

Development of Emotional Intelligence in Convicted Women

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Abstract. The article notes an insufficient study of the problem of female convicts' emotional intelligence, and briefly considers existing models of emotional intelligence. The main results of the conducted research of female convicts' emotional intelligence taking into account the term of their stay in a correctional institution, using the developed author's complex of psychodiagnostic methods, are presented. The paper describes a model for enhancing emotional and personal maturity, taking into account the criminalisation and personal immaturity of female convicts through the application of cognitive-behavioural, humanistic, and rational-emotive approaches. Women serving sentences in penitentiary institutions of the Russian Federal Penitentiary Service in the Oryol, Moscow, and Kaluga Regions took part in an experimental study to test the adequacy and validity of the proposed model for emotional and personal maturity development and the correctional work method created on its basis. The results obtained empirically testify to a statistically significant increase in the components of emotional intelligence in the target group. On this basis, the conclusion is made about the adequacy of the proposed model and technology of work and the possibility of their practical application. This conclusion is confirmed by the information about the subsequent successful implementation of the experimentally tested psychotechnology to improve emotional and personal maturity in the activities of institutions and bodies of the Russian Federal Penitentiary Service. The conclusions about the validity of the proposed model, as well as about the effectiveness and practical relevance of the created on their basis methodological tools for psychodiagnostics and psychocorrection of emotional intelligence, are made.

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1 Introduction

The phenomenon of emotional intelligence is one of the popular yet controversial and ambiguous subjects of research. An analysis of scientific publications shows that there is no universally accepted content of the term “emotional intelligence” [1, 2]. The proposed technologies for the development of emotional intelligence are mainly aimed at applications in the managerial, marketing, and business communication spheres (see for example Goleman, 2013; Stein, 2010, etc.). While there are diverse theoretical approaches to understanding emotional intelligence and an enormous amount of applied research, emotional intelligence in female convicts serving time in correctional facilities has been still poorly studied. Conducting such a study is justified by the data of numerous empirically studied indicators of emotional components in female convicts. It was found that female convicts often committed infractions of serving their sentences and came into conflicts due to emotional intemperance and impulsiveness [3–6]. Negative emotional states among women in prison are exacerbated by the presence of withdrawal syndrome (as most had addictive dependencies before conviction) [7, 8], socially significant illnesses [9] (HIV infection, AIDS), and mental health problems that do not exclude sanity [10]. The above points to the need for research into the emotional intelligence of this category, the identification of its determinants, and the development of effective technology to support women serving prison sentences in the light of the features identified

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2 Methods

In order to study the emotional intelligence of female convicts, the authors conducted a study on a representative sample (220 respondents) using the following tools: an examination of personal case files, individual interviews, group questionnaires, expert interviews, and psychodiagnostic tools: “R. Cattell’s multivariate personality questionnaire” (R. Cattell), “Emotional intelligence test” (N. Hall), “Emotional intelligence test (questionnaire)” (D.V. Lyusin), “Life Style Index” methodology (Life Style Index, R. Plutchik, G. Killerman, G. Conte), “The value questionnaire of Sh. Schwartz” (Sh. Schwartz), “Life Meaning Orientations” Test (D.A. Leontiev), and the questionnaire “Methods of coping behaviour” (R. Lazarus, S. Folkman). Scientific publications on the problem of diagnosis of emotional intelligence show that when interpreting the results, it is necessary to consider not only its quantitative but also qualitative indicators, because while demonstrating a high overall level of emotional intelligence, some components may remain undeveloped [11].

As respondents, 220 women serving sentences in prisons in different territorial bodies of the Russian Federal Penitentiary Service (Kaluga, Vologda, Oryol, Moscow, and the Krasnodar Territory) were recruited. The results of the empirical study were processed using the methods of mathematical statistics. In particular, the factor and correlation analysis, the Mann-Whitney U-criterion, and the Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient were applied.

3 Results

The research results of the level of emotional intelligence in female convicts at different stages of serving the sentence are reflected in the figures (see: Fig. 1, Fig. 2, and Fig. 3). The correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant relationship of the selected indicators of emotional intelligence in female convicts with their educational level, marital status, and the length of their sentence.

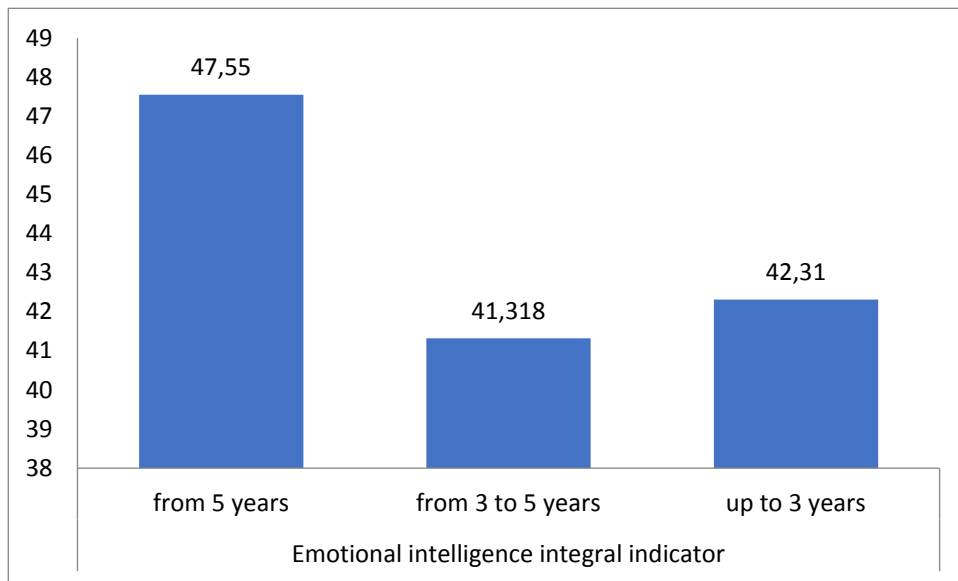


Fig. 1. Indicators according to N. Hall’s methodology “Diagnostics of emotional intelligence”

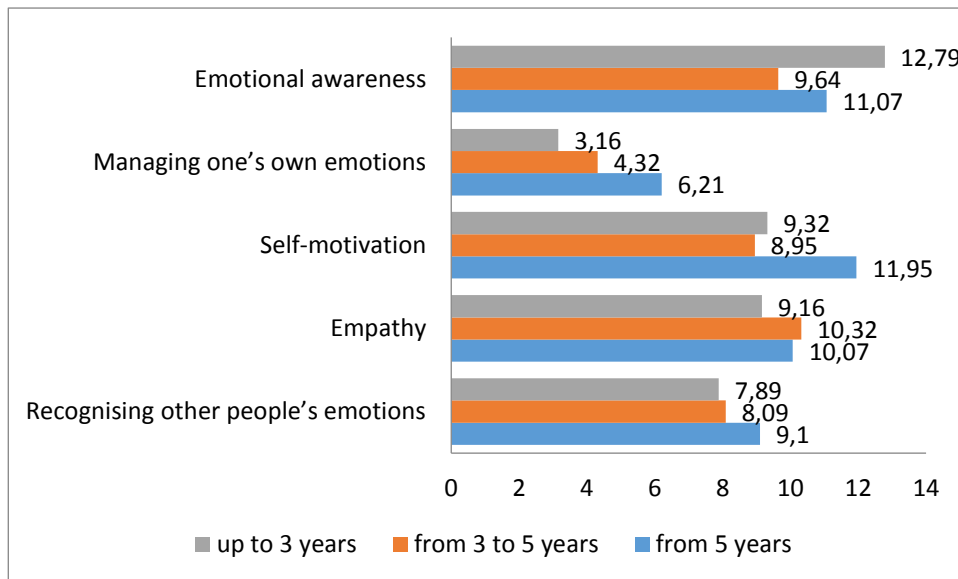


Fig. 2. Indicators according to N. Hall’s methodology “Diagnostics of emotional intelligence”

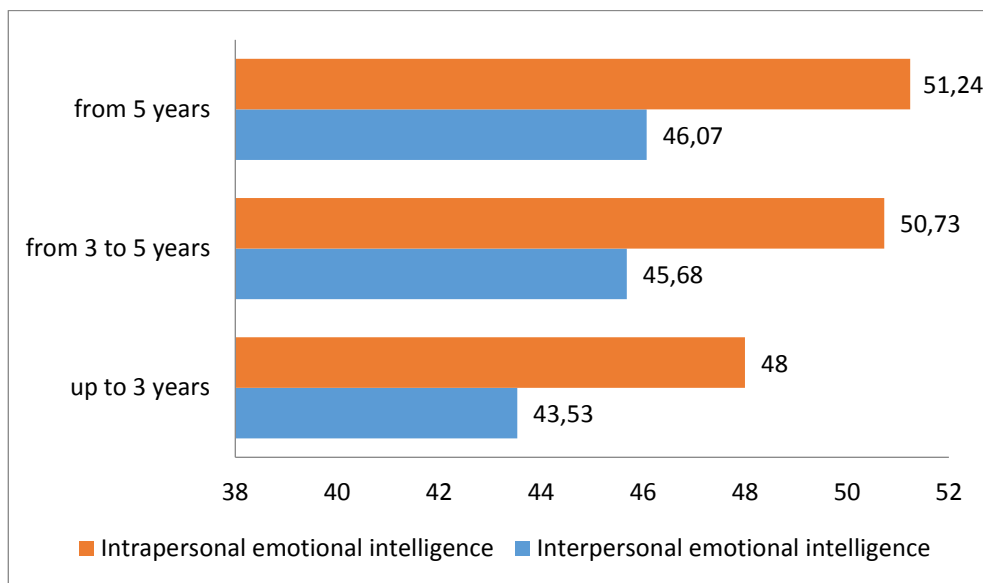


Fig. 3. Indicators according to D.V. Lyusin’s methodology “Emotional intelligence questionnaire”

The presented graphs (see Fig. 1, Fig. 2, and Fig. 3) show decreasing values of emotional intelligence in female convicts who have been in prison for more than 3 years, and subsequent growth of the same indicators in the period of serving a sentence of 5 and more years. It is important to note that, despite the visible dynamics, the revealed changes are within the limits of average values of the general level of emotional intelligence. Thus, it is possible to assert that female convicts do not have full-fledged emotional experience for understanding their own and others’ emotions.

Nevertheless, the revealed changes in the level of emotional intelligence at different stages of serving a sentence indicate the manifestation of adaptation of female convicts to the penitentiary environment and their acquisition of stereotypical behaviour for prison culture. This assumption correlates with the research findings of Yu.R. Gerasimova [12]. This is confirmed by the decrease in such an indicator as “empathy” while increasing the other components of emotional intelligence on the presented diagnostic techniques. Similar conclusions were obtained in the study of P.S. Nikitin and S.N. Borisova who conducted a comparative study of the dynamics of emotional, general, and social intelligence in female convicts and non-convicts [11].

In order to distinguish different types of female convicts based on the level of emotional intelligence, the methods of mathematical statistics were applied to the data obtained in the course of the psychodiagnostic study. The following contrasting types of female convicts according to this criterion were distinguished by successive correlation, factor, and cluster analysis: “emotionally impulsive” and “emotionally rigid”.

Convicts of the emotionally impulsive type demonstrate high levels of meaningfulness in understanding their own and others’ emotions and are well aware of their role in life. As a rule, they tend to comply with the established requirements of serving their sentence in the correctional facility, which is due to a sufficiently high level of self-regulation of emotions, developed ability of self-analysis and self-reflection. This category of prisoners tends to display a greater degree of internal locus of control; they tend to take responsibility for their actions and their consequences.

A sufficiently high level of meaningfulness of life allows emotionally impulsive convicts to make plans for the future and have socially meaningful goals. Convicts of this type strive to earn parole and acquire a family. In their behaviour, they strive to comply with generally accepted moral norms and values and show persistence in achieving their goals. Convicts of the emotionally impulsive type show mechanisms of psychological protection “Regression” and “Substitution” at containment of the negative emotional conditions caused by a stay in a penal colony.

Female convicts of the emotionally rigid type, in contrast to the emotionally impulsive type, are not aware of their own and others’ emotions and do not recognise their importance in everyday life. They tend to display affective rigidity and asthenic experiences, resulting in stagnant emotional reactions to events.

Convicts of this type have difficulty with controlling the manifestations of their emotional state and have difficulty with establishing a cause-and-effect relationship between their emotional states and the consequences of their realisation.

Lack of long-term goals reduces the meaningfulness of their lives, while the external locus of control prevails, indicating a rejection of personal responsibility for the difficulties and the emotional distress accompanying them. The “outwardly blaming” stance of emotionally rigid convicts is combined with the “Avoidance” coping strategy.

4 Discussion

To date, there is no well-defined position on the possibility of successful development of emotional intelligence, which is due to lack of a unified conceptual model. Representatives of an ability model (Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, 1999) share the view that the level of emotional intelligence is largely determined by natural data and is difficult to correct. According to this position, only knowledge of emotional components and their application should be developed. The authors of other conceptual models of emotional intelligence (D. Goleman, D. Slater, etc.) state the possibility of its development at any age [11, 14].

To date in foreign (Staski and Gartwright, 2003; Wing, Schutte, Byrne, 2006; Chang, 2006; Reuben, Sapienza, Zingales, 2009; Clarke, 2010; Boyatzis, Umashankar, Charitra, 2014, etc.) and Russian (M.A. Manoilova, 2004; M.A. Nguyen, 2008; T.I. Solodkova, 2011; E.A. Khlevnaya, 2012; T.S. Kiseleva, 2015, etc.) practice, a number of studies confirming the possibility of the emotional intelligence development, with the help of training group work, have been conducted.

At present, the authors have presented a scientifically substantiated model and psychotechnology of a psychocorrectional programme reflecting the study of the emotional and personal maturity of women serving sentences in prisons, which became possible based on data from methodological and empirical research conducted and tested at Correctional Colony No. 6 of the Russian Federal Penitentiary Service in the Oryol Region [11, 15].

The basis of the work on the correctional and developmental impact was the methodological tools of rational-emotional therapy by A. Ellis. This was due to the possibility of identifying the presence of “irrational judgements and attitudes”, which reflect an unstable emotional sphere in the studied category of persons.

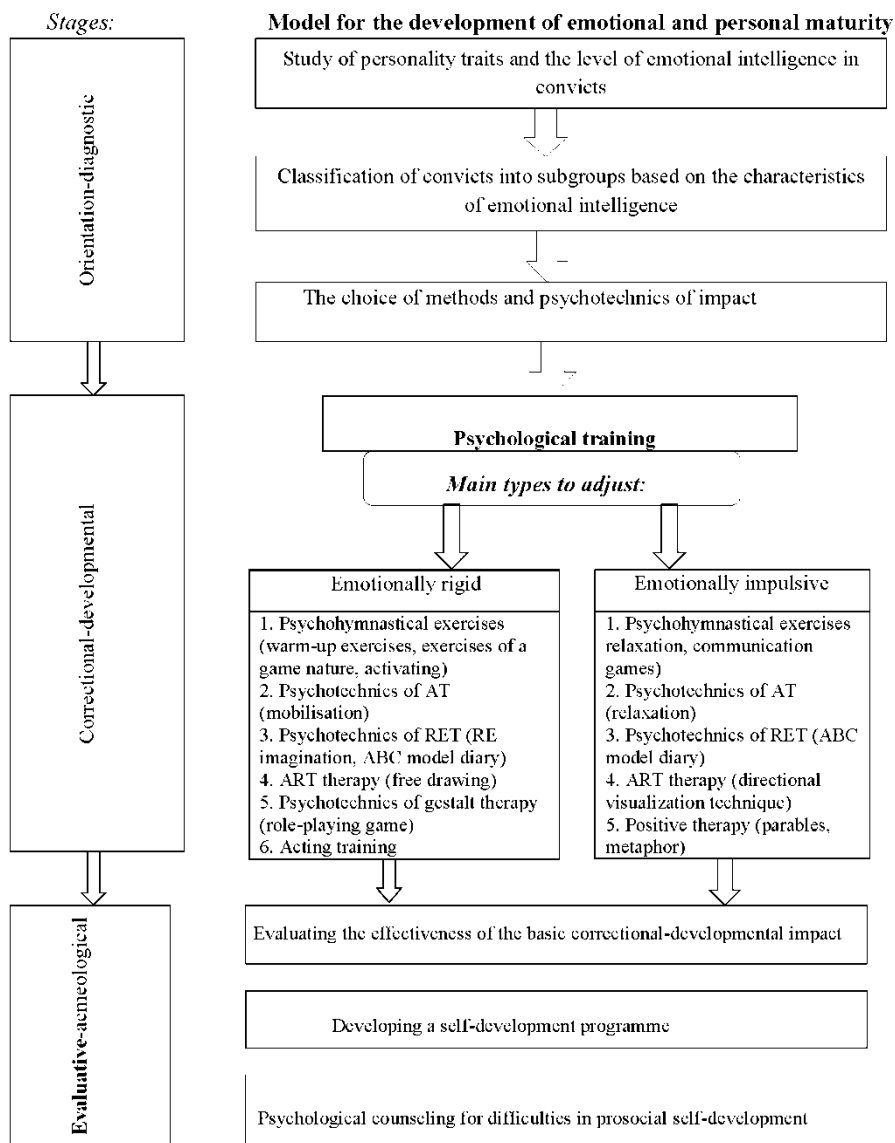


Fig. 4. Scheme of an experiment to increase the emotional maturity of female convicts serving sentences in correctional colonies. AT – autogenic training, RET – rational-emotive therapy

The results of the psychodiagnostic examination before and after participation in the experiment were compared at the end of the correctional and developmental impact according to the presented programme. In addition to the diagnostics data, the dynamics of disciplinary indicators, self-reports of female convicts, and the expert survey of staff members were assessed, which made it possible to note the positive dynamics of emotional self-regulation, empathy and prosocial behaviour of the studied category.

5 Conclusion

The presented results are aimed at increasing the efficiency of psychological support for female convicts in penitentiary institutions. When carrying out psychological correctional work, penitentiary psychologists should pay special attention to convicts of the “emotionally rigid” type since they have specific features that complicate the process of adaptation and re-socialisation in penitentiary institutions. Knowledge of the identified features can be used as a basis for the development of correctional and developmental programmes.

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