

**UNIVERSITY OF PUBLIC SERVICE
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AUTHOR'S SUMMARY OF THE DOCTORAL (PhD) DISSERTATION

MÁRTA FEKETE

**THE DIALOGIC NATURE OF INMATE AND PRISON STAFF
MOTIVATION: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS**

Consultant:

Dr. habil Judit Hegedűs (PhD)

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Description of the scientific problem, subject and aim of the thesis

Long-term inmates have always been in the focus of scientific attention in both Hungarian and international literature. Researchers of the topic usually come from the field of corrections (eg.: Huszár, 1995; Csóti, 1993; Bozsó – Pappné – Sasvári, 2018), law (eg.: Paterline – Orr, 2016; Hagymási, 2009), psychology (eg.: Seeman, 1959), sociology (Antal – Nagy – Solt, 2009; Clemmer, 1940/1958); Sykes, 2007; Crewe, 2005, 2007, 2011) and criminology (eg.: Crawley, 2005; Liebling, 1999; Richards, 1978; Flanagan, 1980). Their research interest lies mainly in the inmates' adaptation- and coping strategies, the deterioration of their cognitive and health state, the effects of prisonisation, deprivation, alienation. Seeing the list of the above-mentioned scientific literature – obviously not exhaustive! – lets us state that one can find numerous literature and research aiming at the inmates but the same cannot be said about prison staff.

In connection to prison staff number of research focus on the duality of the supportive and power position they hold daily (eg.: Crewe, 2011; Liebling, 1993, 2003; Liebling – Krarup, 1993; Hobbs – Dear, 2000), the difficulty of keeping boundaries with the convicts (eg.: Worley – Tewksbury – Frantzen, 2010; Shapira – Navon, 1985), the perception of job-related stress and challenges based on sex (eg.: Zupan, 1986; Jurik, 1985; Crewe, 2006), stress and burn-out (eg.: Cullen et al, 1985; Jurik et al, 1985). Most Hungarian research focus on the latter problem, too (eg.: Menning, 1992; Kormosói, 2000; Biró, 2009; Lehoczki – Szucsáki, 2017).

The dialogic nature of inmate population and prison staff is rarely addressed in scientific literature; however, it is beyond doubt that by interacting daily it is the staff who is mainly held responsible for the well-being of the inmate: with their motivation, positive attitude, their own wholesomeness the goals of reintegration can be reached more easily (Lebujos, 2012).

Based on the above I considered significant to lead research in an integrated approach and a systematic way to dig deeper into the motivational basis of the long-term inmate¹ in dialogue with and reflecting to the motivation of the prison staff and their own resources. In my opinion when we talk about prison the discussion should not only be about convicts but about staff, too: understanding the dynamics of their daily interaction is inevitable to lead research aiming at motivation and resources. To conclude, my dissertation is focusing on both sides and their interaction. The importance of integrated and systematic approach is highlighted in scientific literature, such as in Kreager and Kruttschnitt's work where it is stated that "staff-inmate interaction had the largest impact on inmates' well-being" (Kreager – Kruttschnitt, 2018: 275).

¹ By long-term inmates in this research I refer to those who are behind bars for at least 12 years.

Research objectives

Based on the above-mentioned ideas and the scope of the scientific literature on prisons' operation the aim of the research is to give an overview of motivation and inner resources on both the sides of the inmate and prison staff. Another objective is to explore the tasks and opportunities of the staff to support inmates in the process. The research is a review of the actual state of the subject matter in Hungarian prison climate among long-term inmates and staff working closely with them. To conclude, my personal goal when starting the research was to create a framework of the given subject within which it becomes easier to detect the forms of motivation of both the criminal and the professional, to touch upon the conditions with which motivation can be enhanced and to provide recommendations to preserve and strengthen their motivational basis. By exploring these topics in international and Hungarian scientific literature – focusing mainly on this special prison population and the dialogic nature of prison work – my added goal is to synthesize the ideas relevant in the subject and draw a conclusion in order to designate new possible areas to be researched. The narratives gained by the interviews conducted gives the opportunity to further deep analysis of the population in question.

Research questions

To explore the research topic, I have created research questions around which I have centred my research.

- What are the resources of the inmate?
- What are the resources of the prison staff?
- What are the methods with which the convicts can be most effectively supported?
- In this supportive work what pedagogical and methodological tools are the prison staff operating with?
- How does the special environment of correctional institutions affect inmates? Does it, and if yes, in what ways, affect prison staff? (See: Foucault's concepts)
- Ways of preserving and enhancing motivation in both respective groups.

Research methods

When creating and conducting my research it was without question that I will turn to qualitative research strategies, and I “measured” the subject matter with half structured interview technique in three high security correctional institutions in Hungary where adult male and female prisoners serve their time. These were: Balassagyarmat Prison and Penitentiary (for adult male offenders), Kalocsa Prison and Penitentiary (for adult female offenders) and Szeged Prison and Penitentiary (for adult male offenders). The choice of these institutes was partly based on them being familiar due to previous joint works and partly in accordance with the authorisation process by the Hungarian Prison Services. In the course of the research, I interviewed inmates and prison workers in these institutions. I find extremely important that my explorations are built upon a strict ethical basis and are understood and treated within a strict ethical framework, so all the participants had previously been informed about the aims and conditions of the interview and were assured about the anonymity in effect. Sampling is based on availability and on a voluntary basis and from the part of the prison staff with the condition that they work in close connection with the inmates participating in the research.

For a qualitative research representativity is less of an issue as the aim is not to gain quantitative data but to provide a deeper insight and understanding of a certain topic, to draw on people’s attitudes, opinion (eg.: Szabolcs, 2001; Sántha, 2020). In the course of the research, I have interviewed 60 people: 48 inmates (33 male and 15 female) and 12 prison workers. In order to do this, I have created two distinctive interview “questionnaires”: one for offenders, one for staff. The two were similar in their logic based on which they were created but there were differences respectively (where some questions were not applicable to the subject in question). The topics that were touched upon in the interviews were: family, characteristics of childhood, occupational choice and socialization, questions concerning the sentence/questions concerning work, adaptation (to prison and to prison work; are there any difficulties), personal resources, the characteristics of a good day, their views on the concept of time and freedom.

To provide a complete methodological tool I have analysed the gained narratives with content analysis. Instead of using a qualitative data analysis software (like NVivo or Atlas.ti) I have chosen to analyse my data manually. One analytical unit was given by the questions of the interview. When creating codes for the analysis I followed the deductive way and formulated individual and unique conclusions based on the general and the theories and explanations I found in the relevant scientific literature.

Code categories were also given based on the interview questions and these dimensions helped me create the codes that were assigned to relevant parts of the texts. During the analysis my primary aim was to provide descriptive statistics (instead of mathematical statistical data) with the help of which I could summarize my data in a more meaningful way. Qualitative content analysis “does not necessarily mean statistical analysis” (Sántha, 2020: 28), so the data and diagrams filtered from the coding process are more to highlight and add more means of interpretation to the verbal data drawn from the narratives.

Reflections of the researcher

When conducting qualitative research, one has to be aware of the dilemmas concerning interview techniques and especially interviews conducted in closed institutions. Several scientific literatures draw attention to these dilemmas. On one hand, the duality of *knowing and feeling* starts to apply (eg.: Jewkes, 2011; Liebling, 1999). Many researchers try to avoid acknowledging emotions during a research process: my point of view is that emotions and especially being aware of them serve more as support, and when used wisely, can provide an additional framework for interpretation in the process of the exploration and analysis.

The role of the researcher also appears among the dilemmas. Objectivity is one issue – it can be eliminated through triangulation, see below in detail – and because doing and interview closely resembles our everyday human connections and discussions it requires enormous self-discipline of the researcher (eg.: Héra – Ligeti, 2014; Bodonyi, 2008).

Researcher’s identity is another important question to discuss. On one hand, there is the woman researcher that is reflected upon by relevant scientific prison literature to such detail as the clothes she is wearing when doing an interview in a closed institution (eg.: Jewkes, 2011; Quina et al, 2008). And, on the other hand, there is the concept of *us and them* (Quina et al, 2008), as the researcher, being an outsider, always stands between two – let us say – contradictory groups: the staff and the convicts. To conduct valid research, the matter of trust is significant, therefore the researcher must define their “belonging” when arriving in the closed institution. The researcher’s presence must not harm those living within closed walls (Quina et al, 2008), and one has to be aware of being free from preconceptions and prejudices before, during and after the interviews. These dilemmas affected me, too, in many ways, when preparing for and during the interviews so I have created a chapter in the thesis solely for my reflections as a researcher. During the planning process and when executing the research, I have paid special attention to the condition of triangulation (Denzin, 1970, 2018). This methodological approach makes it

possible to see and analyse the same phenomenon from different perspectives. Triangulation has 4 main areas:

- triangulation of data
- triangulation of theories
- triangulation of methodology
- triangulation of the researcher/investigator.

In this present research the fourth, the triangulation of the researcher/investigator has been realized during the preparation process and when actually conducting the research, as my consultant accompanied me to the prisons and so we had the opportunity to double-check all the interviews before and after and to discuss the experiences after each and every day dedicated to research.

Brief description of the chapters of the dissertation

The dissertation consists of 9 chapters. Third of the study focuses on the theoretical background: in the relevant chapters I was trying to introduce my chosen theoretical framework within which I approach the subject matter. Following this, the second part of the dissertation is dedicated to the methodological background of the research and the last is focusing on the actual results of the interviews. The 10th chapter of the dissertation is about my reflections on the research process: dilemmas, lessons learned.

Existentialist philosophies and **psychology** provide the broadest theoretical background of the dissertation. When collecting and synthesizing the existentialist literature my aim was to find the ways and means individuals can turn to when in extreme life situations. How is it possible to live up to the human potential, to use creative energy even in the darkest times? Beside these, after reviewing existentialist literature – and being aware of the presence and importance of the following in scientific prison literature –, I put special emphasis on the concepts of **being present**, **being responsible** (for oneself), **decisions**, the concept of **time** and **freedom** – these two are especially invaluable behind closed doors – and the **channelling of creative energies** in order to build a **sensible life, actuality and potentiality** (as basic characteristic features of existence), moving towards another theoretical pillar of the thesis, which is autonomous motivation. The concept of **prisonization** is introduced in this chapter – however, at this point only from the point of view of how it is described in Holocaust-related literature – listing challenges posed by this phenomenon. All I have read in existentialist literature, such as Sartre,

Heidegger, Fromm, Yalom, Frankl, Csíkszentmihályi is filtered, synthesized and I have used many existentialist elements and ideas when creating my interviews for the research.

In the second chapter of the dissertation, I am focusing on **correctional pedagogy** or the pedagogy of rehabilitation (eg.: Ruzsonyi, 2004). As a part of this, **constructivist pedagogical approach** (eg.: Nahalka, 1997) is introduced and through readings the possibilities it offers in closed institutions are explored. Beside the above-mentioned paradigms, I am also focusing on theories in which one can detect the importance of **interaction, cooperation, integrated and systemic approach**. After reviewing the pedagogical tools in prison that could be seen as old-fashioned and “classical” I have put more emphasis on highlighting the dynamics that are operating almost undetected between staff and inmate, and although these cannot be seen as pure methods, they could bring long-term changes in the convicts’ lives.

In the third chapter I move onto presenting relevant **motivational theories**. There are several explanations to motivation, and I chose the Ryan – Deci **self-determination theory** (SDT) (eg.: Ryan – Deci, 2006) as the main theory I follow when exploring human motivation. SDT provides explanation to the lack of motivation, to **controlled and autonomous motivation** and even **internalized motivation**, which has a close connection – as I see it – with the approach to motivation found in the existentialist framework. **Facilitating motivation** is also an important part of this chapter. After reviewing SDT I am introducing **Herzberg’s motivation theory** (eg.: Herzberg – Mausner – Bloch-Snyderman, 2017) as it highlights the importance of **responsibility** as an absolute motivator and I drew heavily on this idea when creating the interview for the research as I was trying to find the means of providing responsibility in a controlled environment, such as a prison.

The 4th chapter of the dissertation is designed to give an overview of the problems especially affecting **long-term inmates**. So, the chapter provides general explanation and description of the **pains of imprisonment, adaptation challenges, adjusting to prison life, deprivation** (eg.: Clemmer, 1940/1958; Sykes, 2007; Seeman, 1959). I have explored – with the help of international and Hungarian studies – the **mental and cognitive deterioration** affecting inmates, their **worries over relationships** that are left behind, **suicidal thoughts**. I have also examined the role and means of **prevention** in regards to both inmates and staff.

The 5th chapter is solely about **prison staff: perception of prison work** (differences in perception based on sex), **emotions** (is there a place for emotions in prison work?), **challenges and stress** are investigated in these pages. The **duality of the prison staff** is being analysed here, as they both support inmates in their everyday lives and manifest power. The dialogic nature of prison relations is outlined in these pages – which is one of the main pillars of this

present research. The chapter delves into important questions such as, how is it possible to do **social work from a coercive power** with a special attention to keeping the **boundaries** between inmate and staff? What are the characteristics of a “**good day**”? How is **stress and burn-out** perceived and what are the possibilities of tackling them? In this latter subject I specifically focus on providing recommendations for **prevention**.

The 6th chapter of the dissertation is dedicated to the **strategy** used for the research. The chapter provides a short **overview of available methodologies** with a special stress on the **hierarchy** of them. Majority of the chapter is focusing on the **interview** – my chosen method – and beside presenting basic rules and ideas when conducting research with interview technique, a couple of pages are about **ethical dilemmas**, the possibilities of handling and using **emotions** in the research process, the *us and them-duality* when it comes to prison research.

The following chapters present the actual results of the research. In Chapter 7 I give a thorough account on **planning and sampling**, and I am also reflecting on the **interview questions** (their place and use in the research). I believe that the validity of a qualitative research can be obtained by being familiar with the **context of the research** so in these pages I am giving detailed description of the **data collection and analysis**, my experiences in the process. I have conducted 60 interviews in three different penitentiaries: 48 inmate and 12 staff interviews. The interviews had been typed and coded manually. Aspects of coding are presented in the 7th chapter, too.

The 8th and the 9th chapters are the **actual analysis** of the narratives: the previous is of the inmates, the latter is of the prison staff. I will present the results and my conclusions based on the analysis below.

The 10th, closing, chapter consists of the **researcher’s reflections**, parts of these have already been mentioned above. I am concluding the dilemmas I was facing as a researcher during the research period. My point of view is that the reflection of the researcher is essential in gaining a deeper understanding about the context and environment of the research process thus I found that it gives another layer of comprehension of the subject matter.

Summarized conclusions

The first and second research questions were the following: What are the resources of the inmate? What are the resources of the prison staff? In the interview questions dedicated to answer this I was planning to explore what induces motivation from within the individual or

from the outside. Motivation arising from external factors are: **supportive family background** who is present and is able to share difficulties, everyday events with. For an inmate, regular **visits** and **human connections** are beyond value, even on the level of old-school **letter writing**, the therapeutic trait of which (“**journaling**”) appears in the narratives. **Creative activities** are also invaluable, such as **sports, art, or DIY workshops**, during which **freedom** can be experienced (“flow”). Freedom – as an existentialist category – and its forms of appearance was an important phenomenon to explore during the research, therefore I was trying to identify any reference to freedom (and activities related) when investigating the narratives.

The third and fourth research questions were about the methods with which the convicts can be most effectively supported and whether staff possess and consciously use these? When analyzing the narratives, the importance of **education** is being outlined (far beyond the classic teaching process, which also plays an important factor in prisons). In a prison classroom there are far more valuable results than knowing the history book by heart: it is the **teacher’s persona** that can make a difference. This is one of the pillars of interactionist and constructivist paradigms. So, a method of education is the personality of the teacher, their **character**. What do inmates expect of staff in this respect? The answer to this question – based on the narratives – is all the **needs** that are inevitable in childhood: **empathy, acceptance, attention to needs**, as the majority of the inmate narratives depict **parental and family disfunctions**, deficits. However, on the other hand, **discipline** is also expected: inmates expect **predictability, consistency, firmness** of the staff and this view is underlined by the narratives of the workers, too. Staff reflects to the importance of putting up **boundaries** and the ways of doing so.

The 5th research question was the following: How does the special environment of correctional institutions affect inmates? Does it, and if yes, in what ways, affect prison staff? **Prisonisation** and the feeling of being **deprived** are regarded as important issues in a long-term inmate’s life. According to the narratives it remains so up until a **turning point**, when the inmate becomes able to see (and transform) their lives behind bars. That makes them not looking at the outside and the “what ifs” but to the inside, on their actual lives. It is easier to do so with a finite sentence than with an infinite one, however, **time** is an important factor in this process, too. It is more common to meet with **denial** and **anger** in the narratives of those, who are at the beginning of their time, and those in the middle or towards the end seem to be more peaceful with their lives (even with infinite sentence). Institutionalization is less commonly found in the staff narratives, however, many of the interviewees mentioned the importance of **boundaries** and **distancing** from the inside world. The **supportive family background** has also been

referred to, so as hobbies, with the help of which burn-out is easier to avoid. **Work-life balance** is a must – as many members of staff mentioned it.

The last, 6th research question was about the possibilities of preserving and enhancing motivation in both groups. **Feedback** seems to be extremely important: from the staff to the inmate, from the managers to staff. Strangely, the feedback of an inmate (even a thank you-note from an ex-convict) can also serve as a motivator for the officers, whereas the inmates highlight the importance of **trust**, **acceptance** coming from the part of the worker. I was searching for the appearance of **responsibility** in the narratives, as according to the theories of motivation, responsibility and the feeling of being **competent** can be extremely motivating for the individual. I was eager to find those segments of corrections where responsibility can be gifted to the inmate even in these controlling, disciplined circumstances. I found that the **position of a trustee** (caretaker, janitor) is motivating to a great degree, as well as being a part of a **theatrical/musical play**, where **creation** and **creativity** take place. According to the narratives, closed institutions measure success in **baby steps** (on both sides), which might have enormous effect in return.

The process of the analysis, the conclusions and summary are the result of my own, primer research.

Recommendations for the practical application of the research

1) Conclusions regarding reintegration:

- *Objects and environment*: living in a cosy, comfy, warm environment, if inmates can shape a space according to their own taste, plays an important part in coping. Therefore, an important trait being outlined in the narratives is the use of personal objects, decorations, equipment that help preserving femininity/masculinity.
- *Contact*: strengthening the already existing and creating new means of keeping in touch with families, loved ones. There are 3 areas where connections turn out to be very important in a closed institution: with staff, with other inmates, with family. In order to keep the latter as a motivator factor, modernizing already existing means is a requirement according to the narratives.
- *Parental role*: with more frequent and less regulated meetings with the children, with trainings strengthening the feeling of being a parent.

- *Broadening training offers*: even if it is a DIY workshop, a cultural program, education, it can add enormously to the coping of the inmate. Helping to slow down the pace of cognitive deterioration, training are the most effective means.
- *Responsibility*: to strengthen the feeling of competency and autonomy of long-term inmates.
- *Helping formulate short-term goals and objectives*: participating in education or starting a new job help inmates measure time in “prison pace”.

2) Conclusions regarding staff:

- *Methodology concerning long-term inmates*: especially with infinite sentences it is extremely important for the staff to be aware of the most efficient methods and techniques. It can be an already existing approach (eg.: Life Space Crisis Intervention – LSCI) or a newly formulated one.
- *Keeping the boundaries*: many of the narratives referred to keeping the boundaries as one of the most challenging part of the job (however, they are not lacking the know-how). Based on the results, in order to achieve this, I would recommend adding self-awareness, conflict-management, communication lessons (integrating higher number of hours in the syllabus) in correctional officer training.
- *Power position or social worker/supporter*: being the two simultaneously can become charging to staff so a firm detachment of the two positions (no overlapping tasks) is a requirement as drawn from the interviews.

3) Conclusions and recommendations for science:

- *Life-long inmates as a less researched group*: the research provide a very rich and deep set of narratives, the further analyzation of which is possible.
- *A fresher theoretical framework*: combining philosophy, psychology and pedagogy into one theoretical background, offering a newer framework when talking about the subject matter.
- *Systemic and integrated approach*: the research highlights the dialogic nature of inmate and staff and analyses their role in a systemic way, which gives another rare insight to the matter.
- *Possible further research topics*:
 - the texts offer further qualitative analysis, such as deeper content analysis even on a more textual level;
 - working on a new methodology based on the result (see staff education);

- the perception of hierarchy in the researched group;
- perception of time and the means of structuring time knowing the daily schedule of the given closed institution;
- staff as power or staff as supporter: digging deeper in perceptions;
- perceptions of the job based on sex (differences in perception between male and female colleagues);
- exploring the role of the role model/reference as motivator (in the staff group).

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Scientific-professional biography of the candidate

Name: Márta Fekete

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 2016– **assistant lecturer**
National University of Public Service
Faculty of Law Enforcement
Department of Behavioural Sciences in Law Enforcement
- 2011 – 2016 **administrative assistant / external lecturer**
National University of Public Service
Faculty of Law Enforcement
Institute of Behavioural Sciences and Methodology
- 2009 – 2010 **project manager**
Pannon-Work Iskolaszövetkezet Kft.
- 2005 – 2006 **special translator**
TÉK Kft.

EDUCATION

- 2016 – **PhD student**
Doctoral School of Law Enforcement
Field of research: corrections, motivation, life-long inmates
- 2003 – 2010 **English Language and Literature (1) and Communication Science (media and development communication) (2), MA**
Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church
Faculty of Arts
- 1993 – 2001 **School leaving exam**
Budapest-Fasori Grammar School of the Lutheran Church

STUDIES AND DEGREES

- 2016 – **PhD (in progress)**
Expected end of the degree process: 2021

OTHER ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

- 2019 - 2020 **expert, trainer**
Effective Criminal Justice Strategies and Practices to Combat Gender-based Violence in Eastern Europe
OSCE: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Vienna, Austria
- 2019 **research assistant**
„Good Governance” project (HU)
KÖFOP-2.1.2-VEKOP-15-2016-00001
- 2016 **PhD – state scholarship**
Doctoral School of Law Enforcement
- 2016 – 2018 **project assistant, research assistant**
Erasmus+ CITI-VAL Citizenship Value Education
2016-1-FR01-KA204-023961
- 2016 **workshop speaker** (together with Judit Hegedűs PhD)
Together towards a Better World for Children, Adolescents and Families – Residential Education and Care II. Challenges in Today’s Child Protection
33rd FICE Congress and 2nd CYC World Conference - Vienna, Austria
- 2014 – 2016 **project assistant, research assistant**
Erasmus+ ESM-YA Education for Sentenced Minors and Young Adults
2014-2-ES02-KA205-005432

- 2013 – **organizer of several academic conferences**
Public service and Behavioural Sciences
Public Service and Psychology (ÁROP)
Criminal Psychology Workshops
Witnessing Responses (international)
- 2011 **translator (Eng > Hu)**
TEACCH – Treatment and Education of Autistic and
Communication-related Handicapped Children, Transition
Assessment Profile

LANGUAGE SKILLS

English	Proficiency (2010)
French	Intermediate oral and written (A+B) (2016)