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## SELF-ASSESSMENT OF THE SEX LIFE OF MEN SERVING A PRISON SENTENCE AND A SENSE OF PSYCHOPHYSICAL SECURITY AS PREDICTORS OF THE REHABILITATION PROCESS

**Abstract.** This article addresses issues related to the self-assessment of the sex life of prisoners, including selected aspects of their sense of security in the psychophysical sphere. It presents the results of research on the correlates of the sense of security with the individual elements of the sex life of prisoners.

**Key words:** sex life; sense of security; prison isolation; self-esteem.

## **Introduction**

The sphere of sex, despite the fact that it is generally associated with pleasure, can also be a source of various stress and anxieties and affect the quality of sexual life and condition of the sense of security in the physical and psychological aspect of man. All the facts that are seen in our eyes as a sign of inefficiency, difficulties or complaints related to sexual intercourse, arouse anxiety and often embarrassment. Especially for men, sex is the realm in which „one should show off”. Fitness, sexual skills are part of the shaped cultural stereotype of a real man. An additional difficulty is the fact that men's sexual competences and abilities are easier to assess than they are in the case of women.

Analyzing the problems concerning the self-assessment of the sex life of a person in the aspect of a sense of security, one cannot omit people who are in prisons. Deprivation of sexual needs in a special way manifests itself in prison isolation and affects the sense of psychosocial safety of persons deprived of liberty. Therefore, this article presents the results of research conducted among prisoners, which concerned the correlations of the feeling of their safety with particular elements of sexual life.

Learning and researching the abovementioned predicates seem to serve and support the process of rehabilitation as one should bear in mind the fact that man functions simultaneously in respective spheres of life. Thus self-assessment of the sex life becomes not only the determinant of the sense of security in the psychophysical sphere, but it also contributes to the renewed acquisition of social competencies.

## **Theoretical premises concerning the human sex life in relation to selected aspects of the sense of security**

The standpoint of the researchers regarding the importance of satisfying the sexual need of man and his level of self-esteem for well-being is not clear. They indicate that sexual health is extremely important, and that this significance is very subjective or not significant at all. Researchers of this issue emphasize that from a biological point of view, sexual need is natural and necessary in human life, although for some people it does not seem to play a significant role (Obuchowski, 1984, p. 212).

In the social space, the image of a man who meets the sexual need and has no problems in the sexual sphere, however, is commonly perpetuated.

Media - film, television, Internet, illustrated magazines, as well as pornographic magazines - provide many models of what a „model” sexual intercourse should look like, how partners should behave and how to externalize their emotions. Many people, however, feel or perform sex in a less spectacular way and have a sense of their own imperfection in this regard. These specific, imposed by the media standards thus become a source of deeply hidden fears and may affect the quality of sexual life, which determines the sense of psychosocial security.

Problems related to perceiving oneself as a full-fledged sexual partner are a source of concern for a significant number of people and affect their sense of security. The results of the research indicate that people are afraid of the assessment of their sexual performance and the fact that they will not check to show the proper sexual activity in the sexual sphere (Izdebski, Ostrowska, 2003, p. 119).

Sexual health, which is physical, mental and social well-being, plays an important role in human life and development. According to the WHO (2002), it is a group of emotional, intellectual, biological and social elements of sex life conditioning the positive development of personality, human love and communication. The measure of sexual health is subjectively felt satisfaction with sexual contacts. Sexual health of a man depends on many factors, among them biophysical factors (hormonal system, vascular system, diseases), psychological (depression and its treatment, mental health, sexuality, sex knowledge) and social factors, in particular contacts with a partner (Izdebski, 2012, pp. 1-8).

The most frequent sexual problem among men is erectile dysfunction. The analysis of the literature shows that there are many reasons for the appearance of erection problems. The main risk factors for erectile dysfunction include age, mood disorders, lifestyle (obesity, sedentary lifestyle, too short sleep, poor health), cardiovascular factors, hormonal disorders, penile fracture, diabetes, taking certain medications, post-traumatic factors, prostatic hypertrophy (Oettingen, 2014, pp. 91-105; Onik et al., 2014, pp. 27-29). Analyzing this problem A. Sipiński, citing the research of other authors, states that in the group of men aged 40-70, 52% reported erectile dysfunction of various degrees, whereas severe erectile dysfunction occurred in 10% of men (Sipiński, 2010, pp. 192-209). In turn, the Polish Society of Sexual Medicine indicates that among the men surveyed in 2005-2007, erectile dysfunction occurred in 4% of men under the age of 30, 9% in the age of 31-40, 25% in the age of 41-50 and 37% in the age of 51-60 and 25% over 60 years of age. The results of the study conducted by A. Lewicka also indicate that erectile dysfunction most frequently occurred in men over 50 years of age (Lewicka et al., 2015, p. 59).

The physiological response of a man to a sexual stimulus is a variable response and is an effect of the balance between stimulant and inhibitory stimuli (Depko, 2010, pp. 111-121).

The man's sexual arousal is influenced by the male's personality, neurohormonal system, neurotransmitter concentration, micronutrients, nervous system, cardiovascular and general health (Depko, 2010, pp. 111-121). The sex drive of men is considered in various aspects as innate motivation or as external motivation, e.g. on the part of a partner. Its intensity varies, and it can be measured during the evaluation of the subject's thoughts and fantasies. A young man has a greater sex drive and as the sexual activity increases, the urge continues to grow. The older the man becomes, the more the changes in his sexuality become larger and worsen, which is related to, among others,

decreased libido, decreased energy, erectile dysfunction, reduced endurance (Jakiel, 2010).

Research results indicate that people with a high sense of satisfaction with sexual life achieve a high global result of a sense of quality of life. On the other hand, a low sense of satisfaction with sexual life coincides with a low sense of quality of life (Nomejko, Zdrojewicz, Dolińska- Zygmunt, 2013, p. 59). It can therefore be inferred that the higher the satisfaction with sexual life, the higher the sense of the quality of life of the subjects and the sense of security.

The sense of security is particularly influenced by prison isolation, which contributes to the deprivation of sexual needs or leads to the search for substitute forms. The sexual needs of the prisoners are impossible (the exception is marital meetings during visits without the supervision of prison staff). The lack of normal sexual contact is a serious problem for closed institutions, including penitentiary establishments (Piotrowski, Ciosek, 2016, p. 437). Unsatisfied sexual need finds an outlet in the interest of pornography, masturbation (self-abuse) or homosexual activity in the form of anal, oral or surrogate relations (Hansen, 1968; Szaszkievicz, Kamiński, 2006). Deprivation of sexual need results in increased tension, impulsiveness, violence, sometimes uncontrollable behaviors and aggression (Wolff et al., 2006; Gaes, Goldberg, 2004; Dumond, Dumond, 2002). It should also be emphasized that the inability to satisfy this need may also lead to escape into the world of fantasies, dreams, ideas and symbolic behaviors (Ostrowska, 2008, pp. 256-257).

It is also worth noting that the image of a hard, strong man with no sexual problems is particularly well-established in the prison environment and plays a very important role in the subculture and criminal hierarchy and thus affects the sense of security of prisoners.

### **Analysis of own research results**

This chapter presents the results of research carried out by the authors of this article among 35 prisoners in 2018. The research concerned the correlations of a sense of security with particular elements of the prisoners' sex life. The research tool was a modification of the SHIM questionnaire (The Sexual Health Inventory for Men), also known as IIEF-5 for the assessment of men's sex life. This questionnaire is used to assess the severity of erectile dysfunction on a point scale from 0 to 25 based on the answers given to 5 questions, assessing the sexual performance of a man in the past 6 months. The IIEF-5 questionnaire is a reliable diagnostic tool for assessing possible erectile dysfunction and its severity.

The research aims to examine the sense of security of prisoners who pursue their sexual activity through masturbation activities aimed at their own person.

The elements of sex life (X) include:

- 1) certainty of the respondents that they are able to achieve and maintain an erection;

2) certainty of the respondents that if they can, they can maintain an erection during a heterosexual relationship;

3) certainty of the respondents that if possible they can maintain an erection until the end of the heterosexual relationship;

4) assessment of satisfaction with a heterosexual relationship.

The answer to each question could be in one of the following responses - very high, high, moderate, low, and very low.

At the same time, the level of feeling of psychophysical safety of prisoners (Y) in the following scale was examined - very high, high, moderate, low, very low. The correlations of the sense of safety (Y) with the individual elements of the sexual life (X) are shown below. The age of the respondents 23 - 64 years M (average) = 42 years.

**Table 1. Correlation of the prisoners' certainty that they are able to achieve and maintain an erection and a sense of psychophysical security**

X value						Y value					
$\Sigma = 137$						$\Sigma = 116$					
M = 3,914						M = 3,314					
r = 0,2372						p = 0,17 (irrelevant)					
Prisoner participating in the study	x	y	x <sup>2</sup>	y <sup>2</sup>	xy	Prisoner participating in the study	x	y	x <sup>2</sup>	y <sup>2</sup>	xy
1.	4	3	16	9	12	19.	3	3	9	9	9
2.	4	3	16	9	12	20.	3	4	9	16	12
3.	4	5	16	25	20	21.	3	4	9	16	12
4.	4	3	16	9	12	22.	3	3	9	9	9
5.	3	3	9	9	9	23.	4	3	16	9	12
6.	3	2	9	4	6	24.	4	4	16	16	16
7.	3	3	9	9	9	25.	5	3	25	9	15
8.	3	4	9	16	12	26.	5	4	25	16	20
9.	5	4	25	16	20	27.	5	4	25	16	20
10.	5	3	25	9	15	28.	5	3	25	9	15
11.	5	3	25	9	15	29.	4	3	16	9	12
12.	5	4	25	16	20	30.	4	3	16	9	12
13.	5	3	25	9	15	31.	4	3	16	9	12
14.	4	4	16	16	16	32.	2	3	4	9	6
15.	4	5	16	25	20	33.	4	3	16	9	12
16.	4	3	16	9	12	34.	4	2	16	4	8
17.	4	2	16	4	8	35.	2	3	4	9	6
18.	4	4	16	16	16	$\Sigma$	137	116	561	402	467

Source: Own calculation

From the above research results it should be concluded that there is not strong relationship between the level of feeling of being able to achieve and maintain an

erection and a sense of psychophysical safety. It is also worth noting that the variables do not reach high averages that would indicate their high intensity. The respondents rated the ability to achieve and maintain an erection as nearly a four-point value on a scale of one to five, which can be considered as a moderately positive result. In turn, the perception of your psychophysical safety at a sufficient level (a value slightly exceeding three on a scale of one to five) should arouse some cognitive anxiety. It is difficult after all for the effective process of re-adaptation of prisoners, if one of the most important human needs - the need for security is satisfied at such a low level. This result, to some extent concerns the problem of quality and effectiveness of rehabilitation interactions.

**Table 2. Correlation of the confidence of prisoners participating in the research that they can maintain an erection during a heterosexual relationship and a sense of psychophysical security**

X value						Y value						$r = 0,1769$	
$\Sigma = 131$						$\Sigma = 116$						$p = 0,3093$ (irrelevant)	
$M = 3,743$						$M = 3,314$							
Prisoner participating in the study						Prisoner participating in the study							
	x	y	x <sup>2</sup>	y <sup>2</sup>	xy		x	y	x <sup>2</sup>	y <sup>2</sup>	xy		
1.	2	3	4	9	6	19.	3	3	9	9	9		
2.	4	3	16	9	12	20.	3	4	9	16	12		
3.	4	5	16	25	20	21.	3	4	9	16	12		
4.	4	3	16	9	12	22.	3	3	9	9	9		
5.	3	3	9	9	9	23.	4	3	16	9	12		
6.	3	2	9	4	6	24.	4	4	16	16	16		
7.	3	3	9	9	9	25.	5	3	25	9	15		
8.	3	4	9	16	12	26.	5	4	25	16	20		
9.	4	4	16	16	16	27.	3	4	9	16	12		
10.	5	3	25	9	15	28.	5	3	25	9	15		
11.	5	3	25	9	15	29.	4	3	16	9	12		
12.	5	4	25	16	20	30.	4	3	16	9	12		
13.	5	3	25	9	15	31.	3	3	9	9	9		
14.	4	4	16	16	16	32.	2	3	4	9	6		
15.	4	5	16	25	20	33.	4	3	16	9	12		
16.	4	3	16	9	12	34.	4	2	16	4	8		
17.	4	2	16	4	8	35.	2	3	4	9	6		
18.	4	4	16	16	16	$\Sigma$	131	116	525	402	446		

Source: Own calculation

As in the interpretation of the results listed in Table 1, there was also no relationship between the sense of security and the ability to induce and maintain an erection during heterosexual intercourse. It should be noted that the intensity of certainty about your

own erection is lower than in the case of masturbatory behaviors. This situation can be seen in the context of long abstinence in the sphere of sexual activity. Similarly to the earlier, the safety assessment by the respondents raises the attention. The age range of prisoners participating in research shows that with age, their sense of security does not increase. In each age range, the scores were similar, which may indicate that the coping strategies used in isolation are insufficient to meet the need for security.

**Table 3. Correlation of the confidence of prisoners participating in the research that they can maintain an erection until the end of a heterosexual relationship, and a sense of security**

$\Sigma = 135$ $M = 3,857$						$\Sigma = 116$ $M = 3,314$					$r = 0,2699$ $p = 0,1168$ (irrelevant)	
Prisoner participating in the study	x	y	x <sup>2</sup>	y <sup>2</sup>	xy	Prisoner participating in the study	x	y	x <sup>2</sup>	y <sup>2</sup>	xy	
1.	4	3	16	9	12	19.	3	3	9	9	9	
2.	4	3	16	9	12	20.	3	4	9	16	12	
3.	4	5	16	25	20	21.	3	4	9	16	12	
4.	4	3	16	9	12	22.	3	3	9	9	9	
5.	3	3	9	9	9	23.	4	3	16	9	12	
6.	3	2	9	4	6	24.	4	4	16	16	16	
7.	3	3	9	9	9	25.	5	3	25	9	15	
8.	3	4	9	16	12	26.	5	4	25	16	20	
9.	5	4	25	16	20	27.	5	4	25	16	20	
10.	3	3	9	9	9	28.	5	3	25	9	15	
11.	5	3	25	9	15	29.	4	3	16	9	12	
12.	5	4	25	16	20	30.	4	3	16	9	12	
13.	5	3	25	9	15	31.	4	3	16	9	12	
14.	4	4	16	16	16	32.	2	3	4	9	6	
15.	4	5	16	25	20	33.	4	3	16	9	12	
16.	4	3	16	9	12	34.	4	2	16	4	8	
17.	4	2	16	4	8	35.	2	3	4	9	6	
18.	4	4	16	16	16	$\Sigma$	135	116	545	402	461	

Source: Own calculation

Analyzing the above-mentioned research results, it should be noted that middle-aged prisoners have the greatest certainty of maintaining an erection until the end of heterosexual intercourse. Perhaps the younger ones did not experience satisfying relations in the conditions of liberty, and the representatives of the oldest group because of various disease entities. In the above analysis, there was no relationship between a sense of security and the possibility of completing sexual intercourse.

**Table 4. Correlation of the feeling of satisfaction in the event of a heterosexual relationship and a sense of security**

X value		Y value										
$\Sigma = 148$		$\Sigma = 116$					$r = 0,0588$					
$M = 4,353$		$M = 3,314$					$p = 0,7372$ (irrelevant)					
Prisoner participating in the study	x	y	x <sup>2</sup>	y <sup>2</sup>	xy	Prisoner participating in the study	x	y	x <sup>2</sup>	y <sup>2</sup>	xy	
1.	5	3	25	9	15	19.	5	3	25	9	15	
2.	5	3	25	9	15	20.	3	4	9	16	12	
3.	4	5	16	25	20	21.	3	4	9	16	12	
4.	4	3	16	9	12	22.	3	3	9	9	9	
5.	3	3	9	9	9	23.	4	3	16	9	12	
6.	3	2	9	4	6	24.	4	4	16	16	16	
7.	3	3	9	9	9	25.	5	3	25	9	15	
8.	3	4	9	16	12	26.	5	4	25	16	20	
9.	5	4	25	16	20	27.	5	4	25	16	20	
10.	5	3	25	9	15	28.	4	3	16	9	12	
11.	3	3	9	9	9	29.	4	3	16	9	12	
12.	5	4	25	16	20	30.	4	3	16	9	12	
13.	5	3	25	9	15	31.	4	3	16	9	12	
14.	5	4	25	16	20	32.	5	3	25	9	15	
15.	5	5	25	25	25	33.	4	3	16	9	12	
16.	5	3	25	15	12	34.	4	2	16	4	8	
17.	5	2	25	4	10	35.	5	3	25	9	15	
18.	4	4	16	16	16	$\Sigma$	148	116	648	402	464	

Source: Own calculation

The concept of satisfaction is a category belonging to the concepts that motivate a person to take specific actions. The goal, which the individual intends to achieve, should relate to a specific gratuity. The lack or anticipated weak intensity of satisfaction in the final effect may be demotivating and consequently lead to the abandonment of this action. Prisoners participating in the trials showed a moderately high level of satisfaction with heterosexual contacts. This type of assessment may be associated with the feeling of the need to build intimate relationships with women, one of the components of which is the sexual act itself.

## Conclusions

1. Prisoners participating in research relatively highly evaluate selected elements of their own sex life.
2. The sense of psychophysical safety of prisoners indicates too low level.
3. The assessment of sexual life does not correlate with the sense of security of prisoners.
4. The age of prisoners participating in research does not decide about their safety.



5. Middle-aged prisoners assess the possibility of a sense of satisfaction with heterosexual relationships the most if they had the opportunity to participate in them.

6. A man who lives in penitentiary isolation is still a psychosexual being.

7. Widely understood penitentiary institutions do not ensure proper security of prisoners in the personal dimension.

8. Failure to provide prisoners with personal security by prison establishments may prolong the rehabilitation process of the unit or eliminate it altogether.

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## САМООЦІНКА СТАТЕВОГО ЖИТТЯ ЧОЛОВІКІВ, ЯКІ ВІДБУВАЮТЬ ПОКАРАННЯ У В'ЯЗНИЦІ ТА ПОЧУТТЯ ПСИХОФІЗИЧНОЇ БЕЗПЕКИ ЯК ПРЕДИКТОРИ РЕАБІЛІТАЦІЙНОГО ПРОЦЕСУ

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**Анотація.** Сексуальна сфера належить до найменш відкритого простору функціонування людини. Дуже часто через нерозуміння це стає соціальним табу. Іншим разом цінність сексуальної сфери маргіналізується, забуваючи про те, яку роль вона відіграє в процесному процесі чи в побудові постійних міжособистісних відносин. Людина функціонує одночасно у всіх сферах життя. Дисонанс і розлад в одній сфері призводить до зриву в іншій. Пенітенціарна ізоляція сприяє позбавленню потреби вступати в інтимні, дуже особисті стосунки з іншою людиною. Отже, після виходу з тюрми чоловік також повинен зіткнутися з проблемами в психосексуальній сфері. Розсіяні часто конструюють уявлення про себе як сексуальну особу, змушують колишнього в'язня зазнати реконструкції власної сексуальної активності, яка під час перебування у в'язниці була зосереджена на розрядці сексуального напруження. Діяльність людини, яка виходить із в'язниці, повинна бути вираженням емоційної та духовної зв'язки з іншою людиною.

Проблеми, пов'язані із сексуальним життям ув'язнених, тому повинні бути предметом консультацій спеціалістів (з лікарем, психологом, сексологом). Однак найчастіше ув'язнені відчують ці проблеми в самоті. Сексуальні проблеми, а також проблеми з психічним здоров'ям трактуються в суспільстві та особливо в тюремному середовищі як бенкетно і трактуються як особиста справа, яка заважає людям відчувати їх у використанні професійної допомоги.

Допомога, про яку ми говоримо, необхідна в процесі функціонування, і не тільки у відриві, але й у повсякденному суспільному житті. Варто зазначити що дослідження, проведене серед ув'язнених, показало нам, що питання про почуття безпеки в контексті статевого життя є одним із елементів побудови міжособистісних стосунків.

**Ключові слова:** сексуальне життя; почуття безпеки; ізоляція в'язнів; самооцінка.