

SITUATION AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF WOMEN IN JAILS

Situation and Needs Assessment of Women in Jails A Case Study of Province of Balochistan

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Almost 50% of the population of Pakistan is women. They are not only poor but are doubly marginalized. Majority of them are illiterate and economically dependent. Social and economic indicators show that their condition is deplorable e.g. female literacy is only 15% in Balochistan. Data in various studies show high maternal, infant mortality and morbidity. Chronic malnutrition among girls, poor nutrition status and high mortality rate among the women is observed. Mostly women in the society are dependent and powerless. Their participation in various walks of life is limited due to prevalent cultural norms which carry with them specific cultural codes of honour and shame. The male dominance is a distinct feature all over the country and is specifically reflected with all its strength in all spheres of life in the tribal set-up of Balochistan. The male dominance in society is manifested in male female discrimination in all fields of life and specifically in the field of health and education. The province is otherwise far behind in all these fields and there are less opportunities available to the male population and, therefore, even lesser to the female.

Key Words: Infant morbidity, malnutrition, cultural norms, tribal setup

Perception of the problem

There is strong perception that women being doubly marginalized and economically dependent fall and easy victim to the adversaries of life and, therefore, are generally prone towards the commission of crime as they fall an easy prey in the hands of those hunting for such opportunities. The issue is too complex to be easily analysed due to the multitude of factors that are social, economic, political and institutional.

The study "Females Behind Bars Situation and Needs Assessment in Female Prisons and Barracks" states that globally, female prisoners represent about 5% of the total prison population in the year 2006 (UNODC 2009). Worldwide, on any given date more than half a million women and girls were detained in prisons. Another report by the Inspector General Prison Karachi highlights that there are a total of 97 prisons in Pakistan. Out of them four prisons are exclusively for women located in Multan, Karachi, Larkana and Hyderabad, while a number of prisons have separate barracks for women (IG Prison Sindh 2010). In Balochistan, women prisoners are mostly held in Central Jail, Gaddani and District Jail Quetta, while in district jail Mustung and Dera Murad Jamali there is a small number of women prisoners (Superintendent Central Jail Quetta 2009). Women make up a very small proportion of the prison population in Pakistan. Their total number was around

1250 during 2008 (IG Prison Sindh 2010). The small number of women imprisoned in jail does not significantly mean that women folk are less exposed to the criminal world. Very few cases of crime are reported in case of Balochistan and even lesser in case of women. Those found in jails are the exceptional cases of individuals that unfortunately came to the notice of the authorities. In spite of all this, it appears that the rate of crime amongst womenfolk in Balochistan is comparatively less.

Women in prisons need special treatment due to their separation from their communities, homes and families. They 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, 1957)

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Objective of the study

The main objective of the study is to investigate the gravity and the degree of problems in female sections of jails and to

study the conditions under which these prisoners were living in the jails.

Scope and Significance

On the request of the Ministry of Women Development Islamabad, a research study was conducted by Women Studies Centre University of Balochistan in order to assess the needs of women in jails of Balochistan. The scope of the study is limited to four jails of Balochistan that have the female population. Since no research and study had been carried out previously, therefore, the area had remained unexplored in the past. Besides, the study is undertaken to find out the magnitude of the problem that female prisoners face during their imprisonment and to take appropriate measures in order to solve these problems. Since there was no previous research in this regard, the findings may be utilised by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Women Development and Special Education for future policy making and planning of gender development and equity.

Method

A structured interview technique was used to collect information from women prisoners in jails at all the four places, namely Quetta, Dera Murad Jamali, Mastung and Gaddani. As a first step a questionnaire was designed to interview the women prisoners. Keeping in mind the ethnic diversity of the province, 36 females from different ethnic groups were selected for this survey. The second step was the training of the survey team and specially those of enumerators. A pilot survey was carried out where women prisoners in Quetta jail were interviewed. The questionnaire was then finalized in line with the result of the pilot survey. The final step was the analysis and the synthesis of the data collected and the process of highlighting the outcomes. For the purpose of data processing and analysis, no sophisticated software was used for the purpose of data analysis. The Microsoft Office was used for tabulation, data analysis and diagrammatic presentation.

Results

Socio-economic Characteristics of Respondents: Without understanding the Socio-economic characteristics of respondents, it is difficult to identify the factors affecting their access to facilities available in jails. In this regard, information on age distribution, marital status, area the respondents come from, their educational level, etc was gathered. This background information will help us control the variance of the study and will facilitate data analysis.

Age and religion of respondents: Questions are indicating that the majority of criminals are of age group, 15-26 years. All except one prisoner are Muslims, that is, 35 women prisoners are Muslims and only one is Christine. The demographics information shows that the crime rate is lowest in the age group 46-5.

Table1

Agewise distribution of women prisoners

Years	n	%
15-20	8	22.22
21-25	6	16.67
26-30	2	5.56
31-35	5	13.89
36-40	5	13.89
41-45	3	8.33
46-50	1	2.78
51-55	0	0
56-60	3	8.33
Above 60	3	8.33
Total:	36	100

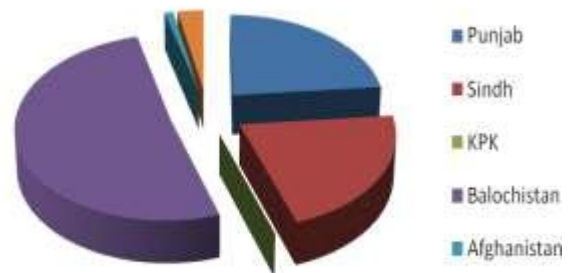
Marital Status: 26 women out of 36 were married, two were divorced, five were widow and three were single. Out of 36 women, 30 reported that they were satisfied with their life before coming to jail.

Provincial/Countrywise Distribution of Women Prisoners:

Majority of the prisoners were from Balochistan i.e. 52%. About 22% belonged to Punjab, 20% are from Sindh and 3% are from Azad Kashmir. No prisoner belonged to KPK. Three women prisoners were foreigners, one from Afghanistan, one from Bangladesh and one from Iran.

Figure1

Provincial/Countrywise Distribution of Women Prisoners



Educational qualifications of Respondents: About 91.67% of the prisoners were illiterate, 5.96% under metric and 2.7% had higher secondary education certificates. When asked whether they can read Holy Quran fully, eleven out of 36 women prisoners were capable of reading Quran. 24 said that they could not read Quran due to their illiteracy. One prisoner was a non-Muslim.

Duration of Imprisonment: Among the women prisoners, six were jailed for a period varying from one to four weeks. Twenty were jailed for a period varying from one month to one year (12

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months). Six were jailed for a period varying from one year to six years.

Table 2.

Duration of Imprisonment

Period	n	%
Up to:		
One Month	06	16.7
One Year	20	55.6
Two years	04	11.1
Four Years	05	13.9
Six Years	01	2.8

Problems of Prisoners: Out of a total of 36 women in jail, 17 said that they had problem in jail whereas 19 said that they had no problem. Women prisoners in Quetta jail complained about the quality of food and behaviour of Jail Authorities. They reported problems of discipline. For example, when women fight with each other the Jail Authorities beat them mercilessly.

Women prisoner in Dera Murad Jamali complained that food is not good and there is no milk for the newborn children. One female prisoner in Mastung jail complained about the small size of the room where she and her newborn baby was uncomfortable.

The worst conditions prevailed in the Gaddani Jail. The size of the room was 10'x12' where all the 15 women were housed. It was not only that the size of the room was small and packed with women; in spite of severe hot weather there was no fan available. Electricity load shedding was reported to be very frequent. The physical conditions were worse and more pathetic. There was no pail for containing water. No plates, glasses and cups were available for taking food and water. And besides this, no education or health facilities were available. The quality of food was horrible and there was no space for children to move about. About 18% complained about shortage of water; 10% about load shedding; 12% complained about lack of good quality of food; 19% had no reply, which showed their contempt for the system.

About 13.89% of the prisoners were imprisoned for a period of 3-5 years. The second category was 11.11%, who were imprisoned for 24-25 years. About 21 prisoners were under trial, which constitutes the highest number i.e. 58.33%.

In order to study the problems of children of women prisoners in jails, a study sponsored by Planning Commission Govt. of India (2004), entitled Children of Women Prisoners in Jails was conducted in Uttar Pradesh at Pandit Govind ballabh Pant Institute of Studies in Rural Development Lucknow (2004). The researchers recommended that Prison administration should be made more sensitive and responsive to the problems of the children of women prisoners. The jails should be provided sufficient resources to ensure that care, nourishment, protection, welfare and development of young children living with their mothers in jails

Respondents suffering from physical illness: Majority of the women prisoners were suffering from several diseases. Some respondents were reported to have more than one ailment. Among them 17.07% stated that they have heart problem. 14.63% reported blood pressure.

Table 3

Number of Respondents Suffering from Physical Illness

Physical Illness	n	%
Blood Pressure	6	14.63
Diabetes	3	7.32
Heart Problem	7	17.07
Infection	1	2.44
Gynae Problem	4	9.76
Kidney Problem	3	7.32
Headache	2	4.88
Stomach Problem	3	7.32
Allergy	1	2.44
Fever	1	2.44
Liver Problem	1	2.44
Abnormal	1	2.44
No Problem	8	19.51
Total:	41	100

9.76% had Gynae problem, 7.32% diabetic, 7.32% kidney patients and 7.32% had problems with the functioning of their stomach problem. 4.88% reported they had headache. 2.44% were suffering from allergies, fever, liver malfunctioning, abnormality and infectious diseases. 19.51% reported no problem.

When asked whether they were getting proper medical treatment, about one third (36.11%) responded in affirmation. 41.67% reported that they are not getting proper medical treatment. 18% did not respond. 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.

Nature of crime: The results presented in table 3 reveal that majority of the culprits were involved in drug trafficking, which is 38.89%. Murder accounted for 22.22% and Hadood (Zina) for about 14%. Stealing of car and kidnapping is less in women prisoners (2.78%).

Table 4

Nature of Crime Committed by Women prisoners

Nature of Crime	n	%
Drug Trafficking	14	38.89
Murder	8	22.22
Hadood (Zina)	5	13.89
Child Trafficking	3	8.33
Runaway	2	5.56
Illegal Immigration	2	5.56
Kidnapped	1	2.78
Stealing Car	1	2.78
Total:	36	100

Satisfaction over Facilities in Jail

When the women prisoners were inquired about the facilities in jail their response was as follows;

63% reported that they were satisfied with the drinking water, while, 36.11% were not satisfied with the drinking water.

44.44% stated that they are satisfied with the quality of food. Whereas, 55.56% reported that they were not satisfied with the quality of food.

86.11% said that they are satisfied with the quantity of food. 13.89% complaint that they are not satisfied with the quantity of food.

47.22% reported that the pregnant women/feeding mother do not get any extra food and care. 36.11% were satisfied with the extra food and care given to pregnant/feeding mother. 16% had no comments.

55.56% reported that the children with women prisoners do not get enough food. 38.89% stated that they get enough food for their children. 5.56% did not respond.

91.67% of the women prisoners reported that their children do not get proper basic education. 5.56% did not respond. 2.78% responded positively that their children get proper basic education in jail but the source of that basic education was not quoted in spite of instance of interviewer.

67.67% responded negatively that they get healthy environment in jail. 27.78% reported that they get healthy environment in jail but that healthy could not be defined by them. 5.56% had no reply because their concepts for healthy environment were not clear.

88.89% reported that their children do not get any toys in the jail. 5.56% had said that their children get toys in the jail through those that come to visit them and sometimes by some generous philanthropists 5.56% did not respond.

38.89% stated that they were satisfied with the members of prisoners in rooms/halls, whereas, 61.11% were not satisfied with the number of prisoners in a room.

27.78% were satisfied with the beds/bed sheets/pillows covers etc. in jail. The remaining 72.22% were not satisfied with the bedding condition of the jail.

There is only one bathroom-cum-toilet, which the women themselves are responsible for maintaining and, therefore, they said that the condition was hygienic as they themselves maintain it. Nevertheless they reported about the absence of detergents and other gadgets required for its cleaning. 17.22% said that they were satisfied under these conditions, whereas, 52.78% said that the existing state was not satisfactory and they required more toilets and bathrooms along with instruments for its cleaning and maintenance.

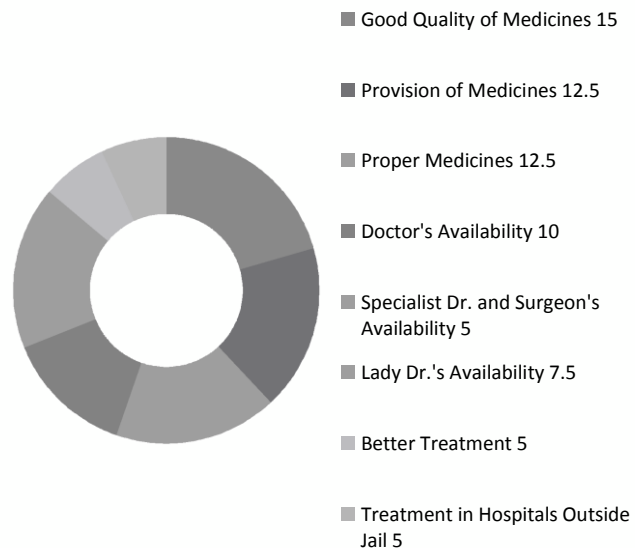
97.22% of the women prisoners were of the opinion that religious awareness can help in bringing about a positive change in the environment of the jail. They believed that religious awareness can help in maintaining a balanced and modest environment in the premises. 2.78% stated

that religious awareness could not help in maintaining better, balanced and modest environment in the jail.

Suggestions by Prisoners

Out of the total prisoners who were suffering from any type of disease, 15% suggested for improvement in quality of medicine. 12.5% suggested for improvement of provision of medicine and another 15.5% for supply of proper medicine to the jail itself. 10% suggested improve the availability of the doctor. 7.5% suggested that there should be a lady doctor appointed regularly in the jail ward. 5% suggested for posting of specialist and surgeon in the jail. 5% asked for better medical treatment. Another 5% suggested that they should be sent for treatment to hospital outside the jail. 27.5% did not respond.

Figure2
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In order to improve the facilities available in jail for women prisoners, 12.77% respondents suggested for improvement of provision and presence of water facilities. Those who suggested for improvement of electricity supply system account for 12.27%. Provision of educational facilities in jail and improvements of general living conditions was suggested by 10.64% each. Provision and improvement of religious education was suggested by 8.61%. Another 4.26% responded that they required a peaceful environment in the jail. Those who stated that there should be an atmosphere of mutual cooperation with each other amongst the inmates of the jail were around 4.20%. Some 4.1% stated that women should spare more times for religious activities and get more involved in the exercise of their religious duties. Those who desired that there should be some arrangement for the skill enhancement and their emphasis was on the arrangement of cutting and sewing classes in jail accounted for 4%. While, another 4% proposed

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that the convicted prisoners should be kept separately from those under trial. They suggested that such segregation was essential to maintain the healthier environment of jail as the attitudes of both these categories differ from each other due to the psychological differences in their mental makeup. 3.9% suggested that there should be a change in the behaviour of Jail Authorities. That they should be better trained for a prisoner friendly attitude. 3% suggested that basic necessities be provided. 2.13% suggested that women should be advised not to quarrel with each other. Almost one fifth (19.90%) women prisoners acted indifferently and said that they had no problem which was probably so due to their attitude of indifference.

Confession of Guilt

When the respondents were asked whether they think, they are guilty, some 30.56% of the women prisoners said that they are guilty whereas 69.44% said that they are not guilty. Among the women prisoners those who were accused for murder cases, most of them said that they have not committed the crime. The study of 77 murders in Rajasthan and Punjab, found that in the case of murders committed by women, the association between offender and victim is even closer, "in 61 cases, the victim was a member of the offender's family" (Ahuja Ram. 1969).

Conclusion and Findings

During the course of the study the most important factor that emerged out of the survey was that the commission of crime usually rooted in the oppressive attitude both at domestic level as well as at the level of the society around. In this advanced age of satellite media the mindset of the female has also undergone changes. Resistance has thus developed against the marriages with old age adults or underage children. It consequently give rise to related crimes like running away from homes, contacting young men for support in such cases and thus getting involved in undesired criminal activity.

Almost all the prisoners involved in crime were found to be illiterate. They all pleaded that their ignorance had brought them to the present situation. They had either been trapped by people because they did not have any sense of self-assessment and situation analysis or because they could not calculate and estimate that they are being dragged into adverse situation.

The lack of facilities and the pathetic situation in jails requires the attention of NGOs who are highly resourceful in terms of funds and the fortunate sections of the society.

The children accompanying the women prisoners in jail need special attention as they are the future generation that would govern this country in the coming times. It's the duty of the society and the state to provide them with human conditions of life even if they were living in the jail with their mothers.

The Jail Manual is too old and requires a thorough review and revision for amendment. It needs to be transformed according to the modern times.

Recommendations

Basic facilities such as good quality food prepared under hygienic conditions should be supplied to all the female prisoners and specially those undergoing pregnancy.

Coldwater, electric fans, electric/gas heaters, medical care, toilets, bathrooms, clothing and bedding etc. should be provided to women prisoners.

In each prison qualified Lady medical officer and essential medicines should be provided.

Special arrangements may be made for prenatal and postnatal care of prisoners bearing children in Jail.

Access to educational facilities may be ensured to all female prisoners.

Adult literacy programmes may be launched in all central jails to educate illiterate women.

Special emphasis needs to be laid upon religious education to female prisoners in jail.

Work culture should be introduced in Prisons, and private sector be encouraged to establish cottage industries in jails against adequate wages.

Official visitors should make periodical surprise visits to the Prisons to ensure good administration.

Facilities of indoor games like Ludo and carom board etc. should be provided.

Prisoners may be allowed to keep a radio, wristwatch, books, paper and pen with them in jail.

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