



## The Legal and Psychological Challenges of Female Prisoners in Pakistan

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### ABSTRACT

In Pakistan, female prisoners experience a range of difficulties and hindrances that have an impact on both their legal rights and psychological well-being. This study addresses the legal and psychological problems that Pakistani female inmates experience and investigates their causes and effects. A thorough overview of the situation of female prisoners in Pakistan is provided by the research using both qualitative and quantitative data from diverse sources. There are many difficulties and issues that female prisoners in Pakistan must deal with, including subpar jail conditions, unfair sentences, inadequate legal counsel, and psychological harm. In addition to affecting the well-being of female prisoners, the previously mentioned obstacles also make it difficult for them to be rehabilitated and incorporated into society once they are freed. To address these issues and improve the criminal justice system for women and girls, policymakers, stakeholders, and civil society organisations must collaborate. Due to their ethnic background, socioeconomic level, and social expectations, female detainees in Pakistan experience serious legal and psychological problems. To guarantee that women have the chance for accountability and rehabilitation after being freed from prison, it is imperative to address these difficulties. Efforts for public education, changes to the legal system, and better amenities for women in jail can all help tackle these issues and reduce the risk that culprits will commit crimes again.

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## 1. Introduction

There are four levels of the criminal justice system in Pakistan: the magisterial, sessions, high, and supreme courts. Women make up about 2% of the total prison population in Pakistan (Raghavan, 2021). According to a report from the World Prison Brief, Pakistan had 133,327 inmates as of August 2021. 2,422 of these detainees in Pakistan's 32 jail facilities were women, making up the remainder (Fair & Walmsley, 2021). Due to gender, social position, and cultural standards, women in Pakistan, particularly female convicts, suffer substantial legal and psychological problems (Ali, Khan, Raza, & Khan, 2023).

In addition, poor living circumstances and inadequate medical care are provided to women in prison, according to a report by Pakistan's Human Rights Ministry. This research, titled "Plight of Women in Pakistan's Prisons," which was presented to the government in 2020, stated that Pakistan's jail rules did not adhere to international standards and that officials frequently disregarded regulations designed to safeguard women and inmates. 66 percent of the 1,121 women incarcerated as of mid-2020 had not been found guilty of any crimes and were being held while awaiting the outcome of their trials. Family visits were very impossible because more than 300 women were being held in locations away from the districts where they resided. The inmates comprised 10 girls under the age of 18 and 46 ladies over the age of 60.

Only 24 female health professionals are available to care for women and girls in jails across the nation on a full-time basis. Children who visit their mothers in jail run more risks. Despite the legal restriction of five years, the committee established by the government of Pakistan to investigate the problems encountered by female inmates in 2020 discovered that 134 women had children with them in prison, some as old as nine and ten. As of 2020, at least 195 kids were living in prisons. Mothers who have children with them in prison frequently lack access to basic treatment, putting both the women and the kids in danger of catching illnesses. This is due to a severe lack of funds for the prison healthcare system.

A prisoner said that notwithstanding her many requests throughout her six-year sentence, her child, who had a developmental handicap, was not provided with any support services or medical attention. Human Rights Watch claims that Pakistan requires immediate and thorough jail reform, with an emphasis on the rights of women, children, and inmates who are at risk. The Human Rights Ministry's report There have already been numerous issues noted with Pakistani prisons extensive issues. At the time, the ministry discovered that about 2,400 convicts have chronic infectious illnesses like hepatitis, HIV, and tuberculosis.

**Table 1: Statistics of Female Prisoners in Pakistan**

Sr.No.	Name of Jails	Under Trial	Convicted	Condemned	Grand Total
1	Central Jail, Lahore.	77	43	1	121
2	Central Jail, Gujranwala.	26	28	0	54
3	District Jail, Kasur.	9	1	0	10
4	District Jail, Lahore.	0	0	0	0
5	District Jail, Sheikhpura.	14	2	0	16
6	District Jail, Sialkot.	16	13	0	29
7	District Jail, Narowal	2	0	0	2
8	Central Jail, Sahiwal	15	14	0	29
10	District Jail, Okara	9	0	1	10
11	District Jail, Pakpattan	13	0	0	13
12	District Jail, Vehari	6	0	0	6
13	District Jail, Khanewal.	0	0	0	0
14	Central Jail, Rawalpindi.	77	60	3	140
15	District Jail, Attock.	2	2	0	4
16	District Jail, Gujrat.	16	3	0	19
17	District Jail, Jhelum.	10	1	0	11
18	District Jail, M.B.Din.	0	0	0	0
19	Sub Jail, Chakwal.	0	0	0	0
20	Central Jail Faisalabad	0	0	0	0
21	B.I. & J. Jail Faisalabad	0	0	0	0
22	District Jail Faisalabad	35	51	0	86
23	District Jail Jhang	22	0	3	25
24	District Jail Toba Tek Singh	17	0	1	18
25	Central Jail Mianwali	10	0	1	11
26	District Jail Sargodha	0	0	0	0
27	District Jail Shahpur	16	3	1	20
28	District Jail, Bhakkar	1	1	0	2
29	District Jail, Hahfizabad	5	0	0	5
30	Central Jail, Multan.	0	0	0	0
31	Central Jail, D.G. Khan.	3	0	0	3
32	District Jail, Multan.	0	0	0	0
33	District Jail, Muzaffargarh.	0	0	0	0
34	District Jail, Rajanpur.	0	0	0	0
35	District Jail, Layyah	1	0	0	1
36	Women Jail, Multan.	19	55	12	86
37	Sub Jail, Shujabad	0	0	0	0
38	B.I & J Jail, Bahawalpur.	0	0	0	0
39	Central Jail, Bahawalpur.	17	1	0	18
40	District Jail, R.Y.Khan.	9	0	0	9
41	District Jail, B.Nagar	5	0	0	5

Source: <sup>1</sup>Punjab Prisons, Government of Punjab

<sup>1</sup> [https://prisons.punjab.gov.pk/female\\_prisoners](https://prisons.punjab.gov.pk/female_prisoners)

The situation has worsened due to a lack of sufficient medical facilities and healthcare personnel for detainees. The number of open posts on the prison medical staff was cut in half. There is a severe lack of ambulances and medical supplies. Overcrowding is still a significant issue. It was discovered that 114 jails, with a combined capacity of 57,742, housed 77,275 convicts. The bulk of those jailed were innocent and awaiting trial. Pakistan has the 38th-largest jail population in the world, per World Prisons Brief 2021. There are 85670 inmates total, including remand and pretrial detainees. The number of prisoners in Pakistani prisons has risen dramatically, from 78,938 in 2000 to 85670 in 2022.

One of the highest rates of incarceration among South Asian countries is found in Pakistan, the fifth most populous nation in the world. The court system in Pakistan presents special difficulties for women because many of them are imprisoned for non-violent crimes like drug trafficking, prostitution, and small-time larceny. Recognizing the psychological and legal issues that Pakistani female convicts face is critical to improving their rehabilitation and reintegration into the community. This research will look into the psychological and legal issues that female prisoners in Pakistan face and propose remedies (Nabi, Hussain, & Kamran, 2021).

Women's incarceration in Pakistan is a serious, multidimensional issue with many elements, encompassing legal, social, economic, and psychological ones. Under the Ministry of Interior, there would be approximately 84,000 convicts in Pakistan by the close of 2020, with 4,000 of them being women. Nevertheless, the actual number of female prisoners is estimated to be significantly greater due to a variety of issues such as a lack of statistics, unreported instances, and juridical malpractice. In Pakistan, female inmates confront a variety of difficulties and hindrances in their daily lives, including inadequate medical care, cramped living quarters, a lack of facilities just for women, and emotional discomfort. These problems not only have an impact on the mental health of female convicts but also prevent them from being rehabilitated and integrated into society once they are released (Islam, Farooq, & Mahmood, 2019).

## **2. Review of Literature**

The situation of female prisoners is very crucial so the prison harms the female prisoners. They are facing many social and psychological issues during imprisonment e.g., homelessness, unemployment, difficulty in mothering, and the visitation of families and children. Almost 80% of female prisoners are diagnosed with the mental health issues like major depression, drug misuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, and self-harm. As compared to general females in society, these female prisoners are five times more experience in mental health issues. Female prisoners often experience domestic, physical, and sexual abuse. These traumas are correlated with mental health issues. There is an urgent need for some female prisoners to be admitted to a hospital for the treatment of these mental health issues. But the process of hospital admission is not easy. Due to many obstacles in prison, most female prisoners remain untreated (Ehsan & Niaz, 2021).

Moreover, suicide is a major cause of death among female prisoners in prison. And the prevalence rate of suicide is higher in female prisoners as compared to male prisoners. There are many factors related to suicidal ideation and suicide attempts among female prisoners. Mental illness, substance misuse, low social support, socioeconomic status, histories of childhood, physical and sexual victimization, histories of pre-incarceration suicidality, and the experiences in prison environment are one of these major factors (Winicov, 2019). Furthermore, the prevalence of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), sexually transmitted infections, and Tuberculosis (TB) is also a major problem among female prisoners. This prevalence is also higher in female prisoners as compared to male prisoners. One of the major causes of prevalence is overcrowding in the prison. The other causes are lack of access to sexual and reproductive healthcare facilities, and poor nutrition and hygiene facilities for the female prisoners in the prison. This lacks facility causes a high death rate among female prisoners (Latif & Shahzadi, 2022).

In addition, the care experienced by female prisoners in women's care centers is more in prison as compared to other female prisoners. Most of them experienced a traumatic event in the past and a lack of facilities in the care centers. They use self-harm as a coping strategy to cope with this stress and to communicate with prison staff. Due to strict rules and regulations, aboriginal women are imprisoned and pay higher charges for violations of minor rules. Due to this, aboriginal women and their families are facing many problems. (Ishfaq & Kamal 2023).

Aboriginal women are facing chronic illness, poor mental health, and substance dependency. Their poor mental health is also associated with life traumas and physical and sexual abuse. The rate of mortality is also higher in Aboriginal women as compared to other prisoners. And most of the aboriginal women are mothers, so the children are also affected due to the imprisonment of their mothers. (Carter, et al 2022).

As the role of mothers is very important in the lives of their children. Therefore, maternal imprisonment badly affects children's lives. The mothers cannot be able to provide support to their children who are with them in prison and those who are at home. The children are kept hidden in prison for their protection. Children are stigmatized in society due to maternal imprisonment. They are also experiencing a lack of social and emotional support and cannot be able to develop their skills and personality according to their own will.

This study (Bright, A. M., Higgins, & Grealish 2022), identified four analytical characteristics of women's experiences receiving mental healthcare in prison. The first analytical component focuses on the services that the female convicts used and the difficulties they ran into. The second analytical factor focuses on the diminished ability of female convicts to take care of their mental health. The degradation of female prisoners' privacy and dignity is the subject of the third analytical strand. Finally, the fourth analytical factor focuses on the tense interactions between female inmates and prison employees. According to this study, there is a stronger demand for prison personnel who adhere to the humanistic values of empathy and unwavering positive respect when working in female prisons.

According to this study, there is a very high rate of mental illness and sexual victimization among female convicts. Through the onset of mental illness, repeated interpersonal trauma, and substance usage. It is proposed that sexual victimization provides a gateway to incarceration for female convicts. Additionally, compared to other groups of women in society, female convicts have a higher prevalence of sexual victimization. The prevalence of mental illnesses, including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and substance use disorders among female convicts is also underlined in this study. (Warritch et al, 2021).

This study stated that female convicts had a higher-than-average prevalence of psychiatric illnesses such as depressive disorders, bipolar disorder, personality disorders, and psychotic illnesses. To address their mental illnesses, some female convicts are required to be sent to a psychiatric hospital and given a psychiatric intensive care bed in a secure facility. It is strongly advised that the DUNDRUM toolkit be used for this purpose in deciding whether or not female inmates need to be transferred to psychiatric hospitals for the treatment of mental problems and the level of security needed per patient in hospitals. (Simpson, A. I., Jones, R. M., and Patel, 2019).

This study contented that female inmates are known to experience detrimental problems that raise their likelihood of attempting suicide while incarcerated. It is claimed that 15.5% of women had tried suicide while serving their current sentences based on entirely anonymous self-report assessments of demographic factors, sentence characteristics, mental anguish, perceived social support, substance use, prison mistreatment, and suicidal attempts. Female prisoners' attempts at suicide are significantly influenced by a combination of factors, including lower educational attainment, victimization in prison, substance abuse while incarcerated, and higher levels of mental distress. According to a comparison of female prisoners who did not attempt suicide with those who did (Ishfaq & Kamal, 2023).

The necessity for structured mental health screening and treatment to lower the risk of suicide among female convicts was also highlighted by this study. It is essential to correctly identify traumatic occurrences among female convicts and then offer them very efficient suicidal preventative activities to lower the probability of suicide among female prisoners (Caravaca Sánchez, Aizpurua, Ricarte, & Barry, 2021).

The aim of this research was conducted to identify the challenges faced by female convicts in prison (Gadama et al., 2020). The three main issues in this investigation were highlighted. The first major issue faced by female convicts is the absence of hygiene and basic accommodation in imprisonment, which are necessary to maintain the cleanliness of the inmates. This causes

female convicts to have health issues like TB, HIV, and diarrhoea. The second major issue facing female prisoners and their offspring is the lack of appropriate and nutritious food, which is crucial for the development and growth of prisoners' children as well as for the health of pregnant, ill, and nursing female prisoners. The third major issue facing female prisoners is the lack of facilities and access to in-prison medical care. This study shows that after examining the conditions of female prisons, it is necessary to raise the bar for living conditions and medical care for the benefit of both female prisoners and the children of those prisoners.

Additionally, this study used the Erving Goffman concept of closed institutions, dramaturgy and self-mourning, the work of Crewe on the gendered pains of imprisonment, and Crawley's opinion on institutional thoughtlessness to highlight the problems faced by female prisoners during pregnancy and at the time of childbirth. To picture the predicament of pregnant convicts in prisons, the novel notion of institutional ignominy was suggested using these ideas. It was discovered that the prison does not have any particular provisions for its female inmates. In the institution, female inmates lack basic amenities such as basic food and medical care as well as privacy and dignity. They are given an uncertain standing in the institution, which is extremely upsetting to the female inmates. The fact that pregnant convicts are treated differently from other female prisoners since they are not allowed to travel freely to hospitals without handcuffs and chains (Abbott, Scott, Thomas, & Weston, 2020).

Furthermore, the social, emotional, and physical health of Aboriginal women is examined in this study by Sullivan et al. It has been determined that the majority of Aboriginal women are behind bars for drug-related offenses, crimes they committed while under the influence of narcotics, and mental health issues. They had worse health and functionality as well as significant psychological suffering. It has been discovered that about 60% of Aboriginal moms had been sexually assaulted, have attempted suicide, and have spent more than five prior periods in prison. The usage of drugs by women to cope with these traumas after experiencing sexual assault as children are found to be closely related to their aggressive behavior. Furthermore, it is hypothesized that physical, mental, and psychological suffering are all related to severe health demands.

Booth (2020) argued that using the jail telephone facilities presents four major difficulties for mother inmates. Making communication with the family during the first week is a struggle for mother prisoners since it takes several days before the pin account is live and usable. The high expense of calling while there is a low level of living in the prison is the second issue that mother inmates must deal with. The call duration, which is based on the Incentives and Privileges Scheme, is the third difficulty that the mother inmates must deal with. Mother inmates who have only recently entered the prison and have little money in their accounts are not permitted to phone their families for an extended period. The variability of call times between jails is the fourth issue that mother inmates encounter. Prisoners are permitted to phone at a set hour during the day, but mothers are aware that their kids and other family members won't be able to reach her at that time. The results of this study also show how communication between mother convicts and their children is negatively impacted by the lack of services in the prison.

Beresford, Earle, Loucks, and Pinkman (2020), highlight five key factors that have a significant impact on children's lives as a result of their mother's incarceration. The first concern is the neglect of children while their mothers are incarcerated out of concern for their safety. To keep them safe and prevent them from being placed in the care system, they don't reveal information about them. The separation of mother inmates from their children is the second aspect. Due to their mother's incarceration, the kids are feeling depressed, lonely, furious, bewildered, and ashamed. Some kids live with their grandparents, while others live alone and struggle with money. In the care system, the kids are separated from their siblings.

These kids struggle academically and engage in criminal behavior. The third part focuses on the ridicule and embarrassment that the kids experience from peers, educators, inmates, social workers, magistrates, and judges. Due to fear, a lack of trust, and inadequate communication with the social care provider, the children of mother inmates do not receive the help they require in the fourth component. Because of domestic abuse, poverty, mental illness, and drug use, people are afraid and lack trust. Additionally, it is noted that there is no privacy to speak with children and that the times and length of meetings with them are inappropriate. The fifth factor is that youngsters require assistance to grow as people and live fulfilling lives.

Fitzpatrick, Hunter, Shaw, and Staines (2023) carried out this study to determine the cause of self-harm among female prisoners who had lived in care facilities. Due to domestic violence, sexual abuse by family members, and traumatic experiences as children, the majority of convicts resided in care facilities. However, they encounter the same issues in care facilities, including sexual abuse by social workers, a lack of safety, a lack of access to drugs for mental health issues, and even ointment after self-harm. Due to these issues in the facilities and a lack of emotional support, inmates self-harm to get the attention of the staff and seek pain relief through self-harm and suicide. According to reports, people who damage themselves in care facilities also harm themselves in jail.

This study, (Sapkota et al., 2022) investigated three key characteristics of being pregnant and becoming a young mother while incarcerated. The first factor shows that pregnant female prisoners in prison do not receive adequate housing, nutrition, pregnancy multivitamins, or prenatal care services. The weekly prenatal and newborn infant check-ups for female convicts take hours to complete. They do not receive any counseling regarding prenatal care. Additionally, according to reports, because of security concerns and extensive paperwork, relatives are not permitted to be there during labor or when the baby is born. If someone is permitted to be there at such a moment, they must leave the room right away after giving birth so that someone can give assistance and amenities. The second part described the challenges experienced by female inmates who wanted to bring their children to the institution. They are not properly instructed about the lengthy administrative process, which in turn causes a lot of problems for the mothers of convicts.

Moreover, the mothers' children are not provided with books, toys, or opportunities to play with other kids in the institution. Another issue is that the majority of moms in prison are single parents with low socioeconomic levels, making it very challenging for them to purchase food, clothing, and other necessities for their kids since neither the prison nor the government provides these things. The third part outlines the challenges experienced by mothers who want to raise their children following their wishes and maintaining a relationship with them. It indicates that denying mothers in prison a choice of food, books to read, sleep schedules, and medical care facilities causes them great suffering. It is challenging for the mother to maintain touch with the children who do not live with their mothers in prison but instead reside with their grandparents or in daycare facilities. The fact that young children cannot reply to phone calls because they lack the necessary cognitive and verbal development and because it is unsettling for them to walk through security screening at the gate or touch their mothers during official meetings is also a major issue in prison.

Baldwin, Sobolewska, and Capper (2020) contended the risk and vulnerability variables for pregnant women incarcerated. Social marginalization, substance abuse, sexual assault, poor health profiles, and pregnancy and birthing outcomes are some of the risk factors. The majority of female convicts are found to have low socioeconomic and educational statuses, as well as histories of unemployment or underemployment. With female convicts, substance abuse is a common occurrence. It is noted that pregnant female inmates consume more drugs than pregnant females who are not in jail, indicating that pregnant female prisoners also begin substance abuse during pregnancy. Also, the majority of them reportedly suffered violence as children and adults. Married women have also been victims of domestic abuse by their partners, and drug abuse is more prevalent among women who were sexually abused as children. The physical and mental health of pregnant female convicts is worse.

In addition, it is brought on by a shortage of food, healthcare, and other resources. In the prison, pregnant female inmates experience such high levels of stress that it affects their mental health. When compared to other female convicts, pregnant prisoners have a far higher risk of depression. Also, it is discovered that pregnant female convicts are more likely to experience medical, dietary, obstetric, and infectious difficulties. The majority of convicts who are women give birth to healthy children. These infants are admitted to hospitals because they are underweight. It is brought on by the mother convicts' worse diet, mental health, and substance abuse. Due to a shortage of these services, miscarriage rates are also relatively high among female convicts. No family or friends are available to assist the female convicts during labor. Prison barriers are also acknowledged as the cause of all these issues.

To examine the causes, age range, religion, socioeconomic situation, level of education, marital status, magazines, and print media used by female convicts, (Dhiman, 2022). It was determined that the top grounds of women imprisoned are enmity murder, extramarital affairs, theft, dowry, and drug-related offenses. The majority of the ladies are between the ages of 25 and 35. They are primarily Hindu and of poor socioeconomic class, while some of them are also Muslims and Christians. The majority of women who are incarcerated are married or divorced. Although there is a significant proportion of illiteracy among female prisoners, there is also a high percentage of graduates in this group.

Mushtaq and Yasin (2021) finds out the sociocultural causes of female prisoners' crimes and the effects of incarceration on their well-being. According to reports, the majority of female convicts are low-income and financially dependent on their male family members. They struggle with domestic violence, power struggles, incompatibility in marriage, and boyfriend deception. They are largely illiterate. As a result of their extramarital affairs, the majority of the female convicts killed their spouses. These are regarded as the primary causes of the crimes committed by female convicts. Also, it was shown that the females who are involved in drug sales, human trafficking, and robberies had a criminal history. Because of the support from their families, they are unafraid. Also, the majority of female convicts require government assistance to hire a competent lawyer. Because they do not come from financially stable backgrounds. Also, it was stated that property conflicts also involve illegal behavior by women. Nonetheless, the prisoner might harm the mental health of female inmates. In prison, they struggle with despair and isolation.

This study contented that the legal system must pay urgent attention if the government paid attention to grant constitutional rights to children who are housed in jails with their mothers. It will be a great step for the welfare of children. Also, there is no information on children who are staying in prisons with their mothers, children who are living apart from their moms, or where they are now residing. It was noted that although children in Pakistan Prisons are permitted to live with their mothers till the age of three, other provincial laws allow children to remain with their moms until the age of six. Nonetheless, some kids remain with their mothers because no one else is willing to take care of them. Nonetheless, these kids' lives may be negatively impacted by their lengthy incarceration. But children who are taken away from their moms experience mental health problems. Children's developmental delays are caused by parents' neglect and lack of attention. According to another survey, kids who live with their mothers have more issues than kids who aren't with their mothers. Alongside these difficulties were prejudice and an abundance of opportunities for literacy (Mirza & Khan, 2022).

### **3. Discussion and Analysis**

#### **3.1. Legal Issues Faced by Female Prisoners in Pakistan**

In Pakistan, female detainees suffer a variety of legal challenges that influence their rights and well-being. One of the most serious legal difficulties is the existence of discriminating gender prejudices in the judicial system. Women are frequently treated unjustly in the courts of law and face unjustifiably harsh sentencing because of their gender. Even when they commit the same offenses, female convicts in Pakistan report receiving worse penalties than male prisoners. This gap in sentencing between men and women is frequently linked to cultural biases, societal conventions, and patriarchal views toward women. As a result, many female convicts in Pakistan serve harsher sentences for comparable crimes than male prisoners.

Poor representation by lawyers is another legal concern that female prisoners in Pakistan face. Many female prisoners are unable to engage legal counsel and must thus rely on government legal help. Nevertheless, the extent and quantity of legal aid provided to female convicts are frequently inadequate, and their cases are frequently not effectively defended. Furthermore, female convicts are frequently unaware of their legal rights, making them vulnerable to abuse and neglect by the judicial system. Moreover, female convicts in Pakistan face inadequate jail circumstances, overcrowding, and a lack of basic services such as healthcare, education, and vocational training.

#### **3.2. Psychological Issues Faced by Female Prisoners in Pakistan**

Besides their legal concerns, female prisoners in Pakistan confront several psychological challenges that harm their mental health and well-being. Depression, anxiety, and emotional discomfort are common psychiatric concerns among female convicts. Incarceration can cause

feelings of helplessness, loneliness, and isolation, all of which can result in psychological damage. Female convicts frequently describe feelings of anxiety and depression, owing to their unclear future, absence from family, and lack of social support. Furthermore, female convicts in Pakistan face stigma and social marginalization, which exacerbates their psychological misery. Female inmates are often shunned by society due to the stigma connected with their criminal record, which can lead to feelings of shame and embarrassment. Their reintegration into society after being released from prison is made more difficult by stigmatization, which can also close doors to employment and social assistance.

The cumbersome judicial process is one of the biggest legal obstacles facing female convicts in Pakistan. Many women are held indefinitely for trial without access to counsel, which is against their right to due process. Additionally, the police or jail officials frequently force or mistreat female prisoners. Women who have been victims of gender-based violence may occasionally be charged with crimes as a result of their victimization. Flogging, stoning, and even the death penalty are possible punishments for women found guilty of crimes, which is against international human rights standards (Watch, 2020).

Another key legal concern is the lack of legal protection for women, who frequently have to give up their claims or risk retaliation from their abusers. Pakistani law needs considerable modifications to ensure that women have access to justice because women are not always adequately protected by it (Alam, 2018), 2018. In Pakistan, laws are also applied inconsistently, and women from disadvantaged groups experience systemic discrimination in the legal system.

Numerous psychological issues affect female prisoners in Pakistan, many of which are brought on by the poor conditions in which they are confined. Women's prisons in Pakistan are usually overcrowded and under-resourced, leading to filthy conditions that could be hazardous to the mental health of prisoners (Watch, 2020). Female inmates in the criminal justice system are also prone to mistreatment, physical abuse, and sexual assault. As a result of their experiences with discrimination based on gender both before and after being imprisoned, many of the women held in Pakistan's prisons struggle with mental health issues like depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress syndrome (Alam, 2018).

Additionally, female prisoners in Pakistan endure a great deal of gender bias and brutality at the hands of other convicts. a combination of the unsanitary circumstances in which they are kept and the accessibility of drugs in jails, women are also at a greater risk of acquiring substance misuse disorders (Afzal, Zaheer, Maqsood, Arshad, & Mahmood, 2020). These elements play a part in the elevated incidences of readmission among Pakistani female convicts.

Multiple efforts might be made to address the psychological and judicial problems female inmates in Pakistan experience. First, judicial changes can make sure that women have access to justice and a fair trial, including legal counsel if necessary. To meet the unique demands and problems experienced by female convicts, such as a lack of childcare facilities and gender-sensitive medical care, authorities can also set up separate courts for women. The backlog of cases should be reduced, and women shouldn't be held without access to counsel for protracted periods.

The mental health of female convicts and their successful reintegration into society can both be greatly enhanced by better prison conditions. The presence of sanitary living conditions, sufficient medical care, and mental health services should be guaranteed by the authorities. To help women reintegrate into society after release, rehabilitation programs should also be implemented to offer them education, mental health care, and training in the workplace. These programs can lessen the stigma associated with incarceration that many women experience and lower the likelihood of recidivism.

Public education efforts can also aid in reducing stigma and discrimination against female convicts in Pakistan based on gender. Addressing the root causes of gender-based violence and discrimination in Pakistani society requires education. Women ought to be allowed more power, and there should be an enhanced awareness of their rights and the injustices they face in the field of law enforcement.



#### 4. Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to highlight the legal and psychological difficulties that Pakistani female prisoners suffer. The contents of the report, there are many difficulties and issues that female prisoners in Pakistan must deal with, including subpar jail conditions, unfair sentences, inadequate legal counsel, and psychological harm. In addition to affecting the well-being of female prisoners, the previously mentioned obstacles also make it difficult for them to be rehabilitated and incorporated into society once they are freed. To address these issues and improve the criminal justice system for women and girls, policymakers, stakeholders, and civil society organisations must collaborate.

Due to their ethnic background, socioeconomic level, and social expectations, female detainees in Pakistan experience serious legal and psychological problems. To guarantee that women have the chance for accountability and rehabilitation after being freed from prison, it is imperative to address these difficulties. Efforts for public education, changes to the legal system, and better amenities for women in jail can all help tackle these issues and reduce the risk that culprits will commit crimes again. Nevertheless, the government must take immediate action to address the basic issues of prejudice against women in Pakistani society if it is to create a just and equitable society for all.

##### 4.1. Recommendations

To solve the previously stated legal and psychological challenges faced by female prisoners in Pakistan, an integrated strategy encompassing both legislative changes and social welfare programs must be implemented. To solve these difficulties, the following solutions can be executed:

The Pakistani government should modify the law to ensure that women are not discriminated against in the justice system for criminal offenses and that each prisoner receives adequate penalties. Government officials should increase funding for legal assistance organizations alongside establishing a framework for regular legal representation for female inmates. The government should improve female-specific facilities in prisons, such as better healthcare, fundamental education, and vocational training, to aid in the rehabilitation of female offenders. The government should take steps to improve prison facilities, ensure humane treatment, and reduce congestion. The government should also start public awareness campaigns to change cultural stereotypes of women and reduce the stigma associated with female convicts.

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