

# CORRELATES OF STRESS AMONG ADULT MALE INMATES IN A LOCAL PRISON, MALAYSIA

Gunenthira Rao<sup>1,2)</sup>, Halimatus Sakdiah Minhat<sup>2)</sup>,  
Hayati Kadir Shahar<sup>2)</sup>, Firdaus Mukhtar<sup>3)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup>Ministry of Health, Malaysia

<sup>2)</sup>Department of Community Health, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences,  
Universiti Putra Malaysia, UPM Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia.

<sup>3)</sup>Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Putra  
Malaysia, UPM Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia

## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Prison is a place of confinement especially for lawbreakers which can have an impact on mental health including stress. Yet, very few studies examined stress among prison inmates. This study aimed to determine the prevalence and correlates of stress among adult male inmates in a local prison in Malaysia.

**Subjects and Methods:** A cross sectional study was conducted at a medium security prison in peninsular Malaysia. A sample of 460 inmates was selected for this study. The dependent variable was stress. The independent variables were sociodemographic characteristics, biological influence, psychological factor, childhood related history and offence related history. Stress was measured by pretest and validated Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale, which was categorized into high and low stresses. The data were collected by questionnaire and in-depth review. The data were analyzed by chi-square and logistic regression.

**Results:** The mean (SD) age of respondents was 38.33 (8.90) years. The prevalence of stress among the inmates was 55.2%. After adjusting for the covariates, stress was associated with depression (aOR= 4.03; CI 95% 2.64 to 6.15; p<0.001), age (aOR= 2.35; CI 95% 1.57 to 3.53; p<0.001), and history of childhood labor (aOR= 1.80; CI 95% 1.03 to 3.15; p= 0.040).

**Conclusion:** More than half of the study subjects experience stress, with depression being the strongest predictor. Further study is needed to understand the causal relationship between the two for effective intervention can be in place for this vulnerable group.

**Keywords:** stress, adult, male, inmate, prison

### Correspondence:

Halimatus Sakdiah Minhat. Department of Community Health, Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia. Email: halimatus@upm.edu.my.  
Mobile: +60389472413.