STRESSORS AND COPING STRATEGIES OF PERSON DEPRIVED IN LIBERTY AT CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION FOR WOMEN: A BASIS FOR INTERVENTION PROGRAM

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Abstract - In this study, the researchers have used the descriptive research design. The researchers gathered data from the purposively selected 154 female inmates of Correctional Institution for Women. The study employed quantitative questionnaires to gather data from the respondents. In the application of the descriptive method of research, the Inmates Stressors Scale and Ways of Coping Questionnaires were used to gather the necessary information and data. Weighted Mean was used to describe the nature of the variables. After gathering and analyzing all the data, the researchers arrived at the conclusion that being convicted of a crime doesn't depend whether a person finished education or not. Female inmates are prone to heightened stress because they have husbands and children and they are worried about their conditions outside. Accommodation and Contacts with Outside were the primary stressors that female inmates face inside the prison. Positive Reappraisal was the coping strategy that they typically used. Accommodation has the greatest number of correlations with the coping strategies. Confrontative Coping has the greatest number of correlations with stressors. As a proposed intervention program, given the mental, emotional, spiritual and physical benefits of mindfulness meditation, a deeper look at its potential usefulness as a tool for addressing stress and anxiety in correctional settings becomes worthy of further investigation.

Keywords - Stressors, Coping Strategies, Persons, Deprived in Liberty, Correctional System

I. INTRODUCTION

For the past several years, the Philippine Correctional System has been the subject of public criticism for its alleged failure to rehabilitate offenders and prevent them from returning to their old criminal life. Quoted here, is the statement of Atty. Ricardo V. Puno, Jr., expressing such sentiments: "Our prisons are place for paying one's debt to the society, yes, but they are not meant to totally dehumanize a person. Much less should they be the 'training academy" for criminals to hone and upgrade the skills of their nefarious "craft"."

The nature of influence of prison sentences on the behavior and adaption of offenders ought to be one of the basic, fundamental questions in criminological and penological research and theory. The rational and efficient use of imprisonment requires that we understand the ways that individuals are affected by the experience of prison life. Despite disparate views regarding the purpose and aims of the penal system, there is a consensus that imprisonment should not be damaging. Social and correctional policy objectives are not met to the extent that imprisonment serves to exacerbate emotional difficulties and psychological vulnerabilities, reinforce pro-criminal and antisocial attitudes and aggressive behavioral patterns, or impede the development of coping skills needed to function in the outside world.

There is no doubt that confinement can be highly stressful. This statement can easily be accepted considering specific feature of imprisonment itself as the most severe form of punishment in contemporary civilized societies. Aside from its most apparent features (i.e. isolation and excommunication, restrictions on freedom of movements, choice and control over one's own life), incarceration carries with it a variety of collateral consequences which may include the loss of employment and the disruption of family life. Incarceration symbolized the unworthiness of the individual to live among the law abiding and the failure of the person to contribute to society in a meaningful and acceptable way. Rejected by society, the inmate is placed in the stark, impersonal and often volatile environment of the prison, where he must function in a subservient, dependent role with few opportunities for demonstrating self-worth, as stated by Wright (2001).

Stress generally occurs when an individual(s) is placed in a situation where their prior experiences or background don't easily lend themselves to interpretation of the current situation. According to Silverman and Vega (2004), a form of "culture shock" then occurs, which triggers the responses that are typically associated with stress. Silverman and Vega argue that a prison constitutes a foreign environment to which a person responds with such culture shock. Common sources of stress which inmates face include loss of freedom, a limited number of facilities and programs, a high potential for violence, conflict with other residents or staff, lack of privacy, and overcrowding (Paulus & Dzindolet, 2005). Inmates also must deal with such issues as excess noise, isolation, and boredom (Negy, Woods, & Carlson, 2002). Other sources of stress include dealing with prison rules, expectations of staff and other inmates, and sexual intimidation from

other inmates (Sultan, Long, Kiefer, Schrum, Selby, & Calhoun, 2000). Inmates may also experience an increase in stress near their release time as they experience uncertainty about the "outside" (Bukstel&Kilman, 2007).

The present study focuses on the problems experienced by inmates as they are incarcerated, and this article is relevant as it shows not only the history of prisons in the Philippines but also the important role that prisons play in the rehabilitation of inmates. In some prisons, corruption and abuses are still rampant, and the problems of lynch violence, insufficient medical care, and the continued failure of rehabilitation practices all remain as serious issues. The general public's understanding of the function of prisons remains conservative. Prisons officials, who ought to be grounded in specialized and concrete basic policies, remain the same, they emphasize only on isolation, punishment, heavy sentencing, and so forth. Apart from lip service, they have no fundamental concept.

II. METHODOLOGY

Research Objectives

To achieve this goal, the researcher aimed 1) to distinguish the common stressors female inmates typically face, 2) how they respond to these by means of coping strategies, 3) to discern the difference in the stressors when grouped according to demographic profile 4) the difference in the coping strategies when grouped according to demographic profile.

Research Design

The researchers used the descriptive research design. A descriptive research design refers to the process of describing what current conditions or attitudes exist now. In this study, it provided an in-depth, independent and accurate assessment of inmates in Correctional Institution for Women, as well as presents their demographic through a survey.

Respondents

Correctional Institution for Women is one of the smallest but the most crowded correctional institution in the country with a total population comprising of 2565 women (October 2016) The respondents of the study were women aged 18-73 years old and inmates in Correctional Institution for Women. 154 female inmates were obtained for the survey through purposive sampling.

Research Instrument Used

The study utilized quantitative questionnaires to gather data from the respondents. The study delved into the stressors that female inmates face inside the prison. The questionnaires were divided into three divisions. The first division includes the section for the demographic profile which is composed of Age, Civil Status, Educational Attainment, Number of Children and Length of Sentence. The second division contains the constructed questionnaire which is called the 'Inmates Stressors Scale' that seeks to determine the common stressors that the female inmates typically face. The third division contains the standardized questionnaire called 'Ways of Coping Questionnaire' to determine how they respond to these stressors by means of coping strategies.

Before the gathering of data, the researchers sought professional psychologists to validate the questionnaire called 'Inmates Stressors Scale' as appropriate for use in the intended setting.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Most respondents are College Graduate which composed of 27.3%. This means that being convicted of a crime doesn't depend whether a person finished education or not; everyone is susceptible to breaking the law.
2. Most of the respondents are married which composed of 46.8%. It means that the female inmates are prone to heightened stress because they have husbands and probably children and they are worried about their condition outside.
3. Majority of the respondents were sentenced with life imprisonment which composed of 50.6% of the total respondents.
4. Based on the gathered data, most of the respondents have 1 to 3 children. This means that most of the female inmates have average number of children and they don't have big families to take care off.
5. In terms of age, majority of the respondents are aged 36-55 which composed of 59.7%. 36-55 age group is considered to be in the middle age.
6. Among the seven categories of Stressors, Accommodation and Contacts with the Outside are considered by the female inmates to induced stress to them in their stay inside the prison.
7. The coping strategies are divided into eight categories which were rated by the respondents into how often they use these coping strategies in dealing with different stresses of life. Among the eight categories, 6 of them were used quite a bit by the inmates in dealing with the daily stresses inside the prison. These categories which are being used by the inmates thoroughly or in a very noticeable degree include Planful Problem Solving, Seeking Social Support, Accepting Responsibility, Self- Controlling, Distancing, Positive Reappraisal.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study helped the researchers prepare the following recommendations.

1. We recommend that future researchers study the effect of inmates' specific cases of being incarcerated in their stress level and how do they cope up to this. Since our study is limited to general inmate population, we did not specify the specific cases of the inmates that can affect their perception of stressors and implementation of coping strategies.
2. We also recommend that future researchers study the level of stress of the correctional staffs of Correctional Institution for Women. Prison staffs have a lot to deal with inside the prison, so they need to be equipped with a lot of guts and high spirit in order to manage different situations that could happen inside the prison.
3. We also saw that most inmates were seldom visited by their family or loved ones. We recommend that it is also good to study the impact of having frequent visits of loved ones to their psychological well-being since being incarcerated separates inmates from close contact and frequent communication with their loved ones.

PROPOSED INTERVENTION PROGRAM

The study, Stressors and Coping Strategies of Person Deprived with Liberty: A Proposed Intervention Program concluded that Accommodation and Contacts with the Outside are considered stressors by the female inmates. These results became the basis for the formulation of an intervention program addressing their need to deal with the stress brought about poor accommodation and inadequate or infrequent contact with their loved one's outsides. Inmates' comfort, food and safety are there utmost concern while staying inside the prison. It defines their survivability as they live outside the comfort of their own home and freedom. Being unable to have a communication with people you cared about the most contributed a lot to the hardship of being incarcerated. Family and friends are everyone's stronghold in any situation. Being away from the people you loved the most bring a great deal of stress to any person.

In line with this, the Correctional Institution for Women have had a lot of reformation programs, performing arts groups, organizations that help inmates grow while staying inside the prison. As the researchers have asked the staffs and teachers of the institution, they have established a variety of program opportunities for inmates to grow in every aspect of life. Considering these circumstances, the researchers sought and thought about a program not included in their current set of programs for the inmates. It shall be called 'Mindfulness Meditation Program'. Growing research evidence demonstrates that the process of mindfulness is a healthy adaptive intervention tool which encourages the participants to objectify their self-defeating mental and emotional states by viewing them as a phenomenon that will eventually pass (Shonin, Gordon & Griffiths, 2014)

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