

# Mental States of Inmates in a Maximum Security Penitentiary (Harboe, 2016, unpublished)

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The study revealed high levels of symptoms of mental illness and disorders in people serving a sentence in a maximum security penitentiary in Denmark. The aim of the study was to examine the mental states of inmates serving a prison sentence in a maximum security penitentiary. A quantitative study (N = 208) was conducted during a period of 18 months and included inmates from a danish maximum security prison.

A large study within the danish Prison and Probation's Services revealed, that a large part of the inmates in danish holding units and state penitentiaries had symptoms of mental illness og mental disorders (Direktoratet for Kriminalforsorgen, 2013). Do to the results of the study and as a consequence of an increasing number of threats and violent assaults towards prison staff and amongst the inmates, the current study arose.

All new inmates in a maximum security penitentiary in Denmark were screened for mental illness and disorders as well as history of substance abuse. The results of the individual screening then resulted in individual recommendations for interventions and further diagnostic investigation.

The study included a male population of N = 208, where of n = 78 were non-danish citizens and n = 35 were part of the gang environment.

All participants were screened using Present State Examination (PSE) for indicators of mental illness, Adult ADHD Rating Scale (ASRS), WHO-5 (general well-being), Addiction Profile and Suicidal behaviour.

The study revealed that 85% of the participants had indications of mental illness or severe addiction. For participants with non-danish citizenship that number was 78%, and for participants with connection to the gang environment the number was 71%.

The study also investigated past and present violent behavior of the participants. It was revealed that 62% of the population had a history of violent behavior or are currently serving a prison sentence for committing a violent crime. For participants with non-danish citizenship the number is 56% and for gang members 66% described having a violent past.

Thus, the study revealed high levels of mental instability and high levels of violent behavior within the study population.