

# The Corrupted Prison System

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## Prisons, Civilization, and the Problem of Institutional Corruption

Fyodor Dostoevsky asserted that “the degree to which the community is civilized can be judged by going to the prisons.” Prison is a corrections system that is crucial in society because it maintains a just society, increases public safety, and carries out criminal sentencing. Prisons help to correct people who have committed different offenses in society and apply moral rules. Both corrections and prison officers are normally valued as individuals and as institutions that are given the mandate to serve society. If the officials are involved in corruption, the honor of the whole system becomes questionable (Barkow, Rachel E., and Mark Osler 390). When an institution is corrupt, it cannot perform its aim of rectifying offenders. The environment in prison has an impact on the mental status and behavior of prisoners. Additionally, the conditions in prisons influence the actions of prisoners when they go back to the community. Convicts who are exposed to corruption by prison officers have problems in reintegrating back into the community since they were subjected to unjust treatment while in prison.

The problem of corruption in prison facilities is a common problem in many jails, particularly in America. Corruption can be defined as the abuse of the rules and regulations of the organization for personal gain. There are examples of corruption activities, which include fixing a ticket for convicts, smuggling contraband, and receiving bribes. The real level of corruption in correctional facilities is not known. The available data is found in inmate reports, media, and officers who report colleagues who are involved in corruption. Currently, there is no consistent tracking of corruption in prisons. One reason for the lack of information is the way society perceives prisoners (Robinson 232). Most people think that convicts brought their problems upon themselves based on the crimes they committed. This results in a lack of concern for the situation of the prison facilities. Additionally, the public feels that correctional facilities are not seen by them and they are not part of their occurrences. The environment in prison has an impact on the mental status and behavior of prisoners both inside the correctional facilities and outside. Moreover, the situation in prisons affects the actions of inmates when they go back to the public. The administration has turned a blind eye to corruption since they want to avoid public concerns (Dawe, Meghan, and Philip 128).

Corruption in prisons starts with small offenses that become bigger and can spring out of control. For instance, in 2013, there was a case in a Maryland prison involving a scandal where the Federal Bureau of Investigation prosecuted 13 correctional officials. The officials helped the Black Guerrilla Family gang members to engage in money laundering and drug dealing. Another example of corruption and human rights abuse happened in 2011 in Los Angeles County, California. The FBI

agents recruited Anthony Brown, who was a convict at the Central Jail, to get information regarding alleged cases of corruption and human rights by deputies. However, after the Sheriffs discovered that the FBI was probing cases of human abuse and corruption, they established a way of derailing the investigation. The victims were found with the offense and have now been imprisoned. Another final example of corruption in prisons involves the FBI Operation Ghost Guard in Georgia. This was established in 2014 when it was found out that a convict was using a cell phone to facilitate kidnappings and murder. The investigation took two years, of which more than fifty officers in nine prisons in the Georgia Department were arrested for trafficking contraband. The study showed that correctional officers were receiving \$1000 on each trafficked cell phone, and the operation helped to seize more than 23,500 cell phones.

## Individual Character and the Uneven Conduct of Correctional Officers

There is no clear reason why some of the officials participate in corruption, whereas others are always working according to rules and regulations. Studies indicate that character is a predictor of corruption in prisons. Such factors are linked to the environmental and social influences intrinsic to correctional facilities. Social psychological factors play a big role in prison corruption (Neal et al. 2009). Prison guards are just like prisoners since they are also captives. The guards are contained in a violent, artificial, and crowded environment. Inmates and guards know the constant threat of harm they face. In most cases, guards are normally outnumbered by inmates, and they are supposed to apply their authority to ensure that there is order and a safe environment. The correctional officers are supposed to decide the kind of privileges prisoners will get by establishing an opinion on the character of the inmates. Prison guards are entitled to escape privileges as a form of punishment. Such decisions are optional and have low public visibility. It is the type of captor-captive connection and the invisible perception that results in prison corruption.

Additionally, the prison environment has been upgraded in many regions, and there has been a shift from the traditional linear design to the direct supervision that is practiced in the form of pods. The kind of direct supervision environment exposes officers and inmates to closer contiguity that can escalate the emotional change between the prisoners and officers. When there is more emotional transference, corruption can increase regarding doing favors and bribes. Prison officers start to identify with convicts because of the increased isolation from their colleagues and closeness to inmates. In such cases, the correctional officers may transfer loyalty to the convicts and be involved in small rule infractions to improve life for their people. An example of small infractions includes things like bringing candy, extra food, or other things such as mobile phones into the pod, and the officer may not see such favors as a violation of the rule. In many years, infractions normally become severe. This puts the guards in a tricky situation and threatens convicts snitching on guards and may force them to proceed with doing favors. Convicts who have powers may demand favors like smuggling contraband, cell phones, and drugs. Therefore, a naïve guard may be vulnerable to

corruption in direct supervision since there is no presence of experienced officers.

According to Smith, there is general agreement about the necessity to improve access to mental health treatment in all correctional facilities (19). This can be done through screening, which is an appropriate way to reduce forms of corruption in prisons. There is a treatment used by convicts in a prison system that gives universal mental health services through screening. For example, research was conducted on 7,965 successive admittances to Canadian prisons. The pattern of mental health treatment was evaluated from the day of admission to release and eventually death. The research shows that screening results were highly linked with treatment application during imprisonment (Dawe, Meghan, and Philip 129). However, mental health screening may have diverted resources from the already known highest-need cases toward newly identified cases, which often received brief treatment suggestive of lower needs. Further work is needed to determine the most cost-effective responses to positive screens or alternatives to screening that increase the uptake of services. The environment in prison has an impact on the health status and conduct of prisoners. Besides, the screening process in prisons affects the actions of inmates when they go back to the community.

## Training, Leadership, and Organizational Causes of Prison Misconduct

Organizational factors play a bigger role in prison corruption. Prison corruption is ascribed to a lack of training, accountability, and leadership. Many departments have bad employment and training standards and don't have valuable role models for new recruitment. Because of this, recruits adopt bad behaviors and agree to take such characteristics. Politicians and administrators also contributed to high rates of corruption in prisons, resulting in reduced standards, inconsistent accountability, and unjust promotion activities. Staff who witness misconduct by their seniors, inconsistent accountability, and shameless promotion will likely be more bitter and angry toward the organization. Because of this, they rationalize their misbehavior as justified. This is worsened when the departments ignore the personal requirements of the prison guards. Most departments try to retain their staff in a high-stress environment and insufficient better experiences. Retaining is poor if the promotion does not focus on quality but political decisions. If the employees who are promoted to high ranks are not qualified, the morale of workers deteriorates, and the justification for prison corruption increases. Lack of courage has also fueled corruption cases in prisons. Both administrators and officers ignore misconduct. The prison authority learns through training that there is a need to perform duties together to keep the prison environment a better place since they are overwhelmed by the high number of convicts.

Private prisons have had the effects of corruption under the program known as the Prison Industry Enhancement Certification Program (PIECP) on unemployment duration, duration of regular service, and earnings of men and women released from several state prisons between 1996 and 2001. The labor market dynamics of formerly imprisoned men and women have indicated the extent of corruption in prison facilities. The program is found to increase reported earnings and formal

employment on an extensive margin, with a stronger impact on the formal employment of women. Evaluation of labor market dynamics reveals that traditional human capital variables, criminogenic factors, and a few demographic characteristics determine job loss. Also, black women, single women, and women with more extensive criminal histories face greater barriers in the labor market than their male counterparts, which results in corruption. The government has failed to work with private institutions to provide constituent accountability because it is the most efficient method to mitigate corruption and unethical behaviors in those facilities. The Prison Industry Enhancement Certification Program (PIECP) on unemployment has also failed to address critical issues in regard to the hiring and promotion of prison officers.

There is a need to reform prisoners so that they can be reinstated into society by giving them better services like health and education. Avoiding any form of discrimination against ex-prisoners can help them adapt to life easily. If our society gets rid of this discrimination, then ex-prisoners will find jobs and places to live and will not resort to crime to provide for them. Many governments have failed to accomplish more substantial reform in prisons. For example, in the U. S, some areas that did not need congressional action were largely rooted in unfortunate deference to the Department of Justice (Dawe, Meghan, and Philip 128). Factors that have been involved in this case include sentencing, clemency, compassionate release, and forensic science of the Department resisting common sense criminal justice reforms that would save taxpayer dollars, avert cases of corruption, help reduce mass incarceration, and maintain public safety. These examples and basic institutional design theory all point in the same direction: real criminal justice reform requires putting the right institutions in charge of criminal justice policymaking. Institutional changes are one thing that would help the administrations to make the system less punitive and reduce prison populations to achieve the broad transformation that most prisons aspire to but fail to attain.

## Independent Oversight and Reform of Criminal Justice Policy

A critical move is to place criminal justice policymaking in the hands of individuals who can advise those in authority independently of the institutional interests of prosecutors. Correctional officers are just like prisoners since they are also imprisoned. The guards are enclosed in a violent, simulated, and congested environment (Cox 432). Prisoners and guards recognize the unyielding danger of harm they face. In most cases, guards are usually outstripped by inmates, and they are supposed to apply their authority to ensure that there is order and a safe environment. The prison guards are supposed to decide the kind of privileges prisoners will get by establishing an opinion on the character of the inmates. Prison guards are entitled to escape privileges as a way of punishment. Such decisions are optional and have low public visibility. It is the type of captor-captive connection and the invisible perception that results in prison corruption. Retention is poor if promotion and services do not focus on quality but on prison supervisors' decisions. If the employees who are promoted to high ranks are not qualified, the morale of workers deteriorates, and the justification for prison corruption increases.

Lack of courage has also fueled corruption cases in prisons.

Prisons departments have helped to correct prisoners who have committed different forms of offenses in society and apply the moral rules. Corrections and prison officers are valued as individuals and as institutions that are given the mandate to serve society. If the officials are involved in corruption, the honor of the whole system becomes questionable. When an institution is corrupt, it cannot perform its aim of rectifying offenders. The environment in prison has an impact on the mental status and behavior of prisoners. Moreover, the situation in prisons affects the actions of inmates when they go back to the public. Criminals who are exposed to fraud by prison officers have difficulties in reintegrating back into the community since they were exposed to unjust treatment while in prison (Neal et al. 231).

In conclusion, the main issue is corruption in prisons, and there must be ways how to reduce or avert corruption. There are various ways to achieve zero corruption in prisons. The facility must ensure that the quality of recruitment and the background is accessed since the past characters. Additionally, the prison departments should give better training programs that ensure that all the recruits understand ethical and unethical issues pertaining to their job that enable them to create a positive culture. The government should partner with the institution to provide constituent accountability because it is the most efficient method to mitigate corruption and unethical behaviors. The prison department should also perform practical career survival training, which includes ethical dilemma simulation since it helps preserve the learned information in the memory (Cox 415). Additionally, senior prison officials must play their roles positively. Seniors are regarded as mentors, counselors, and trainers for all prison employees. One of their important roles is to shield all employees from developing anger because it is the main explanation for participating in corrupt activities. The departments should devise an operational employee mediation program that can detect a single form of corruption through internal training and performance tracking. Correctional facilities should make sure that moral and character standards are the most fundamental issues when promoting their officers.

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