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Hope and self-efficacy in the process of desistance from crime

Abstract: The process of desistance is situated between the individual choices of a person and his or her participation in a wider social life. Success depends therefore on both individual and social factors that affect the person from outside. Among the subjective factors, the category of hope and self-efficacy plays a more and more important role. Research shows that people who are diagnosed with a high level of hope and self-efficacy can cope better in difficult situations and have a better chance of going straight. The article presents research conducted among 90 convicts serving their sentences for the first time. The aim of the research was to measure the level of hope and self-efficacy and to show the relationship between variables. Half of the respondents achieved a high level of hope and self-efficacy, and hope is a significant predictor of their self-efficacy.

Keywords: Desistance from crime, hope, self-efficacy, social readaptation.

The change of the research paradigm in the social rehabilitation of criminals poses new challenges for theorists. Instead of asking – what works? They ask – what helps criminals to break with crime? Supporters of the social rehabilitation trend point out that withdrawal from criminal activity is not linear, but is a dynamic process of reintegration of an individual into society. It cannot be based only on the provision of ready-made programs, but requires greater knowledge of the process of desistance itself in the broader context of human experience. As S. Farall notes, “most of the research suggests that desistance ‘occurs’ away from the judicial system. That is to say that very few people actually desist as a result of in-

tervention on the part of the criminal justice system or its representatives” (1995, p. 56). A significant rate of recidivism indicates that actions taken systematically by penitentiary institutions tend to interfere with the process of social rehabilitation of convicts by, among others, separating convicts from their families, blocking their professional careers or expanding the area of hostility and opposition.

In view of such facts, great emphasis is now placed on the need to take into account the desistance-focused model in the social rehabilitation of criminals. The consequence of such an approach is a change in the way we think and act towards convicts: “offender management services need to think of themselves less as providers of correctional treatment (that belongs to the expert) and more as supporters of desistance processes (that belong to the desister)” (McNeill, 2006, p. 46).

Currently, most researchers agree that desistance is a gradual and dynamic process resulting from the interaction between internal and external factors. Proponents of such an approach state that human choices are influenced by the structural, situational and cultural context and basic characteristics of the person making the choice. Farrall and Bowling (1999, p. 261) argue that the process of desistance results from “interplay between individual choices, and a range of wider social forces, institutional and societal practices which are beyond the control of the individual”.

The aim of this Article is to look at the subjective factors contributing to the process of desistance. Thomas LeBell et al. (2008) point to four interrelated areas of research that can provide knowledge about the subjective factors of the desistance process: hope and self-efficacy, shame and regret, the internalization of stigmatization and the formation of alternative identities. In this study, research will be undertaken focusing on the first area, i.e. hope and self-efficacy.

Hope

In his theory of psychosocial development, Erik Erikson defines hope as the individual’s particular conviction of two general and interrelated characteristics of the world: that it is ordered and meaningful and that it is generally favorable to people. In his opinion, hope is at the heart of all processes and interactions with the environment. In the first year of life, the child learns to trust the environment through a bond with the mother and its immediate environment. The nature of these bonds means that it either gains self-confidence (positive bonds) or experience fear and uncertainty (negative bonds). Erikson describes the first of eight developmental stages as “trust-mistrust”. In his opinion, hope, or “the first basic life force and the basis for ego development, is the result of the resolution of the conflict arising from the first phase of contradictions in our development path, namely the contradiction between basic trust and basic mistrust” (Erikson, 2002,

p. 73). “Trust – mistrust” is therefore an essential stage for the development of hope and for how an individual will perceive the outside world and himself/herself. As one grows up, hope affects the way an individual solves subsequent challenges. Erikson emphasized the importance of the formation of early hope for the later development and control functions of personality, but did not present a developed description of the content and function of basic hope in adults (Trzebiński, Zięba, 2003, p. 7).

Speaking of the dimension of hope in individual and social life, C.R. Snyder (1994, pp. 535–542) indicates a number of important spaces in which it plays an important role. The first one is the perception of oneself and one's own experience. People with a high degree of hope have a more optimistic self-image, treat difficulties as challenges and focus more on success than failure. The second space is dealing with difficulties and adaptation. People with a higher level of hope adapt faster to the new environment and function better in it. They are not afraid to take on great challenges, and when confronted with stressful situations they are more stable and resilient. Achievements are the third space. There is a positive correlation between a high level of hope and performance at work, in social and family relationships.

Hope therefore plays an important role not only in situations of existential trials, such as the loss, disintegration of a previous life, or a new life situation, but also in everyday human events, such as work, health or social relations.

Self-efficacy

The concept of self-efficacy was introduced by Albert Bandura, author of the socio-cognitive theory of behavior.

Self-efficacy is the belief in one's own ability to organize and control one's own behavior in order to achieve a specific, expected result of this behavior. The sense of self-efficacy leads to expectations as to the achievement of the action taken. When choosing a particular behavior, the following factors play a role: generalized self-efficacy – i.e. a general belief in one's own capabilities, and specific self-efficacy – a belief in one's self-efficacy related to the chosen behavior in a specific situation. According to Bandura (1989, p. 1176) “there is a growing body of evidence that human attainments and positive well-being require an optimistic sense of self-efficacy. This is because ordinary social realities are strewn with difficulties. They are full of impediments, failures, adversities, setbacks, frustrations and inequities. People must have a robust sense of personal efficacy to sustain the perseverant effort needed to succeed”.

In the sense of self-efficacy, one can distinguish the element of strength that determines the size of the aspiration to seek a solution to a given task and the element of perseverance needed to cope with the task. The former is more “in-

volved” in the motivation process, the latter is more involved in the action process, especially in the maintenance phase (Juczyński, Juczyński, 2012, p. 219).

Bandura assumes that a person's motivation, well-being and achievements depend more on his or her beliefs than on actual facts. In his opinion, if the person is not convinced that his or her actions will bring the desired results, he or she shows low motivation to act and does not intensify the effort in the face of the encountered difficulties. Thus, a more accurate predictor of human behavior are one's own beliefs about his or her own capabilities, than the level of capabilities actually possessed by him or her: “what people think, believe and feel affects how they behave.” (Bandura, 1986, p. 25).

Self-efficacy differentiates people in terms of thinking, feeling and acting. Namely, the stronger the sense of self-efficacy, the higher the goals people set themselves and the stronger their involvement in the intended behavior even in the face of difficulties and failures (Juczyński, 2000, p. 11).

Hope and self-efficacy in social rehabilitation

The concepts of hope and self-efficacy have in recent years been among the important determinants of the desistance process. The research carried out by Burnett and Maruna (2004, pp. 396–399) on a group of 130 men from Scotland provides interesting knowledge. A prospective quantitative approach has allowed the authors to establish a link between hope and one's own beliefs about returning to crime and the desistance process. In the first phase of the study, conducted just before leaving prison, 80% of the respondents said they wanted to go straight, but only 25% of the respondents were completely convinced of the success of their intentions, while 14% described success as probable. 5% of respondents were absolutely convinced that they do not want to stop committing crimes and that they intend to return to crime. Finally, 14% of those surveyed expressed uncertainty about the future, believing that everything depends on different circumstances, such as starting work, refraining from using narcotics, or reconciling oneself to one's family.

The next phase of the study was carried out a few months after they left prison (N=97). 40 respondents did not commit any crime at that time, while 57 returned to crime. The analysis of the results of the level of hope among the respondents allowed to distinguish 5 categories of people (the results ranged from 0 to 20). The highest level of hope (score 19–20) was achieved by 14 respondents identified as Resolute, 22 convicts were Optimists (score 16–18), followed by the group of Hesitant (23 persons) with the score 12–15, Pessimists (21 persons) with the score 7–11 and finally Skeptics (17 persons) with the score from 0 to 6 points. The authors conclude that the level of hope is linked to a return to crime, which is particularly appropriate for the groups of Hesitant, Pessimists and Skeptics.

The next phase of the study, carried out 10 years later, showed that the level of hope remains an invariably important factor in the desistance process. The authors state that the respondents with a high level of hope are better able to cope with problem situations. However, increasing social problems such as homelessness, loss of a loved one or significant poverty make self-efficacy and optimism less relevant. The conclusion of the study is that if a person is not exposed to too many social problems, hope for the future seems to play a significant role in predicting success even ten years after leaving prison. However, in the face of many exogenous social problems, attitudes and inner motivation can be overwhelmed by reality.

The importance of hope, especially in the initial stage of the change process, is also emphasized by Weaver (2014, p. 11) as well as Farrall and Sparks (2006, p. 13). In their view, hope played a positive role in finding and retaining prisoners' jobs, re-establishing positive partnerships or completing social rehabilitation or therapeutic programs at an early stage of the desistance process. In addition, positive emotional support from the environment and commitment to the community strengthened the sense of hope for success.

Positive effects of hope were also visible in people going straight in longitudinal studies by Farrall and Calverley. The authors point out that hope was the strongest positive emotion in the early stages of the desistance process. Hope provides them "with the vision that an alternative 'normal' life is both desirable and, ultimately, providing they overcome the obstacles and uncertainties that remain, possible. For hope to be meaningful, the object or situation desired must appear attainable at some level" (Farrall, Calverley, 2005, pp. 192–193). According to Simpson's conviction (2004, p. 441), hope includes a component of action, which means that a person will try to maintain it. This is achieved through three types of action that are visible in the desistance process: firstly, action to maintain hope (e.g. avoiding criminal groups or not returning to addiction); secondly, re-evaluation of one's hopes in the event of a change in the circumstances of life (e.g. acceptance of termination of a relationship or resignation from work); and thirdly, recognition that hope can depend on actions that a person does not take (such as avoiding certain places or people) (Farrall, Calverley, 2005, p. 193).

On the Polish ground, the importance of hope and positive orientation in the process of social readaptation is stressed by, among others, A. Fidelus (2012) or A. Kieszkowska (2012).

In terms of self-efficacy, research shows that it clearly differentiates between repeat offenders and convicts who have made a successful desistance effort, without any clear gender difference. This means that self-efficacy plays an important role in both women and men. The individuals who went straight were more open to change, hoped for success and had a greater sense of responsibility and control over their lives. Their perceived effectiveness made it easier for them to set goals, engage and persevere in the face of adversity and complications occur-

ring in the desistance process. Self-efficacy motivates to act for one's own good (Friestad, Skog Hansen, 2010, p. 295; McIvor, Trotter, Sheehan, 2009, p. 357). Hannah-Moffat (2003, p. 45) states that "an effective plan for reintegration into society motivates people to be autonomous and out of control of others. Research in the population of women who have managed to stay out of the penitentiary system shows that those who take control of their own lives and thus change the course are the most likely to succeed."

Own studies

The aim of the empirical studies was an attempt to verify the usefulness of the category of hope and self-efficacy in the desistance process. The main research problem is the question: What is the level of hope and self-efficacy of people leaving prison? and What is the relationship between hope and self-efficacy in the desistance process? Two standardized tests were used: the first one was the BHI-12 Basic Hope Inventory by J. Trzebiński and M. Zięba. The questionnaire consists of 12 statements assessed on a 5-point scale (range of results from 9 to 45). The result is a total of points which is an indicator of the overall level of basic hope. The higher the score, the greater the basic hope. The second tool is the Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) by R. Schwarzer, M. Jerusalem and Z. Juczyński. This tool consists of 10 statements and measures the global confidence in one's ability to cope with demanding situations. The total score ranges between 10 and 40, then converted into sten scores. The higher the score, the greater the sense of self-efficacy.

The studies were conducted in the Penitentiary Facility in Trzebinia on a group of 90 convicts serving their first time in prison. The average age of the respondents was 28.5 years. Respondents have been sentenced to imprisonment for such punishable acts as theft, alimony evasion or road traffic offenses. All prisoners were in the final phase of their sentence (the last 6 months).

The analysis of the conducted studies showed that the average value of basic hope was 31.24. The lowest value was 17 and the highest 39, the standard deviation was $sd=3.97$. When it comes to self-efficacy, the average value was 33.01. The lowest value was 21, the highest value was 40, the standard deviation was $sd=3.82$. Taking into account the weighted results, only one of the respondents achieved a low score, 42 reached medium sten score, and 47 a high score (Table 1).

It should be noted that the level of basic hope, as well as the level of the respondents' self-efficacy, is at a medium and high level, which proves that convicts are convinced that the actions taken are effective and that they believe in their own strength. However, for people with many problems, such as addiction, lack of housing or financial difficulties, the level of hope and self-efficacy is closer to average than high.

Table 1. Basic hope and self-efficacy – descriptive statistics

Variable	Descriptive statistics								
	Valid N	Mean	Median	Mode	Mode Count	Minimum	Maximum	Variance	Standard deviation
Hope	90	31.24444	32.00000	32.00000	16	17.00000	39.00000	15.80474	3.975518
Efficacy	90	33.01111	33.00000	30.00000	13	21.00000	40.00000	14.64032	3.826268

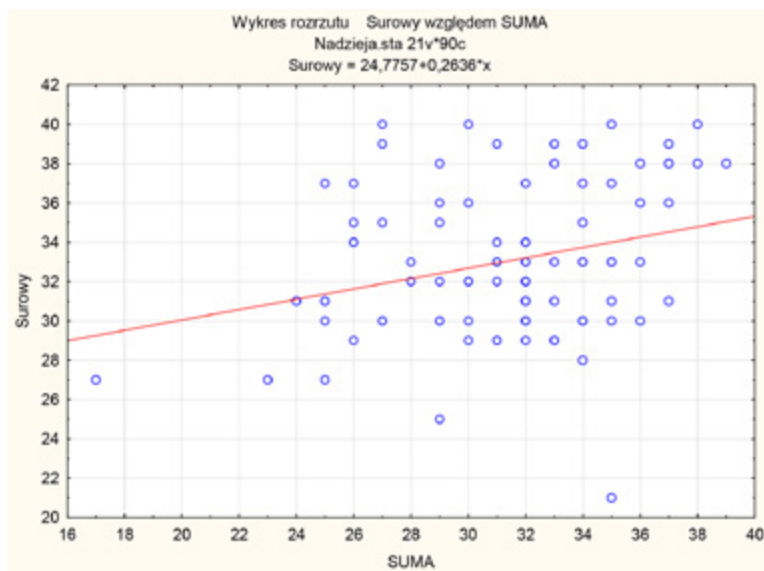
Source: own study

The studies also attempted to determine the correlation between the level of basic hope and the level of self-efficacy. For this purpose, a Spearman rank correlation analysis was carried out. Detailed data is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Spearman's rank correlations

Variable	Correlation of Spearman rank order (Hope) BD removed in pairs Marked correlation coefficients are significant with $p < .05000$	
	Hope	Efficacy
Hope	1.000000	0.244272
Efficacy	0.244272	1.000000

Source: own study



Key: Wykres rozrzutu – Scatter chart; Surowy względem SUMA – Raw vs. SUM; Nadzieja– Hope; Surowy – Raw; SUMA – SUM; Sum = hope, raw = efficacy

Source: own study

The analysis with the rho-Spearman test showed that there was a significant correlation between hope and efficacy ($Rho = 0.244$, $p < 0.005$). The scattering of results and their dependence are presented on the chart below.

Further analyses aimed at demonstrating whether there is a significant difference between the level of hope and the level of efficacy in the group with a high score. For this purpose, three subgroups of respondents were created: Sten score 8 – high; sten score 9 – very high; and sten score 10 – exceptionally high. Analysis with Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric test showed that there was a significant difference ($p=0.03$) in the level of hope between three groups: persons with high efficacy level (sum of ranks=1742), persons with very high efficacy level (sum of ranks=934) and persons with exceptionally high efficacy level (sum of ranks=1419). Detailed data is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Kruskal-Wallis test

Dependent: Hope	Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA ranks; SUM (Hope.sta) Independent variable (grouping): level 2 Kruskal-Wallis test: $H(2, N=90) = 6.992146$ $p = .0303$			
	Code	Valid N	Rank Sum	Average Rank
1	1	44	1742.000	39.59091
2	2	21	934.000	44.47619
3	3	25	1419.000	56.76000

Source: own study

Further analysis indicates that this significant difference exists between the first and third group ($Z = 2.62$; $p = 0.02$), i.e. between those with a high level of efficacy and those with an exceptionally high level of efficacy. Tables 4 and 5 present the data.

Table 4. 'z' value for multiple comparisons

Dependent: Hope	'z' value for multiple comparisons; SUM (Hope.sta) Independent variable (grouping): level 2 Kruskal-Wallis test: $H(2, N=90) = 6.992146$ $p = .0303$		
	1 R:39.591	2 R:44.476	3 R:56.760
1		0.705046	2.624024
2	0.705046		1.588483
3	2.624024	1.588483	

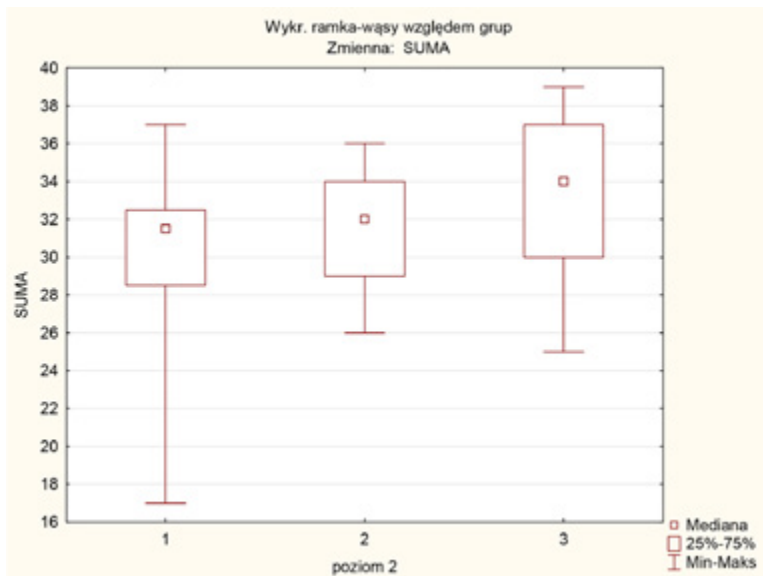
Source: own study

Table 5. p-value for multiple comparisons

Dependent: Hope	p-value for multiple (bilateral) comparisons; SUM (Hope.sta) Independent variable (grouping): level 2 of the Kruskal-Wallis test: H (2, N = 90) = 6.992146 p = .0303		
	1 R:39.591	2 R:44.476	3 R:56.760
1		1.000000	0.026069
2	1.000000		0.336532
3	0.026069	0.336532	

Source: own study

Chart 2 presents the summary of the analyses. It can be seen that the median of hope increases with the level of efficacy. For people with a high level of efficacy the minimum of hope results is 17, while the maximum is 37; for people with an exceptionally high level of efficacy the minimum of hope results is 25, while the maximum is 39.



/Key: Wykr. ramka-wąsy względem grup – box and whisker plot in relations to groups; Zmienna: SUMA – Variable: SUM; SUMA – SUM; Mediana – Median; Min-Maks – Min-Max; poziom – level/

Source: own study.

The last element of the studies concerned the question whether hope is a predictive factor of self-efficacy. For this purpose, a regression analysis was carried out. Table 6 shows the results of the analysis.

Table 6. Regression analysis

N = 90	Summary of the regression of the dependent variable: Raw (Hope.sta) R = .27385998 R ² = .07499929 Correct R ² = .06448792 F(1.88)=549.61 p=7.1351					
	b*	Std. Err. with b*	b	Std. Err. with b	t(88)	p
Absolute term			24.77574	3.107657	7.972483	0.000000
Hope	0.273860	0.102525	0.26358	0.098676	2.671154	0.009005

Source: own study

The observed dependencies can be written down using formula: efficacy=0.26x hope +24.77. On the basis of the conducted analyses it should be stated that hope is an important predictor of the self-efficacy ($b = 0.26$; $p = 0.009$). The higher the hope, the higher the level of self-efficacy.

Discussion and summary

Categories of hope and self-efficacy have found fertile ground in research into desistance. The authors emphasize the importance of a high level of hope and self-efficacy in the initial phase of the recovery process (Weaver, Farrall and Calverley). In addition, the maintenance of self-efficacy and hope for a good life become an important predictor of desistance even in the situation of mounting problems after leaving the penitentiary institution (Burnett, Maruna). Studies carried out in the Prison in Trzebinia shows that more than half of the prisoners are convinced of their self-efficacy (which is indicated by the high level of sten scores results) and show considerable optimism about the future and the possibility of overcoming life's difficulties. This optimistic approach to the future as seen in the studies may be somewhat distorted by the desire to come off well in the final phase of imprisonment. Prisoners who have the prospect of being released from prison try to show their best side of themselves and thus demonstrate their willingness to complete the social rehabilitation process. Nevertheless, both hope and self-efficacy open up opportunities for convicts to look to the future with optimism and make them more willing to take steps towards a life free from crime. The chance of desistance increases when a convicted person has contact with someone who believes in him or her, brings hope and maintains it even when the offender is unable to do so himself or herself.

The desistance process is a difficult one and requires the personal involvement of the convicts. The task of prison staff is to motivate prisoners to participate in social rehabilitation programs and to take responsibility for their own choices and lives. It seems that an important factor, besides motivation, is also

hope and sense of self-efficacy. The diagnosed low level of hope and self-efficacy becomes an important predictor of a return to criminal life (Burnett, Maruna) and significantly reduces the effectiveness of efforts made by prison staff.

Certainly, the disadvantage of the conducted studies is that it took place only in one period of time. It would undoubtedly be important to continue them, e.g. six months after leaving prison and in subsequent years. It also seems important to read the individual contents of the concepts of hope and self-efficacy, which can be used in qualitative research.

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