



## Article

# Reactions of Prison Staff to the Needs of Culturally Different Convicts

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**Abstract:** This article presents trends in penitentiary work with convicts of different cultures and focuses on their activation, individualization of work, and organizational difficulties. The purpose of this research was to discover the ways in which prison staff react to situations requiring flexibility justified by cultural differences of some inmates. The research questions included the following: How do prison staff respond to the needs of culturally different inmates? How do the respondents' reactions correlate with professional experience? Based on the literature, a hypothesis was established that prison staff avoid individualized treatment of convicted foreigners. Despite the perceived differences in culture and religion, and their different mentality, prison procedures aim for uniformity. Tendencies towards resistance and stiffness to the needs of culturally different people become prevailing. The research method used included a diagnostic survey ( $n = 232$ , F: 40, M: 192) conducted with prison officers in Poland. A written interview technique was used, where the respondents reacted to 3 situations involving convicts, reflecting their national, religious, and cultural distinctiveness. In their responses, the respondents decided on their method of action in the situation as well as their motivation. Operationalization of the source material was performed in two ways. The content analysis method was applied according to the grounded theory (B.G. Glaser, A.L. Strauss), resulting in the creation of categories marking actions and motives. A multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) of the built categories using the Statistica program as well as a correlation analysis of variables with Cramer's V coefficient were carried out. The results of the analysis show statistically created, indicated manners of reacting that occurred in the studied sample. Additionally, they point out an independent variable—seniority—which correlated with the quality of the response.



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## 1. Introduction

Migration of populations naturally generate new challenges for national justice systems and penitentiary policies. The dynamics of migration and the movement of people for work and settlement purposes brings also crime committed by foreigners. Therefore, the issue of prisoners of foreign nationalities can be considered in two ways depending on quantitative or qualitative perspectives. On one hand, it concerns the number of foreigners convicted of a crime in a country other than their home country. As a result, justice systems and penitentiary procedures must create appropriate procedures, involve foreign language translators, and adjust living conditions. However, from a qualitative perspective, prison isolation of convicts who are culturally different generates new tasks in the field of social, psychological, and pedagogical work. Therefore, the keys are the quality of decisions made, the response to their needs, and finally, the question of the sense and space for individualization of methods of punishment. Individualization draws its sources from human rights to maintain cultural, religious, and ethnic identity and distinctiveness.

The scope of this research concerns exploration of a part of the Polish penitentiary system's organizational culture (the second level in the concept of E. Schein). It focuses on

perception of the reported needs resulting from different cultures and religions of convicts and defines the reactions of officers. The research does not aspire to describe the complexity of relations at the intersection of different cultures or the sphere of interculturalism. This study used three situations in which convicted Muslims formed claims against standard prison pragmatics. However, they are background to provoke the prison staff's reactions, the analysis of which is the essential aspect of this research. This study was grounded in a pragmatic perspective (Charles Sanders Peirce, George Herbert Mead, and John Dewey) and not in a cultural perspective.

The range of challenges faced by prison policies and practice varies across Europe and the Americas. Due to the destinations of migration flowing from the countries in Asia and Africa, naturally, the number of convicts coming from these regions is large in Western Europe, Scandinavia, and Great Britain. In Belgian prisons, the population of convicts of different national, cultural, and religious backgrounds exceeds 40% (Brosens et al. 2019); in Norway, it is over 1/3 of the population (Westrheim and Terje 2014). The convicts mainly come from Poland, Lithuania, Nigeria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Romania, and Somalia. The diversity of the origins of these people is significant for penitentiary work because it is difficult to develop a unified method of communication of activation and support, which would be adapted to different religious practices, mentality, and life experiences. In Poland, as in the countries of the region, i.e., in Slovakia, Czechia, Lithuania, and Hungary, the number of convicted foreigners is at a relatively low level of 0.5–1%. Of course, this does not mean that foreigner crime rates are radically lower than in Western countries. Rather, it is a result of several factors. On one hand, there is less migration to these countries and the region is treated rather as “transit”. On the other hand, the prisonization rate, i.e., use of imprisonment, is much higher. As a result, the general population of prisoners is larger, and the group of several hundred foreigners in custodies or prisons seems to be quantitatively small. However, as in other countries, this is primarily a qualitative problem because the large diversity of convicts generates many challenges for the prison system and policy. An important factor is also the diverse life history of these people. Research conducted in Belgium emphasized the war experiences of Iraqi convicts, whose childhood and youth had been subordinated to conflicts and marginalization of social groups. As a result, childhood experiences carry over their educational potential, mentality, and quality of building relationships with people (Westrheim and Terje 2014). Similar war experiences affect a group of inmates from Chechnya who left the country, especially as a result of the wars in 1994–1995 and after 1999. Some of them engaged in criminal activities and became prisoners in Poland.

When specifying the terminology (Prisoners' Advice Service 2009), it is worth emphasizing two levels of defining the concept of “foreigner” in prison law and practice. Criminal law set this group of prisoners apart only on the basis of a lack of Polish citizenship. This results in an overly broad definition that gathers all individuals, ignoring the extent of cultural and religious differences. The defectiveness of this approach causes uniform actions to be applied to people from neighboring countries (Belarus, Ukraine, and Czechia) and distant parts of the world (Vietnamese, Chinese, citizens of Nigeria, Pakistan, Iraq, Egypt or Bangladesh, Chechnya, and Georgia). This study focused on a broad definition, including the canon of distinctive features clearly distinguishing people in terms of religion, ethnic customs, language, as well as diet and organization of the day. These distinctive features make the manifestations of diversity evident. The broad understanding of the term “foreign prisoner” has important consequences for the assessment of organizational culture and reactions, which are also revealed in studies of British and American systems (Agozino 2008, pp. 15–16; Preston and Perez 2006; Junger 2001).

The broad understanding of the term “foreigner” in the conducted research required concretization on a culturally and religiously specific and glaringly different group of people. An assessment of staff relations generally for the needs of foreigners would falsify the explored reality. Therefore, the focus is only on convicted Muslims as representatives of the glaring differences in distinctive features, which poses a real challenge to standard

pragmatics. At individual stages of the research directed at the situation of Muslim prisoners, their religious, cultural, and linguistic differences were emphasized. These aspects are also indicated by the analyzed situations (Table 1) involving taking up challenges at various organizational levels.

**Table 1.** Differentiation of the situations analyzed by the respondents vs. extraordinary personnel reactions: layout in the research tool.

	Standard Reactions	Extraordinary (Organizational) Reactions	Difficult, Complex Extraordinary Reactions
Situation 1			
Situation 2			
Situation 3			

In addition to the quantitative and qualitative issues justifying the need for research in culturally different convicts, an important argument is the need to activate them in prison conditions. Foreigners find themselves in a double exclusion situation which, according to Christin Achermann, is enforced both by the criminal law of the country and by national laws on deportation after serving the sentence (Achermann 2009). Thus, these are people who have a low level of motivation to be active during their stay in prison, waiting for forced deportation after leaving the prison. Dorien Brosens concretizes this marginalization of convicted foreigners to the additional difficulties struggled by them: lack of contact with their family, language difficulties, longing and difficulty coping in the prison, and uncertainty of the situation (Brosens et al. 2019; Barnoux and Wood 2016). At the same time, many studies confirm the sense of activating convicts despite their extremely difficult situation in a foreign country. Activation has various trends; it concerns sports, psychological trainings, education, and vocational preparation. Supporting soft skills and sports activity has a positive effect on the well-being of prisoners, increases prison discipline, and reduces conflict situations (Meek and Lewis 2014; Gallant et al. 2015). The well-being and mental condition of prisoners improves with cultural, pro-health, and social activity (Friestad 2010). Education of convicts and professional preparation play special roles. In migrants with experiences of wartime childhood and youth, prison education compensates for the past shortcomings. Education, regardless of ethnic origin, always has a positive effect on quality of life and social position after the return to a home country (Westrheim and Terje 2014). Additionally, education of prisoners is not only a rule of international law but also a pro-humanitarian action, assuming that isolation from society itself does not change their disadvantageous socioeconomic position. Education is a chance for social inclusion in every region; it is an important dimension of democratic qualities of the society, striving to eliminate marginalization of prisoners as well (Westrheim and Terje 2014). Pro-professional activation of convicts reduces criminal recidivism (Davis et al. 2013). Long-term education programs in Argentina's prisons showed an 85% decrease in reoffending activities of their beneficiaries (Torrijo 2019).

Working with foreign prisoners is associated with numerous restrictions, both organizational and personal. In the organizational barriers, the penitentiary policy of states as well as the specific organizational culture of the prison system play important roles. Latin American countries struggle with overcrowding in prisons, internal violence in convicts, prison gang activities, and lack of medical care but, simultaneously, have policies with a massive tendency toward retributive justice and isolation of the offender, ignoring socialization activities during the very period of this isolation (Torrijo 2019). The restrictive law of European countries concerning deportation of a convicted foreigner after serving a sentence is a difficulty. Such a situation discourages activity and also makes it difficult to plan activities that may turn out to be useless after returning to a completely different region in terms of culture and religion (van Kalmthout et al. 2007). Despite recognizing the need to activate foreigners in their penitentiary policy, the countries of Western Europe

allocate minimal budgets to this. The real needs of convicts who are culturally different are examined to a small extent, and the offer of educational, social, and professional interactions is rigid and aims for uniformity, not individualization (Westrheim and Terje 2014). An organizational issue is also the model of prisoners' arrangement, considering establishments intended only for convicts of different cultures and others for citizens of the country. European countries have various policies in this field. A separate arrangement allows for greater flexibility of work and individualization of activities adequate for cultural, religious, and mental needs. This does not arouse frustration and resistance from the other inmates who are treated with more uniform procedures. In this way, there is a chance to fulfil the provisions of international law, mainly the Recommendation on foreign prisoners of the Committee of Ministers of the EU Member States of 10 October 2012 (2012), assuring the flexibility of prison staff when reacting to exceptional needs, allowing for maintaining identity (Ugelvik 2017). In Polish conditions, it is not preferable to create separate institutions for convicted foreigners, but rather, there are observed rules for avoiding combining people of warring nations, preventing potential tensions, and for bringing convicts from similar regions together. Then, a natural process of mutual linguistic support and cultural contact between these people takes place. On the other hand, the lack of social background in the country means that foreigners more often go to places of increased isolation in order to minimize the chance of escape (Achermann 2009).

Personal barriers can be considered from the perspective of both convicts and prison staff. The abovementioned experiences of childhood during war (Iraq, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Bosnia, and Herzegovina) significantly modify the quality of prisoners' actions in relation with staff. Additionally, deprivation of education in childhood causes greater difficulties in filling these gaps. Another issue is the passivity of convicts and low level of motivation. Brosens et al. (2019) rightly points out that this may be the result of certain attitudes because passivity is not always a conscious choice. Activities to define individual needs and to minimize barriers faced by the convicts may be a way to activate them. Additionally, apart from cultural and mental differences, foreigners do not understand the country's language and they do not understand the principles of the system and societal organization (Achermann 2009). They are therefore marginalized on many levels, remaining, at the same time, in various unfavorable roles: prisoner, criminal, foreigner, and immigrant awaiting deportation. There are also different groups of foreigners in prisons: those who have been detained for many years and remain assimilated in the prevailing society, and short-term prisoners who move between countries for criminal purposes (Ugelvik 2017). Obviously, in this respect, an important role is played by religious and cultural differences as well as different customs and quality of social relations. Some activation opportunities are important in European countries but may turn out to be ineffective in the country of origin of the convict.

Due to the specificity of the presented research, an important role is played by an analysis of barriers resulting from the activities of prison staff. On one hand, the Recommendation of 2012 verbalizes many tasks for individualization of convicted foreigners' treatments. In terms of research, it requires constant monitoring of the needs, atmosphere, and expectations that allow a separate identity of prisoners to be maintained. Nevertheless, the issue of realities of treating convicts becomes a terra incognita, which is scientifically explored to a limited extent (Warr 2016). An example is the lack of research on the situation of today's prisoners who experienced wartime childhood. Another limitation is the insufficient education of prison staff in terms of cultural competences. Cultural insensitivity becomes a serious barrier, as it causes a strong drive for uniformity, not individualization. Often, despite intercultural and multicultural activities in open democratic societies, this activity does not transfer to prison conditions (Rynne and Cassematis 2015). Thus, prison staff do not understand the sense of the needs and mentality of convicts, especially those from regions with a large cultural divergence. An example is the situation in Poland because the majority of convicted foreigners are citizens of Ukraine, Belarus, Russia, and Romania. A small group are the citizens of African, Middle, and Far East countries. There-

fore, the problem of the presence of culturally different convicts is marginalized in Poland and considered to be solved in practice. It is the result of a situation in which foreigners represent different national identities but, culturally and religiously, are close to the prevailing group, whereas groups of convicted Muslims, whose religious attitudes even become radical in prison, seeking to emphasize their dissimilarity, cause more complex problems. This is what the research presented below involves, exploring the ways to respond and the motivation of prison staff. Employees play the role of animators of penitentiary work, teachers, and mentors; therefore, they should have not only specific cultural competences but also personality predispositions (Croux et al. 2018), using the quality of their personal relationship with an individual in this work. A resource for this relationship is one's own life experiences and personal history because working with these convicts is above standard (Brosens et al. 2020).

## 2. Source Material and Methods

Analysis of the research methods requires, in the first place, an outline of the process of obtaining source data. Basic research and analyses were carried out in the years 2012–2017 and were addressed to active officers of the Prison Service in Poland. The scientific goal was to obtain information about general tendencies of prison staff to react to the challenges generated by cultural diversity of the prisoners. The search for the tendencies focused attention on the quantitative approach, prompting the search for respondents from different parts of the country. Respondents were selected for the study with a high degree of randomness in order to avoid the exploration of a homogeneous group. As a result, the sample consists of 232 people, 40 women and 192 men, working as management and executive staff, officers, non-commissioned officers, and privates, taking into account that the prison staff in Poland is a military organization. In terms of seniority, the respondents represented young staff—up to 2 years of work, 21.6%, and 3–5 years of work, 8.6%—and staff experienced in the duties—6–10 years of work, 28.4%; 11–20 years of work, 35.3%; and over 20 years of work, 6%. Due to their official tasks, these were administration officials and management staff (40.5%) as well as personnel working directly with the convicts (59.5%). Diversified tasks and perspectives of perceiving difficulties in working with foreigners made it possible to discover broader, generalized tendencies to respond to their needs. The common feature of the respondents was that they co-created a specific penitentiary policy, operated in a homogeneous system, and were guided by formal and informal rules of the prison life organization. The research was carried out in 3 stages and took place in two central training centers for prison staff. They were visited when vocational courses started, which made it possible to reach a large and regionally diverse sample.

The method of obtaining data was based on a survey and written interview because the respondents received a set of situational descriptions of real problems that had occurred in the Polish prison system. The situation description always concerned the problem of a convicted Muslim and required an extraordinary response from the staff. The arrangement of individual situations was changing in terms of necessary actions' scope and their extraordinary nature, as shown in Table 1. The situations analyzed in these studies were as follows.

Situation 1: In a multi-person cell, there is a Muslim from an Arabian country—a follower of Islam and a zealous practitioner. He does not communicate in Polish, knows no words, and therefore, does not understand what his fellow inmates talk about. They call the Muslim names, attribute terrorist connotations to him, and mock him. However, no one reports related problems and conflicts.

Situation 2: There is a Muslim from African countries in a multi-person cell who pays great attention to everyday ablutions. After miction and defecation, he does not use any hygiene measures (toilet paper) but demands the possibility of washing the body. As there is insufficient sanitation in this cell, he tries to use water bottles, which causes water spills on the floor and resentments from his fellow inmates. This convict demands that the cell be



prepared in such a way that the sanitary facilities allow such ablutions after each miction and defecation.

Situation 3: There is a Muslim in prison who strictly adheres to the principles of religious rites. In addition to a pork-free diet, he demands that he be fed with halal products, including ritually slaughtered meat. He would like the Prison Service to ensure that such certified meat is imported for him, explaining it with the requirements of religion and lack of willingness to compromise on this matter.

The considered situations differed on a continuum from easy matters (closer to standard actions) to difficult matters (requiring individualized, complex actions). Each of these situations had arisen as a result of qualitative pilot studies involving visits to prisons and interviews with both the staff and foreign inmates. Considering introducing the three situations to be confronted by the respondents to the research, it should be emphasized that they were not hypothetical or theoretical. Implementation of the main research was preceded by preliminary research, which included study visits to prisons and conversations with convicted foreigners, representatives of various nationalities, cultures, and religions. Additionally, interviews were conducted with prison staff working directly with foreigners. The aim of the preliminary research was to establish a catalogue of the most difficult situations for prison practice and the most common situations that arise at the intersection of cultures and different expectations of prisoners and officers. This is how the structure of the research process was created, pointing to a group of Muslims as prisoners, focusing on differences in the distinctive features, and selecting three situations used to elicit the respondents' reactions.

The source material was classified into two categories: (a) actions that the prison staff wanted to take in the situation and (b) motives which explained their reactions. In terms of quality, wider information on motivations was obtained in relation to standard and extraordinary (organizational) situations.

The collected source material required using the method of data operationalization in order to prepare them for statistical analysis. Since the aim of the research was to look for a tendency to react in the studied sample, it was not possible to rely only on individual analyses. For this purpose, the methodological approach of the grounded theory, proposed by Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, was used. First of all, a procedure creating categories and arranging the answers thematically, in a cascade manner, i.e., until the categories were exhausted, was applied. The research was conducted in stages, and the responses were categorized after each stage. After each stage, the number of categories already known to the researcher increased, and new ones were created. The research was completed when a subsequent stage in collecting source data did not bring about new categories. In the literature, the methodological convention of the grounded theory is presented in its classic version, proposed in the 1960s by [Glaser and Strauss \(1967\)](#). The form of the theory has since been modified by later sociologists, such as Kathy Charmaz (Constructivist Grounded Theory) ([Charmaz 2006](#)) and Adele Clarke (Postmodern Situational Analysis) ([Clarke 2005](#)), moving towards narrative research.

The convention of Juliet [Corbin and Strauss \(2008\)](#) was used in the procedure of creating thematic categories based on the source material and created focused coding of categories. The axial category was distinguished, which played a leading role for the remaining categories that developed on its basis as secondary (complementary) categories. This concept of combining the leading category with the thematically related complementary ones is important for reducing large amounts of data and helps organize them synthetically. In this manner, the source data concerning both the methods of conduct of the prison staff and their motivations were processed. For replication of the research, it is important to specify the process of coding the statements made by the officers and to describe the cascade selection of the categories and the studied sample. The coding of statements made by the respondents was performed as a process rather than labelling, opting for one of the methods of the researcher's actions proposed in the grounded theory. Labels in coding usually aim at thematic selecting of the statements of the respondent,

which turned out to be of little use in this research. An activity-oriented way of acting was selected to extract reactions and then to determine trends on their basis using similarities. The interview transcript was sorted according to verb forms (e.g., I try to explain, I meet the requirements, I refuse, I persuade to, I am convinced that, and I avoid), classifying the statement into several activities and motives. In the next step, sequential coding was used, first creating basic codes for each statement (factual coding) and then combining them into wider similar groups (theoretical coding).

The key objective of the research was to discover tendencies in the way the respondents react, i.e., supra-individual patterns of response. Therefore, after creating the categories, in accordance with the grounded theory methodology, they were subjected to further statistical analysis. Two approaches were applied: (a) the first one is data mining, which enables observation of data distributions and their layouts in repeating patterns, (b) the other is the correlation analysis. Data mining methods are defined as a manner of exploring source data and are used to analyze qualitative variables (Berry and Linnoff 1997). Thanks to this, it was possible to observe collective (generalized) tendencies in response to the needs of convicts of different cultures. The tendencies to a specific response were obtained by using the Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) method and Cramer's V coefficient was used to analyze the correlation of variables, both using the Statistica program. The correlation analyses were performed on independent variables such as gender, seniority, and direct contact with the convicts and on the dependent variable, i.e., the reactions of the respondents. The quality of these responses in relation to the needs resulting from the dissimilarity of the convicts was categorized in two ways: into those that solve the conflict by individualizing the approach (avoiding conflict) and those that generate it through the lack of concessions (generating conflict).

In terms of violation of human rights and well-being, the conducted research did not have such an impact. Participation of the respondents in the study was voluntary; only adults were involved. The respondents were informed on the data of the institution conducting the research and the scientific purpose. It was explained that the subject of the analysis was not of any political nature and was not related to the wave of migration and the contemporary migrant relocation policy in 2014–2017.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Theoretical Location of the Research

Research on the reactions of prison staff is prognostic when they discover paradigms and patterns of action and do not just analyze individual experiences. Through generalized tendencies, the researcher can describe the rules of action in the context of a wider penitentiary system. Especially in studies carried out in prisons, the acting subject is placed in a network of other formal and non-formal stimuli. He or she acts in a complex system; therefore, his or her reactions are adjusted to the adopted and existing pragmatics. The theoretical basis of the analysis is system theories explaining the processes that govern organizations. Edgar H. Schein's theoretical concept of a system's organizational culture model is particularly important. The organizational culture is a pattern of assumptions shared by the staff, a set of rules and behaviors developed by the system. Therefore, in the research results, it is necessary to look for generalized ways to respond. Additionally, according to Schein (2004), the organizational culture has its strengths because the adopted paradigms work well enough for the staff to be recognized as valuable and useful. From the perspective of penitentiary research, an important aspect is duplication, by new members of the organization, of previously developed activities and rules that they have found. They are communicated as the correct way of perceiving, thinking, and feeling. Edgar H. Schein therefore distinguished three key levels of the organizational culture that are interrelated, the diversity of which prompts researchers toward multi-level exploration.

- The first level of the organizational culture includes artefacts—artificial creations of the organization which are a set consisting of the language of the organization, unified

personnel behaviors, rituals, and the sphere of material equipment and instruments of the organization.

- The second level covers norms and values, both declarative and actually followed. Especially the aspect of norms and rules of operation, which are informal but developed by the organization, prompts the researcher to take into account the contexts in which they emerge.
- The third level describes a reality of archetypal nature, which is unobservable and, at the same time, difficult to study through reflection. It contains hidden (unofficial) assumptions of the organization.

### 3.2. *Tendencies in the Ways the Prison Staff Respond to the Needs of Culturally Different Convicts*

The source material contained information about the actions taken by the respondents in particular situations as well as about their motivation. The qualitative diversity of the answers enabled creation of several axis categories (from 6 to 12 in each of the situations), which organized the source material, indicating key thematic groups. However, discussing the tendencies in response to the needs of convicts was possible only after using data mining analysis. The first approach was the Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA), thanks to which the individual categories of action and motivation were subject to a polar dispersion. The dispersion of the variables shows divergent tendencies in the studied sample. In addition, the statistics used inform the researcher about the scope of the sample described by a given tendency, i.e., at what level the conclusions can be generalized.

The analysis of data dispersion has two research values here; on one hand, it creates generalized group responses that cannot be noticed in individual case studies. On the other hand, it has a prognostic value, informing about the popularity of a given reaction in the organizational culture. The research focused on the most popular and homogeneous tendencies in the prison staff, when the accuracy of the analysis concerned the largest possible part of the studied sample.

#### 3.2.1. *Tendencies to Respond in Situation 1*

The results of the MCA show two polar responses, coded in the categories of action and motivation. The first pole is a tendency to minimize the problem when the Muslim became a victim of verbal aggression. Respondents described their actions as (a) leaving the problem until it dampens (reaction (R): C), guided by the following motivation (motivation (M): 5): not seeing a problem until it is formally reported. The other pole presented a competitive tendency consisting of two actions and three motives. On one hand, actions aimed at isolating the victim of aggression from other inmates (R: A), guided by a utilitarian motivation, i.e., reducing potential threats in the prison (M: 2). An equally popular trend was to use disciplinary punishments against aggressors (R: B), accompanied by two motives: (a) eliminating cell conflicts (M: 1) and (b) respecting the dignity and safety of the victim of aggression (M: 3). The qualitative analysis of both directions of response, which describes patterns occurring in almost 17% of the studied sample, is interesting. That is, in the organizational culture of the prison system, the most strongly represented activity is avoidance of difficulties and pragmatic reactions aimed at eliminating potential threats. However, it is about internal threats that are of interest to the personnel who must counteract them. This is confirmed by the percentage distribution of responses because as many as 58.2% of respondents preferred to isolate the Muslim in order to eliminate tensions and potential conflicts, guided only by pragmatics (1. Transfer him to another cell because he probably feels that he is being treated poorly, which may result in some sort of unwanted reaction. 2. I would transfer him to another cell, preferably an individual one. The safety of a Muslim's life and health is at stake).

On the other hand, the willingness to leave the situation unresponsive (I do absolutely nothing. As long as no one reports problems, I do not investigate) was as popular as actions to punish the aggressors, 9.5% and 9.1%, respectively. The responses promoting protection and respect for the dignity of the victim, which were key here, were relatively



slim. Such a motivation was indicated by 27% of respondents and was at a similar level to the motivation resulting from prison pragmatics, i.e., eliminating threats (24.2%). In the categories describing the motivation, the need to educate all convicts on tolerance and to prevent similar conflicts through education and not isolation was very poorly represented. Educational activities aimed at cultural sensitization were observed in 5.6%. This tendency is confirmed in the literature. The conducted research indicates that prison personnel in various European countries ([Achermann 2009](#); [Westrheim and Terje 2014](#); [Ugelvik 2017](#); [Torrijo 2019](#); [Brosens et al. 2019](#); [Brosens et al. 2020](#)) have low cultural sensitivity, which is why it rarely becomes a stimulating factor. Without multicultural knowledge and cultural sensitivity, the prison staff are primarily guided by the pragmatics of their tasks.

### 3.2.2. Tendencies to Respond in Situation 2

In the case of the analysis of the responses to the second situation, the used MCA dispersed two response tendencies that describe a regularity observed in 16% of the sample. First pole—the most frequent reaction of the staff was striving for standardization of the conditions and ways of treating prisoners despite the fact that there is a clear cultural and religious difference. The prevailing activity was standardization of the living conditions for all prisoners (R: 3), which occurred in 40.1% of the respondents. It results from a double motivation: (a) forcing the Muslim to adapt to the conditions of the country (M: E (36.6%)), and (b) teaching other methods of taking care of hygiene that are common in the country of residence (M: D (9, 1%)) (1. Explain that he must adapt to conditions that are the same for all but, if possible, allow him to follow the rules of hygiene. 2. I try to explain to him that he is in a penitentiary institution and that such concessions are not possible because any imprisonment in which a person stays may have limitations of some kind; moreover, other inmates may, influenced by these concessions, convert to Islam only for their own benefit). The second pole—a competitive tendency, placed on the other pole, was striving for making the treatment of culturally and religiously different convicts more flexible. The prevailing reaction was to adjust the living conditions to the needs of the convict (R: F (25.4%)). The motivation declared by the supporters of this approach mainly involved the following: (a) respect for the traditions of the Muslim (M: 1 (10.3%)) and (b) yielding to the reported needs so as not to generate tension in relationships (M: 6 (3%)). From the point of view of cultural preparation of the prison staff, again, the data confirm little interest in the well-being and protection of an individual's cultural identity; 10.3% of the respondents saw religion as a factor determining the reaction despite the fact that it was the strongest motive justifying the expectations of the convict. However, uniformization reactions were much more popular, both in terms of the living conditions of prisoners and the methods of treatment. Respecting diversity and identity in an organizational culture as well as respecting the awareness of the staff are minimized by pragmatics. Striving for standardization is a way to avoid flexible activities and individualization. In terms of functionality of an organizational culture, such an aim is predictable and justified. On the other hand, however, it points to a strong potential resistance of the personnel to the changes proposed, for example, in the EU Recommendation of 2012 ([Council of Europe 2012](#); [Mulgrew 2018](#)). As in other European countries, cultural sensitivity and recognition of individual needs is not a very popular prison practice. In my opinion, one of the reasons is a strong pursuit of the organizational culture to use schematic actions and to adopt standard response patterns. The strength of the penitentiary system in its totalitarian nature and the aforementioned organizational and personal barriers provide opportunities for this. Therefore, changing the quality of punishment requires, first of all, mental change and multicultural education of staff. It is the direction of teaching sensitivity and perception of prison reality proposed by Max Weber as an understanding interpretation. Part of it is understanding situations and relationships through the prism of cultural and identity sources. Multicultural education is also important here, as it allows to see not only the practical advantages but also the ethicality of the activities proposed in the organizational culture.

### 3.2.3. Tendencies to Respond in Situation 3

The situation of providing a proper diet was the most complicated due to the non-standard activities to solve it. Additionally, in Poland, ritual slaughter products, both intended for followers of Islam and Judaism, are not popular and, therefore, are relatively expensive. Satisfying the religious expectations of the convict would therefore require flexible actions on several levels: orders, suppliers, kitchen work, financing, etc. As a result, such a practice is not implemented and people who declare Islam tend to use an alternative diet, e.g., a vegetarian one, on a daily basis. On the other hand, religious diversity is protected by international law, and the law indicates recommendations for flexible response to the needs of convicts. Of course, cooperation with religious unions and imams is important here to justify the needs of inmates, preventing the manipulative and instrumental use of religion for utilitarian purposes.

An analysis of the tendencies to react describes 12% of the sample, i.e., the remaining group of respondents was dispersed in terms of alternative activities and motivations. Also, 5.32% of the respondents did not give any answer, which was a clear sign of the difficulty in making decisions on this issue. Competitive tendencies to react indicate the following: first pole—activities aimed at (a) categorical refusal to meet such claims (R: E (23.3%)), (b) organizing an appropriate diet (R: D (11.6%)), or (c) transferring the matter to other departments (R: A (9.5%)). Rigid ways of responding to the reported need were associated with clear motivations to limit concessions to the Muslim. The prevailing motives were (a) a necessity to force the convict to adapt to the conditions of the country (M: 2 (16.8%)), (b) avoiding excessive concessions to the convicts (M: 3 (25%)) (1. If he has money, he should buy products for himself for breakfast and dinner, and he can give lunch to someone else; he does not have to eat. He is in prison for punishment and not in a nursing home; the diet is for the sick. The rest have the same food. 2. Change of diet if he covers the costs of providing him with religious practices: the right to religious belief is the foundation of every human right; however, under certain conditions, it may be limited if it is not possible to exercise it).

Second pole—the most common motive of respondents preferring concession and flexible actions is the need to respect the requirements of religion (M: 1 (12.5%)). In the case of other actions and motivations, a large group included supporters of legal and organizational restrictions who were convinced that such a concession was prohibited by law (18%). For the researcher, this is an interesting topic of standardizing beliefs in the organizational culture. Assumptions and beliefs are duplicated, although they have not been confirmed in reality. The diet arrangement, to this extent, is enshrined in international law in the opinions of imams and religious associations. The desired meat products themselves are also commercially available. On the other hand, the belief in legal barriers turned out to be a popular and safe determinant of actions, although based on illusory premises.

### 3.3. Variable Correlation Analysis

The next stage of the research on the reactions of the prison staff towards culturally different convicts was an analysis of the strength of correlation of the independent variables and the dependent variable. Operationalization of the source material with the use of axial categories enabled the generation of a significant dependent variable defining the specificity of the undertaken reactions. The individual categories were divided into two sets: one included the responses aimed at flexibility and concessions (not generating conflict), and the other included reactions of resistance to the reported needs and striving for standardization of activities (generating conflict). The variable was compared using Cramer's V coefficient with independent variables, such as gender, seniority, and direct contact with prisoners in the course of official duties.

The results of the correlation analysis led to a conclusion that only the variable of seniority was significantly correlated with the quality of the response to the needs of convicts (Table 2). However, such a dependency appeared only in relation to the response

to Situation 1 and Situation 2, and in relation to Situation 3, it was not a statistically significant dependency.

**Table 2.** Results of the correlation analysis of the variables seniority vs. quality of the decision made.

		chi-Square	df	<i>p</i>	Cramer's V
Situation 1	Seniority vs. conflict generation	18.085	8	0.021	0.15
Situation 2	Seniority vs. conflict generation	18.663	8	0.017	0.15

Analysis of the direct responses indicated that, in Situation 1, 60% of the youngest staff avoided conflict but, at the same time, 37% of them undertook reactions generating tension, which did not resolve the situation. Much different results, with the greatest discrepancy, were recorded in people with 6–10 years of seniority. A very large part, 85% of the respondents, avoided generating conflict by acting flexibly, and 13% of them generated a conflict. More divergent results appeared in the analysis of responses to Situation 2. Taking into account the youngest staff experience (0–2 years), 36% of respondents decided to engage in conflict-generating activities while 35% preferred measures aimed at mitigating tension. A similar tendency was maintained in the group employed for 3–5 years. A reversal of the observed reaction tendencies occurred in staff with 6–10 years of seniority (52% did not generate a conflict, while 42% did). A constant increase in the reactions to mitigate and minimize tension was observed in the group of people with 11–20 years of seniority (54% were flexible, and 40% were schematic) and over 20 years of experience (60% were willing to act flexibly, while 37% were willing to act schematically). In the case of other independent variables (i.e., gender and direct contact with prisoners in official duties), the results were dispersed and the correlation analysis did not show any significant dependencies.

When surveying the prison staff, apart from independent variables (age, experience, etc.), the specificity of working conditions was taken into account. Already when selecting the respondents, the research was addressed to the employees of two main divisions (penitentiary and security) who had a real impact on the situation of convicts and ways to respond to their needs. The representatives of central and regional administration, who supervised prison institutions, were excluded. This makes the conclusions from the analysis of the results only a part of the organizational culture of the Polish prison system, which is the closest to the implementation of direct tasks towards inmates. However, despite taking into account the differences in professional tasks, the results did not show any statistically significant relationships. It turned out that professional experience (measured by seniority) differentiated the ways of acting, which hypothetically indicates that, in organizational culture, other, more individualized factors forming the actions of the staff, which do not result from formal tasks, should be sought out. Thus, even formal rules for actions and official tasks do not cause an increase in flexibility of action.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusions

The analysis of data in terms of tendencies to respond to the needs of culturally different convicts indicates several aspects of the discussion. On one hand, the quality of decisions and motivations may be discussed, including judging them in terms of international law and international research to date. However, a more important discussion direction is the analysis of consistency of reaction, i.e., the question of standards. The prognostic dimension of the research is important here because, since the correlation analysis identified similar reactions at the level of 12–17%, the general population of officers will present them to a similar extent. Therefore, the question arises about whether there are consistent standards in penitentiary policies regarding the treatment of a convicted foreigner. The data indicate that there are no such standards; the reactions of the staff are rather a result of individual experiences, reflections, and previous practices. Of course, another question may arise—whether such standardization is needed. Is it not better to leave the decisions up to the staff? Such freedom is an advantage in an open environment

but not in a prison setting. There is no possibility of negotiation in a total institution, and no alternative solutions can be found. The standards of consistent and legal action are key.

The above thesis about the need for standards is also confirmed by qualitative analysis of reactions, focusing on the role of education in relation to convicts. The cited literature on the subject highlights the need for cultural education of prison staff. It is also a task resulting from the Recommendation of the European Union. Nevertheless, the respondents hardly perceived the role of education in building relationships with culturally different convicts. The prevalence of restrictive, isolation, and administrative solutions turned out to be easier and more effective for prison pragmatics. This supports the fact that standardization of penitentiary policies is important because there is no readiness to implement education for respect for culture and identity. Due to the lack of knowledge, the response to the needs of convicts is based on more or less formal beliefs prevailing in the organizational culture. It cannot be accepted that, in one facility, there may be a greater flexibility in the policy of protecting the identity of culturally different people and, in another, the policy is schematic, eliminating concessions as threats.

The quality of responses aimed at schematic actions and reluctant to the needs of culturally different convicts will certainly generate strong resistance of staff to the change of the organizational culture. The results of the research make it possible to forecast such resistance; therefore, it is worth starting discussions on the model of cultural education and its implementation into practice. It is already known that potential, extensive cultural training will not bring the intended results. Rather, they will burn out their energy to convince the beneficiaries of their rightness and to fight stereotypes and the strong resistance of the organizational culture to change. Therefore, an interesting solution is cultural mentors in specific prisons who coordinate the quality of treating foreigners based on their personality traits, knowledge, and openness to action. Their role is especially important when there are people of strikingly different religiosity and culture. The mentors have knowledge on the specificity of cultural diversity in order to set clear rules for relations at the crossroads of cultures. In prison conditions, there is always a risk of manipulating otherness for utilitarian purposes. Ethnic customs from different regions of the world also step into the sphere of identity, which must be skillfully distinguished from religion and cultural value. An important task of mentors should be cooperation with local religious people and imams, whose activity in prisons clearly defines the convicts who require flexible actions to protect their identity, separating them from those who utilitarianly manipulate declarations of diversity.

The correlation analyses also induce a discussion on the factors determining decisions made by officers. The relatively small range of correlation (only seniority) means that these factors should be looked for in the entire organizational culture of the system. An important role is played by unwritten rules, beliefs, and stereotypes and by their recognition, which requires further research.

The scope of the preliminary and main research covered a wide sample, addressing a sensitive topic for prison staff. The difficulty and importance of this issue is emphasized by researchers of other penitentiary systems, e.g., British or American systems ([Bhui 2007](#); [Agozino 2008](#); [Akhtar 2012](#)), with much greater experience in working with convicted Muslims and, more broadly, foreigners. This type of research is always faced with difficulties, which, when overcome, leads to an improvement in the research methodology. An example is the extension of comparative research to include the reactions of officers while analyzing penitentiary systems of countries in Central and Eastern Europe (post-socialist bloc) with those of Western Europe. Of course, the scope of the analyzed situations would be more adequate to the realities of the prison system in France or Germany. However, the essence of learning about organizational culture and tendencies of generalized reactions would be an interesting comparison. Additionally, an important direction of expanding research could be the search for personal predictors of reactions (knowledge, experiences, and feelings) in the course of direct conversations with prison staff of various countries. An interesting direction of developing this research concept would be an analysis focused

on convicted foreigners whose childhood fell during the periods of wars, changing their socialization and the way they operate. As a result of socialization deficits, their response to prison situations and quality of relationships built at the intersection of cultures may be unique and scientifically interesting.

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