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## DEPARTMENTS AND TREATMENT GROUPS AT PENITENTIARY FACILITIES IN SERBIA AND EVALUATION OF PRISON LIFE QUALITY

**Abstract:** *The paper addresses the issues pertinent to the relationship between the prison social climate and departments as well as treatment groups at penitentiary facilities (MQPL survey). The focal objective of this paper is to investigate potential differences in how the prison life quality is perceived by persons who reside in different departments and treatment groups. A sample of 616 convicted adult persons was used for this research, which was conducted in 2022. The respondents were serving a prison sentence at penitentiary facilities in Niš, Sremska Mitrovica, Požarevac-Zabela, Belgrade, and the Penitentiary facility for Women in Požarevac. Analysis of variance and descriptive statistics were used. There is a clear pattern in the results of the analysis, namely that person in semi-opened departments rate the quality of prison life significantly better than persons in closed departments. The authors link the obtained results with prison deprivation, risk assessment, and opportunities for improving the prison social climate.*

**Key words:** Prison, Convicts, Prison social climate, Quality of prison life, MQPL, Department of the penitentiary facility, Treatment groups.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ever since it was first introduced, prison sentence and the manner of its execution have stood for an inexhaustible source of various discussions both in scientific and professional discourses. Although it is indisputable that the prison sentence is a necessary means in the criminal legal systems since “society has not found an adequate substitute for imprisonment”,<sup>1</sup> it appears that there is an issue that remains unresolved: how to treat persons convicted to a prison term. This issue has been a matter of continuous interest of those dealing with the subject of sentencing and executing penal sanctions.

Since the 1970s, in most Western countries and in our region alike, there has been blunt criticism of the resocialization concept because it was deemed that it did not lead to the overall reduction in crime and recidivism rates.<sup>2</sup> The ideal of rehabilitation was exposed to harsh critique and was disputed. Martinson’s position that “nothing works” was founded on his analysis of the impact of treatment programs on decreasing recidivism; based on the results he concluded that the treatment of offenders was largely inefficient. Admittedly, the results of a repeated analysis showed that “certain programs did work after all,” and this consequently raised the question – *What works?*<sup>3</sup>

The turn of the century was marked by a general tendency of renouncing the social wellbeing model as well as a decrease in state budget funds used for this purpose, which in the segment of sentencing and executing penal sanctions gave rise to a “new penology”,<sup>4</sup> which is typically defined as the management, surveillance and control of specific groups of people.<sup>5</sup> Rehabilitation is no longer the pivotal point. Instead, it is about risk assessment and the management of the assessed risks, as a direction that promises actual effects and a measurable result, in a situation of growing crime rates, high

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1 Ignjatović, Đ., 2013, Normativno uređenje izvršenja vanzavodskih krivičnih sankcija u Srbiji, *Crimen*, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 144.

2 Knežić, B., *Zatvorska kazna: represija i/ili resocijalizacija*, in: Kron, L., Knežić, B., (eds.), 2011, *Kriminal i državna reakcija: fenomenologija, mogućnosti, perspektive*, Belgrade, Institut za kriminološka i sociološka istraživanja, p. 336.

3 Martinson, R., 1979, *New Findings, New Views: A Note of Caution Regarding Sentencing Reform*, *Hofstra Law Review*, 7, p. 244.

4 Soković, S., 2011a, *Nova penologija – karakteristike i perspektive*, *Pravni život*, Vol. 60, No. 9, p. 823.

5 Ackerman, A. R., Sacks, M., Furman, R., 2014, *The New Penology Revisited: The Criminalization of Immigration as a Pacification Strategy*, *Justice Policy Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 5.

recidivism rates, and lower investment of funds.<sup>6</sup> What emerged as the main means of the new penology were various instruments (questionnaires) used for risk assessment of the convicted persons. Such questionnaires are mainly based on static (invariable) and dynamic (variable) factors. Various scales have been created, consisting of static (invariable) and dynamic (variable) factors. Scales created using static factors commonly rely on slow-changing historical factors (*e.g.*, age) or such factors that are almost impossible to change through human intervention (*e.g.*, age at the time of the first prison sentence). Dynamic risk factors are based on personality traits and the environment, while their overall score may include the actual features of persons that are subject to assessment, these features being useful beyond the prediction of recidivism. Changes in treatment can be documented based on these factors, which in turn can be connected to static elements.<sup>7</sup>

Although the new penological thought is based on the idea of managing various groups of offenders, one should keep in mind that at the present this needs to be combined with such models of treatment that take into account individual needs of the convicted persons. Therefore, we can agree with the position that the focus on risk is not incompatible with rehabilitation matters: risk control changes how rehabilitation is perceived but nonetheless rehabilitation still exists as a means of risk management.<sup>8</sup> In a broader context, one could say that through various programs, during and following the served prison sentence, the ideal of normalization, as Österman calls it, can be accomplished, with the ultimate goal of reducing recidivism rates. Similarly, drawing from a sociological perspective on punishment, Garland views incarceration as a complex, multidimensional process. Speaking about prison, he states that “one must think of it as a complex institution and evaluate it accordingly, recognizing the range of its penal and social functions and the nature of its social support.”<sup>9</sup>

However, irrespective of the manner of treatment, we should not forget that the coercive nature of the prison environment means that punishment affects multiple aspects of everyday prison life. Thus, Coyle notes that convicted persons are restricted in terms of free movement, strict

6 Soković, S., 2011b, Savremene globalne tendencije u kontroli kriminaliteta – karakteristike, perspektive i osvrt na domaće prilike, *Crimen*, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 221.

7 Scanlan, J. M. *et al.*, 2020, Predicting Women’s Recidivism Using the Dynamic Risk Assessment for Offender Re-Entry: Preliminary Evidence of Predictive Validity With Community – Sentenced Women Using a “Gender Neutral” Risk Measure, *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, Vol. 47, No. 3, p. 252.

8 Barry, M., 2019, ‘Walking on Ice’: The Future of Parole in a Risk-Obsessed Society, *Theoretical Criminology*, Vol. 25, No. 2, p. 3.

9 Garland, D., 1991, Sociological Perspectives on Punishment, *Crime and Justice*, Vol. 14, p. 160.

rules of behavior are imposed on them, which also applies to work and activities that are typically carried out during the day. Additionally, limitations are introduced and applied with relation to the convicted persons' personal effects. Furthermore, they are subject to work- and education-related limitations, while their familial relationships change materially and become limited as well.<sup>10</sup>

What contributes to the humanization of the prison sentence and a better quality of inmates' lives is also a positive prison climate, which at the same time also alleviates the negative effects of imprisonment. It represents a major basis for creating a safe environment and various stimulating possibilities for treatment and rehabilitation.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, establishing a positive social climate is not simple if one keeps in mind the complexity of the prison system and a range of differences: psychological, social, educational, culturological ones, among the prison population.<sup>12</sup>

The principle of humane treatment of convicted persons, which in the broadest sense should prompt their successful reintegration into a regular social framework, underlies the modern systems of executing penal sanctions. Although there is several documents passed under the auspices of the United Nations (UN) or some other regional organizations, such as the European Union (EU), none of the documents mention the quality of prison life in direct terms. However, from the very norms and standards follows their specific intention to improve the prison climate and establish certain practices that can diminish the negative effects of imprisonment. These are the underlying postulates of the penal executive legislation of the Republic of Serbia, which will be discussed below in more detail.

Given all this, the main goal of this paper is to investigate whether there is a difference in the perception of the prison life quality among persons residing in different departments of penitentiary facilities (open, semi-open, and closed) and the corresponding treatment groups (A1, A2, B1, B2, V1, and V2). Bearing in mind that the level of benefits that a convicted person can exercise is conditional on the department that housed them, this issue consequently gains importance, since the negative effects of imprisonment are to the largest extent present in the closed department

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10 Stevanović, I., Ilijić, Lj., Vujičić, N., 2024, Previous prison experience and evaluation of the quality of prison life, *NBP. Nauka, bezbednost, policija*, Vol. 29, Nos. 1, 2, (<https://doi.org/10.5937/nabepo29-47558>).

11 Auty, K. M., Liebling, A., 2020, Exploring the Relationship between Prison Social Climate and Reoffending, *Justice Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 2, (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2018.1538421>).

12 Bosma, A. *et al.*, 2020, A New Instrument to Measure Prison Climate: The Psychometric Quality of the Prison Climate Questionnaire, *The Prison Journal*, Vol. 100, No. 3, (<https://doi.org/10.1177/0032885520916819>).

of any penitentiary facility. Therefore, we will analyze the correlation between the evaluation of prison life quality (as perceived by the convicted persons) and the assessed risk levels and the legal framework in Serbia.

## 2. WHAT IS THE PRISON SOCIAL CLIMATE AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Although the prison social climate has been one of the pivotal criminological and penological topics in recent decades,<sup>13</sup> the concept and theoretical basis of this notion in literature have not been conceptualized uniformly.<sup>14</sup> In the broadest sense, the concept of prison social climate entails the idea that how the environment is perceived matters. In this context, it can additionally be defined as a perceived quality of living conditions for the inmates, including relational, social, material, physical, as well as organizational dimensions<sup>15</sup> and interactions between the mentioned factors.<sup>16</sup> Regardless of terminological variation, it is generally accepted that prisons do possess a type of “character”<sup>17</sup> that affects the convicted person’s

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- 13 Ginneken, E. F. J. C. van, Nieuwbeerta, P., 2020, Climate Consensus: A Multilevel Study Testing Assumptions about Prison Climate, *Journal of Criminal Justice*, Vol. 69, 101693, (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2020.101693>).
  - 14 For more details see Baharudin, M. N., Mahadzirah, M., Fazida, K., 2020, Developing a Conceptual Model of Drug-abuse Inmates Personality, Prison Climate, Social Support, and Maqasid Shariah Quality of Life, *International Journal of Arts and Social Science*, Vol. 3, No. 4, pp. 234–242; Ross, M. W. et al., 2008, Measurement of Prison Social Climate: A Comparison of an Inmate Measure in England and the USA, *Punishment and Society*, Vol. 10, No. 4, pp. 447–474, (<https://doi.org/10.1177/1462474508095320>); Ilijić, Lj., 2021, Zatvorska socijalna klima – pojam, faktori i značaj zatvorske socijalne klime, *Zbornik Instituta za kriminološka i sociološka istraživanja*, Vol. 15, No. 2–3, pp. 59–76; Stevanović, I., Ilijić, Lj., Vujičić, N., 2024, p. 2.
  - 15 For more details see Ross, M. W. et al., 2008; Tonkin, M., 2016, A Review of Questionnaire Measures for Assessing the Social Climate in Prisons and Forensic Psychiatric Hospitals, *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, Vol. 60, No. 12, p. 1377; Ginneken, E. F. J. C. van, Nieuwbeerta, P., 2020; Pavićević, O., Ilijić, Lj., Batrićević, A., 2024, *Moralna i socijalna klima u zatvorima*, Belgrade, Institut za kriminološka i sociološka istraživanja; Ilijić, Lj., Milićević, M., Pavićević, O. Approaches and Methods in the Quality of Prison Life Assessing-Measuring and Moral Climate in Prison, in: Nedović, G., Eminović, F., (eds.), 2020, *Approaches and Models in Special Education and Rehabilitation: Thematic Collection of International Importance*, Belgrade, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Special Education and Rehabilitation, p. 88.
  - 16 Moos, R. H., 1989, *Ward Atmosphere Scale Manual* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), Palo Alto, CA, Consulting Psychologists Press.
  - 17 Moos, R. H., 1975, *Evaluating Correctional and Community Settings*, New York, Wiley.

wellbeing and the behavior of convicted persons in the course of and following the execution of the sentence of deprivation of liberty.<sup>18</sup>

It appears that the prison climate is the crucial factor that has rather frequently been neglected by research assessing factors affecting the effectiveness of the prison sentence,<sup>19</sup> *i.e.*, the prison social climate is one of a number of environmental aspects that could provide insight into the substantial differences in the outcomes of treatment programs that are applied in prisons.<sup>20</sup> Studying and improving the prison social climate is significant, since research indicates that it is specifically those factors of the prison social climate (social, emotional, organizational, and physical characteristics of a facility) that act as intermediaries between the perpetrators and the rehabilitation or therapeutic measures. In other words, the prison social or institutional climate can potentially enhance the successful rehabilitation or hinder it.<sup>21</sup>

A piece of information that can commonly be found in literature is that the interest in prison climate can be traced as far back as Clemmer's study of adaptation to imprisonment,<sup>22</sup> and Sykes' study of the Society of Captives.<sup>23</sup> Sykes, who conducted a study of maximum-security prisons, was the first to develop the concept of "pains of imprisonment", *i.e.*, he wrote about deprivations, which stand for difficulties, inflict psychological pain, disrupt an inmate's sense of self-worth and identity.<sup>24</sup> In other words, Sykes (1958) used the term "pains of imprisonment" to describe various conditions, forms of deprivation and the inmates' experiences in prison, and pointed out that by far the hardest aspect of the pains of imprisonment was the deliberate, moral rejection by free society.<sup>25</sup> Starting

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- 18 Boone, M., Althoff, M., Koenraadt, F., 2016, *Het leefklimaat in justitiële inrichtingen* (Prison climate in judicial institutions), Den Haag, Boom Juridisch; Pavićević, O., Ilijić, Lj., Batrićević, A., 2024, p. 136.
  - 19 Ilijić, Lj., Milićević, M., Pavićević, O., 2022, Osvrt na početke proučavanja zatvorske socijalne klime i razvoj instrumenata za procenu, *Zbornik Instituta za kriminološka i sociološka istraživanja*, Vol. 16, No. 1, p. 79, (<https://doi.org/10.47152/ziksi2022015>).
  - 20 Attar-Schwartz, S., Experiences of Victimization by Peers and Staff in Residential Care for Children at Risk in Israel from an Ecological Perspective, in: Rus, A. V., Parris, S. R., Stativa, E., (eds.), 2017, *Child Maltreatment in Residential Care*, Cham, Springer International Publishing AG, p. 279, ([http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-57990-0\\_13](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-57990-0_13)).
  - 21 Hall, P., Chong, M. D., 2018, A Prison's Social Climate, and Its Impact on Reintegration and Recidivism, *James Cook University Law Review*, 24, p. 235.
  - 22 Clemmer, D., 1958, *The Prison Community*, Austin, Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
  - 23 Sykes, G. M., 1958; Ginneken, E. F. J. C. van, Nieuwbeerta, P., 2020, according to Ilijić, Lj., Milićević, M., Pavićević, O., 2022, p. 82.
  - 24 *Ibid.*
  - 25 Osment, L., 2018, *The Complexity of Rehabilitation in Open and Closed Prison Setting*, Master Thesis, Lund University.

from the Sykes' and Clemmer's original studies, scientists have been laying a foundation for a theoretical model of prison climate. This has been done with improvements to the concept through various additions, in the form of new theoretical findings and empirical results.<sup>26</sup>

By relying on the deprivation model, the concept of prison climate in actual terms reflects the idea that pains of imprisonment may vary depending on the conditions of imprisonment.<sup>27</sup> Although every prison is connected to inevitable deprivations,<sup>28</sup> there are variations among institutions, as well as among the regimes within a single institution, in terms of the extent of deprivation.<sup>29</sup>

Studies has confirmed the mentioned views. What researchers have noticed is the existence of distinct differences between institutions with relation to the work organization, physical conditions, existing programs, and they have presumed that different conditions will have an impact on different perceptions of climate by different convicted persons and prison staff. The perceptions of climate by convicted persons and prison staff affect both behavior within the institution as well as the behavior of convicted persons after they have been released from prison.<sup>30</sup> The prison social climate acts as an intervention factor between the variables on a structural level, consisting of prison environment, and the convicted persons' and prison staff's behavior at the individual level. The prison environment, on a structural level, includes physical conditions that arise from design features, social organizations between the administrative, specialized staff and convicted persons, as well as various levels of courtesy/abuse. What has a direct impact on the prison social climate is the structural environment, as well as the existing views, beliefs, and values of the convicted persons and prison staff. Furthermore, the prison social climate has an impact on the behavior of convicted persons and prison staff on an individual level.<sup>31</sup> In addition to this, research has shown that deprivation of

26 Ilijić, Lj., Milićević, M., Pavićević, O., 2022, p. 83.

27 Ginneken, E. F. J. C. van, Nieuwbeerta, P., 2020, p. 3.

28 Sykes G. M., 1958, *The Society of Captives: A Study of a Maximum Security Prison*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

29 Ginneken, E. F. J. C. van *et al.*, 2019, Bearing the Weight of Imprisonment: The Relationship between Prison Climate and Well-Being, *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, Vol. 46, No. 10, p. 1395, (<https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854819867373>).

30 According to: Day, A. *et al.*, 2011, Assessing the Social Climate of Australian Prisons, *Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, 427, pp. 1–6, (<https://doi.org/10.52922/ti260013>); Ross, M. W. *et al.*, 2008, p. 449.

31 Burek, M.W., Liederbach, J. C., 2021, Tell Us how You Really Feel: Validating an Inmate Social Climate Survey, *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 46, pp. 209–231, according to Pavićević, O., Ilijić, Lj., Batrićević, A., 2024, p. 137.

liberty and deprivation of autonomy is less noticeable in the case of convicts who spend most of their time outside prison cells or those who have the freedom to move around the prison grounds or are given the opportunity to be engaged during the day in some activity outside the prison.<sup>32</sup>

On the other hand, prisons with higher security levels tend to impose more stringent restrictions and deprivations, which corresponds to lower levels of wellbeing.<sup>33</sup> According to the deprivation model, pains of imprisonment, their form and intensity have an impact on the very adaptation to the prison regime.<sup>34</sup>

A large number of studies note the significance and effects that the prison social climate has on the relationship between prison staff and convicted persons, and the relative satisfaction with this relationship,<sup>35</sup> the adaptation of individuals to imprisonment, where the frequency of physical and verbal violence feature prominently.<sup>36</sup> Other research has documented that a stimulating prison environment can increase the inmates' willingness and motivation to be involved more actively in rehabilitation treatments.<sup>37</sup> Hence, what comes as no surprise are findings that a positive social climate correlates to a higher degree of accomplished positive change in the inmates' behavior, as well as the length of period without repeated offences following their release from prison.<sup>38</sup>

### 3. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK IN SERBIA

The main legal acts that govern the matters of how prison sentences are executed, as well as the application of treatments in Serbia, are the Law on Execution of Criminal Sanctions (LECS)<sup>39</sup> and Rulebook on Treat-

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32 Kaap-Deeder, J. van der *et al.*, 2017, Choosing When Choices Are Limited: The Role of Perceived Afforded choice and Autonomy in Prisoners' Wellbeing, *Law and Human Behavior*, Vol. 41, No. 6, p. 570.

33 Dye, M. H., 2010, Deprivation, Importation, and Prison Suicide: Combined Effects of Institutional Conditions and Inmate Composition, *Journal of Criminal Justice*, Vol. 38, No. 4, p. 801.

34 Ginneken, E. F. J. C. van *et al.*, 2019, p. 1390.

35 Rössberg, J. I., Eiring, Ø., Friis, S., 2004, Work Environment and Job Satisfaction, *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, Vol. 39, p. 577.

36 Long, C. G. *et al.*, 2011, Social Climate along the Pathway of Care in Women's Secure Mental Health Service: Variation with Level of Security, Patient Motivation, Therapeutic Alliance and Level of Disturbance, *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health*, Vol. 21, No. 3, p. 204, (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/cbm.791>).

37 *Ibid.*

38 Moos, R. H., 1975; Schubert, *et al.*, 2012, according to Ilijić, Lj., 2021, p. 65.

39 Zakon o izvršenju krivičnih sankcija [Law on Execution of Criminal Sanctions], *Official Gazette of the RS*, Nos. 55/14 and 35/19.



ment, Sentence Program, Categorization and Subsequent Categorization of the Convicted Persons (Treatment Rulebook)<sup>40</sup>.

Following observation during the admission process in a penitentiary facility, the convicted person is assigned to the open, semi-open, or closed department, and it is determined which group they belong to. In practice, this means that the categorization itself and sentence program are established based on risk assessment, the convicted person's capacities and needs. This is done using two instruments: the Questionnaire for Convicted Persons who serve prison sentence of up to three years (Short Questionnaire) and the Questionnaire for Convicted Persons who serve prison sentence of more than three years (Long Questionnaire). Three basic risk levels are envisaged, as follows: low, medium, and high (including extremely high – very high risk level, subject to the type of questionnaire used), on the basis of which the convicted person is assigned to the open, semi-open, or closed department of the penitentiary facility. When initial categorization is conducted, the assessed risk level does not have to necessarily match the respective department to which the convicted person is assigned, which is an aspect that is especially noticeable in persons who are assessed as medium risk and who in the majority of cases are initially assigned to the closed department.<sup>41</sup>

Once the categorization is performed, the convicted person is placed in the appropriate treatment groups. The broadest extent of benefits is granted to the A1 treatment group (open department), whereas the V2 treatment group (closed department) is granted the lowest extent of benefits.

The convicted person whose capacity for change is preserved, and who is assessed as a low risk, is assigned to the open department, while they are given the category (group) A1 or A2; if based on their character traits, type and gravity of committed criminal offence, previous lifestyle and the defined sentence program, the person has preserved capacity for change, they are assessed as a low risk and are expected to successfully reintegrate into society. Convicted persons who are placed in one of these two categories may exercise all extended rights and benefits as per Article 129 paras. 1 and 2 of the LECS. The only difference between the two groups is reflected in the length of leave during temporary release to visit family at the weekend and during public holidays, as well as the length of annual leave from the penitentiary institution.

40 Pravilnik o tretmanu, programu postupanja, razvrstavanju i naknadnom razvrstavanju osuđenih lica [Rulebook on Treatment, Sentence Programme, Categorisation and Subsequent Categorisation of the Convicted Persons], *Official Gazette of the RS*, No. 66/15.

41 Vujičić, N., 2023, *Izvršenje kazne zatvora i odustajanje od kriminalnog ponašanja*, PhD Thesis, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Law.

Semi-open department departments house convicted persons who have partially preserved capacity for change and are assessed as medium risk, whereby they are placed in category (group) B1 or B2, *i.e.*, if the person, based on their character traits, type and gravity of committed criminal offence, previous lifestyle, and the defined sentence program, has partially maintained capacity for change and is assessed as medium risk. Similar to the convicted persons who reside in the open department, they are assigned to the semi-open department, and may exercise all extended rights and benefits as per Article 129 paras. 1 and 2 of the LECS. However, the range of these rights and benefits is narrower in terms of the frequency of such convicted persons being granted each particular (individual) benefit, or the length of absence from the penitentiary facility.

The closed department houses convicted persons who are expected to have difficulty adapting to conditions in prison, who pose a danger to other convicted persons or prison staff, whose capacity for change is substantially diminished and who are assessed as a high risk. A convicted person who is assessed as low or medium risk can also be assigned to the closed department, if they are charged with a crime for which the envisaged prison sentence is three years or longer, if there is a legally binding judgment sentencing them to three years or more in prison, if they are serving a prison sentence of five or more years, if they were brought to serve the sentence on a warrant or have been admitted to prison from mandatory detention.

Such a type of convicted persons are categorized as V1 or V2, *i.e.*, such groups that are deemed as not being suitable to exercise benefits outside the penitentiary facility grounds, since such convicted persons have major prison-life adaptation difficulty, based on their character traits, type and gravity of committed criminal offence, previous lifestyle, and the defined sentence program, and also pose a danger to other convicted persons and prison staff, and their capacity to change is substantially diminished and they are assessed as high risk.<sup>42</sup>

#### 4. MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

In this study, our attention was focused on the prison social climate in the Republic of Serbia, *i.e.*, we focused our attention on the assessment and measurement of the subjective experience of living conditions in prison. The objective of this paper's underlying hypothesis was to examine whether the perception of the prison social climate varies depending

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42 Vujičić, N., 2017, Uticaj tretmana na donošenje odluke suda o uslovnom otpustu, *Zbornik Instituta za kriminološka i sociološka istraživanja*, Vol. 36, No. 3, pp. 99–100.

on the respective prison department the respondents reside in (open, semi-open and closed), as well on which treatment group they belong to (A1, A2, B1, B2, V1, and V2). Special attention was paid to identifying in which dimensions of the quality of prison life there are differences in the perception of the prison social climate. To collect the data, we used the Measuring the Quality of Prison Life Survey (MQPL) questionnaire,<sup>43</sup> more precisely, we used an adapted version in the Serbian language.<sup>44</sup>

## 5. METHOD

### 5.1. SAMPLE AND PROCEDURE USED IN THE STUDY

This study represents a segment of a larger-scale nation-wide project PrisonLIFE, which was conducted over a period of three years with the aim of improving the manner in which we understand the prison life quality in Serbia. Five penitentiary facilities in Serbia (four penitentiary facilities for men – Sremska Mitrovica, Niš, Zabela, Belgrade and one penitentiary facility for women – Požarevac) participated in this study, with data collected from the inmates in 2022. The sample was around 14% of the total number of all convicted persons serving a prison sentence in the mentioned penitentiary facilities. It is worth noting that this was a voluntary-basis sample. All ethical rules were applied in the research procedure (*i.e.*, informing the respondents about the research, ensuring anonymity in filling out the questionnaire, the respondents provided informed consent in written form, they could stop filling out the questionnaire at any time, etc.). The ANOVA analysis and descriptive statistics were used in the study.

### 5.2. TYPES OF DATA COLLECTED FOR STUDY PURPOSES

Sociodemographic, penological, criminological and other data were collected from the respondents themselves through the MQPL questionnaire. These data included gender, age, marital status, parentage, education,

43 Liebling, A., Hulley, S., Crewe, B., 2012, Conceptualising and Measuring the Quality of Prison Life, in: Gadd, D., Karstedt, S., Messner, S. F., (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Criminological Research Methods*, Thousand Oaks, CA, SAGE Journals, p. 361.

44 For more details, see Milićević, M. *et al.*, 2023a, *PrisonLIFE project – Adaptation, Translation Equivalence and Content Validity of the MQPL Survey in Serbian*, (Version 1) [dataset], Zenodo, (<https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.8253602>); Milićević, M., Iljić, Lj., Vujičić, N., 2024b, Cross-Cultural Adaptation and Content Validity of the Measuring the Quality of Prison Life Survey in Serbia, [Unpublished manuscript]; Mededović, J., Drndarević, N., Milićević, M., 2023, Integrating Standard and Network Psychometrics to Assess the Quality of Prison Life in Serbia, *Journal of Criminology*, Vol. 57, No. 2, (<https://doi.org/10.1177/26338076231208769>).

previous convictions, committed criminal offense (relative group of criminal offense included) as well as the type of criminal offense (presence of absence of elements of violence), prison sentence length, complicity, relative measure of security of a medical nature (including type of measure), as well as time spent in prison. All these data are shown below in the section on the basic data relative to the sample of the examined population.

It should be noted that the data were collected based on the MQPL questionnaire, which was translated into the Serbian language with cross-national adjustments, for the overall purpose of ensuring validity and relevance of the Serbian version's content. The mentioned adjustments made to the MQPL questionnaire were carried out in five stages according to internationally accepted guidelines, whereas the final version in the Serbian language was subject to consultation with and approval by a panel of experts and the authors of the questionnaire.<sup>45</sup>

Pertinent data on the respective department of the penitentiary facility (open, semi-open and closed) and treatment group (A1, A2, B1, B2, V1 and V2) were collected from the convicted persons' files. Additionally, data on assessed risk level, prison department, treatment group, and type of disciplinary punishment (types of disciplinary offences included), were also collected from the respondents.

## 6. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS – MAIN INFORMATION ABOUT THE SAMPLE

A total of 616 convicts participated in the study. The greatest part of the respondents were serving their prison sentences in the Penitentiary Institution Niš – 186 (30.2%), followed by Sremska Mitrovica – 185 (30%), Zabela – 129 (20.9%), Penitentiary Institution for Women in Požarevac – 86 (14%), and finally in Belgrade – 30 (4.9%). The sample comprised 530 (86%) male respondents and 86 (14%) female respondents. The average age of the respondents was approximately 40 years ( $N=39.85$ ;  $SD=10.29$ ), with their ages ranging from 20 to 74.

Regarding the respondents' marital status, the results showed that 286 (46.7%) respondents had a partner (26.1% common-law partner, 20.4% spouse), whereas 236 (38.5%) of the inmates responded that their status was "single" (unpartnered). There were 79 divorced respondents (12.9%), with 12 (2%) who were widowed. Marital status data was not available for 3 respondents. More than a half of the respondents (56.2%) had children,

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45 For more information regarding the adaptation of the MQPL questionnaire into Serbian language, see Milićević, M., Ilijić, Lj., Vujičić, N., 2024b.

with 42.6% of the respondents having one child, and 57.4% having two or more children.

The majority of convicted persons, 379 (61.6%), had secondary school education, while 152 (24.7%) of the respondents had primary school education. The sample also included persons who held a university degree 42 (6.8%), as well as persons without completed primary school – 40 (6.5%). One respondent was a university student. Education information was not available for one person.

Regarding the type of crime committed, the largest number of respondents – 322 (52.3%) – committed non-violent crime, whereas 292 (47.6%) of the respondents committed a crime with elements of violence. Respective data was not available for two respondents.

The respondents were also divided according to the relative group of committed criminal offence, *i.e.*, according to the first criminal offense for they were sentenced to prison. The collected data show that the largest number of persons were serving a prison sentence for committing a criminal offense against property – 202 (32.8%); against health of people – 192 (31.2%); crimes against life and limb – 133 (21.6%); against public order and peace – 20 (3.2%); and against economic interests – 14 (2.3%). These five groups of crimes make up more than 90% of our sample. Other groups of crimes constitute less than 2%, individually.

The largest number of respondents were serving prison sentences for the following crimes: unlawful production and circulation of narcotics, pursuant to Art. 246 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Serbia – 179 (29.1%); robbery, pursuant to Art. 206 of the CC – 87 (14.1%); aggravated theft, pursuant to Art. 204 of the CC – 71 (11.5%); aggravated murder, pursuant to Art. 114 of the CC – 73 (11.9%); and murder, pursuant to Art. 113 of the CC – 43 (7%). The mentioned crimes make up more than 70% of all crimes for which the respondents were serving prison sentences in the penitentiary facilities included in the study. There was a total of 227 (36.9%) respondents serving prison sentence for two or more crimes.

On average, the length of the prison sentence was about 8 years, *i.e.*, 97.65 months (SD=97.22). The minimum length of the prison sentence was 2 months, and the longest was 40 years.

There were 114 (19.8%) respondents subject to security measures of a medical nature, as follows: compulsory psychiatric treatment and confinement in a medical institution, compulsory psychiatric treatment at liberty, compulsory drug addiction treatment, as well as compulsory alcohol addiction treatment.

Of the total number of respondents, 387 (64.5%) were returnees in the criminal sense, *i.e.*, they had a history of previous convictions. The average number of convictions among previously convicted persons is

5.16 (SD=4.75), ranging from one to 36 previous convictions. On the other hand, more than a half of the respondents – 296 (51.8%) were returnees in the penological sense, *i.e.*, they had previously served a prison sentence.

Complicity-related data were available for 314 (51%) respondents. As far as those convicts are concerned, the results show a relative uniformity between the number of persons who committed the crime without an accomplice – 163 (51.9%), with the number of those who committed the crime in a group being 151 (48.1%).

At the time our research was conducted, the largest number of convicted persons, *i.e.*, 330 (53.7%) of them, were at the given penitentiary facility for more than two years. These were followed by the respondents who were imprisoned between one and two years – 117 (19%); seven months to one year – 92 (15%); and 76 (12.4%) of the inmates had been at the penitentiary facility for less than six months. On the other hand, approximately half of the respondents spent more than five years in prison throughout their life (around 25% of convicted persons more than ten years).

According to the latest risk degree assessment, the largest number of respondents were assessed as high (or very high) risk – 311 (50.8%), followed by medium risk – 274 (44.8%), while the smallest number of respondents were assessed as low risk – 27 (4.4%). Respective data was not available for 17 persons.

Based on the criterion of the respective prison department where the respondents resided, the majority of respondents were in the closed department – 461 (74.8%), 151 were in the semi-open department (24.5%), and only four resided in the open department of the respective penitentiary facility. As for the matter of treatment groups within each type of prison department (open, semi-open and closed), it should be noted that in the majority of cases convicts were assigned to a treatment group for which the level of extended rights and benefits was lower, as follows: V2 – 314 (51.6%); V1 – 144 (23.6%); B2 – 97 (15.9%); B1 – 50 (8.2%); A2 – three; and A1 – one person. Respective data was not available for 7 persons.

No disciplinary measures were imposed on the largest number of respondents – 371 (60.9%). Some form of disciplinary measure was applied to 239 (39.1%) of the inmates. Among those persons who had disciplinary measures imposed on them, a single only one disciplinary measure – 157 (70.7%) – was imposed on the majority of such persons. The most common among the disciplinary measures was restriction or prohibition of the receipt of packages for up to three months, which was applied in 125 (52.3%) cases, while the rarest disciplinary measure was restriction or prohibition of the disposal of money in the penitentiary institution for up to three months which was applied in 40 (16.7%) cases.

## 7. RESULTS

Table 1 Quality of prison life and types of penitentiary facilities according to security level: descriptive statistics and group comparisons.

Dimensions	CD M(SD)	SOD M(SD)	F	Multiple comparisons
<b>Harmony</b>	3.00(0.79)	3.44(0.75)	20.26	SOD>CD; OD>CD
Entry into custody	2.90(0.78)	3.11(0.80)	5.02**	SOD>CD
Respect/courtesy	3.17(0.89)	3.66(0.79)	19.22	SOD>CD
Staff-prisoner relationships	3.05(1.01)	3.64(0.90)	22.32	SOD>CD; OD>CD
Humanity	3.09(0.91)	3.55(0.85)	17.58	SOD>CD; OD>CD
Decency	2.68(0.82)	3.30(0.81)	34.60	SOD>CD; OD>CD
Care for the vulnerable	2.97(0.86)	3.28(0.82)	9.11	SOD>CD; OD>CD
Help and assistance	2.96(0.90)	3.28(0.86)	8.50	SOD>CD
<b>Professionalism</b>	2.76(0.80)	3.35(0.81)	33.62	SOD>CD; OD>CD
Staff professionalism	3.08(0.99)	3.64(0.89)	20.40	SOD>CD; OD>CD
Bureaucratic legitimacy	2.44(0.80)	3.08(0.82)	39.70	SOD>CD; OD>CD
Fairness	2.71(0.91)	3.28(0.96)	23.44	SOD>CD; OD>CD
Organisation and consistency	2.68(0.83)	3.28(0.87)	31.84	SOD>CD; OD>CD
<b>Security</b>	3.17(0.66)	3.71(0.63)	40.43	SOD>CD
Policing and security	3.18(0.67)	3.57(0.65)	19.66	SOD>CD
Prisoner safety	3.30(0.84)	3.88(0.71)	30.08	SOD>CD
Prisoner adaptation	3.62(0.94)	4.17(0.74)	21.68	SOD>CD
Drugs and exploitation	2.73(0.90)	3.52(0.95)	43.53	SOD>CD; OD>CD
<b>Conditions and Family Contact</b>	3.30(0.88)	3.86(0.76)	27.30	SOD>CD; OD>CD
Conditions	3.28(0.98)	3.82(0.90)	19.85	SOD>CD; OD>CD
Family contact	3.32(1.07)	3.92(0.87)	21.33	SOD>CD; OD>CD
<b>Wellbeing and Development</b>	2.97(0.73)	3.46(0.71)	28.69	SOD>CD; OD>CD
Personal development	2.91(0.94)	3.45(0.89)	20.44	SOD>CD
Personal autonomy	2.96(0.80)	3.36(0.75)	15.84	SOD>CD; OD>CD
Well-being	2.47(0.94)	3.04(0.93)	23.65	SOD>CD; OD>CD
Distress	3.77(0.94)	4.17(0.72)	13.56	SOD>CD; OD>CD

**Notes:** MQPL – Measuring the Quality of Prison Life CD – closed department, SOD – semi-opened department, OD i open department

All multiple comparisons are significant at the  $p < .05$  level

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

ANOVA showed that the entry into custody is the sole individual dimension in which we can see statistically significant differences between the semi-open and closed departments (Table 1). No statistically significant differences were observed in any other dimensions (including individual dimensions). However, when different departments (closed and semi-opened) are compared (multiple comparisons), the quality of prison life was rated better in almost all dimensions by respondents from the semi-open department. Differences in certain dimensions were also observed between open and closed departments. Due to the small number of respondents from the open department, these data were excluded from analysis.

Table 2 Prison life quality and treatment groups: descriptive statistics and multiple comparisons.

Dimensions	B1	B2	V1	V2	F	Multiple comparisons
	M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)		
<b>Harmony</b>	3.40(0.69)	3.40(0.77)	3.07(0.77)	2.96(0.80)	9.00	B1>V1, V2; B2>V1, V2
Entry into custody	3.12(0.78)	3.06(0.78)	2.86(0.79)	2.92(0.78)	2.61*	B1>V1; B2>V1
Respect/courtesy	3.59(0.78)	3.62(0.81)	3.23(0.89)	3.14(0.90)	8.29	B1>V1, V2; B2>V1, V2
Staff-prisoner relationships	3.59(0.89)	3.60(0.91)	3.18(0.97)	2.99(1.03)	10.68	B1>V1, V2; B2>V1, V2
Humanity	3.55(0.76)	3.49(0.90)	3.19(0.85)	3.04(0.94)	7.91	B1>V1, V2; B2>V1, V2
Decency	3.21(0.73)	3.30(0.85)	2.75(0.83)	2.64(0.82)	15.98	B1>V1, V2; B2>V1, V2
Care for the vulnerable	3.27(0.76)	3.25(0.84)	3.07(0.81)	2.92(0.88)	4.59**	B1>V2; B2>V2
Help and assistance	3.22(0.80)	3.25(0.89)	3.02(0.87)	2.93(0.91)	3.37*	B1>V2; B2>V2
<b>Professionalism</b>	3.28(0.79)	3.31(0.82)	2.84(0.76)	2.71(0.81)	14.62	B1>V1, V2; B2>V1, V2
Staff professionalism	3.56(0.91)	3.63(0.88)	3.18(0.95)	3.04(1.00)	9.43	B1>V1, V2; B2>V1, V2
Bureaucratic legitimacy	3.04(0.75)	3.03(0.86)	2.46(0.77)	2.43(0.82)	16.35	B1>V1, V2; B2>V1, V2
Fairness	3.21(0.96)	3.22(0.99)	2.84(0.89)	2.65(0.91)	10.21	B1>V1, V2; B2>V1, V2
Organisation and consistency	3.18(0.85)	3.25(0.85)	2.79(0.80)	2.63(0.84)	14.61	B1>V1, V2; B2>V1, V2



Dimensions	B1	B2	V1	V2	F	Multiple comparisons
	M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)		
<b>Security</b>	3.68(0.68)	3.67(0.60)	3.21(0.65)	3.14(0.67)	18.05	B1>V1, V2; B2>V1, V2
Policing and security	3.53(0.68)	3.53(0.64)	3.21(0.65)	3.17(0.69)	8.20	B1>V1, V2; B2>V1, V2
Prisoner safety	3.89(0.73)	3.82(0.69)	3.35(0.85)	3.28(0.83)	13.60	B1>V1, V2; B2>V1, V2
Prisoner adaptation	4.16(0.82)	4.13(0.70)	3.68(0.97)	3.59(0.93)	10.19	B1>V1, V2; B2>V1, V2
Drugs and exploitation	3.44(1.04)	3.49(0.90)	2.82(0.89)	2.69(0.91)	20.12	B1>V1, V2; B2>V1, V2
<b>Conditions and FC</b>	3.75(0.74)	3.87(0.76)	3.30(0.88)	3.30(0.88)	12.51	B1>V1, V2; B2>V1, V2
Conditions	3.64(0.91)	3.85(0.90)	3.32(1.01)	3.26(0.97)	9.21	B1>V1, V2; B2>V1, V2
Family contact	3.90(0.82)	3.91(0.89)	3.25(1.07)	3.35(1.08)	10.20	B1>V1, V2; B2>V1, V2
<b>Wellbeing and Develop.</b>	3.49(0.64)	3.38(0.73)	3.02(0.75)	2.94(0.73)	12.58	B1>V1, V2; B2>V1, V2
Personal development	3.46(0.80)	3.39(0.95)	2.97(0.95)	2.89(0.94)	8.87	B1>V1, V2; B2>V1, V2
Personal autonomy	3.42(0.66)	3.26(0.76)	2.96(0.84)	2.96(0.79)	7.32	B1>V1, V2; B2>V1, V2
Well-being	3.06(0.91)	2.96(0.95)	2.50(0.94)	2.44(0.95)	9.87	B1>V1, V2; B2>V1, V2
Distress	4.25(0.74)	4.10(0.71)	3.94(0.92)	3.69(0.94)	7.94	B1>V1, V2; B2>V2

Notes: MQPL – Measuring the Quality of Prison Life

All multiple comparisons are significant at the  $p < .05$  level

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ .

There is a clear pattern in the results of the analysis (multiple comparisons), namely that person from semi-opened departments (B1 and B2 group) rate the quality of prison life significantly better than persons from closed departments (V1 and V2 group). However, entry into custody, care for the vulnerable, and help and assistance are three individual dimensions where ANOVA showed statistically significant differences between groups. In those dimensions, convicted persons from groups B1 and B2 significantly rated the quality of prison life better than respondents from group V2 (Table 2). Due to the small number of respondents, treatment groups A1 and A2 were excluded from the analysis.

## 8. DISCUSSION WITH CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study research was conducted with a view to investigating variations in the perception of the prison social climate, depending on the prison department or treatment group the convicted persons belong to. Additionally, the objective was to review the dimension in which there is substantial difference in this respect.

Reviewing separately specific prison departments to which a convicted person is assigned, it is notable that entry into custody is the sole (individual) dimension in which statistically significant differences exist between the semi-open and closed departments, in the sense that the convicted persons who reside in the former department rated the quality of prison life better. For example, this means that the respondents from the closed department of the penitentiary facility had the feeling of extreme loneliness during the first three days of imprisonment, as opposed to the respondents residing in the semi-open department. Taking into account that the assignment to various departments is carried out once due observation is conducted during the admission process, the obtained results can be connected to specific treatment program applied to a particular person. The semi-open departments house only persons assessed as low-risk and medium-risk, in the sense that they are told that after the passage of a particular length of time, subject to them fulfilling treatment programs (*e.g.*, good behavior, performing work duties), they can be extended benefits that are used outside the penitentiary facility (*e.g.*, leaves, visits to the family and relatives at the weekend and during public holidays). The treatment program for persons residing in the closed department of the penitentiary facility is more intensive and is dependent upon revisions of the questionnaire in the segment that is relevant to the reduction in risk levels, which is often difficult to achieve.

Although the ANOVA test did not demonstrate substantial differences in other dimensions (individual dimensions included), multiple comparisons between various groups show that almost all dimensions were rated better by the respondents from the semi-open department of the correction facility, which was expected. A similar result was obtained in a study by Bosma *et al.* who established that inmates residing in the lower-security department ranked the prison life quality better than those inmates residing in higher-security prison departments.<sup>46</sup> Consequently, such results indicate and confirm that the stronger the restriction of rights

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46 Bosma, A. *et al.*, 2020, pp. 370–371.

and benefits of convicted persons, the stronger the level of negative effects of imprisonment.<sup>47</sup>

In our research, we have additionally analyzed treatment groups within the semi-open and closed departments of the facility. Although differences were not identified in the five major dimensions, differences were noticed in some individual dimensions of harmony. These dimensions are: entry into custody, care for the vulnerable, and help and assistance. It can be seen that the entry into custody dimension shows significant differences both across departments (semi-open and closed) and across treatment groups (groups B1 and B2 vs. groups V1 and V2).

An interesting fact is that care for the vulnerable, as well as help and assistance, were ranked better by the respondents from the B1 and B2 treatment groups (multiple comparisons only with the V2 group, it being the least favorable treatment group). What in part causes concern is that if one takes into account that persons who are higher risk of self-harm, suicide, or abuse, but also those who have issues, *e.g.* addiction problems, are assigned in the closed department of the penitentiary facility, the result show that respondents from the V1 and V2 treatment groups ranked worse the two dimensions than the respondents from the semi-open department of the facility (groups B1 and B2). Such a result could be indicative of the need to pay special attention to vulnerable groups, both through targeted intervention and the conducting of certain programs in the closed department of the facility, the objective of these programs being to empower the convicted persons' very capacity to change for the better. In this manner, with investment of additional efforts by specialized staff and the penitentiary institution itself, one could expect the said segments of prison life to improve.<sup>48</sup>

Multiple comparisons across various groups also showed substantial differences. Accordingly, in almost all dimensions, the quality of prison life was ranked better by convicted persons belonging to B1 and B2 treatment groups, which can also be explained by the regime applied in the semi-closed and the closed departments, respectively. This takes us back to the matter of risk assessment, which is an issue indicated by the employees of penitentiary facilities in Serbia. The main point of critique is that the risk assessment questionnaires used in Serbia are not sufficiently sensitive, *i.e.*, they do not include sufficient dynamic factors that could prompt easier movement of a convicted person across departments and

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47 Ginneken, E.F.J.C. van *et al.*, 2018, The Life in Custody Study: The Quality of Prison Life in Dutch Prison Regimes, *Journal of Criminological Research, Policy and Practice*, Vol. 4, No. 4, p. 259, (<https://doi.org/10.1108/JCRPP-07-2018-0020>).

48 According to: Stevanović, I., Ilijić, Lj., Vujičić, N., 2024, p. 12.

treatment groups.<sup>49</sup> In addition introducing new forms of questionnaires, which would be adapted to treatment (this being one possible solutions), it is necessary to create a positive prison climate that would alleviate the negative effects of imprisonment. The results indicate that such a change is primarily necessary in the closed department of penitentiary facilities, while the change itself could occur by society ensuring that there are enough specialized staff competent to work with convicted persons, such as psychologists, sociologists, pedagogues, or through the introduction of various courses that would strengthen convicted persons' capacity to change for the better, with a special focus on the vulnerable groups and those groups that are at a high risk of recidivism. Additionally, one should not overlook the role that work, education, and professional improvement have in this process, as do assistance and support outside the system of formal social control, mainly from family and friends.

Certain changes could also occur in the field of legislation, taking into account that research has shown that the departments and treatment groups that allow the use of a wider range of benefits, including those that are out-of-penitentiary-facility in nature, significantly affect how the quality of prison life is perceived. Currently, the fastest solution would be to provide clear guidelines on how to make progress in treatment, in terms of subsequent categorization of the convicted person into a group with a higher degree of extended rights and benefits, but with the risk assessment questionnaire not being the only parameter. Article 34 of the Rulebook alternatively stipulates that the risk assessment questionnaire does not have to be the only parameter, but that progress may be achieved even when the convicted person completes the treatment program or when individually set goals are reached. In this segment, it is necessary to provide an authentic interpretation since the direction that has been until now seen in practice is that progress entails only improvement that is related to the assessed risk level (*i.e.*, practice does not offer an alternative approach, instead a cumulative fulfilment of all three segments is required). Interpretation related issues contribute to treatment progress not being sufficient due to the multiple obstacles, which diminish the quality of prison life and also prevent the application of certain institutes, such as the institute of parole.

Although the study has provided a number of notable findings in the area of the significance of the correlation between, on the one hand, and the department and treatment groups and the quality of prison life, on the

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49 For more details, see Vujičić, N., 2023; Jovanić, G., 2012, *Standardizacija postupka uslovnog otpusta kao mera zaštite od recidiva*, PhD Thesis, University of Belgrade, Faculty for Special Education and Rehabilitation.

other hand, some criticism is also due. Some of it is reflected in the fact that the sample consisted of 14% of the total convicted persons serving sentences in one of the penitentiary facilities covered by the study. Accordingly, it was not possible to draw general conclusions in terms of the quality of prison life in Serbia. Also, participation in the study was on a voluntary basis, which resulted in a relatively small number of the convicted persons taking part. A substantial limitation is that the sample did not engage to a sufficient extent persons who are serving sentence in the open department, as a result of which the persons assigned to the treatment groups A1 and A2 were excluded from our survey. The mentioned limitation in this segment was a direct consequence of the fact that at the time when the data were collected, the convicted persons serving sentences in the open department were mainly engaged in their work activities (often outside the penitentiary facility itself), hence it was not possible for them to take part in the survey. Additionally, certain categories of the convicted persons, *e.g.*, those on whom disciplinary measures had been imposed, those who were subject to special measures, or those who were engaged in work activities, did not participate either.

In order to gain an in-depth insight into the quality of prison life in Serbia, it is necessary to conduct further research, taking into account several parameters, such as penitentiary facilities, whose security levels may vary and bearing in mind penitentiary facilities in which short-term prison sentences are served. Furthermore, it is necessary to include various categories of convicted persons, *e.g.*, persons with special needs, minors who are serving prison sentences, persons who are subject to medically related security measures, etc. To be able to monitor continuity, but primarily to comprehend change in the quality of prison life in the Serbian penitentiary facilities system, it is necessary to conduct subsequent research (longitudinal research). Finally, we should not rule out a possibility of carrying out cross-national studies, which could contribute to reviewing good practices by reviewing experiences from different systems of executing prison sentences, thereby identifying potential manners of improving the quality of prison life in Serbia.

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## ODELJENJA I TRETMANKE GRUPE U ZAVODIMA U SRBIJI I OCENA KVALITETA ZATVORSKOG ŽIVOTA

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### APSTRAKT

U radu se analizira odnos između zatvorske socijalne klime i odeljenja i tretmanskih grupa u zavodima (MQPL). Osnovni cilj rada je da se ispita da li postoje razlike u percepciji kvaliteta zatvorskog života između lica koja se nalaze u različitim odeljenjima i tretmanskim grupama. Istraživanje je obavljeno tokom 2022. godine, na uzorku od 616 osuđenih punoletnih lica koja izdržavaju kaznu zatvora u KPZ Sremska Mitrovica, KPZ Požarevac – Zabela, KPZ Niš, KPZ Beograd i KPZ za žene Požarevac. U radu su korišćene deskriptivna statistika i ANOVA analiza. Postoji jasan obrazac u rezultatima analize, a to je da osuđena lica iz poluotvorenih odeljenja u statistički značajnoj meri bolje ocenjuju kvalitet zatvorskog života od ispitanika iz zatvorenog odeljenja. Dobijene rezultate autori dovode u vezu sa negativnim efektima zatvaranja, procenom rizika i mogućnostima za poboljšanje zatvorske socijalne klime.

**Ključne reči:** zatvor, osuđenici, zatvorska socijalna klima, kvalitet zatvorskog života, MQPL, odeljenja u zavodima, tretmanske grupe.

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