary unit.

The first research hypothesis  $H_1$  assumed that prisoners had a lower sense of coherence and ego resilience compared to the control group. Analysis of the research results showed that the feeling of coherence in both groups is similar. The exception is the sense of meaningfulness. Persons sentenced to imprisonment obtained a significantly higher result. A high result of a sense of meaningfulness may mean that the prisoners apply a strategy necessary to survive a difficult situation (Tomaszewski 1975), which is the fact of their imprisonment. In order to "survive" a period of isolation, the prisoners try to set goals and, consequently, find the sense of life in the situation in which they live. This sense of meaning of life helps to take up various activities while serving a prison sentence and gives an optimistic perspective for the future. Adaptation is aptly recognized by Ciosek (2001, p. 211) "it is impossible to escape from the prison situation, so one must adapt to it anyway [...] adaptation means in fact the ability of a human to adapt to changing external conditions, both physical and social, and the ability to achieve in them important goals for oneself". Niewiadomska (2010), in turn,

notes that the adaptation potential of the prisoners is generated by the profits of the subject's management capital (skills of creating positive family relations, experience of the senselessness of one's own life and organizational competences). A similar mechanism seems to exist in the case of another variable, i. e. ego resilience. The analysis of research results showed that the feeling of resilience in both groups is similar, and for some indicators the level of resilience is higher in the group serving imprisonment. These include the following indicators: perseverance and determination in action; personal competence to cope with and tolerate negative emotions; optimistic attitude to life and ability to mobilize oneself in difficult situations. The results obtained may indicate that some of the resources have become active as a result of being in a difficult situation to defend against the consequences of the incarnation. The assessment of whether or not this process is deliberate (as a defensive mechanism, for example) remains unresolved and may constitute the subject of future research. Undoubtedly, deprivation of liberty, understood as an exemplification of a difficult situation (Tomaszewski 1975), can activate and manifest certain resources inherent in man. Therefore, the results of the conducted research do not allow to confirm  $H_1$  hypothesis.

The second hypothesis –  $H_2$  – assumed that the prisoners, in comparison with the control group, are significantly more depressive; they manifest anger and anxiety more often, but do not differ from the control group in terms of curiosity. The results of the study do not confirm this hypothesis. It turned out the prisoners are not significantly more depressive or anxious than the control group; they reveal a significantly lower level of anger understood as a characteristic (relatively stable over time), but higher as a condition. Moreover, they show significantly higher curiosity index in comparison with the control group. Perhaps the fact that there are no differences in terms of depression and anxiety, which undoubtedly surprises, is the result of the prisoners being adapted to the incarnation conditions. The question of what form this adaptation takes remains open. The higher level of curiosity of prisoners can be explained by the state of isolation, sometimes long-term one. Prisoners are probably aware of the changing world “outside”, which must consequently trigger their imagination.

The third research hypothesis –  $H_3$  – related to quality of life and assumed that prisoners reveal a significantly lower quality of life. This hypothesis was confirmed partially, as on one hand prisoners have a significantly lower psychosocial sense of quality of life, on the other hand they show a higher sense of psychophysical quality of life. Psychosocial quality of life is related to the following dimensions: sense of belonging, safety, social identity, establishing and maintaining links with other people. There were no differences in the personal, metaphysical quality of life and overall result. A lower level of psychosocial quality of life is undoubtedly a consequence of the drastic narrowing of relations with other people through the fact of imprisonment. The psychophysical sphere, in turn, is a broadly understood human carnality and drive, as well as physical appearance, tempera-

ment and vitality. The disturbance of biological balance can be demonstrated by the disease (Frąckowiak 2004). There is no doubt that imprisoned people come from dysfunctional backgrounds (they are often the representatives of the poor, for whom the mere fact of obtaining regular meals is a positive factor).

Another research hypothesis –  $H_4$  – assumed that prisoners sentenced in penitentiary institutions suffer significantly lower social support in comparison with the control group. The analysis of the obtained results showed that persons deprived of their liberty experience significantly lower social support in its informational, instrumental, appreciative and emotional aspects in comparison with the control group. This research hypothesis was thus confirmed. The presented results confirm the results of other authors' research (Machel 2003; Banerski 2011). They show how important social support is in the process of social rehabilitation, which is insufficient for people serving prison sentences.

$H_5$  hypothesis related to religious attitudes and assumed that the prisoners have a significantly lower intensity of religious attitudes. Therefore, the results did not confirm the hypothesis, because prisoners are characterized by a similar intensity of religious attitude. "It should be remembered, however, that self-declarations in this area present only an approximate picture of the significance of religion in the lives of individuals or entire social groups. They only inform about the nature and intensity of attitudes towards religion and do not reflect the whole form of human religiousness" (Zaręba 2003, p. 74). Even if the intensity of religious attitudes of persons serving imprisonment is similar to a control group, religious attitudes do not translate sufficiently into behavior. This conclusion is important information for people working with prisoners: it is necessary to take into account the religious aspect, which should be reflected in everyday choices. Of course, a completely different issue is how to do this.

On the other hand, the sixth research hypothesis ( $H_6$ ) assumed that prisoners much more often use negative religious strategies of coping with stress, while significantly less frequently the positive strategies. This hypothesis has been confirmed, as prisoners much more often use negative religious strategies of coping with stress compared with the control groups. To sum up: although the intensity of religious attitudes in both groups is similar, in a situation of stress, persons serving imprisonment are more likely to choose negative strategies, which correlate with immaturity rather than with the maturity of religious attitudes.

The seventh hypothesis –  $H_7$  – assumed that prisoners use significantly less often active strategies for coping with stress. The analysis of these methods revealed that people living in penitentiary institutions, in comparison to the control group, much more often show passivity in dealing with stress, which to some extent confirms the hypothesis  $H_7$ . Prisoners are more likely to use unconstructive strategies such as alcohol or drug use, discontinuation of actions or denial.

The last hypothesis ( $H_8$ ) assumed that there is a relationship between nonreligious strategies for dealing with stress and a sense of coherence. This has been

confirmed because coherent persons are resourceful, i.e. those who take constructive action to address the problem.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the studies carried out. Statistically significant differences between the group of persons serving imprisonment and the control group did not occur within the following scopes: feeling of coherence, ego resilience, depression, fear, personal, metaphysical and general sense of quality of life, intensity of religious attitude. Significant differences were found between the research and control groups in terms of: curiosity, anger, social support, negative religious strategies for coping with stress, psycho-physical and psychosocial quality of life, ways of coping with stress, sense of sensibility, perseverance and determination in action, personal competence to cope with and tolerate negative emotions, optimistic attitude to life and ability to mobilize oneself in difficult situations.

The presented research results prove that persons serving imprisonment are characterized not only by deficits and negative attitudes, but also by resources and positive perspectives. This phenomenon is accurately described by Bulenda (2003, p. 226): "Prisoners differ in many aspects [...]. In many aspects, they are very similar to members of certain groups of the population remaining at large. In general, they partially resemble a cross-section of the whole society, partially distorted by penal policy."

However, it should be noted that the study presents comparative analyses between the research group and the control group. The vast majority of studies on life situation of prisoners known to the authors do not take into account comparative analyses with the control group; they concern only groups of prisoners. The problems presented above are a contribution to further in-depth analyses of the situation of the prisoners. In the future, analyses will be carried out taking into account differences within the research group.

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