

## **Relationship of Pessimistic Attitude with Childhood Abuse among the Female Prisoners of Punjab Prisons**

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### **Abstract**

The study explores the relationship between the experience of abuse and pessimistic attitude among the female prisoners. This area of research has never been explored in Pakistan. Participants included 400 females both the convicts and under trials from the four Central Prisons of Punjab Prisons. Data was collected with the help of structured questionnaire. House Tree Person Test was also administered for rapport building. It was hypothesized that female prisoners having the experience of abuse were also having pessimistic attitude towards the life. Findings showed significant co-relation between experience of abuse and pessimistic attitude. Pearson correlation co-efficient was calculated between experience of abuse and pessimisms. In order to further understand the level of abuse; it was divided into emotional, physical and sexual abuse. This study highlighted the need to attend emotional problems of female criminals.

**Keywords:** Pessimistic attitude, Childhood abuse, Female prisoners.

### **1. Introduction and Literature Review**

Women are important part our population. They are daughters, sisters, wives and mothers. Majority of female cases are not reported. This may be due to prestige of the family and normally a woman offender after being identified and reported to police, is more likely than a male offender, generally treated as semi innocent accomplices, whether this is her true role or not. Crime is simply a human act considered undesirable, bad or illegal from the point of view of the social, moral and legal aspect of society.

**Table 1: Indicates the total female prisoners population in jails of Pakistan with Province-wise break up (Position as on 30-06-2009)**

Name of Province	Under-trial	Convicted	Condemned	Drug Addicts	Drug Traffickers	Total
Punjab	249	162	148	6	196	<b>761</b>
Sindh	90	-	01	0	76	<b>167</b>
KPK	50	123	0	0	80	<b>253</b>
Balochistan	4	11	0	0	9	<b>24</b>
Baltistan	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Azad Kashmir	15	0	0	0	0	<b>15</b>
<b>Total:-</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>1220</b>

Correctional Experts have seriously neglected the female offender's psychosocial needs and the prisons they reside. These forgotten offenders have been neglected so far is that female inmates are limited in number. Limited number does not mean that problem is ignorable. Present study is an attempt to understand, the relationship of experience of childhood abuse with the pessimistic attitude of female prisoners. Child abuse is physical, emotional and sexual exploitations or harm to a child, who is unable to understand or react to harm. Physical abuse involves, attack on child's physical safety and integrity, it ranges from hitting, kicking, punching, burning and assault by weapon, which result in bruises injury, pain. The sexual abuse is sexual behavior as fondling, touching genitals or other parts of body in sexual way or use of persuasion inducement, enactment or coercion of any female child. Emotional abuse is mal-treatment which involves verbal condemnation, constantly rejecting ignoring and criticizing the child.

Experience of abuse leaves the child in trauma, though after having a painful experience pain heals up but the emotional problems keep on developing. Child abuse in Pakistan is not a well acknowledge and well publicized phenomenon to recognize it as contributory factor of pessimism among female criminal, due to the social norms and values of the society. In this study age of female criminals is above the eighteen years, the reason behind is to rule out the experiences, which she might have undergone during her captivity. Pessimism is a grim disorder (Milligen & Clark 1993) and it is a dominant emotion, which effect badly over all functioning of individuals (Anderson & Jamison 1986). Pessimistic Attitude is mood disturbances, despair, helplessness, hopelessness and negative expectancy (Rawin & Heacock 1993).

A Person with pessimistic attitude shows low work potential, high apathy, general withdrawal (Rosenbaum & Rosenbaum 1999). In other words pessimistic attitude is feeling of inadequacy, decreasing activity, low self image, pessimism, sadness and worthlessness.

Victims of child abuse suffer from low self esteem and other emotional problems in the later years (Prevent child abuse, New York, Executive Summary, 2001). Abused

Juvenile delinquent in the later years of life suffers from hostility depression and suicidal attempts. (Yorat Albany 1992).

Female prisoners 22% met the criteria of major depression (Dewel 1988). Any experience of harsh treatment during childhood results in difficulty in negotiating the demands of adult life. The personality formed in an environment of coercive control is not adopted to adult life. (Herman 1992).

Women who were abused as a child would be unable to negotiate the environmental stressors and other emotional problems (Byrne 1990). Marcus, S. 1993 concluded after his research work that abused female reported more emotional and substance abuse problems and negative attitude towards life.

Child abuse is vicious circle typically abusive parents have history of abuse or deprivation in childhood and in turn treat their children in similar manner Johnson, 2001. Female prisoners need psychological guidance and support (Shankardas, D.R. 2001).

Female prisoners were more likely than male prisoners to report neurotic disorders, depression (Jack, W.B. 2003). Shah, Z 2003 concluded that there is intense and urgent need to sensitize the jail authorities as well as Judges of the fact that women prisoners needs psychological guidance. Within this context present study intends to find out the relationship between childhood abuse and pessimistic attitude among the female prisoners of Punjab prisons.

## **2. Methodology**

### *2.1 Sample*

Participants consisted of 400 female prisoners from four central prisons of Punjab Province. The sample was representative and adequate (Good & Hat). There were no limits such as age, education, experience, under trial or convicts. Participants were approached individually by the researcher and rapport was developed with the help of House tree person test and with the help of psychological techniques. Caution was taken not to use the term abuse or any other sensitizing language which might block their responses.

### *2.2 Instrument*

Data was collected by means of observation and questionnaire. During the construction of questionnaire (AMS), care was taken to use easy and simple language so as to make it easily comprehensible for the participants. The questionnaire was in Urdu and in it the information obtained was limited in oral responses of the subjects to pre-arranged questions. Cornbach's alpha reliability co-efficient was calculated through SPSS (reliability co-efficient alphas was 0.86). Item analysis of this self perception inventory indicates that no single item was inconsistent.

The participants were required to select the response that best fits the way she has been feeling.

### 2.3 Procedure

The participants were approached individually in the Prison setting. It was made clear to them that this information would be kept confidential and would be used only for research purpose. The subjects were briefed on how to answer questions. Considering the general illiteracy and poor background of these criminals, the researcher read out statements individually. Average time taken to complete the scale was between 6-8 minutes.

### 3. Data Analysis and Results

Present study examined the relationship between child hood abuse and pessimistic attitude among the female prisoners of Punjab Prisons.

Sample population was belonged to 30-34 years of age 21% while 19.5% were belonging to age between 45-49 years of age and 195 were having 50 years of age while 82.8% respondents were illiterate, only 13% respondents were illiterate, only 13% were literate without formal education whereas 2% were having religious education. Most of the respondents were marked 55% whereas 27% were unmarried, 12.3% were divorced and 55% were widowed.

Female prisoners are convicts and under trial prisoners selected across different subjects age, types of crime, duration of sentence, both the educated and uneducated prisoners, and also under trial and convicts with a period of abuse till eighteen years of age.

Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated, it was found that co-efficient of correlation between abusive experience was significant at 0.0 level of significance ( $r=.411$   $p<.01$ )  $P=.000$  whereas there was also a significant correlation between emotional abuse and pessimistic attitude ( $r=.419$   $p<.01$ )  $P=.000$ . The correlation between sexual abuse vs. pessimistic attitude ( $r=.190$   $P=.01$ ). Similarly the coefficient of correlation between Physical abuse and pessimistic attitude was ( $.180$   $p.01$ )  $P=.000$ , indication correlation between physical abuse and pessimistic attitude.

**Table 2: Abuse and Pessimistic Attitude**

Source of Comparison	N	(r)	P.Value
Abuse Vs Pessimistic Attitude	302	.411	.000

Above table shows that coefficient of correlation between abuse and pessimistic attitude of criminal females was significant at 0.01 level of significance ( $r=.411$   $p<.01$ ). Indicating statistically significant relationship between degree of abuse and pessimistic attitude among the female prisoners of Punjab Prisons.

**Table 3: Correlation between Emotional Abuse and Pessimistic attitude:**

Comparison	N	r	P. value
Emotional Vs Pessimistic Attitude	314	.419	.000

It is shown in the table that coefficient of correlation between emotional abuse and pessimistic attitude of criminal is significant at 0.01 level ( $r=.419p<.01$ )

**Table 4: Sexual Abuse Vs Pessimistic Attitude**

Comparison	N	r	P. value
Sexual Vs Pessimistic Attitude	333	.190	.000

Above table shows coefficient of correlation between sexual abuse Vs pessimistic attitude of female criminals in prisons which was significant at .01 level of significance ( $r=.190 p <.01$ ) indicating statistically significant relationship between degree of sexual abuse and degree of pessimistic attitude.

**Table 5: Physical Abuse Vs Pessimistic Attitude**

Comparison	N	r	P. value
Emotional Vs Pessimistic Attitude	334	.173	.000

Above table indicating correlation between physical abuse and pessimistic attitude of female criminals was significant at .01 level  $r=.173p<.01$ . Overall findings suggest significant correlation between pessimistic attitude and experience of childhood abuse.

**4. Conclusion and Discussion**

Findings suggests that there is a relationship between experience of childhood abuse and pessimistic attitude among female prisoners of Punjab Prisons. Findings are consistent with prospective study conducted by Pederson, 2001 and Herman 1992.

Potentially any negative event in life elicit subjective appraisal of how threatening the event is, if the event is perceived with alarm, the stress may trigger emotional reaction as (Sadness, anxiety), psycho-somatic and behavior reactions, as human beings response to negative events in multi-dimensional ways (Smith & Hazarous 1993), Negative Past experiences made many people feel helpless, hopeless and dejected. Present Study is also consistent with Paykel & Cooper (1992), according to them there is existence of a moderately strong link between negative life events and on set of mood disorders.

A few good reasons for this significant relationship between pessimistic attitude and experience of abuse are the negative childhood experiences, develop frustration, feelings of self blame, people start thinking about their own setbacks (rejection of society due to crime) Personal inadequacies which they see unchangeable and adopt pessimistic attitude toward life, which may further be aggravated by negative life experiences of prison life also.

Women in prisons were mostly unprivileged, findings of this research relating to abusive childhood experiences and pessimistic attitude towards life are important in a sense as the researcher for the first time in Pakistan tried to take all the organs of criminal justice

professionals and general public in the deep end of the women's experiences through that gloomy depressing institution called prisons.

Moreover findings of this research are also helpful to work out such a legal judicial and penal machinery to see the effects of past negative experiences has significant relationship with pessimistic attitude. Thus the abusive childhood experiences increase better feelings, guild, self-blooming and consequently pessimistic attitude towards life. Suther, Lanel and Cressy, 1970).

Present study also suggest that negative life experiences, indifferences neglect and lack of affection are responsible for emotional problems as depression in mood tone and there is need to address such issues with the help of psychological rehabilitation for females inside the prisons, as depression among women in prisons decreases as the creative activities increase (Jeanifer, D 2004). Similarly effect of art therapy indicated marked improvement in pessimistic mood, behavior problem solving strategies adopted by female prisoners (Gussak, D. 2007). It is further suggested that a more casual link can be established through further research in this area.

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