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Conceptualisation of Resentment and Loneliness as Determinants of Stress in Men Serving a Prison Sentence

Konceptualizacja resentmentu i poczucie osamotnienia jako wyznaczniki stresu u mężczyzn odbywających karę pozbawienia wolności

The paper aims at analysing the predictors of stress in men serving a prison sentence by examining the sense of loneliness and conceptualising resentment. The feeling of loneliness, understood as a subjective state of feeling isolated and lacking a sense of emotional connection with others, will be considered a component of three indicators: the feeling of lack of contact with others, the severance of social ties, and belonging to a social group. On the other hand, resentment in the emotional regulatory system is presented as a negative feeling resulting from a sense of unfulfillment and isolation, causing a mental state that extends over time and is based on various types of emotional reactions. It may cause these feelings to turn into revenge without concrete actions, which entails hatred, but does not lead to direct harm but jealousy. The conceptualisation of resentment refers to personal experiences that influence the emotional state and components of environmental attitudes in penitentiary settings. Moreover, the predictor of stress, i.e., the psychophysical reaction to events potentially exceeding the ability of the individual to cope, is considered its intensification. The study involved 128 adult men aged 20 to 65, serving a prison sentence in Polish in the penitentiary in Popowo and Warsaw – Służewiec. The obtained results indicate a relationship between the level of perceived stress and the feeling of loneliness and resentment.

Key words: stress, a sense of loneliness, resentment, emotions, penitentiary psychology

Podjęta tematyka ma na celu analizę predyktorów stresu u mężczyzn odbywających karę pozbawienia wolności poprzez zbadanie poczucia osamotnienia oraz konceptualizację resentymentu. Poczucie osamotnienia, rozumiane jako subiektywny stan odczuwania izolacji i brak poczucia więzi emocjonalnej z innymi, będzie rozpatrywane jako składowa trzech wskaźników: poczucie braku kontaktu z innymi, zerwanie więzi społecznych oraz przynależność do grupy społecznej. Natomiast resentyment w systemie regulacyjnym emocji jest przedstawiony jako negatywne uczucie wynikające z poczucia niespełnienia oraz odizolowania, powodując stan psychiczny, który rozciąga się w czasie, a u jego podłoża leżą różnego rodzaju reakcje o zabarwieniu uczuciowym. Co może powodować, że te uczucia przekształcą się w zemstę bez konkretnych czynów, wywołują nienawiść, ale nie prowadząc do zadawania wprost krzywdy, a powodując zazdrość. Konceptualizacja resentymentu dotyczy osobistych doświadczeń, które wpływają na stan emocjonalny i składowe postaw środowiskowych w warunkach penitencjarnych. Ponadto predyktor stresu, czyli reakcja psychofizyczna na wydarzenia potencjalnie przekraczające możliwości poradzenia sobie przez jednostkę, rozpatrywane są jako jego nasilenie. W badaniu wzięło udział 128 dorosłych mężczyzn w wieku od 20 do 65 lat, odbywających karę pozbawienia wolności na terenie Polski w zakładzie karnym w Popowie oraz zakładzie karnym w Warszawie – Służewcu. Otrzymane wyniki wskazują na związek poziomu odczuwanego stresu z poczuciem osamotnienia oraz resentymentem.

Słowa kluczowe: stres, poczucie osamotnienia, resentyment, emocje, psychologia penitencjarna

Theoretical Introduction – In Search of Stress Predictors

The purpose of this paragraph is to identify the predictive factors of stress (the feeling of lack of contact with others, the severance of social ties, and belonging to a social group) and the factors resulting from resentment in people serving a prison sentence. Inmates are locked up every day, isolated from the rest of the world around the clock, sharing space with other people. They are subject to constant control by prison staff, and their daily lives are strictly regulated under the prison rules, and punishment in its general sense is perceived as a “specific kind of

regulator”¹. Contact with the outside world is limited – the number of phone calls to loved ones or live meetings is regulated by superiors. This specific life situation, associated with forced isolation and limitation of many needs, provides an important context for the analysis of stress. Deprivation of needs while serving a prison sentence begins with basic physiological needs. Prisoners use the toilet in their cells, and access to the shower, which is limited, usually is only available once a week, depending on the ward’s rules. On other days, the convict may only use the sink in his cell. Generally, life in prisons is characterised by a certain routine and repetitiveness². The degree and intensity of stress in prison may therefore depend on the degree of stress, isolation, and resentment. Constant deprivation of needs leads to the accumulation of negative emotions that hinder the normal functioning and development of the individual. The isolation and marginalisation that society inflicts on inmates leads to feelings of loneliness, misunderstanding, and exclusion. Therefore, it is important to understand the psychological functioning of convicts, their experienced stress, and ways of coping with it, feeling of loneliness, and resentment.

Stress and Coping

According to Lazarus and Folkman’s definition, stress is a “specific relationship between a person and the environment, which is assessed by the person as burdening or exceeding their resources and threatening their well-being”, while the title “transaction” refers to a cognitive assessment³. The stressful nature of a given transactional situation is the result of two main processes: cognitive assessment and coping strategies. According to this definition, cognitive assessment occurs before the individual undertakes coping actions. Therefore, the coping process is intentional and dependent on the situational context, it is sequential and dynamic, as it has a process-based dimension⁴. Stress occurs when an individual assesses a given situation as potentially preventing the achievement of the

¹ M. Ciosek, B. Pastwa-Wojciechowska, *Psychologia penitencjarna*, Warszawa 2017, pp. 12–14.

² R. Poklek, *Zarys psychologii penitencjarnej*, Diffin, Warszawa 2018, p. 33.

³ I. Heszen-Niejodek, *Teoria stresu psychologicznego i radzenia sobie*, [in:] J. Strelau (ed.), *Psychologia. Podręcznik akademicki*, Gdańsk 2000, p. 470.

⁴ R.S. Lazarus, *From psychological stress to the emotion: A history of changing outlooks*, “*Annual Review of Psychology*” 1993, no. 44, pp. 1–21.

assumed goal, which causes increased emotional arousal and triggering processes aimed at controlling this arousal. Therefore, stress is related to cognitive processes that determine the way an individual interprets, evaluates, and understands a situation. This situation can be assessed as neutral (one that does not matter), positive (auspicious, optimistic), and negative (stressful, harmful), causing negative emotions.

The second theory relating to stress is the “Conservation of Resources Theory” by Stevan Hobfoll. Its main premise is that the human being aims to find, maintain, and protect the objects (or resources) he values⁵. A stressful situation is a relationship with the environment and is activated in circumstances related to the existence of a threat of loss of resources; actual loss of resources or lack of expected profits, even though that the entity has invested a significant amount of its resources. In his theory, Hobfoll links stress to the adaptive system that man has acquired since the beginning of existence – human nature is determined in such a way as to protect and fight for what is valuable to him. When there is a risk of losing resources, there is an automatic, knee-jerk reaction (fixed specific patterns of behaviour and beliefs of the individual). Stress is a kind of automatic reaction and is not fully conscious – it is rather an “adaptive reaction” within, causing feelings of jealousy, hatred, or revenge.

Many Polish penitentiary officers, led by Iwona Niewiadomska⁶, have studied the personality determinants as well as the causes and effects of prison stress – one of the first objective factors was the expected duration of the prison sentence imposed by the court and its type. It does not mean that the level of stress of an inmate is directly proportional to the length of the sentence – for some people, even the shortest sentence can be a huge psychological burden. However, it is assumed that long-term sentences have a particularly negative impact on the convicted’s psyche. Time is a precious value for every human being, because, considering the transience of human life, the time lost in being locked up in prison walls is very painful – especially if the person serving a prison sentence has a sentence of several years in perspective. The study’s results showed that for most people, the most difficult period was the first months, when isolation put them in states of fear, anxiety, uncertainty, sadness, irritability, and constant tension, which led to ambivalence of attitudes and

⁵ S. Hobfoll, *Stres, kultura i społeczność. Psychologia i filozofia stresu*, GWP, Gdańsk 2006, pp. 49–67.

⁶ I. Niewiadomska, *Osobowościowe uwarunkowania skuteczności kary pozbawienia wolności*, Lublin 2007, pp. 387–390.

judgments, as well as a sense of uncertainty about their own fate and that of their loved ones⁷.

People who are less mentally resilient experience the greatest stress already at the moment of arrest, when the very fact is so shocking to them and causes such a huge trauma that it leads to PTSD syndrome (post-traumatic stress disorder), which occurs in people experiencing extremely strong traumatic events and it manifests itself, e.g., as sleep disorders, persistent recurrences of the traumatic event, nightmares or mood swings⁸.

Convicted people serving a prison sentence, experiencing a new situation, such as isolation, are forced to learn new ways of dealing with difficult situations or skilfully apply those they already know. Typically, symptoms of experienced trauma include increased reactivity to stress, a tendency to seek new and intense stimuli, and high levels of negative emotions, impulsivity, and aggression⁹. In conclusion, “in persons with significant adaptive potential, serving a prison sentence associated with social isolation, long-term stress, negative emotions, and inability to achieve life goals leads to a chronic crisis of evaluation resulting in personality disintegration and difficulties in social functioning”¹⁰.

Feeling of Loneliness

John Cacioppo, the author of research on loneliness, defined it in one of his books as “human hunger” and the “search for social food”¹¹. According to the author, each human sometimes experiences such a “hunger”, which does not have to be identical with the lack of any relations but also with their quality.

⁷ P. Constantino, S.G. Assis, L.W. Pinto, *The impact of prisons on the mental health of prisoners in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil*, “Ciência & Saúde Coletiva” 2016, no. 21(7), pp. 2089–2100.

⁸ R. Yehuda, J. LeDoux, *Response variation following trauma: A translational neuroscience approach to understanding PTSD*, “Neuron” 2007, no. 56(1), pp. 19–32.

⁹ M. Otto, C. O’Cleirigh, M. Pollack, *Attending to emotional cues for drug abuse: Bridging the gap between clinic and home behaviors*, “Science & Practice Perspectives” 2007, no. 3, pp. 48–56; L.M. Najavits, M. Walsh, *Dissociation, PTSD, and substance abuse: An empirical study*, “Journal of Trauma & Dissociation” 2012, no. 13(1), pp. 115–126.

¹⁰ I. Niewiadomska, *Osobowościowe uwarunkowania skuteczności kary pozbawienia wolności*, Lublin 2007, p. 531.

¹¹ L.C. Hawkey, J. Cacioppo, *Loneliness Matters: A Theoretical and Empirical Review of Consequences and Mechanisms*, “Annals of Behavioral Medicine” 2010, no. 40, pp. 218–227.

Another definition of loneliness defines it as a “state in which a person does not find support in other people or her own inner world”, which is why “loneliness usually results from a subjective assessment of the quality of a person’s interpersonal relationships, and not from the number of these relationships”¹². In the case of the group of respondents, it is particularly important, as they constitute a specific category experiencing forced isolation. Convicts have limited contact with people outside the prison on a daily basis, limiting themselves mainly to penitentiary staff and fellow inmates. Their contact with the outside world is rare, mainly through correspondence, phone calls, personal meetings, and possible passes, so they feel that they have no contact with others.

A more recent theory was presented by Richard Ryan and Edward, who defined certain psychological needs as a kind of “nutrients” – they are designed to affect the individual’s well-being, his growth, and development in society¹³. They distinguished three universal needs, which are to accompany a person throughout her life. The first is autonomy, i.e., a sense of independence and the ability to influence one’s life independently of others and following one’s own needs and desires. The second is competence, i.e., a sense of effectiveness in what we do. The individual feels that he has the right knowledge and skills, which he uses in skilfully – it gives him a sense of control over his environment and confidence in his abilities, and thus – the individual is also capable of taking on certain challenges. The last need is the so-called “kinship”, i.e., the ability to feel connected with others and a sense of belonging. It is the need to feel important to someone, to be relevant. It is possible to conclude the importance of the sense of belonging and how the feeling of loneliness can affect the functioning of a person by breaking social ties. Henryk Machel¹⁴, a specialist and expert in penitentiary and rehabilitation knowledge, pointed to reintegration with the family as a significant predictor of a prisoner’s return to normal life, and the feeling of loneliness, resulting from isolation from important people, has a devastating impact on the individual’s functioning.

¹² S.R. Asher, J.A. Paquette, *Loneliness and peer relations in childhood*, “*Current Directions in Psychological Science*” 2003, no. 12(3), pp. 75–78.

¹³ R.M. Ryan, E.L. Deci, *Self-determination theory and the role of basic psychological needs in personality and the organization of behavior*, [in:] *Handbook of personality: Theory and research*, eds. O.P. John, R.W. Robins, L.A. Pervin, The Guilford Press 2008, pp. 654–678.

¹⁴ H. Machel, *Rodzina skazanego, jako współuczestnik jego resocjalizacji penitencjarnej, readaptacji i reintegracji społecznej*, “*Resocjalizacja Polska*” 2014, no. 7, pp. 45–57.

An interesting concept was presented by Andrzej Jakubik¹⁵ and Anna Kraszewska, according to whom the feeling of loneliness can be perceived as a characteristic feature of a generalised sense of alienation, belonging to a social group. According to their model, the feeling of loneliness occurs together with the sense of meaninglessness or helplessness, the conviction that our fate is independent of us, “usually complaining about the sense of lack of meaning in life or inner emptiness”¹⁶. On the other hand, Jan Chodkiewicz and Magdalena Świątkowska, following Jakubik, also defined the feeling of loneliness as the “conviction of the impossibility of entering into desirable interpersonal and social relationships”¹⁷.

In this context, the presented theories of loneliness, understood as a subjective state of isolation in prison conditions and lack of emotional connection with others, have been considered in the following studies as three components: a sense of lack of contact with others, a severance of social ties, and belonging to a social group.

Conceptualisation of Resentment

The conceptualisation of resentment as a negative emotion derived from internal tensions in social relations began in 1887. This term was first introduced by Friedrich Nietzsche in his work *On the Genealogy of Morality*. He showed resentment as an attitude and source of morality of weak people with a slave mentality, which is a negation of primitive and active morality, realising the will of the power of the masters¹⁸. At the beginning of the twentieth century, two German social scientists, Max Weber and Max Scheler, revisited the subject of resentment. Weber wrote: “(...) On the basis of the Jewish ethical religiosity of salvation, there is an element that Nietzsche first noticed, and which is not found in any magical and animistic caste religiosity. This element is resentment, which in Nietzsche’s understanding accompanies the religious ethics of the negatively privileged who, in a direct reversal of the old

¹⁵ A. Jakubik, A. Kraszewska, *Zespół alienacyjny u mężczyzn uzależnionych od alkoholu*, “Alkoholizm i Narkomania” 2002, no. 1, pp. 95–106.

¹⁶ M.G. Karbowski, *W poszukiwaniu korelatów osobowości u adeptów teologii. Perspektywa noetyczna*, Dom Wydawniczy ELIPSA, Warszawa 2021, p. 39.

¹⁷ J. Chodkiewicz, M. Świątkowska, *Poczucie osamotnienia a wsparcie społeczne i zadowolenie z życia u mężczyzn uzależnionych od alkoholu*, “Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Psychologica” 2007, no. 11, p. 81.

¹⁸ F. Nietzsche, *Z genealogii moralności*, Wydawnictwo vis-a-vis Etiuda, Kraków 2022, pp. 24–30.

faith, believe that the source of the inequality of earthly destinies is the sin and injustice of the positively privileged, which sooner or later must bring God's vengeance. In the form of such a theodicy of the negatively privileged, moralism serves as a means of legitimising a conscious or unconscious desire for revenge"¹⁹. These feelings turn into resentment, arousing revenge, vindictiveness, non-harmless hatred, or jealousy without confirming the scenes of jealousy²⁰. Therefore, an "inhibited and suppressed set of negative emotions concerns not only the psychological experiences of the individual, but can also be transferred to emotional states or components of cultural attitudes"²¹. As Max Scheler writes, it is then that the desire for revenge becomes vindictiveness, and the intensifying reflex of revenge causes the transfer to other objects that have some common element, and the failure to satisfy it can grow into the idea of "duty", which can "even lead to spiritual withering and death"²². Therefore, it seems obvious that people subjected to punishment experience negative emotions, such as anger, revenge, causing a sense of resentment. Moreover, in the case of a long-term sentence (which is the essence of imprisonment), the perpetrators also experience stress and feeling of depression. Often, these emotional states occur simultaneously or alternately, depending on the current situation. It can be assumed that in penitentiary institutions, this kind of emotion – in varying degrees of intensity – is common among prisoners. Therefore, it is essential that the inmate has an awareness of valuation. According to Scheler, the attitude of powerlessness is pure resentment, resulting from a sense of one's own inferiority, which paralyses the activity of the individual. The emotions and desires that are aroused generate internal tensions, anger, hatred, jealousy, which make up the inability to act. And the "most impotent jealousy is at the same time the strongest. Therefore, the strongest resentment gives rise to that jealousy which concerns the essence and being of an individual person, that is, existential jealousy"²³. In the context of this issue, we can observe the occurrence of negative emotions, which

¹⁹ M. Weber, *Szkice z socjologii religii*, Wydawnictwo vis-a-vis Etiuda, Kraków 2018, pp. 154–155.

²⁰ P. Hoggett, *Ressentiment and grievance*, "British Journal of Psychotherapy" 2018, no. 34(3), pp. 395.

²¹ M.G. Karbowski, *Destructive impact of resentment in the process of acculturation*, "Probation" 2023, no. 2, p. 57.

²² M. Scheler, *Resentiment w strukturze systemów moralnych*, Wydawnictwo ALETHEIA, Warszawa 2022, p. 23.

²³ S. Czerniak, *Socjologia wiedzy Maxa Schelera*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo PWN, Warszawa 1981, p. 47.

can be conceptualised as resentment, since in the lives of prisoners, there are always critical situations in relationships with others whom we value or reject due to their certain characteristics.

Research Topic

This analysis focuses on a specific research problem, which is to determine how the level of loneliness and resentment affect the level of stress in people serving a prison sentence. To explain this relationship, the following hypothesis was put forward: the feeling of loneliness is positively correlated with the intensity of stress experienced by inmates. It is assumed that there are differences in the level of stress, loneliness, and resentment.

Research Methodology

The research problem has been detailed into the following research questions:

- Are there differences in the level of stress in people serving prison sentences?
- Are there differences in the level of stress in people serving prison sentences on the level of loneliness?
- Are there differences in the level of stress in people serving prison sentences due to resentment?

Variables

The study involved the following variables:

- dependent variable: the level of perceived stress;
- independent variable: feeling of loneliness (indicators: lack of contact with others, severance of social ties, belonging to a social group); sense of resentment (indicators: temporal, spatial, energetic, informational);
- secondary variables: age, having a family, having children, length of sentence, type of committed offence, serving sentence (first or second time).

Method and Subjects

The study aims at investigating the relationship between the sense of loneliness and resentment and the level of experienced stress in men serving a prison sentence in various penitentiary settings. The research was conducted from March to June 2022, using own survey and two questionnaires to analyse the mentioned variables.

The study group consists of adult men aged 60 to 65 who served a prison sentence in the penitentiary in Popowo and the penitentiary in Służewiec. A total of 128 people participated in the study.

Research Tools

The study was conducted using the author's questionnaire containing questions about demographic data and information on aspects such as: having a family, having children, serving a sentence (for the first or subsequent time), the length of the sentence, and the time currently spent in the institution. Moreover, two questionnaires were used to assess these variables.

PSS-10 Perceived Stress Scale Questionnaire

The authors of the PSS-10 (Perceived Stress Scale) are Cohen, Kamarck, and Melmelstein. The Polish adaptation was made by Juszczynski and Ogińska-Bulik. The tool is used to assess the intensity of stress related to the life situation of the respondent. It contains ten questions about various subjective feelings that the respondent has towards personal problems and events, behaviours and ways of dealing with them. Cronbach's α reliability index for the tool was 0.84.

R-UCLA Loneliness Scale Questionnaire

Questionnaire by Russell, Peplau, and Cutron (1978). Polish adaptation by Kwiatkowska, Rogoza, and Kwiatkowska (2017). It is designed to examine the sense of loneliness in adults. The R-UCLA is a revised

multidimensional scale consisting of 20 items. Items form three subscales: lack of contact, a sense of breaking social ties, and belonging to a group. Cronbach's Alf reliability index for the tool was 0.85.

Ressentiment Questionnaire

A pentabase method, which was created on the basis of the "Method of systemic description of professional competencies"²⁴. The analysis focused on the perspective of the emergence of resentment, and did not aim to examine the respondents' own feelings of resentment. The study focuses on subjective assessments of four aspects of resentment, using the pentabase method in the dimension:

- **temporary**, i.e., subjectively, something can be perceived as long-lasting, although objectively, measured by a clock, it takes a short time – for example, waiting for a delayed train may feel like a long time, despite being only five minutes long, while a conversation with an interesting person may be perceived as short, despite lasting three hours;
- **spatial**, i.e., for one person who lives in a block of flats, a flat with an area of 100 m² may feel spacious, while for a resident of a large single-family house it may be perceived as small or medium-sized;
- **energetic**, i.e., I subjectively interpret my own reactions as reactions to the negative attitudes of others towards me, even if objectively they were not of such a nature (for example, someone was joking and I took it seriously). On the other hand, someone else's negative behaviour, which was objectively directed against me, in my estimation, had no effect on my attitude towards that person;
- **informational**, i.e., my negative reaction to the negative attitudes of others towards me results from my subjective assessment of their behaviour, and I can subjectively convince myself that my knowledge of their negative behaviour is reliable (I am sure that they did it on purpose), although objectively it can only be based on gossip. In the second case, I have reliable knowledge, but I do not consider it as such. Cronbach's Alpha reliability index for the tool was 0.86 (MLQ-S) and 0.87 (MLQ-P).

²⁴ R. Rogalińska, *Metoda systemowego opisu kompetencji profesjonalnych* [in:] "Problemy Profesjologii" 2011, no 2, pp. 11–20.

Course of the Study

The research was carried out using the traditional method (on paper). The questionnaires were sent to prisons, where staff distributed them to inmates and oversaw the process. Before the study, participants read the instructions and received information about voluntary participation and anonymity. The respondents took turns filling out questionnaires. While completing the surveys, they ticked the appropriate boxes or provided their own answers in the case of open-ended questions.

Analysis of Own Research

In order to answer the research questions, statistical analyses were carried out using the SPSS Statistics 26 package. It was used to perform the analysis of basic descriptive statistics together with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests, the Mann-Whitney U test, the correlation analysis using Pearson's r-coefficient, as well as the linear regression analysis. The significance level in this case is $\alpha = 0,05$.

Basic Descriptive Statistics with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

In the first step of the analysis, the distributions of quantitative variables were checked. For this purpose, basic descriptive statistics were calculated along with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test examining the normality of the distribution. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Basic descriptive statistics of the studied variables together with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test

PSS-10									
Level of perceived stress	2,65	2,75	0,78	-0,05	-0,62	1,00	4,30	0,08	0,071
KR									
Resentment	3,31	3,23	0,43	0,22	-0,55	2,38	4,31	0,09	0,033
R-UCLA									
Feeling of loneliness	2,02	2,05	0,49	-0,06	-0,71	1,00	3,20	0,08	0,058
	<i>M</i>	<i>Me</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Sk</i>	<i>Kurt.</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>p</i>

The result of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for several introduced variables showed statistical significance, which means that their distributions differ significantly from the normal distribution. However, it is worth noting that the skewness of the distribution of all variables does not exceed the conventional absolute value of 1, suggesting slight asymmetries in their distributions. Therefore, an analysis based on parametric tests may be justified, provided that the other assumptions of these tests are met.

Sociodemographic Exploration of the Study Sample

128 people took part in the study. On the day of the survey, most of them had secondary education (37.5%) or vocational education (26.5%), they came from a large city (46.8%) or from a small town (29.7%).

Table 2. Distribution of sociodemographic variables in the sample

Education		Frequency	Percentage	Percentage of valid	Cumulative percentage
Important	Basic	32	25	28,2	28,2
	Professional	34	26,5	29,7	57,7
	Average	48	37,5	29,9	87,8
	Higher	14	10,9	12,1	100,0
	Total	128	100.0	100,0	

		Current marital status			
		Frequency	Percentage	Percentage of valid	Cumulative percentage
Important	Bachelor	54	42,2	46,5	46,6
	Married	19	14,9	15,8	62,4
	Divorced (or separated)	38	29,6	24,6	86,7
	Widower	2	1,6	0,9	87,6
	Cohabitant	15	11,7	12,3	100,0
	Total	128	100,0	100,0	

		Place of origin			
		Frequency	Percentage	Percentage of valid	Cumulative percentage
Important	Village	30	23,5	22,6	22,6
	A small town (below 100 thousand)	38	29,7	28,5	53,7
	Large city (over 100 thousand)	60	46,8	49,9	100,0
	Total	128	100,0	100,0	

Interpretation of Statistical Relationships – Stress Level, Resentiment, and Loneliness

In the first analysis, it was verified and shown that there are relationships between the level of stress, resentment, and the feeling of loneliness in the study group. For this purpose, due to the quantitative nature of the variables and the near-normal distributions, Pearson's r coefficient was used (Table 3).

The analysis showed that all correlations were statistically significant and it turned out that the level of perceived stress correlated statistically significantly with resentment (negative and strong correlation) and the feeling of loneliness (positive and moderate correlation). These results indicate an increase in stress levels along with an increase in feelings of loneliness and a decrease in resentment.

Table 3. The relationship between stress levels, feeling of resentment

		1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. The level of perceived stress	<i>r</i> Pearson significance	-				
2. Resentment	<i>r</i> Pearson significance	-0.57 <.001	-			
3. Feeling of loneliness	<i>r</i> Pearson significance	0,38 <0,001	-0.39 <.001	-		

There was also a significant relationship between resentment and feeling of loneliness (negative and moderate correlation). In addition, negative correlations were noted between feeling of loneliness and resentment (weak correlation).

Analysis of Stress Levels Based on Selected Sociodemographic and Psychometric Variables

Then, in order to extend the previous analyses, a linear regression analysis was performed, building models explaining the level of perceived stress based on age, resentment, and feeling of loneliness. Hierarchical models were built, where independent variables were introduced in two steps.

In the first one, sociodemographic variables (age) were introduced in order to control their relationship with the dependent variable when assessing the prediction of variables introduced in the second step, related to selected psychometric variables (resentment, feeling of loneliness). The analysis aimed to check how psychometric variables can predict the level of stress, while controlling for the impact of the age and type of ward in which the inmate is staying.

The analysis showed that the first model, considering sociodemographic variables (age and type of ward), was statistically insignificant, explaining only 1.5% of the variance of the dependent variable. None of these predictors was statistically significant. The second model was statistically significant and allowed to explain 33.9% of the variance of

the dependent variable. Resentment was a significant predictor ($Beta = -0.47$). A negative value of the coefficient for this variable indicates an increase in stress levels as resentment increases. Detailed results of the analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Hierarchical linear regression model predicting the level of perceived stress based on selected sociodemographic variables and the level of self-compassion, feeling of loneliness, and dimensions of life meaning

		<i>B</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	R^2_{sk}	ΔR^2	<i>F</i>	ΔF
model									<i>SE</i>
1	(Fixed)	2,05	0,35	5,91	<0,001				
	Age			0,01	0,01	0,17	1,84	0,068	1,85
				0,06	0,17	0,37	0,713		Branch 0,03
				5,44	0,79	6,92	<0,001		
								2	(Fixed)
	Age	0,00		0,01	-0,02	-0,29	0,775		
	Resentment				-0,86	0,16	-0,47	-5,32	<0,001
	Feeling of loneliness			0,18	0,15	0,12	1,22	0,224	10,68***
									14,63***

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$ Annotation.

Dependent variable: The level of perceived stress.

Summary

Stress is an intrinsic part of every person’s life and the subject of research in different contexts and social groups. It has a significant impact on physical and mental health, as well as overall well-being. The appearance of a stress reaction indicates the deprivation of certain needs (even the basic ones – without which we are not really able to meet higher needs) and, as mentioned, it is a signal of the threat of potential loss of some of our resources. Researchers are looking for answers to the question of what increases stress levels and what potentially decreases them. In this study, we focused on a group of adult men serving a prison sentence in a closed prison and an attempt to check the impact of the level of loneliness and resentment on the level of stress in the study group. A key research question was posed about differences in the level of stress among inmates, considering the feeling of loneliness and resentment. The dependent variable was the intensity of stress, and the independent variables were the feeling of loneliness and resentment. Sociodemographic data, such as age and education, were included as secondary variables. In response to the research problem, the correlation

analysis indicated an increase in stress levels along with an increase in feeling of loneliness and an increase in resentment.

In many scientific studies, John Cacioppo (he has shown that loneliness impacts the increase in perceived stress) has already found the significant impact of the feeling of loneliness on the level of stress of the individual, and these results confirm the already existing findings. On the other hand, the presented analyses also found that stress and feelings of loneliness are moderately positively correlated, which means that an increase in stress goes hand in hand with a greater feeling of loneliness. Exploration of the research confirms the correctness of the first hypothesis, which suggests that people serving a prison sentence, who do not maintain contact with their loved ones or do not have such relationships, may cope worse with penitentiary conditions due to the increase in stress levels. It has also been assumed that there is a negative relationship between resentment and the intensity of perceived stress, which has also been confirmed in studies. Thus, the expert opinions of 2014 were confirmed, in which Peter Halama²⁵ also carried out a study that showed that negative emotions are linked to stress. Results showed that resentment is strongly negatively correlated with the level of perceived stress, which was consistent with the hypothesis.

The results of the regression analysis showed that resentment is a key predictor, despite the analysis of all factors considered, this dependent variable was the strongest, and its negative value next to the variable indicated an increase in stress levels. This is all the more interesting because resentment turned out to be more important than, for example, the sources of stress indicated by Jin Park and Roy Baumeister²⁶, which have already been well documented in research and publications, or the sense of loneliness of Tyler Stillman and others²⁷. Following this, it can be seen that resentment is particularly important in the case of people who are disadvantaged in life – it is because the awareness of sharing experiences and the sense of unity allow for a smoother passage through difficult experiences. Self-understanding can be a relief, as it has been

²⁵ P. Halama, *Meaning in Life and Coping: Sense of Meaning as a Buffer Against Stress*, "Meaning in Positive and Existential Psychology" 2014, no. 1, pp. 239–250.

²⁶ J. Park, R.F. Baumeister, *Meaning in life and adjustment to daily stressors*, "The Journal of Positive Psychology" 2017, no. 12(4), pp. 333–341.

²⁷ T.F. Stillman, R.F. Baumeister, N.M. Lambert, W. Crescioni, C.N. DeWall, F.D. Fincham, *Alone and Without Purpose: Life Loses Meaning Following Social Exclusion*, "Journal of Experimental Social Psychology" 2009, no. 45(4), pp. 686–694.

put “showing compassion to one another has a direct, soothing effect (...) it can help to free oneself from the harmful bonds of doomsayer”²⁸.

Moreover, the results show that people serving a prison sentence are often exposed to long-term stress, and the awareness that someone is waiting for them, receiving a phone call from prison or coming to see them is very helpful in adapting to new conditions and in mitigating the effects of stressors, such as forced isolation with strangers, deprivation of needs or constant supervision and control by prison staff and officers giving rise to negative emotions. István Tóth-Király and Kristin Neff²⁹ conducted a study in which they also proved that people who cannot feel compassion for themselves do not feel the effects of isolation as strongly, which can also be important for the study group. Perhaps the level of emotion of a person serving a prison sentence could influence how the individual deals with this situation of deprivation and alleviate the resentment they feel. Interestingly, the results also showed that self-compassion is negatively correlated to a moderate degree with the level of loneliness, and positively correlated with resentment (to a strong degree).

In conclusion, the situation of forced isolation itself, due to the specificity of life in prison and the multiple deprivation of needs, is extremely stressful for people serving a prison sentence, and thanks to this research, we can also see the importance of other factors – resentment – that affect the level of stress they feel.

²⁸ I. Toth-Kiraly, K. Neff, *Is Self-Compassion Universal? Support for the Measurement Invariance of the Self-Compassion Scale Across Populations*, “Assesment” 2021, no. 28, p. 172.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 169–185.

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