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Social Factors Influencing Criminal Recidivism

ABSTRACT

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Keywords: recidivism , social exclusion, social reintegration, inmates, prison .

Delinquency has generated the constant concern of society in general and of social specialists in particular, with the declared aim of its understanding and prevention. Therefore, research, prevention activities and remedial intervention for various forms of delinquency are declared priorities of actions circumscribed to the social and criminal policies of the state.

Almost two centuries ago, in the work entitled *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), Nathaniel Hawthorne suggested that prisons should be a necessity rather than desirable institutions, describing them as a "black flower of our civilization". During the last three decades, this "flower" has proliferated in the United States, given the unprecedented multiplication of prisons in this country. While the explosive growth in the number of prison population is well documented, the causes that led to such a situation, its consequences and possibilities for its reduction are not well understood.

The phenomenon of criminal recidivism is subsumed to the sociology of deviance from the norms and values of society, being regarded as a specific form of it .

While in its common-language use (Webster`s dictionary) the term recidivism derives from the Latin *recidivus* and is defined as " the act of repeating an undesirable form of behavior when a similar form of behavior had negative consequences", in scientific language there are several ways of defining recidivism . Maltz defines recidivism in the context of criminal justice as "the return of an individual to a form of criminal conduct for which s/he was convicted and which assumably was corrected" (2001, p.1).

Both criminal recidivism and deviance may be analyzed starting from a multitude of theories that, over time, have developed causal frameworks, but this paper focuses on the relationship between forms of social exclusion and criminal recidivism, starting from the assumption that the two phenomena influence each other.

The *reasons* that led to the initiation of this research are the lack of research on criminal recidivism among the prison population; the need to obtain accurate information on this undesirable social phenomenon; the need to sketch an image of criminal recidivism peculiarities, which might be used for the work on reintegration done both while inmates are in prison and during the post-prison period.

The research theme aims to highlight risk factors for criminal recidivism in the case of inmates in Oradea Penitentiary and forms of social exclusion to which they were subjected . This approach aims to go beyond the generally adopted perspective, i.e. that prisoners are solely responsible for the situation they find themselves in, which triggers their imprisonment with minimum expenditure and investment, most of them being irrecoverable and resistant to

change according to social rules and values. The analysis starts from the theoretical-explanatory approaches to deviance (the anomie theory, the theory discussing the failure to adapt to social norms, the theory of subcultures, the theory of social disorganization, the theory of conflict and others), which provides a complex background for addressing causal mechanisms that may influence relapse and gather descriptive and explanatory data about the particular problem of recidivism.

The social importance of the topic lies in the need to analyze and understand the dynamics of relapse, a phenomenon that: disrupts social order through the repeated transgression of legal norms by offenders; stimulates the proliferation, among the population, of feelings of fear and insecurity as a result of the antisocial potential of recidivists; involves significant social costs (Romanian prison system budget expenditures allocated for 2012 in grants was Ron 912 505 000 (according to Activity Report of National Administration of penitentiaries ANP for 2012¹, p.16).

Criminal recidivism is present in different percentages in all countries. In Romania², the incidence of repeat offenders among prisoners is 45,78 %. This percentage indicates unmistakably that for more than half of the inmates incarcerated in prisons, social and penal policies are ineffective and do not lead to the desired prosocial correction. In Europe, a monitoring report concerning recidivism (Wartna, 2009) presents the following percentages of this phenomenon: Austria - 38 %, Germany - 35.7 %, Netherlands - 40.4 %, Sweden - 36 %, Norway - 43.4%, Scotland - 53 %, England and Wales - 48 %. The percentage of offenders in Romania (45,8 %), places our country among the states with a relatively high proportion of recidivists.

For specialists, the presence of this fairly large group of recidivists raises the question whether there are certain differences regarding lifestyles and attitudes among inmates. For reformers working with prisoners and offenders, recidivists represent "the symbol of failure of any criminal confinement measure, the incapacity of prison treatment to reform" (Florion, 2006, p.110) and therefore a scientific approach is required to reduce this phenomenon as much as possible.

Starting from these coordinates, one can raise questions about the ineffectiveness or the non-functionality of socio-criminal mechanisms of the state. The theme of prisons non-functionality was explained by the fact that "from the beginning, the prison, in its reality and

¹ <http://www.anp.gov.ro/documents/10180/18750/Bilant+ANP+2012/6818a833-3b2e-4af4-8e08-e98f5f354520> accessed on 15/04/2013.

² <http://anp.gov.ro/documents/10180/2256331/bilant+2013+engleza.pdf/b72eb9ef-b9cf-41cb-8ea7-4e1971213e2f> accesată la 12/04/2014

visible effects, was denounced as the great failure of criminal justice; strangely enough, the detention history does not show some timeline along which one might observe the following orderly sequence: the development of a penalty of imprisonment, followed by the finding of its failure; then the slow development reform projects, which might contribute to putting in place a more or less coherent prison technique; then, the putting in practice of this project; finally, evaluating its success or failure" (Foucault , 2005 , p.335 . This statement is proved by the same author by figures indicating that "prisons do not reduce crime rate: no matter how much we would try to expand, multiply or improve prisons, the amount of criminal acts and of criminals remains constant or, worse, it increases ". In the context of similar coordinates, Boudon agrees that detention can provide good living conditions, some of them being actually inaccessible to inmates while in freedom, that prison provides opportunities for improving criminal conduct, which leads to the idea that the state of detention, designed to reduce crime rate, fails in this respect and it may even stimulate it, which puts us in the presence of a perverse phenomenon" with individual or collective effects resulting from the juxtaposition of individual behavior without being part of the objectives pursued by the actors" (Boudon, 1998, Iasi, p .25).

The scientific relevance of the topic lies in the fact that the sociology of deviance explanatory paradigms (the social disorganization theory, the anomie theory, the cultural transmission theory, the functionalist theory, the social control theory, the paradigm conflict and the labeling theory), sought and prepared answers to the causes of crime, but did not approach distinctly criminal recidivism phenomenology, which has a larger longitudinal dimension in the lives of offenders. I believe that in order to gain scientific knowledge about this complex and diverse phenomenon, which seriously undermines social order, a more rigorous scientific approach is required, especially from the theoretical and the methodological point of view. It should be noted that such an approach is even more necessary as it refers to a segment of the population that is very difficult to investigate, prisoners sometimes presenting a low level of education and being often reserved in communication. On the other hand, the social problems of released prisoners were not researched scientifically on the national level and authorities did not adopt special measures for the social inclusion of released inmates.

The main research objectives are: the identification of explanatory theoretical models of recidivism, the analysis of the social profile of recidivists in Oradea Penitentiary, the study of exclusion factors that may be associated with recidivism using the quantitative research, the identification of exclusion factors using the means of the qualitative study, interviewing

some recidivist inmates and building an explanatory model of recidivism based on the exclusion factors analyzed.

The thesis has five chapters in its structure.

The first chapter looks at the concept of criminal recidivism in sociological literature. Thus it briefly presents theoretical models on delinquency and criminal recidivism (anomie, behavioral, social control, culturalist, differential association, labeling, stigma, rational choice, the discontinuance, ecological- systemic and life course theories).

The anomie theory starts from the concept of "anomie", coined by Durkheim and subsequently adopted by Merton³ (1938, p.676), which postulates that both social conformity and non-conformity are individual responses to a particular type of social structure that provides identical ideals to its members, but often without making available equal means to achieve them. This discrepancy between ideals and means of realization can lead to violations of social norms. The term anomie describes precisely this failure of the regulatory framework, taking into account two variables: goals (ideals) towards which people consider it worthwhile to aspire and formal or accepted means to achieve goals. In their actions, individuals exhibit five types of adaptation models: conformity, innovation, ritualism, withdrawal and rebellion . For Merton, the deviant act is caused by anomie as it leads to infringement of admitted norms and the perpetuation of illegal forms of behavior. These reactions are due to the placement of individuals in certain types of structures and social organization which do not provide them with legitimate means to access the goals of society.

According to the *behavioral theory*, various forms of learning are the essence of human behavior (Goodwin , 1999). According to behavioral theory , the causes of antisocial acts are found in society, the environment being the main element that contributes to the formation and development of criminal behavior. According to Goodwin, the personal characteristics of an individual are based on his/her past experiences of past and on their contemporary life, as a result of the socialization process that takes place inside the living environment. According to the behavioral theory, prisons are used as instruments of crime control, which increased in number recently.

³ <http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/jhamlin/4111/Readings/MertonAnomie.pdf> accessed on 12/01/2012

Social control theory explains criminal behavior as being the result of a lack of internal control of the individual or the absence of articulated and effective mechanisms of external social control. The starting point of this theory was the book entitled *Causes of Delinquency*, by Travis Hirschi⁴ (1969, p.58 -59), having as central theme the link between individuals and society, which has four components: *attachment* to other members of society as affective ties; *commitment* to the common direction of action, involving investment of time and energy in order to live together in conformity; *involvement* in regular and conventional activities as a result of the commitment ; *trust* in legal and moral rules . Deviant acts appear attractive to individuals, but social ties stop most people to commit such acts. Deviance is understood as a result of intense exposure to social situations in which individuals develop certain behaviors to avoid the urge to conform to social norms.

According to *the theory of subcultures*, along with the dominant culture of a society there are certain subcultures of delinquent nature that have emerged as a form of protest to the norms and values of the dominant group. Each dominant group seeks, through the levers at its disposal, to establish rules, boundaries and prohibitions for certain social groups, which generates, among members belonging to different subcultures, feelings of anxiety, frustration and dissatisfaction. Deviance is analyzed in terms of individuals reporting that the originating culture is marginalized by the dominant culture that consolidates its power by transforming cultural norms in legal rules. The exponent of the culturalist theory is A. Cohen (1955) who considered crime as form of protest for groups and cultures marginalized by the dominant group. The reaction of these delinquent subcultures takes the form of illegal activities, which appear and are perpetuated in processes whereby members of those groups are involved in socialization (p.26).

The representative the *differential association theory*, Edwin Shuterland (1947), argues that understanding and explaining criminal behavior can be achieved taking into account the communication process that takes place within social groups, where each individual internalizes social norms and legal interpretation. The personality of an individual depends on the culture of origin, which leads to the idea that an individual's chances of becoming delinquent increase significantly if one comes into contact with more criminals than non-criminals. Basically, delinquent behavior is learned through contacts between individuals and groups, by means of verbal and nonverbal communication .

⁴ http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/36812_5.pdf accessed on 22/02/2012

In the context of *the structuralist theory*, the issue of criminal recidivism was strongly illustrated by Foucault (2005), who stated that "conditions encountered by inmates on release from prison fatally condemn them to relapse: because they are under police surveillance; because they stay under house arrest or restraint to reside; for they are allowed to leave jail only with a permit they must show everywhere they go, on which the conviction is mentioned. The conclusion is that "prisons indirectly produce offenders, leaving the family of the inmate in poverty; the same sentence that sent to jail the head of the family also forces the mother, daily, to the most abject poverty and makes children candidates to abandonment, and condemns the whole family to vagrancy and begging. Precisely for these factors crime threatens to multiply" (Foucault , 2005 , p.339).

The labeling theory belongs to symbolic interactionism paradigm that focuses on social relations, looked at through the prism of social interactions that lead to the construction of symbolic identities because people act unceasingly and their actions will be permanently interpreted. Thus , social actors will assign certain meanings to actions, situations and symbols involved in the process of social interaction. For the representatives of symbolic interactionism deviance is considered a social construction through which some individuals come to be called criminals. Labeling is understood as being a form of "human interaction", a way of "social building of discrimination and differences in a derogatory way" (Gochman, 1982, p 169).

The rational choice theory addresses the problem of recidivism in general and of deviance in particular, starting from the fact that a crime is the result of opting to commit that act. Arguments put forward by the rational choice model in the area of criminal recidivism are supported by Windzio (2006), who argued that the population consisting of delinquent adolescents (boys) seems to be heterogeneous and composed of different groups: on the one hand utilitarian actors who want to avoid suffering in future, and on the other hand very sensitive people, characterized by fear of other inmates . The latter behavior can be easily understood from the perspective of rational choice, yet they have the highest rate of recidivism .

One of the originators of the *theory of discontinuance* is considered Shadd Maruna, who published the work *Making Good : How Ex - Convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives* (2001), including several narrative biographies of British convicts for crimes against property and crimes related to drug use and drug traffic. From the chosen sample, Maruna identified two distinct groups: those who " persist " in committing crimes and those who " give up" committing antisocial acts. Although substantially all prisoners must equally face obstacles

involved in the success of social reintegration, those who continue to commit crimes argue that their situation is due to unfavorable circumstances characterized by poverty, drug use, lack of job employment and educational opportunities, which determined them to feel they had no choice but to continue their deviant behavior. In contrast to this group, those who renounce the deviant behavior say they have done this because of the moral aspect of their character, which makes them avoid the influences that have corrupted and led them to a life of deviance. However, these individuals say they are overwhelmed by the individual crime cycle - prison, being motivated to change the course of life usually thanks to the benevolent intervention of a trustful person (Terry, 2001, p.227-228).

The environmentalist - systemic theory was developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) with the publication of the work entitled *The Ecology of Human Development*, which emphasizes the relationship between human beings and their environment, in the sense that human ecology designates how the surrounding environment (family, economic structures and political context) come to be regarded as part of the life course of individuals from childhood to adulthood. This theoretical model highlights the major role that environmental factors play in human development.

The problem of crime has often been studied considering *the environmentalist theory* - systemic approaches that analyze the contexts in which prisoners are released or how these contexts may affect recidivism in general.

According to *life course theory*, crime causation is an evolutionary process that begins before birth and continues throughout an individual's lifetime. In this way, individual factors interact with social factors, which determine the onset, length and end of a criminal career. The essence of this theory is the issue related to persistence or waiver of deviance. Some predict a continuation of deviance on a lifelong basis; others predict a continuation of deviant behavior only at some criminals, while giving up criminal behavior may be observed in the case of others (Cullen and Agnew, 2002).

Chapter I brings to the fore a few studies on recidivism, so as to provide a globalizing image of this phenomenon, presenting its features in countries such as Ireland, the United States, China and Romania.

Romanian studies on recidivism are relatively few and they address this phenomenon from different epistemological perspectives.

The issue of employability in the case of Romanian former prisoners offenders has been analyzed in a study (Chipea et al 2012) that, using the focus-group method, has investigated four social groups: prisoners offenders to be paroled within 30 days; offenders

who have failed to integrate into the labor market; professionals involved in the process of reintegration into the labor market people who have been convicted of criminal acts; and employers willing to hire people included in the aforementioned category. The results of the study indicate that the social reintegration of prisoners is difficult and the ones likely to succeed are those who benefit from the support of other well-meaning persons from the proximity social environment. The first two groups investigated are quite similar in that they have had a common experience, experiencing the same feelings of stigmatization, rejection, both from those inside the institution and from the persons outside it. In general, former prisoners hardly get a job in the country because of the criminal record they possess, which becomes a stigma difficult to hide; they often work illegally in low-skilled and low-paid jobs; they try to hide the truth about their criminal history; they accept jobs abroad or start their own businesses in order to avoid rejection and exclusion that might arise.

A study on the adaptation of vulnerable groups in the labor market in the Central region (Gorski and Corman, 2011), examined the issues of labor market integration of inmates from Aiud, Codlea, Miercurea- Ciuc and Targu Mures prisons. It was found that the chances of a detainee to be integrated into the labor market after release increases if he/she: has some qualification; wants to change; has the ability of self-control; is a middle-aged person, healthy both physically and mentally; is persevering; has maintained contacts with his/her family; has previous work experience; is not a repeat offender; worked during detention; has a permanent home after release from prison; has participated to training courses.

Literature in the field has often indicated among the causative factors of delinquency and criminal recidivism implicitly, specific elements of *social exclusion*. Exclusion is, if we use a geological metaphor, " a structural fault that makes its way inside a society in which it is exposed as illegitimate" (Murphy, 1985, p.234), which may lead to a conflict that shakes the foundations of society. Thus, the structural fault of exclusion is a source of moral and ideological battles that may have a hidden or transparent, legitimate or illegitimate results.

The most commonly encountered form of exclusion in the case of former prisoners is that on the labor market. Many of them say that there is a strong link between the existence of jobs and committing crimes: when individuals have a job, it is unlikely that they will commit crimes. It is therefore important to make every effort to promote the employability of prisoners when they leave prison (Mellow et al , 2008).

Another form of exclusion of former prisoners is that of housing. This aspect has been brought to the fore in the UK in a report by the *National Association for the Care and*

Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO , 2000), which presents a series of studies that highlight the severity of the problem of lack of housing and associated crime as a result of those reforms that have reduced access to housing for former inmates. Although there is no evidence that the lack of housing or unfit dwellings would lead directly to the commission of new crimes, it is certain that such an experience may cause a relapse. For example, one of the cited studies, which evaluated 600 people by the time of release from prison, has revealed that 30 % of inmates who had a home to which to return again were convicted again, compared with 69 % of the inmates without a home.

The **second chapter** highlights social policies, regulations and practices used to reduce criminal recidivism. Given the process of globalization and the anchoring of Romania in the community life of the European Union, we proceeded to a presentation of international recommendations in the field, these setting the limits of the issues addressed. We have also exposed a number of best practices in the attempts to reduce recidivism at international level, which are successful models that can generate research directions and remedial intervention in the case of former inmates. In order to understand the limits of actions aimed at reducing recidivism by controlling the phenomena of social exclusion, we chose to present the legal framework governing this issue, and then got a clear picture of the steps made in Romania in this respect. Here we made a distinction between the types of action promoted by the Romanian prison system, which run mostly during the execution of sentence, and those promoted by external collaborators, who are usually a bridge between the inner world of prisons and the community.

The *National strategy for the social reintegration of inmates*⁵ is one among the actions taken by the Romanian prison system to reduce recidivism, an initiative that aims to create the necessary institutional background needed for the reintegration of detainees, emphasizing the active role institutional and community factors should acquire through convergent action , in relation with the goal of social reintegration. The strategy aims to: establish an interactive, functional and articulated inter-institutional cooperation and clearly defined responsibilities in the successive stages of the process of social reintegration; co-interest public institutions, associations and non-governmental organizations relevant to social reintegration; attract resources for the assistance to inmates, during the successive stages of the social reintegration process.

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<http://www.just.ro/MinisterulJustitiei/Actenormative/Proiectedeactenormativeaflateindezbatere/tabid/93/Default.aspx>, accessed on 20/10/2012

The last part of this chapter reflects a number of solutions presented in the literature to optimize the problems of social exclusion of former inmates.

The **third chapter** refers to research on relations between criminal recidivism and social exclusion and is divided in 7 sub-sections as follows: research design showing how to approach the subject of investigation; research question whose aim is to summarize the purpose of the study and understand the essence of the results; designing a conceptual framework and the operationalization of concepts with the view of shaping the investigation tools; the research method; the quantitative research and the quantitative analysis results; the qualitative research results; limits, risks and ethical aspects of the research.

The *research design* was characterized by the following elements : it was based on a field study; information resulted from the interaction with the subjects investigated; the research method was the sociological inquiry, using as data production tool the survey and the case study - that has the interview as data production tool; quantitative analyses were intertwined with the qualitative analysis; data used was mainly of the transverse-type; expected results in the research were mainly exploratory; the representativeness level was high for the segment of the prison population in Oradea Penitentiary. The research was conducted in two areas: quantitative (applying questionnaires) and qualitative (conducting interviews).

In formulating the *research question* we took into account the opinion of McArthur (1976) that "the former inmate is confronted on release with a situation that practically assures failure". Given these coordinates, the research question is: how and to what extent social exclusion contributes to the emergence of criminal recidivism?

For Maltz , a *conceptual framework* is a simplified representation of reality, one that contains the essential features of the system or process investigated. Assuming that rehabilitation is certainly connected with details about inmates and the correctional programs they have followed, Maltz (2001, p.9) has built a logical model to rehabilitate prisoners, which resembles medical treatment models where etiologies are related to mental or psychological problems. This pattern is illustrated in Figure 1 .

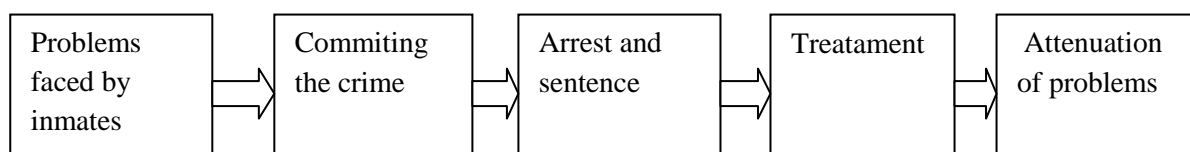


Figure no. 1. The logical model for the rehabilitation of prisoners

Based on the model above we built the following conceptual diagram (Figure 2), starting from the idea that: not only social exclusion leads to recidivism but also other factors (volitional, motivational, affiliation to various criminal groups, etc.) ; social reintegration of each individual depends on earlier life experiences of imprisonment, detention and experiences related to particular challenges arising immediately after the inmate has been put into freedom; the reintegration process is completed either with the social reinsertion of the former inmate or with the latter's exclusion.

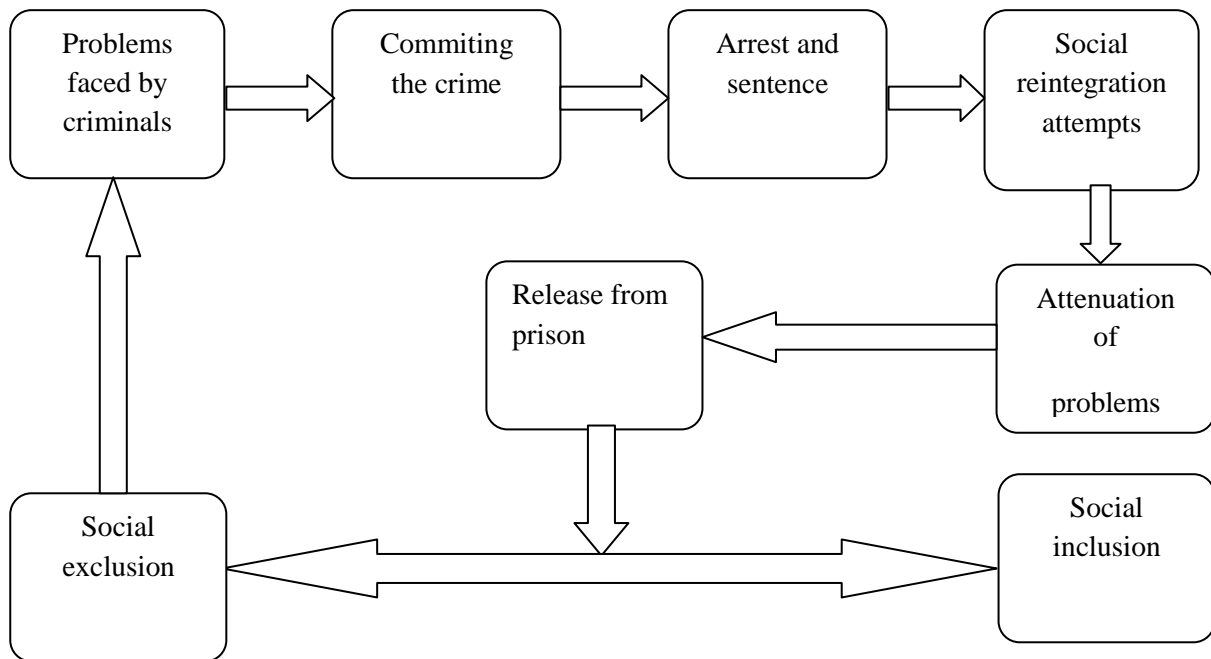


Figure no.2 The conceptual framework of the social reintegration issue

After release, inmates experience either social inclusion in all spheres of social life, or exclusion, which may be total or partial. In the latter case, exclusion phenomena will lead to situations similar to those faced before being imprisoned, which may contribute to relapse into crime area and hence the detention-liberation cycle.

Social exclusion is regarded as "a multidimensional process of progressive social rupture, whereby groups and individuals are disconnected from social relations and institutions, thus preventing them from full participation in the preset activities of the society in which they live" (Silver , 2007 , p .15) . Regardless of the content and the criteria according to which socially excluded groups form, these are characterized by lack of ability to access social opportunities. I proceeded to achieve this operationalization of this concept, starting from an adequate understanding of this phenomenon specificity, but through a permanent reporting to research objectives. In Table 1, the column dedicated to dimensions, we identified the elements (aspects) that present a certain degree of generality of the social

exclusion phenomenon. The last column shows the indicators that will make the transition to observation and the measurement of social exclusion variation in relation to criminal recidivism.

Table no.1 Conceptual framework of social exclusion

Concept	Dymensions	Indicators
Social exclusion	Occupational status	Occupational status
		Qualification level
		Qualification opportunities / re-qualification
		Degree of acceptance on the job market
	Housing situation	Type of housing
		Access to social housing
		Characteristics of housing
	Family situation	Level of acceptance in the family
		Marriage opportunities
	Interpersonal relations	Neighbours' degree of acceptance
		Degree of acceptance within the group of firends
	Relations with institutions representatives.	Degree of acceptance at the level of institutions

As regards the *research method* and with the view of obtaining valid data we took into account the need for the triangulation of information sources and therefore we opted for a quantitative method - the sociological investigation, and a qualitative method – the case study. The first type of research is quantitative, and is designed to test statistical hypotheses and answer the research question. The second type of research is qualitative, its objectives being either the confirmation or the rejection of results obtained by means of the quantitative analysis, as well as obtaining new data to allow the formulation of explanations of the data obtained.

The technique for gathering information from the *sociological investigation* is the *questionnaire*. This choice takes into account the appropriation of the research instrument to the specific of the research, taking into account the benefits it presents by comparison with other survey techniques (Rotariu and Iluț, 1997). The questionnaire was applied in two ways : self-administrated - for those who know how to read and write and administrated by an operator in the case of illiterates. Before completing the questionnaire, the respondents were presented with: the motives for which they have been included in the research; a brief presentation of the research; anonymity and confidentiality of the data collected and the coordinates within which the filling of the questionnaire will take place.

Regarding the *case study*, we chose the *interview* as a method of data production. Given the type of information required, concerning both the present and the past situation of respondents, the interview adopted both a classical character and the " life story" form, given

the consistent temporal dimension of some issues to be investigated. This option is also preferred by methodological literature, interviews being appreciated (Yin, 2005) as essential sources of information for researching cases in the form of guided conversations. Interviewees were selected by two criteria: to the extent possible, with as many entries in prison (more than three quarters of them between 4 and 13 imprisonments) and capacity / availability to communicate. Consent for participation in the interview was obtained after explaining the scope of the interview and the confidentiality of the data collected. Interview structure contains elements that have sought to obtain information on: criminal history; employment situation after the previous release; housing situations after release; family relationships during detention and thereafter; status of interpersonal relationships; reasons for persistence of relapse; factual data. The innovations associated with interview items are related to the description and detailed presentation of the various forms of exclusion for an in-depth understanding of this phenomenon. The interview guide was applied to 26 recidivist inmates incarcerated Oradea Penitentiary and a number of 3 persons who served custodial sentences in the same detention unit and after more than 3 years have not relapsed. Conducting interviews was preceded by the consent to participate in the interview and the presentation of: the interviewer , the research that is in progress, the way of choosing interviewees as part of the sample; the estimated time of the interview; anonymity and confidentiality of data registered.

The quantitative analysis aims to address data to respond primarily to either the confirmation or invalidation of research hypotheses and then to contribute to answer the research question. We developed five hypotheses, each for a dimension of the concept of social exclusion as follows :

1. If a person has served a prison sentence and is subject to forms of exclusion on the labor market, then the chances for him/her to commit another crime and return to prison increase. This assumption is justified by: the difficulties of finding and occupying a job; low education and professionalization level in the case of prisoners; reluctance of employers to offer jobs to people who have violated the criminal law. This hypothesis is based on assertion of Travis and Petersilia (2001, p.304) that „released offenders have very low employment rates, suggesting that incarceration may reduce the employability and future earnings of young men and the stigma of incarceration makes ex-inmates unattractive for entry-level or union jobs, civil disabilities limit ex-felons acces to skilled trades or the public sector, and incarceration undermines the social networks that are often necessary to obtain legitimate employment”.

2. If a person released from prison encounters housing problems, then the likelihood of committing new criminal acts and be incarcerated again increases. The justification for this assumption is related to: the basic and urgent need for a person to have a home that provides adequate living conditions. This hypothesis is supported by a report from the Social Exclusion Unit (2002) indicate that inmates who do not have a home are more often incarcerated again.

3. If a person who has been released has problems of acceptance from family, then the probability for him/her to relapse increases. This assumption is justified by the fact that most detainees encounter family problems but also by the fact that they come from families with disadvantaged backgrounds. An attitude of exclusion on the part of the family can determine relapse into crime. In this context, Halsey (2007, p.361) state that „very few had completed more than nine years of schooling, most had a parent and/or guardian who were/are involved in crime or had been sentenced to custody at some previous occasion, nearly all came from families who had a chronic reliance on welfare payments and histories of extended unemployment, many had mental health, alcohol and drug problems, some had experienced quite serious instances of physical abuse at the hands of family members or *known associates*”.

4 . If former inmates encounter acceptance resistance from the people with whom they had relationship before detention and are marginalized by them (a group of friends, neighbors and so on, belonging to non-criminal groups), then the risk for them to persist in repeating criminal behavior increases. This assumption is justified by the fact that human nature requires an ongoing social interaction in all spheres of community life . Without the pro-social interaction of the people in the neighborhood, it is difficult to maintain a lifestyle that respects the norms and values of society. Wolf and Draine (2004, p.463) said „the presence of the prisoner may bring unwanted surveillance from the authorities, hostility from neighbors who do not want ex-offenders in their backyards, shame to the family, and internal disharmony in the household. Equally important, but perhaps more pressing, is the possibility that the ex-offender's presence puts the family's residence and welfare at risk”.

5. If people released from prison are not supported by state institutions (social services of municipalities, county employment agencies etc.) to ensure legal conditions of existence , they are more likely to resort again to criminal behavior. The justification for this hypothesis has in view: lack of some legal framework to regulate the issue of former inmates in institutions they come in contact with; ignorance or indifference on the issue of convicts on the part of civil servants. This hypothesis is based on Foucault view`s (2005) that, if it is true that prison sanctioned crime, it essentially produced in and through incarceration which, after

all, prison extend it. Following Foucault, the offender is a product of the institution. Needless, therefore, surprising that the considerable proportion biography of the inmates through all these mechanisms and establishments which are left to believe that it was aimed to avoid prison.

The investigated group consisted of inmates incarcerated in Oradea Penitentiary and former inmates who did not recidivate in the last three years . The unit of analysis was made of all recidivist inmates in Oradea Penitentiary, on **August 15, 2009**, respectively 173 persons. The recording unit was the person that was included in this group of prisoners and was investigated by a questionnaire or an interview.

From the investigation sample, i.e. 173 recidivists definitively convicted for various offenses, 153 completed the questionnaire in Appendix No.5, while the others either refused to complete it or were transferred to other prisons or units, or have been released. Respondents were explained that they have been selected to participate as subjects in research on recidivism and have the option to answer or decline participation. Those who expressed verbal consent, were removed from the detention rooms, led to a room where they received the questionnaires and instructions for completion. Once completed the questionnaires, these were numbered from 1-153 and we started to build the database using the software SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) . After setting variables, respondents' answers were introduced electronically. After completing this step, given the fact that most scales are nominal and ordinal , we continued with the appropriate statistical processing stage.

For *testing statistical hypotheses*, we have used frequency, factorial and regression-type analyses.

The table below shows, based on frequency analyses, the difficulties encountered by inmates during the process of social reintegration after release.

Table showing the opinions of recidivist inmates as regards difficulties encountered after release (%)

Cause	Very difficult	Difficult	Quite difficult	Quite easy	Easy	Very easy
finding a job	23,7	14,4	11,0	13,6	25,4	11,9
communication with state institutions	18.9	17.1	15.3	16.2	24.3	8.1
availability of accomodation	10,8	9.0	6.3	5.4	29.7	38.7
resumption of family ties	4.2	7.6	5.0	5.9	42.0	35.3
restoring relations with the group of friends	3.4	12.1	7.8	10.3	42.2	24.1

n=153

The factorial analysis has analyzed a group of 13 items that relate to *the extent to which subjects believe* that these factors are the reasons due to which former prisoners get to relapse . They are shown below.

Cause that leads to relapse	Measure in which the mentioned cause leads to relapse (%)				
	Very little extent	Little extent	I have no opinion on the subject	To a large extent	To a very large extent
Poverty (N=124)	12,9	6,5	8,1	41,9	30,6
Alcohol consumption (N=128)	13,3	14,1	7,8	32,0	32,8
Entourage, through the negative influence it exerts (N=128)	8,6	20,3	10,9	36,7	23,4
Low degree of education (N=129)	20,9	17,1	9,3	37,2	15,5
Lack of support from the state for solving social problems (N=128)	22,7	19,5	5,5	33,6	18,8
Difficulty in finding a job (N=129)	20,2	19,4	8,5	25,6	26,4
Criminal behaviour (N=129)	10,1	21,7	20,2	29,5	18,6
Homelessness (N=128)	25,0	15,6	12,5	28,9	18,0
Desire to become rich quickly (N=128)	25,0	27,3	6,2	23,4	18,0
The image of inmate, which is disreputable (N=127)	27,6	29,1	8,7	21,3	13,4
Incapacity to adapt to the demands of social life (N=128)	28,1	28,9	12,5	14,8	15,6
Lack of support from the family (N=129)	27,9	25,6	17,8	18,6	10,1
Acceptable comfort offered by prison (N=128)	43,0	21,1	15,6	8,6	11,7

Of the 13 items above we aimed to extract a smaller number of factors. For every item we have used the same scale with the following coding:

Very little extent	Little extent	I have no opinion on the subject	To a large extent	To a very large extent
1	2	3	4	5

Most items correlate among themselves with a correlation coefficient with an absolute value between 0.200 and 0.500 (42 correlations among the $13 \cdot 12 / 2 = 78$ pairs of possible items); therefore the items will be grouped into a larger number of factors. The KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) coefficient has the value 0.764, which represents a good value for a factorial analysis. The MSA (Measures of Sampling Adequacy) coefficient of variables adequacy, for the factorial analysis, is between 0,682 and 0,820, and thus no item from the analysis had to be removed. We have used factorial analysis with all recidivists, the few

invalid answers had been replaced - only during the factorial analysis – with the average value calculated from the valid codes at valid responses to the item.

Table showing the statistics of eigenvalues from the factorial analysis

No.	Eigenvalue	% explained by variance	% cummulated explained by variance
1	3,518	27,1	27,1
2	1,457	11,2	38,3
3	1,163	8,9	47,2
4	1,031	7,9	55,1
5	0,956	7,4	62,5
6	0,871	6,7	69,2
7	0,806	6,2	75,4
8	0,676	5,2	80,6
9	0,662	5,1	85,7
10	0,547	4,2	89,9
11	0,491	3,8	93,7
12	0,430	3,3	97,0
13	0,394	3,0	100,0

By means of repeated attempts we have found the optimal model with four factors, which has an explanatory power of 55.1 % (the model with 4 factors explains, on average, 55.1% of the variance of the 13 items). The variance explained separately for each item is between 41.1 % and 64.4%.

To identify the factors we have used their saturations with analysis items, which are actually the correlation coefficients between factor and item.

Table of correlations between the factors and the items of the factorial analysis

Cause that leads to relapse	Factor			
	1	2	3	4
Lack of support from the state in solving social problems	0,680	-0,054	0,236	-0,152
Lack of family support	0,655	0,300	-0,233	-0,051
Difficulty in finding a job	0,652	0,010	0,158	0,017
Homelessness	0,608	0,154	0,240	0,311
Poverty	0,501	0,382	0,240	0,205
Criminal-type behaviour	-0,085	0,790	0,112	0,020
Low level of education	0,237	0,742	0,098	0,014
Acceptable comfort provided by prison	0,146	0,117	0,764	-0,024
Incapacity to adapt to the demands of social life	0,074	0,186	0,717	0,004

The image of inmate, which is disreputable	0,439	-0,230	0,513	-0,010
Alcohol consumption	0,140	0,387	0,453	0,192
Entourage, through the negative influence exerted	0,118	0,298	0,131	0,672
Desire to become rich rapidly	0,152	0,401	0,180	-0,639

The numeric codes used at factorial analysis items have been, as seen before, 1 for *to a very little extent* answer and 5 for *to a very large extent* answer, therefore the higher factorial scores will show the larger extent of the respondent's consent to that factor, as cause that leads to relapse.

Recidivists' responses indicate the following factors causing relapse:

- factor 1 is well correlated with items that relate to harsh living conditions (lack of social support from the state, lack of family support, difficulty in finding a job, homelessness, poverty) . This factor will be called ***the subjective factor of poor living conditions***.

- factor 2 is highly correlated with education-related items: criminal-like behavior, low level of education. This factor will be called ***the subjective factor of poor education***.

- factor 3 is highly correlated with the items of the inmate status: acceptable comfort offered in prison, inability to adapt to social life outside prison. This factor correlates well with the items causing relapse: the image of inmate and alcohol consumption. This factor will be called ***the subjective factor of prisoner status***.

- the last factor correlates only with entourage, and the desire to get rich rapidly respectively, as causes of relapse. But with the desire to get rich rapidly the correlation is negative, thus this aspect leads to relapse to a smaller extent. Because of this reason the factor will be simply called ***the subjective factor of the entourage***.

A group of five items referred to the concrete situation after release/previous releases, i.e. *how difficult it has been to resume life in its different aspects*. Table no.24 shows the distribution of the 5 items.

Table showing the distribution of recidivists in relation to the measure in which they encountered difficulties in resuming life after release, in the decreasing order of percents cumulated at very difficult, difficult and quite difficult (%)

How difficult it has been to resume life immediately after release in the following domains:	How difficult it has been					
	Very difficult	Difficult	Fairly difficult	Fairly easy	Easy	Very easy
Finding a job (N=114)	23,7	14,9	11,4	13,2	24,6	12,3
Communication with state institutions in solving different social problems (N=107)	19,6	16,8	15,0	16,8	23,4	8,4
Availability of a home or place of accommodation (N=108)	11,1	8,3	6,5	5,6	28,7	39,8
Resuming relations with relatives, friends and acquaintances (N=113)	3,5	12,4	8,0	10,6	40,7	24,8
Resuming ties with the family of origin or establishing a new one (N=116)	4,3	7,8	5,2	6,0	40,5	36,2

For all items, the codes used for responses are:

Very difficult	Difficult	Fairly difficult	Fairly easy	Easy	Very easy
1	2	3	4	5	6

The correlation between items (for N=118) are relatively large. These are shown in the table below.

Table of correlation coefficients at items referring to difficulties encountered after release

How difficult it was to resume life immediately after release in the following domains:	Finding a job	Availability of home or place of accommodation	Resuming ties with the family of origin or establishing a new one	Resuming relations with relatives, friends and acquaintances
Availability of home or place of accommodation	0,449			
Resuming ties with the family of origin or establishing a new one	0,217	0,330		
Resuming relations with relatives, friends or acquaintances	-0,007	0,214	0,492	
Communication with state institutions in solving different social problems	0,165	0,258	0,202	0,290

The KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) coefficient is 0.611, a satisfactory value for the factorial analysis. The MSA coefficient of variables adequacy (Measures of Sampling Adequacy) for the factorial analysis is between 0.546 and 0.730, thus we had to remove no item from the analysis.

The correlations between factors and factorial analysis items are shown in the following table.

Table of Correlations between factors and factorial analysis items

How difficult it has been to resume life immediately after release in the following domains:	Factor		
	1	2	3
Resuming relations with relatives, friends and acquaintances	0,853	-0,075	0,257
Resuming relations with the family of origin or establishing a new one	0,836	0,291	-0,031
Finding a job	-0,040	0,890	0,034
Availability of a home or a place of accommodation	0,261	0,766	0,171
Communication with state institutions in solving different social problems	0,136	0,144	0,966

The numeric codes used at the factorial analysis items were, as seen before, 1 for the *very difficult* answer and 6 for the *very easy* answer, thus the smaller factorial scores will indicate the higher degree of consent on the part of the respondent to that factor. For this reason we have changed the factors' scale, so as the higher value will indicate a higher degree of difficulty.

Recidivists' responses show the following factors that indicate different types of difficulty in resuming life after release:

- factor 1 correlates well with the items on relations with relatives, friends, acquaintances, or the family, so this factor will be called ***the objective factor interpersonal relationships***.

- factor 2 correlates well with items related to living conditions, and will be called ***the objective factor of poor living conditions***.

- the last factor correlates with a single item that has the correlation coefficient close to 1; it will be called ***the objective factor of lack of social support from the state***.

Of particular attention is the analysis of links between the objective factors of life after previous release and the subjective factors relating to causes of recidive. The correlation of these are given in the table below.

Table of correlations between the objective factors of life after the previous release and the subjective factors relating to causes of recidive

The objective factor of	The subjective factor of			
	harsh living conditions	poor education	inmate status	entourage
interpersonal relations	0,060	0,050	0,096	-0,031
harsh living conditions	0,098	-0,142	-0,037	-0,077
lack of social support from the state	0,163	-0,115	-0,116	0,059

A logistic regression analysis requires the dichotomization of the predicted variable. For this purpose we have taken the number of previous incarcerations of recidivists, and have formed two categories: those who are at the second incarceration (37 subjects) and those with four or more previous incarcerations (32 subjects). Of these only 31, respectively 29 present factorial scores at all the seven factors, thus the number of cases included in the logistic regression analysis is 60. During the analysis the ones at first relapse receive code 0, and those with at least four previous incarcerations receive code 1.

Table Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients shows that the recidivist status depends significantly ($p = 0.012$) on the 7 factors of the analysis. Thus we can continue interpreting the following tables. From Nagelkerke R^2 value (0.345) it results that the variance of the predicted variable (recidivist status) is explained in a percentage of 34.5% by the variances of factors used in the analysis as independent variables (predictors).

Based on factorial scores we have calculated the predictability of the recidivist status 1 and 4 + in the table below.

Table showing the predictability of the status based on factorial scores

Concrete status	Predicted status		Percentage of prediction
	Recidivist 1	Recidivist 4+	
Recidivist 1	22	9	71,0
Recidivist 4+	6	23	79,3

We could observe that, for three quarters of the cases, based on factorial scores, prediction has been correct and the explanatory power of the model is of 75.0 % .

The parameters of the regression equation for both subjective and objective factors are presented in the table below.

Table showing the parameters of the regression equation

Factor	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
<i>fs1</i>	0,446	0,350	1,622	1	0,203	1,562
<i>fs2</i>	-0,472	0,336	1,968	1	0,161	0,624
<i>fs3</i>	0,534	0,320	2,773	1	0,096	1,705
<i>fs4</i>	1,010	0,393	6,623	1	0,010	2,747
<i>fo1</i>	-0,019	0,305	0,004	1	0,951	0,981
<i>fo2</i>	0,490	0,318	2,371	1	0,124	1,632
<i>fo3</i>	0,096	0,340	0,080	1	0,777	1,101
Constant	0,081	0,319	0,065	1	0,799	1,084

Prediction is obtained by calculating using the following formula:

$$\text{Pred}(\text{statut}) = 0,081 + 0,446 \cdot fs1 - 0,472 \cdot fs2 + 0,534 \cdot fs3 + 1,010 \cdot fs4 + \\ - 0,019 \cdot fo1 + 0,490 \cdot fo2 + 0,096 \cdot fo3$$

From a calculated value that is less than 0.500, the prediction is that the person is at the first relapse (previously he/she was imprisoned only once), and for a value more than 0,500 we might predict a person with at least four previous incarcerations.

Taking into account frequency, factorial and regression analyses it results that hypotheses 1, 2 and 5 are confirmed while hypotheses 3 and 4 are disabled.

Interviews content analysis took into account information provided in the quantitative and qualitative manne , not only the manifest content but also the latent one. Given the specificity of the topic, thematic analysis prevails, where the dimensions of the concept of exclusion (employment, housing , family , interpersonal and institutional) are topics for analysis. Life-story type interviews were applied to 26 offenders in Oradea Penitentiary, in the period 8-14.07.2010 and 3 other interviews with former prisoners who were freed more than three years ago and have never relapsed and for whom criminal relapse risk is low. The interviews were recorded on tape recorder and later transcribed to facilitate understanding and interpretation.

The analysis of *the occupational exclusion theme* reveals some interesting data, as follows : more than half of respondents (16) have no professional qualification, while others have qualifications with low complexity (tractor driver, shoemaker, carpenter, locksmith, plumber and welder); only five offenders have worked before the execution of the punishment, the others (21) have not performed work in the true sense of the work(some of them only worked as day-labourer). One of the explanations for the somewhat surprising fact that they did not work before committing the first offense is the fact that criminal activity

began at an early age, even before the coming of age (14 cases) , which led to the execution of custodial sentences in juvenile rehabilitation centers or even in prisons.

Exclusion from housing is more reduced than occupational exclusion, being mentioned by approximately a third of respondents. After release , most respondents (19) lived with their parents and fewer (3) had private housing , or some other situation (4). Most respondents (16) said they encountered no housing problems, but there is a segment (7) who stated that they had such problems. However, there were enough (15) who would have needed social housing, of whom only two managed to obtain such a form of accomodation.

The analysis of the *family exclusion* theme provides a first interesting information, namely that of all those interviewed, only one is married, while all others (25) are single or cohabiting. Therefore, almost all interviewees have an uncertain marital status and low family cohesion. The existence of any form of *family exclusion* was looked at on two temporal levels, one during the sentence and one immediately following release. While being in prison, most recidivists (19) say that relations with their family members were good or very good, even if sometimes their detention has caused their parents feelings of shame.

Regarding *interpersonal exclusion*, two questions were asked, first about how they were received by neighbors and second, how they were received by the group of friends. As regards the neighbors, approximately two thirds of those who have returned home after the journey through the Romanian prison system had a good degree of receipt/acceptance, while the remaining were faced with hesitant attitudes. The group of friends generally shows the same type of behavior displayed by neighbors. Some have found a reliable aid in friends, especially those who had no family or they could not rely on it.

The analysis of *exclusion manifested by state institutions* in relation to former offenders, reveals various situations. The first concerns the 14 respondents who claim that they felt marginalized by representatives of institutions. Sometimes state representatives were hesitant in relationing with a former inmate, a situation that has degenerated into a verbal conflict. If state representatives sometimes have a passive or indifferent attitude to convicts, there are also situations when the latter do not like the former.

The opinions of the three people who were in detention and have not relapsed for more than three years and for whom the passage of time means a decrease in the chances of ever returning to prison, are often consistent with those of recidivist inmates. There is, however, a contrasting side of information provided by both parties, especially factually. In this sense, we see a clear difference in terms of criminal history, meaning that if the first (recidivists) mainly committed crimes of theft and robbery, while the second group has a

different type of offense record: fraud, tax evasion, traffic of drugs, traffic with explosives, car theft, forgery and use of forgery, i.e. less action directly against a specific person, but aimed at achieving a higher financial goal. Also, any person in the second group did not return to prison after the first custodial sentence.

The results of the quantitative and the qualitative analysis show that the hierarchy of social exclusion forms is the same, namely: occupational, institutional, housing , neighbors and group of friends and finally the family. As regards testing statistical hypotheses, they confirm/ invalidate, as in the case of the quantitative research, with the exception of institutional exclusion. If quantitative results were not strong enough to prove the veracity of the hypothesis, qualitative analysis brought additional elements in the sense of supporting them. This can be explained by the valence of the interview, as investigation technique, which allows the revealing of more substantial detail.

Limitations of the research are related to: poor capacity of inference in the case of the quantitative research, as a result of exploring the opinions of recidivist prisoners in only one prison space; studying a sample made up exclusively of male subjects.

The risks posed by the study in terms of scientific validity and fidelity can be generated by low level of credibility of information provided by people who have a repetitive criminal behavior; desire to give socially desirable answers in order to exculpate for their crime ; probable distortion on the part of the researcher, as a result of his familiarity with the prison environment; relatively low capacity of representativeness of the results obtained.

The ethical aspects of this study were: the request and consent of the subjects to be investigated; the principle of not making public the names of persons involved in the study; consent of the detention center for collecting data both from databases or the archive; respect for the legislation in force in the various stages of the research.

The last part of the paper is dedicated to conclusions, highlighting the results achieved, the innovations brought by the research carried out compared with what is known in the literature, and proposals for the implementation of measures aimed at reducing criminal recidivism, taking into account the phenomena social exclusion former inmates are faced with.

The five hypotheses were tested statistically by the regression analysis method, with the help of which we aimed to observe whether changes in a certain type of exclusion (the labor market, housing, family, interpersonal and institutional) produce changes on criminal recidivism.

The first hypothesis, that *difficulties in finding a job* have repercussions on the chances of relapse, is confirmed with a risk of error less than 5 %. The result is similar to other studies conducted in other prison facilities, which shows obviously that this area requires attention in outlining any social reintegration strategy after the period of detention.

The second research hypothesis, which states that *housing* issues were influential in the emergence of criminal recidivism, is supported with a risk of error less than 5 % . Thus there is a link of determination between problems of housing and criminal recidivism, which was found in other similar research.

The third hypothesis states that there is a relationship between *family*-type exclusion and criminal recidivism. This relationship is not confirmed by statistical processing, the assumption being invalidated. It can be concluded that the family is not a factor of exclusion that leads to increased relapse, but on the contrary, has a strong inclusive role, even if the families of origin usually have a poor material and social capital, and perhaps experience stigma as a result of the imprisonment of their family member.

The fourth hypothesis promotes the idea of the existence of a relationship between exclusion manifested by the group of acquaintances and the emergence of criminal recidivism. This relationship is probably not supported by the regression analysis, and for this reason we consider role of the friends/acquaintances as being inclusive, which could be explained by the solidity and soundness of friendly relations which could not be eroded by state prison on the one hand , and by the presence of a sense of empathy and helpfulness shown by the group in relation to the former prisoner.

The last research hypothesis assumes that the difficulties in relationing with state institutions can lead to amplification of the criminal "spiral". Statistical analysis revealed little effect so that this hypothesis is not confirmed. It is possible that many of recidivists investigated have not appealed to institutions that would have helped, either unwittingly or due to lack of interest on the matter and the propensity to commit antisocial acts.

Through a logistic regression equation, the cumulative influence of the 5 components of social exclusion (employment , housing , family, group of people , institutions) was tested in roder to find an answer to the research question . Logistic regression coefficients indicated that forms of social exclusion have a powerful effect on criminal recidivism, prediction that has a significant degree of intensity.

From these results , we obtained a partial answer to the question of research on how social exclusion contributes to the emergence of criminal recidivism. The answer is unequivocally that the effects of social exclusion on recidivism are significant.

The *qualitative analysis*, based on the interpretation of the results obtained from the processing of responses, led to the following conclusions .

The analysis of the *occupational exclusion* theme provides complementary data to the quantitative incursion. Thus: occupational exclusion is felt most strongly in contacts with employers, when trying to occupy a job and less while in contact with work-colleagues . Some of those who took a job had hidden their past experience in prison while others have recognized this fact. There have been times when stigmatizing actions were accepted by subjects in an attempt to preserve their jobs.

Regarding the exclusion from *housing*, this problem was found in approximately one third of respondents. After release , most offenders returned to the homes of their parents, the cases where convicts had private housing being rare.

Exclusion from *family* is very rare. Most recidivists stated that relations with their family members were good or very good, even if sometimes their detention has caused feelings of shame to their parents.

The analysis of *interpersonal exclusion* aimed to identify potentially exclusive attitudes on the part of neighbors and the group of friends. There were no differences in the attitudes of the two groups, both having rather a prosocial role, of encouragement and motivation in finding existential paths that do not intersect with criminal activity.

Regarding the *exclusion expressed by representatives of public institutions*, it can be noticed that more than half of the investigated recidivists appreciate they felt marginalized on contact with public institutions representatives. It is likely that some of those who made such statements might not have called to such institutions, since they returned to their antisocial habits.

The *quantitative research findings* coincide with those of the qualitative research, though the latter go deeper into the issues studied. Thus the research instruments and the results obtained have been validated, as phenomena of exclusion put their "print", in a negative way, upon the social reintegration of people leaving prisons.

A reference of the results of this study to action directives proposed by various international fora leads to the following conclusions: the Romanian state takes into account in the recommendations of international law with regard to criminal and post-criminal assistance; the implementation of international guidelines is often difficult or impossible due to objective factors (unemployment, financial constraints, the issue of collective mental reluctance to accept and reintegrate former prisoners, lack of personnel with responsibilities for social reintegration, etc.); sustained effort by responsible government representatives and

community members in general is required to reduce criminal recidivism, a phenomenon with negative consequences for both public safety and in terms of justice and detention costs.

One of the objectives of the research was *to identify explanatory theoretical models of criminal recidivism*. The results confirm the labeling and the stigmatization theory statements whereby on the one hand, the social reality related to former inmates is constructed in terms of symbolic representations that people project on this category of people, while on the other hand the effects of stigma on former inmates is observed in low or marginal access to various resources in the social field (jobs, social housing, etc.). These denials do nothing else than pushing these individuals to other subsistence solutions that lie beyond the legal limits. Thus Boudon 's statement that stigmatized deviants , i.e. those who are labeled and excluded, will be forced to find solutions that enable them to survive rejection, is confirmed.

Another objective of the study was to shape *the social profile of the recidivist* in Oradea Penitentiary. The results show that the socio-legal profile of repeat offenders is as follows: they are persons around 32 years, with a predilection to commit crimes of theft or robbery; they have a very low educational and skill level, being also poorly integrated in terms of family. In the period after release some of them: are looking for a job and/or housing ; usually enjoy acceptance in the family home or in the newly established one; are usually included by the group of neighbors and friends.

Among others, this research aimed to indicate social factors that may be put in relation to criminal recidivism. The results clearly show that exclusion from the labor market and housing influences the appearance of recidivism. However, taken as a whole, social exclusion causes criminal behavior.

The last objective was to build *an explanatory model of recidivism* in relation to the exclusion factors analyzed. The research results indicate that in general, recidivism can be explained by the phenomena of labeling and stigmatization of former prisoners in different social contexts (employment, housing and communicating with public institutions), which leads to attitudes of social exclusion which prevent natural reintegration of the former prison population segment, it having only antisocial solutions to survive.

The answer to the *research question* that aims to find out how and to what extent social exclusion contributes to the occurrence of criminal relapse is found in the following data obtained from research. Social exclusion on finding a job and getting a home lead to the lack of financial resources that can provide the necessary legal daily living, i.e. a living space absolutely necessary for survival. This fact contributes significantly to the choice of illicit variants of existence, the only ones available to provide basic needs, even to the risk of

returning in detention, a situation ensuring comfortable minimum survival conditions (food, accommodation, healthcare, etc.).

The *innovations* brought by the above research are: it is the first Romanian research that tests the influence of variables associated with the emergence of social exclusion on criminal recidivism; elements related to the issue of social exclusion with which former prisoners in Romania confront have been tested by comparison to other states, results being very similar; the relationship of influence that social exclusion exerts in the manifestation of criminal recidivism has been highlighted statistically; we compared data resulting from interviews with former prisoners that relapsed and information provided by offenders who have not relapsed; data obtained from quantitative and qualitative research were triangulated, in the sense that the two forms of research provided identical answers to the research objectives; the results obtained may be disseminated and used to develop reintegration strategies for inmates or former inmates.

Proposals for the improvement of the studied phenomenology are presented below in relation to the social factors subscribed to the phenomenon of social exclusion.

The first social factor that proved to have significant influence in the emergence of criminal recidivism was the exclusion in *accessing employment*. In order to reduce this phenomenon several steps are needed, so that significant effects might be observed in a medium-term period of time. Starting from the fact that prisoners in general and recidivists in particular present a low level of skills due to the low level of school education and professionalization, measures should be adopted in order to counteract these phenomena through educational and vocational interventions.

Regarding the issue of *exclusion from housing*, experienced by those leaving prison, the availability of social housing in our country should be considered. The situation of social housing is known: the insufficient number of social homes, the long lists of applicants who must wait years to get into the possession of a social home. About a third of the recidivists released need a house and are unable to wait for very long periods of time to receive such housing; in addition they lack the financial resources to hire a home. Solutions for the optimization of this problem involve primarily a legal framework in the field of social housing, which should be aligned with community opportunities and the housing needs of those leaving prison. Concurrently, better connectivity and bidirectional communication between social services in prisons with their counterparts in local government are required. In parallel, NGOs initiatives must be encouraged, especially those of institutions that manage to provide even temporary housing support to former inmates in various social shelters.

Given that one can not speak of *exclusion from family and group of acquaintances*, it is not necessary to suggest improvement ideas for this direction. These social groups have rather an inclusive role through the material and the emotional support granted.

Exclusion from representatives of state institutions is quite rarely encountered. However, it is recommended that each institution with attributions involving tasks with former prisoners to be concerned with the professional quality of human resources subordinated so that the latter should have adequate communication skills, ability to be empathize and to resolve situations incurred for the purposes of meeting the needs and social problems posed by former inmates. A fair resolution of problems appearing after release means a decrease in the chances of criminal relapse.

An integrative solution for the entire issue of social exclusion, as perceived by former inmates and contributing to the reduction of criminal behavior refers to the existence of an adequate legal framework to establish mechanisms for cooperation between all relevant governmental and nongovernmental factors with responsibilities in the field. Starting and making operational such an inter-institutional mechanism is feasible in a medium-term horizon. The fundament of this multi-institutional edifice is created by the National Strategy for the Social Reintegration of detainees, which creates prerequisites for reducing criminal recidivism. After the approval and application of this legislation other opportunities to streamline social integration problems of people leaving prison Romanian spaces will become available.

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