

Original article

UDC 159.9.07

doi: 10.46741/2686-9764.2022.59.3.009



Emotional States of Convicts: a Model of a Psychological Correction Program

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Abstract

Introduction: the article presents results of testing the program for psychological correction of convicts' emotional states, aimed at gradual elaboration of conditions arising at all stages of the life path. The 5-month program involved 167 people serving sentences of imprisonment in subordinate organizations and institutions of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia in the Ryazan Oblast. *Methods:* at different stages of the program implementation, the following methods were used: scales of positive affect and negative affect (as adapted by E.N. Osin), Spielberger-Hanin anxiety test, K. Izard's differential emotions scale, Y.M. Orlov's questionnaire of the need for communication and the need for achievement, Rosenzweig frustration test, and Zimbardo time perspective inventory. *Results:* as a result of the program, the indicators of situational anxiety decreased compared to the primary results, the emotional states of failure to achieve the goal did not undergo any special changes, however, the indicators of extra-punitive and ego-defense responses went up, the need for communication and the positive emotions index increased, the indices of negative and anxious and depressive emotions declined, which indicates success of the measures implemented. *Conclusions:* conducting classes with convicts in the context of time periods allowed us to fully consider conditions of convicts, affecting their past experience and future plans and influencing their current state, which contributed to optimizing the emotional state and reducing manifestations of destructive behavior during the process of serving a sentence.

Key words: emotional states; emotions; psychological correction; places of imprisonment; convicts; perception of psychological time; time intervals.

5.3.9. Legal psychology and security psychology.

For citation: Aligaeva N. N. Emotional states of convicts: a model of a psychological correction program. *Penitentiary Science*, 2022, vol. 16, no. 3 (59), pp. 310–319. doi: 10.46741/2686-9764.2022.59.3.009

Introduction

Emotional states play an important role in the life of a person serving a sentence in prison. According to A.A. Rean's definition, emotional states are "relatively stable experiences of a person's attitude to the surrounding reality and to him/herself at a certain point in time, relatively typical for a given person" [14]. Being "indicators" of existing problems, they help regulate convicts' behavior.

People's ideas about themselves and their life paths are based on their past experience, which allows them to independently create a narrative about significant events anchored by emotional states [8]. M. Becker and his colleagues believe that the perception of the "narrative" of life and its associative links with the past allows us to predict the degree to which a person can feel self-sufficiency and is able to set clear goals and plans for the future [18]. Autobiographical memories of one's own life also retain substitute memories of events that happened to other people, but are perceived as a valuable part of one's own history, which influence the formation of "emotional experience" [24].

In literary sources there are various terms denoting the category of "perception of time": temporal trans-perspective (V.I. Kovalev), temporal orientation (F. Zimbardo), subjective picture of the life path (B.G. Ana'ev, A.A. Kronik, E.I. Golovakha), temporal outlook (P. Fraisse), etc. In this study we use the concept of psychological time, reflecting the system of a person's temporal relations between events occurring in his/her life, in combination with the concept of temporal perspective, which is a set of human ideas about the past, present and future. The terms used are synonymous and show the significance of events in defining ideas about the psychological past, present and future.

Modern researchers believe that a person's ideas about the past are the result of subjective emotional and cognitive processing, in particular, there is a connection "between the

strategies of emotion regulation "rumination" and "catastrophization" and negative ideas about the past" [13]. The nature of event actualization can be influenced by the currently dominant emotional state [16]. In the theories of cognitive estimates, assessment processes are considered as primary, causal factors that affect emotional states. In this process, a significant role is played by past experience and a person's ideas about the future.

The problem of emotional and cognitive processes interaction and the impact of emotions on time experience is indicated in several works [19; 20; 22]. Recent studies have revealed significant correlations between indicators of time perspective and indicators of emotion regulation [21].

Currently, the psycho-correction programs applied in relation to convicts are based mainly on provisions of the cognitive-behavioral approach and affect various spheres (cognitive, value-semantic, emotional), and also use various methods and techniques (art-therapeutic techniques, positive thinking techniques, cognitive psychotherapy). However, most researchers note that the formation of a holistic perception of the life path of persons serving sentences in places of deprivation of liberty contributes to the preparation for successful adaptation to life after release from correctional institutions (N.A. Konovalova [7], O.B. Schreder [17], A.B. Abibulaeva, L.V. Mardakhaev, A.K. Kuvatov [1]). Therefore, we made an attempt to work out a program for correcting emotional states with regard to the specifics of the psychological time perception. To implement this task, we applied an integrative approach (the subjective approach to group work by I.V. Vachkova and S.D. Deryabo), key provisions of E. Bern's transactional analysis (structural analysis of personality, analysis of transactions), an experimental-phenomenological approach of gestalt therapy by F. Perls, provisions of the

behavioral game psychotherapy based on theories of B.F. Skinner (theory of social learning) and A. Bandura (theory of socio-cognitive learning), B.F. Skinner's ideas about the personality of a person as a sum of patterns of behavior (each individual reaction is based on previous experience and genetic characteristics), an acmeological variant of therapy with creative self-expression by M.Ye. Burno. When working with each time interval, depending on the lesson purpose, a certain approach was used, helping disclose current problems and ensure full functioning of the personality.

Yu.Yu. Neyaskina argues that under the influence of difficult life situations, in particular, serving sentences in places of deprivation of liberty, there are changes in the perception of time periods of life, including a lack of semantic fullness of each of them. The author believes that people's orientation to a certain life period (fixation on the moments of the past, hedonistic attitude to events of the present, unrealistic ideas about the future) can be considered as coping strategies to deal with harsh circumstances; still they often lead to difficulties in further adaptation, do not allow to take active (and adequate) steps to solve life problems [11].

S.V. Baburin and E.V. Zautorova conducted a survey among convicts of correctional institutions of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia in the Vologda Oblast, in which they revealed that convicts had negative ideas about themselves and their life at the present stage, as well as found it difficult to make plans for the future [4].

M.G. Flaherty notes that while serving their sentence in a correctional facility, convicts submit to a strict temporary regime, which leads to ignoring the distant future and perceiving time "as a painful burden". The strategy of resistance to this phenomenon is temporal compression, that is the perception that time (i.e. their term of service) will pass quickly [23]. E.V. Nekrasova also emphasizes changes in the perception of psychological time under the influence of spatial characteristics, noting that both "rapid" changes in the subjective perception and "qualitative" changes characterized by loss of a sense of reality are possible [10].

When studying the specifics of the psychological time perception by convicts serving long-term or life imprisonment, we revealed positive attitudes towards the past, its positive reconstruction, a low level of fatalism of the present, the focus on the future, its planning, idealization and detailing. The authors explain these features of perceiving the time perspective by the convicts' desire to cope with the "immobility" of time, scarcity of events, wish for parole to realize their plans (Yu.Yu. Neyaskina [11], Yu.V. Slavinskaya, B.G. Bovina [15]).

A.A. Martynova states that the profile of the time perspective of convicts does not depend on the term of punishment, but there is a trend to a predominant orientation towards the future, which allows setting goals that give meaning to the present and maintain contact with the real world [9]. A positive perception of the past and the future, orientation to the fatalistic present determine an unbalanced profile associated with the inability to change anything in the current life period, despite the resource-based past and future. However, according to E.A. Ippolitova, during the period of adaptation to a correctional facility, convicts have pronounced pessimistic thoughts about the past, present and, partly, the future; in the middle of the sentence, nostalgia for the past and relative acceptance of the present appear; before release, the past and present are largely rejected, anxiety about the future arises [6]. These differences in the results obtained indicate that when analyzing characteristics of the psychological time perception, it is also necessary to take into account additional factors that can have a significant impact on the studied indicators. For example, E. Piotrow and R. Kadzikowska-Wrzosek argue that low scores on the "self-control" scale among convicts lead to the dominance of the "fatalistic present" orientation, which, in turn, negatively affects self-determination [25].

The Polish researchers developed the "Prison Time" methodology aimed at studying perceptual-formal measurements of time (pace, dynamics, variability) and emotional-valence measurements (emotional attitude to the experience of time at the time of serving a sentence) [26]. The study showed that

convicted men perceived the relationship between periods differently, adopted a time orientation, different from that observed in the general population, but the frequency of thinking about specific categories of time was similar [27].

Difficult life circumstances lead to rethinking of time periods of the past, present and future, highlighting significant moments in them, changing one's own attitude to them and affecting the value sphere of a person [2]. Serving a sentence in places of deprivation of liberty, being a rather difficult situation, contributes to the division of life into stages before crime commission and after release. The sentence period is a prerequisite for this rethinking. That is why the model of the developed psycho-correction program involves working with emotional states in the context of the time perspective concept, consistently considering a person's past experience, plans for the future and the current state, which will allow the convict to adapt favorably to the period of serving his/her sentence.

Methods

The developed psycho-correction program was tested on 167 male convicts serving a sentence of imprisonment in subordinate organizations and institutions of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia in the Ryazan Oblast. Sixty-two convicts were included in the experimental group, one hundred and five – in the control group.

The samples mainly have the following parameters: average level of education, unmarried, who have committed a particularly serious crime, openly cooperating with the administration of a correctional institution.

It took 5 months to implement the program. Express diagnostics with the participants involved the use of the positive and negative affect scale (as adapted by E.N. Osin [12]) and was carried out every two weeks to identify the dynamics of changes.

The time periods of the past, present and future were correlated with the emotional states highlighted by E.P. Il'in:

- 1) "Past" – emotional states of the forecast/expectations;
- 2) "Future" – emotional states associated with the failure to achieve the goal;

3) "Present" – communicative emotional states [5].

The first month of research, the main purpose of which was to work out convicts' expectations and forecasts regarding future events and actions based on their own past experience, is called the block "Past" (Table 1).

Table 1
Key activities of the block "Past"

No.	Action plan	Homework assignments
1	Acquaintance. Regression method. Exercises "Our expectations", "Carousel of communication", "Journey into the past".	Answer the questions.
2	Watching the movie "Groundhog Day", discussing significant moments	Make a list of personal fears, worries and feeling based on past experience.
3	Method of sharing experience. Exercises "Self-portrait", "Screen test", parable.	Measure "Evening review of events".
4	Simulation method. Parable. Meditation "The sage from the temple".	Technique "To cut off, discard".

The second month of work was devoted to identifying convicts' life goals and teaching goal-setting (Table 2).

Table 2
Key activities of the block "Future"

No.	Action plan	Homework assignments
1	Method of symbolic self-expression. Exercises "Mobilizing breathing", "Concentration on counting", "Group story", meditation-visualization "Mountain top"	To make a list of life goals and desires.
2	Method of group problem solving. Exercise "Catastrophe in the desert".	To perform the test of M. Rokich's value orientations.
3	Method of group problem solving. Exercises "Quality", "Thrift store", "Suitcase", SMART goal setting technique	To write 10-15 life goals using the SMART technique.
4	Operationalization method. Lecture "Goal setting techniques". Analysis of specific goals of convicts, taking into account possible frustrating situations	To send a letter to yourself in the future.

The rest 3 months were aimed at working with 3 vectors of communication: “convict-convict”, “convict-employee”, “convict-relative, acquaintance”, because the convicts’ present involves communication with other people in the process of everyday interaction in a correctional facility (Table 3).

Table 3

*Key activities
of the block “Present”*

No	Convict – convict	Convict – employee	Convict – relative, acquaintance
1	“Three names”, “Emphasizing community”, “Emphasizing significance”.	“Verbal and nonverbal manifestations”. Exercise “I am an adult”. Mini-lecture “Typical patterns of interaction”, “Lighthouse”.	“Conflict”. Technique “Changing what you don’t like” (T. Krupskaya) using metaphorical associative cards “Dixit”.
2	“I am so afraid, and many are not afraid of it”, “I am not afraid, but many are afraid”, “How have you learned not to be afraid of it?”	“Without a mask”. “Criticism”, statement of criticism. Mini-lecture “Model of constructive criticism” “Constructive criticism”.	“Spilling out aggressiveness”. «Listening techniques”.
3	“Feeling”, “Technique of polite refusal”.	Group discussion “Is it possible to live without established rules?”. Exercises “Uncertain, confident and aggressive answers”, “Yes”. Role-playing game.	“Past, present and future”. “Carousel”.
4	“Detectives”, Drawing on the topic “Dialogue”	“Concentration on a neutral subject”, “Concentration on emotions and mood”. Role-playing game.	Drawing in a circle “Mandalas”. Exercise “Wish in a circle”.

At the end of the experiment, the in-depth diagnostics was carried out using the following methods: Spielberger-Hanin anxiety test,

K. Izard’s differential emotions scale, Y.M. Orlov’s questionnaire of the need for communication and the need for achievement, Rosenzweig frustration test, and Zimbardo time perspective inventory.

Quantitative processing of psycho-diagnostic data was conducted in the program Psychometric Expert 9.1.0. Qualitative processing is represented by the analysis and description of the results obtained.

Statistical processing was performed in the IBM SPSS Statistics 22 program and was carried out in several stages. The Wilcoxon T-test was used to assess differences in the severity of signs measured before and after the psycho-correction program. The Mann-Whitney U-test was applied to assess differences in the level of severity of the studied signs in the experimental and control groups. The Friedman test helped identify dynamics of changes in the experimental group during the program realization.

Results

The author’s early works reflected results of testing the psycho-correction program on a sample of disabled convicts serving sentences in the Correctional Facility No. 2 of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia in the Ryazan Oblast (the male correctional facility of strict regime). The program activities, conducted in a group format with convicts with disabilities, showed their effectiveness, but the dynamics of changes for each was individual [3].

Let us consider results of testing the psycho-correction program on a sample of convicts who do not have any disabilities. The analysis of the methods used at the end of the experiment indicates a decline in the indicators of situational anxiety and the index of negative and anxiety-depressive emotions, as well as a rise in the group conformity rating (GCR) and the positive emotions index (Figure 1). Statistically significant differences are observed in indicators of the scales “need for communication” ($T=28.38$, $p<0.01$) and “negative emotions index” ($T=25.63$, $p<0.01$), as well as extra-punitive ($T=18.41$, $p<0.01$) and intra-punitive ($T=24.53$, $p<0.01$) responses and ego-defense ($T=20.13$, $p<0.01$) and continued need ($T=24.44$, $p<0.01$) types of reactions.

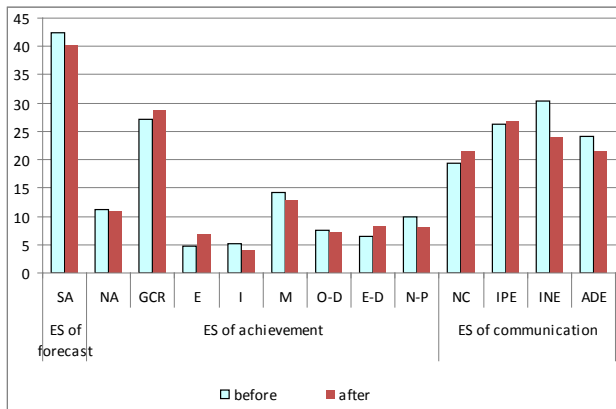


Figure 1. Comparison of average indicators of emotional states before and after the psycho-correction program

*Note. ES – emotional state; SA – situational anxiety; NA – need for achievement; GCR – group conformity rating; E – extra-punitive response; I – intra-punitive response; M – non-punitive response; O-D – obstacle dominance; E-D – ego-defense; N-P – continued need; NC – need for communication; IPE – index of positive emotions; INE – index of negative emotions; ADE – anxious and depressive emotions.

Situational anxiety of the convicts was mainly associated with forecasting their future after release from the correctional facility. Most of them had a negative experience of employment, family life, building relationships with other people, which complicated the process of re-socialization and contributed to the repeated violation of law and order. This experience contributed to a negative forecast of possible events, which was one of the reasons for the depressed state. In the first month of the program, psychological activities were aimed at studying events of the past and possible ways to resolve similar problems if they arise in the future. The convicts noticed that their life stories and difficulties are not unique: other persons who participated in the program also had similar problems. The opportunity to share a story created a favorable atmosphere in the group, which helped to reduce anxiety and increase a degree of the group conformity.

According to the results of the psycho-correction program, the indicators of the need for communication went up, but no purposeful work was done for this. The main format of psychological activities was group classes, which allowed convicts to discuss issues that were important to them together. An active discussion and group assignments revealed

common topics for conversations to be continued in everyday life in the correctional facility. Increased interest in group activities contributed to a rise in the positive emotions index and a decline in the indices of negative and anxiety-depressive emotions.

The work conducted helped identify statistically significant differences only in indicators of the scales of obstacle dominance “O-D” ($U=2658,0$, $p<0.05$) and ego-defense “E-D” ($U=2640,5$, $p<0.05$) types of reactions.

Comparison of average indicators revealed an increase in indicators of the scales “index of positive emotions” and “group conformity rating” (Figure 2) in the experimental group of convicts.

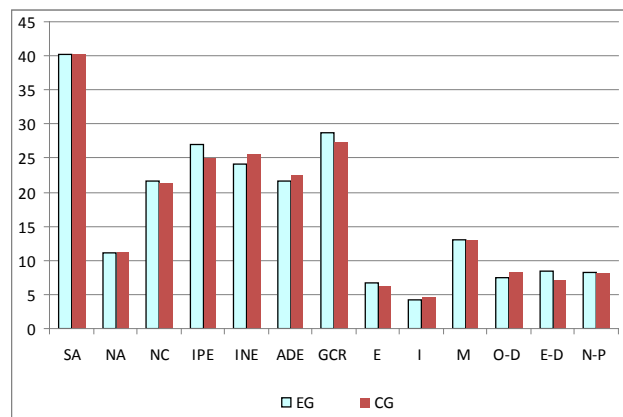


Figure 2. Comparison of average indicators of emotional states in the experimental (EG) and control groups (CG)

*Note. SA – situational anxiety; NA – need for achievement; NC – need for communication; IPE – index of positive emotions; INE – index of negative emotions; ADE – anxious and depressive emotions; GCR – group conformity rating; E – extra-punitive response; I – intra-punitive response; M – non-punitive response; O-D – obstacle dominance; E-D – ego-defense; N-P – continued need.

When studying the dynamics of changes in emotional states, patterns were revealed at a high level of statistical significance between indicators of positive ($\chi^2=461,1$, $p<0.001$) and negative ($\chi^2=90,1$, $p<0.001$) affect.

Figure 3 shows the dynamics of changes in positive and negative affect, which were measured once every two weeks. By 3–5 measurements, we can observe a sharp jump in affect, which we associate with the transition to the block “Future”, which is one of the most difficult and uncertain for convicts. Most convicts serving sentences in places of deprivation of liberty are repeat offenders

and, after release, experience difficulties in adapting to life outside the correctional institution, which leads to re-commission of crime. Difficulties in planning the future are associated with unreality of visible prospects and discrepancy between available adequate human capabilities.

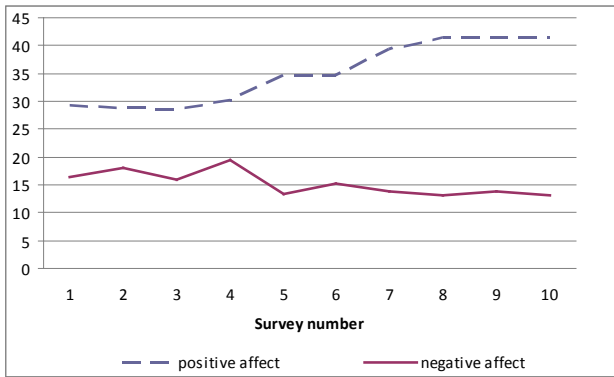


Figure 3. Dynamics of changes in positive and negative affect

The cluster analysis made it possible to divide the experimental group into two clusters, differing in the dynamics of changes in emotional state throughout the entire period of the program: Cluster 1 comprised 46 people, Cluster 2 – 16 (Figure 4). It can be noted that the second cluster participants are characterized by smooth dynamics of changes in positive affect. The first cluster convicts have a sharp jump on the 5th measurement associated with the transition to the block “Present”, aimed at working with current conditions during the period of serving sentences in places of deprivation of liberty.

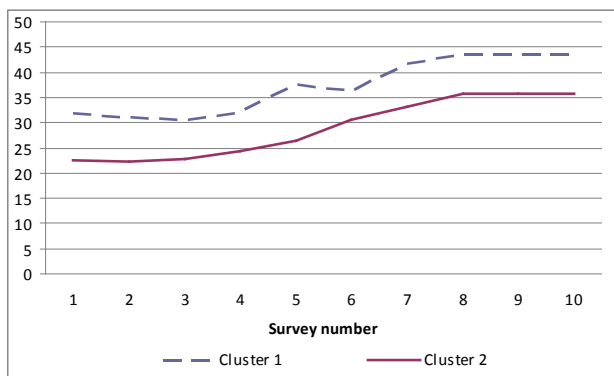


Figure 4. Dynamics of changes in positive affect in clusters 1 and 2

Cluster 2 is characterized by a gradual decrease in negative affect by the middle of the program and jumps on the 7th and 9th measurements due to conducted classes focused on communication of convicts with employees and relatives (Figure 5).

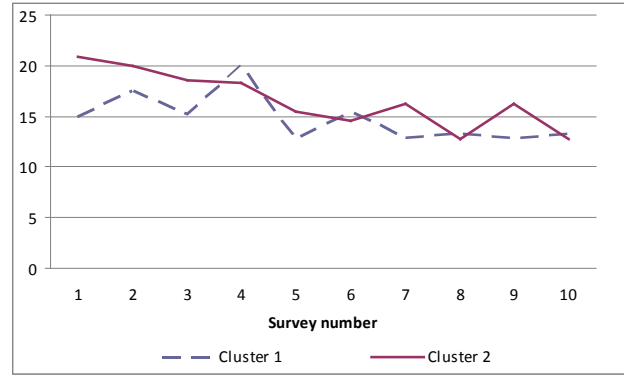


Figure 5. Dynamics of changes in negative affect in clusters 1 and 2

In Cluster 1 the jumps reflect the end of blocks “Past” and “Future”. The convicts of this cluster noted that a one-month period to study past experience and future plans was not enough for them, and the completion of one stage led to regret. The block “Present” did not affect their emotional states so much, because in the current period their life was not saturated with certain events, only interaction and communication at the “convict-convict” level caused vivid discussions, since it was this vector of relations that was full of various conflict situations requiring discussion.

As a result of the psycho-correction program, the convicts’ attitude to their own goals and plans for the future, as well as perception of events of the present period, changed, there was a desire to achieve satisfactory relationships with other people in order to maintain an optimal emotional state during the period of serving a sentence in the correctional institution. Statistically significant differences were achieved in indicators of the scales “positive past” ($T=26,0, p<0.001$), “hedonistic present” ($T=10.5, p<0.001$), “fatalistic present” ($T=30.18, p<0.001$), “future” ($T=13.5, p<0.001$) (Figure 6).

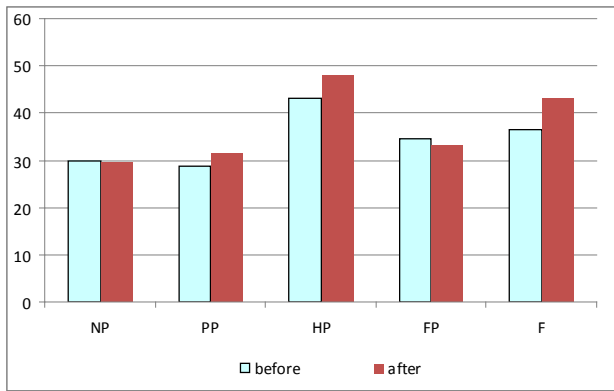


Figure 6. Comparison of average indicators according to the time perspective questionnaire

*Note: NP – negative past, PP – positive past, HN – hedonistic present, FP – fatalistic present, F – future

Discussion

In conditions of restricted freedom (“spatial restriction”) the perception of time changes, which can also influence convicts’ emotional state. The psychocorrection program, aimed at working with emotional states at each time stage, allows convicts to perceive life not as segments “before” and “after” serving a sentence, but as a single whole, cycle of interrelated events. Optimization of the emotional state according to the perception of the past, present and future leads to a favorable forecast of the process of adapting to difficult life circumstances.

The degree of connection between the categories of time demonstrates how much previous experience affects the present, and it, in turn, affects the future. The data obtained indicate convicts’ orientation to the past, expressed by certain emotional states affecting the subjective perception of the remaining time periods. Purposeful work with each life stage helps reduce manifestation of negative and anxious and depressive emotions.

However, when assessing convicts’ emotional states, the socio-psychological situation (SPS) is one of the significant factors requiring research, because convicts arrive in a closed space and their condition is subject to “infection” of the general mood of surrounding people.

The sample included 2,092 convicts, which is 72.3% of the total number of persons serving sentences in subordinate organizations and institutions of the Federal Penitentiary

Service of Russia in the Ryazan Oblast. Aged 21–75, convicts have different marital status and educational level (Table 4).

Table 4 Socio-psychological situation in the current period

Indicators		2 quarter of 2021
Block No. 1 Conditions of serving a sentence	average value	78%
	interpretation	satisfactory
Block No. 2 Operational situation in the correctional facility	average value	72%
	interpretation	satisfactory.
Block No. 3 Relationships in “the employee-convict” system	average value	74%
	interpretation	satisfactory.
Block No. 4 Relationships in the “convict-convict” system	average value	67%
	interpretation	unstable
Block No. 5 Convicts’ state	average value	78%
	interpretation	satisfactory.
Block No. 6 System of attitudes and motivation of convicts	average value	79%
	interpretation	satisfactory.
Assessment of the socio-psychological situation	number of unsatisfactory ratings by blocks	0
	number of unstable ratings by blocks	1
	number of satisfactory ratings by blocks	5

Having studied the socio-psychological situation in institutions, we identified changes in the convicts’ general mood associated with the epidemiological situation and changes in leadership. To a certain extent, it had an impact on indicators of the convicts in the control group. However, despite the circumstances, indicators of the convicts who participated in the program are quite positive.

Conclusions

The psycho-correction program based on comparison of emotional states with the temporary perspective concept has shown its effectiveness in a sample of convicts: indicators of situational anxiety declined compared to the primary results, emotional states of achieving (not achieving) goals did not undergo any special changes, however, indicators of extra-punitive and ego-defense responses rose, the need for communication increased,

the index of positive emotions and the indices of negative and anxiety-depressive emotions decreased.

To develop this scientific direction, it is possible to expand the developed research model by considering a larger number of components in the structure of emotional

states; adapt program classes for conducting trainings in an individual form as part of psychological measures implementation according to the individual program of psychological support of convicts who are on various types of preventive care, as well as activities with released convicts in the pre-release school.

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Received February 28, 2022