



Henry Khat  
Singapore Polytechnic, Singapore

## Secondary Adjustment In Prisons: Prisoners' Strategies Of influence

### **Abstract**

This participant observation research explores and examines the strategies that prisoners use to influence prison officers in an Asian prison setting. Grounded theory methodology is employed in the analysis process. From the study, eight strategies of influence are conceptualised: *repetition, distraction, finding excuses, feigning ignorance, false compliance, hearsay, direct hit* and *spontaneous protest*. They are further subsumed under three main categories of *Enhancers, Trouble Shooters* and *Resistors*. On the other hand, there are three categories of prison officers with respect to their responses to the eight strategies of influence – *Idealists, Pragmatists* and *Authoritarians*. In summary, this study serves three objectives. First, it provides a fresh perspective on how prisoners attempt to influence prison officers in their daily interactions. Second, it has demonstrated that data collection through covert participant observation can be done effectively without causing any harm to the stakeholders in a prison setting. Lastly, this study has implications for the development of theory, practice and future research in the area of penology.

### **Keywords**

Secondary adjustment; Influencing Strategies; Covert Participant Observation; Grounded Theory.

As a prison officer, I was always intrigued by the mini-society that existed in the prison setting. I was constantly wondering how power dynamics played a part in such unique prison officers – prisoners' relationships. The exercise of power, status and influence by both parties in this relationship baffled but yet fascinated me. And I was particularly interested in understanding how prisoners at the supposedly disadvantaged end of this power imbalance deal with the prison officers in their daily interactions. Thus, my curiosity in these issues brought me to conduct this inquiry on the dynamics of the dealings between the prisoners and prison officers.

Prison is a place in which new norms are formed, due to the presence of unique institutional pressures such as the loss of personal freedom and rights, adjustment to new living conditions and social relationships, dealing with prison control mechanisms such as rules, regulations and punishment. (Sykes 1958). Prisoners

have to adjust their behaviours in accordance to these new norms that are totally different from those in the normal outside society. In the prison setting, power is exercised by the institutional staff extensively on the inmates in restricting and intervening in, their social behaviours (Goffman 1961). This is because the control of prisoners is usually perceived by the prison administrators as the ultimate goal in the efficient functioning of any prison (Scharf 1983). The control mechanisms such as withdrawal of privileges, loss of good time, lock down etc. are exercised to bring the prisoners back into compliance (Hamm, Cuopez, Hose and Weinstein 1994). The prisoners usually perceive such control mechanisms as a form of violation of their human rights but they have no means of removing them. Therefore, they have to cultivate a system of secondary adjustments that do not directly challenge the staff but still allow them to obtain certain forbidden satisfactions (material or emotional ones) or to get away from certain sanctions (Goffman 1961). Thus, the different forms of interactions between the prisoners and prison officers are strongly characterized by such secondary adjustments amidst the institutional rules, routines and other control mechanisms (Goffman 1961; Rosenhan 1973). Such institutional rules, routines and control mechanisms aim to restrict or thwart certain undesirable prisoners' behaviours or activities (as perceived by prison administrators). To contravene this, unique forms of influencing techniques (secondary adjustments) are created by the prisoners. These secondary adjustments serve to assist the prisoners in exerting indirect influence on the prison officers in order to achieve their own personal interests through a non-confrontational avenue (Goffman 1961). In this paper, such possible secondary adjustments by the prisoners would be explored and investigated in the context of this research.

### **Importance of This Study**

This study aims to understand the strategies of influence employed by prisoners on the prison officers in achieving their personal aims. This area of study has been largely ignored in the local context. Thus, this study can help to fill up the relevant gaps in the current literature. On the other hand, this study also serves as an important source of information for any researcher who is planning to study the behaviours of prisoners. Third, by understanding the influencing behaviours of the prisoners, this study provides another important learning resource for aspiring prison officers. Lastly, this study showcases the effective use of covert participant observation method in the unique setting of prisons without causing any harm to the researched subjects.

### **Research Questions**

This study arose mainly because of my professional experience as a prison officer and, my curiosity in understanding more about my work environment. It aims to understand the interactions between prisoners and prison officers in their daily dealings. In other words, it seeks to understand the prisoners' use of secondary adjustments that do not directly challenge staff but still allow them to obtain certain forbidden satisfactions or get away from certain sanctions (Goffman 1961). As such, the research question in this study is "What are the types of secondary adjustment that the prisoners used in achieving their personal aims?"

## **Research Methodology**

### ***Grounded Theory Methodology***

Grounded theory is the methodology used in this study. Grounded theory is a form of inductive qualitative research, which is about conceptualising data and eventually resulting in the emergence of a theory or theories from the data itself (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1998). Grounded theory method relies on the method of constant comparison where the analysis of data involves the data interacting with one another through comparison. In the constant comparative method, each piece of relevant data is continually compared with every other piece of relevant data to generate theoretical concepts that encompass as much behavioural variation as possible (Glaser and Strauss 1967). It involves four stages: a) comparing incidents applicable to each category; b) integrating categories and their properties; c) delimiting the theory and d) writing the theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967: 105). It is important to compare every incident and category with one another. This is done through asking questions of the information provided by each incident or category to ensure if any two are similar. Through this comparison process, the collection, coding and analysis phases work in tandem from the start to the end of the investigation. This allows the gradual development of the data from the lowest level of abstraction to a higher one of theoretical conception. At the same time, theoretical sensitivity, which is important in the data analysis stage, is fostered in the constant comparison phase. Theoretical sensitivity is the ability of the researcher to identify the important features of the collected data, perceive the concepts, categories, properties and their interrelationships that arise and finally give meanings to them (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Glaser 1992; Strauss and Corbin 1998). In the initial stage of data analysis, certain events may be overlooked, but as theoretical sensitivity increases, they can be recoded and reanalysed (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggested that the researcher's personal inclinations and experience are helpful in creating theoretical sensitivity to the ongoing research. In this study, I was able to draw on my experiences as a prison officer. This helped me to attain an acceptable level of theoretical sensitivity in dealing with the initial data collection and analysis. At the same time, the reading of literature also helps in enhancing the theoretical sensitivity of the researcher (Glaser 1978). Thus, the literature review conducted was very helpful in developing my theoretical sensitivity. As the study progressed, the data analysis phase became another source for increasing my theoretical sensitivity (Strauss and Corbin 1998).

This study is concerned with the behaviours of the prisoners in a prison setting. Thus, there is a need to discover and understand their actions as the research question has shown. This portends well for a grounded theory approach as it is a qualitative research paradigm that emphasizes on the discovery of the true meanings behind the actions of these social actors (in our case, the prisoners).

### ***Methods of Data Collection***

This research was conducted in a local prison where I, the researcher, was a senior prison officer tasked in supervising a number of junior prison officers and 300 over prisoners. In grounded theory, sampling is conducted according to the principle of theoretical sampling where sampling choices are dictated by the

categories of the emerging theory. I had focused my data collection on a number of prisoners' activities that I supervised. These activities include job therapy in workshop, free association and foot drill in the yard, life skills guidance sessions in the hall and free association in the dormitory. In theoretical sampling, the researcher jointly collects, codes and analyses his/her data. He/she then further decides what the data to be collected next are and where to find them, so as to develop the theory as it emerges (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss and Corbin 1998). Thus, the function of theoretical sampling is to aid in the selection of participants who will yield data that produce categories of a phenomenon until no new categories are found. At the same time, it also helps to develop, elaborate and refine existing categories through searching their other uncovered properties and dimensions, until none is found. In other words, the researcher is "sampling along the lines of properties and dimensions, varying the conditions." (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 202) The most important theoretical sampling criterion in grounded theory is that the data collected must be able to achieve the theoretical completeness of the whole phenomenon. This is achieved when theoretical saturation is attained and data collection stops. Theoretical saturation is where no additional data are found whereby the researcher can form new categories or develop new properties and dimensions of any present category (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Therefore, sample size in theoretical sampling is not an important issue as long as theoretical saturation is reached (Glaser and Strauss 1967). To achieve theoretical saturation, data were collected from a total of 29 prisoners, 3 Senior Prison Officers and 9 Junior Prison Officers. The whole data collection period took slightly over a year.

The main avenue of data collection was the use of covert participant observation. One of the reasons that I decided to use covert participant observation method was that the investigated prisoners were perceived as a marginalised group. Marginalised groups such as criminal groups, religious groups, deviant groups etc. are usually inaccessible for research if permission is sought from them. Therefore, covert participant observation would be the most useful and effective method in examining such marginalised subcultures so as to gather insightful and accurate data (Festinger et al. 1956; Parker 1974; Humphreys 1970). Besides, participant observation provides knowledge of the context in which events occur, and may enable the researcher to see things that participants themselves are not aware of, or that they are unwilling to discuss during an interview (Patton 1990). Another important reason that participant observation was used in the data collection was I (as a prison officer) was the one subjugating the researched subjects (the prisoners). Due to our obvious conflicting interests, overt forms of data collection such as interviews, focus groups or questionnaires can never be effective in eliciting true information from the researched subjects. Besides, the prison officers who were observed were my colleagues. This also meant that they would not like their professional livelihood to be researched on. Therefore, covert participant observation is the most suitable method of data collection due to this unique relation between researched subjects and me. Lastly, as it was a covert participant observation research, I had to rely mostly on his retrospective note taking. After every observation, I would take notes of the significant events that transpired whenever I was not in view of anyone.

Besides observing the prisoners and my colleagues, I was able to rely on two other important means of eliciting information. The first method of gathering information came from the informal interactions between my colleagues and me. I could confirm with them any prisoner's behaviour that I had observed. At the same time, I could seek their perspectives on the probable reasons behind such prisoners'

behaviours. However, in these interactions with my colleagues, I took care not to let them know that I was actually conducting a research.

The third method of gathering data comes from a special group of prisoners who were supposedly on better terms with the prison officers. These prisoners were assisting the prison officers in the operational and administrative chores of the dormitories and thus in constant contact with the prison officers. I would ask them about other prisoners' behaviours under the shield of catering to operational needs. Similarly, these prisoners did not know that I was conducting a research. However, I had to take care that these prisoners might not be divulging the correct information. At the same time, it had to be noted that these prisoners are cautious in their responses to my queries most of the time. Thus, only some significant data were elicited from them.

## **Data Analysis**

Open and axial coding stages of grounded theory analysis procedure are used in the data analysis stage (Glaser 1978; Strauss and Corbin 1998). Open coding involves the labelling of phenomena as indicated by the data (Strauss and Corbin 1998). As such, these labels known as concepts which are the building blocks that will help build up the theory or theories, are formed in this stage. This is achieved through the comparative method that employs the procedures of asking questions and making comparisons of the data (Glaser 1978). By asking simple questions such as what, how, when and where, the data are broken down into different compartments. In axial coding, the data are compared and similar compartmentalized data expressing the same incidents are grouped together under the same conceptual label. These conceptual labels are then contrasted again and further clustered into a higher and more abstract level known as categories (Strauss and Corbin 1998). In this study, the data analysis process occurred concurrently with the data collection process. After each period of data collection, I would code and analyze them accordingly.

## ***Credibility of the Research and Findings***

The rigor of an interpretive study is examined by the notion of trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Trustworthiness is defined as the conceptual soundness of the research results and is influenced by the notions of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba 1985). This study aims to describe accurately the reality of a phenomenon it intends to represent within the research context (credibility) through the triangulation and maximum variation of data sources (prisoners and prison officers). By describing the influencing behaviours of the prisoners in width and depth, the transferability (the applicability of the research findings to other similar settings) can be sustained (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Dependability refers to the consistency between the data collected and the findings while confirmability refers to the degree the findings can be corroborated by other researchers (Lincoln and Guba 1985). An audit trail that consisted of a detailed documentation of the methods and the collection and analysis of data was maintained. Two ex-colleagues of mine were also asked to corroborate the findings. These measures ensured dependability and confirmability of this study.

## **Ethical Issues**

The main controversial issue about this study is the covertness of data collection. In the spirit of most social research, this study may be considered unethical, as the permission of the researched subjects was not sought at all. However, for research on unwilling participants, the next best move would be a covert research stance that does not compromise the confidentiality of the researched subjects. This is because the conventional methods such as interviews, questionnaires etc. would not work well under such circumstances. The confidentiality of the researched subjects has been constantly kept in mind and achieved. I made sure that there is no avenue that the identities of the researched subjects would be revealed.

## **Limitations**

There are several limitations in the implementation of this study. One of the limitations is related to the my significant reliance on his memory power. At times, I had to be around physically supervising the prisoners and it would be a substantial period amount of time that had passed before I could find a private period to pen down the significant events that I had taken note of. Besides, there were times where I had to handle unexpected administrative or operational events that had occurred. This meant that I could have missed certain significant events. This was also the main reason that this data collection stage took over a year before theoretical saturation of the data was achieved.

The next limitation is methodological. The replicability of the research findings can be an issue here. However, this study is exploratory in nature and does not aim to generalise its findings on the main population of prisoners in the local context. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the findings still have some useful but limited form of generalization. It can generalize its findings to any other population in similar contexts experiencing the same phenomenon. Thus, the results of this study may still be applicable to other prison settings that resemble the one in this research. Lastly, my epistemological preferences, beliefs, values, theoretical orientations, bias, experiences may also affect the data collection and analysis. This limitation is reduced as much as possible through I being reflexive in the data collection and analysis processes. Reflexivity is a process of conscious self awareness where a researcher continually appraises the subjective responses and intersubjective relationships within the data in relation to his/her values, experiences, interests and beliefs (Finlay 2002).

## **Findings and Discussion**

### ***Types of Prisoners' Secondary Adjustments***

The strategies of influence that are discovered and conceptualised in this study are the categories of *repetition, distraction, finding excuses, feigning ignorance, false compliance, hearsay, direct hit and spontaneous protest*. In this study, the following identifications are used in the data collection and analysis processes: SPO- Senior Prison Officer, PO – Junior Prison Officer, P – Prisoner, Y-Yard, D-Dormitory, G-

Guidance Room and W-Workshop. For example, the fifth observation that was conducted in the yard (Y5) involved one particular Junior Prison Officer (PO3) and 3 prisoners (P3, P5 and P24). In summary, data were collected from a total of 29 prisoners, 3 Senior Prison Officers and 9 Junior Prison Officers.

### **Repetition**

Prisoners may use repetition as a form of influencing strategy on the prison officers. Their main mode of operation involves them taking turns individually or in groups, to request certain privileges from the prison officers. The first few requests are usually rejected by the prison officers. Thus, they employ a wave of such repetitive acts to pressurize the concerned prison officers in eventually acceding to their requests. These requests are usually not contravention of the rules and regulations of the prison. The approval of these requests is subjected to the individual decisions of the prison officers as they are not entitlements for the prisoners. To stop the waves of pestering by the prisoners, some prison officers may accede to their demands. One example of such tactics is shown in *Observation Scenario Y3*:

Before the commencement of the foot drill, P3 asked PO2 to allow them to play sport games after the foot drill. It was then followed another similar request by a group of prisoners consisting of P3, P6 and P27 during the break. PO2 rejected their request both times. Eventually, they approached PO2 as another group (consisting of P3, P6, P11 and P13) and PO2 finally agreed to let them play games after the foot drill. This was not in PO2's agenda when he first took this group for foot drill as he told me before the session that he would end the foot drill and would proceed to handle some administrative matters. However, the prisoners managed to change PO2's initial plan and PO2 allowed them to have games after the foot drill. When I asked PO2 why he eventually let them to have games even though he told me that his original plan was not so, he hesitated and claimed that he could settle the administrative matters later.

Other examples of the employment of repetition as a strategy of influence are shown in *Y7, Y11, Y4, D10, D12, D15, W3, W4, G2 and G3*. I managed to speak to some prison officers of at least 20 years' experience working in various prisons (SPO1, PO3 and PO4), regarding this phenomenon. According to them, prisoners like to ask repeatedly or pester the prison officers for the privileges they hope to attain. Some more, those requests they made are not against the rules and regulations. Therefore, inexperienced prison officers may fall into this trap as they feel that acceding to their requests does not constitute breaking the rules. It is further verified by P13 (one of the administrative prisoners) who claimed that P03 and his friends were experts in such influencing method and usually they got what they wanted.

### **Distraction**

The prisoners employ the strategy of distraction to get fellow prisoners out from certain situations where they were caught by prison officers breaking the institutional rules and regulations. Its mode of operation involves creating a pressing situation to divert the prison officer's attention from the situation when he is dealing with the

prisoner's misdeed. The strategy of distraction is clearly illustrated in *Observation Scenario W18*.

In W18, P23 was caught by PO8, for illegally passing some items to another production line. It was against the workshop's regulations and prisoners caught doing it would be subjected to punishment. While PO8 was deciding on the kind of action to take against P23, P3 cut his fingers. PO8 then quickly meted a stern verbal warning (instead of putting up a report against him) to P23 so that he can attend to the P3's injury. When I causally asked PO8 the reason why a formal report was not put up against P23, he told me that he felt that it was more important to handle the medical emergency.

It seemed to be a deliberate attempt by P3 to cut his fingers so that the attention from the wrong doer P23 would be diverted. Other examples are shown in Y8, W3, D5 and Y6. These instances can be perceived as the strategy of distraction. However, it could not be confirmed with prisoners or prison officers. Notwithstanding that, here are two undeniable facts in each execution of distraction. First, it is always executed before a fellow prisoner gets in trouble with the prison officer and the consequence is always that that fellow prisoner always gets away with a lesser or no punishment. However, I also noticed that there were some instances where this strategy failed, especially with experienced prison officers.

### ***Finding Excuses***

Prisoners tend to find excuses whenever they do not want to do some tasks as assigned by the prison officers. P12 is an example. This is further ascertained by SPO2, PO3 and PO7. P12 was always finding excuses to get away from doing tasks assigned to him as shown in W2, G1, D1 and D10. In all these instances, he was trying to get away from counselling, work and foot drill by reporting that he was not feeling well due to different kinds of illnesses. This tactic is also used by other prisoners P21, P14, P3, P11 and P25 as shown in G2, D1, W1, W12 and W14 respectively.

### ***Feigning Ignorance***

The prisoners attempt to feign ignorance of any issue, which the prison officers question them about when they know that admitting it would get them into trouble. One of the examples is shown in W16:

P15 was caught by PO7 for communicating with a passing civilian worker in the workshop. It should be noted all inmates in the workshop were briefed on the dos and don'ts there and thus knew that it was an offence for doing that. However, P15 kept saying that he did not know that is an offence.

In this instance, P15 tried to plead his innocence by feigning ignorance. He knew that if he admitted his mistake, he would be punished for it. Therefore, he decided to take a chance by employing this tactic of feigning ignorance. His gamble worked as PO7 gave him the benefit of the doubt and meted out a verbal warning to him. Other instances of feigning ignorance are shown in W13, D17, Y1 and Y8. Most of the



prisoners would use this strategy upon the first sign they are caught breaking rules and regulations by the prison officers. SPO2, SPO3, PO1, PO2 and PO5 agreed that prisoners use the strategy of feigning ignorance frequently.

### ***False Compliance***

The prisoners usually show compliance when the prison officers instruct them to do certain tasks. However, once the prison officers are not physically around to ensure that the orders are carried out, they usually do not complete the required tasks. Such behaviour would be termed as the strategy of false compliance.

Examples of such tactics can be found in D6, D8 and W7. In D8, I arrived at the dormitory immediately after PO2 was intending to leave. I then began talking to some of the prisoners. After sometimes, PO2 returned and enquired the prisoners if they had cleaned up the bunk areas. The prisoners claimed that they had done it. However, when I checked with PO2 when this instruction was given, I understood that it was given just before I came to the dormitory. And during the period I was there, no prisoners were seen tidying up the bunk areas. Further inputs by PO2, PO3 and PO6 also unilaterally confirmed that this tactic is commonly being used by the prisoners. However, they said that they would remind the prisoners the second time to carry out their assigned tasks even though they knew that they deliberately did not carry out the tasks. These officers told me that these tasks are usually mundane ones, thus, they will give some leeway to the prisoners.

### ***Hearsay***

There is a number of incidents where the prisoners commented “*I heard (certain practice or procedures) are allowed in....Can we have/do it too?*” to the prison officers. This strategy is known as “hearsay”. This strategy happened in many observation instances such W3, W12, D4, D5, G2, G12, Y6 etc. My experienced colleagues, SPO1, SPO2 and PO4 revealed that this strategy is often used as a tool to influence the decisions of new officers. According to them, this will make the prison officers question about the validity of the hearsay. Being new officers, they will not want the inmates to see them as indecisive. Thus, this will pressurize them into either believing or disbelieving it. If the prison officers believe the hearsay, the prisoners will gain. If the prison officers do not trust what they have said, the prisoners have nothing to lose too. The most important of all, according SPO2, the prisoners have no obligation to be responsible for their hearsay as they have stressed that they have heard about that certain procedures or practices are allowed but they have not seen it being implemented.

### ***Direct Hit***

Direct hit is a strategy of influence that is highly confrontational but at the same time, provides a high rate of success for the prisoners. This strategy demands the presence of two critical factors. The first one is the presence of an error made by the prisoner officer earlier. This error is committed in front of the prisoners without the prison officer realising the mistake made. The second factor is that there must be another prison officer around if this strategy is to be executed. To provide a better perspective of the rationale of direct hit, the scenario below is provided.

In D19, P3 asked for a carom board from PO7 after 6pm. This was not allowed by the institutional rules. Therefore, PO7 rejected it. However, the moment, the researcher arrived at the scene, he made a fuss out of the whole issue by stating that PO7 performed double standard by allowing the carom board to be in the dormitory after 6pm two nights ago. This scene was created in the presence of me, PO7 and the other prisoners. The other prisoners supported P3's claim and were waiting for the course of action by both the prison officers. The aim of P3 seemed to be getting the carom board and getting PO7 into trouble if he did not get it. Thus, it was a win-win situation for P3 even if he might not get the carom board. In this instance, P3 did not get the carom board, while I had to reprimand PO7 after ascertaining what P3 claimed was true.

This strategy of influence is seldom executed as the executor would be affecting the future relationship between him and the concerned prison officer. However, according to P15 (another administrative prisoner), there were a few instances where the concerned prisoners succeeded in getting their aims through the strategy of direct hit.

### ***Spontaneous Protest***

Spontaneous protest usually involves at least a group of prisoners. It usually occurs when the prison officer makes a highly unpopular decision. This act is spontaneous as it occurs without any instigation by any prisoner but just happens at the spur of the moment by groups of prisoners. It becomes a chain reaction where other groups of prisoners follow suit unprompted. It occurs in scenarios where the inmates feel short-changed by the prison officers especially in terms of privileges and rights. An illustration is shown in Y25 as below.

PO3 had to call off the free association session at the court due to unforeseen circumstances only after 10 minutes. One group of prisoners could be seen protesting to PO3. This is followed by another two groups at the other end of the court, which started protesting while PO3 was still handling the first group. After some persuasion by both of us and another two other prison officers who were called upon to assist, we managed to get them back to dormitory but we compromised by giving them another 10 minutes of free association.

Although such spontaneous protests occur at times, they are usually harmless and do not compromise the security of the prison. It never results in real physical confrontation between the prisoners and prison officers. As the instances have shown, the aim of this strategy of influence is probably to delay the execution of the prison officer's decision or to negotiate for a better deal for the prisoners through spontaneous group behaviours. In this way, they can extend the enjoyment of their privileges or rights.

The research question in this study is "What are the types of secondary adjustments that the prisoners used in achieving their personal aims?" As the study has shown, the strategies of influence that are used by prisoners include the categories of *repetition*, *distraction*, *finding excuses*, *feigning ignorance*, *false compliance*, *hearsay*, *direct hit* and *spontaneous protest*. These forms of secondary adjustment occur in this particular prison setting that is bounded by rules and

regulations (Sykes 1958; Goffman 1961; Rosenhan 1973). These secondary adjustments are largely covert in their intentions (*repetition, distraction, finding excuses, feigning ignorance, false compliance and hearsay*). However, some of them are overt in their aims (*direct hit and spontaneous protest*). At the same time, they can be individual- and/or group-based. The categories of *distraction, finding excuses, feigning ignorance, direct hit* and *false compliance* can be both individual- and group-based to be effective. On the other hand, the categories of *repetition, hearsay* and *spontaneous protest* need the presence of group cooperation to be effective.

As this is a small scale study, these insights are not exhaustive. However, these insights can serve as future references for more large-scale studies in such areas which are largely unexplored in Asian context. In short, this study has implications for the development of theory, practice and future research in the area of penology.

### **Typology of Prisoners' Secondary Adjustments**

Different strategies used by the prisoners serve different specific aims. The strategies of *repetition* and *hearsay* aim to help the prisoners get extra privileges such as games' times, TV times, exemption from chores they do not like etc. Such strategies of influence would be termed as *Enhancers* as they are executed to enhance their living and working conditions in the prison.

As for the strategies of *distraction, feigning ignorance, false compliance* and *finding excuses*, the prisoners utilise them to get themselves or their peers out of trouble when they are caught by prison officers contravening the rules, or not following official instructions. The strategies are termed as *Trouble Shooters* in this study. The non-confrontational nature of the both *Enhancers* and *Trouble Shooters* agrees with the characteristics of secondary adjustments suggested by the study of Goffman (1961).

However, the other two strategies discovered in this study can be confrontational to some extent. First, the strategy of *direct hit* aims to get prison officers in trouble with the prison higher authority. Second, the strategy of *spontaneous protest* is used by the prisoners to show passive protest against certain unpopular decisions made by the prison officers. Both strategies are seen as confrontational because they aim to oppose the prison officers. These strategies of influence are known as the *Resistors* in this study since they aim to demonstrate resistance against the prison officers.

In short, the prisoners' goals in engaging in such strategies always serve their own personal benefits in the prison setting that is bounded by control mechanisms that are presumably against them. These strategies can be grouped under the categories of *Enhancers, Trouble Shooters* and *Resistors*. At the same time, these secondary adjustments can be both cooperative and conflictive. They may be cooperative as they help the prisoners in reaping material or social benefits for themselves, while they can be conflictive in demonstrating passive resistance against the prison officers. Another notable finding is that these three categories are not mutually exclusive with respect to their execution by the prisoners, i.e. any prisoner may use all three categories, some of the categories or none of the categories. Therefore, this study did not succeed in discovering a typology of prisoners with respect to the execution of these secondary adjustments. On the contrary, from the analysis process, a typology of prison officers with respect to their responses to such secondary adjustments, was discovered.

## ***Typology of Prison Officers with Respect to Their Responses to Prisoners' Secondary Adjustments***

Some prison officers may be persuaded by the prisoners' strategies while others may see through their ploys. In all, there are three different categories of prison officers with respect to their responses towards the prisoners' strategies of influence. The first group generally consists of prison officers who have no idea that they are manipulated by their prisoners through such persuading strategies. They genuinely believe that the prisoners are here to be rehabilitated and do not perceive such micro-political activities as being present. This group of prison officers are termed as the *Idealists*. This may create a pressing issue here as this group of prison officers may be compromising the security of the institution. More importantly, if these prison officers discover that they are being manipulated by their prisoners through such strategies, their working morale and confidence can be substantially affected. This is particularly detrimental to their professional growth as effective prison officers.

On the contrary, some of the prison officers may know about some of these strategies but they do not openly articulate or acknowledge them. These prison officers belong to the second category of prison officers in responding to such manipulative strategies and would be termed as the *Pragmatists*. At times, they may choose to ignore them or even accede to such persuasive moves as long as the acts of influence are discreet. This is because it is perceived to be a lose-lose situation for the prison officers if they are too keen in handling every single act of passive resistance or influence that they recognise. They have divulged that prisoners can afford 24 hours a day in planning such influencing ventures while prisoner officers can never invest an equal amount of time in counteracting them. They have to take care of other operational needs, administrative needs and their own external commitments. Thus, these prison officers believe in exercising flexibility ("give and take" mentality) in addressing such influencing acts from the prisoners. By doing this, certain elements of control can be ceded to the prisoners as long as there is no serious implication on the security of the institution. Thus, to the prison officers in this study, the control of the prisoners is not perceived by them as the most important function of theirs. This is in contradictory with Scharf (1983) and this may create problems as there may be a danger that the prisoners assume incremental control in the institution in the long run.

The last group of prison officers consists of those who know about their prisoners' persuading acts and adopt a rigid and strict stand towards them. They are termed as the *Authoritarians* in this study. They would tell straight in the face of the prisoners not to influence them and provide no room for further discussion or negotiation. The relationship between such prison officers and their prisoners is usually tense. And their prisoners would attempt to get such prison officers into trouble through the strategy of *direct hit*. Therefore, such prison officers have to be constantly on their highest operational alert.

In summary, this study discovered three categories of prison officers' responses to the prisoners' strategies of influence and it was believed that none of them had a clear edge in dealing with these strategies of influence effectively. If the prison officers are able to learn from the findings and deal with the prisoners more effectively, the process of the rehabilitation of prisoners can be conducted more effectively in the reduced presence of such unconstructive micro-politics. However, this does not mean that prison officers would rigidly implement operational policies in consideration of the findings. This is because the power dynamics between prison officers and prisoners are very complex and intricate. Exercising either extreme ends

of the continuum of responses [Rigidity (*Authoritarians*) vs. Flexibility (*Pragmatist*)] towards the prisoners' strategies of influence can be counter productive. On the other hand, being unaware of such strategies of influence (as of the *Idealists*) can put the prison officer in dire straits too. In order to manage this complex relationship well, there is a need to exercise an effective amount of flexibility, rigidity and awareness in the dealings between both the prison officers and prisoners. However, this is never an easy task.

## Conclusion

This study has also provided some insights into the world of micro activities of influence used by the prisoners. From the study, eight strategies of influence are conceptualised: *repetition, distraction, finding excuses, feigning ignorance, false compliance, hearsay, direct hit and spontaneous protest*. They can further subsumed under three main categories of *Enhancers, Trouble Shooters* and *Resistors*. At the same time, there are also three categories of prison officers with respect to their responses to the eight strategies of influence – *Idealists, Pragmatists* and *Authoritarians*. In conclusion, I hope that this study would make some meaningful contributions in the area of penology. Eventually, these contributions can play their part in benefiting both the operational capability of the prison officers and rehabilitation of the prisoners, with no partial treatment to either prison officers or prisoners.

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