PREVALENCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS AMONG FEMALE PRISONERS IN PAKISTAN

MARYAM RIAZ

Department of Psychology, University of Gujrat, Gujrat, Pakistan. Email: maryamriaz440@gmail.com

NOREENA KAUSAR

Department of Psychology, University of Gujrat, Gujrat, Pakistan. Email: noreena.kausar@uog.edu.pk

MUEEN ABID*

Department of Psychology, University of Gujrat, Gujrat, Pakistan.
Corresponding Author Email: mueen.abid@uog.edu.pk

Abstract

The aim of present study is to find the point prevalence of psychological disorders among female prisoners in central jails of Gujrat, Gujranwala and Sialkot districts. The sample comprised of 167 female prisoners, selected from targeted jails. The research instrument consisted of four parts. The first part was related to consent form, second part was about demographic variable, third part was related to screening questionnaire of the targeted psychiatric illnesses and the forth part consisted of diagnostic criteria's of targeted psychological disorders based on DSM-V. The current research was conducted in two phases. In the first phase the demographic and screening questionnaires were administered on all the participants. Through the screening questionnaire vulnerable participants were identified. In the second phase the relevant diagnostic questionnaire were administered on screened vulnerable cases for targeted psychiatric illnesses which were identified during first phase. On the basis of cut of scores, vulnerable cases were first identified and then diagnosed. Further diagnosed cases were categorized in different categories based on severity level. Results revealed that point prevalence of targeted psychiatric disorders was 37% among prisoners in targeted cities. Major depressive disorder was most prevalent psychological disorders among prisoners. The prevalence of specific phobia and social anxiety disorder were almost same. Panic disorder was the least prevalent psychological disorder among targeted prisoners. The majority of female prisoners have symptoms at moderate to severe level. Findings conclude that prisoners need clinical counseling and therapeutic services for their psychological problems and disorders.

Keywords: Point Prevalence, Psychological Disorders, Prisoners, Diagnostic Criteria

INTRODUCTION

Societies are made by human and they are connected with each other through some social roles. In order to have a functional society there is always an intense need of some social systems and these social systems contain some social, political and legal roles and regulations. Individuals must obey these roles and regulation to be accepted by the society. When these roles are violated by humans in one way or other it may create imbalance in social system. Particularly when social and legal roles are violated it results in social and judiciary crime. It has been seen that the prison population is increasing rapidly. All over the world the population of the prisoners in prisons was more than 10.1 million by the year 2011. The United States, Russia and China were housing half of the worldwide prison inmates, and the United States has the highest imprisonment rate in the globe (as cited in Shahid, Aftab, Yousaf, Naqvi & Hashmi, 2014).

Within the prison centers prisoners have to face a lot of problems such as limited space, more than needed people, unhealthy and polluted environment, insufficient facilities relating to diet and unreasonable holdup in the discarding of cases are the key sources of stress to the prisoners of prison. It has been proved by many researchers that stress lead to distress which in turn leads to psychiatric disorder (Sarhandi, 2014). Especially in developing countries like Pakistan the problem is more aggravated and ultimately it affects the physical and psychological health of the prisoners. In psychological health they may face trauma and stress related disorders, mood disorders, anxiety disorders.

In the past few decades, research concerning prison sample has been greater than ever due to the hasty increase of the population. Some of the researches emphasized on the fundamental factors that add to criminality among the prisoners, whereas some other researches focus on effectual healing and rehabilitation programmes for the inmates. Numerous hazard factors regarding to the criminal behavior have been highlighted (Ahmed & Mazlan, 2014).

Present study was aimed to find out point prevalence of psychological disorders among women prisoners. Different researches have indicated that health services are either absent or small in number at women prisons in Pakistan and it becomes one of the important reasons to develop psychiatric illnesses. A study conducted by Yousaf , Batool and Anwar (2009) exposed that, in the criminal justice system the figure of women has increased about 273 percent in the past fifteen years. In response, multiple problems are there in many of these women, such as substance abuse, high rates of mental health, child rearing, and health problems, parenting problems, violence histories, sexual abuse and resulting trauma. In contrast, movements and campaigns are either nonexistent or very few regarding to improve facilities and arrange programs to fulfill the hastily increasing requirements of women, in spite of the considerable raise of women in the criminal justice system.

According to Columbia Encyclopedia (2003) the women incarceration rate has progressively increased, over the past two decades. Women inmates in state prisons are more at risk to have psychological disorders and history of physical and sexual abuse as compared to male prisoners. In state prisons about 50% women were in alcohol or drugs addictions when they commit their crime. According to the evidences most of them were received very few, if any, psychological or physical managements in the society (as cited in Yousaf et al., 2009). The same trend has been explored by Bilal and Saeed (2011) who conducted a cross-sectional research on Psychiatric morbidity among the female inmates of district jail in Rawalpindi. The sample consisted of 176 inmates and the results showed high psychiatric morbidity (62.50%) among female inmates. On the same ground Beyen, Dadi, Dachew, Muluneh & Bisetegn (2021) conducted a research to find depression in prisoners in Ethiopia. By using multistage random sampling technique a sample of 727 (583 male, 66 female) inmates was selected. Participant's depression level was assessed by using Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9). Results demonstrated that 284 respondents from the total sample have symptoms of depression.

The debate in the former paragraphs has exposed that there are several health issues for inmates in prisons all over the world and especially in the developing countries and particularly in Pakistan. The female prisoners are also at great risk to develop mental disorders. Consequently, the study in hand was planned to explore the point prevalence of psychological disorders (Major Depressive Disorder and Anxiety disorders) among female prisoners in Gujrat, Gujranwala and Sialkot districts.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Objectives of present study are to

- Find point prevalence of psychological disorders among female prisoners

- Explore point prevalence of Major Depressive Disorder among female prisoners

- Investigate point prevalence of targeted Anxiety Disorders among female prisoners

- Identify severity of psychological disorders among diagnosed female prisoners

SUBJECTS AND METHODS

Research Design

A cross-sectional survey research design was used to find the point prevalence of Anxiety Disorders and Major Depressive Disorder among targeted prisoners.

Setting and Time of Study

Central jails of districts Gujrat, Gujranwala and Sialkot were the settings of current study. Research was conducted from June 2020 to November 2021.

Target Population and Sample

Female prisoners from the central jails of Gujrat, Gujranwala and Sialkot districts were targeted in this study. The total targeted population was 167 in which districts Gujrat, Sialkot and Gujranwala contain 38, 56 and 73 female prisoners respectively. Census sampling technique was used to select the whole population as the study sample.

Instrument

In the current study, the research instrument was constructed by the researcher. SCID (Structured Clinical Diagnostic Interview) based on DSM-V was used for the purpose of data collection. There were four parts of research instrument. The first part was related to consent form, second part was about demographic variables and the third part was related to screening questionnaire of the targeted psychiatric illnesses, while the forth part consisted of diagnostic criteria's of anxiety disorders and major depressive disorder based on DSM-V. The screening and diagnostic tools were translated into Urdu language by using Lexicon Equivalence translation method.

Research Procedure

For the collection of data from central jails of Gujrat, Gujranwala and Sialkot districts, formal permission was obtained from the Inspector General for prisoner in Lahore. The current research was conducted in two phases. In the first phase the demographic and screening questionnaires were administered on all the participants. In the second phase only those participants were contacted who has showed vulnerability to any psychiatric illness in screening questionnaire. The structured clinical diagnostic interview was conducted individually by the researcher to all the screened participants.

Statistical Analysis

At the end the responses were calculated, analyzed, interpreted, and tabulated with the help of SPSS 21.0 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version. The descriptive statistics were used to find frequencies and percentages. Cut off scores of the each disorder was employed and the vulnerable cases were identified from the total targeted participants and then based on diagnostic criteria vulnerable cases were assessed for fulfilling the diagnostic criterion of relevant psychiatric illness.

RESULTS

Table 1: Female prisoners at phase 1, phase 2 and phase 3

Variables	f	%
Screening (n=167)		
Vulnerable cases for targeted psychological disorders	103	62
Not vulnerable cases	64	38
Screened cases (n=103)		
Diagnosed	62	60
Not Diagnosed	41	40
Severity of diagnosed cases (n=62)		
Mild	13	21
Moderate	24	39
Severe	25	40

Large proportion (n=103, 62%) of respondents were screened vulnerable for targeted psychiatric illnesses. Table indicates that there are 62 (60%) participants from screened cases, who diagnosed for any category of targeted psychiatric illnesses. The frequencies and percentages also shows that 40 % (n=41) of vulnerable female prisoners were not diagnosed for targeted psychological disorders. The frequencies indicate that 13 (21%) females from diagnosed cases have the mild level of severity in the targeted psychological disorders. Table further depicts that moderate (n=24, 39%) and severe (n=25, 40%) levels of severity have almost same percentages of diagnosed female prisoners.

Table 2: Diagnostic Criteria of Each Targeted Psychiatric Disorder Based on DSM-5

Disorders	No Diagnosis	Diagnosis
Major depressive disorders	1-7	8 and above
Specific Phobia	1-6	7
Social Anxiety Disorder	1-8	9
Panic Disorder	1-7	8 and above

Table 2 indicates that for Major depressive disorders, the score ranges from 1-7 falls in the category of no diagnosis however the scores of 8 and above fall in the category of diagnosis. Specific Phobia has no diagnosis for the scores from 1-6 but have the diagnosed category for 7 scores. For social Anxiety Disorder there will be no diagnosis for the scores of 1-8 whereas scores of nine will get diagnosis. For panic disorder, the score ranges from 1-7 falls in the category of no diagnosis however the scores of 8 and above fall in the category of diagnosis.

Table 3: Frequencies and Percentages of Diagnosed Female Prisoners (N=167)

Categories	f	%
Diagnosis		
Diagnosed	62	37
Not Diagnosed	105	63
Disorders		
Major Depressive Disorder	24	14
Anxiety disorders	38	23
Specific Phobia	16	10
Social Anxiety Disorder	15	09
Panic Disorder	07	04

Table 3 indicates that there are 62 (37%) participants diagnosed for any category of targeted psychiatric illnesses where as rest of other females 105(63%) from total sample were not diagnosed for any category of targeted psychological disorder. It indicates that targeted anxiety disorders were the most frequently diagnosed disorders among female prisoners with the percentage of 23 (n=38) from total sample whereas major depressive disorder has 24 diagnosed participants with the percentage of 14 from whole sample. Specific phobia (n=16, 10%) and social anxiety disorder (09%, n=15) share almost same percentages of diagnosed females from total sample. Panic Disorder is the least diagnosed category among female prisoners with the percentage of 04% (n=07).

Table 4: Demographic Characteristics of Diagnosed Female Prisoners *(n=62)*

Variables	f	%
Jail		
Gujrat	15	24
Gujranwala	23	37
Sialkot	24	39
Age in years		
20-25	18	29
26-30	19	31
31-35	13	21
36-40	05	08
41-45	05	08
46-50	02	03
Residential type		
Village	24	39
City	38	61
Socioeconomic status		
Lower class	41	66
Middle class	13	21
Upper class	08	13
Family system		
Nuclear	33	53
Joint	29	47
Nature of crime		
Drug smuggling	25	40
Thievery	07	11
Robbery	04	07
Fight	08	13
Kidnap	05	08
Attempt to murder	06	10
Murder	07	11

Table 4.47 showed that Sialkot has the highest proportion (n=24, 39%) of female prisoners following the Gujranwala central jail with percentage of 37% (n=23). The table further indicates that the highest proportion (n=19, 31%) of diagnosed females prisoner fall between the age range of 26 to 30 years follows the 29% (n=18) of female prisoners with the age category of 20 to 25. The 61 % of female (n=38) were from urban areas whereas 39% (n=24) were from rural side. Table further indicates that highest numbers of the respondents (n=41, 66%) belong to lower class. While the percentages of nuclear family system (n=33, 53%) and joint family system (n=29, 47%) were almost same. A highest number of participants were in jail due to drug smuggling (n=25, 40%) whereas

robbery was the lowest crime (n=4, 7%) found in diagnosed cases. Participants with thievery, fight, kidnap, attempt to murder and murder cases have contributions of 11% (n=7), 13% (n=8), 5% (n=8), 10% (n=6) and 11% (n=7) respectively in diagnosed female prisoners.

DISCUSSION

The present study was conducted to explore the point prevalence of targeted Anxiety Disorders and Major Depressive disorder among female prisoners from central jails of Gujrat, Gujranwala and Sialkot districts. Sample for present study consisted of 167 female prisoners. The research was conducted in two phases. In the first phase the demographic and screening questionnaires were administered on all the 167 participants and 103 vulnerable cases were separated from whole sample. In the second phase only those participants were contacted who has showed vulnerability to any psychiatric illness in screening questionnaire and relevant part of diagnostic tool was administered to diagnose them for particular disorder. A total of 62 respondents were diagnosed for any targeted psychiatric illnesses.

On the basis of research objectives, findings of current study are discussed below:

The first objective of the study was to find point prevalence of psychological disorders among female prisoners. Table 2 indicates that the point prevalence of targeted psychiatric illnesses is 37% in female prisoners. The findings of the current research are consistent with the finding of study conducted by Naidoo and Mkize (2012) in Durban, found prevalence for mental disorder among inmates. The research findings indicated high prevalence of Axis 1 disorders with the percentage of 55.

Find point prevalence of Major Depressive Disorder among female prisoners in central jails of Gujrat, Gujranwala and Sialkot districts was the second objective of the study. Table 2 reveals the 14% point prevalence of major depressive disorder in female prisoners. The findings are consistent with the finding of Bilal and Saeed (2011), which indicates that there is 19% depressive illness among females in districts jail Rawalpindi. Another research conducted by Constantino et al. (2016) at Brazil confirmed these findings. This study found that 8% of women suffer with severe depression in jail. These findings are also in line with the study of khan et al. (2012) which also reveals that there is 59% depression prevails in female prisoners.

In the current study the third objective was to investigate the point prevalence of targeted Anxiety Disorders among female prisoners. The table 2 reveals that there is 23% of point prevalence of targeted anxiety disorders in female participants. Among the targeted anxiety disorders, specific phobia and social anxiety disorder almost have the same percentage of point prevalence which is 10% and 09% respectively. Panic disorder is least diagnosed disorder among females with the percentage of 04. Findings of current study were confirmed by the study of Andreoli et al. (2014) on Prevalence of Mental Disorders among Prisoners. This study indicated that Lifetime and 12- month prevalence of anxious-phobic disorders was, respectively, 50% and 28% among women. The findings

of the study are further comparable with the finding of Bilal and Saeed (2011), which indicates that there is 10% anxiety related disorders among females in districts jail Rawalpindi. Similarly, results are in line with the Yousaf et al. (2009) findings about health problem in women prisoners. This study confirmed the prevalence of anxiety disorders with the percentage of 22.

Identify severity of psychological disorders among diagnosed female prisoners was the fourth objective of the study. Table 1 indicated that majority of female prisoners have symptoms at moderate (n=24, 39%) to severe level (n=25, 40%). These findings are consistent with the study of Constantino et al. (2016) on impact of confinement on psychological health of prisoners. The study depicted that 39.5% females have moderate level of psychiatric illness follows by 8% of females with severe symptoms. The findings are also comparable with the study of khan et al. (2012) which found that 74% have mild, 21% have moderate and 5% have severe level of psychiatric symptoms.

In sum up, it is obvious from the study findings; prevalence of targeted psychological disorders is high among prisoners. Major depressive disorder is the most prevalent psychological disorder among female prisoners whereas panic disorder is the least prevalent psychiatric illness diagnosed in targeted prisoners. Majority of respondents diagnosed with moderate level as compared to mild and severe level of severity in targeted categories of psychological disorders.

CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

Following are main clinical implications arise from these findings. First, the high prevalence of targeted psychiatric illnesses in the prison population pointed out the needs for accurate assessment and treatment of the particular problems. Second, screening of the illnesses, especially of psychiatric morbidity, should be carried out on a regular basis. Third, the primary care teams for prisoners should have adequate resources in order to meet their mental health need. Fourth, different programs such as stress management, counseling, anxiety and depression therapy should be introduced in the correctional services in prison, particularly for those with the problems. Fifth, the outcomes of our research highlighted the need to follow alternatives to incarceration of persons with serious psychiatric problems. Sixth, findings will help the policy makers to formulate favorable policies to mentally ill offenders.

LIMITATIONS

There are also some limitations that must take into account to conduct future researches in the same dimension. Although this study is useful to explore point prevalence of targeted disorders but it does not discuss the factors which may lead to the development of these disorders in inmates. The male prisoners and juvenile offenders were not included in the study due to difficulty to collect data from them; results cannot be generalized to whole prison population. The results of present study may be valid for the participants of district Gujrat, Sialkot and Gujranwala but these results cannot be

generalized to the prisoners of other districts situated at various geographical locations because data from other districts may have given some different results. Most of the participants were uneducated so researcher had to explain them each item that was very difficult. Finally, this study was cross sectional, so we could not evaluate the long term morbidity of these psychiatric illnesses associated with prisons. These aspects however did not influence significantly the results of this research.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on limitations following are the recommendations for future researches. Researches should be conducted on causes and other aspects of psychiatric illnesses among prisoners. Future researches are suggested to be conducted in other major districts of Pakistan to better understand the problem. Future researches are recommended to include male prisoners and juvenile offenders in study, it will increase the generalize ability of findings. Future investigators should contact prisoners at various points in their sentences to determine the duration and course of the psychiatric illnesses.

CONCLUSIONS

Findings of the current study revealed that point prevalence of targeted psychiatric disorders was 37% among female prisoners in targeted districts. These findings demonstrate that the burden of psychiatric illnesses in this population becomes a direct challenge to society. Significant prevalence of targeted anxiety disorders and major depressive disorder among prisoners in present study provide evidence of the impact of imprisonment on them.

References

1. Ahmad, M. A., & Mazla, N. H. (2014).
    Stress and Depression: A comparison study between men and women inmates in Peninsular Malaysia. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 4(2), 153-160.

2. Andreoli, B. S., Santos, D. M. M., Quintana, I. M., Ribeiro, S. W., Blay, L. S., Taborda, V. G. J., & Mari, J. D. J. (2014). Prevalence of mental disorders among prisoners in the state of Sao Paulo, Brazil. *PLOS ONE,* 9(2), 1-7. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0088836

3. Beyen, T. K., Dadi, A. F., Dachew, B. A., Muluneh, N. Y., & Bisetegn, T.A. (2021). *BMC Psychiatry*, 17(31), 1-9. DOI 10.1186/s12888-016-1179-9.

4. Bilal, F. & Saeed, K. (2011). Psychiatric morbidity among the female inmates of district jail Adyala, Rawalpindi. *Rawal Medical Journal, 36.*

5. Constantino, P., Assis, D. G. S., & Pinto, W. L. (2016). The impact of prisons on the mental health of prisoners in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. *Ciência & Saúde Coletiva,* 21(7), 2089-2099, DOI: 10.1590/1413-81232015217.01222016.

6. Khan, M.T., Hussain, H., Khan, G., Khan, A., Badshah, A., & Sarwar, R. (2012). Incidence of depression among incarcerated woman in central prison, Peshawar, Pakistan. *European Journal of General Medicine, 9(1)*, 33-38.

7. Naidoo, S., & Mkize, D. L. (2012). Prevalence of mental disorders in a prison population in Durban, South Africa. African Journal of Psychiatry, 15, 30-35. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ajpsy.v15i1.4

8. Sarhandi. (2014). Psychiatric morbidity among prison inmates at the Central Prison Karachi, Pakistan. *The Health*, 5(2), 18-21.

9. Shahid, I., Aftab, A., Yousaf, Z., Naqvi, H. S., & Hashmi, M. L. (2014). Prevalence of depression among male prisoners at an urban jail in Pakistan*. Journal of Society for development in new net environment in B&H,* 8(6), 699-704.

10. Yousaf, M., Batool, Z., & Anwar, H. N. (2009). Determining health problems of women prisoners: A case study of district jail Faisalabad, Pakistan. *Pakistan journal of life and social Sciences,* 7(1), 35-38.