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Experience in Developing and Testing a Model Program for Psychological and Educational Work with Persons Convicted of Terrorist and Extremist Crimes

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Abstract

Introduction: the steady increase in the number of the suspected, accused and convicted of terrorism and extremism, as well as cases of their participation in various emergencies, necessitates a personal, targeted approach to correctional psychological and educational work with them. The need for an individual approach, including in psychological and educational work with those convicted of terrorism and extremism, is also indicated by regulatory legal documents, in particular the Order of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia No. 1111 dated November 24, 2017 "On the organization of events on countering terrorism, extremist activity in penal enforcement institutions and bodies". *Study purpose:* determination of the effectiveness of the tested model program for psychological correction of personality of persons convicted of terrorism and extremism-related crimes. *Research methods:* psychodiagnostics *methods:* the Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI) "Time perspective of convicts", multidimensional self-attitude research questionnaire, a psychodiagnostic method "Life-purpose orientations"; a method for testing the program developed; a method for identifying statistical differences – the Student's t-test; a method for comparative analysis of the psychodiagnostics results obtained following the testing results. *Results:* validation of the reliability of statistical differences with the help of the Student's t-test determined the absence of significant changes in the indicators of convicts in the control group. Meaningful changes were observed in the indicators of convicts of the experimental group with the help of the following methods: ZTPI "Time perspective of convicts", a multidimensional self-attitude research questionnaire and a psychodiagnostic method "Life-purpose orientations". A comparative analysis of the results of psychodiagnostics of convicts in the experimental group before and after testing of the basic program proved the reliability of statistical differences with the help of the Student's t-test determined the presence of positive personality changes in the behavioral, cognitive and affective spheres of the personality of convicts in the experimental group. *Conclusions:* assessment of the model program testing results revealed a sufficient degree of its effectiveness and the possibility of its implementation. The model program largely determined the content and structure of the section of the additional professional program – a professional development program for psychological service employees who accompany persons convicted of terrorist and extremist crimes.

Key words: targeted approach, educational work, psychological work, model program, correctional work, convicts, extremism, terrorism, irrational attitudes.

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Introduction

The need to counter terrorist and extremist ideology in society in general and in the penitentiary system in particular through the elaboration of methodological works dedicated to the correctional impact on persons serving sentences for terrorist and extremist crimes is beyond doubt [8, p. 3, 17, 20]. The normative legal acts regulating the content of psychological work with convicts of various categories determine the necessity to develop methodological materials that contribute to the implementation of effective psycho-correctional work with convicts sentenced for terrorist and extremist crimes. Such regulatory legal documents include the Comprehensive plan to counter terrorism ideology in the Russian Federation for 2019–2023 [5], the Concept for the development of the penal enforcement system of the Russian Federation up to 2020 [6], the Order of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia No. 1111 dated November 24, 2017 “On the organization of events on countering terrorism, extremist activity in penal enforcement institutions and bodies”, and the Action plan to improve performance of psychological services of the penal enforcement system for the period of 2018–2020. The implementation of the model program in 2019 was provided for in paragraph 4.6. of the Action plan to improve performance of psychological services of the penal enforcement system for the period of 2018–2020.

The purpose of the research was to test a model program. To achieve the goal, the following tasks were solved: working out the specified model program on the basis of already elaborated psychological and pedagogical techniques and methods; testing of the model program in various territorial bodies of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia, selecting appropriate tools, interpreting and assessing the results obtained.

The hypothesis of the study was the assumption about the effectiveness of psychological and pedagogical techniques and methods contained in the model program, contributing to the correctional effect on convicts of the studied category.

Research methods

The research methods were the following: the Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (hereinafter – ZTPI) “Time perspective (TP) of convicts”, a multidimensional self-attitude research questionnaire, a psychodiagnostic method “Life-purpose orientations”; a method for testing the program developed; a method for identifying statistical differences – the Student’s t-test; a method for comparative analysis of the psychodiagnostics results obtained when testing.

The formation of the model program content was influenced by the provision of the Concept for the development of the penal enforcement system of the Russian Federation on the “necessity to provide targeted psychological assistance to all convicts in accordance with their general characteristics”. We conducted work on determining general characteristics of those convicted of terrorist and extremist crimes, as well as most common (typical) socio-psychological characteristics among them in 2013–2018 within the framework of a number of research topics of the Federal Research Institute of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia.

The material on general characteristics of persons convicted of extremist and terrorist crimes, as well as on most common (typical) socio-psychological characteristics among them, is presented in a number of our publications [3,4] and in the analytical review with proposals “Theoretical and practical possibilities for developing a model program” (Our ref. 15-95516 of December 12, 2018), sent even before the model program development to the territorial bodies of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia for practical use of psychologists of the penal enforcement system.

It should be noted that, as in case of standard programs implemented in 2012, the model program is defined as such, since its structure and content of many psychological measures represent the basis for psychological corrective work with convicts of the category under consideration.

Discussion

It should be noted that the 2012 standard programs could not sufficiently implement the

provision of the Concept for the development of the penal enforcement system of the Russian Federation up to 2020 on the “necessity to provide targeted psychological assistance to all convicts in accordance with their general characteristics”. Each program is devoted to the norms of law (articles) of several chapters of the Criminal Code (hereinafter referred to as the RF CC), which means it was initially devoid of targeting [11, p. 201]. In particular, the 2012 standard program on the organization of individual educational, social and psychological work with those convicted of crimes against state power, military service, peace and security of mankind meant carrying out such work only with persons who committed crimes according to the norms specified in chapters 30–34 of the RF Criminal Code. These chapters include articles 285–361, a significant part of which is not devoted to extremism and terrorism-related crimes. Accordingly, most RF Criminal Code norms devoted to terrorist and extremist crimes, as well as work with convicted persons, are simply not considered in this program.

Unlike the standard program for psychological work with convicts, developed by the interregional psychological work department of territorial bodies of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia in the Arkhangelsk Oblast and used by penitentiary psychologists since 2017, the model program does not oblige psychologists to develop grouping-based individual projects of working with convicts (hereinafter – IPW). A model program in such projects is understood as a set of measures organized and carried out by psychologists of institutions, designed on the basis of studying personal characteristics of convicts, nature of the crimes committed by them, used for corrective action on convicts and prevention of their commission of new crimes. In addition, psychologists have to determine “targets of influence” on a convict.

The content of the model program was so constructively perceived by the community of penitentiary psychologists-researchers that some of them began to use the text of the model program in their publications without references, posing as their own. It is now possible to get an idea of the content, structure (stages of work) and methodological aspects of the model program by studying the publication materials of such psychologists. In this situation, it seems even inconvenient for the model program developer to disclose various aspects of its content, for example, issues of irrational (de-

structive) cognitive attitudes, beliefs and value orientations of convicts.

We will give a brief description of the content and structure of the model program. In essence, it is a system of measures carried out by penitentiary psychologists, developed on the basis of an in-depth study of the personality of convicts of the categories under consideration, the nature of the crimes committed [10] and used to correct them and prevent new violations.

Structurally the basic program consists of blocks devoted to the psychological study of cognitive, affective and behavioral levels (spheres) of the personality of those convicted of extremism and terrorism-related crimes. Consideration of the specifics of general characteristics of such convicts proves the necessity to focus on mechanisms of the cognitive-behavioral approach when conducting psychological corrective work with them.

The model program outstands, as it is a ready-to-use methodological material for practical use, already tested in the framework of the Standard model of conducting a pilot on the organization of supervision in correctional facilities of the penal enforcement system in 2017–2018, as well as for practical use of the “Psychological correctional program of work with prisoners serving sentences for terrorist and extremist activities” in the territorial bodies since 2014.

The testing of the model program, conducted in February–June 2019, involved 690 convicts from 122 correctional facilities of 30 territorial bodies of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia from 5 federal districts of the Russian Federation. The convicts were divided into 2 groups: experimental (326 people), in which the model program was used, and control (364 people), in which the model program was not used.

Most significant positive results of the model program testing, in comparison with the indicators of the same period of the previous year, were recorded in the behavioral sphere of the personality of convicts. So, the results of the study of disciplinary practice indicators (Table 1) show that:

- the number of penalties imposed on convicts of the experimental group has significantly decreased: from 501 in 2018 to 395 in 2019 (by 21.2%);
- the number of penalties imposed on convicts of the control group increased from 539 in 2018 to 677 in 2019 (by 20.4%);

– the number of incentives increased slightly from 22 in 2018 to 30 in 2019, and convicts of both among convicts of the experimental group the control group from 22 in 2018 to 26 in 2019.

Table 1

Indicators of disciplinary practice of convicts who participated in the model program testing

IPWD (interregional psychological work departments of territorial bodies of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia)	penalties				incentives			
	experimental group		control group		experimental group		control group	
	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019	2018	2019
IPWD of the Volga Federal District	347	210	372	494	9	10	9	14
IPWD MOPR of the Southern Federal District	11	16	23	24	2	2	0	0
IPWD of the Far Eastern Federal District	17	35	27	24	0	0	0	0
IPWD of the Siberian Federal District	65	56	63	69	7	10	8	3
Total for all IPWD	501	395	539	677	22	30	22	26

These are the results of disciplinary practice of the convicts during testing in comparison with the indicators of the same period of the previous year, when the model program was not tested.

A comparative analysis of the results of psychological diagnostics of convicts of experimental and control groups before and after the model program testing shows the following:

1. Validation of the reliability of statistical differences with the help of the Student's t-test determined the absence of significant changes in the indicators of convicts in the control group. Consequently, there were no meaningful personal changes in the convicts of this group.

2. Significant changes were observed in the indicators of convicts of the experimental group, according to the following methods: ZTPI "Time perspective of convicts", a multidimensional questionnaire for self-attitude study and a psychodiagnostic method "Life-purpose orientations".

2.1. The use of the Zimbardo time perspective inventory revealed the following (Table 2):

– the increase in the average indicator of a present hedonistic (PH) TP from 44.7 to 45.4 points testifies to convicts' increased orientation to the hedonistic present, that is, their life situation ceases to be so difficult to bear [22, 23], they begin to show interest in something new, try to avoid traumatic experiences and events, experience a surge of mental strength,

energy, uplift, the feeling of a full life returns to them;

– the rise in the average indicator of a future (F) TP from 44.8 to 46.2 points is associated with convicts' intention to refuse momentary pleasures for the sake of greater remuneration in the future and their adherence to the principle of reality when planning their lives [1]. People tend to rethink their life styles and values, consider realities of life and take into account other people's interests and social norms of behavior;

– the decrease in the indicator of a positive past (PP) TP from 33 to 32.4 points in combination with the indicator of a future TP determines convicts' greater orientation to the present and future than to the past [2, p. 21]. They are already less "stuck" in the past; they expect something positive and good from life. The past as a repository of mistakes and traumatic memories is no longer so burdensome for them due to psychological working-through;

– the decrease in the indicator of a present fatalistic (PF) TP from 38.3 to 37.1 points determines weakening of convicts' fatal belief that everything is predetermined from above and a person himself/herself is not able to change anything. People begin to believe in their own strength, in the fact that it is they who determine their future to a large extent, and it is their actions that lay foundations for their future.

Table 2

Indicators of psychological diagnostics of convicts who participated in the model program testing according to the ZTPI

Characteristics of statistical analysis	Scales of the ZTPI							
	PH_ before	PH_ after	F_ before	F_ after	PP_ before	PP_ after	PF_ before	PF_ after
Average	44.71	45.44	44.78	46.17	33.01	32.40	38.25	37.05
Variance	47.34	54.91	37.30	40.69	24.60	32.24	42.57	54.51

Observations	326	326	326	326	326	326	326	326
Combined variance	51.02		39.1		28.1		48.53	
t-statistics	1.12		1.1		0.9		0.7	
P(T<=t) one-sided	0.12		0.2		0.3		0.2	
t critical one-sided	-0.49		1.71		1.72		1.7	
P(T<=t) two-sided	0.40		0.26		0.55		0.38	

2.2. The results of the psychodiagnostic method “Life-purpose orientations (hereinafter – LPO)” disclose the following (Table 3):

– the increase in the average indicator of “Life goals (G)” from 32.5 to 33.6 points characterizes intensified inner work of man on the formation of life attitudes for the future, which boost processes of meaning and time perspective formation. At the same time, a person tries not to live for today, or in the past [12, p. 56; 13, p. 33];

– the rise in the indicator of an “Life outcome (O)” from 25.4 to 25.9 reflects strengthening of the tendency to analyze a part of the life lived [7, p. 106]. An indicator below 25 points determines extreme dissatisfaction with the past;

– the increase in the indicator “Locus of control (LC-L)” from 26 to 27.4 points forms the conviction of convicts that they control their lives, make decisions and realize them [16; 19].

Table 3

Indicators of psychological diagnostics of convicts who participated in the model program testing according to the LPO method

Characteristics of statistical analysis	Scales of the LPO method					
	G_before	G_after	O_before	O_after	LC-L_before	LC-L_after
Average	32.5	33.6	25.4	25.9	26.0	27.4
Variance	53.12	32.90	28.60	26.10	35.18	26.17
Observations	326	326	326	326	326	326
Combined variance	42.87		27.15		38.97	
t-statistics	0.90		0.61		1.21	
P(T<=t) one-sided	0.31		0.33		0.22	
t critical one-sided	1.71		1.49		1.48	
P(T<=t) two-sided	0.16		0.41		0.27	

2.3. The results of the multidimensional self-attitude research questionnaire (hereinafter –

MSAR) are reflected in (Table 4).

Table 4

Indicators of psychological diagnostics of convicts who participated in the model program testing according to the MSAR method

Characteristics of statistical analysis	Scales of the MSAR method			
	s_w before	s_w after	s_a before	s_a after
Average	9.51	9.79	6.54	7.83
Variance	326	326	326	326
Observations	7.68	7.22	5.89	4.11
Combined variance	7.12		3.9	
t-statistics	0.91		1.5	
P(T<=t) one-sided	0.20		0.09	
t critical one-sided	1.81		1.79	
P(T<=t) two-sided	1.20		0.16	

The rise in the indicator of “self-worth (S_w)” from 9.46 to 9.94 points indicates greater self-esteem and constructive self-perception of convicts. At the same time, there is a decrease in the degree of doubt about individual significance and the indifference to one’s own self. People become more interested in their inner world.

The growth in the indicator of “self-acceptance (S_a)” from 6.82 to 7.51 points shows a decrease in the degree of intrapersonal conflict associated with self-assessment on the part of the surrounding social environment, determines manifestation of self-efficacy and faith in other people’s acceptance.

3. Thus, the comparative analysis of the results of psychological diagnostics of convicts of the experimental group before and after the model program testing proved reliability of statistical differences with the help of the Student's t-test, determined presence of positive personality changes in behavioral, cognitive and affective spheres of the personality of convicts of the experimental group.

3.1. At the cognitive level (sphere) of personality: convicts begin to show interest in everything new (information, events, people); refusing momentary pleasures, they begin to plan their lives based on the principle of reality. There is a trend to rethink life, its values, based on the realities of life, take into account the interests of other people and social norms of behavior. The work on the meaning formation is triggered, and the passed period of life is also assessed.

3.2. At the affective level (sphere) of personality: convicts tend to avoid traumatic experiences and events, experience a surge of strength, energy, and spiritual strength; they are already less "stuck" in the past, expect something positive and good from life, the past as a repository of mistakes and traumatic memories is no longer so burdensome for them due to psychological working-through. The convicts' attitude that they are able to exercise control over their lives, make decisions and implement them in life is strengthened. Intrapersonal conflict is decreased.

3.3. At the behavioral level (sphere) of personality: there is a significant decrease in destructive acts. For example, the analysis of disciplinary practice showed a 21.2% decrease in penalties applied to convicts. Convicts begin to take into account other people's interests and social norms of behavior. Manifestation of intrapersonal conflict associated with the assessment of oneself on the part of the surrounding social environment is minimized.

The model program proved to be effective. Thus, it can be used in the framework of psychological work with convicts who are on the watch list as persons studying, promoting, or spreading extremist ideology in accordance with the Instructions for the prevention of offenses among persons held in penal institutions approved by the Order of the Ministry of Justice of Russia No. 72 of May 20, 2013. It should be noted that the realization of the model program makes it possible to ensure the implementation of provisions of the Concept for the development of the penal enforcement system of the

Russian Federation ensuring targeted psychological assistance to all convicts in accordance with their general characteristics.

The model program largely determined the content and structure of the section of the additional professional program – the competence development program for "Employees of the penal enforcement system whose job responsibilities include prevention and combating terrorism and extremist activity in penal institutions, resocialization of persons convicted of terrorism and extremism-related crimes", developed for the purpose of methodological support of the process of professional development of penitentiary psychologists.

In 2019, twelve psychologists of the RF penal enforcement system participated in the specified training program at the Academy of the FAS of Russia. In 2020, forty more psychologists underwent advanced training in the video conferencing format.

Elaboration of methodological support for psychological work with those convicted of terrorism and extremism involved reporting on this direction of penitentiary psychologists' work.

So, in accordance with paragraph 1.4.2. of the Order of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia dated November 24, 2017 No. 1111 "On the organization of events on countering terrorism, extremist activity in penal enforcement institutions and bodies", as well as paragraph 1.6 of the Protocol of the All-Russian meeting of the heads of psychological services, inter-regional psychological work departments of territorial bodies of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia, psychologists of the units for provision of psychological support to educational organizations of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia worked out a reporting form of the psychological service of a territorial body of the FPS of Russia on the results of work with persons convicted of terrorism and extremism-related crimes (hereinafter – a reporting form).

When developing a reporting form, it was agreed that the procedure to provide reporting information should not be onerous for penitentiary psychologists and the reports should be as informative as possible to determine characteristics of convicts of the category under consideration. Also, the developed reporting form should easily integrate with the electronic reporting form "PS-1" in the automated system of a penitentiary psychologist, worked out by the interregional department of psychological work of the FPS of Russia in the Yaroslavl Oblast. In order to meet this requirement, the reporting

form was previously agreed with the specialists of this organization.

According to the reporting forms of territorial bodies of the FPS of Russia, since 2019, penitentiary psychologists have been applying the model program developed in accordance with paragraph 4.6. of the Action plan to improve performance of psychological services of the penal enforcement system for the period of 2018–2020. More than two thousand convicted of terrorism and extremism are engaged in this work annually.

Psychological portraits (characteristics) and recommendations and brief psychological references are prepared on the basis of results of this diagnostic work.

Among those convicted of terrorist and extremist crimes, there are people:

- with leadership qualities and a negative orientation;
- with signs of mental disorders;
- with increased aggressiveness and excitability.

Individual corrective and preventive measures, psychological consultations are conducted with those convicted of terrorist and extremist crimes.

Psychologists of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia together with the model program use an educational and methodological manual “Religions and extremism. Directions and methods of countering religious extremism in places of deprivation of liberty” (Research Institute of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia) [9, p. 52; 14; 15], sent to territorial bodies of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia by the Department of Educational, Social and

Psychological Activities of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia on June 27, 2019 (Our ref. 15-47420).

Conclusions

It is worth noting that development of the main methodological material regulating implementation of psychological work with those convicted of extremist and terrorist crimes was preceded by years long research work to identify general characteristics of such convicts, as well as to single out most common (typical) socio-psychological characteristics within a number of research topics.

Determination of the above characteristics contributed to the realization of the provision of the Concept for the development of the penal enforcement system of the Russian Federation up to 2020 to ensure targeted psychological assistance to convicts in accordance with their general characteristics within the framework of the model program – the main methodological document regulating the implementation of psychological work with convicts sentenced for terrorism and extremism-related crimes.

The model program materials largely determined the content and structure of the section of the additional professional training program for psychologists of the FPS of Russia for work with those convicted of terrorism and extremism.

Provision of methodological support for psychological work with those convicted of terrorism and extremism contributed to the elaboration and implementation of a reporting form in this area of work of psychologists of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia.

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