



The role of religious education in tertiary crime preventions

Leila Melinda Hezam

Dr, assistant professor, PhD student
Eötvös Loránd University,
Faculty of Law
Eötvös Loránd University,
Doctoral School of Law
hezam.leila@ajk.elte.hu



Abstract

Aim: Since man is a being in search of meaning, religion can be defined as a way of ‘sacral search for meaning’ related to certain events in life. While sacrality is central to some people’s systems of meaning-seeking, it is marginal or not sacral at all in the systems of others. It is clear that religion can be an important guide for the individual, as it can influence one’s understanding of the world and make individual challenges and social conflicts understandable and bearable. As faith, in its mature developmental form, underpins the way religious people live their lives, the sacral search for meaning can also play a crucial role in one’s coping processes. However, the extent to which religion is involved in coping with a particular life event depends to a large extent on the extent to which it is part of an individual’s orientation system. The protective effect of religion in coping is a thesis already recognised by scientific psychology and therefore has an undisputed place in the scientific professional discourse on reintegration. The aim of this paper is to provide scientific evidence for the place and legitimacy of religion in reintegration.

Methodology: The research is based on two sub-samples, one religious and one control group. Inclusion in the religious group was based on self-reporting, regardless of whether the subjects of the study had a religious experience in the life period prior to serving their sentence. The data were analysed using SPSS statistical software package.

English-language republication. The Hungarian version of this article was published in *Belügyi Szemle* 2024, issue 3. DOI link: <https://doi.org/10.38146/bsz-ajia.2024.v72.i3.pp393-413>

Findings: Juveniles in juvenile detention who self-reported being religious showed a different attitude towards conflict management compared to the control group. This suggests that a framework of cooperation between civil churches, the academic community and decision-makers in custodial institutions could be used to develop a diversified, faith-based reintegration model to increase the effectiveness of efforts to reduce crime.

Value: The publication is a gap in the empirical study of religion-based reintegration. The topic is a practical one, but its full exploration requires further research.

Keywords: religious practice, reintegration, coping, conflict resolution

Theses

It is beyond dispute nowadays that religion is part of the great social theories, and even more so that it occupies a prominent place in the social sciences, even if the phenomenon of religion, from the point of view of criminal sciences, is more often dealt with in the peripheral fields of sociology and criminology, where it does not have a rich literature. In the present study, I examine the attitudinal effects of reintegration programmes based on the Christian religion among juvenile boys in domestic correctional institutions. The historical traditions and religious homogeneity of Hungary justify the Christian religious orientation of the effectiveness study, while the target group of the study is justified by the disproportion of male and female children. The study investigates the effectiveness of religion as a reintegration tool and the effectiveness and probability of social reintegration through a differentiated dimension of religious practice (conflict management as a coping method). The research hypothesis proposed in this study is that religious adults have different conflict management attitudes than the control group (non-religious adults). In my analysis, I will attempt to provide evidence that religious practice may lead to a shift in attitudes related to conflict management, which may facilitate successful social reintegration.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the potential of religious practice to support social reintegration (in this case through conflict resolution), while at the same time drawing the attention of reintegration scholars to the fact that this is a reintegration tool with significant reintegration potential.

Introduction

There are many connections between human behaviour and religiosity that are already known. It can influence an individuals' behaviour patterns, affect their goals and guide their choices. The main outcome of the process of religious faith development, in terms of behaviour, is when the individual reaches a stage of religious maturity where their decision-making mechanisms are no longer guided by external expectations but by their own beliefs (Martos & Kézdy, 2007).

Prison policy in Hungary, including correctional institutions – especially after the emergence of co-disciplines involved from the 1960s – has made a long journey through the territory of tertiary crime prevention, from re-education to the letting-go of educational optimism, to the function of supporting the prisoners' livelihood after release. Despite a whole range of scientific ideas, legal theories of tertiary crime prevention have now abandoned their illusory notions and seek to add to the scientific theses of prevention ideas mainly by their positions on ideal prison conditions and alternative sentences. Thus, while the scientific expectations of modern penal policy are largely oriented towards alternative punishment: reducing the burden on the judiciary, avoiding overcrowding in prisons and the negative effects of prisons and correctional institutions, and prioritising human liberties. Until then, the reintegration goals of correctional enforcement and its implementation in practice have been the focus of both legal and academic circles, which aim to bring conditions of detention closer to a free social existence, while social expectations favour repressive enforcement (Lőrincz, 2009).

These opposing expectations also distract attention from possible reintegration instruments whose existence does not depend on the implementation environment, budgetary resources or the possibilities to implement corrective interventions. One such reintegration tool is the practice of religion, the (re)integration potential of which has been demonstrated by a wide range of free social research. Religion and offending are conceptually distinct research topics, but this conceptual distance is only apparent, and the main proof of this is the granting of the right to practise religion in the enforcement context. However, the exercise of religion within the walls of the penitentiary institution has become more of a fundamental right, which penitentiary institutions are obliged to guarantee. The professional discourse on the nature of the connection between religious practice and offending is rather poor, in other words, it is outside the professional dialogue on reintegration in our time, at least as far as general European practice is concerned. This does not consist in a denial or severe restriction of the right to practise religion, but rather in a lack of professional reflection on this issue (Johnson & Schroeder, 2014).

The resources of religious practice, whether in prison inmates, inmates of penitentiaries, or members of free society, are illustrated by Pascal's thought: *'The knowledge of God without that of man's misery causes pride. The knowledge of man's misery without that of God causes despair. The knowledge of Jesus Christ is the middle course, because in Him we find both God and our misery'* (Pascal, 1978).

Scientifically verified effects of religious practice

The legitimacy of the practice of religion in the field of tertiary crime prevention can be justified by two main factors: the complex nature of the clerical profession and the positive effects of religious practice on life skills, as demonstrated by scientific research, i.e. the protective effects of religious practice.

A dynamically changing age places countless demands on the pastoral profession. For the believers, it is important that the pastor be an excellent speaker, a good teacher, an accessible spiritual counsellor, a shaper of opinion and community, and a good psychologist or psychotherapist, all of this, of course, at the cornerstone of faith. And neither the church nor the prison or correctional services expect anything less. The theoretical background of Christian psychology is the science of pastoral psychology, which is situated at the interface of psychology and theology (Tiringer, 2013).

Psychotherapy is a helping process that seeks to achieve behavioural change through human interaction (i.e. communication and relationship) (Tiringer, 2013).

These tasks are not easy, especially when the pastor carries out these activities within the walls of prisons or correctional institutions. In this particular environment, his tasks are complemented by the assessment of prisoners' requests, the organisation of the church service and, not infrequently, the service to the staff. In addition to his role as a teacher, the chaplain therefore also carries out mental health, pastoral care and psychotherapeutic tasks. Of course, these tasks are not sharply separated, they can interact at many points and are in fact complementary. All three areas are characterised by a belief in correctable behaviour, a relationship with the person in need, the maintenance of a professional framework for assistance, and the formulation of an individualised goal based on the needs of the person in need (Tiringer, 2013). The work of the pastor therefore goes beyond the formal exercise of religious practice.

The 'inner rearrangement' and new type of life guidance that takes place in the individual can of course be achieved with the help of a psychologist, mental health professional, pastoral care worker, without religious content, but the

value content conveyed by the pastor can be just as suitable tool for the transformation of the inner order, as the research outlined in this chapter tries to show. Furthermore, *'we should take it as evidence that religious belief, practice and relationship with God are associated with positive health, well-being and healing, and have an impact on personality functioning and the quality of human relationships and moral behaviour. [...], we must see religiosity as a resource for coping with adversity'* (Tiringier, 2013; Horváth-Szabó, 2007). Alongside the pastor, the religious community can also play a role in shaping attitudes, helping to develop faith and what is known as 'mature religiosity'. The characteristics of this are summarised by Szentmártoni (2003). In his view, a person with 'mature religiosity':

- has a rich and differentiated spiritual life, able to distinguish the essential from the non-essential;
- autonomous, carrying its own particular dynamics, i.e. faith becomes the individual's way of life;
- is a coherent unit within the personality, i.e. it affects moral conviction;
- comprehensive, mature religiosity is transformed into a worldview and frames the individual's system of meaning (Szentmártoni, 2003; Tiringier, 2013).

With regard to the protective factors of religious practice, it is important to emphasise that offending does not necessarily mean the proliferation of criminal attitudes, but is often explained by a constellation of unfavourable circumstances (Szabó, 2015). Therefore, the protective effect of religion is a relevant reintegration tool primarily for repeat offenders who show personality traits of criminal attitudes.

The observation of the relationship between religious practice and offending is not new, but its examination as a reintegration tool in prison or correctional settings has not been a feature of the domestic research and literature until recently. The aim of faith-based reintegration programmes is twofold: theologically, to win the heart of the person, whether free or convicted, and to help them to come to faith (conversion); and in terms of enforcement, to reduce recidivism and facilitate the treatment of convicted persons. Thus, the purpose of prisons and correctional institutions is not to facilitate conversion, but to deny the connection between these two aspects is a complete misunderstanding of faith-based reintegration (Hallett et al., 2019). In order to demonstrate the reintegration potential of religious practice and its potential as a resource for the prison service, a systematic review of research on the effects of religious practice is essential.

1 Translation by the author.

Contemporary research into the connection between religious practice and criminality can be traced back to Hirschi and Stark's highly controversial 1969 publication *Hellfire and Crime*. Their study has become a real catalyst for research into the connection between religion and crime. The work has significantly shaped the 'intellectual climate' on offending, and it is no coincidence that the literature on religion and offending refers to the study as the 'Hirschi effect' (Jang & Johnson, 2020). The catalyst effect was due to the fact that Hirschi and Stark found no significant inverse correlation between measures of delinquency and religious commitment among the juveniles included in the study. This implies that their research findings suggest that increasing religious commitment among juveniles is not associated with a decrease in the likelihood of delinquency. The original findings of Hirschi and Stark have been confirmed by subsequent research and refuted by others, but it is undisputed that their work has stimulated research on religious practice (Burkett & White, 1974; Albrecht et al., 1977; Higgins & Albrecht, 1977). The results of the research therefore proved to be rather contradictory, which was later explained by Stark as a result of the different moral composition of the communities of the young people studied; he found that in areas with high church membership and attendance, a so-called 'moral community' is also established, as opposed to areas with lower church membership, where the community is more formal. Stark's finding thus identified a statistically detectable correlation between religiosity and offending in moral communities (Johnson & Schroeder, 2014; Stark et al., 1982; Hirschi & Stark, 1969). This important theoretical perspective has provided the framework for further exploration of the relationship between religion and offending.

A range of empirical research suggests that religious practice is also protective against criminal acts in communities characterised by poverty. Johnson and colleagues (2000) found that for US youth at risk of poverty (in the Boston, Chicago and Philadelphia areas), religiosity has a real deterrent effect against drug use; they also showed that among disadvantaged youth, frequency of church attendance has an inversely proportional effect on criminal offending, particularly drug use and drug sales (Johnson & Schroeder, 2014). Indeed, empirical evidence also suggests that the positive effects of religious practice on young people persist even when the immediate environment is unfavourable, so that young people with 'bad backgrounds' can still become 'good children' if their faith is important to them (Johnson & Schroeder, 2014). But there is also growing empirical evidence that religious commitment can reduce the risk of criminal behaviour, including minor and more serious forms of crime (Evans et al., 1996).

Examining the theses of research on the practice of religion, we can conclude that religion reduces the occurrence of stressful life events, also reduces the

pressure to control an individual's life, provides a cognitive framework of meaning with a related worldview, can be a tool for improving socio-economic status, increases adaptive capacity, independent of self-evaluation. Religion is thus essentially a system that offers its followers both a moral order and a law-abiding way of life. The practice of religion deserves special attention in the reintegration policies of prisons and correctional institutions, because of the protective effects described above. This is supported by a 2012 study showing that nearly 80% of studies on religious practice found a positive association with psychological well-being (Makridis et al., 2020).

Christian reintegration in general

The interdisciplinary nature of the topic is clearly illustrated by the research above. As Pulszky and Tauffer put it before the turn of the century: *'Science, like life, like nature, like all world orders, is essentially unified. But the human mind can only attain to the comprehension of this supreme unity by analysis; after the first incomplete and confused impression, it must enter into the dissection of the details, and understand their interrelationship and relationship, before it can rise to the second survey, in which it gains a clear picture of the universal whole, which in itself is harmonious and complete. In examining the individual parts, however, we must never forget that they are not independent, that they are not autonomous, that they are only dry, decaying dross when broken off the living tree of science.'* (Pulszky & Tauffer, 1867).

The fact of imprisonment and the factors inherent in the enforcement environment (such as forced community, fixed agenda, house rules) are a tough test for reintegration professionals and prisoners alike. However, religiously based reintegration can counteract these factors, help to establish moral judgement, restore moral behaviour and rehabilitate relationships, both horizontal, i.e. human-human, and vertical, i.e. human-God. It is the scientific utility of the latter that this study seeks to demonstrate.

The enforcement of custodial sentences is primarily a state task, which serves both to ensure public safety, to protect society and to enforce the state's criminal powers, while at the same time pursuing the objective of social reintegration. The Church plays a decisive role in achieving these objectives. The role of the Churches goes beyond the right to worship in the penal and correctional environment, as it does in the free social environment, and extends to many areas of social life. On the one hand, it provides community religious services (worship), and on the other, it seeks to maintain personal contact with the prisoners, which

is a common way of practising religion. Contact with a chaplain (pastoral care) can have a number of positive benefits for prisoners, such as:

- the chaplain can help prisoners to face their own past and help them to accept and deal with the trauma of the crime;
- support prisoners in coping with the harmful consequences of imprisonment;
- can help prepare for life after release;
- can assist with social reintegration through the transmission of moral values; and
- can help to develop a positive vision of the future (Tihanyi, 2019).

The basic theology and attitude to man and sin of the theology within the walls of prisons and correctional institutions is the same as that of the free social Christian churches. It is based on the principle that all people are equal, and that there is no difference between 'slightly sinful' and 'very sinful' people, even if the latter are put behind bars. The practical utility of this for the convict is connected to self-esteem, because if the convict believes that there is no difference between him and the people 'on the outside', then he can see a way out of the criminal life, he can believe that there is another way than the one that leads back within these prison walls (Tihanyi, 2019). It is also important to mention the two obvious challenges that pastors working within the 'prison walls' inevitably face:

- 1) On the one hand, the specific situations of life within the walls of execution (the life of the criminal) encourage the representatives of the churches to dare to break with the comfort Christianity that otherwise characterises Europeanism, and to dare to try new forms of communication and group activities without changing the theological message, either by changing the social activities in the outside world or by means of religious activities specifically designed for the prison.
- 2) The attitude of the chaplain and the religious practitioner towards the culture of the prison is key. If the attachment of the person mediating religion to the local prison subculture is insufficient, the church becomes a sub-cultural ghetto, but if it is too much adapted to it, the values it mediates become weightless (Tihanyi, 2019).

Here, it is also important to refer to the role of secular and sacral power partnerships that can potentially facilitate reintegration work, as they can mediate hope for prisoners (Jang & Johnson, 2020). This cooperation implies complex institutional cooperation, which raises a number of additional organisational issues. What is certain, however, from an empirical perspective of the impact of religion, is that the prison service, the academic profession and secular sectors of society

must recognise that providing religion-based reintegration programmes and creating the possibility for continuous programme renewal in the implementation of these programmes is not an unacceptable method of reintegration for the right to practise religion, but a desirable one. In view of the limited capacities of the state and the churches, it is advisable to create opportunities for the involvement of civil churches and volunteers. As regards volunteers, it is important to stress that the effectiveness of their involvement in reintegration has been empirically proven (Duwe & Johnson, 2016). In addition, volunteers providing faith-based programmes in prisons would also save the prison budget (Hallett et al., 2019).

However, as security considerations cannot be neglected in any reintegration programme, the familiarisation of the members of the civil church community who are willing to participate, with the rules of law and order may be a necessary precondition for the authorisation of cooperation. However, the renewed involvement of churches in reintegration cannot end at the moment of release. At this point, civil churches can play a decisive role, as they must be ready to welcome and support the reintegration of the ex-prisoner into the religious community of the place of residence of the prisoner or the place of the municipality of their choice. Aftercare in a church community can provide a strong social network that can replace otherwise poor family or other social contacts, and the involvement of volunteers from civil church communities in prisoner reintegration can be an almost inexhaustible human resource. If the efforts of the Church are taken seriously by the domestic scientific community, an objective assessment of the effectiveness of religious programmes cannot be neglected. This will open up a scientific avenue for domestic researchers that has remained largely unexplored until now. This empirical accountability could ultimately improve the relationship between the prison system and between correctional and religious institutions.

The protective effects of religious practice: how personal conflict coping is experienced by juveniles

The Christian religion can place a positive emphasis on coping resources such as health, education, social relationships. This is confirmed by Park's (2005) research among university students, which showed that religious people's coping not only focuses on sacred coping, but also helps them to cope with difficulties (Park, 2005). According to his thesis, religiosity gives a new colour to the individual, a kind of cognitive reframing of coping. Coping strategies can be an excellent indicator of individual experience of conflict, in which the

16-item Conflict Resolution Questionnaire provides methodological support (Rózsa et al., 2008).

The *Conflict Resolution Questionnaire* focuses on the analysis of people's coping strategies. Coping is basically a process, that describes and summarises a person's mental and behavioural efforts to respond and deal with an event that has happened to them. At the theoretical level, the literature articulates two broad categories of coping strategies: problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. The problem-focused strategy is characterised by an attempt to influence or change a situation. Thus, in problem-focused conflict management, the individual makes an active effort to change or eliminate the event that directly causes the stress. Emotion-focused strategies, on the other hand, do not attempt to change the situation, but to change the emotional processes involved. In reality, of course, a mixture of these is used, and none of them is right or wrong in itself, as the effectiveness of their application is often situational. The practice of religion, prayer and trust in spiritual authority can basically be categorised as emotion-focused coping, as religious practice can be seen as a support-seeking rather than an active problem-solving strategy (N. Kollár & Szabó, 2004; Park, 2005). The *Ways of Coping Questionnaire* was originally developed by Lazarus and Folkman in the 1980s. The questionnaire, initially consisting of 66 items, was shortened (16 items) and validated in Hungary by Rózsa and co-authors (2008), who made it available to Hungarian researchers. The work of Rózsa and his colleagues was preceded by several domestic validations (following the work of Mária Kopp and Árpád Skrabski), but these were adaptations of several questions (22 items) and thus several factors (7-8 dimensions of analysis). These longer adaptations were used to produce the 16-item version, which was needed to make the questionnaire quicker and easier to retrieve (Rózsa et al., 2008).

The questionnaire uses a four-point Likert scale (1 = not typical; 2 = hardly typical; 3 = typical; 4 = very typical). However, with regard to the measurement of conflict resolution, it should be noted that dividing the types of strategies into factor groups and characterising individuals along these lines is a very difficult task, as coping is a complex, multidimensional process; and due to its process nature, different strategies may characterise a conflict management period (Rózsa et al., 2008).

The research sample

The modality of conflict management for religious juveniles was examined in four domestic correctional institutions in the country. The correctional institutions included in the study were Budapest, Aszód, Nagykanizsa and Debrecen.

The survey was carried out between June and August 2023. 138 juveniles completed the questionnaire, an average of 32 per institution, of which 16 were religious and 16 were non-religious (control group). The latter group was selected in order to make the questionnaire data comparable with those of the religiously practising juveniles who were used as a control group. The subjects of the control group are therefore a group of subsample subjects who do not receive the experimental stimulus, in this case religious practice.

In order to verify the positive effects of religious practice on conflict management and social reintegration, quantitative research was chosen, which is justified by the fact that it provides a comprehensive picture of the attitude of the inmates of the reformatory towards religious practice through the analysis of the relationship between the criteria examined in the questionnaire, and also by the fact that it allows for objective comparison of the subsamples, by using statistical methods.

The sub-samples are:

- a group of juveniles who call themselves religious,
- self-identified non-religious juvenile group.

In research on religious practice, the differentiation is typically based on attendance at worship, and empirical results have consistently supported an inversely proportional relationship between worship attendance and deviance. However, given that worship occasions occur with a different regularity from adults and are replaced by religious group sessions with different frequencies, religiosity was defined on the basis of self-report to ensure comparability between correctional institutions. Thus, the religious sample included minors who self-reported to be religious, while the control group also included self-reported sample members. In both cases, only male juveniles were included in the study, which is justified by the gender bias in favour of the male sex. The average age of the sample at the time of data collection is 17 years. Juveniles who agreed to complete the questionnaire – completion of the questionnaire was voluntary – completed the questionnaire in small groups (10-15). The questionnaire took on average 30-35 minutes to complete.

In order to evaluate the data from the questionnaire, a database was created and the data was analysed in detail using the SPSS software package.

The instructions of the questionnaire asked respondents to recall and re-experience a recent difficult situation, and then, based on the re-experienced state of mind, to choose the reactions listed in the questionnaire, depending on which of these reactions occurred in the weeks following the recalled event and to what extent.

Those elements of the questionnaire (so-called items) were selected in which the self-identified religious children excel and which at the same time counter-balance the negative effects of imprisonment, thus helping their reintegration.

Table 1
Areas investigated

Areas investigated	Statement of the questionnaire
1. Optimism	'I thought, there's good in every bad thing, I tried to be cheerful about it.'
2. Humour	'I tried to be humorous about the situation.'
3. Development of character	'I was emerging from the situation as a different person, in a good way.'
4. Solution focus	'I found several different solutions to the problem.'
5. Problem analysis	'I tried to analyse the problem to understand it better.'

Note. Table provided by the author.

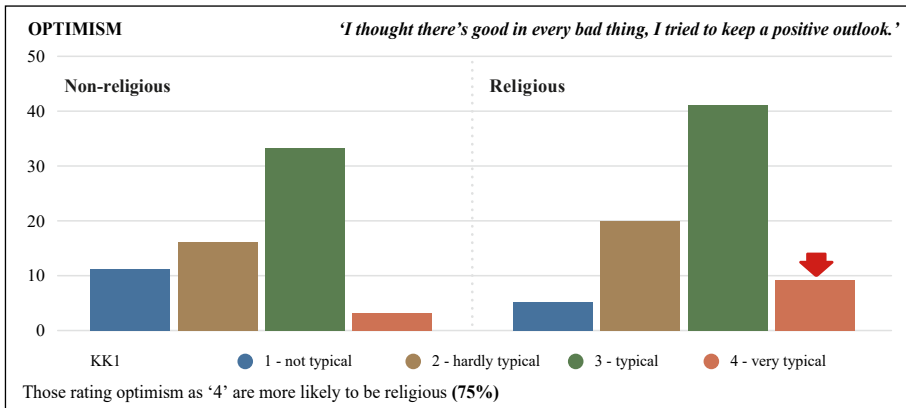
The study was conducted in the spirit of ecumenism and therefore does not distinguish between Christian denominations in the factor analysis. No differentiation is therefore made between Christian denominations.

Empirical picture of the areas covered

The data showed a partly significant and partly trend-like correlation between religiosity and adaptive forms of conflict management.

The first area in which religious youth have shown remarkable results is optimism. In terms of optimism, a form of framing appears that gives place to a positive outlook on life in the religious group, a coping mode that is therefore used significantly more by the religious group. Those who rated optimism at 4, i.e. those who said that they were very optimistic during the conflict they had experienced, were more likely to be in the religious group. In terms of proportion, it can be observed that 75% of the religious group were very optimistic during the conflict recalled. In contrast, the non-religious group had a higher proportion of those who rated optimism as 1 (68%). An optimistic outlook in a conflict situation can be an important coping tool, as it can imply awareness of the possibility of change, the ability to influence a situation that seems hopeless into a positive direction, which can mean escape from recidivism for a juvenile on the verge of delinquency.

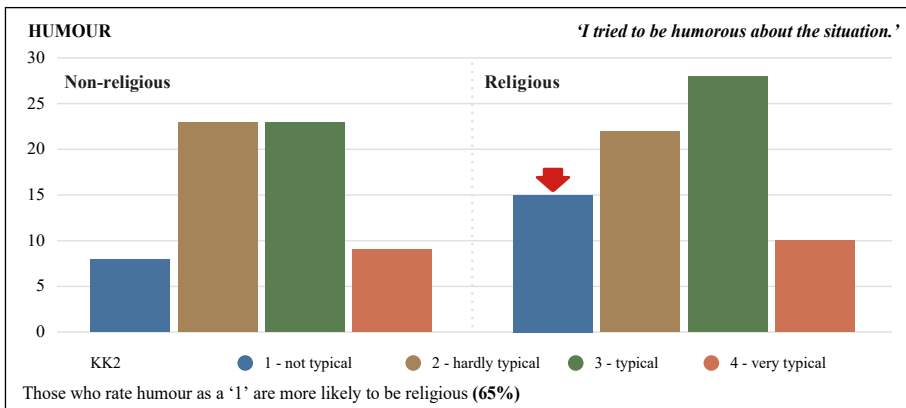
Figure 1
Optimism among juveniles in correctional institutions



Note. Table provided by the author.

Humour seems to be used significantly more by the non-religious group, with 65% of respondents with a religious base marking humour as 1 (i.e. not typical) and around 35% of respondents marking humour as uncharacteristic. The latter are the control group. This may indicate a weaker coping of the religious group. However, humour, which in theory is a positive way of reframing, can also act as a trivialisation in the group studied, and can also be seen as a way of deflecting responsibility, so that the fact that humour is in the background cannot necessarily be assessed as a weakness of the conflict management method.

Figure 2
Humour in juveniles in correctional institutions

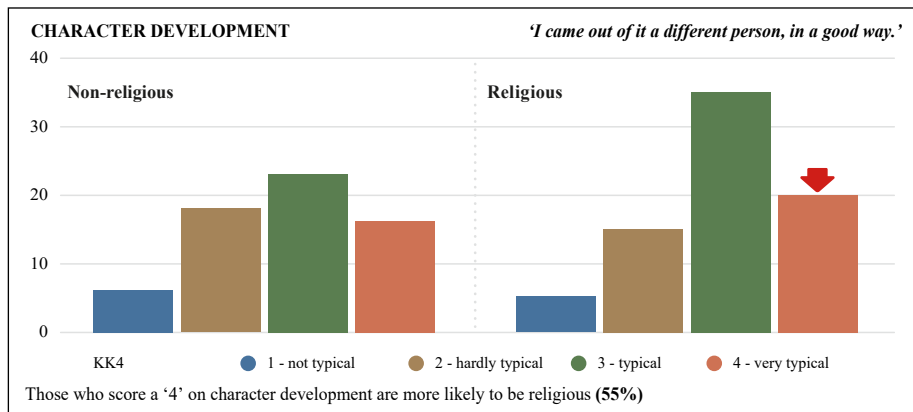


Note. Table provided by the author.

There is a tendency-like correlation between personal development, i.e. character development, and religiosity. Respondents who rated their character development as 4 (very typical) were typically from the religious group, with 55% of respondents indicating a positive change in their personal development as a relevant factor.

Figure 3

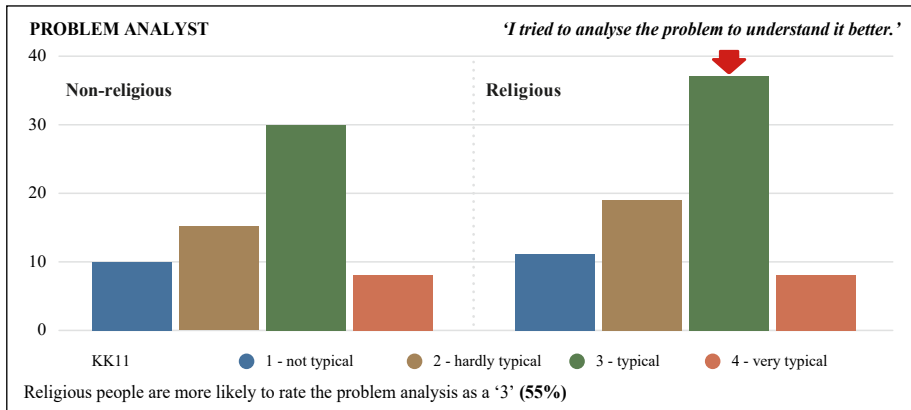
Character development in juveniles in correctional institutions



Note. Table provided by the author.

There is also a trend-like correlation in the area of problem analysis ability. The empirical results indicated that in the religious group, following the recalled conflict, the analysis of it as a 3 (i.e., a typical trait) is more likely to occur in the religious group. In fact, 55% of the self-identified religious respondents described the weeks following the conflict as being typically accompanied by the phenomenon of analysis.

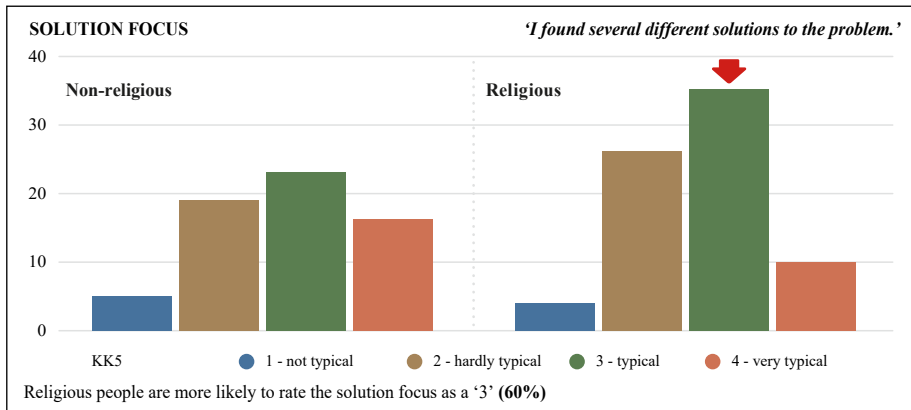
Figure 4
Problem analysis of juveniles in correctional institutions



Note. Table provided by the author.

Finally, the solution-focus item showed notable results in the religious group, according to which the solution-focused approach is the 3rd (i.e., typical trait) in the religious group. 60% of the self-identified religious respondents described the weeks following the conflict as typically characterised by a solution-focused approach.

Figure 5
Solution focus for juveniles in correctional institutions



Note. Table provided by the author.

Summary

Based on empirical research in positive psychology, religiosity can be a structure that helps in the search for meaning, commitment to goals, conflict management, forgiveness, and generally helps in the integration and development of the personality. The protective effects of religion among the civilian population are well documented by social science, and the results of the research above suggest that similar effects of religious practice can be observed among juvenile boys in correctional institutions. Undoubtedly, the results of religiosity are observed primarily as a result of virtue effects and existential influences, the imprint of which is manifested through conflict resolution. Therefore, it is recommended to diversify both the theory and the practice of reintegration with the diversity of religious programmes.

A worthy means of this can be the provision of various forms of religious practice and faith-based occupational groups, as well as the (pro)active involvement of religious institutions in the criminal justice system. Otherwise, my preliminary assumption is that the domestic public is more in favour of religious-based prisoners' reintegration initiatives than of progressive improvement of prisoners' conditions, and therefore the demand for social involvement in such reintegration initiatives could also be the beginning of a fruitful cooperation between the state and civil society. Helping prisoners to grow in faith and engaging them in a faith-based community within the prison that can develop pro-social behaviour also has the potential to reduce the risk of reoffending. Of course, the development of faith-based programmes must also address stubborn realities, namely those social deficits (for example, in the area of cognitive conflict management) that can be developed to help promote law-abiding behaviour after release (Cullen, 2010).

The research above, like all research on religious practice, has a dual priority in the area of utility, as it has benefits for both scientific theory and practice, as follows.

The usefulness of religious studies research(s) for scientific theory

- 1) Engaging interdisciplinary research in atypical environments. As discussed in Pulszky & Tauffer (1867) above, research in the field of prisons and correctional institutions is typically interdisciplinary and therefore necessarily requires the involvement of several social science disciplines. This necessarily implies collaboration between researchers with expertise in different social science fields, which allows comprehensive and complex

findings to be made, so that the research results can be interpreted in multiple scientific dimensions.

- 2) Promoting effectiveness studies and psychodiagnostic tests. Research in the implementation environment can help to refine individual reintegration programmes, if necessary, and improve them on the basis of scientifically proven results. Likewise, it can provide methodological assistance in assessing the psychodiagnostic status of prisoners and inmates in correctional institutions.
- 3) Diversifying religious reintegration policies. By demonstrating the scientific relevance of religious practice, religion-based reintegration can be made variable.

The practical expedience of religious studies research

- 4) Tertiary crime prevention – religion can contribute to reducing the risk of recidivism through faith-based programmes and diversification of religious practice.
- 5) Relief, cooperation schemes – religious practice has the potential to relieve the burden on prisons and correctional institutions in both the short and longer term, the former through its impact on behaviour and the latter by reducing recidivism.
- 6) Developing and increasing motivation – perhaps the greatest benefit of practising religion is that the prisoner or inmate can become a law-abiding person through their internal motivational system, rather than behaving correctly to conform to external expectations.

Finally, it is important to stress that the results of research on religious practice can also form the basis for the development of prison pastoral and reintegration programmes in the long term. However, the present research findings are initial results in the area explored, and this slice of implementation clearly requires further research and experimentation with new faith-based programmes. However, further research is needed to explore more precisely the preventive and healing, reintegrative effects of religiosity and spirituality. These should include a more nuanced measurement of religiosity or spirituality and an examination of the relationship of these forms of religiosity to mental well-being. An attempt should therefore be made to place religion-based reintegration on the scientific horizon. The right to practise religion and the related faith-based reintegration ideas re-emerged in our country at the end of the 20th century and will hopefully remain with us.

References

- Albrecht, S. L., Chadwick, B. A. & Alcorn, D. S. (1977). Religiosity and Deviance: Application of an Attitude-Behavior Contingent Consistency Model. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 16(3), 263–274. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1385697>
- Burkett, S. & White, M. (1974). Hellfire and Delinquency: Another Look. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 13(4), 455–462. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1384608>
- Cullen, F. T. (2010). Toward a criminology of religion: comment on Johnson and Jang. In Rosenfeld, R., Quinet, K. & Garcia, C. (Eds.), *Contemporary Issues in Criminological Theory and Research the Role of Social Institutions* (pp. 151–161). Wadsworth.
- Duwe, G. & Johnson, B. R. (2016). The Effects of Prison Visits From Community Volunteers on Offender Recidivism. *The Prison Journal*, 96(2), 279–303. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032885515618468>
- Evans, T. D., Cullen, F. T., Velmer, S. B. Jr., Dunaway, R.G., Payne, G. L. & Kethineni, S. R. (1996). Religion, Social Bonds, and Delinquency. *Deviant Behavior*, 17(1), 43–70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.1996.9968014>
- Hallett, M., Hays, J., Byron, B. R., Duwe, G. & Joon, J. S. (2019). U.S. Prison Seminars: Structural Charity, Religious Establishment, and Neoliberal Corrections. *The Prison Journal*, 99(2), 150–171. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032885519825490>
- Higgins, P. & Albrecht, G. (1977). Hellfire and Delinquency Revisited. *Social Forces*, 55(4), 952–958. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2577564>
- Hirschi, T. & Stark, R. (1969). Hellfire and Delinquency. *Social Problems*, 17(2), 202–213. <https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.1969.17.2.03a00050>
- Horváth-Szabó, K. (2007). *Vallás és emberi magatartás* [Religion and human behaviour]. Pázmány Péter Katolikus Egyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kar.
- Jang, S. J. & Johnson, B. R. (2020). *Connecting In-Prison Programs to Prisoner Reentry and Aftercare. A Case Study of Restoration Outreach of Dallas Ministries*. Baylor University.
- Johnson, B. R., Larso, D. B., Joon, J. S. & Spencer, D. L. (2000). The ‘Invisible Institution’ and Black Youth Crime: The Church as an Agency of Local Social Control. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 29(4), 479–498. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1005114610839>
- Johnson, B. R. & Schroeder, C. S. (2014). Religion, Crime and Criminal Justice. In N. A., *Oxford Handbook Topics in Criminology and Criminal Justice* (online edn) (pp. 1–14). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935383.013.005>
- Lőrincz, J. (2009). *Büntetőpolitika és börtönügy* [Penal and prison policy]. Rejtjel Kiadó.
- Makridis, C., Byron, J. R. & Koenig, H. G. (2020). Does Religious Affiliation Protect People’s Well-Being? Evidence from the Great Recession After Correcting for Selection Effects. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 60(7), 1–34. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12700>
- Martos, T. & Kézdy, A. (2007). A vallásosság szerepe a személyes célok rendszerében [The role of religiosity in the system of personal goals]. In Horváth-Szabó, K. (Szerk.), *Vallásosság és személyiség* (pp. 134–156). Pázmány Péter Katolikus Egyetem.

- N. Kollár, K. & Szabó, É. (2004). *Pszichológia pedagógusoknak* [Psychology for pedagogues]. Osiris Kiadó.
- Park, C. L. (2005). Religion as a Meaning-Making Framework in Coping with Life Stress. *Journal of Social Issues*, 61(4), 707–729. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2005.00428.x>
- Pascal, B. (1978). *Gondolatok* [Reflections]. Gondolat Kiadó.
- Pulszky, Á. & Tauffer, E. (1867). *A börtönügy múltja, elmélete, jelen állása különös tekintettel Magyarországra* [The past, theory and present status of prisons, with special reference to Hungary]. Emich Gusztáv Kiadványa.
- Rózsa, S., Purebl, Gy., Susánszky, É., Kő, N., Szádóczky, E., Réthelyi, J., Danis, I., Skrabski, Á. & Kopp, M. (2008). A megküzdés dimenziói: a Konfliktusmegoldó kérdőív hazai adaptációja [Dimensions of coping: a domestic adaptation of the Conflict Resolution Questionnaire]. *Mentálhigiéne és Pszichoszomatika*, 9(3), 217–241. <https://doi.org/10.1556/Mental.9.2008.3.3>
- Stark, R., Kent, L. & Doyle, D. P. (1982). Religion and Delinquency: The Ecology of a 'Lost' Relationship. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 19(1), 4–24. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002242788201900102>
- Szabó, J. (2015). *Speciális prevenció és dezisztencia* [Specific prevention and desistance]. Doktori értekezés. Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Állam- és Jogtudományi Kar Doktori Iskola.
- Szentmártoni, M. (2003). A felnőttkor vallásossága [The religiosity of adulthood]. In Horváth-Szabó K. (Szerk.), *Valláspszichológia* (pp. 74–81). Akadémiai Kiadó.
- Tihanyi, M. (2019). *Bűn – hit – szabadulás. A vallás szerepe a büntetés-végrehajtásban* [Crime – Faith – Release. The role of religion in the penitentiary system]. Nemzeti Közszerológiai Egyetem.
- Tiringer, A. (2013). A lelkészek mentálhigiénes tevékenysége [Mental health activities of pastors]. In Kiss, E. Cs. & Sz. Makó, H. (Szerk.), *Mentálhigiéne segítő hivatás. Fejezetek az elmélet és a gyakorlat területeiről* (pp. 171–184). Pro Pannonia Kiadó.

Reference of the article according to APA regulation

- Hazam, L. M. (2024). The role of religious education in tertiary crime prevention. *Belügyi Szemle*, 72(3), 501–520. <https://doi.org/10.38146/bsz-ajia.2024.v72.i3.pp501-520>

Statements

Conflict of interest

The author has declared no conflict of interest.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Ethics

Data will be made available on request.

Open access

This article is an Open Access publication published under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY NC-ND 2.0) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/>), in the sense that it may be freely used, shared and republished in any medium, provided that the original author and the place of publication, as well as a link to the CC License, are credited.

Corresponding author

The corresponding author of this article is Leila Melinda Hezam, who can be contacted at hezam.leila@ajk.elte.hu.