

## THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL CLIMATE ON LIFE SATISFACTION OF DRUG-ABUSE INMATES IN MALAYSIA PRISON

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**Abstract:** Prison could serve as both a direct obstacle and an interactive adaptable in the impact and consequence of inmates' penitentiary interventions. The main aim of this study was to examine the effects of the different aspects of prison social climate on life satisfaction among drug-abuse inmates in a Malaysia prison. The link between prison social climate and life satisfaction has been inadequately explored. This study adopted a cross-sectional research design involving a total 465 drug-abuse inmates. The respondents were selected using simple random sampling. The data was collected using self-administered questionnaires comprising items to measure the two major constructs in the study, prison social climate and life satisfaction. The findings of the study revealed that different aspects of prison social climate had different influence on drug-abuse inmates' life satisfaction. The study also indicated that activities such as creative activities, education, work skills and physical exercise need to be enhanced and diversified as it can increase life satisfaction of drug-abuse inmates. Better understanding of drug-abuse inmate life satisfaction during incarceration will help in designing more effective treatment opportunities during incarceration and reduce recidivism.

**Keywords:** Prison social climate, Life satisfaction, Well-being, Drug-abuse inmates, Structural equation modeling

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, drug-abuse inmates frequently represent a large part of the penitentiary population (Allen *et al.*, 2015). Equally, drug-abuse inmates continue to be a major problem in Malaysia with 59.9% inmates in Malaysian prison population charged for various drug-abuse offenses (National Anti-Drugs Agency, 2016). Rehabilitation of drug-abuse inmates is very challenging because this subgroup are problematic

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due to discipline issue and rules infraction (Montanari *et al.*, 2014). Many inmates label incarceration as habitually depressing, anarchic, overcrowded, isolated and with little access to nature (Linden, 2015). In many countries, prison systems goal is to provide rehabilitation so that when inmates are released they are able to contribute in community and do not reoffend. However, there is substantial difference in the capability of prison in carrying out the rehabilitation, such as education, training, and work to achieve such goals (Allen *et al.*, 2015). Study by Buunk *et al.* (2016) found male inmates in a correctional facility experienced high sense of defeat and low life satisfaction. In fact, study in general population found low life satisfaction might be an early sign of future mental problem and long-term effect on the risk of suicide (Koivumaa-Honkanen *et al.*, 2001).

Identically, decreased life satisfaction of inmates has been linked with an increased risk of reoffending and risk of suicide (Pavot and Diener, 2008; Lindstedt *et al.*, 2005). Similarly, those inmates who perceived the incarceration as hostile are more likely to be re-arrested after release (Listwan *et al.*, 2013). Likewise, Gullone *et al.* (2000) study in Australian prison found male inmates score a high level of anxiety and depression. Henceforth, most inmates will return to community when released. Without serving a sentence well, they will harm the economy and society of the country (Petersilia, 2000). Seligman (2002) found increase happiness and life satisfaction is crucial to help individuals achieve optimal functioning in their life. Skaggs and Barron (2006) stated that those who had reported higher levels of satisfaction with life during incarceration were more likely to survive. This implies that achieving satisfaction in life among inmates was crucial during period of rehabilitation in correctional institutions.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Prison Social Climate

It was noted by Jordan (2011) that prison social climate is linked directly to inmates' well-being. The suggestion that a prison social climate enhances rehabilitative outcomes has become increasingly convincing (Harding, 2014). Predominantly, deploy of incarceration as a period of time to develop inmates' social, education, skills, and the promotion of good mental health are important for successful rehabilitation (Jordan, 2011). There are many terms for prison social climate as studied by previous researchers. Some researchers defined prison social climate as prison condition, prison climate and prison environment (Molleman and Van Der Broek, 2014; Ross *et al.*, 2008; Toch, 1992). Prison social climate refers to the social, emotional, organizational and physical characteristics of prison as perceived by inmates (Ross *et al.*, 2008).

Prison social climate can be measured by privacy, safety, structure, support, emotional feedback, social stimulation, activity, and freedom (Toch, 1992).

Meanwhile, research by Molleman and Van Der Broek (2014), stated that prison social climate can be measured in terms of security, rights and rules, enforcement, contact with the outside world, day programme, autonomy, reintegration and expectations for the future. In general, prison social climate affects inmates in different ways such as support inmates rehabilitation, guide inmates' behaviour and personal growth (Lutze, 1998). Conversely, prison social climate potentially can aggravate health issues by exposure to physical harms, mental health problems and injury from other inmates (Brinkley-Rubinstein, 2015; Ross *et al.*, 2011). Equally, Nurse *et al.* (2003) conclude that the primary negative impact on mental health in prison was the impact of isolation, no mental stimulus, and lack of activity, little opportunity to participate in education, skills and job training. Therefore, the quality of treatment environment in a group appears to be crucial for rehabilitation motivation (Van Der Helm *et al.*, 2009).

## **2.2. Life satisfaction**

Life satisfaction is cognitive assessment of individuals' quality of life, is an essential component of subjective well-being (Diener *et al.*, 1985), and combination of personal goals, achievements and positive mental health (Koivumaa-Honkanen *et al.*, 2001). In general, life satisfaction is defined as having long-term accessibility combined with an individual's emotions and moods associated with life domains such as job satisfaction, marital satisfaction, housing satisfaction (Pavot and Diener, 2008). Changes in life domains have an influence on life satisfaction. Due to adjustment the impact on life satisfaction is mostly temporary until the individual cope with the new life domain (Sell, 2012). However, stressful or upsetting events can have a negative enduring impact on life satisfaction (Pavot and Diener, 2008).

According to a review for Pavot and Diener (2009), they found only one study had been done by Joy for inmates' life satisfaction. Joy (1990) argue inmates score extremely low on life satisfaction. Comparatively, Lindsted *et al.* (2008) reported on the study of offenders and life satisfaction and found that high levels of anxiety and low levels of socialization which influenced satisfaction with life. Inmates with complex and chronic behaviour conditions were more constrained to improve their life satisfaction. Thus, life satisfaction can be impacted by specific interventions designed to build on positive experiences which have been shown to reduce stress and promote positive life satisfaction (Pavot and Diener, 2008). Leidenfrost *et al.* (2016) suggest higher levels of well-being may lead to increased resilience, lower emotional distress and better adaptation to incarceration. Thus, this information is paramount to creating healthier, more positive incarceration environments and reduce reoffending of inmates. The aims of the study is to determine whether there is a relationship between prison social climate and life satisfaction of inmates.

### 3. METHODS

#### 3.1. Participants and procedure

The target population for the current study were drug-abuse inmates in Peninsular Malaysia prison. Drug-abuse inmates include possession and use drugs illegally. This study was conducted in April 2015 to June 2015. Self-administered survey questionnaires were distributed by trained enumerators among drug-abuse inmate's prison located in Peninsular Malaysia. The 465 respondents were selected using a simple random-sampling approach from a sampling frame provided by the Malaysia prison authority. This study used a self-administered questionnaire containing items measuring prison social climate and life satisfaction. Instructions pertaining to giving responses to the statements in the questionnaire were clearly stated on the research instrument. The intercepted respondents were given ample time to provide their responses at their convenience and return them back to the enumerator, after 15-20 min, to a booth allocated by the prison unit.

#### 3.2. Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire contains 58 items measuring prison social climate by Molleman and Van Der Broek (2014). These items measures eight domains of prison social climate namely safety, right and rule, rule enforcement, reintegration, expectation for future, contact with the world outside, activities and autonomy included in this measurement. Nonetheless, after conducting a pilot study, only 13 items measuring two domains (right and rule, and activities) were used for the actual survey. Each item used a 10-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree) for respondents to rate their agreement and disagreement toward every statement.

Life satisfaction was measured using five items adopted from Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) developed by Diener *et al.* (1985). This scale was developed to examine respondent's judgement towards quality of life in general. After conducting a pilot test, four items were retained in the final survey. The life satisfaction was measured using a 10-point Likert scale. Respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreements or disagreements for each life satisfaction item on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree). Higher score indicates greater sense of satisfaction with life in general. The last section of the instruments contains items pertaining to respondents' demographic data.

#### 3.3. Statistical analysis

A total of 600 drug-abuse inmate were involved in this study. After a data-cleaning process, a total of 465 useable data sets, representing a response rate of 77%, were subjected for further analysis. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) using AMOS

21 was used to test the goodness-of-fit of the proposed structural model and hypotheses postulated in the study. Descriptive analysis was also performed to describe the sample data.

## **4. RESULTS**

### **4.1. Demographic**

The respondents involved in the study were male drug-abuse inmates. Most of them were sentenced to a punishment of one year or less (65.6%). Most of the respondents (53.6%) were youths in the productive age group of 21-35 years old and 92 % of them had finished high school, with highest education at Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia level. Most of the respondents (64.1%) were self-employed (doing odd-jobs) and earning an average income of RM 1000 to RM 3000 per month (41.1%). Majority of them were single (51.4%) and they indicated that the first time they got involved in drug-abuse incidents were when they were between the ages of 16 to 25 years old (61.1%).

### **4.2. Exploratory Factor Analysis**

In the study exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was run separately on two main constructs namely prison social climate and life satisfaction. The EFA results reduced 58 items of prison social climate into 13 items under two factors. Based on EFA findings, prison social climate is measured as two dimensional structures right and rules (five items) and activity (eight items). For life satisfaction construct, only one component is produced. Henceforth, the component matrix is referred to attain the factor loadings. To support the theory on these variables, the study of EFA is extended to Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) as suggested by researchers (Hair *et al.*, 2010; Byrne, 2013).

In this study, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) for each variable, namely prison social climate is 0.909 and life satisfaction is 0.782. This means that, the EFA approach is accepted and the result of KMO has achieved the requirement. Once KMO is perceived valid, the subsequent step is undertaken to identify how many items can be composed in the same factor. Table 1 presents the factor loadings for each variable, namely prison social climate and life satisfaction. The remaining factor loadings will proceed for the CFA approach using AMOS version 21 in SPSS IBM.

### **4.3. Reliability and validity**

The proposed model's dimensionality is assessed based on the factor loadings of the items measuring the constructs. The findings in Table 2 suggested that the factor loadings values of all items meet the cut-of-point of 0.6. The dimensionality of the model is achieved. The reliability assessment of the instrument is assessed

**Table 1**  
**Rotated component matrix and component matrix**

<i>Rotated component matrix</i> <i>Prison social climate</i>			<i>Component matrix</i> <i>life satisfaction</i>	
<i>Items</i>	<i>Component Rules</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>Component Life satisfaction</i>
Item1	0.713		Item1	0.775
Item2	0.737		Item2	0.833
Item3	0.858		Item3	0.804
Item4	0.767		Item4	0.782
Item5	0.680			
Item6		0.786		
Item7		0.824		
Item8		0.792		
Item9		0.742		
Item10		0.664		
Item11		0.668		
Item12		0.752		
Item13		0.676		

using Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ), Construct Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The instrument's reliability is achieved since the values of  $\alpha$  ranged from 0.87-0.93 exceeding the acceptable cut-of-point of 0.70. The calculated CR values for the different domains of prison social climate ranged from 0.93-0.95 and life satisfaction is equal to 0.88, exceeding the required value of more than or equal to 0.6, indicating that the instrument meets the construct reliability requirement. The accepted cut-of-point for AVE is more than or equal to 0.5, suggesting that the instrument is reliable. In this case, the AVE values for prison social climate and life satisfaction are 0.75 and 0.85, respectively. Based on these criteria, the instrument is accepted as reliable.

The discriminant validity of the instrument is also assessed by examining the square root of AVE which is illustrated in bold in Table 3. The instrument achieves its validity when the square root of AVE is higher than the values of correlations between the constructs, indicated in the rows and columns of Table 3. The findings suggested that the discriminant validity requirements are met, thereby the instrument achieved its discriminant validity.

#### **4.4. Model's goodness-of-fit**

Several statistical indices are used to test the model's goodness-of-fit (Hair *et al.*, 2010) and these indices are categorised into Absolute fit, Incremental fit and

**Table 2**  
**Reliability of prison social climate and life satisfaction**

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Factor Loading</i>	$\alpha$ (0.7)	AVE (0.5)	CR (0.6)
Prison Social Climate(PSC)	<b>Right and Rules (Rules)</b>		0.93	0.81	0.93
	I was informed of my right when I arrived at this institution (P6)	0.89			
	I was informed of my obligations when I arrived at this institution (P7)	0.91			
	The rights of inmates are clear (P8)	0.90			
	<b>Activities</b>		0.95	0.75	0.95
	Satisfied with library activities (P31)	0.83			
	Satisfied with the work activities (P32)	0.86			
	Satisfied with the education activities (P33)	0.89			
	Satisfied with the creative activities (P34)	0.91			
	Satisfied with the exercise activities (P35)	0.87			
Life Satisfaction (LS)	Satisfied with the day programmes (P40)	0.83			
	Life is close to ideal (L1)	0.78	0.87	0.72	0.88
	The conditions of life are excellent (L2)	0.94			
	Satisfied with life (L3)	0.82			

**Table 3**  
**The Discriminant Validity Index Summary**

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Prison Social Climate</i>	<i>Life Satisfaction</i>
Prison Social Climate	<b>0.75</b>	
Life Satisfaction	0.38	<b>0.85</b>

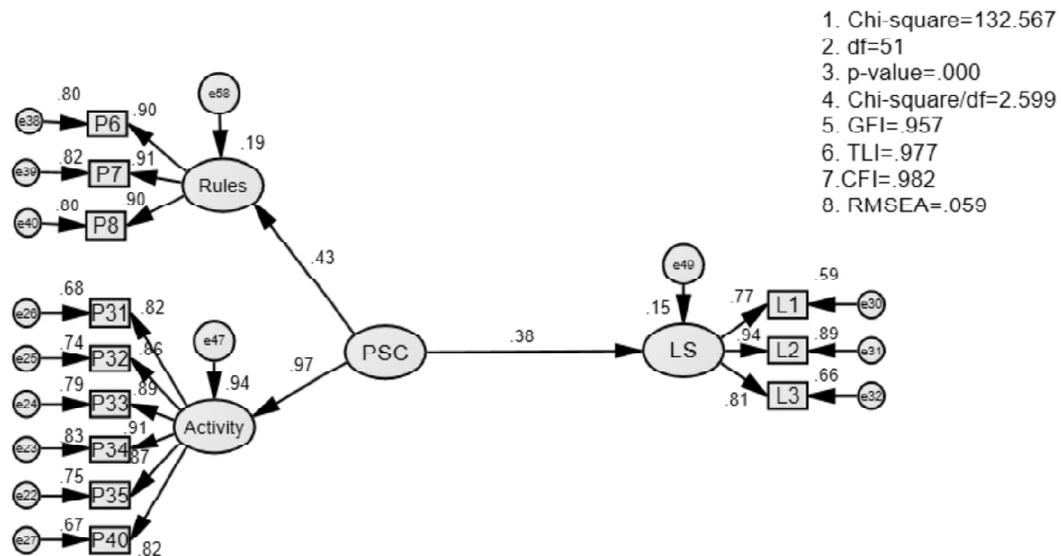
Parsimonious fit. Absolute fit is assessed based on indexes such as Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), the acceptable cut-off point is less than 0.08 and for Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), and the values should be more than 0.9. Incremental fit measures are Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker Lewis Index (TLI). The values of these indexes should be more than 0.90. Parsimonious fit was determined using the normed Chi-square and the cut-off value should be less than 5.0. The results of fitness indices of the model as illustrated in Figure 1 indicated that  $\chi^2 = 2.599$ ,  $p = 0.00$ , CFI = 0.98, TLI = 0.977, GFI = 0.957, AGFI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.059. The model meets the requirement of goodness-of-fit, since values of these indices meet their respective cut-off point requirements. Thus, the proposed hypothesised model fits the sample data adequately well and further analysis can be carried out. The model suggested that there are two underlying constructs to improve prison social climate, namely right and rules (rules) and activities (activity). These constructs explain 38% variations in life satisfaction.

### 4.5. Relationships among constructs

The results in Table 4 suggest that the path coefficients for the full model are significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). The findings of the study suggest that there is positive significant relationship between prison social climate and life satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.362, p < 0.001$ ). The result supports the hypothesis that prison social climate has significant effect on life satisfaction. Findings in Table 4 suggest that “activities” and “right and rules” aspects of prison social climate have effects on life satisfaction. “Activities” are measured by six items whilst “right and rules” is measured by three items. These items explain 97% and 43% variations in “activities” and “right and rules”, respectively.

**Table 4**  
**Regression Weights**

Construct	Path	Construct	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Result
Life Satisfaction (LS)	<---	Prison Social Climate (PSC)	0.362	0.105	3.456	***	Significant



**Figure 1: Structural model of prison social climate and life satisfaction**

## 5. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between prison social climate and life satisfaction of drug-abuse inmates. The results show that there exists a positive and significant relationship between prison social climate and life

satisfaction. This indicates that having higher aspects of prison social climate will help drug-abuse inmates in achieving higher satisfaction with life during incarceration. The findings of this study discovered that there are two aspects of prison social climate which influenced drug-abuse inmate's life satisfaction. The study suggested that the aspects of prison social climate that should be focussed on are activities and "right and rules" aspects. The study found that the types of activities that should be focused in prison are creative activities, education activities, exercise activities and activities arranged according to the order of their importance. Engaging in creative activities enabled many participants to connect with their capabilities and potential. This gave a sense of pleasure, achievement, satisfaction, and improvements of inmate's mental health (Seeker, 2007). The second important item in activities dimension is education activities. Similarly, education activities is crucial as a way to prepare drug-abuse inmates to transition back into community as better individuals and as a means of providing productive developmental activities during their incarceration. Markedly, most inmates were from working-class backgrounds and were therefore accustomed to casual or unskilled employment, education activities could be considered since positive relations with life satisfaction of inmates. Upon release, educational experiences are vital predictors of wellbeing, as socioeconomic status is one of the strongest social determinants of health (Brinkley-Rubinstein, 2015; Pettit and Kroth, 2011). The finding is supported by Duwe and Clark (2014); Vacca (2004) who suggested that inmates who are involved in educational activities during their incarceration are less likely to return to prison after release. Notably, study by Davis *et al.* (2013) found that inmates who receive education are more likely to find employment than their peers who do not receive such opportunities.

The third important item in activities dimension that increase inmates life satisfaction is physical activities. The finding supported the work of Meek and Lewis (2012); Martos-García *et al.* (2009) who suggested that physical activity has the potential to play a key role in promoting inmates well-being. Likewise, a study from Battaglia *et al.* (2015) found that 9 months of supervised physical activity has a positive effect on the mental well-being of inmates. In addition, Vaiciulis *et al.* (2011) stated those who showed a strong sense of responsibility tended to be more physically active than inmates who did not consider themselves responsible. Thus, physical activities in prison can uphold inmate's physical health which was normally difficult in society (Woodall, 2010). This improvement in physical health is very important to enhance drug-abuse inmate's reintegration in communities upon release. Finally, life satisfaction can be improved through clear rights and rules. This study found that drug-abuse inmates are concerned about the rules and rights that apply to them. This may be because drug-abuse inmates are generally not exposed to a life bound by the rules. Hence, to minimize stress during incarceration, drug-abuse inmates must be given clear information about their rights and at the same time know that they have to obey the rules. This is very

important for inmates to adjust their life in prison which is bound by the rules and things that have been set for them.

## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Our studies prove positive prison social climate increase drug-abuse inmates life satisfaction while undergoing rehabilitation in prison. First, life satisfaction of drug-abuse inmates can be increased by conducting activities that can stimulate their minds, such as education, creative activities and work skills. Second, life satisfaction can also be enhanced when drug-abuse inmates get clear information about their rights and rules they have to follow. Thus, this study suggests that prison authorities ought to emphasis on inmates' right and rules, mental and physical activity that can reduce drug-abuse inmates' depression and probability of reoffending. The study was conducted on a drug-abuse inmate's population. To increase confidence in the model, it should be conducted for other type of inmates. This study also did not control the variances of inmate's characteristics (i.e. gender, age, length of sentence and first-time or reoffender) on the proposed model. Thus, extending the research to observe the effects of inmate's moderators would be beneficial.

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