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Family as the Foundation of Change – a Case Study of Effective Social Rehabilitation

Rodzina jako fundament zmiany – studium przypadku skutecznej resocjalizacji

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Abstract

Aim. This article highlights the crucial role of the family in supporting the resocialization and social reintegration of individuals leaving prison. The family, as an emotional, moral, and practical support system, plays a vital role in reshaping attitudes and behaviours, helping individuals reintegrate into society and live according to social norms. The analysis focuses on the influence of family relationships, emotional engagement, and support on the motivation of incarcerated individuals to change and their efforts toward resocialization.

Methods and materials. The methodology is based on an individual case study and conceptual analysis. Definitions of key terms such as family, resocialization, and penitentiary isolation provide the theoretical foundation for the discussion. The article examines

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the family's role in social reintegration, particularly the importance of emotional and motivational support in the resocialization process.

Results and conclusion. The results of the case analysis suggest that strong family bonds, including emotional involvement and support from close relatives, are crucial drivers for personal change and successful reintegration into society. The study emphasises the need for an individualised approach to resocialization and highlights the positive influence of family dynamics on individuals undergoing the process. These findings offer a foundation for further research into the role of family in the post-prison reintegration of individuals and the significance of their involvement in the resocialization process.

Keywords: resocialization, family, family bonds, change, case study

Abstrakt

Cel. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest ukazanie roli rodziny jako kluczowego czynnika wspierającego skuteczny proces resocjalizacji oraz reintegracji społecznej osób opuszczających zakład karny. Rodzina, pełniąc funkcję systemu wsparcia emocjonalnego, moralnego i praktycznego, może odegrać fundamentalną rolę w procesie zmiany postaw i zachowań jednostki, pomagając jej w powrocie do życia zgodnego z normami społecznymi. Przedmiotem analizy jest wpływ emocjonalnego zaangażowania, obecności oraz wsparcia członków rodziny na proces resocjalizacji osoby odbywającej karę pozbawienia wolności. W szczególności chodzi o to, w jaki sposób relacje rodzinne mogą wpłynąć na motywację skazanych do podjęcia wysiłku zmiany.

Metody i materiały. W części metodologicznej artykuł opiera się na metodzie indywidualnego studium przypadku, wzbogaconej o analizę pojęciową. Przedstawiono definicje kluczowych terminów, takich jak rodzina, resocjalizacja oraz izolacja penitencjarna, które stanowią teoretyczne tło dla przeprowadzonej analizy. Rozważania teoretyczne koncentrują się na roli rodziny w procesie społecznej readaptacji jednostki, zwracając uwagę na znaczenie wsparcia emocjonalnego i motywacyjnego w kontekście resocjalizacji.

Wyniki i wnioski. Wyniki analizy przypadku wskazują, że więzi rodzinne, w tym emocjonalne zaangażowanie i wsparcie ze strony najbliższych, mogą być kluczowym motorem do zmiany postaw i powrotu do życia zgodnego z normami społecznymi. Studium podkreśla również potrzebę indywidualnego podejścia w pracy resocjalizacyjnej oraz wskazuje na pozytywną interakcję pomiędzy środowiskiem rodzinnym a osobą poddaną resocjalizacji. Wnioski płynące z analizy mogą stanowić punkt wyjścia do dalszych badań nad rolą rodziny w procesie readaptacji osób po odbyciu kary pozbawienia wolności.

Słowa kluczowe: rodzina, studium przypadku, zmiana, resocjalizacja, więzi rodzinne

Introduction

Penitentiary rehabilitation encompasses a set of planned psychocorrective interventions aimed at shaping socially acceptable attitudes among individuals serving prison sentences. Its legal foundations are outlined in Article 67 § 1 of the Executive Penal Code (Act of 6 June 1997), which states that the enforcement of a sentence should stimulate the offender's willingness to cooperate in the rehabilitative process, whilst fostering a sense of responsibility and a respect for the rule of law. The legislator assumes that the purpose of incarceration is not only to prevent recidivism, but also to initiate changes in the offender's personality that support moral renewal and social reintegration (Niewiadomska, 2016).

In the modern approach to penal policy, grounded in the principles of the *pro-social* rehabilitation model and aligned with international human rights standards, particular emphasis is placed on maintaining the incarcerated individual's ties with the outside world. These relationships, due to their integrative and supportive role in the reintegration process, are considered a vital element in preparing inmates for their return to society and the resumption of social roles after serving their sentence. It is essential that prisoners experience a sense of continued belonging to their social environment, as this continuity helps preserve their identity and sustain hope for life beyond the penitentiary institution (Szczygieł, 2002).

The significance of extra-institutional factors in the rehabilitation process is reflected in the concept of social rehabilitation, which is based on the broadly defined support of individuals through activities conducted outside prison walls. Practices rooted in social pedagogy and social work, implemented, among others, by non-governmental organisations and public institutions, are increasingly attentive to the needs of marginalised populations, including incarcerated individuals. These approaches emphasise the necessity of building reintegration bridges between the individual and society (Szczepaniak, 2011).

In this context, the family plays a particularly crucial role – as a primary, and often sole, source of emotional support, motivation for change, and a sense of belonging. Maintaining contact through letters, phone calls, visits, or temporary leaves not only provides psychological support to incarcerated individuals but also strengthens their identification with loved ones and fosters a positive self-image. After release, the family often becomes an invaluable source of support in the process of rebuilding a social life, especially in the face of challenges arising from the stigmatisation and marginalisation of former inmates (Pindel, 2009).

This article presents a case study of an individual whose successful rehabilitation was made possible through stable family relationships and the active involvement of loved ones in the process of personal transformation. The analysis of this personal

history offers a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that support rehabilitation and highlights the pivotal role the family environment can play. The central thesis of this study is that enduring family bonds can serve as a key factor in facilitating effective rehabilitation promoting moral transformation, the reconstruction of social identity, and reintegration into society after imprisonment.

Family, Rehabilitation, and Penal Isolation – the Complex Dynamics of Social Influence

The family serves as the foundation upon which an individual's social and psychological development is built. In the social sciences, it is defined as a fundamental social group whose structure and functioning are essential for shaping relationships among its members. In this sense, the family can be regarded as an institution responsible for child-rearing, the transmission of values, and providing support across various life circumstances. From a socialisation perspective, it represents the primary educational environment in which children, through observing adults, acquire skills of cooperation, initiative, and adaptation to social norms. While the contemporary image of the family continues to evolve, in many cases the traditional model persists, where the mother assumes the caregiving role and the father holds decision-making authority (Wałęcka-Matyja, 2014).

From a systemic perspective, the family community is viewed as a group of closely connected individuals bound by specific ties, such as formal, financial, or territorial relationships. The typical model is commonly understood as a union between a woman and a man with children-either biological or adopted, and sometimes includes extended family members. Each member of this structure influences the others, and the proper functioning of the whole requires effective communication and interaction among participants. The protection of this group, as well as its interaction with the broader social system, relies on defined internal and external boundaries that ensure both stability and flexibility in responding to change (Świętochowski, 2014).

The concept of family can, however, be understood in a broader sense, encompassing diverse family structures shaped by diverse cultures, social systems, and historical periods. Such a definition must also consider various forms of families, including group families, blended families, and those formed through changes in marital partnerships. Equally important is the configuration of roles and the network of interpersonal and intergenerational relationships, which are shaped both by experiences gained in other social groups and by externally imposed norms (Kawula, 2022).

As a fundamental social group, the family plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's personality by establishing norms and behavioural patterns that influence

the structural and functional stability of the group. A functioning family serves as a reference group for the individual, enabling identification and the preservation of traditions and values. Individuals within the family mutually influence one another, shaping both internal dispositions and external behaviours (Tyszka, 1976).

The nature of the family, its level of activity, and its social status have a decisive impact on the individual's home environment. The family functions as a social group whose members pursue common goals, forming a distinct entity that maintains its identity despite changes in its composition. Stable patterns of behaviour among its members emerge from mutual interactions and contribute to the overall stability of the family system (Czapów, 1968).

Understanding the role of the family as an educational environment is also essential in the context of rehabilitation. The theory of rehabilitative education and penitentiary interventions is based on the assumption that social maladjustment – an individual's deviation from accepted norms – is the result of internalising negative behavioural patterns. Early representatives of rehabilitative pedagogy linked the process of resocializing education to learning theory, viewing maladjustment as a consequence of deviant learning (Szczepaniak, 2011).

The concept of resocialization refers to the process of re-socialising an individual who, for various reasons, has failed to adapt to life within society. The aim of this process is to enable the person to function appropriately within the framework of socially accepted norms and roles. Unlike socialisation, which is understood as a spontaneous and positive process of social education occurring through mechanisms such as imitation, identification, or internalisation, resocialization is deliberate and methodical. At its core lies intentional educational intervention aimed at reversing the effects of inadequate socialisation by permanently modifying the behaviours and attitudes of socially mal-adjusted individuals (Konopczyński, 2015).

Resocialization pedagogy, as both a scientific and practical discipline, focuses on the education of individuals facing difficulties in the socialisation process. Its primary goal is to reintegrate the individual into social life by transforming harmful behaviours and fostering new ones aligned with accepted social norms. Central to this process are appropriately selected educational methods that take into account both the individual's needs and the realities of the environment to which they are expected to return (Pytko, 2005).

In the context of penal isolation, the resocialization process is based on planned, individualised interventions aimed at reducing the risk of recidivism. These programs typically include correctional assessments, formal and vocational education, specialised therapy, social skills training, social work, and preparation for life after release. Collaboration with the family plays a particularly important role, as it can serve as a key source of support throughout the process of transformation (Machel, 2006).

Prison life is governed by strict regulations that structure daily routines, movement rules, and limit contact with the outside world. While this organisation helps maintain institutional order, it also restricts inmates' autonomy and reinforces their dependence on the institution (Poklek, 2010). Inmates are subject to uniform rules regarding behaviour, appearance, and use of free time, which significantly suppress individuality. In overcrowded correctional facilities, opportunities for personal agency are scarce, and decisions about daily activities, such as outdoor walks or visitations, are contingent on the discretion of prison staff. This environment fosters a sense of helplessness and a lack of control over one's own life (Kędzierski, 2022).

The conditions of penal isolation exert a profound impact on inmates' mental health. Excessive noise, lack of privacy, the threat of violence, and a rigid daily structure contribute to chronic stress. Many prisoners experience a form of *culture shock* as they are forced to adapt to rules and norms radically different from those of life outside (Skowroński & Talik, 2018). Moreover, administrative procedures – such as classification or mail censorship – often have a degrading effect, diminishing inmates' sense of dignity and self-worth. As a result, some inmates seek meaning and self-affirmation within informal prison structures, which may offer them a sense of recognition and partial autonomy.

Incarceration often leads to learned helplessness, characterised by a perceived loss of control over one's life. This phenomenon further complicates the rehabilitation process, as individuals affected by helplessness tend to exhibit lower motivation for change and reduced adaptive capacity upon release (Woźniakowska *et al.*, 2006). In this context, the role of the family as a stable and supportive environment becomes particularly significant. The family can not only mitigate the negative effects of penal isolation but also serve as a foundation for effective rehabilitation by supporting the individual in rebuilding social identity and assuming positive social roles after the completion of the sentence.

The Experience of Penal Isolation as a Turning Point in the Process of Inner Transformation

Penal isolation represents a unique form of seclusion that not only removes the individual from social life but also deeply affects their identity structure and mode of functioning. Prison, as a total institution, exerts control over nearly every aspect of daily existence, from the regulation of time and space to oversight of social relationships, and restrictions on privacy. This environment is highly hierarchical, coercive, and governed by rigid institutional rules that impose a uniform daily routine, reducing the inmate's subjectivity to that of a dependent ward. As a result, isolation creates both

a physical and symbolic separation from the outside world, leading to depersonalization and alienation (Kędzierski, 2022).

Such profound intrusion into the individual's everyday functioning means that identity in adulthood is not a fixed construct – it may undergo transformation in response to internal psychological processes and changes in the social environment. This is particularly evident in the context of incarceration, which significantly influences identity development. A systemic perspective allows us to understand identity formation as the outcome of continuous interaction between various levels of human functioning – from personal experiences to environmental influences – which intertwine and dynamically interact, forming a complex network of interconnected elements (Toroń-Fórmanek, 2016).

Within these interactions, emotional bonds-particularly those rooted in attachment –acquire special significance. According to John Bowlby's attachment theory, attachment behaviours are instinctive and biologically ingrained, meaning they are not learned but constitute a natural part of the human behavioural repertoire. These behaviours possess a distinct dynamic, different from mechanisms that fulfil basic physiological needs such as hunger or sexual desire, yet they are equally essential for psychological well-being. In adulthood, attachment-based relationships develop between close individuals and become especially evident in times of threat, illness, or crises that are part of the daily reality for those deprived of liberty. In this context, simply knowing that someone is willing to offer emotional support and care can significantly enhance an inmate's sense of security and influence their motivation to maintain meaningful relationships (Marchwicki, 2006).

Conversely, the absence of such support-particularly from the family-represents a key barrier to successful social reintegration. The family, as the initial environment of socialisation, plays a foundational role in the individual's reintegration into the social fabric. However, this reintegration process can only unfold effectively when the severance of social bonds is not the result of negative influences within the family environment (Kędzierski, 2022).

The role of family relationships as a supportive factor in the social reintegration of incarcerated individuals-and as a safeguard against the negative consequences of prison isolation – is clearly emphasised in key international normative documents. Both the *European Prison Rules*, adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, and the *United Nations standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules)*; UNODC, 2015) stress the necessity of enabling prisoners to maintain regular contact with their families and loved ones.

According to the *European Prison Rules* (Rules 24.1–24.9), prisoners should have the right to communicate with their families through correspondence, telephone, and other available means, as well as to receive visits under conditions that support

the preservation of emotional bonds. Prison authorities are obligated to assist inmates in maintaining contact with the outside world through appropriate social support measures. Furthermore, where possible, prisoners should be placed in facilities located near their home or the community in which they plan to reintegrate (Rule 59; Council of Europe, 2020).

Similar standards are set forth in the *Nelson Mandela Rules*, which also guarantee inmates the right to regular contact with family and friends—regardless of gender or marital status, including conjugal visits, where permitted (UNODC, 2015). These documents impose on prison administrations the responsibility to ensure proper organisational and procedural conditions that take into account both institutional security and the dignity of inmates and their families. In light of the above, international standards unequivocally recognise the family as a vital element in supporting the rehabilitation process and as a protective factor against the social disintegration of incarcerated individuals.

In prison practice, these standards translate into various forms of communication that play a crucial role in maintaining social identity and motivating inmates toward inner transformation. The most common and accessible form of contact remains traditional letter writing; procedurally simple, it allows inmates to sustain emotional connections and exchange thoughts despite the constraints of isolation. Alongside this, telephone communication has gained increasing importance, offering a more immediate and personal form of interaction with loved ones. Regular phone calls help preserve bonds, counteract feelings of loneliness, and reinforce motivation to return to life outside prison walls. Nevertheless, in-person visits – especially face-to-face meetings – remain the most valued form of contact with the outside world for many incarcerated individuals. These encounters enable physical presence, shared emotional experiences, and the strengthening of familial ties, fostering a sense of being accepted despite confinement. Of particular significance are so-called conjugal visits, which respond to the natural human need for intimacy and erotic connection with a partner. The restriction or absence of such visits can lead to emotional strain, heightened frustration, uncontrolled aggressive behaviours, and, in some cases, the pathologisation of sexual expression in a closed environment. For this reason, some correctional systems permit supervised temporary leaves, allowing inmates to fulfil these needs, though such measures are not available to everyone, particularly those serving long-term sentences. However, the most desired form of external contact for inmates is temporary leave (furlough), which allows them to physically leave the facility and experience family life in its everyday context. These leaves provide opportunities to reclaim social roles as a parent, partner, or child, and help restore a sense of purpose and meaning beyond the institution. Decisions to grant such privileges take into account various factors, including the nature of the offence, the inmate's progress in rehabilitation,

their behaviour while incarcerated, family and social circumstances, and the potential risk they may pose upon temporary release (Szczygiel, 2002).

Ultimately, while traditional and legislatively endorsed forms of rehabilitative engagement, such as work, education, and participation in cultural or sports activities, continue to play an important role, they often prove insufficient for achieving lasting personal transformation. A key factor in the effectiveness of rehabilitation lies in stimulating the inmate's intrinsic motivation to change their way of life and engage in self-development (Sztuka, 2014).

In academic literature, motivation is understood as an internal mechanism that initiates and sustains specific human actions. Reykowski (1977) defines it as a process of psychological regulation that determines both the direction of an individual's actions and the degree of energy invested in their pursuit. In his view, motivation functions as an internal regulator, guiding human activity toward the achievement of particular goals. Factors that trigger the motivational process include unmet needs, task-related demands, the presence of rewarding or punishing stimuli, and the individual's subjective assessment of the effectiveness of their own actions, namely, the belief that the goal is realistically attainable.

In this context, the role of interpersonal relationships, especially familial ones, cannot be overlooked. These relationships often become the driving force behind inner transformation. Inmates' motivation is shaped not only by their internal experiences but also by the emotional and social support they receive from loved ones. The family, as a source of hope and a sense of belonging, can serve as a catalyst in the rehabilitation process, enhancing the desire for change, a sense of meaning, and belief in the possibility of reintegration into society (Viets *et al.*, 2008).

Research Assumptions

The aim of this case study is to demonstrate the significance of the family as a critical factor supporting the effective social reintegration of individuals deprived of liberty. The study focuses on the life history of a man serving a prison sentence, in which family relationships, despite earlier tensions and periods of estrangement, played a key role in initiating a process of inner transformation and rebuilding motivation to live in accordance with social norms. The subject of the study is therefore the process of the inmate's rehabilitation, examined from a psychosocial perspective, with particular emphasis on the emotional importance of close relationships as the foundation of post-penitentiary change. The study also aims to highlight the potential of family ties as a resource facilitating the return to society, and the resumption of constructive social roles, after release.

The case study method enables a comprehensive analysis of a specific phenomenon, individual, group, process, or social relationship, always in relation to its real-life context. The goal is not merely to describe the case but to achieve a deep understanding, taking into account social, cultural, and organisational conditions. The primary aim of the researcher is not to formulate generalisations but to grasp the dynamics and mechanisms of a specific case, which may offer a model for understanding similar phenomena. In research practice, this strategy is characterised by high flexibility, both in the selection of source materials and the tools used. Combining interviews, observations, document analysis, and content analysis allows for a multifaceted exploration of the issue and a fuller picture of the phenomenon under study.

It is this methodological openness, stemming from pragmatic considerations, that makes the case study particularly valuable in analysing complex social problems. Depending on the theoretical perspective and research objective, a case study can serve multiple functions: it may be a starting point for developing new theories, refining or modifying existing concepts, or providing descriptive and interpretative insights into broader categories of phenomena. In applied research, it may also offer practical solutions relevant to evaluating social interventions or diagnosing organisational issues (Strumińska-Kutra & Kołodkiewicz, 2012).

This study employs the autobiographical-narrative interview as its primary research technique, a specific form of narrative interview developed by Fritz Schütze (Rokuszevska-Pawełek, 1996). This method enables an in-depth exploration of individual experiences by presenting the course of a person's life in a temporal sequence, taking into account its development, transformations, or stagnation. Through the act of telling their story, the respondent reconstructs and interprets the past, attributing meaning and coherence to their life in a retrospective narrative. As such, the interview not only yields factual data but also reveals how the individual understands and emotionally processes their experiences. Unlike the expert narrative interview, which focuses on the respondent's specialised knowledge, the autobiographical-narrative interview centres on the subjective dimension of life, making it particularly valuable in studying social phenomena with a personal and emotional character (Juszczuk, 2013).

The selection of the individual for the case study was guided by several key criteria intended to allow for a deeper analysis of the rehabilitation process through the lens of familial and emotional experiences. Of particular importance was the respondent's penitentiary history, which included repeated conflicts with the law as well as active efforts to disengage from the criminal milieu and reintegrate into society. An additional factor influencing the choice was the complexity of the subject's family background-marked by a dysfunctional upbringing, early experiences of social marginalisation, and the role of fatherhood as a potential motivational force for change.

The individual also experienced a psychological crisis that proved to be a turning point in his biography, providing a valuable opportunity to examine the dynamic interplay between internal transformation and the emotional and social support received from family. This carefully selected case not only allowed for an analysis of the course of effective rehabilitation, but also offered insight into the role of close relationships in shaping and sustaining that process.

In qualitative research, particularly when employing the autobiographical-narrative interview method, ethical considerations play a vital role. In line with established ethical standards in the social sciences and with full regard for the well-being of the participant, all necessary measures were taken to ensure privacy and confidentiality. Full anonymity was guaranteed: all identifying information was removed or altered to prevent recognition. Before the interview, the participant was thoroughly informed about the purpose, scope, and nature of the study, and was made aware of the voluntary nature of participation, including the right to withdraw at any stage without providing a reason. Special attention was paid to the sensitivity of the topics discussed, and the need to maintain empathy and respect for the respondent's narrative, especially as they shared deeply personal and often difficult life experiences.

Profile of the Case Study Participant

The subject of this case study is a man born in 1984, originally from northern Poland. Before his incarceration, he had completed only primary education. Although he attempted to continue his studies at the secondary level, he was eventually expelled due to frequent absences and behavioural issues. During adolescence, he began associating with an older peer group that exerted a negative influence on him, contributing to his gradual social marginalisation.

His family background was marked by instability. His father, a manual labourer, struggled with alcohol abuse, which significantly affected the home environment. At the age of 12, he experienced the breakdown of his family; his parents separated, and he, along with his two brothers (one older, one younger), was raised solely by their mother, who worked in administration. These early experiences of family dysfunction and emotional neglect profoundly shaped his psychosocial development and contributed to his adaptive difficulties.

At 17, he met his partner, and at 19, they had a daughter. That same year, he encountered the criminal justice system for the first time—he was sentenced to two years in prison for committing an armed robbery. After serving his sentence, he returned to his family home, living with his mother, partner, and child. Although he initially expressed a desire to change his lifestyle, he soon reoffended, committing property-related crimes. This time, he received a suspended sentence of imprisonment, conditional for four years.

Following his release, he attempted to find stable employment. However, due to limited vocational skills and persistent financial difficulties, he was unable to provide adequate living conditions for his family. As a result, he decided to work abroad for a year. Upon returning to Poland, fearing inspection by the authorities, he used someone else's identification document. He was apprehended, sentenced to six months of imprisonment, and the court also reinstated his previously suspended sentences.

This period marked a severe psychological crisis. The prospect of re-incarceration and separation from his family led to a deterioration of his mental health, culminating in a psychiatric hospitalisation. He was admitted with symptoms of depression and suicidal ideation. After completing psychiatric treatment, he chose to radically change his environment and relocated abroad with his partner and daughter, hoping to start a new life away from his past difficulties. Unfortunately, he was located and arrested under a European Arrest Warrant. As a result, his partner and daughter remained abroad – where the child had already begun attending school – while his own life became destabilised once again.

The Family Motif as a Catalyst for Post-Penitentiary Transformation

In the analysed case, family relationships played a central role in the rehabilitation process of the incarcerated man. Despite periods of tension and weakened contact, these relationships ultimately proved to be a vital resource, enabling a gradual shift from defiance to reflection and, eventually, to inner transformation. At the time of his re-incarceration, the individual experienced a profound identity and existential crisis, marked by a sense of life failure and loss of personal agency. This emotional turmoil manifested in a hostile attitude toward prison staff and institutional order.

According to the participant's account, the initial phase of imprisonment was characterised by intense rebellion and resistance to the correctional system. He displayed impulsive behaviour, disregarded officers' instructions, engaged in interpersonal conflicts, and violated prison regulations. These actions resulted in disciplinary sanctions, including restrictions on visitations and phone calls with his family. Such measures deepened his emotional isolation and heightened his sense of marginalisation.

During this period, his previously relatively stable family relationships deteriorated significantly. His partner, emotionally and physically overwhelmed by raising their child alone, began to withdraw, limiting both conversations and visits. Although young, his daughter sensed the tension, which contributed to the inmate's growing inner distress. His mother, though expressing support, maintained a rather distant and pragmatic relationship, lacking in emotional depth. At that point, the inmate found himself suspended between the desire to belong to his family and the painful feeling of its loss-experiencing ambivalent emotions of anger and frustration, yet also a deep, unspoken longing for closeness.

The turning point, both emotionally and motivationally, came with an event that seemed minor on the surface but carried profound symbolic weight: a letter from his daughter received during the Christmas season. Inside was a simple drawing of a Christmas tree and a family-father, mother, and child. This triggered an intense emotional response. For the first time since his incarceration, he deeply felt both the loss and the desire to reconnect with his child. The drawing depicted an image of a united family – whole, unburdened by guilt and separation. This aesthetic and emotional experience, anchored in the symbolic meaning of the holidays, initiated a process of deep introspection. The man began to realise that his previously aggressive and defiant behaviour not only distanced him from early release but also from those he valued most.

From this moment, a gradual change began. Although he continued to face the challenges of prison life, he showed greater flexibility in interacting with staff, reduced aggressive behaviours, and demonstrated a growing willingness to engage in restorative actions. His relationship with his partner began to heal, initially through letters, then phone calls, and eventually through the gradual reestablishment of visits. Over time, he expressed a strong desire to resume the role of a responsible father and partner, articulating specific plans for life after release: finding legal employment, supporting his daughter's education, and rebuilding his family relationships based on honesty and emotional commitment.

This case illustrates how the family motif, understood as the need to regain closeness and emotional bonds, can serve as the driving force of the resocialization process. What proved essential was not merely the existence of family ties, but their emotional significance and their potential to mobilise change. The symbolic moment of receiving his daughter's Christmas drawing functioned as a catalyst for reflection, allowing the man to reassess his previous attitudes and adopt a new life trajectory focused on repair and personal growth.

Narrative Presentation of the Inmate's Transformation

The analysis of the inmate's personal story reveals a process of profound inner transformation, in which family bonds, especially those with his partner and daughter, emerged as the decisive factor. At the beginning of his sentence, the man displayed rebellious attitudes typical of individuals who, having previously struggled with social reintegration, find themselves once again incarcerated. He could not come to terms with his return to prison, perceiving it as a personal failure and a consequence of systemic injustice. His reactions were marked by intense emotions: anger, helplessness, and frustration-directed both inward and outward toward the prison staff and institutional order.

I didn't want to talk to anyone. I was angry about everything. I couldn't accept that I was here again. It felt like everyone was trying to break me, and nobody understood how tired I was of this place.

I felt like I was stuck in a dead end. Every day in prison was the same, pointless. I was furious because I couldn't accept the situation. I felt like no one wanted to understand me, and I was angry at everyone; myself, the guards, the whole system. It felt like this place was going to break me, and I didn't know how to get out.

His initial behaviour was clearly destructive, he refused to cooperate with correctional officers, avoided participation in programs, and repeatedly violated prison regulations. As a result, disciplinary measures were imposed, including a ban on phone calls to his partner and the suspension of visits. Paradoxically, it was precisely this deprivation of contact that became a turning point; it intensified his emotional craving for connection and made the potential loss of family bonds painfully real. "I was furious. Most of all, because I couldn't call my woman or see my daughter. But I didn't know how to handle it differently. I was hitting a wall."

The breakthrough occurred during the Christmas season, when he received a letter from his young daughter. Inside was a simple drawing-depicting the three of them: himself, his partner, and their child sitting together by a Christmas tree. That moment took on deep symbolic meaning. The child's gesture expressed unconditional love.

That letter... I held it under my pillow all night. She had drawn us together under the Christmas tree. And suddenly it hit me; I wasn't there. And worse, I wasn't there again. That's when I thought: if I don't change now, I'll lose her forever. Not because of the court or the prison, but because of myself. It would be my fault.

That drawing with the tree and the three of us, I couldn't stop looking at it. That's when I asked myself: What have I done with my life?

From that point forward, the tone of the man's narrative shifted noticeably. Alongside his lingering anger, new emotions began to emerge-longing, remorse, and a desire for redemption. He started to reflect more deeply on his past decisions and gradually began envisioning a different future. He emphasised that the moment he first heard his daughter's voice over the phone, after months of silence, had a profound impact on him:

For a long time, I lived as if nothing mattered. But when she said over the phone that she missed me, it was the first time in ages I felt like I mattered to someone. That my life meant something.

Over Time: Transformation, Motivation, and the Role of Family

As time progressed, the man began to engage in the activities offered by his prison educator, enrolled in individual therapy, and joined a vocational activation program. Particularly meaningful to him was the opportunity to participate in a vocational training course, which, he emphasised, provided a realistic chance for employment after release. His statements reflect the emergence of intrinsic motivation and a shift in his value system toward family, responsibility, and stability.

I don't know how it's going to be yet. But I know that when I get out, I'll fight for them- for my little girl and my woman. I don't want to bring them shame anymore. I want them to be proud of me. "When I get out, I want to do something normal. Maybe construction, something that gives me money, but also peace of mind. I want my daughter to be proud of me."

Based on the narrative presented, key conclusions can be drawn regarding the role of family in the rehabilitation process. The emotional bond with his daughter, along with the continued, albeit challenged, support from his partner, enabled the man to redefine his identity. These bonds became not only a source of motivation but also a reflective mirror through which he could confront the consequences of his actions. They nurtured his capacity for self-reflection, instilled a sense of responsibility, and initiated a genuine process of change.

I'm not living in the past anymore. Now I think about what's to come. Not for me. For her. Because when you know someone's waiting for you, everything feels different.

You get a lot of time to think in prison. But only when she told me she believed I could do it, did I actually believe it myself. It wasn't the prison that changed me, it was what was waiting for me on the outside.

From this perspective, it may be posited that the quality and durability of family bonds are key determinants of successful rehabilitation. These relationships serve not only as a foundation of emotional support, but also as a source of self-reflection and a motivational driver toward change. The inmate's readiness for social reintegration was largely fuelled by a deep-seated desire to restore lost intimacy, and by the belief that returning to his family was only possible through genuine transformation in behaviour and values.

Conclusions, Limitations, and Practical Implications

The analysis of this individual case study offers meaningful insights into the significance of familial relationships in the process of effective rehabilitation. The findings indicate that stable and emotionally significant family ties can function both as a protective factor under conditions of prison isolation and as a catalyst for deep inner change. The story of the incarcerated man empirically illustrates the thesis that family bonds play a pivotal role in an inmate's transformation. In the context of institutional isolation, emotional connections with loved ones, as well as a sense of belonging and responsibility, operate as essential psychological resources, helping individuals cope with the hardships of imprisonment. Simultaneously, these bonds serve a motivational function, activating processes of introspection and initiating shifts in personal identity and value orientation. Crucially, this transformation did not arise from external coercion, but from an internal re-evaluation of relationships, social roles, and personal identity.

A particularly powerful catalyst for change in this case was the relationship with the inmate's daughter, rooted in emotional closeness, longing, and symbolic communication (*e.g.*, the drawing enclosed in her letter). This emotional experience triggered deep reflection, reoriented the inmate toward the future, and had lasting, observable effects on his behaviour—including improved institutional discipline and the formulation of realistic life goals following his release.

While this particular case study offers significant cognitive value by providing a nuanced understanding of the psychological and social processes that occur in the context of incarceration, it is not without limitations. The uniqueness of the subject's personal history, the subjective nature of his experiences, and the specificity of his family dynamics mean that the results cannot be generalised to the broader prison population without additional empirical validation. It would therefore be advisable to continue research in the direction of qualitative exploration of family relationships as a potential rehabilitative resource. In particular, studies based on in-depth interviews with a larger group of incarcerated individuals who maintain strong family ties would be of great value. To enhance data reliability and validity, the use of a triangulated methodology, incorporating perspectives from family members, correctional officers, and prison psychologists, is recommended. Such an approach would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the multidimensional nature of change among inmates and enable a more holistic assessment of the role of familial relationships in social reintegration.

From a practical standpoint, the results of this analysis underscore the need to focus rehabilitative efforts on the emotional potential of inmates, with particular emphasis on increased family involvement in the reintegration process. Social workers, psychologists, and prison educators should be fully aware of the importance of family ties as a central element of rehabilitation, even when these relationships are temporarily

strained or disrupted. In light of this, traditional rehabilitation programs should be expanded to include activities aimed at rebuilding and strengthening emotional connections with inmates' families. Supporting these relationships can become a critical component of an individual's reintegration into society.

Rather than relying solely on standardised interventions, it is worth implementing comprehensive programs that include regular therapeutic meetings with family members, virtual visitation systems to maintain contact, and educational workshops designed to help families understand the resocialization process and their role within it. Such initiatives may not only improve the quality of family bonds but also enhance inmates' motivation for change and increase their engagement in rehabilitation-ultimately contributing to a reduced risk of recidivism.

The conclusions drawn from this case study contribute meaningfully to the broader discourse on the humanisation of penal policy and the need to view social bonds not merely as external circumstances but as essential internal resources. They highlight that authentic rehabilitation does not always require complex tools; sometimes it begins with a simple gesture: a child's drawing and a father's change in behaviour that manifests, quietly yet powerfully, in his actions.

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