

**SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF IMPRISONMENT:****Measuring the factors of broken personalities. Ecuador****Ximena Costales Peñaherrera, Ecuador**

In order to place the problems regarding deprivation of freedom it is necessary to define, first of all, what is exactly the prison, who are the actors, and the implications the belonging to such a universe has for each of them. It needs to be emphasized that the prison can and should be understood in the frame of the model of the “camps” of Bourdieu, meaning an infrastructure governed by the parameters of the society which gives shelter to them, and which at the same time defines its functioning, dynamics, contradictions and all that characterizes it. For this reason, it is possible as well to understand, in the opposite way, a specific society, if we analyze the prisons. This analysis of the penal universe becomes specially relevant when we try to undress human darkness in this space and the concepts which govern it.

The present work deals primarily with the penal actors who, contrary to the common belief, are not just the persons deprived of freedom. It is necessary to take into account the family members, by majority women, whose lives are strongly disrupted by the confinement of one of their members. Their levels of poverty and limitations turn even more frustrating, and they are confronted with new burdens and responsibilities. The children of imprisoned persons are subject to sensitive changes in their life as well. All of them together constitute a high population, bigger in number than intermediate cities in Ecuador, and with a tendency of increase of population more than those cities.

On the other side, all persons who work in a prison, be it in administrative tasks, “technicians” or guards, are subject to the influence of prison and to the schemes of broken personality at different levels. Faced by a world which involves these actors, it is difficult not to say impossible to develop capacities of social readaptation or some mechanisms of resilience, meaning creative possibilities renewing the personality.

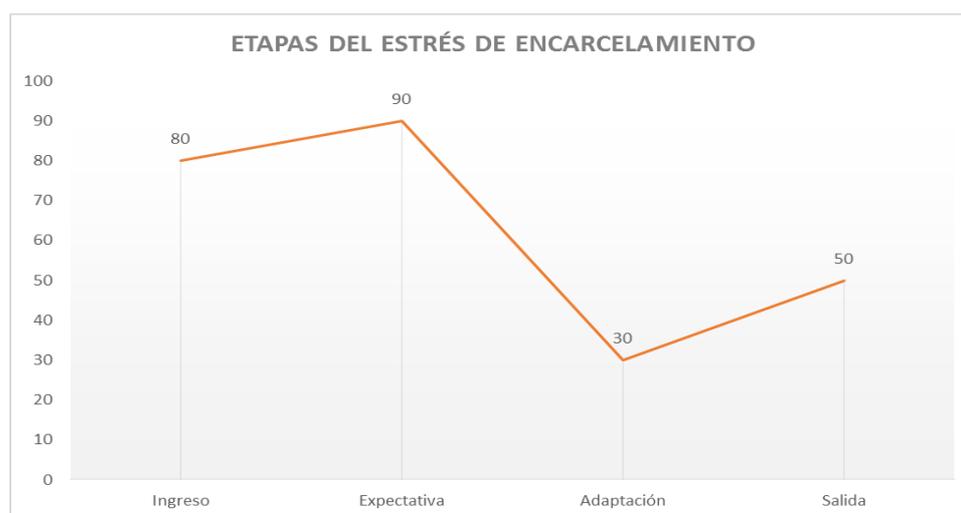
All these parameters, hardly known at social level, easily become “common places”. At the most, mass media and people in general use to affirm that “prison is the University of crime” but do not achieve to fill these headlines with content duly contrasted with reality and seriously tested. There is hardly any difference in the perception of bureaucracies destined to govern the destinies of prisons and those who have in their hands the design of state policies, a phenomena that converts into one of the fundamental reasons why no consistent answers can be given to confinement which is socially and politically demanded for those who break the law.

The core idea of this work includes an explanation of the factors of broken personality, the same which use to be present in all actors we have described. The forms of adaption in penal *habitus*, the coincidence between the individual and collective aspects and the mechanisms of adjustment of these functioning help to explain the immense negativity inside the life of confinement. We will explain how with the starting point of a representative statistical sample responses of persons deprived from freedom have been studied in the prisons densely jammed in Ecuador: Guayaquil and Quito. The results present very high levels of reliability and make evident the principle difficulties these persons go through, related, at the same time, to the obstacles they have to confront in their inevitable return to society, as within the

prison they lose nearly all possibilities to re-learn or cling to encouraging behaviour patterns. The loss of autonomy, restriction of mobility and lack of auto-direction generate negative responses in the imprisoned persons in front of themselves as well as others. The individuals deprived of freedom lose the basic and fundamental condition for psychological balance as they are restricted in their capacity to “take decisions and act according to their desires and necessities” (Valinmer.2008). On the other hand, they cannot exercise the rational submission to the established order with their parameters of life, as they are forced to do it. In fact, the behaviour patterns that are not practised in the due form tend to produce distortions in the sense of no intervention of a personal decision that supports it. The individuals subdued to those conditions live in situation of loss of personal value and produce, besides, disturbances of depressive carácter. These syntoms have their roots in the stress of confinement which is explained in different phases.

In the presentation of the document it becomes clearly obvious which are the behaviour patterns that can decrease or slow down these processes and disturbances, which are always related to the valuation of the human being and the maintenance of emotional links, primarily with their families. Prison, in the words of Michel Foucault, tends to dismember the individual from society, could help to re-do what was undone?

Graphic 1



Source:

AFAP and Valinmer. MJDH.2008.

The high levels of anxiety lived through by the individuals in relation with their penal confinement and their individual and social consequences are essential not only to determine the harmfulness of the penal model in which actual societies are involved, but also for the search of consistent human alternatives.

The whole analysis is finally related to the concept of human security according to which the Ecuadorian State consecrates the theoretical possibility of rights even in these spaces of confinement.