



PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS AMONG PRISONERS IN PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVE

To find out the frequency and percentage of psychological disorders among Pakistani prisoners and to find out the association between type of crime committed and psychological disorder experienced by them.

STUDY DESIGN

Cross sectional research design

PLACE AND DURATION OF STUDY

The study was carried out in a jail of Lahore city.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS

Using purposive sampling strategy, a sample of 48 (Men = 33; Women = 15) prisoners was taken. Screening Questionnaire for Psychiatric Disorders (Kausar & Dawood, 2013) was administered to screen out psychological disorders in prison inmates. Statistical Package for Social Sciences was used to calculate frequencies and percentages of these disorders in prisoners.

RESULTS

Of the total population of 48, 19 (39.58%) prisoners were suffering from psychological disorders, 2 (4.17%) were suffering from panic disorder, 2 (4.17%) were suffering from panic disorder with agoraphobia, 1 (2.08%) was suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder, 5 (10.42%) were suffering from generalized anxiety disorder and 9 (18.75%) were suffering from major depressive disorder. Psychological disorders were more frequent among prison inmates who had committed crimes involving physical hurt such as kidnapping, murder etc, but there was no significant association found between the type of crime committed and psychological disorder experienced.

CONCLUSION

Prisoners were found to suffering from psychological disorders, which indicate the need of psychiatric and psychological services in the prisons.

KEY WORDS

Psychological Disorders, Prisoners, Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, high incidences of psychological disorders are reported. Around 450 million individuals across the globe experience psychological or behavioral problems. These psychological health issues are specifically prominent in the inmates of jails and prisons. Approximately 90% of prisoners are suffering from one or more psychological disorders¹. In many cases, psychological disorders are already present in the people, before they are convicted and sent to jail; and these disorders increases in their intensity during the period of imprisonment. However, these psychological disorders and behavioral problems can also develop after imprisonment because of the stress of being convicted and imprisoned, physical or emotional torture experienced during imprisonment, and other conditions including the violation of prisoner's rights.² Factors such as low education, unemployment, homelessness, substance abuse and histories of hardship and deprivation make prisoners more prone to develop psychological disorders.^{3,4}

Psychological disorders are more prevalent in prison population as compared with the general population.⁵ According to different researches, the psychological health issues prominently observed in prison population includes: antisocial personality disorder⁶; schizophrenia; bipolar disorder, major depression, fatigue, substance misuse, worry, irritation, sleep problems and suicidal risks.^{5,7,8,9}

Particular type of psychological disorder is not generally associated with a particular kind of crime. Research indicates that criminals mostly do not show crime patterns related to the symptoms of their psychological illness over their lifespan;¹⁰ and even if there is a relationship between psychological disorder and crimes, its magnitude is very small. There is a large misconception among general public that such relationship exists; but statistics suggest otherwise.^{6,11}

According to Bryon (2014) almost half of the prison population suffers from at least one psychological disorder; and it is extremely rare for the people to get plea for insanity despite having the mental illness and most of these people end up being incarcerated. Once inside the prison, it is quite unlikely for the prisoners to get treatment for their psychological and behavioral problems. This explains particularly high recidivism rate for the discharged convicts with serious mental issues.¹²

From previous researches and theories, it can be deduced that prisoners are likely to develop psychopathology; people having psychological disorders are susceptible to incarceration; getting captivated is harmful

for psychological wellbeing; and very few offenders get the opportunity to be properly treated for their psychological problems after being imprisoned.¹ So the present research was conducted to know about the psychological health of the prisoners in Pakistan; because if such information is known, management plans can be devised to treat prisoners for their psychological disorders. This will not only improve their quality of life but will also increase the likelihood that after getting discharged from the prisons, they will better adjust in the society.

OBJECTIVES

- To find out the frequency and percentage of psychopathology/ psychological disorder in prisoners.
- To find out the frequency and percentage of psychopathology/ psychological disorders in prisoners involving in different criminal activities.
- To find out the association between type of crime committed by prisoners and psychological disorders they are suffering from.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS

The present study employed cross sectional research design and 48 (Men = 33; Women = 15) prisoners were approached using non-probability purposive sampling method. Inclusion criteria consisted of adult prisoners more than 18 years of age and being imprisoned for at least six months. Exclusion criteria comprised of prisoners not willing to participate, with some terminal physical illness, and prisoners having psychological disorder prior being convicted.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (N = 48)

Variable	f (%)	M(SD)
Age		40.13(11.7)
Gender		
Men	33(68.8)	
Women	15(31.3)	
Education		
Illiterate	28(58.3)	
Primary	7(14.6)	
Middle	3(6.3)	
Matric	8(16.7)	
Bachelors	2(4.2)	
Family System		
Nuclear	39(81.3)	
Joint	9(18.8)	
Marital Status		
Single	11(22.9)	
Married	32(66.7)	
Widow	3(6.3)	
Divorced	2(4.2)	
Age in which first crime was committed		33.46(11.11)
Age of first detention due to criminal activities		33.58(11.20)
Psychological disorder in family		
Yes	1(2.1)	
No	47(97.9)	

Before data intake, researcher obtained permission from concerned authorities of Jail administrators of Lahore. Later, prisoners who met inclusion criteria of research were briefed about the nature of research and written informed consent was obtained from them. None of the prisoners approached refused to participate in the study.

RESULTS

Frequencies and Percentages of psychological disorders in prisoners were calculated. These statistics are shown in table II.

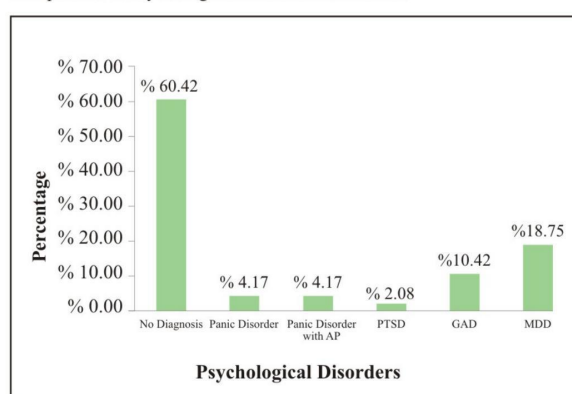
Table 2
Psychological Disorders in Prisoners (N = 48)

Psychological Disorders	Men	Women	Total
	f(%)	f(%)	f(%)
Panic Disorder	1 (2.08)	1 (2.08)	2 (4.17)
Panic Disorder with Agoraphobia	1 (2.08)	1 (2.08)	2 (4.17)
Posttraumatic Stress Disorder	1 (2.08)	-	1 (2.08)
Generalized Anxiety Disorder	4 (8.33)	1 (2.08)	5 (10.42)
Major Depressive Disorder	6 (12.5)	3 (6.25)	9 (18.75)
Total Diagnosis	13 (27.08)	6 (12.5)	19 (39.58)
No Diagnosis	20 (41.67)	9 (18.75)	29 (60.42)

Note: Men = 33; Women = 15

Table II indicates that about 40% of prisoners were suffering from psychological disorders. The most frequent psychological disorder among prisoners was major depressive disorder, followed by generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder and posttraumatic stress disorder. These results are pictorially shown in figure 1

Figure 1
Comparison of Psychological Disorders in Prisoners



Moreover percentages and frequencies of nature of criminal activities committed by those prisoners who were also diagnosed with psychological disorders were calculated. These numbers are provided in table III.

Table 3
Frequencies and Percentages of Criminal Activities among Prisoners Diagnosed with Psychological Disorders (N = 19)

Nature of Crime	Psychological Disorder
	f(%)
Crime involving physical hurt (murder, kidnapping)	12 (63.16)
Panic Disorder	1 (8.33)
Panic Disorder with Agoraphobia	1 (8.33)
Generalized Anxiety Disorder	3 (25.0)
Major Depressive Disorder	7 (58.33)
Crime involving property damage	4 (21.05)
Panic Disorder	1 (25.00)
Panic Disorder with Agoraphobia	1 (25.00)
Generalized Anxiety Disorder	1 (25.00)
Major Depressive Disorder	1 (25.00)
Crime involving drug smuggling	3 (15.79)
Posttraumatic Stress Disorder	1 (33.33)
Major Depressive Disorder	2 (66.67)

Table III depicts that the most number of prisoners suffering from psychological disorders were those who have committed crimes involving physical hurt to others like murder and kidnapping; followed by property damage and drug smuggling. Panic disorder, panic disorder with agoraphobia, generalized anxiety disorder and major depressive disorder were found in offenders who have committed crimes involving physical hurt as well as property damage; whereas posttraumatic stress disorder and major depressive disorder were found in the offenders who were involved in drug smuggling.

Furthermore Chi Square analysis was carried out to find the association between type of crime committed and psychological disorder experienced by the prisoners.

Table 4
Pearson Chi Square Intercorrelations between Type of Crime Committed and specific Psychopathology/Psychological Disorder among Prisoners (N = 48)

Type of Crime	Psychological Disorders					
	No disorder N (%)	PD with A N (%)	PD N (%)	PTSD N (%)	GAD N (%)	MDD N (%)
Physical Hurt	17 (35.4%)	1 (2.1%)	1 (2.1%)	0	3 (4.2%)	7 (14.58%)
Property Damage	1 (2.1%)	1 (2.1%)	1 (2.1%)	0	1 (2.1%)	1 (2.1%)
Threat/Fraud	1 (2.1%)	0	0	0	0	0
Drug Smuggling	10 (20.83%)	0	0	1	0	2 (4.2%)

Note: $\chi^2 = 35.61$; $df = 30$; $p > .05$.

PD with A = panic disorder with agoraphobia; PD = panic disorder; PTSD = posttraumatic stress disorder; GAD = generalized anxiety disorder; MDD = major depressive disorder

Table IV depicts that there was not any significant association found between type of crime committed and psychological disorder

experienced by the prisoners suggesting that presence of psychological disorders among prisoners do not have link with specific type of crime they might have committed.

DISCUSSION

The aim of present study was threefold. First, it intended to determine the frequency and percentage of psychological disorders among prisoners. Second, it investigated the frequency and percentage of type of criminal activities among those prisoners who were diagnosed with psychological disorders. Third, it determined the nature of association between type of crime committed by prisoners and specific psychopathology/psychological disorder.

Results depicted that around 40% prison inmates were diagnosed as having psychological disorders. The most frequent psychological disorder among prisoners was Major Depressive Disorder followed by Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Panic Disorder, and PTSD. Previous empirical evidence support present findings. Gunn, Maden, and Swinton⁹ reported that 37% psychiatric disorders were prevalent among prison inmates of England and Wales. In one systematic review of 62 surveys, 10% prevalence rate for Major Depression was found among prison inmates suggesting that prison inmates were more likely to have psychological disorders than general population.⁸ Butler et al. (2006) also assessed¹² month prevalence rate of mental disorder in Australian prisoners and community sample and found that former group had 80% psychiatric illnesses among them.¹⁵ According to clinical studies, severe mental illnesses are found in 10-15% of prison inmates. One reason for increased proportion of mental illness in prison inmates is that in recent years, jail staff refers more prisoners to psychiatric health services due to greater ability to recognize signs and symptoms of mental disturbance. However, their psychological illnesses supposedly persist because of their intimidating, previous fear inspiring and violent behavior. Furthermore, psychologically ill prison inmates are often denied community based care such as generally they are not given access to general social services, vocational and social rehabilitation as well as therapeutic housing.^{16,17,18}

The present study established that psychological disorders were more frequent among prison inmates who had committed crimes involving physical hurt such as kidnapping, murder etc. Several studies adhere to the notion that violent aggressive behavior is common among people with mental illnesses. It was also found that violent offenders are more likely to have psychological disorders than non-violent offenders.¹⁹ However, studies are limited in determining whether violent behavior leads people to develop psychological disorder in the first instance or developing psychological disorder prone them to commit violent crimes.^{20, 21} Thus, more vigorous methodology needed to be employed to determine whether criminal violent behavior is a causal determinant of a psychological disorder among prison inmates.

The present study also examined the association which turned out to be insignificant between nature of crime committed by prisoners and the type of psychological disorders they were inflicted with. Present outcome augmented the findings of previous empirical investigations^{22, 23} that involving in a specific type of crime does not determine which kind of pathology a criminal offender may be going to have.

The present study had several limitations such as small sample size, more severe psychological disorders such as bipolar disorder, schizophrenia as well as substance use disorder and personality disorders were not evaluated, and findings were highly dependent upon the validity and reliability of the Screening Questionnaire for Psychiatric Disorders and the accuracy of diagnoses ascertained by researcher. As diagnoses were ascribed to prisoners in one interview; it is highly likely some prisoners would have been misclassified or misdiagnosed. All these factors could limit the generalizability of present findings to other prisons.



CONCLUSION AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

Present data document that frequency of psychological disorders is higher in prison inmates of Pakistan and in those who are convicted of crimes involving physically hurting others. It also established that there is no significant association between nature of crime and specific type of psychopathology among prisoners. Future studies need to collect detailed information regarding the prevalence of psychological disorders in prisoners. Present findings highlight the need to develop and provide psychiatric and psychological services to prison inmates of Pakistan to increase the likelihood of the released prisoners successful rehabilitation into their communities.

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