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## **Family in perception and in opinion of persons serving prison sentences**

**Abstract:** Defining a family as a system of related elements that are in mutual relations with each other, it is assumed that understanding its individual parts is not possible in separation from the whole. Breaking the bond by isolating one of its members leads to system disturbances and the need to reorganize it. If the unit is placed in a penitentiary institution, it is condemned to long-term exclusion from its family, which in turn leads to dysregulation of the system, and even - in the situation of inability to cope with change - the break-up of the family.

**Keywords:** family system, family relations, convicted, social stigmatization

### **Introduction**

A systemic approach to the family, providing a theoretical basis for explaining a number of social problems, proposes the possibility of analyzing the family in various aspects, from different angles, relying on an insight into the specificity of family relationships and their mechanisms. Individuals living in a family are subject to specific family rules, perform their respective roles and communicate in a family-typical way. Global treatment of a family system means that all family members contribute to the functioning of the system at various levels. If one element of the system begins to function improperly, it disrupts the existence of the whole family, leading to a situation where, in order to continue to exist, a system needs to reorganize itself. This becomes a problem when its main element (from the husband/wife subsystem; a parent) is temporarily separated from a given system and the contact with him/her is restricted, which is a significant impediment to the process of changing

and reorganizing the family. It is facing a crisis and it is up to its members to decide how it will or will not survive this disruption of the system.

The aim of this paper is to show how people serving prison sentences perceive their families, as well as to identify the problems and difficulties in various areas of family life, which they face on a daily basis.

### **The family as a basic social institution**

In psychology and pedagogy, the family is perceived as a primary social group due to the interactions, relations and forms of dependence between its members. It is a historically shaped community in which an individual evolves and, through the processes of socialization, becomes part of a wider society. Each family has a sense of individuality, uniqueness, has its own priorities, opinions and goals, the structure of relations between its members and, above all, a specific structure. In the light of psychology, the family should satisfy the needs of the individual at every level of the pyramid created by A. Maslow, that is:

- biological needs, necessary to keep the individual alive,
- security needs, related to the provision of care and support from more powerful individuals,
- cultural needs, reflecting human dependence on the products of material culture (flat, car, etc.), as well as the products of spiritual culture (books, cinema, etc.),
- needs for belonging and love - close, tender, intimate relationships with people based on friendship and love,
- needs for respect and recognition, i.e. striving for independence, knowledge and meaning, positive opinion about the individual from the perspective of others; meeting the need of recognition triggers self-confidence, the feeling that one is needed and helpful, while not meeting it leads to a sense of weakness, inferiority and helplessness,
- need for self-fulfillment, striving to do what the individual feels “called” to do, what develops his or her abilities and skills and gives an opportunity to prove himself or herself (Maslow 2004, p. 26).

The proper functioning of a family is based on the fulfillment of a number of functions imposed on it by the social environment in which it exists and develops, such as:

- procreative function - the family, as a social group, grows thanks to biological functions, provides not only members for its (own) group, but for the whole society,
- productive function - it provides the society with workers and contributes to the increase of creative and productive forces. Because of their ability to earn money, usually outside the home, family members can satisfy their economic needs, i.e. the needs to have the necessary means of subsistence,
- service and caring function - provides daily services to all family members (food, cleanliness of the flat, clothing, etc.) and care to those members who are not fully independent due to age or illness, disability or other reasons; the family satisfies both the living and caring needs of the members, the needs of looking after others and being looked after by them,
- socialization function - concerns the socialization of children who enter society as a result of family life, this function satisfies parental needs - having and bringing up children, as well as passing on to them their mother tongue, basic behavioral patterns existing in the society, customs, moral values and culture,
- psycho-hygienic function - stabilization, security and possibility of exchanging feelings in the family create conditions for the development of personality, the family contributes to the development of emotional maturity and mental balance; more often this function is called the function of emotional exchange or the function of expression of feelings, or relieving emotional tensions or the function providing family members with a sense of security (Ziemska 1979, pp.).

A well-functioning family strives to meet the above-mentioned needs and functions in an optimal way, enabling its members to develop harmoniously in various areas of social life.

### **Family in systemic approach**

In the light of the systemic approach, the family consists of interdependent groups of people, characterized by similar memories of the past, emotional tie and interactions between individual family members and the entire group as a whole (Plopa 2005, p. 15).

A characteristic feature of the family in the systemic perspective is the presence of direct and indirect relations between all family members. Family members interact with each other depending on the specific arrangements determined by the occurring transactions. These arrangements, although not overt or clearly visible, form the overall structure of the family. As a consequence, the family is a structure that cannot be reduced to the sum of the individual parts, i.e. the members of the family, but is a dynamic system shaped by mutual interactions.

The systemic approach to the family derives from the General System Theory developed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy. He saw natural phenomena as a complex set of systems, each of which is both part of a larger system and a set of subordinate systems. The system was therefore a higher-level structure which was a set of mutually interacting elements. The essence of the systemic approach is attaching a lot of importance to the organization (relations between parts), focusing on relations running according to a pattern and considering events in the context in which they occur and not in isolation from the environment.

A family, as a system, is a complex structure made up of interdependent groups of people who share history, experience some degree of emotional bond and introduce the strategies needed for individual members and the group as a whole. In the light of systemic theory of the family, all parts of the family are interconnected, no member of the family system can be fully understood in isolation from the rest of the family, and the functioning of the family cannot be fully understood by a simple description of each family member or individual subgroup. Family structure and organization are important factors that strongly influence and define the behavior of all members of the system, and communication transaction patterns determine the behavior of family members. The systemic theory of the family assumes that the family is based on the following principles: integrity, circularity, equipotentiality, equifinality.

Integrity means that the family system is an integral structure. It is a whole that can be compared to a living organism. Getting to know the system requires a holistic and broad perspective on the life of the entire family, as each system is the result of interaction between its elements.

Circularity assumes causality, which is treated as a circular process, without a clearly marked beginning and end. Family members interact with each other by means of feedbacks, in which the affections of individuals are mutually strengthening each other. At this point it is

difficult to determine whose behavior is the cause and whose is the effect. An example of this is a family where the father abuses alcohol because he says that his wife is emotionally cold and the atmosphere at home is unpleasant, while his wife is annoyed when her husband drinks another bottle.

Equipotentiality, in turn, is that the causes coming from a single source can have different effects. As an example, there are two families living in very modest conditions, one of which, through organization, entrepreneurship and creativity, achieves a much higher social status than the other, which does not have the aforementioned characteristics. Equifinality, on the other hand, means achieving the same results in different ways. An example of equifinality is a situation in which two men get a job in the same company, in the same position, although each of them comes from a different family - one of them grew up in a family where a lot of emphasis was placed on education, the other one in a family where cleverness and manipulation were the most desirable features, skills.

The family consists of individual subsystems: marital, parent - child, children. The most important subsystem is the marital subsystem, especially in terms of interpersonal communication. The spouses' relationship teaches the children's subsystem the mechanisms of communication, which is why the proper exchange of information between parents is important. Children from broken families, single-parent families and those with an impaired parent relationship are more likely to be at risk of entering into inappropriate relationships in the future. Good communication between spouses also has a positive impact on the emotional attachment to children and an overall increase in self-esteem, "emotional support is a message to the spouse-parent that he or she is loved, respected and valued, and this further affects the degree of involvement and patience that the parent brings into relationship with the child" (Plopa 2005, p. 67). Each family, apart from the fact that it has its own subsystems, is also characterized by boundaries that ensure the intimacy of the family and enable it to communicate with its surroundings. The system literature distinguishes three levels of boundaries:

- boundaries between the family and the surrounding - they allow for maintaining intimacy and separateness that are determined by the family identity, the members' feeling that together they form a family, have a common life,
- boundaries between family subsystems - they refer to who plays what role in the system,

which is expressed by, among others, different rights and duties, separate rooms, influence on making decisions in matters important to the family,

- boundaries between individuals - they protect the individuality of each member of the family, because each individual has the right to express his or her own opinion.

The systemic theory distinguishes several types of boundaries, from intact through damaged ones, boundaries of variability, no boundaries, to walls instead of boundaries.

If the family is a whole, and the changes of each of the elements in this system depend on each other, then a situation, in which the internal or external conditions of the family system change, forces the family system to reorganize (take measures of an adaptative nature, enabling it to function properly). The changes in the system are even more significant if the central subsystem - parents - is broken down/reconstructed. It is then that the current pattern of behavior is disturbed and a new one, better suited to the current conditions, is sought (Namysłowska 1997, pp. 224).

### **A family in the face of a crisis - the problem of penitentiary isolation**

The way of looking at the family as a whole indicates that disruptions in the functioning of one of its members are a manifestation of dysfunctionality of the entire system (pathology and psychopathology of the family), and the pathology of the family as a certain group, institution or educational environment is a symptom of the dysfunctionality of society as a whole (Giza-Poleszczuk 2005, p.157). People learn to behave in accordance with the norms and rules of the society in which they live, and simultaneously, in the same way, they learn criminal behavior. If the social environment, and in particular the primary group, which is most often the family, does not support them, hinders their everyday existence, uses violence and does not provide a sense of security, then most often the choice of behavior contrary to social standards, including crime, occurs, which results in the perpetrator being isolated from society and placed in an isolation institution (Stanik 2013, p. 72). Thus, the family may participate in passing on incorrect patterns of behavior to the individual that it shapes (reproducing criminal patterns from generation to generation), or trigger such behavior (Jaworska 2013, p. 26). The family system in which an individual operates may therefore generate not only proper behaviors of its individual elements, but also those which indicate a dysfunction of the system as a whole and pose a threat to social order. According to Brunon Hołyst, a person who, by means of fate, finds himself or herself in a deviant environment,

especially during his or her childhood or adolescence, becomes a deviant with time. Lack of positive stimuli, care, faith, sense of security or love on the part of important people leads to emotional neglect of children and may result in disorders in all spheres of the functioning of the individual (Hołyst 2009, p. 144).

The family, considered by many authors of pedagogical literature as a group whose support is very important for the individual, may also constitute a space of negative influences. We are talking not only about the individual's family of origin, which passes on (not always positive) patterns of functioning through intergenerational transmission, but also about the system that the person creates by getting married and having children. Whether or not the family functions properly are largely evidenced by how it copes with the crisis situations that it encounters. The moment of separation of one of the most important elements of the system (husband/wife, parent) and breaking its structure is an example of such a crisis (Chańko 2015, pp. 66-82). The solution to this crisis depends on all the elements of the system, which has to reorganize itself, especially when the time of separation can be prolonged. This is the case when one of the family members goes to prison (Chańko 2016, p. 25).

Prison isolation is a difficult and depriving situation for a person: he or she no longer performs a number of social roles, has no possibility to decide about him- or herself, no freedom of action, has to obey the rigid rules and regulations, the daily agenda of a given institution, and, furthermore, his or her relations with the previous environment are terminated, suspended or restricted. The prison also prevents the supply of information, with the exception of general information, as it is provided by the mass media (TV, press, radio). It limits primarily the information concerning the families and the environment of the prisoners (Ciosek 2001, p. 51).

A social rehabilitation change in the conditions of prison isolation often takes place under the influence of non-prison factors close to the person, i.e. family, especially wife or husband (Machel 2014. p. 47). Therefore, it is proposed that the process of rehabilitation of socially maladjusted individuals should include the participation of persons important to them, to whom they will return after serving the sentence, and the contact with whom, during the incarnation, will be a positive motivation to improve. The aim of penitentiary social rehabilitation is to achieve changes in the personality of prisoners, which will prevent them from returning to criminal behavior after serving a sentence of imprisonment and will enable

them to function properly in society after leaving the prison (Machel 2014, p. 48). Therefore, maintaining the prisoner's contact with the family is one of the priorities of the social rehabilitation measures in prisons (regardless of the way in which the family functions). Contacts with the family are intended to maintain the prisoner's ties with the system in which the person previously existed, which in turn is to facilitate the social readaptation of the convict after being released from prison (Toroń 2013, p. 75). Research on the evaluative orientation of people serving sentences in prisons shows the almost complete acceptance of family values and placing family life in the highest position in the hierarchy of values. This declarative nature of affirmation of the goodness of the family, and thus of the bonds with it, contrasts sharply with the quality of the attitudes presented by them (Sakowicz 2006, p. 74). The picture of the relations of the respondents with their families (in which they lived before the conviction and to which they will return after serving their sentence) is not favorable. A large part of the convicts' families is dysfunctional (effect: little interest in the imprisoned person, lack of assistance on their part, lack of support), which results in the deepening of social alienation of the convicts and lack of motivation to change their way of living. This may result in a fiasco of social rehabilitation activities and returning to crime (Sakowicz 2006. p. 94).

Systemic theories emphasize that the primary source of human behavioral disorders are factors rooted in the family system. Family relationships of convicts are dynamic, variable, unstable, therefore they do not always facilitate penitentiary social rehabilitation; in such cases they may contribute to returning of the individual to the path of criminal recidivism (Machel 2014, pp. 47-49). Therefore, it is important to analyze the family situation of the convicted not only on the basis of records provided to prisons, but also on the basis of conversations with the prisoners themselves in order to be able to undertake penitentiary activities aimed at stabilizing (if possible) the family ties of the prisoners, learning, developing skills necessary in interpersonal relations with relatives, reducing emotional isolation, creating a vision of return to the society and functioning in it in a proper way.

### **Methodological basis of the research**

In pedagogical sciences, two research models enabling the acquisition of scientific knowledge are generally applied: positivist (quantitative) and humanistic (qualitative). To explore the issue of interest to the researcher, qualitative research was carried out - a situated activity that places the observer in the world and allows to get to know



the studied person in their entirety, with his or her range of emotions, strengths and flaws, the inner world, and not just superficiality. Qualitative research also leads to the development of knowledge useful in practice, which allows to formulate and support specific solutions for specific practical problems.

The cognitive objective of the research is to empirically examine how people serving prison sentences perceive their families (selected elements of the family system) and what is their opinion about the intra-family relationships which they are part of. Theoretical objective of the research is to enrich the system of theoretical knowledge in the field of social rehabilitation pedagogy and penitentiary pedagogy concerning the perception and evaluation of the family environment of imprisoned people. The practical objective is to formulate, on the basis of the results of research, conclusions for educational practice, which would determine guidelines for social rehabilitation work in a closed environment, as well as pedagogical, psychological and therapeutic work, for prison educators, probation officers, psychologists, pedagogues and therapists.

The method of individual cases and the technique of qualitative (non-categorized) interview were applied in the research. The method of individual cases concerns individual people and consists in collecting data on physical, mental and social life and development, which is the subject of interest of the researcher (Pilch, Bauman 2010, p. 298). The qualitative interview is an interaction between the interviewer and the respondent (Lalak 2010, p. 71). The interviewer has a general research plan, but it is not a specific set of questions to be asked necessarily and in a specific order, but rather a conversation where the interviewer gives a general direction and puts emphasis on certain topics raised by the respondent. The non-categorized interview is based on a free exchange of opinions, not excluding the prepared number of both open and closed questions. The situation of the interview is often identified with the construction site where the knowledge is created. In interviews, we deal not only with reproduction and representation of existing knowledge, but also with interaction concerning a specific issue, which is an element of knowledge produced in this situation (Kvale 2010, p. 56). The theoretical frame for most interview-based research is the tradition of symbolic interactionism, according to which a person can reflect on his or her life and thus enable researchers to understand the subject of the reflection.

The research was carried out in the Białystok Prison. This is a penitentiary institution where recidivists serve their sentences of imprisonment. The research involved 5 men who

have families. At the request of the respondents, their names were changed. The respondents participated in interviews voluntarily.

### **Family of origin in perception and in opinion of persons serving prison sentences**

The family system in which the individual functions has an unprecedented impact on his or her psycho-social development, the way he or she perceives the surrounding reality and interprets events. The patterns, norms and values passed on in the family of origin, internalized by the person in the process of socialization, constitute the foundations in the area of creating interpersonal relations with others, situate the individual in certain social groups, often on the basis of similar experiences and the path of life. Not all family systems function properly, so any aberrations carry the risk of dysfunctionality of the individual. Sometimes this social abnormality is considered a deviation only by a wider society, while for a given person and the social group in which he or she exists it is something "normal", a determinant of a given system, e.g. not taking up employment and benefiting from state care or engaging in criminal activity (profession handed down from one generation to the next one).

Below are descriptions of families of origin together with their evaluation made by the examined men.

#### **Case 1 - Maciej**

Age: 35 y.o.

Education: secondary

"In my family it was always so normal, my mother was working on 3 shifts because she was working in a warehouse, my father was a taxi driver. All in all, nothing has changed so far, apart from the fact that in the meantime two of my siblings were born. We were not poor, although sometimes I envied my friends for something, because some of them were from wealthy families, we were an average family. My parents had a lot of responsibilities, and younger siblings were also quite problematic for them, so I had a plan to become independent and move out quickly. Our flat wasn't too big either, so it was getting a bit crowded, especially when I wanted to bring a friend or a girlfriend. I left home when I was 17, I stayed with my friend and worked with him, he was teaching me the profession of a mechanic. I was visiting home sporadically, my father was always telling me that a man has

to make his own way in life, so they didn't mind I wanted to be on my own. All the more so, when the business started to work and sometimes I was bringing my mom some money, she was glad and she wasn't asking where it was from. I was always saying that we were doing well, and she didn't want to know more. What for? When I got arrested for the first time I was afraid that they would say that they didn't want to know me, but it wasn't that bad. My father did some talking, my mother cried, of course they said what they had to say and that was it. I already knew what I had done wrong and how to avoid it. The next time it was a bit worse, because my father said that he was ashamed to have a son who is a criminal and did not even want to visit me or talk to me on the phone. He only said that I was a disgrace to the family and that whenever someone asks about me, they say that I went abroad so that the kids don't have to be ashamed. My mom was helping me as much as she could, she was visiting me, buying what I needed. When I left the prison she even invited me for dinner, said that I could return home, but I already had another plan. And then it happened as it happened. I'm in prison, I know what I did, but at least my family is not short of anything. I will be released in a few years, it will be okay. My parents help my wife, take the kids to their house, I know because my wife tells me about it. I won't say a bad word on them, because they have always been there to help. It's a normal family, not any pathology."

Case 2 - Michał

Age: 47 y.o.

Education: vocational, cook

"My father died when I was 7, he drove under influence, caused an accident and died in it. I still remember him, he never worked, he was always getting drunk and upsetting my mother. He was taking the money from her coat and telling me to sit quietly because the guys have to stick together. She always shouted at him, calling him a bum, and worked a lot. My brother was 3 months old when my father died and everything fell on me, I had to help my mother. I had to grow up very quickly. Even as a kid I was making money where I could, I was collecting some scrap metal or distributing newspapers. Later my mother fell ill and I had to be a babysitter and a nanny for my younger brother. I had a very good contact with my mother, although it wasn't easy, we helped each other and my younger brother. I still help him, even though he lives in another country, I help him anyway, he is not the sharpest tool in the shed. My mother died in sleep when I was 19, my aunt took my brother, I got a job,

together with my cousin, in another city. Then I brought my brother there, but these were difficult times so he went to Belgium to make a living and stayed there. I used to visit him sometimes, but that was a different life, I didn't like it. I came back to Poland and had to serve my time. And now again, some old stuff. But my brother is in contact with me, a very good contact, he is waiting for me to leave, maybe I will go to him, because there is nothing waiting for me here anymore."

#### Case 3 - Leszek

Age: 52 y.o.

Education: vocational

"My family has always been close to me. Both my mother and my father have always been on my side. If I were to judge it, I would certainly say that we are bonded, even strongly bonded, that everyone helped each other, that we spent all holidays together, it was crowded, loud, but we were together. I have a big family, there are seven of us siblings, maybe that's why I wanted to have a lot of my own children, and I have five. I come from the countryside, my parents are still there, my siblings not quite - they live in different corners of the country, but they come back home for any major celebrations. My mother and my father are already old, but they have some help in the countryside - my youngest brother and my sister. They will stay on the farm, so my parents have their successors. They didn't know about the first time, I said that I was leaving to earn money because we didn't have much. There was no point in bothering them. Now it's a different story, they know where I am, because it was loud about it, the accident, I will repent. They will move me soon and I will start the therapy, not even for myself, but for M. and my kids".

#### Case 4 - Jakub

Age: 33 y.o.

Education: secondary

"I am the only child, I have no siblings. I ended up here for drugs, it's not my first time in prison, although I hope it's the last one. My mother gave birth to me quite early, my father run away, I think he was scared of his new role, which he was not ready for. After a few years my stepfather appeared, took us to his house and that's how I got my father. At the beginning

I was raised by my mother, my aunt and my grandmother, so I've always had a better contact with women. I've never had any contact with my biological father, my mother didn't care about it and neither did I, he wasn't even paying any child support. I only know that I have a step-sister, I saw her several times in photos. When it comes to my relations with my parents, I don't know if they were close. My stepfather was always at work, somehow we didn't have a common language. I wanted him to set up a company with me and teach me the profession (he deals with finishing works and so on), but he preferred his brother to work with, so I didn't want to beg him. I knew that I was less important to him. I love my mother like no one in the world, because she brought me up. We've never talked much, but it is probably my fault, I've never wanted to tell her that it's hard for me, that I need something. I knew that when I grew up, it would be different and that my children would have much better life. I didn't get even pocket money, I always had to live by my wits. Sometimes it didn't work out, which is exemplified by this prison term. I thought my mum would get a heart attack, she prayed that I wouldn't do stupid things anymore, but she doesn't understand what easy money is. The risk is inherent in it, there is nothing you could do about it. I would never say anything bad about my mother. She is and always will be the most important person to me. My stepfather supported us financially, he still supports my mother, because she goes to work so as not to sit at home and not miss him. And now he also supports financially my wife and his granddaughter. So he is what he is, but he has never chased us out”.

Case 5 - Artur

Age: 44 y.o.

Education: vocational

"There is not much to say about my family. My mother and my father have spent all their lives in the country, I had five siblings who had to eat. My father beat us repeatedly when we didn't listen to him, he even beat my mother. But she has never left him. She is still with him, I know it from my sister, because I haven't had any contact with them for a long time. I didn't want to live in the country, so I used to run away as much as I could, at first, as a kid, they searched for me, and later, they gave up. I think it was my father's decision. He was in charge of everything, he was only drinking alcohol and beating, these were his things. In the past, I thought I would pull my mother out of there, but she grew into this village, this house. It was different in the past, when you married someone, it was for ever, divorces

were not an option. I have no contact with them, none. Maybe it's good, because my father would probably say what an evil son he has brought up. Though I wouldn't talk about upbringing in his case. I don't want to see him, I don't need it. Sometimes I think about my mother, but life is about choices”.

### **Own family in the perception and evaluation of convicted men**

The family system, from which, as a result of incarnation, one of the elements is taken away, is disturbed, and its regularity is determined by how the other members of the family reformulate the roles and tasks of the system in order to continue to satisfy their needs and perform the functions assigned to the family. It is also important that the temporarily excluded element should continue to participate in the functioning of the system and, after serving a custodial sentence, be able to return to the family. In a crisis situation, the family can try to face an uncomfortable situation, and what strategy it will adopt depends on how strong the ties between its members are and what the structure of the family system is.

Respondents perceive and evaluate their own families in different ways.

#### **Case 1 - Maciej**

Age: 35 y.o.

Education: secondary

"I have a young wife and two cool kids. I miss them terribly, they keep me alive, without them I would not exist. Of course A. won't tell them where their dad is, because they wouldn't understand the truth, they're young, but they know that their dad will come soon and we'll always be together. My wife is forgiving, she knows what I have done and why, I admit that it didn't work out. I promised her that this was the last time. I know it myself, I don't want to leave them any more, it's hard. She calls me and says that my little girl has a fever, and I sit here and I can't do anything about it, it gets on my nerves and I want to blow up the whole prison, to blow up everyone, because something is happening to my child, and I can't do anything, nothing. Prison term teaches humility and strengthens feelings. I love them like crazy, I would give up my life for my kids. But my woman is great, she is strong, she knows that I will come back to her, I believe in her and that she is faithful. We've been married for

several years and I'm still in love with her. They are my strength. If it were not for them, different things could happen".

Case 2 - Michał

Age: 47 y.o.

Education: vocational, cook

"I have three children, one is studying at university, two are studying at school. They are nice boys. They do not visit me here too often, the oldest one does sometimes. I miss them, but they have their own lives, school, girlfriends, friends. The two of them still live with my wife, and Hubercik is already renting a flat with his girlfriend. They are ashamed of me now, so I don't put pressure on them to visit me I even understand them, a stupid father, it's better not to let others know. They don't need me as I am anymore, especially as I can do nothing while I'm here. After the first time my wife wanted to pack her things and leave me, but somehow I stopped her. Now it's been six months of prison term and I got divorce papers. And I'm angry, because maybe when I'm out I would be able to do something, and while I'm here I can only beat my head against the wall. At first I thought I wouldn't agree to that and that I would fight for her, but as far as I know she already has someone else who has taken my place and who is not a bandit and takes care of my boys. This made me change my mind. So, I will be a divorcee. I do not want to fight with her. She has raised our kids well, that's the most important thing. She doesn't want a husband who is never at home, she is still young. I thought a lot about it. I don't pose problems to her, our relation is normal. After all, we've lived 25 years with each other".

Case 3 - Leszek

Age: 52 y.o.

Education: vocational

"My family is sacred for me. I have five children, my wife, with whom we understand each other very well. I know that I haven't been a good husband, but she is with me for good and for bad. She could have left me a long time ago, she threatened me to do that more than once, but she is still with me and I thank God for that. I wouldn't want anyone else. It was hard for her when she was left alone, but my kids are resourceful, they were helping

each other when their dad wasn't at home, now they are doing it too. My wife comes from the countryside, just like me, we were brought up differently than these urban kids now. We know what hard work is, and what the family is, and that it's not a game. Maybe I am here, maybe I got lost in my life, but she helps me, she believes that it will be different. And I have someone to change for”.

#### Case 4 - Jakub

Age: 33 y.o.

Education: secondary

"I always wanted to have a daughter, I always said that if she was born, she would have everything, and I would be the happiest guy in the world. And it happened. I messed up a little because I'm here and they're all alone, but our parents help them, so I don't have to worry about it. Only the time drags here, sometimes I feel like running away from here, at least for a moment, to stay with them and enjoy it. Waiting is cruel. Longing too. We waited for our daughter Marysia so long, there were problems with pregnancy, but she is healthy, wonderful. And my wife, we know each other briefly, but I know that now she is focused on our child and not on looking for adventures. She is a good girl, hardworking, very wise. Luckily, she's stayed with me, we talk to each other, talk about what happens at home, how Marysia grows up. I know that it's hard for her, but she doesn't complain. She only says that this is the last time we are separated, that she will not survive the next one. When I listen to others here, when they talk about what their women have done, my wife is a real angel. I will survive this mess and I will be with them soon”.

#### Case 5 - Artur

Age: 44 y.o.

Education: vocational

"My wife couldn't stand it, although I think she wanted to leave me earlier. I divorced two months ago and somehow I still think about it. It could have been different, but it's my fault, it's not about the sentence itself, but about my behavior. You have to take care of your relationship, it didn't work out for me. At least I have my kids. Two daughters and one son. And although the girls side with their mother and do not keep in touch with me, Maciek



sometimes talks to me. I wasn't a perfect husband, but somehow I didn't assume that she would leave me. Actually, we had already passed each other before, and my prison term gave her the freedom to act. She did what she wanted. I feel lonely, because it is better to have someone to go back to, to know that someone is waiting for your return. I don't even know where I'll go when I leave prison, because I can't stay in her apartment".

## **Summary**

The statements of the respondents presented in this article clearly indicate the necessity of getting to know family relations of persons serving imprisonment sentences, in the process of social rehabilitation and penitentiary process.

Some respondents have disturbed relations with their families (own and of origin), hence maintaining such relations or basing the social readaptation process on this component may lead to failure. In this case, it seems important to find resources in the prisoners themselves, potentials the development of which can be an alternative to the lack of family ties, by obtaining them in other social groups, e.g. among friends, colleagues, etc.

Three respondents seek a source of motivation for their own change in their families, indicating positive relations with their wives and children, as well as an emotional bond their family members. The same respondents also described their families of origin as normal or supportive, both for themselves and for their own families (assistance in caring for grandchildren, etc.). This is important information for prison staff, educators, psychologists so that in such cases they can take action to maintain family ties, strengthen them and organize some forms of support for prisoners and members of their families, such as joint activities, events, workshops for prisoners, e.g. within the scope of communication with children, schools for parents, etc. Staying in the family system, despite the incarceration and the associated restrictions on interpersonal contacts between its members, is extremely important to convicted men. Contact with the family, maintaining ties are ersatz for a normal life, and the vision of returning to the loved ones drives to action and provides an opportunity for positive effects of the process of social rehabilitation and readaptation.

**Abstrakt: Rodzina w percepcji i ocenie osób odbywających karę pozbawienia wolności**

Definiując rodzinę jako system powiązanych elementów, pozostających ze sobą we wzajemnych relacjach, zakłada się, iż zrozumienie poszczególnych jej części nie jest możliwe w odseparowaniu od całości. Rozerwanie więzi przez izolację jednego z jej członków, doprowadza do zaburzeń systemu i konieczności przeorganizowania go. Jeśli jednostka zostaje umieszczona w instytucji penitencjarnej, skazana jest na długotrwałe wykluczenie ze swojej rodziny, co w konsekwencji prowadzi do rozregulowania systemu, a nawet - w sytuacji nieumiejętności poradzenia sobie ze zmianą - rozpadu rodziny.

**Słowa kluczowe:** system rodzinny, relacje rodzinne, skazany, stygmatyzacja społeczna

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