Library Progress International *Print version ISSN 0970 1052*
Vol.44 No. 3, Jul-Dec 2024: P. 17638-17645 *Online version ISSN 2320 317X*

Original Article *Available online at www.bpasjournals.com*

Investigating The Interplay Between Criminal Propensity, Spiritual Health, And Substance Use Among Larceny Offenders In Central Jails In India

Neelam Hasmukh [1], Ajit Kumar Singh[2*], Ritu Raj [3]

[1]Research Scholar, Amity Institute of Behavioural and Allied Sciences, Amity University Rajasthan, Jaipur, India.
[2]Assistant Professor, Amity Institute of Behavioural and Allied Sciences, Amity University Rajasthan, Jaipur, India.
[3]Assistant Professor, Amity Institute of Behavioural and Allied Sciences, Amity University Madhya Pradesh, Jaipur, India.

How to cite this article: Neelam Hasmukh, Ajit Kumar Singh,Ritu Raj (2024). Investigating The Interplay Between Criminal Propensity, Spiritual Health, And Substance Use Among Larceny Offenders In Central Jails In India. *Library Progress International*, 44(3), 17638-17645

Abstract
Larceny, taking other persons property without their consent, is a crime categorised under 378 and 379 under Indian Penal Code (IPC). There are several factors behind larceny offence, but criminal propensity is a major contributing factor. This study explores the interplay between criminal propensity, spiritual health, and substance use among larceny offenders in central jails in India. Utilizing a descriptive research design, the study examines these variables through a structured questionnaire administered to 231 prisoners. The analysis reveals a near-even distribution of substance and alcohol use among participants, with 48.5% reporting use and 51.5% abstaining. Criminal propensity is notably high, with 69.3% classified as having "Above Average" tendencies, indicating a need for targeted criminal justice interventions. Spiritual health varies significantly, with 45.0% reporting "Very Low" and 20.8% "Very High" levels. The study finds no significant differences in criminal propensity or spiritual health between substance/alcohol users and non-users. However, a significant negative correlation ($r = -0.395$, $p < 0.01$) between criminal propensity and spiritual health suggests that higher spiritual health is associated with lower criminal propensity. Regression analysis supports this relationship, showing that spiritual health explains 15.6% of the variance in criminal propensity. These findings highlight the importance of integrating spiritual health into interventions aimed at reducing criminal behavior and improving overall well-being among prisoners.

Keywords: Criminal propensity, Spiritual health, Substance use, Prisoners, Larceny offenders.

Introduction

In recent years, there has been growing interest in understanding the multifaceted factors contributing to criminal behaviour, particularly within prison populations. Criminal propensity refers to the likelihood of an individual engaging in criminal activities. It is influenced by a range of factors, including genetic predispositions, environmental influences, and psychological traits (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). In India, the Indian Penal Code (IPC) delineates various offenses and their corresponding penalties, with sections such as IPC 378 (Theft) and IPC 379 (Punishment for Theft) being some of the most frequently encountered in the prison system (Indian Penal Code, 1860). Spiritual health is a sense of peace, purpose, and connection to others and the universe, can play a significant role in moderating criminal behaviours (Levin, 2007). Individuals with higher levels of spiritual well-being are less likely to engage in criminal activities and are better equipped to cope with stress and adversity (Koenig, 2012). Spiritual practices can provide prisoners with a framework for introspection, remorse, and rehabilitation, thereby potentially reducing recidivism rates (Johnson et al., 1997).

Substance use is a critical factor influencing criminal behaviour (Nordfjaern & Flemmen, 2013). The abuse of substances such as alcohol, drugs, and narcotics is prevalent among prison populations and is often associated with increased aggression, impaired judgment, and heightened propensity for criminal acts (Bennett & Holloway,

2005). Sections of the IPC, like IPC 279 (Rash Driving or Riding on a Public Way) and IPC 304A (Causing Death by Negligence), often see offenders who were under the influence of substances at the time of the offense (Indian Penal Code, 1860). Substance abuse worsens existing mental health issues and contributes to aggressive and impulsive behaviours (McLellan et al., 2000).

Understanding the interplay between criminal propensity, spiritual health, and substance use requires a holistic approach (Giordano & Longmore, 2008). For instance, prisoners with high criminal propensity and low spiritual health may turn to substance use as a coping mechanism, exacerbating their criminal behaviors (Gorsuch, 1995). Conversely, enhancing spiritual health through interventions like meditation, yoga, and counselling can reduce reliance on substances and promote rehabilitation (Levin, 2010). The positive correlation between spiritual health and psychological well-being among various populations, including prisoners. Research indicates that individuals who engage in regular spiritual practices exhibit lower levels of stress and anxiety. (Pargament, 2007). Structured substance abuse programs significantly reduce relapse rates among former inmates (Marlowe, 2003). Spiritual engagement provides inmates with a moral framework and a sense of community, which are crucial for maintaining lawful behaviour post-release (Clear and Sumter, 2002). Prisoners with higher levels of spiritual health are more likely to use positive coping mechanisms, such as seeking social support and engaging in meaningful activities (Trevino et al., 2012; Visher and Travis, 2003).

The present study aims to investigate the interplay between criminal propensity, spiritual health, and substance use among larceny offenders in central jails in India. Such an investigation is crucial for developing effective rehabilitation programs to reduce substance use that address not only the criminal behaviours but also the underlying psychological and spiritual dimensions influencing these behaviours.

Objectives of the Study

To examine the relationship between criminal propensity, spiritual health, and substance use among prisoners in central jails in India.

To evaluate the correlation between criminal propensity and spiritual Health among larceny offenders.

To assess the influence of spiritual Health on criminal Propensity and its possible contribution to the formulation of criminal justice strategies.

Methodology

A total of 231 larceny offenders currently imprisoned in various central jails in India were selected through the convenient sample approach. Before data collection, authorization was obtained from the respective authorities administering the prisons. The researcher established rapport with the participants and delivered a comprehensive briefing regarding the research. Participants were thereafter given the questionnaires and requested to submit their responses. Data collection proceeded in the jail environment, conforming to security measures and adhering to instructions given by the authorities. The inclusion criteria comprised those aged 21 to 40 who had been convicted by the court exclusively for violations of IPC Sections 378 and 379. Exclusion conditions were imposed on individuals with supplementary criminal charges not associated with larceny offenses and those currently experiencing any health or psychological issues. The data collection procedures followed strict guidelines, guaranteeing the integrity and reliability of the data obtained. Permission was obtained from the prison authorities before conducting the study. Participants were assured that the research would maintain anonymity, with individual replies compiled into group data for reporting. Questionnaires were distributed to inmates within the jail premises.

Tools for data collection

Data collection was conducted using two major instruments: Criminal Propensity Scale and Spiritual Health Scale.

Criminal Propensity Scale – SASN, developed by Arjun Singh and Neelam Sharma in 2017, assesses criminal propensity through four dimensions: aggression, obedience, anti-social behavior, and drug abuse. These dimensions are measured using 50 items on a five-point Likert scale. The scale categorizes criminal propensity levels for males, with raw scores of 180 and above indicating an extremely high propensity, 168 to 179 as high, 157 to 167 as above average, 140 to 156 as average/moderate, 129 to 139 as below average, 117 to 128 as low, and 116 and below as extremely low, the very same scale is used in this research.

Spiritual Health Scale (SHS) -SHS introduced by Shabnam Qayoom and Akbar Husain in 2018, evaluates spiritual health through 22 items on a five-point Likert scale. The SHS classifies spiritual health with a score of 69 indicating very low spiritual health, 75 as low, 83 as moderately spiritual, 91 as high, and 96 as very high spiritual health, herein the same scale is used by the researcher for this study.

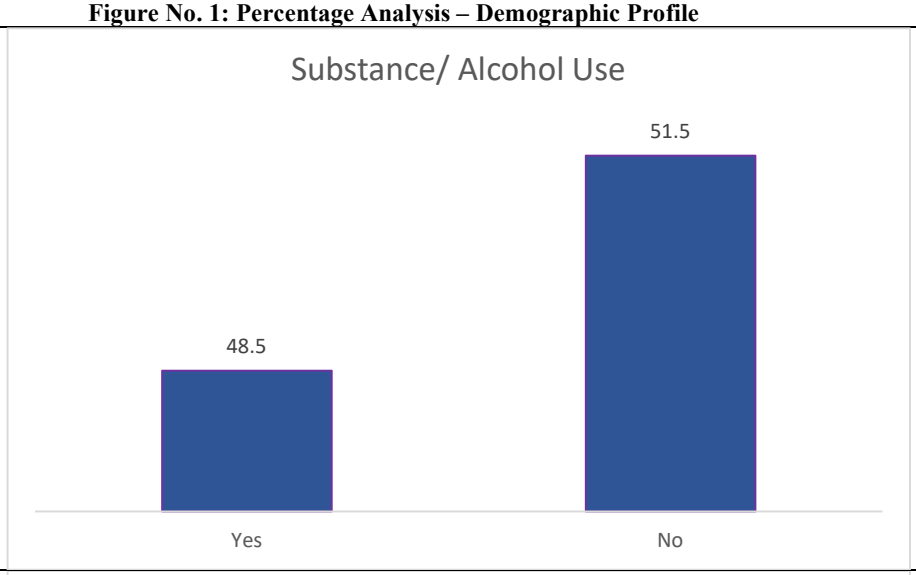
Results

The data presented highlights three critical factors—substance/alcohol use, criminal propensity, and spiritual

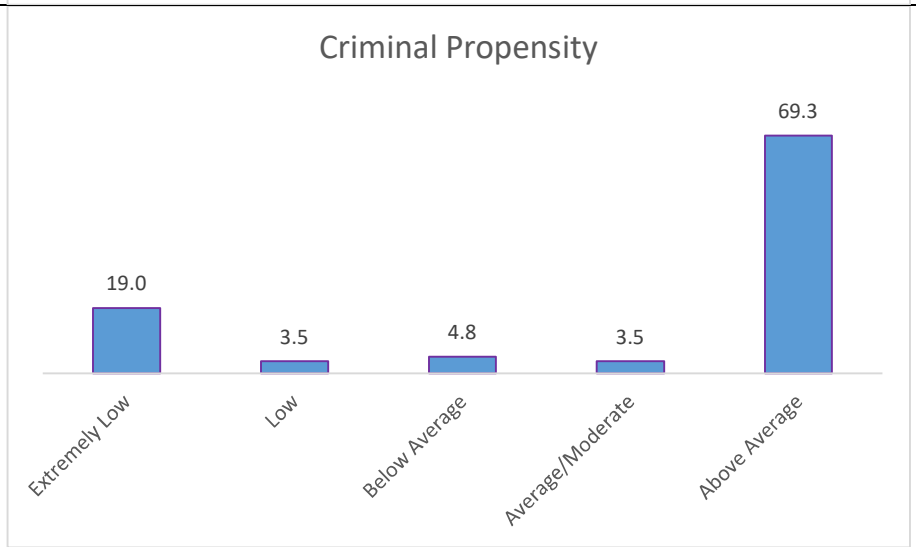
health—among a sample of 231 individuals. The frequency and percentage distributions for each variable provide a comprehensive view of the participants' behaviors and attributes.

Figure No. 1: Percentage Analysis – Demographic Profile

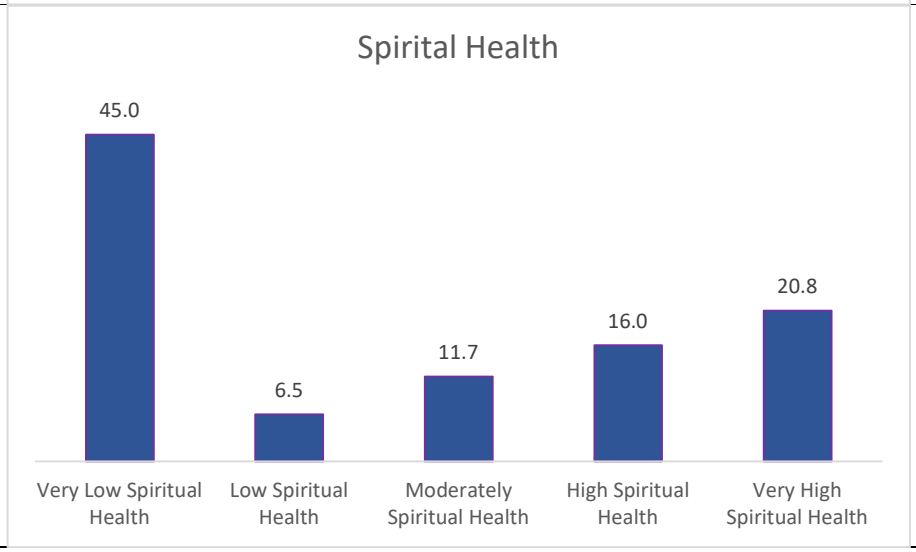
Substance/ Alcohol Use



Criminal Propensity



Spiritual Health



The analysis of substance/alcohol use reveals that slightly less than half (48.5%) of the sample reported using substances or alcohol, while the majority (51.5%) did not engage in such behaviors. This near-even split underscores the importance of addressing substance use in interventions and preventive strategies within this population.

Criminal propensity among the participants is notably high, with 69.3% falling into the "Above Average" category. This is a significant concern as it indicates a substantial proportion of individuals who may be at risk of engaging in criminal activities. The remaining 30.7% are distributed across the lower propensity categories, with "Extremely Low" (19.0%) being the most notable. These findings suggest the need for targeted criminal justice interventions and rehabilitation programs tailored to mitigate high criminal tendencies.

Spiritual health varied widely among participants, with a notable 45.0% exhibiting "Very Low Spiritual Health" and 20.8% reporting "Very High Spiritual Health." This distribution indicates a broad spectrum of spiritual well-being within the sample. The presence of both low and high spiritual health groups suggests diverse spiritual needs, which can be addressed through personalized spiritual and mental health support services. The data highlights the potential of enhancing spiritual health as a means to improve overall well-being and possibly mitigate negative behaviors.

The Table No. 1 presents the results of an independent samples t-test analyzing the relationship between criminal propensity and spiritual health with substance/alcohol use among 231 participants. The group statistics detail the mean scores, standard deviations, and standard errors for participants who reported substance/alcohol use and those who did not.

Table No. 1: Independent Sample T Test - Criminal Propensity and Spiritual Health with Substance/ Alcohol Use

Group Statistics					
Substance/ Alcohol Use		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Criminal Propensity	Yes	112	4.0714	1.60357	0.152
	No	119	3.9412	1.62759	0.149
Spiritual Health	Yes	112	2.5893	1.56857	0.148
	No	119	2.6303	1.72649	0.158

Independent Samples Test						
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Criminal Propensity	Equal variances assumed	.380	.538	.612	229	.541
	Equal variances not assumed			.613	228.516	.541
Spiritual Health	Equal variances assumed	5.410	.021	-.188	229	.851
	Equal variances not assumed			-.189	228.720	.850

The independent samples t-test for criminal propensity indicates no significant difference between individuals who use substances/alcohol and those who do not, as evidenced by a p-value of 0.541 ($t = 0.612$, $df = 229$). This suggests that substance/alcohol use does not significantly impact criminal propensity within this sample. The mean scores for criminal propensity are relatively close, with users averaging 4.0714 and non-users averaging 3.9412, further supporting the lack of significant difference.

For spiritual health, the Levene's test for equality of variances showed a significant result ($F = 5.410$, $p = 0.021$), indicating that variances are not equal between the groups. However, the t-test for equality of means, whether equal variances are assumed or not, also indicates no significant difference in spiritual health between substance/alcohol users and non-users ($p = 0.851$, $t = -0.188$, $df = 229$). The mean scores for spiritual health are very similar, with users averaging 2.5893 and non-users averaging 2.6303. This finding suggests that substance/alcohol use does not significantly affect the spiritual health of the individuals in this sample.

The analysis shows that there are no significant differences in criminal propensity and spiritual health between those who use substances/alcohol and those who do not. This implies that other factors may play a more critical role in influencing these variables within this population. Future research could explore additional variables that might interact with substance use to impact criminal propensity and spiritual health.

The Table No. 2 displays the results of a correlation analysis examining the relationship between criminal propensity and spiritual health among 231 participants. The table includes Pearson correlation coefficients, significance levels, and sample sizes.

Table No. 2: Correlation Analysis - Relationship with Criminal Propensity and Spiritual Health

Correlations			
		Criminal Propensity	Spiritual Health
Criminal Propensity	Pearson Correlation	1	-.395**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	231	231
Spiritual Health	Pearson Correlation	-.395**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	231	231
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

The correlation analysis reveals a significant negative relationship between criminal propensity and spiritual health, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.395 ($p < 0.01$). This indicates that higher levels of criminal propensity are associated with lower levels of spiritual health among the participants. The negative correlation suggests an inverse relationship, where an increase in one variable corresponds with a decrease in the other.

The significance of this correlation ($p = 0.000$) underscores the robustness of the relationship, affirming that the observed association is not due to random chance. Given the substantial sample size ($N = 231$), the findings provide strong evidence for the connection between these two variables. This inverse relationship highlights the potential importance of enhancing spiritual health as a strategy to reduce criminal tendencies.

The results suggest that interventions aimed at improving spiritual health could be beneficial in mitigating criminal behavior. Further research could explore the causal mechanisms underlying this relationship and investigate whether similar patterns are observed in different populations or settings. The significant negative correlation found in this study emphasizes the value of considering spiritual well-being in efforts to address and prevent criminal activities.

Herein the Table No. 3 presents the results of a regression analysis to determine the impact of spiritual health on criminal propensity. The table includes the model summary, ANOVA results, and coefficients for the regression model.

Table No. 3: Regression Analysis – Impact of Criminal Propensity on Spiritual Health

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.395[a]	.156	.152	1.48587
a. Predictors: (Constant), Spiritual Health				

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	93.411	1	93.411	42.309	.000[b]
	Residual	505.585	229	2.208		
	Total	598.996	230			
a. Dependent Variable: Criminal Propensity						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Spiritual Health						

Coefficients[a]						
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	5.014	.183		27.339	.000
	Spiritual Health	-.387	.059	-.395	-6.505	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Criminal Propensity						

The model summary indicates that spiritual health accounts for 15.6% of the variance in criminal propensity ($R^2 = 0.156$). The adjusted R^2 value of 0.152 suggests that even after adjusting for the number of predictors, the model explains a significant portion of the variance. The standard error of the estimate is 1.48587, indicating the average distance that the observed values fall from the regression line.

The ANOVA results show that the regression model is statistically significant ($F = 42.309$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that spiritual health is a significant predictor of criminal propensity. The significance level of 0.000 confirms that the observed relationship is unlikely to be due to chance.

The coefficients table reveals that spiritual health has a significant negative effect on criminal propensity ($B = -0.387$, $p < 0.001$). The unstandardized coefficient (B) indicates that for each unit increase in spiritual health, criminal propensity decreases by 0.387 units. The standardized coefficient (Beta) of -0.395 aligns with the correlation analysis, further supporting the negative relationship between these variables. The constant value of 5.014 represents the expected value of criminal propensity when spiritual health is zero.

The regression analysis demonstrates that higher levels of spiritual health are associated with lower levels of criminal propensity. The significant negative coefficient highlights the importance of spiritual health as a potential factor in reducing criminal behaviors. These findings suggest that interventions aimed at enhancing spiritual health could play a crucial role in mitigating criminal tendencies, emphasizing the value of incorporating spiritual well-being into preventative and rehabilitative programs.

The analysis reveals that substance and alcohol use is almost evenly distributed among participants, with 48.5% reporting use and 51.5% abstaining. This near-equilibrium highlights the necessity for targeted interventions and preventive measures tailored to address substance use within this population.

Criminal propensity is notably high, with 69.3% of participants classified as having "Above Average" tendencies. This substantial proportion suggests a significant risk for criminal behaviour, highlighting the critical need for specialized criminal justice interventions and rehabilitation programs. The remaining 30.7% are spread across lower propensity categories, which further underscores the importance of tailored strategies to manage and mitigate criminal tendencies effectively.

Spiritual health among participants varies considerably, with 45.0% reporting "Very Low" spiritual health and 20.8% indicating "Very High" spiritual health. This wide range reflects diverse spiritual needs, suggesting that personalized spiritual and mental health support services could be beneficial. Addressing these varying levels of spiritual health may help improve overall well-being and potentially reduce negative behaviors.

The independent samples t-test findings indicate no significant difference in criminal propensity or spiritual health between substance/alcohol users and non-users. This suggests that substance/alcohol use does not significantly influence these variables within this sample, pointing to the need to explore other factors that might affect criminal propensity and spiritual health.

Correlation analysis reveals a significant negative relationship between criminal propensity and spiritual health ($r = -0.395$, $p < 0.01$). This negative correlation indicates that individuals with higher criminal propensity tend to have lower spiritual health, suggesting that improving spiritual health might be a key factor in reducing criminal behavior.

Regression analysis further supports this view, showing that spiritual health explains 15.6% of the variance in criminal propensity. The significant negative coefficient ($B = -0.387$, $p < 0.001$) confirms that higher spiritual health is associated with lower criminal propensity. These findings highlight the potential value of enhancing spiritual health as part of strategies aimed at reducing criminal tendencies and improving overall behavioral outcomes.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the relationships between substance/alcohol use, criminal propensity, and spiritual health, contributing to a deeper understanding of these dynamics. The results show no significant differences in criminal propensity or spiritual health between substance/alcohol users and non-users. This finding contrasts with some existing research that suggests substance use can exacerbate criminal behavior and impact mental health (Simons, M. & Burt, C. E., 2011). For instance, research by Makkai and McGregor (2004) found a strong association between substance abuse and increased likelihood of engaging in criminal activities, which was not observed in this study. This discrepancy might be attributed to sample differences or variations in the operationalization of substance use and criminal propensity.

The significant negative correlation between criminal propensity and spiritual health ($r = -0.395$) aligns with previous studies that suggest a protective role of spiritual and religious well-being against criminal behavior. For example, Baier and Wright (2001) found that higher levels of religious involvement were associated with lower rates of criminal behavior, supporting the notion that spiritual health can mitigate criminal tendencies. The regression analysis further supports this relationship, demonstrating that spiritual health accounts for 15.6% of the variance in criminal propensity. This is consistent with findings by Wright and Kelly (2009), who noted that spiritual and religious factors play a significant role in influencing criminal behavior, albeit through complex mechanisms.

The wide variation in spiritual health among participants, with 45.0% reporting "Very Low" and 20.8% "Very High," underscores the diverse spiritual needs within the sample. This variability is consistent with the work of Pargament (1997), who highlighted that spiritual health is not uniformly distributed and can vary significantly across different populations. The lack of significant differences in spiritual health between substance users and

non-users, as well as the negative relationship with criminal propensity, suggests that enhancing spiritual well-being might be a viable strategy for addressing criminal behavior, echoing the conclusions of several studies on the protective effects of spirituality (Koenig, H. G., 2009).

Conclusion

The study reveals that substance and alcohol use is almost evenly distributed among participants, with 48.5% reporting use and 51.5% abstaining. High criminal propensity is evident, with 69.3% having "Above Average" tendencies, indicating a high risk for criminal behavior. Spiritual health varies significantly, with 45.0% reporting "Very Low" and 20.8% indicating "Very High" health. No significant difference in criminal propensity or spiritual health between substance/alcohol users and non-users was found, suggesting the need for specialized interventions. A significant negative relationship was found between criminal propensity and spiritual health, suggesting that enhancing spiritual health could help reduce criminal behavior.

The findings of this study show the complex relationship between criminal propensity, spiritual health, and substance use within the population of larceny offenders in central jails in India. The analysis revealed that, although substance and alcohol use was nearly evenly distributed among participants, there were no significant differences identified in terms of criminal propensity or spiritual health when comparing users to non-users. The results indicate a significant inverse relationship between criminal propensity and spiritual health, implying that individuals who have higher spiritual well-being are likely to demonstrate reduced traits toward criminal behavior. This highlights the significant potential of spiritual health in preventing criminal behavior. The findings highlight the significant variability in spiritual health among prisoners, indicating the necessity for specific strategies to effectively meet their spiritual and healing requirements. The findings indicate that the incorporation of spiritual well-being within correctional interventions may serve as an effective way to reduce criminal behaviors and enhance the overall well-being of prisoners.

References

- Andrews, D. A., & Bonta, J. (2010). The psychology of criminal conduct (5th ed.). Anderson Publishing.
- Baier, C. J., & Wright, B. R. E. (2001). 'If you love me, keep my commandments': A meta-analysis of the relationship between religion and crime. Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, 38(1), 3-21. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022427801038001001
- Bennett, T., & Holloway, K. (2005). Understanding drugs, alcohol and crime. Open University Press.
- Clear, T. R., & Sumter, M. T. (2002). Prisoners, prison, and religion: Religion and adjustment to prison. Journal of Offender Rehabilitation, 35(3-4), 127-159.
- Giordano, P. C., Longmore, M. A., Schroeder, R. D., & Seffrin, P. M. (2008). A life-course perspective on spirituality and desistance from crime. *Criminology*, *46*(1), 99-132.
- Gorsuch, R. L. (1995). Religious aspects of substance abuse and recovery. Journal of Social Issues, 51(2), 65-83.
- Indian Penal Code, 1860.
- Johnson, B. R., Larson, D. B., & Pitts, T. C. (1997). Religious programs, institutional adjustment, and recidivism among former inmates in prison fellowship programs. Justice Quarterly, 14(1), 145-166.
- Koenig, H. G. (2009). Spirituality and health: An overview of research and clinical applications. International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine, 39(4), 381-389. https://doi.org/10.2190/PM.39.4.b
- Koenig, H. G. (2012). Religion, spirituality, and health: The research and clinical implications. ISRN Psychiatry, 2012, 1-33.
- Levin, J. (2007). *God, faith, and health: Exploring the spirituality-healing connection*. Turner Publishing Company.
- Levin, J. (2010). Religion and mental health: Theory and research. International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies, 7(2), 102-115.
- Makkai, T., & McGregor, K. (2004). The impact of drug and alcohol use on crime. Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology, 37(1), 35-52. https://doi.org/10.1375/acri.37.1.35
- Marlowe, D. B. (2003). Integrating substance abuse treatment and criminal justice supervision. NIDA Science & Practice Perspectives, 2(1), 4-14.
- McLellan, A. T., Grissom, G. R., Brill, P., Durell, J., Metzger, D. S., & O'Brien, C. P. (2000). Comparative effectiveness of intensive outpatient treatment and traditional outpatient treatment for cocaine abuse. Journal of Psychoactive Drugs, 32(3), 305-320.
- Nordfjærn, T., Dahl, H., & Flemmen, G. (2013). Social influence, health variables and criminal behaviours associated with substance use among rural Norwegian adolescents. *Drugs: education, prevention and policy*, *20*(1), 56-66.
- Pargament, K. I. (1997). Psychology and religion: The search for a common ground. Guilford Press.

- Pargament, K. I. (2007). Spiritually integrated psychotherapy: Understanding and addressing the sacred. Guilford Press.
- Simons, R. L., & Burt, C. E. (2011). 'Not just a phase': Substance use and its consequences in the context of criminal behavior. Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment, 41(4), 411-418. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsat.2011.04.007
- Trevino, K. M., Archambault, E., & Schuster, M. (2012). Religiosity and spirituality in cancer patients: A systematic review of the literature. Psycho-Oncology, 21(6), 630-641.
- Visher, C. A., & Travis, J. (2003). Transitions from prison to community: Understanding individual pathways. Annual Review of Sociology, 29, 89-113.
- Wright, B. R. E., & Kelly, J. R. (2009). Religion and criminal behavior: A review of the literature. Criminal Justice Review, 34(2), 207-226. https://doi.org/10.1177/0734016807307597