

Increasing Rate of Women Imprisonment in Australia

Name

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Prison imprisonment rates in Australia have been on the rise since early 2000. It is not only Australia that is being faced with such a trend, but also the world at large. Different nations have had the same situation where the numbers of crimes have increased leading to many people being imprisoned (Fazel & Seewald, 2012). The worrying trend is that suddenly the number of women who get to prisons has recently been on the rise compared to the males. This provides arguments and debate posing a question that, in the modern societies does it mean that women are being involved more in criminal activities than men? A lot of opinions have been raised with some studies and research is providing evidence that indeed that maybe the case since female prisons in Australia have had an increasing population which is vice versa trend. Additionally, the male population before early 2000 was more compared to that of the women but after things changing the trend has reversed with more population comprising of females in present days. Many studies have posed questions to know the reason behind this, and the main finding is that the changing lifestyle may be the cause for such trends (Fazel & Seewald, 2012).

General Trends

In the past two decades, the Australia's prison population has risen in what is considered to be so dramatically in comparison with other advanced countries. The AIC in full termed as the institute in charge of criminology in Australia that gets funding from the government recently published a report that inmates numbers increased by 102 percent over a period of 17 years that is the year 2000 to 2005. The study by the organization indicated clearly that on the basis of average, the rate has increased by 4.2 percent in every year which is considered almost thrice an increase in the population to be imprisoned in the age bracket of 18 years and above (Sudbury, 2014).

According to Sudbury (2014), in the year 2000, the rate of incarceration was at 89.9 at a group of 100000 which had increased in the year 2005 with 139.2 percent just at the same group of 100000; this is about an increase of 55 percent. The rate is so higher compared to Britain 100000 per 94 percent, making it 30 percent higher also when compared with Indonesia at 22 percent per 100000 which makes it being even seven times higher than Indonesia. When the annual growth rate is analysed, it is twice compared to that of England and Wales, but it might be half the rate of the USA.

The aboriginal being the most affected people in Australia with increasing population in prison have been over-represented since they represent only 3 percent of the total

population in Australia, yet 28 percent of the prisoners in Australia are the Aboriginal people. According to statistics, the studies have indicated that the in the year 2016, the percentage of the aboriginal prisoners was at 27.3 percent. 34.3 percent were incarcerated in the same year were women while men comprised of only 26.7 percent (Baldry & Cunneen, 2014). 48 percent of the prisoners in custody were juveniles and aboriginals.

The percentage was 58.6 in the year 2000 to 2010 which was recorded as an increase in the number of Aboriginal women prisoners. The rate for the Aboriginal men was at 35.2 percent, on the other hand, that of the women who were non-Aboriginal was at 22.4 percent and for men who are non-aboriginal was at 3.6 percent. For the Aboriginal people, the number of their imprisonment statistics gets worse year in year out. Since the year 2000, the number has been increasing at a rate of 88 percent which is almost thrice the number for non-Aboriginals that is at 28 percent.

Hence, Australia is believed to have headed towards having prisons that are comprised of the Aboriginal people in one to two by the year 2020. Since early 2000's, the imprisonment rate for the aboriginals is 12 times higher than that of the non-aboriginals and with the most people being affected being the aboriginal women's. Back in the old times, the year 1992, the total number of the prisoners present was 15000 and this comprised of both the Aboriginals and the Non-Aboriginals. However, by the time studies were carried in the year 2012, the figure had doubled to around 30000, and the year 2016 the figures were around 38800 with the figures of imprisonment for the Aboriginals having skyrocketed from 1 to 7 per the prisoners in the year 1992 while 2012 it was at 1 in 4, and the year 2014 it was at 1 in 3 (Fazel et al., 2011).

The data from ABS showed that from 2000 to 2012, the rate of imprisonment for both male and female Aboriginal had skyrocketed from 1727 to around 2436 per 100000 adults of the aboriginal's total population. On the other hand, that of the non-aboriginals had also risen from 122 to 154 per a hundred thousand adults of the total population. It is an indicator that many prisoners are out and in of the prisons. The Western part of Australia having the leading rate of the number of the Aboriginals that are being incarcerated as compared to any other region of Australia, with rates almost doubling from early 2000's to present. According to the report from the parliament in the year 2010, the number of aboriginal people jailed in the Western Australia was around 2483 per 100000 compared the USA where we had around 2290 for the African Americans. In the year 2009 around March, the numbers in the western were around 3741. Many studies have indicated that many juveniles who are imprisoned might be still re-offend and then taken back to the prisons with the Justice Centre playing a

major role in that. The statistics indicate that in the wide Australia, in every four prisoners who are released at least one will have a chance of being taken back into the prison for conviction (Baldry et al., 2011).

Reason for Incarceration of Many Women's

Studies have shown that female prisoners have a typical behaviour and characteristics. On the other hand, the nature of the offences committed on the aspect of being convicted before, their age and the indigeneity provide the reasons as to why there exists disparity between the rate of imprisonment amongst female and male. Furthermore, changes in the process of sentencing such as to whether they are being treated equally or not by the judiciary, and if a lot of women who are not sentenced are being held up in the prisons could also provide as a reason behind this trend of the rising cases of many women being imprisoned.

Many researches however reveal that sentencing process is the main cause of these increasing rates of women. This is despite the considerations like that women are prone to less serious offences and don't repeat the mistakes as compared to men. In an analysis, there are suggestions that their age and indigenous nature of women have changed slightly according to the reference course period. However, crimes nature has changed. Women's who are convicted because of the non-violent crimes has been on a reducing rate while those who are convicted of violent crimes is on the rise. Robbery being the leading crime, hence factors leading to increased women prisoner numbers are several (Herbert et al., 2012).

Firstly, women criminal behaviour has changed; women mostly have been regarded as being involved in less serious crimes such as drug use and shoplifting but not crimes like assaults and homicides. However, recently the behaviour has changed with the type of crimes women are committing. Since if the crimes are considered as serious, they will serve a longer jail term, many women therefore are reoffending, and this attracts a longer jail term in prison, and the punishment is not on the type of the crime, but the frequency hence an increasing number and rate.

Secondly, changes in female offenders characteristics; it is clearly established that many people who are offenders are at the age of 15-24. This age group has been known for being involved with a lot of criminal activities. Recently there is a change in the women age profile whereby there is a down ward trend. The indigenous status also plays another role since both male and female prisoners have a high representation in Australia. Hence, the rate

of the Indigenous prisoners in Australia has increased compared to the one for the indigenous males hence an increasing number of female offenders in prison (Herbert et al., 2012).

Lastly, change in responses to female criminal cases; there exists a possibility that court systems have different ways of treating the female and male offenders. The inequalities that exist are linked with either paternalism or chivalry. Since they could be having short sentences for the women as compared to men, but it seems there are changes that have taken place hence prolong the sentence period for the women to, hence many are committing repeated offences and are found convicted for long in the prisons hence increasing the number of women being convicted. The increase in the women incarceration can also be as a result of the increase in the number of sentenced women prisoners.

Criminal Theories

The following criminal theories are the best to explain the arising situation of increased cases for many females. Firstly, rational choice, whereby an action is done with people basing on their interests after weighing the risks associated with that crime versus the rewards. This theory is in line with what many women say that even if they commit a certain crime they won't be there for a long time since they are less serious crimes (Davis, 2011). The punishment offered will not be severe, with such a mind set up, they end up reoffending and repeating the same mistakes that land a lot of them in prisons. What they know is different with the changing judiciary system that has seen so many things change, and hence a lot of females end up being caught in prisons serving long jail term sentences which do not relate to their expectations. This has seen the female prisoner's rate increase compared to the male in the recent early 2000's to present in Australia.

Lastly, the theory of social disorganization; the surrounding and habitat play a great role in influencing the person's actions. For the many, Aboriginal females have been looking at other women and the small offences they do, hence in the coming ages, they try to copy, and this has been witnessed being the main factor for many of the indigenous females landing in prisons. The lifestyles they have led lest them divorced hence living them with options to provide for their needs where they end up being involved in illegal activities like the drugs, which according to the judiciary system are termed as crimes. Before they were regarded not being serious, but the punishment for these crimes both for males and females have been harsh without consideration for gender and age (Davis, 2011).

Social Implications

The trend comes about with several social implications which have been leading to a lot of female gender being involved in the criminal activities. The blame goes to the society which has been ranked as the number one for not providing solution to the problems of people. The society is seen to full of inequality which has most of the time resulted to human problems like poverty, divorces, hence forcing females to try and get different means so as to fulfil their interests.

Gender inequality being another factor that is linked with high rates female prisoners since the female is seen as feeble not able to carry out certain tasks. This limits opportunities for everyone being on the same level creating social differences. Hence, the society should be able to tackle the aspects of inequality in every way so as to create an environment that offers equal opportunities. People involved with crimes should be punished all the same, even if it calls for the erection of more prison and police apparatus so as it house the growing number of prisoners (Larney et al., 2012). If women are not handled well during rehabilitation, they will be faced with low esteem, personality disorder, drug abuse, stress disorder that is posttraumatic, sexual abuse and self-injury or suicide commitment. Therefore, services should be provided to help live a secure, productive, and health life.

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