

THE SOCIAL CLIMATE OF THE CLOSED PRISON IN ZENICA IN THE PERIOD FROM 1993 TO 2016: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY¹

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PURPOSE

Social aspects of different environmental systems concerning the individual behaviour have a significant influence on types of behaviour, i.e. differences in behaviour can appear in the same personality in different circumstances.

Systematic quantification of the environment can increase the likelihood of behaviour prediction. Following this lead, Stern (1967) quantified and measured dimensions of behaviour in camps that had a flexible organization. In almost all environmental situations, the behaviour was adapted to the flexibility of the environment.

The fundamental fact, confirmed by research, is that different social climates have different consequences on the behaviour of the same subjects. Rudolph H. Moos and P. Houts (Moos & Houts, 1968) determined that the degree of emphasis on spontaneity and autonomy in psychiatric wards, positively correlated with the initiative of patients, was defined as their participation in successful treatment. Conversely, emphasized aggressiveness resulted in a negative attitude towards treatment and a lack of initiative. Research in the social climate of prisons undertaken by Street, Vintner and Perron (Street, Vintner & Perron, 1966) in six different prisons for juveniles, the treatment goals of whom were oriented towards the relation between obedience - conformity and re-education – development, resulted in conclusion that differences in treatment goals had consequences for staff perceptions of prisoners; then on the perception of the prisoners towards the staff.

The difference between prisons was also emphasized by Erving Goffman (Goffman, 1961), underlining the fact that the relationship between prisoners and staff in a total institution has a different climate, i.e. the latter is defined by authoritarianism. Donald R. Cressey (Cressey, 1965) reviewed prison researches, particularly regarding the differences between treatment orientations and prisons whose primary purpose was incapacitation³. It was observed that it was a common assumption that uncooperativeness, loyalty, honesty, aggression and paranoia were traits attributed to prisoners. Deviation is understood as a consequence of something “in” the prisoner. He suggested that many behavioural traits exhibited by prisoners or prison staff could have been the result of the type of organization, rather than the individual. Simply, the diagnosis and explanation of “individual disorder” and “deviant behaviour” of prisoners have to be considered in the organizational context in which the behaviour occurs. In theory, the expe-

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³ The length of the sentence is also very important (Ignjatović 2007:233).



periences of prisoners are recognized as elements of reality, as one of the main focuses of interest. For E. Goffman (1961) this reality meets the definition of the total institution of the person in it.

Prisoners' behaviour, and the experience of a closed prison, such as the prison in Zenica is, can therefore be investigated from the point of view of the individual traits of the prisoners and their environment. Due to this fact, the importance of the current environment for human behaviour emerges. From this arises the need to respect the participation of situational, current determinants that shape behaviour. This fact was particularly emphasized by Rudolph H. Moos (Rudolph H. Moos, 1968, 1974, 1975; Moos & Houts, 1968; Moos & Wenk, 1972; Moos & Schwartz, 1972) in a series of papers in which he focused on the research of institutional environments, and he proved that it was necessary to quantify systematically various aspects of the social and physical environment, and to combine them with the individual characteristics of the examinees, in order to predict their behaviour. He defined this approach as a social climate based on two assumptions. First, that the individual environment is a unique entity, and second, that the social climate can be described and quantified. This means that prisons can be researched from the point of view of the quality and quantity of the internal environment as a set of relationships between prisoners and official staff, and with this process the rigidity of social control, the structure of situations and sets of events could be measured. The totality of the observed mutual social relations between the actors within the prison, and the attitude towards the prison as an institution is defined as the social climate. F. Brinc (1985), D. Ajduković and A. Kulenović (1989), S. Bogojević (1991) researched the social climate of prisons, and in the recent period, the works of Lj. Ilijić as well (Ilijić, 2013, 2016, 2017, 2021, Pavićević & Batričević, 2024).

These researches have strengthened the conviction about the necessity to respect the environmental conditions in sociology that go beyond the environment as a given fact. Certain social conditions or realities are articulated through behaviour (Crewe&Liebling 2017:892). That is why the social climate of prisons is considered to be of an important scientific interest (Moos, 1974; Ilijić, 2021; Pavićević, et al., 2024), because it reveals latent relationships, processes and events within the prison community. The universe of variables of the social climate of prisons is stratified, and the most frequent events - variables, from the point of view of prisoners, are repression, disorganization, prison code and deprivation.

The most important aspect of the functioning of the prison community is its social climate, which defines the direction and movement of this community in the complex environment (system) in an effort to explain it, to adapt to it, or to reduce the environment (system) to a factor which will define it as "unjustly condemned" population.

With regard to the subject of this research, we followed the social climate of the prison community in the war and peacetime period.

The following goals are imposed:

- 1) Determination of changes in the social climate of the prison community, i.e. its subdimensions in the periods 1993, 1994, 1997 and 2016.
- 2) Determining and analysing the structure and functioning of the social climate of the prison community, and its subdimensions, with an emphasis on 2016 as a normative period in which the peacetime situation dominated (1993 was characterized by a total blockade, 1994 by a partial release, and 1997 and 2016 were characterized by the dominance of peace).
- 3) Determining which subdimensions of the social climate of the prison are the most stable through the analysis of correlations and multiple correlations.

In addition to the aforementioned research interests, we believe that this approach also makes sense in terms of helping to define the goals of serving the sentence, especially in:



- reduction of violations of institutional rules, especially individual and collective violence within the prison,
- management of security risks in prison,
- creation of re-educational treatment for prisoners in terms of developing competencies that will enable the prisoners to function in civil circumstances (education, problem-solving skills, etc.),
- reduction of recidivism,
- the diagnostic value of the work,
- longitudinal and comparative studies,
- partial indicator of the state of human rights of prisoners in prison.

METHODS

Through a longitudinal approach to this research, we focused on the changes and conditions of the social climate of the closed prison in Zenica in the indicated time periods. As S. Tomanović (2020) says: “Time and change are cultural constructs, but also individually and subjectively interpreted constructs...” (Tomanović, 2020: 10), therefore we want to cover prisoners and their perception of prison in two fundamentally different research periods, i.e. the war period in 1993 and 1994, and the peace-time period in 1997 and 2016.

For this purpose, it seemed necessary to apply the following:

- 1) The theoretical analysis of the problem, which includes the analysis of concepts, the theoretical framework of behavioural problems, the definition of the situation and the strategy of behaviour of prisoners in prison as a total institution. A person in a closed space in all the points or situations is a conscious and goal-oriented organism (Proshansky, Ittelson, & Rivlin, 1970). In this situational context, individuals and groups, such as prisoners, strive to organize their physical and social environment with the request that the organization include the interaction and exchange (Sabani, 2023) with the environment (institutional and personal aspect). This is precisely the social space in which the social climate of the prison community is mostly engaged in shaping the internal environment of the prison.
- 2) Empirical non-experimental survey method with a longitudinal dimension was applied to the work, and its choice stemmed from the goal of the research.
- 3) The statistical method enabled us to observe certain regularities in trends, as well as the statistical significance of the phenomena and features we research. The paper presents the correlation relations between the subdimensions of the social climate of prisons and multiple correlations, while the other indicators are ignored due to the volume of empirical material. Pearson's correlation coefficient r shows us the cause-and-effect relation between the subdimensions of the social climate. We used those relations as determinants of the definition of the situation by treated periods and examined groups. We used the multiple correlation r for the purpose of analysing the general factor of the social climate of the prison community for certain periods, as well as for the overall observed periods.

The prison community serving the sentence in the Zenica closed prison by definition is fixed in time and space (Walker&Drawve, 2018: 178). Despite this, within the prison there is a multitude of mutual relations and processes that grow out of the specific character of the prison, as well as the psychosocial differences of the prisoners. A set of norms (prison code) that regulate relations inside and outside the community, common interests and a number of other relationships have a different impact on



the community itself. The situation in prison, which consists of both formal and informal parts, their formal and informal differentiation is variable, and it varies under the influence of many external and internal factors, and as such implies multiple simultaneous events. As we mentioned, the most frequent events - variables are the following:

- Repression means the way of “exercising power” in the relationship between the prison community and official staff; it measures the level of supervision, control, and use of force.
- Disorganization measures the amount of disorder within the formal staff of the prison, the ambiguity of treatment and demands towards the prisoners, non-compliance and the breakdown of the system within and between the formal and informal (prison) parts.
- Prison code measures a set of unwritten rules of behaviour within the prison community, as well as the levels of cohesion (Sykes & Messinger, 1960).
- Deprivation measures a set of deprivations in terms of freedom, material values, goods, services, heterosexual relationships, autonomy and safety in prisoners towards other prisoners. Deprivation is a highly subjective feeling, but it is considered to be a collective variable due to the similar experiences of prisoners.

On the basis of these dimensions, the social climate of the prison is the result of the relationship that determines the different degree of presence of repression, disorganization, prison code and deprivation, whereby the difference of the prison into the formal part (repression and disorganization) and the informal part (prison code and deprivation) is respected. Based on this definition, we can consider that the social climate of the prison is the result of the relationship between:

- 1) official staff and prisoners,
- 2) prisoners and prisoners,
- 3) prisoners according to the living conditions in the prison,
- 4) prisoners according to free time in prison,
- 5) prisoners according to deprivations⁴.

Wenk and Moos (1972) tested several different prisons, the purposes of which ranged from incapacitation (guarding) to treatment procedures that took place in semi-open prisons. They concluded that prisons with a lower degree of supervision and control result in a more favourable social climate inside the prison.

In this sense, we used the revised and adapted CIES (Correctional Institutions Environment Scale Manual) created by Moos (1974) for different types of prisons. He also created form R, which contains 90 items, and form C, which contains 87 items. These forms refer to the following subdimensions:

- quality and intensity of mutual relations,
- the way of encouraging personal development,
- the system maintenance.

The first subdimension reflects the degree of involvement of the members of the institution in what is happening among them, mutual support and assistance, and the degree of spontaneous and open expression of feelings. The second subdimension assesses the degree of autonomy in preparing people to solve practical life problems in the post-penal period and the effort for the prisoner to get to know himself better. The third subdimension deals with the amount of order and organization, the clarity of the day-to-day running of the program and the level of supervision over prisoners.

⁴ Intense and constant deprivations can cause post-traumatic stress (Cavadino, Dignan&Mair 2013:174)



Based on the method of collecting data and facts, a non-experimental survey method was applied, and the survey technique proved to be the most appropriate, and the instrument contained 39 items in the Likert format⁵. 9 items refer to the repression subscale, 10 to deprivations, 9 to the prison code, and 11 to disorganization. The decisive moment for shortening the instrument to 39 statements was the low educational level of the prison population and reduced ability to concentrate on unusual activity, and fluctuation of attention.

With regard to the goal of the research, the survey technique proved to be the most appropriate. The survey helped to standardize and measure the social climate, and to test the statistical hypotheses regarding the subject of the research.

We used the aforementioned instrument in April 1993, covering 68 prisoners (93.9%) of the total number serving their sentences that year. In April 1994, 74 prisoners were examined, 83.3% of the prisoners were included in the sample. In December 1997, we tested 70 respondents (21.8%). We conducted the research in November 2016 on a sample of 152 prisoners (20.9%). Considering the presented relationships of the sample and the set, it is evident that the samples had all the metric characteristics that are valid for the set as well, and it allows us to generalize the results of the research. All samples include crimes of murder, aggravated theft, robbery and rape. They were all sentenced to over 3 years in prison.

FINDINGS

Starting from the hypothesis that each treated observation period of the prison has its own specific social climate, which is reflected in the different intensity of the presence of the mentioned subdimensions of the climate, we approached the quantitative analysis of the results in order to determine the differences between the periods. We also determined the state of the social climate of the prison in certain periods. As the most economical procedure, we used the Pearson correlation coefficient r .

Table 1. *Overview of the Correlation Coefficient Across the Treated Periods*

Periods Correlations	1993	1994	1997	2016
r DDo	0.44	0.43	0.4	0.37
r DR	0.03	-0.29	0.59	0.38
r DK	0.13	-0.38	0.38	0.2
r DoR	0.12	0.61	0.52	0.14
r DoK	0.06	0.46	0.42	0.36
r RK	0.34	0.7	0.64	0.2

The correlation between the variables in 1993, as far as we can see, ranges from 0.03 to +0.44. The presence of a negligible correlation between repression and deprivation, as well as disorganization and the code, is explained by the fact that these subdimensions have become weak, and that they were completely neglected due to the general state of society. The formal system itself was in considerable existential problems, due to which official duties were neglected. However, the correlation of disorganization and deprivation dominated, and that focus was explained by the fact that main-

⁵ The prison social climate test, as well as the accompanying documentation, can be obtained from the author for inspection.



taining order in the prison was difficult (Šabani, 1999). All this introduced distrust in officials and significantly affected deprivations in addition to accompanying deprivations related to scarcity, which latently indicated a conflict between formal and informal communities. Disorganization significantly related to deprivation. We explain this fact by the prisoners' observation about the non-functioning of the prison and the inconsistency of treatment. Prisoners perceived their deprivation to be equal to that of formal staff (lack of food, cigarettes, etc.). This deprivation was visible and often expressed in communication, which is why the disorganization gains importance. This resulted in the view that the inertness of the formal community caused the prisoners' deprivation.

The correlation between repression and the prison code maintained statistical significance, which pointed to the conclusion that the conflict between the formal and informal community took place in the direction of the greater presence of repression or its symbols uniting the prison community. As repression was more present, the prison code strengthened. We attribute this to the fact that the classic forms of penal treatment lost their influence in that period (occupational therapy, individual and group work, rewards, etc.). In the given circumstances, and in such a reduced space, the formal system remained recognizable precisely through repression or symbols of repression. The statistically significant correlation between the subdimensions of repression and the prison code ($r = 0.34$) essentially represented a conflict between the formal community, which was the bearer of repression, and of the informal community, which was the bearer of the prison code. The same relationship repeated in the correlation of disorganization (carried by the formal system) and deprivation (carried by the prison community) represented its subjective experience. All other correlations of the subdimensions were not statistically significant, i.e. the formal system did not react to the prison code as an opposite, but they adapted to each other. As we can see, in 1993 there were current processes of confrontation, but also of adaptation, for the reason that the exclusive attitude and reaction of one of the both systems could have ultimately been dangerous and undesirable for both systems.

The interrelationship of subdimensions in 1994 ranges from $r = -0.38$ to $r = 0.70$. All correlations are statistically significant and moderate coverage of the social climate of the prison community is visible. The most obvious connection was between the subdimensions of repression and the prison code, and repression and disorganization. It was clear that repression determined the overall social climate during that period. Repression did not completely cover the space of the social climate of the prison, but it largely determined it independently. Repression was to the greatest extent related to the prison code ($r = 0.70$), which was not surprising due to the fact that those two variables were the most outstanding foci of events (traits) and states (states) in the two basic components of the prison social climate, formal and informal community.

During 1994, the hypothesis was confirmed - as repression increased, the homogeneity of the prison community increased as well. The strong association around the prison code was evident. In that period, this correlation was emphasized, i.e. the basic event was the constant struggle for the functioning of the prison as an institution. At the same time, the growth of repression resulted in the growth of disorganization in 1994, which translated into empirical language meant that the phenomenology of repression was perceived by the prisoners as the absence of order, uniformity of actions and fulfilment of the obligations of the formal system. The bearers of this correlative connection were the formal system, which in 1994 changed the direction of its action in the direction of resistance to prisoners, and not as in 1993 in the direction of adaptation to prisoners. That turn from adaptation to resistance was the reason for this significant connection, which the prisoners evaluated as disorganization. The correlative connection observed between disorganization and the prison code meant that the growth of disorganization supported the stability of the prison code. Within the disorganized state of the prison, that meant that space was opened for the prison code. Disorganization was also significantly related to



deprivations, and we associated it with the fact that the formal system was in a position to make important decisions about prisoners, which was especially related to making decisions about parole or external benefits. The prisoners considered the formal system responsible for the increase of deprivation. In that period, deprivations were negatively associated with repression and the prison code. Deprivation increased the dependency of prisoners, which had the negative impact on the prison code, as well as on repression. The experience of deprivation obviously could not be reduced within the prison code.

During 1997 (peacetime period), the social climate of the prison community was decisively determined by the connection between repression and the prison code, which could also be explained by the conflict between the formal and informal community. The normalization of the function of the prison caused a conflict between the formal and informal community⁶, and it seemed that that conflict was constant and permanent, and that belongs to the attributes of this type of prison. Even in 1997, the focus of events was on the relationship between repression and the prison code ($r = 0.64$), meaning that there was a direct confrontation between the formal and the prisoner (informal) community. The conflict between the formal and the prison community was visible in correlation of repression and deprivation ($r = 0.59$). As an additional indicator of the contrast between the formal community and the prison community, there was a correlation of disorganization and repression (the carrier of the formal system). The subdimensions of deprivation and the prison code, which referred to the prison community, were significantly more correlated with each other, which could have been explained by the fact of the character of the peacetime era, i.e. that prisoners could alleviate deprivation much more easily in this period than before, and because of that they exercised less alternative mitigation in the prison code. The relationship between the formal and the prison parts, such as the correlation of disorganization and the prison code, as well as deprivation and disorganization, had moderate saturation and did not stand out as foci of the social climate of the prison community.

In 2016 the interconnection of the subscales was not uniform, but it was evident that the strongest links were repression and deprivation, followed by the prison code and disorganization, and deprivation and disorganization. Other subdimension relationships did not show stronger relationships. Those findings were not surprising because repression and deprivation remained structurally the most important elements of the overall social climate. Those elements had the greatest influence and to a certain extent independently determined the relationships with other variables. The subdimensions of the prisoner code were significantly related to disorganization, which confirmed the view that the prisoner community was deeply divided into two groups, because one part of the sample within the group often committed disciplinary violations and they believed that they had been unjustly disciplined (Šabani, 2024). The second group was pro-socially oriented and had an interest in following the rules in order to realize their rights, such as the use of external benefits and the possibility of reducing the length of the sentence (Šabani, 2023). Deprivations, as an essential part of the essence of punishment, were also significantly linked to disorganization because prisoners believed that the formal system did not sufficiently enable the reduction of deprivation. As we can see, all the most significant connections of the subdimensions defined the social climate through two basic components of the prison, formal (official prison staff) and informal (prisoners). We explain the low correlations between the variables related to prisoners, deprivations and the prison code by the inhomogeneity of the prison community and opposite value orientations⁷. During 1997, the social climate of the prison community was decisively determined by the connection between repression and the prison code, which could be also explained by the decisive conflict between the formal and informal community. It seemed that that conflict was constant and permanent and belonged to the attributes of this type of

6 Some aspects of this conflict can be called SCP (situational crime prevention) because the dynamics of this conflict are often unpredictable (Bowers&Johnson 2016:111).

7 It has been noted that the same treatment can have different consequences for the prisoner (Loughran & Mulvey 2011:165).



prison, as we have mentioned before. The focal point in 1997 were the events related to repression and the prison code ($r = 0.64$), i.e. there was a direct confrontation between the formal and informal communities. The conflict between the formal and the informal community was visible in the correlation of repression and deprivation ($r = 0.59$). As an additional indicator of the contrast between the formal and informal community, there was a correlation of disorganization and repression. The subdimensions of deprivation and the prison code, which referred to the prison community, were significantly more correlated with each other, which could have been explained by the fact of the character of the peacetime era. The prisoners could alleviate deprivations much more easily in that period than before, and therefore, the alternative mitigation in the prison code was less exercised.

The relationship between the formal and prison parts, such as the correlation of disorganization and the prison code and deprivation and disorganization, has moderate saturation and does not stand out as foci of the state of the social climate of the prison community.

In order to determine to what extent the results on certain subtests were related to the entire test result, we calculated multiple correlations R^8 by placing each subtest specifically in the position of the dependent variable.

Table 2. *Multiple Correlations of the Subdimensions of the Social Climate of the Prison Community Through the Treated Periods*

Period R	1993	1994	1997	2016
D. DoRK	0.46	0.54	0.60	0.78
Do. DRK	0.43	0.67	0.54	0.65
R. DDokE	0.45	0.73	0.69	0.66
K. DDokR	0.35	0.87	0.65	0.60

We treated a single subdimension as dependent in relation to other subdimensions as independent, and obtained the following results.

From the multiple correlation coefficients in 1993, it was evident that all dimensions of the social climate equally covered space, except for the prison code. We can say that the situation in the prison was determined by an equal amount of repression, disorganization and deprivation, which meant that the situation in the prison was not differentiated, and it was not recognizable to express the centre of events or subdimensions that would be decisive in relation to the others, but they were balanced.

In the course of 1994, the prisoner's code gained importance, covering not only most of the universe of variables of the social climate of prisoners, but also repression. They almost equally marked the climate in that period. The prison code imposed itself as a general factor in the social climate of that period. During that period, the prison code imposed itself as a general factor in the social climate of the prison community followed by repression.

During 1997, repression and the prison code also proved to be the most significant factors of the social climate, which suggested a permanent conflict between formal and informal communities and was actually an extension of the quality of the social climate from 1994.

8 For multiple correlation, the symbol $R_{1.234}$ is used, where 1 indicates the dependent variable, and the other numbers indicate the independent variables under whose influence we examine the dependent variable.



In 2016 we determined that the first-order factor was the perception composed of deprivation. That was best explained by the following items of the prison social climate test:

- Officials are the personalities who should be especially respected,
- I can hardly bear the denial of information about what interests me,
- I have a hard time not being able to be alone with my wife or girlfriend whenever I feel the need.

Repression was imposed as the second factor, which was best indicated by the results on the following items:

- The guard service uses physical punishment too often,
- Applications for disciplinary violations are filed even for the insignificant trifles,
- In this prison, it is not possible to talk to officials in a human way,
- Disciplinary penalties imposed on the disciplinary report are too severe,
- I can hardly stand what others decide on behalf of me when I will eat, sleep, walk, work and the like,
- Officials control prisoners too much,
- Officials enjoy humiliating prisoners.

Disorganization and the prison code also significantly defined the social climate of the prison, but to a lesser extent.

The greatest variability during the entire period was shown by the prison code and repression tended towards a stable and significant presence within the social climate, which was not surprising considering the type of prison. In general, we can say that the subdimension of repression had the greatest significance, so that it could be also spoken of as a general factor of the social climate of the prison community. At the same time, it appeared as the most powerful instrument of formal staff in treatment strategies towards the prison community. Deprivation constantly increased their participation in the overall definition of the prison social climate as the areas of prisoners' human rights expanded, as well as the growing need for consumerism.

ORIGINALITY/VALUE

The originality of the work is reflected in the fact that the social climate of a closed prison was measured in the samples of the mentioned periods, and that the findings could have been used for comparative research conducted in other prisons. The research of this type could be used for creating more humane functioning of prisons, especially in terms of managing security risks in prisons, creating re-educational treatments and reducing recidivism.

We tried to specify the structural and functional differences of the prison community in the domain of social climate as a dynamic aspect of those changes. The dynamic of changes was monitored and operationalized through the varying intensity of the presence of deprivation, disorganization, repression and the prison code in the period from 1993 to 2016. The tested periods adequately indicate different qualitative conditions or environments not only in prison, but also in society.

The results show that the most important elements of the social climate were deprivation and repression, and almost throughout the entire observed period they had a dominant role in creating the social climate that made up the formal and informal system. It appeared that the relatively stable functional conditions of the environment contributed to this mutual support of the subdimensions of the social



climate of the prison community. They discriminated well between research periods from the point of view of the prison community. The prison code showed the greatest variability and it most often depended on special prisoner groups that achieved their actualization in relation to prisoners who were prone to multiple disciplinary violations and had given up on the prison treatment goals in relation to them. Disorganization, as part of the prison reality, adapted to the main events in the prison and its presence mainly depended on repression and deprivation.

In this regard, the point of view in the domain of the existence of the prison community was confirmed in the sense of Sykes and Messinger's statement that: "It is necessary to pay more attention to the social environment in which the prison population has to live with the problems that this environment creates. We want to know why the prison community is there, and also how the prisoners maintain it", (Sykes&Messinger, 1960:12).

The hypothesis of the existence of the social climate as a specific entity through which it is possible to analyze the states and traits of a group, such as a prisoner group, was also confirmed. We hope that we have succeeded in proving that these are real and empirical, and not hypothetical constructs of the prison community and its social climate.

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