**Drug Use in Prisons of First Time Offenders**

Student’s name

Professor’s name

Subject code

University

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# 1. Introduction

Drug use among the prisoners in the United States is a compelling issue that enormously complicates the purpose of rehabilitation of the offenders in the country. Estimates presented in the reports and surveys in this regard show that drug use and dependence among arrestees are at endemic levels and suggest that an urgent need for effective intervention prevails. The nature of drug use remains chronic in nature. It involves relapsing condition, which makes recovery a slow and lengthy process.

## 1.1 Purpose Statement

The American criminal justice system currently holds approximately eighty people in Indian country jails (Minton & Cowhig, 2017), more than three thousand in local jails (Minton, 2015), almost two thousand in juvenile correctional facilities (Hockenberry *et al.,* 2016), more than a hundred in federal prions (Stephan, 2008), and more than two million people in state prions (Stephan, 2008). The purpose of this study is to investigate the connection between drug abuse and dependence of first time offenders in these prisons and other key variables such as prior drug abuse habits of the first time offenders, the duration of time they spend in the jails, the perception of accessibility of drugs, the gang and STG affiliations of the first time offenders, and measures of perceptions of prison.

The rest of the study is organized as follows: Section 2 provides literature review of the study, which has been further subdivided into seven sections for the purpose of simplicity. Section 3 provides the research question and hypothesis of the study. Section 4 discusses the sources of data. Section 5 provides design of the study whereas Section 6 elaborates on the relevant research issues. Section 7 provides details on the dependent and independent variables chosen in this study. Section 8 and 9 provide significance and limitation of the study respectively. The last section concludes the study.

# 2. Literature Review

This literature reviews aims at key aspects associated with drug use, predominantly in the prisons of the United States. According to the data collected by National Inmate Surveys, two-thirds of the sentences inmates and half of the state prisoners meet the criteria for drug use or dependence in prisons. Majority of the prisoners have chronic and problematic drug use patterns. This literature review investigates the linkage between the first time offenders and drug use in the prisons of the United States. For the purpose of simplicity, this section has been subdivided into seven sections namely, drug use in prison, prior drug abuse, length of time in prison, perception of accessibility of drugs, gangs and security threat group affiliations, and measures of perception of prisons. The last section provides critical analysis of the literature survey.

## 2.1 Drug Use in Prison

Drug use in prison is a common occurrence. Several prior studies suggest that the drug use of first time offenders in jails worldwide is rife and illicit drug use including NPS, heroin, and cannabis remains endemic. More than half a million people are locked up because of drug offenses (Wagner & Sawyer, 2018). Most of the American prisons are designed for punishing the offenders. They have zero to little activities in the system to spend their time on (Anaheim Lighthouse, 2017). Moreover, the inmates are often angry, guilty, lonely, and sometimes abused by the fellow inmates (Anaheim Lighthouse, 2017). All of these factors add to an environment that encourages addictions.

## 2.2 Prior Drug Abuse

Prior drug use remains a critical issue among the first time offenders. While they cause additional financial burdens on the correctional measures, they also flourish an environment within the jails that encourages addictions for the first time offenders (Anaheim Lighthouse, 2017). A number of studies indicate that majority of the prisoners have previously used drugs in their lives at some point (Royuela *et al.,* 2014).

## 2.3 Length of Time in Prison

In 2013, the estimated average length of time in prison was 23 days (Minton, 2015). The more time the first time offenders spend in the jails with the addicted inmates, they more they are exposed to the risks of drug abuse and dependence due to the fact that many of the prisoners have chronic and problematic drug use patterns (Royuela *et al.,* 2014).

Reports have provided that the inmates in the United States suffer from drug addiction or substance use (Columbia University, 2018). The two groups make more than 80% population of the American jails in the current times (The Nation’s Health, 2010). The report also found that only 16% of the inmates facing the issues of drug addiction or substance abuse are likely to receive a treatment or contract to a such facilitation (The Nation’s Health, 2010).

## 2.4 Perception of Accessibility of Drugs

Despite the fact that drugs are tightly regulated in the country, and it is often difficult and illegal to bring drugs within the prisons through an outside source, many prisons in the United States experience a flourishing black market for drugs (Anaheim Lighthouse, 2017). The contraband ranges from cigarettes to drugs (Anaheim Lighthouse, 2017). Primarily, lazy or corrupt staff members often push this market (Anaheim Lighthouse, 2017). They either do not care about its existence or prevalence or earn profit through it (Anaheim Lighthouse, 2017). As per a report in 2016, the modern use of technology in the form of computers, cell phones, and drones make it easy for the inmates to increase their accessibility of drugs (John, 2016).

## 2.5 Gangs and Security Threat Groups Affiliation

According to a 1999 survey, gang affiliations among the inmates from 9% to 25% over the past decade (Knox, 1999). The recent survey reported an increase from approximately 11% to 14% in 2008 (Hill, 2009). The averages of these estimates indicate a constant increase in the gangs and security threat group affiliations among the inmates (Winterdyk & Ruddell, 2010). Such gang memberships negatively impact the first time offenders because of their drug abuse and dependence (Trulson *et al.,* 2006).

Prison gangs often involve murderers, thieves and drug dealers. Such gangs are involved in vast majority of trade in drugs and other contrabands such as cell phones behind the bars (Wood, 2014). Therefore, the first time offenders are at a great risk of falling prey to such gang activities (Wood, 2014). While getting involved in the gangs, the new inmates are more likely to adapt to the old habits and culture of the prison, which heavily involves drugs (Wood, 2014).

## 2.6 Measure of Perception of Prison

The important public policy decisions are often based on the measures of perception of the system (Kjelsberg *et al.,* 2007). Therefore, measuring the perception of the American prisons by the residents of the United States is a promising method to exhibit the seriousness of the issue of drug addiction and substance abuse (Kjelsberg *et al.,* 2007). In a similar vein, a positive attitude towards the prisoners helps in securing the effectiveness of various activities in connection to rehabilitation and other facilitation (Kjelsberg *et al.,* 2007).

## 2.7 Analysis of Literature Review

The American criminal justice system currently holds a large number of people in Indian country jails, local jails, juvenile correctional facilities, federal prions and state prions. This literature review analyzed key aspects associated with drug use, predominantly in the American prisons while investigating the linkage between the first time offenders and drug use in the prisons of the United States. In this regard, it studied drug use in prison, prior drug abuse, length of time in prison, perception of accessibility of drugs, gangs and security threat group affiliations, and measures of perception of prisons.

From the literature review, it is clear that drug use in prison is a common occurrence. Most of the American prisons are designed for punishing the offenders with a narrow scope of activities for them to spend time on. Moreover, the inmates are often angry, guilty, lonely, and sometimes abused by the fellow inmates. All of these factors add to an environment that encourages addictions. Additionally, a number of studies indicate that majority of the prisoners have had previously used drugs at some point in their lives. Moreover, the more time the first time offenders spend in the jails with the addicted inmates, they more they are exposed to the risks of drug abuse and dependence due to the fact that many of the prisoners have chronic and problematic drug use patterns.

The literature review further indicates that the prisons in the United States experience a flourishing black market for drugs. Also, gangs have taken over the jails, which often involve murderers, thieves and drug dealers. Such gangs are involved in vast majority of trade in drugs and other contrabands such as cell phones behind the bars. However, a positive attitude towards the prisoners helps in securing the effectiveness of various activities in connection to rehabilitation and other facilitation.

# 3. Research Question and Hypothesis

The research question is that if there is a connection between drug abuse and dependence of first time offenders in the American prisons and other key variables such as prior drug abuse habits of the first time offenders, the duration of time they spend in the jails, the perception of accessibility of drugs, the gang and STG affiliations of the first time offenders, and measures of perceptions of prison. In this regard, the following hypothesis is made:

* $H\_{0}^{1}$: Prior drug abuse habits have insignificant impact on drug abuse in prison.

$H\_{1}^{1}:$ Prior drug abuse habits have significant impact on drug abuse in prison.

* $H\_{0}^{2}$: Length of time spent in jail has insignificant impact on drug abuse in prison.

$H\_{1}^{2}:$ Length of time spent in jail has significant impact on drug abuse in prison.

* $H\_{0}^{3}$: Perception of accessibility of drugs has insignificant impact on drug abuse in prison.

$H\_{1}^{3}:$ Perception of accessibility of drugs has significant impact on drug abuse in prison.

* $H\_{0}^{4}$: Gang and STG affiliations have insignificant impact on drug abuse in prison.

$H\_{1}^{4}:$ Gang and STG affiliations have significant impact on drug abuse in prison.

* $H\_{0}^{5}$: Measures of perception of prison have insignificant impact on drug abuse in prison.

$H\_{1}^{5}:$ Measures of perception of prison have significant impact on drug abuse in prison.

# 4. Data Source/Sampling

This study employs primary data research. For this purpose, a random sample of the first time offenders being released from the American prisons will be taken. Need more details here.

# 5. Research Design

It is a quantitative research paper. The sample of the dataset comprises of \_\_ first time offenders being released from the American jails during the period of \_\_\_\_\_\_. The participants will be questions either directly (through interview) or indirectly (via questionnaires) to obtain the primary dataset concerning the defined dependent and independent variables.

# 6. Ethical Issues

Due to the sensitivity of the topic under discussion, this study has faced and addressed a handful of ethical issues. The participants of the research include first time offenders being released from jails. Their informed consent has been obtained before conducting the survey. It means that a person knowingly and voluntarily gives his free consent to an act.

Moreover, this study also takes regard of the ethical principle of *beneficence – do not harm,* which indicates that the professional mandate to be effective and efficient for the wellbeing of the society, i.e., the research has been conducted to better server and promote the welfare of the participants. This study also takes into account the respect for confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. Additionally, it respects for privacy as well.

# 7. Variables

This study adopts the following dependent and independent variables. Drug abuse in prison is taken as the dependent variable. The independent variables include prior drug abuse habits of the first time offenders, the duration of time they spend in the jails, the perception of accessibility of drugs, the gang and STG affiliations of the first time offenders, and measures of perceptions of prison.

# 8. Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to the United States only. Due to the cultural differences and drug use disparity, the results of this particular study cannot be generalized to the world’s population at large. Also, the size of the sample is small due to the fact that chosen time period runs from \_\_\_ to \_\_\_ and only a limited number of first time offenders were being released from the jails during this period.

# 9. Significance of the Study

Despite its limitations, this study is significant in studying, analyzing and providing information concerning the trends of drug use in the American jails for the first time offenders. Additionally, this study also covers several other variables in this regard, which have not previously been mentioned, utilized, and analyzed as a part of one study in the previous literature. Moreover, this study covers sampling of the first time offenders being released from the jails. It does not differentiate between different types of the prisons and jails in the country, and thus, covers a large sample size, which has not been covered in any of the previous studies.

# 10. Conclusion

Estimates presented in the reports and surveys on the first time offenders being released from the American jails show that drug use and dependence among arrestees are at endemic levels and suggest that an urgent need for effective intervention prevails. The purpose of this study is to investigate the connection between drug abuse and dependence of first time offenders in these prisons and other key variables such as prior drug abuse habits of the first time offenders, the duration of time they spend in the jails, the perception of accessibility of drugs, the gang and STG affiliations of the first time offenders, and measures of perceptions of prison. An extensive study on these variables helps in securing the effectiveness of various activities in connection to rehabilitation and other facilitation of such inmates in the country.

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