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Journal of Physical Education and Sport Vol 24, no 3, September, 2009

e – ISSN: 2066-2483

p – ISSN: 1582-8131



Online Publication Date: 10 September 2009

ORIGINAL RESEARCH

PARTICULARITIES OF FORMING A SPORTS GROUP WITHIN THE LOCK-UP ENVIRONMENT

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Rezumat: Scopul acestei lucrari este de a analiza relatiile interumane din cadrul unui grup sportiv constituit in mediul carceral in vederea reeducarii detinutilor prin respectarea normelor si regulilor sportive. Folosind metoda sociometrica, s-a aplicat chestionarul la un grup de 15 detinuti participanti voluntari la activitatilor sportive educative si de recreere de tip fotbal desfasurate in cadrul Penitenciarului de Maxima Siguranta Popa Sapca din Timisoara. In urma constituirii sociomatricei, s-au putut calcula indicii sociometrici la fel ca si sociograma in care se evidentiaza diferitele tipuri de relatii existente la fel ca si pozitiile ocupate de subiecti. O caracteristica a acestui grup este faptul ca fiind unul de tip informal, el la randului sau determina alegerea unui lider informal pe baza abilitatilor si cunostintelor sportive, grupul functionand cu un lider formal, ales de catre grupul mare de detinuti. Insa pe terenul de sport, liderul formal al grupului accepta un alt lider si participa alaturi de el la activitatile si meciurile de fotbal. Grupul primar format are o coeziune care-i permite functionarea dar si crearea unei identitati sportive ceea ce determina clasificarea sa in grup de aparteneta pentru marea parte dintre subiectii participanti dar si posibilitatea ca el sa fie si grup de referinta pentru detinutii neparticipanti la activitatile sportive.

Cuvinte cheie: penitenciar, fotbal, grup, coeziune, integrare.

Summary: The purpose of this paper is to analyze the interpersonal relationships within a sports group formed in the lock-up environment in order to reeducate the convicts by observing the sports norms and rules. Using a sociometric method, the quiz has been used for a group of 15 convicts volunteered for educational and recreational sporting activities (e.g. football) developed within the “Popa Spaca” Maximum Security Prison from Timisoara. By means of the sociomatrix and sociogram, it has been calculated the sociometric indexes, measuring various types of existing relationships as well as the positions held by the subjects. One feature of this group is that of being an informal group, or is determining the election of an informal leader on the ground of sporting abilities and knowledge, the group operating as a formal leader, elected by the larger group of convicts. But on the sports field, the formal leader of the group accepts another leader and participates together with him at the activities and football games. The primary group has a cohesion which allows it to function but also to create a sporting identity, determining its classification in the affiliation group for the most of the participating subjects but also the possibility for it to be a reference group for the non participating convicts at the sporting activities.

Key word: prison, football, group, cohesion, integration.

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Introduction

The paper is approaching the sport from a social prospective and namely the possibility to enter in a hostile, limited environment, that of imprisonment, reeducation and rehabilitation. All this can be performed through various socialization and integration programs where sports also can be a participant through sporting games with a certain regulation and set of rules to be observed. When the private and action space is isolated and limited, the rights are restricted, the individuals from various walks of life and social environment have to cohabit and participate at the formation of a group. In the given case, it is assumed that the degree of cohesion is very low but the educational programs help to its improvement, and a popular sporting game such as football could be an efficient mean for uniting the relationships between its members, because the enforcement of regulations and arbitration rules, as well as the sporting values of respect towards the adversary is pointed out.

One of the socialization means used within the penitentiaries is the sporting activity. The development of the sporting practices in the penitentiary rehabilitation is made possible by a double process: the importance of the physical and sporting activities in our society and the role of rehabilitation and integration in the outside world. This double movement is interpreted through the accessibility of minority (convicts) in the sporting areas as well as through the entering of the sport in the lock-up environment (freedom limited area).

Moreover, the introduction of sporting practices in prison continues to surprise the public opinion who is wondering about the reasons of introducing the activities specific to the freedom in a place without members. In addition, it is questioned the contribution of the sport in the development of some moral qualities, being stigmatized by various practices such as doping, corruption, ruffianly behaviour. Nevertheless, taking into consideration the fact that the evolution and development of the society as well as the changes happened in connection with the treatment of the convicts and penitentiary management has rendered possible the reform of a Standard Minimum of Rules for the Treatment of Convicts, elaborated within the European Council [Resolution (73) 5] so that to be a support, to encourage the best development and to offer a purpose to the further progress, it has been elaborated set of rules regarding the integrity of the convicts, such as those related to the physical activities:

83 – “The penitentiary regimes will acknowledged the importance of the mental and physical health of the convicts and will keep it through activities organized properly so that to ensure recreational possibilities by exercises and recreational conditions.”

84 – “Although a physical educational program organized properly will be elaborated within and observing the objectives of the treatment and training regime, the sport and other recreational activities will be also a part of the penitentiary regime. Therefore, the institutions will be endowed with the necessary equipment and appliances”.

A first answer is offered by the newspaper headlines and televised shows, as well as the sporting news reporting various sporting experiences made in prison. The result of these actions is the fact that these practices provide a way of escape for the convicts, that in a certain way, the sporting practices allow to the convicts to materialize the wish to get rid physically of the institution paying a smaller price. Detention – the depriving of liberty should ensure a set of minimum rules for the treatment of the convicts (O.U. no 56 / 2003 regarding the rights of the persons punished by liberty depriving).

Sport in prison is the strengthening of two institutions in which the devices are participating in order to obtain the global equilibrium of the society. The penitentiary institution helps in depriving of liberty the individuals with social order related problems before trying to reintroduce them into the society. The sporting institution appear more as a mean put at the population's and organization's disposal in order to contribute at the hygienic, political, social and psychological maintenance of the convicts. Therefore, the articulation of the two institutions contribute indirectly at the general balance of the society ensuring a certain number of functions that the penitentiary administration considers profitable and to be used in the service of own security and reintegration mission.

Sport is an equilibrium factor and plays a fundamental role in the improvement of the detention conditions and it maintains them in a climate adequate for the penitentiary rehabilitation. It binds the rules to be observed, to have responsibilities and to invest in a collective activity.

The development of some sporting activities is helping most of the convicts to get over more easily the frustrations and the detention period, in a constructive way. The development of some common sporting activities will lead to the cultivation of new relationships between convicts and not only. In Romania this topic is still at the beginning. It has been approached at the beginning of the 21 century, in countries from Europe such as Portugal, France, England, whose specialists have elaborated few years ago this form of socialization through the physical activities in the lock-up environment. Within a seminar organized by the Committee of Sports Development within the European Council, taken place in Vimeiro (Portugal), in 1986, a special attention was given to the participation of the convicts to the sporting activities. Romania has not participated as not being a member of the European Union, thus explaining the lack of development of such an activity within the national penitentiary earlier.

In the lock-up environment, the groups come into being depending on various activities, so that there are work groups (participants at the activities developed inside and outside the penitentiary), educational groups (participants at various didactic and school groups), creational groups (creative activities – visual arts, painting, music, etc.) recreational groups and sporting groups. The socialization through football within penitentiaries represents an important factor for the progress from the behavioral point of view.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the inter-human relationships within an informal sporting group formed in the lock-up environment in order to reeducate the convicts by observing the sporting norms and rules participating voluntarily at the sporting activity such as football. The sporting activities are a solution for entering into relations with other convicts and for finding a place within the lock-up population. In order to belong to a smaller group, the convict has to be known within a larger group of detention in order to choose the persons with whom he can make friends; football and sport in general could be a chance of socialization of the convicts willing to participate at such sporting practices. Due to the rules, football orients the convicts to a behavior more similar to the behavior that they should have after ending the punishment and returning in the middle of the society.

“Cohesion could be considered that most important group variable, because, it is the reason for which the group exists, maintains and operates as a coherent entity, independent” (Pantelimon, 1971). The cohesion phenomenon reflects the degree in which the group is attractive to its members and constitutes a consequence of the concentration of all forces acting on the individuals in order to remain within the group. The cohesion is considered as an essential condition for enforcing some common norms accepted by the group. The group is acting as an independent unit only when it has reached a minimum level of cohesion.

Hypothesis of this research:

By practicing football in the lock-up environment, the convicts are organized in an independent group with a level of cohesion which allows it to operate and to determine its own leader elected based on his sporting abilities.

Material and method: "POPA ȘAPCĂ" Maximum security prison from Timisoara has been the place where it has been developed the specific intervention program called "Aggressiveness control" addressed to convicts with aggressive behavior. It included a multidisciplinary team (psychologist, educator, social worker) and football was the sport that has been practiced. The sociometric test has been applied on a pattern of fifteen convicts imprisoned within "POPA ȘAPCĂ" prison from Timisoara, volunteered participants at football and it has been carried out during the period Nov 1, 2008 – May 1, 2009. The group that has been formed is a small one and it functioned as a unit constantly during the research. The relationships between its members are direct, meaning that everyone may communicate and exchange information with the others. Therefore the group appears as a social interaction system, through which the subjects coordinate mutually their intentions and preoccupations, adapting to one another.

The sociometric technique (J. L. MORENO) represents an ensemble of articulated procedures namely:

- Sociometric test;
- Sociomatrix;
- Sociogram;
- Sociometric indexes: Sociometric status index (ISS) and Preferential status index (ISP)

Results:

From the sociomatrix presented below (Table 1) it has been calculated the sociometric indexes at the first two questions (elections and rejections) with the following results:

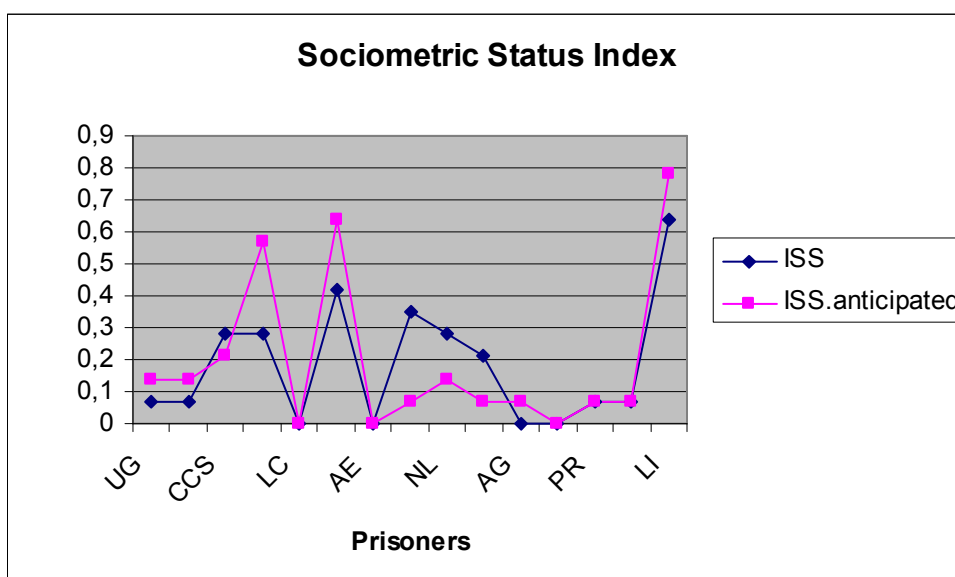
Prisoner	UG	DF	CCŞ	BS	LC	MCM	AE	CMD	NL	MC	AG	MDS	PR	MV	LI
UG	0		2				-3	1	-2				-1		3
DF	1	0	-3					2	-1				-2		3
CCŞ	-2	-3	0	2		1								-1	3
BS	-3	-1	3	0				1	2						-2
LC		1		3	0	2		-3	-1		-2				
MCM			2	1		0			-2	-3				-1	3
AE	-2			2		1	0	-1	-3						3
CMD	-1		1			-3	-2	0	2	3					
NL	-2	-3	-1					3	0	1					2
MC		-2					-3	3	2	0	-1				1
AG						3	-1	-3	-2	2	0			1	
MDS					-3	2		-2			-1	0	1		3
PR		-1				2	-3		1	-2			0		3
MV														0	
LI															0
T. Pre.	1/1	1/1	4/8	4/8	0/0	6/11	0/0	5/10	4/7	3/6	0/0	0/0	1/1	1/1	9/24
T. Res.	5/10	5/10	2/4	0/0	1/3	1/3	5/12	4/9	6/11	2/5	3/4	0/0	2/3	2/2	1/2
ISS	0,07	0,07	0,28	0,28	0	0,42	0	0,35	0,28	0,21	0	0	0,07	0,07	0,64
ISP	-0,28	-0,28	0,14	0,28	-0,07	0,35	-0,35	0,07	0,14	0,07	-0,21	0	-0,07	-0,07	0,57

Tabel 1

In the sociometric analysis, the main purpose is the structure of the interpersonal relationships within the group. After calculating the sociometric status index, it has been carried out the comparative diagram (Table 2) of the results of the elections and their perception. It has been noticed as follows:

- In the diagram (Table 2) are being presented the comparative results of the values of Sociometric status index of the elections as well as of the perceived elections, according to the values from table 1 and table 2. It is noticed that the convict with code LI is getting near to the value 1 (ISS = 0,64), LI is the informal leader of the group because he has obtained most of the elections and also perceives most of the elections (ISS=0,78). This position is being offered due to his sporting abilities in football and the field knowledge. Moreover it is noticed that LI is also the individualist of the group because he elects nobody, being sure of his position due to his football related skills and knowledge. His position is contested only by BS who is among the popular persons of the group (ISS=0,24 and 0,57) fact that is proving that the leader value of LI on the sport field is not acknowledged.
- MCM is the formal leader of the group generally (ISS=0,42 and 0,64) but on the sport field he is giving up his place to LI, the “sportive” leader who is the first on the list of his preferences, following CCS (mutual choice) and BS. MCM is rejected one time, by CMD, who has a controversial position being elected 5 times (on the third position after LI and MCM) and is rejected 4 times proving his will to become the next leader of the group.
- MDS, AG, LC and AE are the tolerant of the group because they are elected by nobody but there are expressing their preferences towards the others, and it is assumed that the leaders (LI and MCM) could make the connection with the rest of the group members. In the case of AE and LC, they prefer also BS, who has a good score (ISS=0,28 and 0,57), him being one of the group popular, so he could help to their integration with the sporting group.

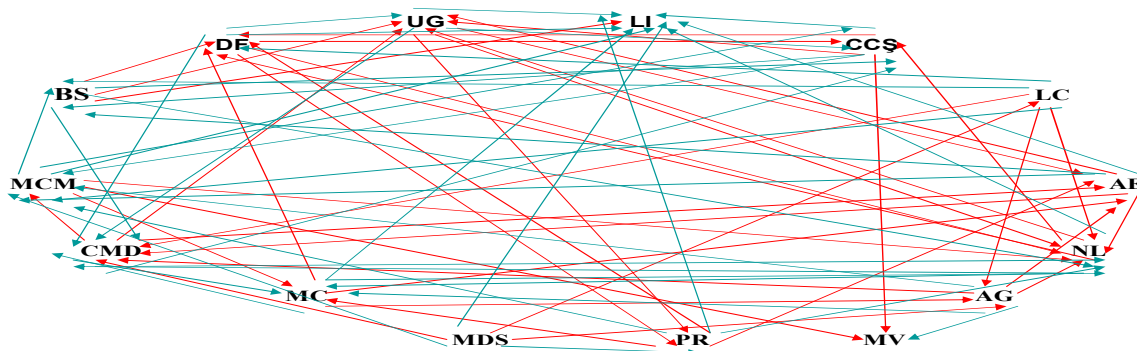
- As the group popular, besides CMD (0.35), BS (0.28), there are also CCS (0.28), NL (0.28) and MC (0.21).
- There are also mutual elections: MCM-CCS, BS-CCS, NL-CMD, CMD-MC, NL-MC and MCM-PR. And also mutual rejections: AE-UG, UG-NL, CCS-DF, DF-NL, DF-PR, AE-CMD.
- There are being registered 3 oppositions of feelings: UG elects CCS but the latter is rejecting him, UG elects CMD but the latter is rejecting him, and AG elects MC but the latter is rejecting him.
- MV is the remote of the group because he elects nobody. Only AG prefers him, but the latter at his turn is preferred by nobody, so he can not solve his integration into the group. MV is rejected by CCS (who is among of the favorites of the group) and MCM (leader) is rejecting nobody confirming his position of remote.
- It is noticed that four persons are elected by nobody: LC, AE, AG and MDS meaning that they are only tolerated by the group, as long as they are expressing their choices towards MCM, the formal group leader (all four made this choice) and two of them (MDS and AE) preferred also LI, the sportive leader.
- NL stays the persons who has registered most of the rejections (11 points out of 6 rejections) meaning that his position in the group is controversial (in preferences he has registered 7 points out of 4 elections). The following persons who have received most of rejections (5) are: UG (10 points), DF (10 points) and AE (12 points) who is confirming their position as marginal and last in the preferences.
- The group remotes are: LC, AG and MDS, registering the status 0.



Tabel 2

This could be observed also in the sociogram of the social relationships:

Tabel 3



From the sociomatrix presented below (Table 4) it has been calculated the indexes for the last two questions – perceived choices and rejections with the following results:

Prisoner	UG	DF	CCŞ	BS	LC	MCM	AE	CMD	NL	MC	AG	MDS	PR	MV	LI
UG	0	1	-2	-3		3	-1								2
DF	1	0				2									3
CCŞ			0	2		1									3
BS			3	0				1							2
LC		1		-2	0	2		-3	-1		3				
MCM			2	1		0			-2	-3				-1	3
AE	-2		3	2	-1		0		-3						1
CMD	-2	-1		-3				0	2	1					3
NL	-2			2		1	-3	-1	0						3
MC	2	-2		1		-1	-3			0					3
AG				3		2	-3	-1	-2		0			1	
MDS	-1			1	-2	2					-3	0	3		
PR						3		-2	1	-1			0	-3	2
MV	-2			1	-1	3			-3					0	2
LI															0
T. Pre.	2/3	2/2	3/8	8/13	0/0	9/19	0/0	1/1	2/3	1/1	1/3	0/0	1/3	1/1	11/27
T. Res.	5/9	2/3	½	3/8	3/4	1/1	4/10	4/7	5/11	2/4	1/3	0/0	0/0	2/4	0/0
ISS	0,14	0,14	0,21	0,57	0	0,64	0	0,07	0,14	0,07	0,07	0	0,07	0,07	0,78
ISP	-0,21	0	0,14	0,35	-0,21	0,57	-0,28	-0,21	-0,21	-	0	0	0,07	-0,07	0,78

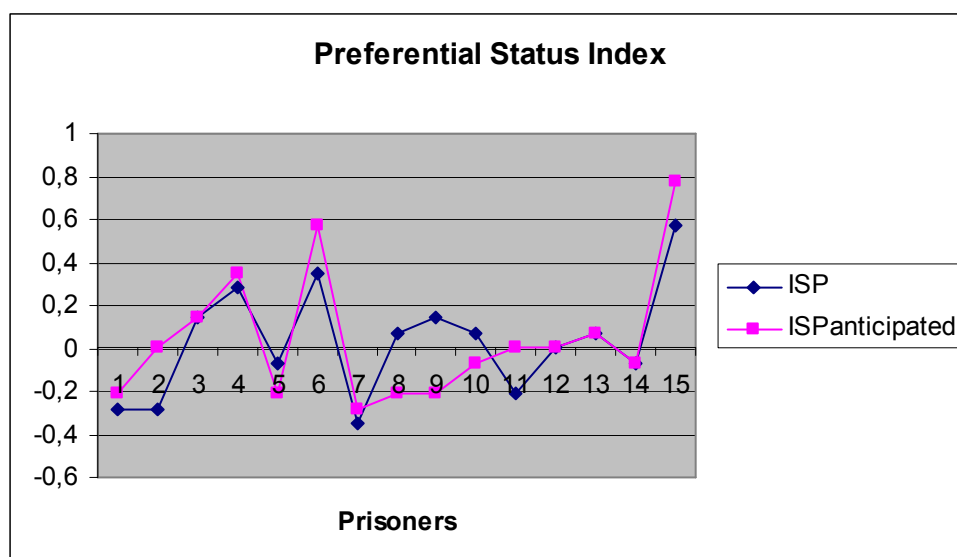
Tabel 4

Based on the information from the sociomatrix (Table 4), concerning the perceptions on choices and rejections, the following conclusions are being drawn:

- The group leaders MCM and LI confirm their position as group favorites, the rest of the members considering them to be elected within a sporting team. With a score of 27 points out of 11 perceived elections he has not registered any perceived rejection from anyone from the group but MCM who has gathered 19 points out of 9 perceived elections has registered one perceived rejection from MC.

- BS thinks that no one would reject him but 3 members of the group think that they will not be elected by him, in the sporting team. In the same situation are CCS and DF.
- 3 mutual elections are perceived between: UG-DF, BS-CCS, MCM-CCS.
- One single mutual rejection is perceived between MC-MCM
- 5 perceived oppositions are being registered: NL-MCM, MV-MCM, CMD-BS, CMD-NL, NL-CMD
- It is noticed that MV who has not expressed his preferences or rejections, nevertheless he is expressing on perceptions. To be noted that he is in opposition with the perception of the leader MCM, that he is perceiving as his chooser in the team but he is rejecting him, and he does not perceive correctly that AV is choosing him, hoping that the group leaders will give him attention.

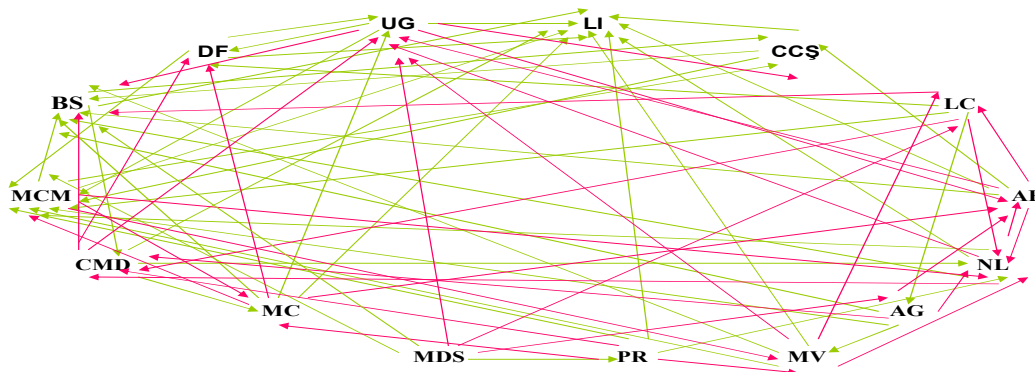
On the ground of the sociometric matrix, we have calculated the **preferential status index** and by ordering the values based on the formula presented previously, it has been obtained a hierarchy with the individuals depending on how they are being perceived in the group. The values of the preferential status index are in Table 5. These values show the interpersonal relationships between convicts and identify the most popular, less popular, neutral and remote. By ordering the “ISP” values decreasing we have obtained the hierarchy of the subjects according to the preferential status index.



Tabel 5

This could be observed also in the sociogram of the social relationships:

Tabel 6



Discussions:

- Particularly it has been noted that at the beginning of the sporting practice, the behavior of the convicts was a little bit irritated due to the football rules and regulations, some of them reacting almost to every decision taken against their team. But step by step they got used to them and to respect them, becoming fully aware that their observance will get them close to the victory. If at the beginning granting the yellow card for a fault more severe or a improper behavior was hard to perceive for them, at the end of the practice period, granting a red card was not a incomprehensible problem, and in exchange they were raising the hand and taking the guilt, apologizing and leaving the field fully aware of the deed.
- The configuration of the sociometric status indexes of the subjects shows that the distribution is in majority for small values of the indexes between 0 and 0.3. In this interval are 10 out of 15 subjects and only for 5 subjects the values are between 0.35 and 0.64. At the perceived elections, the configuration of the index has a progressing position towards the proper elections because for 6 of the subjects the indexes have raised and for 5 the index has not changed and for 4 the indexes have lowered.
- The existence of the two leaders: one formal leader (MCM) and one informal leader - LI-the one chosen on the sporting field proves that if on the field who is leading is LI, outside the field the role of MCM is more important because at the perceived elections, ISS raises from 0.42 to 0.64 and at LI, ISS raises from 0.64 to 0.78 proving that the sporting activity is conferring to the leader a greater popularity than to the formal leader on the sporting field of the penitentiary.
- It has been calculated the cohesion index of the group based on the formula $C_g = \frac{Ar^2}{N(N-1)}$ and it has been established according to the table of Matei C., (1973) at 0.05 indicating to us that there is a group with a low level of cohesion. Taking into consideration the environment, the situation, the individuals, the fact that this group exists, functions and forms its own identity through sport based on certain rules, it proves that the engine is the sporting activity.

Conclusions:

The existence of this physical and emotional discharge represents major arguments of the penitentiary administration for justifying the sport in the prison. It participates at the preservation of the internal equilibrium of detention providing a physical discharge area, accurately limited, compensating the effort made by the convicts to support the multiple institutional constraints imposed to them

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