

A STUDY ON THE READING HABIT AND INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF WOMEN INMATES OF TAMIL NADU PRISONS

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ABSTRACT

Indian women are considered to be holier and purer than men. Their role as mother, wife, caretaker and a central figure in the family is a significant one. But in-recent times, the number of criminal offences committed by women has increased at a much higher rate than the number of crimes by males. Hence socially, the crimes committed by women are considered to be more serious when compared with the male criminality. A definite need has arisen for an indepth and intensive study on female criminality to acquire greater insight into the problem. The present study on the reading habit and information seeking behavior of women inmates of Tamil Nadu Prison analyses the impact of reading habit in the marginalized clientele. Prison library services have been accepted as one of the ways to achieve the objective of prison which is to educate and rehabilitate the inmates of prisons. The Prisoners need information to improve their personality through education and to seek legal redress for their personal issues. Therefore, the present study has been undertaken, to find out the information needs and information seeking behavior of women prisoners lodged in the special prisons in the three Zonal prisons namely Puzhal-Chennai, Vellore and Trichy. For the purpose of detailed study a structured close ended interview schedule was used and 232 respondents were personally met by the researcher and his other enumerators, after getting the approval of the jail authorities. The schedule consists of questions regarding, age, educational status, marital status, frequency of visit to library, purpose of seeking information, problems faced in getting information, satisfaction about resources available in the prison Library. Hypothesis were set and tested. Inferences have been stated as findings and suggestions have been offered for implementation.

Keywords: Women Prisoners, Convicts, Rehabilitation, Crimes, Interview schedule.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent times, the number of Criminal offences committed by women has increased at a much higher rate than the number of crimes committed by males. In India, it is estimated that the female crime rate has increased by 362.53 percent for the period from 1971 to 1990. Socially the crimes committed by females are considered to be more serious when compared with the

Research and experience have indicated that women in comparison to men are no different in terms of their personality, achievement, motivation, dependency and

male criminality because of the role played by a woman as mother, wife, caretaker and more to say a central figure in the family. The various dimensions for women and crime has recently been developed into a broad field of research in the areas of social work, Sociology, Criminology and Women studies.

other related attitudes. They have proved themselves successful in all the fields in which they have been given an opportunity.

1.1 Prison Libraries in Tamil Nadu

There are 135 prisons in Tamil Nadu, of which 9 are central Prisons, 3 are special prisons for women and 103 are sub-jails for men, 10 are sub-jails for women, 4 are special sub-jails for men, and 3 are

special sub-jails for women, apart from a borstal school, an open air prison and a farm jail. The three special prisons for women are located in three places which serve as zones for different districts as shown below.

Puzhal (wef 26/11/2006) Chennai Zone	Vellore (w.e.f. 15/04/1930) Zone	Tiruchy(w.e.f. 04/05/1997)Zone
Chennai Thiruvallur Kancheepuram	Salem Namakkal Dharmapuri Coimbatore Erode Nilgiris Cudalore Villupuram Thiruvannamalai Thanjavur Nagappattinam	Trichy Perumballur Karur Pudukottai MaduraiRamnad Virudhunagar Sivagangai Dindugal Theni Thirunelveli Thoothukudi Kanyakumari

1.2 Concept of Information Seeking Behaviour

Information seeking behavior refers to those activities a person engages in when identifying his or her own need for information, searching for and using such information and using. Information Behavior is the totality of human behaviour in relation to the sources and channels of information. Information seeking behavior

involves personal reasons for seeking information, the kinds of information which are being sought and the ways and sources with which needed information is being sought. Information seeking behavior is expressed in various forms, from reading printed materials to research and experimentation.

2. NEED FOR THE STUDY

Our Indian Women are considered to be holier and purer than men. But recently the crime rate by women has gone up and the number of woman prisoners keep increasing. There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. Traditionally, the Indian women has been the foundation stone of the family and society in general. She

creates life, nurtures it, guards and strengthens it. She is, as wife and mother committed to serve the family. She is the transmitter of tradition, the instrument by which Indian culture is preserved. Hence, there is a definite need for more in-depth and intensive study on female criminality to acquire greater insight into the problem.

Prison library services have been accepted by the world as one of the ways to achieve the objectives of prisons, which is to educate and rehabilitate the inmates. Therefore, prisoners need information to improve their education and also to seek for

legal redress. Hence, the present study has been entitled “A Study on Reading Habits and Information seeking Behaviour of Women Prisoners in Tamil Nadu”, is a relevant one and contributes to the

contemporary society in which women play

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

For the first time the situation of women in prisons was looked into by the Justice Krishna Iyer Committee appointed in 1987 which recommended induction of more women in the police force in view of their special role in tackling women and child offenders. The National Expert Committee on Women Prisoners, framed a draft model prison manual. This manual

The All India Committee on jail reforms (1980-1983), the Supreme court of India and the Committee of Empowerment

The 2006 Supreme Court Judgement in the Upadhyaya vs State of Andhra Pradesh case lays down that children in jails should be provided with adequate clothing suitable

The Prisons Act, 1894 is the basis of which the present jail management and administration operates in India. Section 24 states that in the case of female Prisoners the search and examination shall be carried out by the matron under the general or special

In the post independent era, in 1951, the government invited the United Nations expert on correctional work. Dr. W. C. Reckless, to undertake a study on Prison

The Model Prison Manual 1960 recognized the importance of the reasonable diversification of prison institution like separate institution for delinquent children, adolescent offenders, habitual, Professional and organized Criminals, women offenders, leprosy unit, Tuberculosis unit, under-trial

The working group on Prisons (1972) and the Mulla Committee under the Chairmanship of Justice A. N. Mulla (1980) have given recommendations for prison policy and reformation. The committee

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general purpose of this study is to find out the information needs and

active roles at different sectors.

was circulated to all the A & B States for incorporation into the existing jail manuals. The manual has made suggestions regarding, the age upto which children of women prisoners can reside in prison, their welfare through crèches and nursery, regular medical examination, education and recreation, nutrition for children and pregnant and nursing mothers.

of Women (2001-2002) have all highlighted the need for a comprehensive revision for the prison laws.

to the local climate. Regular medical examinations to monitor physical growth and proper education must be provided to the children of female prisoners.

orders of the Medical Officer. Section 27 of the act stipulates that female prisoners shall be separated from male prisoners and also that convicts will be kept separate from the un-convicted ones.

administration and to suggest policy reforms. His report titled, "Jail Administration in India" made a plea for transforming jails into reformation centres.

prisoners, sub-jail and open institutions. It has suggested measures like education, work, technical and vocational training cultural activities, leave and emergency, release, sanitation and hygiene, diet, aftercare and rehabilitation.

recommended a separate place with toilet facilities, all general duties with regard to women offenders should be performed by women staff and there should be a separate women ward in prison hospitals.

seeking behaviour of women prisoners lodged in the special prisons in the three

zonal Prisons located at Puzhal in Chennai, Vellore and Trichy. Under each zone a few districts are attached and the women

1. To study the social back ground of the respondents considering the age-wise distribution, educational status and marital status.
2. To identify the users with their frequency of library visit

5.1 Period of study:

The study was undertaken during 2015-16 for a period of one year.

5.2 Scope of the Study

The study has been undertaken in the three special Prisons intended for women prisoners located at Puzhal Chennai, Vellore and Trichy. These three Prisons serve as Zonal Centres for women prisoners from

5.3 Sources of Information

The required information for the study was collected both from Primary and secondary sources. The selected women prisoners from the three special prisons formed the primary source. In addition informal talk with the office-bearers of the

5.4 Sampling Design:

For the purpose of detailed study, about 300 prisoners were identified on the basis of their categories, at the rate of 100 per prison structured close ended questionnaire schedule was used for collection of information. Only from 232 respondent the required information was

5.5 Tools used for collection of Data

For the collection of primary data from the selected sample respondents, a structured, close ended interview schedule, approved by the jail authorities, was used. The schedule consisted of questions

Secondary data were collected from books, journals, prison manuals and

convicts are jailed in the respective zone centre. The following are the major objectives of the study.

3. To study and understand the time spent in the library by women Prisoners.
4. To analyse and understand the purpose of women Prisoners seeking information.
5. To identify the library users by their usage of formal information sources.

different districts attached to these special prisons. Hence the study is focused only on women prisoners lodged in the above three special prisons intended for women convicts.

jails and interview technique with the librarians of prison libraries and jail superintends formed primary source of data. The records of the prisons and the librarians of the prison libraries formed secondary source of information.

fully available and hence, the sample for the study has been taken as 232. The question were asked by the researcher and his helpers and responses were recorded in person. The respondents have been selected on the basis of stratified random sampling and purposive sampling methods.

regarding age, educational status, marital status, frequency of visit to library, purpose of seeking information, problems faced in getting information, satisfaction about resources, etc.,

unpublished theses, dissertations and project reports personally by the investigator.

5.6 Tools used for Analysis:

In order to test the objectives and the formulated hypotheses, the researcher used some statistical tools such as averages percentage, pie diagram and chi-square test.

For testing the association between the variables the investigator had used x² tests applying the following formula.

$$X^2 = \sum (O-E)^2 / E$$

Where, \sum summation, O= Observed value , E=expected value. For testing the hypothesis, the investigator has fixed 5%

level of significance. Degree of freedom = (r-1) (C-1) where r is the number of rows and C the number of columns.

5.7 Hypothesis set and tested

The following are the null hypothesis set and tested to find out the validity of the statement made

1. There is no significant difference among the respondents by their frequency of library visit with regard to the type of users.
2. There is no significant difference among the respondents by the hours spent in a single visit for reference with regard to the type of users.
3. There is no significant difference among the respondents by the purpose of seeking information with regard to the type of users.
4. There is no significant difference among the respondents by using formal information sources with regard to the type of users.

5.8 Limitations of the Study:

Due to constraints of time and cost, only 232 respondents have been interviewed from three special prisons intended for women prisoners, located in Puzhal - Chennai, Vellore and Trichy. Getting Permission from the jail authorities for interviewing the women prisoners was another hindrance in the study Purposely

information about the prisoners caste, community, religion and the type of crime for which they were convicted were not collected on the instructions from the jail authority. Hence, the outcomes of the study are applicable only to the respondents studied and can not be generalized.

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS:

The responses from the selected respondents have been consolidated into the following data for a thorough and in-depth analysis. The social background of the

respondents is analysed considering the age-wise distribution, educational status and marital status.

Table-1

Age-wise distribution of the respondents

Sl.No.	Age in Years	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Below 20	06	02.59
2	21-25	24	10.34
3	26-30	18	07.76
4	31-35	48	20.69
5	36-40	36	15.52
6	41-45	30	12.93

7	46-50	20	08.62
8	51-55	20	08.62
9	56-60	16	06.90
10	Above 60	14	06.03
	Total	232	100

Source: Primary Data

It is clear from table-1 that the highest number of women prisoners belong to the age group of 31-35 covering to 21% percent. It is really a point of concern that majority of the women prisoners are young

and in an impressionable age group. The age-wise distribution of the women prisoners ranges between 3 percent to 21 percent. The least has been recorded with the age group of less than 20 years.

Table-2

Educational status of the Respondents

Sl. No.	Educational status	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Illiterate	130	56.03
2	Primary School Level	52	22.41
3	Middle school Level	16	06.90
4	Secondary School	26	11.21
5	Graduate and Above	08	03.45
	Total	232	100.00

Source: Primary Data

Since majority of the women prisoners are young, it is interesting to concentrate on their educational status. Table-2 presents the educational status of the women prisoners. The table represents that the least percentage of women prisoners (3.45) belong to the graduate level. It also

depicts that illiteracy level is 56.03 percent which is the highest among the women prisoners. It is inferred from the table that the educational status plays a vital role in the study as it is found to be very much influential in terms of attitude.

Table-3

Marital status of the Respondents

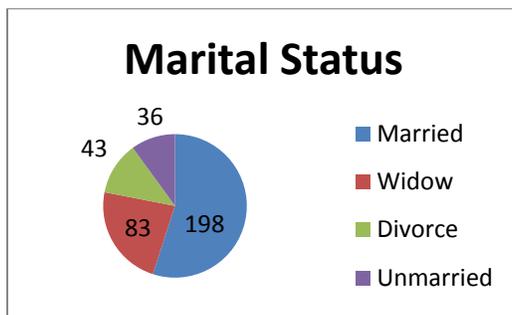
Sl. No.	Marital Status	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Married	128	55.18
2	Widow	54	23.28
3	Divorcee	28	12.06
4	Unmarried	22	09.48
	Total	232	100.00

Source: Computed from primary data

The marital status of the respondents is given in table-3. It shows that about 55 per cent of the respondents are married.

Only about 9 percent of the respondents are unmarried, about 24 percent are widows and about 12 percent are divorcees.

Marital status of Respondents



The pie diagram shows that among the prisoners the majority are married followed by widows. The unmarried form the least percentage.

Table-4
Frequency of Library visit

Sl.No.	Frequency of visit	Respondents on the basis of categories					Total	%
		Illiterates	Primary	Middle school	Secondary	Graduate		
1	Daily	0	10	08	12	08	38	16.38
2	Once in a week	0	08	04	-	-	12	5.17
3	Twice in a week	0	06	02	10	-	18	7.77
4	Three times in a week	0	18	02	04	-	24	10.34
5	Occasionally Never go to Library	130	10	-	-	-	140	60.34
	Total	130	52	16	26	08	232	100.00

Source: Computed from Primary Data

Frequency of visit to library depends upon the factors like the necessity of the information, availability of the information etc., It is observed from table-4 that 16.38 percent of the respondents. Visited the

library daily, 5.17% visited once in a week, 7.77 percent visited twice in a week, 10.34 percent visited three times in a week and the remaining 60.34 percent either visit occasionally or never visit library.

6.1 First Chi-Square Result

Chi-square calculated value : 36.2
 Degree of Freedom : 20.0
 Chi-square table value at 5% : 31.4

Since the calculated value is greater than its table value at 5% level of significance the null hypothesis is rejected.

It is inferred that there is a significant difference among the respondents with regard to their frequency of the library visit.

Table-5
Purpose of Visiting Library

Sl. No.	Purpose	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	To get higher qualification	48	20.70
2	Solve Present Problem	145	62.50
3	News about outside world	24	10.34
4	Study Story Books	12	05.17
5	Study religious Books	03	01.29
	Total	232	100.00

Source:- calculated from Primary Data

It is evident from table-5 that the majority of the respondents seeking information for the purpose of getting information (62.5%) to solve their present problem, 20.7% to obtain higher

qualification, 10.34% to collect information about happening outside the prison. About 5.17% visit library to study story books and about 1.29% go to library to study religious books.

Table:6
Hours Spent in a Single Visit

Sl. No.	Hours Spent	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Less than 1 hour	169	72.84
2	1 – 1.30 hours	15	06.47
3	1.30 – 2.00 hours	48	20.69
4	2.00 to 2.30 hours	-	-
	Total	232	100.00

Source: Computed from the Primary Data

An effort was made to find out whether they spent more hours in the library during their visit. It is crystal clear from table -6 that the majority of the women prisoners spent less than one hour (72.84%),

about 15 (06.47%) spent 1 to 1.30 hour and about 48 respondents who are graduates spent 1.30 to 2 hours in single visit to library.

6.2 Second Chi-square result:

The Chi- square calculated value is 36.1 which is greater than its tabulated value of 25.0 at 5% level of significance . The null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, it is

inferred that there is a significant difference among the respondents with regard to hours spent in a single visit to the library.

Table: 7
Use of formal Information Sources

Sl. No.	Information Sources	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Books	38	16.38
2	Periodicals	12	05.17
3	Reference Sources	22	09.48
4	Prison Manuals	05	02.16
5	Others	155	66.81
	Total	232	100.00

Source: Prepared from Primary Data

Information sources may vary with the interest and type of the study. Information sources maybe grouped differently by different authors. It can be observed from table-7 that among the literate women prisoners, the majority of the

6.3 Chi-square Result:

The Chi-square calculated value (15.2) which is less than its tabulated value at 5% level (25.0) of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. It is inferred

The study revealed that e-sources of information are conspicuously absent in the jail libraries.

7. FINDINGS

The following are the summary of the major Findings of the study

With reference to the objectives of the study and the chi-square tests carried out, the following are the major findings of the study:

1. The study revealed that the highest number of women prisoners belong to the age group of 31-35. The least has been recorded with the age group of less than 20 years.
2. It is inferred from the study that the educational status plays a vital role in the attitude of women prisoners. Among the women prisoners illiteracy level is 56.3% and among graduate women prisoners is only 03.45 percent.
3. The study reveals that 55 per cent of the women prisoners are married, widow 23.28% Divorcee 12.06% and un married is only 09.48 percent. It is concluded that among women prisoners married women are more than unmarried women.
4. The study revealed that there is a significant difference among the respondents with regard to their

respondents used information sources such as books (16.38%) Periodicals (05.17%), reference sources (09.48%), Prison manuals (02.16%) and others including the illiterate women prisoners is (66.81).

that the chi-square test indicates that there is no significant difference among the respondents with regard to the use of formal information sources of the library.

frequency of the library visit. women prisoners with UG, PG qualification visited library daily. Whereas, illiterate women prisoners either occasionally or never go to library.

5. The study shows that majority of the women prisoners visited library for the purpose of getting information (62.5%) to solve their present problems, 20.70 percent seek information to get higher qualification, 10.34 percent interested in getting information about what is happening out side the jail. Only 05.17% are interested in reading story books.
6. Majority of the Women (72.84%) prisoners spent in library less than one hour, about 15 prisoners (06.47%) spent one to one and a half hour and 48 prisoners (20.69%) spent from 1.30 to 2 hours as many of them , they are preparing for higher studies.
7. It is inferred from the study that there is no significant difference

among the women prisoners with regard to the use of formal information sources of the library.

8. SUGGESTIONS

Rehabilitation refers to a Programmed effort to alter negative attitudes and behavior of women prisoners with a view to eliminate the future criminal behaviour. After the

The following measures can be implemented either as preventive or curative steps to curb crime as well as help women

1. Since majority women prisoners belong to the middle age group, they can be easily redeemed through counselling.
2. Educational institutions, especially academicians through the extensional services can address the women convicts in the prison and also provide skill training, motivate the target women, make them to involve themselves in economic activities after release from prison.
3. Younger women prisoners can be encouraged to do higher studies
4. Illiterate women prisoners can be provided with technical skill training in and can be encouraged to join adult education programme and learn to read and write.

9. CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the ultimate aim of rehabilitation programmes is to make, the women criminals to be accepted by their husband, family members and society where they originally belong and bring them to the main stream of development process. The users of library to become useful citizens to themselves and to the nation and

8. The study revealed that electronic sources of information are conspicuously absent in the women prison libraries.

release, the women prisoners have to become socially, morally, economically, emotionally strong to lead a peaceful life in the society.

criminals to alter their life in a wholesome approach at all levels.

5. Vocational training programmes in tailoring, Glass Painting, pot painting jute bag making, phenol making, incense stick making, pickles and papad making etc., can be extended to the prisoners by service oriented organizations.
6. The physical and mental health of the women prisoners should be given top priority, yoga, meditation and Art of living classes must be made compulsory.
7. Radio/TV programmes intended for the prison dwellers be translated into the local languages.
8. Women of any religion may normally have faith in god. Hence, ethics and morals from religious literature can be stressed in the counseling.

is to provide them with the right information at the right time. The woman criminals need legal awareness, self empowerment training for not to repeat the same crime or any other type of crime in future. Moreover Psychological counseling for female prisoners is to be given to lead a normal social life-after release from jail.

10. FOR FUTURE STUDY

Since majority of the respondent women prisoners are married a special study can be made to find out the types of crime they have committed. This may throw some light on the pathetic condition in which women live and forces them to commit such

crimes. Society can also be enlightened to respect women, realize the services of women to the family as a wife, as a mother and avoid incidences that force women to become criminals.

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