

Psychodiagnosis Program for Persons Deprived of Liberty

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Abstract: This article aims to develop and experimentally validate a psychodiagnostic program for persons deprived of liberty, which provides clear directions for recommending psychosocial programs so as to ensure that positive behavioral changes are observed after completing them. Furthermore, this study focuses on highlighting the importance of developing a psychodiagnostic program for incarcerated people to establish more effective methods of intervention and inclusion in various psychosocial programs that contribute effectively to their behavioral change.

Keywords: diagnosis program; detained person; behavioural change

The reason for developing a psychodiagnosis program derives, on the one hand, from the existence at the level of the prison population of some diversity of personality traits, and on the other hand, from the fact that, at the level of penitentiary units, there is no program in place aimed at identifying dominant personality traits. The program focuses on generating a thorough knowledge of the personality and the needs of detainees through the use of existing diagnosis and prognosis techniques recommended by specialists, on achieving cooperation within the group, and on developing sensitivity to the problems of others.

Methodology and Description of the Psychodiagnosis Program for Persons Deprived of Liberty

This approach consists of a model program for knowing the personality traits and the lifestyle of detainees with antisocial behavior to establish effective approaches to working with them (tests, questionnaires, interviews, recommendations of various programs that better suit the personality of each detainee during the execution of the

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sentence). The activity of knowing the detainee ends with a psychodiagnosis (psychobehavioral profile), which highlights both the positive aspects of his personality and the negative aspects with the measures (methods) required to be changed, as well as the possibilities of effective participation of the detainee in his own re-education.

The psychosocial programs carried out in prison produce certain changes on the behavioral dimensions of the detainees, but these are not sufficiently obvious as the participation in such programs is determined by the rewards obtained and not by their real psychosocial needs. The most accurate diagnosis of the psycho-behavioral profile of the detainees and the proper highlighting of the causes that determined their antisocial behavior are essential requirements for the meaningful recommendation of the recovery programs within the correctional institutions.

The purpose of the research: The research aims to demonstrate the importance of implementing a psychodiagnosis program for persons deprived of liberty in order to highlight the possibility of obtaining positive changes in personality structure based on an appropriate psychosocial reintegration program according to dominant characteristics.

Objectives

1. The elaboration of the psychodiagnosis program, based on the knowledge needs of personality traits and on the lifestyle patterns of detainees with antisocial behavior.
2. The delving into the personal style of each detainee in order to establish more effective methods of intervention and inclusion in various programs that contribute effectively to their behavioral change.
3. The establishing of the effectiveness of the psychodiagnosis program and monitoring the durability of the effects registered by the participants after completing the psychosocial program.

Hypotheses

1. Detainees who have participated in psychosocial programs, following the psychodiagnosis program, would have a higher level of *agreeableness* compared to detainees who have not been subjected to psychodiagnosis.

2. Detainees included in psychosocial programs, following the psychodiagnosis program, would have a lower level of neurosis compared to detainees who have not benefited from such a program.
3. Detainees who have participated in psychosocial programs, after undergoing a psychodiagnosis program, would have a higher level of assertiveness compared to detainees who have not been subjected to such a program.
4. Conclusions and recommendations based on the results of the program.

Variables

- The independent variable used in this study is the psychodiagnosis program.
- Dependent variables are represented by behavioral dimensions such as agreeableness, neurosis, and assertiveness of the detainees selected to participate in the research.

Research sample

This research involved a number of 45 detainees who were divided as it follows:

- *the experimental group*, initially consisting of 15 detainees who committed violent crimes and disciplinary offenses during the sentence execution, detainees who initially benefited from a psychodiagnosis program and who participated in psychosocial programs. Of these, 11 detainees actually participated in the present study; 4 detainees have been distributed in a regime of maximum safety and high risk and were eliminated from the present study;
- *the control group*, consisting of 30 detainees who committed violent crimes and disciplinary offenses during the sentence execution and who did not benefit from the psychodiagnosis program nor participate in previous psychosocial programs.

The Description of the Psychodiagnosis Program

Knowing the personal traits of each detainee is important in order to establish more effective methods of intervention and inclusion in various programs that effectively contribute to their behavioral change (Stohr, Hemmens et.all., 2001). Prisoners are highly diverse, yet they share a common experience of incarceration. Prisons can be violent, harsh, psychologically damaging environments; incarcerated people live in

an environment that is both depersonalizing and dehumanizing. Moreover, the social stigma associated with incarceration, combined with the depersonalizing effects of imprisonment, can lead to a sense of hopelessness and powerlessness, as well as deeply internalized shame and guilt. Thus, in addition to dealing with substance abuse and other mental disorders, the consensus group recommends that prison treatment also address the trauma of incarceration itself, as well as a prison culture that conflicts with treatment goals. (Peters & Steinberg, Substance abuse treatment services in U.S. prisons. In: Shewan & Davies, J., 2000. pp. 89–116)

As the prison population tends to be incarcerated for longer periods of time than detainees, the possibilities for treatment in a penitentiary setting are wider, depending on funding and other factors. Prison counselors and administrators can establish long-term and comprehensive programs. Substance abuse issues can be addressed along with behavioral, emotional, and psychological issues. Ideally, detainees have the opportunity to refrain from substances and learn new behaviors before release. Treatment in a prison setting can vary greatly in the scope and intensity of the program. Ideally, the activities of the program take place outside the prison population. However, complete isolation from the general population is somewhat unusual (Lo & Stephens, 2000, pp. 229–245). Less intensive treatment programs may simply provide counseling, education, and other treatment services similar to outpatient programs. Prisoners live among the general population and have tasks or meetings for services (De Leon, 2000).

The Purpose of the Program

Knowing the personality traits in order to establish effective approaches in working with incarcerated persons (methods of observation, interview, psychological testing materialized in completing the psychological file, recommendations of various programs that suit the personality of each detainee during the execution of the sentence).

General objectives:

- Knowing the personality traits of persons deprived of liberty
- Recommendation of psychosocial reintegration programs

Methodology

Resources

- human resources involved: the psychologist
- material resources: psychological tests, pencils, sheets
- target group: the program is mainly addressed to persons deprived of liberty: final convicts, distributed in closed regime or maximum security (including those with a high degree of risk),
- detainees in the quarantine period, definitively convicted
- groups of 8-10 detainees

The duration of the program:

The program took place throughout 3 weeks (for drafting the psychological profiles and the recommendation of various programs better suited to the personality of each detainee during the execution of the sentence), consisting of 2 sessions per week.

The place of the program:

The activities within the program were carried out at the club of the section (for group activities) and at the psychology office (for interviews, counseling sessions).

Working methods and techniques:

For the psychodiagnosis activity (initial/periodic evaluation) –a semi-structured interview, the biographical method, the analysis of activity products, questionnaires, personality tests: Big Five Plus, following the scores obtained on the variables *agreeableness*, *neurosis*, and *assertiveness*. ***Evaluation:***

Prior to the implementation of the program, an initial assessment of the existing mental tension within the group was performed. Subsequently, a continuous evaluation was carried out, which resulted in the elaboration of psychological profiles for each detainee and the characteristics related to the behavior and personal style of each detainee considered useful for other services (guardianship, medical), which were also recorded in the education and psychosocial assistance files. The continuous evaluation was performed using the method of observation, interview, questionnaire, and psychological test. At the end of the program, an overall evaluation took place, highlighting the interpersonal relationships between the detainees in the working group, the individual psychological profiles, and the

specific recommendations according to the personality traits, for possible inclusion in psychological counseling.

Activities

1. Informing the persons deprived of liberty that they will be analyzed in the Commission for individualization of the regime/establishment of the regime regarding the initiation of the program (verbal announcement).
2. Presentation, discussion, and signing of informed consent, therapeutic contract.
3. Working with the target group: self-knowledge by interacting with others, careful observation of the personality of each detainee, development and change of attitudes and behavior of group members towards ensuring desirable behaviors.

Measures required by the transfer situation

In case of the transfer of the detainee during the period in which he participates in the program (although not recommended, this is still possible), the most recent meeting (the topic of the most recent meeting) will be recorded, as well as some significant remarks regarding the participation in group meetings.

Carrying Out the Psychodiagnosis Program for Persons Deprived of Liberty

Opening the meeting

At the beginning of each meeting (in the initial phase, prior to the actual activities), the moderator comes into visual contact with each participant and tries to form an opinion about the attitude and mood of each participant before proceeding with the following activities.

Session 1

The purpose of the meeting: The first meeting of the program is intended to create the conditions of psychological security necessary to establish relationships of trust.

Objectives:

- Motivating detainees to participate in the psychodiagnosis program.
- Completing and signing the informed consent, the therapeutic contract.

- Familiarizing group members with each other and with the psychologist.
- Helping participants to build trusting relationships within the group.

Session 2

The purpose of the meeting: To know the personality traits of persons deprived of liberty

Objectives:

- Psychological evaluation of the personality traits of the selected detainees.

Session 3

The purpose of the meeting: Observation of behavior, openness to self-knowledge

Objectives:

- Knowledge of personality through self-disclosure.

Session 4 and 5

The purpose of the meeting: The completion of the presumptive psychodiagnosis by completing the general information on the subject.

Objectives:

- Getting to know the person through the interview.
- Knowing the motivations, feelings of the detainees, their post-act attitude towards the deed committed, towards themselves and the world in general.

Session 6

Purpose: The analysis of the answers received and the interpretation of the results.

The elaboration of a presumptive psychodiagnosis and a recommendation of inclusion/non-inclusion in a general or specific psychological program or the inclusion of the detainee into a psychological counseling program, according to the dominant personality traits.

Research Results and their Interpretation

For the given stage of the research experiment, the psychometric tool Inventory Big Five^{©plus} was used in order to obtain some positive changes in the personality structure of the detainees, based on an appropriate psychosocial reintegration program according to the dominant characteristics that could demonstrate the effectiveness of the psychodiagnosis program for persons deprived of liberty.

The first step was to collect data for statistical processing for which it was used in the T test analysis method for paired samples and independent samples.

The first hypothesis: *Following the psychodiagnosis program, the detainees from the experimental group, who participated in the psychosocial program, will present a higher level of agreeableness compared to the detainees from the control group, who were not subjected to psychodiagnosis.*

This hypothesis was not confirmed according to the data in table 1.1. because the significance threshold is higher than 0.05, but the score is close to this threshold ($p = 0.06 > p = 0.05$). This indicates that there are some minor differences between the control group and the one who followed a psychodiagnosis program, but these small differences are not sufficient to be statistically significant.

Table 1.1. T test for independent samples for the agreeability variable

	Group	N	Average	Standard deviation	Sig
Agreeability	Group control	30	2.17	.874	.060
	group_experimental	11	2.73	.647	

From a psychological perspective, detainees who participated in psychosocial integration programs according to recommendations, after completing the psychodiagnosis program, did not obtain significant differences in the size of "agreeability" compared to detainees in the control group who did not participate in psychosocial programs. Agreeability is probably the personality factor with the greatest impact on the quality of interpersonal relationships. The central aspects of the agreeability of detainees refer to the trust in others and the orientation towards cooperation. As they go through psychosocial programs, the detainees present a

slightly different level of agreeableness compared to the time of testing, they begin to gain some confidence in others, becoming a little more empathetic and attentive to the needs of others.

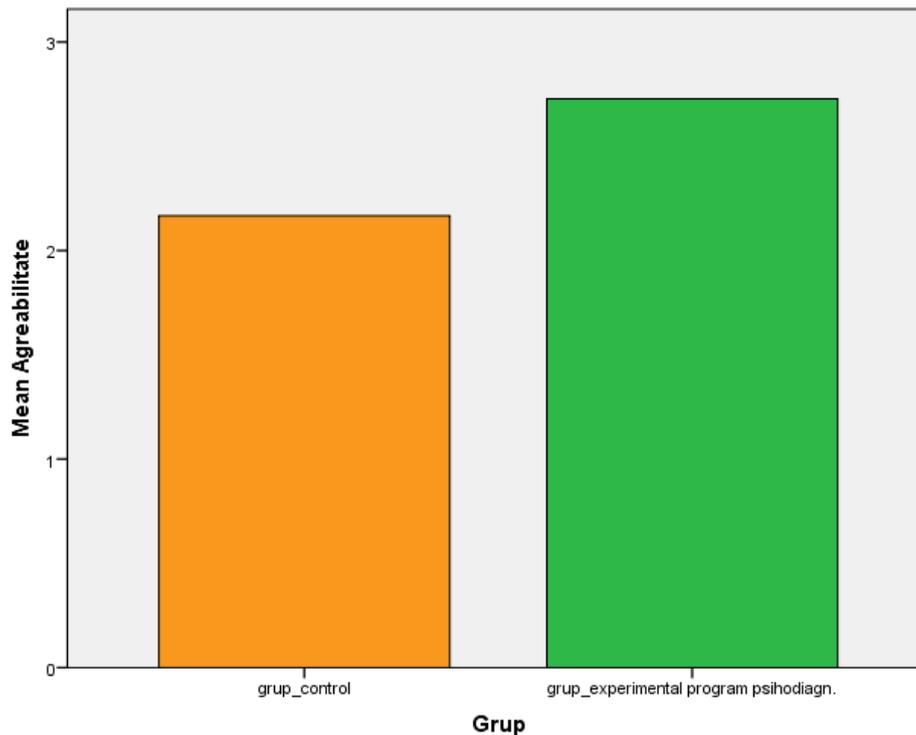


Figure 1.1 The size of the agreeableness between the control group and the experimental group that followed the psychodiagnostic program

The second hypothesis: *The detainees from the experimental group included in the psychosocial programs, following the psychodiagnosis program, will present a lower level of neuroticism compared to the detainees who did not benefit from participating in such a program.*

The second hypothesis, according to the data in Table 1.2, is confirmed because the significance threshold p is less than 0.05. The experimental group that benefited from the psychodiagnosis program obtained a much lower score at the level of neuroticism compared to the control group that did not benefit from the psychodiagnosis program.

Tabel 1.2. T tests for independent samples for the neurosis variable

	Group	N	Average	Standard deviation	Sig.
Neurosis	group_control	30	2.00	.910	.003
	group_experimental program psihodign.	11	1.09	.302	

We notice that detainees who have followed a psychodiagnostic program and participated in psychosocial programs have a low level of neurosis size as seen in Figure 1.2. We find that detainees with a low level of neurosis will be harder to upset and are not so emotionally reactive. They will be calm, emotionally stable, and will not have persistent negative emotional states. Detainees are strong, mature, calm, stable, and constant in their interests, more emotionally balanced, realistic, molding themselves according to the current situation, they control their impulses, they do not easily show nervous fatigue, they avoid conflicts. The level of neurosis is lower, due to the usefulness of the psychodiagnostic program by recommending and going through psychosocial programs; the impact of education on behavior is constructive and, with the what they acquired after the programs were carried out, they are less vulnerable to conflicts, proving better self-control.

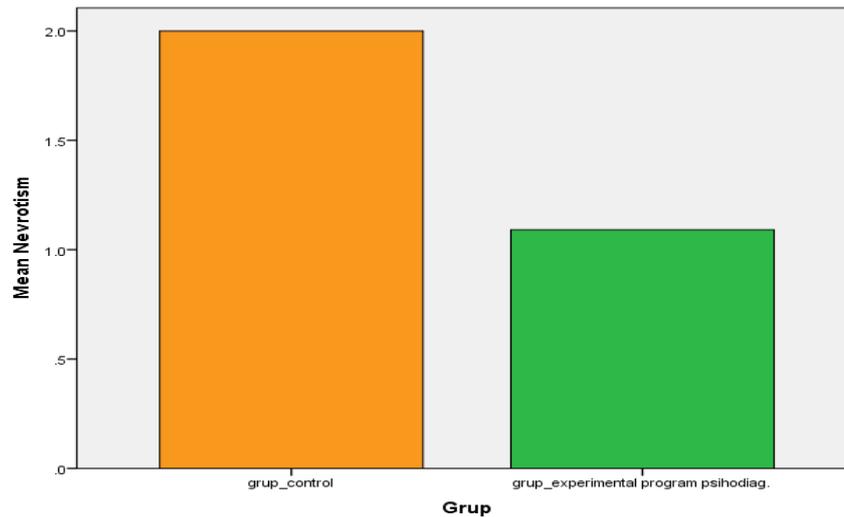


Figure 1.2. The extent of neurosis between the control group and the experimental group that followed the psychodiagnostic program

Hypothesis three: *Detainees who have participated in psychosocial programs, after undergoing a psychodiagnosis program, will have a higher level of assertiveness compared to detainees who have not been subjected to such a program.*

Tabel 1.3. T tests for independent samples for the assertiveness variable

	Group	N	Average	Standard deviation	Sig.
Asertiveness	gruop_control	30	1.80	.925	.000
	group_experimental program psihodign.	11	2.73	.467	

Table 1.3, from a statistical point of view, provides information on the level of assertiveness after detainees have been subjected to a psychodiagnosis program. The half-life threshold .000 indicates that this hypothesis has been confirmed, as the score of the significance threshold obtained from the application of the statistical method T-test for independent samples is less than 0.05. From a psychological point of view, assertiveness is especially important because it helps in maintaining inner balance. It also facilitates the establishment of a harmonious interpersonal connection. Therefore, the fact that the detainees obtained a high level of assertiveness after completing a psychodiagnosis program proves that they learned to express their needs without harming anyone, following a common sense. Firm behavior that does not violate the psychological and personal space of the other means being assertive.

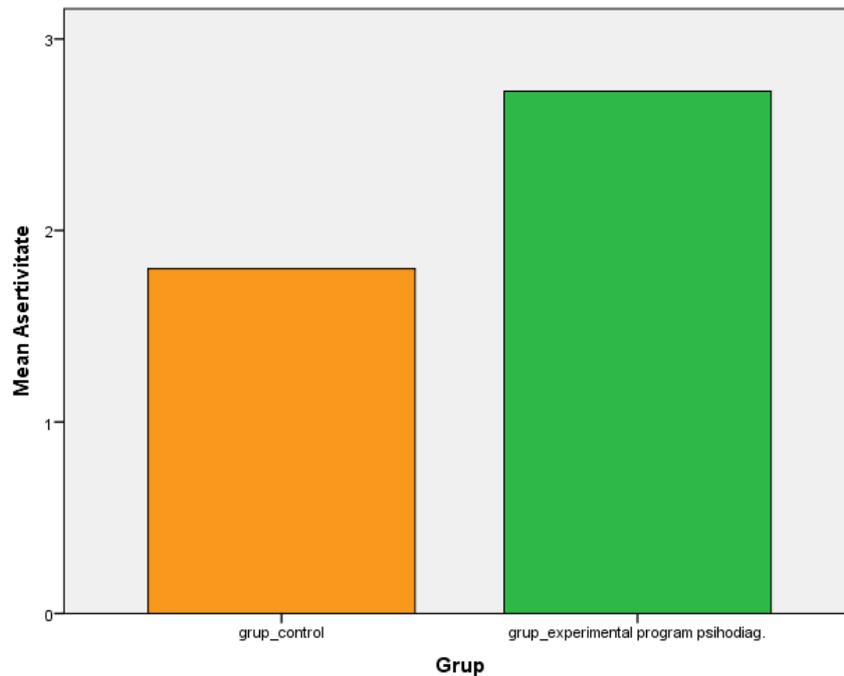


Figure 1.3. The assertiveness dimension between the control group and the experimental group that followed the psychodiagnostic program

Conclusions

After some of the detainees were included in the psychodiagnosis program, research was conducted to highlight certain dominant personality traits: agreeableness, neurosis, and assertiveness. The statistical situation imposed on the agreeableness variable is that no statistically significant differences were obtained, which means that the detainees internalized the awareness to show compassion towards others, to express their point of view, to ask for support from those around them, and to accept that there are people very different from themselves they must tolerate.

Many studies suggest that people who engage in antisocial behavior, including criminal behavior, tend to be distinguished by personality traits, such as poor impulse control and hostility, which facilitate non-compliance with social norms. Regarding the well-known model of the five factors, antisocial behavior is most strongly associated with low agreeableness and conscientiousness. Low agreeableness is associated with a lack of sympathy for others and disrespect for moral rules, while

low conscientiousness is associated with a dislike of rules, lack of self-discipline, and impulse action, regardless of the likely consequences. All five important factors are made up of broad personality traits that subsume a series of more specific traits, and in a single model, each of the big five is made up of six narrower facets. Research indicates that antisocial behavior is associated with low levels of all facets of agreeableness and conscientiousness¹.

Regarding the variable neurosis, it is demonstrated that, as a result of the psychodiagnosis program, the detainees from the experimental group obtained much lower scores of neurosis compared to the control group. A low level of neurosis indicates that there is a certain emotional balance, a lack of worries, and satisfaction with one's own life. There is a relaxed attitude in social situations, dominated by calm and detachment even in tense moments. From a psychological point of view, it is observed that following the psychodiagnosis program, the detainees from the experimental group proved to have a better capacity for self-control, being detached in certain tense moments, they proved to be emotionally stable and knew another side of social life. The fact that the detainees, after completing the psychodiagnosis program, registered a higher level proves that they have those qualities that an assertive person has. An assertive person clearly communicates his wishes and sets boundaries, but does not make requests from other people and does not review if the requests are not met. The ability to be assertive allows one to be open to other people and to stand up for themselves or others in a non-aggressive way. It can also protect them from aggressors and other social predators.

Cognitively, assertive people experience fewer anxious thoughts, even when stressed. From a behavioral point of view, assertive people are firm without being rude. Moreover, they react to positive and negative emotions without becoming aggressive or resorting to passivity.

The structure of the psychodiagnosis program allows a person deprived of liberty, which is to be included in the program, to have a clearly established psychosocial program that aims to track and interpret behavioral changes.

Therefore, although the psychodiagnosis program is in a project stage, the present research can be perceived as a first step towards demonstrating the effectiveness of the implementation of this program. It is important to mention that the discovery of

¹ Ardelean, C.P. *Coordonate psihologice ale pericolozității în mediul penitenciar/ Psychological coordinates of danger in the penitentiary environment*, available at <https://ro.scribd.com/doc/229834337/Ardelean-Calin-Petrica-Ro> [accessed on 8.01.2019].

dominant personality traits is a pillar of any program that considers the social integration of detainees due to the fact that the individual through his uniqueness reacts differently to certain activities. Guiding detainees to a specific program that includes psychological counseling can be more effective if it is done according to the dominant personality traits.

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