

Psychiatric Morbidity Among Long-Stay Male Convicted Prisoners

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ABSTRACT

Background: Numerous prisons worldwide have reported high rates of psychiatric illness. In a cross-sectional study of 414 incarcerated prisoners' findings, shows that 92% were diagnosed with serious mental illness. Similarly, a retrospective study of 78 inmates found that 75% were having severe mental illness. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to investigate the mental health issues in long-stay convicted prisoners. **Methods:** The present study is a cross-sectional design conducted at Sabarmati Central Prison, Gujarat. A total of 30 convicted prisoners were assessed using the brief psychiatric rating scale using the purposive sampling method. **Results:** The findings showed that 28 (93.3%) convicted prisoners had mild level of guilt feelings, 17 (56.7%) had a mild depressive mood, and 7 (23.3%) had anxiety symptoms. **Conclusion:** Long-stay convicted prisoners require mental health assistance in terms of counselling and psychiatric medication, which helps in the reduction of repeat incarceration as well as improving psychological well-being.

Keywords: *Convicted Prisoners, Anxiety, Depression, Severe Mental Illness, Incarceration*

High levels of psychiatric illness have been reported in many prison inmates across the world (Fazel and Seewald, 2012). In a cross-sectional study of 414 incarcerated prisoners, it was reported that 92% were diagnosed with serious mental illness (Morgan et al., 2010). Similarly, a retrospective study of 78 inmates found that 75% were having severe mental illness (Lamb et al., 2007). In a Turkish study of 77 convicted prisoners incarcerated for murder and attempted murder, it was reported that the most common psychiatric conditions are depression, anxiety and antisocial personality disorder (Kugu, 2008).

Additionally, Colorado's prison system also reported increasing cases of mental illness among the inmates, which is directly correlated with high rates of recidivism and adjustment issues at the prison (O'Keefe and Schnell 2007). Prison inmates with psychiatric disorders have been found to be at increased risk of multiple incarcerations; particularly, inmates with bipolar disorder reported higher recidivism than inmates without psychiatric disorders (Baillargeon 2009). Lionel Penrose proposed Penrose's Law theory, which states that an increase in the number of beds in a mental hospital is correlated with a decrease in crime and

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imprisonment rates (Penrose 1939). Recidivism is generally defined as a relapse into previous criminal behaviour or repeat arrest or incarceration (Baillargeon 2009). Convicted inmates are not a homogenous group; some individuals adjust to the prison condition, whilst the majority develop psychiatric problems which require rehabilitation and reintegration, which require long-term counselling support with the prisoners to rebuild their lives as law-abiding citizens and reduce repeat offences. Therefore, the objective of the study is to screen the mental health issues in long-stay convicted prisoners.

METHODOLOGY

There will be no significant relation between convicted long-stay prisoners and psychopathology.

- Venue: Sabarmati Central Prison, Gujarat.
- Study design: Cross Sectional design
- Sample and sampling: A total of 30 convicted prisoners using purposive sampling method.

Tools used.

- **Socio Demographic Data Sheet:** The current study used a socio-demographic data sheet to collect the demographic details, which include age, gender, education, marital status, religion, family type, birth order, IPC section and duration of stay in prison.
- **Brief Psychiatric Rating Scale (Overall & Gorham, 1962):** This 18-item rating scale assesses psychiatric symptoms, which include somatic concern, anxiety, depressive mood, hallucinatory behaviour, etc. It is a clinician-rated scale ranging from 1 (not present) to 7 (extremely severe).

Procedure

After obtaining the permission from the Chief Superintendent of Prison, Sabarmati Central Prison, Gujarat, 30 male convicted long-stay prisoners were taken using the purposive sampling method. Subsequently the purpose and objective of the research were explained; following that, consent was taken from each prisoner. Afterward, a socio-demographic data sheet and a brief psychiatric rating scale were administered to assess the psychopathology in the prisoners.

Statistical analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 23 version was used for analysing psychopathology frequency and mean sociodemographic details of the prisoners (IBM Corporation, 2015).

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic details of the long stay convicted prisoners (n=30)

| Variables | | Long stay convicted prisoners Mean± SD/n (%) |
|----------------|-----------|---|
| Age | | 50.30±5.94 |
| Education | | 5.40±4.38 |
| Marital status | Married | 25(83.3%) |
| | Unmarried | 5(16.7%) |
| Religion | Hindu | 23(76.7%) |
| | Muslim | 7(23.3%) |

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| Variables | | Long stay convicted prisoners Mean± SD/n (%) |
|----------------------------|---------|---|
| IPC | 302 | 29(96.7%) |
| | 307 | 1(3.3%) |
| Birth Order | 1 | 9(30.0%) |
| | 2 | 8(26.7%) |
| | 3 | 5(16.7%) |
| | 4 | 5(16.7%) |
| | 5 | 2(6.7%) |
| | 7 | 1(3.3%) |
| Family type | Nuclear | 28(93.3%) |
| | Joint | 2(6.7%) |
| Duration of stay in prison | | 19.76±4.62 |

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic details of the long-stay convicted prisoners, in which 25 were married and 5 were unmarried. Likewise, 29 prisoners were imprisoned in IPC section 302, and 1 prisoner was convicted in IPC section 307. The mean duration of stay in prison was 19.76±4.62. The majority of the prisoners' birth order was found to be firstborn, 9 (30.0%), and second born, 8 (26.7%).

Table 2 shows the frequency of various psychopathology in long stay convicted prisoners using BPRS (n=30)

| Variables | | Frequency |
|-------------------------|-------------|------------|
| Somatic concern | Not present | 29 (96.7%) |
| | Moderate | 1(3.3%) |
| Anxiety | Not present | 22(73.3%) |
| | Very mild | 7(23.3%) |
| | Moderate | 1(3.3%) |
| Guilt feelings | Not present | 2(6.7%) |
| | Mild | 28(93.3%) |
| Depressive mood | Not present | 13(43.3%) |
| | Very mild | 17(56.7%) |
| Suspiciousness | Not present | 29(96.7%) |
| | Severe | 1(3.3%) |
| Hallucinatory behaviour | Not present | 29(96.7%) |
| | Severe | 1(3.3%) |
| Unusual thought content | Not present | 29(96.7%) |
| | Severe | 1(3.3%) |

Table 2 shows the frequency of various psychopathologies in long-stay convicted prisoners using BPRS. In which 28 (93.3%) convicted prisoners had mild level of guilt feelings, 17 (56.7%) had a mild depressive mood, 7 (23.3%) had anxiety symptoms, and 1 (3.3%) had somatic concern, suspiciousness, hallucinatory behaviour, and unusual thought content respectively.

DISCUSSION

The present study observed that the mean age of the prisoners was 50.30 ± 5.94 , and the mean education of prisoners was 5.40 ± 4.38 . Furthermore, 23 (76.7%) inmates belong to the Hindu religion, and the majority of them were married, 25 (83.3%). The current study observed that the mean duration of stay in prison was 19.76 ± 4.62 ; similar findings were reported in an earlier study of mean duration in prison, which was 24 years (Al-Rousan et al., 2017).

The present study observed that 29 (96.7%) of the convicted prisoners are incarcerated for IPC 302. Additionally, most of the prisoners' birth order was found to be first born 9 (30.0%) and second born 8 (26.7%). The current study observed that 28 (93.3%) had mild levels of guilt feelings. One possible explanation is that, among sex offenders, especially child molesters, they have strong internal needs to confess, but due to guilt, they are reluctant to confess (Salter 1998).

The present study found that 17 (56.7%) had a mild depressive mood; this is in accord with the French study that surveyed 800 incarcerated males, in which 24% were diagnosed as having major depression (Falissard et al., 2006). Further, the present study reported 7 (23.3%) had anxiety symptoms, which is consistent with the earlier research that reported 17.7% suffering from generalised anxiety disorder (Falissard et al., 2006). Additionally, the present study found that 1 (3.3%) had somatic concern, suspiciousness, hallucinatory behaviour, and unusual thought content, respectively. This is in support of the earlier study that observed 15.8% having schizophrenia (Dicataldo et al., 1995).

CONCLUSIONS

Long-stay convicted prisoners require mental health assistance in terms of counselling and psychiatric medication. This helps in overcoming the poor adjustment with prison staff and other inmates. It improves their mental wellbeing and increases their engagement in prison-related activities such as horticulture and cooking, which provides a sort of purpose in their life.

Limitations

The present study sample size was 30, and generalisation should be taken cautiously. Future study should focus longitudinally on the role of convicted prisoners and mental illness.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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