

ISSN 2354-8428
e-ISSN 2598-8727

JURNAL KEPERAWATAN

KOMPREHENSIF

COMPREHENSIVE NURSING JOURNAL

Published by :

**Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Keperawatan
PPNI Jawa Barat**

Vol. 9 No. 4, October 2023



JURNAL KEPERAWATAN KOMPREHENSIF	VOL. 9	NO. 4	Bandung October 2023	ISSN 2354-8428	e-ISSN 2598-8727
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Review Article

Mental Health Problems among Adolescent Prisoners: A Literature Review

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Received : 24/05/2023

Revised : 24/07/2023

Accepted : 30/10/2023

Online : 31/10/2023

Published : 31/10/2023

Abstract

Aims: The purpose of this literature review is to identify mental health problems in adolescent prisoners.

Methods: A literature review method was used. PubMed, Sage Journal, Springer, and EBSCO were used to search for articles. This literature review's inclusion criteria were English publications published during the last ten years, and qualitative and quantitative study.

Results: The results obtained were mental health problems that often appear in adolescent prisoners such as behavioral disorders, hyperactivity, violent behavior, Oppositional Defiant Disorder (disobedient behavior), substance use disorders, and anxiety disorders.

Conclusions: Mental health services for adolescents in prisons need to be improved to prevent more serious health problems.

Keywords:

adolescent, mental health problems, prisoners, prison

INTRODUCTION

Adolescent prisoners are adolescents who, based on court decisions, serve a sentence in a correctional institution for a maximum of 18 years (1). According to Riskesdas data (2), the prevalence of mental-emotional disorders as indicated by symptoms of depression and anxiety for those aged 15 and up exceeds 9.8% of the entire population of Indonesia, indicating a considerable increase in the prevalence of mental disorders.

The prevalence of mental disorders has been studied in adolescent prisoners is still limited when compared to similar studies in adult prisoners. In 2018 the number of child perpetrators of criminal acts was 3,048 children, a slight decrease from 2017 which reached 3,479 children. Of this number, 894 children or 29.33 percent are still prisoners

and 2,154 children or 70.67 percent are prisoners or students. Both adolescent prisoners and child prisoners have decreased compared to 2017. Adolescent prisoners and child prisoners are dominated by boys, namely 98.33 percent of adolescent prisoners and 97.09 percent of child prisoners (3).

Adolescence is a vulnerable period for depressive symptoms to develop and higher rates of depression are found in adolescents who are prisoners (4). Adolescents who are prisoners are certainly more vulnerable and have a higher risk of experiencing psychosocial health problems. This is because adolescents are separated from their families and peer environment (5). Adolescents living in the correctional settings will undergo a more severe and difficult transition period when compared to other normal adolescents. The

psychological burden they experience feels heavier when they live in a correctional setting. Therefore, this literature review aims to determine mental health problems in adolescent prisoners.

METHODS

A literature review was used in this study. The data sources used are secondary data taken from several scientific articles with the use of several limitations such as year of publication, language, and research design. The author conducted several search processes to obtain relevant articles about mental health disorders in adolescent prisoners using PubMed, Sage Journal, Springer, and EBSCO. In the process of searching for the article, the keywords used include (Adolescent OR juvenile OR youth OR teenager OR teens) AND (mental health problems OR mental disorder OR mental illness OR psychiatric problems OR psychological problems) AND (inmates OR prisoners OR detainees OR convicts OR offenders).

The inclusion criteria in this study include accessible full-text, English-language articles, qualitative and quantitative

research types, articles with a maximum publication of the last 10 years (2012-2022), and articles that focus on mental health problems in adolescent prisoners. While the exclusion criteria are child prisoners, adults, using a language other than English, and articles publication more than 10 years.

Using the PRISMA Flow Diagram as a guide, this research completed the study selection procedure. In addition, the results of the selection of journals are determined using keywords, and validated against inclusion criteria, exclusion criteria, and titles. Extraction was done manually by analyzing the author, year of publication, country, sample size, research method, and results (Table 1). The article selection process is carried out by looking at the title, content of the article, and inclusion criteria. So finally, there are five articles according to the conditions carried out a synthesis. The PRISMA diagram below illustrates the process of selecting articles according to the title and research inclusion criteria so that five articles that meet the requirements are obtained.

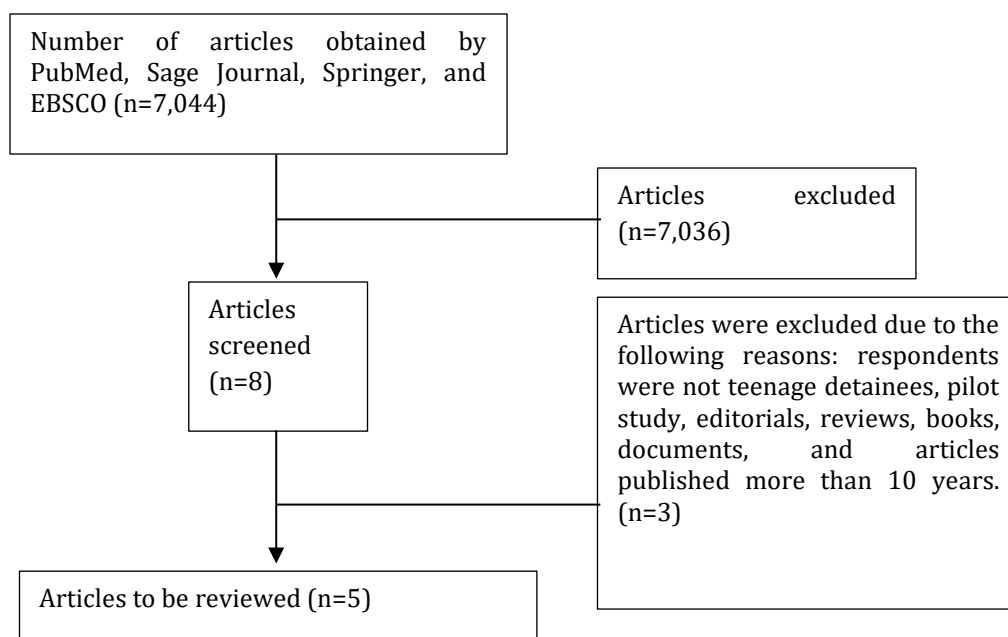


Figure 1. Article Search Flow

RESULTS

Five articles obtained. After going through the process of selecting and examining articles based on inclusion criteria, exclusion criteria and duplication, there were five articles related to health problems in adolescent prisoners. Based on research sources, articles were published in Germany (1), Chile (1), Nigeria (1), Portugal (1), and South Korea (1). The five articles were published between 2015 to 2021, the methods were quantitative and cross-sectional studies.

Table 1. Data Extraction of Mental Health Problems among Adolescent Prisoners

Author, Year Country	Sample size	Method	Result
Turner et al, 2020 Germany	161	Quantitative study	Female adolescent prisoners have a greater proportion of somatic symptoms, anxiety/depression, and attention problems than male adolescent prisoners.
Gaete et al 2018 Chile	935	Cross-sectional study	Cannabis dependence disorder, severe depressive disorder, and anxiety disorder were the most common mental disorders among 935 responders. Childhood abuse, among other things, was linked to major depressive disorder, and maternal mortality was linked to anxiety disorders.
Kuranga, 2021 Nigeria	120	Cross-sectional study	A total of 62.5% of those polled are over the age of 15. The proportion of respondents suffering from mental problems was 82.5%. The most frequent mental problems were disruptive behavior disorders (40.8%), drug use disorders (15.8%), anxiety disorders (14.2%), psychosis (6.7%), and mood disorders (5%).

Rijo et al, 2015 Portugal	217	Quantitative study	Mental health issues are common, with a global prevalence of 91.2% of the total sample. Global prevalence rates were similar in both groups (93.4% in incarceration and 88.4% in community-based programs). Adolescents in youth facilities are more likely to be addicted to drugs, whereas anxiety and mood disorders are more common in community-based groups. Participants with behavioral issues were more than four times more likely to meet the criterion for substance misuse.
Kim et al, 2017 South Korea	173	Cross-sectional study	In total, 90.8% of inmates had at least one psychiatric diagnosis, with 75.1% having psychiatric comorbidities. Alcohol use disorder was the most frequent psychiatric disorder, followed by behavioral disorders and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. The most prevalent combination of comorbidities is alcohol use disorder and behavioral problem. When paired with conduct disorders, the presence of the two psychiatric diseases was associated with greater rates of recidivism, and alcohol use disorder was also connected with recurrent offenses, but not with anxiety disorders, major depression, or psychotic disorders.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of a review of the five articles that have been carried out, mental health problems commonly appear in adolescent prisoners such as behavioral disorders, hyperactivity, conduct disorders (violent behavior), Oppositional Defiant Disorder (disobedient behavior), substance use disorders, and anxiety disorders. The percentage of prisoners with at least one mental disorder is 90.8%, higher than the general adolescent population of 15-38% (6). Adolescent prisoners generally exhibit higher rates of all mental health problems than adolescent boys, with the possible exception of drug use (7). Various characteristics cause mental health problems in adolescent prisoners, namely drug abuse and past conflicts.

According to Rijo et al (8), the most common problems found in prisoners who are placed in adolescent prisons or receive community-based programs are disruptive disorders such as attention deficit disorders, hyperactivity, rebellious behavior, behavioral disorders, and antisocial personality disorders. Meanwhile, Gaete et al (9) discovered a high prevalence of substance abuse problems, depressive conditions, and anxiety disorders in adolescent convicts, as well as a link between certain mental disorders and certain crimes. Adolescent substance misuse has substantial negative repercussions for adolescent development and school performance, and it raises the likelihood of developing substance use disorder (SUD) in adolescence (10).

Kim et al (6) found that the prevalence of adolescent prisoners with substance abuse disorders was 57.8%, disruptive disorders 71.7%, behavioral disorders 55.5%, anxiety disorders 25.4% and major depression 17.3%. This figure shows that more than half of adolescent prisoners have mental health problems. Mental disorders in juvenile prisoners in a study conducted by Kuranga et al (11) were behavioral disorders, alcohol and substance use

disorders, psychosis, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) and other anxiety disorders. The most common behavioral disorder found in juvenile inmates is disruptive behavior disorder (DBD).

According to Turner et al (12), negative childhood experiences can have an impact on a person's biological and neurological development. Delays in development during childhood increase a person's risk of having mental health problems such as depression, personality disorders, substance use disorders, or antisocial behavior, all of which are linked to abuse and other negative effects. Furthermore, children with parents who have mental health problems are at a higher risk of developing mental illnesses than children with parents who do not have mental health problems. The behavior of parents who often yell at children, hit them, and behave rudely will form a maladaptive character during child development. This is supported by the full-adjusted model which states that those associated with the incidence of depression or dysthymia are a history of childhood abuse, a history of living on the streets, early theft, violations of public order at an early age, and the presence of anxiety disorders (9).

In addition, education is one of the causes that can determine mental health problems in prisoners. Education greatly influences the level of anxiety and depression of adolescent prisoners (9). The higher the amount of education gained by convicts, the lower their level of anxiety and sadness. The study conducted by Kim et al (6) also investigated comorbid diseases and repetitive behavior disorders that can appear in people with mental health problems. Alcohol abuse and behavioral disorders are more at risk of developing comorbid diseases. In addition, alcohol abuse disorders exhibit higher rates of comorbidity and repeat offending behavior than prisoners with other mental health

problems. With mental health disorders accompanied by the use of drugs and alcohol, psychiatrists need to pay attention to the presence of comorbid illnesses.

Prisoners who experience mental health problems should be given appropriate treatment and counseling to overcome the problem and prevent the worsening of mental health problems, not all prisoners receive counseling services equally. These juvenile convicts are more likely to seek help from those with whom they have long-term, trusted ties, such as parents and friends. The poor use of counseling services among these teenagers is attributable to psychological, social, institutional, and cultural impediments to seeking these services, such as issues of understanding, stigma, and confidentiality (13).

According to Rijo et al. (10), convicts in Portugal have fewer possibilities to satisfy their mental health requirements than children detained. Intensive monitoring is still used on prisoners who are attempting to lessen peer and family connection issues and avoid the usage of psychiatric medicines. In South Korea, the resources available to provide services for teenage detainees with mental illnesses are very restricted. In South Korea, there is just one medical protection center for teenage detainees that can provide psychiatric care. Furthermore, the institution can only handle 60 patients at a time, and there is no full-time registered psychiatrist on staff to administer services (6).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the five articles' analyses, it was found that mental health problems that often arise in adolescent prisoners such as behavioral disorders, hyperactivity, conduct disorder (violent behavior), Oppositional Defiant Disorder (disobedient behavior), substance use disorders, and anxiety disorders. The causes of mental health problems in juvenile prisoners include unpleasant childhood experiences, past conflicts, drug

abuse, and low levels of education. The level of mental health services in prisons is still low, as a result, it is hoped that correctional institutions would pay more attention to the mental health of convicts, particularly youngsters.

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