

## PERSONAL SECURITY OF THE OFFICERS OF THE POLISH PRISON SERVICE

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### ABSTRACT

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**Objective and problem:** The aim is to know the opinions of the Polish prison officers (security department) about personal security while on duty. The main question is: How do prison officers perceive their security while on duty? **Methodology:** The authors use literature analysis as well as the analysis of statistical data and of phenomena occurring in society. A diagnostic survey using the interview technique played an important role in the empirical part. The survey was conducted in 2020, in a group of 320 prison officers from various prison units, using the author's questionnaire. **Conclusions:** The personal security of prison officers is about their perception of dangerous situations (threats) in the workplace. The issue is mainly concerned with emergency situations: physical hazards (e.g. damage

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to health), mental hazards (e.g. after a suicidal act is revealed) and legal protection (e.g. in case of slander). **Results:** Direct contact with prisoners makes the work of an officer of the Prison Service dangerous and stressful, but the officer has adequate professional preparation and technical means to repel the attack. The authors identified significant threats and dangerous places, as well as assessed the effectiveness of the measures aimed at boosting a prison guard's safety.

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#### INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

Structurally, the prison system in Poland has been under the authority of the Minister of Justice since 1956, who also creates and abolishes prisons and detention centres. In this sense, the ministry is also a link in the wider chain of the personal security system of the prison service officers.

The execution of official duties by prison service officers is burdened with a high level of risk of loss of life or health, as well as responsibility for the quality of performed tasks. The penalty of imprisonment is the most repressive punishment applied in relation to persons who violate legal norms. Persons with personality disorders, with a different sexual orientation, homeless people, addicts of alcohol or other psychoactive agents or those suffering from infectious diseases are sent to prison units. The officer has a duty not only to isolate them from society, but also to ensure that all prisoners' rights are respected, including humanitarian conditions, dignity, health care and religious beliefs. The work takes place in shifts and requires full availability from prison service staff. In specific conditions of prison isolation, prisoners' behaviour is often marked by verbal and physical

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aggression. Various studies estimate that the physical and mental health of prison staff remains lower than that of the general population.<sup>2</sup>

The prison system requires special security requirements for both prisoners and prison staff, since prison staff's work is carried out under conditions of particular danger to their personal safety, which relates not only to physical integrity but also to respect for all human rights.

The prison service has been given appropriate and statutory powers to prevent, reduce and eliminate security threats in prison. However, maintaining a balance between force and peaceful execution of prison sentences does not seem to be an easy task.

Prison service employees belong to the dispositional groups dedicated to the prevention or overcoming of various dangers threatening society.<sup>3</sup> As an armed and uniformed formation, they are the most important component of the prison system. Its activities mainly include maintaining security and order in prison units, and cooperation with prisoners. The aim of the prison units is to carry out tasks relating to the execution of provisional detention, as well as the application of prison sentences and social rehabilitation. The legislator has also imposed an obligation on prisons to treat prisoners humanely, to protect society from the perpetrators of crimes, and to cooperate with other entities.

The specificity of the service consists of the following features: paramilitarism, availability, changeability, dangers to life arising from working with prisoners, as well as the often manifested negative attitude of citizens towards prison service officers.<sup>4</sup> Prison service staff experience a high level of stress in the place of service in comparison with other professional groups. This results from the specific working conditions which favour this, i.e. working in isolation, the sense of responsibility and contact with criminals.<sup>5</sup>

In a prison unit, each employee has his or her own responsibilities and powers. An indispensable duty of a prison service officer is to perform them

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<sup>2</sup> S. Johnson, C. Cooper, S. Cartwright, I. Donald, P. Taylor, C. Millet, *The experience of work-related stress across occupations*, "Journal of Managerial Psychology", 2005, no. 20(2), pp. 178–187, DOI 10.1108/02683940510579803.

<sup>3</sup> R. Poklek, *Służba Więzienna w systemie bezpieczeństwa państwa* [Prison service in the state security system], "Securitologia", 2013, no. 17(1), p. 61.

<sup>4</sup> H. Machel, *Więzienie jako instytucja karna i resocjalizacyjna*, Gdańsk 2003, p. 65.

<sup>5</sup> See A. Piotrowski, *Stres i wypalenie zawodowe funkcjonariuszy Służby Więziennej* [Stress and professional burnout of prison service officers], Warszawa 2010.

properly in accordance with his or her position. It is believed that the staff of the prison and security units are the most vulnerable.

#### **PRISON STAFF**

Professional work in the prison service is associated with exposure to various types of physical and mental injuries, and requires sacrifice and, often, a readiness to perform the duties in a 12-hour shift system.

Pursuant to the *Act of 22 March 2018 on Prison Service*, a person can become an officer if he or she is over 18 years of age, has full capacity to perform legal acts, is entitled to public rights, confirms the guarantee of proper performance of official acts, has not been punished, and no criminal proceedings are pending against him or her. Apart from that, an officer of the prison service should have education appropriate for the function, and guarantee the secrecy as well as compliance with the principles set forth in the *Act on the Protection of Classified Information of 5 August 2010*.<sup>6</sup>

Given the nature of the work, a person employed in a prison unit must have adequate physical and mental capacity. Also, prison service officers may not participate in activities that adversely affect the authority and importance of the prison.

In order to confirm his or her psychological and physical fitness, a future prison service officer must undergo a two-stage qualification procedure. After passing a fitness test and receiving a positive assessment, candidates are referred to the Mental Health Clinic. The examination at the outpatient clinic consists in solving a written test which assesses the intellectual processes of the examined person. Various types of tests are used to check the intellect, concentration of attention, speed of learning, and the personality of candidates for the position of an officer of the prison service.

Prison staff is a specific professional category. People of different education, careers and gender are employed to work in the prison service. Prison staff includes the following types of employees:

- those who continuously work in direct contact with the inmates,
- operatives with limited personal contact time,
- officers with occasional or zero contact with prisoners.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Ustawa z dnia 22 marca 2018 r. o zmianie ustawy o Służbie Więziennej oraz niektórych innych ustaw* [Act of 22 March 2018 amending the Act on Prison Service and certain other acts], Journal of Laws of 2018 item 912.

<sup>7</sup> H. Machel, *Więzienie jako instytucja...*, *op. cit.*

The first category includes security officers who are responsible for security, discipline and other matters relating to the service of prisoners in residential units. These are mostly non-commissioned officers with secondary education. This group also includes counsellors, psychologists, doctors and medical staff, as well as people who supervise the work of the prisoners, i.e. the accommodation department and the work of the prisoners outside the prison.

The second category includes members of prison management, whose work consists in control, inspection and intervention. The category also includes persons dealing with the administration of an interdepartmental prison, who perform control and inspection activities concerning limited contacts with prisoners.

The last category is that of staff who, by reason of their duties and tasks, have occasional or no direct contact with prisoners. It is an external security service consisting of drivers; financial, investment and human resources staff; as well as district directors and the administration of the Central Board of the prison service.

Szockyj conducted research into the suitability of women for work in male prisons in five respects: physical aptitude, communication skills, defence issues, perceptions of the prisoner, and privacy issues. The research has shown that women are much more poised and calmer in terms of communication with prisoners, and their participation in such communication contributes to its higher moral level. The prisoners are decent and respectful towards women in prison staff. Studies have shown that men, as prison staff, are impatient and rushing, and treat prisoners as objects. Women, on the other hand, are more focused on the prisoners and are able to reassure the more aggressive ones.<sup>8</sup>

#### HAZARDS IN PRISON UNITS

Working in prison units is dangerous and difficult. Working conditions such as isolation, interaction with prisoners, and particular responsibility for tasks are conducive to situations that threaten the security of the prison officers.

The literature distinguishes two types of threats occurring in the prison unit: external and internal.<sup>9</sup> The first type refers to situations that affect the

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 67.

<sup>9</sup> See E. Pływaczewski, J. Pomiankiewicz, *Więziennictwo jako element systemu bezpieczeństwa państwa* [Prisoning as an element of the state security system], [in:] *Moder-*

security of the prison unit from outside, as well as the security of prison staff outside the unit. External threats include: natural disasters, terrorist attacks, corruption, and attacks on prison staff during an escort. They appear in the surroundings of the prison unit.

Internal threats, on the other hand, are related to the disrupted relationship between staff and prisoners and the prisoners themselves. Dangerous situations occurring between groups include fights, beatings, escapes and various forms of abuse.<sup>10</sup> In practice, these are different kinds of emergencies of different nature and intensity levels, which disrupt the routine functioning of a prison unit in its environment.

The personal security of prison officers relates to activities that cause extraordinary events of an individual or collective nature to occur during the service. These include disorder, self-inflicted damage, manifestations of aggression, suicide, bodily harm, revolt, destruction of property, or attack on a convoy. Inappropriate atmosphere in the prison unit and the inappropriate allocation of prisoners may contribute to the threat.<sup>11</sup>

The following factors are most frequently mentioned in the literature on the subject which affect the security of prison service employees: overload of professional duties, aggression on the part of inmates, conflict and ambiguity of roles, degree of uncertainty about work and future career, insufficient skills and abilities, low level of participation in decisions, inadequate flow of information between the units' departments, inconsistent or unclear messages, authoritarian character of relations with superiors or co-workers and conflicts between these groups, and work-family conflict.<sup>12</sup>

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*nizowanie więziennictwa. V Kongres Penitencjarny* [Modernization of prisoning. V Prison Service Congress], T. Bulenda, A. Rzepliński (eds), Warszawa 2015.

<sup>10</sup> D. Becker-Pestka, *Etos służby w pracy personelu resocjalizacyjnego* [Etos of service in the work of rehabilitation personnel], "Colloquium Wydziału Nauk Humanistycznych i Społecznych. Kwartalnik", 2014, no. 4(16), p. 51.

<sup>11</sup> R. Poklek, *Służba Więzienna w systemie bezpieczeństwa państwa* [Prison service in the state security system], "Securitologia", 2013, no. 17(1), p. 44.

<sup>12</sup> See A. Piotrowski, *Stres i wypalenie zawodowe...*, *op. cit.*; E.G. Lambert, N.L. Hogan, I. Altheimer, *An exploratory examination of the consequences of burnout in terms of life satisfaction, turnover intent, and absenteeism among private correctional staff*, "The Prison Journal", 2010, no. 90(1), pp. 94–114, DOI 10.1177/0032885509357586; F.S. Taxman, J.A. Gordon, *Do fairness and equity matter? An examination of organizational justice among correctional officers in adult prisons*, "Criminal Justice and Behavior", 2009, no. 36(7), pp. 695–711, DOI 10.1177/0093854809335039; T.L. Castle, J.S. Martin, *Occu-*

It is very important to maintain a correct relationship between officers and prisoners. The vast majority of negative factors result from direct contact with prisoners. Wardens, counsellors and guards are exposed to the greatest danger. They are the ones who have a direct link with extraordinary events. The security department is a special department, as it is here that the majority of occupational psycho-physical risks occur.

A prison service officer is concerned about: life and health, loss of job, corruption provocation, various forms of aggression and attempts to humiliate prisoners, acts of repression by former convicts, false accusations, pressure from superiors, and inadequate legal protection measures.<sup>13</sup>

The maintenance of order and security in the prison unit is the domain of the Security Division. It has direct and long-term contact with prisoners and usually performs tasks related to the use of direct coercive measures or firearms.

The assessment of the personal safety of prison service officers is, among others, based on the number of extraordinary accidents. In 2019, 135 deaths were recorded (in 2018 – 169), 168 attempted suicides (in 2018 – 173), 139 assaults on officers (in 2018 – 148), 132 fights and beatings (in 2018 – 127). The largest number of incidents, as many as 1,431 (in 2018 – 1,302), concerned the disclosure of a prohibited object. The number of escapes totalled 153 (in 2018 – 253); of these the most frequent were escapes from an external place of employment.<sup>14</sup>

Risks in the workplace such as physical, chemical or biological factors are well known, as they remain easily noticeable and measurable. According to the prison service occupational medicine data, almost all officers and civilian staff of the prison service are exposed to the adverse effects of various factors influencing their lives and health. Around 20,000 of them, mainly prison officers, counsellors and medical staff, are exposed to biological agents, more than 1,660 to noise (shooting range and the use of company

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*pational hazard: Predictors of stress among jail correctional officers*, "American Journal of Criminal Justice", 2006, no. 31(1), pp. 65–80, DOI 10.1007/bf0 2885685.

<sup>13</sup> See M. Kuźmicki, *Zagrożenia w placówkach penitencjarnych jako źródło obaw funkcjonariuszy* [Threats in penitentiary institutions as a source of concern for officers], "Przegląd Więziennictwa Polskiego", 2018, no. 98, p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> Statistical data: *Statystyka roczna*, "Służba Więzienna", <https://www.sw.gov.pl/strona/statystyka-roczna> (accessed: 20.09.2020).

cars<sup>15</sup>). The number of accidents on duty is about 4.5%, i.e. 45 accidents per 1,000 employees and officers, with a national average of 7 accidents.<sup>16</sup>

More than 1,000 psychological interventions are recorded every year after events that may have been a factor contributing to severe stress. This most often concerned extraordinary events.

Of the 1,478 officers who resigned in 2017, 842 did so at their own request and 546 as a result of a medical committee ruling. During the first five years of service, the health condition of many guards deteriorated significantly and made it impossible for them to continue their service.<sup>17</sup> From 9% to 14% of officers complain of frequent headaches, sleep disorders and hypertension. One in twenty prison service officers often uses analgesics. Every eighth officer had an accident during the five years of service, the result being several times higher in comparison with people working in Poland in other professions. At least 70% of the staff participated in stress prevention and interpersonal skills training workshops and most officers consider them effective.<sup>18</sup>

In 2018, 40,974 complaints were registered, of which 31,569 were dealt with by the Prison Service, and 8,977 were forwarded to various institutions, according to their jurisdiction. The largest number of complaints concerned the treatment of prisoners by the Prison Service staff (about 30% of complaints) and living conditions (about 15% of complaints).

Polish prison law distinguishes four types of prisons: for juveniles (M), for those serving a first sentence (P), for repeat offenders (R) and for those serving a military arrest (W). Each of these prisons can be organised as a closed (Category 1), a semi-open (Category 2), or an open (Category 3) prison. The types of prisons are determined by the category of persons for whom a particular prison unit is intended.

The listed types differ in the degree of protection and isolation of the inmates. Goffman calls such places total institutions, because they are

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<sup>15</sup> Information on the state of health and safety at work in organisational units of the prison service, Central Board of the Prison Service, Warszawa 2016.

<sup>16</sup> A. Wolska, L. Uncle, B. Wiśniewska-Mulawa, B. Buszta, A. Grzenia, H. Sadowska *et al.*, *Wypadki przy pracy w 2014 r.* [Accidents at work in 2014], Warszawa 2015, p. 47.

<sup>17</sup> A. Piotrowski, *Samoocena stanu zdrowia, wypadki w trakcie służby i profilaktyka stresu zawodowego w Służbie Więziennej* [Self-assessment of health condition, accidents during service and prevention of occupational stress in the Prison Service], "Medycyna Pracy", 2018, no. 69(4), pp. 425–438, DOI 10.13075/mp.5893.00535, p. 427.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 425.



the places of residence and work of a significant number of people in a similar situation, cut off from the rest of society for some time and leading a formalised lifestyle.<sup>19</sup> The types of prison reflect their protection systems: respectively a full, limited, and simplified protection system.

The number of prisoners in Poland has remained at a similar level in recent years: according to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development data from 2019, the number of prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants in Poland was 196. This is the seventh place among thirty six OECD countries. The highest rates of prisoners were in the United States (655), Turkey (318) and Israel (234), and the lowest rates were in Iceland (37), Japan (41) and Finland (51).<sup>20</sup>

Prison service officers on duty in the security department check prisoners, vehicles, parcels and rooms during their daily tasks. The activities of the prisoners are constantly monitored by the officers. These are various technical protection measures. These include: CCTV (camera system); alarm systems (SSWiN, SSP<sup>21</sup>); hold up devices (HUDs); panic alarm buttons; individual sirens; radio and wired means of communication; call centres; intercoms; video intercoms; devices to control people and cargo; detectors of drugs and metals; mobile phones; parcel scanners; inspection mirrors; people detectors; access control devices; and the protection of sewers, man-holes, chimneys, masts, poles, power generators, locks, doors and grilles, window and internal bin bars, etc. Technical and protective measures are mechanical, electrical, electronic and constructional measures used in the protection of organizational units.

All security measures applied in a prison unit depend on the security system (zones A–E). The head of the unit together with the head of security establish a security plan with appropriate safeguards. Functioning of the security systems is based on physical protection, and the security undertakings applied by prison service consist, among other things, in the use of technical and protective safeguards, alarm and communication means.

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<sup>19</sup> E. Goffman, *Instytucje totalne. O pacjentach szpitali psychiatrycznych i mieszkańcach innych instytucji totalnych* [Total Institutions. About patients of psychiatric hospitals and residents of other total institutions], Gdańsk 2011, p. 11.

<sup>20</sup> *Jaka jest liczba osadzonych w polskich aresztach i zakładach karnych?*, “Demagog”, 13 August 2019, <https://demagog.org.pl/wypowiedzi/jaka-jest-liczba-osadzonych-w-polskich-aresztach-i-zakladach-karnych/> (accessed: 20.06.2020).

<sup>21</sup> SSWiN – burglary and robbery alarm system; SSP – fire alarm system.

Exceptional occurrences as ordered by the Director-General of the prison service shall include:<sup>22</sup> disruptions to the functioning of the unit (assault on a unit or convoy; taking a hostage; revolt; disorderly conduct; external threats such as fire or a crisis situation); a prisoner's escape from the unit or convoy; preparation of a prisoner's escape or attempted escape; a prisoner's suicide; death of an officer, a prisoner or other employee or serious injury to any person or to a prison service dog; assault on an officer or employee in connection with the performance of official activities; rape of a prisoner or submitting to other sexual activity under duress; abuse of a prisoner; attempted suicide of a prisoner; other situation violating the good name of the prison service; fight; beating; collective illness of prisoners; committing a prohibited act by an officer or employee; the escape of a person deprived of liberty; arbitrary departure; non-return; disclosure of dangerous or unauthorised objects. All the above events affect the functioning of the prison unit.

In the years 2014–2016 (in 2016, only the first quarter was included), in Polish prison units a total of 45 cases of extraordinary events related to an arbitrary departure of a prisoner from a place of employment outside the unit without escort were recorded.<sup>23</sup>

In 2018, Machel and Żerko carried out a survey among 51 prison officers who encountered violence from prisoners. As many as 72.5% of the prison officers were attacked by prisoners while performing their duties. The events took place while prisons officers were checking order (35.7%) or a correct attitude in contacting the superior (28.5%), as well as in the event of a refusal by the director of a reward (21.4%). According to 45.9% of respondents, such situations happen very often. Aggression manifests itself in a verbal form taking the shape of rude vocabulary (78.3%), or contemptuous and offensive face expression (8.1%) and gestures (5.5%). As far as punishable threats are concerned, they were addressed to three officers (8.1%). None of the respondents mentioned physical aggression.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> The Order of the Director General of the Prison Service No. 1/2018 of 3 January 2018 (the previous Order No. 52/2013 of 29 November 2013) concerning the on-call service in organisational units of the prison service, events that may occur in the prison service and the manner of explaining and documenting them is binding.

<sup>23</sup> Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, *Wystąpienie pokontrolne nr LWA/44/2016* [Follow-up speech no. LWA/44/2016], 9 June 2016, p. 6.

<sup>24</sup> H. Machel, J. Żerko *Zagrożenie personelu resocjalizacyjnego agresją w zakładach izolacyjnych* [Aggression threats to rehabilitation personnel in isolation facilities], [in:] *Agresja*

TABLE 1. NUMBER OF ASSAULTS ON POLISH PRISON SERVICE OFFICERS IN THE YEARS 2016–2019

Year	Number of events	Number of participants
2016	90	112
2017	93	112
2018	150	142
2019	148	139

Source: *Statystyka roczna*, “Służba Więzienna”, <https://www.sw.gov.pl/strona/statystyka-roczna> (accessed: 20.09.2020).

The table above shows the number of events and the number of prison service officers in 2016–2019 who were targets of the attacks. A significant increase in incidents occurred in 2018, because there were fifty-seven more cases than the previous year. In 2016, 112 officers were attacked, the same was true in 2017, in 2018 – 142, and in 2019, 139 officers were harmed.

In the specific conditions of prison isolation, aggressive behaviour and the use of violence are a major and constantly manifesting threat. Prison units are a place where different personalities and different relationships between prisoners and staff collide.

#### SECURITY OF PRISON OFFICERS (PERSPECTIVE OF RESPONDENTS)

The personal security of prison service officers is a real and serious problem, but also a concept which is difficult to define. This security issue is connected with physical and mental threats.

The respondents were employees of various prison facilities. A group of respondents consisted of 320 officers from security departments within the prison service.<sup>25</sup> 256 men took part in the study, which constituted 80% of

*i przemoc we współczesnym świecie. Agresja i przemoc wśród dzieci i młodzieży oraz w instytucjach społeczno-opiekuńczych* [Aggression and violence in the contemporary world. Aggression and violence among children and youth and in social care institutions], J. Kuźma, Z. Szarota (eds), Kraków 1998, p. 317.

<sup>25</sup>The research was carried out as part of the diploma seminar conducted by Dr. J. Gierszewski. See A. Sobczak, *Bezpieczeństwo osobiste funkcjonariusza służby więziennej podczas wykonywania obowiązków służbowych* [Personal security of a prison officer while performing official duties], Słupsk 2020 [typescript].

all respondents, and 64 women, which constituted 20% of the respondents. The gender imbalance is related to the low level of feminisation in that department. The main problem may be the randomness of the sample of respondents due to the difficult access to respondents in this type of research and the epidemic threat. On the other hand, the sample of 320 people is fully representative in terms of the overall number of prison staff (security department).

Most of the respondents had higher education, as many as 180 prison officers, of which a bachelor's degree was held by 56%, and a master's degree by 33% officers (104 respondents). Within the surveyed sample 36 people, i.e. 11%, had secondary education.

Respondents were divided according to their work seniority. Thus, 31% (100 respondents) were prison officers with 11–15 years of experience and 25% (80 respondents), with 16–20 years of experience. Therefore, most of the respondents – more than half of the officers – had seniority between 11 and 20 years. Such persons certainly have extensive experience and knowledge of threats occurring in prison units. Only 12.5% of the respondents (40 persons) had a short length of service in the range from 0 to 5 years.

As regards place of employment, 37.5% (120 respondents) were employed in a remand centre, 25% in a prison of the open type (80 officers), 20% in a prison of the closed type (64 officers) and 17.5% in a prison of the semi-open type (56 respondents).

As 49% of respondents said, they felt safe while on duty; 26% felt the opposite. The remaining 25% said they did not have a clear opinion on the subject.

The provisions of the Executive Penal Code Act<sup>26</sup> allow for “permanent monitoring” in Polish prisons (video and/or audio signal) in cells and other places where prisoners are held, but it refers to strictly defined categories of prisoners, including those at risk of suicide and important witnesses. According to 46.8% it is technical security measures and according to 44% it is the use of video surveillance that are crucial for the personal security of the guards. Additionally, 37.5% of those surveyed consider that it is also important to communicate one's observations on the prisoners' behaviour. Other elements that, according to respondents, may improve security are: talks with a counsellor (31%), talks with a psychologist (30%), classification

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<sup>26</sup> *Ustawa z dnia 6 czerwca 1997 r. – Kodeks karny wykonawczy* [Act of 6 June 1997– The Executive Penal Code], Journal of Laws of 1997 no. 90 item 557, as later amended.

of prisoners (23%), possibility of using direct coercive measures (22%), educational atmosphere (18.75%), experience of officers (11.8%), dissemination of knowledge about threats and ways to counteract them (11.5%), lighting (9%), physical training (6%), control of prisoners' movements (6%), participation of prisoners in hobby clubs (1.5%).

TABLE 2. SOLUTIONS TO IMPROVE SECURITY FOR POLISH PRISON OFFICERS

Solution/factor	Number of respondents (out of 320) pointing to this solution	Percentage
video surveillance	140	44
lighting	30	9
physical training	20	6
classification of prisoners	75	23
communicating observations on prisoners' behaviour	120	37.5
talks with counsellors	100	31
talks with psychologists	98	30
participation of prisoners in hobby clubs	5	1.5
raising awareness of the threat and ways to counter it	37	11.5
experience of officers	38	11.8
possibility of using direct coercive measures	70	22
control of the movement of prisoners	20	6
educational atmosphere	60	18.75
technical protection system	150	46.8

The percentage does not add up to 100% because respondents could indicate more than one answer.

Source: A Sobczak, *Bezpieczeństwo osobiste funkcjonariusza służby więziennej podczas wykonywania obowiązków służbowych* [Personal security of a prison officer while performing official duties], Słupsk 2020 [typescript].

In the opinion of all the respondents (100%), the most dangerous places for a prison officer are: the prison officer duty station and the counsellor duty station. These places are the least safe because of direct contact with the prisoner. Other places are: communication routes in the wards (30%), the visiting room (14%), the common room for prisoners (12%), office space (9%), kitchen (6%), prisoners' cells (6%), walking areas (4.5%) and armed posts (3%). The above data show that an officer on duty must take care of his or her safety at every place of the prison unit and be prepared for a possible attack directed at him or her.

TABLE 3: LEAST SECURE PLACES IN A PRISON UNIT

Dangerous place	Number of respondents (out of 320) pointing to this place	Percentage
office space	30	9
counsellor's duty office	320	100
ward duty station	320	100
communication routes in the wards	98	30
prisoners' cells	20	6
walking fields	15	4,5
armed posts	10	3
auditorium	45	14
day care centre for prisoners	40	12
kitchens	20	6

The percentage does not add up to 100% because respondents could indicate more than one answer.

Source: A Sobczak, *Bezpieczeństwo osobiste funkcjonariusza służby więziennej podczas wykonywania obowiązków służbowych* [Personal security of a prison officer while performing official duties], Słupsk 2020 [typescript].

Some of the risks are related to the barriers that result from the impact that prison has on prisoners.

TABLE 4. THE MOST IMPORTANT BARRIERS AFFECTING THE SECURITY OF PRISON OFFICERS IN THE PRISON AREA

Barrier	Number of respondents (out of 320) pointing to this barrier	Percentage
normative solutions	85	27
financial problems in the prison system	70	22
overcrowding	130	40
poor staff preparation	80	25
too few specialists (counsellors, therapists, psychologists)	100	31
technical condition of Polish prisons	70	22
low level of employment of prisoners	90	28
low universality of teaching	50	15
structure and strength of prison subculture	20	6
destructive attitudes on the part of some prison staff	65	20

The percentage does not add up to 100% because respondents could indicate more than one answer.

Source: A Sobczak, *Bezpieczeństwo osobiste funkcjonariusza służby więziennej podczas wykonywania obowiązków służbowych* [Personal security of a prison officer while performing official duties], Słupsk 2020 [typescript].

According to 40% of respondents, the greatest barrier to prison officers' security is overcrowding. Also an important factor, according to 31% of respondents, is too small number of specialists (counsellors, therapists, psychologists) employed in the units. This barrier, as indicated by respondents, is followed by: low employment level of prisoners (28%), legal regulations (27%), poor preparation of staff (25%) financial problems of the prison system (22%) and technical condition of Polish prisons (also 22%).

Prisoners in prison isolation should have at their disposal means of influencing the prison system in order to relieve emotional tensions by making appropriate use of their free time. Other means serve as a form of assistance aimed at inducing a person deprived of his or her liberty to

cooperate with the staff of the prison. All instruments which can be used to influence the convicted person and to achieve the expected result are considered here measures of prison impact. A distinction is made between formalised penal measures, which are regulated by law, and non-formalised educational measures, which are used by prison staff but are not described in the law. Among the formalised prison measures, the following stand out: work, education, cultural and educational activities, maintaining contact with the family and the outside world, therapeutic measures. Non-formalised means of influencing the convicted include conversation and support.<sup>27</sup>

TABLE 5. MEASURES OF PRISON IMPACT ON PRISONERS

Types of measures	Number of respondents (out of 320) pointing to this measure	Percentage
work	250	78
education	100	31
cultural and sports activities	190	59
contacts with the outside world	80	25
penalty system	120	37.5
reward system	120	37.5
therapeutic measures	90	28

The percentage does not add up to 100%, because respondents could indicate more than one answer.

Source: A Sobczak, *Bezpieczeństwo osobiste funkcjonariusza służby więziennej podczas wykonywania obowiązków służbowych* [Personal security of a prison officer while performing official duties], Słupsk 2020 [typescript].

According to 78% of the respondents, work is one of the most important means of influencing the prisoner. The employment of prisoners reduces the incidence of aggression and also plays an important role in fulfilling the financial obligations of the prisoner. 59% believe that cultural and sports activities are also positively linked to the behaviour of prisoners. These

<sup>27</sup> R. Poklek, *Metodyka i organizacja resocjalizacji w zakładach karnych. Skrypt dla studentów resocjalizacji* [Methodology and organisation of rehabilitation in prisons. Script for students of rehabilitation], Kutno 2013, p. 33.



include the activities of the day-care centre, library, film screenings, reading, broadcasting centres, competitions, exhibitions, hobby clubs, individual creativity, gym. Next is the system of penalties and awards (37.5% each). Thanks to them, desired attitudes are formed and the convicts are prevented from being deprived in emotional, biological and sensory and informational dimensions. However, 28% of respondents believe that the best form of influence on the convicted person is therapeutic measures which influence the readaptation of the prisoner. Contacts with the outside world are in the last place. This has been indicated by 25% of respondents.

In the opinion of 84.5% of the respondents, the classification of penitentiary facilities positively influences the security of the guard. Based on the categories used in a unit, the officer knows with what kind of prisoner he or she is dealing and what he or she can expect. 75% of the respondents believe that it has an impact on the personal security of the guards. However, 14.5 % of respondents said that it does not matter.

As many as 61% of respondents said they were concerned about their family's safety in connection with their service. However, 19% said they were not afraid of the safety of their families and 22% had no opinion on this issue. Respondents working in closed type of prisons were the most concerned about the safety of their families, and those working in semi-open prisons with a limited system of protection were the least concerned.

## CONCLUSIONS

The sense of security of the officers of prison units depends on a number of factors. Each prison unit has a different security system. In the respondents' opinion, the best solutions boosting the security of a prison guard is a technical security system which includes: monitoring, means of alarming: signaling devices, hold up devices (HUDs), panic alarm buttons, radio and wire communication means, intercoms, luggage control devices, vehicle loads, door and gate locks, and video surveillance.

An important factor in improving the security of the prison officer is communicating observations on prisoners' behaviour. The information about the emotional, mental and physical state of the prisoners is important for their behaviour towards fellow prisoners as well as prison service officers.

Security staff believe that hostile attitudes towards them prevail. The most common manifestation is verbal aggression and, to a lesser extent, active assault, slander and false accusations.

Overcrowding of prison units, normative solutions, low employment of prisoners and poor preparation of staff are the most important barriers affecting the personal safety of the prison officers.

Prison impact measures also have a significant influence on the security of prison officers. The most important of these are: work, penalty and reward systems, and cultural and educational activities. The system of programmed influence is therefore not only important for the process of rehabilitation of prisoners.

Prison officers face verbal aggression from prisoners practically on a daily basis and such behaviour becomes the norm in everyday contact with them. The risk of physical aggression, which is experienced by prison service wardens on average once a month, is a determining factor in reducing safety and comfort in working with prisoners.

The typology of prison units is very important for the personal safety of prison officers. The classification helps to allocate prisoners correctly, prevents the demoralisation of prisoners and guarantees their safety to a greater extent.

The classification of convicted persons shall be based primarily on the results of personal cognitive research, which involves the collection of all data relating to the convicted person. The most threatening group of prisoners are young people serving a semi-open prison term.

The least secure places in the prison are, in order of priority, the counsellor's and prison officer's on-call offices, and the communication routes in the wards. In order to improve security, fixed or mobile alarm devices are installed which make the guards feel safe in contact with prisoners.

According to the respondents, day and night shifts are equally dangerous.

Extraordinary events are a frequent threat in a prison unit. Almost half of those surveyed witnessed the use of direct coercive measures against the prisoner, 38% of those surveyed had to intervene in the situation of injury to the prisoners, and 28% had to deal with self-harm.

Factors that reduce the guardians' sense of personal security include: the consequences of potential mistakes, false accusations, and collective actions by prisoners.

The personal security of prison officers is perceived by those involved as very fragile, but despite a number of risks, the officers have the appropriate professional training and technical means to feel reasonably safe while performing their tasks.

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