

Research article

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## Life Plans of Convicts Serving Sentences in the General Regime Correctional Facility

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### Abstract

*Introduction:* the research is relevant due to the importance of studying life plans of convicts serving sentences in correctional facilities of general regime. The article considers results of this study. Near, medium-term, and long-term life plans of convicts are analyzed. Stages of serving sentences (initial, middle, final) are highlighted. The theoretical and empirical research is based on the classification of V.G. Deev as upgraded by A.V. Napris. The empirical study was conducted at the correctional facility of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia No. 6 in the Ryazan Oblast. The sample size is 70 men. *Purpose:* to study life plans of convicts serving sentences in the general regime correctional facility and identify their correlation with stages of serving sentences. *Methods:* observation, survey, testing ("Self-assessment of life plans" by A.V. Napris (a modified version of the test "Self-assessment of orientation" by V.G. Deev). *Practical significance of the research:* the study of life plans of convicts serving sentences in places of deprivation of liberty, conducted with the purpose of further elaboration of a program for forming life plans of convicts and its use in the work of penitentiary psychologists. *Results:* the empirical study shows that convicts can be conditionally divided into three groups: those with near life plans (24.3%); with medium-term life plans (28.6%); with long-term life plans (47.1%). The majority of convicts with near life plans (24.3%) are at the initial stage of serving sentences (0–1 years) and have low self-esteem. They are characterized by stubbornness, passivity, lack of initiative, inclination to conflict, distrust, closeness in communication and loss of the meaning of their own lives. Getting into a correctional institution, they fall into the rigid framework of internal regulations, withdraw into themselves, and therefore hardly adapt to the new environment, having only near life plans. Most convicts with mid-term life plans (28.6%) are at the middle stage of serving

sentences (1–3 years) and have adequate self-esteem. They have traits of character, such as impulsivity, demonstrativeness, conflict, unpredictability, sensitivity to criticism and remarks. Convicted groups admit their mistakes and are not afraid to make them, they strive to realize mid-term life plans, but at the same time they are frivolous about the future. The vast majority of convicts with long-term life plans are at the final stage of serving sentences (3–9 years) and have inflated self-esteem. They are characterized by optimism, sociability, demonstrativeness. *Conclusions:* the empirical research analysis demonstrates that life plans (near, medium-term, and long-term) of convicts depend on the stages of serving sentences (initial, middle, final). In this regard, there is a need for prison psychologists to study and consider convicts' life plans.

**Key words:** convicts; life plans; self-assessment of life plans; empirical research; places of deprivation of liberty; correctional facility.

### 5.3.9. Legal psychology and psychological security.

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#### *Introduction*

Problems related to identifying the content, structure, and features of convicts' life plans have recently become relevant for penitentiary science, since they give the convicted the opportunity to successfully adapt to society. To study life plans of convicts serving sentences in places of deprivation of liberty, it is necessary to consider a concept of "life plan" in more detail.

I.S. Kon considers the life plan of an individual as a priority "activity plan necessary for realization of life goals" [3]. Life plans are defined by I.T. Levykin as "goals expressing critical needs and interests, encouraging people to concentrate their aspirations and actions to achieve them" [4]. According to A.I. Ushatkov, a "life plan is a set of desired and probable concrete ways and means of realizing people's life goals" [10]. I.N. Astaf'eva defines the life plan of convicts as a "set of people's decisions to organize their life activity" [1]. Analysis of domestic scientists' research in convicts' life plans in places of deprivation of liberty (A.V. Napris [6], A.I. Ushatkov, B.B. Kazak [10], I.N. Astaf'eva [1], E.F. Stefan [12]) allowed us to identify kinds, types, structure of life plans, and groups of convicts by presence / absence of their life plans.

A.I. Ushatkov, having conducted a study of life plans of persons convicted of violent and mercenary crimes, found that "66.7% and

61% of these convicts have antisocial goals and life plans, manifested in their behavior: regime systematic violation and crime commission" [10]. V.G. Deev in his work came to the conclusion that "life plans are the highest level of personality orientation" [6].

Convicts' life is a segment of the life path limited by the framework of legislation, characterized by a temporary lack of life benefits necessary for an adequate world perception and aspirations to achieve goals. The convicts' life plans are a set of interests that prevail precisely in the environment in which the individual is located. To make plans for future life, a convict [8] has to adapt to a new environment, taking into account the lack of certain means and opportunities. After adapting to new conditions, a person can make plans for a longer period, depending on the entire sentence.

Based on the theoretical analysis conducted, we can define the concept of life plans as a set of life goals, prospects, programs, attitudes, and aspirations in achieving the tasks set, determined by setting deadlines and developing life strategies. We believe that life plans can be divided into 2 types: positive and negative.

Positive life plans [7] include those characterized by presence of positive factors, people's aspirations to achieve goals in the future. Positivity of the life plan depends on

indicators of subjective confidence in it and emotional experiences in connection with the planned future. In our opinion, convicts' positive life plans in relation to the future make the present valuable, without devaluing it and encouraging expectations and ideas about the future [2].

Negative life plans are a set of negative circumstances formed by segments of the life path from the past and present. They can both be aggravated by negative factors arising in the near future, and tend to improve when positive moments arise.

#### Methods

We conducted an empirical study of convicts' life plans at the correctional facility of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia No. 6 in the Ryazan Oblast. The surveyed group consisted of 70 male respondents serving sentences in the general regime correctional facility.

The research is aimed at identifying life plans of convicts serving sentences in places of deprivation of liberty. During the study, the following psychodiagnostic methods and techniques are used: observation, survey, testing "Self-assessment of life plans" by A.V. Napris (a modified version of the test "Self-

assessment of orientation" by V.G. Deev) [6].

The research tasks are to conduct an empirical study of life plans of convicts serving sentences in the correctional facility of general regime and identify their correlation with the stages of serving sentences.

#### Results

In accordance with the purpose and tasks of the study, we considered life plans of convicts [11] serving sentences in the correctional colony of general regime. Analysis of its results allowed us to single out 3 groups of convicts: with near life plans (24.3%); medium-term life plans (28.6%); long-term life plans (47.1%) (Fig. 1). We will consider each of the selected groups in more detail.

Convicts' near life plans are characterized by permanence, immutability in time and narrowness of manifestation in various spheres of life. They are aimed at solving everyday life tasks, as well as satisfying drives and desires in a way familiar to them. This indicates that convicts focus on near life plans only at the initial stage of serving sentences, since it does not take convicts a lot of time to adapt to the penitentiary environment. Then there is a change in priorities and near life plans are replaced by mid-term life plans.

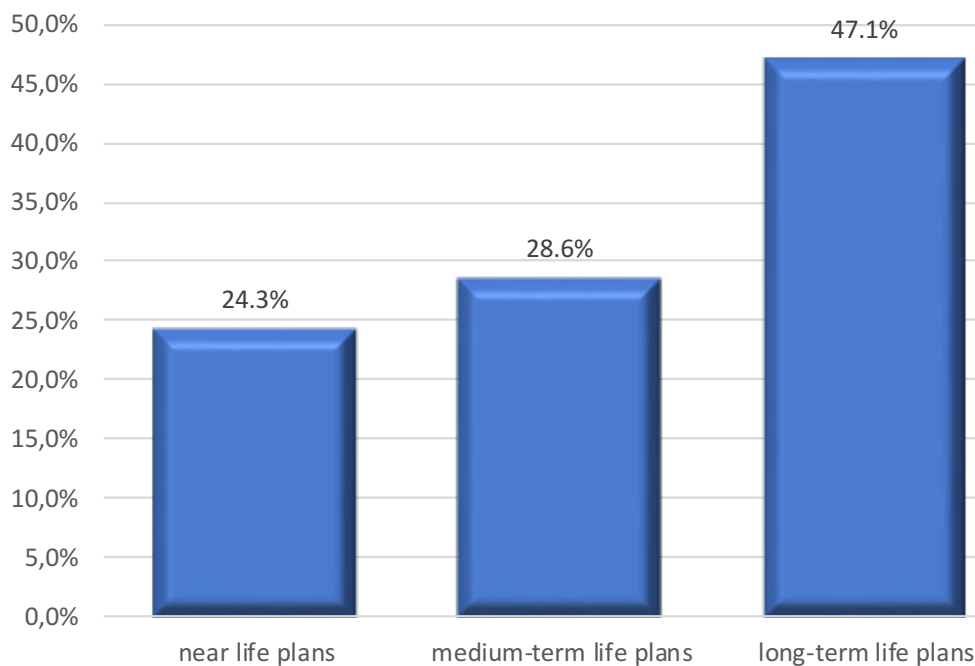


Fig. 1. Share of the identified groups of convicts serving sentences in the general regime correctional facility, according to the method of "Self-assessment of life plans" by A.V. Napris (a modified version of the test "Self-assessment of orientation" by V.G. Deev)

Using the method “Self-assessment of life plans” by A.V. Napris (a modified version of the test “Self-assessment of orientation” by V.G. Deev) [6], we found that the index of overall positive self-assessment of life plans of convicts with near life plans amounts to 0.2 : 0.46; negative – 0.1 : 0.13, indicating low self-esteem of this group of convicts and their weak motivation for the future and overcoming possible life difficulties.

Analysis of the group of convicts with near life plans (24.3%) shows their low self-esteem. They are characterized by stubbornness, passivity, lack of initiative, inclination to conflict, distrust, closeness in communication and loss of the meaning of their own lives. Getting into a correctional institution, they fall into the rigid framework of internal regulations, withdraw into themselves, and therefore hardly adapt to the new environment, having only near life plans.

Convicts with medium-term life plans, unlike those with near life plans, try to change themselves and their relationships with the surrounding reality, and also often show dissatisfaction with their lives due to the lack of life goals.

According to the conducted testing, the index of the overall positive self-assessment of life plans of convicts with medium-term

life plans is 0.36 : 0.63; negative – 0.2 : 0.33, revealing adequate self-esteem of convicts. Life plans of this group convicts are more definite.

The study of convicts [9] with medium-term life plans demonstrated that convicts’ self-esteem is adequate. The results of the observation and survey showed that convicts with average life plans have such personality traits as impulsivity, demonstrativeness, conflict, unpredictability, sensitivity to criticism and remarks. Convicted groups admit their mistakes and are not afraid to make them, they strive to realize mid-term life plans, but at the same time they are frivolous about the future.

Convicts with long-term life plans, unlike convicts with near and medium-term life plans, tend to repeat features of life plans of the previous two groups, but only at a higher level of development. The results of the observation and survey showed that this group of convicts [5] builds clearer life goals, considering imprisonment only as a stage on the way to implementing life strategies. At this stage, convicts with long-term life plans have more stable beliefs and ideals.

Analysis of the results obtained with the help of the method “Self-assessment of life plans of convicts” by A.V. Napris (modified by

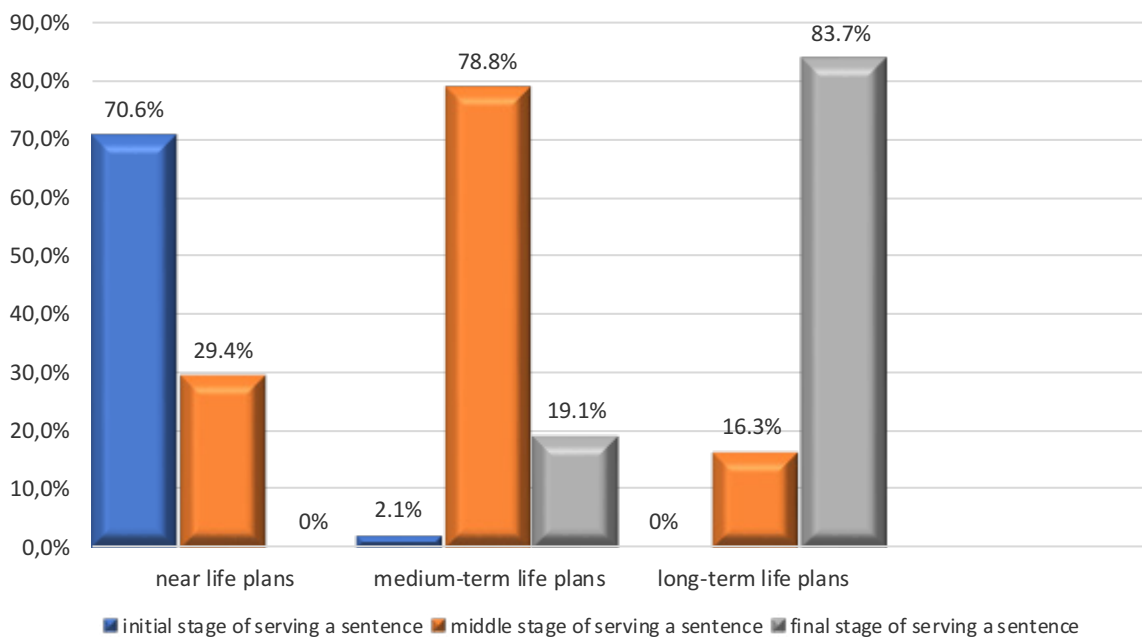


Fig. 2. Distribution of convicts’ life plans at various stages of serving sentences

V.G. Deev) showed that the index of overall positive self-assessment of life plans of convicts belonging to this group is 0.53 : 0.77; negative – 0.2 : 0.43, indicating convicts' inflated self-esteem. They try to achieve their plans and realize their life goals.

A group of convicts with long-term life plans is characterized by inflated self-esteem, optimism, sociability, and ostentation. The results of the observation and survey reveal that convicts get used to different social roles easily and strive to realize long-term life plans, thus showing their stable life position.

In the course of the study, we classified stages of serving sentences: initial (0–1 year); middle (1–3 years); final (3–9 years).

Having studied each group of convicts, we found that the majority (70.6%) of the convicts in the group with near life plans are at the initial stage of serving sentences, 29.4% – at the middle stage of serving sentences, 78.8% of the convicts of the group with medium-term life plans are at the middle stage of serving sentences, 19.1% – at the final stage of serving sentences, 2.1% – at the initial stage of serving sentences; 83.7% of convicts of the group with long-term life plans are at the final stage of serving sentences, and 16.3% – at the middle stage of serving sentences (Fig. 2).

It is established that there is certain correlation between between stages of serving sentences and life plans of convicts. Thus, convicts who are mainly at the initial stage of serving sentences have near life plans; convicts who are at the middle stage of serving sentences – medium-term life plans; and convicts who are at the final stage of serving sentences – long-term life plans.

#### *Conclusion*

Based on the empirical study results, we came to the following conclusions:

1. Convicts with near life plans (24.3%)

have low self-esteem and traits of character, such as stubbornness, passivity, lack of initiative, conflict, distrust, closeness in communication and loss of the meaning of their own lives. When they get into conditions of a correctional institution, they become introverted, fall into the rigid framework of internal regulations, and therefore hardly adapt to new environment, having only near life plans.

2. Convicts with medium-term life plans (28.6%) have adequate self-esteem. The results of observation and survey demonstrate that convicts with medium-term life plans have personality traits, such as impulsivity, ostentation, conflict, unpredictability, and sensitivity to criticism and remarks. They admit their mistakes and are not afraid to make them, they strive to realize medium-term life plans, but at the same time they are frivolous about the future.

3. Convicts with long-term life plans (47.1%) are characterized by inflated self-esteem, optimism, sociability, and ostentation. They build clearer and more definite life goals, considering serving a sentence in the form of imprisonment only as a stage on the way to implementing life strategies. At this stage, convicts with long-term life plans have more stable beliefs and ideals.

4. It is established that there is correlation between stages of serving sentences (initial, middle, final) and life plans of convicts (near, medium-term, and long-term). Thus, convicts who are mainly at the initial stage of serving sentences are characterized by near life plans; convicts who are at the middle stage of serving sentences – by medium-term life plans; convicts who are at the final stage of serving sentences are characterized by long-term life plans. In this regard, there is a need for prison psychologists to study and take into account life plans of convicts.

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