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Age-psychological characteristics of inmates

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Abstract

This article presents a conceptual model of age-psychological characteristics of inmates and their role in the penitentiary treatment process and the correction of various categories of offenders. It especially analyses the age- psychological specifics of minors, youths, adults and older people serving sentences, the problems in their regime treatment, correctional work and employment. We propose psychologically based recommendations for the treatment and correction of sentenced minors and prisoners in adolescent, youth, adult and old age.

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Keywords: age-psychological characteristics (values, attitudes, motives, psychological conditions, self-esteem); penitentiary treatment and correction; the regime treatment; educational-corrective activity.

1. Topicality of the problem

More than 30 recommendations of the Council of Europe present a too differentiated view to the treatment of different age categories of prisoners: adolescents, young and adults (Stratiev, 2011). Furthermore, in Recommendation Rec (2003) 23 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the management of prisoners serving life sentences and other long-term ones by the prison administrations, in particular, in Article 28 was stated that older prisoners should be assisted to maintain good levels of physical and mental health (Closed case, 2012, 2). Given this intensive European attention to the age characteristics of different groups of prisoners, which naturally presupposes their psychological interpretation it is very strange that a careful reading of the Penal Code, the Law on Punishments Execution and its Enforcement Rules we cannot find a single text dedicated to the age-psychological

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specifics of convicts. A review of publications in penal and penitentiary-psychological publications shows a complete lack of interest in the age-psychological matter.

Meanwhile, in the immediate penitentiary practice constantly appear different difficulties associated with the regime treatment of minors and elderly prisoners, as well as with their employment engagement against the very limited production resources. The optimisation of educational-correctional work with convicts where the individual approach is more fully present (Traykov, 2007; Kovachev & Madjarov 1990) requires in-depth study of age-psychological features of different generational segments of the prisons population. All mentioned trends determine the need for conceptual reflection of the age-psychological characteristics of prisoners in the context of their penitentiary treatment and correction.

2. Methodology

I present my experience in the creation of a conceptual model for full understanding and use in the process of Bulgarian penitentiary treatment and re-socialization correction of the age-psychological characteristics of inmates. It was constructed by a comparative analysis and theoretical generalizations mainly on Bulgarian literary sources in the field of psychology, criminology, penology and criminal law enforcement. The proposed conceptual model is empirically based on data from a qualitative analysis of a large amount of observations, psycho-diagnostic tests and consultations with prisoners of different ages, which are part of my personal archive as of continuous work as penitentiary psychologist. I have used the results of psychodiagnosis and observations of over 230 convicted juveniles residing in the correctional facility for boys in the town of Boychinovtsi for the period from 1994 to 2010, as well as 200 imprisoned youths, 130 convicted adults and 150 elderly people, serving their sentences in prisons and prison hostels of indoor and outdoor type for men in the cities of Burgas, Varna, Plovdiv, Sofia, Stara Zagora, Trojan for the period 1997 to 2013.

The theoretical justification of the conceptual model is built on the analysis and summary of 23 literary sources, presenting psychological, socio-demographic and criminological characteristics of the age specifics of convicted and their values, attitudes, self-esteem, mental states.

The main hypothesis of this study is summarized as follows: We assume that the age-psychological characteristics of inmates pose particular problems at their residence in the places of imprisonment, which requires their full reporting and organizing a relevant penitentiary treatment and correctional work with the convicted minors, young people, adults and the elderly.

From the main hypothesis of this theoretical and methodological study logically results the formulation of its tasks which are presented in the following sequence:

- Outlining age-psychological specificity of minors, youth, adult and older people whose effective convictions are executed in places of imprisonment.
- Psychological interpretation of issues emerging in the process of penitentiary treatment of minors, youth, adult and elderly prisoners determined by their particular age-psychological profile.
- Development of psychological recommendations for optimizing the treatment in places of detention of convicted minors, young, adult and elderly convicted with a full account of their age-psychological characteristics.

The theoretical and empirical verification of the hypothesis and objectives of the present study suggests the use of the following methods:

- Analysis of international legal-penal documents and penitentiary psychological publications represented in the issues of the applied science bulletin "Closed case" for the period from 1995 to 2015.
- Analysis and interpretation of literary psychological, criminological and sociological sources associated with age-psychological problems.
- Extrapolation of ideas and productions on the age-psychological profile of the respondents from the general psychology and developmental psychology on offenders in the field of penitentiary psychology.
- Study of the current reports of Chief Directorate "Execution of Sentences" for the period from 2009 to 2014.

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