

ILLITERACY AND INCIDENCE OF CRIME AMONG WOMEN: CASES NARRATED FROM JAILS IN BALOCHISTAN

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Abstract

This study is based on „Need Assessment Survey of Women in Jail“ sponsored by Ministry Women Development, Social Welfare, and Special Education, Government of Pakistan. The study was carried out in four jails of Balochistan namely Quetta, Gaddani, Dera Murad Jamali and Mastung jails. The women were imprisoned for their involvement in crimes like zina under Hadood Ordinance, drug trafficking, murder and child trafficking. More than 90% of the prisoners involved in crime were found to be illiterate. The cultural taboos hinder the education of the female and she does not become aware about her responsibilities and rights. 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. Some level of education in all these prisoners could have changed the situation.

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INTRODUCTION:

Education plays an important role in the life of both male and female. It enables them to distinguish between right and wrong. Education level has got the direct bearing on incidence of crimes. The higher the education level the lower would be the chances to involve in criminal activities and vice versa. Unfortunately, the literacy rate at national level in Pakistan is very low. While at provincial level it is at alarming stage especially in the case of Balochistan in comparison to the other provinces of the country. The current literacy rate in the province stands at an abysmal 43%, according to Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLM) conducted by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). The survey further stated that Male literacy rate in Balochistan is 55% and Female literacy rate is just 25%. Whereas the illiteracy rate in Balochistan has dropped by 3% in the year 2013-14.

A study –The Link between Low Literacy and Crime¹ states that there exist a relation between crime and low literacy level. It shows that people with low literacy are mostly less active in social activities. They are reluctant to engage in sports activities, social gatherings and religious groupings. Their chances to involve in criminal activities either as offender or victim is higher than those with higher literacy level. The inability to read and write well may not be a direct cause of criminal behaviour, but low literacy and crime are related. It may also help to explain why crime rates are higher in neighbourhoods where a high percentage of people have low literacy.

The findings of another study –Crime and Unemployment in South Africa; Revisiting an Established Causality: Evidence from the Kwazulu Natal Province² by N.G. Tshabalala,(2014), reveals that the low level of education contributes to the high rate of crime. The results of the study

showed that the low level of education is responsible for the high rate of unemployment and bears a direct

The author (Dr. Aurangze.2012) of the study –‘Determinants of Crime in Pakistan’ establishes relationship of low level of education with the high rate of crime. He suggested that education plays an important role, it creates awareness between wrong and right practices which has been done by people.

Research Methodology:

The research study was conducted in four jails of Balochistan where women prisoners were accommodated. These include Quetta Jail, Mastung Jail, Dera Murad Jamali Jail and Gaddani jail. The data/information were collected through a questionnaire designed in line with the objective of the study. All the women in four jails of Balochistan were interviewed by a team of enumerators especially trained for the study. The list of women prisoners was obtained from Inspector General Prisons Balochistan Quetta. There were 36 women prisoners in these jails. Out of the total 18 were imprisoned in Quetta jail, 14 in Gadani jail, 2 in the jail of Dera Murad Jamali and 2 in Mustung jail. The information were sought from face to face interview with women prisoners. The study conducted provided the women an opportunity to narrate their cases.

Since a large majority of the women prisoners were illiterate, it was difficult to get the required direct information from them. It took a long time to explain them, how important it was for them to give true and proper information. It also required lots of effort to convince them that they could trust the interviewing team with the realities of their life as it would be a sacred trust with the team which would not be ever used against them.

Table: Educational Qualification of Prisoners

Qualification	No.	%
Illiterate	33	91.67
Under Metric	2	5.56
Higher Secondary	1	2.78
Total:	36	100

The table shows that more than 90% of the women prisoners were reported to be illiterate. Out of the total of 36 women in jails only 3 with the education level of under matric and higher secondary level were found to be literate.

Followings are the different cases narrated by women prisoners. These stories are being presented as they there were narrated, therefore, we cannot comment upon their being true or false. The Court has given their judgements and we are not in a position to comment upon that:

Quetta Jail:

- A women prisoner who had killed her fiancé narrated that her parents wanted to marry her to a person whom she did not like. Simply because she was in love with her cousin. Her cousin repeatedly requested her parents to call of her engagement but they did not agree. The cousin killed her fiancé and was arrested. The Judge ordered her arrest alleging that she too was involved in the murder.
- One poor prisoner said that she had been a co accused in murder her husband. The murderer of her husband had blamed that she had persuaded her to commit the murder.

- A prisoner who had come from Azad Kashmir narrated that while she was living in a rented house in Azad Kashmir the lady owner of the house persuaded her to come to Quetta along with her and year ago when she had come to Quetta a policeman named Nadir proposed her for marriage. He persuaded her a lot but could not make her agree to marry. The policeman once got hold of her in the bazar and gave her a beating. She went to the Police Station to lodge a complaint against him and the policeman also reached there. The dispute was resolved by the intervention of the police but the same night Nadir came to her again and threatened that if she did not agree to marry him, he would kill his wife. On her refusal he killed his wife and allege it that she was involved in the killing. The police arrested her and, therefore, she is in the jail.
- A woman prisoner narrated that she was working as a housemate in the house of a retired officer. One day while he along with his two kids was having dinner with his guests, two police officers came and arrested all of the members of the family along with me under Haddood Ordinance. The two guest girls were also arrested. My lawyer said that if she provided him with a girl for entertainment he would manage her release. Later on the guest girl that had been arrested from his house were released by the Judge with whom she is still living.
- A woman prisoner insisted constant that she had not committed any crime.

- A woman prisoner pleaded that she had not herself committed any crime. Her son had committed the crime for which she was held imprisoned.
- One prisoner narrated that once a girl had eloped away with a boy. The relative of the boy found them and took away the boy, leaving the girl alone. Her son is a bus driver and they left over the girl requested my son to give her some refuge and in return she would later marry him. My son took her to Karachi. When the police raided my house, they found her son and the runaway girl missing from the house. Later on the police arrest both of them from Karachi. The girl's father lodged a case against my son and he was arrested. Five months later the police arrested me also under the charge that I was also involved in the kidnapping of the girl. The girl accompanied her back home and we are imprisoned for a case of kidnapping.
- One woman prisoner said that she was living in Bangladesh where her husband was a drug addict and a gambler so she took divorce from him. One day while she was returning from her friend's house, 2-3 persons kidnapped her and brought her to Pakistan in Usta Muhammad where they sold her for Rs. 120,000. While she was travelling with the man who had bought her they were arrested by the police and brought to Jail. In the beginning she was living in Lahore Lakpat Jail for one month where she thought she would be sent back to Bangladesh. Instead of that she was brought to Quetta jail where now nobody is ready to take

any responsibility regarding her. She feels helpless as there is none to help her out from the jail. She does not want to back to her country because she fears her parents would kill her. She says she wants to marry some good humane person in Pakistan and thereafter she may decide to go and see her parents and friends. She desires to live a happy life after that. She says she does not want to go to the *Dar-ul-Aman*. She also complained that she look older than her age because of the adverse conditions of life.

- Another female prisoner stated that her husband owned agricultural land. There was a quarrel between her husband and his younger brother in which the younger brother was injured. The Sardar of the area fined her husband for Rs. 500,000/- for the injury caused by him. Her husband wanted to pay off the fine by selling his share of land but the younger brother did not permit him to do so. One day at midnight her brother in law came and picked a quarrel with her husband when she tried to intervene she was kicked aside and she became unconscious. When she woke up she found her husband dead. She called her father in law who locked her up in a room. After the funeral of her husband he called the police and got her arrested. She begged for justice because her parents were poor and could not help her. She had now been convicted for imprisonment for seven years. She filed an appeal in the High Court but the brother in law insists that her imprisonment may be extended to 25 years.

- Another female prisoner who is held for trafficking kids said that she lived in Rahim Yar Khan. Her neighbours convinced her to go to Iran for pilgrimage with them. They travelled by coach from Rahim Yar Khan to Quetta. Near Iran they all were arrested. The photographs of the children of the neighbouring family had been entered in passport. This had been done by the travel agent in Rahim Yar Khan. On the recovery of the photographs of children on her passport she was held and imprisoned for 20 years. On appeal of her son to High Court the sentence was reduced to five years with the fine of Rs. 5000. Her son now appealed to the Supreme Court.
- A female prisoner said that she had married her neighbour without the consent of her family. The brother lodged an FIR against her husband and registered a case of kidnapping against him. The police arrested the couple and, therefore, she is in jail.
- A woman prisoner from Jahang said that she had developed friendship with someone who had their agricultural lands adjacent to the lands of her parents. They had family relations and she fell in love with the brother of the land owner who was a bus driver. They ran away to Karachi and married. Even now she carries her Nika Nama. The parent registered a case against her sister in law. The sister in law got the couple arrested to rescue herself. Now there are two cases registered against her. One is that under Haddood Ordinance and the other is running away from home. She

talked to her father who showed willingness to withdraw the case but did not come back to her because the mother has become revengeful and is insisting to keep cases against us. The prisoner still likes her husband and thinks that she has not done anything wrong in marrying him. Since they both are in jail there is none to help them.

- Another female prisoner who was a poor worker said that while she was working a women suggested her to go to Iran for pilgrimage and bring Irani goods to sell with lots of profit and earn money. She prepared a passport and gave Rs. 5,000/- to the agent for visa while she was living for pilgrimage, the agent brought his brother and children to accompany her. The agent had detained her passport. At Taftan border when the police wanted to see her documents she was arrested because the five children that had been accompanying her had been entered in her passport and probably the purpose to smuggle the children through her. She was caught in the case for kidnapping and stolen children and is now in jail.
- Another woman prisoner who used to wonder around and sell cloths said that in process of her business of selling clothes she went to Dera Murad Jamali where she met the wife of a retired SHO to whom she used to sell clothes. One evening she was invited to dinner by the policeman's wife. During the dinner the police raided her house and arrested all of them including four men under Hadood Ordinance. After a few days imprisonment they were bailed

out. The case continued and she was sentenced for ten years. She complained that the lawyer was a very bad person as he had been inviting her for sexual relations, which she had refused.

- Another lady prisoner said that her daughter had fallen ill. She was advised by someone to go to Dalbandin and get some medicinal herb. On her way to Dalbandin she was caught by the Anti-Narcotics Department in the case carrying 4 Kgs. of opium under her seat. She kept on crying and imploring that the drug did not belong to her but nobody listened. She was a poor woman who made her living by selling cloth and all other people were rich and influential, therefore, she was caught in spite of innocence.

Mastung Jail:

- A prisoner in Mastung Jail had a pathetic story where a mother was accused of killing her son in law. She said that her eldest daughter who was married was living with the parents along with her family. The fiancé of her younger daughter killed elder son in law and threw the body in a dried well. One of the cousins of the deceased father accused that the parents in law had murdered the man. She and her husband were both arrested for this murder. She told the police that the fiancé of her younger daughter had committed the crime and, therefore, he too was arrested.
- Another woman prisoner in Mastung Jail said that she was travelling from Karachi to Quetta by road along with her brother, her nephews and her own children. On their way

the nephew forcibly snatched away the car from her brother who was on the driving seat. Later the car was stopped at a point by the police. The nephew did not stop the car instead broke the chain of police and ran away. The levies and police followed them. Fire was opened on them. The nephew escaped and she with her brother was caught for violating law.

Dera Murad Jamali Jail:

- A prisoner charged from murdering her husband in the Dera Murad Jamali said that one night after their routine of taking dinner she went to bed. At midnight someone killed her husband and she has been accused for the alleging crime about which she does not know. Again in Dera Murad Jamali jail a prisoner narrated that her husband is not a good man. He is interested in another women and wants to marry her because of his inclination towards another women he maltreats her and keeps harsh behaviour with her. Through some means he got her caught in Siakari and she also pleaded that she had not committed the crime.

Gaddani Jail:

- A woman held for drug trafficking said that their neighbours had thrown heroine in their house and now all the family members are in the jail.
- In drug trafficking almost all of the women prisoners said that they are trapped and are not guilty of crimes. Some name of their relatives and neighbours are usually given for such a crime.

- One woman prisoner said that she was a councillor and her husband is a drug addict. She said that she will report to police against those persons who sell narcotics. Her opponent in the election of councillor bribed the SHO who arrested her on the charge of drug trafficking and later arrested all the members of her family.
- Another woman said that while she was driving her car in Hub the police arrested her. Later Charas and Kalashinkove was said to be recovered from the car and they were arrested.
- Another women prisoner at the same place said that in her neighbour some people are involved in drug trafficking, when the police raided their house, they threw ½ kg hashish into her house. She said that the neighbours had bribed the police and since she was poor, therefore, she was accused in that case.
- Another prisoner said that one day when she was in her house some people entered and kidnapped her.
- A woman prisoner said that her husband was sick. They came to the town of Turbat from their village in search of some job. They started selling fruit and fish in Turbat when police arrested both of them accusing them for selling drugs.
- Another woman stated that her parent wanted to marry her with an old man for which they had received Rs. 50,000/- and 4 tolas of gold from the old man. She ran away with a

boy who lived in her neighbourhood. When they reached Hub Chowki the police arrested them.

- Another women in Gaddani jail said that while she was coming from Quetta byroad another female passenger was sitting next to her. She had a bag which she handed over to her. The Coastguard arrested her and found out that the bag contain 7 kg of Chars.

Conclusions

Most of the women prisoners were found to be illiterate. They admitted at large that their illiteracy and ignorance was one of the main causes of the occurrence of the crime. The situation would have been different if they had some level of education. The stories told by the women in these four jails are eye opening for the people in general and the authorities in particular who are at the helm of the affairs.

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