PREFACE

Prison is not a place of punishment, but an 'ashram' to reform the prisoners. Kiran Bedi as IG (Prisons) offered a humane insight into the travails of the most celebrated of Indian prisons—the capital's Tihar Jail. She has laboured relentlessly to provide dignity to the prisoners and jail staffers alike. She was primarily concerned with two areas—sensitive handling of the demotivated, undertrained and weary prison staff on the one hand and, on the other, improving the appalling conditions in the overcrowded jail.

The studies of crowding in prisons for men indicate that male inmates experience physiological, attitudinal and behavioural effects as a result of prison crowding. There is also some speculation that overcrowding contributes to prison riots. Inmates may feel negative in their living situations because they perceive that they do not have control over their environment. Often the prisoner is subjected to stimulus overload and cannot control the unwanted environmental stimulation or because the prisoner is constrained from performing certain behaviours.

In India, overcrowding in prisons can be attributed to the fact that a majority of the prisoners are under trial—picked up on suspicion. There seems to be no feasible solution to trial delays. The courts are packed to the ceiling with case files, judges are too few and undertrials are too many. The undertrials have to spend a long time in prison due to the slow process of justice dispensation. These inmates may be, especially different from the convicted population. It seems worthwhile to undertake comparative work and trace the pertinent issues of this population.

Female prisoners have been generally under-represented in research studies as compared to massive documentation of research on male prisoners. Women's low share of crime might have significant consequences for those women who are incarcerated, either under suspicion or punishment.

In the wake of this, the present study was planned to investigate the environmental perception (perception of crowding and control) and attitude towards life among undertrial and convicted female prisoners, alongwith the role of perceived availability of social support during imprisonment. In addition, an attempt has also been made to trace the pertinent issues of this population.
The first chapter of Introduction in the present study gives in brief key features of a total institution, classical penal theory, features of Indian prisons, prison systems and female criminality, in general. The effect of social support in stressful situations is a continuing focus of research on social support. The chapter further deals with the measures of social support (Network measures, Received social support and Perceived support), hypothetical models of social support and the role of social support in relationships and during life time. In the last section of this chapter, emergence of the problem, aims and objectives of the present study and hypotheses are presented.

The second chapter is an attempt to Review the Related Literature. It embodies investigations related to behavioural effects of prison environment, mental health status of the prisoners and the mental health services in prisons, probation services, prisoner and staff relationship and family relationship of prisoners. In this chapter a brief review of literature on elderly population in community has also been presented alongwith older inmates. Further, review of the studies conducted on the variable of Social Support are highlighted.

The third chapter comprises the Methodology adopted in the present investigation. It includes the design, sample, tools, and statistical techniques used in the study. Details of procedures employed for data collection are also explained in this chapter.

The results of the study are presented in the fourth chapter- Analysis and Interpretation. The first section concentrates on the analysis of variance for the variables of social support, type of prisoners and age group. The second section highlights some of the distinct issues prevalent among female prisoners, derived from the interview schedule data.

The obtained results have been discussed in the chapter five of Discussion, in the light of the various previous investigations conducted in this field and related areas.

The Findings of the present research work, final Conclusion are given in chapter sixth. It also incorporates the Limitations of the present study and Suggestions for further substantial research work.
The work could not have been conducted and reported without the help of many individuals. I take this opportunity to acknowledge those who have made major contributions of immeasurable value.

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I dedicate this work to the loving memory of my revered grandfather Late Mr. V.P. Singh. His blessings and special interest in my work has enabled me to go ahead.

(Neeti Rana)