

Psychological Impact of Tattoos: Review Article

DNYANESHWARI DHUMAL¹, SHIVANI PATOLE²

^{1,2} Department of forensic science, Yashwantrao Chavan Institute of Science Satara, Maharashtra, India

Abstract- *In today's world, tattoos are more and more common and are used to express oneself and create one's identity. This study investigates the psychological effects of tattoos, utilizing previous research to present a comprehensive summary of their effects on people's mental health. Studies reveal that tattoos may have both favorable and unfavorable psychological effects. Positive outcomes include increased self-worth and a feeling of empowerment. men's and a better impression of Buddy. Negative impacts can include effects on people's mental health. Studies reveal that tattoos may have both favorable and unfavorable psychological effects. Positive outcomes include increased self-worth and a feeling of empowerment. men's and a better impression of Buddy. Negative impacts can include dissemination and social stigma. and lament the poorly thought out tattoos.*

Index Terms- *Tattoos, Scar Transformation, Self-Acceptance*

I. INTRODUCTION

Tattoos gaining popularity in recent times, it's no surprise that they've garnered significant attention among researchers and psychologists to understand their role in human lives. Historically, tattoos were known to hold personal meaning, represent various cultural nuances, and be part of religious practices. The human psyche involves many woven stories of self-identity, personal experiences, and culture, and body modifications serve as a strong form of visually communicating the emotions and values specific to every individual. While the psychology behind getting tattoos and piercings is complex, they certainly hold symbolic meaning. So, whether someone gets an intricate full-sleeve tattoo or adorns stretched earlobes with various ear weight styles, it can hold personal, spiritual, and emotional meaning to them.

- **Expressing Oneself**

Your inner thoughts, personal stories, and feelings need to be heard. There may be instances where someone struggles to communicate verbally their point of view, and that's when tattoos become a unique way of expressing their emotions without using any words. Since it provides an indirect way to communicate your own narrative, it leads to a feeling of liberation and installs a sense of relief.

- **Self-Acceptance**

Many of us struggle with accepting ourselves, and we use tattoos as a way to love ourselves and find peace within. Whether you get a tattoo that reflects personal growth, signifies a struggle you've overcome, or marks a major milestone in your life, it's all part of your identity, and embracing it in the form of a tattoo is a constant reminder and a boost to your self-esteem.

- **Scar Transformation**

People who have visible scars struggle with body image issues and self-confidence. Tattoos offer a way for these individuals to turn their flaws into beautiful works of art. Getting scars tattooed doesn't just help their sense of self but also helps them heal emotionally as they positively redefine their relationship with these imperfections.

- **Connection to Community**

Once you start getting tattoos, you innately become part of the tattoo community, which surprisingly is quite close-knit and has a strong sense of belonging. It's an opportunity to build connections, speak your truth, and realize you're not alone. This breaks down self-isolating habits that leave many feelings lonely as they continue with mental health struggle

- **Mindfulness**

Several individuals use the process of tattooing as a healing ritual to learn and push their spiritual boundaries. Getting tattooed requires a lot of patience

and perseverance because it's a lengthy process that involves enduring pain and nervousness. Being present in the moment and teaching your body tolerance is a form of practicing mindfulness, resilience, and strength.

- Tattoos and criminal behavior

Lombroso, an Italian psychiatrist and a criminal anthropologist of the late 19th century, considered tattoos to be a clear sign of intrinsic atavism, a tendency to conform to wild and primitive behaviour in the 'born delinquent' ([1]. Tattoos are common among both adult and adolescent prisoners ([2]; [3]; [4]; [5]; [6]). Prevalence rates ranging from three to five times those in the general population have been reported ([7]; [8]). The prevalence is even higher among adult and adolescent prisoners who have used intravenous drugs [9]). Tattooed individuals, with or without a mental disorder, are more likely to have previous convictions than non-tattooed controls ([10], Reference Gittleson and Wallen1973; Reference Buhrich and MorrisBuhrich 1982).

Are tattooed individuals more likely to offend or is tattooing part of a criminal subculture? The answer is probably yes to both the questions. There are abundant examples of criminal gangs using tattoos, often on exposed areas of the body (Reference Mallon and Russell Mallon 1999), as a marker of affiliation and membership. It is therefore possible that tattoos reinforce criminal behaviour by allowing individuals to affiliate with criminal elements in gangs. On the other hand, it seems that individuals with certain psychological makeup who are more likely to engage in criminal behaviour are also more likely to acquire a tattoo, owing to shared risk factors. Prisoners with antisocial and sadistic personality types, as measured by the Millons Clinical Multiaxial Inventory, are more likely to obtain tattoos while in prison (Reference Manuel and RetzlaffManuel 2002). In incarcerated adolescents, having a tattoo is associated with engaging in hostile and aggressive behaviour and risk of violent recidivism (Reference PutninsPutnins 2002). Rates of alcoholism, drug misuse (Reference Buhrich and MorrisBuhrich 1982; Reference Raspa and Cusack Raspa 1990; Reference Williams Williams 1998; Reference Brooks, Woods and Knight Brooks 2003), impulsivity, risk-taking behavior (Reference Brooks, Woods and Knight

Brooks 2003) and personality disorders (Reference Ferguson-Report, Griffith and StrausFerguson-Rayport 1955; Reference Yamamoto, Seeman and LesterYamamoto 1963; Reference Post Post 1968; Reference Gittleson, Wallen and Dawson-Butterworth Gittleson 1969; Reference Williams Williams 1998) are high in both men and women bearing tattoos, and all these are risk factors for criminal behaviour.

There are other reasons why tattoos are so common among prisoners. They may represent a form of visual communication and a form of defence. They may indicate gang membership and criminal past, symbolise aggression and toughness or a form of exoskeletal defence (Reference Manuel and RetzlaffManuel 2002). They may also be obtained to rebel against the authorities, deal with boredom or express one's creative side (Reference Mallon and Russell Mallon 1999).

Tattooing among prisoners is a public health problem, with 20–30% of tattooed prisoners, both male and female, acquiring their tattoo in prison. Not surprisingly, the techniques and materials used are crude and such individuals are at high risk of acquiring blood-borne viruses such as hepatitis C (Reference Strang, Heuston and WhiteleyStrang 2000; Reference Hellard, Aitken and Hocking Ellard 2007).

II.

II. METHOD & MATERIAL

1. My Body is a Journal, and my tattoos are stories: The aim of this research study was to gain insight into a group of South African psychology students' perceptions regarding tattoos. Tattoos were valued for their symbolic personal meaning and as a form of self-expression, while religion, the permanence of tattoos and medical aspects deterred students from getting a tattoo. Students do tend to become involved in more risk-taking behavior during their university years as they are away from home – often for the first time (Armstrong et al 2002b). This might prompt the decision to get a tattoo. Students are still inclined to get approval from their parents for getting tattoos, they were not discouraged to get tattoos even when their parents were passive or outraged about them wanting to get tattoos. [6]

2. Religious tattoos at one Christian University: this research study aimed to understand the perceptions of South African psychology students regarding tattoos. The study found that having a tattoo was not common among senior psychology students, but many participants expressed interest in getting a tattoo if it held personal meaning. Some studies suggest a negative correlation between religious affiliation and tattoos, but this study found no significant differences based on gender or religious affiliation. However, black students were less likely to have tattoos. The study also found that the majority of participants were black, religious, female psychology students, which may have influenced the results. Further investigation is needed to understand the cultural nuances related to tattoo practices.⁴⁹⁶ Participants were involved in the analysis. Some of the researchers' results seem to reinforce earlier work in this field: "The main reasons for getting a tattoo are its personal meaning, memory, and self-expression value. Body art allows individuals to express their identity,". [7]

3. Tattoo Designs Among the Drug Abusers: In 'Tattoos', Roger Byard (2013) noted that the popularity of tattooing has increased in recent years, particularly among young people. Tattoos have been practiced for thousands of years and are now commonly produced using electric machines. Gang and prison tattoos often have antisocial messages and a focus on death and violence. Tattoos can be used to identify a person's cultural background or affiliations. They can also have medical purposes, such as conveying important information or treating certain conditions. However, tattoos can also be associated with high-risk behavior and psychological illnesses. It is important to document the characteristics of tattoos during forensic autopsies, as they can provide valuable information about the decedent.²⁰ autopsy cases with this type of tattoo revealed that suicides and were included in the research. Aspects of their results may diverge from previous research in this subject: "A study found that individuals with tattoos of Ned Kelly had higher rates of suicides and homicides, but the findings cannot be generalized to the general population," Byard argued. [8]

4. Criminalistic Human Identification from Scar and Tattoo Marks:

The description must include number, location, size and form, its specific location upon the body, fixed or loose, the smoothness or irregularity of the surface, color and the occurrence/lack of glistening and tenderness. The state of the ends and the apparent direction of the original wound should be established. The use of heat, filtered ultraviolet light or surface friction has proved to be useful in making dim scars promptly visible. Suspected scar in a corpse can be proved by microscopy by examining for the presence/absence of elastic tissue that is absent in a scar.(Scar evidence of identity should be considered in association with alternative points for identification, but where a scar/mark is odd or uncommon; it is significance gets greatly increased.)Suspected scar in a corpse can be proved by microscopy by examining for the presence/absence of elastic tissue that is absent in a scar. (Scar evidence of identity should be considered in association with alternative points for identification, but where a scar/mark is odd or uncommon; it is significance gets greatly increased.) [9]

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tattoos have been shown to have a psychological impact on a number of behavioral and identity-related factors. According to certain research, getting a tattoo can provide one a sense of empowerment or self-expression as well as improve one's self-esteem. Furthermore, tattoos can impact social interactions and perceptions by acting as symbols of personal identification or group connection.

There are, nevertheless, possible adverse consequences to take into account. Some people may have regrets about their tattoos, particularly if they believe that the design is impulsive or no longer represents who they are. Additionally, the stigmas and prejudices perpetuated by society around tattoos can result in prejudice or condemnation in specific situations, which can negatively affect people's social relationships and sense of self.

Tattoos have a complicated psychological effect that varies based on social standards, cultural background,

and personal experiences. To completely comprehend the long-term impacts of tattoos on behaviour and wellbeing, more investigation is required.

CONCLUSION

The psychology of tattoos covers a wide range of experiences and emotions. For many people, tattoos are a powerful tool of self-expression, allowing them to convey their values, beliefs, and personal narrative to the world. This encourages self-expression, self-awareness and empowerment, leading to self-confidence and self-esteem. Additionally, tattoos often promote relationships and group membership as a symbol of belonging to or sharing a community or subculture. However, in addition to this appearance, tattoos can also cause psychological harm. Some people may regret or dislike their tattoos, which can cause problems with body image and self-confidence. Additionally, sometimes the stigma surrounding tattoos can lead to feelings of isolation or discrimination. Despite these challenges, tattoos often have a deeper meaning, representing memories, relationships, or personal struggles. Finally, the psychology of tattooing is subtle and personal; It is influenced by many factors such as self-belief, cultural background and life experiences.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We are thankful to the Department of Forensic Science, Yashwantrao Chavan Institute of Science, Satara, India for the valuable and enlightening guidance and for the provoking and cooperative behavior towards us and allowing us to write the review on this topic.

REFERENCES

- [1] Ferracuti, S (1996) Cesare Lombroso (1835–1907). *Journal of Forensic Psychiatry* 7: 130–49. Google Scholar.
- [2] Post, RS (1968) The relationship of tattoos to personality disorders. *Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology and Police Science* 59: 516–24. Google Scholar.
- [3] Newman, G (1982) The implications of tattooing in prisoners. *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* 42: 231–4. Google Scholar.
- [4] Birmingham, L, Mason, D, Grubin, D (1999) The psychiatric implications of visible tattoos in an adult male prison population. *Journal of Forensic Psychiatry* 10: 687–95. Google Scholar.
- [5] Strang, J, Heuston, J, Whiteley, C et al (2000) Is prison tattooing a risk behaviour for HIV and other viruses? Results from a national survey of prisoners in England and Wales. *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health* 10: 60–6. Google Scholar.
- A. Tsang, "My body is a journal, and my tattoos are my story.' Exploring the motivations and meanings of tattoos using a multi qualitative-method approach".
- [6] Kevin D. Dougherty & Jerome R. Koch , "Religious Tattoos At one Christian university," *Internatioinal Visual Sociology Association* .
- [7] Alexander borokhov, MD, Roland Bastiaans , MD, And Vladimir Lerner MD, phd , "Tattos Design Among Drigs Abusers," *ISR PSYCHIATRY RELAT SCI* , vol. 43, no. 1.
- [8] L. Balan, "Criminalistic Human Identification From Scar And Tattoo Marks," *European Journal of Law And Public Administration* .
- [9] Kevin D. Dougherty & Jerome R. Koch , "Religious tattoos at one Christian University," *International Visual Sociology Association* .