

Women Prisoners' Access to Education & Training: A Report from Balochistan

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Abstract

The present study was designed to obtain a first-hand knowledge regarding the education facilities provided to women prisoners. Furthermore, it looked at whether any kind of training was being imparted to them to make them skilful for a respectable earning after they leave the jail. The study results reveal that there was no education facility for women prisoners in the jails of the province. The same was the case of training facilities for women prisoners. The Department of Education and the Technical Training Board of the Provincial Government has not yet played any significant role in improving the situation. The Jail Authorities pointed out that obstacles in improving the condition were beyond their control. They were mainly financial, lack of proper space, lack of teaching staff and teaching facility and the callous behaviour of the higher authorities responsible for maintaining human conditions in the jail. The women prisoners are looking forward to the return of Elizabeth Fry to come over and improve their conditions in Jails.

Key words: Women Prisoners, Education, Training, Cultural Taboos

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Introduction

In Pakistan about 65% of the population lives in rural areas (Rural Empowerment and Institutional Development REPID 2013-14). These rural areas are characterised by lack of basic facilities of life such as roads, education and health. Resultantly, the literacy rate is low in these areas, it is 65% among males, compared with only 38% for females. Wide disparities exist among the provinces as well. According to the national study on measuring learning achievement at primary level in Pakistan, in the case of Punjab the female literacy rate (43%) is the highest (Pakistan Census Organization 2012), while Balochistan has the lowest (17%) female literacy rate. However, in some remote areas of the province, the literacy rate among rural females is less than 10%. The province is far behind in all the fields of social development and there are less opportunities available to the male population and, therefore, even lesser to the female.

The condition of women in prisons of Balochistan is even worse, when compared to the above situation. Most of them are illiterate or less educated, they are unaware of their rights and are lacking in confidence. Due to their illiteracy and lack of confidence the jail staff exploit the prisoners and are hardly provided the amenities they are entitled to according to the jail manual. They mostly live in miserable conditions and even their basic needs are not fulfilled inside prisons. The women prisoners are looking forward to the return of Elizabeth Fry to come over and improve their conditions in Jails. Elizabeth Fry was a lady who worked for the rights of women prisoners in England in 1810. Elizabeth provided clean clothes and food to the female prisoners. She got women prisoners to knit and sew, to earn money. In 1817 Elizabeth and her friends set up a society to make prisons better. She visited other prisons, and helped other women set up groups to help prisoners. In 1816 Fry was successful in establishing a prison school for the children who were imprisoned with their mothers. She helped found the Association for the Reformation of the Female Prisoners in Britain. This led to the eventual creation of the British Ladies' Society for Promoting the Reformation of Female Prisoners. She wrote a book on prison reforms.

Literature review

The local media produced the main source of information of the conditions of jail. Time and again there were articles and features, which pointed towards the adverse conditions of the prisons and especially of the female section of the prisons. When the news items in the print media highlighted the issue the Social Welfare Department tried to probe into the matter and bring some improvement. This opened way for social workers to visit the jail and thus another source of information was created by this. The discussion of the visitors attracted attention of the civil society and the need for such study was felt. It was realised that since no proper research and study had been carried out on these lines. It was important to explore this field for better future planning and policy making in this regard. A study "Reforming Pakistan's prison system" by the International Crisis Group (2012) working for the prevention of conflict Worldwide states that the breakdown of the rule of law in the country has evolved a corrupt and dysfunctional prison system. The jails in Pakistan are mostly overpopulated, understaffed and poorly managed, and have become a fertile breeding ground for criminality and militancy, with prisoners more likely to return to crime than to abandon it. Regarding women prisoners it recommends that building separate detention facilities for women prisoners and ending the practice of housing them in separate barracks within male prisons; investing in education services and vocational training for inmates, particularly youth and women, to inculcate skills needed to re-enter the workforce.

Similarly, some reports shows that women in jails are sexually abused by the police authorities and sometimes even the Jail Authorities exploit their position by forcing them to work for them unpaid sometimes by embroidering their clothes and at other times doing manual drudgery in their homes. About 60% of the women prisoners are in jail because of being affected by the Hadood Ordinance. Instances show that a majority of these women were raped and instead of being redressed through law enforcing agencies and judicial institutions they themselves were captured and labelled as criminals and were punished under the Hadood Ordinance. Though they were subject to crime, this crime became their fate ultimately...*source Daily Jang.*

Keeping in view the above situation it is important to explore the issue in detail for better future planning and policy making in this regard, as no proper research study had been carried out in the past on these lines in the province of Balochistan.

Objective of the study

The main objective was to study the conditions under which the women prisoners were living in the jails and to obtain a first-hand knowledge of the condition of the females in jails in terms of their access to education facilities and to look at whether any kind of training was being imparted to them to make them skilful for a respectable earning after they leave the jail.

Method and Procedure

Keeping in view the small number of women prisoners in 4 jails of the province which had women cells, almost all of them were interviewed for the study. Out of the total of 36 women prisoners, 18 were imprisoned in Quetta jail, 14 in Gadani jail, 2 in the jail of Dera Murad Jamali and 2 in Mustung jail.

Instrument

The research methodology adopted in the study mainly encompasses face to face interview of the investigators with women prisoners. For this purpose a structured interview technique was used to collect information. As a first step a questionnaire was designed to interview the women prisoners which included almost all the possible questions related to the life of women prisoners in jail, the available education/training facilities to them and the need for these facilities to improve the situation. Female enumerators who were specially trained for the purpose of data collection individually interviewed the women prisoners. A pilot survey/pre testing was conducted by interviewing the women in Quetta jail and the questionnaire was finalised in the light of pilot survey.

As a final step the collected data was analysed, synthesised by using Microsoft office. Simple tables, charts/diagrams were used to present the analysed data for drawing result and conclusions.

Results

Age of the Women Prisoners: The data reveals that the highest number of prisoners are of age group 16-25 years accounting for 39% of the total. While, the crime rate is reported to be least (3%) in the age group of 46-55 years.

Table 1

Age Groups of the Prisoners

Years	No.	%
16-25	14	39
26-35	7	19
36-45	8	22
46-55	1	3
56-65	6	17
Total	36	100

Marital Status: The marital status of the prisoners show that the majority of them are married. They account for 72% of the total. Whereas the divorced, widows and single were 6%, 14% and 8% respectively.

Table 2

Marital Status

Marital Status	No.	%
Married	26	72.22
Divorced	2	5.56
Widow	5	13.89
Single	3	8.33
Total:	36	100

Educational Qualifications: Among the women prisoners a big majority (around 92%) of them were illiterate, 6% were under metric and only 1 out of 36 accounting for 3% had higher secondary education certificate.

Table 3

Educational Qualification

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

Quranic Literacy: 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.

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Table 4

Quranic Literacy

Read Holy Quran	No.	%
Yes	11	30.56
No	24	66.67
Not Applicable	1	2.78
Total:	36	100

Family Educational Status: 56% of the prisoners' father or husband were illiterate. 25% were under metric. 13% were metric. 5% had Masters Degree.

Table 5

Father's/Husband's Qualification

Father's/Husband's Qualification	No.	%
Illiterate	20	55.56
Under Metric	9	25.00
Metric	5	13.89
Masters	2	5.56
Total:	36	100

Education facility in Jail: Education is an integral part of any rehabilitation programme within any prison sentence plan. It is through a process of formal and informal education that prison inmates are given the possibility for a successful reintegration into society. Formal education programs have been successful in preparing inmates to find employment and be self-sufficient when they are released from prison (Boucouvalas & Pearse, 1985). However, informal learning programs are also helpful in reducing recidivism (Day, 1998).

All the women prisoners said that they are not attending any school in jail. They stated that there is no education facility in jail for women prisoners.

Table 6

Education Facility in Jail

Attending School in Jail	No.	%
Yes	0	0.00
No	36	100.00
Total	36	100

Vocational Training in Jail: The same is the case of the vocational training for women in jail. All the women prisoners stated that they are not provided any type of vocational training inside the jail. Vocational training programs in prison are a source to teach inmates about general employment skills or skills needed for specific jobs and industries. The overall goal of vocational training is to reduce inmates' risk of recidivism by teaching them marketable skills they can use to find and retain employment following release from prison. Vocational and technical training programs can also reduce institutional problem behaviours by replacing inmates' idle time with constructive work (Wilson, Gallagher, and MacKenzie 2000). The type of vocational training available in a prison will depend on inmates' interests, availability of teaching staff, and funding.

Table 7

Vocation Training in Jail

Attending Vocational Training in Jail	No.	%
Yes	0	0.00
No	36	100.00
Total	36	100

Need for Religious/Spiritual Education: 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). In this connection the religious education plays an important role by inculcating the moral and ethical values. The religious education is not only a source of hope and an avenue for change, but it also reduces the likelihood of future crime. Among the women prisoners 88.89% were of the view that there should be religious education in jail. 5.56% had no comments. 5.56% replied that no religious education is required.

Table 8

Need for Religious/Spiritual Education

Need for Religious Education	No.	%
Yes	32	88.89
No	2	5.56
Not Applicable	2	5.56
Total	36	100

91.67% were of the view that attending religious/spiritual education will improve their mental/physical capacity. 8.33% of the female prisoners had no view.

Table 9

Improvement of Condition

Improvement of Condition	No.	%
Yes	33	91.67
No	0	0.00
Not Applicable	3	8.33
Total	36	100

Basic Education for Accompanying Children in Jail: 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. The study "Reforming Pakistan's prison system" by the International Crisis Group (2012) working for the prevention of conflict Worldwide recommends investing in education services and vocational training for inmates, particularly youth and women, to inculcate skills needed to re-enter the workforce.

Table 10

Basic Education for Accompanying Children in Jail

Basic Education	No.	%
Yes	1	2.78
No	33	91.67
Not Applicable	2	5.56
Total	36	100

Outcome

There is no arrangement for any sort of education neither formal nor religious. In this respect Quetta jail is an exception where there is a library, which has been established by the generous donation of some individuals, but this library also is located within the premises of the male prisoners and the women do not have an access to it. Two middle age prisoners in Quetta Jail indicated that some three years back there had been a few days literacy course taught to the prisoners, which basically did not bring any change in their educational condition as it was a very basic low level course of learning rather it was something that could be termed as some 'Basic Literacy Programme' enabling women to write and spell their names in Urdu.

The Department of Education and the Technical Training Board of the Provincial Government has not yet played any role in improving the situation.

The Jail Authorities pointed out that the obstacles in improving the condition were beyond their control. They were mainly financial, lack of proper space, lack of teaching staff and teaching facility and the callous behaviour of the higher authorities responsible for maintaining human conditions in the jail.

Situation Analysis of the Jails

(a) Quetta Jail

There are no arrangements for formal/informal education for women prisoners in jail. Religious teaching is not part of the schooling in the jail. There is no female teacher for religious teaching. There are absolutely no arrangements to take care of the schooling of children who accompany the women prisoners. There is no such provisions because the jail manual does not contain any such rule rather it does not allow children above 2½ years of age to stay with their mother in jail.

The Jail Authorities do not receive any fund or grant for the education/schooling of the female prisoners nor there exist any type of technical/vocational training for women prisoners. Jail Authorities mentioned that in spite of their repeated demands no attention has been paid to this problem. The higher authorities have been reminded repeatedly but nothing has been taken place on ground. About 2-3 years back the ILO Project in collaboration with HRC provided training related to handicraft and tailoring.

The official of the Technical Training Board never pay visit to the jail in pursuance of their policies nor there any incentive for the female prisoners to participate enthusiastically in the technical training.

Counselling is available to female prisoners by Social Welfare Staff and Lady Jailer.

Although most of the facilities required like fan, water and television are present in Quetta jail yet they still lack in schooling, vocational training, books, reading material and in terms of care of their children. But these are still better than the condition of other jails of Balochistan.

No amount is reflected in Quetta jail budget for women prisoners' educational or vocational training.

b) Gaddani Jail

In Gaddani Jail there are 15 female prisoners. There are also four children accompanying them. All these prisoners are illiterate. No classes are being organised by the Jail Authorities for the education of these women, therefore, no female prisoner is attending the school at any level. The Superintendent Jail has personally requested the Secretary Women Development, Social Welfare and Special Education Quetta several times to provide them Female Social Welfare Officers and Female Social Workers but this request has not so far been accepted.

There are no books, newspapers, magazines or any other kind of reading material provided by the Jail Authorities.

There is no tutor and there are no arrangements for schooling. The authorities usually make an excuse of no money, no room and no teaching available for this purpose. Nor there is any interest on part of the women prisoners as they all are illiterate. No amount has been allocated to women prisoners' education. Though incentives are offered to women prisoners to attract them for schooling in the form of reduction in imprisonment duration.

There is neither private tutor nor any NGO that would offer teaching material free of cost or would help in facilitating their teaching. The Education Department is also not extending any service to help the women prisoners. There is no facility of games and sports nor is there any other entertainment except for a television which was provided by M/S Hubco Power Company. There is a second set of television that has been donated by M/S Attock Cement for the child prisoners. No educational or pleasure trip were arranged for women prisoners outside the jail.

There is no facility of library and games like carom board and Lodo games are sometimes provided.

The Jail Authorities have recommended several times to the higher authorities to provide female teacher and religious female teacher.

There is no chair or table in the jail. There is no classroom or schooling, therefore, there computer training is out of question and the women prisoners are illiterate. There is also no religious teaching. There is a lack of funds for the education of women prisoners and, therefore, a teacher cannot be hired. There is no arrangement or any effort to groom women prisoners of the negative impact of their immoral and criminal outlook and to evade crimes.

There is no provision to take care of the children who are of the age of going to school. The barriers to the provision of technical and vocational training are lack of funds, lack of trained staff and lack of interest on part of the state and Jail Authorities. The Technical Training Board has made no contribution towards this end. There has also not been any budget allocation for such training. No incentives have been provided to women prisoners to participate in technical training. No women prisoner is getting socio-psychological treatment.

c) Dera Murad Jamali Jail

There were only two female prisoners confined in DeraMuradJamali jail. Both of them are illiterate. These women have no learning facilities. They are not provided with any teaching material. There is no teacher and, therefore, there is no response from female prisoners towards education and training. The main obstacles that were also indicated are financial constraints, lack of space, teaching aids and facilities and lack of teaching staff. There is no amount fixed in the jail budget for women prisoners' education.

Some NGOs ready to serve in this regard or private tutors are only available at Quetta. In the interior of Balochistan there is dearth of such facilities. Not a single women prisoners appeared in any of the examination from jail side.

There is no school accommodation for establishing the school in the jail. The Jail Authorities has recommended that arrangement for religious education be made available to them. There is no facility of any table or chair in the jail.

Computer training or any other type of vocational training is out of question because of no school arrangements in the jail. Religious teaching is available only for male prisoners. No efforts are ever made to groom the women prisoners and to make them aware about the negative effects of immoral or criminal outlook and to evade crime.

There is no arrangement to take care of the children of the women prisoners. The Education Department does not play any role nor does any other Department even the staff of Social Welfare Department are not available to jail outside Quetta. No funds or grants have ever been given to the jails for women prisoners.

According to Jail Authorities no efforts have been made to overcome the hindrance and obstacle. Technical Training Board have either not been approached or they have made no contribution for technical training of women prisoners. Almost all the female prisoners are illiterate.

There is no provision of budget for the prisoner women's training. There is no incentives for women to participate enthusiastically in the technical training. No socio-psychological treatment is being given to female prisoners.

d) Mastung Jail

In Mastung Jail there are only two adult female prisoners. Both of them are illiterate. There are no classes in the jail for female prisoners. There is no facility for schooling. There are no classes, no books and no arrangements for teachers and for teaching materials and no space to conduct such activity. No magazine or newspaper are provided there as such reading material are not required. The women prisoners do not respond to the idea of education. The obstacle indicated are lack of space, lack teaching aids, teaching facilities and teaching staff. There is no budget amount fixed in the jail budget for women prisoners' education. There are incentives to reduce imprisonment duration if the educational activity is adopted. There is no private tutor or NGO that offers any teaching material or facility free of cost. No religious teaching is there for women. No female teacher is available for teaching of women. There is no arrangement to take care of the children accompanying in jail. There is no educational facility available to these children and the Education Department or any other NGO and private sector does not play any role in providing this opportunity. No funds or grant are provided by any quarter for the schooling of these children. There is no technical/vocational training facility for these women prisoners. The barriers indicated are lack of funds, lack of space and lack of interest by the state and Jail Authorities.

No efforts have been made to overcome their deficiencies. There is no technically training instructor available in the jail nor have any alternative arrangements been made. No women prisoner has ever been trained since 1997. No official of the Technical Training Board of the Government of Balochistan has ever visited the jail in pursuance of their training policy. There is no budget allocation for the purpose. No incentives are offered to women prisoners for participating enthusiastically in the technical training.

Conclusion and findings

The cultural taboos hinder the education of the female and she does not become aware about her responsibilities and rights. An aggressive revolt has been observed in cases where she has to face adverse situations of life. 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.

Religious education plays an important role by inculcating the moral and ethical values. The study revealed that it is not only a source of hope and an avenue for change, but also reduced the likelihood of future crime.

The disinterest of the state authorities in the affairs of the prison houses indicate towards an alarming situation of the society. Different state agencies like the Education Department, the Social Welfare Department and institutions responsible for education and skill enhancement ought to play their positive role in bringing about a positive change in the existing situation.

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. The study reforming Pakistan's prison system by the International Crisis Group (2012) working for the prevention of conflict worldwide states that the breakdown of the rule of law in the country has evolved a corrupt and dysfunctional prison system. The jails in Pakistan are mostly overpopulated, understaffed and poorly managed, and have become a fertile breeding ground for criminality and militancy, with prisoners more likely to return to crime than to abandon it.

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. Arrangements for the education of the women, their vocational and technical training, their skill enhancement and their psychological catharsis need to be made in order to have a balanced society.

The study reforming Pakistan's prison system stresses on building separate detention facilities for women prisoners and ending the practice of housing them in separate barracks within male prisons. The women in jails are looking forward to the re-emergence and rebirth of Elizabeth Fry to come over and look into their affairs sympathetically and struggle hard to reform their conditions with love and care.

Recommendations

Illiteracy emerged as one of the main causes of crimes among women. Special attention should be paid on women education in order to make them responsible citizen of the society. Similarly, educational & training facilities may be provided to women in jails. In this connection elementary schools should be started with qualified teachers. Informal education programmes for women prisoners may be started to educate illiterate women in jails.

Special emphasis needs to be laid upon religious education to female prisoners in jail. Appointment of religious scholars for the provision of religious education to female prisoners in jails is, therefore, pertinent.

Allama Iqbal Open University and other such educational institutions should be facilitated to collaborate and address women's development needs in education, training and increasing their productive skills. The Allama Iqbal Open University should launch educational programmes offering Middle, Matriculation, Intermediate, Graduate and Postgraduate courses for female prisoners who desire to enhance their educational capabilities.

For the leisure and entertainment of the women prisoners, separate libraries be established for containing with teaching and training materials, books and newspapers/ periodicals.

The study reforming Pakistan's prison system suggests that investing in education services and vocational training for inmates, particularly youth and women, to inculcate skills needed to re-enter the workforce. It is therefore important to introduce that work culture in Prisons, and private sector be encouraged to establish cottage industries in jails against adequate wages. Various trades and prison industries be initiated with; training in handicrafts, sewing, knitting, weaving, book binding, tailoring, dyeing, soap making, food processing and plastic flower making. Wage-earning schemes for female prisoners in all jails can motivate the prisoners towards productive work. The following wage rates can be adopted:

Skilled	-	Rs. 30/-	(per hour)
Semi-skilled	-	Rs. 20/-	(per hour)
Unskilled	-	Rs. 10/-	(per hour)

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