

Assessment of Stress among Physically Challenged Prisoners: Influence of Age and Nature of Physical Challengedness

Jayaraju R^{1*}, Lancy D'Souza², Rangaiah B³

ABSTRACT

The present study examines the stress levels experienced by prisoners who are physically challenged and influence of age and nature of physical challengedness. A total of 234 subjects were selected for the study. The participants were divided into the four groups, prisoners who are physically challenged and prisoners who are not physically challenged. Physically challenged individuals outside the prisons and subjects who were not physically challenged and lived outside the prisons formed other two groups. Dube's Life Events Scale (1983) was administered to all the participants. Two-way ANOVA was employed to find out the difference between groups and age on stress. Results revealed that physically challenged prisoners had maximum stress compared to other prisoners as well as subjects living outside the prison and physically challenged. Secondly, age of the respondents did not have significant impact over stress scores. Finally, it was found that the nature of physical challengedness did not have significant impact over stress scores.

Keywords: *Physically Challenged, Prisoners, Stress*

Stress is any kind of interference that disturbs the functioning of an organism. The human being responds to physical and psychological stress with a combination of psychic and physiological defenses. If stress is not avoided, then stress is increased, there is a danger of psychosomatic and mental disorders. In modern technological society stress has an unavoidable effect. If stress is not controlled then the individual can have profound negative effect on his/her ability to function. Today, research has shown that the stress is related to all kinds of diseases. Some of the diseases are coronary heart disease, blood pressure, diabetes, cancer and so on. There are many studies on stress with the normal population, but there are not enough studies on the people who are physically challenged.

¹ Assistant Professor of Psychology, Maharani's Arts College, Mysore-575 005, India

² Associate Professor of Psychology, Maharaja's College, University of Mysore, Mysore-575 005, India

³ Professor of Psychology, Pondicherry University, Kalapet, Puducherry-605014, India

**Responding Author*

Received: January 15, 2018; Revision Received: March 1, 2018; Accepted: March 2, 2018

Assessment of Stress among Physically Challenged Prisoners: Influence of Age and Nature of Physical Challengedness

It is very difficult to explain the meaning of physically challenged or handicapped. According to Luthra (1974), the word handicap can be applied to blind, deaf, lame, leprosy patients and all other types of patients. According to many studies, physically challenged experience a lot of stress (Lawrence, 1991; Lawrence & Bennet, 1992; Singh, 1980). Therefore, the people who are physically challenged seems prone to stress and stressful experiences.

In general, studies have shown that stress is experienced to some extent by the prisoners and it is high for the first time prisoners (Vianey & Richards, 1998). There are many studies related to the stress among prisoners who are physically challenged. Such studies have shown that physically challenged prisoners experience a lot of stress (Lappin, 1993). The prevalence of mental disorders in Prison's is high, but access to services to treat them is often very low (Steadman, et al, 2009). There are some studies with regard to the stress among physically challenged prisoners in western countries. But there are not many studies in the Indian context. There are few studies in north India. There was a need to take this into cognizance in this part of India. It is important because of many reasons. Firstly, physically challenged prisoners will have their own unique problems, they are human beings. Secondly, while making policies there is a lacuna of ground realities, which need to be bridged.

The following null hypotheses were employed for the present study,

1. There is no significant difference in the stress scores of normal, physically challenged, normal prisoners and physically challenged prisoners.
2. There is no significant difference the stress scores of the subjects in different age groups
3. There is no significant interaction between groups and age in their stress scores.

METHOD

Sample

A total of 234 participants were selected for the study. The sample consisted of four groups, namely, physically challenged prisoners, normal prisoners without physical handicaps, physically challenged outside prisons and normal people without physical handicaps. 57 physically challenged prisoners and 57 normal prisoners without physical handicaps were selected from various prisons in Bangalore, Belgum, Ballary, Bijapur, Gulbarga, and Mysore districts in Karnataka. For the purpose of comparison 60 participants from outside the prisons that were physically challenged and normal without physical handicap were selected. Purposive sampling method was used for the study.

Tools

1. Dube's Life Events Scale (1983).

In 1983, Dube developed the Life Events Scale to find the stress level of individuals in various life events. The scale was developed according to the cultural requirements in India. The scale includes various life events like physiological needs, physical health, social, cultural, income, retirement from the job, division of joint family system, conflict, problem of

Assessment of Stress among Physically Challenged Prisoners: Influence of Age and Nature of Physical Challengedness

dowry and many other aspects have been included in the scale. The questions in the scale are particularly related to the situations very close to the criminal attitudes. The scale includes 52 situations or life events. Originally, Dube has not given reliability and validity scores in the manual. Therefore, in the present study, the test has been standardized (reliability; 0.89 and validity; 0.61-0.91) only for the events which are important in the present study.

Procedure:

The first author personally visited all the central jails of Karnataka, situated in Mysore, Bangalore, Gulbarga, Bijapur, Bellary and Belagavi. After obtaining permission from the concerned authorities, he selected normal prisoners and physically challenged prisoners. Further, the researcher selected the physically challenged subjects from respective cities as well as normal outsiders randomly to complete the matched design groups. Each respondent either in jails or outside was approached individually and the investigator established rapport with them in the first session along with collection of demographic variables of the subject in detail. In the second session, after 2-3 days they were requested to answer Dube's life events scale, and instructions were given as per the manual. Later, the filled up scales were scrutinized to see any incompleteness or multiple answers. Only those scales were complete and unambiguous were selected, and a master chart was prepared and fed to the computer.

The obtained results were analyzed through SPSS for windows (version 20.0). Two-way ANOVA was employed in the present study to see the difference between various groups and age groups in stress scores and difference in stress scores between physically challenged and normal prisoners along with interaction effects.

RESULTS

i. Groups, age groups and stress scores

Table 1 presents mean stress scores of various groups in different age groups along with results of 2-way ANOVA. Between different groups (normal outsiders, physically challenged outsiders, normal prisoners and physically challenged prisoners), a non-significant difference was observed ($F=1.55$; $P<.020$), as the obtained F value was found to be non-significant. Subjects in different age groups also had statistically similar scores. The interaction between groups and age groups was also found to be non-significant ($F=1.03$; $P<.400$). Though not statistically significant results obtained, we find comparatively higher stress among physically challenged prisoners compared to subjects living outside the prison (normal and physically challenged).

ii. Prisoner groups, physical challengedness and stress scores

Table 2 presents mean stress scores of various groups of physically challenged living outside and inside the prison with different types of physical challengedness along with results of 2-way ANOVA. Physically challenged prisoners had significantly ($F=6.23$; $P<.01$) higher stress (mean 74.38) compared to subjects who were physically challenged (mean 69.10) and not living in the prison. Between different nature of physical challengedness a non-significant difference was observed ($F=0.39$; $P<.76$) and lastly the interaction effect between groups and nature of physical challengedness ($F=0.44$; $P<.73$).

DISCUSSION

Main findings of the present study are

- Physically challenged prisoners had maximum stress compared to other prisoners as well as subjects living outside the prison and physically challenged.
- Age of the respondents did not have significant impact over stress scores
- Nature of physical challengedness did not have significant impact over stress scores.

The present study indicated that the physically challenged prisoners had higher levels of stress compared to the other groups in the study. Hypothesis 1 is rejected as there was significant difference was observed between groups, and hypotheses 2 and 3 accepted. Vianey and Richards (19998) have found first time prisoners to be too stressful. Many psychologists have found that the physically challenged are stressful (Lappin, 1993; Suraprasad Pathi, 1995). As physical disability can be stressful, the prisoners should definitely experience more stress compared to others in the prison as well as outside. Physically handicapped who commit crime and face prison terms might undergo a lot of stress as they physically and psychologically feel the shame.

The experience of stress according to the present study does not depend on the age of the subject. Therefore, experiencing stress is not age related. Also, the nature of physical challengedness did not matter in experiencing stress. All forms of disabilities create similar kind of stress and were not different for different disabilities. Therefore, the nature of physical disability has not affected the experience of stress.

A study by Sinha (2010), revealed that the mental illness rate in prisoners is three times higher than in the general population and it is more common in females rather than males. In recent years, this problem has come to the surface and has gained public attention, while most prisons were aware of the problem as early as in the 1980s. According to mansoor, Perwez, Swamy and Ramaseshan (2015), factors in prisons that may adversely affect mental health include overcrowding, dirty and depressing environments, poor food, inadequate health care, and physical or verbal aggression. Lack of purposeful activity, lack of privacy, lack of opportunities for quiet relaxation and reflection aggravate mental distress. The availability of illicit drugs can compound emotional and behavioural problems in prison. Reactions of guilt or shame, anxiety of being separated from family and friends and worries about the future also compound such mental distress. Timely identification, treatment and rehabilitation are almost non-existent in many Prisons, particularly in the developing countries. The present study indicates that the physical disability of the prisoners bring stress and the prisoners who are physically challenged experience more stress compared to the normal prisoners, and more importantly, the physically challenged out side prisons. It can also be suggested that the treatment given to the physically challenged prisoners in prisons has to be reviewed.

Assessment of Stress among Physically Challenged Prisoners: Influence of Age and Nature of Physical Challengedness

REFERENCES

- Dube. S. (1983). Manual and questionnaire for life events stress scale in Pestonjee D.M. (Ed. 1992). *Stress and coping*, New Delhi: sage publications.
- Lappin. N., (1993). Improving access for disabled. *Social Welfare*, 40(1), 112-116.
- Lawrence. B (1991). Self-concept formation and physical handicap: some educational implications for integration. *Disability Handicap and Society*, 6, 139-146.
- Lawrence. B., and Bennett. S. (1992). Shyness and education; the relationship between shyness, social class and personality variables in adolescents. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 62-82.
- Luthra, P.N. (1974). Services for the handicapped in India. *Social Welfare*, 21(1), 31-38.
- Mansoor, M., Perwez, S.K., Swamy, T.N.V.R., & Ramaseshan, H. (2015). A Critical Review on Role of Prison Environment on Stress and Psychiatric Problems among Prisoners, *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 6 (1), 218-223.
- Singh. A. (1980). Personality of female murders. *Indian Journal of Criminology*, 9, 156-160.
- Sinha, S. (2010). Adjustemnt and mental health problems in prisoners. *Industrial Psychiatry Journal*, 19(2), 101-104.
- Steadman H, Osher F, Robbins P, Case B, & Samuels S. (2009) Prevalence of serious mental illness among jail inmates. *Psychiatry Service* 60 (6), 761-765.
- Suraprasad Pati, (1995). Awareness of people about integrated education for the disabled. *Education Review*, 101, 76-84.
- Vianey.R, and Richard. R., (1998). Differences in anxiety between first time and multiple time inmates: A multicultural perspective. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and Law*, 26, 375-382.

Table 1, Mean stress scores of various groups in different age groups along with results of 2-way ANOVA

Age (in years)	Various groups				Total
	Normal Out side	Physically challenged out side	Normal prisoners	Physically challenged prisoners	
Less than 30	69.25	70.36	72.14	72.93	71.36
31-40	69.96	68.00	72.06	74.43	71.15
41-50	70.91	62.60	67.50	81.00	71.21
Above 5 1	70.00	75.50	73.25	71.00	71.86
Total	69.95	69.10	71.70	74.38	71.29

F (groups)=1.55; P<020 (NS); F (age)=0.10; P<.960; F (interaction)=1.03; P<.400 (NS)

Assessment of Stress among Physically Challenged Prisoners: Influence of Age and Nature of Physical Challengedness

Table 2, Mean stress scores of various groups of physically challenged living outside and inside the prison with different types of physical challengedness along with results of 2-way ANOVA.

Nature of physical challenge	Various groups		Total
	Physically challenged (out side prison)	Physically challenged (in prison)	
Leg	68.59	73.83	70.84
Hand	67.87	76.46	71.86
Blind	72.83	75.88	74.57
Others	70.20	73.29	72.00
Total	69.10	74.38	71.77

F (groups)=6.23; P<.01 (S); F (physical challenge)=0.39; P<.760; F (interaction)=0.44; P<.73 (NS)

How to cite this article: Jayaraju R, D'Souza L, & Rangajah B (2018). Assessment of Stress among Physically Challenged Prisoners: Influence of Age and Nature of Physical Challengedness. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, Vol. 6, (1), DIP: 18.01.057/20180601, DOI: 10.25215/0601.057