

**INMATE LIFE AND INCARCERATION EXPERIENCES  
OF WOMEN IN PRISON: A STUDY IN MIZORAM**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
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PHILOSOPHY**

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**INMATE LIFE AND INCARCERATION EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN  
PRISON: A STUDY IN MIZORAM**

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**In partial fulfilment of the requirement of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in  
Sociology of Mizoram University, Aizawl**



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On evaluation of all the formalities, I am pleased to forward the thesis for evaluation and further necessary action.

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**DECLARATION**  
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**NOVEMBER, 2025**

I **LALRINDIKI**, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to do the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/Institute.

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**Dated: 14<sup>th</sup> November, 2025**

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## **CHAPTER- I**

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## **CHAPTER- I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

Incarceration represents a complex social issue shaped by legal frameworks, socio-economic conditions, institutional policies, and the lived realities of those confined within prison walls. Understanding the experiences and welfare services available to women inmates is a crucial indicator of the overall functioning and humanity of any correctional institution. A detailed assessment of these conditions reveals both the systemic challenges faced by inmates and the areas requiring urgent reform.

#### **1.1 Crime and Society**

Crime and deviance have consistently been seen throughout many human societies as the most significant and debated pathological concerns (Downes et al., 2016). Crime includes not only the actions one commits, but also the individuals involved and the locations where these actions occur (Clinard & Meier, 2011). The majority of postmodern studies of crime view it as a relative concept that varies across societies in terms of its nature and responses (Henry & Milovanovic, 1996). Crime refers to any behaviour that violates societal norms and the laws of the State (Siegel, 2018). Traditionally, the study of crime or deviant behaviour has been primarily linked to male criminality, often overlooking women's experiences and perspectives in criminological theory (Heidensohn, 1985).

The concept of crime depends on the ideas, philosophies, and culture of every society (Clinard & Meier, 2011). It changes when there is a change in the values and attitudes of society. When new regulations are imposed due to social transformation, the concept of crime assumes a new meaning (Downes et al., 2016). What a society defines as crime is socially constructed and highly relative (Becker, 1963). The social environment and deviance are therefore deeply intertwined with the understanding of criminality (Cohen, 1955; Merton, 1938).

Wetzell (2017) proposed four rough approximations of criminological paradigms. The first paradigm explains crime as a consequence of moral deficiency, while the

second paradigm attributes crime to criminogenic biological abnormalities in the offender. The third paradigm posits that crime results from biological and environmental factors, and the fourth paradigm suggests that environmental factors primarily influence crime. A significant number of medical professionals involved in criminological research have characterized the relationship between crime and abnormality as a multifaceted interplay of environmental circumstances influencing mental abnormalities that are not intrinsically criminogenic. The third paradigm might manifest in distinct ways depending on whether emphasis was placed on biological or environmental elements. The fourth paradigm of environmentalism instilled hope in society's capacity to reform criminals and deter crime through the improvement of social circumstances.

Of course, this is only a preliminary sketch of the typology of criminological paradigms that requires further refinement by criminological scholars. It emphasizes the intrinsic connection between crime and the broader cultural and environmental factors that shape individual behaviour within specific social contexts (Cohen, 1955; Clinard & Meier, 2011). Cultural norms, social disorganization, and environmental influences play a crucial role in determining why certain individuals or groups engage in criminal behaviour (Shaw & McKay, 1942; Sutherland, 1947). This perspective reinforces the notion that crime is not merely a legal construct but also a social and cultural phenomenon shaped by the dynamics of the society in which it occurs (Becker, 1963).

In all societies at all times, crime is viewed as a behaviour that deviates from the norm. Prominent criminologists create a variety of theoretical frameworks. Merton (1949) emphasized the strain theory, which is based on the stress or strain of work, and stated that society and social structure share equal responsibility for the causes of crime. He asserts that when women are unable to achieve "culturally defined goals" through "institutional means", they are more likely to commit crimes (Parveen, 2018).

## **1.2 Women Criminality**

Criminology functions as the analytical instrument of the criminal justice system, aiming to discover, examine, and elucidate the fundamental reasons of criminal conduct. Similar to how medicine identifies the root causes of ailments prior to administering therapy, criminology examines the social, psychological, biological, economic, and environmental influences that drive individuals to engage in criminal behaviour. This perspective transcends the perception of crime as simply a violation of law, recognizing it as a multifaceted social phenomenon shaped by an intricate network of individual and systemic factors (Mohanty, 2012).

Historical beliefs on female criminality typically viewed women's criminal behaviour as a result of their sexuality or unresolved psychological issues. Scarce research has been devoted to examining how economic, societal, and political factors influence women's involvement in criminal activities (Klein, 1995, p.31). Women are sometimes rigidly classified based on the type of crime they commit; if they display violence, they are labelled as 'masculine', while those who conform are seen as manipulative, sexually maladjusted, and promiscuous. The concept of sexuality serves as a cohesive element in several, frequently conflicting views (Klein, 1995, pp. 45-46). A clear and prominent fault in the early theories of criminogenesis is their consistent bias toward males (Chesney-Lind, 1989).

The study of female criminality was long overlooked in the field of criminology. Klein (1995) observes that female criminality is frequently marginalized in works that claim to cover criminality as a whole, focusing mostly on men. Nevertheless, the release of Freda Adler's *Sisters in Crime* and Rita Simon's *Women and Crime* in 1975 resulted in a shift in the level of focus given to female criminal behaviour (Belknap, 1996, p. 37). Proctor (2004) highlighted that the two of them developed the liberation theory to explain women's criminality. Adler highlighted that the empowerment of women would lead to a rise in their rates of violent criminal activity, whereas Simon predicted that the liberation of women would result in a drop in their engagement in violent crimes and an increase in their involvement in property crime. A heightened focus on women's criminology arose, prompting

arguments among criminologists over the necessary modifications to effectively understand female criminal behaviour.

Pollak (1950), in *The Criminality of Women*, argued that female criminality had been severely underrated and that women were, in fact, more prone to deceit and crime than men. In her controversial book *Sisters in Crime* (1975), Adler attempted to explain how female crime both increased and transformed during the 1960s and 1970s. Adler (1975) identified what she called a “new breed of female criminal”, characterized by growing aggressiveness, violence, and a deviation from traditional femininity, adopting instead a more “masculine” style of offending. Central to her thesis was the notion that women’s liberation and expanding social freedom led to higher rates of female criminality. The women’s movement, therefore, drew substantial public and academic attention to changing perceptions of female offenders. However, subsequent research offered little empirical support for the “new female criminal” theory, suggesting it was more ideological than factual (Smart, 1976). More recently, the perception of female offenders has shifted toward recognizing them as active participants in criminal behaviour, a perspective gaining traction in both media and policy circles, with renewed attention to the works of Pollak and Adler (Dowey & Silvestri, 2008).

In the last 25 years, there have been many significant advancements in the study of female criminal behaviour. Noteworthy ethnographic research has emerged, focusing on women and girls involved in gangs, prostitution, and incarceration (Campbell, 1984; Miller, 2001; Carlen, 1985; Miller, 1986). Researchers are investigating the correlation between sexual abuse and female involvement in criminal activities (Chesney–Lind, 1989; Chesney–Lind & Sheldon, 1998; Gilfus, 1992; Wisdom, 1995; Belknap, 1996). There is a distinction being made between the white-collar crimes committed by women and those committed by men (Daly, 1989).

The life paths leading to criminal behaviour vary between males and females. Pollack (1995) establishes a correlation between women’s victimization and their engagement in criminal behaviour. She highlights that women who murder their spouses have often endured prolonged and systematic physical abuse, resulting in

convictions and sentences, even in cases where the act was committed in self-defence immediately following an attack by the husband. Wetzell (2017) presents criminological frameworks that provide diverse causes for crime, encompassing moral deficits, biological abnormalities, and environmental influences.

In the purview of the Criminal Justice System and criminality in general, male criminality seems to be dominant in comparison with female criminality. With the increase in the rate of female incarceration since the 1980s, interested researchers are keen to study the sociocultural construct of women in prison, where the focus is not only on knowing the causes of incarceration but on delving deeper into the root causes of incarceration (Broke & Brekken, 2019).

Historically, women have served as the cornerstone of the household and society. She gives birth to life, tends to it, protects and enhances it. She is essential to the growth of the country in her capacity as a mother. In the wake of industrialization, urbanization, and westernization, drastic changes have occurred in society, where women's participation in social, economic, and political fields has increased to a great extent. However, in today's society, women are more likely to become involved in criminal activity due to factors including disorganized families, strained marriages, high aspirations, stress from unfulfilled expectations, failure to cope, and failure to change (Parveen, 2018). Over the past ten years, the number of women incarcerated has climbed significantly in many nations and all regions. Over one in ten convicts are women in eleven countries (*ibid*).

Recent research has found that women offenders differ from their male counterparts in personal histories and pathways to crime (Belknap, 2001). Female individuals entering the criminal justice system have distinct pathways compared to their male counterparts. This can be attributed, in part, to variations in the routes individuals take to engage in criminal behaviour and the specific patterns of offenses they commit (Bloom, et al., 2004). Theories concerning women's criminality have historically included social, psychological, and biological aspects. Men have been subjected to social and cultural theories, whereas women have been subjected to individual and psychological explanations (Parveen, 2018).



Women's criminality and imprisonment are highly related to poverty. They are more likely to be in jail due to their inability to pay fines or are usually incarcerated due to minor offenses. Usually, they come from socially and economically marginalized groups in society. They are young, have a history of alcohol and substance abuse, have a low level of education, and many are accompanied by children who are dependent on them. Besides, there tends to be a greater stigma attached to women's criminality as compared to men's criminality, with higher chances of women being condemned by their family and community (*ibid*).

The variations among women are crucial when it comes to developing policies and programs that are responsive to the needs and experiences of women (McGee & Baker, 2003). The criminal justice system is influenced by the variations in how women enter the system, their conduct while being supervised or in detention, and the realities of their existence in the community. Substantial research indicates that women's reactions to community supervision, incarceration, therapy, and rehabilitation differ from those of men (Bloom et al., 2004).

Female criminality is often understood and treated in comparison to male criminality (Heidensohn, 1985). When discussing female criminals or prisoners, they are portrayed as exceptional, repulsive, and diabolical individuals who have not only violated the law but have also crossed numerous societal norms and moral boundaries (Smart, 1976). The presence of a female deviant is perceived as causing disgrace not only to her own family but also to the community (Pollak, 1950). Therefore, honor is the fundamental framework through which female misconduct is regarded by the family, community, and the criminal justice system (Naffine, 1987; Chesney-Lind, 1997).

The common perception in a male-dominated society is that women are not born to have deviant behaviour (Heidensohn, 1985). Even if women do commit crimes, their numbers are assumed to be lower compared to male criminals (Pollak, 1950). Contrary to this idea, the global, national, and local female prison population has experienced a significant increase (Walmsley, 2017). There exist multiple levels of disregard and oppression towards women who are incarcerated or involved in

criminal activities, as well as an exaggerated interest and desire to portray them (Chesney-Lind, 1997). Society simultaneously demonstrates a contradictory interest with female criminals, frequently sensationalizing their activities in media and public discourse while neglecting the underlying disparities that influence their paths toward criminality (Naffine, 1987; Jewkes, 2015).

Discussions around female criminals primarily focus on the rising participation of women in criminal activities, while giving little consideration to acts of violence (Adler, 1975; Smart, 1976). Theories have tried to explain why women are less likely than men to commit violent crimes (Pollak, 1950). In the early stages, the biological theories mostly focused on the physical disparities between males and females, often citing impulsivity and the superior muscular strength of males (Rafter, 2008). However, cultural and socialization theories have been more prevalent in the literature on gender differences in violence. Central to these theories is the concept of differential socialization between men and women, wherein men's violent behaviour is tolerated, but women are condemned and instructed to suppress any aggressive impulse (Kruttschnitt 2013; Macoby 2000; Steffensmeier & Allan 1996). In reaction, liberation theory says that women have taken on more masculine behaviours and are more likely to be violent because of changes in how they were socialized (Bottos 2007). None of these theories specifically tackled the problem of gender inequality in rates of violent crime, nor do they consider the societal and cultural factors that contribute to female involvement in criminal activities. Mainstream criminological study in India frequently encounters a theoretical impasse, as no single theory can provide a comprehensive explanation for every dimension of a social phenomenon (Akers & Sellers, 2013).

Using contemporary methods to examine women's criminal behaviour, it is necessary to move beyond conventional frameworks and classifications. Macro-level factors, such as the economy, provide a larger framework that influences how women, their crimes, and their lives in jail are understood. However, there are also hidden forces present in culture and the family structure. Crimes and violations result in the relocation of women, particularly those who are poor and from lower castes, from their confined existence within the patriarchal household to the controlled and

institutionalized environment of the jail, which is under the authority of the State (Cherukuri, 2008).

The incarceration of women is intricately linked to poverty, serving as both a motivating factor for their offenses and a barrier to accessing legal representation or meeting financial obligations such as fines or bail. Female inmates frequently serve as the major or only caregivers, and their imprisonment can have a profound impact on their family, especially on young children (Penal Reform International, 2008). Every step of a woman's experience with the criminal justice system can be influenced by bias. For instance, women who report domestic abuse may be disregarded or mistreated further by the police; pre-trial detention conditions for women are frequently worse than those of sentenced prisoners Pre-Trial Detention of Women (Townhead, 2007); and women may be subjected to harsher sentences due to the belief that only 'bad' women commit crimes. Women may also be at a disadvantage due to their sexual orientation, nationality, or ethnicity.

North East Network (2009), in its work 'A life behind bars: An exploratory study of female prisoners in central jails of Assam', asserts that certain types of offenses or offenders may not be granted bail. Usually, this is only done for major crimes. But most women are accused of minor, nonviolent crimes that shouldn't need to be detained before their trials. In addition, numerous women may lack the financial means necessary to get bail. Confronted with the unavoidable reality of being detained, women experience various physical and mental health issues due to mistreatment both before and after their trial and punishment. There is a common occurrence of reports indicating that women who are incarcerated are susceptible to various forms of mistreatment, specifically sexual abuse. This treatment is a violation of the international prohibition against torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment. When female inmates are under the control of prison guards and have no say over what happens, abuse can happen, and they are powerless (North East Network, 2009).

Thus, the crime committed by women and the condition of women who committed the crime are different from those of male prisoners. Christian Science Monitor

article begins, “When men are arrested, they ask for a lawyer. When women are arrested, they ask for their children.” (Gauch, 1989). Especially, the situation of women inmates is challenging when accompanied by their children or when they are the sole providers of their children.

### **1.3 Crime and Punishment**

Crime is a serious anti-social action to which the State reacts consciously and this reaction is begged by punishment (Sutherland & Cressey, 1978). Shankardass (2000) examines that punishment has been viewed as an accepted form of social life. Punishment serves as the connection between the establishment of rules and the violation of those rules. The relationship between the punisher and the punished is inherently unequal. Therefore, all theories on punishment revolve around power and the entitlements and assertions to use that authority (Philip, 1987, 191).

Scott and Flynn (2014) have highlighted the link between crime and punishment. The existence of punishment is said to be justified by the problems of crime, and the amount of the crime committed is the most important component in deciding the severity of punishment. However, several of the most significant and renowned criminologists, including Emile Durkheim, Georg Rusche, and Michel Foucault, have contested this widely held assumption. They believe that crime is generally insignificant and that social, cultural, economic, and political variables play a considerable role in determining the types and extent of punishment in society. (2014, p 12).

Michel Foucault, in his classical work *Discipline and Punish, The Birth of Prisons* (1975), talks about the different ways people were tortured in the past and how the way people think about justice has changed over time. It provides an elaborate account of how the traditional society regards a human body that deviates from the established norms of that community. Body deformation, severe sanctions, and public exhibition of deformed bodies were commonly employed as punishment measures in many communities. These were especially followed to punish people who broke the rules and to let other people know what would happen if they did the same (Foucault, 1977).

The philosophy of punishment has experienced an important shift, moving away from harsh and disfiguring consequences. The emphasis now lies on addressing the crime itself rather than punishing the individual responsible. The objective is to address the criminal activity that has been a source of concern for society and to rehabilitate individuals with disturbed mental states. The shift originated from the social reformations that emerged during the progressive and open-minded Renaissance period and then spread worldwide through colonial expansion. People in prison and on death row were used as cheap or free labour to do dangerous jobs that regular people would not do. During colonial rule, jails and other forms of imprisonment were also used as a way to discipline people in line, but they were not used as a form of torture (Foucault, 1977; Ignatieff, 1978).

Hence, the punitive justice system shifts towards restorative justice. The purpose of imprisonment undoubtedly is the retribution or reformation of a person. Restorative justice seeks to raise awareness among offenders of the impact of their crimes on victims through ‘sentences’ served within the community. Offenders may be ordered to participate in community service projects or mediated reconciliation meetings, or ‘conferences’ with victims and their families. Rather than being antagonized by society, they need to be educated on the costs of crime in a meaningful way that helps them to reintegrate into the mainstream social relationships (Zehr, 2002; Braithwaite, 1989).

## **1.1 Incarcerated Women**

Incarceration is a complex reality because perceptions from the outside might sometimes be manipulated or biased. The experiences of incarcerated women all over the world differ from country to country, but at some point, the prison system has failed to cope with their needs. Studies on crime, punishment, and imprisonment are often considered a male phenomenon. For a long time, any sort of deviance committed by a female has been condemned by society at large (Heidensohn, 1985; Carlen, 1983). Women are considered to be the vulnerable section of society; the gender differences in male and female criminality, and the question of women being granted their rights within the prison have been questionable topics. Research on

prison life was susceptible to misinterpretation for a very long time, and studies on female criminality were very few (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2013).

In recent years, the issue of incarcerated women has reaped increasing attention as societies tend to challenge the complex intersection of justice, gender, and social inequalities. While the rate of male incarceration overshadows the issue of imprisoned women, the rate of increase in the number of incarcerated women is alarming to a great extent. According to the latest official statistics, there are 22,918 women prisoners in India. In total, 78 per cent are undertrials, of whom most belong to the oppressed or backward caste or a tribal community. Although women constitute only 4.1% of the total prison population in India (NCRB, 2022), their rate of incarceration has consistently increased in recent years (2016–2021), and a thorough investigation of their experiences inside the prison is a challenge to attribute.

Tripathi (2022) examines that only negligible information exists regarding the actual experiences of female inmates, both in and out of prison. Women's imprisonment has received little attention in public policies, practices, and scholarly works on prisons. Seen as 'correctional afterthoughts' (Ross and Fabiano, 1986), women's incarceration experience and deviance have mostly been hidden, disregarded, or misunderstood (Pollack, 2012).

The marginalization of female prisoners is apparent through the routine procedures inside the prison system and in relation to government policies. This was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the fundamental constitutional rights to life and health were significantly undermined for the incarcerated population. The prolonged period of lockdown exposes the disparities in access to physical space and resources, heightened surveillance, and the resulting social isolation, all of which contribute to the vulnerability of women (Penal Reform International, 2021). The lockdown further exacerbated the challenges in accessing justice processes during the epidemic, including limited access to legal representation, interviews with family members, temporary release from custody, and physical attendance at court proceedings (National Human Rights Commission, NHRC, 2021).

Bandyopadhyay and Mehta (2022) highlight how the terms “women offender” and “women prisoner” are simultaneously recognized and excluded. Devlin’s (1998) book “Invisible Women” has significantly impacted the continuous struggle to change the conversation from denying the existence of incarcerated women to recognizing and resolving their issues. Recently, there has been a lot of focus on the unequal treatment of women in the context of incarceration, especially as compared to men. Kemshall (2004) argues that there are separate paths leading to men’s and women’s incarceration. Women are incarcerated as a result of structural obstacles such as poverty, gender inequality, violent relationships, and other issues. Women who have committed crimes have faced a variety of unfavourable treatment, including being disregarded, stigmatized, marginalized, treated like medical problems, and labelled as pathological (Allen 1987; Eaton, 1986).

Academics in India have continuously ignored the perspectives of women who are incarcerated and the gendered aspects of societal governance. Medlicott (2007) asserts that women face more severe punishment than men, even before being imprisoned, despite their engagement in less serious criminal behaviour. Carlen (1983, p. 18) argues that the evaluation of female criminals is based more on their compliance with cultural norms and gender roles, such as marriage and motherhood, than on the severity of their crimes.

Considering the ignorance of incarcerated women, the increasing rate of incarceration, and the need to have a better understanding of their life in imprisonment, it is important to highlight that the section of the edited book by Bandyopadhyay and Mehta (2022) titled “Confronting Institutional Spaces” features firsthand accounts from women incarcerated, delving into the intimate details of their everyday lives and the significance they place on their individual experiences. This compilation of writings about female convicts is extremely significant. As Comack (1999, p. 296) stated, “the voices of women behind bars have for too long been silenced; it is time we begin to listen to what they have to say.”

The stigmatization endured by incarcerated and released women incurs significant consequences. The stigma (Goffman, 1963) associated with the crimes they

committed becomes what (Becker, 1963) referred to as one's master status. For many women offenders, it is a challenging and often impossible effort to try to distance themselves from their deviant reputation (Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001). According to Braithwaite (1989), the act of stigmatizing and humiliating individuals hinders their ability to reintegrate into society and contributes to the continuation of criminal activity. Due to the categorization by society and the internal process of self-blame, it seems that female criminals frequently undergo a process of degradation (Garfinkel, 1956).

Approximately 60% to 80% of imprisoned women are mothers (Bloom & Steinhart, 1993; Henriques, 1996). Before their incarceration, the majority of female offenders were residing with their children and serving as the primary source of financial support for their families (Baunach, 1985; Chesney-Lind, 1997; Datesman & Cales, 1983; Greenfeld & Minor-Harper, 1991; Henriques, 1982, 1996). (Rasche, 2000) observed that the most severe part of imprisonment is likely the separation of a mother from her children. Women in prison have an unparalleled sensation of loneliness. Sykes (2007) argued that the frustration, tension, and guilt of being separated from and unable to care for their children are added to the suffering of women who are imprisoned.

Divorce, which further contributes to the isolation experienced during separation, is a frequent event among incarcerated women (Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001). (Rafter, 1985) observed that incarcerated women lack the support of a spouse or partner to ensure a stable home environment for their children, unlike incarcerated men. As a result, incarcerated mothers have heightened concern regarding the quality of care their children are receiving. (Stanton, 1980) discovered that a significant number of female inmates report being divorced by their spouses or abandoned by males they cohabitated with before their incarceration. In general, female prisoners, due to their main function as parents, do not receive significant assistance with child care from the fathers of their children.

Imprisonment poses tremendous challenges for the majority of women, and the difficulties they face after being released are equally significant. The internalization



of self-shame, which can arise from feelings of embarrassment or remorse, along with the stigmatizing social shame imposed by the community, often results in punishment that exceeds the actual time served by women offenders. This can also potentially lead to their continued engagement in deviant behaviour (Dodge, Pogrebin, 2001).

## **1.2 Women in Prison**

Since time immemorial, imprisonment has been the expected mode of dealing with offenders. The universally held view of imprisonment suggests that incarceration is justifiable only if it guarantees the protection of society against crime. India also shares this view, which could be achieved only if the process of incarceration prepares and motivates the offenders to be law-abiding and self-supporting after they are released from prison. It further suggests that prison experiences should not aggravate the sufferings already inherent in the offenders whose liberty and self-determination are often deprived within the prison walls. Hence, imprisonment should be catered in such a way that a few offenders who endangered public safety should be segregated meaningfully and ensure that they come out of prison as better people than they were at the time of their incarceration. (The Mizoram Gazette, 2017)

Pogrebin and Dodge (2001) argued that female inmates commonly assert that adapting to the institutional environment is more challenging compared to their male counterparts due to many factors. Women generally prioritize privacy to a greater extent than males (Pollock-Byrne, 1992), and, as a result, they may have increased challenges in adapting to living in a community and the humiliating process of body searches (Ward & Kassebaum, 1965). In addition, women frequently experience anxiety at the possibility of being abandoned by their family and partners, and they are preoccupied with the potential loneliness they might encounter after being out of prison (Dobash et al., 1986).

The majority of women in prison are incarcerated for nonviolent drug or property offenses, with drug offenses being the largest source of growth for women's prison and jail population. Of course, it is precisely the war on drugs that is responsible for

the astounding increase in the number of women who are confined. Mauer et al. (1999) argue that “the set of law enforcement and sentencing policies and practices that have been enshrined under this approach have had a dramatic and disproportionate impact on women.”

### **1.2.1 Global Scenario of Women in Prison**

According to Fair & Walmsley (2024), the COVID-19 epidemic has had an impact on prison population numbers due to various factors. Prisoner populations in several nations had a decline during the second quarter of 2020, and in certain countries, the numbers continue to be lower than they were at the start of the year. This report indicates that there are around 10.77 million individuals currently incarcerated worldwide, either as individuals awaiting trial or as those who have already been convicted and sentenced. The total number of prisoners is greater than 10.77 million and potentially beyond 11.5 million, including countries where records are not available. The United States (629 inmates per 100,000 people) has the highest prison population rate (629 per 100,000 people), followed by Rwanda (580), Turkmenistan (576), El Salvador (564), Cuba (510), and Palau (478) (World Prison Population List, 2024).

The number of prisoners around the world has grown slightly more slowly (24%) than the population as a whole (28%), since around the year 2000. Significant disparities exist throughout continents, as well as within continents, regarding the fluctuations in the total number of prisoners. The jail population in Oceania has experienced a significant (82%) increase, while in the Americas it has grown by (43%), in Asia by (38%), and in Africa by (32%). In contrast, the prison population in Europe has declined by 27%. The European data indicate significant declines in jail populations in Russia (56%) as well as in central and eastern Europe (49%). However, the prison population in Europe, excluding Russia, has experienced a modest growth of 5%. Significant increases have been documented in South America (200%) and Southeast Asia (116%) (*ibid*).

According to the World Female Imprisonment List 2017, over 714,000 women and girls are imprisoned around the world, accounting for seven per cent of the global

prison population. Since 2000, the female prison population has grown at a higher rate than the male prison population, with the number of women and girls in jail increasing by more than 50 per cent while the male population has grown by roughly 20 per cent (World Female Imprisonment List, 2017).

An analysis of arrest statistics in the United States from 1980 to 2011 reveals that women are responsible for twice as many property crimes compared to violent offenses. Property offenses account for around 70 per cent of the overall crime rate among incarcerated women. In England, Wales, and Italy, drug-related offenses are the prevailing criminal activities; the percentage of women incarcerated due to drug offenses is higher than compared of incarcerated men. Statistically, women exhibit a higher tendency to engage in stealing, accounting for 38% of crimes perpetrated by women compared to 23 per cent by men. Similarly, women are more likely to commit fraud, with 13 per cent of crimes attributed to women and six per cent to men. On the other hand, violence against individuals and robberies are less common among incarcerated women as compared to men (Campaniello, 2019).

### **1.2.2 Indian Scenario of Women in Prison**

There has been a rise in crime rates in India from 241.2 in 2019 and 314.3 in 2020. (NCRB Prison Statistics, 2020). The capacity of Women's Jails has increased by 34.6 per cent during 2014-2019 (status as of 31st December of each year); however, the actual number of women inmates has increased by 21.7 per cent in the same period. The capacity of women Inmates in Other Jails (except Women Jails) has increased by 4.0 per cent during 2014-2019. During the same time period, the number of women in these jails increased by 10.77 percent (NCRB, Prison Statistics, 2020).

At the national level, there were a total of 23,772 female inmates in different prisons. Out of this number, only 17.8 per cent (4,240) of the female inmates were housed at Women's Jail as of December 31, 2022. Approximately 82.2 per cent of the total female convicts, amounting to 19,532 individuals, were housed in jails of a different nature (NCRB, Prison Statistics, 2022).

The national prison count has risen from 1,319 in 2021 to 1,330 in 2022, reflecting a 0.8 per cent increase. Only 16 States/UTs had Women's Jails (34 Women's Jails) with

a total capacity of 7,080 in India. These States/UTs (Number of Jails) (Capacity) are Rajasthan (7) (998), Tamil Nadu (5) (2018), Kerala (3) (232), Andhra Pradesh (2) (280), Bihar (2) (202), Gujarat (2) (410), Punjab (2) (608), Uttar Pradesh (2) (540), Delhi (2) (680), Karnataka (1) (100), Maharashtra (1) (262), Mizoram (1) (96), Odisha (1) (55), Telangana (1) (260), Tripura (1) (25), and West Bengal (1) (314) and the rest of the 20 States/UTs have no separate Women in Jail as on 31st December, 2022 (*ibid*).

The comparison of occupancy rates of female detainees in jails, excluding Women's Jails, reveals that Uttarakhand has reported the highest occupancy rate at 166.5 per cent. As of December 31, 2022, there were a total of 4,258 inmates in women's jails around the country. Of them, 4,240 were females and 18 were transgender individuals. The entire capacity of these jails is 7,080 inmates, which includes 7,071 females and 9 transgender individuals. Delhi had the largest number of inmates, with 675 individuals held in its jails. Tamil Nadu followed closely with 610 inmates, while Rajasthan and Punjab had 476 and 433 inmates, respectively (*Ibid*).

In India, the number of crimes committed by females increased from 5.4 per cent in 2001 to 6.2 per cent in 2011. The percentage of females involved in horrific crimes such as murder has climbed from 4.6 per cent in 2001 to 6.3 per cent in 2011. Additionally, the rate of females attempting to commit murder has risen from 2.6 per cent to 4.2 per cent over a decade (Government of India, 2011).

Government of India (2011) reported that among the category of crimes committed by women, the highest number of crimes committed is petty crimes, which consist of 33 per cent classified as other IPC crimes. This is followed by household crimes, accounting for 21 per cent, which are committed in collaboration with men and other relatives. The third highest category, at 19 per cent, involves cases of physical assault. Taking an active part in riots accounts for 10 per cent, while theft represents four per cent of the reported crimes. Crimes such as dowry killings, cheating, murder, and attempted murder account for two per cent of the total. Lastly, the occurrence of crimes such as kidnapping, abduction, and molestation is less than one per cent.

With the rise in female inmate rates and the total crime rates in general, the situation of prisons in India needs much recognition, as female sections in the Indian prisons are usually spaces for rape, torture, and violation of any rights that women have. In some states in India, the women offenders are not ensured any proper hygiene, no proper sanitation, or reproductive hygiene (National Crime Records Bureau [NCRB], 2020; National Human Rights Commission (NHRC, 2018). The prison walls have stripped them of their rights as human beings, and not only that, being within the prison has taken away their family ties and snatched away the roles they hold in society (Banerjee, 2019). Thus, imprisonment for numerous women transcends mere physical confinement; it evolves into a phenomenon of social death, whereby their identities as mothers, daughters, and citizens are systematically damaged (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2014).

### **1.2.3 Scenario in North-East India**

The reason why women prisoners are locked up and how they are treated depends on two things. Firstly, their legal classification as either a convicted criminal or as an individual awaiting trial, such as in the instance of being remanded or under-trial; and secondly, their gender identity as a woman. This is made even worse by the fact that many female prisoners have been there because they committed minor, nonviolent crimes. After all, they helped commit more serious crimes because they are poor and from disadvantaged groups in society. They frequently have a history marked by both physical and emotional abuse, which contributes to a greater prevalence of mental health issues (North East Network, 2009).

The North-East India region consists of eight states, namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura, usually referred to as the “Seven Sisters,” together with the state of Sikkim, regarded as the ‘brother’ state. The North East States (Number of Jail), (Number of inmates) are Arunachal Pradesh (2) (335), Assam (31) (11592), Manipur (5) (855), Meghalaya (5) (1137), Mizoram (10) (1580), Nagaland (12) (469), Tripura (14) (1194), and Sikkim (2) (387). Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Sikkim are among the 10 States in India which did not have a sub-jail. Only Assam State among the eight

North-East States has a separate Open Jail. Among the 16 separate Women's jails in India, only Mizoram and Tripura have a separate Central Women's Jail; Mizoram, which was inaugurated on 19<sup>th</sup> July, 2019, with a capacity of 96 inmates, and in Tripura, there is a Female Jail within their Central Jail known as Kendriya Sansodhanagar, which can house only 25 female inmates. Considering the National data, Mizoram (168.8%) has reported the highest overcrowding in Women's jails, followed by Tripura (156.0%) (NCRB, Prison Statistics, 2022).

#### **1.2.4 Mizoram Scenario**

In Mizo society, studies on criminology are rather few, and studies on crimes committed by women are relatively rare compared to studies on male offenders. Considering the statistics from the Prison Department, it is evident that crimes committed by females have increased, but the concern for tackling the issue still seems to be taking a backseat. Women offenders are often victimized, especially in a closed-knit society like the Mizo society. As such, studying in this area is crucial to reform and understand the situation of incarcerated women and their overall impact. The subject of female criminality was and still is largely neglected. Once a person has been labelled as a criminal, the person is rarely ever allowed to forget the status. (Bhosle, 2009). In Mizoram, there are 8 District Jails, one Central Jail, and a separate Central Women's Jail located in Aizawl. In total, there are 951 inmates out of 1607 capacity. Among the total inmates, 73, which is only 7.6 percent (51- Under Trial Period, 18- Convict), are female prisoners (Prison Statistics, Mizoram, 2019).

Central Women's Jail, located 12kms distance from Aizawl Court, D.C. Complex, between Tanhril and Sakawrtuichhun (now the city area), was inaugurated on 19th July 2019. It was the only separate Central Women's Jail in North East India. This separate women's jail was headed by the same Superintendent as the Central Jail, but was exclusively administered by female staff. Children under 6 years and below could be accommodated by their mothers within the jail (Prison Department (Home), Government of Mizoram).

There is a drastic increase in the number of female inmates in Mizoram. According to the (Prison Statistics Mizoram, 2022) daily report for December 2021, there is a total

of 71 female inmates, while the number of female inmates has increased to a total of 107 as of February 2022. The national level occupancy rate of women jails was 60.1%, with Mizoram reporting the highest overcrowding rate of 168.8 per cent in women jails (NCRB, Prison Statistics, 2022). As such, the cause for the level of increase in female inmates needs a systematic investigation.

### Statistics of female inmates and their level of increase

**Table 1.1: Mizoram Female Prisoners Population Report from January 2022 to April 2023**

| TIME PERIOD | UTP | LIFER | CONVICT<br>PI | CONVICT<br>SI | CHILDR<br>N | TOTAL | CAPACIT<br>V | EXCEEDI<br>NC | SPACE<br>AVAILAB | CAPACIT<br>V |
|-------------|-----|-------|---------------|---------------|-------------|-------|--------------|---------------|------------------|--------------|
| Jan, 2022   | 43  | 1     | 10            | 2             | 2           | 58    | 98           | No            | 40               | Nil          |
| Feb,2022    | 58  | 1     | 14            | 3             | 2           | 78    | 96           | No            | 18               | Nil          |
| March,22    | 86  | 1     | 13            | 3             | 4           | 107   | 96           | Yes           | Nil              | 11           |
| April,2022  | 88  | 1     | 16            | 4             | 4           | 113   | 96           | Yes           | Nil              | 17           |
| May,2022    | 100 | 1     | 18            | 7             | 10          | 136   | 96           | Yes           | Nil              | 40           |
| June, 2022  | 105 | 1     | 23            | 4             | 9           | 142   | 96           | Yes           | Nil              | 46           |
| July, 2022  | 100 | 1     | 27            | 6             | 8           | 142   | 96           | Yes           | Nil              | 46           |
| Aug,2022    | 96  | 1     | 35            | 11            | 8           | 151   | 96           | Yes           | Nil              | 55           |
| Sept, 2022  | 110 | 1     | 40            | 6             | 6           | 163   | 96           | Yes           | Nil              | 67           |
| Oct, 2022   | 132 | 1     | 28            | 9             | 7           | 177   | 96           | Yes           | Nil              | 81           |
| Nov, 2022   | 130 | 1     | 32            | 10            | 7           | 180   | 96           | Yes           | Nil              | 84           |
| Dec, 2022   | 127 | 1     | 31            | 10            | 7           | 176   | 96           | Yes           | Nil              | 80           |
| Jan, 2023   | 157 | 1     | 20            | 11            | 14          | 203   | 96           | Yes           | Nil              | 107          |
| Feb, 2023   | 165 | 1     | 20            | 12            | 17          | 215   | 96           | Yes           | Nil              | 119          |
| March, 23   | 216 | 1     | 14            | 7             | 19          | 247   | 96           | Yes           | Nil              | 161          |
| April, 23   | 228 | 1     | 10            | 6             | 23          | 268   | 96           | Yes           | Nil              | 172          |

Source: Prisons Department (Home), Govt. Of Mizoram.

UTP- Under Trial Prisoner.

LIFER- Person convicted to life imprisonment.

CONVICT RI- Convict Rigorous Imprisonment.

CONVICT SI- Convict Simple Imprisonment.

From the above Table:1, it is shown that the number of inmate capacities, which is 96, has exceeded since March 2022 to date, and the number of excess capacities is increasing every month. It is clearly shown that under-trial inmates are increasing at an alarming rate, i.e., from 43 in January 2022 to 228 in April 2023. The total number of female inmates in January 2022 was 58; within a year and 4 months, it has increased to 268, where the inmate capacity is exceeded by 172 inmates.

| Ward Number  | Capacity   | No. of prisoners |
|--------------|------------|------------------|
| I Ward - A   | 16         | 29               |
| I Ward- B    | 16         | 33               |
| UTP I Ward   | 16         | 31               |
| UTP II Ward  | 16         | 31               |
| UTP III Ward | 16         | 30               |
| UTP IV Ward  | 16         | 31               |
| UTP V Ward   | 16         | 30               |
| UTP VI Ward  | 16         | 31               |
| UTP VII Ward | 16         | 21               |
| Cell- A      | 4          | -                |
| Cell- B      | 4          | -                |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>152</b> | <b>267</b>       |

**Table 1.2: Number of female inmates dated 8<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

Source: Daily Population Report, Central Women's Jail, Govt. of Mizoram, dated 8<sup>th</sup> May, 2023 (Field).

From the above Table1.2, it is shown that the total capacity in the present wards available is 152. However, it is shown that the total number of present inmates is 267 in which exceeds the capacity by 115. Each ward's capacity is 16, which is exceeded by a maximum of 17 inmates and a minimum of 5 inmates. Even the convicts could not be kept in a separate room since the majority of them are under-trials, and they are all mixed up.



## **1.5 Overview and Statement of the Problem**

Crime and deviance are prominent and extensively discussed matters in many societies, involving behaviours, individuals, and places. Postmodern studies emphasize that the perception of crime is subjective and can differ across different societies according to their respective cultural norms and legal systems. Crime is a term that is shaped by changes in cultural values and attitudes, making it a socially created and subjective notion. The paradigmatic positions discussed in this chapter highlight the intricate interaction of cultural, biological, and environmental factors in shaping criminal conduct, suggesting that improving social circumstances could help reform criminals and deter crime.

Historical analyses of female criminality frequently ascribed women's criminal conduct to their sexuality or psychiatric problems, while neglecting to investigate the influence of economic, sociological, and political variables. Women were frequently subjected to strict categorization according to their offenses, with violent offenders being characterized as 'masculine' and non-violent offenders being perceived as manipulative or promiscuous. Before the release of Freda Adler's "Sisters in Crime" and Rita Simon's "Women and Crime" in 1975, early criminological ideas had a bias towards males and mainly neglected the study of female criminality. However, these two influential works redirected attention towards understanding female criminal behaviour.

Considerable progress has been achieved in the investigation of female criminal behaviour in the last 25 years. Ethnographic research has delved into women's participation in gangs, prostitution, and imprisonment, while studies have explored the connection between sexual abuse and criminal conduct. The disparities in the paths to criminal behaviour for males and females have been emphasized, revealing a connection between women's victimization and their engagement in illegal activity. The rise in female imprisonment rates since the 1980s has prompted a more thorough investigation into the underlying factors contributing to women's criminal conduct.

The inclusion of women in the system, their behaviour while under supervision or detention, and their encounters in the community vary greatly from those of men,

thereby requiring customized methods for community monitoring, imprisonment, therapy, and rehabilitation. Female criminality is often viewed in comparison to male criminality, with female offenders being portrayed as exceptionally deviant and dishonourable. Despite the prevailing conventional notion that women are less inclined to engage in criminal activities, the female jail population has experienced a substantial rise on a global scale.

The majority of women in prison are incarcerated for nonviolent drug or property offenses, with drug offenses being the primary cause of the increase in the female prison population. The “war on drugs” has significantly and disproportionately impacted women, leading to a dramatic rise in their incarceration rates, and the causal trajectories are yet to be explored.

Female criminal conduct is typically less prone to violence in comparison to male criminal behaviour, and this distinction is commonly explained by hypotheses that highlight biological, cultural, and socialization disparities. Nevertheless, these ideas are inadequate in providing a comprehensive explanation for the disparities in violent crime rates across genders, as well as neglecting the sociocultural elements that contribute to female criminal behaviour. Research emphasizes that criminal activities frequently compel women, particularly those from marginalized families, to enter the regulated confines of correctional facilities, thus intensifying their difficulties.

Crime is a serious anti-social action to which the State responds with punishment, a concept deeply rooted in social life and power dynamics. Some scholars emphasize the inherent inequality between the punisher and the punished, while others explore the link between crime and punishment, arguing that the severity of punishment is commensurate with the severity of crime. Similarly, renowned sociologists and criminologists went on to argue that social, cultural, economic, and political factors play a significant role in shaping punishment.

As discussed, Michel Foucault (1975) describes the evolution of punishment from brutal physical torture to more rehabilitative approaches, reflecting changes in societal views on justice. Traditional societies often employed severe physical sanctions and public displays of punishment to deter rule-breaking. Over time,

influenced by social reforms from the Renaissance and colonial expansion, the focus shifted towards addressing the crime itself and rehabilitating offenders rather than inflicting harsh punishments.

The incarceration of women is a complex and often neglected issue with significant variations in experiences and treatment across different countries. Historically, studies on crime and imprisonment have focused mainly on men, overlooking the unique challenges faced by female prisoners. Women in prison are often marginalized, and their specific needs are inadequately addressed by the prison system. Societal condemnation of female deviance remains prevalent, and research on female criminality has been limited.

Recently, attention to incarcerated women has increased, highlighting the intersections of justice, gender, and social inequalities. Although women constitute a small percentage of the total prison population, their incarceration rates are rising alarmingly, especially among marginalized communities. Research indicates a lack of information on the actual experiences of female inmates, who often face more severe punishment than men for similar or lesser offenses. Their incarceration is influenced by structural obstacles like poverty, gender inequality, and abusive relationships. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these challenges, limiting access to justice and increasing social isolation and vulnerability.

Adapting to prison life is particularly challenging for female inmates due to their higher need for privacy and the distress of body searches. They also face anxiety about potential abandonment by family and partners and loneliness after release. There are lots of such issues that require exploration. Overall, addressing the unique needs and experiences of incarcerated women is crucial for promoting gender equality and improving the effectiveness of the criminal justice system.

The present study was accordingly conceived to examine women prisoners in Mizoram, one of the States in North-East India. It will highlight the experiences of women prisoners inside the jail, focusing on the reasons why they are in prison, their family background, the circumstances for committing a crime, and the overall treatment they received inside the prison setting. The rehabilitation process they

received, which will promote their re-entry into society, will also be a major concern of this study.

Against the said backdrop, some questions evolved at various stages of the initial work, which led to the problematization of this study:

1. What are the factors (social, economic, cultural) that contribute to women's imprisonment?
2. What is the socio-economic profile of women behind bars?
3. How does imprisonment affect the lives of women prisoners?
4. What are the conditions of the families of women prisoners?
5. How effective are the institutional facilities available for women offenders in incarceration?
6. How do the theories of penology contextualise the women offenders in incarceration?

The next chapter attempts to present a needful review of the literature.

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## **CHAPTER- II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

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#### **2.4. RESEARCH GAP AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

## **CHAPTER- II**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **2.0. Introduction**

This chapter primarily deals with secondary sources, which involve reviewing existing literature so as to find the research gap and decide the rationale of the study. The subject matter is categorized into three primary heads: Theoretical literature, Methodology in studies, and Thematic domains. Eight perspectives are covered under the theoretical perspectives, while nine approaches employed by researchers in the subject area are included under the methodological perspectives. The title of the research and the study objectives served as the basis for further division of the Thematic domain into several sub-themes.

#### **2.1 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES**

The theoretical perspective examines relevant theories that contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the topic being studied. It also provides a rationale for the planned study. The study examines Erving Goffman's Total Institution, Agnew's General Strain Theory, Merton's Strain Theory, Foucault's Discipline and Punish, Marginalization, Social Control, Self-Control, with specific emphasis on the Theories of Penology.

##### **2.1.1 Erving Goffman's Total Institution**

Jacobsen and Kristiansen (1971) examine the work of Erving Goffman's 'Total Institution' (Goffman, 1961:17), in which he considered a total institution as a mini-society in itself, where they are totally governed by a person's authority, as it is cut off from the rest of society. To him, a total institution is a 'closed social system' that is walled off from the rest of society by high walls, barbed wire, and barred doors. As soon as they enter a total institution, a new identity is given to them, which is much lower than their previous identity. As their old identity is stripped off, such members of total institutions are often prone to stigmatization. The aim of each of these total institutions, which are prescribed by higher authorities, is to help them overcome their deviant behaviors and inculcate good morals within them. He further examined

how the total institution acts as ‘forcing houses for changing persons’ (Jacobsen & Kristiansen, 1971:88). Firstly, the person is admitted to a total institution, which is normally accompanied by ‘degradation, humiliations, and profanations of the self’. Secondly, the person goes through a ‘rite of passage’ which creates a new identity for the person along with a new social status. After going through both these procedures, the person experiences immense changes in his ‘moral career’ which in turn changes the perception of ‘the self and of the ‘significant other’. Davis (1989), in his analysis of total institutions, focused on three crucial variables precisely: the level of openness or closedness of each institution, the official explicit purpose of the institution, which may intentionally or unintentionally be vague, and the primary methods used by the staff to ensure compliance, as perceived by the inmates.

### **2.1.2 Agnew’s General Strain Theory**

Proctor (2004) examines incarcerated females with Agnew’s General Strain Theory, which suggests that if people are treated badly, they might get mad and engage in delinquency. In this theory, the strain creates pressure for corrective action, with delinquency being one of the possible outcomes. Agnew believes that participation in crime functions as a way of dealing with negative social relations and their consequent psychological states, such as anger and frustration. From this study, it is shown that the inmates with a higher level of strain due to a history of sexual and physical victimization, impoverished socioeconomic backgrounds, or weaker social bonds and support were more likely to have higher levels of criminality. In addition to this, inmates with more friends who engaged in unlawful acts, as well as those who reported spending more hours per week with such friends, were more likely to have higher levels of criminality. This study suggested that strain associated with a particular form of negative social relations- sexual and physical abuse may influence female to engage in serious criminality and to ultimately establish their criminal careers.

### **2.1.3 Merton’s Strain Theory**

Shaila (2018) analyzed that distinguished criminologists create a range of theoretical frameworks. Merton (1949) stated that the social structure and society shared equal

responsibility for the cause of crime by highlighting the strain and theory of criminality based on tension or pressure from the workplace. He claims that when women fail to use institutional mechanisms to achieve “culturally defined goals,” they are more likely to commit crimes.

#### **2.1.4 Foucault’s Discipline and Punish**

Foucault (1977) examines the evolution of the modern prison system, from execution to incarceration and ultimate supervision of criminals. Foucault shows how stringent discipline and morals have shifted punishment’s agency from the physical to the spiritual. Before the eighteenth century, punishment was aimed at the human body. Violent torture, body mutilation, and cruel executions were all part of a public display meant to teach a lesson and dissuade others from committing similar acts. The terrible suffering of wrongdoers was interpreted as confirmation of the sovereign’s total control over all citizens. French reformers began to criticize the prison system in the 18th century, calling for less dramatic and severe sentences. They were more concerned with social control than with the well-being of offenders. When citizens witness extreme brutality, they generally side with the tormented criminal, resulting in riots. The emergence of a new economy and body politics elevated “the art of punishment” to new heights. The major purpose, according to penal reformists, should not be to seek revenge on the perpetrator, but rather to avoid future crime. The state would now focus on reducing the potential consequences of a crime, making punishment less violent on criminals’ bodies, but ensuring a stronger mental effect. The number of jails and criminal correctional facilities has increased as a result of this transition. Instead of being horrifying and dreadful places, prisons, according to Foucault, became sites of correction, reclamation, and soul cure.

#### **2.1.5 Marginalization Theory**

Chesney-Lind, Meda. and Daly, K. (1988) highlighted the marginalization theory, suggesting that a woman’s marginalization (low salary, inadequate job, being in a lower social class, and being victimized by her family) permeates crime. Women who experience victimization become motivated to commit crimes. Fundamentally, the marginality theory is supported by vast amounts of data and facts. Compared to



others, it is more valid and reliable. unable to adequately describe the kind of white collar and corporate criminality committed by upper-class women. Small (2000) also asserts that, according to this theory, unemployment, low pay at work, insufficient assistance payments, and the rise in female-headed homes with many children are the main reasons for female crime.

Merry, Morash (2006), according to this view, the rise in crime committed by women is directly tied to their lack of access to meaningful employment prospects. Despite the fact that there are more women in the workforce than ever before, a large portion of them are still unemployed or only earning the minimum wage. Statistics show that the majority of female criminals are unemployed or concentrated in places where income is poor and work is unrewarding.

#### **2.1.6 Social-Control Theory**

Hirschi (2002) asserts that, according to the Social Control theory, everyone has had criminal urges. The majority of us do not act on these urges, since outside circumstances suppress them and prevent us from doing so. Attachment, commitments, participation, beliefs, and conformity are a few examples of these external influences. These aspects all guarantee that someone is repressing their need to commit a crime. However, a person is more likely to act on their criminal inclinations if these restraints are absent or weak in them.

Lilly, J. R., Cullen, F. T., & Ball, R. A. (2018) found evidence to support this notion when they observed that there were hardly any gender differences in the relationship between a lack of social control and criminality. This implies that female offenders can also be included in the scope of this crime theory.

#### **2.1.7 Self-Control Theory**

Negi, Virender. Negi, Monika. (2017) This theory was originally developed by Hirschi and Gottfredson and is also known as the General Theory of Crime. This theory indicates that it does not believe in the need for gender-specific explanations of criminality and instead tries to explain all crime. According to the notion, men and women who lack self-control commit crimes. They contend that their parents'

inadequate child-rearing techniques when they were young contributed to their lack of self-control. Low self-control individuals are more prone to be impulsive, insensitive, and to act physically more quickly. These characteristics are obvious indicators of criminality. Savage, J., & Wozniak, K. H. (2016) also observed that criminals are usually flexible, which reinforces the notion that they lack self-control.

### **2.1.8 Theories of Penology**

Penology, originating from the Latin term ‘poena’ or ‘punishment’, is a distinct field under criminology that focuses on the philosophy, objectives, and implementation of punishment and rehabilitation. It entails the methodical examination of prison institutions, correctional strategies, and the rehabilitation of criminals within the criminal justice framework. Historically, penology concentrated on the implementation of punishment as a method of retribution and deterrence, ensuring that criminals faced repercussions for transgressing the law. Modern penology has progressed from simply punishment to include rehabilitation, reformation, and social reintegration of criminals (Mohanty, 2012).

Dharm and Shelke (2019) examine the different theories of punishment and analyze their changing trend. They have highlighted that there is no single theory that is sufficient in itself to limit crime, and usually, theories of punishment aim to control the increase in crime rate and to prevent the deterrent effect of criminal activities on society.

### **The Deterrent Theory of Punishment**

Meyer (1969) looks at Cesare Beccaria’s 19th-century punishment theory, which Plato previously proposed. The goal of punishment, according to this theory, is to cause the offender suffering to make them pay for their wrongdoing. As the name indicates, deterrence is the use of punishment to prevent offenders from repeating the crime they committed and also warn other potential offenders of the dreadful consequences of wrongdoing. The extent of punishment inflicted on the criminals will be a message for them never to repeat their actions in the future.

### **The Retributive Theory of Punishment**

The most ancient kind of punishment is based on this principle. Private retribution, such as an eye for an eye, blood for blood, and a tooth for a tooth, reigned at times. At times, the state usually administers such private vengeance in its hands. A person committing criminal activities will be punished straight away without any second thought. This theory is not advocated much by criminologists (*ibid*).

### **The Preventive Theory of Punishment**

Dharm and Shelke (2019) argue that the preventive method of punishment seeks to prevent the criminal from committing the crime either by imprisonment, inflicting the death penalty, or by ending the modes by which they used to commit a crime. With imprisonment, the chances of the offender repeating the crime are limited; sometimes the mode of criminal acts is chopped off, like the hands of robbers and thieves, organs of sexual offenders, etc., to prevent the criminal and deter them from committing the crime. Through this preventive method, the offender is put away from the chances of committing a crime, which results in the safety of society.

### **The Reformatory Theory of Punishment**

According to this theory, the offender is to be cured physically and morally. It aimed to make the offender mentally strong through re-education and discipline to prevent them from the temptation of committing the crime. For this, a healthy imprisonment environment is necessary to transform the criminal (*ibid*).

Theories of deviance, imprisonment, and punishment are discussed in this part in the hopes of providing support for the planned research. Through this lens, victimology is to recognize and affirm the damage inflicted by crime, which may present as trauma, anxiety, loss, stigma, or financial distress. It examines the mechanisms of healing and rehabilitation, both individual and communal, highlighting the significance of support systems, therapy, restitution, and access to justice. Victimology also enhances restorative justice methodologies, which seek to remediate harm by promoting discussion, empathy, and reconciliation among victims, offenders, and the community. It fosters a balanced and empathetic approach

to justice, ensuring that reactions to crime encompass not only punishment but also acknowledgment, rehabilitation, and empowerment for victims (Mohanty, 2012).

#### **2.1.9 Overview of Theories**

The reviewed theories need to be contextualized based on the lived experiences of incarcerated women. Based on the reviewed theories, the causes of their deviant behavior, the effect of confinement within the prison walls, and its overall impact will be analyzed. The theory of punishment will be contextualized to provide an understanding of prison as an institution of rehabilitation for the study population. Hence, the reviewed theories seek to provide an overview of sources explored on the research topic so that the research fits within a larger field of study.

This study focuses on several theories related to the study's objectives among the various criminology theories available. The studies relate such theories, particularly to women's imprisonment. An overview of the theoretical framework connects the proposed theories in connection to each other as well as the area of study. Theories related to criminology focus on issues related to the prison as an institution, the causes of criminal behavior, gender differences, penalties, and the reformation of the perpetrators and the prison system as a whole.

Robert Agnew developed the General Strain Theory in 1992, and it has since become the leading version of strain theory and one of the major theories of crime. Robert K Merton developed the strain theory in 1938, highlighting that societal structures can pressure individuals into committing crimes. When these two theories, i.e., Merton's Strain Theory and Agnew's General Strain Theory, are analyzed together, both highlight the strain (which may be anger, frustration, victims of abuse, or poor socio-economic condition) or societal pressure accumulated within the individuals, which can foster criminal behavior and might force them to engage in criminal activities. Instantly, studies on criminology focus on the cause of deviance, the nature of deviance, and the background of the perpetrators. These theories can be related to the causes of women's imprisonment and the socio-economic background of the women offenders.

Marginalization theory, as often applied to criminology, is also considered for this study. According to this theory, marginalized groups within society (low social class, low wage earners, unemployed, and gender discrimination) are prone to commit crimes. Their deteriorating condition compels them to be perpetrators of criminal activities. The condition of being marginalized and the strain they have to bear in their life might sometimes stimulate them to criminal behavior.

According to the Social Control and Self-Control theory, a lack of social control and self-control can also be a stimulant for criminal behavior. Failure to conform to the norms of society and lack of self-control due to being victims of child abuse can lead people to act violently. The two theories are not gender specific and can be applied in the studies of women's imprisonment.

The above theories analyzed together can shed light on the studies on women's imprisonment, the causes of their crimes committed, their socio-economic background, and the problems they faced that stimulate them to their criminal activity.

Erving Goffman's 'Total Institution' is also taken into consideration to have a better understanding of the prison as an institution for wrongdoers. Goffman's 'Total Institution' analyzed prison as a closed social system where a new identity is given to the inmates, which is much lower than their previous identity outside the prison. As they enter this closed social system, they are often prone to stigmatization. The new identity asserted within the four walls can be related to the experiences of imprisonment undergone by female prisoners. The changes experienced by incarcerated women before and within the prison walls can be highlighted. The changes in the relationship they shared with their children and families when they enter prison can also be analyzed.

After theorizing the causes, socio-economic background, and experiences within the prison, the penalties they received, and the moral reformation they underwent within the prison walls are analyzed. Here, different theories of Penology are dealt with, which include Deterrent, Retributive, Preventive, and Reformatory theories of punishment. The following theories of punishment focus on the changing trend in the

levels of punishment of the perpetrators from the past to the present. The Deterrent theory of punishment, propounded by Cesare Beccaria in the 19th century, aims to punish the offenders for their wrongdoings in the hope that it will also be a warning for others never to repeat the crime. The Retributive theory of punishment is more or less similar to the above theory; it aims to directly punish the offenders for their wrongdoings without any second thought. The Preventive theory, as the name suggests to prevent criminals from repeating the crime by imprisonment, death penalty, or, in some cases, may include chopping the arms, hands, or legs of the offenders to prevent them from repeating the crime. These theories of punishment have somewhat similar goals, especially the first two theories are classical theories that are not much advocated by present criminologists. Later, the theory of punishment drifted apart from the previous theories towards the Reformatory theory, which aims to cure the offenders physically and mentally to promote re-entry into society. The final stage of these prominent theories of punishment is highly advocated by criminologists at large.

Foucault's 'Discipline and Punish' highlighted the changing pattern of punishment through historical anecdotes. Punishment of criminals in the past was harsh, and the ultimate punishment was given to the offenders according to their wrongdoing. During the earlier times, punishment was seen as a public display; later, it subsided to less severe punishment, with the growth of the economy and emergence of intellectuals, punishment of the wrongdoer attained new heights. Instead of inflicting physical pain and torture, the mode of punishment shifted towards reformation, changing from revenge to avoiding future criminal acts.

## **2.2 METHODOLOGICAL REVIEWS**

The methods used in research provide a framework for understanding the study population. For this research, methods such as ethnography, in-depth case studies, observation in the field, and an interview schedule are commonly employed sources of primary data collection. Secondary data are collected from the concerned Departments. The sample size is usually smaller as the studies usually focus on an in-

depth analysis of the data from respondents. The following are some of the studies and methods employed by others in the area of the proposed research.

Kumar (2017) in her research used an ethnographic study in Women's Prisons of Kerala involving twenty-two inmates who voluntarily cooperated for the study. Ethnographic studies improved not only the quality of the study but also helped in resolving the major issue of many inmates, i.e., time and space to talk. As per the principle of ethnography, the method is more important than the actual product of research; the fieldwork for a prolonged time period, observations, and in-depth conversations have constructed the substance of the study. Rowe (2004) employs an ethnographic perspective to unravel the lived meanings of both the culture of the female prison writer and the consequences of the prison environment based on her experience.

Parveen (2018) conducted a study on the condition of women prisoners using the census method with reference to the total population of female undertrials and convicts from jails in UP. The study found that the low economic status of the family is an important factor in crime. The universe of the study consists of female prisoners from UP, as it has the highest percentage of female inmates in India. The total number of female inmates is 2964, out of which 694 are convicts and 995 are under trial. The study selected 7 women's prisons from eastern UP since studies have not been conducted in this area. Observation, interview schedule, focus group discussion, and case studies were used; the interview schedule, which consists of open-ended and closed-ended questions, was an informal rather than formal interview. The focus group discussion was helpful for building rapport with the respondents. The study was exploratory cum descriptive in nature.

Das (2013) conducted a study on 35 female prisoners whose jail time is five years or more from three jails in Odisha using a household schedule, questionnaire, observation in the field, interview schedule, and in-depth case studies. Respected jail authorities were also interviewed apart from the inmates. The research aims to highlight the socio-economic, cultural, and psychological aspects of the women

prisoners and also analyzes the primary cause for committing crimes. The study is exploratory in nature. SPSS method was used for data analysis.

Sen (2005) researched women inmates in West Bengal. In the study, there are 53 jails in West Bengal, from which a sample was selected only from 4 Central Jails, including one Women's Jail. A total of 200 women inmates were interviewed, which constitutes only 16 percent of the total female inmate population in West Bengal. A formal interview was conducted, but later, the researcher shifted to an informal interview to get in-depth answers from the respondents. An interview schedule with semi-structured questions and a case study was used.

Jeffries et al. (2020) conducted a study on understanding women's pathways into prison in Thailand. Here, they used descriptive research and used interview method. They interviewed 75 imprisoned women, along with 5 women who had finished their serving time within the prison. Three focus groups, including 16 prison officials, were also interviewed, where anonymity and confidentiality were maintained by not naming or identifying prison staff. All the interviews lasted between one to two hours and were all recorded. Interview topics include childhood and adulthood experiences, education, employment and economic circumstances, health and substance abuse histories, circumstances surrounding their offending, prior arrest, and terms of imprisonment under pathways into prison. Experiences of imprisonment, needs addressed/not addressed in prison, pre-release planning under lives in prison, and definitions of success, challenges, how needs are/might be addressed under expectations, and experiences of re-entry.

Greenfelder (2018) conducted a study on re-entry experiences of female inmates and their children under the project, the Women's Prison Inmate Network Study (WO-PINS). Here, they used mixed-method designs in a Pennsylvania women's prison. Phase 2 of their research used a semi-structured interview method to understand their future concerns and expectations about reentry into society. They also interviewed the temporary caregivers of their children, as well as at least one of their children, regarding reunification with their mothers after incarceration. The phase 2 interview consisted of 22 respondents from the first prison and 62 respondents from the second



prison. After initial coding, each interview was broadly summarized by themes and sub-themes, allowing comparisons among respondents and further in-depth analysis.

Kaushik (2015) researched the cause of women's imprisonment in India. Three prisons were selected for the purpose of this research, which are Ferozepur prison in Punjab, Varanasi prison in UP, and Jaipur prison in Rajasthan. Here, a questionnaire, interview schedule, and observation were used to study the women prisoners.

McDonald (2006) in his study on therapeutic community and its impact on the coping skills of substance-abusing women, uses an exploratory/descriptive research design. It utilizes qualitative and quantitative methods. In the first part of the research, surveys were distributed to collect demographic information, coping strategies, depression level, and anxiety level. It assesses the effect of several variables, like coping, depression, and anxiety, while controlling for other variables such as age and race. In the second part of the research, qualitative face-to-face interviews were utilized. The interviews included detailed information on the participants' upbringings before entering prison and their present coping mechanisms. These in-depth interviews help us comprehend female inmates who abuse drugs from their viewpoint. Two women's prisons in Pennsylvania were part of the site selection for this study. The sample size for the survey consists of 40 inmates and 27 volunteers out of 185 female inmates. After each survey, all the women were asked whether they would agree to be face-to-face interviewed. Then, the sample size for the interview consists of 47 inmates and 22 volunteers. The data gathered from the survey were analyzed quantitatively. SPSS was also used for tabulation. Semi structured interview was used. The interview usually takes between 30-40 minutes per respondent.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India (2018) researched Women in Prisons in India. The purpose of the study is to understand female prisoners in India to improve their condition. The study is based on a mixed design that analyzes both qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative data are collected from the records of NCRB and Prison Statistics India. Microsoft Excel was used for analyzing quantitative data. Qualitative studies on the condition of prisoners

were obtained from the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). This Ministry also specifically requested two qualitative investigations for this report, i.e., gathering primary data from the National Commission for Women's visits to jails between November 2017 and May 2018, and National Law University of Delhi's thorough review of prison manuals. This report's findings are based on the results of these two investigations.

### **2.2.1 Overview of Methodologies**

All the methodological reviews consist of studies related to women's imprisonment only. The studies are all exploratory/descriptive in nature. From the review, two researcher used ethnography as a major approach in their studies as it gives more insight into the area of the study. The majority of the methods include only qualitative studies in which primary data are collected using observation, an interview schedule, a case study, and a focus group discussion. One researcher highlighted the importance of using informal questions (semi-structured interviews) rather than structured interviews, as it gives more freedom on the part of the respondents.

Three researchers among the methodological reviews used mixed methods in their studies, i.e., a combination of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Survey as a tool for collecting primary data was the method used in quantitative research; in such studies, the qualitative aspect of the research utilized an interview schedule as part of collecting primary data. The census method was used as the basis for analyzing the sample size by one researcher. This census method is also part of the proposed study. Regarding data analysis and tabulation, SPSS data analysis was used in three studies.

## **2.3 THEMATIC REVIEWS**

To have a better understanding of incarcerated women. The thematic review section is subdivided into seven categories, which are reviewed as below:

### **2.3.1 Socio-economic profile**

Bhandari (2016) argued that there is a need to have a holistic understanding of the problems faced by persons involved in criminal activities. It is clearly shown from the studies that persons involved in criminal activities usually come from families with low class status. They are brought up in a family which have experienced unemployment, marital difficulties, neglect, abuse, mental health problems, and are usually from a low social class status. Kaushik (2015) in their studies shows that most convicted women are educationally and economically backward based on three prisons in India, i.e., Varanasi, Jaipur, and Ferozepur.

Brock and Brekken (2019) suggest that incarcerated women possess lower levels of educational attainment when they enter prison. Neglect and severe physical, emotional, and sexual abuse weaken their motivation and ability to concentrate. The study revealed that incarcerated women suffered negative educational experiences due to a lack of parental support and alienation in schools. The findings of the study may contribute to scholarly inquiry of women's pathways to prison, a construct now underrepresented in the literature.

Steffensmeier and Allan (1996), Alarid et al. (2000) and Hanynie (2001) in their research, indicate that women are frequently drawn into criminal activity by their relationships with unscrupulous male partners; they argue that they may be especially vulnerable to such impacts.

### **2.3.2 Causes of Imprisonment**

Palermo (2003) analyses the causes for the increasing antisocial and criminal behaviour perpetrated by women from a sociological point of view. The study argued that the emancipation of women from patriarchy brought them not only freedom but also new responsibilities. The greater desire for achievement and material possession at times weakened the moral sense in some women, creating difficulties in self-control, which leads to aggressive behaviour. Steffensmeier in Renzetti and Goodstein (ed) (2001) also emphasized that economic hardship is one of the primary factors that leads women to engage in criminal activities. Saxena (1994) highlighted that a significant portion of the female population experiences higher economic

hardship and instability, which puts them under more pressure to commit consumer-based crimes like shoplifting, check fraud, service theft, and welfare fraud. Cherukuri (2008) conducted a study in India and suggests that the majority of criminals are from the lowest socioeconomic classes, and many crimes are committed for financial gain or as a result of a precarious economic situation. And also found that dowry-related greed is another reason why women commit crimes in India.

Dirks (2004) found a wide range of physical, emotional, and sexual assaults in the lives of jailed women. According to the report, many jailed women had been sexually victimized at some point in their lives, with many of them occurring before the age of 18. Those having such histories tend to face the same traumas during their service time within the prison. Their history of poverty, sexual abuse, mental illness, and substance abuse has marked their advent into the criminal justice system. Fair, Helen (2008) conducted an international review on women prisoners and concluded that the majority of women inmate comes from the most impoverished socioeconomic groups, many come from abusive homes, and the majority struggle with drug or alcohol addiction and untreated mental health issues. Madhurima (2009). Several experts have highlighted that one significant aspect influencing women's criminality is their use of drugs for excitement. Scholars claim that the "war on drugs" is increasingly turning into a "war on women."

Brock and Brekken (2019) studied the educational experiences of women prisoners and analyzed that their educational experience is an important factor in the pathway to prison. As per their studies, incarcerated women show lower educational attainment when they enter prison. Many convicts blame their poor academic performance on their parents' lack of interest in their academic success. Neglect and extreme abuse (physical, emotional, and sexual) cause problems with motivation and concentration. The absence of assistance from their parents made it difficult for the women to finish high school. Teens' academic progress was hampered by a lack of childcare, family obligations, conflict with parents, and discrimination from school staff. They recall school as a period when they felt isolated and bullied by others. The women claimed that their parents were uninterested in their daily lives, particularly their education. The women's parents' physical, emotional, and substance addiction

was perceived as a lack of parental participation during their formative years. The absence of assistance from their parents made it difficult for the women to finish high school. Teens' academic progress was hampered by a lack of childcare, family obligations, conflict with parents, and discrimination from school staff. Bajpai and Bajpai (2000) emphasized that in India, women are either largely illiterate or have limited educational possibilities and assert that there is a direct link between illiteracy and criminality.

Saxena (1994) this study found that women offenders had difficult marriages and experienced extreme conflict in their marriages, including oppression, harshness, repression, and humiliation. Husband's adultery, his extramarital affairs with other women, and his immoral behavior contributed considerably to married women's violent behaviour. The majority of women who were found guilty of homicidal crimes had trouble adjusting to family life. Ferraro and Moe (2003), Chesney-Lind and Pasko (2004) suggest that the societal expectations of appropriate mothering can place unreasonably high demands on lower-class women; incompetence to fulfil such societal demands can drive them to criminal activities. Maniyar (2004) in the study has also shown that family dysfunction, particularly marital conflict brought on by drunkenness and adultery, joint families, and broken homes, contribute to crime in India.

Couloute and Kopf (2018) in their analysis have shown that formally incarcerated people have a desire to work, though their unemployment rate is five times higher than the general population, and significantly higher than that of the worst years of the Great Depression. They found out that incarcerated people had trouble finding work, particularly in the time after being released. Bloom et.al. (2004) analysed that having a criminal record also makes it more difficult to find a job, and the majority of the jobs held by women were entry-level, low-skill, and paid poorly. They often faced structural barriers to securing employment in the outside world, as they are now labelled as convicts. According to their research, the first two years after a release had the highest unemployment rates. Even those who succeed in finding employment experience a further setback due to low pay and work insecurities compared to others, which ultimately forces them into poverty.

Kilroy (2016), in the study of women prisoners in Australia, examines the factors that contribute to women offending. The study argued that crimes committed by women are likely minor and non-violent offences. Women rarely commit serious violent acts toward strangers, and the few serious violent crimes committed by women are usually against violent partners. The study reported that the majority of women prisoners are victims of abuse and have past experiences of violence in the form of sexual and domestic abuse. The study also highlighted the deprived socio-economic background of women prisoners, stating that the majority of them struggled with poverty, unemployment, housing insecurity, poor health, and poor educational background. It also argued that financial dependency, mental health issues, and substance abuse are the effects of repeated victimization, which is associated with an increased risk of offending.

Women feel these characteristics differently and probably more acutely than men, even though many of these factors also characterize men's paths to prison. For instance, whereas victimization and related trauma are linked to both female and male imprisonment trajectories, jailed women typically experience victimization earlier in life, more frequently, and in a variety of forms (such as child abuse and domestic violence). As a result, victimization seems to be a factor that has a higher influence in determining women's paths to incarceration (Jeffries et al. 2019b; Owen et al. 2017).

### **2.3.3 Gender differences and experiences of women in prison**

Ginn (2013) examines the differences in men's and women's offences, arguing that women tend to be involved in less serious crimes, like domestic situations to support the needs of their own and their families, as compared to men's involvement in serious violence, criminal damage, and professional crime. As impoverished, racialized, single parents, survivors of physical and sexual assault, people with mental or physical health issues, and people who are addicted, criminalized women frequently experience several forms of marginalization (Balfour & Comack, 2014). He argues that women who usually played a central role in their families before imprisonment are taken away from their families. These experiences of

imprisonment lead to multiple health and social needs. Women entering prison tend to have a history of sexual abuse, victims of domestic violence, and drug abuse. It is also shown that they tend to rate their physical and mental health as poor and are usually engaged in drugs and alcohol.

Smith (1894) highlighted the problems faced by women prisoners in comparison with male prisoners. Women in jail have various demands and entry points into prison that are specific to their gender. Stathopoulos & Quadara (2014) argued that since the percentage of female prisoners is comparatively less compared to male prisoners, society as a whole tends to neglect the condition of women's imprisonment. As far as concerns, there are fewer studies of female prisoners than male prisoners. Apart from this, the extent of crimes committed by female prisoners is usually petty offenses and is usually mild in comparison with the crimes committed by male prisoners. Despite the scenario, female prisoners bear a greater load of physical and mental abnormalities and also face many medical problems as compared to men in prison. Many of the female prisoners have a history of severe social, mental, alcohol, or drug abuse. For female prisoners, their entry into prison has little or no success either in deterring them from committing further crimes or in rehabilitating them. Indeed, it separates them from their families and children, and mothers with children often face double the problems concerning the overall condition of themselves and their children.

Agomoh (2015) stated that Bangkok Rule #46 requires prison administrators to implement thorough and individualized rehabilitation programmes that take into account the women's gender specific needs as well as the underlying causes of their offences, which are all too frequently linked to diverse and extensive histories of loss and trauma. Even if the Bangkok Rules are still aspirational in the majority of developing countries, Kenya has created minimal family programming to help with maintaining family bonds. Similarly, the non-governmental organization Prisoners' Rehabilitation and Welfare Action have collaborated with the Nigerian government to offer trauma counselling and staff training.

Kruttschnitt & Gartner (2003) highlighted the importance of understanding women's experiences in prison, their responses to treatment, their lives after prison, and how changing prison regimes have affected them. They further suggested that studies on these things remain limited. According to them, individual attributes, pre-prison experiences, and prison conditions are associated with how women respond to incarceration, but assessments of their joint and conditional influences are lacking. Understanding of ways women negotiate power and construct their lives in prison is important, and systematic evaluations of interventions based on these assessments are rare; as such, they suggested the need for studying the long-term consequences of imprisonment.

Fettig (2009) examines that the majority of women behind bars commit crimes such as drugs and property offences, and most of them have minimal education, few job skills, and little employment history. Female prisoner experiences certain significant characteristics during their criminal participation, incarceration, and their re-entry into society; a number of them suffer from the dual problems of mental illness and drug abuse. Apart from that majority were both custodial parents and primary financial providers. Unlike male prisoners, incarcerated women report that the other parent is not the caregiver for their children while they are imprisoned. Instead, a grandmother or other relative is the most likely caregiver for their children. The study clearly reveals that proper treatment is beyond the reach of low-income women, and hence, they often resort to self-medication.

#### **2.3.4 Family Relationships of Incarcerated Women**

La Vigne et al. (2009) examine that incarcerated mothers look forward the most to their children's well-being upon release. They often experience more conflict with family members than male prisoners; they usually do not receive financial support from their families, and it is difficult for them to find a job when they are released. The employment hurdle is mainly due to a lack of proper job training during their imprisonment. They face re-entry challenges with a different set of skills and deficits than men, which are manifested in higher rates of relapse and recidivism. All this



suggests that a focus on women as a distinct subpopulation of persons re-entering society is critical to the development of effective policies and practices.

Ruso et al. (2010) found that women in prison experienced an unparalleled sense of isolation. Especially mother faced several challenges within the prison and after imprisonment. Their children are at risk of lots of difficulties and problems. Mothers who have children in their care are highly likely to lose legal or informal custody of them when they enter prison (Dowell et al., 2018). They had issues with housing, insufficient personnel, a lack of family interaction, a lack of education and employment programming, and inadequate healthcare. A high percentage of female inmates have a history of mental, physical, or sexual abuse.

Lempert et al. (2005) argued that a gap is created between the prisoner and their husbands, children, and parents. Women in prison are not allowed to take on the role of providing direct care for those who have depended on them, especially their children, whom they can hardly name without experiencing intense pain. However, this forced separation has also freed them from the burdensome everyday obligations many women must deal with at both home and work.

Ahsan and Tabish (2018) revealed that the facilities housing the children may be located in the same city as the prison where the mother is incarcerated, outside the city but in the same state, or perhaps even in another state. Visits between the mother and the children are irregular, and as time goes on, the distance between visits may decrease as a result of neglect on the part of the relevant authorities. Sometimes, children who are in another state or district may not see their mother for months or even years.

Children of incarcerated mothers also tend to suffer. A major stress for mothers in prison is separation from their children (Frye & Dawe, 2008; Stone, 2013; Stone et al., 2017). Parents who are incarcerated face several difficulties, including being separated from their kids, trying to stay in touch with them while they're behind bars, having their parental responsibilities acknowledged by the criminal justice system, and providing for their kids while they're incarcerated. (Bartlett et al., 2018; Flat Out Inc. & VACRO, 2006; Fowler et al., 2017; Walker, 2018). However, a higher

percentage of women usually have exclusive custody of or responsibility for their children (Rossiter et al., 2016). This has serious implications for how children are cared for during mothers' arrest, sentencing, incarceration, and release. Children of incarcerated parents may face stress, grief and loss, behavioral problems, stigma and discrimination, in addition to the practical disruption to their lives (Dawson et al., 2012).

The extent to which women are essentially held responsible for the effects of their incarceration on their children is another significant distinction between men and women who are parents while serving time in jail (Elliot-Hohepa & Hungerford, 2013; Pösö et al., 2010; Walker, 2018). Women who participate in residential programs for mothers and children in jail (sometimes known as "prison nurseries") claim that custody officers, other inmates who work in the prison environment, and other female inmates constantly criticize their parenting (Shaw et al., 2015; Walker, 2018). Residential programs for mothers and children unintentionally contribute to the power structure in prison settings since women are actively encouraged to control their behavior and attempt to restore their 'spoiled' maternal identities to be accepted into the program (Celinska & Siegel, 2010; Walker, 2018). Qualitative research has revealed that these events may have an effect on one's health. Since only a small percentage of mothers in jail are given a spot in the programs, they may experience a variety of symptoms, such as stress, anxiety, sadness, hopelessness, and re-traumatization (Celinska & Siegel, 2010; Walker, 2018).

The type of support from the families of incarcerated women also presents an issue. Dodge, Pogrebin (2001) highlighted the importance of family support for incarcerated women. Any type of interaction with their families retains a support system for them. It reminds them that there are still people who care about them and are not forgotten. It also enhances their emotional survival and self-esteem when they re-enter the community. Female inmates released into the community, however, are largely left on their own since they lack a family support system. Due to this, reintegrating into the community will provide more adjustment issues. Being freed from prison seems to be significantly more terrifying for women without family support. Women on parole must act as their own support system in these situations.

### **2.3.5 Women's incarceration and rehabilitation**

Tittle (1974) examines the ambiguous concept of rehabilitation in the study of imprisonment. He analyses several arguments related to the idea behind the prison as a rehabilitating agency for criminals, its failures and successes. Recidivism as an approach to measure rehabilitation is considered uncertain, as criminal behaviour results not only in personal defects but is also as much a function of social conditions and influences as of individual characteristics. The study concluded that due to a lack of data/ records, people will continue to assume prison as a molding ground for recidivism, regardless of any forms that are instituted. It suggests rehabilitation to be considered as a community-based institution that serves everybody in need, rather than the responsibility of the prison alone.

Chandra et al. (2018) highlighted the need for Indian criminologists to study the causes of crime, its prevention, and the rehabilitation of offenders. It also implies that reformatory measures should be investigated, and that the interaction between criminology, public policy, and practice should be improved.

Gul (2018), in the research-based article, reveals the problems of prison management, which include overcrowding, torture, under-budgeting, understaffing, lack of basic needs for the prisoners, and proper training of the staff within the prison system. The article recommends a holistic rehabilitative approach within the prison regime. To accomplish this approach, it suggests meaningful, practical, and effective training of the prison staff to restore their moral and professional integrity. It further suggests the need for programmatic intervention based on individual assessments of the inmates.

The provision of accommodations that foster healthy relationships with family and friends, addressing both physical and mental health and socioeconomic determinants of incarceration, providing gender-specific prison programs and transitional care, improving the prison environment, and ensuring non-discriminatory security standards are among the best practices for women entering prison internationally (Breuer et.al., 2011). While Moyer (1992) argued that the majority of correctional facilities offer few female-specific vocational education and training programmes.

### **2.3.6 Health issues and Recreational activities**

Maniyar (2004), according to studies, a significant portion of offenders experience anxiety, low self-esteem, and feelings of insecurity. Enos (2001), Henriques (1982) Watterson (1996) examine that the majority of women incarcerated have children under the age of 18, and qualitative research has shown that separation from their children is the main source of anxiety for incarcerated women.

The prevalence of chronic illnesses is higher among women than men (Anderson,2006). The need for these services, however, far outweighs what is readily available. While states like New York report that more than 25 per cent of women receive mental health care while they are incarcerated, inmates frequently complain about poor quality of life conditions in prison, and one of the main difficulties is the lack of readily available services (WPA, 2003).

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2020) conducted a report based on the National Prisoner Health Data Collection (NPHDC) to understand the health and well-being of women prisoners in Australia while entering prison, during custody, and upon release from prison. From this report, it is shown that between 2009-2019, the number of female prisoners has increased by 64 per cent as compared to a 45 per cent increase in the male prison population. The report suggested that the severity of crimes committed by women and severe responses to relatively minor crimes committed by women contribute to the increasing women's prison population in the country, besides economic crisis, social unrest, displacement due to war, and criminal justice systems that disadvantage women. The report further analyzed the socio-economic background of women offenders and reported that women prisoners had lower education levels than women in Australia generally. Unemployment was also higher among the female prison entrants than in the general community. More than 72 per cent of the female prison entrants surveyed had a history of incarceration in youth detention or adult prison. Nearly half of the total women inmates reported fair or poor mental health on entry to prison. Women prisoners do not have the appropriate support in place when they are released from prison.

Recreation as a part of rehabilitation is a therapeutic process for women while they are incarcerated. Alexis (2014) has analyzed the leisure activities of women while they are in prison. The article suggests the importance of leisure activities within the prison as a means to reduce coerciveness and increase normativity. Well-being through leisure is not a means to an end in itself, but it can act as a means to reduce coercive and normative ends. There could be positive as well as negative leisure and some that stand in between as a form of recreation (Yuen & Pedlar, 2009). For incarcerated women in general, the range of recreational activities that have a positive impact includes movies, singing, card games, sports, reading, writing, telephoning families, and holiday activities. Apart from these, even work, educational, and religious activities are considered a part of positive recreational activities within the prison (Davila Figueroa, 2011). However, excessive intake of tobacco and cigarettes could be either positive or negative; it instilled short-term pleasure, but if it is consumed excessively, it could really be harmful for health, so this activity stays in the middle ground of being a positive and negative recreational activity (Tewksbury & Mustaine, 2005).

### **2.3.7 Recidivism and Re-entry**

Re-entry is a gendered phenomenon since women's lives after release differ from men's, just like the roads to and experiences of imprisonment (Brown & Bloom, 2009; Cobbina, 2010).

First and foremost, understanding the events and paths that led to their incarceration is necessary to support the effective reintegration of formerly incarcerated women. A growing body of research shows that the criminalization of women is related to a collection of interconnected and related variables that limit and shape their behavior and life decisions. These variables include masculine influence and control, low education, poverty, dysfunctional families, other adverse life experiences, deviant friendships, trauma and victimization, disordered family lives, other adverse life experiences (Daly, 1994; Owen et al., 2017; Jeffries & Chuenurah, 2018; Jeffries & Chuenurah, 2019; Jeffries et al., 2019a; Jeffries et al., 2019b).

Women who live in unstable or inappropriate housing are more likely to reoffend, according to research by Baldry et al. (2006). Homelessness provides an environment for people reentering society that is conducive to drug abuse and other criminal activity (Carter, 2019). Because there are no other options, women who are unable to find stable housing can also be compelled to return to unhealthy and dangerous living conditions (Van Olphen et al., 2009). Thus, there is a significant link between inadequate accommodations and unfavorable results (Severance, 2004; O'Brien and Leem, 2007; Tarpey & Friend, 2016).

Jeffries et al. (2020) conducted studies on women prisoners in Thailand and sought to understand the expectations and experiences (including needs, challenges, and successes) of women re-entering Thai society post-imprisonment. From this study, it was found that re-entry success was dependent on women obtaining an adequate and secure source of income, reconnecting with family, and having a safe and stable place to call home. In addition, women's motivations to change, ability to stay strong, and religious convictions were also important. The study also shows that concrete efforts are being made by the prison officials to promote women's rehabilitative and re-entry needs. The evident initiatives of the prison include prison environments that generally endeavored to support and heal, rather than harm.

Research consistently demonstrates that relationships with family and friends are a major indicator of re-entry success (O'Brien, 2001; Bui & Morash, 2010). Arditti & Few (2006) concluded that women who preserve family links and effectively re-enter family life after incarceration are less likely to be re-arrested. Relationships with romantic partners, family, and friends offer formerly incarcerated women essential sources of support in the form of financial support, emotional provisioning, and/or practical assistance (such as money, housing, childcare, and employment opportunities). These relationships also foster a sense of belonging (Leverentz, 2006, Arditti and Few, 2008, Cobbina, 2010, Leverentz, 2011, Opsal, 2015). Apart from this, positive interpersonal relationships are also vital for the positive transformation of incarcerated women (Herrschaft et al., 2009).

Children can be a significant motivator for transformation, according to studies on women's reentry, and motherhood can motivate women to abstain from crime and substance abuse (VanDeMark, 2007; Cobbina, 2010). So, in order to promote women's re-entry, it's crucial to give them access to education, training, and career opportunities while they're behind bars. This will improve their chances of finding fulfilling jobs that pay well after they're released (Jeffries et al., 2020)

Despite the effort made by the officials, members of the community frequently express reluctance to welcome female ex-offenders and appear to pass severe moral judgments. Due to the lack of attempts to reconcile the offender's existence in the community, the offender is stigmatized as being bad rather than the act itself (Braithwaite, 1989).

Kumari (2009) suggested the need to provide technical skill training for illiterate women prisoners, a business idea with simple skill technology for earning some money, and facilities of higher studies for literate women prisoners.

Johnson (2002) has suggested mature coping skills for inmates so that they can abstain from their past behavior and face the world after they are released from prison. Further suggesting that mature coping skills will include firstly accepting once problem at hand, working to solve the problem maturely instead of resorting to violence except for self-defense, then coping with the environment surrounding them so that they can be supported by people around them, which will ultimately solve their problem.

Chlup (2006) Van Waters had long believed that education could enable women to thrive and be successful when they were released from prison. Davis, et.al (2014), Karpowitz and Kenner (1995). Access to education is a key factor in the social and economic empowerment of women. It also opens doors to social and economic mobility and has increased work options for many people who are incarcerated.

### **2.3.8 Overview of Thematic Reviews**

Under the thematic review, several sub-themes are added based on the objectives of the study. The first two sub-themes are the causes of women's imprisonment and

their socio-economic conditions. The reviewed literature is mainly from mainland India and studies related to international journals and articles. It shows that the majority of women prisoners have low socio-economic profiles, and the causes of their imprisonment are due to their low socio-economic conditions. It is realized that women prisoners are often victims of abuse either by their spouses or neglect by their family members. They usually have low educational qualifications, are unemployed, or are engaged in low-paid jobs. Especially, women who have children face a double burden of the need to support their children alone. Because of their poor socio-economic condition, they often indulge in substance abuse, which affects them mentally and physically. Their financial struggle, marital conflict, substance abuse, domestic abuse, low educational qualification, unemployment, and lack of family support often contribute to their criminal behavior.

The reviewed literature suggested that the overall experiences of women within the prison, the causes of imprisonment, and their rehabilitation experiences are different from male prisoners. For women, the reason for their incarceration is usually minor crimes as compared to men. Since women are usually the caretakers of their family and children, their being away from the family has a serious consequence for their family, especially if they are mothers having children to attend. Women also have separate physical and mental needs compared to male prisoners. As it is shown in the reviewed literature that they often engage in substance abuse and a victim of sexual abuse and domestic violence, these situation leads to mental health issues that need to be properly treated while they are incarcerated.

Women prisoners usually have mental illness; they enter prison accompanied by low self-esteem, anxiety, and insecurities; their mental illness is also usually due to their separation from their children. Women prisoners usually lose contact with their family members after they are in prison. Usually, they are neglected by their families and do not get sufficient support from their family members. The relationship with their children also deteriorated after they were in prison. On the other hand, their family members and their children faced loss, grief, sadness, discrimination, and stigmatization from the community. They also sometimes faced criticism from the officials and tutors within the prison for their insufficient parenting.



It is shown from the reviewed literature that rehabilitation programmes and activities within the prison should be gender specific, and a holistic rehabilitation should be provided within the prison, especially for women. The activities for recreation within the prison must be positive in nature, which could foster the needs of the prisoners to prevent recidivism and promote re-entry into society.

Understanding women's pathways to incarceration is key to their re-entry into society. It is shown that support from their family, partner, and friends fosters a positive effect on their re-entry success. Positive interpersonal relationship with their families, especially motivation from their children, can boost their personality when they are to be released. Education and skilled training provided to them can promote a successful re-entry into society after being incarcerated. It is also shown from the reviewed literature that homelessness can be a factor for re-offending for women prisoners. Besides stigmatization and lack of proper backup and training from the caretaker.

## **2.4 RESEARCH GAP AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

1. All the existing literature reviewed is the works of researchers mainly from other countries. Despite the increasing rate of women prisoners, in-depth studies on the lives and experiences of women prisoners in the country, North-east India, and especially Mizoram, are rare. Poverty, low educational profile, broken family, or unstable income may at times contribute to the deviant behaviour, which will be explored in this research.
2. The impact of incarceration on their families' relationships will also be taken into account, which is something that is frequently overlooked in the studies reviewed herein. Thus, in-depth research in this area is necessary to find solutions to their problems from the lives and experiences of women within the prison.
3. Studies on criminology and deviant behaviour often contribute towards the legal aspect. The institutional facilities available to them, especially for female inmates, need a systematic investigation. Thus, this research hopes to

seek from the sociological point of view and reveal the causes, effects, and solutions of deviant behaviour, and find solutions for their prevention.

4. Mizoram is a state in the North East, recently having a separate Women's Jail, i.e., 2019. According to the National Crime Records Bureau 2019, Mizoram has the second highest number of female inmates, i.e., 187 convicts, 29, under-trial 158
5. (NCRB, 2019), next to Assam, where the total population is high as compared to that of Mizoram. All the other North-East states have below 100 female inmates. Thus, there is a need to have an in-depth study on female prisoners in a closed-knit society.
6. In Mizo society, with the majority being Christians, criminal behaviour is considered to be a sin, and reformation is mandatory. Civil society and family members remarkably contribute to the proper functioning of society. However, crimes involving law and order are considered to be a serious offence, especially when the perpetrators are women. They often faced stigmatization and shame in society compared to male perpetrators. As such, studies on female incarceration are necessary in a society with a majority following the Christian religion.
7. Certain thematic domains not covered in the studies reviewed and to be included in this study are family relationships of incarcerated women, including the type of support they received from their family, rehabilitation and recreational activities provided to them inside the prison, recidivism, and their re-entry into society.
8. Methodologically, this study is going to be broad-based to include the triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data.
9. Most of the studies are data-rich and theory-inadequate, with a missing focus on contextualization. An attempt is made to contextualize the theories reviewed.

**Table 2.1 Research Gap and Rationale for The Study**

| <b>Sl.No</b> | <b>Gap</b>                                                                                                       | <b>Rational</b>                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.           | West-centric studies                                                                                             | Need for study in India, the Northeast, and Mizoram                                                                                                        |
| 2.           | Lacking studies on the impact of incarceration on families                                                       | To find the nature, nuances, and dynamics of problems from the lived experiences                                                                           |
| 3.           | A dearth of systematic investigation from a sociological and criminological perspective                          | Reveal the etiology and effects of deviant behaviour from a sociological and criminological perspective                                                    |
| 4.           | Inadequacy of in-depth study on female prisoners in a closed-knit society                                        | Second-highest number of female inmates in North East worth studying                                                                                       |
| 5.           | Limited research on the experiences of female incarceration and its perception from a Christian moral framework. | Need to explore the gendered stigma and societal responses to women's incarceration                                                                        |
| 6.           | Certain thematic domains are not covered in the studies reviewed                                                 | Need to explore the family relationships, types of support, rehabilitation, recreational activity inside the prison, recidivism, and re-entry into society |
| 7.           | Methodological Gap                                                                                               | Need to triangulate qualitative and quantitative data                                                                                                      |
| 8.           | Studies are data-rich and theoretical- contextualization poor                                                    | Need to contextualize the theories reviewed                                                                                                                |

The next chapter deals with the research context and framework, commencing with the objectives of the study.

## **CHAPTER -III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1. Introduction**
- 3.2. Objectives of the study**
- 3.3. Research Design**
- 3.4. Universe and Sample**
- 3.5 Principles of Inclusion and Exclusion**
- 3.6. Time Frame of the Study**
- 3.7. Operationalization of Concepts**
- 3.8. Pilot Study**
- 3.9. Sources of Data**
  - 3.9.1 Primary Data**
  - 3.9.2 Secondary Data**
- 3.10. Data Analysis and Interpretation**
- 3.11. Field Experience**
- 3.12. Ethical Issues**
- 3.13. Limitations of the Study**
- 3.14. Chapter Plan**

## **CHAPTER -III**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Man is a curious being and is constantly in search of new knowledge. Research is a systematic process of collecting and analyzing information to increase our understanding of the phenomenon about which we are concerned or interested (Kothari, 2014). Research is the means, and knowledge is the goal. Research Methodology is a systematic plan for conducting research, or how the research will be conducted. It is the study of the strategies for obtaining knowledge for research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A researcher can draw on both quantitative as well as qualitative methods. Quantitative method has numerical data, and it is analysed using statistical and mathematical methods, while qualitative methods involve no numerical data. It is often expressed in languages, pictures, photographs, and observations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This chapter is discussed under the following heads: Objectives of the study, Research Design, Universe and Sample, Principles of Inclusion and Exclusion, Time Frame of the Study, Operationalization of Concepts, Sources of Data, Data Analysis and Interpretation, Field Experience, Ethical Issues, Limitations of the Study, and Chapter Plan.

#### **3.2 Objectives of the study**

The last section of the previous chapter on review of literature dealt with the research gap and the rationale for the study, which paved the way for deciding the objectives of the study. This study starts with the following objectives:

1. To understand the socio-economic profile of women offenders.
2. To understand the factors that cause women offending and consequent incarceration.
3. To study the effect of imprisonment on women and the lives of their families.
4. To examine the institutional facilities available for women offenders in incarceration, which can promote re-entry into society.

5. To contextualise the theories of penology and to make a macro analysis of this micro study.

### **3.3 Research Design**

Research design is a detailed plan of how the goals of research will be achieved. It plans as to what, why, how, when/where it is to be observed, how to record observations, how to analyse/interpret observations, and how to generalise. Thus, it is a systematic plan of conducting research (Kothari, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For this study, qualitative methods are used. The research design used in this study is descriptive-exploratory in nature.

Descriptive research aimed at finding out and describing the phenomena. Its primary goal is to describe, explain, and validate research findings. It also organized the findings to fit them with explanations, and then tested or validated those reasons under the intended study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Exploratory research is used when problems are in a preliminary stage, when the topic or issue is new, or when data is difficult to collect. It is flexible and can address research questions (what, why, how). It is also often used to generate formal hypotheses (Kothari, 2014).

### **3.4 Universe and Sample**

The universe of the study comprises all the district jails of Mizoram. There are eight District Jails located in Aizawl, Lunglei, Siaha, Champhai, Kolasib, Serchhip, Mamit, and Lawngtlai Districts of Mizoram. A separate Central Jail and Central Women's Jail are also located in the Aizawl District of Mizoram. The universe of this study includes all the female inmates from eight districts of Mizoram, including Central Women's Jail, with a total of 107 female inmates as per the list from the table.

**Table 3.1: Mizoram Female Prisoners Daily Population Report as on 24th Feb,**

| <b>JAIL</b>                          | <b>UTP</b> | <b>LIFER</b> | <b>CONVICT<br/>RI</b> | <b>CONVICT<br/>SI</b> | <b>CHILDREN</b> | <b>TOTAL</b> |
|--------------------------------------|------------|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| <b>Central Women's Jail (Aizawl)</b> | 56         | 1            | 13                    | 3                     | 2               | 75           |
| <b>District Jail (Aizawl)</b>        | -          | -            | -                     | -                     | -               | -            |
| <b>District Jail (Lunglei)</b>       | 10         | -            | -                     | -                     | -               | 10           |
| <b>District Jail (Saiha)</b>         | -          | -            | -                     | -                     | -               | -            |
| <b>District Jail (Kolasib)</b>       | 1          | -            | -                     | -                     | -               | 1            |
| <b>District Jail (Champhai)</b>      | 10         | -            | -                     | -                     | -               | 10           |
| <b>District Jail (Lawngtlai)</b>     | -          | -            | -                     | -                     | -               | -            |
| <b>District Jail (Serchhip)</b>      | 6          | -            | -                     |                       | 1               | 7            |
| <b>District Jail (Mamit)</b>         | 4          | -            | -                     | -                     | -               | 4            |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                         | <b>87</b>  | <b>1</b>     | <b>13</b>             | <b>3</b>              | <b>3</b>        | <b>107</b>   |

**2022**

Source: Prisons Department (Home), Government of Mizoram.

- UTP- Under Trial Prisoner.
- LIFER- Person convicted to life imprisonment.
- CONVICT RI- Convict Rigorous Imprisonment.
- CONVICT SI- Convict Simple Imprisonment

From Table 3.1 above, it is shown that the majority of female prisoners are found in the Central Women's Jail, Aizawl. The figure shows 73 female inmates, excluding two children, in Central Women's Jail out of the total 107 female inmates from all of the District Jails, which is 70.09 percent of the total female inmates.

The Central Women's Jail, Aizawl, is purposely selected for the present study. All the 73 women prisoners found in the Central Women's jail, Aizawl, were taken using

the census method. Case studies will be conducted, purposely looking at the gravity of the case, and further, two mothers with accompanying children.

During the synopsis presentation, there were 73 respondents dated 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022, which was the total number of inmates at that time. However, the number of respondents has changed since there was an increase in the number of female inmates from the start of the fieldwork, i.e., 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2023, up to 13<sup>th</sup> Sept, 2023, compared to 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022 in the proposal, where there is a total of 73 inmates, including 2 children only. As of 13<sup>th</sup> Sept 2023, the last date of the fieldwork, the total number of female inmates in Central Women's Jail was 280, Lifer- 1, Convict SI-10, Convict RI-33, UTP- 236, including 23 children. Of the total 280, 50 percent are interviewed, which is 140, including one additional respondent who keenly requested to be interviewed. The total number of inmates interviewed was 141. The case study was conducted among one lifer, two mothers with accompanying children, and eight other inmates based on the intensity of the crimes they committed.

The categories of respondents are categorized based on Lifer, Convict S.I. (Simple Imprisonment), Convict R.I. (Rigorous Imprisonment), and UTP (Under Trial Period), as well as based on the types of crime committed and habitual and 1<sup>st</sup> timer among each category. From the sample of 141, the numbers in each category are as follows:

**Table 3.2: Mizoram Female Prisoners Daily Population Report as on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023, and the number of samples collected**

| <b>No. of inmates dated 13th Sept, 2023</b> | <b>Total Inmates</b> | <b>No. of Inmates Sampled</b> | <b>Convict (NDPS+Others*)</b> | <b>UTP (NDPS+Others*)</b> |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Lifer</b>                                | 1                    | 1                             | 0+1 (Murder)                  | -                         |
| <b>Convict R.I.</b>                         | 33                   | 13                            | 13+0                          | -                         |
| <b>Convict S.I.</b>                         | 10                   | 3                             | 0+3                           | -                         |
| <b>UTP</b>                                  | 236                  | 124                           | -                             | 114+10                    |
| <b>Total</b>                                | <b>280</b>           | <b>141</b>                    | <b>17</b>                     | <b>124</b>                |



Source: Field Data

**Others\*:** Dacoity, Theft, Murder, Fraud, cheating, and Alcoholic vandalism

Among the 141 respondents, 127 inmates, i.e., 90.07% are in jail due to ND&PS cases. The rest 14 inmates, i.e., 9.92% are other cases.

**Table 3.3: Sample based on 1<sup>st</sup> timer and habitual inmates**

| <b>Incarceration</b>  | <b>Convict</b> | <b>UTP</b> |
|-----------------------|----------------|------------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Timer | 11             | 108        |
| Habitual              | 6              | 17         |
| <b>Total No.</b>      | <b>17</b>      | <b>124</b> |

Source: Field Data

In the above table, it is shown that among the 141 respondents, 118 (83.68%) are 1<sup>st</sup> timer inmates and 23 (16.31%) are habitual inmates.

From the total of 141 respondents, nine inmates were selected for the case study, representing each from all categories, and also based on the severity of crimes committed, as follows:

The only lifter present in the prison is taken for a case study, along with two cases from habitual offenders (UTP), two cases from 1<sup>st</sup> timers (UTP), two cases from ND&PS (convicts), and two cases from 1<sup>st</sup> timers (convicts).

The list of KII respondents interviewed includes Jailer, Asst. Jailer, Jail Warder, Lawyer, Synod Prison Ministry representative, Set Free Ministry Representative, Counsellor, Prison IG, and representatives from CADS and Excise and Narcotics. Among the list, Jailer, Jail Warder, Synod Prison Ministry representative, and Set Free Ministry Representative were interviewed.

### **3.5 Time Frame of the Study**

The synopsis for this research was approved on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2022 after passing DRC and BoS on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2022 and 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022, respectively. The coursework was completed on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2021. Synopsis writing began right after the completion of fieldwork, and it took four months to complete after extensive re-writing with the

supervisor. After the synopsis was approved, an extensive review of the literature began following a systematic pattern by dividing the existing review of literature into three sub-themes, which are Theoretical Reviews, Methodological Reviews, and Thematic Reviews, as seen in Chapter II. It took 9 months to read secondary sources and write reviews. The fieldwork started from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023 up to 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023, which is approximately 7 months. 2024 and 2025 were utilized for data analysis, interpretation, and writing.

### **3.6 Principles of Inclusion and Exclusion**

There are eight District Jails in Mizoram, along with a separate Central Women's Jail and Central Jail located in Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram. The total female inmate population in Mizoram is 107 as per the daily census record dated 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022 from the Prison Department (Home), Mizoram. Since the majority of the female inmates are housed in Central Women's Jail, Aizawl, this research concentrated and took samples only from Central Women's Jail. The research includes only female inmates 73 (56-UTP, 1 Lifer, 16- Convict) who comprise 70 percent of the total population from Central Women's Jail, Aizawl. It excludes all the female inmates from the 8 District jails of Mizoram, as they constitute only 30 percent of the total study population. It will also exclude two children from Central Women's Jail.

However, since the number of female prisoners has increased at the beginning of the fieldwork, the number of respondents has increased. As of 13<sup>th</sup> Sept 2023, the last date of my fieldwork, the total number of female inmates in Central Women's Jail was 280, Lifer- 1, Convict SI-10, Convict RI-33, UTP- 236. Of the total 280, 50 percent are interviewed, which is 140, including one additional respondent who keenly requested to be interviewed. The total number of inmates interviewed was 141.

### **3.7 Operationalization of Concepts**

Operationalization of concepts is the process of turning abstract concepts into measurable observations in relation to the research topic. For this research, the following concepts are taken and operationalized as follows:

- **Crime:** A crime is held to be an offense that goes beyond the personal and into the public sphere, breaking prohibitory rules or laws, to which legitimate punishments or sanctions are attached, and that requires the intervention of a public authority. It is an offense committed that breaks the norms of society and is punished by legal sanctions. The legal definition of crime may sometimes be insufficient because the idea of crime in a society is very much socially constructed and highly relative, which can be highly influenced by the ideas of morality, religious faith, and scientific reasons.
- **Penology:** Literally, penology is the study management and punishment of criminals. It is the division of criminology that concerns itself with the philosophy and practice of society in its efforts to repress criminal activities. It deals with the treatment of prisoners and the subsequent rehabilitation of convicted criminals. It also redefined prisons as a correctional rather than a retributive establishment.
- **Inmate Life:** Basically, inmate life refers to those who are confined within a particular place for their misconduct. For this research, an inmate refers to a woman who is confined within the prison. Inmate life denotes the study of the lives and experiences of incarcerated women prisoners.
- **Incarceration:** Incarceration means a state of being confined within a prison; imprisonment. It is a process of being institutionalized by a carceral organization, such as the prison service, in a prison that isolates inmates from the wider society. It represents the consequences of illegal activities.
- **Prison:** Basically, a prison is a building in which people are legally held as a punishment for a crime they have committed or while awaiting trial. It can also denote a place in which criminals (that individuals who do not conform to the norms of society) are forced to live as a punishment.
- **Women prisoners:** Women prisoners literally means women who are confined to imprisonment because of their deviant behaviour. They constitute the minority in the prison population as compared to male prisoners. Although they represent the minority, the population of incarcerated women is growing at a rate twice as fast as the male prison population. The crimes committed by women prisoners differ

in the degree of severity; as such, they continue to be treated differently by the criminal justice system. In response, separate prisons are created for incarcerated women.

- **Habitual offenders:** Habitual offenders are individuals who repeatedly engage in criminal behaviour and are frequently involved in unlawful activities. These individuals often have a long history of arrests or convictions, indicating a persistent pattern of illegal conduct. In the legal and criminal justice system, they are described as people who continually violate the law despite previous punishment or rehabilitation attempts.
- **UTP:** Undertrial prisoners (UTP) are individuals who have been accused of a crime and are detained in jail while awaiting trial or legal proceedings. They have not yet been convicted or acquitted, which means they are still presumed innocent under the law. However, due to various reasons, they remain incarcerated without having undergone a full trial or received a judgment. However, in practice, they may spend long periods in jail due to delays in the legal process. In many cases, undertrials may be eligible for bail, but due to financial constraints or the nature of the charges, they may be unable to secure release. One of the biggest issues facing undertrial prisoners is the delay in the judicial process. Factors such as an overburdened judiciary, lack of legal representation, or procedural inefficiencies contribute to their prolonged detention. The prolonged detention of undertrial prisoners raises serious human rights issues. Many undertrials languish in overcrowded prisons under poor conditions, which can lead to physical and mental health problems. This violates their basic rights, including the right to a speedy trial.
- **Convict:** A convict is a person who has been found guilty of a crime by a court of law and is sentenced to a punishment, typically involving imprisonment, fines, probation, or other legal penalties. Unlike an undertrial prisoner, who is still awaiting a verdict, a convict has undergone a legal trial and has been judged culpable for the offense they were charged with. Once convicted, the person is sentenced based on the nature and severity of the crime. The sentence may

include imprisonment, probation, community service, fines, or other penalties as prescribed by the law.

### **3.8 Pilot Study**

After completion of the review of the literature, questions for the interview schedule were framed, which were to be tested in the field at the initial stage of the pilot study. The pilot study included two visits to the prison setting. Four respondents were interviewed using the first draft during the pilot study. Several changes were made to the interview schedule after the pilot study. The first draft of the interview schedule started with questions related to the causes of imprisonment, which is the first objective of the study, and was followed by the socio-economic profile of the respondents. However, when I went to the field and interviewed the respondents, it was inappropriate to directly start with questions related to the causes without knowing the general profile of the respondents. So, after the pilot study, the sequence of the interview schedule was changed. After discussing with my supervisor, the first set of questions began with questions related to the socio-economic profile of the respondents, followed by questions related to the causes of imprisonment. Several questions were added, and some were deleted from the interview schedule since they are not relevant. On the second day of the pilot study, a few more questions were added, and the final draft of the interview schedule consisted of 113 closed-ended questions and 13 open-ended questions. The questions are framed in such a way as to meet the demands of the objectives of this research.

### **3.9 Sources of Data**

The two main sources of data, which are primary and secondary sources, are used for this research.

**3.9.1 Primary Data:** Primary data includes interview schedules, observation, and case study methods. It refers to first-hand information that is obtained by the researcher himself/herself from the field. This research collects primary data from the field itself through an interview schedule by interviewing the incarcerated women. Besides this, the Key Informant Interview (KII) schedule is utilized to get insight from prison officials, GOs, and NGOs. It also relies on observation in the field by

observing the daily routine of the prisoners and the institutional facilities available within the prison itself. An in-depth study is also conducted through a case study method with selected respondents.

**3.9.2 Secondary Data:** Secondary sources of data are those data that are obtained from published or collected data by another person. For this research, secondary sources of data are obtained from secondary sources like case history reports, prison records, unpublished theses, articles, journals, books, magazines, newspapers, and diaries, NCRB, Prison Records, Directorate of Prisons, and files.

### **3.10 Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Data analysis is a process of ordering, categorizing, manipulating, and summarizing data to obtain answers to research questions.

The cases collected through interviews, observation, and case study are classified and analysed. Transcriptions of the open-ended questions of the interview schedule and case studies are made, followed by classification of the respondents' answers based on the objectives of the study. After this, coding of the closed-ended question is done in an Excel Sheet, which is fed into SPSS for analysis, followed by drawing conclusions and suggestions for the study.

### **3.11 Field Experience**

Visited Central Women's Jail on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2023, and was warmly welcomed by the senior Head Warder of the prison. Before entering the prisoners' ward, phones have to be submitted. They put a seal on the wrist as an identification for an outsider. The environment was calm and peaceful, not like the prison we see in movies. The prison setting looks more or less like a Hostel, and the prison staff are all welcoming. The wards and the surroundings were clean and neat. Some of them are sleeping, sitting outside on the verandah, chit-chatting with their inmates, playing cards, and watching Television. There are children in some wards, and each ward is overcrowded. They are all polite and show respect to visitors.

There are nine wards inside Central Women's Jail, and each ward differs in many ways. Most of the inmates in each ward are welcoming, but in some wards, the

researcher encountered inmates who were not responsive. Once, an inmate said, “If it’s not meant for us to be released, I am not interested in being interviewed”. In one of the wards, all the inmates are interested in being interviewed, and they even call their friends who went out to do chores for the interview. A common issue and anger they have in this ward relates to some of their inmates who faced physical abuse either from CADS or the Excise and Narcotics when they were captured. One respondent said, “I can’t even walk by myself when I enter the prison, my body aches, and I can’t even sleep at night”.

The respondents differ a lot in the way they deal with their experiences in prison. For some, it’s a door to new life. They admit their mistakes and repent. But for the majority, it’s a place of remorse, frustration, and loneliness. One respondent said, “There is nothing positive inside the prison, it’s a place to learn bad habits and words, we are treated like animals”. The majority of the inmates, when asked how they spent their time inside the jail, the most common answer is “We just sat in our rooms and there was nothing to do”. That’s what they are doing every time they are visited. Their longing desire to meet their children and relatives haunts them every hour. They could use the telephone twice a week for only three minutes. Visiting time is barely 2-3 mins, and inmates from outside Aizawl didn’t even have visitors for months. Money, space, time, food, leisure, and whatnot, to mention everything, are a struggle inside the jail. One respondent said, “Being sick inside the jail is the worst experience for me; the medical staff often accused us of faking our sickness, and it’s hard to get medicine when needed”. Many said that there is discrimination between the rich and poor in the way some of the staff treat them.

The authorities are understaffed since the number of prisoners is increasing every day. The actual capacity is 96; however, on average, there are always 250-300 inmates. The Jailor also said that it was difficult to manage them. Mothers who accompany their children suffer the most inside the prison; they have to take care of their toddlers and protect them every minute so that they are not a nuisance to others. The playroom for children could not even function properly. They have a library that could not function at all. When asked, the staff said that we are waiting for donations to rebuild their library. The overall discipline, a senior inmate said that they try their

best to renovate their library to function normally, but till the last day of my fieldwork, there has been no progress.

### **3.12 Ethical Issues**

The following research ethics will be followed, which is based on the norms and regulations of Social Science Research:

1. This study is mainly for academic research, and this is fulfilled till the end of the research.
2. The researcher interviewed the respondent only when valid approval was received from the concerned authorities, i.e., from the Directorate of Prisons, Government of Mizoram.
3. The researcher maintained a good rapport with the respondents and did not force any respondents or prompt them to give answers. The willingness and consent of the respondent are of utmost priority. Without the direct consent of the respondent, the interview was not conducted.
4. Confidentiality of the research work and respect for the privacy of the respondents are strictly maintained throughout the fieldwork.
5. Respondents are interviewed only after prior notice informing them of the date, time, and place of the interview.
6. The researcher is punctual, maintains strict discipline, and is empathetic throughout the interview session.
7. The secondary data, which are collected from the works of others, are properly cited throughout the research.
8. The researcher avoided any sort of misleading or false information and did not exaggerate any of the information obtained from primary sources.
9. The researcher respects the respondents and takes their consent before every interview with utmost sincerity and modesty.



10. The researcher used AI tools such as Grammarly and Quill Bot to improve the writing of the thesis.
11. Approval letter from the Human Ethics Committee, Mizoram University, was received on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2023 after the presentation of the synopsis to the Ethics Committee. The Chairman of the Institutional Human Ethics Committee is Dr. John Zohmingthanga, MBBS, MD (Path), Deputy Medical Superintendent, Civil Hospital, Aizawl, Mizoram.

### **3.13 Limitations of the Study**

The following are the limitations of the study:

1. Since the study is within the premises of strict law and order under the Government. It took time to get permission to do regular field visits and observations.
2. There are times when access to the prison is strictly prohibited during fieldwork due to internal problems and programmes.
3. It is also difficult to get the correct information and experiences of the inmates under strict surveillance.
4. Problems also arise regarding the consent of the respondents for the interview, since some of them avoided being interviewed.
5. Regular visits and observation are necessary to build a good rapport with the respondents, for which time is limited.

### **3.14 Chapter Plan**

1. Introduction
2. Review of literature
3. Methodology
4. Socio-economic profile
5. Etiology of Female Criminality
6. Effects of Incarceration on Women
7. Summary and Conclusion

**CHAPTER -IV**  
**SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE STUDY POPULATION**

- 4.1. Introduction**
- 4.2. Age**
- 4.3. Marital Status**
- 4.4. Nature of Family**
- 4.5. Residential Status**
- 4.6. Educational Qualifications**
- 4.7. Monthly Income**
- 4.8. Household Asset**
- 4.9. Religion and Community**
- 4.10. Pre- incarceration status**
- 4.11. Nature of Imprisonment**
- 4.12. An Overview**

## **CHAPTER -IV**

### **SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE STUDY POPULATION**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter highlights the socio-economic status of the women prisoners who are the major subject of this study. A socio-economic profile is an extensive overview of the social and economic attributes of individuals, communities, or regions. It offers essential insights on variables including income, education, work, health, housing, and resource accessibility. Comprehending a socio-economic profile aid in evaluating the welfare and developmental prospects of a group, while also pinpointing social disparities (Kumar, 2019; Sen, 1999). Hence, the socio-economic profile provides a comprehensive overview of the living conditions and opportunities accessible to them. This chapter is discussed under the following heads: age, duration of imprisonment, nature of imprisonment, type of offense committed, availability of lawyer, awareness of rights and duties as a prisoner, recidivism, marital status, extent of marriage, no. of children, residence, type of house, owned house/rented house, educational qualifications, dropout rate from school, religion, denomination, community, type of family, no. of family members, no. of working hands in the family, no. of dependents in the family, monthly income of family, type of ration card, household assets owned, type of vehicles owned, property inherited from family, job before being in jail, participation in church activities before imprisonment, participation in YMA before imprisonment.

#### **4.2. Age**

Age, it has been said, is a “brute fact of criminology” (Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1983, p.552). The phenomenon referred to as the “age–crime curve” exemplifies this reality, as practically all criminal activities have reached their peak during late adolescence and subsequently declined (Rocque et al., 2015).

Age is a significant variable in studies across various disciplines. The importance of age in study arises from its impact on numerous biological, psychological, and social elements (Cohen et al., 2018). Age assists researchers in understanding patterns,

trends, and disparities across various life phases, facilitating a deeper comprehension of human behaviour, development, and requirements.

Age is a crucial variable in criminological research, as it affects both the probability of engaging in criminal behaviour and the nature of the offenses perpetrated (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). The examination of age concerning criminality aids criminologists in comprehending the heightened susceptibility of younger persons to engage in criminal conduct, the reduction of crime rates with advancing age, and the formulation of efficient crime prevention and rehabilitation techniques customized for various age demographics. Investigating the correlation between age and crime enables academics to more effectively tackle the intricate social, economic, and psychological determinants that influence criminal conduct throughout their lifetime.

The age distribution of the sample respondents is shown in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1 Age**

| <b>In years</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-----------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>15-25</b>    | 23               | 16.3                  |
| <b>25-35</b>    | 47               | 33.3                  |
| <b>35-45</b>    | 47               | 33.3                  |
| <b>45-55</b>    | 17               | 12.1                  |
| <b>55-65</b>    | 5                | 3.5                   |
| <b>65-75</b>    | 2                | 1.4                   |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

It is shown that the age of the respondents ranged from 18 years, the youngest, and 73 years, the oldest. Based on the lowest and the highest age of the respondents, the age group was classified into six class intervals: 15-25, 25-35, 35-45, 45-55, 55-65, 65-75 years.

The highest number of inmates lies in the age range between 25-35 years, which is 47 (33.3 %), and 35-45 years, which is 47 (33.3 %). In combination, these two groups represent 66.6 per cent of the total respondents, indicating that two-thirds of

the respondents fall between the ages of 25 and 45 years. This suggests that the concentration of women inmates falls within mid-adult working and child-rearing years. This can have significant implications as it can disrupt family structure, economic roles, and care responsibilities.

The next highest range is followed by the age range between 15-25 years, which is 23 (16.3%). This may indicate vulnerabilities to early criminal involvement stemming from poverty, inadequate education, exploitation, or affiliation with criminal networks. The representation declines rapidly as the age goes higher, i.e., 45-55 (12.1%), 55-65 (3.5%), and 65-75 (1.4%). This could indicate that women are less likely to be involved in crime as they age. 45-75 years constitute only 17 per cent of the total respondents.

The findings align closely with the age–crime curve, a well-established concept in criminology that demonstrates how the tendency to engage in criminal activity generally peaks during late adolescence and early adulthood and gradually declines with age (Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1983; Farrington, 1986). In this study, the majority of women inmates, 66.6 per cent between 25 and 45 years fall within this high-risk age range. This reflects the period of life when individuals are socially and economically active, often facing multiple pressures related to employment, relationships, and family responsibilities. Such factors may contribute to heightened vulnerability to criminal involvement during these mid-adult years.

The smaller proportion of inmates aged 45 years and above (17%) supports the downward slope of the age–crime curve, which shows that criminal involvement tends to decrease as individuals age due to greater social stability, emotional maturity, and reduced exposure to risk environments (Steffensmeier & Allan, 1996). Similarly, the presence of younger inmates aged 15–25 years (16.3%) represents the early peak phase of the curve, suggesting that youthful impulsivity, economic insecurity, and peer influences may play significant roles in early criminal behaviour.

#### **4.3. Marital Status**

Marital status has been used as a significant element to have a better understanding of the manner in which women become involved in criminal activity and

imprisonment. According to several studies, the experiences of divorce, widowhood, and separation frequently result in vulnerabilities such as mental stress, financial difficulties, and less social support, all of which raise the possibility that women may engage in illicit activities (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2013; Tripathi & Yadav, 2021). Women are more vulnerable to survival crimes, drug misuse, and other deviant coping techniques as a result of the fact that these positions frequently remove them from reliable support networks (Belknap, 2015). According to Huebner (2010), when incarcerated, women who were married at the time of their imprisonment frequently experienced interruptions that had a severe impact on the stability of their families, with repercussions for their dependent children and homes. Marriage can serve as a source of vulnerability for women rather than a source of safety; it can expose them to various forms of coercion, victimization, and domestic violence, all of which are contributing factors to women's engagement in criminal activity (Jewkes et al., 2019).

Divorce and separation can elevate stress, financial burden, and mental instability, which are linked to a heightened likelihood of criminal activity. Studies indicate that divorced persons may exhibit a higher tendency to engage in specific criminal behaviours, especially when confronted with financial difficulties. Divorce and separation are also correlated with a heightened risk of substance usage, perhaps resulting in drug-related offenses or other criminal activities. Additionally, widows and divorcees are frequently left without any sort of social or financial security, which increases their likelihood of committing crimes compared to their married or single peers (Bucerius, 2022).

**Table 4.2 Marital Status**

| <b>Marital Status</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-----------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Unmarried</b>      | 13               | 9.2                   |
| <b>Married</b>        | 50               | 35.5                  |
| <b>Divorced</b>       | 51               | 36.2                  |
| <b>Widowed</b>        | 27               | 19.1                  |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

A significant portion of the respondents are divorced (36.2 %) or widowed (19.1%), together making up 55.3 per cent of the total sample. This indicates a probable correlation between separation from spouse and a greater vulnerability to criminal engagement, which might result from mental instability, social isolation, or financial hardship.

Whereas 50 (35.5%) consisted of married inmates, indicating that a substantial number of inmates face legal issues while they play an important part in their families. Their being in prison could have serious consequences for their dependent children and household stability; this could also raise concerns about the impact of imprisonment on their family.

Merely 9.2 per cent of inmates are single, indicating that the majority of acts or circumstances resulting in incarceration might happen later in life or be influenced by relational problems, such marital discord, domestic violence, or abandonment.

A high proportion of divorced and widowed inmates suggests a correlation between marital instability and increased likelihood of criminal behaviour. Divorced and widowed constitute more than 50 percent of the total inmates, which is 55.3 percent. This suggests that more than 50 percent of the inmates are without partners. This reflects the fact that criminal behaviour is more prevalent among individuals who have experienced divorce or are separated from their partners.

The data indicates that marital instability, domestic violence, or economic dependency may contribute to women's involvement in criminal activities. Divorced and widowed women may be devoid of the social support systems that might prevent criminal conduct or offer alternatives to imprisonment.

#### **4.3.1 Extent of marriage**

The marital status will also focus on the extent of marriage, which is also a crucial factor in studying marriage, as studies have shown that women committing crimes tend to be either divorced or separated from their partners and are usually economically unstable, further, children are usually their responsibility when they are

divorced or separated. This burden tends to lead them to commit criminal activities. Research indicates that there is frequently a connection between child-rearing obligations and long-term marital partnerships, which increases the financial and emotional loads placed on women, particularly in the case of desertion or abuse (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2013). To provide for their children in the lack of assistance from their spouses, women who continue to remain in long-lasting, unstable marriages may resort to survival crimes, which might include the act of stealing or the trafficking of drugs (Tripathi & Yadav, 2021). Research also suggests that short-term marriages, which are those that endure fewer than five years, are generally indicative of early marital breakdowns, which are characterized by factors such as domestic abuse, uncertain income, and incompatibility (Carlen, 1998; Raghavan, 2020). These early failures can serve as significant catalysts for women's journeys into jail, since early separation or divorce exacerbates economic instability and psychological misery.

**Table. 4.3 Extent of marriage**

| <b>In years</b>          | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>1-2 years</b>         | 18               | 12.8                  |
| <b>3-4 years</b>         | 10               | 7.1                   |
| <b>2-3 years</b>         | 14               | 9.9                   |
| <b>More than 4 years</b> | 86               | 61.0                  |
| <b>Unmarried</b>         | 13               | 9.2                   |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As shown in the table, a majority (61.0%) of the women have been married for more than 4 years. This suggests that numerous women were engaged in long-term marriages before jail, potentially indicating difficulties such as domestic conflict, continuous abuse, or family-related crimes developing over time. A combined 29.8% of women had marriages lasting 4 years or less, i.e., 1–2 years (12.8%), 2–3 years (9.9%), 3–4 years (7.1%). Short-term marriages may indicate premature failures in marital relationships, maybe attributable to domestic abuse, incompatibility, or



economic strain, which may have impacted their paths into the criminal justice system. 9.2% of respondents are unmarried, consistent with the marital status data. This group may comprise women whose offenses were not associated with marital concerns.

From the above table, it is shown that prolonged marriages do not inherently protect women from engaging in criminal activities. Prolonged exposure to toxic relationships, abuse, or economic dependency may ultimately result in conflict-related crimes or crimes related to the sale of drugs. Married women, regardless of the duration of their marriage, may experience a deficiency in institutional assistance, including legal remedies, mental health services, or financial autonomy, which can result in criminal behaviour as a means of coping or survival.

The extent of marriage among female inmates indicates that the majority have engaged in prolonged marital unions. This undermines the presumption that female criminals are predominantly young, unmarried, or socially isolated, highlighting the intricate relationship between marriage, social roles, and women's incarceration.

#### **4.4. Nature of family**

The type of family determines whether the family is nuclear or joint. A nuclear family refers to a family unit consisting of parents and their unmarried children living in the same household and a joint family refers to an extended family that comprises two or more generations living in the same household (Parsons & Bales, 1955). In a household with many families living in small or overcrowded housing, stress levels can increase, and social tensions can escalate. Overcrowding can make it more difficult to supervise children, leading to a higher likelihood of delinquency or criminal behaviour. Additionally, in overcrowded areas, neighbours may be less likely to intervene in or report criminal activities, as there may be more anonymity and less social cohesion (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997). Under the nature of the family, several variables, including the number of family members, the number of children, and the number of earning and dependent family members, will be taken into consideration.

**Table 4.4 Nature of family**

| <b>Type of family</b>  | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Extended family</b> | 54               | 38.3                  |
| <b>Nuclear family</b>  | 87               | 61.7                  |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field survey

From the above table 4.4, a significant 61.7 per cent of the women prisoners come from nuclear families, while 38.3 per cent of the women come from joint families, where traditionally, a wider support system exists through extended family members. In nuclear families, women have less social and emotional support, especially during marital conflict or economic hardship, which can increase their vulnerability to criminal involvement. They have more responsibilities in managing domestic, financial, and emotional roles within the family; this could be an extra burden for the individuals.

The evidence indicates that family structure significantly influences women's lived experiences, coping strategies, and potential paths toward incarceration. Comprehending the characteristics of familial backgrounds is essential for formulating specialized rehabilitation programs, mental health assistance, and preventive social interventions for female inmates. Under the nature of the family, the number of family members, the number of children, the number of working hands in the family, and the number of dependents in the family will be considered.

Considering the number of families is important, as some studies suggest that larger families, especially those with more children, may have higher rates of delinquency among children. This can be due to the difficulties in providing attention, supervision, and resources to each child. Larger families may also be associated with lower income, which increases the risk of children engaging in criminal activity to fulfil unmet needs. While smaller families may provide more resources and attention to each child, there is also research suggesting that smaller families, particularly those with only one child, may experience greater stress in cases of high parental

expectations or overprotection. The dynamics of these families can sometimes lead to issues with socialization, leading to potential behavioural problems in children.

**Table. 4.5 Number of family members**

| <b>In numbers</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>0-5</b>        | 104              | 73.8                  |
| <b>5-10</b>       | 33               | 23.4                  |
| <b>10-15</b>      | 4                | 2.8                   |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field survey

As indicated in the above table, the number of family members is categorized into three groups: family members between 0-5, 5-10, and 10-15. As shown in the table, a dominant 73.8 per cent of the women prisoners belong to families with 0-5 members, suggesting that small family units are common. This aligns with the earlier finding that 61.7 per cent of respondents come from nuclear families, where smaller household sizes are typical. Smaller families may also imply fewer support systems during times of crisis or legal issues, increasing vulnerability.

23.4 per cent of respondents have moderately large families. These may reflect joint or extended family living arrangements, though less common. In such families, internal conflicts, inheritance disputes, or domestic pressure may contribute to legal involvement. Only 2.8 per cent of women come from very large families, indicating that traditional large joint family systems are rare among the respondents.

Larger families may provide emotional and economic support, although they can also be sources of marital conflict, particularly for women who frequently hold subordinate positions within patriarchal family structures. In smaller families, isolation, economic dependence, and insufficient support may compel women into circumstances that lead to incarceration. The data indicate that most women prisoners come from small-sized families, which often correlates with nuclear living arrangements and limited support systems

The number of children responsible for being taken care of by their parents is important in studying criminal behavior, especially among women. In any case of divorce or separation, children are usually in the hands of the mother; in such cases, if the mother is unemployed, the burden to meet the needs of the children solely depends on the unemployed mother. The burden of taking care of their children often tends to force women to engage in criminal activities. The economic instability, the burden to meet the needs of their children, and the well-being of their children tend to be the causes of mothers committing crimes by mothers.

**Table. 4.6 Having children**

| <b>Having Children</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>             | 125              | 88.7                  |
| <b>No</b>              | 16               | 11.3                  |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As shown in the above table, a striking 88.7 per cent of women prisoners have children, indicating that most incarcerated women are mothers. This emphasizes the extensive social consequences of women's incarceration, especially for dependent children who may have emotional, educational, and economic difficulties resulting from the absence of their primary caregiver. Only 11.3 per cent are without bearing children. This small group of women includes younger women and unmarried individuals.

The high rate of motherhood among incarcerated individuals highlights the necessity to investigate the impact of maternal imprisonment on the stability of the family, especially for the welfare of children left behind.

The number of income-generating persons inside the household is a significant consideration. If the number of earners in the family is less as compared to the family size, it can lead to financial strain. Larger families, particularly those with many children, often face greater financial strain, especially in low-income households. Economic stress can lead to frustration and a feeling of hopelessness, which may increase the likelihood of crime. In particular, children in economically

disadvantaged families may turn to crime or delinquency due to a lack of resources, education, or job opportunities.

**Table 4.7 Number of earning members in the family**

| <b>In Numbers</b>  | <b>Number of earning members<br/>Frequency (%)</b> | <b>Number of dependents<br/>Frequency (%)</b> |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| <b>None</b>        | 5 (3.5)                                            | 18 (12.8)                                     |
| <b>One</b>         | 55 (39.0)                                          | 17 (12.1)                                     |
| <b>Two</b>         | 40 (28.4)                                          | 33 (23.4)                                     |
| <b>Three</b>       | 32 (22.7)                                          | 33 (23.4)                                     |
| <b>More than 3</b> | 9 (6.4)                                            | 40 (28.4)                                     |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>141 (100.0)</b>                                 | <b>141 (100.0)</b>                            |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in the above table, the largest group (39.0%) reported only one working member in the family. This indicates a high degree of economic dependency, likely leading to financial stress, a known risk factor for conflict, vulnerability, and involvement in crime. 28.4 per cent have two working hands, and 22.7 per cent have three, showing that about half of the families (51.1%) have multiple income earners. While better off than single-income families, these families may still struggle to meet basic needs, particularly in larger households.

Only 3.5 per cent of families have no working hands, reflecting extreme economic vulnerability or complete dependency on external aid or illegal means. Just 6.4 per cent reported more than three working members, indicating that financial stability is rare among these households.

The data indicate that the majority of female inmates originate from financially disadvantaged families, with a significant proportion depending on a single income earner. This economic adversity undoubtedly contributes to the socioeconomic vulnerability that overlaps with their pathways toward incarceration.

Likewise, if the number of dependents is more compared to the number of earners in the family, it signifies that the family is economically unstable. The family members

might lack basic necessities of life, including financial and emotional support. This can lead to frustration for the earner as well as the dependent in the family, which can lead to criminal activities among the family members.

The largest group (28.4%) of respondents reported having more than three dependents in the family. This suggests a significant economic and caregiving burden, which could contribute to stress, conflict, or involvement in criminal activities to meet basic needs.

46.8 per cent of women have two or three dependents, showing that nearly three-fourths (70.2%) of the respondents bear moderate to high family responsibility. This reinforces their role as central figures in family survival, often with limited support or resources. 2.8 per cent reported having no dependents, and 12.1 per cent had just one.

The presence of multiple dependents increases pressure on women, especially when combined with limited income sources (as shown in previous tables). This can lead to desperation-driven offenses such as theft, fraud, or involvement in illicit trade. The data also affirms that a significant number of incarcerated women were likely primary caregivers, and their absence may disrupt family life, especially for children and elderly dependents. This data highlights the significant familial obligations shouldered by the majority of female inmates, especially the substantial percentage having three or more dependents. These obligations frequently converge with economic adversity, establishing a cycle of stress, marginalization, and criminalization.

An analysis of the types of families that female inmates originate from indicates that the vast majority of them, or 61.7 percent, are members of nuclear families, whereas 38.3 percent are members of joint or extended families. Women are more vulnerable during times of conflict or suffering because nuclear family arrangements, although smaller, sometimes provide less social and emotional support. The size of the family is another important factor; 73.8 percent of the respondents are members of households that contain between zero and five persons, which demonstrates the prevalence of small family units.

The fact that a significant percentage of jailed women (88.7%) are mothers highlights the larger societal consequences of their imprisonment, especially for the dependent children who face emotional and economic disturbance as a result. Economic conditions further aggravate these issues; the majority of families are dependent on a single earning member (39.0%), but a large percentage confront high dependence ratios, with over 70 per cent of women having at least two or more dependents.

These findings emphasize the fact that women inmates frequently bear the burden of significant family obligations in environments that are characterized by a scarcity of assistance and economic instability. Pathways that lead to criminal activity may be influenced by demands of this nature, which are compounded by the strains of financial hardship and caregiving responsibilities.

#### **4.5. Residential Status**

Under this, the residence, their present address, whether it is rural or urban, the district in which their present address is located, whether they own a house or stay in a rented house, and the type of house they reside in are taken into consideration. As this will suffice for the economic status of the individuals.

Residence, defined as an individual's place of living, significantly correlates with crime, as numerous factors associated with residential location, such as neighbourhood attributes, housing standards, and community solidarity, can affect both criminal conduct and victimization (Shaw & McKay, 1942; Sampson et al, 1997). Criminologists examine these aspects to comprehend the variations in crime rates across different regions and the influence of residential environments on individuals' likelihood of perpetrating or experiencing crime. Regions characterized by elevated poverty, unemployment, and restricted access to resources typically exhibit increased crime rates. Economic hardship can induce stress and tension, which, as per strain theory, may drive individuals towards criminal behaviour, particularly financially motivated crimes (Merton, 1938). Urban locations with high population density typically exhibit elevated crime rates compared to suburban or rural regions. Urban environments present increased potential for criminal activity

owing to elevated population densities, anonymity, and closely situated residential and commercial areas.

**Table 4.8 Residential Status**

| Rural         | Urban         | Total         | East Districts | West Districts | North Districts | South Districts | Outside Mizoram | Total         |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Frequency (%) | Frequency (%) | Frequency (%) | Frequency (%)  | Frequency (%)  | Frequency (%)   | Frequency (%)   | Frequency (%)   | Frequency (%) |
| 56 (39.7)     | 85 (60.3)     | 141(100)      | 8 (5.7)        | 1 (0.7)        | 114 (80.9)      | 6 (4.2)         | 12 (8.5)        | 141 (100)     |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in the table above, the respondents' present address is considered. A significant majority (60.3%) of the women in jail are from urban areas, while (39.7%) come from rural areas. This suggests that urban areas contribute more to the prison population of women, which could relate to increased visibility and law enforcement in urban areas, increased socio-economic pressures, or urban crimes, and potential migration of women from rural to urban areas, resulting in heightened vulnerability. Although rural regions frequently exhibit lower socio-economic status, the greater urban representation indicates urban offences such as drug-related crime. Urban women may have distinct obstacles, including insufficient support systems and job-related pressures.

The district-wise residence is subdivided into four major zones, including East District, which consists of Khawzawl and Serchhip districts, West District, which consists of Mamit district, North District, which consists of four districts, namely, Aizawl, Champhai, Kolasib and Saitual. South district consists of four districts, namely Hnahthial, Lunglei, Lawngtlai and Saiha. Those living outside Mizoram are also taken into consideration.



From the above table, an overwhelming 80.9 per cent of the women come from the North District(s), making it the primary source of incarcerated women. East, South, and West Districts contribute marginally (East: 5.7%, South: 4.2%, West: 0.7%), showing very low prison population representation. Outside Mizoram accounts for 8.5 per cent, which is notable and may point to migration from other states as refugees, which is a heightened problem Mizoram is facing recently.

The fact that over four-fifths of the women come from a single region (North Districts) calls for a focused investigation into local socio-economic, cultural, or criminal factors affecting women in that area. The North district consists of the capital district Aizawl which is the most populous as compared to other districts. Champhai is also one of the biggest districts in Mizoram, and it lies on the border of neighbouring Myanmar, Saitual district also lies on the border of Myanmar. Kolasib district also shares a border with neighbouring Assam. This suggests that the majority of the women inmates live in border areas that are vulnerable and major drug trafficking routes within the State.

#### **4.5.1 Type of house**

Areas with elevated homeownership rates generally exhibit reduced crime rates. Homeowners typically possess a greater interest in the safety and quality of life within the community, prompting them to uphold property standards and engage in safety measures (Sampson & Groves, 1989). Whereas, areas with higher percentages of rental homes may encounter increased crime rates. Tenants may demonstrate reduced dedication to the community, and property owners may lack the incentive to improve security or properly screen tenants, perhaps attracting higher-risk individuals (Kirk & Laub, 2010).

**Table 4.9 Owned house/ Rented House and Type of House**

| <b>House<br/>Rented</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage<br/>(%)</b> | <b>Type of House</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage<br/>(%)</b> |
|-------------------------|------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Owned</b>            | 71               | 50.4                      | Kutcha               | 68               | 48.2                      |
| <b>Rented</b>           | 70               | 49.6                      | Semi- Kutcha         | 12               | 8.5                       |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>              | Pucca                | 60               | 42.6                      |
|                         |                  |                           | Homeless             | 1                | .7                        |
|                         |                  |                           | <b>Total</b>         | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>              |

Source: Field Survey

As the above table indicates, 50.4 per cent of the women prisoners have their own house, which is almost similar to the number of inmates who live in a rented house, constituting 49.6 per cent. This indicates a lack of substantial prevalence of either housing type among the respondents. Those who live in their own house can be regarded as an indicator of relative economic stability. The fact that roughly half of the women had owned homes indicates a varied socioeconomic background. The nearly equal distribution suggests that criminal conduct may not be confined solely to economically disadvantaged populations.

As shown in the previous table, the rural-urban divide among the inmates shows that a significant 60.3 per cent are from urban areas, which is more than half of the total respondents. Urban areas are considered to be more economically stable than rural areas. This could indicate an even proportion between female inmates who owned homes and those who rented, suggesting a diverse socioeconomic profile.

As the above table shows, there is an almost equal distribution of owned houses and rented houses among the respondents. The type of house could determine a more specific economic status of an individual. Poor housing conditions and inadequately maintained structures are frequently associated with higher crime rates. Such situations may indicate neglect or insufficient investment, hence inviting criminal activities. Public housing developments frequently exhibit elevated crime rates compared to privately owned properties. This is occasionally attributable to elevated

poverty levels, insufficient investment in security measures, and the socioeconomic difficulties encountered by people.

The table is categorised into Kutcha house, Semi-Kutcha House, Pucca, and Homeless. Kutcha houses are built without concrete; the materials used are usually bamboo, plywood, and tiles. The cost of the houses is also cheap. Semi Kutcha is a mixture of cemented structure and bamboo, wood, or plywood. Pucca houses are, on the other hand, well-constructed dwelling houses built with bricks, cement, concrete, or timber. Homeless indicates an individual who doesn't have either a Kutcha, Semi-Kutcha, or Pucca house.

As indicated in the table above, almost fifty percent (48.2%) of the female inmates resided in kutcha houses, which are generally constructed from impermanent materials. This reflects substandard housing conditions and potentially lower economic status. The nearly equivalent distribution of owned and rented residences in the preceding table, indicative of a diverse socioeconomic background, can be elucidated by examining the household type, as 48.2 per cent reside in a Kutcha house, characterized by low construction costs.

However, a substantial percentage (42.6%) resided in pucca houses constructed from resilient materials such as bricks and cement. This implies that not all inmates originated from disadvantaged backgrounds, signifying diverse socio-economic origins. A minority (8.5%) resided in semi-permanent constructions, indicative of a transitional dwelling status between kutcha and pucca. Only one woman (0.7%) experienced homelessness. Despite the limited number, it shows the profound vulnerability and social isolation experienced by certain respondents.

Above all, a total of 56.7 per cent (kutcha and semi-kutcha) of respondents resided in substandard housing, indicating a predominant economic disadvantage. This could be a contributing factor to criminal conduct or it could correspond with inadequate access to education, healthcare, and legal assistance. The table reveals that most of the respondents lived in kutcha or semi-kutcha homes, reflecting a prevalence of poor housing conditions.

The findings show that most incarcerated women come from urban areas (60.3%), with an overwhelming concentration in the North Districts, particularly border regions vulnerable to drug trafficking routes. This suggests that geography and urban pressures play a significant role in shaping women's exposure to crime. Housing conditions further reveal the economic hardships many inmates face. Over half (56.7%) lived in kutchra or semi-kutchra houses, reflecting poor living standards and limited resources, while 42.6 per cent resided in pucca houses, showing that not all offenders came from deprived backgrounds. The small number reporting homelessness points to extreme vulnerability. Overall, the data indicate that poor housing, urban pressures, and border dynamics converge with economic instability to influence women's pathways into incarceration.

#### **4.6. Educational qualifications**

The educational qualification of the individual, as well as the dropout rates and the reasons for dropping out are taken into consideration. The relationship between educational qualification and crime is complex since education levels can greatly influence a person's likelihood of criminal conduct, the possibility of re-arrest post-release, or the risk of becoming a crime victim (Harlow, 2003; Lochner & Moretti, 2004). Higher educational attainment is typically correlated with diminished crime rates, whereas lower levels of education are frequently associated with increased crime rates. Education provides individuals with skills and qualifications that enhance their prospects of securing steady, stable employment. Employment helps alleviate economic pressure, which is frequently linked to criminal activity, especially property crimes, and economically driven offenses. It also cultivates critical thinking, emotional regulation, and problem-solving skills, enabling individuals to navigate conflicts, manage stress, and mitigate impulsive, high-risk behaviours that may result in criminal action.

The table is classified into illiterate, without having any formal education, not knowing how to read or write. The primary level of education includes classes I- IV. Below HSLC signifies till class X. HSLC is still class X. Higher Secondary indicates till class XII. Graduate and post-graduate follows:

**Table 4.10 Educational qualifications**

| <b>Educational Qualifications</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Illiterate</b>                 | 3                | 2.1                   |
| <b>Primary</b>                    | 29               | 20.6                  |
| <b>Below HSLC</b>                 | 42               | 29.8                  |
| <b>HSLC</b>                       | 35               | 24.8                  |
| <b>Higher Secondary</b>           | 27               | 19.1                  |
| <b>Graduate</b>                   | 3                | 2.1                   |
| <b>Post-graduate</b>              | 2                | 1.4                   |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field survey

As indicated in the table, the largest group is those below HSLC (29.8%), followed closely by HSLC (24.8%) and primary education (20.6%). A combined 75.2 per cent of the respondents had education up to HSLC or below (Illiterate, Primary, below HSLC, and HSLC). Only 3.5 per cent Graduate and Post-graduate, totalling 5 respondents, had a college-level education. This indicates a significantly low degree of higher educational attainment, potentially reflecting restricted access to advanced education or early school dropout. 97.9 per cent are literate, which is relatively high; only 3 women (2.1%) were illiterate. This suggests that fundamental literacy is prevalent; however, it does not inherently contribute to higher educational or employment prospects.

The educational background of the respondents is marked by minimal formal education, with around 75 per cent failing to advance beyond high school. Despite a relatively high literacy rate, advanced education is uncommon, reflecting a wider socioeconomic disadvantage. The data indicate that insufficient education is associated with susceptibility to criminal activity, potentially due to a deficiency in career opportunities, awareness, or empowerment

Studies indicate that those who discontinue high school or possess minimal educational qualifications are at an elevated risk of criminal involvement. Withdrawal from education is frequently linked to socioeconomic difficulties,

diminished employment prospects, and heightened interaction with deviant peers, all of which elevate the probability of criminal behaviour. In economically disadvantaged communities, a cycle frequently emerges wherein inadequate education results in restricted employment prospects, heightened poverty, and, consequently, elevated crime rates. Individuals with limited educational qualifications may resort to criminal activity as a strategy to address financial difficulties or the absence of relevant employment opportunities. Restricted educational possibilities and diminished academic performance can elevate the likelihood of criminal conduct, especially in underprivileged populations.

**Table 4.11 Drop-out rate from school**

| <b>Drop Out</b>   | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>        | 127              | 90.08                 |
| <b>No</b>         | 11               | 7.8                   |
| <b>Illiterate</b> | 3                | 2.12                  |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As shown in the above table, an overwhelming 90.8 per cent of the women prisoners dropped out of school before completing their education. This serves as a critical indicator of educational discontinuity, highlighting entrenched social and economic difficulties. Early departure from formal education is a common trait among the respondents. Only 11 respondents 7.8 per cent finished their education without discontinuing. This figure is exceedingly low. This indicates that educational determination is low among the respondents. The 3 women are illiterate or never enrolled in school, consistent with the 2.1 per cent illiteracy rate.

The high dropout rate aligns directly with the low levels of educational attainment. As indicated in the previous table of educational qualifications, 50.4% of respondents had education only up to primary or below HSLC. There are only 3 graduates and 2 post graduates making up to 3.5 % only. This indicates that the majority of women either did not finish secondary education or withdrew before or during the early years

of high school. Educational vulnerability is a key feature in the lives of these incarcerated women.

#### **4.7. Monthly income**

The monthly income of the individual as well as their family determines the economic condition of the family. Whether they have a stable income is a matter of concern in today's world. Studies have shown that individual tends to engage in criminal activities due to unemployment, which ultimately leads to poverty (Messner & Rosenfeld, 2001; Merton, 1938).

**Table 4.12 Monthly income of family**

| <b>Monthly Income<br/>(Rupees)</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Below 50000</b>                 | 105              | 74.5                  |
| <b>50000- 100000</b>               | 26               | 18.4                  |
| <b>100000-250000</b>               | 5                | 3.5                   |
| <b>250000 above</b>                | 5                | 3.5                   |
| <b>Total</b>                       | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

A significant majority (74.5%) of the respondents originated from households with monthly incomes below ₹50,000, reflecting widespread economic distress. About 18.4% belonged to moderately better-off families. Only 10 respondents (7%) came from higher-income families (split equally between Rs.1L–Rs.2.5L and above Rs.2.5L). The significant prevalence of low-income households, with three out of four women, indicates an extensive connection between poverty and incarceration. Financial distress may result in engagement in survival crimes, participation in the drug trade, or exploitation by others for illicit activities.

Cross-analysis of the above-mentioned variables, including educational qualifications and types of housing, clarifies a comprehensive understanding of multi-dimensional poverty. Low income aligns with high school dropout rates, which is 90.08%. 56.7% lived in kutchha or semi-kutchha houses and 50.4% lived in rented

accommodation. The data definitely indicates that poverty is a fundamental underlying issue in the lives of the majority of the respondents. Approximately 75 percent of families earn less Rs.50,000, indicating that economic marginalization is compounded by inadequate schooling and poor housing conditions.

#### 4.8. Household Asset

Household assets refer to tangible and intangible resources owned by a household. The household asset which will be taken into consideration will include household assets owned, type of vehicles owned, type of ration card owned and property inherited from the family (Kabeer, 2005). In the context of socio-economic profiling, particularly for vulnerable groups such as incarcerated women, household assets are crucial in evaluating their material well-being, stability, and status in society.

Categories under the household assets include television, refrigerator, LPG connection, washing machine, microwave oven, and computer.

**Table 4.13 Household assets owned**

| Assets Type            | Frequency (%)      |                     | Total (%)          |
|------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
|                        | Yes (%)            | No (%)              |                    |
| <b>Television</b>      | 110 (78.0%)        | 31 (22.0%)          | 141 (100%)         |
| <b>Refrigerator</b>    | 119 (84.4%)        | 22 (15.6%)          | 141 (100%)         |
| <b>LPG Connection</b>  | 131 (92.9%)        | 10 (7.1 %)          | 141 (100%)         |
| <b>Washing machine</b> | 106 (75.2 %)       | 35 (24.8 %)         | 141 (100%)         |
| <b>Microwave Oven</b>  | 14 (9.9 %)         | 127 (90.1 %)        | 141 (100 %)        |
| <b>Computer</b>        | <b>23 (16.3 %)</b> | <b>118 (83.7 %)</b> | <b>141 (100 %)</b> |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in above, basic amenities including LPG Connection (92.9%), Refrigerators (84.4%), and Television (78.0%) are owned by a large majority. This implies that basic modern household amenities are available to the majority of families, even inmates, which may indicate a minimum standard of living or access to governmental social programs. Washing Machines are owned by 75.2 per cent of the respondents, which shows relatively good penetration, indicating urban lifestyle



adoption among many. However, affordability may still be a challenge for the remaining 25% without one.

As discussed above, even though the majority of them have access to basic amenities of life. Accessibility to technological and high-end appliances are low. Microwave Ovens (9.9%) and Computers (16.3%) are owned by a very small fraction. This indicates a digital gap and restricted access to advanced technology, possibly attributable to cost, insufficient digital knowledge, or a perceived lack of necessity.

Although numerous women originate from economically disadvantaged households as indicated in the previous category, asset ownership presents a complicated scenario, which may be because many families may experience low income yet possess substantial assets. The lack of digital assets and technologically equipped assets reflects educational and skills gaps. Low computer ownership can also be related to high school drop-out rates, 90.08%, low educational attainment, and lack of exposure to digital skills.

The asset profile of the respondents indicates that, although basic household items are commonly possessed, there exists a significant gap in the ownership of advanced or digital assets, highlighting financial limitations and technological deprivation. Asset data complements income and education data, offering a comprehensive view of socioeconomic vulnerability.

The type of vehicle owned includes whether they owned any vehicle, including a four-wheeler and a two-wheeler. Owning a vehicle can determine the economic status of an individual.

As indicated in the table, more than half (58.2%) of the respondents reported owning a vehicle. This suggests that a considerable number of the respondents or their families possessed a level of mobility or economic activity that necessitated vehicle ownership. A significant 41.8% lacked vehicle ownership, indicating ongoing economic constraints or dependence on public transportation, which may be restricted or unavailable in rural or isolated regions.

Vehicle ownership serves as an indicator of household economic position and independence. Non-ownership may signify either severe poverty or rural regions characterized by limited mobility requirements or community transportation alternatives. The data indicates that 58.2% of the respondents or their homes possessed a vehicle, implying that not all originated from significantly impoverished backgrounds. Nonetheless, 41.8% of those without vehicles constitute a substantial segment encountering transportation-related difficulties, hence increasing economic and mobility inequalities within this population.

**Table 4.14 Type of Vehicle Owned**

| <b>Type of Vehicle</b>            | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Not having vehicle</b>         | 59               | 41.8                  |
| <b>Car, Scooty</b>                | 7                | 5.0                   |
| <b>Car, Bike</b>                  | 2                | 1.4                   |
| <b>Bike</b>                       | 13               | 9.2                   |
| <b>Scooty</b>                     | 36               | 25.5                  |
| <b>Scooty, Bike</b>               | 4                | 2.8                   |
| <b>Scooty, Bike, Car</b>          | 4                | 2.8                   |
| <b>Pickup, Bike, Scooty</b>       | 1                | .7                    |
| <b>Bolero</b>                     | 1                | .7                    |
| <b>Scooty Pickup</b>              | 2                | 1.4                   |
| <b>Pickup, Bike</b>               | 1                | .7                    |
| <b>Scooty, Bus</b>                | 1                | .7                    |
| <b>Bike, Sumo</b>                 | 1                | .7                    |
| <b>Scooty, pick up, bike, 207</b> | 1                | .7                    |
| <b>Sumo, Taxi</b>                 | 1                | .7                    |
| <b>Taxi, Scooty, Car</b>          | 1                | .7                    |
| <b>Pickup, car, Sumo, Scooty</b>  | 1                | .7                    |
| <b>Car</b>                        | 4                | 2.8                   |
| <b>Sumo</b>                       | 1                | .7                    |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in the above table, Scooty ownership is the most common (25.5%), followed by Bike (9.2%). Scooters and bicycles are economical, fuel-efficient, and particularly suitable for women, especially in hilly regions such as Mizoram. Only a small portion own cars (2.8%) or more expensive combinations like Sumo, Pickup, Taxi. Multi-vehicle ownership (e.g., Scooty, Bike, Car) is minimal and is likely limited to upper-income households. 12 respondents (8.5%) reported owning two or

more types of vehicles. These cases may indicate a household with a higher income background.

A considerable proportion (41.8%) remains without vehicle ownership, indicative of economic limitations, particularly when analyzed alongside low-income and rental housing data previously mentioned. Very few own vehicles like pickup trucks or taxis, which may suggest involvement in informal transport-based occupations. The prevalence of two-wheelers signifies practical ownership for everyday transportation or domestic tasks, rather than for luxury.

The vehicle ownership data indicates that 41.8% of the respondents lacked access to a vehicle, whereas the majority possessed at least one, predominantly two-wheelers. This highlights a stratified economic background, ranging from economically vulnerable to relatively mobile and semi-urban households.

The type of ration card in India includes APL (white), AAY (pink), PHH (Blue) and BPL (Yellow). These cards are based on the economic status of the households, each with its own entitlements and eligibility criteria.

**Table 4.15 Type of ration card owned**

| <b>Ration Card</b>  | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>APL (white)</b>  | 34               | 24.1                  |
| <b>AAY (Pink)</b>   | 4                | 2.8                   |
| <b>PHH (Blue)</b>   | 52               | 36.9                  |
| <b>BPL (Yellow)</b> | 14               | 9.9                   |
| <b>None</b>         | 37               | 26.2                  |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in the table above, PHH (36.9%), BPL (9.9%), and AAY (2.8%) together account for 49.6 per cent of respondents. These categories denote economically disadvantaged groups, signifying that approximately fifty percent of female inmates originate from government-recognized low-income homes. One-fourth (21.4%) of respondents have APL (white) cards, indicating households that are

officially above the poverty line, though they may still be economically strained by local standards. The APL status may indicate poor to middle-income families rather than those of affluence. Over 37 respondents, accounting for 26.2 per cent, do not possess any ration card. This group of respondents could include migrants or unregistered individuals, or those who have fallen through cracks in documentation.

The high number of respondents within PHH, BPL, and AAY cardholders can also correlate with the previously mentioned economic indicators such as 90 per cent high school dropout rates, 74.5 per cent below Rs. 50000/ month income, high share of kutchra or semi-kutchra housing and low educational attainment. The 26.2 per cent without any card highlights documentation gaps or exclusion from welfare systems, which increases their vulnerability. These individuals are at high risk of food insecurity, which may indirectly contribute to criminal behaviour.

The ration card data indicates a considerable incidence of economic disadvantage among the respondents, with approximately fifty percent officially classified as impoverished or vulnerable according to governmental criteria. Simultaneously, the presence of respondents with APL cards and others not having any card signifies a diverse spectrum of economic backgrounds, encompassing lower-middle-class households as well as marginalized and undocumented populations.

Property inheritance refers to the transfer of property (real estate, assets, or other valuables) from one individual to another, typically from a deceased person to their heirs or beneficiaries, or it can be any property inherited by an individual from their family members while they are still alive (Rosen, 2012). The process and rules regarding property inheritance can vary widely depending on the country or region, the nature of the estate, and whether the deceased person had a will or estate plan in place.

**Table 4.16 Property Inherited**

| <b>Property Inherited</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                | 15               | 10.6                  |
| <b>No</b>                 | 126              | 89.4                  |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As shown in the above table, a vast majority of 89.4 per cent did not inherit any property from their relatives or family members, pointing to a lack of generational wealth or economic legacy. This signifies that the majority of female inmates originate from households devoid of land, housing, or other inheritable assets, which is a critical indicator of poverty and vulnerability. Only 15 respondents (10.6%) inherited property. This small percentage indicates that merely a minority originates from families with stable or asset-owning backgrounds, potentially possessing better legal or familial status.

This table highlights a critical aspect of economic disadvantage affecting the respondents. With almost 90 per cent devoid of inherited assets, the data highlights their vulnerable economic condition and absence of generational support systems. The absence of assets promotes enduring poverty, diminishes empowerment, and may elevate the likelihood of criminal behaviour due to necessity or coercion.

In Mizo society, patriarchy is still high, although women are not prisoners. While the Mizo Marriage, Divorce, and Inheritance of Property Act, 2014, brings clarity to family laws in Mizoram regarding marriage, divorce, and inheritance, its implications for women's rights, especially property inheritance, deserve a critical examination. According to this Act, daughters and widows are recognized as legal heirs, which is in contrast with the early customary law that favoured only male heirs. Divorced women are now entitled to management and a share of the matrimonial property upon divorce, offering legal protection. However, in the ground reality, the Act permits the continuing influence of patriarchal customary laws, which may continue to exclude women. Courts and traditional elders frequently wield authority, resulting in inconsistent and at times biased outcomes for women. Widows

frequently obtain merely a life interest in property, rather than complete ownership. A significant number of women lack awareness of their rights or encounter cultural obstacles in claiming them. *Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl* (MHIP), one of the largest women's NGOs in Mizoram, continues in its efforts to promote gender equality and advocate women's rights, particularly concerning property inheritance issues. But unfortunately, this is yet to no avail.

#### **4.9. Religion and Community Participation**

The religion to which the individual belongs, along with their specific denomination, will be highlighted. Besides, the community to which they belong, whether ST, SC, or OBC, will be highlighted as well (Coser, 1960; Nagraj, 2010). The interplay between religion and crime is intricate, with religion frequently exhibiting a sophisticated impact on crime rates, criminal conduct, and rehabilitation efforts. Religion can offer moral guidance, cultivate communal support, and promote self-discipline, all of which correlate with lower levels of crime. The impact of religion on crime significantly differs based on the individual, the community, and the setting.

All 141 respondents (100%) are identified as Christians, showing complete religious homogeneity among the respondents in this study. This corresponds well with the religious demographics of Mizoram, where Christianity is the predominant faith, comprising nearly 87 per cent of the general population according to the 2011 Census. In Mizoram, Christianity is not just a religion, it serves as a fundamental cultural, ethical, and community foundation. This homogeneity among the respondents could also suggest that the respondents share common norms, morals, and values. They could also have potential similarities in upbringing, family structures, and societal expectations.

The complete Christian identity of female inmates in Mizoram embodies the ethno-religious homogeneity of the area. This perspective emphasizes the significance of faith and church-based interventions in facilitating psychological, social, and moral recovery. It highlights the significance of religion in community reintegration, ethical guidance, and institutional outreach initiatives following incarceration.

All 141 of the respondents are members of the Scheduled Tribe (ST) population, constituting 100 per cent of the sample. Mizoram's population is largely tribal, with over 90 per cent of its inhabitants classified as Scheduled Tribes. The demographic composition is evident in the jail population. Tribal communities, characterized by cohesive social structures, established standards, and a shared identity, exhibit distinct dynamics that influence crime and deviance. Comprehending crime within tribal societies necessitates an examination of both internal cultural factors and external impacts from modernity, legal frameworks, and governmental policies.

Since all the respondents are Christians, their religious denomination is taken into consideration, which is categorized into Presbyterian, Baptist, United Pentecostal Church, Seventh Day Adventist, Roman Catholic, Methodist and others. Others include Shalom, Salvation Army and the Isua Krista Kohhran (IKK).

**Table 4.17 Religious Denomination**

| <b>Denomination</b>              | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Presbyterian</b>              | 77               | 54.6                  |
| <b>Baptist</b>                   | 19               | 13.5                  |
| <b>United Pentecostal Church</b> | 17               | 12.1                  |
| <b>Seventh Day Adventist</b>     | 4                | 2.8                   |
| <b>Roman Catholic</b>            | 3                | 2.1                   |
| <b>Methodist</b>                 | 7                | 5.0                   |
| <b>Others</b>                    | 14               | 9.9                   |
| <b>Total</b>                     | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As shown in the above table, the Presbyterian Church is the dominant denomination, representing more than half (54.6%) of the women prisoners. This aligns with Mizoram's general population trends, where Presbyterians are the majority. Baptists (13.5%) and the United Pentecostal Church (12.1%) are the next most common denominations. Smaller representations include Seventh Day Adventist (2.8%), Roman Catholic (2.1%), and Methodist (5%) communities. The "Others" category

(9.9%) suggests a notable diversity, including Shalom, Salvation Army, Isua Krista Kohhran (IKK).

The data challenge the basic notion that religious commitment prevents criminal behavior. Women from all denominations, especially those profoundly involved in religious activity, are present in the prison population. Certain churches in Mizoram, particularly the Presbyterian and Baptist denominations, engage actively in rehabilitation, social support, and moral teaching. Their participation may be crucial for post-incarceration reintegration initiatives, particularly in a culture with a strong religious framework.

Consistent participation in religious communities cultivates social connections, mutual support, and accountability, which can diminish crime rates. A strong sense of belonging and collective efficacy within religious communities motivates members to adhere to social rules and support one another.

The Church plays a significant and multifaceted role in Mizo society. Not just contributing to the spiritual lives of its people, but also in social, cultural, educational, and political domains (Vanlalhriatpuia, 2017). The Church wields substantial moral and institutional influence. It is central to Mizo identity. Participation in Church activities is deemed to be immense respect and gratitude among the community, and members actively involved in such activities are considered to be morally right and law-abiding citizens.

Young Mizo Association is the biggest NGO in Mizoram and it caters to the needs of the society through 'tlawmngaihna' community service at its finest (Zothansanga, 2015). It acts as a patrolling agency and looks after the well-being of the community through thick and thin. Participation in community services like YMA can foster mutual support and accountability in the community they live in. Such community organizations stand to support a peaceful and safe environment and also inculcate a spirit of togetherness in the community. Participation in such activities can help individuals restrain themselves from unlawful activities. They usually strive to work for the betterment of the community and prevent commotions and crimes.



**Table 4.18 Participation in Church and Community Activities (YMA)**

| <b>Participation in Church &amp; YMA</b> | <b>Frequency (%)</b> | <b>Frequency (%)</b> |
|------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                               | 31 (22.0)            | 19 (13.5)            |
| <b>No</b>                                | 110 (78.0)           | 122 (86.5)           |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>141 (100.0)</b>   | <b>141 (100.0)</b>   |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in Table 4.18, 78 per cent of female prisoners did not participate in Church activities. Likewise, 86.5 per cent were not involved in YMA, which is one of Mizoram's most respected voluntary organizations. These figures suggest that a majority of incarcerated women were socially disconnected, which is a critical risk factor in criminal behavior. In Mizoram, the Church and the YMA serve as influential moral, cultural, and community-forming institutions. Active engagement in such activities frequently cultivates societal regulations, supportive networks, ethical responsibility, and proactive engagement in communal awareness. Nevertheless, the absence of involvement in such activities likely reflects exclusion from community life and a lack of support systems, which increases the risk of involvement in illegal activities, especially among vulnerable groups like women.

22 per cent of women engaged in Church activities may have received some moral instruction, although it was insufficient to avoid their incarceration. The notably low participation in YMA activities (13.5%) indicates a disconnection from civic and cultural community standards, which are essential in a state like Mizoram, where YMA frequently serves as a moral observer. The data indicates a significant opportunity for the Church and YMA, in which they have taken an active role, to be further studied in promoting spiritual counselling, community acceptance, and vocational or moral training. Their involvement could reduce recidivism and also help at-risk women before they enter the criminal justice system.

Above all, this indicates that female inmates in Mizoram are predominantly segregated from the core communal frameworks of the Church and YMA. This social separation may serve as both a catalyst and a result of their criminalization.

Addressing this deficiency through the promotion of inclusive involvement, particularly among marginalized women, may serve as an effective technique for crime prevention and post-release reintegration within Mizoram's distinctive cultural and religious framework.

#### **4.10. Pre-incarceration status**

Studies suggest that higher employment rates are generally associated with lower crime rates. Whether the inmates are engaging in any job before they are in prison will show the relationship between employment and crime (Raphael & Winter-Ebmer, 2001; Freeman, 1999). The type of job is divided into five categories. Self-employed people, for example, undertake street vending, selling vegetables, and selling secondhand clothes under this category. Private firm employees have their own shop or work under a private firm. Manual labourers are mostly daily wage earners or farmers. A government job indicates an individual working at a Government firm, but all are contract workers. Jobless indicates individuals without job or any engagement to earn a living.

**Table 4.19 Type of Prior Job**

| <b>Type of Prior Job</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Self- Employed</b>    | 76               | 54                    |
| <b>Private Firm</b>      | 39               | 27.6                  |
| <b>Manual Labour</b>     | 8                | 5.6                   |
| <b>Govt. Job</b>         | 3                | 2.2                   |
| <b>Jobless</b>           | 15               | 10.6                  |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

A significant proportion (76) of female inmates were engaged in self-employment, potentially encompassing informal sector activities such as street vending, selling vegetables, small-scale agriculture, or domestic services. These indicate that they are economically vulnerable and lack a stable income. Such a factor could heighten the risk of engaging in illegal activities, particularly in the border regions of Mizoram,

where smuggling and drug trafficking are widespread. A considerable proportion (27.6%) of female inmates were employed in private enterprises, likely in low-paying, unregulated environments such as retail shops or as domestic assistance. The nature of these jobs indicates inadequate legal protections and poor conditions of employment, potentially compelling persons to resort to alternative (and sometimes illegal) ways of earning a livelihood.

Women engaged in manual labour (5.6%) might be involved in agricultural work, construction, or daily wage work, reflecting physical and economic hardships. These individuals frequently lack access to legal knowledge and support systems, heightening their vulnerability to exploitation and criminal activity. Very few were employed in Government jobs (2.2%), reflecting the low level of education, as studies have shown that only 0.9 per cent of female inmates are graduates. Over 10.6% are unemployed before incarceration, which often correlates with poverty and social marginalization. These unemployed individuals will have a heightened dependency on their partners or family members, which can result in being used as a courier or accomplice in criminal activities.

The inmate's prior job status indicates that economic instability and precarious work predominantly characterize the backgrounds of female inmates in Mizoram. These variables substantially enhance their susceptibility to criminal activity. Efforts to mitigate female incarceration must focus on employment generation, skill development, and social support systems, specifically aimed at self-employed and unemployed women in vulnerable communities.

#### **4.11. Nature of imprisonment**

The nature of imprisonment pertains to the objectives, attributes, and consequences of detaining someone in prison as a punitive measure for criminal offenses (Clear, Reisig, & Cole, 2018). In the criminal justice system, the nature of imprisonment includes the detention of individuals as undertrial or convicted prisoners. Undertrial prisoners are those accused of a crime who are awaiting the outcome of their trial or legal proceedings. They have not yet been convicted and are presumed innocent unless proven guilty. The condition of undertrial prisoners is a critical concern in

numerous legal systems, affecting individual rights and the overall efficacy of the judicial process. Convicted prisoners are those individuals who are found guilty of the crimes they have committed, have undergone trial, and have been sentenced by the court.

Imprisonment is a complex and varied element of the criminal justice system. It functions as a mechanism for punishment, deterrence, rehabilitation, and protection, although it also presents considerable ethical, social, and practical challenges (Cullen, Jonson, & Nagin, 2011). Comprehending the essence of incarceration is crucial for assessing its efficacy, investigating alternatives, and guaranteeing that the system fosters justice, equity, and public safety.

It also includes duration of imprisonment, type of offense committed, availability of lawyer, awareness of rights and duties as a prisoner, and recidivism.

**Table 4.20 Nature of imprisonment**

| <b>Imprisonment</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Undertrial</b>   | 120              | 85.1                  |
| <b>Convicted</b>    | 21               | 14.9                  |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in Table 4.20, an impressive 85.1 per cent of female convicts are undertrials, indicating they have not yet been convicted by a court of law. This indicates that a significant percentage of women are imprisoned without a final judgment, which raises issues over delays in the judicial system, inadequate access to legal assistance, and extended incarceration for minor or bailable offenses. High undertrials could have several implications. They could often face uncertainty, stress, and stigma while awaiting verdicts, without clarity on the outcome of their cases. Many women may serve as primary caretakers or financial providers, and their extended pre-trial incarceration can severely impact families and children. This circumstance also presents significant human rights and legal issues, particularly in the context of Indian law, which advocates the idea of “bail, not jail” for those who have not been convicted.

There could be several possibilities for the high rate of undertrials. One significant contributor involves drug-related offences, where numerous women are arrested under the NDPS Act, frequently subjected to lengthy inquiry durations and strict bail restrictions, even for first-time or minor offenders. Low literacy or a deficit in legal understanding could hinder women's ability to navigate the court system. Numerous undertrial female inmates may also lack access to prompt or adequate legal assistance, particularly in isolated or disadvantaged regions.

While only 14.9 per cent have been formally convicted, this might again reflect slow court processes. It may also suggest that many women may have been wrongfully detained or unnecessarily held in custody. The high percentage of undertrial female inmates in Mizoram (85.1%) signifies a significant indication of systematic delays and insufficient legal support. A significant number of these women may be incarcerated without adequate justification or as a result of insufficient prompt judicial examination. This data emphasizes an immediate necessity for legal change, speedy case resolution, and support mechanisms to prevent the unfair prolongation of detention for women awaiting trial.

The number of times the respondent had been in prison denotes their chance of recidivism. Repeated offenders need to be identified as they require proper rehabilitation while they are inside the prison. It is also crucial to identify the reasons for re-offending to prevent them from being in and out of jail. Recidivism denotes the tendency of an individual with prior convictions to re-offend and return to criminal behaviour despite punishment or rehabilitation (Bales & Piquero, 2012). Within the framework of the criminal justice system, recidivism is often quantified by the frequency of former convicts being rearrested, reconvicted, or reincarcerated within a designated period following their release from jail or correctional supervision.

Recidivism can include rearrest, reconviction, and reincarceration. The causes of recidivism are influenced by various factors, including lack of education and skills which prompt individuals to re-offend due to inability to find legal jobs (Visser & Travis, 2003; Cullen & Jonson, 2011). Substance abuse can also be one of the causes

as they struggle with addiction. Untreated mental problems can also be related to recidivism. Affiliations with other criminals or gangs can encourage individuals to keep engaging in criminal conduct. The absence of family, community, or social support can also increase the likelihood of re-offending. Ex-offenders frequently encounter social stigma and discrimination, which might also restrict their employment prospects and social reintegration options (Travis, 2005).

Recidivism can harm public safety, it can increase the financial burden on the criminal justice system, and families of habitual criminals may endure mental and financial burdens, impacting children and future generations (Lattimore & Visser, 2009).

**Table 4.21 First Timer**

| <b>First Timer</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>         | 115              | 81.6                  |
| <b>No</b>          | 26               | 18.4                  |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in Table 4.21, a significant majority, 81.6 per cent of women prisoners, are incarcerated for the first time. This shows that the majority of these women may not have a criminal background and may have committed offenses due to conditions such as poverty, coercion, or a lack of legal awareness. The rate of recidivism is low, as only 18.4% are repeat offenders, indicating a low recidivism rate among women prisoners.

The low recidivism rate could be attributed to effective recreational and rehabilitation programs within the prison. Or, in the instance of Mizoram's female prisoners, it could be linked to the state's extensive presence of illegal drug trafficking. The police and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are taking stringent efforts to combat drug trafficking. As mentioned before in their residential status, the majority of the detainees at the prison come from the Northern Districts, which include Aizawl and Champhai district, which is Mizoram's capital and borders Myanmar simultaneously, where illegal drug trafficking is prevalent.

The duration of imprisonment denotes the period an individual is ordered to serve in jail or prison as punishment for committing an offense (Tonry, 2011). The period fluctuates considerably depending on the crime's nature, circumstances, legal frameworks, and judicial system. It is essential for fulfilling the objectives of the criminal justice system, including deterrence, rehabilitation, punishment, and public safety. The length of imprisonment is a complex matter shaped by the crime's nature, the offender's traits, legal systems, and society's views. It functions to penalize offenders, safeguard the public, prevent future offenses, and facilitate rehabilitation possibilities. Comprehending the determinants of sentence durations aids in assessing the effectiveness of the criminal justice system and informing improvements for more equitable and effective punishment.

**Table 4.22 Duration of imprisonment during the field survey**

| <b>Duration of imprisonment</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Below 1 year</b>             | 124              | 87.9                  |
| <b>1-2 years</b>                | 12               | 8.5                   |
| <b>2-3 years</b>                | 2                | 1.4                   |
| <b>3-4 years</b>                | 1                | .7                    |
| <b>6-7 years</b>                | 2                | 1.4                   |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in Table 4.22, a striking 87.9 per cent (124 out of 141) of the women prisoners are serving sentences below 1 year. This suggests that the majority of charges committed by women are minor, involving nonviolent or low-level crimes such as petty theft, small-scale drug smuggling, or violation of administrative law. The duration of time spent progressively drops for higher durations, 8.5 per cent for 1-2 years, 1.4 per cent for 2-3 years, 0.7 per cent for 3-4 years, and 1.4 per cent for 6-7 years.

Offenses, commonly known as crimes, are actions that violate laws or rules. The type of offenses committed by undertrial or convicted prisoners can vary widely in nature and severity. They are generally categorized into several types based on the legal

classification and seriousness of the crime. The types can vary from felonies including murder, robbery, rape, and major drug trafficking, and misdemeanours which are less severe crimes including petty theft, simple assault, and minor drug possessions. The seriousness of the crime committed is begged by legal punishments which can range from imprisonment for a few months to lifetime imprisonment and even the death penalty.

The type of offence committed is subdivided into the following categories: ND&PS (Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act), theft, murder, and others. Others include dacoity, attempt to murder, fraud, cheating, and Alcoholic vandalism.

**Table 4.23 Type of offence committed**

| <b>Type of offence</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>ND&amp;PS</b>       | 126              | 89.4                  |
| <b>Theft</b>           | 7                | 5.0                   |
| <b>Murder</b>          | 3                | 2.1                   |
| <b>Others</b>          | 5                | 3.5                   |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in Table 4.23, a very high percentage, 89.4 per cent (126 out of 141) of women prisoners are incarcerated under the ND&PS Act, which indicates the overwhelming majority are involved in drug-related offences. This indicates that drug trafficking or possession, perhaps at a small-scale or courier level, is the predominant offense among female inmates in Mizoram. Thefts account for only 5 per cent of cases, which may involve petty or survival-driven crimes. Only 3 women (2.1%) are in prison due to murder, which indicates that violent crimes are extremely rare among the inmates. Others constitute 3.5 per cent, which is quite low and includes offences like dacoity, attempt to murder, fraud, cheating, and alcoholic vandalism.

Considering the high proportion of ND&PS cases and vulnerability of women, it is evident that there is a trend in which women may serve as carriers or mules in the drug trafficking trade, often due to poverty, lack of education, and employment



opportunities, or coercion through or involvement in toxic relationships. This could also reflect the border regional issues, especially given Mizoram's proximity to drug trafficking routes near international borders. The data substantiates that women are rarely implicated in violent crimes, with the majority of offenses associated with economic or social weaknesses rather than deliberate aggression. The high number of first-timers (81.6%) in Table 4.21 also substantiates the type of offence committed, as a handful of them are unaware participants in drug offences.

The data in Table 4.23 indicates a significant correlation between drug-related offenses and the incarceration of women in Mizoram, with nearly per cent imprisoned for ND&PS instances. The current situation necessitates a more humanitarian, rehabilitative, and preventive strategy, concentrating on the underlying causes, such as poverty, coercion, and lack of awareness, that drive women into the drug trade.

In the criminal justice system, a lawyer plays an essential role in guaranteeing justice administration and safeguarding individuals' legal rights (Ashworth & Horder, 2013). Various categories of lawyers are engaged, each with distinct obligations and responsibilities. A defence lawyer represents the accused in criminal cases by defending the rights of the accused, conducting a case investigation, plea bargaining, trial representation, and appeal. There can be two types of defenders: public and private defenders. The State appoints the former and represents the accused who could not afford private legal representation, and the latter are lawyers whom defendants hire to represent them. A prosecutor represents the government or state in criminal cases. Their responsibilities include file charging, case representation, plea bargaining, trial representation, and sentencing recommendations. Judges, although not strictly acting as lawyers during a trial, are often skilled and experienced legal professionals who have transitioned into judicial roles. The job of each lawyer is essential for preserving a balanced system in which laws are enforced, defendants are afforded equitable trials, and victims' interests are represented.

**Table 4.24 Availability of Lawyer**

| <b>Availability of Lawyer</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Yes                           | 96               | 68.1                  |
| No                            | 45               | 31.9                  |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

68.1 per cent of female inmates indicated that they had access to a lawyer. This suggests that a majority has legal representation, which is an encouraging indication for the safeguarding of human rights and due process. While 31.9 per cent do not have access to a lawyer at the time of their cases. This is a significant portion, as one-third of the total inmates have limited access to justice. The 31.9 per cent who do not have access to private lawyers are given public lawyers. There are lots of complaints about the service of the public lawyers, as some of them complained that they could not even contact them through phone calls. Reasons for their unavailability to hire a private lawyer are a lack of financial resources, a lack of awareness about legal aid services, lack of education.

The absence of a private legal representation can severely impact women's ability to understand charges, prepare a proper defence, and navigate court procedures. This can also lead to an unjust conviction or longer pre-trial detention. The data highlights an urgent need to improve access to free and affordable legal aid, raise awareness about legal rights among prisoners, and also deploy more women-friendly legal aid officials.

Table 4.24 reveals a significant deficiency in the legal support system for female inmates in Mizoram, with about one in three missing an efficient legal representation. This disparity highlights the necessity of enhancing the legal aid framework and guaranteeing that all defendants, especially marginalized women, obtain just and impartial treatment within the legal system.

Understanding the rights and responsibilities as an inmate is essential for guaranteeing equitable treatment within the criminal justice system and preserving order in correctional institutions. Incarcerated individuals have certain rights that

must be upheld, while simultaneously bearing specified duties and responsibilities to ensure the safety and order of the facility.

The rights of prisoners included the right to humane treatment, that they must be treated with dignity and respect, including protection from physical abuse, psychological abuse, harassment, and torture perpetrated by jail personnel or fellow inmates. Prisoners also have the right to access necessities such as food, water, clothing, and sanitation. They also have the right to access medical and mental health care, as well as emergency medical treatment must be provided to them promptly. They also have the right to consult the legal system and be in touch with their lawyers whenever needed. The right to safety and protection from or against their inmates is also crucial. They have the right to communicate with their friends, family members, and inmates through phone calls or visits. The ability to practice one's religion is also a right inside the prison. They also have a right to access education and rehabilitation programs. Protection from discrimination based on sex, gender, nationality, race, and disability.

Apart from the rights of the prisoners as mentioned, they also have several duties entailed to them when they are inside the prison. They must strictly follow the rules and regulations demanded of them by the prison administration, and respect and obey the prison staff and their fellow inmates. they must avoid engaging in violence or any sort of harassment or discrimination against their fellow inmates. Maintaining cleanliness and proper hygiene is also a duty they must follow. They should also promptly participate in work assignments such as kitchen duties, maintenance, and other prison jobs. They must avoid illegal activities and engage in rehabilitation efforts provided to them. They must refrain from harming or misappropriating jail property, encompassing facilities, equipment, or things allocated for personal use. Honor the possessions of fellow inmates, refraining from theft or interference.

Awareness of prisoners regarding their rights and duties is crucial for several reasons, such as protection against abuse, better rehabilitation, order and safety, and access to justice (Clear, Reisig, & Cole, 2018). However, there are several challenges in raising awareness among prisoners due to a language barrier, a lack of proper

education, and a lack of access to information. Several efforts could be implemented to improve awareness of prisoners by having a proper prison orientation, and involvement of NGO's and lawyers in raising their awareness. Adequate awareness of rights and responsibilities fosters a more equitable and just criminal justice system, prioritizing rehabilitation, safety, and the preservation of human dignity.

**Table 4.25 Awareness of Rights and Duties**

| <b>Awareness of Rights and Duties</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                            | 7                | 5.0                   |
| <b>No</b>                             | 134              | 95.0                  |
| <b>Total</b>                          | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in Table 4.25, only 5 per cent are aware of their rights and duties as prisoners. A staggering 95 per cent of the inmates are completely unaware of their rights and duties. The lack of awareness of their rights and duties could be a vulnerability to injustice. Women who are unaware of their rights are more likely to be manipulated or coerced; they may not be aware of their legal deadlines for which they could miss their bail or appeal. There could also be a chance to accept the unjust outcomes without consent and be excluded from rehabilitation programmes or parole. This alarming lack of awareness is likely rooted in low educational qualifications, economic hardships and cultural marginalizations.

Table 4.25 highlights a troubling fact: 95 per cent of female inmates in Mizoram lack awareness of their rights and responsibilities, rendering them exceedingly susceptible inside the criminal justice system. This highlights the pressing necessity for specialized legal literacy programs to equip imprisoned women with the knowledge required to defend and protect their rights.

#### **4.12 Overview of the chapter**

This chapter highlights the socio-economic profile of 141 female prisoners in Central Women's Jail, Mizoram. It covers the variant dimensions of socio-economic variables, including age, marital status, nature of family, residential status, educational qualification, monthly income, household asset, religion and community, pre-incarceration status, and nature of imprisonment.

The age distribution of 141 female inmates at the Central Women's Jail shows that the majority falls within the 25–45 years, collectively representing 66.6% of the entire sample. This predominant concentration in mid-adulthood indicates a substantial impact on family and societal duties, including caring and economic obligations, frequently disturbed by incarceration. The 15–25 age years constitute 16.3 per cent, indicating early engagement in criminal activities, potentially influenced by socioeconomic factors such as poverty, inadequate education, or criminal exposure. A significant drop is observed in older age groups, 45–75 years, totalling 17 per cent of the sample, reinforcing the criminological idea that the inclination to engage in criminal behaviour diminishes with age. This distribution highlights the significance of age as a criminological variable. Comprehending age trends facilitates the development of age-specific policies and interventions, such as rehabilitation programs and support networks that mitigate the social costs of incarcerating women during their prime familial and professional years.

Next is the marital status, in which the extent of marriage is also taken into account. Divorce and widowed together accounted for 55.3 per cent of the sample, suggesting a correlation between marital instability and increased vulnerability to criminal behaviour, possibly stemming from economic hardships, emotional stress, and lack of social support. 33.5 per cent are married women, who face imprisonment while they hold key positions in their family. Their imprisonment will surely hamper the lives of their family, especially their children. Only 9.2 per cent are unmarried, suggesting that criminal involvement often happens only when one is in a relational breakdown or domestic issues, rather than being in isolation. The study also suggests that the majority of women, 61 per cent, have been married for more than 4 years,

indicating that long-term marital unions do not inherently shield women from engaging in criminal conduct. Shorter marriages account for nearly 30 per cent, reflecting an early breakdown in the relationship due to domestic violence, financial strain, or incompatibility. The data refutes preconceptions that link criminal women predominantly with youth or single status. Rather, it indicates that many individuals are mature, either formerly or presently married, and often burdened with home obligations and vulnerabilities. A breakdown of marriage, especially through divorce or widowhood, can intensify economic instability and social isolation, hence heightening vulnerability to criminal activity. Furthermore, enduring marriages, particularly those characterized by dysfunction or abuse, may be associated with offenses pertaining to survival, coping, or retaliation, encompassing substance-related crimes or instances of domestic violence.

The analysis of female inmates' familial backgrounds uncovers significant characteristics regarding family structure, size, support availability, and economic challenges that are essential for comprehending the pathways leading to incarceration. The data indicates that the majority of imprisoned women originate from nuclear (61.7%), compact families with constrained support networks. They are primary caregivers accountable for several dependents, 88.7 per cent of whom have children. Reside in economically challenged homes with restricted earning potential. Familial relations are essential for comprehending women's participation in criminal activities. They illustrate a pattern of structural vulnerability, wherein the demands of caregiving, economic adversity, and inadequate support combine to heighten the probability of criminal behaviour, frequently perpetrated not from vengeance but as a strategy for survival or coping.

The residential status of imprisoned women offers critical insights into their socioeconomic backgrounds and possible variables contributing to criminal behaviour. This part assesses the respondents' current place of residence, distinguishing between urban and rural settings, the district of residence, housing ownership status, and dwelling quality, each serving as critical indicators of economic conditions and social vulnerability. The residence status of female inmates illustrates a range of socio-economic conditions, predominantly featuring individuals

from urban and border-district regions susceptible to systemic issues like drug trafficking and poverty. Although a portion of the women originate from reasonably stable housing situations, the majority live in economically challenged and unstable circumstances. This emphasises the significance of improving housing quality, enhancing community safety, and mitigating urban pressures within holistic crime prevention and rehabilitation efforts aimed at women.

Education is a crucial factor in understanding the social background and the susceptible nature of imprisoned individuals. This section analyses the educational attainment of female inmates, their rates of school dropout, and the consequences of their educational status on criminal behaviour. Comprehensive studies substantiate the notion that education diminishes the likelihood of criminal conduct by fostering employment, social integration, and cognitive abilities. In contrast, individuals with less education are more prone to participate in criminal actions, frequently motivated by economic necessity, peer influence, or ignorance of legal consequences. The educational backgrounds of these women indicate that criminal behaviour may reflect underlying societal issues, including poverty, insufficient educational infrastructure, or social isolation. Over three-fourths of respondents did not progress beyond high school, and nearly all exited prematurely, indicating educational vulnerability that is strongly associated with diminished life possibilities and heightened engagement with the criminal justice system. The educational background of imprisoned women in this study indicates a persistent trend of inadequate formal education and elevated dropout rates, highlighting education as a significant area of vulnerability. Although basic literacy is widespread, insufficient higher educational attainment limits economic mobility and social integration.

Monthly income serves as a vital indicator of an individual's or household's socio-economic status, frequently affecting access to education, housing, healthcare, and general quality of life. Economic difficulty has long been acknowledged as a significant contributing factor to criminal behaviour, particularly in survival crimes, economic offenses, or participation in illicit trades such as drug trafficking. This income distribution highlights the significant financial burden experienced by these women. For most individuals, poor income undoubtedly correlates with restricted

access to quality education, healthcare, legal services, and steady employment, all of which can heighten vulnerability to criminal activity. This economic stress could worsen social difficulties such as early school dropout, unstable housing, and insufficient legal awareness, all of which are evident in the respondents' profiles.

Household assets serve as a concrete indicator of an individual's or family's material welfare and socio-economic standing. For imprisoned women, asset ownership is a vital framework for assessing poverty, vulnerability, and possible systemic exclusion from economic and social opportunities. This section analyses various indicators: basic household assets, vehicle ownership, ration card status, and inherited property, each providing insight into the women's living conditions before incarceration. The household asset profile presents a multifaceted and stratified economic situation. Although some respondents possess basic comforts, ownership of digital and high-value assets remains limited, signifying considerable economic limitations and technical deprivation. The data indicates that, alongside restricted vehicle ownership, dependency on ration cards, and absence of inherited property, a significant portion of these women experienced persistent economic fragility, devoid of both current resources and generational wealth. The findings emphasize multi-dimensional poverty, intertwined with gender bias, documentation issues, and insufficient access to technology and mobility, all factors that contribute to marginalization and may heighten vulnerability to criminal action under stressful or coercive circumstances.

This section examines the religious and communal affiliations of incarcerated women in Mizoram, emphasizing the socio-cultural context that influences their existence. All 141 participants in the study identified as Christians and members of Scheduled Tribes (ST), demonstrating total homogeneity in both religious and tribal affiliation. This illustrates the overall demographics of Mizoram, where Christianity is the prevalent religion and the majority of the population comprises tribal communities. The predominant Christian identity of the respondents highlights the cultural significance of the Church in Mizo society, where religious institutions are essential for spiritual life, moral guidance, communal unity, and social regulation. This religious diversity within a singular faith indicates a common moral framework alongside varied spiritual traditions. Despite this, engagement in religious institutions



and civic activities is quite minimal. The absence of engagement in these institutions may have increased their susceptibility to crime and indicates a breakdown of community solidarity.

This section analyses the job position of female inmates before incarceration, highlighting the socio-economic vulnerabilities that may lead to criminal activity. Employment is a crucial socio-economic determinant that affects crime rates, as unemployment and insecure income frequently correlate with a heightened propensity for criminal behaviour. The results indicate that female convicts in Mizoram primarily originate from economically insecure origins, informal work, and social marginalization. These aspects substantially contribute to their criminality. Addressing these basic problems necessitates focused interventions, including skill development programs, job creation initiatives, and economic empowerment strategies, especially for self-employed and unemployed women. These preventative strategies may diminish susceptibility to crime and facilitate enduring rehabilitation and reintegration initiatives.

The nature of incarceration among female prisoners in Mizoram presents a complicated and varied scenario influenced by legal, socio-economic, and institutional issues. The analysis reveals that an alarming majority of female prisoners are undertrials, highlighting significant issues related to judicial delays, restricted access to legal representation, and institutional inefficiencies. A significant number of these women are probably confined for minor, non-violent acts and continue to be detained due to their inability to get bail or legal counsel. The data also indicates that 81.6 per cent of the prisoners are first-time offenders, implying that the majority of women possess no previous criminal record and may have engaged in illegal acts owing to economic need, pressure, or insufficient legal knowledge. The low recidivism rate (18.4%) highlights the necessity for focused interventions and rehabilitation to avert reoffending, particularly among vulnerable women. The duration of incarceration also indicates the severity of their offenses, since 87.9 per cent are serving terms of under one year, predominantly for minor offenses. This trend correlates with the predominant majority (89.4%) imprisoned under the NDPS Act, indicating that drug-related offenses, mainly involving

smuggling or courier activities, are the principal reason for incarceration. A minimal number of women participate in violent crimes, with murder and theft constituting a small percentage. Notwithstanding the judicial system's reliance on counsel, 31.9 per cent of women are devoid of legal representation, and public defenders frequently fail to deliver sufficient assistance. The lack of skilled legal representation renders numerous inmates inadequately prepared to mount a defence, hence continuing cycles of unlawful pre-trial detention. The most concerning feature is the disturbingly low awareness of legal rights and obligations, since just 5 per cent of inmates express knowledge of their rights. This significant deficiency in awareness exposes female prisoners exceedingly susceptible to exploitation, maltreatment, and the denial of due process. In the absence of fundamental legal literacy, numerous women remain ignorant of their rights and responsibilities, risking their prospects for justice or rehabilitation.

This chapter presents a detailed socio-economic profile of 141 female inmates at Mizoram's Central Women's Jail, highlighting vulnerability patterns influenced by age, marital instability, low educational attainment, poverty, and inadequate social support. The majority of inmates are in their prime adult years, are either divorced or widowed, originate from nuclear families, and experience significant economic difficulties, coupled with restricted educational and employment opportunities. The majority are first-time offenders imprisoned under the NDPS Act for non-violent crimes, usually due to coercion or survival-driven decisions. The excessive rate of undertrial prisoners, insufficient legal assistance, and inadequate legal awareness intensify their marginalization. These findings highlight the essential requirement for focused interventions in legal access, education, economic empowerment, and social reintegration, which are crucial for enhancing opportunities for justice and rehabilitation.

## **CHAPTER -V**

### **ETIOLOGY OF FEMALE CRIMINALITY**

#### **5.1. Introduction**

#### **5.2. Cause of committing crime**

##### **5.2.1 Instigation to commit the crime**

#### **5.3 Family Issues**

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#### **5.5. Physical Factors**

##### **5.5.1 Physical deformities**

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**5.6.1 Long-term conflict with any relatives**

**5.6.2 Relatives history of imprisonment**

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**5.6.5 Pressure to get a job**

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**5.7 Drugs and Alcoholism**

**5.7.1 History of substance abuse**

**5.7.2 Involvement in selling drugs**

**5.7.3 History of alcohol abuse**

**5.7.4 Involvement in alcohol abuse**

**5.8 Stigmatization and repentance**

**5.8.1 Relationship with relatives at home**

**5.8.2 Biggest regret in life**

**5.8.3 Any blame for committing the crime**

**5.9 An Overview**

## **CHAPTER -V**

### **ETIOLOGY OF FEMALE CRIMINALITY**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter highlights the etiology of female criminality. The etiology of female crime refers to the study of the origin and causes of committing crimes for which they are incarcerated. The etiology of their criminality could be complex and multifaceted, involving a combination of social, psychological, familial, and biological factors. Women are less likely to be involved in serious crimes as compared to men. Menani (2024) argues that women's criminal behaviour is typically influenced by their social status and the choices offered to them, and thus, societal variables significantly impact the types of crimes in which women are engaged. This chapter will hence highlight the various issues they faced related to their criminal behaviour.

#### **5.2 Causes of committing crime**

The motivations for criminal behaviour among female inmates may significantly differ from those commonly linked to male offenders. Koegl et.al (2021) in their studies on male criminals suggest that most of the male inmates committed crimes to experience pleasure, sensation seeking, or escape reality. However, studies on female criminality suggest different motives for committing crimes, as for women offenders, experiencing joy and sensation seeking, or escaping reality, is not an option for them to commit the crime. It's their marginalization and, for their survival, their lack of support that urges them to commit criminal behaviour. These motivations are shaped by various social, economic, psychological, and relational aspects. Economic disadvantage, which is accompanied by poverty, unemployment, and the need to support their family, may be one of the most common factors contributing to their criminal behaviour. Victims of domestic violence, drugs, alcohol dependency, mental health issues, and social and cultural pressures can be a prominent contributor to their criminal behaviour. Instigation to commit a crime relates to the fundamental factors, pressures, or stimuli that motivate or compel them to engage in criminal behaviour. In contrast to premeditated or purely opportunistic crime,

instigation frequently includes the impact of external or internal causes that compel them to engage in criminal action.

The causes for criminal behaviour might differ significantly depending on the individual, surroundings, and circumstances (Siegel, 2018). Substance abuse, encompassing addiction to drugs and alcohol, can hinder cognitive function and result in criminal behaviour. Mental illness can precipitate criminal behaviour as individuals may not possess sound judgment. Socioeconomic and environmental variables such as poverty, financial strain, and limited possibilities may compel individuals to engage in criminal behaviour. The tendency for individuals to envy others and desire more in life may drive them to engage in illegal behaviour. Individuals who are oppressed and not in a sound state of mind may also engage in unjust revenge. In a region surrounded by drug trafficking routes, it is prevalent that many individuals participate as carriers or accomplices in drug trafficking, either intentionally or unknowingly.

**Table 5.1 Causes of committing crime**

| <b>Causes</b>                                    | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Poverty</b>                                   | 46               | 32.6                  |
| <b>Mental problem</b>                            | 1                | 0.7                   |
| <b>Revenge</b>                                   | 2                | 1.4                   |
| <b>Addiction</b>                                 | 28               | 19.9                  |
| <b>Greed</b>                                     | 11               | 7.8                   |
| <b>Carrier or accomplice of drug trafficking</b> | 53               | 37.6                  |
| <b>Total</b>                                     | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

**Source: Field Survey**

The above data reflect that poverty, 32.6 per cent, is the leading motive behind women prisoners in Mizoram. As understood from the field, the majority, 126 out of 141 respondents, are in prison due to ND&PS cases, and getting easy money by selling drugs seems to be an alternative to solving poverty issues.

Respondent 15 stated:

*“I am engaged in selling drugs because of my husband’s illness. He is in and out of the hospital and sometimes even needs an ICU. His illness has persisted for years, all our savings are exhausted, and we also have a loan to repay. I have no other option left.”*

Respondent 17 added:

*“My husband and I didn’t have any job, we have a child, and making ends meet is difficult. I thought of selling it once so that it would help us financially, but I was caught on my first attempt.”*

Addiction, 19.9 per cent, is also one of the major leading factors. A significant portion, 37.6 per cent, falls under the category of a carrier or accomplice of drug trafficking and is caught in the process. Mental problems, 0.7 per cent, and revenge, 1.4 per cent, are low. While greed, 7.8 per cent is a less dominant motive, indicating that women prisoners are less likely to be driven by materialistic ambitions and more likely by survival or emotional factors.

Respondent 32 stated:

*“I am just accompanying my friend. The police who caught me said that drug dealers are always faking, and we don’t believe you. Even when I called out the name of the drug owner, they refused to acknowledge it. The actual owner of the drug was not caught, but I am here now in prison.”*

Respondent 51 added:

*“I am never involved in any type of drug smuggling. My brother, without my knowledge, kept it in our house, and they caught me since I am the owner of the house. I am a single parent, and I am heartbroken thinking about my children who are at home without any supervision.”*

Respondent 59 added:

*“I am visiting my ailing mother at Champhai with my brother. On our way home to Aizawl, my brother’s friend sent us a parcel to deliver to Aizawl. I am not aware that the parcel contains drugs. I later learned that my brother knew everything. The sumo driver, my brother, and I are caught when we reach Aizawl.”*

As indicated, a significant portion of women offenders are driven by addiction as well as a carrier or accomplice of a drug trafficking, which is 57.5 per cent. These women, as could be understood from the field, are from rural or economically marginalised backgrounds, without proper education and a steady income. The main reason could be Mizoram being one of the North East States known as transit points in drug trafficking routes (Golden triangle). This increases women’s exposure to and involvement in drug-related offenses. Poverty signifies that there are limited employment opportunities, especially for women, which may push them towards involvement in illegal drug trafficking or smuggling.

#### **5.2.1 Instigation to commit the crime**

The factors of instigation to commit the crime may include factors like peer pressure, relatives, friends, and self, which can be further stimulated by social and economic issues (Akers & Sellers, 2013). While peer pressure from friends may commonly contribute to criminal behaviour, familial pressure, particularly in cases of addiction, can also serve as a crucial motivator. Usually, individuals who commit a crime and are incarcerated tend to attribute responsibility for their actions to themselves rather than to others. There may be situations in which an inmate experiences frustration due to a lack of accountability for their incarceration.



**Table 5.2 Influence to commit the crime**

| <b>Instigator</b>        | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Self</b>              | 92               | 65.2                  |
| <b>Friends and peers</b> | 33               | 23.4                  |
| <b>Relatives</b>         | 11               | 7.8                   |
| <b>Any others</b>        | 5                | 3.5                   |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As the table indicates, the majority of the women inmates, 65.2 per cent, which is nearly two-thirds of the total respondents, admit themselves as the instigators of the crime they committed. This indicates that although external factors are crucial, personal agency or decision-making significantly determines female criminal conduct. However, ‘self’ instigation does not inherently denote complete freedom; their decisions may still be influenced by economic hardship, emotional strain, or social pressure, particularly in environments where women have limited options.

Respondent 37 stated:

*“I live with my father and elder brother, and I am the sole earner in our family. I used to take any job available to meet our family’s needs. I trained to become a Beautician, since we didn’t have any money to start on my own, I knowingly involved myself in selling drugs, my father and brother didn’t know anything. It was my fault.”*

Respondent 67 added:

*“After my husband and younger son passed away, I was lost in life. I started drinking alcohol, and my health is deteriorating. And I was in and out of the hospital, since I didn’t have the strength to continue manual labour, I am out of money, even for my medication. Out of desperation and poverty, I chose to be a carrier of drugs to earn Rs 30000 per trip. It was my sole responsibility, and I blame myself for it.”*

A significant proportion of women are influenced by friends, 23.4 per cent, which indicates that younger women or first-timers are an easy target, possibly for crimes related to drug trafficking, as Mizoram is vulnerable to drug offences. As shown in the table, in some cases, 7.8 per cent, family members or close relatives are the instigators. This reflects the relational aspect of female criminality, wherein women may be compelled to engage in illicit activities due to trust or support for family members, or out of obligation or fear.

Respondent 9 stated:

*“My friend from our village is doing business in Aizawl, and he requested me to let him stay in our house while he is in Aizawl. The police investigated our house, and drugs were found. I am not aware that he is involved in selling drugs. Since I am the owner of the house, they capture me along with him. My friend also said that I was not involved, but they didn’t believe us.”*

Respondent 10 added:

*“I am caught because of my husband; he is a drug addict. I used to stock it for him since he can’t live without it. He often sold my mobile phone, I just need to make sure that he got his substance, so that we will not suffer.”*

Respondent 107 also added:

*“My friend requested me to order it for her. But later I realised that she reported me and I was caught.”*

The small category, 3.5 per cent, of any other includes those who are unknowingly accomplices of drug peddlers. This indicates that their participation in the offense is frequently indirect or unintentional, arising from a lack of understanding regarding the genuine nature of their conduct or the activities in which they were engaged. These individuals, especially women, may have been deceived, used, or compelled to transport parcels, unaware that their activities were linked to drug trafficking. Their

limited understanding and lack of exposure to legal awareness make them vulnerable to such exploitation.

This section analyses the underlying causes and instigating factors of criminal conduct among female inmates in Mizoram. In contrast to male offenders, whose criminal activities frequently arise from thrill-seeking or escape, female criminality predominantly originates from economic difficulties, substance abuse, and social marginalization. It highlighted the deep meaning between crime and socio-economic vulnerabilities. The data also indicates female offenders see themselves as the primary instigators; however, this “self-instigation” is frequently influenced by external pressures and limited life options. The results suggest that female criminality is mostly driven by survival, coercion, and institutional neglect rather than opportunism. Overall, the analysis highlights the gendered and contextual aspects of female crime, emphasizing the necessity for policy interventions that tackle poverty, drug susceptibility, and socio-cultural influences, especially in high-risk areas such as Mizoram.

### **5.3 Family Issues**

The etiology of female criminality is intricately linked to numerous family-related issues (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2013). In contrast to male offenders, women’s criminal activities frequently stem from relational, emotional, and structural dynamics within the familial context. In numerous instances, the family functions not only as a protective unit but also as an agent of victimization, neglect, and social pressure, resulting in pathways toward crime. Concerning criminality and family issues, several factors, including whether women are victims of domestic violence, whether they grew up with both parents, the nature of their home environment, the number of siblings and their relationship, and the support they received from their family while studying and their acceptance of their family members will be taken into consideration.

#### **5.3.1 Victim of domestic violence**

The issue of domestic violence among female inmates is substantial and frequently constitutes an underlying factor for their criminal conduct (DeHart, 2008). A

significant number of female inmates, especially in regions such as Mizoram and comparable socio-cultural environments, are identified as having been victims of abuse before their offenses. Many could be trapped in a violent relationship with their partners or with their relatives. The abuse could be physical, emotional, psychological, or sexual. Domestic violence is more prevalent in the case of women compared to men, as women are considered to be more vulnerable, especially in a patriarchal society like Mizoram.

**Table 5.3 Victim of domestic violence**

| <b>Victim of domestic violence</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                         | 46               | 32.6                  |
| <b>No</b>                          | 95               | 67.4                  |
| <b>Total</b>                       | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in the table, a significant proportion, nearly one-third (32.6 %) of the respondents reported experiencing domestic abuse before they were in prison. This reveals a high correlation between female criminality and victimization, supporting the “pathways perspective” that long-term exposure to trauma and abuse makes many women criminals. Domestic abuse or violence can be a significant contributing factor to crime. The crime they committed can be a response to trauma or retaliation, as a means of escape or survival, or as an outcome of coercion into illegal activities by abusive partners.

Respondent 5 stated:

*“I often get emotional and physical abuse from my ex-husband. I was born and raised in a poor family. My mother is a widow; she used to sell alcohol, and my ex-husband used my background as a means to disrespect me verbally and physically.”*

Respondent 99 added:

*“I used to be physically abused by my ex-husband, who is an alcoholic addict. He committed adultery, and we got divorced.”*

The majority, 67.4 per cent, reported not facing any type of domestic abuse. However, looking into the broader social context of Mizoram, where Christianity and community values are strong, domestic violence can still be underreported or inadequately addressed, or even some women may be confused with the word domestic violence, where emotional and financial abuse are often overlooked. It also indicates that not all female offenders are victims of violence; other motivations, such as poverty, addiction, or peer influence (as illustrated in Table 5.01 and Table 5.02), are equally relevant.

### 5.3.2 Growing up with parents

In the context of women prisoners, it is crucial to understand the role of parents in their upbringing and their relationship with their parents (Hoeve et al., 2009). The intervention of parents in their upbringing could reveal patterns and underlying causes of criminal behaviour. As parents play a crucial role in the child's social behaviour, emotional development, and overall life outcomes. Since parents are the primary agents of socialization during early childhood, they are the ones who instill moral values, discipline, and a sense of right and wrong. The impact of a child growing up in a dysfunctional family can have trauma, a feeling of neglect, and abuse, which could further lead to deviant behaviour.

**Table 5.4 Growing up with parents**

| <b>Growing up with parents</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                     | 98               | 69.5                  |
| <b>No</b>                      | 43               | 30.5                  |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in the table, a majority of women, nearly 70 per cent, are growing up with their parents, suggesting that family presence alone is not a protective factor. This also suggests the need to focus on the quality of parenting they received during their upbringing. Nearly one-third of women, 30.5 per cent, did not grow up with their parents, which is a critical risk factor for criminal behaviour. Absence of a parental

figure while growing up is associated with emotional insecurity, lack of discipline and supervision, low educational attainment, and exposure to deviant peer groups.

Respondent 5 stated:

*“I grew up with my mother since my parents got divorced. I think that my life will be different if I have a responsible father.”*

Respondent 43 stated:

*“Since my parents got divorced, my mother went away, and I was left with my father. My father is an alcoholic, and he often scolds me and creates problems at home. I wish that if my mother hadn’t left us, my life would be different.”*

Respondent 47 added:

*“Both my parents passed away when I was a toddler. We are 9 siblings, and we struggle to make ends meet. 9 siblings grew up together without parents, and I wish that if my parents were here with us longer, we wouldn’t have to struggle so much, and I used to think that our life would take a different turn.”*

### **5.3.3 Triggering environment at home**

A triggering environment at home denotes where there is a lack of a secure, supportive, and nurturing familial atmosphere that can hamper an individual’s healthy development (Caldwell et al., 2006). The existence or lack of a supportive environment throughout their developmental years can profoundly affect the life choices, susceptibility, and criminal activity of women inmates.

**Table 5.5 Triggering environment at home**

| <b>Triggering environment at home</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                            | 30               | 21.3                  |
| <b>No</b>                             | 111              | 78.7                  |
| <b>Total</b>                          | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As shown in the above table, a striking 78.7 per cent reported that they do not have a triggering environment at home. This highlights the complexities of female criminality, where crime can stem from external social, economic, or relational factors, despite having a stable environment at home. It also suggests that many female offenders do not come from an overtly abusive home environment. This also suggests the significance of peer influence, poverty, and addiction in the later stages of life. However, a notable 21.3 per cent do not have a conducive environment at home, which could include all types of abuses and neglect. This group of respondents probably encountered early-life challenges that influenced their psychological health, coping mechanisms, and future risk behaviours, consistent with the pathways perspective in criminology.

Respondent 9 stated:

*“Since I am always drunk or intoxicated, our home environment is gloomy. I am the one who always creates the problem and rebels against my family members. My relatives often forcefully neglect me because of my unpleasant behaviour.”*

Respondent 16 added:

*“As my father has been an alcoholic since my childhood, we hardly have a decent home environment. He is physically abusive, and it affects our mentality as well. I hardly received the support I needed from home.”*

### 5.3.4 Tolerance by family members

Tolerance by family members regarding incarcerated women denotes the emotional, social, and moral support provided by their families, despite the stigma or humiliation associated with imprisonment (Bales & Mears, 2008). It signifies that the family acknowledges and continues to maintain a relationship with them despite their imprisonment. This indicates that the family does not reject her or regard her as an outcast just due to her incarceration. Instead, they provide her with assistance, showing compassion and care, which is essential for her emotional stability and prospects for effective reintegration into society.

**Table 5.6 Tolerance by family members**

| <b>Tolerance by family members</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                         | 126              | 89.4                  |
| <b>No</b>                          | 15               | 10.6                  |
| <b>Total</b>                       | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in the table above, a high number, 89.4%, reported that their family tolerated them, despite their incarceration. This suggests that there are a strong familial bond and social tolerance, which is particularly significant in a close-knit, community-oriented society like Mizoram. A notable 10.6 per cent of women reported that they were not accepted by their families post-crime. This group of respondents may experience isolation, stigma, and emotional distress, and the rate of recidivism can be high.

Respondent 90 stated:

*“Even though I am in prison, my relatives took care of me as much as they could. They visit me whenever they are available. I am immensely grateful for the care and support I received from my loved ones.”*

However, Respondent 71 stated:



*“Since I am in prison, all my relatives are ashamed of me and broken-hearted. My father didn’t want to talk to me till today. My presence in the prison is a humiliation for our family.”*

### 5.3.5 Number of Siblings

The number of siblings denotes the total count of a person’s brothers and sisters, including both biological and adopted siblings (McHale, Updegraff, & Whiteman, 2012). Taking into account the number of siblings, it helps us understand the size of the family the inmate is coming from, possible distribution of parental support and care, and whether the inmate may have experienced neglect, favouritism, or sibling rivalry. A woman with 3 siblings indicates she was raised in a household with 4 children, herself included. This may impact her upbringing, emotional development, and the chances afforded to her.

**Table 5.7 Number of Siblings**

| <b>Number of Siblings</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>None</b>               | 10               | 7.1                   |
| <b>Two</b>                | 16               | 11.3                  |
| <b>Three</b>              | 11               | 7.8                   |
| <b>More than three</b>    | 104              | 73.8                  |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in Table 5.7 above, 73.8 per cent come from families with more than three siblings. This indicates that nearly three-quarters of the respondents come from large families, likely multi-child households. This also indicates that there is a strong trend of a large family background. As understood in the field, larger families usually have problems with economic constraints. Likewise, larger sibling groups are frequently associated with economic hardship, resource scarcity, and restricted access to education or social support, potentially contributing to vulnerabilities that result in incarceration. The large percentage of siblings group paints the picture that the majority of the women incarcerated come from socially and economically disadvantaged groups in Mizoram. It is well-known that Mizo society is a closed-knit

one, and a predominance of large families is obvious, but with the limited resources available in Mizoram, it is certain that for large families, there will be a predominance of educational and economic hardships. Only 7.1 per cent are without siblings. A combination of 19.1 per cent have two or three siblings.

Respondent 76 stated:

*“We are siblings of 10, and I am the second-eldest sibling. I had to sacrifice everything for my younger siblings since childhood. I could not even continue to study.”*

### 5.3.6 Discrimination among siblings

Discrimination among siblings denotes a scenario in which parents or caregivers show unequal or unfair treatment towards one child relative to their other children (Feinberg et al., 2012). This unequal treatment may involve preferential treatment of one child over another, favouritism based on gender or academic performance, unequal distribution of love and support, or blame or criticism being subjected to more at one sibling than others. In the context of women prisoners, discrimination among siblings may have a deep psychological impact, which can be attributed to low self-esteem, feelings of neglect or rejection, and deviant behaviour as a form of rebellion or attention seeking, family conflict or broken relationships, increased vulnerability to external negative influences. If an individual feels less valued while growing up, this can affect her choices and behaviour later in life.

**Table 5.8 Discrimination among siblings**

| <b>Discrimination among siblings</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                           | 16               | 11.3                  |
| <b>No</b>                            | 125              | 88.7                  |
| <b>Total</b>                         | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in the table, a large majority, 88.7 per cent, did not report experiencing discrimination from their siblings. However, 11.3 per cent acknowledged feeling

discriminated against by their siblings. This indicates that preferential treatment of male siblings or eldest siblings was not a dominating factor in their upbringing, according to the way they respond in the field. In Mizo society, which traditionally prioritizes equality and communal ideals, particularly influenced by Christianity and tribal customs, the obvious acknowledgment of discrimination may be socially disapproved. Women may have internalized sibling duties, such as sacrificing education or chances for their brothers, without perceiving it as discrimination.

Respondent 46 stated:

*“There will always be times in families and among siblings that we disagree or fight. However, since we are blood-related, we easily reconcile. I couldn’t understand how siblings can be enemies forever in certain families.”*

Respondent 63 stated:

*“Because of my imprisonment, my siblings do not want to talk to me or take care of me; they neglect me. I didn’t even try to contact any of them.”*

### **5.3.7 Lack of Support from family/caretakers while studying**

Support from family or caretakers while studying denotes assistance, motivation, and resources supplied by parents, guardians, or caregivers to facilitate a child’s educational progress and success (Fan & Chen, 2001). This support can be emotional support, encouraging, motivational words, and showing interest in the child’s educational background. Financial support, including providing money for their tuition fees, transportation fees, books, and uniforms. Practical support, which could include being present at their school activities, helping them out with their assignments, and homework. Moral support in believing the child’s potential and capabilities when they have academic failure or pressure. In the context of women prisoners, it helps us to understand their educational background and upbringing. Failure of such can lead to feelings of neglect or deprivation, low self-esteem, early

school dropout or educational failure, and increased vulnerability to crime due to lack of opportunities in life.

**Table 5.9 Lack of Support from family/caretakers while studying**

| <b>Supportive</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>        | 104              | 73.8                  |
| <b>No</b>         | 37               | 26.2                  |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

The data in Table 5.9 highlights the extent to which women inmates lacked family or caretaker support during their educational pursuits. Out of the total 141 respondents, a significant majority, 73.8 per cent (104 respondents) reported that they did not receive support from their families or caretakers while studying. In contrast, only 26.2 per cent (37 respondents) stated that they had supportive family members or caretakers.

This disparity indicates that family neglect and the absence of encouragement were common experiences among the women before incarceration. Lack of emotional, financial, and moral support may have hindered their ability to continue schooling, leading to educational discontinuity and limiting future opportunities.

Respondent 13 stated:

*“I come from a poor family, my parents passed away when we were young, I could not continue studying, and I studied only till primary school. We didn’t have any backup, and I had to search for any kind of jobs to take care of my younger siblings.”*

Respondent 37 stated:

*“I am an illiterate; I didn’t go to any school since we couldn’t afford it. I used to remember my parents working in the field day and night to support our family. Life is not fair; it is difficult for us to survive in this world. Since I am not educated, finding a job is extremely difficult.*

*I just engaged in illegal means. That's my only option to take care of our family."*

This section examines the significant influence of family dynamics on the etiology of female criminality. In contrast to male offenders, women's criminal activity frequently stems from intricate relational and emotional dynamics within the family. The investigated key variables encompass domestic violence, parental upbringing, family environment, sibling interactions, and the level of family support received. The number of victims of domestic violence underlines how trauma and abuse serve as major pathways to crime. The percentage of inmates not grow up with parents also signifies instability in early childhood. Those inmates pointing out a triggering environment at home also suggest that they may have a feeling of insecurity and neglect. Family structure also acts as a contributing factor, where the majority comes from a large family, which is often associated with economic hardships and scarcity of resources. While only a few reported experiencing discrimination from siblings. Education-related support also highlights developmental vulnerabilities that may adversely affect their life trajectories and heighten their likelihood for criminal activity. Despite these challenges, a significant majority of inmates indicated familial acceptance following incarceration, implying strong familial ties in Mizo society. Overall, the data indicate that familial issues manifesting as trauma, insufficient support, or financial strain are intricately linked to the experiences of incarcerated women. These findings underscore the necessity for family-oriented treatments and support structures to prevent female criminality and facilitate rehabilitation.

#### **5.4 Issues in Socialization**

Socialization denotes the continuous process by which individuals acquire and internalize the norms, values, beliefs, actions, and social skills essential for effective societal functioning (Grusec & Hastings, 2015). Learning to interact with each other, inculcating cultural norms and values, and knowing social roles, expectations, and rules of behaviour. It is a significant process where one becomes a member of society. It guarantees the preservation of social order by disseminating cultural

knowledge and promoting integration and harmony within communities. Socialization enables individuals to become effective members of society, possessing the skills and values necessary to navigate their social environment. Socialization is vital for the survival and perpetuation of society.

Although socialization is an essential process that facilitates individuals' integration into society, it is not uniformly easy or equitable for all (Miller & Dollard, 1941). Numerous obstacles and challenges may emerge during the socialization process, impacting personal growth and social integration. Socialization issues pertain to the challenges, obstacles, or negative influences that hinder or distort individuals' acquisition and internalization of societal norms, values, and roles. These difficulties can obstruct the development of a stable identity, induce separation from society, or foster deviant behaviour.

Examining the socialization of incarcerated women prior to their imprisonment involves understanding the various challenges and adversities they faced while growing up (Siegel, 2016). The problems and difficulties faced by them while growing up, whether it be physical, emotional, sexual abuse from any individuals, mental problems including anxiety, depression, and stress, adjustment with family members be it immediate or distant relatives or within the household, mistreatment from any of their relatives or friends or even by the community in general, or whether they faced any sort of difficulties that could have serious impact on their life, will be taken into consideration.

#### **5.4.1 Past abuse while growing up**

Past abuse while growing up denotes detrimental or violent experiences that someone may have suffered in the early stages of life, frequently inflicted by family members, relatives, caregivers, or others in positions of control or trust (Widom, 1989). The type of abuse could be physical, such as beating, burning, or hitting. Sexual abuse, including unwanted sexual contact, exploitation, or harassment during childhood. Emotional abuse includes persistent criticism, degradation, intimidation, or neglect of emotional needs. In the context of women prisoners, experiencing abuse while growing up is a major risk factor that can contribute to later criminal behaviour, as

these could lead to long-term trauma, mental health issues, substance abuse, or coping mechanisms. Trust issues and broken relationships, aggressive or withdrawn behaviour, running away from home, or early involvement in crime. If one does not encounter any form of abuse while growing up, the chances of getting all the above-mentioned instances could be avoided.

**Table 5.10 Past abuse while growing up**

| <b>Past abuse while growing up</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Physical abuse</b>              | 6                | 4.3                   |
| <b>Sexual abuse</b>                | 4                | 2.8                   |
| <b>Emotional abuse</b>             | 8                | 5.7                   |
| <b>No abuse</b>                    | 123              | 87.2                  |
| <b>Total</b>                       | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in Table 5.10 above, 123 out of 141 respondents (87.2%) reported that they have not experienced any form of abuse, whether physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. This suggests that for the majority of imprisoned women, childhood trauma may not have directly contributed to their criminal behaviour. However, the type of abuse reported includes physical abuse (4.3%), sexual abuse (2.8%), and emotional abuse (5.7%). These figures, although relatively low, indicate the concealed trauma that some women may have experienced, perhaps leading to enduring psychological effects such as diminished self-esteem, dysfunctional coping mechanisms, or vulnerability to criminal influences. A total of 18 women (12.8%) encountered various forms of abuse, indicating that over 1 in 10 female inmates had traumatic histories. The combined experience of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, despite being numerically limited, collectively illustrates the vulnerable nature of these women within their childhood environment. Though the percentage of women experiencing abuse is low, these findings emphasize the necessity of addressing early trauma within crime prevention and inmate rehabilitation efforts, ensuring that individuals with abusive backgrounds receive adequate psychological assistance.

Respondent 33 stated:

*“I was sexually abused by my stepfather when I was just a kid. Back then, I didn’t understand anything. When I grew up, I realized that the way my stepfather treated me was not okay. He already passed away, and there is no point in telling it to anyone. I am just sharing with you because I trust you.”*

#### **5.4.2 Mental problems while growing up**

Mental problems while growing up denote psychological or emotional challenges encountered during childhood or adolescence, potentially influencing an individual’s ideas, feelings, behaviours, and development (Kessler et al., 2005). These issues may be diagnosed or undetected and can vary from moderate emotional disturbances to severe mental diseases. Mental problems could consist of depression, feeling hopeless, or being withdrawn. Anxiety, excessive worry, panic, or fear in a normal situation, or excessive stress that could disrupt normal life. Mental health issues while growing up could play a significant role in the pathway to crime. It can increase the chance of substance abuse or involvement in an abusive relationship. It can also lead to poor academic performance, school dropout, or isolation. Individuals with mental problems could also have poor judgment and isolation from social functioning. Individuals not experiencing mental problems have less chance of the above-mentioned issues.

**Table 5.11 Mental problems while growing up**

| <b>Mental problems</b>   | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Anxiety</b>           | 12               | 8.5                   |
| <b>Depression</b>        | 5                | 3.5                   |
| <b>Stress</b>            | 20               | 14.2                  |
| <b>No mental problem</b> | 104              | 73.8                  |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey



The above Table highlights the mental abuse faced by 141 women inmates, focusing on anxiety, depression, and stress. As seen in the table, the majority of 104 respondents (73.8%) reported having no mental problems in their upbringing. This suggests that the majority of inmates did not link their early experiences to identifiable mental health issues or may have lacked the awareness or terminology to articulate them. Stress is the most common mental health problem reported, experienced by 20 inmates. Anxiety was reported by 12 inmates, followed by 5 inmates reporting having depression. A total of 37 women (26.2%) encountered some type of mental difficulty during their childhood or adolescence. These 26.2 per cent of inmates reported having mental problems while growing up, indicating a significant psychological strain that may have influenced their conduct, decision-making, and susceptibility to criminal influences. The high level of stress could relate to family conflict, poverty, abuse, academic or peer pressure. The data highlights the significant influence of mental health in early life as a potential risk factor for criminal behaviour.

Respondent 17 stated:

*“I was on medical bail before I was in prison. I had anxiety, and I am now on medication. Being mentally unstable and having the need to be in prison is the worst experience I have encountered in my life.”*

Respondent 124 stated:

*“I am the sole earner in my family, and my husband and I got divorced. I have to take care of our three children. I didn’t have any stable job, life stressed me out, that’s why I started getting involved in illegal drug trafficking.”*

#### **5.4.3 Problems of adjustment with the family**

Problems of adjustment with the family denote challenges in interpersonal relations, understanding, or emotional bonding with family members during the growth of a person (Amato & Fowler, 2002). The individual experienced difficulties in assimilating, gaining acceptance, or maintaining peace within the familial setting. In

the context of women prisoners, having problems of adjustment with family can lead to emotional distress, risk of falling into a toxic relationship, a weak family support system, or seeking acceptance outside the family. Having problems with adjustment with family is an important indicator of emotional conflict and instability in a person's early life. A woman who frequently argued with her family and had feelings of rejection may have fled from home prematurely, discontinued her education, or engaged in dangerous circumstances, thus increasing her susceptibility to criminal activity or exploitation. If an individual comes from a healthy family environment, such situations could be avoided.

**Table 5.12 Problems of adjustment with the family**

| <b>Problems of adjustment</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                    | 15               | 10.6                  |
| <b>No</b>                     | 126              | 89.4                  |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

126 out of 141 women (89.4%) stated they did not face problems adjusting to their families while growing up. This indicates that for the majority of inmates, familial relationships were regarded as stable or managed, and a lack of adjustment within the family may not have been an important variable in their crimes. Minority, 15 respondents (10.6%) have reported experiencing problems within their family. This group of respondents, although smaller, may have encountered conflict, neglect, insufficient emotional connection, or communication deficiencies, perhaps resulting in emotional detachment or behavioural problems. The 10.6 per cent experiencing difficulties with familial adjustment may have been at an elevated risk of alienation, escaping from home, vulnerability to negative peer influences, or pursuing acceptance in other environments, all of which can contribute to criminal behaviour. These data, however low, emphasize the significance of familial unity and support as a mitigating factor against crime.

Respondent 39 stated:

*“Since I am an addict, the relationship with my family is really bad. I am not welcomed by my family at home. I used to loiter around in different places. But I understand my family for their ignorance. I am just an addict wanting nothing but drugs only.”*

#### **5.4.4 Mistreatment while growing up**

Mistreatment during upbringing denotes the experience of being subjected to unjust, harsh, or cruel treatment in childhood or adolescence by parents, relatives, guardians, or others within the household or community (Font & Maguire-Jack, 2016). It is an extensive term that refers to any type of abuse, neglect, or injustice experienced throughout early life. Forms of mistreatment could be physical, emotional, sexual, neglect, or discrimination. Childhood mistreatment frequently serves as a trigger to vulnerability, trauma, and subsequent criminal behaviour in adulthood. It may result in substance abuse, emotional distress, dropping out of school, trust issues, and entry into exploitative situations.

**Table 5.13 Mistreatment while growing up**

| <b>Mistreatment</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>          | 16               | 11.3                  |
| <b>No</b>           | 125              | 88.7                  |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in the table above, 125 (88.7%) respondents among 141 inmates reported not facing mistreatment in their upbringing. This indicates that for the majority of imprisoned women, explicit abuse was not a prevalent occurrence in their early years. 16 inmates (11.3%) reported that they were mistreated while growing up. Mistreatment in this case includes neglect, physical and emotional aggression, and this leads to their behavioural problems and rebellious tendencies. The presence of experiencing mistreatment while growing up among 1 out of 10 inmates indicates a serious social concern. As early maltreatment is a recognized risk factor for emotional instability, compromised decision-making, and an increased tendency for

legal conflicts in later life. These women might need psychological interventions to overcome their problems.

Respondent 71 stated:

*“I come from a poor family, having to live with a step-mother. Sometimes I used to feel that my father didn’t even love me or care for me. I am living with my step-siblings. I am never given the right treatment at home. I have been bullied and neglected since childhood. I have to do everything by myself, got married, betrayed by my husband, life is harsh and difficult.”*

#### **5.4.5 Difficulties faced while growing up**

Difficulties faced while growing up denote the challenges, difficulties, or negative circumstances encountered during an individual’s childhood and adolescence, which may have influenced their emotional, psychological, educational, and social development (Herrenkohl et al., 2012). This is a comprehensive and inclusive term encompassing diverse personal, familial, and societal challenges that may obstruct a healthy and supportive development. The difficulties could be family-related, emotional, psychological, educational, or health issues. It is a critical factor for future vulnerabilities and conflicts with relatives. A woman raised in an environment characterized by persistent conflict, economic difficulties, and a lack of emotional support may have endured neglect and trauma, rendering her more susceptible to engaging in dangerous behaviours or being a victim, potentially ending in incarceration.

**Table 5.14 Difficulties faced while growing up**

| <b>Difficulties faced while growing up</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                                 | 16               | 11.3                  |
| <b>No</b>                                  | 125              | 88.7                  |
| <b>Total</b>                               | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in the table, 125 respondents out of 141, which is 88.7 per cent, reported that they did not face any difficulty while growing up. The majority suggested that, at least from their perspectives that their earlier life was relatively stable without any major difficulties. 16 respondents, 11.3 per cent, reported that they have faced difficulties while growing up. These difficulties mainly include economic hardships, parental separation, and lack of education and access to basic needs. The 11.3 per cent experiencing early challenges constitute a vulnerable subgroup that may have cultivated coping mechanisms, either adaptive or maladaptive, that impacted the course of their lives. Challenges in early life are frequently linked to diminished educational achievement, inadequate social integration, and heightened vulnerability to criminal behaviour.

Respondent 21 stated:

*“I was born and brought up in a family that earns a living by selling alcohol. I was brought up by my mother. Sometimes, I blame her for selling alcohol, but then I realised that there are no means for us to survive if not selling alcohol. Our home environment is not a suitable place to grow up.”*

Another respondent 37 stated:

*“Life growing up on the border of Mizoram is difficult. We always have to think of survival mode. Nothing is free while everything is difficult to attain. Illegal means are the best chance for us to earn a living. If not, we will not be able to survive in life.”*

This section examines the obstacles encountered by female inmates in Mizoram during their developmental years, emphasizing how these hurdles may have hindered their socialization and led to their subsequent imprisonment. Socialization, an essential process by which individuals acquire societal norms and roles, is vital for personal growth and social integration. Nonetheless, it is frequently hindered by negative events that can obstruct this process. Through the data, this section reveals that a minority of the respondents faced significant challenges such as past abuse, mental health issues, family adjustment problems, mistreatment, and difficulties

during childhood. Although most individuals reported stable upbringings, these data highlight a susceptible demographic whose early life challenge may have resulted in emotional instability, poor decision-making, and susceptibility to criminal influences. The results emphasize the necessity for early intervention, psychological assistance, and rehabilitation initiatives that tackle childhood trauma, mental health, and familial relationships to facilitate crime prevention and social reintegration.

### **5.5. Physical Factors**

Physical factors denote the bodily or physiological conditions that may predispose or motivate a woman to engage in criminal behaviour (Loeber & Farrington, 2014). Within the physical factors, whether one has any physical disability should be taken into consideration, as this could affect their overall social and economic capabilities. Disability in any form could hinder their educational, mental, financial, and social well-being. This could further lead them to resort to criminal behaviour.

A chronic illness is a prolonged, enduring health condition that often requires ongoing medical attention. It can impact an individual's daily life and activities, and may lack a definitive solution, although it is generally manageable. Although chronic disease does not directly induce criminal conduct, it may indirectly foster criminal tendencies in women via multiple mechanisms. The list of chronic illnesses includes diabetes, cancer, HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, and many others. These chronic illnesses could be a trigger or an excuse to pull them towards criminal behaviour. The need for medication requires financial stability. All these needs might be one of the causes of their criminal behaviour.

#### **5.5.1 Physical Deformities**

Physical deformities denote abnormalities or irregularities in the body's shape, structure, or function, which may be congenital or arise later due to accident, sickness, or starvation (Kellogg, 2006). These conditions can influence an individual's look, mobility, or physical capabilities. In the context of women prisoners, physical deformities may have a significant social, emotional, and psychological impact, including exploitation, neglect, and abuse. Individuals with hidden or physical deformities can have experienced abandonment or abuse, low

societal acceptance, and exclusion from education and employment. Since all these experiences could lead an individual to frustration and hopelessness, individuals with physical deformities might have a greater chance of indulging in deviant behaviour.

All 141 respondents (100%) reported that they do not have any physical deformities. This indicates that physical disability or deformity is not a contributing factor to the etiology of female criminality among the respondents. It also suggests that disability-related marginalization or vulnerability was not a significant issue for this particular group of inmates. However, the absence of physical deformity denotes that alternative socio-economic, psychological, or environmental factors exerted greater influence on the criminal behaviour of these women. The data indicate that physical deformities were absent among the studied women prisoners, hence eliminating any direct association between disabilities and criminal behaviour in this context. Consequently, to comprehend the etiology of crime among these women, focus should be directed towards psychological, familial, and structural factors rather than physical health issues.

### 5.5.2 Chronic Illness

Chronic illness denotes a prolonged health condition that may lack a treatment, generally enduring for a year or longer, frequently needs continuous medical care, and restricts everyday activities (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). Common cases include asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, TB, HIV/AIDS, arthritis, and cardiovascular illness. Chronic illness may not directly induce criminal conduct; nevertheless, it might indirectly contribute by heightening stress, loneliness, dependency, and economic difficulty, perhaps prompting some women to resort to criminal acts as a means of coping or survival.

**Table 5.15 Chronic Illness**

| <b>Chronic Illness</b>    | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Diabetes</b>           | 11               | 7.8                   |
| <b>Others</b>             | 45               | 31.9                  |
| <b>No chronic illness</b> | 82               | 58.2                  |

|                              |            |              |
|------------------------------|------------|--------------|
| <b>Diabetes &amp; Cancer</b> | 1          | .7           |
| <b>Diabetes &amp; others</b> | 2          | 1.4          |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>141</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

Source: Field Survey

Table 5.16 provides information on the prevalence of chronic illnesses among the 141 respondents. 58.2 per cent (82 women) indicated the absence of chronic illness, suggesting that the majority of the respondents were in relatively good physical health. However, A significant 41.8 per cent (59 inmates) reported suffering from one or more chronic illnesses. Among them, 7.8 per cent reported having diabetes, a small portion had a combined diabetes and cancer, 1 respondent and 2 respondents reported having diabetes and hypertension. The presence of multiple chronic illnesses, however uncommon, indicates the intricate health requirements of certain inmates. Others, which consist of 31.9 per cent (45 inmates), reported having HIV Aids, hypertension, and gastrointestinal issues.

A significant percentage of inmates (exceeding 40%) suffer from chronic illnesses, highlighting the necessity for consistent medical checkups and healthcare services within the prison. It also emphasizes the necessity for sufficient prison healthcare infrastructure, encompassing diagnostics, medication, nutritional management, and mental health services. Chronic disease, particularly when neglected or inadequately handled, can adversely impact inmates' mental health, social adaptation, and rehabilitation opportunities.

Respondent 103 stated:

*"I am an HIV patient, I already knew that I was positive 2 years ago. Inside the prison, being positive cannot be kept confidential, because we have to take medicine now and then, and they don't allow us to have it with us."*

Respondent 92 stated:

*"I am diabetic and I also have hypertension. I need to take medicine regularly, and my relatives need to provide me now and then. Since*



*the food we received is not suitable for diabetes, I am often visited by my relatives to provide food and other necessities. We have spent lots of money.”*

Respondent 88 stated:

*“Before I was in prison, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Since it is at the early stage, I had surgery, took chemotherapy, and I am okay for now. If I am not out for a long time, I think it will be very difficult for me.”*

This section analyses the influence of physical conditions, specifically physical deformities and chronic illnesses, on the etiology of female criminality among incarcerated women in Mizoram. Although physical characteristics do not invariably serve as direct causes of crime, they might induce vulnerabilities that may affect deviant behaviour via social, emotional, or economic pathways. The data indicate that none of the respondents reported physical deformities, suggesting that physical impairment did not influence their routes to crime. This finding eliminates physical deformities as a major factor among the examined inmates and redirects focus to alternative socio-psychological causes. However, chronic illness is a significant issue, with a significant inmate indicating the presence of one or more chronic health diseases, including diabetes, hypertension, HIV/AIDS, and other disorders. Although these situations are not directly criminogenic, they may indirectly contribute by elevating stress, fostering dependency, or imposing financial strain, which could result in criminal behaviour as a coping strategy. This section emphasizes the necessity for cohesive health care and specialized support systems in prison. It highlights that untreated chronic health issues can intensify emotional suffering and impede rehabilitation. Therefore, physical well-being, particularly regarding chronic illness, should be seen as a vital component in the comprehensive understanding and treatment of jailed women.

## **5.6 Discrimination and conflicting environment**

Discrimination entails the unequal or unjust treatment of individuals based on attributes such as race or ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, faith, impairment,

age, and country of origin (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020; Miller, 2019). And conflicting environment arises when there is an ongoing tension, disagreement, and hostility. The causes of the conflicting environment may be due to miscommunication, power struggles, and unresolved grievances. When discrimination occurs in a conflicting environment, the result could be devastating and can even lead to deviant behaviour. Any sort of discrimination faced by the women inmates, whether be childhood and school days, or discrimination faced at home, or even in society in general, will be considered. Any type of conflict, whether with relatives at home or conflict with NGO's in the society, will also be taken into consideration. Extreme pressure or discrimination on the grounds of having a job will also be considered. As all the above-mentioned factors can have a tremendous impact on both the mental and physical well-being of an individual. An individual engaged in an environment of discrimination and conflict cannot have a healthy mindset and will be easily lured to engage in deviant behaviour.

#### **5.6.1 Long-term conflict with relatives**

Long-term conflict with relatives denotes persistent arguments, tensions, or hostility between an individual and their family members, such as parents, siblings, in-laws, or extended relatives, that endure over an extended duration (Bartlett et al., 2018; Dawson et al., 2012; Frye & Dawe, 2008). These confrontations may manifest as emotional, verbal, physical, or legal in nature. Ongoing household discord is a crucial sociological and psychological determinant in the origins of female criminal behaviour. It frequently creates an unstable and emotionally detrimental environment, potentially resulting in lifelong impacts on a woman's behaviour, psychological well-being, and decision-making processes. In the case of women prisoners, it affects their psychological stability, social identity, and availability of support systems. In numerous instances, crime manifests as an expression of unresolved emotional trauma or a desperate reaction to parental rejection or abuse.

**Table 5.16 Long-term conflict with relatives**

| <b>Long-term conflict with relatives</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                               | 17               | 12.1                  |
| <b>No</b>                                | 124              | 87.9                  |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in the above Table, a majority (87.9%) of the respondents reported no long-term conflict with relatives, indicating relatively stable family relationships for most of the inmates. However, 12.1 per cent (17 women) reported encountering extended disputes with family members. Although this is a minority, it constitutes a sufficiently substantial segment to warrant consideration in comprehending familial dynamics as a potential contributing factor to criminal behaviour. For these 17 women, unresolved conflicts or strained relationships may have fostered an unfavourable home environment, potentially impacting decision-making, support systems, and stress management. This discovery corresponds with extensive criminological theories that highlight the significance of family dysfunction in the origins of criminal conduct, especially among women who may depend more on familial support. This indicates that familial relationships, especially enduring conflict, may serve as a pertinent socio-emotional element in the context of certain female offenders. Resolving such problems via family counselling or reconciliation programs may be a crucial step in rehabilitation and reintegration.

Respondent 97 stated:

*“I didn’t have a permanent place to go home. Since I am an addict, my families didn’t accept me. We have not been in contact for a long time. I used to stay wherever is convenient and possible. I didn’t blame my family cause I am a burden for my family.”*

### 5.6.2 Relative's history of imprisonment

Relative's history of imprisonment pertains to instances in which one or more immediate family members (including parents, siblings, spouses, or extended relatives) have been previously incarcerated (Farrington, 2005; Murray & Farrington, 2008; Tripathi, 2022). This aspect is crucial for comprehending the intergenerational cycle of crime, particularly regarding female criminality. The incarceration of family members can profoundly influence a woman's social environment, perspective, coping mechanisms, and conduct. It is frequently linked to social learning, normalization of deviance, and insufficient stable support structures, all of which may elevate the probability of criminal activity.

**Table 5.17 Relative's history of imprisonment**

| <b>Relative's history of imprisonment</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                                | 47               | 33.3                  |
| <b>No</b>                                 | 94               | 66.7                  |
| <b>Total</b>                              | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

Table 5.18 provides data on whether the female inmates have any relatives who have also been incarcerated, thereby illuminating potential intergenerational patterns of criminal behaviour. A significant 33.3 per cent (47 women) said that a family member had a history of incarceration. This represents a significant percentage and suggests a potential trend of criminal conduct within families. The majority (66.7%) lacked a familial history, indicating that not all crimes perpetrated by women are influenced by family background or exposure to criminality. The significant proportion of women having incarcerated relatives may indicate the relevance of environmental or social learning theories of crime, which suggest that criminal behaviours can be imitated or normalized within family or community environments. These findings on the high percentage of inmates having relatives in prison could also reflect a lack of positive role models or a support system within their family.

From the findings, it becomes evident that familial criminal background can be a relevant etiological factor in understanding female criminality in Mizoram.

Respondent 33 stated:

*“My husband who is also engaged in selling drugs is in men’s prison right now. I missed him a lot, I wish we could get a chance to meet each other. Once one our day of visiting court, I tried to sneak a letter to him, unfortunately I was caught by the duty.”*

Respondent 40 stated:

*“My son used to be in prison for selling drugs as well. I was now in prison all because of my son, he is an addict and I have to provide him. The reason I am now in prison is also because I am caught taking drugs for my son. Since we cannot afford it much, I have to sell it as well to support us.”*

### **5.6.3 Victim of any type of discrimination**

A victim of any form of discrimination denotes women who have endured inequitable or biased treatment due to variables including gender, caste, tribe, class, disability, marital status, religion, sexual orientation, appearance, or health condition (Crenshaw, 1991; Tripathi, 2022). Discrimination may manifest within families, communities, businesses, educational institutions, or public systems. Here, whether they are victims of discrimination from their friends and family will be specifically taken into consideration. They are the closest ones with whom they interact and share their deepest thoughts and feelings. Being a victim of any kind of discrimination, especially from their close ones, could limit opportunities, breed resentment, and erode self-worth, often leaving deviant behaviour as the only possible means of assertion, resentment, or survival.

**Table 5.18 Victim of any type of discrimination**

| <b>Discrimination</b>    | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Family</b>            | 1                | .7                    |
| <b>Friends</b>           | 4                | 2.8                   |
| <b>No discrimination</b> | 136              | 96.5                  |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

The above table represents whether the 141 respondents faced any type of discrimination, particularly from family and friends, prior to incarceration. A substantial 96.5 per cent (136 women) indicated no experience of discrimination, implying that discriminatory treatment was not a prominent element in the lives of the majority of inmates before incarceration. However, 3.5 per cent (5) of inmates did report being discriminated against, 0.7 per cent (1 woman) by family members and 2.8 per cent (4 women) by friends. Despite being a minor proportion, it is crucial to recognize that even minimal instances of discrimination can lead to psychological distress, social isolation, or feelings of alienation, particularly among marginalised groups. These findings emphasize the significance of inclusive and non-discriminatory environments, particularly in vulnerable social contexts.

#### **5.6.4 Bullied by friends/ classmates**

The term bullied by friends/classmates denotes the ongoing verbal, physical, emotional, or social maltreatment perpetrated by peers in educational or communal environments during childhood or adolescence (Olweus, 1993; Espelage & Swearer, 2003). This type of peer victimization significantly affects psychological well-being, especially in young girls, and is a crucial yet frequently neglected element in the origins of female criminal behaviour. Bullying can inflict profound psychological trauma that impacts a woman's emotional growth, conduct, and subsequent decisions. Individuals subjected to bullying frequently experience diminished self-esteem, social isolation, and resentment, which may ultimately result in deviant or criminal behaviour as a means of self-defence, revenge, or social survival.

**Table 5.19 Bullied by friends/classmates**

| <b>Bullied by<br/>friends/classmates</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                               | 7                | 5.0                   |
| <b>No</b>                                | 134              | 95.0                  |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field survey

As indicated in the Table above, a predominant 95.0 per cent (134 women) indicated that they had not experienced bullying from friends or classmates. Nevertheless, 5.0 per cent (7 women) reported experiencing bullying, which, while a minority, signifies a significant psychological and societal concern. This small group may have experienced early-life peer victimization, potentially leading to feelings of rejection, isolation, or diminished self-worth. It is also significant to note that bullying, especially during the early days, is known to have a long-term effect on the mental health and social development of an individual. It can further lead to trust issues, trauma, social withdrawal, and in some cases, rebellious behaviour or aggression as a coping mechanism. For these 7 women inmates, bullying may have indirectly fostered maladaptive habits that may have potentially evolved into criminal action under specific circumstances.

Respondent 25 stated:

*“Since I come from a poor family, I used to be bullies by my classmates, they call names, laugh at me, and didn’t want to be friends with me, I used to be alone.”*

#### **5.6.5 Pressure to get job**

Pressure to get a job here denotes the economic and societal expectations imposed on women to provide financial support, whether from their families, partners, or society at large (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004; Daly, 1994). Although employment is typically regarded as a beneficial opportunity, in situations when women encounter restricted education, prejudice, poverty, or insufficient skills, this pressure can

become excessive and compel them to resort to illegal or risky methods of income generation. The need to secure employment, when coupled with economic hardship, gender-specific obstacles, and limited opportunities, constitutes a structural catalyst for criminal behaviour among women. For many individuals, crime is not a voluntary decision but rather a final recourse driven by need.

**Table 5.20 Pressure to get job**

| <b>Pressure to get job</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|----------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                 | 59               | 41.8                  |
| <b>No</b>                  | 82               | 58.2                  |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

Table 5.20 analyses the extent to which female inmates had pressure to get a job before their incarceration, offering insights into socio-economic stresses. A notable 41.8 per cent (59 women) indicated experiencing pressure to secure employment, indicating substantial economic expectations or stress in their lives.

Respondent 101 stated:

*“Since I didn’t even pass class X, it is extremely difficult for me to get a job that pays well. My children are dependent on me, so I have to go places to find a suitable job that could pay me.”*

Respondent 109 also added:

*“If I could have a permanent job to feed my family, I would not be here in prison. My children are dependent on me, and I want them to continue their studies. I just have to engage in selling drugs so that my children can afford to go to school. I didn’t even want to think about the future. I am here, and my children are starving outside.”*

However, the majority (58.2%) did not experience such pressure, potentially due to relying on family, limited opportunities, or alternative support systems. The pressure to earn may stem from poverty, being a single provider, or family obligations. There



could also be a lack of stable or well-paying employment, especially for women with limited education or skills. This economic stress may heighten susceptibility to risky survival strategies, including illicit sources of revenue like drug trafficking and theft. The data indicate a necessity for skill development, job placement assistance, and economic empowerment initiatives, particularly for women vulnerable to criminal activity stemming from economic desperation.

#### **5.6.6 Caught by YMA/ NGO's for misbehavior**

Within the sociocultural framework of Mizoram, the Young Mizo Association (YMA), which is the largest NGO in Mizoram, and several NGOs significantly contribute to community oversight, moral regulation, and social discipline (Lalrinawma, 2017; Tripathi, 2022). Being publicly cautioned by such groups for behaviours deemed inappropriate, such as alcohol consumption, drug usage, drug smuggling, altercations, or indecency, can result in significant social, emotional, and legal repercussions, particularly for women. Being detained by YMA or NGOs for misconduct, particularly in close-knit communities such as Mizoram, might catalyse illegal behaviour. Public discipline frequently results in alienation, emotional distress, and enduring stigmatization rather than rehabilitation. For certain women, this can signify the onset of their hostility from lawful society and their induction into the criminal justice system.

**Table 5.21 Caught by YMA/NGOs for misbehaviour**

| <b>Caught by YMA/NGOs for misbehaviour</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                                 | 20               | 14.2                  |
| <b>No</b>                                  | 121              | 85.8                  |
| <b>Total</b>                               | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

Table 5.21 indicates whether the inmates had been previously caught by YMA (Young Mizo Association) or any NGO's for any form of misbehavior before they were in prison. As mentioned earlier, in the Mizo Society, NGO's especially YMA, act as a watchdog in maintaining peace and order in the community. It is one of the

strongest agents to maintain social control in society, and the community also adheres to it with utmost respect. 14.2 per cent (20 women) had previously been apprehended by YMA or NGOs for misconduct, indicating prior community-level interventions or warnings prior to their arrest.

Respondent 39 stated:

*“I was called by members of our locality YMA for suspicion of selling drugs, since I was not caught red-handed during that time, they didn’t send me to the police, they gave me a warning, and here I am.”*

Respondent 134 stated:

*“I am a habitual offender; this is not the first time I have been in prison as well. Members of our locality often call me and warn me not to indulge in drug trafficking. However, selling drugs is also like an addiction, I couldn’t stop myself since I know the ways, it’s an easy way of getting money for me.”*

Respondent 104 also added:

*“I am now in prison because of selling drugs. However, I also used to sell alcohol before. I was asked to leave my locality once by members of YMA because I was caught selling alcohol.”*

A significant majority, 85.8 per cent (121 women), lacked any such record, suggesting either a first-time offense or that their previous conduct remained unobserved or unaddressed by community organizations.

The YMA and NGOs in Mizoram actively engage in community surveillance, moral policing, and behavioural correction. Being apprehended by these entities frequently serves as a societal deterrent. The 14.2 per cent who were apprehended likely had pre-existing behavioural problems or dangerous conduct that were apparent in the community and identified early; nevertheless, those interventions may not have been successful in preventing subsequent criminal involvement. This also suggests that there is a potential but limited impact of community correction. There is a need for a

stronger follow-up support system, including counselling, rehabilitation, and livelihood alternatives, especially for women at risk.

This section examines the influence of discrimination and exposure to conflict-prone circumstances on the criminal behaviour of female convicts in Mizoram. It emphasizes that personal histories characterized by emotional trauma, marginalization, and social tension can serve as significant socio-psychological stimulants for deviance. Overall, although overt discrimination was not extensively reported, the interplay of economic hardship, peer victimization, familial discord, and community surveillance creates a multifaceted network of conflict and inequality. These criteria, while not universally applicable, indicate that for a considerable percentage of women, criminal behaviour was not an impulsive act but rather a reaction to persistent stress, marginalization, and unfulfilled needs. Addressing these concerns via counselling, social reintegration, and support services may diminish the probability of recidivism and facilitate rehabilitation.

### **5.7 Drugs and Alcoholism**

Substance abuse, including the misuse, sale, and smuggling of drugs, as well as alcohol use disorder, can have profound health, psychological, and legal consequences, and is often a primary factor in female incarceration (National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], 2020; World Health Organization [WHO], 2018). Drugs are chemical compounds that influence the standard operations of the body and mind. They may be utilized for medical purposes (as prescribed by a physician) or for non-medical/recreational use. The non-medical or misuse of drugs will be considered here. Substance abuse can result in addiction, health complications, or legal ramifications. History of intoxication, selling, and smuggling of illegal drugs, including heroin, cocaine, and LSD, will be considered. As the majority of the cases of the respondents in prison relate to drug cases. Alcoholism, or Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD), is a chronic condition marked by an inability to regulate or cease alcohol consumption despite adverse repercussions. It frequently encompasses both physical dependency and psychological addiction. Here, besides the consumption of alcohol, the selling of alcohol will also be taken into consideration

### 5.7.1 History of substance abuse

Substance abuse, including the misuse of drugs (legal or illegal) or other addictive substances, is a significant causal factor in female criminality. A history of substance misuse denotes a woman's recurrent and frequently prolonged engagement with psychoactive substances that compromise her judgment, conduct, health, and social functioning. A history of substance misuse significantly contributes to female criminality. It not only modifies behaviour and decision-making but also creates economic desperation, susceptibility to exploitation, and social isolation. For numerous women, particularly in areas such as Mizoram, substance use serves as both an indicator and a catalyst of profound social and psychological issues, frequently resulting in imprisonment.

**Table 5.22 History of substance abuse**

| History of substance abuse | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|----------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Yes                        | 28        | 19.9           |
| No                         | 113       | 80.1           |
| Total                      | 141       | 100.0          |

Source: Field survey

Table 5.23 presents data regarding the history of substance usage among women prisoners before their incarceration. 19.9 per cent (28 women) disclosed a history of substance addiction, representing a notable minority, suggesting a correlation between substance use and criminal participation for nearly one-fifth of the inmates.

Respondent 43 stated:

*"I am currently married and I also have 2 children. I am secretly addicted to heroin. No one, even my husband, realized it before I was caught. All my relatives are broken-hearted, especially my husband. I didn't know why I was indulging in such an addiction. I regret it so much, but I can't help myself anymore."*

Respondent 77 stated:

*“I am an addict. I was forced to be in prison by my relatives who charged me for stealing our own scooter. I was not actually stealing it, but they made it an excuse to put me in prison. They have put me in several rehabilitation homes, but I always escape them. They believe that prison could discipline me and help me quit doing drugs.”*

However, the majority (80.1%) lacked such a background, indicating that for most female inmates, substance misuse was not a direct contributing factor. For the 28 inmates who reported having a history of substance abuse, their behaviour could have played a direct role in the commission of crimes, especially related to drugs. It could also influence their mental health and could also be a significant factor as a coping mechanism for trauma, poverty, or social marginalization.

Although 80.1 per cent of female convicts had no history of substance misuse, a significant 19.9 per cent did, suggesting that substance addiction is a contributing factor in a considerable fraction of female criminal cases in Mizoram. This highlights the necessity for focused drug misuse awareness, counselling, and recovery initiatives within the broader framework of comprehending and mitigating female criminal involvement.

### **5.7.2 Involvement in selling drugs**

Participation in drug trafficking is a substantial and direct factor in female criminality, particularly within economically disadvantaged and socially excluded populations. For numerous women, drug trafficking is not solely a criminal activity but a survival tactic influenced by poverty, coercion, addiction, or exploitation. In Mizoram, where drug trafficking is an escalating issue, many of the female inmates are first timers, lured into selling drugs without knowing any legal consequences (National Crime Records Bureau [NCRB], 2020; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2019). Or maybe repeated offenders, who are often in and out of prison. or even some, maybe a carrier or mules, who are lured in by expert drug traffickers. Cultural and religious norms in Mizoram frequently intensify the stigma surrounding female offenders engaged in drug trafficking, intensifying their social marginalization and adversely affecting their mental health.

**Table 5.23 Involvement in selling drugs**

| <b>Involvement in selling drugs</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                          | 78               | 55.3                  |
| <b>No</b>                           | 63               | 44.7                  |
| <b>Total</b>                        | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

Table 5.24 provides data regarding the involvement of female prisoners in drug trafficking previous to their incarceration, thereby offering a critical insight into the nature of their illegal activities. A predominant 55.3 per cent (78 women) engaged in drug trafficking, rendering it the most prevalent criminal activity among the assessed female inmates.

Respondent 89 stated:

*“This is a place of drug traffickers. Every conversation is about drugs, how to get them, and where to get them. I am a first timer, but the prison environment taught me all the tricks to deal with drug trafficking. Sometimes I used to have a thought of engaging more after I am out of here.”*

Respondent 8 added:

*“I used to feel anxious and pity for the innocent inmates who are here for the cunning behaviour of drug dealers. They unknowingly act as a carrier of drugs for a few earnings. They are just used.”*

Respondent 10 argued:

*“The majority of us are here because of ND&PS cases. Some will say that they didn’t know that the things they are involved in are related to drugs. But that’s not the truth. We all know it and indulge in it anyway.”*

The Jailor stated:

*“After COVID-19, the majority of cases we have are related to drug trafficking. It is a huge problem for us. Even though there are habitual offenders, the majority of them are 1st timers; there are genuine cases where some are victims of drug peddlers. But, we can’t help them as most of them are caught red-handed. The real owners are cunning, and they are very difficult to catch. Unfortunately, widowed, single mothers and poor individuals are stuck here with us. Many among the inmates are here because of their ignorance. For a small amount of earnings, they risk their entire life and end up here in prison.”*

44.7 per cent (63 women) were not involved in this activity, indicating a diverse range of offenses and histories. Even though the majority of the inmates are in prison due to ND&PS cases, 63 inmates argue that they do not have a history of involvement in selling drugs. This could be triangulated with the sayings from the above quotations. Many of them are 1<sup>st</sup> timers. The high rate of involvement in drug selling suggests economic hardship or unemployment. Also, it serves as a carrier or middleman within extensive drug trafficking networks due to their susceptibility or compulsion. Even a lack of awareness or a disdain for legal consequences may influence such actions. This tendency signifies a profound socio-economic and systemic issue.

Over half (55.3%) of female inmates are engaged in drug trafficking, indicating that drug-related offenses constitute a significant route to imprisonment for women in Mizoram. This highlights an urgent necessity for initiatives aimed at economic empowerment, legal education, and the disintegration of drug trafficking networks, particularly those that exploit or involve women.

### **5.7.3 History of alcohol abuse**

A history of alcohol abuse is a crucial element in comprehending the etiology of female criminality, especially in circumstances where poverty, trauma, and gender discrimination intersect. Alcohol abuse denotes the extended and detrimental intake of alcohol that disrupts a person’s mental, emotional, physical, and social health, frequently culminating in actions that conflict with the law. In Mizoram, alcohol is

socially and religiously condemned, particularly concerning women (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020; Breuer et al., 2011). Women who are engaged in the misuse of alcohol are likely to be publicly stigmatized or denounced by community organizations such as YMA. A history of alcohol addiction significantly influences female criminality in intricate and frequently concealed ways. It contributes to crime by directly influencing behaviour, as well as by undermining social connections, intensifying poverty, and deteriorating mental health.

**Table 5.24 History of alcohol abuse**

| <b>History of alcohol abuse</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                      | 20               | 14.2                  |
| <b>No</b>                       | 87               | 61.7                  |
| <b>Occasionally</b>             | 34               | 24.1                  |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

Table 5.25 presents data on alcohol consumption trends among the 141 examined female inmates, categorizing them as regular misuse, occasional usage, and abstinence. 14.2 per cent (20 women) admitted to alcohol misuse, signifying that a segment of female inmates exhibited severe and potentially detrimental drinking behaviours.

Respondents 50 stated:

*“I have a history of alcohol addiction. I quit drinking, but I started engaging in drugs from which I can never escape.”*

A majority (61.7%) indicated no prior alcohol consumption, implying that alcohol abuse was not prevalent among most inmates. A notable 24.1 per cent (34 women) engaged in occasional alcohol consumption, which, although not constituting abuse, could nonetheless affect behaviour or decision-making in precarious situations. The 14.2 per cent who engaged in alcohol abuse may have committed offenses when intoxicated or to sustain their alcohol use, or may have experienced impaired judgment, resulting in unlawful conduct. The occasional users (24.1%) may not



demonstrate addiction but could be susceptible to escalation, particularly in response to stress or peer pressure.

In Mizoram, the majority of female inmates (61.7%) indicated no alcohol abuse; nonetheless, the aggregate of abusers (14.2%) and occasional users (24.1%) constitutes more than one-third (38.3%) of the jail population with varying levels of alcohol exposure. This underscores the influence of alcohol as a contributing factor to female criminality and stresses the necessity for alcohol education, mental health assistance, and recovery activities within preventative and rehabilitation strategies.

#### **5.7.4 Involvement in selling alcohol**

The sale of alcohol, particularly in regions where it is socially or legally prohibited, such as Mizoram, is a major factor contributing to the criminalization of women. Participation in this action frequently stems from economic necessity, societal coercion, or survival instincts, rather than intentional criminal intent. Nonetheless, owing to legislative prohibitions under the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition and Control) Act, 2014, such actions are classified as criminal offenses, resulting in arrests and incarceration. In Mizoram, where church power and communal ethical standards are upheld, the sale of alcohol is regarded as both a legal and moral violation. For women, participation in the sale of alcohol frequently constitutes a crime of need rather than intent, particularly in areas with stringent alcohol regulations such as Mizoram. Although the law penalizes the crime, it frequently overlooks the underlying factors, poverty, unemployment, and insufficient education that drive women to engage in such activities (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020; Tripathi et al., 2022; Breuer et al., 2011).

**Table 5.25 Involvement in selling alcohol**

| <b>Involvement in selling alcohol</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                            | 13               | 9.2                   |
| <b>No</b>                             | 128              | 90.7                  |
| <b>Total</b>                          | 141              | 100.0                 |

Source: Field Survey

Table 5.25 provides data regarding the involvement of female prisoners in the illicit sale of alcohol before their incarceration. A little percentage (9.2%) of 13 women participated in alcohol sales, signifying that this was a less prevalent offense relative to drug trafficking (as illustrated in Table 5.24). Approximately 90.8 per cent were uninvolved, indicating that alcohol sales were not a significant criminal activity among these inmates. The 9.2 per cent engaged in selling alcohol may indicate efforts to generate revenue through informal or illegal marketplaces, particularly where alcohol sales are restricted or prohibited. Economic hardship or constrained employment prospects may force women into precarious occupations. In comparison to drug-related charges, the selling of alcohol seems to be less common yet remains substantial, particularly within a regulated legal framework such as that of Mizoram. Participants may not regard it as grave as drug-related offenses; yet, the legal consequences are substantial under local laws.

Even though only 9.2 per cent of female inmates were involved in selling alcohol, this suggests that financial vulnerability and perhaps a lack of legal knowledge were important contributory factors. The comparatively low rate indicates that, although alcohol-related offenses exist, they exert less impact on female criminality than drug trafficking. This also shows that drug trafficking is rampant compared to alcohol.

This section analyses the influence of substance misuse and alcohol-related offenses on the etiology of female criminality among convicts in Mizoram. Based on empirical data, it highlights how drug and alcohol abuse, either through personal use or participation in illicit distribution, contributes to incarceration. Drug-related offenses constitute a primary reason for incarceration. Alcohol abuse was also infrequent. The analysis highlights the interplay of economic distress, social vulnerability, and legal illiteracy as key factors contributing to substance-related crimes. The results emphasize the necessity for focused measures, such as addiction rehabilitation, legal education, and socio-economic assistance, to tackle the underlying factors contributing to female criminal participation.

## 5.8 Stigmatization and repentance

Stigmatization denotes the societal process of labelling and marginalizing individuals due to specific behaviours or qualities, resulting in their social marginalization. Stigma is especially pronounced in a closely knit tribal community such as Mizoram, where communal identification and social conformity are greatly valued. Female inmates frequently encounter dual stigma: initially for their criminal actions, and subsequently for breaking traditional gender roles in Mizo society, which anticipates women to embody passivity, morality, and familial devotion. The consequences of stigmatization could include difficulties in re-integration into society, barriers to employment, education, and marriage, mental health issues, and reluctance to seek help from others (Tripathi et al., 2022; Breuer et al., 2011).

Repentance is the profound remorse or regret for one's wrongdoing, frequently coupled with an aspiration to repent and pursue a better life. Numerous individuals convey genuine remorse for their wrongdoing, especially when the offense impacts family or community. Especially in Mizoram, where Christianity is dominant, inmates experience repentance and emotional healing through religious activities, prayer, and counsel from pastors or chaplains. The convergence of stigmatization and repentance creates a multifaceted social and emotional experience for female inmates in Mizoram. They also encounter fear of sin, spiritual rebirth, the mercy of the good Lord, and moral sin. Although societal stigma poses significant obstacles to reintegration, numerous women experience authentic inner growth during incarceration. This could also be understood by the fact that the most prevalent form of rehabilitation available in the prison is the Church and counselling, which are mostly conducted spiritually. Successful rehabilitation necessitates not only correctional assistance but also societal acceptance, diminished stigma, and familial reconciliation, all situated within the cultural and theological framework of Mizo society (Tripathi et al., 2022; Breuer et al., 2011).

Respondent 82 stated:

*“Before I was in prison, I didn’t have time to pray or read the Bible. However, since there is not much activity here, I spent a lot of time*

*praying and reading the Bible. It's a blessing for me that I am very near to God."*

Respondent 13 added:

*"The only enjoyment we have inside the prison is crusades, Church services, and counselling. I have gained a lot, and I am born in Christ from prison. As soon as I am out of here, I will serve the Gospel."*

### 5.8.1 Relationship with relatives at home

The quality of a woman's familial relationships significantly influences her emotional well-being, social growth, and behaviour. Adverse or strained familial connections can substantially influence the etiology of female criminality, particularly in situations when women are financially and emotionally dependent on familial frameworks. In Mizoram, a strong family and community bond is considered to be ideal, and deviation from family and community norms is highly judged. Unsatisfactory relationships with their family frequently compel women to abandon their homes in search of consolation or identity, occasionally resulting in their involvement with vulnerable or criminal networks. A dysfunctional familial relationship is not merely an additional aspect; it frequently serves as a fundamental motivator for a woman's engagement in criminal activity (Maniyar, 2004; Cherukuri, 2008; Frye & Dawe, 2008).

**Table 5.26 Relationship with relatives at home**

| <b>Relationship with your relatives at home</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Good</b>                                     | 123              | 87.2                  |
| <b>Not Good</b>                                 | 17               | 12.1                  |
| <b>Excellent</b>                                | 1                | .7                    |
| <b>Total</b>                                    | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

Table 5.26 evaluates the quality of familial relationships that the women inmates maintained at home before their incarceration, emphasizing the emotional and social

support systems in their lives. A significant majority (87.2%) of women indicated having a ‘good’ relationship with their relatives at home, reflecting moderate familial support and connectedness. Merely 0.7 per cent (1 inmate) characterized her relationship as ‘excellent,’ indicating that exceptionally strong familial bonds are uncommon. 12.1 per cent (17 women) reported that their relationship was “not good,” suggesting conflict, neglect, or emotional detachment, which may have led to stress, loneliness, or susceptibility to deviant behaviour.

Positive familial relationships (good/excellent) can serve as protective factors against criminal behaviour by offering emotional, ethical, and physical assistance as well as promoting lawful conduct and responsibility. In contrast, strained relationships (12.1%) may lead to mental health challenges, absence of supervision, or the quest for an alternate source of acceptance, including deviant peer networks. It could also likely increase the likelihood of recidivism or ongoing marginalization following release. Thus, indicating that a ‘good’ relationship does not inherently prevent criminal behaviour, highlighting the necessity to investigate underlying familial issues, such as neglect, abuse, or pressure, even within ‘good’ relationships.

### **5.8.2 The biggest regret in life**

The notion of “biggest regret in life” significantly influences the psychological and emotional development of an individual, even those engaged in criminal behaviour (Brown & Bloom, 2009; Rossiter et al., 2016). Within the framework of female criminality in Mizoram, this issue can be perceived as both a consequence of crime and a fundamental cause, especially when examined through the perspectives of emotional instability, societal disintegration, and insufficient rehabilitative assistance. The inmates express deep emotional remorse for the actions that led them to incarceration. For many, their biggest regrets revolve around imposing harm on their children or family as a result of their absence or the disgrace imposed on the family. When interviewed, most of them said that their biggest regret in life is the fact that they are now in prison.

Respondent 19 stated:

*“I spent every day in prison regretting the reasons for my presence here. If I could turn back time, I would never be involved in drug trafficking. I was paid Rs. 10000, but I have spent triple the amount because of my imprisonment.”*

Respondent 124 stated:

*“My biggest regret in life is getting married. I chose the wrong partner, and my life crumbled right from there. If my husband were a responsible person, I won’t not end up here.”*

Respondent 99 also added:

*“If I could turn back time, I would not do anything that could harm my children. Because of me, their future is ruined.”*

### **5.8.3 Blame for committing the crime**

Within the framework of female criminality in Mizoram, the concept of blame, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, can serve as a significant etiological component influencing criminal behaviour. Blame can emerge as self-blame or internal attribution, when the individual holds herself accountable for the conditions leading to the crime, and external blame, where the responsibility is ascribed to external influences, individuals, or societal structures (Bandura, 1990; Weiner, 1985).

Women in the patriarchal and tightly bound tribal society of Mizoram frequently encounter stringent expectations concerning morality, gender roles, and obedience. When individuals diverge from these standards, particularly through illegal behaviour, many experience internalized guilt and shame. This internalized guilt can establish a cause-and-effect relationship, wherein guilt can further lead to additional deviant behaviour due to mental health issues, trauma from past abuse, low self-esteem, and lack of emotional support. There could also be several external factors that pushed them into criminal activities. This could include blame on partners, relatives, or friends, or blame on poverty or lack of opportunities, or blame on pure pressure or community stigma.

Respondent 64 stated:

*“I could not blame anyone for my wrongdoing. It’s purely my fault, and I will suffer the consequences. I knowingly involved myself in selling drugs.”*

However, Respondent 45 stated:

*“As soon as I am out of here, I will surely take revenge on my friend who sent me the drug parcel. I cannot forgive him, and it makes my life even miserable.”*

Factors such as stigmatization, repentance, familial relationships, regret, and blame emerge as critical components in the etiology of criminal behaviour among women. In a society where communal values, gender norms, and moral codes are strongly embedded, women who engage in illicit activities encounter multiple stigmas, not just for violating the law but also for transgressing conventional feminine duties. This stigmatization frequently leads to social marginalization, mental health challenges, and obstacles to reintegration post-incarceration. In contrast, repentance, frequently articulated through religious or spiritual practices, serves a pivotal function in the emotional rehabilitation and aspiration for ethical transformation among several inmates. In Mizoram, where Christianity is profoundly established, jails frequently serve as venues for spiritual healing and moral contemplation. Familial relationships considerably influence women’s mental stability and risk for criminal activity. Although most incarcerated women indicate having had ‘good’ ties with their families, these relationships could still contain unexpressed conflict, neglect, or emotional isolation. Conversely, strained familial relationships are more closely associated with vulnerability, stress, and an increased likelihood of involvement with deviant networks.

The concept of regret serves as a significant emotional motivator. Many offenders express profound regret regarding the devastation inflicted upon their children and families, which contributes to feelings of shame and guilt. This remorse may stem from what they have done and signify the underlying emotional traumas that may have influenced their illegal behaviour in the first place. The notion of blame, whether internal or external, functions as a significant psychological and sociological

framework. Women may internalize blame and shame owing to cultural standards, or they may externalize blame to issues such as abusive relationships, poverty, peer pressure, or lack of opportunity. Both factors are essential in influencing their decisions and coping strategies.

## **5.9 An Overview**

This analysis offers an in-depth study of the complex factors contributing to female criminality in Mizoram, emphasizing the distinct influence of how gender, socio-economic, psychological, and cultural dynamics have influenced women's criminal pathways. In contrast to male offenders, whose criminal activities frequently arise from thrill-seeking or opportunistic motives, female criminality in Mizoram is mostly influenced by economic deprivation, substance use, familial trauma, and social marginalization. A significant number of female offenders saw themselves as the self-instigators of their criminal behaviour, but deeper investigation indicates that these activities are often influenced by coercive circumstances and limited life options. More than intent, their crimes are motivated by institutional neglect, mental stress, and survival.

A crucial aspect is the impact of familial relations. Female inmates frequently originate from households marked by physical violence, parental absence, emotional neglect, or economic strain, particularly in large families. Even when women describe their familial ties as "good" a deeper examination reveals underlying problems such as emotional isolation or insufficient real assistance. Although numerous offenders indicate familial acceptance following jail, indicative of the cohesive Mizo culture, there is still a necessity for family-oriented therapies to tackle underlying issues and facilitate reintegration.

Early developmental difficulties also have a critical impact. Although most individuals experienced stable childhoods, a notable minority reported encountering abuse, mental health challenges, or adjustment difficulties, all of which may have hindered effective socialization. These developmental vulnerabilities can impair emotional control and decision-making, heightening sensitivity to deviant motivation. Regarding physical health, numerous prisoners reported having chronic



conditions, including diabetes, hypertension, or HIV/AIDS, but none reported physical deformities. Despite not being the direct causes of crime, these circumstances cause financial and mental strain, which may lead to vulnerable women turning to criminal activity as a coping strategy. This emphasizes the necessity of including healthcare access and emotional support in rehabilitation systems.

Conflict and discrimination have important effects as well. Many women experienced accumulated stress from economic disparities, peer conflict, family disputes, and societal monitoring, even in situations where overt discrimination was less widely recognized. For many, criminal behaviour seems to be a reflexive response to enduring social and emotional forces rather than intentional deviation. Substance abuse is a significant contributing element, especially in drug-related offenses. Although alcohol misuse was less common, the correlation between poverty, limited legal awareness, and substance-related criminality is apparent. These findings necessitate the implementation of more comprehensive rehabilitation programs, addiction treatment, and legal education aimed at vulnerable female groups.

Finally, comprehending female criminality in Mizoram requires an awareness of fundamentally emotional components such as stigmatization, repentance, regret, and blame. Female criminals endure dual stigmatization, first for perpetrating a crime and second for breaking societal norms of morality and femininity. Many prisoners also feel sincere regret, which is frequently expressed through religious beliefs and spiritual practices, especially considering Mizoram's strong Christian identity, even if this stigma frequently prevents social reintegration. A strong factor influencing prisoners' desire for reform is their sense of regret, particularly about harm done to their families and children. At the same time, their coping mechanisms, emotional load, and self-perception are framed by internal and external patterns of blame. The findings from these interrelated fields highlight the fact that female criminality in Mizoram is the result of intricate interactions between trauma, poverty, a lack of support networks, and gendered social norms rather than being the product of deliberate deviance.

**CHAPTER -VI**  
**EFFECTS OF INCARCERATION ON WOMEN**

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## **CHAPTER -VI**

### **EFFECTS OF INCARCERATION ON WOMEN**

#### **6.1. Introduction**

Incarceration has significant and complex consequences on women, influencing their physical, mental, and reproductive health, along with their social and economic well-being. Female inmates frequently encounter distinct problems relative to their male counterparts, including elevated incidences of past trauma, mental illness, and sexual victimisation, which may be intensified by the prison environment. Harner & Riley (2013) claimed that incarceration can increase, improve, or maintain the status quo of women's mental health, highlighting the necessity for trauma-informed care within correctional facilities. Beyond the prison walls, the incarceration of women or their partners can lead to significant economic consequences, including diminished earnings and heightened unemployment, further compounding the difficulties women have upon reintegration into society. Karlsson & Zielinski (2020) highlighted that incarcerated women face elevated rates of sexual victimisation and mental illness, with sexual abuse perhaps influencing their path to incarceration.

The incarceration of women also has significant impacts on the lives of their families. The disturbance affects not only the incarcerated women but also their children, caregivers, and the wider family network, frequently leading to emotional, social, and economic difficulties. Powell (2020) stated that the incarceration of women, especially mothers, is commonly termed a "family sentence", as it forces caregivers, often grandparents or other relatives, to take on the duty for the children, resulting in considerable disruption and stress in their own lives. Booth (2018) also argues that maternal incarceration negatively impacts the lives of female inmates and their families, as they frequently assume the primary caregiving responsibilities for their dependent children. Seeing these women only as mothers ignores the fact that they are part of social and familial networks, relationships, and duties, and that they typically provide the majority of the care for their dependent children. This not only impacts female inmates striving to maintain maternal connections but also significantly affects the numerous innocent children and family members abandoned

during maternal incarceration. Children of prisoners are referred to as the ‘hidden victims of jail’ and the ‘orphans of justice’ due to their persistent neglect in political and policy discussions, academic research, and broader societal considerations.

Ips (2024) suggests that women’s correctional institutions emphasize safety, security, and rehabilitation to promote effective reintegration into society. Institutional facilities are essential in facilitating the reintegration of women inmates into society. Successful re-entry is optimally facilitated by gender-responsive, trauma-informed, and comprehensive institutional programs that cater to women’s specific needs, including education, mental health, family reunification, and digital competencies. Nevertheless, numerous facilities continue to encounter substantial deficiencies in resources and assistance. Even the presence of female staff could foster a compassionate atmosphere, enhancing the effectiveness of rehabilitation efforts. The presence of counselling, psychological support, and educational opportunities tailored to the realities of female inmates.

This chapter highlighted the effect of imprisonment on the lives of women inmates. The positive/ negative impact during incarceration focuses on their mental health, relationship with their friends, relatives, family members, and society at large. The consequences of their imprisonment on the lives of their children and immediate family are prioritized, as they often are the most likely to carry the burden of their incarceration. Focus is also given on the internal relationship inside the prison with its inmates as well as the prison staff. Besides, Prison administration and infrastructural facilities play a crucial role in their reintegration into society. As such, administrative aspects of the prison settings, including the facilities provided to them as well as the infrastructure available, are considered.

## **6.2. Positive/ Negative Effects of Incarceration**

The experience of incarceration significantly impacts women prisoners, particularly within the socio-cultural framework of Mizoram. Female inmates in the state are usually imprisoned for charges associated with drug trafficking, alcohol sale, theft, or personal conflicts, crimes often influenced by economic deprivation, insufficient education, fractured families, and societal neglect (Tripathi et al., 2022; Cherukuri,

2008; Maniyar, 2004). The incarceration experience for these women is influenced not only by the conditions of captivity but also by the embedded shame associated with female criminality in Mizo society, where women are conventionally seen as moral custodians of the family and community.

The effects of incarceration on these women can be both detrimental and, in certain instances, marginally advantageous. On one hand, imprisonment frequently results in social isolation, deterioration of mental health, and enduring stigmatization (Strozier et al., 2011; Rossiter et al., 2016). Numerous women endure emotional trauma due to separation from their children and families, while also confronting obstacles such as inadequate healthcare, insufficient rehabilitation services, and poor post-release support (Frye & Dawe, 2008; Stone et al., 2017; Bartlett et al., 2018). Conversely, the prison environment may occasionally provide a structured routine, necessities, and opportunities for self-reflection, religious engagement, or vocational training, particularly for women who have experienced neglect or abuse outside the correctional system (Celinska & Siegel, 2010; Breuer et al., 2011).

Within the impact of imprisonment on life, whether imprisonment has a positive or negative impact on their life will be considered, as well as the overall effect of imprisonment on the life of the inmates. The positive impact on their life determines their level of self-reflection on their life after imprisonment. Some may experience a sense of remorse and self-awareness, leading them to refrain from indulging in such deviant behaviour or seek spiritual revival (Celinska & Siegel, 2010; Breuer et al., 2011). On the other hand, for others, their imprisonment could have a profound negative impact on their life. Their chances of recidivism could be higher. They could turn out to be rebellious than before and could even learn more deviant behaviours from the prison environment (Frye & Dawe, 2008; Strozier et al., 2011). Additionally, the overall impact of their lives while they are in prison will also be considered.

**Table 6.1 Impact of imprisonment on life**

| <b>Impact of imprisonment on life</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Positively</b>                     | 104              | 73.8                  |
| <b>Negatively</b>                     | 37               | 26.2                  |
| <b>Total</b>                          | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

An unexpectedly high percentage, which is 104 (73.8%) inmates, reported having imprisonment had a positive impact on their lives. The respondents may reframe experiences positively to demonstrate reform to the researcher as a medium to hide their deviant behaviour or the immediate guilt they have since they are now behind bars. As in the Mizoram women's jail, the majority of them entered jail due to drug-related cases, including drug users themselves, and mostly smugglers. For inmates having drug-use histories, prison could have been a place that enforced abstinence and regularity, reducing chaos and withdrawal anxiety. And for the smugglers, prison could be a place for self-reflection and self-realization for their wrongdoings. For inmates who have past histories of domestic violence, it could be a shelter to be relieved from abusive partners and home environment, and the ability to 'sleep without fear' inside the prison. It could also serve as a place where they could get away from the community stigma of the smugglers being treated as outsiders and a delinquent in their community. Since one of the most efficient rehabilitation programs inside the prison is faith-based rehabilitation. The availability of counselling services and Church services, collective prayers, and regular devotions could foster mutual aid, personal growth, and peer solidarity, which they had never experienced outside the prison.

Respondent 52, who is accused of the ND&PS case, stated:

*“Being in prison affected me positively. I finished reading the Holy Bible and even wrote it down, which I would never do if I were not in prison. Since I was brought up by my missionary grandparents, the*

*advice and prayer that they have inculcated in me have revived, and I am closer to God even than before”.*

Respondent 59 added:

*“My journey in prison had taught me lots of lessons. I realized the importance of family and the value of my children, which I had taken for granted. I am also much nearer to God, since there is not much to do inside the prison, I pray more and often read the Bible, which I never had time to do outside. I now regret that I used to blame poverty as the main cause of everything. But I now realize here inside the prison that having God in our life is the greatest achievement we could have while we are alive”.*

Respondent 67 highlighted her positive experience and commented:

*“If I am not here in prison, you will not see me anymore. I will already die of alcohol abuse. I will drink myself to death, I am thankful that I can be sober after a long time”.*

On the other hand, 37 (26.2 %) reported that imprisonment harmed their life. Although the number of inmates reported having a negative impact is low compared to inmates having a positive impact, the inmates reported having a negative impact may be the truthful ones, who dare to come up with the realities of their lives. As the majority of them are engaged in drug-related cases, the environment inside the prison is filled with inmates discussing the process of drug smuggling. This could have a serious impact on the lives of first-timers; some might be more experienced in handling drugs after their imprisonment. The fact that many of them are mothers having children also feels that them in prison and their children outside without their supervision took a toll on their emotional health. Many of them are breadwinners of their families, and the burden of being inside the four walls and their families without proper income could be detrimental to them. The shame and stigmatization they received from their relatives, friends, and community had also disrupted their mental health. Even some of them had suicidal thoughts while they were in prison.



Respondent 12 stated:

*“I am brokenhearted for being in and out of prison. They have caught me several times for selling drugs. Even if I beg them to forgive me once, they never listen to me. There is no chance for us to settle in life, I cannot earn anything while I am in prison, and I have to spend all my savings here inside the prison, so after being released, I will continue selling it again”.*

Respondent 114 added:

*“There is nothing positive or good inside the prison. Everyone is selfish. Even if someone said I am transformed inside the prison, do not believe them, they will be the same as soon as they are released. Do not trust anyone, prison is a fake world”.*

Respondent 112 further added:

*“Prison environment is risky, especially for 1st timer. Everyone is gossiping about others; there is nothing positive to be learned from this. Once we enter, we have more linkage, especially in terms of drug smuggling, and we learn more about the secret routes to trade drugs. I learn lots of bad words from my inmates, and I learn to be selfish and disrespectful to others. I am worried especially for the children here inside the prison, they are innocent and carefree, but the environment here is not suitable for children to grow up. There is a saying that being born again inside the prison is like catching the flu, you get sick for a while, get cured, and again get sick, the cycle goes on, there is no permanent cure”.*

**Table 6.2 The effect of imprisonment on life**

| <b>The effect on life</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                | 130              | 92.2                  |
| <b>No</b>                 | 11               | 7.8                   |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

92.2 per cent of female inmates acknowledged that incarceration significantly impacted their lives, whereas merely 7.8 per cent felt no change or influence. The vast majority indicates that incarceration is a pivotal life event, supporting the idea that prison constitutes more than just spatial confinement but is a profoundly a place for transforming lives. This aligns with the data presented in Table 6.01, indicating that 73.8 per cent reported a positive impact, while 26.2 per cent reported a negative impact. Collectively, these two tables indicate that the effect is almost universal; yet, its direction, whether positive or negative, differs based on individual conditions.

The high number of inmates stating that imprisonment affected their lives points towards the intensity of institutionalization, as imprisonment imposes organized routines, surveillance, social regulations, and restricted movement, all of which exert significant influences. Besides, as the inmates are estranged from their children, families, or communal responsibilities, it reinforces the notion that their former lives have been disrupted, reinterpreted, or even devalued. For several women, particularly those engaged in substance use or facing economic instability, incarceration may signify a pivotal moment for rehabilitation, spiritual enlightenment, or personal development. However, a small minority stated no to their response 11 (7.8%), might have a short-term stay, whose incarceration has not yet significantly affected them. Even for some who are trauma-affected, their view on being incarcerated can be an interruption in their already volatile life histories.

### **6.2.1 Suicidal thoughts after being imprisoned**

Imprisonment can be profoundly painful, especially for women who enter the criminal justice system already burdened by poverty, abuse, and social marginalization (Celinska & Siegel, 2010; Enos, 2001). In Mizoram, societal

expectations for women prioritize morality, familial obligations, and obedience, leading to significant stigma surrounding female incarceration, which frequently results in profound psychological pain (Brown & Bloom, 2009; Cobbina, 2010). For numerous female inmates, the shift from society to incarceration represents not merely a deprivation of physical freedom but also a psychological fracture that elicits profound emotions of humiliation, remorse, and despair (Frye & Dawe, 2008; Strozier et al., 2011).

The development of suicidal thoughts is among the most concerning effects of this mental strain (Celinska & Siegel, 2010; Walker, 2018). The separation from children and loved ones, the concern of social rejection upon release, and the harsh realities of incarceration, characterized by inadequate mental health resources, inflexible schedules, and institutional neglect, can cause women to doubt their self-worth and, in certain instances, their desire to continue living (Enos, 2001; Frye & Dawe, 2008). In Mizoram's sole women's prison, the absence of culturally attuned therapy and rehabilitative measures frequently compels inmates to confront their pain in isolation (Brown & Bloom, 2009; Cobbina, 2010). Comprehending the prevalence and determinants of suicidal thoughts among female inmates in Mizoram is crucial for formulating effective mental health interventions and guaranteeing compassionate, rehabilitative incarceration methods. Resolving this issue is not merely a question of prison reform but an essential measure for safeguarding the dignity and rights of imprisoned women in the state.

**Table 6.3 Suicidal thoughts after being imprisoned**

| <b>Suicidal thought</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>              | 39               | 27.7                  |
| <b>No</b>               | 102              | 72.3                  |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

39 (27.7%) inmates reported having suicidal thoughts after they were in prison. This signifies a substantial prevalence of mental health issues, implying that incarceration imposes a significant emotional and psychological burden on several inmates.

Female offenders may encounter distinct stressors such as separation from children, societal shame, or prior trauma that worsen suicidal inclinations.

Respondent 11 stated:

*“At the beginning of my time spent in prison, I had thoughts of ending my own life. Getting clean is a difficult process for me since I am a drug addict. I am not given the appropriate medication, I am unable to sleep at night, and I am unable to consume food because I am in the process of detoxing. I will certainly end my life if I do not have any children to take care. The only thing that gives me hope is thinking about my children. It was one of the worst experiences I have ever had in my life”.*

Respondent 15 further added:

*“When I was incarcerated, I would often have thoughts of ending my own life. Even before my incarceration, I was experiencing a great deal of worry and anxiety. I used to see a psychiatrist and take medicine for my mental health issues. As soon as I found out that my husband was terminally ill and had been sent to the intensive care unit, I began crying every day, and I wanted nothing more than to terminate my own life. I hold myself responsible for the fact that I was unable to provide for my husband when he required my assistance the most. It is also to earn some money to cover the medical bills of my husband, for I am currently serving time in prison”.*

Respondent 53 also added:

*“I tried to commit suicide on my second night in prison. Since I am an addict, the withdrawal was so severe that I just wanted to end my life. My body was in pain, and I couldn’t sleep.”*

However, a significant majority, 107 (72.3%), did not express such views, maybe indicating individual resilience, coping strategies, or availability of social support and mental health supports. Besides, as many inmates are mothers having children,

the care for their dependent children makes them resilient to continue life. Nonetheless, this should not overshadow the significant minority that is at risk. The presence of suicidal ideation, though it may seem less compared to the majority not having suicidal thoughts, is alarming, and urgent intervention is needed.

Respondent 76 commented:

*“The fact that I am in prison makes me realize the harsh reality of our State. Drugs had ruined every corner of our society. I am happy that I could experience this inside the prison. As soon as I am out of prison, I wish to spread awareness as much as possible regarding the dangers of involvement in selling drugs and the unfair treatment many receive for being caught instead of the real smugglers. I have realised that they easily capture poor people who are fighting for their survival. This situation has encouraged me to stay positive and alive while I am in prison”.*

Respondent 81 added:

*“Even though life inside the prison is tough, I have to encourage myself to stay positive and survive this harsh reality for the sake of my children, who are solely dependent on me. I cannot think of committing suicide.”*

Respondent 94 further commented:

*“Since my husband is also in jail, there is no one to look after our children, having the thought of our children gave me the strength to live on and survive this situation”.*

### **6.2.2 In prison physical/ emotional abuse**

Although incarceration is meant to be a process of correction, for many women inmates in Mizoram, it only serves to reinforce the trauma and violence they have already experienced (Frye & Dawe, 2008; Walker, 2018). The jail atmosphere may subject female inmates to additional physical and emotional abuse instead of providing a setting for rehabilitation and healing (Enos, 2001; Celinska & Siegel,

2010). In a society where conventional gender roles are rigidly upheld and women are expected to exemplify moral restraint and household duties, incarceration leads to profound personal and societal disgrace (Brown & Bloom, 2009; Cobbina, 2010). This stigma frequently manifests within the prison system, where women may endure neglect, verbal degradation, coercion, or even physical abuse from fellow inmates or authorities (Enos, 2001; Frye & Dawe, 2008). For women who enter prison with the wounds of domestic violence, poverty, or substance abuse, incarceration can exacerbate their trauma rather than confront its underlying causes (Celinska & Siegel, 2010; Walker, 2018).

**Table 6.4 Physical/ emotional abuse after imprisonment**

| <b>Physical/ emotional abuse</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                       | 29               | 20.6                  |
| <b>No</b>                        | 112              | 79.4                  |
| <b>Total</b>                     | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in the above table, 29 (20.6%) inmates have endured physical/emotional abuse while they are inside the prison. Even though they are a minority as compared to those 112 (79.4%) inmates reported not facing physical/emotional abuse, it signals a systemic problem in custodial care. The presence of even 1 in 5 prevalence indicates that abuses are not isolated incidents, and the matter needs to be taken seriously. The potential sources of abuse inside the prison could be mistreatment from the prison staff, including verbal degradation, intimidation, and use of excessive force. Peer-to-peer violence among the inmates could also be one of the potential sources, including bullying, extortion, and fights. Besides, the mishaps in institutional practices include a lack of proper medical facilities and care, solitary confinement, degrading searches, overcrowding, and a lack of proper recreational activities.

Respondent 21 highlighted:

*“My fellow inmates who are lesbian frequently interfere with me and ask me to have an affair with them, which causes me to experience feelings of emotional insecurity.”*

Respondent 59 stated:

*“After attending counselling and Church services regularly, my life is renewed here in prison, I am born again in Christ. However, my fellow inmates often insult me for being born again in Christ. They didn’t believe me, and even some of them said that I was bluffing and made fun of me. I am emotionally hurt by the way some of my fellow inmates treat me.”*

Respondent 60 also added:

*“Some of my fellow inmates often talk behind my back and bully me whenever I have the chance to talk about the Gospel during our devotions. They avoided me and treated me as if I did not exist.”*

Respondent 61 commented:

*“You won’t believe the degree of discrimination between the rich and the poor inside the prison; it’s emotionally draining. Those who have money and those who are from a well-to-do family always have the upper hand.”*

Respondent 70 further commented:

*“Since I have been appointed as the head of our Ward (Discipline Head), I have to make necessary decisions when needed. Some of my fellow inmates used to envy me and talk behind my back. It’s difficult to cope with the emotional abuse despite the burden of being in prison”.*

Respondent 104, who is accompanied by her 1-year-old son, commented:

*“I am joined by my son, who is one year old, because there is no one outside to take care of him. Being in prison alone is a strain, and he*

*accompanies me. When my son is wailing in the middle of the night, I am frequently insulted. There is nothing I can do about it, yet I am unable to help. Because I am a refugee, they engage in derogatory language toward me. Being incarcerated with a child is the worst possible circumstance that one could find themselves in”.*

Since any kind of abuse can erode trust, create fear, and can even lead to retaliatory violence, it is crucial to take the matters into concern to impose a safety culture inside the prison. And also, since the staff’s attitudes and behaviors shape the day-to-day life of the inmates inside the prison, matters have to be looked into the staff training and accountability. The matters related to overcrowding and gang hierarchies have to be considered as well, since all these can heighten interpersonal abuse.

### **6.2.3 Financial assistance from relatives**

Financial support from family members is essential for imprisoned women, especially in areas such as Mizoram, where correctional facilities frequently lack sufficient resources to fulfill the fundamental and personal requirements of convicts (Bloom et al., 2003; Enos, 2001). For several female inmates, familial support, particularly in the form of financial assistance, can profoundly influence their welfare throughout imprisonment (Bui & Morash, 2010; Leverentz, 2006). It enables access to vital commodities such as hygiene, improved nutrition, or healthcare products, and can also facilitate involvement in prison-based vocational programs (O’Brien, 2001; Leverentz, 2011). The degree of such support frequently reflects underlying societal dynamics. In a strict and tightly-knit Mizo society, where female criminals encounter significant moral condemnation and stigma, not all inmates receive ongoing familial support (Cobbina, 2010; Arditti & Few, 2008). Numerous individuals are dismissed or overlooked due to the stigma linked to their criminal status, particularly if they are perceived as having violated societal norms of femininity (Bui & Morash, 2010; Leverentz, 2006). Therefore, the availability or lack thereof of financial support from family members becomes not only a matter of economic concern but also a reflection of social acceptance, emotional bonds, and familial fortitude in the face of hardship.



**Table 6.05 Financial assistance from relatives**

| <b>Financial assistance</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-----------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                  | 103              | 73.0                  |
| <b>No</b>                   | 38               | 27.0                  |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As shown in the above table, a significant 103 inmates (73%) receive financial assistance from relatives, demonstrating persistent familial connections and a degree of external support following imprisonment.

Respondent 3 stated:

*“Although I am incarcerated, I am fortunate to have a family that is supporting me. In particular, my husband is standing by my side during the entire process. Despite the fact that we are not from Aizawl, he made sure that I had the funds to purchase the things that I required, even though he was unable to visit me frequently. In addition, my husband’s parents are also quite supportive.”*

Respondent 1 added:

*“My relatives who are currently residing in Mizoram did not wish to cause any inconvenience to my two brothers, who are currently residing outside the country, because of my imprisonment. On the other hand, they became aware of it during COVID. From that day forward, both of my brothers have consistently provided both emotional and financial support to me. Furthermore, they travelled to Mizoram for the sole purpose of visiting me. The fact that my family is so encouraging is a blessing in my life.”*

Respondent 77 commented:

*“I am blessed to have a stable family, and I didn’t have any financial problems inside the prison. However, I realized that a significant*

*number of my inmates are struggling financially. Even though I am currently incarcerated, I am thankful that I am in a position to assist those in need financially. I have been able to provide financial assistance to a few of my fellow inmates.”*

However, 38 inmates (27%) indicated they had no financial support, highlighting economic neglect, strained familial connections, or familial poverty, a notable minority potentially at increased risk of neglect, despair, and material deprivation inside the prison environment. Prison facilities frequently fail to address the comprehensive needs of inmates, like hygiene products, nutritional supplements, and legal support, rendering external financial aid crucial for basic dignity and well-being. Individuals devoid of such support may experience social isolation, economic vulnerability, and reliance on prison personnel or fellow inmates, hence heightening the danger of exploitation or abuse.

Respondent 5 stated:

*“I was 9 months pregnant when I was in prison. My husband committed adultery and left me with my two children, who are 6 years old and 8 years old. I don’t even know where my eldest daughter lives. I am accompanied by my son, and I had a baby recently. I am a housewife and could not work since I am pregnant. Out of frustration, I started selling drugs in the hope that it would sustain the needs of my children. Since we didn’t have any money, all the medical expenses of my newborn child and our needs were taken care of by the prison authorities and inmates. I am thankful to them.”*

Respondent 59 stated:

*“Here inside the prison, I rely on donations to get me through each day. Because I am a single mother, all three of my children are reliant on me for their needs. I am the only person in the family who brings in money. Since I am currently incarcerated, our family receives no income. Before her departure, my friend who was serving her sentence*

*here gave me a sum of five thousand rupees; at the moment, that is the only money I own. It is both worrying and frustrating.”*

Respondent 101 also responded:

*“I am with my stepfather at home. I also have a 2-year-old son who accompanied me here. since we are poor, we could not even afford to get the needs for my child, that’s why I started selling drugs. Even my father used to physically abuse me when he was drunk. I didn’t have any money left. We are here at the mercy of my inmates and the prison staff.”*

#### **6.2.4 Contact/visit/financial aid from their friends**

Friendships can be a vital emotional and practical lifeline while incarcerated, particularly for female inmates in Mizoram who frequently experience rejection from their families and social shame (Bui & Morash, 2010; Cobbina, 2010). In addition to direct family, friends can offer significant support through consistent communication, jail visits, and financial assistance (Arditti & Few, 2008; Leverentz, 2006). These gestures not only address visible necessities, such as goods for personal hygiene or supplementary food, but also provide emotional comfort and a sense of ongoing connectedness to the external environment (Enos, 2001; O’Brien, 2001). In a society where incarcerated women are often marginalized or overlooked due to cultural conventions and ethical standards, sustaining friendships helps alleviate emotions of abandonment, isolation, and despair (Bloom et al., 2003; Leverentz, 2011). The extent of friend-based support significantly varies and is typically dependent upon the woman’s social background, the nature of the offense, and the robustness of her pre-existing ties. Examining the influence of friendships on imprisoned women in Mizoram exposes the wider social context of imprisonment and how informal social connections can either alleviate or worsen the distress of confinement (Bui & Morash, 2010; Cobbina, 2010)..

**Table 6.06 Visitor from family**

| <b>Visitor from family</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|----------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Once a month</b>        | 8                | 5.7                   |
| <b>Once a year</b>         | 2                | 1.4                   |
| <b>On request</b>          | 90               | 63.8                  |
| <b>Every three months</b>  | 1                | .7                    |
| <b>Never</b>               | 40               | 28.4                  |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

The majority, 90 (63.8%), received visits from their family only after request, indicating a reactive approach from their family and not a routine visit. This implies that unless the inmate specifically requests it, there are financial, emotional, or logistical obstacles that prohibit frequent visitation. A significant 40 (28.4%) reported that they never received visits from their family. This is a worrying figure since a complete absence of communication with family can have a significant negative influence on an individual's emotional well-being, heighten feelings of abandonment, and make it more difficult to recover. Merely 8 (5.7%) inmates receive monthly visits, while only 1 (0.7%) inmate receives visits every three months. This demonstrates that although there are established benefits of family connection on inmates' mental health and reintegration, there is a lack of routine and supportive contact between inmates and their families. Further highlighting the overwhelming lack of persistent familial engagement is the fact that only 2 (1.4%) of inmates, or two individuals, are visited only once per year.

Respondent 52 argued:

*“My relatives visited me only when I requested them to visit. I usually request them when I have a particular need and when I miss them uncontrollably. Since the time for the visit is short, only for about 5 minutes, and we are all surrounded by staff and other inmates with their relatives. It is not worth the visit with all the money and time they spent to come all the way here.”*

Respondent 3 also added:

*“Since we live outside Aizawl, it’s very difficult for my relatives to visit me. Till today, they kept it a secret from my children that I am in prison, because we are afraid that it might affect their mental health and studies. On request, my husband used to visit me whenever he had time; he is working, and it’s difficult for him to visit me frequently.”*

Respondent 6 stated:

*“Since I am with my 2-year-old son in prison, I appreciated and eagerly waited for the days of visit. My husband often visited us. A visit from my husband comforted me and gave me hope. We are lucky that our daughter is still young and she couldn’t understand much of our situation. Visits from my relatives, especially my husband, gave me to strength to move on.”*

Respondent 113 commented:

*“I am a widow and I leave behind three of my children. There is no one to visit me, all my immediate relatives live in far-off villages. I don’t want my children to visit me and see their mother inside the prison. I only talk to them on the phone when I miss them. Even though they sometimes wish to visit me, I insist they not come and waste their time and money. Sometimes, deep in my heart, I used to envy my inmates who had regular visits from their relatives. But there is nothing I could do to help it”.*

Respondent 69 also stated:

*“I am old and weary; my husband and addict son live in a village far away from Aizawl. There is no one to visit me while I am in prison. Even if they wanted to, they couldn’t afford to come to Aizawl. I just depend on the inmates and the staff here as my family. I cried every day during the first week of my imprisonment, and I couldn’t eat properly, thinking about my old, fragile husband and my addict son.”*

The data indicate a trend of isolation and restricted familial involvement for the majority of incarcerated women. The figure indicating that about 92 per cent (the total of ‘on request’, ‘never’, and infrequent visits) do not receive regular visits emphasizes poverty or geographical distance, making frequent visits difficult. There could also be a possibility of shame or stigma associated with their imprisonment to the point that they are ignored by their family members. Or in some cases, there could also be a possibility that their families have neglected them, or ignored them, and want them to suffer for their wrongdoings.

**Table 6.7 Any Financial help from friends after being in prison**

| <b>Help from friends</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>               | 34               | 24.1                  |
| <b>No</b>                | 107              | 75.9                  |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

The above table shows that 34 (24.1%) reported getting help from friends, while a significant majority, 107 (75.9%), reported not getting any help from friends after incarceration. The help which they received or did not receive can be in the form of visits, telephone contact, sending money, or any item while their friends are in prison. The majority who lack support from friends while they are in prison may reflect a breakdown in personal relationships after imprisonment or stigma and social isolation related to their imprisonment. Only a small minority can relate to their friends or get support after they are in prison.

Respondent 5 stated:

*“Since we are in a dilapidated situation, I am fortunate to have the support and care from inside the prison. Inmates here knew well that I had no one to take care of me and my children from the outside. Because of our situation, an ex-convict who used to be in our ward visited me twice, and I am grateful to have her in my life. She is the only one who has visited me after I was imprisoned.”*

Respondent 72 added:

*“I am lucky to have faithful friends who care for me in my lowest. Even though they couldn’t physically visit me inside the prison. They are used to send my relatives who have visited me with food and snacks. I thought that they would forget me after being in prison, but I am fortunate to have a few friends who still care for me in my worst.”*

Respondent 49 commented:

*“I am a drug addict, and the reason for my imprisonment is also due to my addiction. Being in prison made me realize that all those whom I used to call friends, whom I care for them much more than my family members, didn’t even dare to ask me about my situation, being contact or visit is far from happening. I have now realized that they only want me when I can provide them the drugs they need.”*

Respondent 127 further commented:

*“Even my relatives and family members could not visit me, nor dare to visit me. I never had the hope that my friends would visit me here inside the prison, and they never did either.”*

This overall highlighted that there is limited reintegration support from their peer groups or friends when they are in trouble. The data also suggests a need for a community-based social integration programme for inmates’ reintegration into society. As some of the inmates lack family support, the support they receive from their friends can be the only hope they have inside the prison or after they are out of the prison.

#### **6.2.5 Visit from locality or church members**

In Mizoram, where the majority are Christians and a community-focused society, assistance from residents and church organizations is profoundly crucial for female inmates (Bloom et al., 2003; Johnson, 2011). Visits from religious leaders or community members can provide significant consolation, spiritual direction, and emotional comfort (Cnaan et al., 1999; Johnson, 2011). These visits frequently

connect the jail with the external world, telling inmates that they are not wholly forgotten or ostracized (Blevins & Cullen, 2005). For women experiencing isolation, social stigma, and emotional turmoil within prison confines, such outreach offers both a feeling of community and moral as well as spiritual support (Bloom et al., 2003). The frequency and character of these visits are dependent upon the inmate's prior behaviour, her rapport with the local community, and the perceived gravity of her offense (Johnson, 2011). Although certain inmates benefit from consistent pastoral care or church-led assistance, others may be neglected because of the persistent stigma associated with female criminality or their not being acknowledged by the community or the Church while they are not in prison (Cnaan et al., 1999). Examining the function of the church and community in aiding women convicts clarifies the benefits and constraints of community-based rehabilitation within Mizoram's cohesive social framework (Blevins & Cullen, 2005).

**Table 6.8 Visit from members of the locality/ Church**

| <b>Visit</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>   | 25               | 17.7                  |
| <b>No</b>    | 116              | 82.3                  |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in the Table, the majority, 116 (82.3%), are not visited by any members of the locality or church. Only a few, 25 (17.7%), reported being visited by members of the church and locality. As mentioned, Mizoram is a close-knit society in which Church and locality members play a significant role in the overall well-being of the individuals. Even though some may not consider it as their sole responsibility to visit inmates of their locality and Church members inside the prison, somehow, it is obvious in their teachings to take care of the needy and the sinners when they need them the most.

Respondent 88 stated:

*"I was once visited by our Pastor when I was in our district prison before I was shifted here. I am an active member of the women's*



*fellowship back in our Church. Our Pastor visited me and had a prayer for me. It was humbling and comforting at the same time. I feel shy and regretful for my wrongdoings, and that awakened me to never indulge myself in selling drugs again.”*

Respondent 101 stated:

*“Because of my imprisonment, we have to shift our house since the YMA didn’t allow us to stay at their locality. Expecting a visit from our locality and members of the Church is out of the question. By the way, I never attended Church services.”*

Respondent 31 added:

*“Since we are poor and barely make ends meet. We could just afford to live in a house provided by the Government for poor people. When they realized that I was in prison for selling drugs, they requested that we move out of the house. There is no chance for members of our locality to ever visit me or contact me.”*

The lack of visits also suggests the lack of community or religious support during their incarceration. The findings also highlight a social disconnection between inmates and their local or religious communities, potentially arising from social stigma, fear of association, or moral judgment. As Churches and surrounding communities often provide essential emotional and spiritual support, their absence may adversely affect inmates’ rehabilitation and reintegration processes.

#### **6.2.6 Stigmatization issues**

The stigmatization by community members is one of the most distressing and persistent repercussions encountered by women inmates upon their release (Link & Phelan, 2001; Pager, 2007). In a culturally conservative and tightly bound tribal society where women are expected to maintain moral standards and traditional gender roles, incarceration signifies a significant decline in social standing (Bloom et al., 2003). Female ex-prisoners are frequently perceived not only as offenders but also as violators of societal norms, rendering their reintegration into society very

difficult (Western, 2006). Numerous individuals encounter social marginalization, murmuring, evasion, and perhaps outright rejection from neighbours, acquaintances, and sometimes extended family members (Pager, 2007). This societal stigma can result in home loss, employment discrimination, and psychological hardship, perpetuating cycles of shame and marginalization (Link & Phelan, 2001).

**Table 6.9 Any Stigmatization faced by family members**

| <b>Stigmatization faced</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-----------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                  | 5                | 3.5                   |
| <b>No</b>                   | 136              | 96.5                  |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As shown in the table, a small proportion of 5 (3.5%) inmates reported that their relatives had faced stigmatization because of their imprisonment. However, the majority, 136 (96.5%), inmates reported that their family was not facing stigmatization. Several reasons could interplay here, since Mizoram is a community-based based closed-knit society, many family members might keep a secret of their relatives being in prison as they are afraid to be stigmatized. Even from the majority of inmates who said ‘no’, there might be underlying circumstances where their family members hide the ridicule or stigmatization they faced. There is also a possibility that the stigma is silenced or internalized, rather than openly acknowledged. The small proportion who realized that their family has even faced stigmatization because of them has an additional emotional burden on them.

Respondent 1 added:

*“Once, my relatives who talk to me on the phone said that our neighbors are gossiping and talking behind our backs because of my imprisonment. I am not surprised because I am the only one among our family who has committed such crimes. My families are well-reputed in our community, and I knew that many who knew us would be surprised.”*

Respondent 77 added:

*“My imprisonment had taken a toll on my family. My relatives could not bear the shame they had because of me and the stigmatization they faced from my neighbors, as well as some of our relatives”.*

She further added:

*“Since my in-laws’ family is well-reputed in our community and an active member of the Church in our locality. My imprisonment is kept a secret in our hometown. Even my two children didn’t know that I was in prison. They inform them that their mother is out of station, working. But I don’t know how long we can keep this secret. Stigmatization is not an issue for us as of now”.*

Respondent 111 stated:

*“There is no proper means to communicate with the outside world. Even though we have a few minutes to talk on the phone, my relatives are out of touch with me; they have never visited me. I cannot tell whether they faced any type of stigmatization.”*

The experience of incarceration among women prisoners in Mizoram reveals a complex interplay of both positive and negative consequences. While a majority of respondents perceived imprisonment as having a positive impact, citing sobriety, spiritual renewal, safety from abusive relationships, and opportunities for self-reflection, a considerable minority reported negative experiences, including stigma, isolation, and psychological distress. Nearly all the women prisoners acknowledged that imprisonment had significantly affected their lives, making incarceration a critical turning point.

A major area of concern is the mental health of inmates, often triggered by drug withdrawal, separation from children, and loss of family support. Emotional and physical abuse was also reported by inmates, highlighting vulnerabilities within the prison environment. The data also suggests that family support played a crucial role in coping with their stress and the burden of being in prison. While the majority

received financial assistance from relatives, many lacked regular visits, with only a few reporting monthly family contact and 28.4 per cent receiving no visits at all. Support from friends and community members was minimal, with just a few inmates, respectively, benefiting from such engagement. Although only 3.5 per cent admitted that their families faced stigmatization, this is likely underreported due to the tendency of families to conceal imprisonment.

Overall, the findings suggest that while incarceration can provide opportunities for personal transformation and rehabilitation, systemic challenges such as inadequate mental health care, limited community support, social stigma, and the persistence of abuse within prison challenge its rehabilitative potential. Strengthening counselling services, expanding vocational and faith-based programs, and building reintegration mechanisms are essential for improving the well-being of women inmates and reducing the long-term negative effects of incarceration.

### **6.3. Effect of imprisonment on their family**

The incarceration of a woman has profound consequences that extend beyond the prison walls, greatly affecting the lives of her family members (Comfort, 2008; Gabel & Johnston, 1995). In Mizoram, where familial bonds are strong and communal connections are profound, a woman's imprisonment frequently undermines the social, emotional, and financial equilibrium of the household (Bloom, Owen, & Covington, 2003). Women generally have pivotal positions as caregivers, mothers, and ethical pillars within the family unit. Their absence generates a void that is difficult to occupy (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008).

Emotionally, children and their dependents faced some sort of confusion, distress, and in some cases trauma (Arditti, 2012; Poehlmann, 2005). Sudden separation can result in anxiety, behavioural problems, or withdrawal, particularly when suitable alternative care is lacking (Murray & Farrington, 2005). Spouses or partners may withdraw support or encounter societal judgment, while elderly parents left behind may endure emotional strain and increased responsibilities (Comfort, 2008). Economically, families frequently experience a decline in income or domestic assistance, especially when the incarcerated woman has a role in the household

through employment or childcare (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). In certain instances, the financial burden of legal fees, prison visits, and sustaining communication might worsen limited resources (Gabel & Johnston, 1995). Socially, families of imprisoned women frequently encounter secondary stigma, including gossip, avoidance, and judgment from the community, particularly in rural and traditional environments (Arditti, 2012). This collective stigmatization may result in isolation, diminishing the family's status and sense of security within their community. Thus, the effects of female imprisonment are not limited to the inmates alone, but have a deep impact on the well-being and unity of the entire family.

### **6.3.1 Treatment of family pre and post imprisonment**

The treatment of family members before and after a woman's incarceration illustrates the evolving dynamics of familial and social relationships within the context of imprisonment. In Mizoram, where communal identity and social standing are highly esteemed, the incarceration of a female relative frequently results in significant emotional and social consequences for both the inmate and her family (Arditti, 2012; Comfort, 2008). Women who deviated from the norms, through drug abuse, alcohol sale, or illicit activities, often encountered criticisms, moral judgment, or deteriorating familial relationships, even before any legal repercussions (Gabel & Johnston, 1995). In certain instances, initial indicators of family dispute or neglect played a role in their pathways to criminality (Murray & Farrington, 2005). Following incarceration, the treatment of their family members frequently altered significantly, particularly in the perception of the broader community. Families of jailed women often endure secondary stigma, encountering judgment, rumour, or social ostracism from neighbours and religious communities (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008; Poehlmann, 2005). This cultural backlash can lead to humiliation, isolation, and a breakdown of trust across extended kin networks. This may result in less emotional support for the inmates and, in certain instances, total disconnection from family members (Arditti, 2012).

**Table 6.10 Treatment of family Pre and Post imprisonment**

| <b>Differential treatment</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                    | 15               | 10.6                  |
| <b>No</b>                     | 126              | 89.4                  |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

Only a few inmates (10.6%) reported that they had faced differential treatment after they were in prison from their family members. While the majority, 126 (89.4%), said that there is no such differential treatment from their relatives after imprisonment. Instances of differential treatment from relatives are obvious, as having a prisoner among the family, especially in a closed-knit society, carries lots of emotional and societal stigma in the form of ridicule, gossip, and blame. The very low percentage of people who report discriminatory treatment is consistent with the similarly low percentage of familial stigmatization reports (3.5 per cent in Table 6.09). When combined, these results imply that the majority of women in this group experience little overt social rejection or exclusion. There could also be a potential case of under-reporting, as differential treatment and stigma can appear in subtle ways, such as avoidance and loss of opportunities, which respondents may not notice or may justify. The “No” group may encompass unrecognized or unacknowledged negative experiences.

Respondent 96 commented:

*“Since I am in prison because of my addiction to drugs, my family members are fed up with me. I am in and out of rehabilitation centres several times, but I always somehow manage to escape from them. Out of frustration, they just sent me to jail for a theft case. They have lost all the trust they had in me. They lost hope and didn’t have faith in me anymore. They punished me and ignored me as of now.”*

Respondent 10 stated:

*“Considering the reason for my imprisonment, it will not be surprising to hear that my relatives are more caring towards me since I was in prison. It was due to my husband’s addiction. They pitied me more, and they often visited me, sending me whatever I asked for. I am fortunate to have my relatives by my side when I needed them the most”.*

### 6.3.2 Most affected by imprisonment

Female inmates are more likely to serve as primary caregivers and emotional support within their families. Their absence generates a ripple effect, influencing children, their husbands, dependent relatives, and broader social dynamics. Imprisonment for women in Mizoram is not only a legal sanction but a profoundly gendered experience that transforms their lives and the lives of people in their surroundings in enduring ways. Those most affected by their imprisonment will disclose the importance of family dynamics and how it impacts their overall well-being.

**Table 6.11 Most affected by imprisonment**

| <b>Most affected by imprisonment</b>  | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Parents</b>                        | 27               | 19.1                  |
| <b>Husband</b>                        | 15               | 10.6                  |
| <b>Children</b>                       | 68               | 48.2                  |
| <b>Others</b>                         | 20               | 14.2                  |
| <b>Husband &amp; Children</b>         | 5                | 3.5                   |
| <b>Parents &amp; Children</b>         | 3                | 2.1                   |
| <b>Parents &amp; Husband</b>          | 2                | 1.4                   |
| <b>Parents, Children &amp; Others</b> | 1                | .7                    |
| <b>Total</b>                          | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As shown in Table, 68 (48.2%), inmates reported that their children are most affected because of their imprisonment, which is obvious as all the inmates are women prisoners. This also clearly highlights the significant role of a mother in taking care of their children. Parents 27 (19.1%) are also significantly represented, likely due to emotional hardship or the responsibility of caring for grandchildren in the absence of their daughters. Husbands, 15(10.6%), are identified less often, suggesting diminished spousal support or marital disintegration during incarceration. Others 20 (14.2%) may encompass extended relatives and friends, who have undertaken responsibility for dependents or have encountered social or emotional consequences because of their being in prison. The rest 8 inmates cannot even identify one individual who is most affected, a combination of their parents, children, husband, and others are highly affected. Respondent 5 stated:

*“I have 3 children as of now, one is born here in the prison, the middle child is with me. Since my eldest daughter is above 6 years old, she can’t be with me. Through a phone call, I was informed that they let her stay with her father, who left us. But since her father is always drunk and also has a new wife, I am worried. The last time I heard about my daughter was that CWC (Child Welfare Committee) took her, and they let her stay in their home. Thinking about my daughter leaves me speechless and broken-hearted”.*

Respondent 7 added:

*“My daughter is most affected due to my imprisonment. She is now married and has children. Before, I used to babysit her children, which is a relief for her as she can work. Now it’s difficult for her to have a job. She has to quit her job because there is no one to take care of her children”.*

Respondent 41 further added:

*“We are poor, and we barely have food to eat. I have 3 children and I took care of them without a husband. Since I was in prison, my elder daughter had to quit her studies and look after her younger siblings. I*



*used to be the sole earner in our family, selling vegetables and working all available possibilities to earn a living. We cannot have any savings. Now, my eldest daughter finds all possible ways to earn a living for our family. I am frustrated thinking about my children. They can't even visit me since we didn't have money".*

Respondent 11 also added:

*"My eldest daughter is most affected by my imprisonment. Since I am in prison, I leave my children at my sister's place. My sister told me, frustrated, that we can control her manners and behavior. She used to steal money from us, and she is not afraid of anyone. We don't know what to do with her. This pains me a lot thinking about the current situation and the future of my daughter".*

Respondent 17 also added:

*"My husband misses me a lot. We had two children, and the younger one still needs to be breastfed. But my mother-in-law didn't allow her to be with me at the prison. I am worried that my husband might betray me while I am here out of loneliness."*

Respondent 18 stated:

*"Since I am the sole carer of my parents, who are aging. My imprisonment has affected their mental well-being, and they are physically deteriorating. My parents' health condition became worse after I was in prison. I don't think they will be able to survive long without me."*

Respondent 53 also commented:

*"Thinking about my husband and children who are at home without me always makes me sick; sometimes I can't even sleep at night. My husband is the only one who took care of our children, who are still young. To make it worse, my husband is an addict, and I knew that he would not be able to handle and take care of our children, but we have*

*no other choice; there is no one near us or our relatives to help us out. I also heard that our children's grades in their school are declining."*

Respondent 58 also added:

*"Since I am in prison. My children didn't have a place to stay. They have to live separately in my friend's house. Thinking about them having the need to be separated makes my heart sink. I didn't even have any money to leave them. I don't know how long they can stay at my friend's house. I am worried and frustrated. I have no other option left as we didn't have any relatives to rely on."*

The significant proportion of children impacted highlights the intergenerational consequences of women's incarceration. Their absence frequently affects emotional connections, caregiving practices, educational progress, and financial security. The identification of various combinations (e.g., Husband & Children, Parents & Children) illustrates the extensive ripple effects that incarceration exerts on familial networks. The designation of 'Husband' as inferior to 'Parents' or 'Others' may indicate unstable marital bonds, abandonment, or diminished emotional engagement from partners. The findings highlight the significance of establishing familial connections following release, particularly with children and parents. Alongside, community-based groups and faith-based institutions can significantly facilitate family healing and reintegration.

### **6.3.3 The effect of imprisonment on children**

Women who are incarcerated frequently serve as the major or only caretakers for their children, and their abrupt disappearance causes emotional, psychological, and developmental difficulties (Arditti, 2012; Poehlmann, 2005). Separation from the mother often leads to instability in housing, disruption of education, and a profound sense of abandonment (Gabel & Johnston, 1995). These youngsters may be entrusted to extended family, institutional facilities, or allowed to navigate independently, circumstances that often lack emotional support or financial stability (Comfort, 2008). Children of imprisoned women may encounter societal stigma, discrimination, or isolation (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). This may result in

behavioural issues, diminished self-esteem, and challenges in social or academic adaptation. The intergenerational effects of maternal incarceration can be enduring, perpetuating cycles of hardship, trauma, and, in certain instances, heightened likelihood of criminal conduct (Murray & Farrington, 2005). Meeting the needs of these children is crucial for disrupting this cycle and cultivating resilience in impacted families (Arditti, 2012).

**Table 6.12 Effect of imprisonment on children**

| <b>Effect of imprisonment on children</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                                | 93               | 66.0                  |
| <b>No</b>                                 | 19               | 13.5                  |
| <b>Not applicable</b>                     | 29               | 20.6                  |
| <b>Total</b>                              | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in the Table, two-thirds, 93 (66%) of the respondents affirm that their children are adversely affected by their imprisonment. Only 19 (13.5%) reported that their children are not affected by their imprisonment. 29 (20.6%) of the women inmates didn't have any children. The children here indicate all their offspring without concerning with their age group. These figures support the findings in Table 6.11, where almost half (48.2%) of respondents named children as the group "most affected" by their incarceration.

Respondent 59 stated:

*"My youngest child, who is 7 years old, has to be with my friend's family as she still needs to be accompanied by an adult, and the others cannot continue their education due to my imprisonment. We didn't have any income, as I am the sole earner, I lived on donations from my inmates and staff here. I couldn't afford to pay the fees for my children's education, and we have no relatives to rely on."*

Respondent 65 also stated:

*“Since my husband and I are in prison, my one and half years old son needs to be with my mother. Thinking about my son, I want to get out of here as soon as possible. I also feel pity for my mother as she has to take care of him.”*

Respondent 66 further stated:

*“My eldest daughter has to quit her schooling as she has to take care of her sick father since I am in prison.”*

Respondent 69 also added:

*“My children could not continue their studies since I am in prison”.*

The data imply a broad spectrum of consequences for the children. Their children will face emotional distress in the absence of their mothers, and if their mothers are their sole caregivers, it will also disrupt the caregiving experiences as there will be a sudden shift from their mother to other relatives, and some might not even have anyone to look after them. The education of the children will also be affected, as without proper care, some children might often be absent from their schools. There could also be a major societal setback in the form of stigma from their peers. If the mothers happen to be the sole earners within the family, they could also face tremendous economic hardships. The relatively “No” group may represent cases where children are very young and unaware of the situation, or there can be cases where relatives provide exceptional care and guidance. Child-centred interventions in the form of establishing child-friendly visitations and spaces need to be provided within the prison.

#### **6.3.4 The effect of imprisonment on husband**

In a patriarchal society where conventional gender norms allocate caregiving and domestic duties predominantly to women, the abrupt disappearance of a wife destabilizes the family structure and compels men to assume unusual tasks (Arditti, 2012; Comfort, 2008). Numerous spouses encounter difficulties in managing childcare, domestic tasks, and financial obligations, particularly among lower-

income families (Gabel & Johnston, 1995). This role inversion may induce tension, confusion, and a sense of inadequacy. Furthermore, the societal stigma associated with having an incarcerated spouse can result in embarrassment, isolation, and a diminished social status within the community (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). Certain husbands may withdraw from their imprisoned wives owing to societal pressures or personal grievances, resulting in strained or fractured marital relationships. In certain instances, the spouse may remarry or become emotionally detached, leaving the woman a prisoner, isolated and emotionally frustrated. The incarceration of women profoundly affects marriage relationships and the emotional health of their partners, frequently highlighting the fragile condition of gender norms in Mizo society (Murray & Farrington, 2005).

**Table 6.13 Effect of imprisonment on husband**

| <b>Effect on husband</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>               | 55               | 39.0                  |
| <b>No</b>                | 13               | 9.2                   |
| <b>Not applicable</b>    | 73               | 51.8                  |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As shown in the table, 55 (39%) of respondents indicated that their spouses were impacted by their incarceration. Merely 13 (9.2%) believed their spouses were unaffected. A significant 73 (51.8%) indicated “Not applicable,” signifying they were unmarried, divorced, separated, or widowed at the time of incarceration. Of the 68 women with husbands (out of a total of 141, with 73 not applicable), 80.9 per cent (55 of 68) reported that their husbands were impacted. Merely 19.1 per cent (13 of 68) perceived their husbands as unaffected.

Respondent 3 stated:

*“My husband is concerned about my well-being. We fought a lot to get my case cleared or fight for the possibility of bail. My husband is very much involved in my case. He is worried, and he tries to visit me often.”*

Respondent 6 added:

*“Visit from my husband comforts me and gives me hope. My husband tried his best to bail me out. He feels lonely.”*

Respondent 15 further added:

*“My husband is most affected by my imprisonment; his health deteriorates, and he passed away while I am in prison. It was one of the most difficult days of my life. I could attend only his funeral, that too wearing a jail uniform and being guarded by police. It was humiliating, and my world is falling apart. The saddest part is the need to go back to jail after the funeral service. I could not even look at my children’s faces. People are staring at me as if I have committed the worst crime ever. The insult, the loss, the pain, the regret will forever linger in my heart.”*

Respondent 79 also commented:

*“My addict husband needs to take care of our children alone, it’s depressing, and I am longing to be with them. It will be a burden for my husband to take care of our children alone. I knew that he was not going to suddenly quit doing drugs. I am worried about the functioning and well-being of my family.”*

A substantial majority of married women believed that incarceration profoundly affected their husbands, emotionally, socially, or financially. This effect may encompass social shame or stigma among the community, disruption of domestic roles, particularly in caregiving or financial responsibilities, and marital sorrow or divorce during imprisonment. The elevated “Not applicable” number (51.8%) corresponds with previous data patterns, indicating that numerous female inmates in Mizoram are unmarried, divorced, or separated, potentially reflecting risky marital stability within the setting of incarceration. The significant proportion of women lacking spousal support emphasizes the necessity for alternative support structures (parental, community, institutional) during and post-incarceration. Single mothers

may experience heightened socio-economic vulnerability, necessitating specialized support.

### 6.3.5 Custody of children while in prison

The issue of child custody during a mother's incarceration is a delicate and intricate problem that exposes the vulnerability of both the imprisoned mothers and their children (Arditti, 2012; Murray & Farrington, 2005). Given that numerous female detainees serve as primary or only caregivers, their incarceration frequently necessitates immediate alternative custodial arrangements (Gabel & Johnston, 1995). In the lack of established child welfare systems, custody is usually informally delegated to extended family members, predominantly grandparents or siblings (Murray & Farrington, 2005). Nevertheless, such arrangements may not consistently ensure emotional security, adequate care, or educational continuity (Arditti, 2012). In instances where no appropriate family member is available or willing, children may be placed in state-operated shelters or institutional care, increasing their psychological pain and feelings of abandonment (Boswell & Wedge, 2002). Certain young children, particularly those under six years of age, may reside within the prison with their mothers according to legal stipulations; however, the prison setting is significantly detrimental to optimal child development. The absence of coherent policy, financial backing, and qualified social workers intensifies the difficulties in safeguarding the best interests of these children (Gabel & Johnston, 1995).

**Table 6.14 Custody of children while in prison**

| Care of children    | Frequency  | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------|------------|----------------|
| Husband             | 25         | 17.7           |
| Relatives           | 49         | 34.8           |
| Parents             | 24         | 17.0           |
| Not applicable      | 40         | 28.4           |
| Husband & Relatives | 3          | 2.1            |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>141</b> | <b>100.0</b>   |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in the table, 40 (28.4%) did not have children; however, among the 101 inmates having children, 49 (34.8 %) left their children with their relatives, the relatives here indicate their cousins, friends, aunts, and grandparents. Only 25 (17.7%) remain solely with their father. 24 (17%) remains with the inmate's parents. 3 (2.1%) remains with both father and relatives. Extended-family kinship care predominates, possibly reflecting cultural traditions of clan support. The comparatively low proportion of paternal-only custody aligns with previous findings of minimal spousal engagement, indicating potential marital instability or economic incapacity among husbands. Grandparental care is crucial, providing stability for children; however, it can put substantial emotional and financial strains on elderly caretakers.

Respondent 1 stated:

*"My daughter was taken care of by my sister when she was a baby. We have not contacted each other. She will not even know that I am in prison. She is in good hands, and I have no worries about her. I am lucky to have a supportive family."*

Respondent 117 also stated:

*"Since my husband and I are in prison, there is no one to look after our children at home. We have to send them to a far village in my husband's hometown. All their education and schooling got disrupted. We have no other option."*

Respondent 132 further stated:

*"The most difficult thing for me inside the prison is having to leave my children in the custody of my relatives. Even though I knew that they would be treated well. They are too young to be separated from their mother. I regret being in this position because of my children."*

This analysis highlights the significance of mothers in a family. It also assures that when women having children are in prison, their innocent children are mostly and



highly affected by it. There is always a dynamic change in the emotional and social environment of children, especially young children. This could have a severe impact on their upbringing, for which they never do wrong.

### **6.3.6 Support and sympathy of family members while in prison**

Family engagement after a woman's incarceration is crucial in influencing her rehabilitation, emotional health, and societal reintegration (Arditti, 2012; Poehlmann, 2005). Certain families, particularly those with strong emotional connections or prior knowledge of the woman's challenges, continue to offer support by visiting her frequently, providing both moral and practical aid, and attending to her children (Loper et al., 2009). This continuous connection can serve as a significant source of emotional strength and inspiration for incarcerated women (Casey-Acevedo & Bakken, 2001). Nevertheless, in numerous instances, families isolate themselves owing to the stigma, shame, or societal pressure linked to having a female relative incarcerated (Murray, 2005). The societal expectation for women to maintain moral integrity and familial obligations worsens feelings of disgrace, frequently resulting in rejection, broken relationships, or silence (Ferraro & Moe, 2003). This emotional detachment profoundly impacts female inmates, rendering them isolated and psychologically vulnerable (Arditti, 2012). The degree of familial participation, or its absence, directly influences the woman's mental health, optimism for the future, and capacity for societal reintegration post-release. Consequently, familial response is a critical determinant in the post-incarceration trajectory of women in Mizoram.

**Table 6.15 Support and sympathy of family members while in prison**

| <b>Support of family members</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                       | 109              | 77.3                  |
| <b>No</b>                        | 32               | 22.7                  |
| <b>Total</b>                     | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in the table, 109 (77.3%) stated that their families are involved in some way during their incarceration. While 32 (22.7%) reported that their families do not back them up during imprisonment. The substantial proportion of "Yes" responses

indicates that, although the social stigma and logistical obstacles outlined in previous tables (e.g., limited friend/community visits in Tables 6.07 & 6.08), immediate and extended family continue to serve as the principal support system for imprisoned women in Mizoram. This corresponds with Table 6.14, wherein relatives, parents, and husbands collectively undertook childcare responsibilities, illustrating a concrete familial commitment that extends beyond emotional support. In contrast to the 24.1 per cent friend help (Table 6.07) and 17.7 per cent locality/church visits (Table 6.08), family engagement is significantly greater, highlighting the importance of kinship networks in this cultural environment.

Respondent 88 stated:

*“Since I am a diabetic, my husband and children are worried about my well-being and diet here inside the prison. Once a week, they visited me and brought me food and snacks that I couldn’t even finish by myself. I even sometimes have to ask them not to bring much. But it’s good that I could have the opportunity to share with the less fortunate inmates here.”*

Respondent 63 also added:

*“I am an addict. they used to force me to stay in several rehabilitation homes in Aizawl, but somehow I always managed to escape from them without finishing the full course. Out of desperation, my relatives sent me to prison in the hope that I would not be able to escape. They often visit me and care for me as much as they can. I wanted to be bailed out, but they didn’t allow”.*

The 22.7 per cent without familial engagement presumably coincides with respondents without marital support (Table 6.13) or whose parents are deceased or distant. These women may be particularly susceptible to social isolation, financial hardship, and psychological distress.

Respondent 93 stated:

*“I am an addict, and because of my addiction, I have to sell drugs. My relatives discarded me, and I have no one to take care of me.”*

Respondent 132 also stated:

*“I live with my stepfather and my mother. Since I have a child, it’s much difficult for me in life. My mother was controlled by my stepfather, and we were not loved in our home. Even now, they haven’t bothered to contact me or send me anything. I didn’t have any other relatives to care for me.”*

Respondent 115 further commented:

*“All my relatives live outside Mizoram. I didn’t have anyone to take care of me. We are poor, and my relatives will not have any money to give me. I can’t even talk to them over the phone, since I didn’t have money to use the phone, and their timings are hardly the same.”*

### **6.3.7 Frequency of visits**

The frequency of familial visits to female inmates is a crucial indicator of emotional support, social connectivity, and the prospects for reintegration following release (Arditti, 2003; Casey-Acevedo & Bakken, 2001). Frequent visits from family members impart a sense of connection to inmates, mitigate emotions of abandonment, and constitute a vital source of mental and emotional strength during incarceration (Loper et al., 2009). Nonetheless, the reality frequently demonstrates a pattern of sporadic or irregular visits, particularly following the initial phases of incarceration (Bales & Mears, 2008). Within these, the regularities of the visits they received and the relatives who visited them most will be taken into consideration (Hairston, 1991). As this will highlight the relationship they have with their immediate families or relatives, which will signify their importance and relationship within their families.

**Table 6.16 Frequency of visits**

| <b>Frequency of visits</b>      | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Husband</b>                  | 18               | 12.8                  |
| <b>Children</b>                 | 14               | 9.9                   |
| <b>Friends</b>                  | 7                | 5.0                   |
| <b>Relatives</b>                | 59               | 41.8                  |
| <b>None</b>                     | 29               | 20.6                  |
| <b>Children &amp; Relatives</b> | 6                | 4.3                   |
| <b>Friends &amp; relatives</b>  | 1                | .7                    |
| <b>Husband &amp; relatives</b>  | 6                | 4.3                   |
| <b>Husband &amp; Children</b>   | 1                | .7                    |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As shown in the table, 59 (41.8%) inmates reported that they are visited by their relatives, excluding husband, children, and friends. The categories of relatives include aunts, cousins, and parents. Merely 12.8 per cent of respondents indicated that they received visits only from their husbands. Visits from children 14 (9.9%) were rather infrequent; however, somewhat more prevalent when accompanied by relatives 6 (4.3%). Some inmates do not want their children to visit them, even though they miss them a lot, because they do not want their children to see them inside the prison. Friends constituted a mere 7 (5.0%), further emphasizing the pattern of inadequate peer support illustrated in Table 6.07. 29 (20.6%) of women received no visits, highlighting a troubling degree of isolation for more than one-fifth of the inmates.

Following prior tables, particularly Tables 6.14 and 6.15, relatives remain the primary providers of emotional and physical support. This illustrates the strength of extended family networks within Mizo society. Infrequent visits from husbands (12.8%) and friends (5.0%) indicate previously noted low levels of marital support (Table 6.13) and social alienation from peers (Table 6.07). The infrequent occurrence of “husband & children” (0.7%) signifies that family visits are remarkably rare. The

29 women (20.6%) who received no visits may signify the most socially and emotionally vulnerable group. This seclusion undoubtedly has detrimental psychological effects and may impede recovery and reintegration following release.

Respondent 91 commented:

*“I didn’t want my children to visit me because I am afraid that the trauma of my imprisonment will haunt them for the rest of their lives. When I need something, I ask my adult relatives to visit me. This is also only in times of emergency”.*

Respondent 121 added:

*“Since the prison is far from our locality, I didn’t want to bother my family to visit me often. They have to hire a vehicle, and it’s costly. Our family didn’t have the means to visit me regularly.”*

Respondent 131 further added:

*“Requesting our relatives to visit us is not worth the time and money spent. We only have a few minutes to interact with them. It just makes us homesick. I never request anyone to visit me. I have to reap what I sow and suffer, I didn’t want to trouble others for my mistake”.*

Respondent 136 also commented:

*“I used to feel sad and envy my fellow inmates when they announced their names on visiting day. I felt that they are fortunate enough to have someone who cares for them and takes time to visit them. I never have anyone to visit me while I am in prison.”*

### **6.3.8 Helpfulness of visiting their children**

Visits from family members serve as an essential emotional and psychological support system for imprisoned women, providing comfort, hope, and a sustained sense of belonging (Arditti, 2003; Poehlmann, 2005). For inmates, such visits provide not only relief from the boredom and isolation of incarceration but also reaffirm their value and identity beyond their criminal history (Casey-Acevedo &

Bakken, 2001). The chance to observe their children, especially for mothers, during these visits is very significant. For mothers, even brief interactions with their children facilitate the preservation of maternal ties, alleviate anxiety for their well-being, and provide motivation for positive conduct and ultimate reintegration (Loper et al., 2009). Consistent contact with family members has been shown to mitigate depression, enhance cooperation with prison authorities, and foster optimism for post-release reintegration (Bales & Mears, 2008).

These visits also benefit the children, who frequently endure silently due to their mother's absence. Encountering her even in a correctional environment alleviates sentiments of abandonment and confusion. It affirms her enduring love and presence in their lives, which is essential for their emotional development (Poehlmann, 2005; Shlafer & Poehlmann, 2010). Consistent visits can enhance the mother-child relationship, maintain attachment, and mitigate the enduring psychological effects of separation (Arditti, 2012). Consequently, family visits serve not only as social interactions but also as therapeutic engagements that facilitate healing, reinforce familial bonds, and enhance the inmate's rehabilitation and prospective reunification with her children (Casey-Acevedo & Bakken, 2001). However, those visits from their children could have a far-reaching negative impact on the lives of the mothers, since visits are always short and limited. For some, it could worsen their emotional turmoil, and feelings of regret and shame could haunt them since they are the ones who are incarcerated (Loper et al., 2009).

**Table 6.17 Helpfulness of visiting children**

| <b>Helpfulness of the visit</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                      | 72               | 51.1                  |
| <b>No</b>                       | 19               | 13.5                  |
| <b>Can't say</b>                | 50               | 35.5                  |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field survey

As shown in the above table, 72 (51.1%) reported that visits from their relatives, especially their children, are beneficial for them, which will have a positive emotional and relational impact on them. While 19 (13.5%) said that visits were not helpful for reconnecting. Since the duration of visits is short, some inmates feel that

they are more troubled and miss them more when they visit, and for them, it's better if they are not visited, as they are also ashamed of their condition. A substantial 50 (35.5%) responded "Can't say" suggesting that they either didn't have children, were uncertain, or had mixed experiences. They are also burdened by the uncertainty and guilt about their children's feelings or understanding of the situation. There is also a lack of privacy and emotional space within prison conditions, as well as frequent short visit durations. For more than fifty percentage of the responders, visits significantly contributed to preserving or restoring the mother-child relationship throughout incarceration. These ties may alleviate the emotional burden on both mother and child, facilitating a more seamless reintegration post-release.

Respondent 65 stated:

*"Seeing my children on visiting day motivates me and gives me hope to move on in life. It is only because of my children that I am still alive today. Their visit is emotional, but it gives me strength and hope to move on."*

Respondent 77 also stated:

*"Even though the visiting period is short, being able to see my children only for a few minutes relieves all my pain, and it gives me renewed strength to be alive."*

Respondent 81 commented:

*"My relatives didn't allow my children to visit me. They are worried that it might give them an inferiority complex later in their life. Even though I missed them miserably, I agree that they shouldn't see their mother in a situation where I am right now."*

Respondent 90 further commented:

*"I am afraid to see my children in my situation. I regret it so much that I didn't dare to see their faces. The guilt I feel burdens me every day. I couldn't even imagine the pain my children will undergo because of my imprisonment"*.

### 6.3.9 Problems faced by the family after imprisonment

The incarceration of a woman generates a profound ripple effect that significantly affects her family, particularly when she occupies a pivotal role in household administration, childcare, or emotional support. Families frequently encounter urgent practical challenges, such as child care, disruption of daily routines, and heightened financial pressure, especially in low-income households where women may have contributed through informal labour, selling local goods, or managing household finances (Arditti, 2012; Ferraro & Moe, 2003). Frequently, the responsibility of caregiving transfers to elderly parents or unprepared relatives, increasing the strain on already constrained resources (Christian, 2005). In addition to technical and financial issues, families contend with emotional turmoil and societal stigma. In a tightly woven Mizo community, where honour and communal reputation are most important, the incarceration of a female family member might result in gossip, ostracism, and a decline in social status. Children may experience bullying or social isolation in educational settings, while husbands or siblings may socially withdraw to evade public attention (Murray & Farrington, 2008). Over time, these demands may result in strained relationships, emotional breakdowns, and the collapse of the family unit. The repercussions of a woman's incarceration extend well beyond the confines of the jail, profoundly impacting the social, emotional, and economic stability of her entire family.

**Table 6.18 Problems faced by the family post imprisonment**

| <b>Problems faced by family after imprisonment</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                                         | 30               | 21.3                  |
| <b>No</b>                                          | 111              | 78.7                  |
| <b>Total</b>                                       | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in the table, 30 (21.3%) reported that their families had faced problems after their imprisonment. However, the majority, 111 (78.7%), reported that their family does not face such problems. There may be a strong family or community support system, a tolerance for stigma, or little disruption caused by the inmate's imprisonment in some households, as indicated by the comparatively low number of



families reporting concerns, which is 21.3 per cent. On the other hand, 78.7 per cent of people who did have difficulties might have been challenged by financial difficulty, social stigma, emotional pain, or disruptions in their roles as caregivers. And even for some inmates, they are ostracised from their house and community, and they do not have a place to stay. Even some families kept it a secret within their family as well as to their community that their family members are imprisoned. They did such a thing to prevent distress and stigma from their children as well as from the community at large.

Respondent 8 stated:

*“We were evicted from our rented house soon after I was caught selling drugs. Since we couldn’t find a place to stay. I just joined my friend with all our belongings. Even my children are with them right now. I am worried, but there is nothing much I can do from here.”*

Respondent 19 commented:

*“My imprisonment has affected my entire family; my children couldn’t continue their education since I am the sole earner. We are evicted from our rented house. I have three children, and they have been living separately in my friend’s house since I went to prison. I couldn’t imagine the hardship they will face.”*

Respondent 52 stated:

*“I am not connected with any of my relatives after I am in prison. I couldn’t say anything about whether my imprisonment has affected their lives. But I am certain that they will not be evicted from our house, since it is our own house.”*

### 6.3.10 Change of residence by a family due to imprisonment

The incarceration of a woman in Mizoram may compel her family to make substantial lifestyle modifications, including relocating. This relocation is frequently motivated by the profound social stigma associated with having a female family member incarcerated, a stigma that is especially severe in Mizo society, where traditional values, moral expectations, and communal scrutiny are deeply ingrained. Families may relocate to evade scandal, disgrace, or social ostracism in their original community, pursuing obscurity and an opportunity to reconstruct their lives in a different setting. Similar patterns have been documented in criminological and sociological research, which observe that families of incarcerated individuals often employ geographical relocation as a coping mechanism to distance themselves from stigmatizing environments and to restore their dignity (Condry, 2007; Arditti, 2012). Such displacement, however, may also result in the fragmentation of social support networks, economic instability, and psychological distress, underscoring the far-reaching social costs of female incarceration beyond the prison walls (Codd, 2008).

**Table 6.19 Change of residence by a family due to imprisonment**

| <b>Change of residence by family</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                           | 23               | 16.3                  |
| <b>No</b>                            | 118              | 83.7                  |
| <b>Total</b>                         | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As shown in the table, 23 (16.3%) inmates' families have shifted their places due to their relatives' imprisonment, as stated by the inmates. However, the majority, 118 (83.7%), did not shift their places. A high Percentage age of families who did not relocate suggests that the majority of families were able to keep their residence, either because of stability, resilience, or a lack of external pressure to move. The 16.3 per cent indicates that some families were forced to relocate as a result of incarceration, which may have been caused by social stigma, financial instability, the loss of housing, or the requirement for family support in a new location. The necessity of relocating can have serious consequences for families, including the

disruption of children's educational experiences, the loss of employment opportunities, and the loss of social networks. In the worst-case scenario, some respondents need to put their belongings at their neighbour's house since they are not allowed to stay in their houses by their landlords due to imprisonment.

Respondent 41 stated:

*"We were evicted from our locality after I was caught selling drugs. We stay in a rented house here in Aizawl. Since I was in prison soon after I was caught, my relatives took care of my belongings."*

Respondent 65 also stated:

*"I was given a warning letter by YMA 'Young Mizo Association' of our locality. It was my first time indulging in selling drugs. If I were caught again, they would evict us from our locality."*

Respondent 101 further commented:

*"We are evicted from our locality after being caught, it is obvious since it was not our permanent residence. I am committing a crime that is not accepted by society, and I deserve it."*

From the above, it is shown that the imprisonment of women in Mizoram deeply affects not only the inmates but also their families, disrupting emotional, social, and economic stability. As women often serve as caregivers, mothers, and moral anchors within households, their absence creates a void that is difficult to fill. Children are the most affected, facing emotional distress, disruption in education, loss of stability, and in some cases, separation from siblings. Many are left under the care of relatives, grandparents, or even institutional facilities, while some live within prisons under challenging conditions. These changes often result in trauma, behavioural issues, and feelings of abandonment.

Husbands, too, are impacted, though to a lesser extent compared to children and parents. Many struggle with new responsibilities, financial strain, or societal stigma, while some withdraw emotionally or remarry, leaving the imprisoned women isolated. Parents frequently bear the burden of caring for grandchildren and endure

emotional hardship due to their daughter's incarceration. Relatives, particularly extended kin, emerge as the most consistent support system, providing childcare, visits, and emotional support, though stigma and shame sometimes lead to rejection and estrangement.

Family visits play an essential role in maintaining bonds, particularly between mothers and children, often giving inmates hope and motivation. However, visits are limited, sometimes emotionally overwhelming, and not always possible due to financial or logistical constraints. Some women do not receive any visits, leaving them vulnerable to loneliness and despair.

The families of inmates also face broader challenges, including financial instability, childcare difficulties, eviction, and social stigma. In some cases, families are forced to relocate due to pressure or ostracism from their communities. Despite these hardships, many families remain engaged, offering emotional and practical support, while others withdraw completely.

Overall, the imprisonment of women in Mizoram reveals the profound interconnection between incarceration, family life, and social structures. It not only affects the women themselves but also reshapes family dynamics, particularly harming children and elderly parents, and often intensifies the cycle of poverty, stigma, and social exclusion.

#### **6.4. Condition of physical and mental health**

The physical and mental health status of women prisoners indicates a concerning convergence of neglect, pre-existing vulnerabilities, and the effects of incarceration. Many female inmates enter prison in a state of poor health, sometimes attributable to poverty, substance abuse, inadequate nutrition, or insufficient prior access to medical care. Incarceration can worsen these diseases owing to congestion, restricted access to specialist treatment, inadequate hygiene, and insufficient focus on women's unique health requirements, including reproductive and menstrual health. Numerous studies highlight that imprisoned women experience higher rates of chronic illness, mental disorders, and trauma-related symptoms compared to their male counterparts or women in the general population (Plugge et al., 2006; WHO, 2009). Furthermore, the

prison environment often fails to provide adequate psychosocial and medical support, which can aggravate pre-existing conditions and lead to the deterioration of both physical and mental well-being (World Health Organization, 2020; Bartlett et al., 2014).

Imprisonment profoundly impacts the emotional well-being of women, many of whom bear the weight of traumatic histories, including marital violence, desertion, or sexual assault. The disconnection from familial ties, particularly separation from children, coupled with social isolation and the shame associated with their offenses, worsens anxiety, despair, insomnia, and, in certain instances, suicidal thoughts (Covington, 2007; WHO, 2009). Without consistent counselling, mental health assistance, or therapeutic interventions, these concerns frequently remain unaddressed (Plugge et al., 2006). For numerous inmates, the prison setting transforms into a realm of silent suffering, wherein both physical and mental health decline progressively, adversely affecting their capacity for rehabilitation and societal reintegration (Bartlett et al., 2014; World Health Organization, 2020).

#### **6.4.1 Experience inside the prison**

Women's experiences in prison facilities are very different from men's, influenced by gender-specific vulnerabilities, roles, and demands. The loss of their freedom and the interference with their social and family obligations are two consequences that women prisoners frequently face. Inside prison walls, they face challenges ranging from inadequate healthcare and poor living conditions to limited opportunities for education and skill development (Covington, 2007; UNODC, 2014). In many contexts, prison systems are historically designed for male prisoners, neglecting the psychological, emotional, and reproductive health needs of women (Carlen & Worrall, 2004).

The everyday life of incarcerated women is marked by strict routines, overcrowding, and restricted autonomy, yet also by efforts to find coping strategies through social bonds, leisure activities, or religious practices (Crewe, Hulley, & Wright, 2017). Their lived experiences are further shaped by intersecting factors such as poverty, prior victimization, and cultural expectations regarding women's roles as mothers

and caregivers (Bloom, Owen, & Covington, 2003). Particularly in societies with strong family-centered values, like Mizoram, imprisonment not only isolates women from their communities but also intensifies their sense of emotional deprivation and stigma.

Respondent 1 stated:

*“The best experience I have so far here is the day when my brothers visited me. They came all the way from abroad just to visit me. This gives me hope to live on. Nothing else inside the prison is worth mentioning. Since we are all women, I hate the fact that I need to defend myself and control my speech and actions because inmates will always talk behind my back, and if they are not in a good mood, they tend to complain to the authorities. Hatred is ruling inside the prison; there is no love. We have to be mentally strong to survive here.”*

Respondent 29, who is with her two children, stated:

*“Every day I need to fight for the well-being of my children. They are only 9 months old and 3 years old. It’s difficult for me to control their behaviour every minute. I often faced ridicule from my fellow inmates because of my children. It’s worst when they can’t stop crying at night. This experience inside the prison will surely be one of my worst experiences in life. I have to stand up for both my children, let alone put aside myself.”*

Respondent 33 also stated:

*“Nothing is exciting inside the prison. It’s the same every day; there are no good things to gain or learn from here. The food provided to us hardly changes; we get the same meal every day. There is no activity to cope with our loneliness, boredom, and homesickness might end my life one day.”*

Respondent 71 commented:

*“Being a 1st timer here in prison, it’s a whole new experience for me. It’s not as bad as I used to imagine. The environment is calm and the staff are also respectful and good to us. The only problem I have is with food; I can manage the rest. For me, being inside the prison is a blessing; I have more time to read the Holy Bible and pray, which I never had time for when I was outside.”*

Respondent 100 also stated:

*“The prison experience taught me to be more understanding and appreciate others for who they are. It is a challenging experience as 30-40 women are kept in a single room. There are no places to go; we see each other every day. Even though there are times when we argue and hate each other, at the end of the day, we can all forgive and accept the place we are destined to. I always feel pity for mothers who are accompanied by their children. An adult can handle things, but seeing the faces of innocent children makes me think twice about the life decisions of their mothers.”*

#### **6.4.2 Treatment received for mental well-being**

Mental well-being is a critical yet often overlooked aspect of the prison experience, particularly for women inmates. The stress of incarceration, separation from family, loss of autonomy, and the stigma of imprisonment frequently exacerbate existing psychological vulnerabilities or generate new mental health concerns (Fazel, Hayes, Bartellas, Clerici, & Trestman, 2016). Women prisoners are more likely than men to report histories of trauma, abuse, substance use disorders, and depression, making them especially susceptible to mental distress during incarceration (James & Glaze, 2006).

Effective treatment and support for mental well-being within prisons are therefore essential for rehabilitation and reintegration. Interventions may include counselling, psychiatric care, peer-support groups, and structured recreational or spiritual activities that help inmates cope with loneliness and stress (WHO, 2014). However, research indicates that mental health services within prisons are often limited, under-

resourced, or not tailored to the specific needs of women (Bartlett & Hollins, 2018). The neglect of these services not only undermines the psychological health of women inmates but also hampers broader goals of prison reform and social reintegration.

**Table 6.20 Treatment received for mental well-being**

| <b>Treatment received</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                | 88               | 62.4                  |
| <b>No</b>                 | 53               | 37.6                  |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in the table, a majority, 88 (62.4%), stated that they have received mental health treatment after they were in prison. However, a large number of respondents, 53 (37.6%), stated that they do not receive such treatment. The context of the mental health treatment here is controversial, as they do not have a professional psychiatrist or mental health professionals. The majority who suggest having received the treatment are the ones who regularly attended the counselling services provided to them. Since counsellors from outside used to visit them thrice a week. The important aspect we need to consider here is that the counselling services they received are usually based on religion and faith-related. The 37.6 per cent of the inmates suggesting not having any sort of mental health treatment is understandable, as to them faith faith-based or religious-based counselling is not what they needed, rather they need help from professional counsellors to a certified degree. To them, the counselling services they can attend are pointless. This data highlights the need to draw attention to the fact that there is a requirement for increased mental health services, preventative screenings, and increased mental health literacy among both staff and inmates.

Respondent 13 said:

*“All the inmates inside need a healthy mindset to refresh ourselves. We all come from different backgrounds, and our ways of upbringing are different. We are all ignorant that we didn’t even feel the need for*



*mental well-being. It will be of great help if we could have a professional psychiatrist or psychologist. Even though we are regularly visited by counsellors, many of us are not willing to listen to the words of God every day.”*

Respondent 21 stated:

*“It will be very beneficial if the prison can have a professional psychiatrist or psychologist who can be available at regular intervals. Being inside the prison, we all need mental treatment from professionals.”*

Respondent 98 commented:

*“Counsellors from outside visited us regularly. I am grateful for their visit. I used to consult them about everything they visit us, if I am available. Sometimes, all my problems and hardships cannot be shared with my inmates. It feels better to share it with others who understand our situation.”*

Respondent 111 further commented:

*“When I am in deep sorrow and heartened, I just run to the counsellors and seek their prayers. It is comforting, and I am grateful to them. Sometimes, we used to have Bible study and sharing, which kills the boredom in me, and I highly appreciate their visit.”*

Respondent 65 stated:

*“I didn’t find it necessary to visit the counsellors. It’s a waste of time for me. Personally, I didn’t want to share my life struggles and problems with people whom I had never known. Some of my inmates used to request me to visit them, but I never wanted to, and I didn’t need it anyway.”*

### 6.4.3 Condition of health after imprisonment

The conditions of health after imprisonment frequently illustrate the enduring physical and psychological repercussions of imprisonment. A significant number of women exit prison in a more compromised condition than when they entered, primarily due to inadequate nourishment, insufficient specialized medical care, and restricted access to mental health support throughout their incarceration. Imprisonment often exposes individuals to overcrowded environments, inadequate nutrition, limited access to quality healthcare, and heightened risks of infectious and chronic diseases (Awofeso, 2010; WHO, 2014). For women, these health challenges are compounded by gender-specific needs such as reproductive health care, maternal health, and treatment for trauma or abuse, which are frequently neglected in correctional facilities (Plugge, Douglas, & Fitzpatrick, 2006).

The experience of imprisonment can exacerbate existing illnesses, contribute to the development of new medical or mental health issues, and disrupt continuity of care once inmates return to the community (Binswanger, Stern, Deyo, Heagerty, Cheadle, Elmore, & Koepsell, 2007). In addition, the stigma of imprisonment, social exclusion, and economic marginalization further limit access to healthcare after release, placing ex-prisoners at greater risk of poor long-term health outcomes (Wang, 2019).

**Table 6.21 Condition of health after imprisonment**

| Condition of health | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Improving           | 9         | 6.4            |
| Deteriorating       | 48        | 34.0           |
| Stable              | 84        | 59.6           |
| Total               | 141       | 100.0          |

Source: Field Survey

As shown in the table, it was claimed by 84 (59.6%) respondents that their health status had remained steady after they were incarcerated. The majority of inmates experiencing stable health may indicate that the conditions in the prison were sufficient to maintain fundamental physical health. And in some cases, it indicates

that their time in prison is only for a few months, some even less than 2 months. For those experiencing less time in prison and without any chronic illnesses, it will be easy for them to say that their health is stable. However, a decline in their health was experienced by 48 (34.0%) of the respondents. This suggests that a significant portion of inmates faced negative impacts on their health due to several factors, including prior health concerns, poor nutrition, psychological stress, and lack of timely medical care. A small portion of 9 (6.4%) stated that their health was improving after incarceration. This could reflect those who benefited from structured routines, access to medical healthcare, which they could never afford, or substance withdrawal support inside the prison. The small inmates suggesting improved health could be from a low socio-economic background.

Respondent 55 stated:

*“Since I am addicted to drugs, I leave home, and there is no one to take care of me. And I didn’t take proper care of myself as well. But after I am in prison, I eat better with proper timing, I have gained weight, and my overall health condition is improving.”*

Respondent 37 commented:

*“The nutritional value of the food provided to us is not good. I have once complained about it to the Jailor. After I was in prison, I lost my appetite, and my weight has drastically declined. I often get sick, and it’s also difficult to get medicine when needed.”*

Respondent 76 further commented:

*“I have diabetes, and the food available for our daily meals is not good for my health. My relatives need to send me pre-cooked food often since I cannot eat the meals provided here. My overall health has deteriorated since I was in prison.”*

Respondent 129 stated:

*“Luckily, I have no complaints concerning my health after being in prison; my health condition is stable by the grace of God.”*

Inside prison, women's everyday experiences are marked by monotony, restrictions, and strained social relationships. Some describe the environment as hostile, with tensions among inmates creating a sense of mistrust, while others find solace in religion, reading, or small acts of mutual support. For mothers imprisoned with children, the burden is particularly heavy, as they struggle to care for their young ones in an environment ill-suited for child-rearing. Despite occasional positive reflections such as improved routines, opportunities for prayer, or temporary health gains most experiences are coloured by emotional deprivation, lack of meaningful activity, and limited opportunities for personal growth.

After imprisonment, women's health conditions tend to remain stable for some, worsen for many, and improve for a few. For those whose health improves, structured routines, consistent meals, or the absence of substance use play a role. However, others report deterioration, citing poor nutrition, inadequate medical care, and the incompatibility of prison meals with chronic health conditions like diabetes. Stable health outcomes are often associated with short prison stays or the absence of serious prior illness. Overall, the post-incarceration health condition underscores how imprisonment not only reflects but also shapes broader inequalities in access to care, with long-lasting effects on women's physical and mental well-being.

### **6.5. Treatment of prison staff inside the prison**

The treatment of female inmates by prison staff significantly influences their everyday experiences, emotional health, and feelings of dignity within the correctional facility. Although certain jail personnel exhibit professionalism, empathy, and a rehabilitative mindset, the general treatment frequently fluctuates based on institutional culture, staff training, and resource accessibility (Bartlett et al., 2014; Covington & Bloom, 2006). In specific instances, female inmates indicate receiving fundamental respect and equity, particularly from female officers who demonstrate enhanced comprehension of their emotional and physical requirements. Many inmates' experience apathy, indifference, and a deficiency of empathy, particularly regarding health concerns, mental instability, or appeals for assistance (WHO, 2009; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2018). The

level of satisfaction they received from the staff that took care of them is immensely significant in a correctional facility.

**Table 6.22 Satisfaction with treatment by prison staff**

| Satisfaction with treatment | Frequency  | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------------------|------------|----------------|
| Yes                         | 137        | 97.2           |
| No                          | 4          | 2.8            |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>141</b> | <b>100.0</b>   |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in the table, an overwhelming 137 (97.2%) have reported satisfaction with treatment by prison staff. However, only 4 (2.8%) claimed that they are not satisfied with the treatment they received from the prison. This data suggests a high level of satisfaction with the treatment by prison staff, which indicates that there is possibly humane and respectful conduct from the prison staff. There is also a perception among the inmates that the authority figures within the prison were generally fair and professional. However, the small percentage of dissatisfaction must be taken into serious consideration, as it may point to isolated but potentially serious cases of mistreatment and neglect. These findings are a favourable reflection on the management of the prison as well as the correctional policies that are currently in place. On the other hand, it is essential to continue monitoring the connections between staff and inmates in order to guarantee that the level of satisfaction remains high and to resolve any underlying problems that may not be overtly indicated in measurements of satisfaction.

Respondent 60 stated:

*“The staff are cordial towards us. I have not experienced differential treatment from the staff. They immediately follow up on the complaints we made if they can do it.”*

Respondent 132 also stated:

*“If some of the inmates complain about the staff, it’s usually them who created the problem. They treat us equally and listen to us.”*

However, respondent 55 stated:

*“There is differential treatment among some staff with reference to the way they treat us. The rich are acknowledged more than the poor. I myself have experienced it.”*

Respondent 90 further added:

*“I have experienced differential treatment from the staff. They used to cater to the personal preferences of the rich, while neglecting the needs of the poor. Even when we have similar requests, their responses differ.”*

#### **6.5.1 Satisfaction with the relationship with inmates inside the prison**

The quality of the relationship among inmates significantly influences their emotional well-being and ability to cope with incarceration. These peer relationships frequently offer essential emotional support, a feeling of solidarity, and an alternative familial structure within the prison setting (Crewe et al., 2014; Liebling & Maruna, 2013).. For women who perceive abandonment by their families or communities, relationships with fellow inmates can serve as a vital source of strength and comfort (Covington, 2002). Nonetheless, satisfaction with these relationships differs. Some offenders may report strong friendships, mutual support, and collaboration in daily activities, whereas others may encounter friction, conflict, or distrust, particularly in overcrowded or resource-deprived settings (Zamble & Porporino, 1988; Wener, 2012).. Differences in personality, background, criminal behaviour, or substance dependence may result in misunderstandings or hatred. The degree of enjoyment is contingent upon an individual’s social adaptability, the availability of supporting peers, and the overall environment within the prison.

**Table 6.23 Satisfaction with the relationship with inmates inside the prison**

| <b>Satisfactory inmates' relationships</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                                 | 124              | 87.9                  |
| <b>No</b>                                  | 17               | 12.1                  |
| <b>Total</b>                               | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As shown in the table, the majority, 124 (87.9%), reported that they manage to maintain a healthy relationship with their inmates inside the prison. However, 17 (12.1%) inmates stated that they are not satisfied with the relationship they have with their fellow inmates inside the prison. According to the high degree of satisfaction as stated by the majority, it appears that positive peer interactions were frequent among the inmates, which may have provided the following benefits, including helping with one's emotions, shared understanding of imprisonment, and it can also reduce feelings of alienation and stress. The minority who were dissatisfied have faced interpersonal conflict, which is quite obvious considering their personal space inside the prison. Cases of bullying, exclusion, and personal conflicts are also common, especially among inmates who are accompanied by their children. Since the majority of them are accused of drug trafficking, there seems to be a lack of trust and miscommunication among the inmates. Some also feel excluded as they didn't have enough money to buy their basic needs, as well as those to do not have any relatives or friends to visit them. It is essential to maintain a healthy inmate relationship inside the prison, as it can boost their emotional and physical well-being. For those who are dissatisfied, mental health interventions as well as prison redressal mechanisms are much needed.

Respondent 46 commented:

*"Each ward has a separate leader; the discipline of the ward highly depends upon the nature and attitude of our leaders. Trouble among the inmates never exists as far as my experience goes."*

Respondent 49 further commented:

*“Since I am here with my child, I have to carry a double burden. However, the presence of my inmates relieved my burden of taking care of my child. Sometimes I used to feel that my child was more connected to my friends here. I am blessed to have them.”*

Respondent 111 also added:

*“Having time to share my deepest thoughts and struggles with my inmates is a blessing and relief. I am fortunate to have found many new friends whom I can rely on. Since I am a single mother and the sole earner of my family, I didn’t have money even to buy my basic needs; it is only because of the support from my inmates that I can survive.”*

However, Respondent 6 stated:

*“I cannot trust anyone here. They are talkative and often say bad things about me behind my back. I usually don’t interact much with them. I prefer to be alone.”*

Respondent 33 further stated:

*“They shifted me to another ward because I once fought with another inmate. She blamed me for the things I didn’t do I was angry with her, so they had to shift me to another ward.”*

### **6.5.2 Having time to communicate with inmates**

Having time to communicate with inmates while they are in prison can act as a support system to cope with their mental and emotional isolation. Since they are away from their family and friends, being able to share their thoughts and problems with others could give them a sense of relief and assurance (Liebling & Maruna, 2013). If the rehabilitative aspect inside the prison is not well-equipped, most of their leisure time needs to be spent with their inmates (Crewe et al., 2014). In prisons where rehabilitative programs and psychological services are inadequately developed, social interactions among inmates become even more critical, occupying much of their leisure time and fulfilling unmet emotional and social needs (Zamble



& Porporino, 1988). Such communication not only promotes emotional stability but also contributes to the development of empathy, cooperation, and collective resilience within the correctional environment.

**Table 6.24 Having time to communicate with inmates**

| <b>Communication with inmates</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yes</b>                        | 120              | 85.1                  |
| <b>No</b>                         | 21               | 14.9                  |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field survey

As indicated in the table, 120 (85.1%) reported that they had time to communicate with their inmates. While 21 (14.9%) stated that they do not have enough time to communicate with inmates. The high level of communication indicates that the prison environment is socially engaging. The existence of such an environment fosters a network of support among the inmates, and they could also share their experiences and help each other to cope with incarceration. Besides, having a conversation with inmates about their feelings could act as informal counselling, which they very much needed. On the other hand, those who do feel that they could not talk freely with their inmates could be impacted by a feeling of isolation, which can hamper their mental well-being. The reasons could be a lack of personal space to freely chat, or engagement in assigned tasks inside the prison, or it could also be because of their personality opting to be a loner then sharing their feelings with inmates.

Respondent 71 stated:

*“Since there is no activity to do inside the prison. There is plenty of time to chat and mingle with other inmates. We used to play cards or talk about our family and life struggles. It is a therapy for us.”*

Respondent 94 added:

*“The maximum amount of time we have here in prison is communicating with other inmates. It’s our best therapy here. Since we are not allowed to sleep during the day. We often sit together, chatting, playing cards, or babysitting.”*

However, Respondent 24 stated:

*“The room is way too overcrowded, and sometimes I feel overwhelmed. There is no privacy at all. Even sharing secrets with other inmates is difficult. Everyone can hear what we are saying.”*

### 6.5.3 Adjustment made inside the prison

When one enters a new environment, adjustment issues are a big concern for them as well as the surroundings. Human beings tend to have a good ability to adapt to a new environment. But the approach can be difficult and negative if the new environment happens to be a place like a prison. The word ‘prison’ itself can have a negative connotation, as it is a correctional facility, one needs to compromise, adjust themselves for their well-being as well as for their survival (Haney, 2018). Within this section, the behaviour changed after being in prison, opportunities for open talk with prison staff, prompt complaints redressal, non-discrimination in treatment inside the prison, any sort of escape plan, and re-offending will be considered.

**Table 6.25 Adjustment made inside the prison**

| <b>Adjustment made</b>             | <b>Yes (%)</b>  | <b>No (%)</b>     |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| <b>Behaviour change</b>            | 126(89.4)       | 15 (10.6)         |
| <b>Open talk Opportunities</b>     | 137(97.2)       | 4 (2.8)           |
| <b>Prompt Complaints Redressal</b> | 135(95.7)       | 6 (4.3)           |
| <b>Non- discrimination</b>         | 95(67.4)        | 46 (32.6)         |
| <b>Escape plan</b>                 | 7(5.0)          | 134 (95.0)        |
| <b>Re-offending</b>                | <b>19(13.5)</b> | <b>122 (86.5)</b> |

Source: Field Survey

The table indicates that there is a high amount of communication within the prison setting, indicating a socially engaging environment. It is indicative of a fully functional and supportive prison environment that there are high rates of behavioral adjustment (89.4%), open communication (97.2%), and rapid redressal of grievances (95.7%). All of these are solid evidence that the majority of offenders are making steps to rehabilitate themselves, are coping emotionally, and have the potential to change.

Respondent 89 stated:

*“After I am in prison, I learn many things. I learn to live with others of different backgrounds. I am more understanding than before. My communication skills have also improved a lot.”*

Respondent 99 further stated:

*“Before I am in prison, I am peculiar about the way I do things. But that is not possible anymore. I learn to share my things with others, which is a great achievement for me.”*

Concerning the discrimination issue, even though the majority of inmates (67.4%) believe there is no discrimination, a considerable number of inmates (32.6% of them) report having actual experiences with it. It appears from this that there is still room for improvement in terms of equality in treatment depending on factors such as class, background, type of crime, or personal identification. It is notable that the prison atmosphere is secure and that inmates are largely cooperative or resigned to their terms because just 5% of offenders claimed to have ever had some thoughts about escaping.

Respondent 40 stated:

*“Once, I planned an escape with another inmate. We tried it, but we were caught immediately. We were isolated in a separate room for 1 week; it was so stressful, and from that time, I never plan an escape again.”*

Respondent 71 also added:

*“When I think about the family I left behind, especially my children. I thought of escaping from here, but I never had the guts to fulfil it.”*

The fact that 13.5% of inmates reported the probability of committing more offenses highlights the necessity of improvements in post-release planning, developmental programs for skills, community-based support networks, and psychosocial interventions.

Respondent 103 stated:

*“I was caught selling drugs; it was my first time. I did it for my survival; I have no other means. I learn a lot of new ways to source and sell drugs from experts here. I will obviously sell it again after I am out. If not, I didn’t have any savings to survive.”*

Respondent 123 further added:

*“When I am out of here, I have no other means to make money other than selling drugs again. They took away all my money when they caught me. Even though I said that the money is not from selling drugs, they didn’t want to believe me. So, I have to do it again.”*

Respondent 32 commented:

*“The punishment and treatment I received inside the prison didn’t reform my mentality. I am thinking of more ways on how I can sell more when I am released.”*

Respondent 64 also stated:

*“I was trapped. The drugs they caught me with are not mine. Even when I explained to them, they didn’t want to listen to me, and they caught me. I thought of selling drugs when I am out of here. I cannot earn anything from here. I have no other option.”*

However, Respondent 6 stated:

*“The experience inside the prison is so bad that I will not go back to this place anymore. I want to have a normal life. I don’t want to go back to this place”*

Respondent 57 also stated:

*“Being a widow and having dependent children, I never afford to be in prison. But now here I am. I will surely never indulge in anything for which I have to go back to prison.”*

Respondent 90 commented:

*“I regret what I am doing, my family is disrupted because of my imprisonment, my children are suffering. I never want to think about the burden I have created for my children, it is painful. I will never commit the same mistakes again.”*

#### **6.5.4 Daily routine inside the prison**

When it comes to maintaining discipline, fostering mental and physical well-being, and providing assistance for rehabilitation, the daily routine of inmates is one of the most important factors. It gives structure, minimizes idleness, and encourages the development of positive habits such as managing one’s time and taking care of oneself (Liebling, 2011). Other benefits of routines include the facilitation of skill development, the preparation of inmates for reintegration into society, and the reduction of conflicts inside the institution (Haney, 2018). Moreover, participation in educational, vocational, and recreational activities within a set schedule facilitates skill development and prepares inmates for reintegration into society (Wener, 2012). Regular routines also reduce opportunities for conflict and misconduct, promoting institutional order and collective cooperation among prisoners and staff (Johnson, 2002). In general, a daily schedule that has been carefully laid out is an extremely important factor in both the administration of the jail and the personal growth of the inmates. The daily prescribed routine of the Women’s Jail will be highlighted along with the daily routines of some of the inmates. The prescribed daily routine of the

inmates inside Central Women's Jail, Aizawl, Mizoram, as stated by the senior Warder of the prison, is as follows:

**Table 6.26 Daily routine of women inmates at Central Women's Jail, Mizoram:**

| <b>Time</b>           | <b>Activity</b>                                                                                              |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>5:00 am</b>        | Cooking in charge starts in the kitchen                                                                      |
| <b>5:40 am</b>        | Wake up, devotion in each Ward, and exercise                                                                 |
| <b>6:00 am</b>        | Free to move around and do personal stuff                                                                    |
| <b>7:30 - 8:30 am</b> | Counting and lock-up in their respective wards                                                               |
| <b>8:30 am</b>        | Breakfast                                                                                                    |
| <b>9:30 am</b>        | Court day/ interview/ telephoning relatives/engaged in tailoring and weaving, medical check-up, counselling. |
| <b>12:00 pm</b>       | Lunch                                                                                                        |
| <b>12:00- 3:00 pm</b> | Free to do whatever they desire if not engaged                                                               |
| <b>3:00 pm</b>        | Dinner                                                                                                       |
| <b>4:30 pm</b>        | Counting and lock-up in their respective Wards, devotion in each Ward                                        |
| <b>9:30 pm</b>        | <b>Lights down</b>                                                                                           |

Source: Field Survey

The day begins as early as 5:00 am, and inmates who have been assigned to work in the kitchen begin their day. This is followed by a general wake-up and devotion at 5:40 in the morning.

It is a reflection of the institutional values on routine and order that early rising supports discipline and time management inside the institution. At two different times throughout the day, in the morning and in the evening, devotion is held at each separate ward. At the devotion, inmates used to take turns reading the Bible and praying, which helps with both emotional and spiritual well-being. In addition, morning exercise is beneficial to one's physical health, which is an essential component of overall wellness for prisoners.

At 9:30 in the morning, inmates have the opportunity to do the task they are assigned for the day, participate in tailoring and weaving, attend court procedures, attend counselling, attend medical check-ups, meet their visitors if they have any, or communicate with their families through telephone. Participating in these activities is necessary for rehabilitation and the development of skills, and they provide opportunities for employment and reintegration after release from prison. Breakfast is served at 8:30 in the morning, lunch is served at noon, and dinner is served at an extremely early hour of three o'clock in the afternoon. The lengthy interval of time that elapses between dinner and bedtime (6.5 hours) may result in feelings of hunger or discomfort, indicating that, if possible, it may be necessary to change the schedule of meals or to include a light snack in the evening. The evening lock-up, which begins at 4:30 p.m., serves to protect the inmates' safety and get them ready for the night. This is followed by devotion, which helps to promote calmness before bedtime. For the sake of both physical and emotional well-being, turning off the lights at 9:30 p.m. guarantees a full night's sleep.

It is important to note that the timetable does not contain any structured educational programs, or artistic or recreational outlets other than weaving and tailoring. However, it does incorporate vocational and spiritual components. The short working or activity span (usually 9:30 am–12 pm) may result in the inmates' time being underutilized, particularly for those who are motivated to study or work more. A well-ordered, spiritually inclined, and relatively rehabilitative atmosphere is reflected in the everyday routine with its consistent routine. However, it might be better if there is a possibility to improve or change the timing of meals to promote better nutrition, as well as enhance the educational and vocational opportunities available.

Respondent 4 stated:

*"Having to wake up early in the morning is the biggest challenge for me in our daily routine. I can manage with the rest."*

Respondent 14 also stated:

*"I hate the fact that it is mandatory to attend Church service. I sometimes used to fake sickness because I want to escape it."*

Respondent 20 stated:

*“Outside prison, I never wake up early in the morning, and I usually sleep after 12:00 pm. Changing my sleep cycle is the most difficult challenge for me in my daily routine. I can somehow manage the others.”*

### **6.5.5 Coping strategy inside the prison**

Coping strategies within prison represent the diverse ways incarcerated individuals manage the stress, isolation, and uncertainty of confinement. For women prisoners in particular, coping mechanisms are shaped not only by the prison environment but also by their prior life experiences, including histories of poverty, trauma, abuse, and social marginalization (Covington, 2007). Life inside prison is marked by restricted autonomy, separation from family, and monotonous routines, all of which contribute to psychological distress. In such contexts, coping strategies become essential tools for emotional survival and adaptation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Women inmates often rely on both individual and collective strategies to endure imprisonment. These may include forming social bonds with fellow inmates, engaging in leisure activities such as reading, writing, or playing games, participating in religious or spiritual practices, and seeking emotional support through counselling or peer networks (Crewe, Hulley, & Wright, 2017; Zamble & Porporino, 1990). While some coping strategies are constructive and foster resilience, others, such as withdrawal, aggression, or denial, may exacerbate tensions and hinder rehabilitation.

**Table 6.31 Coping Strategy inside the prison**

| <b>Coping strategy</b>                           | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Chatting with inmates</b>                     | 35               | 24.8                  |
| <b>Reading and writing</b>                       | 19               | 13.5                  |
| <b>Physical exercise</b>                         | 2                | 1.4                   |
| <b>Card games/ Carrom board/ Chinese checker</b> | 20               | 14.2                  |
| <b>Playing guitar</b>                            | 5                | 3.5                   |



|                    |            |              |
|--------------------|------------|--------------|
| <b>Singing</b>     | 2          | 1.4          |
| <b>Watching TV</b> | 2          | 1.4          |
| <b>Others</b>      | 56         | 39.7         |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>141</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

Source: Field Survey

The importance of social interaction in the management of loneliness is highlighted by the fact that activities such as playing games (14.2%) and chatting with other inmates (24.8%) are among the most prevalent coping mechanisms. The majority, 39.7 per cent rely on others as a coping mechanism. Here, others include being alone without doing anything, sleeping, and even some respondents reported that they cry often when they are lonely. Very few inmates use physical exercise (1.4%), music (5%), or watching TV (1.4%) as coping methods. This could reflect limited access, lack of programming, or personal preference. There is a moderate engagement in reading and writing, 13.5%. This indicates a positive, reflective approach to coping and may suggest an area for expansion through improved access to books, journals, and writing materials. Others (39.7 %) are the ones who manage to have other means, like needing to babysit their children, engaged in weaving and tailoring assigned to them, and in charge of preparing meals. Others also include those who didn't have anything to say when it comes to coping mechanisms. These inmates prefer to be alone.

Respondent 55 stated:

*"I always sing and play the guitar when I feel sad and lonely. It uplifts my mood and motivates me to move on."*

Respondent 90 stated:

*"My best coping mechanism is attending counselling and Church service. I am closer to God after being in prison. Besides, I like to chat and mingle with my fellow inmates."*

Respondent 106 also added:

*“Playing cards, chatting with friends, and mingling with them helps me to forget that I am in prison. It is also exciting when we have visitors from outside and they organise a function for us.”*

However, Respondent 76 stated:

*“Nothing inside the prison soothes my loneliness and homesickness. I hate everything. I just want to be alone and be released as soon as possible.”*

The treatment of women prisoners by prison staff plays a central role in shaping their overall experience of incarceration. For many inmates, respectful and fair conduct from prison authorities provides a sense of dignity and security within an otherwise restrictive environment. Accounts from prisoners highlight that staff interactions often range from professional and empathetic to indifferent and discriminatory, reflecting the broader institutional culture and availability of resources. While many women report feeling satisfied with the care and attention they receive, others emphasize instances of differential treatment, often influenced by class and social background. These mixed experiences underscore the need for continued monitoring and improvement in staff-inmate relations to ensure fairness and accountability.

Equally important is the quality of relationships among inmates themselves. For many women, bonds formed inside prison serve as vital sources of emotional support, helping them to cope with loneliness, stress, and separation from family. Positive relationships can foster solidarity, mutual assistance, and even substitute for familial connections. At the same time, conflicts, mistrust, and exclusion are also present, particularly in environments marked by overcrowding, economic inequality, and histories of substance abuse. Such dynamics illustrate the dual role of peer relationships as both a buffer against isolation and a potential source of tension.

Communication among inmates emerges as another significant coping resource. The opportunity to talk, share experiences, and provide mutual comfort often functions as a form of informal therapy, easing the psychological burden of imprisonment. However, for some, overcrowding, lack of privacy, or personal preference for solitude can hinder such exchanges, leading to feelings of isolation.

Adjustment to prison life involves significant behavioural and emotional changes. Inmates frequently learn to adapt by modifying their habits, improving their communication skills, and finding ways to coexist peacefully within a controlled environment. While many display resilience and the ability to cope with challenges, issues such as discrimination, thoughts of escape, or intentions to reoffend highlight the limitations of current correctional measures. These factors indicate the ongoing need for effective rehabilitative programs, post-release planning, and equal treatment across all social groups within the prison.

The daily routine inside the prison reflects the institution's emphasis on discipline, structure, and order. Activities such as work assignments, religious devotion, exercise, and vocational training help maintain stability and promote rehabilitation. However, the absence of structured educational or recreational opportunities limits the potential for personal growth. Despite this, spiritual practices and vocational tasks offer some inmates meaning and purpose, while others find the rigid schedule challenging to adjust to.

Finally, coping strategies adopted by women prisoners highlight the diverse ways in which they navigate the hardships of incarceration. Engagement in religious practices, counselling, music, games, and social interaction often provides emotional relief and strengthens resilience. Yet, not all women find solace in these activities; for some, prison remains an isolating and distressing experience. Together, these experiences reflect the complexity of prison life, where dignity, relationships, adjustment, and coping strategies intertwine to shape women's journeys through incarceration.

#### **6.6. Availability of Institutional Facilities**

The availability of institutional facilities for female inmates and the ease with which they may be accessed are two of the most important factors in ensuring that they are treated with compassion and fostering rehabilitation. The incarceration of women in Mizoram, a state in which societal values are intricately entwined with community norms and traditional roles, not only poses a challenge to gender expectations but also calls for a nuanced approach to the administration of prisons (Baldry, 2010). The

provision of institutional amenities, which may include healthcare and counselling, as well as grievance redressal and vocational training, is therefore required in order to satisfy the specific requirements that are imposed upon institutionalized women.

There have been significant efforts to guarantee that inmates have access to fundamental amenities as well as psychosocial care. The presence of facilities that provide mental health care, opportunities for open communication, access to complaint procedures, and methods that do not discriminate against individuals is all indicative of progressive correctional strategies (UNODC, 2014). In addition to the management of the inmate population, the purpose of these institutional regulations is to establish an atmosphere that is conducive to personal reform, emotional stability, and reintegration after release (Prison Reform Trust, 2021). The lived experiences of women inmates often reflect both the strengths and limitations of the prison infrastructure.

This section explores the availability and accessibility of basic needs, availability of water supply, food sufficiency and nutritional value, availability of medical staff, enrolment in training programmes, enjoyment of training programmes and helpfulness of training programmes after released, skills acquired inside the prison, availability of counselling service, recreational activities provided to them, religious services available and financial support.

**Table 6.26 Availability of Institutional Facilities**

| <b>Facilities</b>                       | <b>Yes (%)</b> | <b>No (%)</b> |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------|---------------|
| <b>Basic needs</b>                      | 139 (98.6)     | 2 (1.4)       |
| <b>Accessibility</b>                    | 135 (95.7)     | 6 (4.3)       |
| <b>Water supply</b>                     | 130 (92.2)     | 11 (7.8)      |
| <b>Food Sufficiency</b>                 | 141 (100)      | 0 (0)         |
| <b>Nutritional value</b>                | 41 (29.1)      | 100(70.1)     |
| <b>Availability of medical staff</b>    | 135 (95.7)     | 6 (4.3)       |
| <b>Enrolment in training programmes</b> | 12 (8.5)       | 129 (91.5)    |
| <b>Skills acquired</b>                  | 17 (12.1)      | 124 (87.9)    |

|                                |                  |                  |
|--------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>Counselling</b>             | 141(100.0)       | 0 (0)            |
| <b>Recreational activities</b> | 39(27.7)         | 102 (72.3)       |
| <b>Religious service</b>       | 115(81.6)        | 26 (18.4)        |
| <b>Financial Support</b>       | <b>102(72.3)</b> | <b>39 (27.7)</b> |

Source: Field Survey

As shown in the table, regarding the basic needs and their accessibility, including the availability of basic needs, 139 (98.6%) of the respondents have access to basic needs, such as soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, and sanitary pads, which are sufficiently available to almost all respondents. The level of accessibility to these basic needs is also high, which is 135 (95.7%). Regarding water supply, 130 (92.2%) reported that it is sufficiently available to them. Regarding the basic needs, as far as the data suggests, the inmates seem to have no problem with them, and they are highly accessible and available. The small percentage who denies having access to those basic needs might have experienced it once in a while and not regularly, especially concerning the basic needs; they might be from an economically deprived background.

With regards to nutrition and food, 141 (100%) of the respondents stated that they received their meals regularly and on time. As stated by the Jailor, “They received thrice a meal per day, morning, afternoon, and evening regularly”. However, even though there is a regularity in the meals they received, the majority, 100 (70.1%), stated that the food provided to them does not have nutritional value. As stated by the cook, who is also one of the inmates, she said, “We usually eat rice, dal, potato, or any seasonal vegetables weekly, and we eat meat once a week, but the quality of food cannot be good since we are many, lunch consists of two rotis with black tea without any sugar”. The 41 (29.1%) inmates reported ‘yes’ to the nutritional value of food are the ones who just agree with whatever they received, and they did not expect much from it.

Healthcare services seem to be on a positive trend, as 135 (95.7%) of the inmates agree with the availability of medical staff regularly and on time. There is a medical check-up thrice a week, where one doctor and a nurse are available. The prison had

one permanent nurse available in the prison. Regarding counselling services, all 141 (100.0%) inmates had access to counselling services, which were provided three times a week; people from outside would visit them. Attending counselling classes is a free will for each inmate; no one is forced to attend. This is an encouraging sign for mental health support within the prison system.

The rate of enrolment in the training programme is alarmingly low, coming in at only 12 (8.5%), which indicates that there are few chances for educational or career advancement. The majority, 129 (91.5%), are not enrolled in any training programmes. There are limited opportunities for inmates since only two training programmes, i.e., Tailoring and Weaving, are available with limited seats. Since the option for training programme is limited, even among those who are enrolled, some of them are not enjoying it; they just attend it as they are assigned. Half of the respondents who are enrolled argue that the training programmes are not beneficial to them since they do not have proper equipment. Reflecting on the low rate of enrolment in training programmes, the skills acquired by the inmates are also relatively low, with only 17 (12.1%) reported to have acquired skills while they are inside the prison. The majority, 124 (87.9 %) inmates reported not acquiring any skills. As earlier discussed, the rate of enrolment is just 12 inmates, compared with the skills acquired by 17 inmates, in tailoring and weaving. It seems that a few inmates, 5 individuals to be exact, of the respondents have learned making baskets from used cigarette covers as well as crocheting handbags from their fellow inmates.

The participation or the level of involvement in recreational activities provided inside the prison is low, as reported by the inmates, which is only 39(27.7 %), and the majority, 102 (72.3%) inmates reported not being interested in the available recreational activities. This suggests a limited scope for physical or mental engagement during leisure. A regular church service is conducted every Sunday and sometimes even on Saturdays. This seems to be enjoyed and appreciated by the majority of respondents, especially the Sunday Church service is kept mandatory for all unless they are sick or they have small children to accompany. The majority, 102(72.3 %) inmates reported having financial support from their outside to buy their

basic needs; however, 39 (27.7 %) inmates have financial problems to even purchase their basic needs.

Basic living standards, adequate food provision, and mental health care (counselling) are given high priority within the prison setting. In addition, a significant number of medical and religious services are accessible, which is indicative of a well-structured support system. The quantity of food is sufficient, but the quality of the food (nutrition) continues to be a significant problem. The absence of rehabilitation and skill-building facilities is considerable, which might make it more difficult for formerly incarcerated individuals to re-enter society and find jobs.

Those who are incarcerated may experience mental distress or boredom as a result of inadequate recreational opportunities.

#### **6.6.1 Availability of meals, medical checkups, and worship services.**

Access to fundamental amenities, such as regular meals, medical attention, and the opportunity to participate in spiritual or religious practices, is a significant indicator of the quality of institutional care that is provided in correctional facilities (UNODC, 2014). These programs are not only necessary for the women who are incarcerated in Mizoram, but they are also fundamental to their dignity, rehabilitation, and human rights (National Crime Records Bureau [NCRB], 2023). Many of these women are emotionally vulnerable, face social stigma, and struggle with health issues (Covington & Bloom, 2006).

The quantity and quality of meals that are supplied to inmates are essential indicators of the living conditions within the jail as well as the overall care that is provided by the institution (Baldry, 2010). Access to medical care is an essential component of prison welfare, particularly for female inmates who may enter the system with untreated mental or physical health concerns (Prison Reform Trust, 2021). Additionally, one of the most significant aspects of adjusting to a new environment and managing emotions is spiritual well-being (Lalthansangi, 2019).

All 141 (100%) respondents reported receiving three meals a day, three medical check-ups per week, and one worship service per week. Apart from the mandatory

once-a-week worship service on Sundays, worship services are also available on Saturdays for those who wish to attend. This demonstrates that complete conformity with the institution's norms has been achieved regarding the provision of food, healthcare, and religious services within the institutional setting. With relation to these fundamental requirements, the uniformity is also indicative of the standardization of services and possibly a well-maintained administrative structure within the prison facility.

### 6.6.2 Most beneficial activity

To gain a meaningful understanding of what contributes meaningfully to the rehabilitation, emotional well-being, and adjustment of women who are incarcerated, it is vital to identify the activity that brings the most benefits to female inmates. There are a number of activities that are provided by the institution in the context of Mizoram's prison system, which is an effort to humanize the experience of being incarcerated (National Crime Records Bureau [NCRB], 2023). Vocational training, religious services, counselling, utilization of leisure time, and recreational possibilities are some examples of what fall under this category (UNODC, 2014).

**Table 6.27 Most beneficial activity**

| Activities                   | Frequency  | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------|------------|----------------|
| Vocational activities        | 4          | 2.8            |
| Leisure time                 | 15         | 10.6           |
| Church Services              | 43         | 30.5           |
| Counselling                  | 14         | 9.9            |
| Church service & Counselling | 65         | 46.1           |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>141</b> | <b>100.0</b>   |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in the table, for almost half of the respondents, 65 (46.1%), the combination of spiritual (Church Services) and psychological (Counselling) is the most beneficial activity available to them. When it comes to coping with



incarceration, this highlights the linked role that faith and emotional healing play throughout the process. The relevance of religious practice was stressed by a sizeable proportion, 43 (30.5%) of the inmates, who pointed to the function that it plays in providing support, identity, and opportunities for moral reflection. Although the combined effect of psychological support and church services is more valuable, the impact of psychological support in the form of counselling alone is only somewhat significant. 15 (10.6%) reported leisure time to be the most beneficial activity available to them. This indicates that the unstructured personal time is meaningful, possibly offering freedom to them from the rigid prison routine. Those who opt for vocational activity 4 (2.8%) are low, likely due to limited access and opportunities, as stated in the previous findings.

Respondent 99 stated:

*“I benefited the most from the counselling sessions, which are available three times a week. It calms me down as I can share my deepest thoughts, which is not possible inside the Ward as there is no privacy.”*

Respondent 102 also added:

*“I enjoyed the most when we have visitors from outside on Sunday Church service, especially when Gospel artists accompany them and we can listen to beautiful songs.”*

### **6.6.3 Number of counselling sessions attended**

When it comes to addressing the emotional, psychological, and behavioural difficulties that women in prison need to deal with, counselling is an extremely important component. The stability of mental health, the rehabilitation from trauma, and the preparedness for reintegration into society following release can all be considerably aided by regular counselling sessions (Covington & Bloom, 2006; Tripathi & Yadav, 2018). Counselling interventions not only help inmates process feelings of guilt, isolation, and anxiety but also foster positive coping mechanisms and self-awareness, which are essential for successful rehabilitation (UNODC,

2014). In the context of India, the inclusion of psychological and social counselling within prison settings has shown to improve inmates' emotional resilience and readiness to reintegrate into their families and communities (National Crime Records Bureau [NCRB], 2023).

**Table 6.28 Number of counselling sessions attended**

| <b>Counselling sessions attended</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Once a week</b>                   | 41               | 29.1                  |
| <b>Twice a week</b>                  | 23               | 16.3                  |
| <b>Thrice a week</b>                 | 17               | 12.1                  |
| <b>Occasionally</b>                  | 47               | 33.3                  |
| <b>Never</b>                         | 13               | 9.2                   |
| <b>Total</b>                         | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As indicated in the table, the highest percentage of respondents is 47 (33.3%) who attended counselling services irregularly, when they needed to. The fact that a sizeable portion of the inmates, 41 (29.1%), receive counselling once a week, that is both moderate and consistent, suggests that roughly one-third of them are regularly engaged in mental health activities. There is a limited amount of intensive counselling coverage, as evidenced by the fact that three times a week, 17 (12.1%), and twice a week, 23 (16.3%), account for less than a third of the total. Remarkably, 13 (9.2%) inmates have indicated that they have never attended any of the sessions, which may be an indication of exclusion or personal reluctance.

However, the majority of the inmates (90.8%) have received at least some counselling, showing a wide coverage, but with significant variation in frequency. Given the high percentage of participants who only participate sometimes, it is clear that counselling schedules should be standardized and regular engagement should be ensured. Counselling services are one of the few rehabilitation services provided to them. The limited availability of resources, such as the number of counsellors, or the prioritization of inmates depending on their needs, may be the cause of the low frequency of intense counselling.

Respondent 47 stated:

*“My sister and I regularly attended counselling sessions. It heals our souls, and it is only because of these sessions that we can survive the prison. Even now, some inmates are talking behind our backs as we have never missed counselling sessions.”*

#### **6.6.4 Recreational activities available**

Inmates' participation in recreational activities in prison is more than just a means of passing the time; these activities also play an important part in improving emotional well-being, developing social contact, and supporting mental health issues (Johnson & Toch, 2011; Tripathi & Yadav, 2018). Women who are incarcerated can benefit from having access to activities like these because they help them break the monotony of their confinement, relieve stress, and establish a feeling of function and purpose (UNODC, 2014). The recreational activities taken up by the inmates will vary based on the personality of the inmates and the wards they are assigned to (NCRB, 2023).

All the inmates (100%) have access to a variety of recreational activities such as religious activities, reading books, playing cards/carrom board /chinese checker, telephoning families, watching television., which suggests that the facility provides the same service to all of its inmates. The recreational activities offered to them are basic and diverse. Religious services that they have on Sundays and occasionally on Saturdays provide emotional and spiritual support. Reading books contributes to mental engagement and self-improvement. Board games provided to them will help them to interact with inmates and also act as a stress reliever. Telephoning families also helps them to interact with the outside world, and it strengthens their emotional well-being. Watching television entertains them and is a good source of news updates.

Although all these recreational activities are provided to them, the maintenance and availability differ. Television is available only in 3 wards, among which only 1 television is in good condition. These televisions are donated by individuals from outside and are not purchased within the prison administration. The time for

telephoning their families is also complained about by many inmates, as they only have 3-5 minutes to talk, and the phone they are using is outdated, they usually have issues of improper signal, no privacy at all, as they are all surrounded by their fellow inmates waiting for their turn. They are even charged Rs 10 per minute for their phone calls. Reading books, particularly the Holy Bible, is common among the inmates. Even though they are allowed to have books inside, only a few have them. Reading books is not a common practice inside the prison. Even though they have a library, it is not functional.

### 6.6.5 Skills acquired

A significant contribution to the empowerment of female inmates, the facilitation of their rehabilitation, and the enhancement of their prospects of successfully reintegrating into society after release is the development of skills within the confines of the correctional facility itself (UNODC, 2014). One of the goals of the many programs that are offered in correctional institutions is to provide offenders with the vocational and life skills that will help them become more self-sufficient, confident, and economically independent (Covington & Bloom, 2006; Tripathi & Yadav, 2018). The activities for skill development provided by this correctional institution include weaving and tailoring, which are outsourced from voluntary clubs like the Rotary Club.

**Table 6.29 Skills acquired**

| <b>Skills acquired</b>    | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Weaving</b>            | 3                | 2.1                   |
| <b>Tailoring</b>          | 5                | 3.5                   |
| <b>No skills acquired</b> | 120              | 85.1                  |
| <b>Others</b>             | 13               | 9.2                   |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

The majority, 120 (85.1%), reported that they have not acquired any skills after they were in prison. This is a critical finding, as there is an absence of meaningful skill-based rehabilitation for over 85 per cent of the inmates. It also reflects a major gap in

the prison's rehabilitative framework. As the development of skills is critical for achieving social reintegration, economic independence, and lowering the rate of recidivism. The percentage of inmates involved in tailoring and weaving combined is just 5.6 per cent which is low compared to the number of inmates. The other 13 (9.2%) include inmates who have acquired skills from their cellmates inside the prison. The skills include handicrafts like making a basket out of a cigarette cover, making a bracelet using yarn, and crocheting handbags. These skills are not the ones provided by the institution. They were initiated by the inmates themselves.

Respondent 71 stated:

*“There is nothing to learn from here. Weaving and tailoring centres are available for namesakes. Seats are limited and we usually don't want to enrol ourselves.”*

Respondent 98 also stated:

*“It would be appreciated if we could have more vocational activities inside the prison. More than 200 women spent the whole day doing nothing much. Since we didn't learn or gain new things from here, it's easy to get back to selling drugs.”*

Respondent 1 further commented:

*“If there could be at least one vocational programme for skill development. Many inmates will benefitted from it. Majority are here due to selling drugs as it is our main source of earning a living. If we could be out from here with a skill to start a living. We could have not fallen back into selling drugs.”*

#### **6.6.7 Utilization of leisure time**

The psychological well-being, emotional adjustment, and rehabilitation process of incarcerated women are all significantly impacted by leisure time, even though it is frequently restricted in situations where the prison environment is structured (Crewe, 2011). These activities assist in reducing stress, encourage social bonding, and promote personal growth (UNODC, 2014). Recreational and leisure activities such as

reading, prayer, group discussions, and cultural participation provide mental relief from monotony and emotional distress, fostering resilience and a sense of normalcy (Bartels & Easteal, 2013). Moreover, these activities serve as informal therapeutic outlets that strengthen coping mechanisms and improve inmates' readiness for reintegration after release (Ghosh, 2020). In the women's prisons of Mizoram, inmates participate in a wide range of activities during their leisure time. These activities assist in reducing stress, encourage social bonding, and promote personal growth.

**Table 6.30 Utilization of leisure time**

| <b>Utilization of leisure time</b>                                                                        | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Sleeping, Chatting with inmates, Playing cards, carrom board/ Chinese checker, Reading and Writing</b> | 116              | 82.3                  |
| <b>Others</b>                                                                                             | 25               | 17.7                  |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                                              | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

The majority of the respondents 82.3 per cent are engaged in leisure activities such as sleeping, chatting with inmates, playing cards, carrom board/ Chinese checker, reading and writing. It may be deduced from this that a sizeable majority of inmates rely on social interaction and activities that are either passive or semi-active in order to deal with their surroundings and entertain themselves during their spare time. Even though sleeping might not be considered as an activity, it is crucial for the inmates to mention it. The fact that they give preference to sleeping could indicate the lack of recreational activities inside the prison. Even though there is a playground at the end of the prison campus, they are hardly allowed to utilize it. However, 17.7 per cent of the inmates are either engaged in vocational programmes like tailoring or weaving the whole day, or they are assigned to the kitchen to do cooking. If they are engaged in such activities, they don't have much leisure time. The others also include

those inmates who are engaged in handicrafts like crochet, making bracelets, and baskets.

#### 6.6.8 Quality of infrastructural facilities

One of the most important factors in ensuring that inmates are able to live in conditions that are dignified, safe, and hygienic is the quality of the infrastructure amenities that are present in prisons (UNODC, 2014). If a woman is incarcerated, the infrastructure of the prison has a direct impact on her physical health, mental well-being, and her capacity to participate in rehabilitation programs (Bartels & Easteal, 2013). Inadequate sanitation, overcrowding, poor ventilation, and limited access to clean water or menstrual hygiene products can exacerbate health problems and heighten psychological distress (Penal Reform International, 2022). Despite the fact that the state's correctional authorities have made attempts to uphold fundamental norms, there are still a number of obstacles to overcome to fulfil the requirements of a gender-sensitive correctional system (Balfour & Comack, 2014).

**Table 6.31 Quality of infrastructural facilities**

| <b>Quality of Infrastructural facilities</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Good</b>                                  | 37               | 26.2                  |
| <b>Bad</b>                                   | 104              | 73.8                  |
| <b>Total</b>                                 | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

As shown in the table, almost three-quarters 104, 73.8 per cent of the inmates gave the infrastructure a rating of “bad,” indicating that there were significant inadequacies in the physical conditions of the prison. The main problem they encounter is the problem of overcrowding. They are put in a room where there is no proper place for their belongings. They hang their bedsheets on the railings of the windows and use them as a place to store their clothes. Only a few spaces are left for each one of them for their sleeping area; it is congested, and there is no personal space, especially for inmates who are accompanied by their children. More than 30 inmates even share a single bathroom. It is possible that the inmates' health, hygiene,

and overall well-being would be negatively impacted by the inadequate infrastructure.

Respondent 8 stated:

*“More than 30 women need to share a single toilet. I hope you could understand our situation. At least 2-3 people have to take a bath together; if not, there is no time for us.”*

Respondent 28 stated:

*“I used to take bath when someone was in the toilet doing their business; if not, there is no time. Besides, there is no proper place to store our belongings. It’s overcrowded and everything is cluttered inside our Ward.”*

Respondent 75 stated:

*“I wish we could have a volleyball court or a Basketball court. There is physical activity inside the prison. Besides, all rooms are overcrowded and we have to share everything. There is no privacy or space. It’s overwhelming, especially during summer.”*

#### **6.6.9 The average monthly expenditure in the prison per person**

In order to evaluate the manner in which financial resources are distributed for the basic requirements, welfare, and rehabilitation of women inmates in Mizoram, it is essential to have a solid understanding of the average monthly expenditures that are incurred by each inmate. The dedication of the government to sustaining standards of life, healthcare, nourishment, security, and institutional support within correctional facilities is shown in this spending, which highlights the government’s commitment as well as the socio-economic background of the inmates (UNODC, 2014). In the context of Mizoram, where socio-economic limitations intersect with limited correctional funding, understanding expenditure patterns offers insight into both administrative priorities and the lived realities of inmates (National Crime Records Bureau [NCRB], 2022). Thus, the analysis of average monthly inmate expenditures



provides a critical framework for assessing how correctional systems translate policy commitments into tangible welfare and rehabilitation outcomes.

**Table 6.32 The average monthly expenditure in the prison per person**

| <b>Average monthly expenditure per person</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>less than 3000</b>                         | 104              | 73.8                  |
| <b>3000-5000</b>                              | 27               | 19.1                  |
| <b>5000-7000</b>                              | 4                | 2.8                   |
| <b>7000-10000</b>                             | 6                | 4.3                   |
| <b>Total</b>                                  | <b>141</b>       | <b>100.0</b>          |

Source: Field Survey

The inmates are allowed to have a personal account inside the prison, which is maintained by the Jailor of the prison. This account is mainly for the inmates to buy their personal needs. It is not mandatory, but a necessity for all the inmates. The amount of money depends on the financial situation of each inmate; there is no limit to it. Once a week, there is a time to buy their needs and wants, which they can pre-order beforehand, and they deduct it from the money they deposited. As indicated in the table, the majority of inmates, 104, 73.8 per cent monthly expenditure is less than Rs 3000. Some of the inmates didn't even have balance in their account. They have to borrow it from their inmates or even some inmates who are financially well to do used to order it for others who are in need. This monthly expenditure clearly shows the harsh reality of their financial situation which is low. This situation also suggests that most of the inmates are from low socio-economic background as previously stated in chapter IV.

Respondent 31 stated:

*“Since I didn't have any relatives to visit me, I never spent much money here. I live off of others who are willing to donate to me. I didn't have any money.”*

Respondent 61 also stated:

*“We didn’t need much money here. We can survive on a small amount.  
I didn’t have any money to spend at all, but I can survive till today.”*

The availability of institutional facilities for women inmates plays a crucial role in shaping their daily lives, emotional well-being, and prospects for rehabilitation. Most inmates reported that their basic needs, such as toiletries and sanitary supplies, were sufficiently provided and accessible. Water supply was generally available, and meals were served regularly and on time, ensuring food sufficiency. However, the nutritional quality of the meals was considered inadequate, as the diet largely consisted of rice, dal, and seasonal vegetables, with meat provided only occasionally.

Healthcare services were relatively reliable, with medical staff visiting regularly and routine check-ups being conducted. Counselling services were also widely accessible, offered multiple times a week by visiting professionals, and many inmates found them particularly beneficial for their mental and emotional health. Religious services, especially Sunday church gatherings, were another important source of comfort and spiritual strength.

Despite these positive aspects, significant challenges remain. Opportunities for vocational training and skill development were very limited, with only a few inmates gaining access to tailoring or weaving programmes. Some inmates learned small handicrafts informally from their peers, but overall, the absence of structured skill-building programmes left most women without meaningful opportunities for rehabilitation or future employment. Recreational activities were also minimal, and many inmates expressed boredom and lack of engagement during their leisure time.

Infrastructure was another area of concern. The prison environment was marked by overcrowding, lack of personal space, and inadequate facilities, with multiple women often sharing a single bathroom. These conditions negatively affected hygiene, privacy, and overall well-being. Financially, most inmates came from disadvantaged backgrounds and had very limited means to spend on personal needs. Some had no financial support at all and survived with the help of fellow inmates.

Overall, while basic needs, food supply, healthcare, counselling, and religious services were fairly well provided, the prison system faced major gaps in

infrastructure, nutrition, skill development, and recreational opportunities. These shortcomings restricted the rehabilitative potential of incarceration and often left inmates vulnerable to boredom, poor health, and difficulties in reintegration after release.

### **6.7. Post-release plan and Suggestions**

The process of reintegration into society after incarceration represents one of the most challenging phases in the lives of women prisoners. Unlike men, women often face compounded barriers upon release, including social stigma, fractured family relationships, economic instability, and limited employment opportunities (Bloom, Owen, & Covington, 2004). In contexts such as Mizoram, where women traditionally hold significant familial and communal roles, the disruption caused by imprisonment further complicates their return to social life. Therefore, developing a comprehensive post-release plan tailored to the specific needs of female inmates is crucial.

Such plans not only address basic requirements such as housing, healthcare, and livelihood but also emphasize psychosocial rehabilitation, skill development, and restoration of family ties. Post-release support acts as a safeguard against recidivism by equipping women with coping strategies and access to resources that facilitate their reintegration (Graffam, Shinkfield, & Hardcastle, 2008). In addition, culturally sensitive suggestions that consider local values and gender roles enhance the effectiveness of re-entry programs. By prioritizing rehabilitation over punishment, correctional systems can ensure that women inmates transition into productive community members, thereby reducing the cycle of incarceration.

Respondent 33 stated:

*“I want to change my life and lead a normal life after I am out of prison. I don’t want to repeat and be here again. I realized that I have not taken proper care of my family and children. After being released, I will spend as much time as possible with my family.”*

Respondent 43 also stated:

*“I will never involve myself in selling drugs again. I didn’t want to end up here anymore. After being released, I will open a new business and will try to lead a normal life.”*

Respondent 108 commented:

*“I am fortunate to be born again here in prison. After being released, I will spread the Gospel as much as I can and follow the Gospel Team. I will also spend more time with my family. I just realized the worth and importance of family when they are far away from me.”*

However, Respondent 12 stated:

*“I don’t have any plan. My life is pointless; I didn’t have any money to start a living. I didn’t have any relatives to rely on.”*

Respondent 103 also stated:

*“I will just go with the flow after being released. I can’t plan anything. My mind is always blank and worried; I just want to go home”.*

### **6.7.1 Suggestions**

The testimonies of women prisoners in Mizoram highlight both aspirations for transformation and the obstacles that hinder successful reintegration. While many express a strong desire to reform, reunite with their families, and contribute positively to society, others reveal feelings of hopelessness, financial insecurity, and lack of support. To address these challenges, the following suggestions are proposed:

1. **Strengthen Family Reintegration Programs:** Regular family counselling and visitation schemes should be expanded to rebuild relationships and reduce emotional strain. Special programs for mothers and children can help restore bonds and minimize the long-term impact of separation.
2. **Provide Vocational and Skill Development Opportunities:** Structured vocational training in prison, combined with post-release employment support, is essential. Skill-building in areas such as tailoring, handicrafts,

agriculture, and small-scale entrepreneurship can provide sustainable livelihoods and reduce economic vulnerability upon release.

3. **Ensure Access to Mental Health and Counselling Services:** Many inmates struggle with trauma, substance abuse, and psychological distress. Strengthened mental health care, including addiction recovery and continuous post-release counselling, can provide stability and prevent relapse into criminal behaviour.
4. **Facilitate Community-Based Support Networks:** Partnerships with NGOs, churches, and local community groups can create safety nets for released women. Community awareness campaigns are also needed to reduce stigma and foster acceptance of former inmates.
5. **Develop Post-Release Housing and Financial Assistance Schemes:** For women without families or financial resources, transitional homes and small-scale financial assistance programs (such as microcredit loans) are necessary to prevent homelessness and empower economic independence.
6. **Promote Faith-Based and Peer Support Programs:** Many inmates draw strength from religious practices and peer solidarity. Facilitating structured faith-based programs and peer mentoring groups can nurture resilience, instill hope, and guide positive lifestyle choices.
7. **Policy-Level Reforms and Monitoring:** Authorities should prioritize gender-sensitive re-entry policies, including monitoring mechanisms to ensure fair treatment, accountability, and the continuity of rehabilitative support beyond prison walls.

By combining institutional support, family and community involvement, and policy reforms, the reintegration process for women prisoners in Mizoram can be strengthened. A comprehensive, culturally sensitive post-release plan not only empowers individual transformation but also reduces the cycle of recidivism, thereby benefiting families and society as a whole. (Bloom, Owen, & Covington, 2004; Graffam, Shinkfield, & Hardcastle, 2008).

## 6.8 Overview

**Positive/Negative Effects of Incarceration:** Incarceration for women in Mizoram yields both positive and negative outcomes. Positively, it fosters sobriety, spiritual growth, and temporary safety from abuse. Negatively, it causes stigma, isolation, mental distress, and emotional abuse. Family support emerges as critical, though many women receive irregular or no visits, and stigma remains a hidden issue. While imprisonment can encourage self-reflection and change, systemic gaps in mental health care, community support, and prison safety undermine its rehabilitative potential.

**Effect of Imprisonment on Families:** Families of incarcerated women endure deep disruptions. Children face trauma, instability, and separation, while husbands and parents struggle with financial, emotional, and social burdens. Relatives, especially grandparents, often shoulder caregiving responsibilities but may also experience stigma. Family visits provide hope yet remain limited due to financial and logistical barriers. Beyond the prison, families encounter economic hardship, social rejection, and in some cases, relocation. Thus, women's imprisonment destabilizes family structures and perpetuates cycles of exclusion.

**Physical and Mental Health:** Prison life for women is marked by monotony, emotional deprivation, and strained social relations. Mothers raising children face unique challenges. Some report improved health due to structure and absence of substance abuse, but many experience decline due to poor nutrition and inadequate medical care. Mental health concerns are significant, shaped by loneliness and a lack of meaningful activities. Overall, incarceration reflects and reinforces health inequalities, with long-lasting effects beyond release.

**Treatment by Prison Staff and Peer Relations:** Interactions with prison staff range from respectful and supportive to indifferent or discriminatory, often influenced by institutional culture and social background. Relationships among inmates serve as vital coping mechanisms, offering solidarity, comfort, and informal therapy, though conflicts and mistrust also persist. Adjustment involves behavioural adaptation and resilience but is hampered by overcrowding, discrimination, and lack of

opportunities. While religious practices and routines provide some stability, structural deficiencies limit true rehabilitation.

**Availability of Institutional Facilities:** Basic needs like food, toiletries, healthcare, counselling, and religious services are adequately provided. However, significant gaps remain in nutrition, vocational training, recreational opportunities, and infrastructure. Overcrowding, poor hygiene facilities, and lack of structured skill-building leave women vulnerable to boredom, poor health, and limited reintegration prospects. Financial constraints further exacerbate their hardships, particularly for those without family support.

**Post-Release Plan and Suggestions:** Reintegration after imprisonment is particularly challenging for women due to stigma, family disruption, and economic insecurity. While some inmates express determination to reform, reunite with families, and engage in meaningful work or faith-based activities, others feel hopeless due to a lack of resources and support. Effective reintegration requires housing, healthcare, livelihood opportunities, counselling, family restoration, and community acceptance. A culturally sensitive, gender-responsive post-release plan can break the cycle of recidivism and enable women to re-enter society as productive members.

In summary, the experiences of incarcerated women in Mizoram reveal a complex interplay of personal transformation, family disruption, and systemic shortcomings. While imprisonment can bring sobriety, spiritual growth, and opportunities for reflection, it also inflicts stigma, isolation, and psychological strain, with families, particularly children and elderly parents, bearing significant emotional and economic burdens. The prison environment provides for basic needs but is marked by poor nutrition, overcrowding, limited vocational training, and inadequate health care, which collectively restrict genuine rehabilitation. Relationships with staff and fellow inmates play dual roles as sources of support and tension, highlighting the fragile balance of adjustment within confinement. Post-release, women face compounded barriers of social rejection, economic instability, and fractured family ties, leaving many vulnerable to hopelessness. Therefore, a comprehensive, gender-sensitive

reintegration framework encompassing housing, healthcare, counselling, skill development, and community acceptance is essential to transform incarceration from a cycle of exclusion into a pathway for renewal and social reintegration.

## **6.10 Some Case Studies**

### **Case study Number - 6.1**

Schedule no- 140

Age- 38

Ward No- UTP Ward 7

Duration of imprisonment- 28<sup>th</sup> Dec 2022- April 2023 & 13<sup>th</sup> June, 2023 till date

Type of offence- Attempt to murder IPC '308'

Mother's Occupation- Health Worker pension

Father's Occupation- Blacksmith

No. of siblings- 12, first 4 siblings are father's children to the first wife.

The inmate used to live in Saitual village, where she was born, settled in this village for 3 years, and then migrated to Buhban village, where they permanently settled. She spent her childhood in Buhban where she attended her schooling till class X. She could not continue her studies since they lived in a village and education was not a priority during her time. She is the 8<sup>th</sup> born child in her family. She said, "I am the only one among our immediate family who engaged in alcohol addiction; my siblings often scolded me. If my father were still alive, he would be brokenhearted." The rest of her siblings have married and have settled into families. Unfortunately, two of her siblings have passed away. She used to attend Sunday School regularly during her childhood, and she is also a regular church attendee. Her family environment and her upbringing seem to be normal and fine; her income and business are also stable, and as of now, she manages to take care of her family on her own.



Since she quit her studies, she went to Aizawl to live with her sister's family and got married to her late husband in 2006. They have three children, i.e., 18 years old, studied till class X, and got married, 18 years old. They have one child named Ngurthanpuia, who is 3 months old. Her second child is Lalrinkimi; she is currently studying in class 7. Since she is in prison, her younger daughter lives with her parents in Buhban, and she can continue her studies there. Her husband passed away in 2016. He was a taxi driver, and he was also an alcoholic. He passed away mainly because of his complications due to alcohol addiction. He is an only son, but they used to live separately in a rented house at Aizawl Venglai. During her marriage, she used to be a Secretary at the Women's Group in the Salvation Army. She always tried her best to take care of her children despite her husband being an addict. Even though her late husband was an addict, she was never a victim of domestic abuse.

After her husband passed away in 2016, she was left with Rs. 3200/- only. She struggled a lot as she had children to take care. In 2017, she started engaging in all sorts of business; she owned a taxi, lent money to others with interest, commissioned land with interest, and also started a compost pit disposal business. She works day and night to feed her children as much as possible. Sometimes, she has to leave home early in the morning and reach home late at night. Thinking back to those days, she said, "We never had a proper meal to eat, and were extremely spendthrift. I never have quality time with my children". With all the struggles in life, she managed to handle her finances, and now she has two houses at Zuangtui and Falkawn. She owned a scooter, a taxi, and a private car.

She started drinking alcohol regularly in 2022; from this moment, her life changed. She had a boyfriend and they lived together in her house without getting married. Her boyfriend also regularly drinks alcohol. That morning, she and her boyfriend got drunk and they argued, he yelled at her saying "I am going to kill you", he then took a knife and pointed towards her, but since he is too drunk, he couldn't control himself, so in self-defense she hurt him with the knife in his left arm, it was bleeding and he ran away immediately. They took him to the hospital, but it seems the injury was not that severe, she said that the next day he could drive around with a scooter. Her boyfriend's mother filed an FIR on the day itself. She said that this was the only

time they got physical while they were together. She was arrested on 28<sup>th</sup> Dec, 2022, till April 2023, her friend bailed her out, and she was released. Unfortunately, her friend withdrew her bail as they have some issues; it seems her friend was jealous of her as she is in love with her, but she denied. Then she went back to jail on 13<sup>th</sup> June, 2023.

It seems that her boyfriend's family tried to withdraw her case, but she went to them and sought forgiveness. But she denied saying that if they tried to withdraw the case, they should not have filed a case before. She was mad about them, and now her only hope is to wait for her trial and hope for release. She has diabetes, but this did not create many problems inside the jail. Her biggest regret in life so far is being together with her boyfriend, because of which she is in jail right now. She completely blamed her boyfriend's family, who filed an FIR for her being in prison. She said it's hard for me to forgive them right now. "My daughter just married while I was out in jail, and I can't even be with my 3-month-old grandson". They have to manage life by themselves.

Her life in jail was horrible, she said "There is no good inside the jail, we feel that we are all bad people and I didn't see anyone trying to change their life, I have learnt so many bad habits and thinking from here, I learn to be more stubborn, my thrust for drinking alcohol is increasing every day inside the jail, I can't make up my mind to be a good person from inside, it ruins my whole life". Despite all this, her health condition seems to be normal; she hasn't faced any sort of abuse inside the jail, but she didn't have the energy to attend counselling classes. Her new boyfriend used to visit her on request. Her children suffer the most while she is in prison; the younger child has to be with her grandmother at Buhban. The older children who recently got married can manage the household; she hasn't had any financial problems till now. She can adjust to the daily routine; she just sits and chats with inmates and plays cards inside the prison. Gossiping seems to be common inside the prison, because they have to switch rooms. They received rations regularly, and medical services can be availed if needed, but she has not acquired any skills from the jail. She has not benefited from the activities inside the jail. She has not experienced anything good or exciting inside the jail. She said, "We are like wild animals put together". Their main

problem right now is overcrowding; more than 30 inmates have to share one bathroom, no personal space, and they just have a small space to sleep. After being released, she plans to take care of her family and pray more.

### **Case study number- 2**

Schedule No- 3

Age- 32

Ward No- I Ward- A

Duration of imprisonment- From 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2022

Type of offence- ND&PS 'C' (codeine 33 bottles)

Convict R.I , Sentence- 10 years

Mother's Occupation- Housewife

Father's Occupation- Middle school teacher's pensioner

No. of siblings- 6, all female, and now they are all married and have settled.

Both parents took care of her sister's children along with her sister, as their father had passed away.

The inmate was caught selling codeine for the first time in 2018 and was on bail due to medical reasons. After being selected for the case study, she revealed that she was caught for the second time in 2019, again due to selling codeine. It was only after the case study that I realized she was not a first-timer. Now she has been convicted for 10 years, and the trial period was from 2018-2022.

She was born and brought up in Zawlnuam village. She stayed at Zawlnuam till 2005; in 2005, she joined her sister at Khatla, Aizawl. She studied till class 9 at Zawlnuam, attended classes -10 to class 12 at Aizawl. She joined BA 1<sup>st</sup> year, but since she is not interested in studying, she got married while she was in her 1<sup>st</sup> year of BA. She had a normal childhood, attended Sunday school regularly, and her parents are supportive of her studies as well. In 2011, she got married while she was in her 1<sup>st</sup> year of BA, after which she quit her studies. All her siblings and parents are

free from drugs and alcohol, she said, “I am the only problem in our family; everyone is free from drugs and alcohol”.

After getting married, she and her husband are on good terms at the beginning, and her husband is from Zawlnuam village itself; they have two sons who are at present 12 and 10 years old. In 2015, 4 years after their marriage, they divorced for while which ruined her life according to her, she left her husband from Zawlnuam and settled at Bungkawn, Aizawl in a rented house, and her in-laws didn't allow her to take her children with her, this situation left her in grave loneliness, that's when she started addicting to codeine since she has no proper job, she started selling codeine as well. According to her, the reason for their divorce is due to domestic violence from her husband. She said that her husband is not addicted to any drugs or alcohol, but even when they have the slightest argument, he used to physically attack her, and that's why they divorced. They were separated for 2 years. After they were together, her husband never physically abused her again. But during those times, she was addicted to it and she couldn't stop it, even her husband knew it, but couldn't stop her from it, as they needed money as both didn't have proper jobs, and in the end, she was caught.

Now, her husband works as a teacher under SSA, and he looks after their two children with the help of her in-laws at Zawlnuam. Since her husband's family is a reputed family at Zawlnuam, no one knew that she was now in prison, even her children didn't know about it, they used to tell them that her mother was out of the station. Her children are safe and are under proper care and maintenance. Her husband used to visit him whenever he had free time, and they sent her money and her needs regularly. They recently appealed her case to the High Court, and she hopes for a positive response. Her husband's family is doing their best for her to get out of prison.

Her biggest regret in life is the reason for her being in prison right now; she misses her children, but they didn't allow her to talk much to them, since they are afraid that they might know the truth. She showed me a photo of her family and her children, and I could see happiness in her face while looking at the picture. She said she would

never indulge in such activity anymore, and she wished that her sentences could be reduced. She tried for a special interview with her husband and hopes they will permit her soon. At present, her relationship with her husband is good, and her family does their best to support her.

Since she is imprisoned for just a month while being interviewed, she has nothing much to say about management inside the prison. She wished to have a proper playground inside the prison to cope with their loneliness. The worship services organized inside the prison are also helpful to her. The main thing that bothers her is her 10 years of sentencing and the longing for her family, especially her children and husband.

### **Case study number- 3**

Schedule no- 8

Age- 50

Ward No- I Ward A

Duration of imprisonment- 15 years convicted from 8<sup>th</sup> Jan, 2017

Type of offence- ND&PS, 21 'C'

The respondent is from Zokhawthar, Champhai. Her father, 85 years old, is still alive, and he is a Church elder; her mother passed away in 2014. There are 8 siblings, and all are still alive and well. One of her brothers is also a Church elder. Since childhood, they have been raised in a good Christian family. She said, "I am the only black sheep in our family. My mother also used to be aware of me when she was alive, all my siblings and family members are angry and frustrated with my situation right now". They are Baptist denominations, and she studied till class IV. She quit studying because of poverty, and also, during her time, education was not a priority in her village.

She got married at the age of 21 years old at Zokhawthar, her husband was a manual labourer. They got separated after 6 years of marriage when she was only 27 years old. They have three children, 1 male and 2 female, while they are separated, her

youngest child was only 1 year old. The main reason for their divorce was due to her husband's jealous mindset, and she is also a victim of domestic abuse. After 2 years, she got married for the second time to a manual labourer from their village. They married for 10 years, and they again got separated. She said it was a difficult marriage since she already had 3 children with her, and her husband was also an alcoholic. Again, she is a victim of domestic violence in her second marriage as well. Her second husband is already remarried, and he is still alive.

At present, they live in a rented house at Zokhawthar, paying rent of Rs 3000 per month. Her son is now 28 years old, and he is working as a private driver. Her two daughters are now 31 and 26 years old, both are married, and have separate families with two children each. She currently lives with her son, since she is in prison, her son lives alone in their rented house at Zokhawthar. She used to earn a living from supplying grocery items from Zokhawthar to Aizawl. Since their family only consists of 2 members, and her son is also earning a little money, they can manage a normal living standard.

The main reason for her involvement in drug trafficking is her greed. She owns a small piece of land at Zokhawthar from her father, and she wants to build a house of their own. Since their income is not sufficient to build a house, she took a risk once and smuggled 40 blocks of heroin along with her grocery items for sale at Aizawl. She is caught on the way to Aizawl by the Excise and Narcotics. She was caught for her second time. She was in Champhai District Jail for 2 years, i.e., from January 2017- 2018. She was later transferred to Central Women's Jail when it was inaugurated in 2019. After a year, she was convicted to 15 years in prison. It's her 7<sup>th</sup> year in prison. She is one of the senior-most inside the prison.

Presently, she is the Discipline in charge of the overall Women's Jail. She said it was a burden for her to be in such a position; she often denied it, but she was forced to hold that position by the staff member. Her biggest regret is selling drugs, she says, "I regret it a lot, especially when I saw the effect of drugs on people and their sufferings after being imprisoned. I blame myself for selling illegal products. I often question myself for doing such things". She wholeheartedly blamed herself for being

in prison. Her relatives often warn her not to be involved in such illegal activities since it is easily available in her hometown. But she has no other option if she wants to build her own house. Every other job requires a huge capital, which she could never afford.

She has years of experience inside the prison. To her, even though it is depressing to be inside the prison, she found God inside the prison, for which she is very much thankful. If not, she will lead a greedy and selfish life outside the prison. Before she was caught, she used to be an active member of the Church, and even their Pastor visited and prayed for her while she was in prison. Counseling hours provided by Synod Prison Ministry and Set Free Ministry are beneficial for her; she is a regular attendee. She has read the Holy Bible 10 times while she is inside the prison. She said it enriches my soul; if she were not in prison, she would have the time to read the Bible.

She is not involved in any enrollments available in the prison. She regularly attends counselling, reads the Bible, and has a quiet time. She wished that the PCO time could be increased to more minutes since 3 minutes is less to talk to their relatives. One of their main problem inside the prison seems to be the lack of proper medical facilities, even if they have health problems, they refuse to consult a doctor, since not much can be done inside the prison, they can be asked to be referred outside, but they often hesitate to be referred since they need to wear prisoners uniform, wear handcuffed and be guarded by police. She just suffers from her illness inside the prison.

Luckily, she often has visitors, like her daughter and her friends. She could have the necessities without needing to be helped by other inmates. Her biggest concern now is the well-being of her son, who used to drink alcohol, and she sometimes could not talk to him on the telephone. She rightfully knew that it was her fault that her son was drinking; he was angry towards her mother for being in prison. She still has more than 9 years in prison, and she wishes that the High Court could appeal her case and reduce her sentence. When she is out of prison, she wishes to lead a normal life,

free from material and other worldly pleasures; she just wishes to live a happy Christian life with her children and grandchildren.

#### **Case study number- 4**

Schedule no- 1

Age- 36

Ward No- I- Ward A

Duration of imprisonment- 12<sup>th</sup> July, 2017, convicted 10 years

Type of offence- ND&PS, 21 'C'

The respondent was born in Myanmar; her parents are still alive and well, and they both live in Khawmawi Village in Myanmar. They are siblings of 5, one passed away, and she is the second eldest daughter. Her siblings are all living abroad in the USA, Canada, and Malaysia. She got married in 2006, it was an arranged marriage, her husband is an alcoholic and abusive, they got divorced in 2008, and they have one girl child. Her daughter is currently living with her aunt in Rangoon, she is now 14 years old. She has lived with her aunt since she was one year old, so her daughter didn't bother her, and she is also content staying with her aunt. The respondent's childhood and family life are all normal, but her father sometimes drinks alcohol and used to create some drama in the house, but not often. She was brought up in a Methodist Church, her mother is religious, and all her siblings are also good-natured. The environment in which she was brought up is normal and fine. She is a BSc graduate. At present, when she was caught, she lived with her uncle, aunt, and her niece and nephews at Vaivakawn, Aizawl. Her uncle is a contractor, her aunt sells fish in the market, and her niece and nephews are both students.

She used to work as a middle school teacher at the government School in Myanmar while she was married. After they got divorced, she quit her job and started a business supplying goods from Myanmar to Aizawl. She often travels around different places on vacation and enjoys her life to the fullest. She used to be an active member of the Church and the youth fellowship as well. She hasn't seen her child since her arrest and never contacted her, but it didn't bother her much as she is in



safe hands with her aunt, who is a government official. She knew that her daughter was well taken care of.

They caught her smuggling heroin for sale in Aizawl. Excise caught her at Champhai on their way to Aizawl. The main reason for her involvement in drug smuggling is because of her greed for money and peer pressure from her friends; she wanted more money to enjoy life and travel to different places. When she was caught, her relatives were devastated to hear her news; they were really angry and worried about her. Two of her siblings, who are in the USA, didn't know that she was in prison, but they knew it only during times of COVID-19, and they came from the USA to visit her in prison. They had a special interview at the prison in 2022. They are willing to do anything to get her out of prison, but she can't be bailed out. To her, the day her siblings visited her in prison was the most memorable day of her life. They understood her wholeheartedly, sympathized with her, and showed their love and support for her despite all the wrongs she had committed. She spent 2 years at Champhai District Jail; they shifted her to Central Women's Jail in 2019. Now she has spent more than 7 years in prison, and she still has to spend 3 years in jail. At present, she is the 'All Controller' and chairman of the Prison Women Committee (PWC) inside the women's jail. She is one of the most trusted inmates inside the prison by the Staff.

Her family is financially well-to-do and supports her well; she is not deprived of anything inside the prison. Instead, she is like the mother to other inmates, and they come to her whenever they have a problem, and she tries her best to solve it. Since she is a convict, she works regularly at the weaving center inside the prison and gets Rs 970 as remuneration.

Her biggest life adjustment is that she needs to live a simple life inside the prison before she lives a successful life doing whatever she wants, but now all her freedom is gone. Since she is one of the senior-most in prison, she is well-respected by her inmates. But, since she is the overall representative of her inmates, a lot of burden is bestowed upon her. Because of her fight for the well-being of inmates inside the prison, she often faced problems with the staff and prison officials. Before, all rations

they received were in the hands of the staff. She fought for justice along with other members of PWC. They have full custody of the rations that they received, and the leftovers are sold inside the prison from which they can earn a little money, which they use to help needy inmates.

As a chairman of PWC, she is the link between the inmates and the prison staff, she said it is challenging and a great burden to her, sometimes she just wants to quit being the chairman, but no one wants to take up her position. There are instances where they argue with the prison staff for their well-being. One of their biggest problems is concerning medical facilities, they have doctors and nurses on regular duty, but no proper medical facilities. Recently, the prison has been overcrowded, this is also one of their major concerns. Recreational activities are limited and they couldn't even run their library properly.

She regrets a lot for her being in prison, but on the brighter side, it humbled her, and she is near to God, she attended counseling regularly, read the bible, and had quiet time which she never had time to do outside prison, for her a prison is a place where she finds God. Her relatives even approached the High Court for her way out but it has not been successful till today.

#### **Case study number- 5**

Schedule no- 54

Age- 41

Ward No- I- Ward A

Duration of imprisonment- Lifer

Type of offence- Murder

The respondents' parents are both pensioners. Her father had passed away before she got married. She had one elder sister who was also a Government employee. She is a permanent resident of Aizawl, born and brought up in Aizawl. She has 3 children who are 5 years, 9 years, and 14 years of age. She has a master's degree, and before

she got married, she used to work as a part-time lecturer in college. She has been married for 15 years until she became a widow when she killed her husband.

She had a normal upbringing in a Christian family. Since her parents are both earners, she did not struggle much in her life. She never faced anything type of abuse while growing up. She even had the opportunity to study outside Mizoram. She can have all the things she needs in her life. She got married when she was 25 years old. After getting married, she quit her job and became a full-time homemaker. The first thing she said when interviewed was that she misses her children a lot, since they were restraining her children from meeting her. She admitted that she did it, but doesn't remember anything. She said that the motive for her action was due to the intoxication of weed and alcohol alone, and nothing else. She started occasionally drinking alcohol in 2017, and then it became a regular habit. She claimed that she didn't remember anything that night; it seems she didn't even remember the things that happened in police custody. When asked, she claims that she is also a victim of domestic abuse by her husband.

Her experiences in prison changed her whole life and perspective. She sincerely regrets what she did, and prison renewed her life spiritually. On the downside, she feels that the prison is monotonous and there is nothing exciting to do inside the prison. She further exclaimed that the food provided to them is not nutritious, and she is concerned about her health because of the poor nutrition. She has enrolled in tailoring and weaving for 2 months, but she quit as she said it was not her thing. In her free time, she used to read the Bible and chat with other inmates. She praised how the staff handle and operate the prison with fairness and regularity. Her relatives from her side never leave her; they stick by her side and do whatever is possible to reduce her sentence. She exclaimed that they had spent lakhs of rupees to hire the best lawyers they could get. She said that if she can get out of prison, she will spread the Gospel as much as possible, and plans to devote herself to spreading the word of God.

**CHAPTER- VII**  
**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

**7.1 Summary**

**7.2 Socio-economic profile**

**7.3 Etiology of Female Criminality**

**7.4 Effects of Incarceration**

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## **CHAPTER- VII**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

#### **7.1 Summary**

The ideas of crime and deviance are socially created, meaning that they are formed by cultural norms, legal structures, and historical circumstances. Modern studies have emphasized the need to comprehend female crime in connection to social, economic, cultural, and political aspects, whereas older criminological viewpoints generally disregarded women. The reasons why women commit crimes are frequently different from the reasons why men do so, and they are typically related to things like gender discrimination, poverty, victimization, and the unfair consequences of policies like the “war on drugs.”

Although women are less likely to be involved in violent crimes, the incidence of imprisonment for women has increased all across the world, with the most common reasons for incarceration being drug-related offenses and property crimes. Due to the stigma that exists, the lack of sufficient institutional facilities, and the failure to satisfy the demands for privacy, family connection, and rehabilitation, their experiences while incarcerated are distinct and frequently more difficult than those of other people. Their reintegration into society is made more difficult by the presence of structural barriers such as poverty and abusive relationships.

The imprisonment of women is a topic that has not received enough attention in the field of studies in Mizoram, as is the case in several other situations. The socioeconomic profiles of women who are incarcerated, the conditions that led to their imprisonment, the impact of incarceration on their lives and the lives of their families, the relevance of the facilities in the institutions, and the applicability of penological theories to their experiences are all topics that are examined in this study. Together, these factors shed light on the difficulties experienced by incarcerated women and the necessity of gender-sensitive correctional system policy.

Chapter I consisted of the Introduction portion, while Chapter II consisted of a detailed Review of Literature. Chapter III covered the Research Methodology of the study, including all procedural details. Chapter IV of this study delved into the Socio-Economic Profile of 141 women inmates. Chapter V consisted of the Etiology of Female Criminality. Chapter VI deals with the Effect of incarceration on women prisoners, along with the institutional facilities available. Chapter VII summarized the findings to conclude.

Chapter I has been discussed under 6 sections. After a general introduction of crime and society, the next section deals with women's criminality. It highlighted the misrepresentation of female criminality in the past, blaming it on sexuality and psychology and ignoring other institutional factors. However, research has shown that factors including poverty, abuse, and inequality are the factors that most influence women to engage in criminal activity, with most offenses being minor and non-violent. Even with this being the case, women encounter more severe stigma, discrimination, and abuse, which emphasizes the importance of developing justice systems that are sensitive to gender. The next section deals with Crime and Punishment, highlighting the historical shift in punishment from physical torture to imprisonment and later toward reformation, influenced by social reforms and colonial practices. Today, restorative justice emphasizes rehabilitation, community service, and reconciliation, aiming to reintegrate offenders rather than isolate them. The next section focuses on incarcerated women, the neglect and stigmatization women encounter, and the heightened increase in the number, and the emotional problems female inmates encounter, as they are usually the primary caregivers of their families. The next section deals with women in prison, global, national, North-East, and Mizoram contexts, which is followed by an overview. Therefore, the study on the current situation of women inmates with respect to Mizoram has been carried forward.

Chapter II relates to the Review of Literature on prisoners, particularly women prisoners. The literature has been reviewed under three categories: theories, thematic review, and methodological review. Theories include Erving Goffman's Total Institution, Strain Theory, Foucault's Discipline and Punish, Marginalization Theory,

Social-Control Theory, Self-Control Theory, and Theories of Penology. The studies relate such theories, particularly to women's imprisonment. This study applies several criminological theories to explain women's imprisonment, their socio-economic backgrounds, and prison experiences. Merton's Strain Theory (1938) and Agnew's General Strain Theory (1992) both emphasize how social pressure, poverty, abuse, and frustration can foster deviance. Marginalization Theory highlights that disadvantaged groups, such as low-income earners or women facing gender discrimination, are more disposed to crime due to exclusion and hardship. Social Control and Self-Control Theories further suggest that weak social bonds or a lack of self-regulation, often rooted in childhood abuse, increase criminal tendencies.

Goffman's concept of Total Institution explains prison as a closed system that strips inmates of their previous identity, reinforcing stigma and altering family and social roles. Different Penological Theories of punishment: deterrent, retributive, and preventive approaches focus on control and retaliation, while the reformatory model emphasizes rehabilitation and reintegration, now favoured in modern criminology. Foucault's Discipline and Punish further illustrates the historical shift from brutal public punishments to more subtle, reform-oriented disciplinary methods. Together, these theories connect causes of women's crimes, their marginalized status, and the prison's role in shaping their identities, punishments, and chances of reformation.

The methodological reviews incorporated 9 methodologies. All the reviewed studies on women's imprisonment are exploratory or descriptive in nature. Most rely on qualitative methods, using observation, case studies, focus group discussions, and interviews, with some preferring semi-structured formats for greater respondent freedom. Two researchers adopted ethnography for deeper insights. Three studies employed mixed methods, combining surveys for quantitative data with interviews for qualitative perspectives. One researcher applied the census method for sample analysis, a strategy also relevant to the proposed study. For data analysis, SPSS was commonly used in three studies for tabulation and interpretation.

The thematic review section is further divided into 7 sub-headings, which are socio-economic profile, causes of imprisonment, gender differences and experiences of

women in prison, family relationships of incarcerated women, women's incarceration and rehabilitation, health issues, recreational activities, and recidivism and re-entry. From the thematic review, it is noted that studies mainly from mainland India and international sources show that women prisoners often come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds marked by poverty, low education, unemployment, and abusive relationships. Many face marital conflict, domestic violence, neglect, or substance abuse, with mothers bearing the added burden of child care.

Within prison, women's experiences differ significantly from men's, as they struggle with mental health issues, separation from children, and neglect or rejection from families. Families, especially children, also suffer stigma, grief, and discrimination. Rehabilitation literature emphasizes the need for gender-specific, holistic programs, including education, skills training, and positive recreational activities, to reduce recidivism and support reintegration. Strong family ties, motivation from children, and stable housing are shown to be crucial for successful re-entry, while stigma and a lack of support remain significant barriers.



**Table 7.1 Research Gap and Rationale for The Study**

| Sl.No | Gap                                                                                                              | Rational                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.    | West-centric studies                                                                                             | Need for study in India, the Northeast, and Mizoram                                                                                                        |
| 2.    | Lacking studies on the impact of incarceration on families                                                       | To find the nature, nuances, and dynamics of problems from the lived experiences                                                                           |
| 3.    | A dearth of systematic investigation from a sociological and criminological perspective                          | Reveal the etiology and effects of deviant behaviour from a sociological and criminological perspective                                                    |
| 4.    | Inadequacy of in-depth study on female prisoners in a closed-knit society                                        | Second-highest number of female inmates in North East worth studying                                                                                       |
| 5.    | Limited research on the experiences of female incarceration and its perception from a Christian moral framework. | Need to explore the gendered stigma and societal responses to women's incarceration                                                                        |
| 6.    | Certain thematic domains are not covered in the studies reviewed                                                 | Need to explore the family relationships, types of support, rehabilitation, recreational activity inside the prison, recidivism, and re-entry into society |
| 7.    | Methodological Gap                                                                                               | Need to triangulate qualitative and quantitative data                                                                                                      |
| 8.    | Studies are data-rich and theoretical- contextualization poor                                                    | Need to contextualize the theories reviewed                                                                                                                |

The existing literature on women's incarceration reveals several significant gaps. Most studies are West-centric, highlighting the need for research in the Indian context, particularly in the Northeast and Mizoram. There is also a lack of studies examining the impact of incarceration on families, which makes it necessary to explore the nature, nuances, and dynamics of these problems through lived experiences. Furthermore, a dearth of systematic investigation from sociological and criminological perspectives calls for research that reveals the etiology and effects of deviant behaviour within these frameworks.

In addition, there is an inadequacy of in-depth studies focusing on female prisoners in closed-knit societies like Mizoram, despite it having the second-highest number of

female inmates in the Northeast. Limited research also exists on the experiences of female incarceration viewed through a Christian moral framework, emphasizing the need to understand gendered stigma and societal responses toward imprisoned women.

Certain thematic domains, such as family relationships, types of support, rehabilitation, recreational activities in prison, recidivism, and re-entry into society, remain underexplored. Methodologically, there is a need to triangulate qualitative and quantitative data to achieve a more comprehensive understanding. Lastly, while many studies are rich in data, they often lack theoretical contextualization, emphasizing the importance of linking empirical findings with relevant criminological and sociological theories.

The research setting and framework that were used, as well as the methods that were followed over the course of the study, are all described in depth in Chapter III. Therefore, the process begins with the conceptualization of the research topic (context), moves on to the examination of the methodologies that have been employed (framework), and then concludes with the conclusion and the outcome of the study.

Based on the need for the study, this study started with the following objectives:

1. To understand the socio-economic profile of women offenders.
2. To understand the factors that cause women offending and consequent incarceration.
3. To study the effect of imprisonment on women and the lives of their families.
4. To examine the institutional facilities available for women offenders in incarceration which can promote re-entry into society.
5. To contextualize the theories of penology and to make a macro analysis of this micro study.

The present study represents an exploratory cum descriptive research design. The universe of the study comprises all the district jails of Mizoram. There are 8 District Jails located in Aizawl, Lunglei, Siaha, Champhai, Kolasib, Serchhip, Mamit and Lawngtlai District of Mizoram, including a separate Central Jail and Central

Women's Jail, which are also located in Aizawl District of Mizoram. Since the majority of the female inmates are located in Central Women's Jail, the Central Women's Jail Aizawl, is purposely selected for the present study.

In my synopsis presentation, I proposed to interview 73 respondents dated 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022 which was the total number of inmates at that time. However, the number of respondents has changed since there was an increase in the number of female inmates from the start of my fieldwork i.e. 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2023 up to 13<sup>th</sup> Sept, 2023 compared to 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022 in my proposal where there are a total of 73 inmates including 2 children only. As of 13<sup>th</sup> Sept 2023, the last date of my fieldwork, the total number of female inmates in Central Women's Jail was 280, Lifer- 1, Convict SI-10, Convict RI-33, UTP- 236. Of the total 280, 50 percent are interviewed, which is 140 including one additional respondent who keenly requested to be interviewed. The total number of inmates interviewed was 141. The case study was conducted among 1 Lifer, 2 mothers with accompanying children, and 8 other inmates based on the intensity of the crimes they committed.

From the total of 141 respondents, 9 inmates were selected for the case study, representing each from all categories, and also based on the severity of crimes committed as follows: The only lifer present in the prison is taken for a case study, along with two cases from habitual offenders (UTP), two cases from 1<sup>st</sup> timers (UTP), two cases from ND&PS (convicts), and two cases from 1<sup>st</sup> timers (convicts).

The list of KII respondents interviewed includes Jailor, Asst. Jailor, Jail Warder, Lawyer, Synod Prison Ministry representative, Set Free Ministry Representative, Counsellor, Prison IG, and representatives from CADS and Excise and Narcotics. Among the list, Jailor, Jail Warder, Synod Prison Ministry representative, and Set Free Ministry Representative were interviewed.

Through a pilot study, framing the basic structure of the study was done. Data collection followed, and the fieldwork started from 1st March 2023 up to 13th September 2023, which is approximately 7 months. The data collected includes the filled-in interview schedules used by the researcher during the field survey, which have been answered by the respondents, including case studies and inputs from the

key informants. Upon the completion of the fieldwork, all the schedules were scrutinized and cross-checked. Coding was done, and the data were disaggregated under 4 major heads: 1) Socio-economic profile, 2) Etiology of women's criminality, 3) Effects of incarceration, and 4) Availability of institutional facilities. Subheads under each major head were also conceptualized. In this particular study, both qualitative and quantitative methodologies have been employed in combination in order to create the analytical framework. Data were coded for quantitative analysis. The coded data were classified according to the classifying scheme that was created specifically for this purpose. SPSS software is utilized for quantitative analysis. In addition to the case study, observation, and narratives, the approach of "lived experiences," which is based on phenomenological and ethnographic traditions, has been employed for the purpose of qualitative data analysis. Additionally, the same format is used to present interviews that were conducted with key informants. The interviews with the respondents were attentively listened to, and summaries of each case were created. In conclusion, the chapter was brought to a close with the operationalization of concepts, a discussion of the study's limits, and a discussion of the ethical standards for research that were adhered to throughout the research.

## **7.2 Socio-Economic Profile**

Chapter IV of the study focuses on determining the socio-economic profile of women prisoners in the Central Women's Jail, Aizawl, Mizoram. Understanding the socio-economic profile of the respondent is important as it sheds light on the underlying circumstances that play a role in women's engagement in criminal activity, as well as their experiences while incarcerated. The variables analyzed in this chapter to understand the socio-economic profile of the women inmates include age, marital status, nature of family, residential status, educational qualifications, monthly income, household assets, religion, community, pre-incarceration status, and nature of imprisonment. To determine the socioeconomic profile of the female respondents, the area has been considered an independent variable, and it has been cross-referenced with all the other factors.

In Central Women's Jail, the age of the women inmates ranges between 18 years, the youngest, and 73 years, the oldest. The age group was classified into six class intervals: 15-25, 25-35, 35-45, 45-55, 55-65, 65-75 years. The majority of respondents are in the age group between 25 and 45 years. The second highest population is followed by the age range between 15 and 25 years. There is a decline in the number of inmates as the age increases; those between 45 and 75 years constitute the lowest population. This implies that the majority of the incarcerated women are in their mid-adult and child-rearing age. The age group in which their contribution to their family and society is paramount.

In terms of marital status, the majority, which is 90.8 % of the respondents, are married. Only a few are unmarried. Among the total respondents, the divorced population is the highest, and a significant number of respondents are also widowed. Considering the total respondents, 55.3% of the respondents are divorced or widowed. This finding supports Chesney-Lind & Pasko (2013) and Tripathi & Yadav (2021) findings that stated that the experiences of widowhood and divorce can be a trigger to women's involvement in criminal activities. Besides marital status, the extent of marriage is also taken into consideration, in which the majority of respondents have been married for more than 4 years. This finding supported the findings of Chesney-Lind & Pasko (2013), Tripathi & Yadav (2021), Carlen (1998), and Raghavan (2020), who argue that women who are in long-term relationship without the support from their partners often faced financial hardships and need emotional and financial support for their children due to which they often indulge in petty crimes including drug trafficking related offences.

In terms of the nature of family, which consisted of the type of family, number of family members, number of children, and number of earners and dependents in the family. The findings indicate that the majority of imprisoned women originate from nuclear and small-sized families, where there is a lack of social and emotional support networks. The fact that a significant majority of these incarcerated individuals are mothers highlights the extensive societal repercussions of their imprisonment, especially as they pertain to children who are dependent on them. The difficulties that women encounter worsen when economic fragility, which is

evidenced by high dependence ratios and a reliance on single earners, is coupled with the obligations of caring. The combined effect of these circumstances is the creation of paths leading to criminal activity. They emphasize the significant impact that family structure, economic instability, and caregiving responsibilities have on the imprisonment of women.

In terms of residence, the study shows that the majority of the respondents are from urban areas. The higher level of urban representation is indicative of offenses that occur in urban areas, such as drug-related crimes. Among the four major zones of the district-wise sub-division, the northern zone, which consists of districts including Aizawl, Champhai, Kolasib, and Saitual constituted the majority of respondents. The concentration of female inmates from the northern regions of Mizoram emphasizes the importance of investigating the socioeconomic, cultural, and criminal elements that contribute to the engagement of women in criminal activity. According to this geographic pattern, these districts, which include Aizawl, Champhai, Saitual, and Kolasib, are either heavily inhabited or border regions, and they are susceptible to being used as routes for drug trafficking. There is a substantial association between women's imprisonment and the dynamics of the border region.

With regards to living in an owned house or a rented house, the findings indicate that the respondents had an almost equal distribution of both owned and rented houses, which is indicative of the diverse range of economic situations in which they reside. According to the findings, over half of the female inmates, which amounts to 48.2 percent, resided in kutchra houses. In addition, 8.5 percent of the female inmates lived in semi-kutchra houses, bringing the total number of inmates who reported staying in substandard housing to 56.7 percent of the total number of respondents. This indicates that the majority of the inmates are economically disadvantaged and have limited access to resources. However, 42.6 percent of the women live in pucca homes at the same time. This fact demonstrates that not all of the women were from backgrounds that were disadvantaged, and it is indicative of the fact that there is a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds represented. Homelessness was indicated by only a single responder (0.7%), which highlights the tremendous vulnerability and marginalization of this group. Housing type is generally a symbol of socioeconomic

position, with poor housing conditions and public housing complexes commonly connected to greater crime rates owing to poverty, weak security, and larger societal difficulties.

In terms of educational qualifications, which included dropout rates, the majority of them have only a modest amount of formal education, although the rate of literacy is almost 100 percent. Nearly three-fourths of the respondents attained education up to HSLC or below. Only 3.5 percent of the respondents have a graduate or post-graduate degree. The dropout rates were extremely high, with 90.8 percent of the women leaving school before they finished their education. This pattern of early educational discontinuity points to the presence of systemic barriers, such as poverty, a lack of support, or exposure to hazardous surroundings, which limit the ability of individuals to access higher education and secure work opportunities. Economic distress and increased vulnerability to criminal conduct are the consequences of a mix of factors, including low education, high dropout rates, and poor employment prospects.

Relating to the monthly income of the respondent's family, the findings have shown that the majority of the inmates are from low-income families that are below ₹50,000 per month. Only 10 respondents are from a higher-income family, ranging between 1L- 2.5L and above. About 18.4 per cent belonged to moderately better-off families, ranging between ₹50,000 – 1L per month. This finding indicates that poverty is one of the underlying issues for their criminal behaviour. The household asset profile indicates that basic amenities, including refrigerators, televisions, and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) connections, are available to a large extent. On the other hand, access to more modern or digital assets, such as computers and microwave ovens, is still restricted. This demonstrates the existence of a digital gap that is influenced by a lack of financial resources, low levels of educational achievement, and an absence of digital skills.

Vehicle ownership is also another indicator of economic stratification. Of the respondents, 58.2 percent owned at least one vehicle, most of which were two-wheelers. The remaining 41.8 percent did not own any vehicles, which shows that

they were economically vulnerable and had limited mobility. Owning several vehicles is uncommon and is linked to households that are in a comparatively more prosperous financial situation. Overall, patterns of ownership of assets and vehicles indicate that the majority of respondents have a low level of living standard that meets basic needs, but they also bring to light inequalities in access to technology, mobility, and financial stability.

With regards to the ration card, which is an official card authorized by the Government of India to prove the socio-economic profile of its residents. A total of 49.6 percent of the women belong to families that are in possession of ration cards that are officially recognized as economically disadvantaged, such as PHH, BPL, or AAY cards. In contrast, 24.1 percent of the women hold APL cards, and 26.2 percent of the women have no ration card, suggesting a lack of coverage provided by welfare programs or an unregistered status. In terms of property inheritance, it is shown from the findings that 89.4 per cent of the respondents did not inherit any property. This shows the lack of generational wealth among the majority of respondents. Despite legal protections under the Mizo Marriage, Divorce, and Inheritance of Property Act, 2014, cultural and patriarchal barriers continue to limit women's access to property.

All the respondents are Christians and Scheduled Tribe (ST), reflecting the ethno-religious and tribal homogeneity of Mizoram. The Presbyterian denomination is the largest (54.6%), followed by Baptists (13.5%) and United Pentecostals (12.1%). Other denominations are minor. This uniformity shows female convicts share morals, cultural norms, and social expectations. The findings also show minimal community participation among the respondents. Only 22% attend Church regularly, and 13.5 per cent join the Young Mizo Association (YMA), signifying social disconnection. The Church and YMA shape moral, cultural, and community values in Mizoram by providing support, ethical direction, and social accountability. Most women are detached from these institutions, which may restrict their social support and raise their risk of crime.

The pre-incarceration job profile of inmates shows economic vulnerability. Over half (54%) were self-employed in informal sector activities like street selling, small-scale



agriculture, and household services, suggesting uncertain income and few legal safeguards. An additional 27.6 per cent worked in private enterprises, possibly in low-paying and unregulated employment, 5.6 per cent did manual labour, and 2.2 per cent worked for the government, emphasizing their poor educational attainment. Notably, 10.6 per cent were jobless before imprisonment, increasing dependency on family and partners and vulnerability to coercion and crime. The results indicate that insecure work, poor income, and economic instability make women vulnerable to criminality, underlining the need for targeted employment generation, skill development, and social support programs.

The findings suggest that the majority of female inmates in Mizoram are undertrials, accounting for 85.1 per cent of the total respondents. Only 14.9 per cent are convicted exposing systematic delays, poor legal help, and bail issues, especially for drug charges. Most inmates (81.6%) are first-time offenders, indicating a low recidivism rate and that poverty, coercion, or lack of legal understanding commonly led to crime. Minor or nonviolent acts, including petty theft, minor drug charges, and administrative violations, account for 87.9 per cent of sentences under one year. A small percentage receive 6–7-year sentences. Undertrial status, short-term imprisonment, and low recidivism show that women are vulnerable in the criminal justice system and require expedited legal processes, legal aid, and targeted rehabilitation to prevent social disruption and support reintegration.

In terms of the type of offences committed, the ND&PS Act applies to 89.4 per cent of the female inmates, indicating a high proportion of small-scale or courier drug trafficking. Murder (2.1%), theft (5%), and various offenses (3.5%) are infrequent, indicating that violent crime among women is low and driven by poverty, coercion, or lack of options. 68.1 per cent of inmates had a lawyer, while 31.9 per cent did not, indicating legal assistance shortages, particularly for underprivileged women. Limited access to private attorneys due to financial restrictions, limited legal aid awareness, and insufficient education might worsen pre-trial detention or lead to unfair convictions. remarkably, just 5% of inmates knew their rights and obligations in jail, leaving 95 per cent open to exploitation, abuse, and exclusion from rehabilitation programs. To safeguard women and promote equal treatment in

criminal justice, focused legal literacy campaigns, prisoner rights education, and enhanced legal assistance are necessary.

### **7.3 Etiology of Female Criminality**

The causes and the issues of committing crime for which they are incarcerated are focused on in Chapter V. This chapter is divided into 8 subheadings, which are: 1. Causes of committing crime, 2. Family Issues 3. Issues in Socialization 4. Physical Factors 5. Discrimination and a conflicting environment 6. Drugs and Alcoholism 7. Stigmatization and Repentance.

In terms of the causes of committing crime, the findings suggest that among the respondents, being an accomplice or carrier to drug trafficking and poverty are the major causes of committing crime, accounting for 70.2 per cent of the total respondents. Mizoram is on regional drug trafficking routes; therefore, many women become involved unintentionally or under pressure from family, friends, or spouses. In addition, addiction, 19.9 per cent, also plays a major role. Responses emphasize survival, financial issues, and familial duties above greed or revenge, which is found to be minor in the findings. Some criminals admit blame, but most cite economic necessity, peer pressure, or familial duties. As shown in the findings, self-instigation was reported by 65.2 per cent of women, often due to restricted choices, emotional pressure, and societal pressure. It can also be noted that friends (23.4%) and family (7.8%) also lure women to crimes. 3.5 per cent blame others as they are unknowingly used as a carrier by drug-peddlers. The study shows that in Mizoram, women's crime is driven by survival, despair, and marginalization. Poverty, addiction, and social neglect are structural weaknesses for women, unlike thrill-seeking or violence for males.

Family issues play a central role in shaping the pathways to female criminality. As shown in the findings, abuse is strongly linked to female crime, as 32.6 per cent of the inmates were victims of domestic violence before imprisonment. Trauma, addiction, and violence often lead women to crime as a coping strategy, escape, or manipulation by abusive relationships. Two-thirds had no history of abuse, showing that poverty, addiction, and peer influence are equally important.

Parental background was crucial too. While 69.5 per cent grew up with their parents, almost one-third did not, demonstrating that parental absence is a major risk factor for emotional instability, neglect, and deviant influences. Most respondents 78.7 per cent reported a supportive home environment, but this did not protect them from crime, reinforcing socio-economic and peer pressures. Only 21.3 per cent grew up in unstable or abusive environments, making them more prone to deviance. Despite incarceration, 89.4 per cent of respondents expressed family acceptance, demonstrating strong communal and familial relationships in Mizo society. However, 10.6 per cent of rejected applicants risk isolation, shame, and reoffending.

The study also reveals that nearly three-quarters of respondents 73.8 per cent grew up in big households with more than three siblings, which might cause economic pressure, resource constraint, and restricted educational possibilities. Such settings show how family size, poverty, and deviance are linked. Only 11.3 per cent reported mistreatment by siblings, suggesting it is not a major factor. The Mizo community promotes communal principles and equality; hence, women may have accepted unfair tasks like sacrificing for their brothers without seeing them as discriminatory. In terms of educational support, most respondents 73.8 per cent reported having family support while studying, demonstrating that lack of support did not directly cause their imprisonment. However, 26.2 per cent who did not receive such support were at risk of poor educational achievement, low self-esteem, and limited prospects, which may have contributed to eventual socio-economic disadvantages.

Socialization is vital for developing people into effective members of society, yet disruptions can lead to vulnerabilities and deviant behaviour. As shown in the findings, only 12.8 per cent of respondents reported prior physical, sexual, or mental abuse, yet this tiny percentage shows lingering trauma that might affect subsequent life choices. Mental health concerns impacted 26.2 per cent of respondents, with stress being the most frequent, highlighting the psychological impact of family strife, poverty, and early life pressure. 10.6 per cent had trouble integrating into their family, and 11.3 per cent claimed maltreatment, showing that some women were neglected, conflicted, or rejected as children. Another 11.3 per cent faced economic difficulty, parental separation, or lack of education. Although most

respondents claimed secure childhoods, a substantial minority had serious problems that hampered good socialization. These findings show that while most women inmates did not directly link their crimes to childhood hardships, a vulnerable minority did. However, it notes that early-life adversities disrupted their socialization, making them more susceptible to poor decision-making, exploitation, and criminal influences.

The inmates assessed had no physical deformities, eliminating handicap as a factor in their criminal paths. However, almost two-fifths of responders had chronic sickness, which is a significant health burden. These disorders may not directly cause crime, but they can contribute to stress, dependence, and financial instability. The findings emphasise the necessity of jail healthcare infrastructure, including regular medical check-ups, diagnostics, treatment, dietary support, and mental health care. Chronic disease must be addressed to protect offenders, facilitate rehabilitation, and reduce recidivism.

This section examines how discrimination and conflict affect the respondents. While most inmates did not report discrimination or familial conflict, substantial minorities did. 12.1 per cent had long-term disputes with relatives, 33.3 per cent had relatives with a history of jail, 5 per cent were harassed by peers, and 3.5 per cent were discriminated against by family, or 41.8 per cent felt compelled to find work, citing economic pressures, while 14.2 per cent were caught by community groups like the YMA or NGOs for wrongdoing before jail. While overt discrimination was rare, economic hardship, family disagreements, peer victimization, and community monitoring fostered tension and marginalization that raised crime risk. These socio-psychological forces must be addressed in rehabilitation and reintegration programs.

Drugs and alcohol play a central role in the criminal pathways of women prisoners in Mizoram. Only 19.9 per cent admitted to substance misuse, yet 55.3 per cent were actively involved in drug trafficking, the most prevalent offense. This suggests that many women joined drug networks owing to poverty, pressure, or restricted opportunities rather than chronic usage. While 14.2 per cent admitted to misusing alcohol and 24.1 per cent occasionally used it, more than 60 per cent had never

drunk. Cultural and religious stigma against women's alcohol usage in Mizoram increased societal criticism for drinkers. Given local regulations, only 9.2 per cent sold alcohol, a less common but still important survival activity. Overall, drug offenses dominate female imprisonment, whereas alcohol abuse and sales are secondary.

From the findings, it is shown that the inmates face humiliation, repentance, regret, and blame. They are shamed for disobeying the law and violating traditional norms of morality, passivity, and family loyalty. Stigma hinders reintegration, harming family, work, and mental health. Reflecting Mizoram's strong Christian culture, many women show true repentance through religious activities and spiritual healing. Families are generally considered "good," yet deeper problems, such as neglect or pressures, may have led to criminal behaviour. the inmates face humiliation, repentance, regret, and blame., emerges as a strong emotional motivator, while blame is distributed internally (self-guilt) and externally (poverty, abusive relationships, peer pressure). Moreover, Mizoram's female crime is more about survival than deviance due to trauma, poverty, and social marginalization.

#### **7.4 Effects of incarceration**

Chapter VI of this study highlighted the effects of incarceration on the lives of the female inmates as well as the effects of incarceration on the lives of their families. This chapter is divided into the following subheadings: 1. Positive/ Negative Effects of Incarceration, 2. Effect of imprisonment on their family 3. Condition of physical and mental health 4. Treatment of prison staff inside the prison 5. Availability of institutional facilities 6. Post-release plan and Suggestions.

Based on the findings, the majority of the inmates suggest that incarceration has a positive impact on their lives. For drug/alcohol addicts, it gave them a chance to abstain, for women facing domestic violence, it gave them a chance to sleep peacefully without fear, faith-based rehabilitation in the form of counselling, devotion, church services, Bible reading, and prayer fostered spiritual renewal, remorse, and self-reflection. For some of the inmates, prison experience gave them a chance to realize the value of family and children, which they used to take for

granted. However, 26.2 per cent of the inmates had a negative experience inside the prison. For them, the emotional distress of being separated from their children, the sense of isolation, and the stigmatization they faced are hard to bear. And for the many first-timers, prison seems to provide a molding ground to learn new deviant behaviors. Some inmates even developed rebellious attitudes, persistent guilt, or hopelessness, increasing the risk of recidivism.

Many inmates, especially those suffering drug withdrawal, poverty, or family tragedy, reported having suicidal thoughts. The causes of having such thoughts are separation from their children, the lack of proper medical help in times of need, social shame, and isolation. However, the majority of inmates are resilient enough not to have suicidal thoughts as they are mostly single mothers with dependent children and a family to take care of.

The majority of the inmates reported not experiencing any sort of physical or emotional abuse while they were in prison. But the presence of systemic issues such as overcrowding, inmates' hierarchy, and staff behaviour suggests risks of recurring abuse. However, 20.6 per cent reported facing physical/emotional abuse in the form of peer bullying, verbal insults, and discrimination from some of the staff, among the rich and poor. Some of the inmates stated that they have witnessed emotional abuse in the form of jealousy, gossip, and stigmatization of those who are born-again inside the prison. In addition, inmates who are with their children used to face added humiliation because of the presence of their children.

The majority of the inmates relied on their husbands, parents, or siblings for financial support while they were in prison. Some inmates even helped their fellow inmates financially, which proves that there is solidarity and compassion among them. The minority 27 per cent lack support from their relatives, either they are abandoned by them or their relatives are not financially well-off to support them. Especially, mothers with their dependent children faced hardships without help from outside the prison.

Contact, visit, or care from friends and relatives while they are in prison is important for the inmates to help them emotionally and give them the strength to move on.

However, only 5.7 per cent of the total respondents received such visits. The majority, 63.8% received visits only on request. There are 28.4 per cent who have never visited their relatives or friends. Especially, visits or assistance from friends is found to be rare, as many of the inmates realized that their friendships were conditional on drug supply and not genuine care. Only a few reported visits from Church members and Pastors, which reflects the stigma, secrecy, and lack of outreach from their own Church congregation. However, this shows that the majority of the inmates are not involved in attending their local Church.

It is also found that only a few reported their family members or themselves facing stigmatization from the community after they were in prison. While some inmates noted relatives gossiping or distancing themselves. Others conceal their imprisonment from their children and community to protect their family's reputation.

From the findings, it is known that the majority of the inmates recognized that their incarceration had a detrimental influence on their families; however, a significant number of them downplayed the seriousness of this impact. A substantial number of inmates denied any impact, showing either resistance or an unwillingness to acknowledge any damage. In general, incarceration put pressure on the stability of households and social position, but the degree of this strain varied. After an individual has been imprisoned, their families typically encounter more negative attitudes and criticism than they did before the imprisonment. The society was found to have a strong sense of moral expectations, which was reflected in the common experiences of gossip, blame, and social isolation. Nevertheless, there were still families that continued to be supportive, which demonstrated that families' reactions were not homogeneous.

Children were recognized as the group that was most impacted by this, with spouses and parents following after. The emotional and social well-being of children was severely affected by the interruption of mother care. The fact that women's incarceration disproportionately hurts dependents is an important finding that highlights the gendered character of imprisonment. It is further noted that since their mothers were not there, children had negative consequences in the extent of their

emotions, social lives, and education. Many experienced ridicule, neglect, and stigmatization from their classmates. The fracturing of the roles filled by mothers caused vulnerabilities that persisted for an extended period of time. This supports the idea that the punishment that comes with jail extends beyond the person who committed the offense. Children were typically cared for by their grandparents or close relatives while their parents were imprisoned. This is indicative of the significant role that the extended family structure plays in Mizoram. Although this configuration ensured survival, it frequently resulted in the weakening of mother-child ties and led to emotional estrangement over the long run.

The majority of spouses were negatively impacted, including emotional stress, gossip, and harm to their social reputations. A few people stayed supportive, a few got remarried, and some kept their distance. The results illustrate how the incarceration of women in Mizoram serves to undermine connections between spouses and to challenge conventional gender roles.

Numerous families continued to participate by providing emotional, financial, and spiritual support. Nonetheless, the degree of assistance fluctuated, and some families withdrew as a result of poverty or embarrassment. For inmates who were undergoing rehabilitation, strong family ties served as a protective element. Even though many families claimed to be dealing with no issues, a significant minority of families said that they were experiencing stigma, financial difficulties, and mental stress. Close-knit communities were common with bias and gossip. This indicates that imprisonment indirectly penalizes families alongside offenders.

The majority of prisoners had visitors; however, these visits occurred infrequently, frequently owing to limitations on financial resources and distance. Visits that occurred regularly increased morale, but the absence of visits increased the sense of isolation. The findings indicate that interactions with members of one's family are a significant determinant of emotional well-being. As visits were a source of comfort, spiritual support, and a feeling of belonging, the majority of inmates felt them to be beneficial. Visits also promoted optimism toward reintegration. There were a few



inmates, meanwhile, who felt weighed down by visits from their families because of recollections of stigma or strife.

From the study, it is found that the daily experiences are shaped by monotony, overcrowding, poor food, and strained social interactions. The respondents indicated sentiments of antagonism, gossip, and boredom, but they also mentioned that they coped with these feelings through religion, prayer, or mutual forgiveness. Mothers who had children had challenges that were distinct from those of others. They were challenged with protecting and taking care of their children in an atmosphere that was not fit. There were a few individuals who reported experiencing beneficial consequences, such as discovering time for spiritual development or developing more self-discipline.

The majority of respondents indicated that they had gotten some type of therapy, which consisted mostly of faith-based counselling administered by visiting pastors; on the other hand, 37.6 per cent of individuals reported that they had not received any treatment at all. A lot of prisoners appreciated counselling since it was a source of solace, while some prisoners were critical of it due to its lack of professional psychiatric care. The findings emphasize the disparity between professional mental health care and religious counselling, emphasizing the pressing demand for certified psychiatrists and psychologists in prisons.

The majority of inmates, 59.6 per cent indicated that their health had stabilized after being incarcerated, which was frequently associated with shorter jail sentences or the absence of chronic illness. On the other hand, 34 per cent stated that their health had deteriorated as a result of inadequate diet, a lack of medical treatment, and stress, while 6.4 per cent reported that their health had improved, typically in combination with organized routines and substance withdrawal. Those who were incarcerated and had chronic illnesses, such as diabetes, had the most difficulties. In contrast, several inmates who came from underprivileged families said that the meals and routines in jail were better than those in the outside world.

The majority of the inmates stated that they felt that their contacts with the prison staff were professional and polite, with the female staff displaying a greater amount

of compassion and awareness of their requirements. The inmates who were grateful for the staff's readiness to listen and respond to their grievances had a feeling of justice within the jail. That being said, a handful of the inmates said that the personnel treated them unequally, giving richer offenders more attention than those who were less well off. Although the overall testimonies reflect highly on the management of the jail, these individual examples of bias indicate the necessity for continual monitoring to maintain consistent fairness and dignity for everyone.

It was also shown that interactions amongst inmates had a significant impact on their mental well-being. A lot of women created links of support with other incarcerated women, which frequently served as a substitute for family ties and offered consolation while they were imprisoned. These ties assisted with practical needs, such as support with childcare, as well as emotional comfort in the form of companionship and shared challenges. During that same period of time, some women suffered disagreements, gossip, exclusion, or distrust. Those who were most frequently affected by these negative experiences were women who had a limited number of visits from outside or who did not have much financial wealth. This indicates that, although peer interactions might serve to cultivate solidarity, they can also become sources of conflict in an environment that is already fraught with stress.

Communication among inmates became another coping method. Many inmates claimed they had adequate time to converse and socialize, calling these talks and activities soothing. Communication helped them cope with loneliness, find encouragement, and relieve stress. However, congestion, lack of privacy, and personal desire for isolation prevented some women from connecting with others. Communication may be a vital support system, but jail restrictions might limit its usefulness.

Prison adaptation had pros and cons. Many women reported changing their behaviour, becoming more empathetic, and learning to live with individuals from varied backgrounds. They also felt they could talk to prison staff and that problems were addressed quickly. However, other inmates felt discriminated against based on class, origin, or criminality, which increased inequity. Few women considered

escape, but a significant number planned to re-offend after release owing to poverty and lack of other means. Others regretted their previous crimes and wanted to change, illustrating that imprisonment's effects vary.

Women inmates at Central Women's Jail in Aizawl follow a regimented daily program to promote discipline, stability, and rehabilitation. Kitchen chores, wake-up calls, devotion, and exercise start the day. Meals are supplied at predetermined intervals, while morning activities include tailoring, weaving, court appearances, counselling, and family communication. Devotion and lock-up in the evening reinforce order, with lights out by nightfall. Since the institution promotes discipline and rehabilitation, the schedule emphasizes spirituality, vocational skills, and time management. However, a lack of structured educational and recreational activities hampers intellectual and creative growth. The long gap between dinner and bedtime also leaves some inmates uncomfortable, highlighting areas for improvement in nutritional and activity planning. Some inmates prefer the structure and discipline, but others struggle with required religious services and early waking.

Coping strategies reveal the diverse ways women manage the stresses of imprisonment. Chatting, gaming, and group activities are the most typical ways inmates cope with loneliness. Others find emotional relief and reflection in reading, writing, music, and religion. Many choose seclusion, sobbing, or sleeping to relieve stress. These differences reveal that although jail life builds resilience in some, others feel hopeless and alone. Peer and spiritual interactions are crucial to survival for many, but limited resources, congestion, and lack of structured programs limit healthy coping alternatives. The daily routine and coping techniques reflect the prison's rehabilitation efforts and women's struggles to adjust.

Inmates' well-being and rehabilitation depend on institutional amenities. The survey indicated that most inmates had toiletries, sanitary items, water, and timely meals. Food was plentiful, but the meals were substandard, consisting mostly of rice, dal, seasonal vegetables, and occasional meat, leaving many inmates disappointed. With regular visits and checkups, medical services were dependable. Many inmates found

weekly counselling helpful for emotional support and self-expression. Sunday church services were also valued, emphasizing the importance of faith in prison life.

Despite these positive aspects, there were significant shortcomings. Few women participated in tailoring or weaving programs, and even fewer reported important skills learned. Peers taught some offenders basket-making and crocheting, but systematic skill-building was non-existent. Most women spent their free time conversing, resting, or playing basic games, while television and playgrounds were poorly maintained or unavailable. Daily life was affected by overpopulation, lack of personal space, and poor cleanliness in the institution. Many inmates claimed poor hygiene and lack of privacy due to sharing a restroom with dozens of others.

Financial resources were another challenge, as most inmates came from disadvantaged backgrounds and survived on very limited funds. Some were impoverished and relied on fellow inmates. While the jail provided basic requirements, medical treatment, counselling, and religious services, the absence of nutritional food, skill-building opportunities, recreational activities, and proper infrastructure hindered rehabilitative potential. These gaps hampered personal growth, caused emotional pain, and hindered reintegration following release.

Reintegration after release is difficult for women inmates due to stigma, broken families, and economic instability. Some inmates wanted to reconcile with family members, start businesses, or follow spiritual paths following liberation. Their views showed how jail helped them realize themselves, strengthened their religious faith, and renewed their appreciation for family. Unfortunately, some inmates indicated hopelessness, financial insecurity, and a lack of definite plans owing to insufficient support structures. These different stories show how resources, connections, and resilience affect women's reintegration preparation.

Overall, the majority of the women prisoners are married, either divorced or widowed, and have children who are dependent on them. They have low educational qualifications, a majority are school drop-outs, and they mostly come from a low socio-economic background. The majority of them are in prison due to drug-related offences, which shows that their deviant behaviour is survival-driven rather than an

intentional violation of the law. While imprisonment can foster positive change such as sobriety, spiritual growth, and renewed family awareness, it also exposes women to stigma, isolation, and continued vulnerability. The findings suggest that without structured post-release support, many women risk falling back into cycles of exclusion and survival-driven offences. A culturally sensitive, gender-responsive reintegration framework combining institutional, family, and community involvement is therefore essential to transform imprisonment into a genuine opportunity for renewal and to prevent recidivism.

### **7.5 Sociological Implications of the Study**

With all said and done, this penultimate section of the thesis attempts to integrate and consolidate the sociological implications of the study in consonance with the theoretical text and empirical context. Examining how society affects social interactions and human behaviour is deemed necessary, especially in relation to structure, institutions, organizations, and culture. By understanding the macro implications from this micro study, the ambition is to appreciate the interconnection between societal institutions and individual behaviour, which may serve as a basis for resolving gender issues in the lived experiences of women who are incarcerated.

When contextualized with Goffman's theory of total institutions (1961), the findings from women prisoners in Mizoram reflect some of the key features he described. Goffman argued that total institutions strip individuals of their former identities through rituals of degradation and impose a new, lower-status identity. This is visible in the prison context, where women adjust to rigid routines, early rising, compulsory religious practices, and constant surveillance experiences that many respondents described as difficult. The stripping away of autonomy, such as the inability to decide meal times or personal schedules, mirrors Goffman's notion of inmates being cut off from wider society and reshaped under institutional authority. This is also in line with the views of Jacobsen and Kristiansen (1971).

The testimonials of prisoners who described personal transformation, such as spiritual rebirth, resolve to stop abusing drugs, or want to reestablish family relationships, also demonstrate the "moral career" that Goffman was referring to.

These modifications demonstrate how prisons serve as “forcing houses” to modify behaviour, but not necessarily in a beneficial way. Some women’s expressions of despair, loneliness, and hostility highlighted the stigmatization and loss of identity that Goffman linked to imprisonment.

Furthermore, the duality of prison life in Mizoram can be explained through Davis’s (1989) enhancement of Goffman’s framework, which emphasizes the openness of institutions, their stated goals, and the ways of compliance. The lived reality from the findings exposes vague goals, unequal treatment, and limited opportunities for actual reintegration, despite the official purpose of the prison’s emphasis on recovery through discipline, spirituality, and vocational activities. Goffman’s idea of complete institutions as closed, regulating systems that both confine and modify identities but frequently fall short in addressing the deeper social and economic problems that lead to criminalization is therefore highly supported by the women’s experiences.

As indicated in the findings, numerous prisoners shared stories of poverty, familial disputes, peer victimization, and social exclusion, all of which align with Agnew’s General Strain Theory of identification of strain-producing conditions. This is also in line with the view of Proctor (2004). For instance, some women turned to crimes like drug trafficking or petty theft as a means of surviving because of the pressure to find work, the lack of steady income, and their isolation from supporting family structures. For some inmates, because of strict schedules, required religious activities, and the stigma associated with being labelled as an offender, the prison itself became another source of stress. This might prolong cycles of resistance and frustration. Others, on the other hand, positively handled stress by turning to their religion, seeking counselling, or working, demonstrating that while criminality is one possible reaction to stress, resilience and adaptability are additional options.

The findings in the socio-economic profile of women prisoners and their overall experiences inside the prison can also be linked with Merton’s Strain Theory. When viewed through Merton’s Strain Theory, the experiences of Mizoram’s female inmates may be seen as the result of structural inequalities and missed opportunities. It aligns with Merton’s idea that when institutional pathways are inaccessible,

individuals adapt through innovation, often turning to illegitimate opportunities. This is also in line with the view of Shaila (2018). According to the findings, many women came from low-income households, had limited education, or lacked a steady job, which prevented them from utilizing legal methods to achieve culturally valued objectives, such as family well-being and financial stability. Hence, crime, especially drug trafficking, theft, or survival offenses, became an alternative route to status and survival. The findings also show how women's marginalized social positions, fractured family ties, and limited vocational skills intensified this pressure, making deviance a rationalized response to structural barriers. Thus, Merton's framework helps explain how crime among women in Mizoram is not merely personal failure but a reflection of broader social inequalities and blocked access to legitimate opportunities.

The rigid daily routine, mandatory religious practices, monitoring, and vocational education exemplify Foucault's concept of prisons as institutions that regulate the body and transform the mind. Instead of explicit corporal punishment, offenders experience a kind of "soul training," which prioritizes compliance, discipline, and spirituality to reform behaviour. The women's accounts reveal both the strengths and limitations of this disciplinary framework. Certain inmates indicated spiritual renewal, enhanced discipline, and a commitment to change, illustrating how prisons serve as venues for moral regulation and internalized governance. Conversely, other inmates articulated discontent with mandatory rituals, monotony, and the erosion of autonomy, exemplifying Foucault's assertion that discipline operates more through nuanced regulation of time, place, and identity than through overt violence. In the context of Mizoram, imprisonment exemplifies Foucault's transformation of punishment into a mechanism of monitoring and correction, focusing less on the physical body and more on regulating the souls and behaviour of female offenders.

The findings reveal a strong link between socio-economic exclusion and female criminality. This can be linked with the theory of Marginalization. Most of the inmates are from a low socioeconomic background, have a low level of education, and lack access to meaningful employment, which leaves them vulnerable to financial distress and social neglect. Many reported themselves as single mothers and

came from broken families. Their situations increased their dependency and pushed them towards subsistence crime or drug-related offences. The testimonies highlight that women who have experienced victimization, be it through abuse, neglect, or social abandonment, exhibit a higher tendency for deviant behaviour, corroborating Chesney-Lind and Daly's (1988) assertion that victimhood is fundamental to female offending. In accordance with Small's (2000) argument, several women encountered unemployment or unstable employment, while others, although being gainfully employed, had insufficient wages to sustain themselves or their children. This institutional exclusion established circumstances in which criminal behaviour emerged as the sole possible method for sustaining livelihoods.

Hirschi's Social Control Theory emphasizes that when bonds of attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief are weak, individuals are more likely to act on criminal impulses. Hirschi (2002). The findings reflect this weakening of social ties. Many inmates came from broken or unstable families, with low educational attainment and limited work opportunities, which reduced their commitment and involvement in conventional roles. Only a few inmates are involved in YMA and the Church before they are incarcerated. Their lack of strong attachments to supportive networks, along with unstable economic conditions, weakened the external restraints that usually prevent deviance. While the study did not directly examine levels of social control, the broader context suggests that poor socio-economic status and limited participation in legitimate activities created conditions where women were more vulnerable to criminal behaviour, aligning with the core assumptions of the theory.

The Self-Control Theory posited by Hirschi and Gottfredson asserts that persons exhibiting low self-control, influenced by inadequate parental supervision and inadequate child-rearing practices, are more prone to criminal activity. Negi, Virender. Negi, Monika. (2017). The theory aligns with the experiences of several offenders who had unstable home environments, maltreatment, or fractured households. Such circumstances likely compromised the cultivation of discipline and long-term self-regulation, rendering individuals more susceptible to impulsive or risky behaviour. Their involvement in crimes associated with poverty, addiction, and



drug trafficking further illustrates characteristics of diminished self-control acting on immediate needs or pressures without considering long-term consequences. Although the study did not directly assess levels of self-control, the patterns of unstable upbringing, inadequate education, and socio-economic challenges indirectly support the theory's fundamental assertion that deficient self-regulation, frequently originating from early life experiences, heightens women's vulnerability to criminal behaviour.

Theories of penology provide different lenses through which the purpose and impact of punishment can be understood, and when contextualized with the findings, they highlight both limitations and possibilities of the prison system. The deterrent and retributive models emphasize suffering and retribution, aiming to instil fear and repay wrongdoing. However, these models appear less effective in the case of women offenders whose crimes often stem from poverty, addiction, and social marginalization rather than deliberate disobedience. The preventive theory, which isolates offenders through imprisonment, aligns more closely with the reality of confinement, where women are removed from the social conditions that facilitated their involvement in crime, though this does little to address primary causes.

The reformatory theory, on the other hand, best resonates with the findings, as prisons are increasingly framed as spaces of correction and rehabilitation. Inmates in Mizoram were exposed to spiritual guidance, counselling, and structured daily routines that aimed to reshape their moral outlook and reintegrate them into society. Yet the effectiveness of such reform is mixed, with some women reporting transformation and renewed purpose, while others experienced frustration and stigmatization. Thus, penological theories collectively provide insight into the ways punishment has been justified and practiced, but in the lived experiences of incarcerated women, reformatory approaches hold the most potential to address the socio-economic and personal struggles that support their criminality

**Table 7.2 Integrated Theoretical Model of Women Prisoners: Text and Context**

| <b>Theory</b>            | <b>Theorists</b>           | <b>Emphasis</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>Study Context</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Total Institution</b> | <b>Erving Goffman</b>      | Closed social system, loss of old identity, stigmatization, degradation process, rite of passage, moral care transformation, forcing house for change.                                                                                                                | In the experiences of women prisoners, their old identity is stripped off through rigid routines, surveillance, and loss of autonomy. Some women reported positive changes like spiritual rebirth or overcoming addiction, while others experienced loneliness, despair, and stigma. The prison's goal of rehabilitation is often in contrast with unequal treatment and limited integration. Prisons act as a "forcing houses" reshaping their identity, but fail to look into the deeper socio-economic issues |
| <b>Strain Theory</b>     | <b>R. K. Merton, Agnew</b> | Structural inequalities and limited access to legitimate opportunities create strain, while negative social experiences like poverty, family conflict, and social exclusion generate frustration, both of which can lead individuals to engage in criminal behaviour. | Socio-economic obstacles, such as low-income households, minimal education, and unstable employment, restrict legitimate opportunities for achievement, compelling them to engage in criminal activities like drug trafficking to sustain themselves and their family. The prison environment imposes additional pressure, since inmates are designated as criminals and must contend with stringent regulations and social hierarchies, which                                                                   |

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                            |                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | further affect their behaviors and adaptive strategies.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Discipline and Punish</b>                                               | <b>Foucault</b>                                                       | Shift in punishment from body to soul. Punishment, from revenge to crime prevention in the form of disciplinary power.                                                                                                  | The practices In Mizoram prison, including rigid daily routine, mandatory religious practices, monitoring, and vocational education, exemplify prison as an institution that regulates the body and transforms the mind. Instead of explicit corporal punishment, offenders experience a kind of “soul training”.                              |
| <b>Marginalization Theory</b>                                              | <b>Kevonne Small Chesney-Lind, Meda. And Daly, K Merry and Morash</b> | Inadequate job, low salary, victimization. Rise in crime among females linked to lack of stable jobs.                                                                                                                   | Low socioeconomic background, low level of education, and lack of access to meaningful employment make the inmates vulnerable to committing a crime. Since some are single mothers who are the sole earners of their families, their situations increased their dependency and pushed them towards subsistence crime or drug-related offences. |
| <b>Social-Control Theory, Self-Control Theory/ General Theory of Crime</b> | <b>Hirschi and Gottfredson</b>                                        | Weak social connections, unstable economic conditions, and insufficient community engagement diminish external constraints and self-regulation, rendering individuals more vulnerable to deviant or criminal behaviour. | The inmate’s involvement in crimes associated with poverty, addiction, and drug trafficking indicates both weakened external constraints and diminished self-control. Although not directly measured, their unstable upbringing, minimal education, and adverse socio-economic                                                                 |

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|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                             |                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | situations imply early life experiences that led to diminished self-control.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Theories of Penology</b> | <b>Dharm and Shelke, Meyer, Cesare Beccaria</b> | <p>Punishment aimed to control or prevent crime. Deterrent- inflict pain to discourage re-offending. Retributive- vengeance or repayment for wrongdoing. Preventive – Prevent offenders from committing crimes again. Reformative- aims at rehabilitation, transforming them into law-abiding citizens.</p> | <p>The deterrent and retributive models that emphasized suffering and instilling fear among the inmates was not seen to be effective in the study. Offences stemmed from poverty, addiction, and social marginalization rather than deliberate disobedience. The preventive theory, which isolates offenders through imprisonment, aligns more closely with the reality of confinement, where women are removed from the social conditions that facilitated their involvement in crime. The reformative theory, on the other hand, best resonates with the findings, as prisons are increasingly framed as spaces of correction and rehabilitation. The spiritual guidance, counselling, and structured daily routines aimed to reshape their moral outlook and reintegrate them into society. However, the effectiveness of such reform is mixed among the inmates, with some women reporting transformation and renewed purpose, while</p> |

|  |  |  |                                                          |
|--|--|--|----------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  |  | others still experienced frustration and stigmatization. |
|--|--|--|----------------------------------------------------------|

Prisons deprive women of their previous identities through stringent regulations and monitoring. Many women feel ashamed, alone, and stigmatized, even if some describe beneficial improvements, including overcoming addiction and spiritual rebirth. Poverty, family strife, marginalization, precarious employment, and a lack of education are the main causes of women's crimes, which drive many, particularly single mothers, to commit survival crimes like drug trafficking, for some, solely for their survival. Impulsive and dangerous behaviours are encouraged by weak social bonds and unstable upbringings, which weaken social and self-control. In Mizoram prisons, discipline has shifted from physical punishment to "soul training" through strict daily routines, mandatory religious services, and vocational work. Hitherto, deterrent and retributive models prove ineffective, preventive approaches mirror isolation, and reformative models resonate most, though outcomes remain mixed, balancing transformation with frustration and stigma.

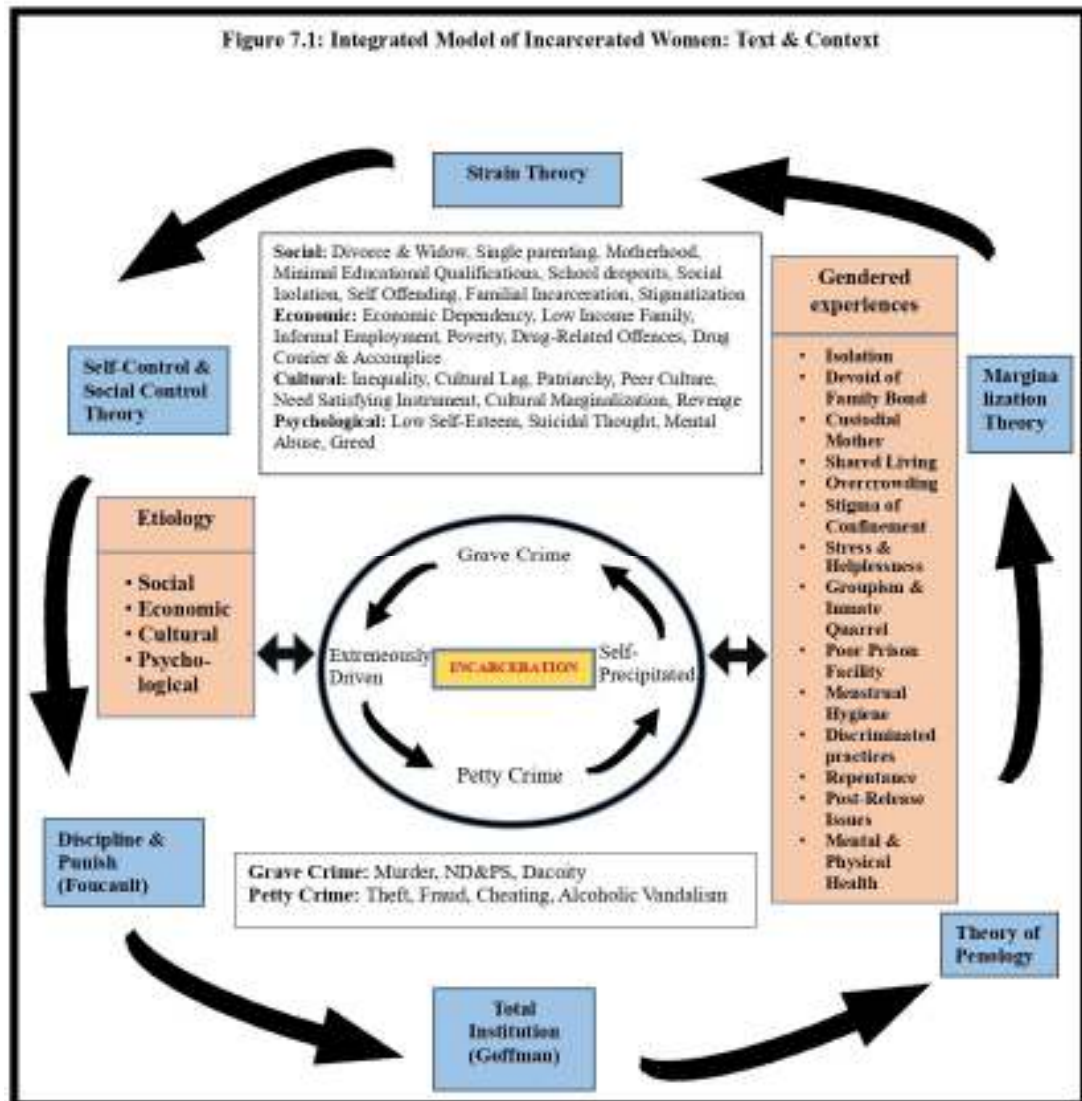
As the respondent stated:

*"For us who have nothing to rely on, no skills, no money, and no relatives to depend on, there is nothing to hope for in the outside world. Our chances of committing the crime, selling drugs again, is an easy way out for our survival".*

Another respondent commented:

*"Prison feels like a hostel where grown-up women stay together, not having much to do and contemplating on our despairing life and the life of our children and relatives who are dependent on us."*

The study of the experience of women inmates in Mizoram shows that women's criminality is shaped by socio-economic disadvantages, weak social bonds, unstable upbringing, and structural inequalities. Prisons act both as institutions of control and potential rehabilitation, but their effectiveness in reforming women is uneven.



This Integrated Model represents the macro theoretical framework, duly supported through micro empirical facts relating to incarcerated women. First of all, the study implies that not a single theory alone is adequate to explain the nature, nuances, and trajectory of the lived experiences of incarcerated women in general. Hence, the Integrated Theoretical Model points to a type of *theoretical pluralism*: the texts and contexts. The model has six layers, such as 1. Incarceration 2. Types of Crime 3. Motives to Commit Crime 4. Etiology of Crime 5. Gendered Experiences 6. Theories in Context (Macro implications of the Micro Study). It emphasizes the socio-economic causes, criminological theories, institutional life, punishment, reform, and the outcomes. The aim is to contextualize theories in relation to the findings of this study, drawing on the experiences of female inmates.

At the centre of the model lies the concept of incarceration, which broadly denotes the condition of being confined or imprisoned as a legal consequence of committing an offense. Although the word often brings up a gender-neutral picture of punishment and discipline, women's experiences and consequences of incarceration are quite different from men's because of their different social positions, biological needs, and socioeconomic situations. The model positions incarceration at the intersection of structural inequality, individual experiences, and institutional authority.

The inner circle distinguishes the types of crimes committed, they are categorized into grave crimes and petty crimes. Under grave crimes, often called serious offenses punishable with 7 years or more of incarceration, such as murder, ND&PS, and dacoity, are among the crimes committed by incarcerated women. While women are more commonly associated with minor or non-violent offenses, the findings proclaim the prevalence of such severe offenses, ND&PS, which is drug-related crime, being the highest. Petty crimes identified in the findings include theft, fraud, cheating, and alcoholic vandalism; however, these categories are not only non-serious and found to be comparatively fewer in number in this study.

The motive to commit these crimes is depicted as either self-precipitated, resulting from personal or self-driven, and extraneously driven (instigated), arising from external forces like peer influence, relatives, and carrier accomplice of drug-peddlers. Self-precipitated motives are found to be dominant among the incarcerated women. The cyclical representation of crime in the model emphasizes that women's participation in criminal activities is not an isolated occurrence but a continuing phenomenon shaped by recurring circumstances, socio-economic contingencies, and individual motives. The motivations of women to engage in criminal behaviour frequently arise from lack and strain rather than intrinsic criminality. Economic hardship, social rejection, single motherhood, and limited opportunities to education or employment restrict legitimate alternatives, prompting women to resort to survival-oriented offenses such as theft or drug trafficking. Their behaviours signify coping mechanisms in reaction to poverty, dependency, and systemic inequality, along with intentional criminality.

The etiology of crime In this framework Is classified Into four Interrelated domains, which are social, economic, cultural, and psychological. Social factors, including divorce, widowhood, familial disintegration, school dropout, and social isolation, lead to vulnerability and deviance. Economic difficulties, such as insufficient income, unstable employment, and dependency on others, create pressure that frequently results in crimes associated with survival. Culturally, gender inequality, patriarchy, and cultural marginalization hinder women's empowerment, constraining their capacity to achieve legitimate goals. Psychological variables such as low self-esteem, suicidal ideation, and experiences of mental or emotional abuse worsen vulnerability to criminal activity. Collectively, these factors illustrate that the origins of female crime are intersectional, grounded in interrelated institutional and individual disadvantages.

The model also emphasizes the gendered experiences of incarcerated women, demonstrating that imprisonment affects women differently from men. The imprisoned women experience social isolation, the stigma of incarceration, and difficulties associated with custodial motherhood, since several inmates are separated from their families and children. Conditions also included overcrowding, poor prison facilities, insufficient menstrual hygiene, and discriminatory practices, which heightened physical and emotional suffering. Repentance also reflects a deep sense of remorse for one's wrongdoings and a sincere desire to seek forgiveness. They have experienced fear of sin, spiritual rebirth, and felt the mercy of the good Lord, and moral sin, reminding them of the importance of righteousness and moral integrity in life. These experiences affirm that women's imprisonment cannot be examined purely as a legal or correctional process but must be understood as a gendered and socially embedded phenomenon.

The model also emphasizes the gendered experiences of incarceration, demonstrating that imprisonment affects women differently from men. The imprisoned women encounter social isolation, the stigma of imprisonment, and difficulties associated with custodial motherhood, as they are separated from their children. Factors including as overcrowding, inadequate prison facilities, insufficient menstrual hygiene, and discriminatory practices intensify their physical and emotional distress.



Within prison, they experience stress, helplessness, and group conflicts, while after release, they struggle with repentance, social reintegration, and mental health issues. These experiences affirm that women's imprisonment cannot be examined purely as a legal or correctional process but must be understood as a gendered and socially embedded phenomenon.

The theoretical foundation of the model synthesizes several major criminological perspectives. The Strain Theory explains how structural inequalities, unfavourable living conditions and lack of access to opportunity structures generate stress and anxiety that result in criminal behaviour. The findings show that incarcerated women come from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds. With low income, limited education, and unstable employment, they struggle to achieve stability through legitimate means. As primary caregivers or single mothers, their inability to meet basic needs creates significant strain and pushes them toward survival-driven actions.

Social and Self-Control Theories emphasize that weak social ties, unstable economic conditions, and limited community support reduce both external control and self-regulation, making individuals more prone to deviant behaviour. Among the inmates, involvement in crimes linked to poverty, addiction, and drug trafficking reflects these weakened controls. Their unstable upbringing, socialization issues, poor education, and difficult socio-economic contingencies suggest early life experiences that contributed to low self-control.

Marginalization Theory contextualizes women's subordination within patriarchal and discriminatory frameworks that increase their vulnerability to criminal action. The study shows that inmates coming from low socioeconomic backgrounds, with limited education and few job opportunities, are particularly vulnerable. Many, especially single mothers and sole earners, turn to subsistence crimes or drug-related offences as a means of survival amid economic hardship and dependency.

While other theories relate to the criminological perspectives, the theories of Foucault and Goffman relate to theories of Penology. Foucault's 'Discipline and Punish' examines how prisons function as institutions of control, enforcing

conformity through surveillance and regulation. In prisons, rigid routines, mandatory religious practices, constant monitoring, and vocational training illustrate this transformation. Rather than physical punishment, inmates undergo a form of “soul training,” where discipline and moral guidance are used to regulate behaviour and reshape the mind.

Goffman’s Total Institution Theory portrays prisons as isolated systems that reshape identity and suppress individuality. While some experience positive transformation, such as spiritual renewal or recovery from addiction, others face loneliness, despair, and social stigma. Although intended for rehabilitation, the system often reflects inequality and limited reintegration opportunities. Prisons thus act as “forcing houses” that reshape identity but fail to address the deeper socio-economic causes of women’s incarceration.

Finally, the Theory of Penology ties these frameworks to the broader understanding of punishment, discipline, and correctional philosophies in general. Punishment serves to control or prevent crime through various approaches such as deterrent (inflicting pain to discourage re-offending), retributive (repaying wrongdoing), preventive (isolating offenders to stop future crimes), and reformative (rehabilitating offenders into law-abiding citizens). In this context, deterrent and retributive models proved ineffective, as most offences arose from poverty, addiction, and marginalization rather than intentional violation of the law. The preventive theory aligns with imprisonment’s role in removing women from criminogenic environments. However, the reformative approach resonates most strongly, as prisons increasingly emphasize correction and rehabilitation through spiritual guidance, counselling, and structured routines. Still, outcomes vary as some women experience genuine transformation, while others continue to struggle with frustration and social stigma.

Thus, the integrated model demonstrates that women’s incarceration is the cumulative consequence of systemic oppression, inequality in society, and gendered power relations. It emphasizes that female criminality frequently results from economic hardship, mental distress, and limited opportunity rather than intentional

indulgence in criminal behaviour. The framework offers a comprehensive knowledge of women's pathways into crime, their experiences in prisons, and the lasting effects of incarceration on their social reintegration and identity.

**7.6 Policy Recommendations:** From the experiences of women prisoners, some actionable recommendations for the issues are consolidated and presented in the following table as the macro policy outcome from this micro study.

**Table 7.3: Policy outcome**

| Diagnosis                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Prognosis                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1. Poor prison facilities</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <p>a) The recreational activities available for the inmates are limited. They only have a playing card and a Television in some rooms.</p> <p>b) A library is available, but it is not well-maintained. The library had one almirah with books covered in cobwebs and dust.</p> <p>c) Only two training facilities, such as Tailoring and Weaving, are available with limited seats. Most of the inmates are not interested in it.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only 2 televisions are functional. The majority didn't have anything much to do. The inmates longed for a playground where they could play outdoor games.</li> <li>They need a well-maintained library to engage themselves with books, spend their time productively, and enrich their knowledge.</li> <li>There needs to be more practical training facilities for skill enhancement, where the majority can learn new and marketable skills.</li> </ul> |
| <b>2. Overcrowding and shared living</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <p>Each Ward in the prison is overcrowded, shared living, and there is no privacy.</p> <p>a) More than 30 inmates need to share a single toilet. Two or three individuals need to take a bath together.</p> <p>b) Under Trial Prisoners and Convicts cannot be separated since it is</p>                                                                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More toilets and bathrooms need to be constructed to ensure that women inmates have adequate facilities for maintaining personal cleanliness, particularly in relation to their menstrual hygiene.</li> <li>A separate ward needs to be</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

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| <p>overcrowded. UTP inmates are placed in Convict Wards.</p> <p>c) There is no privacy; they have to sleep next to each other. No place to move around and put their belongings. It is especially difficult for mothers with their accompanying children.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <p>constructed to properly segregate Under Trial Prisoners from Convicts, ensuring their safety, legal compliance, and appropriate management.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a need to construct proper storage racks so that inmates can keep their belongings in an organized manner. Additionally, the existing wards require extension to provide sufficient space and improve overall living conditions within the facility.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <p><b>3. Mental and Physical Health</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <p>a) Many inmates have a stigma of confinement and stress. Only faith-based counselling services are available for their mental well-being. Even though they are available three times a week, most inmates do not regularly attend them. They find it useless.</p> <p>b) Many inmates have experienced groupism and inmate quarrels, which have affected their emotional well-being.</p> <p>c) Many reported that their health condition deteriorated after they were in prison.</p> <p>d) Medical staff are regularly available, but for many inmates, they are difficult to consult.</p> <p>e) Only vitamins and paracetamol are available.</p> <p>f) For HIV patients, they are not</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trained psychiatrists and psychologists are required to provide regular assessments, counselling, and therapeutic support, ensuring the overall mental well-being and emotional stability of the inmates.</li> <li>• Discipline and leadership need to be regulated to avoid quarrels and groupism. The staff needs to take prompt disciplinary action.</li> <li>• There is a need for regular medical check-ups and the availability of medicines.</li> <li>• Medical staff need to be more vigilant and attentive towards the health needs of the inmates.</li> <li>• The health clinic needs to have a variety of medicines so that the inmates do not need to wait for their medicine</li> </ul> |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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| allowed to have their medicine with them.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <p>when needed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Especially for HIV patients, it will be convenient for them if they could have their medicine with them.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>4. Nutritional value of food</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <p>The nutritional value of the food provided to them is poor.</p> <p>a) Most often, the food item consisted of potato and dal. They received meat, usually chicken, once a week. At lunch, they received tea without milk and dry roti.</p> <p>b) Often, they received uncooked rice, which is difficult for them to eat.</p> <p>c) No separate food is provided to children who are in prison because of their mothers.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a need to improve the food items provided to them. The food items provided to them can be changed. Seasonal vegetables can be prepared.</li> <li>The cook in charge of preparing food needs to be cautious and trained in handling ingredients, ensuring that all meals served are safe and edible.</li> <li>All the children are below 6 years of age. They need a separate and nutritious food supply for their healthy growth and development.</li> </ul> |
| <b>5. Custodial Mothers</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <p>a) Several inmates are accompanied by their children, below 6 years, inside the prison since there is no one to take care of them.</p> <p>b) Many inmates are single mothers who have dependent children.</p> <p>c) Mothers with children are not placed separately, and the play station for children is not well-maintained.</p>                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These mothers with accompanying children need care and protection.</li> <li>The well-being of their children is a concern and needs to be taken care of, especially when they are sick.</li> <li>There is a need for proper care and a space for learning for children inside the prison.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>6. Devoid of family bond and Isolation</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <p>a) The majority of the inmates are visited by their families only on request. The time of visit is also limited.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It will be more helpful for the inmates to reconnect with their relatives if the timing of their visits is increased.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

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| <p>b) They could call their relatives thrice a week, but the phone signal and the quality of the phone used are not good. They also have limited time and have to spend money to make phone calls.</p> <p>c) They have a strong sense of isolation with limited outside interference.</p>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It will be helpful for the inmates if the duration of phone calls could be extended, and quality phones are provided.</li> <li>• Duration of visitation and phone calls need to be extended and properly regulated.</li> </ul>                                                                                        |
| <b>7. Discriminated practices</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <p>a) Some inmates report facing discrimination from the staff. Discrimination in treatment between the rich and the poor.</p> <p>b) Many inmates who could not afford to hire a private lawyer faced difficulties in communicating with their appointed lawyers.</p>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All the inmates deserve equal treatment from the staff, and staff need to be properly trained to maintain professionalism in dealing with the inmates.</li> <li>• The inmates' accessibility to their lawyers needs to be taken care of during the entire judicial proceedings.</li> </ul>                            |
| <b>8. Repentance and post-release issues</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <p>a) Many inmates have realised their wrongdoings, accompanied by a genuine desire to change their behaviour and rebuild their lives.</p> <p>b) Many inmates are worried about their future, and they cannot plan. They are burdened by financial issues as they try to rebuild their lives.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rehabilitative measures need to be strengthened and expanded to equip inmates with the skills, counselling, support, and opportunities necessary for their successful reintegration into society after release.</li> <li>• Post-release programmes need to be planned to engage them to reduce recidivism.</li> </ul> |

The policy recommendations came about through the diagnosis of the problems and the offering of solutions to counter the various issues faced by the inmates at Central Women's Jail.

1. The prison is to make provisions for recreation and skill development by establishing better facilities, such as a proper playground, a fully functional library, and a wide range of practical training programmes for skill enhancement.
2. The prison authorities are to take the initiative to build additional toilets to reduce overcrowding and maintain hygiene, separate wards for UTP and convicts, and provide storage spaces so that the inmates can safely keep their personal belongings within the facility.
3. The prison is to make provisions for professional mental-health support, such as qualified psychiatrists and psychologists, to offer regular counselling and therapeutic support to inmates, improve discipline to maintain order and safety, and provide timely, accessible, and high-quality medical services.
4. The prison has to make provision for separate nutrition for children, tailored to their developmental needs, including age-appropriate meals. The quality of the food provided to the inmates has to be regularly checked and regulated to ensure hygiene, safety, and nutritional adequacy.
5. Provisions have to be made by the prison authorities to create a separate space and special care for mothers with accompanying children so that they can receive focused care and support, and provide space for child-friendly areas equipped with toys, learning materials, and play facilities for their healthy growth and development.
6. An enhancement has to be made by the Prison authorities related to family communication by extending visitation hours and ensuring a more flexible schedule. Phone connectivity and the allowed duration for phone usage should also be upgraded so inmates can maintain regular contact with their families.

7. The Prison staff and authorities have to be alert and proactive in preventing any form of unequal treatment by staff and make sure that everyone has access to legal aid, regardless of their background or offences.
8. The Prison authorities should implement practical post-release rehabilitation and support programmes that offer guidance, skill training, counselling, and support services to inmates as they transition back into society.

### **7.7 Future areas of research**

Future scholars in the field of women's incarceration should incorporate the following considerations into their studies:

1. There needs to be an enhancement in the qualitative research about female inmates. More focus needs to be directed on studying women prisoners through case studies, and not only on the quantitative aspect of the study. This will offer a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and adversities encountered as a result of incarceration.
2. In the study of women prisoners, their families and relatives play an important role. It will be highly beneficial if focus could be given to the roles, responsibilities, and support of their families and relatives. Besides, the impact on their families and relatives, in terms of their mental health and the trauma they encounter, needs an in-depth analysis.
3. It will be helpful if studies could focus on the prison policies and administration and compare them with the daily structure and routines of the prison study.
4. Rehabilitative aspects of the prison system need to be further studied and analysed with possible recommendations.
5. In terms of women's imprisonment, it would prove beneficial if further case studies could be conducted among mothers with their accompanying children; the problems and struggles they encounter deserve an in-depth analysis.
6. For future research, delving deeper into the gender comparative study of imprisonment could help in understanding the needs and policy recommendations of prison administration.



7. From this research, it is found that the majority are in prison due to drug-related offences. Thus, there is a need for future research to focus more on the ND&PS-related offences and find a way to determine the causes and consequences of such criminal behaviour.

## **APPENDIX- I**

### **Research Diary**

**23.08.21** - An online interview for Ph.D. selection was held at the Department.

**25.08.21** - The list of selected candidates for Ph.D. admission has been declared. 10 candidates were selected, and I am lucky to be included. On 03.08.21, we attended the Online ICT Orientation programme.

**27.08.21** - I met my supervisor, Prof. RK Mohanty, at the Department and downloaded two articles. He taught us how to arrange literature in a systematic order.

**31.08.21** - I downloaded 15 articles related to my research proposal from JSTOR.

**13.09.21** - I met my supervisor and we discussed the review of the literature. He taught us how to do a review of literature practically in his chamber.

**20.09.21** - Today, my supervisor taught me keywords to be used while searching for articles related to my research. Collected more than 20 articles and journals related to my topic.

**23.09.21** - Started reading a thesis related to my topic from Shodhganga. The whole month of September, I collected and read articles, journals, and theses related to my topic.

**1<sup>st</sup>- 7<sup>th</sup> October, 21** - Attended the ‘Short Term Course on Research and Publication Ethics’ organized by HRDC, MZU. Inaugural programme started on 1<sup>st</sup> Oct, 2021 at 11:00 am. During this week, we have an opportunity to listen to lectures from professors hailing from prestigious Universities all over India. I had a great experience learning new things, and especially improved my ethical view on research. The dos and don’ts relating to publishing articles and writing a thesis. I also learn the importance and relevance of UGC-carelist. It is an insightful and wholesome experience. At the end of the course, all the participants are awarded a participation certificate.

**29.10.21** - Continue reading articles related to my topic.

**1.11.21** - Started coursework, 1<sup>st</sup> class in on Research Methodology by Prof. RK Mohanty. He taught us on Epistemology, Ontology, Positivism, interpretivism, and realism.

**3.11.21** - Coursework class on introduction to qualitative and quantitative research, single and mixed methods. Brief definition of types of research design.

**4.11.21** - Today's class is on 'Philosophy of Social Sciences', an introductory lecture by Prof. RK Mohanty, and Social Order and Social Reality by Dr. William Singh. The last class on Marxism by Dr. Zara.

**5.11.21** - Evening lecture on Critical Theory and an introduction to the Frankfurt School of thought by Dr. Zara.

**6.11.21** - Dr. William's class on Post-colonial argument.

**9.11.21** - Dr. William's class on Neo-functionalism and reflexive sociology.

**10.11.21**- Sir Zara's class on Holkheimer, Adorno, and Walter Benjamin from the Frankfurt School of Thought.

**11.11.21** - Prof. RK Mohanty's class on Subjectivism, and he explained it with interesting examples that are easy to understand. After this class, Sir William talked about Max Weber and Clifford Geertz.

**12.11.21** - Prof. Mohanty class on Constructivism and Axiology, giving suitable examples.

**15.11.21** - Sir Zara's class on Anthony Giddens and Foucault. He gave a descriptive explanation with relevant examples from our society.

**16.11.21** - Prof Mohanty had a fruitful class on 'How to write a research proposal'. He taught us the step-by-step process of writing a proposal. It's helpful and informative.

**17.11.21** -We had Prof. Mohanty's class on objectivity and subjectivity. He taught us the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity. After this, Sir Zara taught us the theory of Structuration.

**18.11.21** - Sir William taught us an elaborate lecture on Dramaturgy and Symbolic Interactionism.

**20.11.21** - Prof. Mohanty taught us a scholarly debate on thinkers like Weber, Pareto, Alvin Gouldner, Sorokin, and Richard S Rudner

**22.11.21** - Dr Zara's class on the works of Habermas and the types of action by Habermas.

**23.11.21** - Prof. Mohanty taught us Ethnomethodology and Phenomenology elaborately.

**25.11.21** - Tonight's class is on Ethnomethodology by Sir William

**29.11.21** - Tonight's class is on 'How to write a review of literature'. Prof. Mohanty taught us the step-by-step process and how to identify keynotes, categorize them, and systematically write a review of the literature. After this Sir Zara took a class on Modernity by Giddens and Risk Society by Ulrich Beck. He also gave us an assignment to relate any theory to our present society, which we have studied.

**1.12.21** - Prof. Mohanty's class on the steps in writing a review of literature. The sub-theme of the lecture includes documenting, categorizing, evaluating, consolidating, citing, and footnote with reference and bibliography. This class is followed by Dr. Zara's class on Theory of Hyper Reality by Manuel Castells.

**2.12.21** - Prof. Mohanty taught us Ethics in Social Science Research. The topic includes ethical issues in social science research as well as publication ethics. We learn four fundamental characteristics of research ethics.

**4.12.21** - Prof. Mohanty taught us 'Thesis Writing'. The topic includes 10 fundamental principles for efficient thesis writing. It also includes two important basic principles in writing a thesis, which are SPES (Situation, Problem, Study, Evaluation, Solution) & SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time Bound).

**8.12.21** - Dr.Dindini's class on Sampling, types of sampling, and application of sampling in research.

**10.12.21** - Special lecture on SPSS by Prof. Zokaitluangi, former Dean, SSS. She practically explained to us how to collect, code, categorize, and analyze data using SPSS.

**17.2.22** - Continue collecting related articles from JSTOR and Shodhganga. Read a dissertation related to my topic written by Christina Lalrinthari titled 'Experiences of Women Prisoners: A Sociological Study on the Life of Women Behind Bars'. This dissertation is helpful for me as it gave me insight into how I will do my research.

**24.2.22** - Today I visited the Prison Department, Govt. of Mizoram. I collected the Daily Population data of Prisoners in Mizoram. The Department has been publishing and updating a daily prisoner statistics report. I took home a print copy of the Mizoram Prisoners Daily Population Report dated 24.02.2022.

**27.02.22** - Reviewed an article titled 'Women Prisoners and their Dependent Children: A Study of Jaipur and Jodhpur Central Jails In Rajasthan' by Asha Bhandari and 'Women's Imprisonment: Crime and Justice' by Candice Kruttschnitt and Rosemary Gartner.

**28.02.22** - Today I reviewed Women Prisoners: Altering the Life Cycle of Abuse by Amy Fetting, Women in Crime: A study on prison inmates in West Bengal by Sujata Sen, Women in Prison by Richard Smith, and Prisons and Rehabilitation by CR Tiltte. Started writing the Introduction for my proposal.

**2.03.22** - Tonight's reading includes 'Our Prisons Punitive or Rehabilitative' by R Gul, Discipline and Punish by Foucault, Female Offenders in a Changing Society by GB Palermo, A study of Conditions of Women Prisoners and their Children in Eastern UP Jails by Shaila Parveen, and Punishment and Prison by RD Shankardass.

**3.03.22** - Continued reading and reviewing articles. I just framed my tentative topic as 'The Life and Experiences of Women Prisoners. A Study in Mizoram.

**7.03.22** - Today, I met my supervisor, Prof. RK Mohanty, who asked me to make a list of all the articles that I downloaded and put in a separate folder. He also asked me to list down all the references 'used' and 'unused' in a separate folder.

**12.03.22** - Tonight, I arranged my literature stock under sub-themes like Family and Children, Methodology, Problems faced by women inmates, educational experiences, empowerment, gender related, theory, report, and conditions of female prisoners.

**13.03.22** - Even though today is Sunday, Famkima accompanied me to my supervisor's place to show him my proposal. He changed my topic to 'Inmate Life and Incarceration Experiences of Women in Prison: A study in Mizoram'. He pointed out several suggestions and necessary changes to be made.

**15.03.22** - Today I showed him my draft proposal. He added one objective regarding the contextualization of the theory of punishment. Because of this addition, he asked me to review theories of Penology and added to my Theoretical Review.

**17.03.22** - Today, my supervisor asked me to review the Thematic review and methodological reviews of the review of literature as a sub-theme.

**18.03.22** - Added reviews to the thematic and methodological reviews.

**21.03.22** - I met my supervisor and made the final necessary changes to my proposal. He asked me to make power PowerPoint presentation for DRC.

**22.03.22** - Prepare PowerPoint presentation for the upcoming DRC presentation. The slides include a title, an introduction, review of literature highlighting sub-themes. Research gap and rationale of the study, objectives, methodology, operationalization of concepts, sources of data, data analysis and interpretation, and research ethics.

**25.03.22** - Departmental Research Committee presentation day, the panel suggested several helpful recommendations. I made changes to their suggestions. Their suggestions include the addition of a census method and adding more Indian authors to the review of literature.

**5.04.22** - Board of Studies: Our synopsis was presented today at the BoS. Our Head of Department presented each of our synopses. It ended well.

**4.04.22** - As advised by my supervisor, I started breaking down the objectives into different sub-topics for the preparation of the interview schedule.

**17.04.22** - Added more reviews to my literature.

**5.07.22** - Attended a Seminar titled 'Contextualizing Theory in Criminological Research' in which the speaker was Prof. RK Mohanty, my supervisor. He talked about the theories of criminology and the importance of theory in criminology research. He added 6 important characteristics of how one can know about the relevance of research. The characteristics include logical consistency, scope of the theory, parsimony, testability, empirical validity, and utilitarianism.

**11.07.22** - Continue reading and add more to my review of the literature.

**13.7.22** - Prepared a write-up for our first progress report.

**14.7.22** - Today, we had our first progress report at the department. HoD briefed us on our next task ahead i.e. complete review of literature, write an overview, highlight keywords and define all keywords, frame interview schedule and do pilot study.

**11.8.22** - Added more reviews to the methodological reviews.

**13.8.22** - Tonight we have google meet class, where our batchmate Lawmsangpuia and Prof. Mohanty gave us lecture on how to take out keywords and how to make tables for family history.

**19.8.22** - Added more reviews to the theoretical review section.

**11.9.22** - Added more reviews to the thematic review section.

**21.10.22** - Showed my second chapter, which is a review of the literature, to my supervisor. He took out all the sub-themes in my review of literature and asked me to group similar themes so that they could be more organized.

**22.10.22** - Tonight, I am writing an overview for the theoretical review section.

**29.10.22** - Finish writing all the overviews.

**4.11.22** - Started highlighting all the keywords/key concepts from the review of literature. Sorted and managed to take out 118 key concepts.

**18.11.22** - Finished explaining and defining all the key concepts.

**27.11.22** - Started framing questions for the interview schedule.

**2.12.22** - Showed the draft questions to my supervisor. He told me to reframe it in a way that it will be possible to feed into SPSS.

**9.12.22** - Finalized my first draft of the interview schedule with my supervisor. Come up with 100 semi-structured/closed-ended questions and 12 open-ended questions.

**13.12.22** - Done with Second Progress report. Have to conduct a pilot study as soon as possible.

**10.2.23** - Submitted permission letter to the Prison Department, Govt. of Mizoram for conducting Field Work at Central Women's Jail, Tanhril.

**14.2.23** - Granted permission from the Prison Department to do field work at Central Women's Jail.

**18.2.23** - The first day of fieldwork started today. I am accompanied by PL-i. We are welcomed by Pi Maremi, who is the Head Warden of Women's Prison. The prison environment was calm, and it looked more or less like a hostel. Pi Maremi guides us to each room, and she introduces me. All of them stood up when we entered their room. Children are present, and the room seems overcrowded. It was a great experience and was beyond my expectations.

**23.2.23** - Today, I managed to interview 3 inmates: 2 convicts and 1 UTP.

**27.2.23** - I met my supervisor with the report of my pilot study. We reframed the questions. Add more questions and cut some of the questions.

**1.3.23** - My supervisor asked me to maintain the master schedule for the interview schedule.

**7.3.23** - I write down the important quotable quotes in a Word document in a separate folder.

**8.3.23** - Prepare master schedule and make necessary changes to the interview schedule. Also, add more to the review of the literature.



**9.3.23** - Today, I managed to interview 3 respondents. One of my respondents was sick, and I managed to visit her as well.

**16.3.23** - Today, I managed to interview 3 inmates, 1 convict, and 2 UTP.

**17.3.23** - I enter important quotes into a Word document.

**23.3.23** - Today, I managed to interview only 2 respondents since I was a bit late. The second interview was disrupted by their dinner time. Since the dining hall was far from some wards, the in-charge carried their share of food near their room. Some were eating inside their room, and some in the corridors. They seem to enjoy their dinner. Their dinner consists of boiled rice and potato gravy, but all of them have extra dishes of their own. I leave the place at 3.50 pm in the evening.

**24.4.23** - Today is visiting day at the prison. I pushed myself and managed to interview 5 inmates. Discussed the paper to be presented at the upcoming Seminar with my friends in the evening. Come up with problems of overcrowding and the infrastructure of the prison.

**28.3.23** - Today, I managed to interview the staff regarding the infrastructure of the prison and the problems of overcrowding, since I have to collect data for the upcoming paper to be presented at the Seminar.

**29.3.23** - Today, I reported to my supervisor regarding my progress.

**31.3.23** - Today, I managed to interview 3 respondents along with the Jailor of the prison.

**4.4.23** - Today, I managed to interview 5 respondents from 10:30 am – 2:20 pm.

**5.4.23** - Today, I managed to interview only 2 respondents, since one respondent took time to be interviewed.

**21.4.23** - Today, I managed to interview 5 respondents.

**27.4.23** - Today. I could interview only 3 respondents, since they all have lots to share, I could not cover many.

**28.4.23** - Today, I reached the prison at 10:20 am. Unfortunately, they didn't allow me to enter the prison. It seems that there are some issues inside the jail. The Staff member politely asked me to visit another day. I happen to know that some of the inmates are engaging in drugs, and one inmate needs to be hospitalized due to an overdose. In such cases, they punished those who were involved by putting them in a separate cell for a week and shaving their head.

**3.5.23** - Today, I managed to interview 4 respondents starting from 11:00 am- 2:45 pm.

**4.5.23** - Today, I showed my paper for the upcoming presentation to my supervisor. He asked me to add more regarding the cultural aspects.

**15.5.23** - Today, I managed to interview 3 respondents, since I am not feeling well. I go home early.

**16.5.23** - Today, I managed to interview 5 respondents. Since the Progress Report is approaching, I pushed myself to interview at least 5 respondents. The inmates are easily accessible as always.

**17.5.23** - Today, I managed to interview 5 respondents. I am also working on a paper to be presented at a Seminar to be held on 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup>, conducted by the Department of Sociology, PUC.

**18.5.23** - Today, I attended a Two-day National Seminar on the topic 'Post-Mizo Peace Accord (1986- Present): Narratives, Development and Ongoing Issues in Mizoram. There are two sessions, where 8 papers are presented.

**19.5.23** - Today, I presented a paper titled, 'Inside Central Women's Jail: Life of Mothers and their Accompanying Children'. In our session, there are four presenters. It was a fruitful experience. I received 4 questions from the audience, and we had a fruitful interaction.

**23.5.23** - Today, we had our Progress Report Presentation at the Department. The external expert was Prof. Himansu from the Tourism Department, MZU. It went well.

**19.6.23** - Today, I went to jail, but I could not interview any inmates since they have a Crusade which was organized by Synod Prison Ministry. It will be a week-long crusade. The Staff kindly asked me to come next week. They plan to celebrate YMA day, and I donated to the banner. They will invite Minister Robert Romawia Royte as their chief guest.

**26.6.23** - Today, I managed to interview 5 respondents, i.e., Schedule no. 52-56. I happen to interview the only lifter in the prison. She was responsive and well-educated, and she really knows how to answer me in a positive tone.

**27.6.23** - Today I interview Schedule 57 and 58. Both are ND& PS cases.

**5.7.23** - Today, I managed to interview 6 respondents. Since there are fewer inmates interested in being interviewed from Ward A&B, I shifted to UTP Ward VI. Synod Prison Ministry took an initiative to open a music class, i.e., keyboard class, free of charge for interested inmates for a week. Three inmates can learn to play at a time. They enjoyed it a lot.

**6.7.23** - Today, I interviewed Schedule 65-68. Today, Kohhran Hmeichhia from Dawrpui Presbyterian Church visited them and donated essentials and snacks for the inmates.

**12.7.23** - Today I interview respondents 69- 71, i.e., 3 respondents from UTP.

**20.7.23** - Today, I cannot interview since they have a programme. Visitors from outside organized ‘Skill Development and Entrepreneurship training’, which was organized by the National Commission for Women. I attended the programme, which lasted till 2:00 pm.

**22.7.23** - Today, I attended a programme organized by Synod Prison Ministry under the Mizoram Synod. The programme was specially organised by ex-convicts. It was a retreat function for convicts. It was held at Bungkawn Presbyterian Hall. Rev. Lalmuchhuaka, who was the Director of Synod Prison Ministry, chaired the programme. Rev. Dr. K. Lallawmzuala, Senior Executive Secretary, gave a sermon. 8 ex-convicts share their heartfelt testimony. It was the first time they held such an event; they plan to hold it every year.

**1.8.23** - Today I interviewed 6 inmates, Schedule 80-86.

**2.8.23** - Today, I interviewed 5 inmates, Schedule 87-91.

**3.8.23** - Today, I interviewed 4 inmates, Schedule 92-95. Since their ward is an extension due to limited space, more than 30 inmates share 1 bathroom.

**4.8.23** - Today, I interviewed 3 inmates, Schedule 96-98.

**9.8.23** - Today I interviewed 3 inmates, Schedule 99-101 from Convict A ward. Since they had their dinner at 3:00 pm, it is not possible to interview them after 3:00 pm.

**17.8.23** - I cannot interview since they had a discussion programme on Skill Development and Entrepreneurship: Women and Health as part of the celebration of AKAM - Women's Empowerment. It was organized by Women and Child Development, Govt. of Mizoram, in collaboration with the National Commission for Women. Two speakers talk about skill development and all the possibilities regarding start-up businesses that they can avail after they are out from prison.

**21.8.23** - Today, I interviewed 4 inmates, Schedule 102-105.

**22.8.23** - Today, I interviewed 5 inmates, Schedule 106-110.

**29.8.23** - Today, I interviewed 3 inmates, Schedule 111-113. The last respondent approached me at the dining hall; she looked sad and pale. The interview lasted till 4:30 pm as she had lots to share; she even skipped her dinner.

**30.8.23** - Today, I managed to interview 3 inmates, Schedule 114-116.

**31.8.23** - Today, I interview 2 inmates, schedule 117-118.

**4.9.23** - Today, I managed to interview 6 inmates, Schedule 119-124.

**5.9.23** - Today, I interviewed 6 inmates, Schedule 125-131.

**6.9.23** - Today, I interviewed 6 inmates, Schedule 132-137.

**12.9.23** - Today, they had a programme on 'Assessment on Mental Health' organized by Mizoram State Legal Services Authority in collaboration with the Department of Psychology, Mizoram University. The programme is chaired by Prof. Zokaitluangi.

Two speakers had an interactive session with the inmates. The inmates were asked to answer a questionnaire regarding the assessment of mental health. I have to help them out since they didn't know how to answer them.

**13.9.23** - I interviewed 5 inmates, Schedule 138-141. After consulting my supervisor, I took 1<sup>st</sup> Sept 2023 as the start of my fieldwork. Taking this date, 50% of the inmates are 140, since 1 inmate approached me to be interviewed. I took 141 as my total respondents.

**18.9.23** - With the help of my supervisor, I categorized my respondents, selected inmates for the case study as well.

**19.9.23** - Interviewed two selected inmates for case study.

**4.10.23** - Interviewed another two inmates for case study.

**5.10.23** - Interviewed two inmates for case study.

**6.10.23** - Interviewed the only lifter present in the prison as a case study.

**8.10.23** - I interviewed the warder of the jail and the jailor as KII. Unfortunately, the assistant jailor refused to be interviewed.

**16.10.23** - Went to Delhi with the permission of my supervisor, visited the National Archive.

**25.10.23** - As suggested by my supervisor, today I visited NASSDOC ( National Social Science Documentation Centre) under ICSSR. Borrowed two books, ' Women in Prison, An Insight into Captivity and Crime' by Suvarna Cherukuni and 'The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy and Science of Punishment', which is an edited book.

**26.10.23** - As suggested by my supervisor, I visited the Bureau of Police Research and Development. I also visited the NCRB office. They both advise accessing their online portal, where they have updated everything.

**1.11.23** - Today, I visited Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Photocopy relevant chapters for my thesis from four books. Women, Crime and Law by BK Nagla,

Women, Crime and Criminal Justice by Allison Morris, Women Who Offend by Gill McIver, The Nature of Women's Crime by Dennis Saleebey.

**10.11.23** - Volunteered myself at the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual International Conference on Social Sciences held at MZU. Received an appreciation certificate.

**20.11.23** - Interviewed Rev. Lalhmuchhuaka, Director, Synod Prison Ministry at Synod Office, as KII respondents.

**24.11.23** - Interviewed Rev. Zosangliana Colney, Chairman, Set Free Ministry, India, as a KII respondent.

**7.12.23** - We had our 4<sup>th</sup> Progress Report at the Department. They advise me to use triangulation since my respondents are prisoners.

**5.6.24** - I took a long break from my research since I am sick and underwent an operation. Fortunately, I had the opportunity to present a paper in absentia at the Two-Day International Seminar 'Voices Unbound: Perspectives on Social Sciences and Beyond' organized by Pachhunga University College on 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2024.

**6.6.24** - Started entering data into Excel for SPSS.

**10.6.24** - I attended an online lecture on the topic 'New Criminal Laws in India: Key Insights' as part of UGC's Chetna Series of lectures.

**14.6.24** - Continue to enter data of the closed-ended questions in the Excel sheet.

**28.6.24** - Finished data entry, which will be later analyzed using SPSS. Started writing chapter I.

**17.7.24** - Showed the first chapter to my supervisor, and started writing Chapter 2.

**23.7.24** - My supervisor helped me rearrange the subheadings in chapter 1, asked me to write an overview at the end of each subheading.

**24.7.24** - Showed chapter 2 to my supervisor. Make necessary changes.

**27.7.24** - Re-check all the references and start working on Chapter 3, which is the Methodology chapter.

**28.7.24** - Started writing my presentation for the upcoming Progress Report.

**30.7.24** - We had our 5<sup>th</sup> Progress Report. The external was Prof. Pathi from the PA Department.

**14.9.24** - Started writing Chapter 3, which is the Methodology chapter.

**15.11.24** - Since I am not familiar with SPSS, request Gracy from the Social Work Department to analyze my data.

**29.11.24** - Cross-check every data analyzed using SPSS and then make necessary changes.

**2.12.24** - Data analysis on SPSS is finally completed, which will later be incorporated into the chapters.

**18.3.25** - Started working on Chapter IV, which is the socio-economic profile. Started explaining and contextualizing the meaning of each heading.

**25.4.25** - Continue to contextualize all the headings of Chapter IV. I also put up the content for the remaining chapters, i.e., V, VI, VII, and VIII. Also started analyzing the tables in Chapter IV.

**6.5.25** - Meet my supervisor. He reduced and clubbed together the extensive contents in each of my chapters.

**7.5.25** - Started to insert all the tables in each chapter.

**8.5.25** - Continue to write Chapter IV.

**14.5.25** - Had a Google Meet with my supervisor and updated my progress. Had a lot to re-do and make all the necessary changes.

**16.5.25** - Had a Google Meet with my supervisor. Add, rearrange, and make changes in Chapter IV.

**17.5.25** - Had a Google Meet with my supervisor. 1<sup>st</sup> draft of chapter IV is done. My supervisor helped me rearrange the contents of Chapter V. We changed the title from Causes and Consequences of Incarceration to Etiology of Female Criminality. He helped me rearrange all the contents of Chapter V.

**22.5.25** - Attended an Online Seminar organized by Netaji Subhas Open University on the topic Women in Crime: Selected Cases from the Field in West Bengal.

**5.6.25** - Attended Two-Day National Seminar on 'Breaking Barriers: Paradigm Shift in Socio-Political and Cultural Discourse of North East India' organized by Mizoram Christian College.

**8.6.25** - Started writing Chapter V. Defining the meanings and analyzing the tables. Along with incorporating qualitative analysis from the respondents.

**9.6.25** - Continue writing Chapter V, which is The Etiology of Female Criminality.

**13.6.25** - Continue to write Chapter V. Started writing an overview of each major heading, which will be followed by putting quotations.

**16.6.25** - Started with qualitative analysis of Chapter V.

**27.6.25** - Completed writing Chapter V. Started with Chapter VI, which is Effects of Incarceration on Women.

**11.7.25** - Finished defining each subheading of Chapter VI. Started analysing the tables.

**23.7.25** - Finish analyzing the tables of Chapter VI.

**25.7.25** - Started to write an overview of each subheading of chapter VI.

**8.8.25** - Completed chapter VI and started to work on the final chapter.

**22.8.25** - Continue to work on the last chapter.

**28.8.25** - Meet my supervisor, and we discuss contextualizing theories with the findings. My supervisor asked me to write it in table form.

**19.9.25** - Show the last chapter to my supervisor. He asked to relate all the findings in the form of a chart.

**11.10.25** - Sent the final chapter to my supervisor. He asked me to make the necessary changes.



**14.10.25** - Make necessary changes to the final chapter.

**17.10.25** - Started entry of research diary into Word document.

**24.10.25** - Completed entry of research diary into Word document.

**28.10.25** - Started working on PPT for pre-submission Presentation.

## APPENDIX- II

**SCHEDULE NO:**

**Date:**

**Place:**

**Time taken for interview:**

**Interviewer:**

### **INMATE LIFE AND INCARCERATION EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN PRISON: A STUDY IN MIZORAM**

#### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (Purely for Academic Purposes)**

##### **General profile of the respondent:**

A. Name: \_\_\_\_\_

B. Age (in years): \_\_\_\_\_

C. Ward number: \_\_\_\_\_

D. Duration of imprisonment: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Nature of imprisonment: a) Undertrial b) Convicted

1.A. If convicted, year of sentence and duration of trial:

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What is the type of offence you committed?

a) ND&PS b) Theft

c) Murder d) Other cognizable offence

2.A. Specify \_\_\_\_\_

3. Do you hire a lawyer?

a) Yes b) No

3.A. Specify \_\_\_\_\_

4. Are you aware of your rights and duties as a prisoner?

a) Yes                      b) No

4.A.

Specify\_\_\_\_\_

5. Is it your first time being imprisoned?

a) Yes                      b) No

5.A. If no, state a brief detail of your previous arrest\_\_\_\_\_

**E. Particulars of the family at present**

| Sl. No. | Name | Relationship with the respondent | Age | Sex | Education | Occupation | Monthly income | Marital status |
|---------|------|----------------------------------|-----|-----|-----------|------------|----------------|----------------|
|         |      |                                  |     |     |           |            |                |                |
|         |      |                                  |     |     |           |            |                |                |
|         |      |                                  |     |     |           |            |                |                |
|         |      |                                  |     |     |           |            |                |                |
|         |      |                                  |     |     |           |            |                |                |
|         |      |                                  |     |     |           |            |                |                |
|         |      |                                  |     |     |           |            |                |                |
|         |      |                                  |     |     |           |            |                |                |
|         |      |                                  |     |     |           |            |                |                |
|         |      |                                  |     |     |           |            |                |                |

**Socio- economic profile of the female offenders.**

6. Marital status

- a) Unmarried                      c) Married
- b) Divorced                      d) Widowed

7. If married, what is your extent of marriage?

- a) 1-2 years                      c) 2-3 years
- b) 3-4 years                      d) More than 4 years
- e) Not applicable

8. Was your marriage?

- a) Arranged
- b) Love
- c) Not applicable

9. Do you have any children?

- a) Yes                              b) No

9.A. If yes, specify

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10. Birth place

- a) Rural: Specify \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Urban: Specify \_\_\_\_\_

11. Present resident/locality

- a) Rural: Specify \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Urban: Specify \_\_\_\_\_

12. Permanent resident/locality

a) Rural: Specify \_\_\_\_\_

b) Urban: Specify \_\_\_\_\_

13. Type of house

a) Kutcha                      b) Semi- Kutcha

c) Pucca                      d) Homeless

14. Do you stay in a rented house?

a) Yes                      b) No

14.A. If yes, how much do you pay for rent \_\_\_\_\_

15. Educational qualifications

a) Illiterate                      e) Primary

b) Below HSLC                      f) HSLC

c) Higher Secondary                      g) Graduate

d) Post-graduate

16. Do you drop out from school?

a) Yes                      b) No                      c) Not applicable

16.A. If yes, till which class do you attend and why \_\_\_\_\_

17. Religion

a) Christian                      c) Hindu

b) Muslim                      d) Any other (Specify)

18. If Christian, which denomination?

a) Presbyterian                      d) Baptist

b) United Pentecostal Church                      e) Roman Catholic

c) Seventh Day Adventist f) Methodist

g) Others (Specify)

19. Community

a) General

b) SC

c) ST

d) Others (Specify)

20. Family type

a) Joint family

b) Nuclear family

21. Number of members in the family

a) 0-5

c) 5-10

b) 10-15

d) 15-20

22. Number of working hands in the family

a) None

c) One

d) Two

d) Three

e) More than 3

23. Number of dependents in the family?

a) None

c) One

b) Two

d) Three

e) More than 3

24. Monthly income of family

a) Below 50000

c) 50000- 100000

b) 100000-250000

d) 250000 above

25. Type of ration card

a) APL (white) c) PHH (Blue)

b) AAY (Pink)                      d) BPL (Yellow)

e) None

26. Household assets owned

| Assets          | Yes | No |
|-----------------|-----|----|
| Television      |     |    |
| Refrigerator    |     |    |
| LPG Connection  |     |    |
| Washing machine |     |    |
| Microwave oven  |     |    |
| Computer        |     |    |

27. Do you own any vehicle?

a) Yes                                  b) No

27. A. If yes, specify \_\_\_\_\_

28. Do you inherit any property from your family?

a) Yes                                  b) No

28.A. If yes, specify \_\_\_\_\_

29. Do you have any job prior to your time in jail?

a) Yes                                  b) No

29.A. If yes, specify \_\_\_\_\_

30. Do you actively participate in Church activities before imprisonment?

a) Yes                                  b) No

30.A. If no, specify \_\_\_\_\_

31. Are you an active member of YMA in your locality before imprisonment?

a) Yes                                  b) No

31. A. If no, specify \_\_\_\_\_

**Causes of imprisonment and consequent incarceration**

32. What is the circumstance for committing the crime?

- a) Poverty                      d) Addiction
- b) Mental problem   e) Rivalry
- c) Revenge                  f) Greed
- g) Any other (specify)

33. Who motivates you to commit the crime?

- a) Self
- b) Friends
- c) Relatives
- d) Any other (specify)

34. Have you faced any type of domestic violence?

- a) Yes                              b) No

34.A. If yes, from who and how? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you face any type of abuse while growing up?

- a) Physical abuse              c) Emotional abuse
- b) Sexual abuse                d) Any other (specify)
- e) No abuse

35. Do you have any of the following mental problems while growing up?

- a) Anxiety                      c) Stress
- b) Depression                d) Any other
- e) No mental problem

36. Do you have any physical deformities?

- a) Yes                              b) No



37.A. If yes, specify \_\_\_\_\_

37. Do you have any chronic illness?

- a) Diabetes                      c) Cancer  
b) Others (Specify)      e) No chronic illness

38.A. If having any, does it affect your mental health?

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38. Have you faced any sort of discrimination?

- a) Family                      c) Friends  
b) Neighbours              d) No discrimination

39. Do you grow up between both parents?

- a) Yes                      b) No

40.A. If no, with who and do you think that your life would have been more different?

---

40. Is there a healthy environment in your home?

- a) Yes                      b) No

41.A. If no, specify \_\_\_\_\_

41. How would you rate your relationship with your relatives at home?

- a) Good                      c) Excellent  
b) Not Good              d) Terrible

42. Do you have any serious long-term conflict with any of your relatives?

- a) Yes                      b) No

43.A. If yes, specify \_\_\_\_\_

43. Do any of your closed relatives have a history of imprisonment?

- a) Yes                      b) No

44.A. If yes, specify \_\_\_\_\_

44. Do you have any trouble adjusting to your family while growing up?

- a) Yes                      b) No

45.A. If yes, specify \_\_\_\_\_

45. Do you feel mistreated while growing up?

- a) Yes                      b) No

46.A. If yes, specify \_\_\_\_\_

46. Do you face any difficulties while growing up?

- a) Yes                      b) No

47.A. If yes, specify \_\_\_\_\_

47. Will you allow your loved ones to be part of your family where you grow up?

- a) Yes                      b) No

48.A. If no, specify \_\_\_\_\_

48. How many siblings do you have?

- a) None                      c) Two  
b) Three                      d) More than three

49. Is there any sort of discrimination among your siblings while growing up?

- a) Yes                      b) No

50.A. If yes, specify \_\_\_\_\_

50. Are your parents/ care-takers supportive while you are studying?

- a) Yes                      b) No

51.A. If no, specify \_\_\_\_\_

51. Do you get bullied by your friends/classmates?

- a) Yes                      b) No

52.A. If yes, specify \_\_\_\_\_

52. Have you faced extreme pressure to get a job?

- a) Yes                      b) No

53.A. If yes, specify \_\_\_\_\_

53. Do you have any history of substance abuse?

- a) Yes                      b) No

54.A. If yes, when and how do you start taking drugs, for how long and what type?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

54. Do you involved yourself in selling drugs?

- a) Yes                      b) No

55.A. If yes, specify \_\_\_\_\_

55. Do you have history of alcohol abuse?

- a) Yes                      b) No                      c) Occasionally

56.A. If yes, when and how do you start taking alcohol and how long have you taken it?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

56. Have you involved yourself in selling alcohol?

- a) Yes                      b) No

57.A. If yes, specify \_\_\_\_\_

57. Have you ever get caught by YMA/NGOs for misbehaviour?

a) Yes                      b) No

58.A. If yes, specify \_\_\_\_\_

F. What is your biggest regret in life?

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G. If you are to blame any instance or individual for committing the crime, what or who will it be? Narrate

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**Effect of imprisonment on women and the life of their families**

58. Does your imprisonment have any effect on your life?

a) Yes                      b) No

59.A Specify your answer \_\_\_\_\_

59. Do you have any suicidal thoughts after being imprisoned?

a) Yes                      b) No

60.A. If yes, specify \_\_\_\_\_

61. Do you get any physical/ emotional abuse after you are imprisoned?

a) Yes                      b) No

61.A. If yes, specify \_\_\_\_\_

62. Do you get any help or treatment for your mental well-being?

a) Yes                      b) No

62.A. If yes, specify \_\_\_\_\_

63. Is the condition of your health improving or deteriorating after imprisonment?

a) Improving                      b) Deteriorating                      c) Stable

63.A Specify your answer \_\_\_\_\_

64. Concerning your imprisonment, were your family members involved in any way?

- a) Yes                      b) No

64.A. Specify your answer \_\_\_\_\_

65. How often do your family visit you?

- a) Once a month                      d) Every three months  
b) Once a year                      e) Never  
c) On request

66. Who visited you most while you are in prison?

- a) Husband  
b) Children  
c) Friends  
d) Relatives  
e) None

67. Is regular visit helpful to you in re -connecting with your families, especially your children?

- a) Yes                      b) No                      c) Can't say

67.A. Specify your answer \_\_\_\_\_

68. Who among your family/ relatives is most effected by your imprisonment?

- a) Parents                      c) Children  
b) Husband                      d) Others

68.A. Specify your answer \_\_\_\_\_

69. Are there any differences in the way your family treat you before and after you are in prison?

- a) Yes                      b) No

69.A. Specify your answer \_\_\_\_\_

70. Does your imprisonment have any effect on your children?

- a) Yes                      b) No                      c) Not applicable

70.A. Specify your answer \_\_\_\_\_

71. Does your imprisonment have any effect on your husband?

- a) Yes                      b) No                      c) Not applicable

71.A. Specify your answer \_\_\_\_\_

72. Do you used to receive any financial assistance from you relatives?

- a) Yes                      b) No

72.A. Specify \_\_\_\_\_

73. If you are the bread-winner of your family, who is taking care of your family (especially your children) now?

- a) Husband                      c) Parents  
b) Relatives (specify) d) Not applicable

74. Do any of your friends contact/visit/ give you financial aid after you are in prison?

- a) Yes                      b) No

74.A. If yes, how often \_\_\_\_\_

75. Do people from your locality or Church visit you?

- a) Yes                      b) No

75.A. If yes, how often? \_\_\_\_\_

76. Is your family at home facing any problem from the local authorities or Church leaders at the onset of your/ after your imprisonment?

a) Yes      b) No

76.A. If yes, specify\_\_\_\_\_

77. Have you heard of any member of your family facing stigmatization from your community or other relatives?

a) Yes      b) No

77. A. If yes, specify\_\_\_\_\_

78. Have any of your family members considered moving out from your locality or changing their denomination?

a) Yes      b) No

78. A. If yes, specify\_\_\_\_\_

79. Are you satisfied with your relationship with the inmates inside the prison?

a) Yes                      c) No

79.A. Specify\_\_\_\_\_

80. Do you have time to share your thoughts and chat with your inmates?

a) Yes      b) No

80.A. Specify \_\_\_\_\_

81. Are you satisfied with the way the prison staffs treat you?

a) Yes                      b) No

82. A. If no, specify\_\_\_\_\_

H. What were the kinds of adjustment made by you to fit in?

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I. Can narrate your daily routine within the prison?

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**Institutional facilities available for rehabilitation and re-entry into the society.**

82. Are basic necessities for personal hygiene available to you?

a) Yes                      b) No

82.A. Specify free ration you received? \_\_\_\_\_

83. Do you have easy access to basic amenities?

a) Yes                      b) No

84. Is water supply sufficient?

a) Yes                      b) No

84. A. Specify \_\_\_\_\_

85. How many meals do you receive in a day?

a) Once                      b) Twice

b) Thrice



86. Is the food provided to you sufficient?

- a) Yes                      b) No

86.A.

Specify\_\_\_\_\_

87. Is the food provided to you nutritious?

- a) Yes                      b) No

87. A. Specify\_\_\_\_\_

88.Do you have regular medical check- up?

- a) Once a week                      b) Twice of week

c) Thrice a week

89.Are medical stuffs readily available to you when needed?

- a) Yes                      b) No

90.Are you enrolled in any of the training programmes available within the prison?

- a) Yes                      b) No

90.A. If yes, specify\_\_\_\_\_

91.Do you enjoy the training programmes allotted to you?

- a) Yes                      b) No                      c) Not applicable

91.A.

Specify\_\_\_\_\_

92. Do you think it will be helpful for you after released from prison?

- a) Yes                      b) No                      c) Not applicable

92.A.                                      specify                                      your  
answer\_\_\_\_\_

93. Do you have any skills acquired after you are imprisoned?

- a) Yes                      b) No                      c) Not applicable

93. A. If yes, Specify \_\_\_\_\_

94. Which activity is most beneficial for you within the prison?

- a) Vocational activities                      c) Church Services  
b) Leisure time                      d) Counselling

95. Is there any change in your attitude/behaviour after you are in prison?

- a) Yes                      b) No

95.A.                                              Specify                                              your  
answer \_\_\_\_\_

96. Do you have the opportunities for open talks and sharing with the authorities?

- a) Yes                      b) No

97. Do the staff follow up your complaints and grievances promptly?

- a) Yes                      b) No

97.A. If no, specify \_\_\_\_\_

98. How often do you have counselling?

- a) Once a week                      c) Thrice a week  
b) Twice a week                      d) Never

99. Is counselling available when needed?

- a) Yes                      b) No

99.A. If no, specify\_\_\_\_\_

100. What are the recreational activities available to you?

- a) Educational activities
- b) Religious activities
- c) Sports
- d) Reading books
- e) Listening to music
- f) Card games/ carrom board/ Chinese checker
- g) Telephoning families
- h) Others (*Specify*)

101. Do you think these activities are sufficient?

- a) Yes
- b) No

101.A. Specify\_\_\_\_\_

102. How do you cope up with your loneliness?

- a) Telephoning families
- b) Chatting with inmates
- c) Reading and writing
- d) Physical exercise
- e) Card games/ Carrom board/ Chinese checker
- f) Playing guitar
- g) Singing
- h) Watching TV
- i) Others (*Specify*)

103. What skills have you acquired so far?

- a) Weaving
- c) No skills acquired

- b) Tailoring
- d) Others (*Specify*)

104. Do you have worship services on a regular basis?

- a) Once a week      c) Twice a week  
b) Thrice a week

105. Is the religious service helpful in rebuilding your life?

- a) Yes                      b) No

105.A. Specify your answer \_\_\_\_\_

106. How do you spend your leisure time?

- Reading and writing
- Sleeping
- Chatting with inmates
- Playing cards, carrom board/ Chinese checker
- Exercise
- Playing guitar
- Singing
- Watching television

107. Are the prison staffs treating you all equally?

- a) Yes                      b) No

|               |    |    |     |
|---------------|----|----|-----|
| 107.          | A. | If | no, |
| specify _____ |    |    |     |

108. Do you ever plan of getting out of the prison with your inmates?

- a) Yes                      b) No

108.A. Specify your answer

109. Is your view on life changed after you are imprisoned?

- a) Positively                      b) Negatively

109.A. Specify your answer \_\_\_\_\_

110. Do you ever have a thought of re-offending if you have any chances?

a) Yes                      b) No

110.A. If yes, give reasons \_\_\_\_\_

111. Do you think the infrastructure of the prison is good enough?

a) Yes                      b) No

112. What is your average monthly expenditure within the prison?

a) less than 3000

b) 3000-5000

c) 5000-7000

d) 7000-10000

113. Do you have enough money to buy your basic needs?

a) yes                      b) No

113.A. if no, specify, how do you manage? \_\_\_\_\_

J. What is the worst experience you have encountered after imprisonment?

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K. What is the best experience you have encountered within the prison?

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L. Do you have any suggestions for the overall improvement of inmates within the prison?

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M. Do you have any future plan?

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## APPENDIX – III

### ETHICS CERTIFICATE



Human Ethics Committee  
**MIZORAM UNIVERSITY**  
A Central University  
(Accredited by NAAC with "A Grade")  
Aizawl - 796 004, Mizoram, India

No. MZU/HEC/2023/005

Dated: 04.07.2023

To  
**Lalrineldi**  
Department of Sociology  
Mizoram University  
Aizawl, Mizoram

The Human Ethics Committee in its meeting held on 04.07.2023 has reviewed and discussed your application to conduct the project entitled, **"Inmate Life and Incarceration Experiences of Women in Prison : A Study in Mizoram"**.

The following documents were reviewed:

- Proposal for Ethics Committee and final protocol (including protocol amendments) project.
- Participant/ Patient Information Sheet and Individual Consent Form (including updates if any) in English and/or vernacular language.
- Current CV of investigator(s)
- Insurance Policy/Compensation for participation and for various adverse events occurring during the study participation, if any.
- DCG/DDBT/BARC/Hospital/ Centre approval letter/ submission letter, if any.

Decision of Committee: **Approved**

Member Secretary  
Institutional Human Ethics Committee  
MZU

Chairman  
Institutional Human Ethics Committee  
MZU  
(DR. JOHN ZOHMINGTHANGA)  
MBBS, MD (Path)  
Cy Medical Superintendent  
Civil Hospital, Aizawl, Mizoram  
Regn. No. MCI-6514

## Photo plate



**Figure 1: Central Women's Jail, Tanhril**



**Figure 2: Entrance of Central Women's Jail, Tanhril**





**Figure 3: Visit from Presbyterian Women's Fellowship, Dawrpui Branch**



**Figure 4: Mental Health Awareness Programme**



**Figure 5: 1 week music class organised by Mizoram Synod**



**Figure 6: Workers arranging inmates need**

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### List of Publication (s)

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| 1       | Inside Central Women's Jail, Mizoram: Life of Mothers and their Accompanying Children | Post- Mizo Peace Accord (1986-Present): Narratives, Development and Ongoing Issues in Mizoram<br>19 <sup>th</sup> Feb, 2023    | Department of Sociology;<br>Pachhunga University College | National               |
| 2       | Overcrowding in Central Women's Jail: Problems and Prospects                          | Indigeneity & Sustainable Development: Locating the Local in the context of G20<br>30 <sup>th</sup> -31 <sup>st</sup> May 2023 | Department of Sociology;<br>Mizoram University<br>ICSSR  | National               |

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| Sl. No. | Title of Seminars/Workshops/Courses                                                                         | Place                                                      | Year |
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| 1       | Imperial Hegemony and Subaltern Resistance in Mizoram and Subaltern and India's Freedom Struggle<br>(1 Day) | Mizoram University                                         | 2021 |
| 2       | Research Publication and Ethics<br>(7 Days)                                                                 | UGC, Human Resource Development Centre, Mizoram University | 2021 |



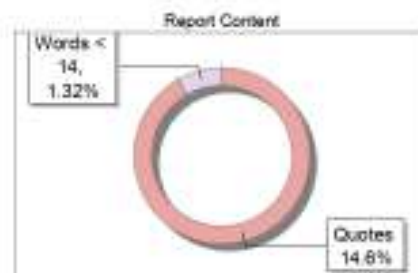
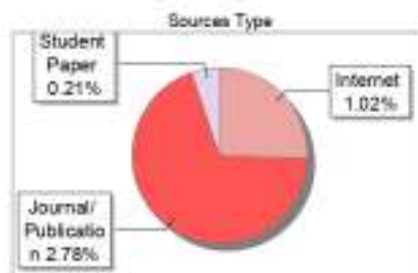
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### **Particulars of the Candidate**

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# **ABSTRACT**

## **INMATE LIFE AND INCARCERATION EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN PRISON: A STUDY IN MIZORAM**

**AN ABSTRACT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**LALRINDIKI**

**MZU REGISTRATION NO.: 4367 OF 2013**

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**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**NOVEMBER, 2025**

**Inmate Life and Incarceration Experiences of Women in Prison: A  
study in Mizoram**

**By**

**LALRINDIKI**

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

**Name of Supervisor: Prof. R. K. MOHANTY**

**Submitted**

**In partial fulfilment of the requirement of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in  
Sociology of Mizoram University, Aizawl**

This thesis examines the inmate life and incarceration experiences of women in prison in Mizoram. The ideas of crime and deviance are socially created, meaning that they are formed by cultural norms, legal structures, and historical circumstances. Modern studies have emphasized the need to comprehend female crime in connection to social, economic, cultural, and political aspects, whereas older criminological viewpoints generally disregarded women. The reasons why women commit crimes are frequently different from the reasons why men do so, and they are typically related to things like gender discrimination, poverty, victimization, and the unfair consequences of policies like the “war on drugs.”

Although women are less likely to be involved in violent crimes, the incidence of imprisonment for women has increased all across the world, with the most common reasons for incarceration being drug-related offenses and property crimes. Due to the stigma that exists, the lack of sufficient institutional facilities, and the failure to satisfy the demands for privacy, family connection, and rehabilitation, their experiences while incarcerated are distinct and frequently more difficult than those of other people. Their reintegration into society is made more difficult by the presence of structural barriers such as poverty and abusive relationships.

The imprisonment of women is a topic that has not received enough attention in the field of studies in Mizoram, as is the case in several other situations. The socioeconomic profiles of women who are incarcerated, the conditions that led to their imprisonment, the impact of incarceration on their lives and the lives of their families, the relevance of the facilities in the institutions, and the applicability of penological theories to their experiences are all topics that are examined in this study. Together, these factors shed light on the difficulties experienced by incarcerated women and the necessity of gender-sensitive correctional system policy.

Chapter I consisted of the Introduction portion, while Chapter II consisted of a detailed Review of Literature. Chapter III covered the Research Methodology of the study, including all procedural details. Chapter IV of this study delved into the Socio-Economic Profile of 141 women inmates. Chapter V consisted of the Etiology of Female Criminality. Chapter VI deals with the Effect of incarceration on women prisoners, along with the institutional facilities available. Chapter VII summarized the findings to conclude.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

A general outline of women's imprisonment in Mizoram has been highlighted in Chapter I of the Introduction. It has been discussed under 6 sections. After a general introduction of crime and society, the next section deals with women's criminality. It highlights the misrepresentation of female criminality in the past, blaming it on sexuality and psychology and ignoring other institutional factors. However, research has shown that factors including poverty, abuse, and inequality are the factors that most influence women to engage in criminal activity, with most offenses being minor and non-violent. Even with this being the case, women encounter more severe stigma, discrimination, and abuse, which emphasizes the importance of developing justice systems that are sensitive to gender. The next section deals with Crime and Punishment, highlighting the historical shift in punishment from physical torture to imprisonment and later toward reformation, influenced by social reforms and colonial practices. Today, restorative justice emphasizes rehabilitation, community service, and reconciliation, aiming to reintegrate offenders rather than isolate them. The next section focuses on incarcerated women, the neglect and stigmatization women encounter, and the heightened increase in the number, and the emotional problems female inmates encounter, as they are usually the primary caregivers of their families. The next section deals with women in prison, global, national, North-East, and Mizoram contexts, which is followed by an overview. Therefore, the study on the current situation of women inmates with respect to Mizoram has been carried forward.

## **Chapter II: Review of Literature**

This chapter relates to the Review of Literature on prisoners, particularly women prisoners. The literature has been reviewed under three categories: theories, thematic review, and methodological review. Theories include Erving Goffman's Total Institution, Strain Theory, Foucault's Discipline and Punish, Marginalization Theory, Social-Control Theory, Self-Control Theory, and Theories of Penology. The studies relate such theories, particularly to women's imprisonment. This study applies several criminological theories to explain women's imprisonment, their socio-economic backgrounds, and prison experiences. Merton's Strain Theory (1938) and Agnew's General Strain Theory (1992) both emphasize how social pressure, poverty, abuse, and frustration can foster deviance. Marginalization Theory highlights that disadvantaged groups, such as low-income earners or women facing gender discrimination, are more disposed to crime due to exclusion and hardship. Social Control and

Self-Control Theories further suggest that weak social bonds or a lack of self-regulation, often rooted in childhood abuse, increase criminal tendencies.

Goffman's concept of Total Institution explains prison as a closed system that strips inmates of their previous identity, reinforcing stigma and altering family and social roles. Different Penological Theories of punishment: deterrent, retributive, and preventive approaches focus on control and retaliation, while the reformative model emphasizes rehabilitation and reintegration, now favoured in modern criminology. Foucault's Discipline and Punish further illustrates the historical shift from brutal public punishments to more subtle, reform-oriented disciplinary methods. Together, these theories connect causes of women's crimes, their marginalized status, and the prison's role in shaping their identities, punishments, and chances of reformation.

The methodological reviews incorporated 9 methodologies. All the reviewed studies on women's imprisonment are exploratory or descriptive in nature. Most rely on qualitative methods, using observation, case studies, focus group discussions, and interviews, with some preferring semi-structured formats for greater respondent freedom. Two researchers adopted ethnography for deeper insights. Three studies employed mixed methods, combining surveys for quantitative data with interviews for qualitative perspectives. One researcher applied the census method for sample analysis, a strategy also relevant to the proposed study. For data analysis, SPSS was commonly used in three studies for tabulation and interpretation.

The thematic review section is further divided into 7 sub-headings, which are socio-economic profile, causes of imprisonment, gender differences and experiences of women in prison, family relationships of incarcerated women, women's incarceration and rehabilitation, health issues, recreational activities, and recidivism and re-entry. From the thematic review, it is noted that studies mainly from mainland India and international sources show that women prisoners often come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds marked by poverty, low education, unemployment, and abusive relationships. Many face marital conflict, domestic violence, neglect, or substance abuse, with mothers bearing the added burden of child care.

Within prison, women's experiences differ significantly from men's, as they struggle with mental health issues, separation from children, and neglect or rejection from families. Families, especially children, also suffer stigma, grief, and discrimination. Rehabilitation literature emphasizes the need for gender-specific, holistic programs, including education,

skills training, and positive recreational activities, to reduce recidivism and support reintegration. Strong family ties, motivation from children, and stable housing are shown to be crucial for successful re-entry, while stigma and a lack of support remain significant barriers.

### **Research Gap and Rationale for The Study**

| <b>Sl.No</b> | <b>Gap</b>                                                                                                       | <b>Rational</b>                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.           | West-centric studies                                                                                             | Need for study in India, the Northeast, and Mizoram                                                                                                        |
| 2.           | Lacking studies on the impact of incarceration on families                                                       | To find the nature, nuances, and dynamics of problems from the lived experiences                                                                           |
| 3.           | A dearth of systematic investigation from a sociological and criminological perspective                          | Reveal the etiology and effects of deviant behaviour from a sociological and criminological perspective                                                    |
| 4.           | Inadequacy of in-depth study on female prisoners in a closed-knit society                                        | Second-highest number of female inmates in North East worth studying                                                                                       |
| 5.           | Limited research on the experiences of female incarceration and its perception from a Christian moral framework. | Need to explore the gendered stigma and societal responses to women's incarceration                                                                        |
| 6.           | Certain thematic domains are not covered in the studies reviewed                                                 | Need to explore the family relationships, types of support, rehabilitation, recreational activity inside the prison, recidivism, and re-entry into society |
| 7.           | Methodological Gap                                                                                               | Need to triangulate qualitative and quantitative data                                                                                                      |
| 8.           | Studies are data-rich and theoretical-contextualization poor                                                     | Need to contextualize the theories reviewed                                                                                                                |

The existing literature on women's incarceration reveals several significant gaps. Most studies are West-centric, highlighting the need for research in the Indian context, particularly in the Northeast and Mizoram. There is also a lack of studies examining the impact of incarceration on families, which makes it necessary to explore the nature, nuances, and

dynamics of these problems through lived experiences. Furthermore, a dearth of systematic investigation from sociological and criminological perspectives calls for research that reveals the etiology and effects of deviant behaviour within these frameworks.

In addition, there is an inadequacy of in-depth studies focusing on female prisoners in closed-knit societies like Mizoram, despite it having the second-highest number of female inmates in the Northeast. Limited research also exists on the experiences of female incarceration viewed through a Christian moral framework, emphasizing the need to understand gendered stigma and societal responses toward imprisoned women.

Certain thematic domains, such as family relationships, types of support, rehabilitation, recreational activities in prison, recidivism, and re-entry into society, remain underexplored. Methodologically, there is a need to triangulate qualitative and quantitative data to achieve a more comprehensive understanding. Lastly, while many studies are rich in data, they often lack theoretical contextualization, emphasizing the importance of linking empirical findings with relevant criminological and sociological theories.

### **Chapter III: Research Methodology**

This chapter deals with the research setting and framework that were used, as well as the methods that were followed over the course of the study. The study began with the conceptualisation of the research topic (context), moves on to the examination of the methodologies that have been employed (framework), and then concludes with the conclusion and the outcome of the study.

Based on the need for the study, this study started with the following objectives:

1. To understand the socio-economic profile of women offenders.
2. To understand the factors that cause women offending and consequent incarceration.
3. To study the effect of imprisonment on women and the lives of their families.
4. To examine the institutional facilities available for women offenders in incarceration which can promote re-entry into society.
5. To contextualize the theories of penology and to make a macro analysis of this micro study.

The present study represents an exploratory cum descriptive research design. The universe of the study comprises all the district jails of Mizoram. There are 8 District Jails located in

Aizawl, Lunglei, Siaha, Champhai, Kolasib, Serchhip, Mamit and Lawngtlai District of Mizoram, including a separate Central Jail and Central Women's Jail, which are also located in Aizawl District of Mizoram. Since the majority of the female inmates are located in Central Women's Jail, the Central Women's Jail Aizawl, is purposely selected for the present study.

In the initial synopsis presentation, the researcher proposed to interview 73 respondents dated 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022 which was the total number of inmates at that time. However, the number of respondents has changed since there was an increase in the number of female inmates from the start of my fieldwork i.e. 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2023 up to 13<sup>th</sup> Sept, 2023 compared to 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022 in my proposal where there are a total of 73 inmates including 2 children only. As of 13<sup>th</sup> Sept 2023, the last date of my fieldwork, the total number of female inmates in Central Women's Jail was 280, Lifer- 1, Convict SI-10, Convict RI-33, UTP- 236. Of the total 280, 50 percent are interviewed, which is 140 including one additional respondent who keenly requested to be interviewed. The total number of inmates interviewed was 141. The case study was conducted among 1 Lifer, 2 mothers with accompanying children, and 8 other inmates based on the intensity of the crimes they committed.

From the total of 141 respondents, 9 inmates were selected for the case study, representing each from all categories, and also based on the severity of crimes committed as follows: The only lifer present in the prison is taken for a case study, along with two cases from habitual offenders (UTP), two cases from 1<sup>st</sup> timers (UTP), two cases from ND&PS (convicts), and two cases from 1<sup>st</sup> timers (convicts).

The list of KII respondents interviewed includes Jailor, Asst. Jailor, Jail Warder, Lawyer, Synod Prison Ministry representative, Set Free Ministry Representative, Counsellor, Prison IG, and representatives from CADS and Excise and Narcotics. Among the list, Jailor, Jail Warder, Synod Prison Ministry representative, and Set Free Ministry Representative were interviewed.

Through a pilot study, framing the basic structure of the study was done. Data collection followed, and the fieldwork started from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023 up to 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023, which is approximately 7 months. The data collected includes the filled-in interview schedules used by the researcher during the field survey, which have been answered by the respondents, including case studies and inputs from the key informants. Upon the completion of the fieldwork, all the schedules were scrutinized and cross-checked. Coding was done, and the



data were disaggregated under 4 major heads: 1) Socio-economic profile, 2) Etiology of women's criminality, 3) Effects of incarceration, and 4) Availability of institutional facilities. Subheads under each major head were also conceptualized. In this particular study, both qualitative and quantitative methodologies have been employed in combination in order to create the analytical framework. Data were coded for quantitative analysis. The coded data were classified according to the classifying scheme that was created specifically for this purpose. SPSS software is utilized for quantitative analysis. In addition to the case study, observation, and narratives, the approach of "lived experiences," which is based on phenomenological and ethnographic traditions, has been employed for the purpose of qualitative data analysis. Additionally, the same format is used to present interviews that were conducted with key informants. The interviews with the respondents were attentively listened to, and summaries of each case were created. In conclusion, the chapter was brought to a close with the operationalization of concepts, a discussion of the study's limits, and a discussion of the ethical standards for research that were adhered to throughout the research.

#### **Chapter IV: Socio-Economic Profile**

Chapter IV of the study is oriented towards determining the socio-economic profile of women prisoners in the Central Women's Jail, Aizawl, Mizoram. Understanding the socio-economic profile of the respondent is important as it sheds light on the underlying circumstances that play a role in women's engagement in criminal activity, as well as their experiences while incarcerated. The variables analysed in this chapter to understand the socio-economic profile of the women inmates include age, marital status, nature of family, residential status, educational qualifications, monthly income, household assets, religion, community, pre-incarceration status, and nature of imprisonment. To determine the socioeconomic profile of the female respondents, the area has been considered an independent variable, and it has been cross-referenced with all the other factors.

In Central Women's Jail, the age of the women inmates ranges between 18 years, the youngest, and 73 years, the oldest. The age group was classified into six class intervals: 15-25, 25-35, 35-45, 45-55, 55-65, 65-75 years. The majority of respondents are in the age group between 25 and 45 years. The second highest population is followed by the age range between 15 and 25 years. There is a decline in the number of inmates as the age increases; those between 45 and 75 years constitute the lowest population. This implies that the majority

of the incarcerated women are in their mid-adult and child-rearing age. The age group in which their contribution to their family and society is paramount.

In terms of marital status, the majority, which is 90.8 % of the respondents, are married. Only a few are unmarried. Among the total respondents, the divorced population is the highest, and a significant number of respondents are also widowed. Considering the total respondents, 55.3% of the respondents are divorced or widowed. This finding supports Chesney-Lind & Pasko (2013) and Tripathi & Yadav (2021) findings that stated that the experiences of widowhood and divorce can be a trigger to women's involvement in criminal activities. Besides marital status, the extent of marriage is also taken into consideration, in which the majority of respondents have been married for more than 4 years. This finding supported the findings of Chesney-Lind & Pasko (2013), Tripathi & Yadav (2021), Carlen (1998), and Raghavan (2020), who argue that women who are in long-term relationship without the support from their partners often faced financial hardships and need emotional and financial support for their children due to which they often indulge in petty crimes including drug trafficking related offences.

In terms of the nature of family, which consisted of the type of family, number of family members, number of children, and number of earners and dependents in the family. The findings indicate that the majority of imprisoned women originate from nuclear and small-sized families, where there is a lack of social and emotional support networks. The fact that a significant majority of these incarcerated individuals are mothers highlights the extensive societal repercussions of their imprisonment, especially as they pertain to children who are dependent on them. The difficulties that women encounter worsen when economic fragility, which is evidenced by high dependence ratios and a reliance on single earners, is coupled with the obligations of caring. The combined effect of these circumstances is the creation of paths leading to criminal activity. They emphasize the significant impact that family structure, economic instability, and caregiving responsibilities have on the imprisonment of women.

In terms of residence, the study shows that the majority of the respondents are from urban areas. The higher level of urban representation is indicative of offenses that occur in urban areas, such as drug-related crimes. Among the four major zones of the district-wise sub-division, the northern zone, which consists of districts including Aizawl, Champhai, Kolasib, and Saitual constituted the majority of respondents. The concentration of female inmates

from the northern regions of Mizoram emphasizes the importance of investigating the socioeconomic, cultural, and criminal elements that contribute to the engagement of women in criminal activity. According to this geographic pattern, these districts, which include Aizawl, Champhai, Saitual, and Kolasib, are either heavily inhabited or border regions, and they are susceptible to being used as routes for drug trafficking. There is a substantial association between women's imprisonment and the dynamics of the border region.

With regards to living in an owned house or a rented house, the findings indicate that the respondents had an almost equal distribution of both owned and rented houses, which is indicative of the diverse range of economic situations in which they reside. According to the findings, over half of the female inmates, which amounts to 48.2 percent, resided in kutcha houses. In addition, 8.5 percent of the female inmates lived in semi-kutcha houses, bringing the total number of inmates who reported staying in substandard housing to 56.7 percent of the total number of respondents. This indicates that the majority of the inmates are economically disadvantaged and have limited access to resources. However, 42.6 percent of the women live in pucca homes at the same time. This fact demonstrates that not all of the women were from backgrounds that were disadvantaged, and it is indicative of the fact that there is a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds represented. Homelessness was indicated by only a single responder (0.7%), which highlights the tremendous vulnerability and marginalization of this group. Housing type is generally a symbol of socioeconomic position, with poor housing conditions and public housing complexes commonly connected to greater crime rates owing to poverty, weak security, and larger societal difficulties.

In terms of educational qualifications, which included dropout rates, the majority of them have only a modest amount of formal education, although the rate of literacy is almost 100 percent. Nearly three-fourths of the respondents attained education up to HSLC or below. Only 3.5 percent of the respondents have a graduate or post-graduate degree. The dropout rates were extremely high, with 90.8 percent of the women leaving school before they finished their education. This pattern of early educational discontinuity points to the presence of systemic barriers, such as poverty, a lack of support, or exposure to hazardous surroundings, which limit the ability of individuals to access higher education and secure work opportunities. Economic distress and increased vulnerability to criminal conduct are the consequences of a mix of factors, including low education, high dropout rates, and poor employment prospects.

Relating to the monthly income of the respondent's family, the findings have shown that the majority of the inmates are from low-income families that are below ₹50,000 per month. Only 10 respondents are from a higher-income family, ranging between 1L- 2.5L and above. About 18.4% belonged to moderately better-off families, ranging between ₹50,000 – 1L per month. This finding indicates that poverty is one of the underlying issues for their criminal behaviour. The household asset profile indicates that basic amenities, including refrigerators, televisions, and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) connections, are available to a large extent. On the other hand, access to more modern or digital assets, such as computers and microwave ovens, is still restricted. This demonstrates the existence of a digital gap that is influenced by a lack of financial resources, low levels of educational achievement, and an absence of digital skills.

Vehicle ownership is also another indicator of economic stratification. Of the respondents, 58.2 percent owned at least one vehicle, most of which were two-wheelers. The remaining 41.8 percent did not own any vehicles, which shows that they were economically vulnerable and had limited mobility. Owning several vehicles is uncommon and is linked to households that are in a comparatively more prosperous financial situation. Overall, patterns of ownership of assets and vehicles indicate that the majority of respondents have a low level of living standard that meets basic needs, but they also bring to light inequalities in access to technology, mobility, and financial stability.

With regards to the ration card, which is an official card authorized by the Government of India to prove the socio-economic profile of its residents. A total of 49.6 percent of the women belong to families that are in possession of ration cards that are officially recognized as economically disadvantaged, such as PHH, BPL, or AAY cards. In contrast, 24.1 percent of the women hold APL cards, and 26.2 percent of the women have no ration card, suggesting a lack of coverage provided by welfare programs or an unregistered status. In terms of property inheritance, it is shown from the findings that 89.4% of the respondents did not inherit any property. This shows the lack of generational wealth among the majority of respondents. Despite legal protections under the Mizo Marriage, Divorce, and Inheritance of Property Act, 2014, cultural and patriarchal barriers continue to limit women's access to property.

All the respondents are Christians and Scheduled Tribe (ST), reflecting the ethno-religious and tribal homogeneity of Mizoram. The Presbyterian denomination is the largest (54.6%),

followed by Baptists (13.5%) and United Pentecostals (12.1%). Other denominations are minor. This uniformity shows female convicts share morals, cultural norms, and social expectations. The findings also show minimal community participation among the respondents. Only 22% attend Church regularly, and 13.5% join the Young Mizo Association (YMA), signifying social disconnection. The Church and YMA shape moral, cultural, and community values in Mizoram by providing support, ethical direction, and social accountability. Most women are detached from these institutions, which may restrict their social support and raise their risk of crime.

The pre-incarceration job profile of inmates shows economic vulnerability. Over half (54%) were self-employed in informal sector activities like street selling, small-scale agriculture, and household services, suggesting uncertain income and few legal safeguards. An additional 27.6% worked in private enterprises, possibly in low-paying and unregulated employment, 5.6% did manual labour, and 2.2% worked for the government, emphasizing their poor educational attainment. Notably, 10.6% were jobless before imprisonment, increasing dependency on family and partners and vulnerability to coercion and crime. The results indicate that insecure work, poor income, and economic instability make women vulnerable to criminality, underlining the need for targeted employment generation, skill development, and social support programs.

The findings suggest that the majority of female inmates in Mizoram are undertrials, accounting for 85.1 % of the total respondents. Only 14.9 % are convicted exposing systematic delays, poor legal help, and bail issues, especially for drug charges. Most inmates (81.6%) are first-time offenders, indicating a low recidivism rate and that poverty, coercion, or lack of legal understanding commonly led to crime. Minor or nonviolent acts, including petty theft, minor drug charges, and administrative violations, account for 87.9% of sentences under one year. A small percentage receive 6–7-year sentences. Undertrial status, short-term imprisonment, and low recidivism show that women are vulnerable in the criminal justice system and require expedited legal processes, legal aid, and targeted rehabilitation to prevent social disruption and support reintegration.

In terms of the type of offences committed, the ND&PS Act applies to 89.4% of the female inmates, indicating a high proportion of small-scale or courier drug trafficking. Murder (2.1%), theft (5%), and various offenses (3.5%) are infrequent, indicating that violent crime among women is low and driven by poverty, coercion, or lack of options. 68.1% of inmates

had a lawyer, while 31.9% did not, indicating legal assistance shortages, particularly for underprivileged women. Limited access to private attorneys due to financial restrictions, limited legal aid awareness, and insufficient education might worsen pre-trial detention or lead to unfair convictions. remarkably, just 5% of inmates knew their rights and obligations in jail, leaving 95% open to exploitation, abuse, and exclusion from rehabilitation programs. To safeguard women and promote equal treatment in criminal justice, focused legal literacy campaigns, prisoner rights education, and enhanced legal assistance are necessary.

## **Chapter V: Etiology of Female Criminality**

The causes and the issues of committing crime for which they are incarcerated are focused on in this chapter, which is divided into 8 subheadings: 1. Causes of committing crime, 2. Family Issues 3. Issues in Socialization 4. Physical Factors 5. Discrimination and a conflicting environment 6. Drugs and Alcoholism 7. Stigmatization and Repentance.

In terms of the causes of committing crime, the findings suggest that among the respondents, being an accomplice or carrier to drug trafficking and poverty are the major causes of committing crime, accounting for 70.2 per cent of the total respondents. Mizoram is on regional drug trafficking routes; therefore, many women become involved unintentionally or under pressure from family, friends, or spouses. In addition, addiction, 19.9 per cent, also plays a major role. Responses emphasize survival, financial issues, and familial duties above greed or revenge, which is found to be minor in the findings. Some criminals admit blame, but most cite economic necessity, peer pressure, or familial duties. As shown in the findings, self-instigation was reported by 65.2 per cent of women, often due to restricted choices, emotional pressure, and societal pressure. It can also be noted that friends (23.4%) and family (7.8%) also lure women to crimes. 3. per cent blame others as they are unknowingly used as a carrier by drug-peddlers. The study shows that in Mizoram, women's crime is driven by survival, despair, and marginalization. Poverty, addiction, and social neglect are structural weaknesses for women, unlike thrill-seeking or violence for males.

Family issues play a central role in shaping the pathways to female criminality. As shown in the findings, abuse is strongly linked to female crime, as 32.6 per cent of the inmates were victims of domestic violence before imprisonment. Trauma, addiction, and violence often lead women to crime as a coping strategy, escape, or manipulation by abusive relationships. Two-thirds had no history of abuse, showing that poverty, addiction, and peer influence are equally important.

Parental background was crucial too. While 69.5 per cent grew up with their parents, almost one-third did not, demonstrating that parental absence is a major risk factor for emotional instability, neglect, and deviant influences. Most respondents 78.7 per cent reported a supportive home environment, but this did not protect them from crime, reinforcing socio-economic and peer pressures. Only 21.3 per cent grew up in unstable or abusive environments, making them more prone to deviance. Despite incarceration, 89.4% of respondents expressed family acceptance, demonstrating strong communal and familial relationships in Mizo society. However, 10.6 per cent of rejected applicants risk isolation, shame, and reoffending.

The study also reveals that nearly three-quarters of respondents 73.8 per cent grew up in big households with more than three siblings, which might cause economic pressure, resource constraint, and restricted educational possibilities. Such settings show how family size, poverty, and deviance are linked. Only 11.3 per cent reported mistreatment by siblings, suggesting it is not a major factor. The Mizo community promotes communal principles and equality; hence, women may have accepted unfair tasks like sacrificing for their brothers without seeing them as discriminatory. In terms of educational support, most respondents 73.8 per cent reported having family support while studying, demonstrating that lack of support did not directly cause their imprisonment. However, 26.2 per cent who did not receive such support were at risk of poor educational achievement, low self-esteem, and limited prospects, which may have contributed to eventual socio-economic disadvantages.

Socialization is vital for developing people into effective members of society, yet disruptions can lead to vulnerabilities and deviant behaviour. As shown in the findings, only 12.8 per cent of respondents reported prior physical, sexual, or mental abuse, yet this tiny percentage shows lingering trauma that might affect subsequent life choices. Mental health concerns impacted 26.2 per cent of respondents, with stress being the most frequent, highlighting the psychological impact of family strife, poverty, and early life pressure. 10.6 per cent had trouble integrating into their family, and 11.3 per cent claimed maltreatment, showing that some women were neglected, conflicted, or rejected as children. Another 11.3 per cent faced economic difficulty, parental separation, or lack of education. Although most respondents claimed secure childhoods, a substantial minority had serious problems that hampered good socialization. These findings show that while most women inmates did not directly link their crimes to childhood hardships, a vulnerable minority did. However, it is

notes that early-life adversities disrupted their socialization, making them more susceptible to poor decision-making, exploitation, and criminal influences.

The inmates assessed had no physical deformities, eliminating handicap as a factor in their criminal paths. However, almost two-fifths of responders had chronic sickness, which is a significant health burden. These disorders may not directly cause crime, but they can contribute to stress, dependence, and financial instability. The findings emphasise the necessity of jail healthcare infrastructure, including regular medical check-ups, diagnostics, treatment, dietary support, and mental health care. Chronic disease must be addressed to protect offenders, facilitate rehabilitation, and reduce recidivism.

This section examines how discrimination and conflict affect the respondents. While most inmates did not report discrimination or familial conflict, substantial minorities did. 12.1 per cent had long-term disputes with relatives, 33.3 per cent had relatives with a history of jail, 5 per cent were harassed by peers, and 3.5 per cent were discriminated against by family, or 41.8 per cent felt compelled to find work, citing economic pressures, while 14.2 per cent were caught by community groups like the YMA or NGOs for wrongdoing before jail. While overt discrimination was rare, economic hardship, family disagreements, peer victimization, and community monitoring fostered tension and marginalization that raised crime risk. These socio-psychological forces must be addressed in rehabilitation and reintegration programs.

Drugs and alcohol play a central role in the criminal pathways of women prisoners in Mizoram. Only 19.9 per cent admitted to substance misuse, yet 55.3 per cent were actively involved in drug trafficking, the most prevalent offense. This suggests that many women joined drug networks owing to poverty, pressure, or restricted opportunities rather than chronic usage. While 14.2 per cent admitted to misusing alcohol and 24.1 per cent occasionally used it, more than 60 per cent had never drunk. Cultural and religious stigma against women's alcohol usage in Mizoram increased societal criticism for drinkers. Given local regulations, only 9.2% per cent sold alcohol, a less common but still important survival activity. Overall, drug offenses dominate female imprisonment, whereas alcohol abuse and sales are secondary.

From the findings, it is shown that the inmates face humiliation, repentance, regret, and blame. They are shamed for disobeying the law and violating traditional norms of morality, passivity, and family loyalty. Stigma hinders reintegration, harming family, work, and mental health. Reflecting Mizoram's strong Christian culture, many women show true repentance



through religious activities and spiritual healing. Families are generally considered “good,” yet deeper problems, such as neglect or pressures, may have led to criminal behaviour. the inmates face humiliation, repentance, regret, and blame., emerges as a strong emotional motivator, while blame is distributed internally (self-guilt) and externally (poverty, abusive relationships, peer pressure). Moreover, Mizoram’s female crime is more about survival than deviance due to trauma, poverty, and social marginalization.

## **Chapter VI: Effects of incarceration**

This chapter highlights the effects of incarceration on the lives of the female inmates as well as the effects of incarceration on the lives of their families. It is divided into the following subheadings: 1. Positive/ Negative Effects of Incarceration, 2. Effect of imprisonment on their family 3. Condition of physical and mental health 4. Treatment of prison staff inside the prison 5. Availability of institutional facilities 6. Post-release plan and Suggestions.

Based on the findings, the majority of the inmates suggest that incarceration has a positive impact on their lives. For drug/alcohol addicts, it gave them a chance to abstain, for women facing domestic violence, it gave them a chance to sleep peacefully without fear, faith-based rehabilitation in the form of counselling, devotion, church services, Bible reading, and prayer fostered spiritual renewal, remorse, and self-reflection. For some of the inmates, prison experience gave them a chance to realize the value of family and children, which they used to take for granted. However, 26.2% of the inmates had a negative experience inside the prison. For them, the emotional distress of being separated from their children, the sense of isolation, and the stigmatization they faced are hard to bear. And for the many first-timers, prison seems to provide a molding ground to learn new deviant behaviors. Some inmates even developed rebellious attitudes, persistent guilt, or hopelessness, increasing the risk of recidivism.

Many inmates, especially those suffering drug withdrawal, poverty, or family tragedy, reported having suicidal thoughts. The causes of having such thoughts are separation from their children, the lack of proper medical help in times of need, social shame, and isolation. However, the majority of inmates are resilient enough not to have suicidal thoughts as they are mostly single mothers with dependent children and a family to take care of.

The majority of the inmates reported not experiencing any sort of physical or emotional abuse while they were in prison. But the presence of systemic issues such as overcrowding, inmates’ hierarchy, and staff behaviour suggests risks of recurring abuse. However, 20.6 per cent reported facing physical/emotional abuse in the form of peer bullying, verbal insults, and

discrimination from some of the staff, among the rich and poor. Some of the inmates stated that they have witnessed emotional abuse in the form of jealousy, gossip, and stigmatization of those who are born-again inside the prison. In addition, inmates who are with their children used to face added humiliation because of the presence of their children.

The majority of the inmates relied on their husbands, parents, or siblings for financial support while they were in prison. Some inmates even helped their fellow inmates financially, which proves that there is solidarity and compassion among them. The minority 27 per cent lack support from their relatives, either they are abandoned by them or their relatives are not financially well-off to support them. Especially, mothers with their dependent children faced hardships without help from outside the prison.

Contact, visit, or care from friends and relatives while they are in prison is important for the inmates to help them emotionally and give them the strength to move on. However, only 5.7 per cent of the total respondents received such visits. The majority, 63.8% received visits only on request. There are 28.4 per cent who have never visited their relatives or friends. Especially, visits or assistance from friends is found to be rare, as many of the inmates realized that their friendships were conditional on drug supply and not genuine care. Only a few reported visits from Church members and Pastors, which reflects the stigma, secrecy, and lack of outreach from their own Church congregation. However, this shows that the majority of the inmates are not involved in attending their local Church.

It is also found that only a few reported their family members or themselves facing stigmatization from the community after they were in prison. While some inmates noted relatives gossiping or distancing themselves. Others conceal their imprisonment from their children and community to protect their family's reputation.

From the findings, it is known that the majority of the inmates recognized that their incarceration had a detrimental influence on their families; however, a significant number of them downplayed the seriousness of this impact. A substantial number of inmates denied any impact, showing either resistance or an unwillingness to acknowledge any damage. In general, incarceration put pressure on the stability of households and social position, but the degree of this strain varied. After an individual has been imprisoned, their families typically encounter more negative attitudes and criticism than they did before the imprisonment. The society was found to have a strong sense of moral expectations, which was reflected in the common experiences of gossip, blame, and social isolation. Nevertheless, there were still

families that continued to be supportive, which demonstrated that families' reactions were not homogeneous.

Children were recognized as the group that was most impacted by this, with spouses and parents following after. The emotional and social well-being of children was severely affected by the interruption of mother care. The fact that women's incarceration disproportionately hurts dependents is an important finding that highlights the gendered character of imprisonment. It is further noted that since their mothers were not there, children had negative consequences in the extent of their emotions, social lives, and education. Many experienced ridicule, neglect, and stigmatization from their classmates. The fracturing of the roles filled by mothers caused vulnerabilities that persisted for an extended period of time. This supports the idea that the punishment that comes with jail extends beyond the person who committed the offense. Children were typically cared for by their grandparents or close relatives while their parents were imprisoned. This is indicative of the significant role that the extended family structure plays in Mizoram. Although this configuration ensured survival, it frequently resulted in the weakening of mother-child ties and led to emotional estrangement over the long run.

The majority of spouses were negatively impacted, including emotional stress, gossip, and harm to their social reputations. A few people stayed supportive, a few got remarried, and some kept their distance. The results illustrate how the incarceration of women in Mizoram serves to undermine connections between spouses and to challenge conventional gender roles.

Numerous families continued to participate by providing emotional, financial, and spiritual support. Nonetheless, the degree of assistance fluctuated, and some families withdrew as a result of poverty or embarrassment. For inmates who were undergoing rehabilitation, strong family ties served as a protective element. Even though many families claimed to be dealing with no issues, a significant minority of families said that they were experiencing stigma, financial difficulties, and mental stress. Close-knit communities were common with bias and gossip. This indicates that imprisonment indirectly penalizes families alongside offenders.

The majority of prisoners had visitors; however, these visits occurred infrequently, frequently owing to limitations on financial resources and distance. Visits that occurred regularly increased morale, but the absence of visits increased the sense of isolation. The findings indicate that interactions with members of one's family are a significant determinant of

emotional well-being. As visits were a source of comfort, spiritual support, and a feeling of belonging, the majority of inmates felt them to be beneficial. Visits also promoted optimism toward reintegration. There were a few inmates, meanwhile, who felt weighed down by visits from their families because of recollections of stigma or strife.

From the study, it is found that the daily experiences are shaped by monotony, overcrowding, poor food, and strained social interactions. The respondents indicated sentiments of antagonism, gossip, and boredom, but they also mentioned that they coped with these feelings through religion, prayer, or mutual forgiveness. Mothers who had children had challenges that were distinct from those of others. They were challenged with protecting and taking care of their children in an atmosphere that was not fit. There were a few individuals who reported experiencing beneficial consequences, such as discovering time for spiritual development or developing more self-discipline.

The majority of respondents indicated that they had gotten some type of therapy, which consisted mostly of faith-based counselling administered by visiting pastors; on the other hand, 37.6 per cent of individuals reported that they had not received any treatment at all. A lot of prisoners appreciated counselling since it was a source of solace, while some prisoners were critical of it due to its lack of professional psychiatric care. The findings emphasize the disparity between professional mental health care and religious counselling, emphasizing the pressing demand for certified psychiatrists and psychologists in prisons.

The majority of inmates, 59.6 per cent indicated that their health had stabilized after being incarcerated, which was frequently associated with shorter jail sentences or the absence of chronic illness. On the other hand, 34% per cent stated that their health had deteriorated as a result of inadequate diet, a lack of medical treatment, and stress, while 6.4 per cent reported that their health had improved, typically in combination with organized routines and substance withdrawal. Those who were incarcerated and had chronic illnesses, such as diabetes, had the most difficulties. In contrast, several inmates who came from underprivileged families said that the meals and routines in jail were better than those in the outside world.

The majority of the inmates stated that they felt that their contacts with the prison staff were professional and polite, with the female staff displaying a greater amount of compassion and awareness of their requirements. The inmates who were grateful for the staff's readiness to listen and respond to their grievances had a feeling of justice within the jail. That being said,

a handful of the inmates said that the personnel treated them unequally, giving richer offenders more attention than those who were less well off. Although the overall testimonies reflect highly on the management of the jail, these individual examples of bias indicate the necessity for continual monitoring to maintain consistent fairness and dignity for everyone.

It was also shown that interactions amongst inmates had a significant impact on their mental well-being. A lot of women created links of support with other incarcerated women, which frequently served as a substitute for family ties and offered consolation while they were imprisoned. These ties assisted with practical needs, such as support with childcare, as well as emotional comfort in the form of companionship and shared challenges. During that same period of time, some women suffered disagreements, gossip, exclusion, or distrust. Those who were most frequently affected by these negative experiences were women who had a limited number of visits from outside or who did not have much financial wealth. This indicates that, although peer interactions might serve to cultivate solidarity, they can also become sources of conflict in an environment that is already fraught with stress.

Communication among inmates became another coping method. Many inmates claimed they had adequate time to converse and socialize, calling these talks and activities soothing. Communication helped them cope with loneliness, find encouragement, and relieve stress. However, congestion, lack of privacy, and personal desire for isolation prevented some women from connecting with others. Communication may be a vital support system, but jail restrictions might limit its usefulness.

Prison adaptation had pros and cons. Many women reported changing their behaviour, becoming more empathetic, and learning to live with individuals from varied backgrounds. They also felt they could talk to prison staff and that problems were addressed quickly. However, other inmates felt discriminated against based on class, origin, or criminality, which increased inequity. Few women considered escape, but a significant number planned to re-offend after release owing to poverty and lack of other means. Others regretted their previous crimes and wanted to change, illustrating that imprisonment's effects vary.

Women inmates at Central Women's Jail in Aizawl follow a regimented daily program to promote discipline, stability, and rehabilitation. Kitchen chores, wake-up calls, devotion, and exercise start the day. Meals are supplied at predetermined intervals, while morning activities include tailoring, weaving, court appearances, counselling, and family communication. Devotion and lock-up in the evening reinforce order, with lights out by nightfall. Since the

institution promotes discipline and rehabilitation, the schedule emphasizes spirituality, vocational skills, and time management. However, a lack of structured educational and recreational activities hampers intellectual and creative growth. The long gap between dinner and bedtime also leaves some inmates uncomfortable, highlighting areas for improvement in nutritional and activity planning. Some inmates prefer the structure and discipline, but others struggle with required religious services and early waking.

Coping strategies reveal the diverse ways women manage the stresses of imprisonment. Chatting, gaming, and group activities are the most typical ways inmates cope with loneliness. Others find emotional relief and reflection in reading, writing, music, and religion. Many choose seclusion, sobbing, or sleeping to relieve stress. These differences reveal that although jail life builds resilience in some, others feel hopeless and alone. Peer and spiritual interactions are crucial to survival for many, but limited resources, congestion, and lack of structured programs limit healthy coping alternatives. The daily routine and coping techniques reflect the prison's rehabilitation efforts and women's struggles to adjust.

Inmates well-being and rehabilitation depend on institutional amenities. The survey indicated that most inmates had toiletries, sanitary items, water, and timely meals. Food was plentiful, but the meals were substandard, consisting mostly of rice, dal, seasonal vegetables, and occasional meat, leaving many inmates disappointed. With regular visits and checkups, medical services were dependable. Many inmates found weekly counselling helpful for emotional support and self-expression. Sunday church services were also valued, emphasizing the importance of faith in prison life.

Despite these positive aspects, there were significant shortcomings. Few women participated in tailoring or weaving programs, and even fewer reported important skills learned. Peers taught some offenders basket-making and crocheting, but systematic skill-building was nonexistent. Most women spent their free time conversing, resting, or playing basic games, while television and playgrounds were poorly maintained or unavailable. Daily life was affected by overpopulation, lack of personal space, and poor cleanliness in the institution. Many inmates claimed poor hygiene and lack of privacy due to sharing a restroom with dozens of others.

Financial resources were another challenge, as most inmates came from disadvantaged backgrounds and survived on very limited funds. Some were impoverished and relied on fellow inmates. While the jail provided basic requirements, medical treatment, counselling,

and religious services, the absence of nutritional food, skill-building opportunities, recreational activities, and proper infrastructure hindered rehabilitative potential. These gaps hampered personal growth, caused emotional pain, and hindered reintegration following release.

Reintegration after release is difficult for women inmates due to stigma, broken families, and economic instability. Some inmates wanted to reconcile with family members, start businesses, or follow spiritual paths following liberation. Their views showed how jail helped them realize themselves, strengthened their religious faith, and renewed their appreciation for family. Unfortunately, some inmates indicated hopelessness, financial insecurity, and a lack of definite plans owing to insufficient support structures. These different stories show how resources, connections, and resilience affect women's reintegration preparation.

Overall, the majority of the women prisoners are married, either divorced or widowed, and have children who are dependent on them. They have low educational qualifications, a majority are school drop-outs, and they mostly come from a low socio-economic background. The majority of them are in prison due to drug-related offences, which shows that their deviant behaviour is survival-driven rather than an intentional violation of the law. While imprisonment can foster positive change such as sobriety, spiritual growth, and renewed family awareness, it also exposes women to stigma, isolation, and continued vulnerability. The findings suggest that without structured post-release support, many women risk falling back into cycles of exclusion and survival-driven offences. A culturally sensitive, gender-responsive reintegration framework combining institutional, family, and community involvement is therefore essential to transform imprisonment into a genuine opportunity for renewal and to prevent recidivism.

## **Chapter VII Summary and Conclusion**

This chapter gives a summary of all the chapters in the thesis under 6 headings and discusses the experiences of incarcerated women in Mizoram, the sociological implications of the study as well as the future areas for research. With all said and done, this penultimate section of the thesis attempts to integrate and consolidate the sociological implications of the study in consonance with the theoretical text and empirical context. Examining how society affects social interactions and human behaviour is deemed necessary, especially in relation to structure, institutions, organizations, and culture. By understanding the macro implications from this micro study, the ambition is to appreciate the interconnection between societal

institutions and individual behaviour, which may serve as a basis for resolving gender issues in the lived experiences of women who are incarcerated.

When contextualized with Goffman's theory of total institutions (1961), the findings from women prisoners in Mizoram reflect some of the key features he described. Goffman argued that total institutions strip individuals of their former identities through rituals of degradation and impose a new, lower-status identity. This is visible in the prison context, where women adjust to rigid routines, early rising, compulsory religious practices, and constant surveillance experiences that many respondents described as difficult. The stripping away of autonomy, such as the inability to decide meal times or personal schedules, mirrors Goffman's notion of inmates being cut off from wider society and reshaped under institutional authority. This is also in line with the views of Jacobsen and Kristiansen (1971).

The testimonials of prisoners who described personal transformation, such as spiritual rebirth, resolve to stop abusing drugs, or want to reestablish family relationships, also demonstrate the "moral career" that Goffman was referring to. These modifications demonstrate how prisons serve as "forcing houses" to modify behaviour, but not necessarily in a beneficial way. Some women's expressions of despair, loneliness, and hostility highlighted the stigmatization and loss of identity that Goffman linked to imprisonment.

Furthermore, the duality of prison life in Mizoram can be explained through Davis's (1989) enhancement of Goffman's framework, which emphasizes the openness of institutions, their stated goals, and the ways of compliance. The lived reality from the findings exposes vague goals, unequal treatment, and limited opportunities for actual reintegration, despite the official purpose of the prison's emphasis on recovery through discipline, spirituality, and vocational activities. Goffman's idea of complete institutions as closed, regulating systems that both confine and modify identities but frequently fall short in addressing the deeper social and economic problems that lead to criminalization is therefore highly supported by the women's experiences.

As indicated in the findings, numerous prisoners shared stories of poverty, familial disputes, peer victimization, and social exclusion, all of which align with Agnew's General Strain Theory of identification of strain-producing conditions. This is also in line with the view of Proctor (2004). For instance, some women turned to crimes like drug trafficking or petty theft as a means of surviving because of the pressure to find work, the lack of steady income, and their isolation from supporting family structures. For some inmates, because of strict



schedules, required religious activities, and the stigma associated with being labelled as an offender, the prison itself became another source of stress. This might prolong cycles of resistance and frustration. Others, on the other hand, positively handled stress by turning to their religion, seeking counselling, or working, demonstrating that while criminality is one possible reaction to stress, resilience and adaptability are additional options.

The findings in the socio-economic profile of women prisoners and their overall experiences inside the prison can also be linked with Merton's Strain Theory. When viewed through Merton's Strain Theory, the experiences of Mizoram's female inmates may be seen as the result of structural inequalities and missed opportunities. It aligns with Merton's idea that when institutional pathways are inaccessible, individuals adapt through innovation, often turning to illegitimate opportunities. This is also in line with the view of Shaila (2018). According to the findings, many women came from low-income households, had limited education, or lacked a steady job, which prevented them from utilizing legal methods to achieve culturally valued objectives, such as family well-being and financial stability. Hence, crime, especially drug trafficking, theft, or survival offenses, became an alternative route to status and survival. The findings also show how women's marginalized social positions, fractured family ties, and limited vocational skills intensified this pressure, making deviance a rationalized response to structural barriers. Thus, Merton's framework helps explain how crime among women in Mizoram is not merely personal failure but a reflection of broader social inequalities and blocked access to legitimate opportunities.

The rigid daily routine, mandatory religious practices, monitoring, and vocational education exemplify Foucault's concept of prisons as institutions that regulate the body and transform the mind. Instead of explicit corporal punishment, offenders experience a kind of "soul training," which prioritizes compliance, discipline, and spirituality to reform behaviour. The women's accounts reveal both the strengths and limitations of this disciplinary framework. Certain inmates indicated spiritual renewal, enhanced discipline, and a commitment to change, illustrating how prisons serve as venues for moral regulation and internalized governance. Conversely, other inmates articulated discontent with mandatory rituals, monotony, and the erosion of autonomy, exemplifying Foucault's assertion that discipline operates more through nuanced regulation of time, place, and identity than through overt violence. In the context of Mizoram, imprisonment exemplifies Foucault's transformation of punishment into a mechanism of monitoring and correction, focusing less on the physical body and more on regulating the souls and behaviour of female offenders.

The findings reveal a strong link between socio-economic exclusion and female criminality. This can be linked with the theory of Marginalization. Most of the inmates are from a low socioeconomic background, have a low level of education, and lack access to meaningful employment, which leaves them vulnerable to financial distress and social neglect. Many reported themselves as single mothers and came from broken families. Their situations increased their dependency and pushed them towards subsistence crime or drug-related offences. The testimonies highlight that women who have experienced victimization, be it through abuse, neglect, or social abandonment, exhibit a higher tendency for deviant behaviour, corroborating Chesney-Lind and Daly's (1988) assertion that victimhood is fundamental to female offending. In accordance with Small's (2000) argument, several women encountered unemployment or unstable employment, while others, although being gainfully employed, had insufficient wages to sustain themselves or their children. This institutional exclusion established circumstances in which criminal behaviour emerged as the sole possible method for sustaining livelihoods.

Hirschi's Social Control Theory emphasizes that when bonds of attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief are weak, individuals are more likely to act on criminal impulses. Hirschi (2002). The findings reflect this weakening of social ties. Many inmates came from broken or unstable families, with low educational attainment and limited work opportunities, which reduced their commitment and involvement in conventional roles. Only a few inmates are involved in YMA and the Church before they are incarcerated. Their lack of strong attachments to supportive networks, along with unstable economic conditions, weakened the external restraints that usually prevent deviance. While the study did not directly examine levels of social control, the broader context suggests that poor socio-economic status and limited participation in legitimate activities created conditions where women were more vulnerable to criminal behaviour, aligning with the core assumptions of the theory.

The Self-Control Theory posited by Hirschi and Gottfredson asserts that persons exhibiting low self-control, influenced by inadequate parental supervision and inadequate child-rearing practices, are more prone to criminal activity. Negi, Virender. Negi, Monika. (2017). The theory aligns with the experiences of several offenders who had unstable home environments, maltreatment, or fractured households. Such circumstances likely compromised the cultivation of discipline and long-term self-regulation, rendering individuals more susceptible to impulsive or risky behaviour. Their involvement in crimes associated with poverty, addiction, and drug trafficking further illustrates characteristics of diminished self-control

acting on immediate needs or pressures without considering long-term consequences. Although the study did not directly assess levels of self-control, the patterns of unstable upbringing, inadequate education, and socio-economic challenges indirectly support the theory's fundamental assertion that deficient self-regulation, frequently originating from early life experiences, heightens women's vulnerability to criminal behaviour.

Theories of penology provide different lenses through which the purpose and impact of punishment can be understood, and when contextualized with the findings, they highlight both limitations and possibilities of the prison system. The deterrent and retributive models emphasize suffering and retribution, aiming to instil fear and repay wrongdoing. However, these models appear less effective in the case of women offenders whose crimes often stem from poverty, addiction, and social marginalization rather than deliberate disobedience. The preventive theory, which isolates offenders through imprisonment, aligns more closely with the reality of confinement, where women are removed from the social conditions that facilitated their involvement in crime, though this does little to address primary causes.

The reformative theory, on the other hand, best resonates with the findings, as prisons are increasingly framed as spaces of correction and rehabilitation. Inmates in Mizoram were exposed to spiritual guidance, counselling, and structured daily routines that aimed to reshape their moral outlook and reintegrate them into society. Yet the effectiveness of such reform is mixed, with some women reporting transformation and renewed purpose, while others experienced frustration and stigmatization. Thus, penological theories collectively provide insight into the ways punishment has been justified and practiced, but in the lived experiences of incarcerated women, reformative approaches hold the most potential to address the socio-economic and personal struggles that support their criminality

### **Integrated Theoretical Model of Women Prisoners: Text and Context**

| <b>Theory</b>     | <b>Theorists</b> | <b>Emphasis</b>                                                                                                                                        | <b>Study Context</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Total Institution | Erving Goffman   | Closed social system, loss of old identity, stigmatization, degradation process, rite of passage, moral care transformation, forcing house for change. | In the experiences of women prisoners, their old identity is stripped off through rigid routines, surveillance, and loss of autonomy. Some women reported positive changes like spiritual rebirth or overcoming addiction, while others experienced loneliness, despair, and stigma. The prison's goal of rehabilitation is often in contrast with unequal |

|                                                                     |                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                     |                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | treatment and limited integration. Prisons act as a “forcing houses” reshaping their identity, but fail to look into the deeper socio-economic issues                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Strain Theory                                                       | R. K. Merton, Agnew                                            | Structural inequalities and limited access to legitimate opportunities create strain, while negative social experiences like poverty, family conflict, and social exclusion generate frustration, both of which can lead individuals to engage in criminal behaviour. | Socio-economic obstacles, such as low-income households, minimal education, and unstable employment, restrict legitimate opportunities for achievement, compelling them to engage in criminal activities like drug trafficking to sustain themselves and their family. The prison environment imposes additional pressure, since inmates are designated as criminals and must contend with stringent regulations and social hierarchies, which further affect their behaviors and adaptive strategies. |
| Discipline and Punish                                               | Foucault                                                       | Shift in punishment from body to soul. Punishment, from revenge to crime prevention in the form of disciplinary power.                                                                                                                                                | The practices in Mizoram prison, including rigid daily routine, mandatory religious practices, monitoring, and vocational education, exemplify prison as an institution that regulates the body and transforms the mind. Instead of explicit corporal punishment, offenders experience a kind of “soul training”.                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Marginalization Theory                                              | Kevonne Small Chesney-Lind, Meda. and Daly, K Merry and Morash | Inadequate job, low salary, victimization. Rise in crime among females linked to lack of stable jobs.                                                                                                                                                                 | Low socioeconomic background, low level of education, and lack of access to meaningful employment make the inmates vulnerable to committing a crime. Since some are single mothers who are the sole earners of their families, their situations increased their dependency and pushed them towards subsistence crime or drug-related offences.                                                                                                                                                         |
| Social-Control Theory, Self-Control Theory/ General Theory of Crime | Hirschi and Gottfredson                                        | Weak social connections, unstable economic conditions, and insufficient community engagement diminish external constraints and self-regulation, rendering individuals more vulnerable to deviant or criminal                                                          | The inmate’s involvement in crimes associated with poverty, addiction, and drug trafficking indicates both weakened external constraints and diminished self-control. Although not directly measured, their unstable upbringing, minimal education,                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

|                      |                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                      |                                          | behaviour.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | and adverse socio-economic situations imply early life experiences that led to diminished self-control.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Theories of Penology | Dharm and Shelke, Meyer, Cesare Beccaria | Punishment aimed to control or prevent crime. Deterrent-inflict pain to discourage re-offending. Retributive-vengeance or repayment for wrongdoing. Preventive - Prevent offenders from committing crimes again. Reformative- aims at rehabilitation, transforming them into law-abiding citizens. | The deterrent and retributive models that emphasized suffering and instilling fear among the inmates was not seen to be effective in the study. Offences stemmed from poverty, addiction, and social marginalization rather than deliberate disobedience. The preventive theory, which isolates offenders through imprisonment, aligns more closely with the reality of confinement, where women are removed from the social conditions that facilitated their involvement in crime. The reformative theory, on the other hand, best resonates with the findings, as prisons are increasingly framed as spaces of correction and rehabilitation. The spiritual guidance, counselling, and structured daily routines aimed to reshape their moral outlook and reintegrate them into society. However, the effectiveness of such reform is mixed among the inmates, with some women reporting transformation and renewed purpose, while others still experienced frustration and stigmatization. |

Prisons deprive women of their previous identities through stringent regulations and monitoring. Many women feel ashamed, alone, and stigmatized, even if some describe beneficial improvements, including overcoming addiction and spiritual rebirth. Poverty, family strife, marginalization, precarious employment, and a lack of education are the main causes of women's crimes, which drive many, particularly single mothers, to commit survival crimes like drug trafficking, for some, solely for their survival. Impulsive and dangerous behaviours are encouraged by weak social bonds and unstable upbringings, which weaken social and self-control. In Mizoram prisons, discipline has shifted from physical punishment

to “soul training” through strict daily routines, mandatory religious services, and vocational work. Hitherto, deterrent and retributive models prove ineffective, preventive approaches mirror isolation, and reformative models resonate most, though outcomes remain mixed, balancing transformation with frustration and stigma.

As the respondent stated:

*“For us who have nothing to rely on, no skills, no money, and no relatives to depend on, there is nothing to hope for in the outside world. Our chances of committing the crime, selling drugs again, is an easy way out for our survival”.*

Another respondent commented:

*“Prison feels like a hostel where grown-up women stay together, not having much to do and contemplating on our despairing life and the life of our children and relatives who are dependent on us.”*

The study of the experience of women inmates in Mizoram shows that women’s criminality is shaped by socio-economic disadvantages, weak social bonds, unstable upbringing, and structural inequalities. Prisons act both as institutions of control and potential rehabilitation, but their effectiveness in reforming women is uneven.

Figure 7.1: Integrated Model of Incarcerated Women: Text & Context

**Strain Theory**

**Self-Control & Social Control Theory**

**Etiology**

- Social
- Economic
- Cultural
- Psychological

**Discipline & Punish (Foucault)**

**Total Institution (Goffman)**

**Theory of Penology**

**Gendered experiences**

- Isolation
- Devoid of Family Bond
- Custodial Mother
- Shared Living
- Overcrowding
- Stigma of Confinement
- Stress & Helplessness
- Groupism & Inmate Quarrel
- Poor Prison Facility
- Menstrual Hygiene
- Discriminated practices
- Repentance
- Post-Release Issues
- Mental & Physical Health

**Marginalization Theory**

**Text & Context**

**Social:** Divorce & Widow, Single parenting, Motherhood, Minimal Educational Qualifications, School dropouts, Social Isolation, Self-Offending, Familial Incarceration, Stigmatization  
**Economic:** Economic Dependency, Low Income Family, Informal Employment, Poverty, Drug-Related Offenses, Drug Consumer & Accomplice  
**Cultural:** Inequality, Cultural Lag, Patriarchy, Peer Culture, Need Satisfying Instruments, Cultural Marginalization, Revenge  
**Psychological:** Low Self-Esteem, Suicidal Thought, Mental Abuse, Greed

**Grave Crime**

**Petty Crime**

**Extremely Driven**

**INCARCERATION**

**Self-Precipitated**

**Grave Crime:** Murder, ND&PS, Dracery  
**Petty Crime:** Theft, Fraud, Cheating, Alcoholic Vandalism

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At the centre of the model lies the concept of incarceration, which broadly denotes the condition of being confined or imprisoned as a legal consequence of committing an offense. Although the word often brings up a gender-neutral picture of punishment and discipline, women's experiences and consequences of incarceration are quite different from men's because of their different social positions, biological needs, and socioeconomic situations. The model positions incarceration at the intersection of structural inequality, individual experiences, and institutional authority.

The inner circle distinguishes the types of crimes committed, which are categorized into grave crimes and petty crimes. Under grave crimes, often called serious offenses punishable with 7 years or more of incarceration, such as murder, ND&PS, and dacoity, are among the crimes committed by incarcerated women. While women are more commonly associated with minor or non-violent offenses, the findings proclaim the prevalence of such severe offenses, ND&PS, which is drug-related crime, being the highest. Petty crimes identified in the findings include theft, fraud, cheating, and alcoholic vandalism; however, these categories are not only non-serious and found to be comparatively fewer in number in this study.

The motive to commit these crimes is depicted as either self-precipitated, resulting from personal or self-driven, and extenuously driven (instigated), arising from external forces like peer influence, relatives, and carrier accomplice of drug-peddlers. Self-precipitated motives are found to be dominant among the incarcerated women. The cyclical representation of crime in the model emphasizes that women's participation in criminal activities is not an isolated occurrence but a continuing phenomenon shaped by recurring circumstances, socio-economic contingencies, and individual motives. The motivations of women to engage in criminal behaviour frequently arise from lack and strain rather than intrinsic criminality. Economic hardship, social rejection, single motherhood, and limited opportunities to education or employment restrict legitimate alternatives, prompting women to resort to survival-oriented offenses such as theft or drug trafficking. Their behaviours signify coping mechanisms in reaction to poverty, dependency, and systemic inequality, along with intentional criminality.

The etiology of crime in this framework is classified into four interrelated domains, which are social, economic, cultural, and psychological. Social factors, including divorce, widowhood, familial disintegration, school dropout, and social isolation, lead to vulnerability and deviance. Economic difficulties, such as insufficient income, unstable employment, and



dependency on others, create pressure that frequently results in crimes associated with survival. Culturally, gender inequality, patriarchy, and cultural marginalization hinder women's empowerment, constraining their capacity to achieve legitimate goals. Psychological variables such as low self-esteem, suicidal ideation, and experiences of mental or emotional abuse worsen vulnerability to criminal activity. Collectively, these factors illustrate that the origins of female crime are intersectional, grounded in interrelated institutional and individual disadvantages.

The model also emphasizes the gendered experiences of incarcerated women, demonstrating that imprisonment affects women differently from men. The imprisoned women experience social isolation, the stigma of incarceration, and difficulties associated with custodial motherhood, since several inmates are separated from their families and children. Conditions also included overcrowding, poor prison facilities, insufficient menstrual hygiene, and discriminatory practices, which heightened physical and emotional suffering. Repentance also reflects a deep sense of remorse for one's wrongdoings and a sincere desire to seek forgiveness. They have experienced fear of sin, spiritual rebirth, and felt the mercy of the good Lord, and moral sin, reminding them of the importance of righteousness and moral integrity in life. These experiences affirm that women's imprisonment cannot be examined purely as a legal or correctional process but must be understood as a gendered and socially embedded phenomenon.

The model also emphasizes the gendered experiences of incarceration, demonstrating that imprisonment affects women differently from men. The imprisoned women encounter social isolation, the stigma of imprisonment, and difficulties associated with custodial motherhood, as they are separated from their children. Factors including as overcrowding, inadequate prison facilities, insufficient menstrual hygiene, and discriminatory practices intensify their physical and emotional distress. Within prison, they experience stress, helplessness, and group conflicts, while after release, they struggle with repentance, social reintegration, and mental health issues. These experiences affirm that women's imprisonment cannot be examined purely as a legal or correctional process but must be understood as a gendered and socially embedded phenomenon.

The theoretical foundation of the model synthesizes several major criminological perspectives. The Strain Theory explains how structural inequalities, unfavourable living conditions and lack of access to opportunity structures generate stress and anxiety that result

in criminal behaviour. The findings show that incarcerated women come from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds. With low income, limited education, and unstable employment, they struggle to achieve stability through legitimate means. As primary caregivers or single mothers, their inability to meet basic needs creates significant strain and pushes them toward survival-driven actions.

Social and Self-Control Theories emphasize that weak social ties, unstable economic conditions, and limited community support reduce both external control and self-regulation, making individuals more prone to deviant behaviour. Among the inmates, involvement in crimes linked to poverty, addiction, and drug trafficking reflects these weakened controls. Their unstable upbringing, socialization issues, poor education, and difficult socio-economic contingencies suggest early life experiences that contributed to low self-control.

Marginalization Theory contextualizes women's subordination within patriarchal and discriminatory frameworks that increase their vulnerability to criminal action. The study shows that inmates coming from low socioeconomic backgrounds, with limited education and few job opportunities, are particularly vulnerable. Many, especially single mothers and sole earners, turn to subsistence crimes or drug-related offences as a means of survival amid economic hardship and dependency.

While other theories relate to the criminological perspectives, the theories of Foucault and Goffman relate to theories of Penology. Foucault's 'Discipline and Punish' examines how prisons function as institutions of control, enforcing conformity through surveillance and regulation. In prisons, rigid routines, mandatory religious practices, constant monitoring, and vocational training illustrate this transformation. Rather than physical punishment, inmates undergo a form of "soul training," where discipline and moral guidance are used to regulate behaviour and reshape the mind.

Goffman's Total Institution Theory portrays prisons as isolated systems that reshape identity and suppress individuality. While some experience positive transformation, such as spiritual renewal or recovery from addiction, others face loneliness, despair, and social stigma. Although intended for rehabilitation, the system often reflects inequality and limited reintegration opportunities. Prisons thus act as "forcing houses" that reshape identity but fail to address the deeper socio-economic causes of women's incarceration.

Finally, the Theory of Penology ties these frameworks to the broader understanding of punishment, discipline, and correctional philosophies in general. Punishment serves to

control or prevent crime through various approaches such as deterrent (inflicting pain to discourage re-offending), retributive (repaying wrongdoing), preventive (isolating offenders to stop future crimes), and reformative (rehabilitating offenders into law-abiding citizens). In this context, deterrent and retributive models proved ineffective, as most offences arose from poverty, addiction, and marginalization rather than intentional violation of the law. The preventive theory aligns with imprisonment's role in removing women from criminogenic environments. However, the reformative approach resonates most strongly, as prisons increasingly emphasize correction and rehabilitation through spiritual guidance, counselling, and structured routines. Still, outcomes vary as some women experience genuine transformation, while others continue to struggle with frustration and social stigma.

Thus, the integrated model demonstrates that women's incarceration is the cumulative consequence of systemic oppression, inequality in society, and gendered power relations. It emphasizes that female criminality frequently results from economic hardship, mental distress, and limited opportunity rather than intentional indulgence in criminal behaviour. The framework offers a comprehensive knowledge of women's pathways into crime, their experiences in prisons, and the lasting effects of incarceration on their social reintegration and identity.

**Policy Recommendations:** From the experiences of women prisoners, some actionable recommendations for the issues are consolidated and presented in the following table as the macro policy outcome from this micro study.

**Table: Policy outcome**

| Diagnosis                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Prognosis                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1. Poor prison facilities</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| a) The recreational activities available for the inmates are limited. They only have a playing card and a Television in some rooms.<br>b) A library is available, but it is not well-maintained. The library had one almirah with books covered in cobwebs and dust.<br>c) Only two training facilities, such as | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only 2 televisions are functional. The majority didn't have anything much to do. The inmates longed for a playground where they could play outdoor games.</li> <li>They need a well-maintained library to engage themselves with books, spend their time productively, and</li> </ul> |

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| <p>Tailoring and Weaving, are available with limited seats. Most of the inmates are not interested in it.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p>enrich their knowledge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There needs to be more practical training facilities for skill enhancement, where the majority can learn new and marketable skills.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <p><b>2. Overcrowding and shared living</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <p>Each Ward in the prison is overcrowded, shared living, and there is no privacy.</p> <p>a) More than 30 inmates need to share a single toilet. Two or three individuals need to take a bath together.</p> <p>b) Under Trial Prisoners and Convicts cannot be separated since it is overcrowded. UTP inmates are placed in Convict Wards.</p> <p>c) There is no privacy; they have to sleep next to each other. No place to move around and put their belongings. It is especially difficult for mothers with their accompanying children.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More toilets and bathrooms need to be constructed to ensure that women inmates have adequate facilities for maintaining personal cleanliness, particularly in relation to their menstrual hygiene.</li> <li>• A separate ward needs to be constructed to properly segregate Under Trial Prisoners from Convicts, ensuring their safety, legal compliance, and appropriate management.</li> <li>• There is a need to construct proper storage racks so that inmates can keep their belongings in an organized manner. Additionally, the existing wards require extension to provide sufficient space and improve overall living conditions within the facility.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>3. Mental and Physical Health</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <p>a) Many inmates have a stigma of confinement and stress. Only faith-based counselling services are available for their mental well-being. Even though they are available three times a week, most inmates do not regularly attend them. They find it</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trained psychiatrists and psychologists are required to provide regular assessments, counselling, and therapeutic support, ensuring the overall mental well-being and emotional stability of the inmates.</li> <li>• Discipline and leadership need to be</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

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| <p>useless.</p> <p>b) Many inmates have experienced groupism and inmate quarrels, which have affected their emotional well-being.</p> <p>c) Many reported that their health condition deteriorated after they were in prison.</p> <p>d) Medical staff are regularly available, but for many inmates, they are difficult to consult.</p> <p>e) Only vitamins and paracetamol are available.</p> <p>f) For HIV patients, they are not allowed to have their medicine with them.</p> | <p>regulated to avoid quarrels and groupism. The staff needs to take prompt disciplinary action.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a need for regular medical check-ups and the availability of medicines.</li> <li>• Medical staff need to be more vigilant and attentive towards the health needs of the inmates.</li> <li>• The health clinic needs to have a variety of medicines so that the inmates do not need to wait for their medicine when needed.</li> <li>• Especially for HIV patients, it will be convenient for them if they could have their medicine with them.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>4. Nutritional value of food</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <p>The nutritional value of the food provided to them is poor.</p> <p>a) Most often, the food item consisted of potato and dal. They received meat, usually chicken, once a week. At lunch, they received tea without milk and dry roti.</p> <p>b) Often, they received uncooked rice, which is difficult for them to eat.</p> <p>c) No separate food is provided to children who are in prison because of their mothers.</p>                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a need to improve the food items provided to them. The food items provided to them can be changed. Seasonal vegetables can be prepared.</li> <li>• The cook in charge of preparing food needs to be cautious and trained in handling ingredients, ensuring that all meals served are safe and edible.</li> <li>• All the children are below 6 years of age. They need a separate and nutritious food supply for their healthy growth and development.</li> </ul>                                                                                               |
| <p><b>5. Custodial Mothers</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <p>a) Several inmates are accompanied by their children, below 6 years, inside</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These mothers with accompanying children need care and protection.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

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| <p>the prison since there is no one to take care of them.</p> <p>b) Many inmates are single mothers who have dependent children.</p> <p>c) Mothers with children are not placed separately, and the play station for children is not well-maintained.</p>                                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The well-being of their children is a concern and needs to be taken care of, especially when they are sick.</li> <li>• There is a need for proper care and a space for learning for children inside the prison.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>6. Devoid of family bond and Isolation</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <p>a) The majority of the inmates are visited by their families only on request. The time of visit is also limited.</p> <p>b) They could call their relatives thrice a week, but the phone signal and the quality of the phone used are not good. They also have limited time and have to spend money to make phone calls.</p> <p>c) They have a strong sense of isolation with limited outside interference.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It will be more helpful for the inmates to reconnect with their relatives if the timing of their visits is increased.</li> <li>• It will be helpful for the inmates if the duration of phone calls could be extended, and quality phones are provided.</li> <li>• Duration of visitation and phone calls need to be extended and properly regulated.</li> </ul> |
| <b>7. Discriminated practices</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <p>a) Some inmates report facing discrimination from the staff. Discrimination in treatment between the rich and the poor.</p> <p>b) Many inmates who could not afford to hire a private lawyer faced difficulties in communicating with their appointed lawyers.</p>                                                                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All the inmates deserve equal treatment from the staff, and staff need to be properly trained to maintain professionalism in dealing with the inmates.</li> <li>• The inmates' accessibility to their lawyers needs to be taken care of during the entire judicial proceedings.</li> </ul>                                                                      |
| <b>8. Repentance and post-release issues</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <p>a) Many inmates have realised their wrongdoings, accompanied by a genuine desire to change their</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rehabilitative measures need to be strengthened and expanded to equip inmates with the skills, counselling,</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

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| behaviour and rebuild their lives.<br>b) Many inmates are worried about their future, and they cannot plan. They are burdened by financial issues as they try to rebuild their lives. | support, and opportunities necessary for their successful reintegration into society after release.<br>• Post-release programmes need to be planned to engage them to reduce recidivism. |
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The policy recommendations came about through the diagnosis of the problems and the offering of solutions to counter the various issues faced by the inmates at Central Women's Jail.

1. The prison is to make provisions for recreation and skill development by establishing better facilities, such as a proper playground, a fully functional library, and a wide range of practical training programmes for skill enhancement.
2. The prison authorities are to take the initiative to build additional toilets to reduce overcrowding and maintain hygiene, separate wards for UTP and convicts, and provide storage spaces so that the inmates can safely keep their personal belongings within the facility.
3. The prison is to make provisions for professional mental-health support, such as qualified psychiatrists and psychologists, to offer regular counselling and therapeutic support to inmates, improve discipline to maintain order and safety, and provide timely, accessible, and high-quality medical services.
4. The prison has to make provision for separate nutrition for children, tailored to their developmental needs, including age-appropriate meals. The quality of the food provided to the inmates has to be regularly checked and regulated to ensure hygiene, safety, and nutritional adequacy.
5. Provisions have to be made by the prison authorities to create a separate space and special care for mothers with accompanying children so that they can receive focused care and support, and provide space for child-friendly areas equipped with toys, learning materials, and play facilities for their healthy growth and development.
6. An enhancement has to be made by the Prison authorities related to family communication by extending visitation hours and ensuring a more flexible

schedule. Phone connectivity and the allowed duration for phone usage should also be upgraded so inmates can maintain regular contact with their families.

7. The Prison staff and authorities have to be alert and proactive in preventing any form of unequal treatment by staff and make sure that everyone has access to legal aid, regardless of their background or offences.
8. The Prison authorities should implement practical post-release rehabilitation and support programmes that offer guidance, skill training, counselling, and support services to inmates as they transition back into society.

### **Future areas of research**

Future scholars in the field of women's incarceration should incorporate the following considerations into their studies:

1. There needs to be an enhancement in the qualitative research about female inmates. More focus needs to be directed on studying women prisoners through case studies, and not only on the quantitative aspect of the study. This will offer a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and adversities encountered as a result of incarceration.
2. In the study of women prisoners, their families and relatives play an important role. It will be highly beneficial if focus could be given to the roles, responsibilities, and support of their families and relatives. Besides, the impact on their families and relatives, in terms of their mental health and the trauma they encounter, needs an in-depth analysis.
3. It will be helpful if studies could focus on the prison policies and administration and compare them with the daily structure and routines of the prison study.
4. Rehabilitative aspects of the prison system need to be further studied and analysed with possible recommendations.
5. In terms of women's imprisonment, it would prove beneficial if further case studies could be conducted among mothers with their accompanying children; the problems and struggles they encounter deserve an in-depth analysis.
6. For future research, delving deeper into the gender comparative study of imprisonment could help in understanding the needs and policy recommendations of prison administration.



7. From this research, it is found that the majority are in prison due to drug- related offences. Thus, there is a need for future research to focus more on the ND&PS-related offences and find a way to determine the causes and consequences of such criminal behaviour.

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