

Depressive Symptoms, Anxiety, Stress, Prison Climate and Perceived Social Support Among Incarcerated Individuals

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Abstract—This study examined depression, anxiety, perceived stress, prison climate, and perceived social support among incarcerated individuals, focusing on how demographic profiles shape psychological well-being. A quantitative, non-experimental design was utilized. Standardized tools, including the Beck Depression Inventory, STAI State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, Perceived Stress Scale, Essen Prison Climate Inventory, and MSPSS, were administered. Given violations of normality based on Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests, non-parametric analyses (Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis tests) were used alongside Spearman's rho correlations. Depression differed significantly by sex and religion, while anxiety showed strong sex effects, with educational attainment additionally influencing state anxiety. Perceived stress differed only by sex, and prison climate varied significantly by educational attainment. Perceived social support differed by sex and, for several subscales, by educational attainment. Correlations showed depression and anxiety were positively associated with stress and negatively associated with prison climate and social support, while prison climate strongly correlated with perceived social support. Findings indicate that gender consistently shapes emotional distress, while education influences perceptions of the environment and available support. High stress, anxiety, and weakened social support highlight the vulnerabilities of incarcerated populations. Results support implementing gender-responsive and education-focused mental health interventions. The proposed modular program, addressing depression, anxiety, stress, prison climate, and social support, may strengthen coping skills, enhance rehabilitation, and improve overall well-being within correctional facilities.

Keywords—Anxiety : Depression: Incarceration: Perceived Social Support: Perceived Stress: Prison Climate: Psychological Well-being.

I. INTRODUCTION

Incarceration creates significant challenges for mental health, including depressive symptoms, anxiety, stress, and the psychological impact of losing personal freedom. Limited social support in prison exacerbates these issues, fostering feelings of isolation, hopelessness, and despair, which worsen inmates' mental health and necessitate targeted interventions. Depressive symptoms are common among incarcerated individuals, often reflecting criteria for major depressive disorder (DSM-5-TR, 2022). Research by Smith et al. found that over half of the inmates in their sample displayed depressive symptoms, influenced by isolation, harsh living conditions, and uncertainty about the future. Anxiety is also

widespread, marked by persistent nervousness, fear, and physical symptoms. The American Psychological Association (2020) notes that anxiety stems from constant threats of violence, overcrowding, and lack of personal space. Smith et al. reported that most inmates exhibited symptoms consistent with anxiety disorders. Stress arises from unpredictable environments, limited autonomy, and the need to remain alert, with Johnson et al. highlighting its impact on physical and mental health. The deprivation of freedom limits autonomy and control, leading to frustration, helplessness, and increased psychological distress (Mears & Hay). Perceived social support mitigates these effects, as inmates with higher levels of support report better mental health outcomes (Johnson & Smith). Despite substantial research, more work is needed to understand the combined effects of depression, anxiety, stress, loss of freedom, social support, and interactions with prison staff. This study explores the prevalence and causes of these mental health conditions and their relationship to social support and freedom deprivation, with the goal of informing strategies to improve mental health care in correctional facilities. This research aimed to understand the relationship among mental health conditions, depressive symptoms, anxiety, and stress, and how inmates experience deprivation of freedom and social support. It describes the respondents' profile in terms of sex, age, civil status, educational attainment, religion, type of crime committed, and years of incarceration; determined their levels of depressive symptoms, anxiety, stress, deprivation of freedom, and perceived social support; compared study variables across profile groups; tested relationships among the variables; and propose a Mental Health Program to support PDLs' psychological well-being.

II. METHODS

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design to capture both objective measurements and subjective experiences of depressive symptoms, anxiety, stress, deprivation of freedom, and perceived social support among incarcerated individuals. The quantitative phase used standardized questionnaires, including the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI), the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10), the Prison Climate Questionnaire (PCQ), and the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), to measure participants' psychological states, prison environment perceptions, and social support. The BDI, STAI, PSS-10, PCQ, and MSPSS

have demonstrated strong reliability in previous studies, with Cronbach’s α values ranging from 0.78 to 0.91. The qualitative phase involved one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions using a validated interview protocol to explore participants’ lived experiences and contextual factors affecting mental health. A total of 907 individuals deprived of liberty participated, with 664 from Sta. Rosa, Laguna, and 242 from Sta. Cruz, Laguna, aged 18 years and above, selected through purposive sampling based on a minimum of five years of incarceration. Ten participants were selected for interviews and focus group discussion. Data collection followed informed consent procedures, providing participants with written and verbal explanations of the study’s objectives, methods, and confidentiality assurances, in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173). Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, to describe demographic profiles and levels of depression, anxiety, stress, deprivation of freedom, and perceived social support. Qualitative data were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to identify themes and patterns in participants’ subjective experiences. Ethical considerations ensured that participants’ rights, anonymity, and access to transcripts were prioritized, and all procedures adhered to recognized research guidelines.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This presents the detailed presentation, thorough analysis, and interpretation of the data. By employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches in this work, we disclose subtle features and trends in the sample and make a worthwhile contribution to the knowledge of clinical symptoms in incarceration.

The profile of the respondents is shown in Table I. The results also show the majority of the group's defining traits. The vast majority are adult (84.9%), male (91.4%), and single (66.88%), with the majority identifying as Catholic (74.7%). A large number of people have completed their education, with 33.6% earning a high school diploma. Of the crimes committed, 73.3% involve drug charges, for which a sizable portion of people are serving time in prison. The average respondent has spent one to three years behind bars, which is indicative of a population that is fairly unpredictable. Conversely, a small percentage of respondents are over the age of sixty, own doctorate degrees, or are involved in less common criminal activities like human trafficking or white-collar crimes. Overall, these details offer an insight into the lives of individuals incarcerated, exposing both their uncommon differences and their shared experiences.

Table II presents the results of the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), where the total weighted mean score across all 21 items is 15.75 with a standard deviation of 10.47, placing the overall group in the Mild Depression category. Item-specific weighted mean scores range from 0.33 (Item 9) to 1.41 (Item 6), with most items in the Minimal Depression range, indicating mild to minimal depressive symptoms. The greatest variability was observed in Item 6 (SD = 1.23), suggesting more pronounced irritability or mood changes. The BDI total score of 15.75 (SD = 10.47) reinforces that, on average, participants experience

mild depressive symptoms, though high variability indicates some may have minimal or more pronounced symptoms.

TABLE I. Profile Distribution of the Respondents.

Profile	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	888	91.4
	Female	77	7.9
Age	Young Age	101	10.4
	Adult	825	84.9
	Elderly	20	2.1
Religion	Catholic	726	74.7
	Protestant/Born Again/Aglipayan	139	14.3
	Muslim	32	3.3
	Iglesia Ni Cristo	61	6.3
Civil Status	Hindu	1	0.1
	Single	649	66.8
	Married	227	23.4
	Live-in	17	1.7
	Widowed	8	0.8
Educational Attainment	Separated	2	0.2
	No education	1	0.1
	Elementary Level	184	18.9
	Elementary Graduate	48	4.9
	Highschool Level	233	24.0
	Highschool Graduate	327	33.6
	College Level	107	11.0
	Bachelor’s Degree	41	4.2
	Vocational Course	15	1.5
Type of Crime Committed	Masters Degree	1	0.1
	Doctoral Degree	1	0.1
	Crimes Against Children	1	0.1
	Crimes Against a Person’s Liberty	3	0.3
	Crimes Against a Person	1	0.1
	Crimes Involving Economic Offense	2	0.2
	Defamation Crimes	1	0.1
	Drug related Crimes	709	73.3
	Drug Related Crimes and Property Crimes	2	0.2
	Human Rights Violation and Organized Crime	2	0.2
	Human Trafficking	1	0.1
	Personal and Property Crimes	3	0.3
	Personal Crimes	109	11.3
	Personal Crimes and Sexual Offense	1	0.1
	Property Crimes	67	6.9
	Sexual Offenses	29	3.0
	Violence and Abuse Crimes	13	1.3
Weapon crimes	16	1.7	
Weapon and Property Crimes	1	0.1	
White Collar Crimes	6	0.6	
Length of Stay in Jail	Less than a year	332	34.2
	1-3	478	49.2
	4-6	123	12.7
	7-10	31	3.2
	11-15	5	0.5
	16-20	1	0.1
	More than 20	1	0.1

TABLE II. Beck Depression Inventory (BDI).

	Σ of scores/mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
BDI Total	15.75	10.47	Mild Depression

Legend: Each item is rated on a 4-point scale, ranging from 0 to 3. The scale reflects the severity of symptoms experienced over the past two weeks

Total Score: Scores are summed across all 21 items, with higher scores indicating greater severity of depressive symptoms.

0–13: Minimal Depression

14–19: Mild Depression
 20–28: Moderate Depression
 29–63: Severe Depression

These findings highlight the importance of early intervention to prevent progression to more severe depression. Two IRT models were compared, one accounting for DIF and one not; the DIF-adjusted model provided a more nuanced understanding of depression severity across genders. Tilahun et al. (2020) emphasize the need for regular depression screening and comprehensive mental health services in correctional facilities. Breedvelt et al. (2024) found that

psychological interventions significantly reduced relapse risk over one year, especially in individuals with three or more depressive episodes. Deng (2023) explored the relationship between motivation and depression, highlighting genetic, environmental, and neural factors and advocating for targeted interventions, personalized treatments, and preventive measures. Lopez et al. (2019) reported that a brief problem-solving intervention reduced long-term depressive symptom severity in female caregivers, though its protective effect on major depressive episodes diminished over eight years.

TABLE III. The Emergence of the Emotional and Psychological Well-being for the Depressive Symptoms among Incarcerated Individuals.

PDL	Transcript	Emerging Concepts	Subcategory	Category	Theme
1	“My goal now is not to sulk. I need to be strong, always brave, and not give up because I wake up and fight every day for my child.”	Feeling ashamed Feeling bereft Emotional Strain Due to Distance from Family Guilt for Being Absent Grieving the Lost Time Emotional Distress and Need for Visits Regret and Concern for Children's Well-Being Regret Over Stubbornness Leading to Consequences	Emotional and Psychological Well-being	Coping with emotional strain and managing feelings Coping with emotional strain and managing feelings	Emotional and Psychological Well-being
2	“When my brother died while I was in here, I couldn't do anything. That tested my strength.”	Worrying a lot Regret Guilt for being absent Grieving the lost time Suicidal thoughts	Emotional and Psychological Well-being	Coping with emotional strain and managing feelings	Emotional and Psychological Well-being
3	“We only find happiness here because we force ourselves to be happy, but being away from family makes it hard.”	Regret over stubbornness leading to consequences Emotional Strain Due to Distance from Family Feeling bereft	Emotional and Psychological Well-being	Coping with emotional strain and managing feelings	Emotional and Psychological Well-being
4	“It's painful when my youngest says, 'I'm pitiful, I don't have a mom; she's in jail.' It breaks my heart to know my child is growing up seeing me in this situation. That's why I'm determined, when I'm released, I won't go back to this life again. I don't want my children to grow up used to seeing me in jail.”	Disappointment and emotional struggle with legal outcome Regret and concern for children's well-being Emotional distress from separation from children	Emotional and Psychological Well-being	Coping with emotional strain from family concerns and legal outcomes	Emotional and Psychological Well-being
5	“Perhaps it's my imprisonment. Because I didn't do it. I miss my children and know they still need me. That's why I hope to be released soon, so I can still give something good to my children.”	Regret for being separated from family Regret over consequences leading to imprisonment Emotional distress due to family separation	Emotional and Psychological Well-being	Coping with emotional strain and regret	Emotional and Psychological Well-being

The quantitative results from the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) show that participants, on average, experience mild depressive symptoms, with a high variability in the severity of these symptoms. The qualitative data further support these findings by highlighting emotional struggles such as guilt, regret, emotional strain from family distance, and concerns about children's well-being, which align with the symptoms of mild depression. The qualitative themes of emotional distress and coping with psychological strain provide deeper insight into the emotional experiences behind the BDI scores. Together, the quantitative and qualitative data offer a more complete understanding of the participants' emotional well-being, emphasizing the need for support to manage both the clinical symptoms and the emotional

challenges they face.

Table IV summarizes the results of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory – State (STAI-S), where the total weighted mean across 20 items is 48.62 with a standard deviation of 9.84, placing the group above the median level of state anxiety (Md = 40). Item-specific weighted means range from 2.06 (Item 9: "I feel anxious") to 3.25 (Item 4: "I am regretful"), indicating that participants experienced moderate to somewhat elevated anxiety symptoms. Most items reflect moderate anxiety (e.g., feeling secure, self-confident, or calm), while others indicate more specific anxious feelings such as nervousness or regret.

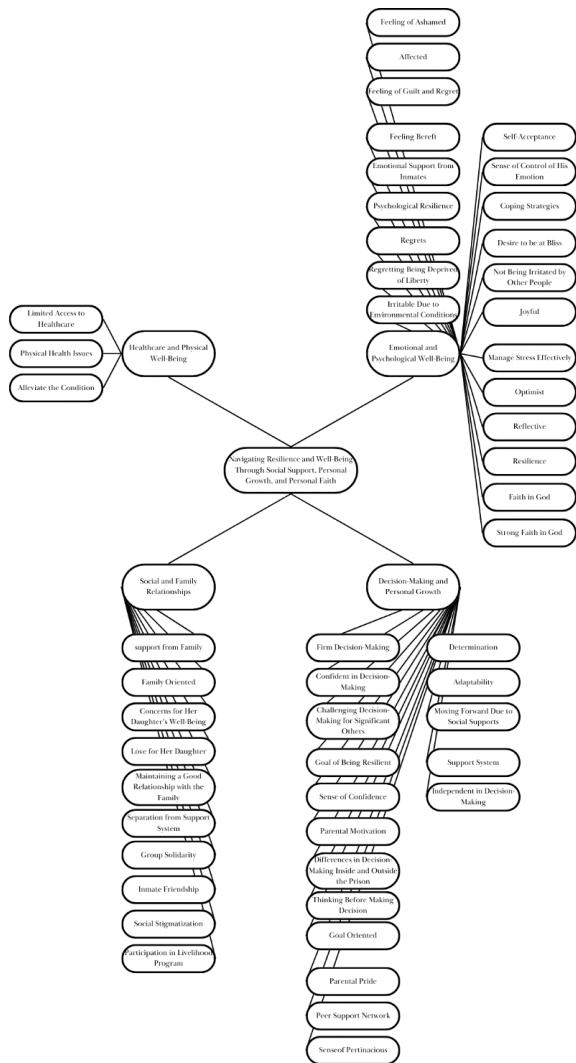


Fig. 1. Thematic Map for Depressive Symptoms among Incarcerated Individuals

TABLE IV. State-Trait Anxiety Inventory – State (STAI-S).

	Σ of scores/mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
STAI-S Total	48.62	9.84	Above Mean

Legend: Not at all – 1, Somewhat – 2, Moderately – 3, Very much
Scores are summed to yield a total score, with higher scores indicating greater levels of state anxiety. Md = 40

The overall score suggests elevated state anxiety, likely reflecting participants’ immediate emotional reactions to their environment, underscoring the importance of addressing both general and specific anxiety symptoms. Forrest et al. (2021) used Generalizability Theory to analyze the STAI and found that while both subscales reliably measured trait anxiety, some items were more sensitive to state fluctuations, suggesting interventions should target dynamic aspects of anxiety. Garrido et al. (2022) reported that the STAI-T demonstrated strong psychometric properties in Argentinian adolescents, including good item fit, reliable scores, and adequate targeting, though some local dependence and differential item functioning were noted. Confirmatory factor analyses supported both four-factor and bifactor models, and STAI scores correlated with the Burns Anxiety Inventory, differing significantly between clinical and non-clinical groups. These

findings confirm the STAI as a valid tool for assessing anxiety, though methodological variations can influence its interpretation.

TABLE V. State-Trait Anxiety Inventory – Trait (STAI-T).

	Σ of scores/mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
STAI-T Total	45.55	10.03	Above Mean

Legend: Almost Never – 1, Sometimes – 2, Often – 3, Almost Always - 4
Scores are summed to yield a total score, with higher scores indicating greater levels of state anxiety. Md = 40

Table V presents the results of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory – Trait (STAI-T), where the total weighted mean across 20 items is 45.55 with a standard deviation of 10.03, placing the group above the median level of trait anxiety (Md = 40). Item-specific weighted means range from 1.94 (Item 9: "I worry too much about things that do not really matter") to 3.01 (Item 19: "I am a steady person"). Participants often report feeling steady and secure, while other items indicate occasional emotional difficulties such as feeling blue or lacking self-confidence. The elevated total score suggests a tendency toward higher trait anxiety, reflecting a consistent experience of anxiety over time, highlighting the need for long-term strategies to manage persistent anxious tendencies, particularly in decision-making and emotional regulation. Bouaziz et al. (2021) found that over half of Tunisian healthcare professionals surveyed during the COVID-19 pandemic experienced trait anxiety, with younger age and psychiatric history as significant factors. Doménech et al. (2024) reported that effective emotion regulation in adolescents is associated with higher emotional self-efficacy, mediated by extraversion and emotional stability, emphasizing the role of emotion regulation in coping and self-perception.

TABLE VI. STAI-S and STAI-T Results.

Dimensions	Σ of scores/mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
STAI-S	48.62	9.84	Above Mean
STAI-T	45.55	10.03	Above Mean

The quantitative findings from the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory indicate elevated levels of state (STAI-S: M = 48.62, SD = 9.84) and trait (STAI-T: M = 45.55, SD = 10.03) anxiety among participants, placing them above the median levels (Md = 40). State anxiety reflects moderate responses to immediate situations, while trait anxiety demonstrates a consistent tendency toward anxious feelings over time. Qualitative findings reinforce these results, with themes of Emotional and Psychological Well-being and Coping and Resilience. Participants reported struggles with uncertainty, separation from loved ones, and emotional strain, aligning with the anxiety symptoms identified quantitatively. Coping strategies such as self-distraction and emotional regulation were observed, illustrating efforts to manage both situational and persistent anxiety. These results underscore the need for targeted interventions addressing both transient state anxiety and enduring trait anxiety, focusing on enhancing emotional coping and resilience in response to environmental and relational stressors.

TABLE VII. The Emergence of the Managing Uncertainty and Emotional Strain for the Anxiety among Incarcerated Individuals.

PDL	Transcript	Emerging Concepts	Subcategory	Category	Theme
1	“Because none of this would be possible without Him. As the Bible says, ‘No challenge given by the Lord is one you cannot overcome. He brought you to this situation because He has a plan for you.’”	Worrying a lot Unpredictability of daily life Life uncertainty Separation from loved ones	Emotional and Psychological Well-being	Coping with emotional strain, managing anxiety, and feelings of uncertain	Emotional and Psychological Well-being
2	“What hurts me the most is that my child saw everything when we were arrested. It’s difficult to explain to her.”	Unpredictability of daily life Lack of control over situations Separation from partner Life uncertainty Restricted freedom	Emotional and Psychological Well-being	Coping with emotional strain, managing anxiety, and feelings of uncertainty	Coping and Resilience
3	“I just keep it to myself. I set it aside and shift my focus to other things to keep myself entertained.”	Keeping feelings to oneself while finding distractions Distracting oneself to cope Emotional strain from separation from family	Coping and Resilience	Coping strategies for managing anxiety	Coping and Resilience
4	“The hardest part is hearing my youngest say, ‘I feel sorry for myself because I don’t have a mommy; she’s in prison.’ It breaks my heart, and I can’t accept my children seeing me like this.”	Concerns about children and long-term imprisonment Difficulty moving on despite support from companions	Coping and Resilience	Managing anxiety related to separation and long-term consequences	Coping and Resilience
5	“I just think about getting out of here so I can still do what I want to do for us.”	Worry about family Concerns for children’s future and education Emotional distress due to long-term imprisonment	Emotional and Psychological Well-being	Coping with emotional strain and anxiety	Coping and Resilience

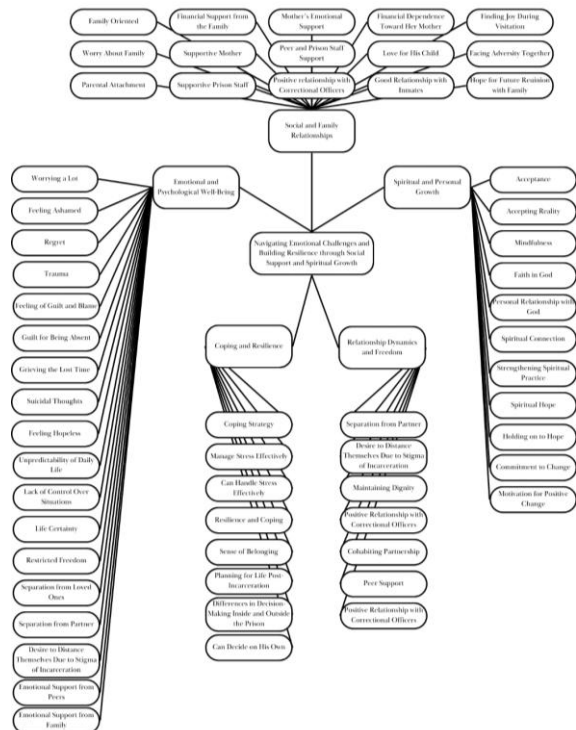


Fig. 2. Thematic Map for Anxiety among Incarcerated Individuals

TABLE VIII. Perceived Stress Scale.

	Σ of scores/mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
PSS Total	21.08	6.83	Above Mean

Legend: 0: Never, 1: Almost never, 2: Sometimes,

3: Fairly often, 4: Very often

Total Score: Responses are summed, with higher scores indicating higher levels of perceived stress. Scores range from 0 to 40. Md=20

The quantitative findings from the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) indicate moderate levels of stress among participants

(M = 21.08, SD = 6.83), slightly above the median (Md = 20). Item-specific scores show that participants sometimes felt confident in handling personal problems (Item 4: 2.64) but also occasionally overwhelmed by challenges (Item 10: 1.90). Qualitative findings support these results, highlighting stressors such as separation from support systems, social stigmatization, and restricted freedom, while also revealing sources of resilience, including peer networks, positive relationships with correctional officers, and encouragement from family and peers. These findings underscore the persistent yet manageable nature of stress in the prison environment and emphasize the need for interventions that combine stress management strategies with the reinforcement of social support to enhance resilience and emotional well-being.

The results of the Prison Climate Questionnaire (PCQ) show an overall positive perception of the prison environment, with a weighted mean score of 3.73 (SD = 0.53). Most items fall within the Agree range, reflecting satisfaction with interactions with fellow inmates and staff, as well as opportunities for personal development and reintegration (e.g., Item 34: “I can prepare well for my return into society,” M = 4.26). However, areas such as perceived safety (Item 14: “I feel unsafe in this institution,” M = 2.23) and sleep disturbances (Items 23–25) indicate neutral perceptions. These findings suggest that while the prison climate is generally positive, specific concerns about safety and rest require attention. Prior research highlights the critical role of prison climate in inmate well-being and rehabilitation, emphasizing the importance of individual perceptions, facility characteristics, and safety measures, including staff protection, pre-employment training, and access to emergency resources.

TABLE IX. Emergence of the Coping and Emotional Resilience for the Stress among Incarcerated Individuals.

PDL	Transcript	Emerging Concepts	Subcategory	Category	Theme
1	"I don't dwell on problems anymore. I think about how to be happy and how to live day by day."	Irritable due to environmental conditions Managing stress effectively Can handle stress effectively Coping strategies	Coping and Resilience	Coping mechanisms for stress management	Coping and Resilience
2	"Even though I am here in prison, my mother is still hoping that I will be released."	Emotional support from peers Emotional support from family Can handle stress effectively Coping strategy Resilience and coping	Coping and Resilience	Stress management and resilience building	Coping and Resilience
3	"When I feel irritated, I just focus on something else, like a livelihood activity, to keep my mind occupied and avoid getting too stressed."	Humor as a coping mechanism Coping strategies for stress management Emotional Strain Due to Distance from Family Emotional Strain from Family Concerns	Coping and Resilience	Coping mechanisms for stress management	Coping and Resilience
4	"I cannot bear being far from my children. I have accepted that I may be in prison for a long time, but being far away from them is very hard to accept, even now."	Emotional distress and need for visits Emotional strain due to family separation	Coping and Resilience	Coping strategies for stress related to family and legal issues	Coping and Resilience
5	"There is really restraint, and I think to myself, if I get involved in their mess, it won't benefit me either."	Coping strategies and resilience Humor and distraction as coping mechanisms Emotional support from family and friends	Coping and Resilience	Coping mechanisms for stress and emotional resilience	Coping and Resilience

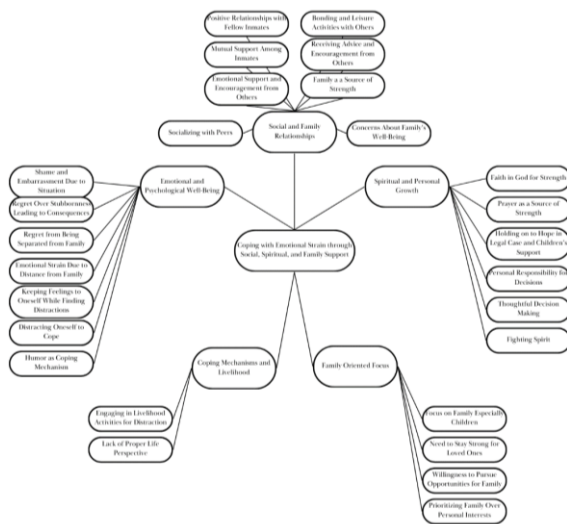


Fig. 3. Thematic Map for Stress among Incarcerated Individuals

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provides a comprehensive understanding of the prison climate's influence on the well-being and relationships of incarcerated individuals. The quantitative results from the Prison Climate Questionnaire (PCQ) reveal an overall Positive/Good perception of the prison environment, with a mean score of 3.73. Participants generally expressed satisfaction with interactions, opportunities for personal development, and preparation for reintegration (e.g., Item 34: mean 4.26).

TABLE X. Prison Climate Questionnaire (PCQ)

	Σ of scores/mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
PCQ Total	3.73	0.53	Positive/Good

Legend: 1 – Strongly Disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 – Agree, 5 – Strongly Agree
Strongly Negative/Extremely Poor (1.0 – 1.8), Negative/Poor (1.9 – 2.6), Neutral/Average (2.7 – 3.3), Positive/Good (3.4 – 4.2), Strongly Positive/Excellent (4.3 – 5.0)

TABLE XI. The Emergence of the Social and Family Relationships for the Prison Climate among Incarcerated Individuals.

PDL	Transcript	Emerging Concepts	Subcategory	Category	Theme
1	"I always think of my child, I want to give him everything he needs, whatever he desires. I don't want him to experience the hardships I went through when I was a child."	Social stigmatization Restricted freedom Separation from support system Group solidarity	Social and Family Relationships	The impact of prison environment on emotional well-being and relationships	Social and Family Relationships
2	"I told my mother, instead of giving it to me, just give it to my child. My child needs it more, financially, because they are the ones supporting her."	Positive relationship with correctional officers Peer support Support from prison staff Desire to distance themselves due to stigma of incarceration	Social and Family Relationships	The impact of prison environment on emotional well-being and relationships	Social and Family Relationships
4	"I just trust in the higher power... that's what keeps me going." This quote reflects the individual's resilience and the importance of faith in overcoming life's challenges. The higher power symbolizes hope and strength during difficult times."	Peer support network Positive relationships with fellow inmates Emotional support and encouragement from others Socializing with peers	Social and Family Relationships	Prison climate and peer relationships	Social and Family Relationships
4	"While I was here, I wanted to see my children. Because once I am far away, it will be harder. That's why, as long as I'm here, I want to see them."	Support and comfort from companions Connection with relatives and close association Support and provision of needs by mother	Social and Family Relationships	Social support in the prison environment	Social and Family Relationships
5	"I want to live in a place where no one knows me because they think that once you're imprisoned, you're always the same. I want to be far from that, away from all the misunderstandings."	Peer support and companionship Support from family and friends Positive relationships with correctional officers Participation in livelihood programs Social stigmatization Separation from partner Desire to distance oneself due to the stigma of incarceration Maintaining dignity despite challenges	Social and Environmental Dynamics	Interpersonal relationships and adjustment within the prison environment	Navigating the Social and Emotional Impact of the Prison Climate



Fig. 4. Thematic Map for Prison Climate among Incarcerated Individuals

However, specific concerns, such as safety (e.g., Item 14: mean 2.23) and sleep disturbances, indicate areas needing improvement. These findings are supported by the qualitative themes, which highlight both positive aspects, such as peer and staff support, and challenges like social stigmatization, restricted freedom, and separation from family. The qualitative themes underscore the impact of prison climate on emotional well-being and social relationships, emphasizing the importance of social support networks, positive staff-inmate relationships, and addressing safety concerns to foster a more rehabilitative environment. Together, these findings underscore the multifaceted nature of prison climate and its critical role in promoting inmate well-being and successful reintegration into society.

TABLE XII. Multi-dimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS).

Subscales	Σ of scores/mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation	Rank
Family	5.64	1.44	Mildly Agree	1
Friends	5.22	1.45	Mildly Agree	3
Significant Other	5.52	1.37	Mildly Agree	2
MSPSS Total	5.46	1.29	Mildly Agree	

Legend: "1" Very Strongly Disagree, "2" Strongly Disagree, "3" Mildly Disagree, "4" Neutral, "5" Mildly Agree, "6" Strongly Agree and "7" Very Strongly Agree

Table XII presents the results of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), with an overall weighted mean score of 5.46 and a standard deviation of 1.29, indicating that participants mildly agree they receive adequate social support. The sub-scales for Family (5.64), Friends (5.22), and Significant Other (5.52) all reflect similar levels of agreement. Solbakken and Wynn (2022) Emphasizing peer support underlines the inherent role of such support in prison when considering the prisoners' mental health and well-being. Chassay & Kremer (2021) In prison, inmates who experienced more frequent family and friend contact through visits and calls demonstrated better mental health functioning, even when controlling for demographic characteristics. For instance, the role that family support can play being critical in determining post-incarceration mental health. The importance of this factor, although their study focuses on the timing and nature of familial support, has been shown in the data collected within the framework of the present study.

TABLE XIII. The Emergence of the Family and Peer Support Networks for the Perceived Social Support among Incarcerated Individuals.

PDL	Transcript	Emerging Concepts	Subcategory	Category	Theme
1	"I survived; I fought through it for my family. That's why I'm here. But if I had given up, with the 21 pieces of medicine I took, all antibiotics, every single day... if I had been weak, I wouldn't be here now. I'm proud of myself for surviving."	Support from family Support from peers and inmates Emotional support from family Supportive mother Positive relationship with correctional officers	Social and Family Relationships	The role of social support in coping with emotional challenges	Social and Family Relationships
2	"My peers here inside talk to me when I'm feeling sad, I open up to them about why I'm feeling that way."	Support from family Financial support from the family Emotional support from peers Support from prison staff Financial dependence toward her mother	Social and Family Relationships	The role of social support in coping with emotional challenges	Social and Family Relationships
3	"I need to be strong. For my... for the people I love."	Family as a source of strength Concerns about family's well-being Emotional support and encouragement from others Bonding and leisure activities with others	Social and Family Relationships	The role of social support in emotional resilience	Social and Family Relationships
4	"I'm always thinking about my children. When I heard my youngest say, 'I have no mommy, she's in jail,' it hurt so much. I can't accept that my children keep seeing me in here. I don't want them to get used to seeing me like this, locked up."	Support from partner during imprisonment Emotional support from family Connection with relatives and close association Support for basic needs from relatives	Social and Family Relationships	Emotional and social support during imprisonment	Social and Family Relationships
5	"Of course, first and foremost, my family and other good friends. Because some friends are only good when they need something. Sometimes, I see people who are only good to you when it's convenient, but behind your back... I've helped so many, but they repay me badly. It's okay, that's how they are. I can't expect anything from them."	Family support as a source of encouragement Peer support and shared experiences Emotional fulfillment from family Support from family and friends Humor with family during visits Bonding with children during visitation Support from prison staff Mutual support among inmates Love for family and children as a motivator	Emotional and Practical Support Systems	The importance of social connections and relational bonds	Drawing Strength from Social Networks and Relationships

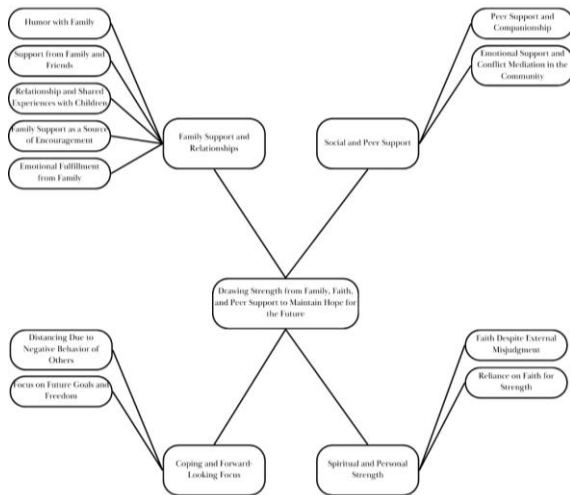


Fig. 4. Thematic Map for Perceived Social Support among Incarcerated Individuals

The quantitative results from the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) reveal that participants mildly agree they receive social support, with an overall mean score of 5.46. Among the subscales, family support ranks highest (5.64), followed by significant others (5.52) and friends (5.22), indicating moderate but varied levels of perceived support. The qualitative data validate these findings by emphasizing the critical role of social relationships in coping with emotional challenges. Participants highlighted family as a key source of strength and encouragement, peers and inmates as sources of shared emotional support, and even prison staff as contributing to their well-being. Themes of emotional resilience, relational bonds, and practical support emerged, illustrating how social networks are crucial in managing emotional and practical challenges during incarceration. Together, these results underline the importance of strengthening social support systems, especially family connections, to enhance the emotional resilience and well-being of incarcerated individuals.

TABLE XIV. Differences of Responses on Depression when grouped according to Profile.

Profile	H/U	p-value	Interpretation
Sex	28562.500	0.016	Significant
Age	4.862	0.088	Not Significant
Religion	12.772	0.005	Significant
Civil Status	2.895	0.576	Not Significant
Educational Attainment	9.259	0.160	Not Significant
Type of Committed Crime	24.500	0.178	Not Significant
Length of Stay in Jail	10.003	0.125	Not Significant

Table XIV presents the differences in depression levels based on profile variables using the Beck Depression Inventory. The results show significant differences in depression scores when grouped by Sex (H/U = 28562.500, p = 0.016) and Religion (H/U = 12.772, p = 0.005). However, no significant differences were found for Age, Civil Status, Educational Attainment, Type of Committed Crime, or Length of Stay in Jail, as their p-values exceed the 0.05 threshold.

Research indicates that gender and religious affiliation can significantly impact depression levels among participants. A

study found denominational differences in depression symptoms among Black Christians, with a larger gender gap for Methodists compared to Baptists and Catholics (Robbins et al., 2020). Another study revealed that Christians were more likely to seek depression treatment than atheists and agnostics (Chiasson, 2020). Gender differences were observed in religious involvement and depression, with men reporting higher levels of religious participation and less depression than women (Santiago et al., 2019). Additionally, religiousness was positively correlated with life satisfaction and negatively correlated with anxiety levels among depressed patients (Cindik Herbrüggen & Akdağ, 2021).

TABLE XV. Differences of Responses on Anxiety when grouped according to Profile

Anxiety	State			Trait		
	H/U	P-value	Interpretation	H/U	P-value	Interpretation
Sex	27887.500	0.007	Significant	25198.000	0.000	Significant
Age	0.540	0.764	Not Significant	0.792	0.673	Not Significant
Religion	2.619	0.454	Not Significant	5.236	0.155	Not Significant
Civil Status	2.323	0.677	Not Significant	0.544	0.969	Not Significant
Educational Attainment	12.875	0.045	Significant	8.368	0.212	Not Significant
Type of Committed Crime	22.032	0.283	Not Significant	19.032	0.455	Not Significant
Length of Stay in Jail	10.000	0.125	Not Significant	3.533	0.740	Not Significant

Table XV shows the differences in anxiety levels based on profile variables for both State and Trait Anxiety. For State Anxiety, significant differences were found based on Sex (H/U = 27887.500, p = 0.007) and Educational Attainment (H/U = 12.875, p = 0.045). However, Age, Religion, Civil Status, Type of Committed Crime, and Length of Stay in Jail do not show significant effects (p-values > 0.05).

For Trait Anxiety, significant differences were observed for Sex (H/U = 25198.000, p = 0.000). No significant differences were found for Age, Religion, Civil Status, Educational Attainment, Type of Committed Crime, and Length of Stay in Jail (p-values > 0.05).

The findings reveal significant effects of gender and educational attainment on anxiety levels. For state anxiety, gender (H/U = 27887.500, p = 0.007) and educational attainment (H/U = 12.875, p = 0.045) both show significant impacts. For trait anxiety, gender has a stronger effect (H/U = 25198.000, p = 0.000).

Pflugrad et al. (2022) studies of anxiety in incarcerated populations show that levels often rise as prisoners get closer to their release date, particularly among younger offenders. Mindfulness-based interventions can reduce anxiety and psychological distress, although evidence is mixed regarding whether they are more effective than other active controls (Per et al., 2019; Han, 2022). De Maria & da Costa (2020) found that during low levels of anxiety there was a higher rate of depression symptoms for male inmates.

Table XVI presents the differences in perceived stress levels based on profile variables. The results show a significant difference in perceived stress levels based on Sex (H/U = 26625.000, p = 0.001). However, no significant

differences were found for Age, Religion, Civil Status, Educational Attainment, Type of Committed Crime, or Length of Stay in Jail (p -values > 0.05). This suggests that perceived stress is significantly influenced by gender, while other demographic and situational factors do not show a meaningful statistical effect.

TABLE XVI. Differences of Responses on Perceived Stress when grouped according to Profile

Perceived Stress	H/U	p-value	Interpretation
Sex	26625.000	0.001	Significant
Age	0.364	0.834	Not Significant
Religion	5.042	0.169	Not Significant
Civil Status	7.470	0.113	Not Significant
Educational Attainment	2.988	0.810	Not Significant
Type of Committed Crime	25.175	0.155	Not Significant
Length of Stay in Jail	1.515	0.958	Not Significant

The perceived level of stress among prisoners is very high, according to Rao et al. (2018) and Porter (2019), and the experience strongly impacts inmates' well-being. Rao et al. (2018), Porter (2019), and Convocar et al. (2019) found the leading sources of stress during serving to be interactions with staff and other inmates, while finding employment was one of the most difficult times after serving. Effective treatments, such as emotion regulation and distress tolerance training, decrease the perceived level of stress among prisoners. This shows that stress is an important factor when trying to support inmates.

TABLE XVII. Differences of Responses on Prison Climate when grouped according to Profile

Prison Climate	H/U	p-value	Interpretation
Sex	33574.500	0.988	Not Significant
Age	0.021	0.990	Not Significant
Religion	1.617	0.655	Not Significant
Civil Status	1.128	0.890	Not Significant
Educational Attainment	18.536	0.005	Significant
Type of Committed Crime	18.884	0.399	Not Significant
Length of Stay in Jail	6.033	0.420	Not Significant

Table XVII shows the differences in responses on prison climate based on profile variables. The results reveal a significant difference in prison climate perceptions based on Educational Attainment ($H/U = 18.536, p = 0.005$). However, Sex, Age, Religion, Civil Status, Type of Committed Crime, and Length of Stay in Jail do not show significant effects (p -values > 0.05). This indicates that educational background is the primary factor affecting perceptions of the prison environment in this sample.

Stasch et al. (2018) research on prison climate shows how important it is for the well-being and rehabilitation of prisoners. Improved treatment attitudes and reduced dynamic risk factors have been associated with a positive prison climate. Van Ginneken et al. (2019) note that being able to measure individual well-being within group units demonstrates that prison measures at the lower (within-person) level are more important in predicting perceptions of prison climate than those at a higher (between-person) level.

Williams et al. (2019) state that challenges in prison climate research are related to the diversity of scales available, as well as the influence of facility type on perceived inmate threat.

Selm et al. (2019) found that educational attainment and prison climate perceptions play an important part in inmates' well-being and rehabilitation outcomes. Van Ginneken et al. (2019) emphasize that individual experience of prison climate matters more for well-being than group perceptions or unit-level averages. Stasch et al. (2018) also state that a rehabilitative prison climate and attitudes toward supportive treatment are connected to lower dynamic risk levels. Gonzales et al. (2021) found that non-uniformed staff who see inmates as "neighbors" help create a culture of respect and transformation in prisons, contributing to literature on the importance of relational and environmental variables in fostering a prison climate that supports rehabilitation. It advised the expansion of educational programs, diversifying staff, and engaging community members in rehabilitation.

TABLE XVIII. Differences of Responses on Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support when grouped according to Profile

MSPSS	Family			Friends			Significant Other			Overall		
	H/U	P-value	I	H/U	P-value	I	H/U	P-value	I	H/U	P-value	I
Sex	22568.000	0.000	S	27070.000	0.021	S	26897.000	0.016	S	24924.000	0.001	S
Age	1.383	0.501	NS	1.524	0.467	NS	0.375	0.829	NS	0.012	0.994	NS
Religion	6.092	0.107	NS	1.143	0.767	NS	2.006	0.571	NS	2.610	0.456	NS
Civil Status	5.198	0.268	NS	5.456	0.244	NS	4.389	0.356	NS	6.337	0.175	NS
Educational Attainment	9.584	0.143	NS	16.132	0.013	S	23.631	0.001	S	20.532	0.002	S
Type of Committed Crime	24.511	0.139	NS	13.281	0.775	NS	25.999	0.100	NS	16.304	0.571	NS
Length of Stay in Jail	9.251	0.160	NS	10.767	0.096	NS	10.976	0.089	NS	11.301	0.079	NS

The results highlight that perceived social support is significantly influenced by sex, particularly across all domains of support. Educational attainment also plays a role, particularly in support from friends, significant others, and overall social support. On the other hand, factors like age, religion, civil status, type of committed crime, and length of jail stay showed no significant influence on perceived social support. In summary, gender and educational attainment are the key factors that significantly influence perceptions of social support, while other demographic and situational variables do not appear to have a meaningful impact.

Moorman & Manacy Pai (2023); Safavian et al. (2022) Investigates the association between completed years of schooling and cognitive impairment focusing on perceived social support, demonstrating that higher perceived social support (mostly family type) is associated with reduced cognitive problems in old diminishers, and more years of schooling are related to higher educational attainment among Latinas. Moorman & Manacy Pai (2023) This was not the case for postgraduates where family support seemed not to benefit cognitive function. There is also a gender difference in the social support—well-being relationship where perceived social support has more of a mediation effect on the association between relationship status and well-being for men compared with women Stronge et al. (2019). Results suggest the critical need for further investigation into the inconsistent literature on gender differences in perceived social support and its impact on psychological well-being.

TABLE XIX. Correlational Matrix of Depression, Anxiety, Perceived Social Support, Prison Climate and Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support

Variables	Anxiety (State)			Anxiety (Trait)			Perceived Stress			Prison Climate			MSPSS		
	r ²	p-value	I	H/U	p-value	I	H/U	p-value	I	H/U	p-value	I	H/U	p-value	I
Depression	-0.001	0.973	NS	.069*	0.032	S	.299**	0.000	S	-.139**	0.000	S	-.179**	0.000	S
Anxiety (State)							.255**	0.000	S	.237**	0.000	S	.110**	0.001	S
Anxiety (Trait)							.384**	0.000	S	.219**	0.000	S	.100**	0.002	S
Perceived Stress										.187**	0.000	S	.106**	0.001	S
Prison Climate													.509**	0.000	S

Table XX shows how psychological factors like depression, anxiety, stress, and perceptions of prison climate are connected to different situations or conditions. For Depression, there was no overall connection, but depending on the situation, the relationships varied, sometimes weakly positive, strongly positive, or moderately negative. State Anxiety consistently showed a moderate positive link across all conditions, while Trait Anxiety also had positive relationships, with some being stronger than others. Perceived Stress was weakly but significantly linked in a couple of situations. Prison Climate had a strong positive connection in one condition. These results suggest that how people feel and perceive things can depend a lot on the specific context or situation. In summary, higher depression and anxiety levels are associated with lower perceived social support, a more negative prison climate, and higher perceived stress. Conversely, a more positive prison climate is linked to better perceived social support.

Recent studies have explored the relationships between depression, anxiety, perceived social support, and prison

environments. The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) has been validated for use with incarcerated individuals, showing good psychometric properties and a three-factor structure (Wittenborn et al., 2020). Prison workers exposed to compulsory isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic exhibited high levels of depression and anxiety, with perceived social support negatively correlated with these symptoms (Ayhan et al., 2022). In a sample of prisoners, perceived social support was found to mediate the relationship between psychological resilience and depressive symptoms (Çivgin & Gün, 2022). For correctional officers, family and supervisor support were significantly associated with lower levels of depressive symptoms, while coworker support showed no significant relationship (Lambert et al., 2022). These findings highlight the importance of social support in mitigating mental health issues within prison environments for both inmates and staff.

The results from both the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests indicate that all variables deviate significantly from a normal distribution (p-values are all less than 0.05). The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test provides the Lilliefors Significance Correction, which is used when the mean and variance are estimated from the data. For all variables tested, BECK TOTAL, STAI-S, STAI-T, PRISON CLIMATE, and MSPSS, the significant p-values suggest that the data for each variable do not follow a normal distribution. Consequently, non-parametric statistical methods may be more appropriate for analyzing these variables.

IV. APPENDIX

TABLE XX. Proposed Modular Activities.

Key Results Area	Program/ Services	Objectives	Strategies/ Activities	Target Person	Persons Responsible	Evaluation
Module 1 Depression: - This module helps participants identify the signs and symptoms of depression and understand how factors like sex and religion influence depressive experiences. Participants will explore their own emotional states and practice coping strategies to manage depressive symptoms in a prison setting.	Understanding and Managing Depression	1. identify the symptoms and triggers of depression. 2. To understand how demographic factors such as sex and religion influence depressive symptoms. 3. To develop and practice coping strategies for managing depression.	1. Introduction to Depression 2. Depression screening 3. Group Discussion 4. Coping Strategies 5. Wrap-up and Reflection 6. Daily Journaling	Incarcerated individuals experiencing depression	Facilitators	- Pre/post assessments of Depression Participant feedback on perceived usefulness of coping strategies. - Observation of behavioral changes over time.
Module 2: Anxiety This module explores state and trait anxiety, with a focus on how sex and education influence these experiences. Participants will learn relaxation techniques to manage anxiety effectively.	Managing Anxiety in Challenging Environment	1. Understand the differences between state and trait anxiety. 2. To explore how sex and education impact anxiety levels 3. To practice and adopt anxiety-reducing techniques.	1. Introduction to Anxiety 2. Anxiety Assessment 3. Group Discussion 4. Anxiety Reduction Techniques 5. Wrap up 6. Mindfulness Practice	Incarcerated individuals experiencing anxiety	Facilitators	- Pre/post assessments of Anxiety - Participant engagement during activities. - Self-reported use of techniques in daily life.
Module 3: Perceived Stress This module focuses on helping participants identify their sources of	Understanding and Coping Stress	1. Identify common sources of perceived stress in the prison	1. Introduction to Stress 2. Stress	Incarcerated individuals experiencing	Facilitators	- Pre/post assessments of Perceived stress

stress and how sex affects stress perception. Participants will practice practical stress-management strategies such as cognitive-behavioral techniques and mindfulness		environment. 2. To understand how sex affects stress perception. differences. 3. To learn and apply effective stress-management techniques.	Assessment 3. Group Reflection 4. Coping strategies 5. Wrap-Up and Action Plan 6. Daily Stress Log	stress		- Stress assessment results before and after sessions. - Participant feedback on the effectiveness of strategies. - Observation of stress management behaviors.
Module 4: Prison Climate This module explores how participants perceive the prison environment, with a focus on how education influences these perceptions. Participants will brainstorm and propose strategies to improve the prison climate.	Improving Perceptions of the Prison Environment	1.To understand how educational attainment influences perceptions of the prison environment. 2. To identify aspects of the prison environment that affect psychological well-being. 3.To suggest actionable strategies to improve the prison climate.	1. Introduction to Prison Climate 2. Prison Climate Survey 3. Group Reflection 4.Improvement Strategies 5. Wrap-Up 6.Environmental Change Project.	Incarcerated individuals	Facilitators	- Pre/post assessments of Prison Climate -Quality of proposals created. - Participant involvement in brainstorming. - Implementation of proposed environmental changes and their impact
Module 5: Social Support This module emphasizes the importance of social support in maintaining mental well-being. Participants will assess their current support systems and learn strategies to strengthen relationships with peers, family, and others.	Building and maintaining Social Support Networks	1.To understand the role of social support in mental health. 2. To identify current sources of social support. 3. To develop strategies for maintaining and strengthening social connections.	1.Introduction to Social support 2. Social Support Assessment 3. Group Reflection 4. Building supportive networks 5. Wrap-up 6. Peer Support Groups	Incarcerated individuals.	Facilitators	Pre/post assessments of perceived social support. - Participant feedback on relationship-building exercises. - Observation of strengthened peer and family connections

V. CONCLUSION

The findings of the study provide significant insights into the psychological and social dynamics experienced by the participants. The results indicate that depression, anxiety, perceived stress, and social support are influenced by various demographic factors, such as sex, religion, and educational attainment, but not by others, including age, civil status, type of committed crime, and length of stay in jail.

1. Depression. Significant differences were observed based on sex and religion, indicating that these variables influence depressive symptoms. Other profile variables do not show significant effects on depression.
2. Anxiety. Significant differences in state and trait anxiety were found for sex, with educational attainment also affecting state anxiety. Other demographic factors had no significant impact.
3. Perceived Stress. Significant differences in perceived stress were observed based on sex, suggesting that men and women perceive stress differently, while other factors like age and civil status do not influence stress perception.
4. Prison Climate. Perceptions of prison climate were significantly affected by educational attainment, but not by other variables. This suggests that higher educational levels

influence how individuals perceive the environment within the prison.

5. Social Support. Significant differences in perceived social support were found based on sex and educational attainment, especially in support from family, friends, and significant others. Other variables, such as age and religion, did not show significant effects.

Overall, the study highlights that sex and education are important factors influencing psychological well-being and social support within this sample. The monotonic relationships between variables, such as the positive correlation between depression and perceived stress, suggest that these psychological states are interconnected, where increases in one may correspond with increases in the other.

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