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**SUICIDE RISK AMONG SUSPECTS AND DEFENDANTS IN  
DETENTION CENTER**

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*Abstract*

This article contains the results of a psychological study conducted in 2017 at the pretrial detention center of Moscow. The sample consisted of 120 males under remand divided into 3 groups depending on term of their detention. The following methods of psychological diagnostics were used: A. Beck hopelessness scale; suicidal risk test; S. Maddi hardiness survey. The article notes that the share of remand prisoners who had a feeling of hopelessness was 9.2% (11 persons out of 120 surveyed). Among other major characteristics of suicide risk, the following is indicated: maximalism, cultural barriers breakdown, ostentation, insolvency. It is stated that remand prisoners had a low level of hardiness per sample as a whole, and 13 individuals (10.8%) had a low one as well; its poorly developed components are described as challenge and control. The article indicates that the affectivity statistically increases in the structure of suicide risk factors, while the term of detention in a remand center extends. However, the level of maximalism and cultural barriers breakdown reduces; the anti-suicide factor statistically decreases after some raise (in the period from 2 to 6 months), but at the same time all three components of hardiness grow up. The conclusion is made that remanded prisoners, who are most vulnerable to suicide, are those placed at the pretrial detention center for the first time and held there for 0 to 2 months, as well as those who spent there more than 6 months.

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**Keywords:** Pretrial detention center (remand prison), remand prisoners, suicide, anti-suicide factors, suicide risk assessment, suicide prevention.



## 1. Introduction

Importance of the suicide prevention problem among suspects and accused persons in pretrial detention centers (hereinafter, remand prisons) is determined by a number of arguments. First, the right to life is the fundamental right of persons under investigation and the penal correction system staff will bear responsibility for preservation of their life and health. Second, suicides in remand prisons clearly indicate to shortcomings in the work of the penal correction system staff that may evoke a negative public response. Third, the dynamic analysis of suicides in a penal correction system of the Russian Federation, carried out by Research Institute of the Russian Federal Service for Execution of Punishment on departmental statistics documents, shows the growth of suicides in remand prisons in 2016 after the downward trend was achieved (Chernyshkova, Tsvetkova, Lobacheva, Debolsky, & Dikopoltsev, 2017).

Many scientific studies in Russia (Boiko, 2002; Kuznetsov, 2014; Mamchenko and Tsvetkova, 2016; Sukharev and Chulisova, 2014, etc.) and abroad (Dish and Cormier, 2016; Dzhansarayeva, Nurmaganbet, Zhanibekov, Turgumbayev, Nabiyev, 2016; Fazel, Benning, Danesh, 2005; Krüger, Priebe, Fritsch, Mundt, 2017, etc.) focused on suicides among suspects and accused persons since the problem is relevant for penal systems worldwide. Studies show that suicides during investigation depend on such factors as uncertainty of the situation, i.e. the future; aggressive and heavy-handed environment of remand prison; loss of control over the events of his own life by a remand prisoner; failure to contact with his family; lack of social and psychological support; inhumane aspects of the remand prison staff actions. Over time, this list of added factors has revealed materials of a criminal case, indictment, approaching a court date or sentencing (Chernyshkova et al., 2017).

Each individual who found oneself in a remand prison has to have personal resources to cope with a stress (Boyko, 2002; Loginova, 2009; Beck & Rush, 1978; Maddi, Khoshaba & Persico, Lu, Harvey & Bleecker, 2002, Kislyakov et al., 2016 etc.). Many of them in this situation fall into a state of hopelessness, which is combined with a low level of hardiness, a sense of shame for what he did and fear of imprisonment pushes remand prisoners to the idea of suicide.

## 2. Problem Statement

The timely diagnostics of personality determinants of suicidal behavior is relevant for suicides prevention, (Kozyrev, 2004). We believe that the following determinants can be attributed to individuals held in remand prisons: feeling of hopelessness, low overall hardiness, and a high risk level of suicide. *Hopelessness* is defined as a feeling of despair or extreme pessimism about future. It is a part of cognitive triad singled out by A. Beck, i.e. connected with a negative perception of oneself and the world (Beck, 2003). E. Shneidman, a famous suicidologist, also noted that hopelessness and helplessness are the most frequent feelings among suicides (Shneidman, 1996). Our domestic psychologist D. A. Leontiev introduced term *hardiness* into scientific use (Leontiev and Rasskazova, 2006) based on “hardiness” phenomenon development made by Maddi in 1975. The studies show that the high hardiness (commitment, challenge, control) helps a person to adapt to the changed environment and successfully survive the situation of uncertainty due to a “challenge” component (Medvedeva, 2012; Medvedeva and Isaicheva, 2014; Kislyakov et al., 2018).

### 3. Research Questions

The empirical study was based on the assumption that the level of hopelessness and suicidal risk in remand prisoners increases as they stay in remand prison, while the level of anti-suicide factor decreases. Therefore, a group of increased risk factor for suicide consists of remand prisoners detained for the first time and held in remand prison from 0 to 2 months. At the same time, the remand prisoners, who managed to adapt quickly to the situation, demonstrate the increased overall level of hardiness. Improving the remand prisoners' hardiness is the main task of psychological prevention of suicides in the pretrial detention center.

### 4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to define suicide risk in suspects and accused individuals, detained and placed in remand prison for the first time.

### 5. Research Methods

The study was conducted in Moscow remand prison. The sample consisted of 120 male suspects accused at the age from 19 to 53 and detained for the first time. They were divided into 3 groups depending on the period of stay in remand prison. The I group consisted of remand prisoners held in prison from 0 - 2 months - 71 persons (59.2%); the II group – from 2 to 6 months - 24 persons (20%); the III group – those housed in remand prison longer than 6 months - 25 persons (20.8%). The following diagnostic methods were used: 1) A. Beck's hopelessness test (Beck Hopelessness Inventory); 2) suicide risk test (Kozyrev, 2004), which identifies development of a suicide intent level according to 9 parameters: ostentation, affectivity, uniqueness, inconsistency, social pessimism, cultural barriers breakdown, maximalism, time perspective, anti-suicide factor; 3) Maddi's (2004) hardiness survey, containing 4 scales, i.e. commitment, challenge, control, hardiness overall level. The obtained data was subject to correlation analysis according to Pearson; a comparative analysis of the data was performed according to Mann-Whitney criterion.

### 6. Findings

The results obtained for each of three tests are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 01.** A summary table of the data obtained in three groups of remand prisoners, allocated depending on the period spent in pretrial detention center

Compared factors (Average values)	Groups compared		
	Remand prisoners, held in remand prisons from 0 to 2 months (I group)	Remand prisoners, held in remand prisons from 2 to 6 months (II group)	Remand prisoners, held in remand prisons more than 6 months (III group)
<b>Suicide risk:</b>			
1. Ostentation	2.4	2.1	2.4
2. Affectivity	1.8	1.4	2.9
3. Uniqueness	2.2	1.7	1.9
4. Inconsistency	2.3	2.1	2.5
5. Social pessimism	1.7	1.2	1.8
6. Cultural barriers breakdown	2.95	2.8	1.9

7. Maximalism	4.1	2.5	2.2
8. Time perspective	1.8	1.1	2.2
<b>Hardiness:</b>			
1. Commitment	32.5	33.1	35.2
2. Challenge	18.3	17.8	20.0
3. Control	24.1	27.3	28.4
<b>Overall factor</b>			
1. Suicide risk overall level	19.25	14.9	17.8
2. Hopelessness	56.2	54.9	56.6
3. Hardiness overall level	74.9	78.2	83.1
4. Anti-suicide factor	2.5	3.1	1.4

## 7. Conclusion

Correlation and comparative analyses of the obtained data defined the following:

- 1) according to the sample as a whole (120 persons), the following were included into the most expressed factors of suicidal risk in suspects and accused: maximalism, cultural barriers breakdown, ostentation, inconsistency;
- 2) though the share of remand prisoners having a feeling of hopelessness in our sample may seem low (11 persons out of 120 - 9.2%), there is no reason for a simple statement of their presence, given that 108 823 people were held in remand prisons in Russia in 2017;
- 3) the dynamics of hopelessness feeling as a personal risk factor for suicide does not undergo any significant changes. Although after the 2nd month of stay in the pretrial detention center, the level of hopelessness is somewhat reduced, its rate again reaches its original value after 6 months;
- 4) the examined suspects and accused individuals were found to have a generally low level of hardiness; a very low level was observed in 13 persons (10.8%). At the same time, the most vulnerable components of hardiness are challenge and control. The remand prisoners doubt that everything that happens to them contributes to their development; they do not see life as a way of gaining experience, they are not ready to act at their own risk in the absence of reliable guarantees of success. As for control, the belief that the fight can influence on the result of what is happening around, even if this influence is not absolute and success is not guaranteed, the surveyed males detained in remand prison feel their own helplessness, to some extent. The commitment is not sufficient for maintaining health in stressful environment, the severity of all three components of hardiness is important;
- 5) as they stay in the pre-trial detention center (from 0 to 2 months; from 2 to 6 months; longer than 6 months), their affectivity statistically increases in the structure of suicide risk factors, and at the same time, maximalism and cultural barriers breakdown reduce. After a certain increase (in the period from 2 to 6 months) the anti-suicide factor statistically reduces, but there is an increase in all three components of hardiness - commitment, challenge, control and, as a consequence, the overall level of hardiness. This means that dynamics of suicidal risk among the suspects and accused held in remand prisons depends on the term of their stay in detention. The highest risk is observed in the first two months; then (from 2 to 6 months) it statistically decreases, and after

6 months, it again statistically increases. Consequently, the most vulnerable to suicide remand prisoners are those, placed in the pre-trial detention center for the first time and held there for 0 to 2 months, as well as those who spent there more than 6 months;

- 6) the following patterns were identified: a) the older the remand prisoners, the more ostentatious and affective they are; b) those remand prisoners prone to affectivity show low commitment; c) the remand prisoners with a high level of commitment may show low factors of time perspective; d) while having a feeling of hopelessness, the remand prisoners tend to show affectivity, ostentation, inconsistency, pessimism and uniqueness, and at the same time their level of hardiness decreases.

The results of the study allow one to conclude that preventive work with prisoners on remand in pretrial detention centers should be targeted at: 1) reduction of suicide risk, and primarily, in such factors as maximalism, cultural barriers breakdown, ostentation and inconsistency, and hopelessness; 2) optimization of remand prisoners life experience with a view to increase their hardiness (especially such components as challenge and control, and in particular, dealing with those who found themselves in detention for the first time, and had been recently placed there), as well as to increase the anti-suicide factor.

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