
Women Psychological Treatment in Jails: A Case Study of Balochistan

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A study was conducted in the four jails of the Balochistan namely, Quetta, Dera Murad Jamali, Gaddani and Mastung to get firsthand knowledge of the conditions of the females in jails in terms of their Psychological treatment during imprisonment. To assess what Jail Authorities can provide facilities to women and what in fact is being provided to them. It also had to analyse whether whatever was being provided was sufficient or required more attention of the government. The study conducted provided an opportunity to peep into the actual conditions in which the females were living in the various jails of Balochistan. During the course of interview many pathetic aspects came into limelight. It revealed the psychological pressures which these women undergo. Their physical conditions were also a witness to the fact that their mental state of peace was not in good condition. There was no medical ward for the female prisoners and hence seldom ever medicines are available to them. There is absolutely no arrangement for any counselling to the prisoners suffering from Psychological diseases. Absence of medical facilities makes the conditions worse.

Some of the lessons learnt were that ignorance, poverty, practice of negative cultural norms, unnecessary suppression of the female by the family, and the frequency of the broken families are mostly the main causes of crime prevalent in womenfolk. As long as all these conditions continue to prevail in society, the situation would not be easy to change. The basic required reforms indicated are improved socio-economic condition of the society, review of the jail manual, which is decadent and does not conform to the changed conditions spread over more than a century.

Perception of the Problem

Women in prisons usually need more psycho-social support than men, both due to the harmful impact of disruption of family links on women, as well as because of their typical background which often involves being victims of domestic violence or other types of abuse. As most of them are illiterate or less educated, they are ignorant of their rights and are lacking in confidence. Their illiteracy and lack of confidence are exploited by the jail staff and they are hardly provided the amenities they are entitled according to the jail manual. They mostly live in miserable conditions and even their basic needs are not fulfilled inside prisons. The report by "Jail Administration" – pinpoints that a successful treatment program of the prisoners lays the foundation that makes it possible to quickly restore them to society without a return to jail (Alexander, M.E.: .1957).

The local media produced the main source of information of the conditions of jail. Time and again there were articles and features, which pointed towards the adverse conditions of the prisons and specially of the female section of the prisons. When the news items in the print media highlighted the issue the Social Welfare Department tried to probe into the matter and bring some improvement. This opened way for social workers to visit the jail and thus another source of information was created by this. The discussion of the visitors attracted attention of the civil society and the need for such study was felt. It was realised that

since no proper research and study had been carried out on these lines. It was important to explore this field for better future planning and policy making in this regard. According to various sources about 70% women in jails are sexually abused by the police authorities and sometimes even the Jail Authorities exploit their position by forcing them to work for them unpaid sometimes by embroidering their clothes and at other times doing manual drudgery in their homes. About 60% of the women prisoners are in jail because of being affected by the Haddood Ordinance. Instances show that a majority of these women were raped and instead of being redressed through law enforcing agencies and judicial institutions they themselves were captured and labelled as criminals and were punished under the Haddood Ordinance. Though they were subject to crime, this crime became their fate ultimately...*source Daily Jang.*

Objective of the Study:

The main objective was to study the conditions under which the women prisoners were living in the jails and to get firsthand knowledge of the conditions of the females in jails in terms of their psychological treatment during imprisonment. Other aspects of the objectives include understanding and assessing the conditions under which she lives during her imprisonment in the jail the reasons for committing crimes, the nature of crimes etc.

Methodology:

In order to collect the information regarding the women prisoners in jail, two different sets of questionnaires were framed. One set of questionnaires was for the purpose of interviewing female prisoners and the other set was for the interview of the Jail Authorities. These questionnaires covered in detail all the important aspects of the study related to the life of women prisoners in jail. Keeping in view the ethnic diversity of the province 36 women prisoners were selected and individually

interviewed for information collection. Apart from interviewing the women prisoners, interview guide was utilised to obtain information from other stakeholders.

Out of the total jails in Balochistan only those jails were selected and studied where women prisoners were present. Since a large majority of the women prisoners were illiterate, it was difficult to get the required direct information from them. It took a long time to explain them, how important it was for them to give true and proper information. At times there was reluctance in answering some questions both by women and by the Jail Authorities.

Enumerators were trained on the designed questionnaire and the related sensitive issues. Cross-questioning techniques were taught to them in order to make them manage the situation where information on sensitive issues was feared to be difficult to obtain or where there were chances of refusal by the respondents.

A pilot survey/pre testing was conducted to get awareness of all sorts of issues arising during such questioning and the related problem arising out of the test of such questionnaire. This helped us to modify the techniques of questioning and to reform them according to the ground realities present before the prisoners. This enabled us to incorporate some practical issues related to questionnaire.

For the purpose of data processing, manual means as well as the computer was used for the tabulation and for the analysis of the data. No sophisticated software was used for the purpose of data analysis. The Microsoft Office was used for tabulation, data analysis and pie diagram.

Analysis:

Age of the Women Prisoners

The data reveals that the highest numbers of prisoners are of age group 16-25 years accounting for 39% of the total. While, the crime rate is reported to be least (3%) in the age group of 46-55 years.

Table 1
Age Groups of the Prisoners

Years	No.	%
16-25	14	39
26-35	7	19
36-45	8	22
46-55	1	3
56-65	6	17
Total:	36	100

Marital Status:

The marital statuses of the prisoners show that the majority of them are married. They account for 72% of the total. Whereas the divorced, widows and single were 6%, 14% and 8% respectively.

Table 2
Marital Status

Marital Status	No.	%
Married	26	72.22
Divorced	2	5.56
Widow	5	13.89
Single	3	8.33
Total:	36	100

Educational Qualifications:

Among the women prisoners a big majority (around 92%) of them were illiterate, 6% were under metric and only 1 out of 36 accounting for 3% had higher secondary education certificate.

Table 3
Educational Qualification

Qualification	No.	%
Illiterate	33	91.67
Under Metric	2	5.56
Higher Secondary	1	2.78
Total:	36	100

Nature of Crime:

The analysis reveals that most of the women prisoners were blamed for their involvement in drug trafficking accounting for 39 percent of the total. While around 9% women were charged with child trafficking.

Table 4
Nature of Crime

Nature of Crime	No.	%
Drug Trafficking	14	38.89
Murder	8	22.22
Haddood (Zina)	5	13.89
Child Trafficking	3	8.33
Others	6	16.67
Total:	36	100

Duration of Imprisonment:

Almost 20% of the prisoners were imprisoned for a period of 0-5 years. The second category was 12%, who were imprisoned for 20-25 years. A large number of women prisoners were under trial, they constituted the highest percentage of 56.

Table 5

Duration of Imprisonment

Years	No.	%
0-5	7	20
5-10	3	9
10-15	1	3
15-20	0	0
20-25	4	12
Under Trial	21	56
Total:	36	100

Initiation of the crime:

Responding to the question of initiation of the crime, 75% of the women prisoners said that they were trapped. 20% said that they did not commit any crime. Only 5% mentioned that they did it willingly.

Table 6
Initiation of Crime

Initiation of Crime	No.	%
Trap	27	75
Did not Commit the Crime	7	20
Own Willingness	2	5
Total:	36	100

Criminal Background of Family:

Regarding the family background of the women prisoners, 97% said that their families had not been involved in any crime. Only 3% said that there were instances of their families being involved in crime earlier.

Table 7
Family's Criminal Background

Family's Criminal Background	No.	%
Yes	1	3
No	35	97
Total:	36	100

Impact of Jail on Life:

Almost 70 % of the women prisoners said that they would be able to live a normal life after being relieved from jail. Those who would not be able to live a normal life because of trauma and the psychological pressures that they had undergone in the jail accounted for 30.56%.

Table 8
Impact of Jail on Life

Can Live a Normal Life	No.	%
Yes	25	69.44
No	11	30.56
Total:	36	100

Physical Illness in Jail:

When the women prisoners were asked about their physical illness about 80% responded in affirmative. Among them 17% stated that they have heart problem. 15% reported blood pressure. 10% had gynaecology problem, 7% each had diabetic, kidney and stomach problem. 5% reported they had headache. Those who were suffering from allergies, fever, liver malfunctioning, abnormality and infectious diseases came out as 2%. While, 20% reported that they had no problems.

Medical Treatment:

Among the women prisoners, 36.11% were getting proper medical treatment. While, 41.67% reported that they are not getting proper medical treatment.

Table 9
Medical Treatment

Medical Treatment	No.	%
Yes	13	36.11
No	15	41.67
Not Applicable	8	22.22
Total:	36	100

75% of the prisoners stated that if someone gets injured or falls seriously ill, the Jail Authorities send them to the hospital immediately. 5.56% said that they were not sent immediately to hospital. 7% did not respond.

Mental Illness:

More than half (53%) of women prisoners were found to be suffering from mental illness. Whereas 47% claimed that they were not suffering from any mental illness.

Table 10
Mental Illness

Mental Illness	No.	%
Yes	19	53
No	17	47
Total:	36	100

Psychological Treatment:

When the respondents were asked about the psychological treatment, only 4 women prisoners accounting for 21% of the total ailing women stated that they are getting psychological treatment. On the contrary, a big majority (15 out of 19) narrated that they are not getting any psychological treatment during their ailment in jail. They were accounting for 79% of the total of the women prisoners suffering from mental illness.

Table 11
Psychological Treatment

Psychological Treatment	No.	%
Yes	4	11.11
No	15	41.67
Not Applicable	17	47.22
Total:	36	100

Kinds of Psychological treatment:

Out of the 4 women prisoners suffering from mental illness and getting psychological treatment, 2 of them were found to be

having counselling. While the other 2 women were reported to have been getting counselling as well as medicine during their ailment. 15 women were registered as getting no psychological treatment.

Table 12
Kinds of Psychological Treatment

Kinds of Psy. Treatment	No.	%
Counselling	2	5.56
Counselling + Medicines	2	5.56
No Treatment	15	41.67
Not Applicable	17	47.22
Total:	36	100

Satisfaction with medical Treatment:

Regarding their satisfaction with medical treatment, 38.89% women prisoners stated that they were satisfied with the medical treatment inside the jail. A big majority (61.11%) of the respondents were not satisfied with the medical treatment provided inside the jail.

Table 13
Satisfied by Medical Treatment

Satisfy	No.	%
Yes	14	38.89
No	22	61.11
Total:	36	100

Suggestions by Respondents:

When the women prisoners were asked about their suggestion to improve the health facilities in jail, 15% suggested for improvement in quality of medicine. Among them 12.5% suggested for improvement of provision of medicine and another 15.5% for supply of proper medicine to the jail itself. 10% requested for the availability of the doctors to improve the situation. 7.5% suggested that there should be a lady doctor appointed regularly in the jail ward. 5% proposed for posting of

specialist and surgeon in the jail. 5% asked for better medical treatment. Another 5% recommended that they should be sent for treatment to hospital outside the jail. 27.5% did not respond.

Table 14
Suggestions by the Respondents

Suggestion	No.	%
Good Quality of Medicines	6	15.00
Provision of Medicines	5	12.50
Proper Medicines	5	12.50
Doctor's Availability	4	10.00
Specialist Dr. and Surgeon's Availability	2	5.00
Lady Dr.'s Availability	3	7.50
Better Treatment	2	5.00
Treatment in Hospitals Outside Jail	2	5.00
Not Applicable	11	27.50
Total:	40	100

Confession of Guilt:

Regarding the confession of guilt 30% of the women prisoners said that they are guilty, whereas 70% of them stated that they did not commit any crime.

Table 15
Confession of Guilt

Confession of Guilt	No.	%
Yes	11	30
No	25	70
Total:	36	100

Behaviour of Jail Staff:

When the women prisoners were asked to comment on the behaviour of the jail staff, 64% reported that the behaviour of the jail staff is good. 25% stated the behaviour as an average. 8% narrated the teasing attitude of the jail staff. About 3% of the women prisoners reported bad behaviour on part of the jail staff.

Overall the women prisoners were found to be satisfied with the behaviour of the jail staff.

Conclusions and Findings

The majority of the women prisoners belonged to the age group of 15-50 years. They were mostly illiterate. The nature of the crimes was diverse and it varied from place to place. Most of them were imprisoned due to Zina under Hadood Ordinance. Drug trafficking was another major crime for which man folk had used women due to their innocence and ignorance. Cases of murder were also plenty and in some cases husband had been murdered, which indicates the suppression and low-income factors prevalent in the present society. Prisoners held for child trafficking also indicated that the children in question were their own children and due to sheer poverty they were being taken to the Arab States so that they may at least be able to get food twice a day. The mother had been promised a well-paid job in addition to the money that the sale of children would bring about.

There were women who had simply preferred to be scapegoats and had run away from their homes in search of better conditions of life shedding away the doubts and suspicion of their husbands and parents, which was a cause of great mental torture to them. In some cases women had been convicted for the crime of stealing ordinary things, which reveal the poor social conditions of a marginalized class of society. Another instance was of females runaway from homes because of the pressure of the family to marry undesirable matches e.g. either too old or children with great age difference with them. In spite of the difficult life in jail they said they would not like to return to their families due to their callous and inconsiderate behaviour. They also feared that their life would be at stake no matter how pleasing and brilliant the promises of their family to forgive them may be.

Regarding the availability of health facilities, there is no medical ward for the female prisoners and hence seldom ever medicines are available to them. Even simple medicines like Disprin, Paracetamol and Panadol are scarcely available. There is absolutely no arrangement for any counselling to the prisoners suffering from Psychological diseases. Absence of medical facilities makes the conditions worse. Most of the time female prisoners have to be taken to the government hospital for their treatment, which keeps the Jail Authorities in anxiety due to the threatened situation of security that has to be exercised to keep these prisoners safe and to ensure their safe return to the jail ward. The Jail Authorities discussed the issue at length and were justified in pointing out that the meagre amount meant for the purchase of medicine was hardly sufficient for a few patients only, and that too not for all the medicines prescribed for them.

The conditions prevailing in these jails are pathetic in many ways. In Quetta jail many women complained of the indifferences of their families who never ever came to meet them and hence they had to depend upon the provisions provided by the Jail Authorities and some charitable social people. Ordinary things like soap, tea and detergent for washing clothes were the items that were highly desired by them. Women with children accompanying them said that few sips of milk could bring joy to the hearts of their children. Shoes and clothing were also in demand. Conditions in Gaddani Jail were the worst amongst all. The size of the room was too small for containing 15 people. Water was scarce to the extent of extinction. Electric supply was not there as it usually remained failed and the suffocation due to overpopulation was hard to be borne even for a short span of time. The women in Gaddani Jail tolerated these conditions, accepting them as a part of their fate. There was no provision for any pastime activity. No arrangement for any sports except for a television, which has been provided, to them for entertainment. There is no arrangement for any sort of education neither religious nor formal. In this respect Quetta jail is an exception where there is a library, which has been established by the

generous donation of some individuals, but this library also is located within the premises of the male prisoners and the women do not have an access to it.

The Jail Authorities pointed out those obstacles in improving the condition were beyond their control. They were mainly financial, lack of proper space, lack of teaching staff and teaching facility and the callous behaviour of the higher authorities responsible for maintaining human conditions in the jail.

Lesson Learnt:

Some of the lessons learnt from the experiences of interviewing and meeting the female prisoners in jail were that ignorance, poverty, practice of negative cultural norms, unnecessary suppression of the female by the family, maltreatment due to suspicious nature and the frequency of the broken families are mostly the main causes of crime prevalent in womenfolk.

As long as all these conditions continue to prevail in society, the situation would not be easy to change. The basic required reforms indicated are improved socio-economic condition of the society, review of the Jail Manual, which is decadent and does not conform to the changed conditions spread over more than a century. Capacity building of the law enforcement agencies in terms of better treatment of prisoners, fair and just judges to conduct fair trials without any external influences and a discouragement of the use of force against the imprisoned people.

Better conditions of society can be generated through poverty alleviation programmes, which came out to be one of the major root causes of many social evils. An environment of peace, free of all sorts of social conflicts need to be established. Furthermore, the literacy rate of the country and specifically of the province of Balochistan can be an effective tool in reducing the rate of crimes prevalent at present.

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