

## VALUE ORIENTATION OF CONVICTED WOMEN IN SLOVAKIA IN RELATION TO THEIR AGE AND EDUCATION

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**Abstract:** The study presents adult convicted women's value preferences at the research sample of 186 women (29,5% of female respondents from the basic set) employing the questionnaire method. We carried out our research in 2017, and we aimed to find out the significance level of chosen values in relation to the variables of age and the achieved level of education. Convicted women achieved the highest score in values such as Health, Family, Freedom. The least important values were the values such as Belief in God, Art and Travelling. Based on the statistical analysis using the *Spearman's rho coefficient* we found out that there is a statistically significant relationship between the age and two chosen values: *Belief in God* ( $r_s = -0,173^*$ ) and *Family* ( $r_s = -0,202^*$ ). Similarly, we found out significant differences among respondents in relation to their achieved level of education in the rate of the following values: *Education* ( $x_2 = 10,158$ ;  $p = 0,006$ ), *Freedom* ( $x_2 = 7,389$ ;  $p = 0,025$ ), *Children* ( $x_2 = 8,617$ ;  $p = 0,013$ ) and *Work* ( $x_2 = 6,568$ ;  $p = 0,037$ ) at the level  $p \leq 0,05$ .

**Keywords:** age, level of education, prison, values, women

### 1 Introduction

„For a long time, women and prison were perceived as two mutually unrelated entities, opposite poles or words that could not be joined with a preposition „in“. The rate of women participating in crime seemed to be so small and their offences so irrelevant that dealing with women, in this respect, was considered to be a waste of time. People did not perceive the criminality of women as a social problem. They interpreted the criminal behaviour of men and women as a consequence of their insufficient physiological development, or an indication of their evolutionary stunting.“ (Nedbálková, 2003, p. 469). However, even today, sociologists still emphasise that prison is a typical environment coded for men, although gender-specific features are indisputable – convicted women differ from men in the imprisonment sentence in many aspects. From the sociological point of view, deprivation of men and women in prison differs significantly, what is related to the difference between the male and female statuses in broader society. While the male social status depends on the work role, the female social status is based mainly on the family role, participating in supporting and emotional relationships (Ward, Kassebaum, 1965, cited in Nedbálková, 2003, p. 473). We can also find a similar explanation by Crowley (2019, p. 13). She says that „most women who are admitted to prison are mothers and many have primary care responsibilities for other family members. These responsibilities and relationships can play a role in women's pathways to prison and are also fundamental to their rehabilitation prospects. For mothers, separation from their children can severely impact their mental wellbeing.“

Globally, convicted women form a statistically much smaller group than convicted men. According to the Yearbook of Prison and Court Guard Service from the year 2017 (2018), when we carried out our research, in Slovakia, there were 7835 adult men and 630 adult women in prison. Thus, the percentage rate represented 92,56:7,44%. Kruttschnitt, Gartner (2003, p. 1) say that „reasons include the relatively smaller number of female felons, the generally less serious nature of their offending, beliefs about the greater reformability – or at least tractability – of women, assumptions about women's peculiar psyches, and conceptions of normative femininities.“ Furthermore, also the gravity of committed crimes, i.e. the reasons why women get into the enforcement of imprisonment sentence, are more specific ones. „Women in prison often come from disadvantaged backgrounds typically marked by economic deprivation, substance abuse, violence and household disruption. Prisoners also tend to have higher rates of illiteracy and lower levels of education than the general population.“ (Crowley, 2019, p. 13). For this reason, dealing with convicted women should naturally differ from dealing with convicted men.

### 1.1 Research on convicted women

The long-term approach to dealing with men and women in prison reflects similar tendencies running in the research area. The first monograph about women's imprisonment was the study *Women in Prison* by authors Ward and Kassebaum from 1965. Kruttschnitt, Gartner (2003, p. 1) say that „research on women in prison and women's prisons has, perhaps inevitably, been shaped by many of the same facts and assumptions. Since the 1960s, when a growing number of academics began to turn their attention to female prisoners and women's prisons, a major theme has been the distinctiveness of female prisoners' needs, disadvantages, and ways of adapting or responding to imprisonment.“ Nedbálková (2003) emphasises that research focuses on topics such as the etiology of women's criminal behaviour and dealing with women in the system of Criminal Law and Judiciary. The research also studies the character of informal social systems inside the prison and the adequacy of imprisonment to respond to social problems.

In Slovak conditions, the research on convicted women has been absent until now. Authors pay attention mainly to people released from the imprisonment sentence because there is better and easier access to respondents. A similar situation is also in the Czech Republic because Urbanová, Večeřa (2003) say that underestimating women's criminality represents a danger. In their opinion, although women commit less severe crimes, their moral consequences are more significant. Thus, generally, in the research on convicted women, it is still valid that „as many scholars have noted, at best, [women] remain marginal to the study and practice of imprisonment.“ (Moore, Scraton 2014, cited in Crewe, Hulley, Wright, 2017, p. 1374). It is crucial to change this situation because only with research, we can understand the world of convicted women that significantly differs from the world of convicted men. In this way, we can make more efficient the re-socialisation methods and the general way of dealing with these women and their imprisonment. Similarly, Kruttschnitt, Gartner (2003, p. 1) emphasise that „understanding of ways women negotiate power and construct their lives in prison is greater than in the past; new theoretical frameworks have provided important insights, but fundamental questions remain unanswered.“

### 1.2 Value orientation of convicted people

Value is a primary axiologic category, and according to Průcha, Veteška (2014), we may define it as a generally accepted feature (quality, significance, importance) that people attribute to objects, phenomena, processes, events and society. Individuals, groups, nations and countries' populations share values, and they transmit them between generations. People acquire them by socialisation and enculturation. Every cultural community has its specific values which influence attitudes, norms of behaviour, motivation and morality. The hierarchical organisation of values is called a value orientation/value system. Value systems within a specific community differ according to the age, gender, socio-economic position and people's achieved level of education. Their characteristic feature is that these values change in time. Urbanová, Večeřa (2003) say that values belong to essential elements of social structure, and they may serve as significant predictors for behaving of different social groups and substructures.

A confrontation of an individual's value orientation with the society's value system can generate a conflict. This conflict can lead to the violation of social norms, and in extreme cases, to the deprivation of an individual's rights and freedom. Already Cochrane (1971, p. 73), a pioneer in research on values and value systems in relation to the emergence and development of delinquent behaviour, emphasises that „persistent criminal behaviour, almost by definition, implies that the criminal has a value system which is, in some important ways, different from that of other individuals who do not engage in criminal

behaviour. This may be because the modal values of society have been consciously or unconsciously rejected by the criminal, or because they have not been internalised to the same extent as by the non-criminal." The author found out that delinquent women often reject the woman's role because they do not appreciate values that society designs for this woman's role.

In 2002, Czech researchers carried out unique research on convicted women's value preferences. Among other topics, this research compared the value preferences of this specific group of respondents with the Czech population's value preferences. They used the questionnaire method, and they researched a sample of 322 female respondents in four Czech prisons. There was a set of 27 value items, and they assessed them with a nine-point evaluating scale. „Traditionally, in the first place appeared the value of health, then a calm life and wellbeing (family, freedom, peace, children, living, friends, success at work). Subsequently, there followed values related to future and mental life (to create something stable, time for oneself, love), status values (popularity, financial security, education, social position). In the end, they mentioned spiritual values (culture, art, belief in God), a holiday and a car.“ (Urbanová, Večeřa, 2003, p. 237). There were not evident more significant differences when compared to the Czech population. Slovak sociologists Lubelcová, Džambazovič (2006) followed up on this research in Slovak conditions. However, they did not focus on value orientations, but only on social and criminological characteristic features.

To reflect these theoretical starting points, we proposed the following research questions:

*RQ<sub>1</sub>: What are the importance levels of chosen values?*

*RQ<sub>2</sub>: Is the importance level of chosen values in a statistically significant correlation with the female respondents' age?*

*RQ<sub>3</sub>: Will there exist a statistically significant difference in the values' importance level regarding the respondents' achieved level of education?*

## 2 Research sample

In Slovakia, the imprisonment sentence of convicted women primarily occurs in two specialised facilities – the Correctional facility Levoča (capacity of 112 places) and the Correctional facility Nitra – Chrenová (capacity of 354 places), where we carried out our research. In 2017, when we collected our data, there were, in total, 630 convicted women (basic set, Yearbook of Prison and Court Guard Service from the year 2017, 2018).

Our research sample consisted of 186 adult women, representing a percentage rate of 29,5% (almost of female respondents from the basic set). During the data collection time, the average number of convicted women in the correctional facility Nitra-Chrenová was 252 women. Thus, up to 73,8% of convicted women from the given facility participated in our research. The research set included imprisoned convicted women in all three surveillance degrees.

We divided respondents into six categories according to their age (19-21 years; 22-25 years; 26-30 years; 31-45 years; 46-60 years; 61 and more years, and finally, not mentioned age). The average age of respondents was 38,43 years (min 20; max 66). The educational level of respondents was heterogeneous; up to 50% of respondents achieved primary education (low education, level of ISCED 2A), 16,12% of respondents achieved secondary education without a school-leaving exam (medium education, level of ISCED 3C) and secondary education with a school-leaving exam (medium education, level of ISCED 3A; 3B). Only about 2,5% of respondents achieved academic education (high education, level of ISCED 6 or 7).

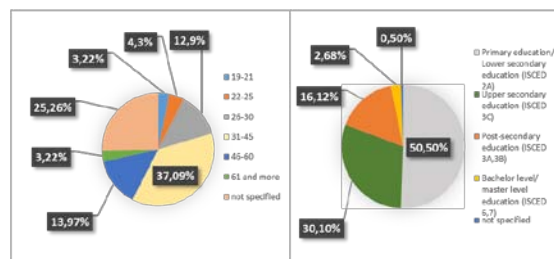


Figure 1: Categorisation of female respondents according to their age and educational level

However, statistically, it is not possible to evaluate the group of five respondents with academic education separately. For this reason, we divided the category of respondents with secondary education into two groups: a group with a school-leaving exam (level of ISCED 3A or 3B) and a group without a school-leaving exam (level of ISCED 3C). We included respondents with the academic education (level of ISCED 6 or 7) in the group with complete secondary education with a school-leaving exam. We continued processing obtained data in categories divided in this way.

### 2.1 Instruments

In the research, we used a questionnaire in print form, designed by the author. After a personal delivery, employees of the given facility (executive director for the Imprisonment Department, employees in duty, pedagogue) directly administered this questionnaire to convicted women. It consisted of 25 items; four items were of socio-demographic character (age, achieved education, marital status and number of children). The items were predominantly closed or semi-closed with a choice of answers, two items had a scale (a four-level and five-level scale). The research tool primarily focused on the education of convicted women in the correctional facility. However, the questionnaire also aimed at adult convicted women's values and attitudes. The Cronbach's alpha of the questionnaire is  $\alpha = 0.764$

Concerning these values, we set one item where convicted women attributed the importance level to fifteen values on a four-level scale (very important – rather important – rather not important – not important at all). Subsequently, we put these importance levels into a statistical relationship with chosen demographic statistic criteria (age and educational level). Based on the methodology from the research by Urbanová, Večeřa, (2003), we formulated the basic value orientations in this item: modern materialistic values (hedonistic orientation such as Money, Work, Travelling, Art), modern idealistic values (integrating values such as Friends, Partner relationship, Children), and traditional values (sense of order in the form of Tolerance, Justice, Dignity, conservative values such as Health, Family, Education, Freedom, and finally, the religious orientation in the form of Belief in God).

### 2.2 Statistical analysis

We statistically processed the obtained data in the programme SPSS version 22 for Windows. We used the descriptive statistics methods (N, M, SEM, SD, Min, Max, SK, KU) and inferential statistics methods: normality tests for data distribution, correlation tests and comparative tests. To find out the relationship between the variables, we used the Spearman's correlation coefficient. Furthermore, to obtain differences regarding the research sub-groups, we applied the Kruskal-Wallis H test. We chose these tests based on the normality test results for data distribution (D'Agostino's  $K^2$  test; Tomšik, 2017).

## 3 Results

In the first part of the results' interpretation, we focused on the descriptive statistical analysis of particular variables (values) and their relations to female respondents' age. The respondents

answered within the scale 1-4 (1 - not important at all; 4 - very important), and they expressed their subjective perception of 15 chosen values' importance. The average score moved from  $M=2,73$  ( $Sd=0,960$ ) to  $M=3,96$  ( $Sd=0,214$ ). The lowest score ( $M<2$  points) achieved the variables Travelling and Art, whereas the highest scored variables ( $M>3,9$ ) were Freedom, Family and Health. Despite this fact, most values achieved a relatively high score (above  $M<3,5$ ), specifically up to five values out of fifteen variables. Subsequently, we tried to determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between the assessed values and respondents' age. Using Spearman's *rho coefficient's* statistical analysis, we found out that a statistically significant relationship is between the age and two values: Belief in God ( $rs=-0,173^*$ ) and Family ( $rs=-0,202^*$ ). Between these two variables and respondents' age was a weak negative relationship. It means that older respondents perceived the Belief in God and Family as less important values. We mentioned the obtained results in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of research variables (values) and their correlation with respondents' age

Variables	N	M	M		SD	SEM	SK	KU	$r_s$ (age)
			I	A					
Health	171	3,96	2	4	0,214	0,016	-6,780	50,276	-0,064
Family	174	3,95	1	4	0,354	0,027	-7,803	60,817	-0,202*
Freedom	171	3,94	1	4	0,328	0,025	-6,311	45,847	,027
Children	168	3,89	1	4	0,438	0,034	-4,859	25,699	-0,037
Work	167	3,81	1	4	0,545	0,042	-3,491	13,121	-0,086
Justice	171	3,81	1	4	0,477	0,036	-2,824	9,272	-0,079
Dignity	166	3,73	1	4	0,605	0,047	-2,633	7,336	,133
Tolerance	164	3,68	1	4	0,624	0,049	-2,103	4,305	,058
Money	166	3,65	1	4	0,592	0,046	-1,849	4,030	,067
Education	160	3,56	1	4	0,689	0,054	-1,723	3,156	,064
Partner relationship	158	3,45	1	4	0,885	0,070	-1,517	1,258	-0,028
Friends	160	3,33	1	4	0,781	0,062	-1,043	0,660	-0,070
Belief in God	167	3,10	1	4	1,019	0,079	-0,850	-0,456	-0,173*
Art	154	2,86	1	4	0,886	0,071	-0,299	-0,718	,053
Travelling	150	2,73	1	4	0,960	0,078	-0,179	-0,957	,063

Note: N- number; M- mean; Min- minimum; Max- maximum; Sd- standard deviation; SK- skewness; KU- kurtosis;  $r_s$ - correlation coefficient; \*- correlation is significant on level  $p<0,05$ .

Another research objective was to find out differences in the respondents' value level in relation to their achieved level of education. We found out significant differences in eight variables, out of them, four variables were at the statistical significance level  $p<0,05$ . The greatest differences in relation to the achieved level of education were observed in these variables: *Education* ( $x^2=10,158$ ;  $p=0,006$ ), *Freedom* ( $x^2=7,389$ ;  $p=0,025$ ), *Children* ( $x^2=8,617$ ;  $p=0,013$ ) and *Work* ( $x^2=6,568$ ;  $p=0,037$ ). The level of responses in the mentioned variables does not have the same tendency. In the variables Family, Education and Work, respondents with secondary education (without a school-leaving exam) achieved the highest average score. In contrast, other groups achieved a significantly lower score, specifically the respondents with secondary education with a school-leaving exam and academic education. The difference in other variables was significant at the level  $p<0,1$ , specifically: *Money* ( $x^2=5,666$ ;  $p=0,059$ ), *Family* ( $x^2=5,260$ ;  $p=0,072$ ), *Justice* ( $x^2=4,983$ ;  $p=0,083$ ) and *Dignity* ( $x^2=4,780$ ;  $p=0,092$ ). In the variables Justice and Dignity, respondents with secondary education (without a school-leaving exam) again had the highest average score. In the variable Family, respondents with primary

and secondary education (without a final school-leaving exam) obtained a comparable score, whereas respondents with secondary education with a school-leaving exam and academic education had a significantly lower average score. We observed a difference in a tendency only in the variable Money. Even though respondents with primary education and secondary education (without a school-leaving exam) had a comparable average score in this variable, respondents with primary education achieved here their highest average score. We did not find any significant difference in the variables Travelling, Art, Belief in God, Friends, Partner relationship, Tolerance and Health in relation to respondents' age. We mentioned and depicted the obtained results in Table 2 and Figure 1.

Table 2: Differences in values' level in relation to respondents' achieved level of education (H test)

Variables	Level code of ISCED	N	M	Mr	df	$\chi^2$	p
Money	2A	82	3,71	89,70	2	5,666	0,059
	3C	53	3,66	81,33			
	3A; 3B; 6; 7	31	3,48	70,82			
Education	2A	80	3,43	73,35	2	10,158	<b>0,006</b>
	3C	49	3,82	95,22			
	3A; 3B; 6; 7	31	3,48	75,68			
Freedom	2A	88	3,95	86,16	2	7,389	<b>0,025</b>
	3C	52	4,00	90,00			
	3A; 3B; 6; 7	31	3,77	78,84			
Family	2A	90	3,98	88,04	2	5,260	0,072
	3C	53	4,00	89,00			
	3A; 3B; 6; 7	31	3,81	83,35			
Children	2A	83	3,96	87,54	2	8,617	<b>0,013</b>
	3C	54	3,87	85,69			
	3A; 3B; 6; 7	31	3,74	74,31			
Work	2A	86	3,80	87,70	2	6,568	<b>0,037</b>
	3C	54	3,89	90,72			
	3A; 3B; 6; 7	31	3,68	73,06			
Justice	2A	83	3,82	85,74	2	4,983	0,083
	3C	53	3,89	87,23			
	3A; 3B; 6; 7	31	3,68	73,82			
Dignity	2A	84	3,65	79,08	2	4,780	0,092
	3C	51	3,86	91,88			
	3A; 3B; 6; 7	31	3,74	81,68			

Note.: N- number; Min- minimum; Max- maximum; M- mean; Mr- Mean rank; df- degrees of freedom;  $\chi^2$ - Chi statistics for Kruskal-Wallis H test; p- level of statistical significance.

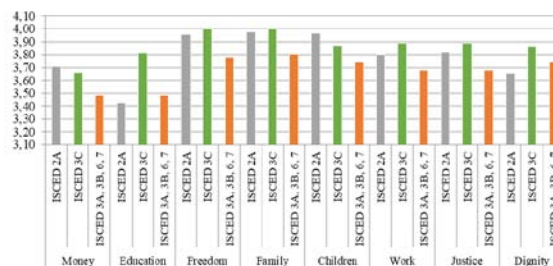


Figure 2: Differences in values' importance level in relation to respondents' achieved level of education – depiction of groups with a significant difference

#### 4 Discussion and conclusion

The highest scored variables by adult convicted women were traditional (conservative) values Health, Family and Freedom, that is consistent with the Czech research results from 2002. The preference of the value Health as the most significant scored value copies the majority society's preference. The second most significant scored value is the value Family. We can attribute this result to the fact that, in many cases, convicted women are also wives and mothers (the value Children achieved the fourth place in the importance level scale). Obtained data from the demographic items verify this preference – up to 81.2% of respondents are mothers. In average, every convicted woman has 3,5 children (min 1, max 13). In the marital status item, almost every third convicted woman (30,64%) stated that she is married or a mate, which means that she has a stable partner relationship. Although the value Partner relationship achieved a relatively high score, this value occupied the eleventh position out of

fifteen items in the final rankings. The third position belongs to the value of Freedom. Similarly, Justice (6th position) is closely related to the imprisonment and subsequent isolation. In general, we can say that Slovak convicted women perceive the following values as the most significant values in their lives: traditional values (Health), integrating values aimed at interpersonal relationships and family structures (Family, Children) and traditional values reflecting the sense of order (Freedom, Justice, Dignity, Tolerance) concerning their current situation and environment.

Spiritual values such as Travelling, Art, Belief in God achieved the lowest score. This result is consistent with the Czech research results again. The fact that the value of Travelling achieved the lowest score among all fifteen variables is related to convicted women's social situation, i.e. with the strict isolation they have to live. The second variable with the lowest score was the value of Art. The imprisonment sentence fulfils the retributive function. If it also fulfilled the re-educational or re-socialising function, the support and development of spiritual values should belong to the essential tools for re-socialisation, enculturation, cultivation and personalisation of adult people's personalities. The Slovak penitentiary system provides cultural-educational activities which represent essential tools for re-socialisation. Moreover, there is a work position of a pedagogue in the educational system who carries out cultural-educational activities and is responsible for their realisation. Correctional facilities organise various cultural-educational events such as debates with famous people from social life (artists, actors, painters, singers) or concerts. Despite this fact, art is not important for convicted women.

A very interesting result is the low-scored value Belief in God (the third value with the lowest score). Based on *Spearman's rho coefficient's* statistical analysis, we obtained a weak negative relationship ( $r_s = -0,173^*$ ) between the Belief in God and convicted women's age. It means that older convicted women attribute the lowest importance to this value. In their isolation, we would assume that they would recur to belief, religion and God more and that this value would have greater importance for them. According to the Decree no.368/2008 about the Imprisonment Policy (§ 68), correctional facilities provide spiritual and pastoral services and activities such as masses, debates, pastoral visits, religious sacraments and consecrations. They also lead study groups, provide religious literature, solve social problems and provide cultural-educational activities. They have rooms for educating and supporting convicted women in their re-socialisation. These facilities also provide specialised preparation for its employees. These activities include holy masses, homilies, dialogues, catecheses, biblical lessons, singing choirs, TV and videos, cultural programmes, lectures and debates, prayer meetings, Rosaries and the Stations of the Cross prayers. Also Clear, Hardyman, Stout, Lucken, Dammer (2000) interpreted the Belief in God by convicted women, and they defined its importance in this specific group as intrinsic orientations (dealing with guilt, finding a new way of life, dealing with the loss – especially of freedom), and extrinsic orientations (safety, material comforts, access to outsiders, inmate relations). However, it is evident from our research that, despite their isolation, convicted women do not consider this spiritual value, Belief in God, very important.

However, a statistically significant relationship (a weak negative relationship) was evident to the value Family ( $r_s = -0,202^*$ ) concerning convicted women's age. Older convicted women perceive this value as less important as well. The research set considered Family to be the second most important value, but there is a reverse situation by older convicted women. This attitude may be related to the higher age of their children who are already not so dependent on their mothers (convicted) and persistent isolation and weakening of extramural relationships. Vanková (2018, p. 580) also points to this fact, and she says that „in most cases, a person released from the execution of a prison sentence has no place to return to, is jobless, homeless, and his closest family, friends and acquaintances turned their backs to him.“ Nedbálková (2003, p. 481) compares the prison

environment to various microworlds where roles from social macro cosmos take place, and convicted women focus on creating relationships there. For this reason, they may create relationships that substitute extramural relationships and copy the world outside. There even arise the so-called pseudo families in women's prisons. From the sociological point of view, we can perceive these families as „an effort to bring along the everyday life in the facility to the structures of broader society to achieve a better reality for their lives.“ Pseudo families are „direct conscious substitutions of family relationships, and they alleviate the pain in prison everyday life. However, these relationships cannot be reduced only to friendly relationships. Friendships differ from family relationships, and they emerge among their peers.“ (Heffernan, 1972, p. 88, cited in Nedbálková, 2003, p. 481). Lukáč (2015, p. 54) also emphasises the specific features of life in the penitentiary environment. According to him, prisonization, e.i. the adjustment and acceptance of prison rules and norms, is „often the only way how to survive in prison without severe damage to mental health. However, it is the way of gradual depletion of such behavioural patterns that are indispensable for healthy acting in freedom“.

Analysing the relationship between values and achieved level of education, we found out that respondents with education 2A and 3C (low education) perceive values Money, Freedom, Family, Children, Job and Justice as more important when compared to convicted women with education 3A and 3B (medium education). However, we observed a reverse tendency in the variable Dignity – respondents with higher education scored this variable as more important than respondents with the lowest education. Paradoxically, the value Education achieved the lowest score by convicted women with primary education (low education). It is evident that they are not aware of the need and importance of education. There can be several reasons for this attitude: incarcerated learners are less educated, have a higher drop-out rate and a more often negative experience with education, they often have learning difficulties they are addicted to drugs or alcohol and are more impulsive and frustrated (Champion, 2012, Ross, Fabiano, 1985, cited in Lukáčová et al., 2018, p. 64-65).

#### 4.1 Research limitations

Various factors have an impact on the validity and reliability of quantitative research in penitentiary conditions. The main reason lies in the fact that, in Slovak conditions, it is impossible to carry out research directly with accused and convicted people. These factors include administering a questionnaire, the time provided for its filling, possible (undesired) cooperation between respondents when answering the questionnaire items. Another relevant factor is understanding the questionnaire items – convicted people form a heterogeneous group, and there are respondents of various educational and personal levels. Even though researchers try to formulate the items as clearly as possible, they cannot be sure that all convicted people will understand them. We could not use the standardised research tool in this environment because its length and complexity would provide less valid results than our designed tool. For this reason, it is not possible to compare our research results with the results which fulfil the norms. Comparing with other researches is more difficult as well. To achieve the research objectivity, researchers must ensure the objective interpretation of obtained results. It is crucial to take into account that the penitentiary world differs from the world outside. This difference is valid also for the words and their meanings – convicted people can perceive them with a different meaning than the majority society. Nedbálková (2003) mentions an example of this difference. She found out that convicted women perceive the concept "friend" as a reliable person in prison, as a person for a sexual relationship. However, there is a reverse situation in the lesbian community and broader public too.

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