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SECURITY AND PUBLIC SAFETY: IMPACT OF GENDER ON PRISONERS' JUSTICE PERCEPTION

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Abstract. Crime is an essential social problem that seriously influences the security of the society and every individual. Social security, in turn, rather closely correlates with state security. Recidivism takes an important place in the general structure of crime and is closely related with the organized crime and state security. Trying to solve the problems of crime by isolating the criminals, at the same time overlooking the gaps in legal and moral cognition, the consequences of crime are temporary prevented but the causes of this problem is often not unmade thus reinforcing the risk of recidivism. The increase of the crime rate among females becomes more topical that taking into account the role of women in the process of reproduction directly influences mental health and security of the society. That, in turn, strengthens the necessity to study the causes of female crime, as well as those determinants that deter the representatives of certain gender from the criminal action. In this regard the study of psychological preconditions in the context of gender differences can arouse interest, highlighting such component of moral and legal cognition as justice.

Keywords: security, safety, prisoners, gender differences, justice, just world, criminal experience

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JEL Classifications: K1, K14, K40

1. Introduction

Nowadays more and more attention is paid to the problems of the security of the society and individuals, since security and public safety is seen as precondition of sustainable development (Stańczyk 2011; Lankauskienė, Tvaronavičienė 2012; Tvaronavičienė, Grybaitė 2012; Šileika, Bekerytė 2013; Račkauskas, Liesionis 2013; Mačiulis, Tvaronavičienė 2013; Vasiliūnaitė 2014; Zahars, Stivrenieks 2014; Matyasik 2014; Tunčikienė, Drejeris 2015; Giriūnas, Mackevičius 2014; Giriūnienė 2013). Not only are the social and psychological consequences of crime being studied, but also its determinants. In this research special attention is paid to the connection between justice perception by the persons who have committed crimes and the most important determinants of crime. There is no doubt that crime has a *globally infecting* character that fosters the economic losses of the state, degradation of moral norms of the society and the lack of confidence about the legal and social security. This, in turn, creates a threat for the citizens' psychological security increasing the risk of various emotional experiences. The consequences of these and several other losses caused by the crime problem are often the increase of the level of recidivism and the general crime rate. Despite the fact that during the last years the statistical data of Latvia (<http://www.csb.gov.lv/statistikas-temas/sabiedriska-kartiba-un-tiesu-sistema-galvenie-raditaji-30282.html>) present evidence for the decrease of the number of criminals (in 2009 – 18649; 2011 - 14309), the total

dynamics of the number of crimes does not show Latvia as a legal and secure state. Moreover, it happens on the background of a rapid population decline. Reasonable concern is raised by the fact that in 2009 and 2010 the proportion of females who have committed crimes has rapidly increased, in 2010 it made almost 15% of the total number of criminals. Taking into account the link between the mother and her child, in a long run it can have a serious impact on juvenile delinquency in the state.

Regardless of the diversity of the researches on the gender differences of crime (Farrington 1992; Bergman, Andershed 2009; Steffensmeier, Allan 2000, etc.), there is no single point of view on this matter in the world practice. Several authors (e.g., Farrington 1992; Kokko, Pulkkinen 2000; Robins, Price 1991, etc.) state that antisocial behaviour is the result of various social problems and disadvantageous conditions, for example, violence, low level of education, mental health disorders, unemployment, unstable partner relationships, conflicts with partners and children, in addition, it concerns males and females in the same way (Bergman, Andershed 2009). Similar opinion is expressed by Steffensmeier and Allan (1996) emphasizing that the causes of crime from the point of view of the traditional theories of anomie, social control and differential associations can be applied equally for female and male crime. In other words, attachment, the level of training, parents control, dangerous perception and factors alike have a similar impact on both genders. In turn, other researchers (Kratzer, Hodgins 1999; Moffitt *et al.* 2001) believe that the mechanisms of antisocial behaviour development differ between males and females; males and females differ in the risk factors that underlay the antisocial behaviour. Moffitt (1993) stated that the origins of antisocial behaviour are similar to both genders; however the continuation of antisocial behaviour that turns into criminal career is more characteristic for males than females (Moffitt *et al.* 2001), thus individual risk factors are more spread and stronger for the gender of males than females (Moffitt *et al.* 2001). Moreover the studies reveal that females do not show attachment to criminal behaviour (Bottcher 2001). The researches on the criminal career (Denno 1994; Kruttschnitt 1994) also provide evidence for important gender differences: the participation of females in violent crimes is lower than males. In comparison to females, males begin to commit violent crimes more early and reach the top of their criminal career, females more rarely have tendency for committing recurrent violent crimes and try to avoid it. Some researchers (Messerschmidt 1993; Ellis, Simpson 1995) emphasize that a crime is a way of “realization of gender” or “realization of masculinity”. Thus crimes, especially violent crimes, are the way for males to show their masculinity, besides violence can gain social acknowledgement among males, but is not related with femininity. Other authors (Miller 1998), in turn, think that, for example, robberies committed by males and females have equal social and cultural causes, but the committance of the crime is affected by the gender. Similar opinion is expressed by Broidy and Agnew (1997) stating that processes that lead to the committance of crimes are similar to both genders, but their essence is substantially different. Both males and females commit a crime when their legal ways to deal with tension caused by their negative emotions are spent; however females react on tension in aggressive way more rarely. Taking into account these statements a logical question can be raised: what are the determinants that caused the increase of the proportion of crimes committed by females up to 15% in the state and what consequences it may cause.

Several theories (Agnew 1991; Gottfredson, Hirschi 1990; Cornish, Clarke 1987; Akers 1998, etc.) try to explain the causes and regularities of crime, but seldom these regularities are viewed in the context of gender differences, thus it is impossible to reflect entirely the way how the differences in male and female lives create specific gender differences in the display of criminal behaviour. Along the crime interpretation approaches the attention is paid also to the impact of imprisonment and punishment on the criminal. Controversial opinions among the researchers exist in relation to the role of punishment in the process of the correction of the prisoner, on the one hand, it is recognized that imprisonment is an important factor in the process of the correction of the prisoner, on the other hand, there is a wide discussion about the destructive impact of imprisonment upon the personality of the prisoner.

There is an opinion (Zahars 2005; Fuko 2001; Sampson, Laub 1993; Gendreau *et al.* 1996, etc.) that prisons do not decrease the crime but, vice versa, provoke the risk of recidivism and frequently contribute to the choice of antisocial behaviour after the release as the convicts are predominantly the former prisoners. Fuko (2001) stresses that the younger is the person who gets imprisoned, the longer he stays there due to the fact that a

prison contributes to the alienation of the individual from the society, inability to adopt the norms of the society, strengthening tendency of antisocial behaviour, creating wider range of rejection.

Despite the fact that the most of the researches on the impact of imprisonment are done in the group of male prisoners, some authors (Casey-Acevedo, Bakken 2001; Thompson, Loper 2005; Gover *et al.* 2008, etc.) draw attention to the peculiarities of the behaviour during the imprisonment in the context of gender differences and their role in the arrangement and implementation of the resocialization and correction programmes. Several researches (Bloom *et al.* 2004; Carmichael *et al.* 2005; Gover *et al.* 2008) have found differences between peculiarities of male and female prisoners, thus within the framework of correction and resocialization measures it is necessary to take into account the gender differences of the prisoners adapting to peculiar female needs. Some researches (Thompson, Loper 2005; Casey-Acevedo, Bakken 2001) showed that the tendencies of prisoners' behaviour are influenced by the length of imprisonment, for example, females imprisoned for a long-term are more violent, have stronger sense of conflict and commit more offences in the prison in comparison with short-term imprisoned females. The history of imprisonments has also an important role that significantly influences the criminal behaviour of both, males and females, furthermore males have characteristic positive connection between the history of imprisonments and offences during imprisonment, for females, in turn, the experience of previous imprisonments decreases the number of offences (Gover *et al.* 2008).

All these researches verify the necessity to study prisoners as a social risk group in the context of gender differences. One of the aspects that determine the effectiveness of interaction processes between an individual and the society and observance of social norms is justice as a component of legal and moral cognition. As an example of a reaction of an individual to injustice can be mentioned a case from jurisprudence, when previously convicted person was hired for construction works and did not receive the promised payment after the finishing of the works. When he understood that he will not get paid for the work done, the man took down the masonry wall he had built, but the indecent owner lodged a claim against him in the police to bring him to trial for property damage. It could be forecasted that individual's representations on justice influence also his attitude to legal norms, moral principles and terms of interpersonal relationships by strengthening the choice of socially acceptable behaviour in everyday life, in addition some researches revealed that offender's belief in a personal just world can be an important precondition for the development of inner motivation to support the socially acceptable norms of behaviour in future (Dalbert, Filke 2007). Thereby two questions were raised for the present research: a) what are the gender differences in the belief in a just world, the assessment of court, prison and personal action?; b) what are the socio-demographic and criminal career variables which influence the belief in a just world of male and female prisoners?

2. Method

2.1. Respondents

373 prisoners in Latvia within the age from 18 to 60 years ($M=32,8$; $SD=10,2$) took part in the research, out of them 166 female prisoners (44%) and 207 male prisoners (55%). According to the level of education of the prisoners it was established that 175 (47%) respondents have unfinished or finished basic education, 174 (47%) respondents have secondary education or vocational education, in turn only 24 (6%) respondents have higher education. Analysis of the marital status of the respondents revealed that 155 respondents have a spouse and 218 do not have a partner. 129 respondents have the first criminal record, which makes up 35% of the total number; in turn 84 respondents (23%) have more than 4 criminal records. According to the type of crime it was found that 86 (23%) respondents are sentenced for violent crimes – homicide, crimes against health, morality, 156 (42%) respondents – for burglary and robbery, and the rest 131 (35%) for crimes connected with inobservance of general order, hooliganism, smuggling, violation of road safety, corruption, distribution of narcotics. According to the criminal experience the first criminal record before the age of 18 was established for 120 respondents (32%), 151 (40%) respondents from 18 to 25 years, from 26 to 30 years – 40 (11%) respondents, and after 31 year – 62 (17%) prisoners. The total time spent in prison less than 1 year was established for 62 respondents, from one to three years – 106 respondents (28%), from 3 to 8 years – 122 (33%) respondents and more than 8 years – 83 (22%) respondents.

2.2. Procedure

Respondents were offered to fill in the questionnaire that in the first part included the characteristics of socio-demographic and criminal experience, subjective assessment of the belief in justice and a just world (7 point scale). In the second part of the questionnaire the respondents were asked to provide answers for the questions that were related with the General Belief in a Just World (GBJW), Personal Belief in a Just World (PBJW), as well as the assessment of court proceedings (ACP), assessment of prison justice (APJ) and assessment of personal action (APA), all questions were evaluated by the 6 points scale (Likert scale).

2.3. Instruments

In order to study the belief in a just world, the adapted Dalbert scale “Personal belief in a just world” (PBJW) was used (Dalbert 1999) that consists of 7 questions and adapted Dalbert, Montada and Schmitt scale “General belief in a just world” (GBJW) (Dalbert, Montada, Schmitt 1987) that consists of 6 questions. To find out the assessment of sentence justice, the modified Otto and Dalbert (2005) scale was used. The perception of sentence justice was studied with 3 questions (“Sentence was just”, “I believe that the court was just towards me hearing my case”, “I believe that the court tried to achieve justice for all parties hearing my case”), in turn in order to assess the justice of personal action or the level of regret of personal action a separate scale was developed that includes 5 statements (e.g., “I feel guilty for the committed crime”, “I do not regret my action (committed crime) as the victim provoked me”). All questions were evaluated according to the 6 point scale (Likert scale) from 1 (totally disagree) to 6 (totally agree). Statistical hierarchical cluster analysis, chi-squared (χ^2) criterion, Student’s t-criterion, analysis of variance for a single factor (ANOVA) with a following Multiple Comparisons were used to test the proposed questions. The level of statistical significance of all the statistical criteria used for the research was $p=0,05$.

3. Results

Answers to the first research question: what are the gender differences in the belief in a just world, the assessment of court, prison and personal action, initially analysing separately the average indicators of the Belief in a just world (BJW) of males and females, revealed that in female sample General belief in a just world (GBJW) and Personal belief in a just world (PBJW) have higher level than male respondents (see Figure 1), higher results for females were found also in three justice parameters – Assessment of court proceedings (ACP), Assessment of prison justice (APJ) and Assessment of personal action (APA), moreover increased results of APJ indicate more negative female attitude to the manifestations of respect and justice in prison environment than in the group of males (Figure 1).

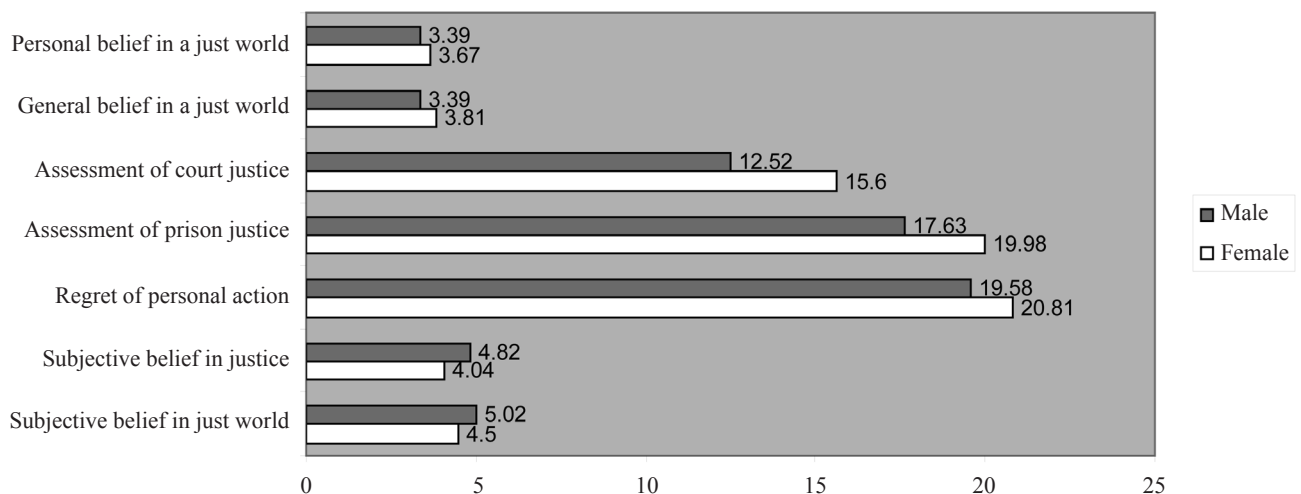


Fig.1. The differences of average indicators of the parameters of the belief in a just world, justice perception and subjective belief in justice and a just world in groups of male and female prisoners

Source: authors' calculations

Males, in turn, reflect higher results in the assessment of subjective belief in justice and a just world that indicates a tendency for males to believe in the existence of a just world and justice as such. As a result of a cluster analysis two groups were formed: 1st group with decreased indicators of the belief in justice and a just world, females in this group make 74,1% out of the total number of females and males 58,5%; 2nd group – with high indicators of the belief in justice and a just world that includes 25,9% of females and 41,5% males. Statistically significant differences were found in the first group according to the belief in justice, females manifest their subjective disbelief in justice more than males in this sample ($p=.029$). Analysing the obtained results it can be concluded that females subjectively reject the belief in justice and a just world, but the results of BJW scale show higher level of belief in a just world in comparison to male respondents, moreover increased results of the regret of personal action and the assessment of court proceedings justice could indicate the potential adaptation opportunities for females and the choice of socially accepted behaviour in future. In turn the increase of the proportion of convicted females may potentially indicate the changes in justice perception that could objectively suggest the negative dynamics of understanding of justice in the whole society.

In order to obtain more complete view on the gender differences in BJW by the use of the method of cluster analysis 4 homogeneous groups were formed according to the belief in a just world: 1st group (high level of GBJW and PBJW) includes 30,7% of females out of the total number of females and 15,5% out of the total number of male prisoners that makes 22,3% out of the total number of respondents, 2nd group (medium level of GBJW, PBJW) that is the largest according to the total number of respondents (41%) includes 42,8% imprisoned females and 39,6% males, 3rd group (high GBJW, low PBJW) consists of 9,6% of females and 15,9% of males (total number of respondents 13,1%) and 4th group (low GBJW, PBJW) – 16,9% of females and 29% of males (23,6% out of the total number of respondents). According to the χ^2 criterion there are statistically significant differences in the Belief in a just world between the samples of males and females ($\chi^2=18.390$, $p<0.001$). The analysis of the results showed that statistically significant differences are in the first cluster GBJW ($p=.001$) and second cluster ($p=.015$), in these groups the indicators of female GBJW are higher than indicators of male GBJW level (see Figure 2).

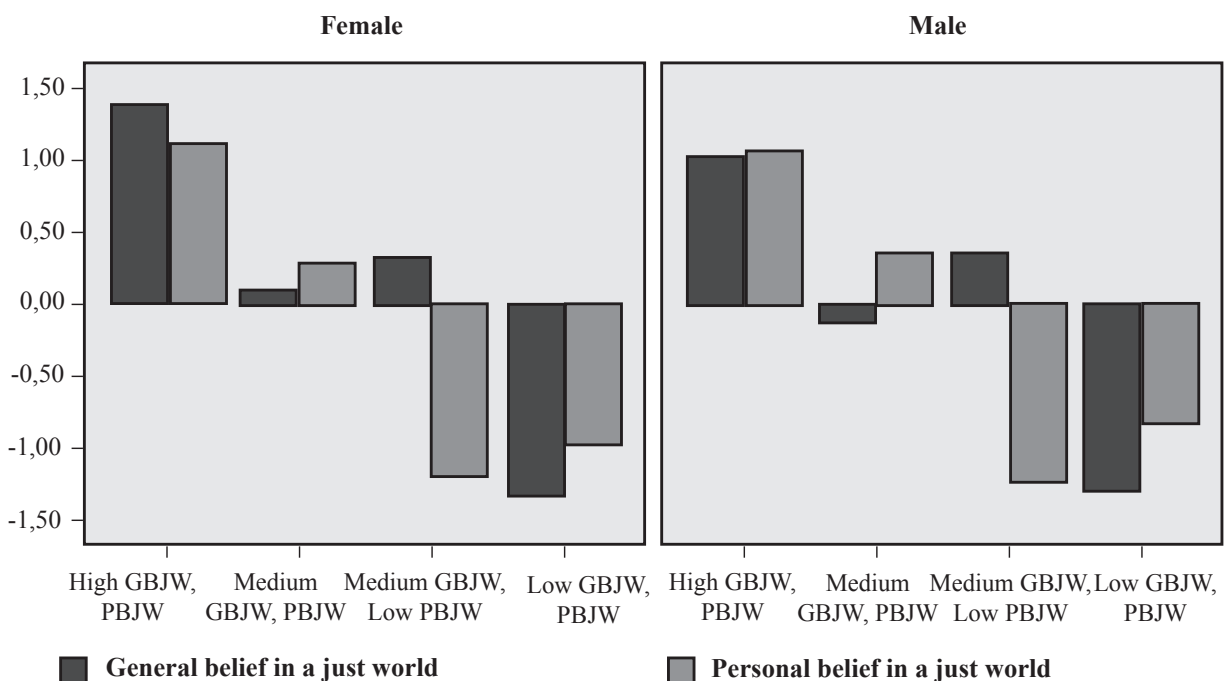


Fig.2. The distribution of GBJW and PBJW values among clusters in groups of females and males

Source: authors

The analysis of the distribution of males and females into clusters according to the Assessment of court proceedings and Regret of personal action revealed that there are statistically significant differences between the samples of males and females ($\chi^2=32.882$, $p<0.001$).

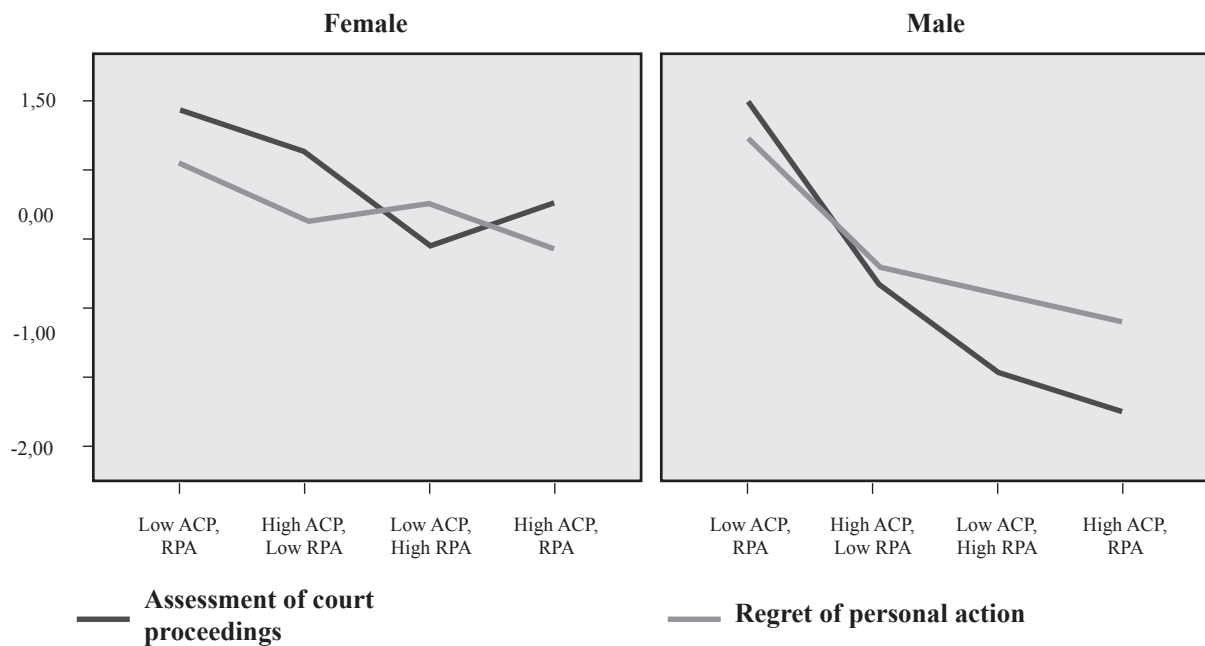


Fig.3. The distribution of ACP and RPA values among clusters in groups of female and male prisoners

Source: authors

In the first group with low indicators of ACP and RPA there are 10,3% females out of the total number of females and 25,7% males out of the total number of males, thus males dominate in this cluster that makes 75,7% out of the number of respondents in the 1st cluster. The largest number of females is in the 2nd cluster with high indicators of ACP and low indicators of RPA (34,5% out of the total number of females that makes 64,8% out of the number of respondents in the 2nd cluster), in turn in the 3rd cluster (low ACP, high RPA) dominate males that make 36,4% out of the total number of male prisoners.

The analysis of gender differences in ACP and RPA levels in clusters (see Figure 3) revealed that there are statistically significant differences in the first group according to ACP ($p=.010$) and RPA ($p=.046$). In the group of females the indicators of ACP and RPA are generally higher than in the group of males.

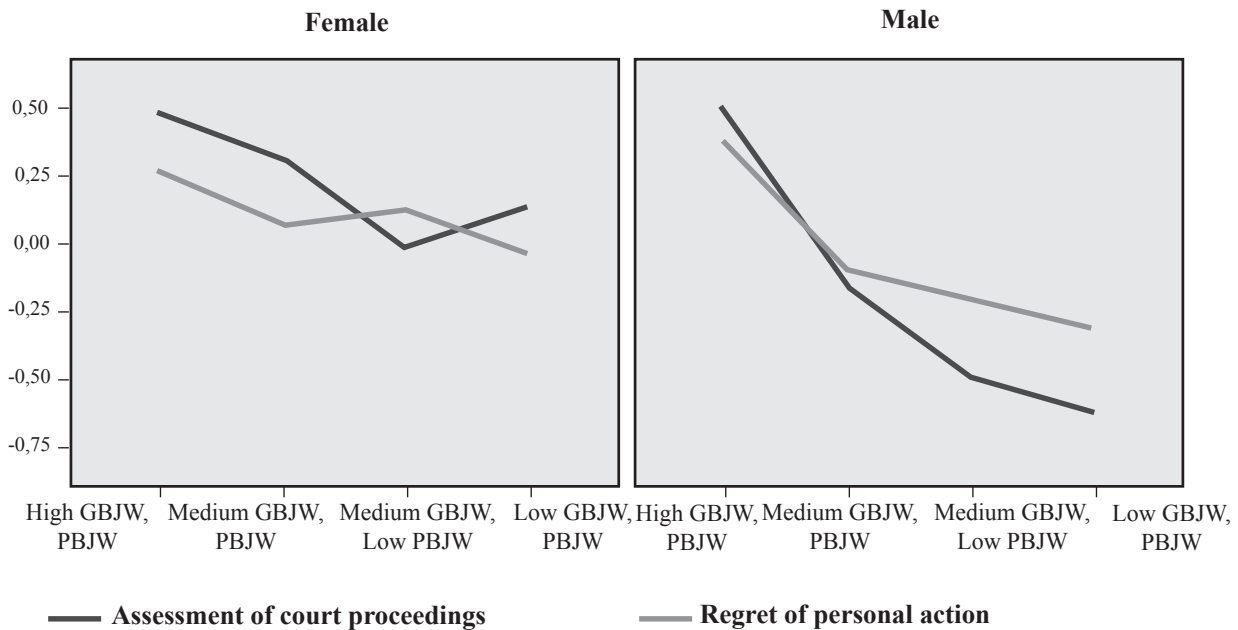


Fig.4. Correlation between BJW clusters and ACP, RPA in groups of male and female prisoners

Source: authors

Analysis of the obtained data revealed that there is a statistically significant correlation ($p=.027$) in the group of males between the Belief in a just world and ACP, RPA (see Figure 4), in turn in the group of females this correlation was not found, thus a conclusion could be drawn that the stronger is prisoners' belief in a just world, the higher is the Assessment of court proceedings and the level of regret of personal action. In order to answer the second question of the research: what are the socio-demographic and criminal career variables that influence the belief in a just world of male and female prisoners, the research data were analysed separately in the groups of male and female prisoners according to various parameters, paying special attention to the influence of criminal career and gender on the Belief in a just world.

The analysis of the obtained data in the sample of males revealed that there are statistically significant differences in the General belief in a just world between the respondents with basic education and secondary education ($F_{2,157}=5,024$, $p=0.005$), as well as between respondents with basic education and higher education ($F_{2,157}=5,024$, $p=0.047$), thus it can be concluded that the lower is the level of education, the stronger is GBJW. There were no statistically significant differences found according to the level of Personal belief in a just world ($F_{2,157}=0,295$, $p=0.745$). The results of the research also showed that there is a statistically significant influence of gender on GBJW ($F=24.147$, $p<0.001$), in turn the level of education does not influence GBJW ($p=0,467$). The significant effect of the mutual impact of both gender and the level of education on GBJW was not found ($p=0,089$). While females in general have higher indicators of GBJW, in addition males with higher education have lower level of GBJW than females in this education group, thus it can be concluded that the level of education influences GBJW in the groups of males and females in different ways. It may be indicative of objective reasons of such attitude whose origins are linked to certain deficiencies in the functioning of the society which should be identified and prevented.

It was found that the groups of offenders according to the type of crime have similar level of PBJW ($F_{2,144}=0,364$, $p=0.695$) and GBJW ($F_{2,144}=1,192$, $p=0.307$) that brings to a conclusion that the belief in a just world does not influence the choice of the type of crime, as well as the type of crime does not influence the perception of justice in the sample of males. In the group of females a significant influence of the type of crime was not found, however the average indicators of PBJW show that the highest level of PBJW is in the group of light crimes, in turn the lowest indicators of PBJW is in the group of females with criminal records for violent crimes ($F=2,423$, $p=0.092$).

The analysis of the obtained results in the group of male respondents according to the first imprisonment revealed that there are statistically significant differences in GBJW scale between the group of respondents who had their first criminal record before the age of 18 and the second group (18-30 years) ($F_{2,157}=3,263$, $p=0.012$), in addition the lowest average indicators were found in the age group from 18 to 30 years that is indicative of a greater negative social experience that transforms into the corresponding perception of the world. In the group of females the influence of the age of imprisonment on GBJW and PBJW was not found. The influence of the number of criminal records on general ($F_{2,157}=0,205$ $p=0.815$) and personal ($F_{2,157}=1,936$ $p=0.148$) belief in a just world was also not found. The analysis of the groups of male respondents according to the total time spent in prison revealed that this indicator also does not have impact on the belief in a just world. Separate analysis of the indicators of the female sample did not reveal a significant impact of the total time spent in prison on GBJW ($p=0.079$), however the lowest level of GBJW was found in the group of female prisoners who have spent in prison less than one year, in turn the highest indicators of GBJW were in the group from 3 to 5 years. The analysis of the influence of the total time spent in prison on PBJW revealed that there is a statistically significant influence of gender on PBJW ($F=6.162$, $p=0.014$), but the total time spent in prison does not influence PBJW ($p=0.356$). The significant effect of the mutual impact of both gender and the total time spent in prison on PBJW was not observed ($p=0.081$). Females with the total time spent in prison more than 10 years have in general higher level of PBJW than males in this group, in turn the lowest indicators are for those females who have spent in prison from 8 to 10 years, males in this group have the highest level of PBJW. In general females have higher level of PBJW than males, thus it can be concluded that the time spent in prison influences PBJW in groups of males and females in a different way.

Conclusions

The initial aim of the research was to study the individual representations of males and females on justice on the basis of the just world theory analysing the belief in a just world in relation with the criminal experience, perception of court proceedings, prison and committed crime justice, as well as the subjective assessment of the personal belief in justice and a just world. The basis for the study of these issues was the previous researches conducted in Germany (Otto, Dalbert 2004; Dalbert, Filke 2007), as well as the researches conducted in Russia (Sosnina 2006; Golynchik 2004; Gulevich 2007) in the field of general representations of justice, in addition the research in the context of gender differences in Latvia was conducted for the first time.

The results of the research lead to the conclusion that the level of prisoners' belief in a just world depends on gender, females have in general higher indicators in both General and Personal belief in a just world, thus a potential prognosis can be made that the measures of resocialization and social integration would be more effectively implemented concerning females, although these differences can be explained by the fact that the total level of criminality of females are lower than in the sample of male respondents. In addition, subjective rejection of the belief in justice and a just world is more characteristic for females, in turn males have higher results in the assessment of their belief in justice and a just world. Also the assessment of court proceedings, justice of prison officials and personal action depends on respondents' gender, females in general have higher assessment of court proceedings and sentence justice and show higher level of regret for the committed crime, but females suffers more from the discomfort caused by the prison environment and relations with administration than males that is indicated in the assessment of prison justice, it could be explained with more deep emotional experiences of females and difficulties to adapt in the prison environment, besides the largest part of females are imprisoned for the first time, in turn in the group of males dominate those respondents with a long criminal career.

Regardless of the fact that the Belief in a just world in general does not depend on the type of committed crime, however the type of crime influences the assessment of female personal life experiences or PBJW, although these differences are not statistically significant ($p=0.09$), females who serve their sentence for violent crimes have lower level of personal belief in a just world than female respondents sentenced for other types of crime.

The fact that the belief of male prisoners in a just world is related with the assessment of court proceedings and the level of regret of personal action, respectively, the stronger is BJW, the more positive they perceive their

sentence and the more negative is the assessment of personal action, is indicative of the potential positive impact of the belief in a just world on the sense of guilt that could foster motivation to observe the laws after the release from prison, in turn this statistically significant correlation was not found in the group of females.

In general the results of the present research allow partially to approve the opinion of other authors (Otto, Dalbert 2004; Dalbert, Filke 2007) about the impact of the belief in a just world on the potential positive changes of prisoners' attitude towards the observance of laws in future. Thus, developing the preventive and resocialization programmes for prisoners as a potential social risk group it would be advisable to pay attention to the characteristic elements of legal and moral cognition taking into account prisoners' individual representations of justice. The obtained results create new perspectives for the further researches in the context of prisoners' gender differences. Considering the fact that there are differences in the perception of justice between females and males which are not significantly related with the socio-demographic and criminal career indicators it would be useful to determine those variables, determination and improvement of which could increase the level of the belief in a just world of males and females, as well as to start the study of other components of moral and legal cognition.

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