

Development of a Conceptual Framework Based on the Lived Experiences of Male Inmates Using Roy's Adaptation Model

Kiran Sharma^{1*}, Dr. Imran Khan², Dr. Shoma Mukherjee³, Prof. (Dr.) R. Sreeraja Kumar⁴, Dr. David Ratna Paul Talagatoti⁵

¹Ph.D. scholar, Sharda School of Nursing Science and Research, Sharda University, Greater Noida, India.

Email ID: kiran.bpl605@gmail.com

²Associate Professor Sharda School of Nursing Science and Research, Sharda University Greater Noida, India

Email ID: imran.khan8@sharda.ac.in

³Professor cum HOD (Department of Pharmacology) School of Medical Sciences and Research, Sharda University Greater Noida, India.

Email ID: drshoma.mukherjee@gmail.com

⁴Associate Dean. Sharda School of Nursing Science and Research, Sharda University Greater Noida, India

Email ID: rs.kumar@sharda.ac.in

⁵Associate Professor Sharda School of Nursing Science and Research, Sharda University Greater Noida, India

Email ID: talagatoti.paul@sharda.ac.in

***Corresponding Author:**

Kiran Sharma

Sharda School of Nursing Science and Research, Sharda University Greater Noida India. 201310

Cite this paper as: Kiran Sharma, Dr. Imran Khan, Dr. Shoma Mukherjee, Prof. (Dr.) R. Sreeraja Kumar, Dr. David Ratna Paul Talagatoti, (2025) Development of a Conceptual Framework Based on the Lived Experiences of Male Inmates Using Roy's Adaptation Model. *Journal of Neonatal Surgery*, 14 (3), 292-297.

ABSTRACT

The experience of incarceration encompasses multidimensional challenges that impact the physical, emotional, social, and psychological well-being of inmates. To understand how inmates, respond and adapt to such challenges, the present study aimed to develop a conceptual framework grounded in Roy's Adaptation Model, based on the lived experiences of male inmates. A qualitative, descriptive research design was employed, involving male inmates from a district prison of Morena, Madhya Pradesh, India. Data were collected using in-depth interviews guided by structured questions rooted in Roy's model. Colaizzi's method of phenomenological analysis was used to derive themes and subthemes, ensuring credibility and depth of interpretation. The analysis revealed a range of stimuli including focal (pre-crime factors like Use of preventive measures, Availability of items, impulsive behaviour, family background), contextual (challenges such as overcrowding, poor hygiene, and rigid routines), and residual (emotional and social worries, stigma, and fear of reintegration). Inmates demonstrated coping mechanisms via cognator (mindfulness, guilt, reintegration thoughts) and regulator (emotional engagement, routine planning) subsystems. These mechanisms influenced adaptation across six domains: physical, mental, social, financial, spiritual, and legal trust. The outcomes included both adaptive (faith, hope, meditation) and ineffective (depression, insomnia, suicidal ideation) responses. A conceptual framework was developed to represent these processes holistically. This framework has potential applications in guiding prison health interventions, psychosocial support strategies, and rehabilitation policies, offering a theoretical foundation for future research and policy-making.

Keywords: Lived experiences, prisoners, adaptation, conceptual framework, Roy's Adaptation Model, coping, Colaizzi's method

1. INTRODUCTION

Prisons are institutions designed not only to confine individuals who have committed crimes but also to serve as settings for rehabilitation and societal reintegration. However, the prison environment is often characterized by overcrowding, inadequate healthcare, poor sanitation, isolation, and lack of social support, all of which profoundly affect the physical,

emotional, and psychological well-being of inmates. Male inmates, in particular, experience a wide range of stressors that challenge their ability to adapt to incarceration and maintain overall health.

Globally, crime rates have shown fluctuations due to economic conditions, geopolitical unrest, and technological advancements [1]. According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime 2023, homicide rates vary significantly, with the Americas and Africa reporting the highest incidences. Property crimes and cybercrimes are increasing worldwide, adding to the challenges faced by law enforcement agencies [2]. Crime refers to any act that violates legal norms, carries punishment, and may cause harm to individuals or society as a whole. The criminal justice system is responsible for enforcing these laws and maintaining public safety. Imprisonment is an act / a method of isolating offenders in a controlled setting where they are required to follow strict rules. Furthermore, crime is frequently seen as the result of cognitive processes, much like any physical action, with legal experts often discussing the psychological factors that contribute to criminal behaviour.

In India, crime statistics recorded by the National Crime Records Bureau shows a steady rise in offenses such as theft, robbery, homicide, and crimes against women. In 2022, India recorded over 4.3 million cognizable crimes under the Indian Penal Code and Special & Local Laws [3]. The states with higher urbanization and unemployment rates tend to show elevated crime rates [4]. In Madhya Pradesh has consistently reported high incidences of crime, particularly crimes against women and property crimes. In 2022, the state recorded 302,906 total criminal cases, ranking among the top contributors to crime in the country [3]. Factors like poverty, lack of education, and unemployment contribute to these numbers [4].

There are multiple reasons why people commit crimes, including economic deprivation, peer pressure, addiction, mental health issues, and a lack of social support [5]. Early exposure to violence, trauma, and negative influences during childhood are also significant factors [7]. Individuals are incarcerated as a form of punishment and societal protection. Imprisonment serves to deter crime, rehabilitate offenders, and deliver justice to victims [8]. However, the effectiveness of prison as a correctional mechanism depends on the environment and rehabilitation programs provided [9]. In India, punishments include imprisonment (simple or rigorous), fines, community service, and the death penalty for the most severe crimes [10]. The judiciary system follows principles of deterrence, retribution, prevention, and reformation. Recent studies have highlighted that inmates frequently suffer from mental health disorders, substance use, infectious diseases, and chronic non-communicable illnesses. The World Health Organization has recognized that prisoners have a higher burden of disease and poorer health outcomes than the general population. A recent study conducted in Indian correctional institutions (2023) revealed a significant prevalence of mental health issues among inmates, including symptoms of depression, anxiety, and behavioral disturbances. These issues are often intensified by substandard living conditions, inadequate access to healthcare, and minimal psychosocial support. Additional stressors such as social stigma, restricted family interactions, and the lack of structured rehabilitative initiatives further hinder inmates' ability to cope with incarceration effectively.

Despite these findings, there remains a noticeable gap in the literature. Current research has largely emphasized quantitative assessments or focused narrowly on specific aspects of inmate health, overlooking the broader spectrum of psychosocial and adaptive challenges encountered during incarceration. Particularly, there is limited exploration of the holistic experiences of male inmates through the lens of theoretical models capable of capturing their adaptive mechanisms. Nursing theories like Roy's Adaptation Model (RAM), which offer a comprehensive view of human responses to environmental stressors, have not been sufficiently utilized within the context of correctional settings in India. This limits the development of targeted and theoretically grounded interventions aimed at fostering positive adaptation and psychological well-being among incarcerated individuals.

Moreover, there is a lack of evidence-based conceptual frameworks derived from qualitative research that could guide policy development and inform prison health reforms. Prisons are often perceived solely as environments of punishment and correction; however, they are also deeply transformative spaces where individuals with pre-existing vulnerabilities are subjected to systemic stressors such as confinement, isolation, and loss of autonomy. These conditions significantly influence inmates' capacity to function, adapt, and eventually reintegrate into society.

Roy's Adaptation Model conceptualizes individuals as holistic adaptive systems who respond to internal and external stimuli using innate and learned coping mechanisms, leading to either adaptive or maladaptive outcomes. While RAM has been extensively applied in clinical and community health contexts, its relevance and utility in correctional environments remain insufficiently investigated.

In response to these identified gaps, the present study endeavors to develop a conceptual framework grounded in Roy's Adaptation Model by exploring the lived experiences of male inmates in a district prison located in Morena, Madhya Pradesh. Employing a phenomenological research approach, this study aims to offer an in-depth understanding of how male inmates adapt across physical, psychological, and social dimensions during incarceration. By doing so, it seeks to generate meaningful insights that can inform correctional nursing practices and support the design of comprehensive prison health interventions tailored to the needs of this vulnerable population.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design grounded in a phenomenological approach to gain deep insights into the lived experiences of male inmates. The research was carried out in the district prison of Morena, located in Madhya Pradesh, India. To ensure comprehensive representation, a total enumeration sampling technique was utilized. Participants were selected based on clearly defined inclusion criteria, which included: Willingness to voluntarily participate in the study, Demonstration of sound mental health at the time of data collection, and Being male inmates currently involved in ongoing legal proceedings. Data collection involved among 69 male inmates, face-to-face in-depth interviews using a structured guide designed in alignment with Roy's model. Interviews were conducted and documented. Data were analyzed using Colaizzi's method, a structured approach suitable for phenomenological research. The analysis began with an in-depth familiarization with the transcribed interviews, allowing the researcher to immerse in the participants' narratives. This was followed by the identification of significant statements directly related to the lived experiences of the inmates. Next, meanings were formulated from these statements, capturing the essence of what the participants expressed. These meanings were then organized into thematic clusters, which represented broader patterns and commonalities across the data. Finally, to ensure accuracy and authenticity, the findings were validated by returning to the participants, inviting them to confirm whether the interpretations accurately reflected their experiences. This rigorous and reflective process ensured that the themes identified were firmly rooted in the participants' own words and perspectives. Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Ethics Committee (SU/SMSR/76A/2023/161), and written informed consent was secured from all participants.

3. RESULTS

Using Colaizzi's method for thematic analysis, the study uncovered multiple themes that align with the foundational elements of Roy's Adaptation Model. Inmates' experiences were interpreted through three categories of stimuli: focal, contextual, and residual. Focal stimuli were closely linked to factors influencing behavior prior to incarceration. These included early exposure to violence, such as use of preventive measures, availability of items, impulsive behaviour at a young age, ongoing family disputes, absence of emotional and social support networks, and underlying psychological distress. These immediate stressors acted as primary triggers for their maladaptive or adaptive responses within the prison environment. Contextual stimuli emerged from the daily realities of the prison setting. Participants frequently described controlled living conditions—marked by overcrowded spaces, lack of ventilation, poor sanitation, inflexible schedules, and insufficient medical care. These environmental pressures created a challenging backdrop for psychological and physical well-being. Residual stimuli were subtler and deeply internalized. They included long-standing emotional concerns such as anxiety about societal reintegration, fear for the welfare of family members, stigma associated with imprisonment, and diminished self-worth due to loss of status and identity. Though less visible, these latent stressors significantly influenced inmates' capacity for adjustment. In response to these stimuli, the inmates utilized coping strategies that correspond to cognator and regulator subsystems of Roy's model. Cognator processes encompassed emotional and cognitive responses, such as self-awareness, hopefulness, feelings of remorse, and proactive steps like participating in counseling sessions and preparing for post-release life. These strategies enabled inmates to mentally process their experiences and envision a path forward. On the other hand, regulator mechanisms were expressed through behavioral and physiological adaptations. Inmates often engaged in structured activities within the prison, created personal routines to maintain a sense of control, and developed career goals to give purpose to their confinement. These mechanisms helped mitigate stress and fostered a sense of normalcy. Adaptation was observed across six domains, as per Roy's framework. In the physical domain, many inmates reported decreased physical activity and a decline in routine behaviors essential for basic survival. This decline was attributed to both the restrictive nature of prison life and a general lack of motivation or opportunities for physical engagement. Mentally, issues such as despair, lack of clarity, and suicidal thoughts were prevalent. Socially, inmates reported isolation and loss of relationships. Financial adaptation was affected by the loss of employment and uncertainty about economic survival post-release. Spiritually, many faced deprivation due to separation from religious practices. Additionally, trust in the legal system was commonly disrupted, manifesting as legal distrust.

The outcomes of these adaptive modes were classified as either adaptive or ineffective. Adaptive responses included meditation, acceptance of fate, therapeutic writing, engagement in spiritual activities, and hope for release. Ineffective responses were marked by psychological distress including insomnia, depression, refusal to engage with others, and suicidal ideation.

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL

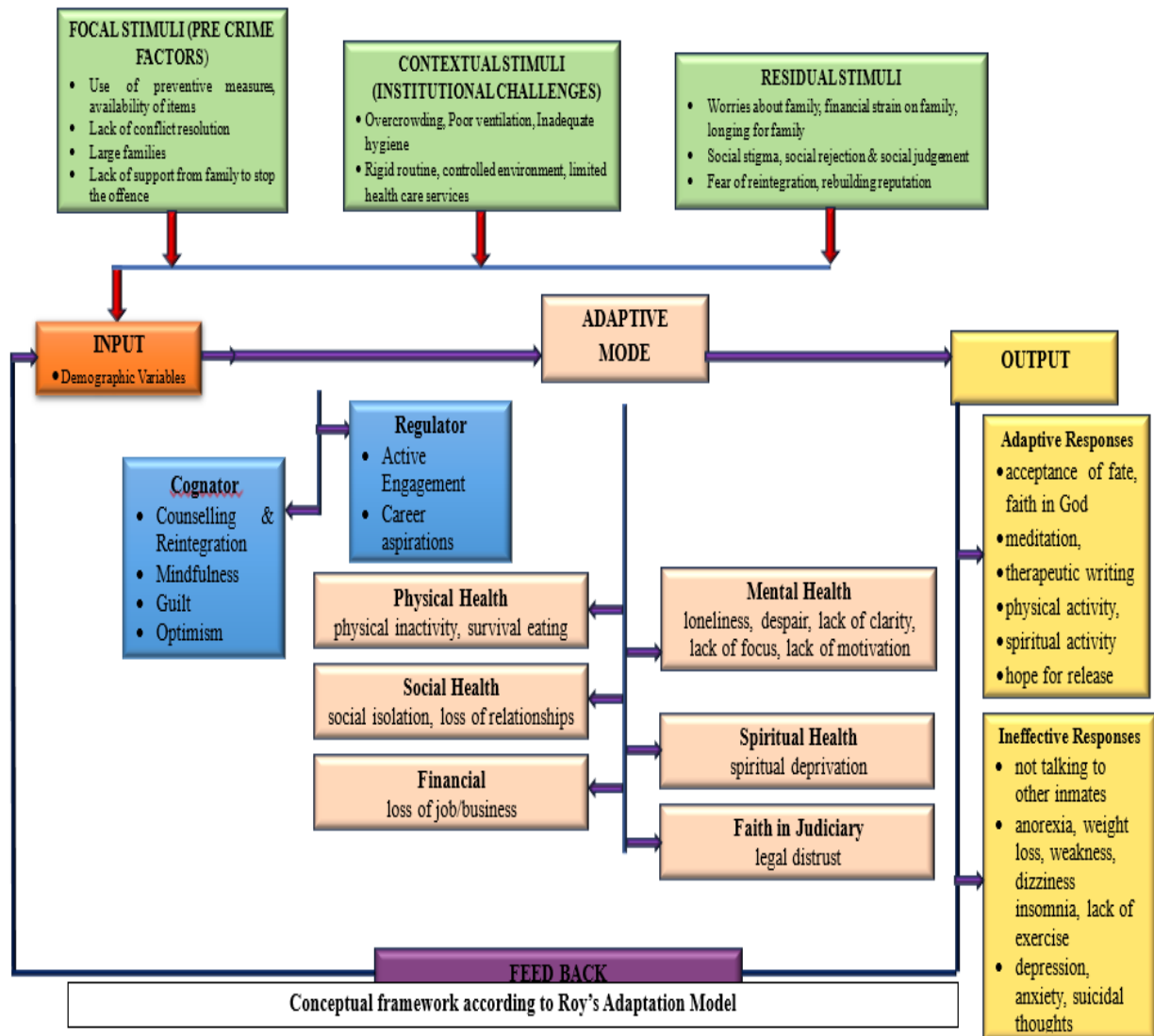


Figure 1: Conceptual framework developed from lived experiences of male inmates corresponding to Roy's adaptation model

The conceptual framework developed through this study presents an integrated visualization of how male inmates respond to incarceration using the constructs of Roy's Adaptation Model. The model begins with input in the form of demographic characteristics of inmates. These interact with three types of stimuli—focal (e.g., use of preventive measures, availability of items, impulsive behaviour), contextual (e.g., institutional overcrowding, lack of services), and residual (e.g., emotional burdens and social fears). These stimuli activate the coping mechanisms: cognator processes (involving emotional and cognitive efforts like optimism, counselling, and guilt management) and regulator processes (involving behavioural and physiological adjustments such as structured routines or emotional engagement). These coping responses influence adaptive modes, which are classified into six interrelated domains: physical health, mental health, social health, financial stability, spiritual well-being, and legal trust. Depending on the efficiency of coping, the inmate exhibits either adaptive responses (like acceptance, meditation, spiritual hope) or ineffective responses (like withdrawal, depression, or suicidal ideation). Feedback within the Roy Adaptation Model illustrates the dynamic and continuous interaction between an inmate's behavioral responses and their surrounding environment. Each response—whether adaptive or maladaptive—reenters the system as a new stimulus, influencing future reactions. For example, positive behaviors such as engaging in spiritual practices can reinforce emotional strength and promote effective coping strategies. On the other hand, maladaptive responses like suicidal thoughts may result in further isolation or punitive measures, intensifying environmental stressors and psychological

burden.

This cyclical feedback mechanism enables ongoing reassessment, adjustment, and refinement of coping processes, underscoring the evolving nature of adaptation during imprisonment. It reflects how behavioral patterns are not static but are continually shaped by changes in both internal states and external conditions. By incorporating this feedback loop, the model effectively represents the iterative and recursive essence of human adaptation in the prison context. Furthermore, it offers a valuable theoretical lens for the development of comprehensive mental health support and rehabilitative interventions tailored to correctional environments.

5. DISCUSSION

This study underscores the complex and evolving process of adaptation among prison inmates, analyzed through the lens of Roy's Adaptation Model (RAM). The findings reinforce the model's effectiveness in categorizing lived experiences into patterns of stimuli and corresponding adaptive responses, thereby supporting both theoretical exploration and the development of practical interventions. Unlike prior research that tends to emphasize either psychological health or criminological perspectives in isolation, this study offers a holistic interpretation of adaptation. The framework captures a broad spectrum of inmate experiences—encompassing physical, emotional, social, financial, spiritual, and legal dimensions.

The application of Colaizzi's phenomenological method ensured a systematic and credible approach to data interpretation, with themes authentically drawn from participant narratives. Although coping responses varied among individuals, the predominance of maladaptive outcomes, such as depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation, signals an urgent need for structured psychological and rehabilitative interventions within correctional settings. Notably, concerns such as loss of faith and mistrust in the judicial process, which emerged strongly from the data, are rarely acknowledged in conventional prison mental health strategies, yet are critical to comprehensive inmate care.

The insights generated align with existing literature indicating that routine, spiritual engagement, and emotional support enhance adaptation. However, this study advances prior understanding by presenting a more integrated model that includes internal coping mechanisms and the broader influence of institutional environments.

The foundational work of Roy and Andrews (2009) provides the theoretical basis for this study, conceptualizing individuals as adaptive systems responding to internal and external stimuli. Although RAM was originally formulated for use in clinical nursing contexts, its core principles are highly applicable to the prison environment. The model outlines four adaptive modes—physiological function, self-concept, role function, and interdependence—which offer a structured framework to examine how inmates respond to the unique challenges of incarceration.

Incarceration introduces numerous stressors that evoke a range of adaptive and maladaptive behaviors. Employing Roy's model in this setting allows for an organized interpretation of inmate experiences while also highlighting key areas for targeted intervention. In doing so, RAM not only facilitates a deeper theoretical understanding but also supports the creation of a conceptual framework that can inform correctional health practices and policy development. The model's comprehensive scope directly aligns with the aims of the present study, making it a valuable tool for exploring and addressing the multifaceted reality of inmate life.

6. CONCLUSION

The conceptual framework derived from this research provides a nuanced understanding of the ways in which male inmates respond and adapt to the multifaceted challenges of incarceration. Grounded in Roy's Adaptation Model, the framework captures the dynamic relationships between external and internal stimuli, coping processes, adaptive modes, and resulting behaviors.

This structured approach offers valuable insights into the lived experiences of inmates and presents a systematic means to interpret their responses across physical, psychological, social, and institutional dimensions. Importantly, the framework holds practical relevance that it can guide healthcare providers, correctional staff, and policymakers in formulating inmate-focused interventions that are both evidence-based and theoretically informed. Such applications may include the development of mental health programs, rehabilitative activities, and post-release reintegration initiatives that address the specific needs and adaptive challenges of incarcerated individuals.

REFERENCES

- [1] UNODC. World Crime Trends Report. Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; 2023.
- [2] Interpol. Global Crime Report. Lyon: Interpol; 2023.
- [3] National Crime Records Bureau. Crime in India Report. New Delhi: Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India; 2022.
- [4] Madhya Pradesh Police Department. Annual Crime Statistics. Bhopal: Madhya Pradesh Police; 2022.

- [5] Agnew R. Strain theory and crime. In: Encyclopedia of Criminology. Hoboken: Wiley; 2017.
 - [6] Hirsch T. Causes of Delinquency. Berkeley: University of California Press; 1969.
 - [7] Farrington DP. Developmental and life-course criminology: Key theoretical and empirical issues. In: The Oxford Handbook of Criminology. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2003.
 - [8] Haney C. The psychological impact of incarceration: Implications for post-prison adjustment. Washington (DC): National Institute of Justice; 2018.
 - [9] Liebling A. Prison Research: Understanding Prison Life. London: Routledge; 2011.
 - [10] Government of India. Indian Penal Code, 1860. New Delhi: Ministry of Law and Justice; 1860.
 - [11] Colaizzi PF. Psychological research as the phenomenologist views it. In: Valle RS, King M (Eds.), Existential Phenomenological Alternatives for Psychology. Oxford University Press; 1978: 48–71.
 - [12] Braun V, Clarke V. Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qual Res Psychol. 2006;3(2):77–101.
 - [13] Fazel S, Baillargeon J. The health of prisoners. Lancet. 2011;377(9769):956–965.
 - [14] Liebling A, Maruna S. The Effects of Imprisonment. Routledge; 2013.
 - [15] Roy C, Andrews HA. The Roy Adaptation Model. 3rd ed. Pearson; 2009.
 - [16] Fazel S, Hayes AJ, Bartellas K, Clerici M, Trestman R. Mental health of prisoners: Prevalence, adverse outcomes, and interventions. *Lancet Psychiatry*. 2016;3(9):871–881.
 - [17] Kumar A, Verma A. Mental health status and psychosocial problems among male prisoners in Indian jails. *Indian J Psychiatry*. 2022;64(1):42–49.
 - [18] Haney C. The psychological impact of incarceration: Implications for post-prison adjustment. *National Institute of Justice*; 2018. Available from: <https://nij.ojp.gov/library/publications/psychological-impact-incarceration>
 - [19] Tripathi BM, Das RC. Psychiatric disorders in prison population in India. *Indian J Psychiatry*. 2020;62(Suppl 3): S262–S265.
 - [20] Liebling A. *Prisons and Their Moral Performance: A Study of Values, Quality, and Prison Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2004.
 - [21] Pal R, Tiwari SC. Spirituality and mental health in Indian prison inmates: A neglected area. *J Relig Health*. 2021; 60:2039–2050.
 - [22] Nanda A. Health and healthcare of prisoners in India: A neglected area of concern. *Indian J Public Health Res Dev*. 2020;11(6):46–50.
-