

AN ANALYSIS OF THE PRE AND POST RELEASE SERVICES TO THE PRISONERS AND ITS IMPACT ON THEIR REINTEGRATION (A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED PRISONS OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA, PAKISTAN)

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Abstract

This paper has gauged the existence and effectiveness of pre and post release services to the prisoners in the context of Khyber-Pakhtukhwa (KP), Pakistan prisons. Seven jails of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan including four central prisons i.e., Peshawar, Bannu, Haripure, DI Khan and three district prisons i.e., Temargara, Mardan and Kohat were purposively selected. Out of 268 respondents, 250 jail inmates were randomly selected within the seven jails of the province and interviewed through semi-structured questionnaire. The remaining 18 respondents, purposively selected and interviewed through interview-guide included judges, lawyers, jail officials, human rights activists and ex-prisoners. Concurrent triangulation (Mixed methodology) was adopted to collect and analyze the data. It was found that prisoners in Pakistan face myriad challenges (social, financial, jobs, psychological etc) in their post-release life which are stumbling blocks to their readjustment. Moreover, there was no effective network of educational, vocational, pre and post release interventions, nor government had any follow-up strategy for the released prisoners, making them prone to their past deviant life style. Released prisoners must be passed through a well calculated arrangement of pre and post release services. Media, NGOs and criminal justice agencies must aware people to extend their all-out support to the released and not treat them persona no grata. Government should revisit the laws (if any) which bar past convicted prisoners to be fit for any public office/government job and the whole criminal justice system (police, prisons, judiciary, parole and probation) needs to be streamlined.

Key words

Prisoners, Central Jails, Inmates, Release, Reintegration

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1. Introduction

1.1. Significance of Pre & Post-release Services in the Process of Reintegration

Prisons are to be correction centers in the modern world and the best replacement of seventeen and eighteen centuries' brutal and barbaric punishments. The offenders are the people whose majority will be back into society sooner or later. The more positive, productive, creative and useful engagements they have in and outside prisons, the greater are the chances of their successful reintegration and vice versa. That is to say, for full-fledge reintegration of a prisoner a holistic approach is required. Casey & Jarman¹ in this regard describe that "through the gate approach", as known in the UK, is very fruitful, for it is characterized by the continuity of educational and vocational training, drug and alcohol rehabilitation programmes and the community support even after the release. Kole² states that pre and post services are direly needed to tackle the post-release problems such as unemployment, lack of money, food and clothing, shelter, transportation, education, skill, psychological counseling and medical treatment. Harper and Chitty³ unearthed that on reentry inmates are often confronted with housing, health, money and job issues. To tackle these issues successfully pre-release activities are of massive importance. Also, equally essential is the continuation of rehabilitation support beyond the release. According to Niriella⁴, both pre and post release services should go hand in hand in the wide-ranging process of reintegration to take on issues such as low self esteem, unreasonable expectations by society, sense of guilt and sin, fear of failure, distrust of others. Martynowicz & Quigley⁵ argues that reintegration target areas such as correcting offending behavior, ensuring and sustaining social support upon an offender's release from prison and engaging him/her in activities which are the norms of society. Moreover, it encompasses addressing the challenges faced by an ex-prisoner as well as community once reentry takes place. Ogilvie⁶ says that criminologists advocate that given its importance in the reform of the prisoners, resources are to be directed to pre and post release programs in the new penology. The United Nations⁷ revealed that social reintegration efforts must be started from the time of prosecution and be extended to post-release life. It is worth noting that an artificial city in the jail of capital Beijing with underground railway station, super markets and internet cafés, has been established. Offenders to be released are trained in this artificial city in a fashion very much similar to the real world. The prisoners are involved in activities such as ATM credit card operation,

mobile phone use, booking of railway tickets, buying of vegetables or other stuff in the super markets and so on, to fit them back into society⁸. Workman⁹ says that Winston Churchill's progressive approach is comprised of three principals. Firstly, the state must extend its support to help the ex-prisoners become useful citizens. Secondly, concentration should be on the support and accountability based system rather than on just compliance and control. Thirdly, since prisoners' reintegration is a transition from the formal state control to the informal community support. Hence, efforts of the community and organizations in connection with the prisoner's reintegration should be supported by the state. Rujjanavet¹⁰ has described that in Thailand Prisons, three types of education are imparted to the prisoners i.e., formal, vocational, religious and non-formal. The prisoners are also provided with ample opportunities of having sports and other healthy recreations in order to make them physically sound and mentally relaxed. Moreover, pre-release centers are also established and an effective follow-up mechanism too exists, which are all aimed at the realization of the noble goal of reintegration. Alessandro Pirona, as cited by Ajala¹¹, argues that there are three categories of programmes: 1. institution-based programmes, 2. surveillance-based transition programmes, and 3. assistance based transition programmes. All three, working in unison, guarantee a successful rehabilitation. Referring to various studies, Borzycki and Baldly¹² linked successful reintegration of the prisoners to be the product of rehabilitative services before and after release.

2. Methodology

Mixed methodology i.e., both qualitative and quantitative strategies were adopted to carry out this study. Moreover, it was the case study of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (henceforth, KP) Pakistan jails. Case study is recommended for getting in-depth and well elucidated evidences and understanding of the social situation¹³. Robson¹⁴ defines CS "a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence".

Seven high profile jails within KP province of Pakistan, one jail each, in all the seven administrative divisions, were purposively selected. So, the four central prisons i.e., *Peshawar*, *Bannu*, *Haripur*, *Dera Ismail Khan* and three district prisons i.e., *Temargara*, *Mardan* and *Kohat* were selected. Out of 268 respondents, 250 comprised of jail inmates (under trial and convicted adults and juveniles male prisoners) randomly selected within the seven jails of the province and

interviewed through semi-structured questionnaire. The remaining 18 respondents’ purposively selected and interviewed through interview-guide included judges (2 in number), lawyers (2 in number), jail officials (6 in number), human right activists (3 in number) and ex-prisoners (5 in number). Researcher’s own observation were also part of the study. Concurrent triangulation technique was used to collect and analyze the data. In short, concurrent triangulation technique combines qualitative and quantitative approaches to confirm, cross-validate or corroborate findings within a single study¹⁵.

3. Results and Analysis

Below are highlighted the likely problems to be faced by those prisoners who were in various jails of the province by the time of data collection. Moreover, the problems being faced by the released prisoners are narrated. Human rights activists and Jail officials’ opinions are also taken into account. The responses are triangulated and its compatibility with the secondary data is discussed as well.

Table 1Perceptions of the prisoners regarding their Post-release problems

Post-release problems likely to be faced by the prisoners	Prisoners would be fairly treated by society after release		Row wise total & %	Total
	Yes	No		
Social problem	6 16.21%	31 83.78%	37 100%	37 14.8%
Housing problem	0 0%	4 100%	4 100%	4 1.6%
Job problem	7 14%	43 86%	50 100%	50 20%
All the above	54 33.96%	105 66.03%	159 100%	159 63.6%
Total	67 26.8%	183 73.2%	250 100%	250 100%

3.1. The problems to be faced/being faced by the prisoners after their release

Table 1 depicted the problems that could be faced by the inmates on their reentry into society and the way they might be treated. Among the 250 prisoners, majority i.e., 183 (73.2%) said that they did not expect fair treatment from society. While, 67 (26.8%) were hoping fair

treatment of their social settings. In addition, 37 (14.8%) inmates alluded to social problems to be awaiting them. Among them 31 were expecting unfair treatment from their social settings and the remaining 6 inmates envisioned an optimistic attitude from society. The 4 prisoners identified housing problem and revealed that they might face unjust treatment on their transition to the free world. Also, 50 (20%) prisoners enlisted job problems and 43 (86%) of them showed their discontent regarding the way society would interact with them. Besides, 159 (63.6%) a larger strength of the inmates revealed that they could face one, two or all the mentioned problems. Out of these 159, 105 (66.03%) inmates said "Yes" as replying to unfair treatment of society, while, 67 (26.8%) fall into "No" category. These mentioned problems often result in the failed reintegration. The findings of Borzycki & Baldry¹⁶, for instance, described that the social, economic and psychological challenges are the obstacles in the crime-free life of prisoners even after their release, which if not addressed promptly and diligently, could make reintegration almost impossible. Moreover, Griffiths, Dandurand & Murdoch¹⁷, identified "finding suitable accommodation with very limited means, managing financially with little or no savings until they begin to earn some lawful remuneration, accessing a range of everyday necessities, and accessing services and support for their specific needs" to be the daunting challenges of post-release life. In KP, **prisoners' stigmatization** is one of the big social problems and potential hurdle to their crime-free life. In this regard, one of the inmates from, *Kohat Jail* told that he had been twice to the prison before. Last times when he was released, he faced discrimination and stigmatization at every step. This made him unfit into the normal world and despite his dislike for the criminal world, he was pushed back to it by his social setting (Field Notes, June, 2014). The **ex-prisoners'** views also validated that they were confronted with various problems. For example, one of the ex-prisoners released in 2012 after completing his life sentence divulged that he had not properly adjusted even after three years of his release. However, the very moment he got a temporary job in a private school at Behrain (Swat) namely *Mustafa* School and College, he got somewhat normalized. The more engaged, he said, he was in his teaching, the more relaxed he felt. He further said that once when his parents had a discussion to search a spouse for him; he got shocked when his sister unwittingly said that his case would be taken differently by society even in the matter of marriage. He said, "Prisoners are the people who are very sensitive toward even the slightest negative comments from society". Moreover, he continued that he was still coping with the

problem of proper adjustment. To him society was degenerated to the extent that it had attached a social stigma to each past prisoner (Interview with S. Fida, 4th November 2014). Another ex-prisoner unfolded that society treated him like an outcast. He revealed that he didn't get proper job and was always rejected for having been in the prison. He regretted that he was on the verge of ruin and needed an overwhelming support from government and NGOs (Interview with an ex-prisoner, August, 2014). It is worth mentioning that **prisoners' stigmatization** is almost a universal phenomenon. Neiderbach & Iwansowsk¹⁸, for instance, argue that imprisoned people, even after their release are treated as social outcasts, which compel them to have willy-nilly association with their past criminal life. In the absence of material, psychological and social support at the time of their release, offenders may have a very tough time breaking the vicious cycle of release and re-arrest. Several other studies therefore revealed that effective pre-release planning and an overwhelming post-release community support in the light of individual criminogenic is of paramount importance. Bazemore & Stinchcomb¹⁹, for instance, describe that informal social support to help the released prisoners and developed their pro-social identities is the prerequisite of a successful reform strategy. Ugwuoke²⁰ in his study based on the sample of 200 prisoners of Enugu Prison, Southeast Nigeria, identified the two major obstacles in the way of a prisoner's reintegration i.e., the poor environmental condition of the prisons and the antagonistic attitude of the society towards the ex-convicted. Ugwuoke²¹ has unveiled that often the prisons' harsh and inhumane atmosphere accompanied by the deprivation of the liberty force an offender into law abiding life. However, the negative and unwelcoming responses of society and stigmatization of the prisoner make them vulnerable to deviancy. Osaze²² stated that prisoners on their reentry might face uncertainty, animosity, and many other personal, social, and legal barriers, which if not addressed maturely, could lead to reintegration failure. It may be noted that convicted prisoners are legally unfit for public offices, which undermine their prospects of reform. Also, in **KP**, society's cooperative role is of paramount importance given to the presence of the high profile militants in its jails. International Center for Counter Terrorism²³ findings, for example, revealed that often community's role in stigmatizing past terrorists stands firmly in the way of their reintegration. The findings elaborate that some members of society might still consider a past terrorist to be a potential threat to society, while others may regard him as a sell-out for renouncing his former terrorist affiliation.

3.2. Pre-release Programs within Jails

The problems being faced or likely to be faced by the released prisoners can be takled effectively through an efficient network of pre and post released programs. Below primary data got from under-custody inmates, released prisoners, jail officials and human rights activists shows the existence and effectiveness of the direly needed pre and post release services.

Table 2Pre and Post release arrangements for prisoners

Statements	Response		Total
	Yes	No	
Prisoners’ educational needs are satisfactorily meet within prison settings	44 17.6%	206 82.4%	250 100%
Vocational/Occupational trainings are available in jail/prison	80 32%	170 68%	250 100%
Experts, Jail authorities, Human Right activists etc consult/guides you in connection with your post-release life	50 20%	200 80%	250 100%

Table 2 shows the pre and post release services, which are a must to address the problems being faced by the prisoners on their release as mentioned above. Various yardsticks such as the existence and effectiveness of educational, vocational, pre-release and post-release interventions have been analyzed. With regard to **educational needs**, 206 (82.4%) inmates, a clear majority, divulged that they were not satisfied. Whereas, 44 (17.6%) prisoners shown their satisfaction. In respect to **vocational/ occupational** activities, the larger portion of the inmates i.e., 170 (68%) responded in negative. While, a lesser number i.e., 80 (32%) had positive response. In reply to guidance regarding their **post-release life**, the majority i.e., 200 (80%) said “No” in comparison to 50 (20%) who said “Yes”. It is widely accepted that pre-release interventions are a must to ensure the reintegration goals. For instance, Davis *et al*²⁴ reported that educational and vocational programs are instrumental in overcoming recidivism and in finding jobs. Esperian²⁵ argued that a study based in Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Texas, Utah and Virginia confirmed that recidivism rate was decreased from 49% to 20% following the implementation of educational programs (p.323). Hawley, Murphy & Souto-Otero²⁶ highlighted the value of prison based educational intervention as:

Education is thus one key aspect of the important rehabilitative role of prisons and has an important, even if often indirect, role

to play in many of the other rehabilitative processes in which a prisoner can engage while in prison (p.7)

Grant²⁷ says that educational programs could make inmates mature, help them find job and decrease the cycle of recidivism considerably. However, as has been shown in the table, Pakistan prisons are yet to provide these opportunities. Other studies unearthed the same. For example, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan²⁸ brings to light that owing to the lack of an overwhelming effort, prisoners are neither getting the needed vocational trainings, nor educational (p.86). In addition, The Government of Khyber -Pakhtunkhwa Inspectorate of Prison²⁹ Report narrates that educational and vocational services are under-resourced, which cannot equip prisoners with the skill and knowledge as per their needs. With regard to the **vocational services**, Anjum, an inmate from **Peshawar Jail** said that prisoners had to live even in prisons' industries making its productive activities non-functional, thanks to overcrowding (Field Notes, 27th May, 2014). It was observed that in district jails "prison industry" did not exist, while in central jails, they were either used for housing prisoners or nonfunctional. In *Peshawar Jail*, for example, it was told by the authorities that "Prison Industry" was at a standstill, because of the renovation and rebuilding work. Shortage of electricity was making the industry nonfunctional in *Bannu Jail*, and in *Haripur Jail* some minor activities were there, but that too lacked regularity, effectiveness, and handsome budgetary allocation. The only exception in this regard were juvenile sections, where it was admitted by the prisoners that at least computer skill and to some extent educational classes were arranged (Personal Observation, May 2014). Wadood, an inmate from *Peshawar Central Jail* described with regard to **pre and post interventions** as:

No effective interventions to train prisoners for a socially, economically and morally healthy life within prisons. They are at the mercy of God throughout their imprisonment period. Same would be the fate of post-release services (Field Notes, 27th May, 2014).

Saqib, in his thirties, from *Haripur Jail* expressed the same feelings as saying, "Specially designed pre and post release programs might be in theory but not in practice. The prisoners have no idea about it" (Field Notes, 12th May, 2014). A **human rights** activist and program manager for prisons in KP from *Dost Foundation* explained:

Pre- release programs are least effective, while there is no concept of the post-release intervention, not to speak

of its implementation. Very few NGOs extend support to the prisoners after their release, but no such effort is seen on the part of the state organs (Interview with Z. Wazir, 30th May 2014).

Kohat Prison's Assistant -cum- deputy superintendent, in this regard told:

Pre-release and post-release programs are seldom practiced. The need is that government through effective pre and post release services ensure the full-fledged reintegration of the inmates. If a prisoner is released to society, on one side he is not fairly and justly treated and on the other side he has no job opportunity to lead a respected life. Resultantly, he/she is often pushed back to the offending mode of life (Interview with S. Khan, 13th May 2014).

4. Conclusion

In the light of this study it can be concluded that prisoners in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa are confronted with problems like lack of job opportunities, homelessness and social stigmatization etc, which hinder their successful reintegration into society. Also, the well designed and well coordinated network of pre and post release services i.e. educational, vocational, well thought-out pre and post release support etc, to equip prisoners with will and skill to cope with the challenges to their re-adjustment is missing. Hence, they are more likely to fall prey to the criminal networks and become liabilities for their respective social settings. It is therefore, recommended that released prisoners must be passed through a well calculated arrangement of pre and post release services. Moreover, society's role is of paramount importance, hence, awareness must be raised by government and NGOs, that people should not treat the released prisoners' persona no grata. The special pre-release programs in the fashion of China's **Beijing** Jail and Thailand Prisons, as well as "through the gate" approach of UK jails (discussed in the literature) should be in place in Pakistan jails. Also, government should revisit the laws which bar past convicted prisoners to be fit for any public office or government job. Moreover, the whole criminal justice system, CJS (police, prisons, judiciary, parole and probation) needs to be streamlined. Media is one of the powerful tools in today's era; hence, an awareness campaign by media may change things for the better.

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