

EMOTIONAL STATES OF PRISONERS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS AFFECTING THEM

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Abstract: This scientific text analyzes the emotional states of prisoners, psychological changes occurring in penitentiary environments, and internal and external factors influencing them. It also describes emotional stability, adaptation processes, and psychological mechanisms of stress factors in prison conditions.

Keywords: Prisoner, emotional state, stress, depression, aggression, hopelessness, emotional instability, penitentiary psychology, socio-psychological factors, social support, adaptation process, prisonization, total institutions, psychological tension, subculture, social isolation, frustration, behavioral change, psychological resources, control and discipline.

Introduction

The psychological state of prisoners undergoes significant changes during the process of serving a sentence. Deprivation of freedom, restriction of social contacts, and uncertainty about the future create strong emotional tension in the individual. Emotional states here are not only internal experiences but also a psychological system that directly influences behavior, adaptation, and social relations.

The emotional states of prisoners and their psychological characteristics are among the most relevant issues widely studied in penitentiary psychology and sociology. Early studies in this field began in the early 20th century, with the main focus on determining the impact of correctional institutions on the human psyche.

In scientific literature, E. Goffman's concept of "total institutions" is considered one of the key theoretical bases for explaining prisoners' emotional and social life. According to this concept, closed systems such as prisons significantly limit individual freedom and affect emotional stability. M. Foucault's theory of "discipline and control" is also widely used to explain the formation of internal emotional pressure in prisoners.

Within penitentiary psychology, F. S. Clemmer's concept of "prisonization" is also important. It scientifically describes changes in prisoners' values, behavior, and emotional reactions during adaptation to prison conditions. As a result of this process, emotional instability, aggression, or alternatively passivity and social withdrawal may increase.

In later studies, H. Haney and other modern penitentiary psychologists, using experimental and clinical methods, proved that prison environments significantly reduce psychological resources and increase stress, depression, and anxiety levels. Research based on Rosenzweig's frustration theory also identified a direct connection between frustration and aggressive reactions in prisoners.

Specificity of Emotional States in Prisoners

In prisoners, the following main emotional states are observed:

- Stress and anxiety – related to uncertainty about the future and prison conditions.
- Depressive states – arising due to social isolation and loss of purpose.
- Anger and aggression – associated with restrictions, feelings of injustice, or environmental pressure.
- Feelings of hopelessness – related to long sentences and difficulties in social reintegration.
- Emotional instability – expressed through frequent mood changes and impulsive reactions.

The emotional states of prisoners acquire a specific form under the influence of special socio-psychological conditions in correctional institutions. Deprivation of freedom, drastic changes in the social environment, and strict regulation of daily life lead to significant changes in

the emotional system. In such conditions, emotions function not only as internal experiences but also as an important psychological factor determining behavior and social adaptation.

Stress and anxiety are among the most common emotional states in prisoners. They are usually formed due to uncertainty about the future, sentence duration, and restriction of freedom. Depressive states are also widespread and are expressed through social withdrawal, reduced motivation, and psychological distress.

Aggression and anger reactions are also frequently observed in prisoners. These states are often associated with strict institutional rules, control systems, or feelings of injustice, and emerge as a form of expressing internal emotional tension through external behavior.

Hopelessness also plays an important role in prisoners' emotional states. It is associated with long-term sentences, difficulties in reintegration, and uncertainty about the future, reducing internal motivation. Emotional instability is characterized by frequent mood changes, impulsive reactions, and reduced psychological resilience.

Overall, prisoners' emotional states form a complex and multi-layered psychological system. They develop through the interaction of internal personal characteristics and external environmental factors, determining the overall level of psychological adaptation.

Psychological Factors Affecting Emotions

1. Personal (Internal) Factors

- Temperament type
- Character accentuation features
- Previous life experience
- Level of psychological resilience
- Self-esteem and identity stability

2. Socio-Psychological Factors

- Relations within the prisoner community
- Lack or presence of social support
- Influence of prison subculture
- Attitude toward control and discipline systems

The socio-psychological factors affecting prisoners' emotional states are connected to a complex system of interactions formed in penitentiary environments. These factors determine emotional stability, behavior, and adaptation processes, and are key determinants of identity reconstruction.

First, interpersonal relations among prisoners are important. Informal groups, hierarchical structures, and subcultural norms may either support adaptation or increase emotional tension and conflict.

Second, lack of social support increases loneliness, emotional isolation, and psychological instability. Research shows that external social support reduces stress and prevents depression.

Third, formal and informal control systems create psychological pressure through strict discipline and restrictions. However, the individual perception of fairness plays an important role in emotional reactions.

Fourth, prison subculture significantly influences emotional experience. It may act as a protective mechanism or increase aggression, fear, and psychological tension.

Overall, socio-psychological factors play a decisive role in prisoners' emotional states.

3. Situational (Environmental) Factors

- Severity of prison conditions
- Degree of freedom restriction
- Daily routine and monotony
- Stressful events (disciplinary measures, conflicts)

Psychological Adaptation Process

The emotional state of prisoners gradually enters an adaptation process. This process includes three stages:

1. Initial crisis stage – strong stress, denial, aggression.
2. Adaptation stage – attempts to adjust, emotional stabilization.
3. Relative stability stage – psychological adaptation and behavioral standardization.

Conclusion

The emotional states of prisoners are a complex psychological system formed under the influence of internal personal characteristics, social environment, and penitentiary conditions. Psychological support, social rehabilitation programs, and development of adaptation mechanisms are important for ensuring emotional stability.

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