

# Personality Disorder among Male Prisoner in Erbil/ Iraq

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## Abstract

**Background and objectives:** Personality disorders are enduring, persistent and pervasive disorders of inner experience and behavior that cause distress or significant impairment in social functioning. They have strong relationship to offending and violence; our aim in the study was to determine the prevalence rate of each specific types of personality disorder among male sentenced prisoners and correlation with crime typologies of the studied population. **Methods:** 100 male sentenced prisoners in Erbil adult reformatory prison were assessed by the use of a semi structured psychiatric interview schedule based on DSM-IV criteria for diagnosing personality disorders. In addition, information were collected regarding socio demographic and crime characteristics by specifically designed questionnaire, the data were analyzed by specific statistical method. **Results:** The study shows that the prevalence of personality disorder in general was 80%; the most prevalent one was antisocial 32%. The most represented crime was murder 35%, the majority of the crimes were done alone 74%, and most of them had no previous crime record 86%. **Conclusion:** This study comes to conclude that there is a high rate of personality disorders in the prison community and there is a correlation between personality disorders and offences.

**Keywords:** prisoner, crime, personality disorder, Erbil.

## 1. Introduction

Personality disorders, as a group, are among the most frequent disorders treated by psychiatrists. Epidemiological studies suggest that between 5% and 13% of the population has at least one personality disorder<sup>1</sup>.

People with personality disorder are the frequent visitors to the emergency departments at hospitals, because of social crises, relationship breakup, violence, injuries, self-injurious behavior, suicide, over intake of drugs, impulsivity and sudden violent death<sup>(2, 3, and 4)</sup>.

It has been proposed that offenders with a personality disorder may be at higher risk of committing serious crimes<sup>5</sup>. They reported links between personality disorders and offences of general violence, domestic violence; sexual offending, stalking and arson<sup>6</sup>. Explored risk factors for reoffending found that offenders with a primary diagnosis of personality disorder were at increased risk of future violent offending<sup>7</sup>.

They are also at a high risk of getting into conflict with the law because of self-injurious behavior, sexual offences, violence, substance use, murder and recidivism<sup>(8,9)</sup>.

The common statement about prison is that it houses the sad, mad and bad of the society. Sad indicates that at least 50-75% of the prison population suffers from depression; Mad depicts that at least 15-30% of them have mental illness and Bad suggests that 10-20% of them are psychopaths<sup>10</sup>. Persons suffering from personality disorders have their reasoning powers intact; hence, none of the countries has granted insanity defense to those with personality disorders. However, they have been provided with an opportunity for treatment and rehabilitation. Prevalence of personality disorders is high in prison population when compared to the general population<sup>(11, 12, and 13)</sup>.

In a recent study, personality disorder was observed in 30% of the prison inmates. The distribution of personality disorders was as follows; 12% with antisocial disorder, 12% with borderline disorder, 3% with paranoid disorder, 2% with narcissistic disorder, and 2% and schizoid disorder<sup>14</sup>.

Aims of the study were:

1. To identify the prevalence rate of personality disorders, their type and their association with crime.
2. Study some crime related characteristics in our society to compare it with international published literatures.

## 11. Methods

This study was conducted in Erbil Adult Reformatory Prison, known as (AL-MAHATTA) prison, in a period of 6 months duration from 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2014 to 15 September 2014.

A sample of 100 sentenced male prisoners out of 550 sentenced prisoners was selected randomly by taking every fifth one from the list of names. Their ages range from 19-68 years.

The total number of sentenced prisoners was 550 at the time of starting the study.

1. The power sample size estimation done by adopting the software (Decision Analyst STATS 2.0) depending on the total population of imprisoned males, which was (550), with maximum acceptable percentage point of error of 5% and desired confidence level of 95%.
2. After randomization each prisoner was assessed through semi-structured interview based on the DSM IV<sup>15</sup>. This questionnaire was adopted by similar work in a previous study submitted to the Iraqi Scientific Council of Psychiatry<sup>16</sup>.
3. This questionnaire was forward and backward translated by a language expert and then viewed by five experts in the field of psychiatry and they gave their opinion, finally before application in the study, a pilot study was done, based on this questionnaire to overcome any obstacles, observe the suitability of the questions and response of the clients in addition to time consumption, the examined samples were excluded from the study group.
4. Socio-demographic characteristics had been obtained by special questionnaire form for all the prisoners who were attending the study.
5. Permission to conduct the study was taken from the General Directorate of Social Reformatory.
6. Oral consent was taken from all the prisoners who were attending the study after explaining the process and keeping their names confidential, all other ethical principles were taken in consideration during the entire process of data collection and study design.

#### 11.1. Exclusion Criteria:

Prisoners who suffered from any Axis I mental illnesses who was diagnosed by psychiatrist were excluded from the study.

#### 11.11. Statistical analysis:

Data were analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS, version19). Chi Square of Association was used to compare proportions when the expected count of > 20percentage of the cells of the column X row table. If the result was <five, Fisher's exact test was used. A p value was  $\leq 0.05$  was considered statistically significant.

### 111. Results

#### Table 1: Frequencies and percentages of personality disorders

Shows that 20% of the prisoners in our sample had no personality disorder, 80% of them had personality disorder. 49% of them had multiple personality disorders.

No.of personality disorder	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative percent
0	20	20.0	20.0
1	31	31.0	51.0
2	19	19.0	70.0
3	11	11.0	81.0
4	5	5.0	86.0
5	7	7.0	93.0
6	3	3.0	96.0
7	2	2.0	98.0
8	1	1.0	99.0
9	1	1.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

#### Distribution of studied groups according to Crime Characteristics:

The most represented type of crime was murder 35%, and the least one was property destruction only 1%, the other types were showed in the table (2).

**Table 2: Crime characteristics of the studied sample**

Crime characteristics	N	(%)
<b>Type of crime</b>		
<b>Terror</b>	4	(4)
<b>Forgery</b>	8	(8)
<b>Murder</b>	35	(35)
<b>Sexual assault</b>	6	(6)
<b>Illegal drugs</b>	11	(11)
<b>Debt problems</b>	3	(3)
<b>Theft</b>	10	(10)
<b>Traffic violation</b>	10	(10)
<b>Prostitution</b>	3	(3)
<b>Bribery</b>	2	(2)
<b>Quarrel</b>	2	(2)
<b>Property destruction</b>	1	(1)
<b>Homosexuality</b>	3	(3)
<b>Leaving mandatory service</b>	2	(2)

**Previous sentencing history:**

Table (3) shows that most of the offenders had no previous criminal records but the results denote that among those group who had no previous sentencing history, but obsessive-compulsive type of personality disorder was most prevalent one followed by paranoid type the least prevalent one was dependent type of personality disorder. Among those who had previous criminal record the antisocial type of personality was most prevalent and both schizoid and avoidant types of personality were least represented but these results were statistically not significant except for antisocial type of personality disorder P-value =0.01

**Table 3: Previous sentencing history of the study group:**

Previous sentence Personality type	No N=86	Yes N=14	p-value
Schizoid	18 20.9%	1 7.1%	0.296*
Paranoid	25 29.1%	6 42.9%	0.354*
Schizotypal	8 9.3%	2 14.3%	0.628*
Antisocial	23 26.7%	9 64.3%	0.011*
Borderline	16 18.6%	3 21.4%	0.726*
Narcissistic	16 18.6%	3 21.4%	0.726*
Histrionic	10 11.6%	3 21.4%	0.386*
Dependent	7 8.1%	2 14.3%	0.609*
Avoidant	22 25.6%	1 7.1%	0.179*
Obsessive-compulsive	27 31.4%	4 28.6%	1.000*

\*= fisher's exact test

**Crime circumstances**

Shows the situation under which the crime was done, whether alone or in the group, most of the crimes were done alone but there were no statistically significant differences among the results.

Among those, crimes were done alone both paranoid and obsessive-compulsive types of personality

disorder were mostly represented. Actually, both schizotypal and dependent types were least represented.

For those that did crime in the group the antisocial type of personality was mostly represented, both dependent and schizoid types were least represented.

**Table 4: Crime circumstances of study groups.**

Crime circumstance Personality type	Alone N=74	Group N=26	P-value
Schizoid	16 21.6%	3 11.5%	0.385*
Paranoid	24 32.4%	7 26.9%	0.601
Schizotypal	6 8.1%	4 15.4%	0.281*
Antisocial	21 28.4%	11 42.3%	0.190
Borderline	13 17.6%	6 23.1%	0.567*
Narcissistic	11 14.9%	8 30.8%	0.088*
Histrionic	8 10.8%	5 19.2%	0.314*
Dependent	7 9.5%	2 7.7%	1.000*
Avoidant	16 21.6%	7 26.9%	0.581
Obsessive -compulsive	23 31.1%	8 30.8%	0.976

\*=fisher's exact test

#### 1V. Discussion

It is known that people in correctional and forensic mental health settings have higher rates of all types' personality disorders, especially antisocial personality disorder, than people in the general community<sup>17</sup>.

A clear understanding of the nature of the link between personality disorder and offending has important implications for treatment and risk management. However, until recently, less attention has been paid to types and aspects of personality disorder other than antisocial and their relationship with offending behavior; and between personality disorders with particular aspects and types of offending behavior, violent and nonviolent<sup>17</sup>.

In this study, the prevalence of any personality disorder was 80%, and 49% of prisoners had more than one type of personality disorder, this is consistent with that of Coid *et al* (1999)<sup>18</sup>, Johnson *et al* (2000)<sup>19</sup>, singleton *et al* (1998)<sup>20</sup>, Fazel and Danesh (2002)<sup>17</sup>, and with that of Langeveld and Melhus, (2004)<sup>21</sup>.

While in another study, which was done in Iran by Palahang *et al* (2000-2001)<sup>22</sup>, the rate was lower than our result 55.2%, the possible explanation was implementation of different methodological classification, or population difference or such cases might have been given another Axis I-comorbid diagnosis

Regarding the specific types of personality disorder in our study antisocial type is the most prevalent one 32% after those both paranoid and obsessive –compulsive types 31%, then avoidant type 23%, followed by schizoid, borderline and narcissistic for each of them 19% and other types come finally.

If we compare with previous published studies we see that our result is consistent with that of JM Arroyo, E Ortega, (2009)<sup>23</sup>, palahang *et al*, (2000-2001)<sup>22</sup> which is done in Iran and Dunsieith *et al* (2004)<sup>8</sup> in United States, Jacquelyn Kennedy 2011)<sup>24</sup> Leue *et al*, (2004)<sup>25</sup> in United Kingdom, Singleton *et al* (1998)<sup>20</sup> in England and Wales, and in the systematic review of 62 studies from 12 countries which was done by Fazel and Danesh, (2002)<sup>17</sup> in all these studies the most prevalent type of personality disorder was antisocial type which is consistent with result from our study

One study in Spain Fernandez-Montalvo and Echeburua, (2008)<sup>26</sup> reflect to the obsessive-compulsive type by 57.8% appeared to be more prevalent and the antisocial type is forth in prevalence by 19.7% after both dependent and paranoid types respectively. However, the latter category (antisocial disorder) is considerably reduced in another study by the same authors<sup>27</sup> 12-15 when a more refined measurement regarding the

psychopathy such as the psychopathy checklist-Revised (PCL-R) was used.

Regarding the least common types of personality in our study, the dependent, histrionic, schizotypal result was close to another published study by Jacquelyn Kennedy (2011)<sup>24</sup>.

Notably, the most represented type of crime was murder in respect to the types of crime that was done by the prisoners. Actually, about 35% of prisoners in our sample were sentenced for murder among them about 82.8% had personality disorder and the most common type of personality disorder was antisocial type followed by paranoid and then obsessive – compulsive type, and this is consistent with that of Roope Tikkanen *et al*, (2006)<sup>28</sup> and palahang *et al*, (2000-2001)<sup>22</sup>.

In a study done by Coid *et al*, (1999)<sup>18</sup>, the most prevalent type of crimes was shown to be those that have relation with violence and homicide and the most prevalent type of personality disorders among those offenders were antisocial type. Likewise In another study, also, the common type of personality disorder was antisocial and the common offense was violence and murder, followed by theft and sex offences<sup>29</sup>.

Our study showed that 14% of the total sample has previous sentencing history and about 12.5% of those with personality disorder have previous sentencing history this result is lower if we do comparison with the previous published study done by Gray *et al* (2011)<sup>30</sup>. That is, it showed that the rate of reconviction was 28.8% among those who had personality disorders. Our explanation for this result went to the difference between our and their penal systems; our penal system may have heavier penalties, or may be due to cultural and social factors that affect the rate of reoffending.

Regarding the circumstances of the crime, most of the crimes were done alone 74% and 26% of them were done in a group, for those that did the crime alone both paranoid and obsessive – compulsive types of personality disorders were more represented and among those crimes that done in a group antisocial type of personality disorder was most represented, these results are consistent with that of Esbec and Echeburua (2010)<sup>31</sup>.

#### 1V.1. Conclusions

The prevalence rate of personality disorder is 80%, the most prevalent type is antisocial then paranoid and obsessive – compulsive type, about 49% of the prisoners have multiple personality disorder

Also we conclude that there is a high rate of personality disorders among prison population and there is a correlation between personality disorders and offences.

#### 1V.11. Limitations of the study:

The place of interview was not so convenient for the prisoners to speak frankly, because the prison guards did not allow the prisoners to be alone while we were interviewing them.

The shortage of time for such a long questionnaire did not allow us to take female gender prisoners and control group to compare the results with them. Another limitation of our study was lack of prior research studies on some topics of our study in the present society.

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