

## Selected Childhood Experiences, Current Psychological Status and Its Associates among Imprisoned Women in Welikada Prison, Colombo Sri Lanka

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**Abstract :** Introduction: Women imprisonment is rising in the world. Imprisoned women have more psychological problems and more adverse childhood experiences than the general population. Female prisoners who had psychological problems had more adverse childhood experiences than the prisoners who did not have psychological problems. Most of the imprisoned women are mothers. Mothers are the principal carer for the children. The psychological status of imprisoned female is worth seeking along with its associates since this is a group of women who need others assistance to make their life adjusted. Any intervention that could uplift their psychological wellbeing would make their life better if they are to be released out of the prison. Since there are no studies done in Sri Lanka to study the imprisoned women psychological wellbeing and their childhood experiences, it is important to study on this to find the magnitude of the problem in Sri Lanka. Methodology: A descriptive cross-sectional study was done at the Welikada Prison, Colombo, among the imprisoned women. 273 imprisoned women were selected using simple random sampling technique. Using interviewer administered questionnaire 270 women were interviewed. Three women did not consent for the study. Frequencies of the selected socio demographic characteristics and selected childhood experiences calculated. GHQ 30 questionnaire was used to assess the psychological distress. Odds ratio was used to calculate the associations between the psychological distress and the selected socio demographic characteristics, selected childhood experiences. Results: Response rate was 98.9%. Mean age of the imprisoned women were 41.28years (SD  $\pm$ 11.86yrs) and Most of women were within the age group of 35-49 years (38.1%). Of them 68.5% were currently married and majority had at least one child. (86.3%). House hold member's smoking (58.5%) and alcohol (40.4%) use was the commonest adverse childhood experience experienced by the imprisoned women. Nearly one fourth (22.6%) of the imprisoned women had attempted suicide during their life and more than half (55.7%) of them had attempted before the age of 18 years. Similarly of the 258 women who had been sexually active during their life, half (50.0%) of the women had exposed to sexual activities during first eighteen years of life and mean age at first sexual exposure was 19.2 (SD $\pm$ 4.86) years. Nearly three fourth (73.7%) of imprisoned women were psychologically distressed in the study sample. Being a women of aged less than 25 years((OR=4.51, 95% CI=1.035-19.64)),previous history of suicidal attempts(OR=2.10,95%CI =1.00-4.41), not having enough foods to eat( OR=2.97, 1.009-8.75) and absence of someone to tell worries (OR=0.355, 95% CI =0.113-0.945) during childhood were significantly associate with psychological distress. Conclusion: Nearly three fourth of the imprisoned women were psychologically distressed and younger age, history of suicidal attempts, the absence of someone to tell their worries and not having enough food to eat during childhood were risk factors for psychological distress. Recommendation: Need to strengthen the rehabilitation and mental health services to the imprisoned women.

**Keywords :** adverse childhood experiences, imprisoned women, psychological distress, prisoners

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