

## **Abstract**

The pandemic reality associated with the restrictions introduced in order to limit the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus led to significant changes in the functioning of prisons and in the daily lives of individuals serving custodial sentences. Under conditions of penitentiary isolation, additional limitations were imposed on social contacts, family visits, selected therapeutic activities and religious practices, which resulted in increased internal tension, anxiety and a heightened sense of threat.

The main aim of the dissertation was to analyse and evaluate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the process of social rehabilitation (resocialisation) of individuals deprived of liberty. The subject of the research concerned changes occurring in the implementation of educational and therapeutic interventions during the pandemic and in the post-pandemic period. Particular attention was devoted to the phenomenon of double isolation, understood as the overlap between penitentiary confinement and sanitary restrictions.

The research problems and hypotheses formed a coherent analytical sequence focused on assessing the impact of pandemic-related restrictions on inmates' functioning and on the effectiveness of corrective measures. Most of the hypotheses were directional and assumed the occurrence of negative consequences in the form of intensified anxiety, concerns about one's own health and that of close relatives, as well as disruptions to therapeutic programmes. One hypothesis had a null character and concerned the absence of a relationship between COVID-19 infection and the occurrence of aggressive behaviour towards infected individuals.

The dissertation was situated within the paradigm of social rehabilitation pedagogy, which concentrates on creating conditions conducive to attitudinal change and social readaptation. A further point of reference was the principle of respect for fundamental human rights, including the right to health protection and to maintaining family ties. The process of resocialisation was conceptualised as a long-term intervention aimed at restoring an individual's ability to function in society, developing self-control and acting in accordance with prevailing norms.

The research adopted a qualitative design. It was conducted at Prison No. 1 in Wrocław and Prison No. 1 in Oleśnica, including its therapeutic unit. The research sample consisted of 22 participants: 19 inmates, two educators and one officer. Empirical material was collected through in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted individually, without the presence of third parties, and were audio-recorded.

The interview guide covered issues related to the impact of the pandemic on serving a sentence, the implementation of rehabilitation programmes, social relationships, coping strategies and perspectives for the future. The obtained results enabled the verification of the formulated hypotheses. No aggressive behaviour towards individuals infected with SARS-CoV-2 was identified. At the same time, the suspension of family visits was indicated as one of the most severe consequences of the pandemic, leading to feelings of loneliness and a weakening of motivation for change. The significance of the family as an important factor supporting the rehabilitation process was confirmed. Access to medical care was maintained; however, the implementation of therapeutic programmes, including Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and work performed outside the prison premises, was disrupted. Differences in responses were also observed depending on inmates' age, particularly in relation to experienced anxiety and tension.

During the pandemic, ensuring biomedical safety became the overriding objective of penitentiary institutions. Protection against the epidemic threat was achieved, yet it was accompanied by a limitation of the relational and educational dimensions of interventions. The findings indicate the need to develop solutions that would ensure the continuity of rehabilitation processes in crisis situations, in particular by securing alternative forms of contact with family members and modifying therapeutic programmes.

The conducted research demonstrates that under conditions of a global health crisis, the penitentiary system tends to concentrate on its isolating function. Maintaining a balance between security and educational objectives constitutes a significant challenge for social rehabilitation pedagogy in the face of future threats.

The dissertation fills a research gap concerning the functioning of the rehabilitation process during the COVID-19 pandemic in Polish penitentiary institutions. It contributes to the field of social rehabilitation pedagogy by providing an empirical identification of inmates' adaptive mechanisms under conditions of double isolation and by highlighting the tension between the isolating and educational functions of the penitentiary system. The findings may serve as a basis for further research and for designing organisational solutions aimed at strengthening the resilience of the penitentiary system in extraordinary circumstances.