

Societal adjustment of probationers in Bahawalpur, Pakistan

*Mohammad Iqbal &
Asiya Anwar*

Abstract

The study was conducted with an aim to know the societal adjustment of probationers in Bahawalpur, Pakistan. For this purpose a convenience sample of 154 respondents who were ever released on probation was collected from three (3) Tehsils of Bahawalpur district. The data regarding hobbies of respondents, nature of crimes committed by the respondents, respondents' satisfaction with the behavior of the probation officers, respondents' views about change in their personality, respondents' level of adjustment in the society and reasons explaining the respondents' low adjustment levels were collected on an interview schedule. The findings indicated that the respondents were mostly illiterate involved in crimes like theft, drug addiction, quarreling with others and gambling etc. The results further indicated that slightly more than a half of the respondents (i.e.50.65 %) show low level of adjustment, the reasons being multiple which could be dominance of respondents' revengeful feelings, improper services provided by the POs and least contact with the POs, improper sitting place in PO's offices and strict behavior of the POs etc.

Key Words: societal adjustment, probationers, crimes

Introduction

Mending deviant behavior has always been a strongest human need as crimes have always plagued every society in human history (Tonry and David, 1995). The history of crime is as old as history of mankind. The first crime was committed by Cain, the first son of Adam and Eve, when he murdered his brother Abel (Book of Genesis 4:1-25). Crime is a major source of insecurity and discomfort in every society (Bridget, 2005).

Crime can be defined as a wrongdoing classified by the state or the parliament of the country or law of the land. According to Curzen crime is an

act or omission of human conduct harmful to others which the state is bound to prevent (Curzon,1980).It renders the deviant person liable to punishment as a result of proceedings initiated by the state organs assigned to ascertain the nature, the extent and the legal consequences of that person's wrongness (Auolak,1999).

In any society social norms are predominant. That is why behavior of individuals is built on the basis of existing social norms (Cree, 2001). Social norms are informal standards of behavior which are set by the occurrence of social processes (Tagga, 2000). Their emergence differs in nature and degree of intensity varies from group to group. According to the Robert Biesrdt a norm is a rule or standard that governs our conduct in the social situation in which we participate and if its absence causes the person to be criminal its presence lets him/her to be a noble citizen (Tagga, 2000).That is why a criminal released on the pledge that he/she will mend his/her behavior is considered a viable way of providing correctional opportunity to the criminal.

Probation

Probation is an effective instrument for mending deviant behavior. Probation is a sentencing alternative that allows the offender to live in the community under the supervision of a probation officer. A punishment given out as part of a sentence which means that instead of jailing a person convicted of a crime, a judge will order that the person reports to a probation officer regularly and according to a set schedule.

The probation process begins with the persistence investigation offender after his/her guilt has been established. The investigation is usually carried out by the Social Worker who is the first to help the court to determine whether the offender is suitable for probation (Khalid, 2006). It is primarily concerned with the offender as an individual, his personality, education, family background, employment and social environment. When probation is approved by the court the offender is placed under the supervision of Probation Officer, he/she formulates the tasks to help the probationer to become more helpful,

responsible and best adjusted in the society (Schmallegger and John, 2010). Parole, on the other hand, is a method of prison release whereby inmates are released at the discretion of a board or other authority before they have completed their entire sentences. Parole can also refer to the community supervision received on release (Bohm and Keith, 1999).

Today's Pakistani society has so many problems which may emerge due to our own negligence and most of them remain unsolved, due to improper decisions of the state. The best example of such type of problem is the commission of petty crimes. If a person commits a minor crime and locked in jail, he/she have to serve punishment which is beyond the severity of crime (Ried, 2000). Along this, another issue is that society also punishes such criminals by criticism. It is reality that no society over the world, let a crime labeled person to be saved from criticism. This criticism is a great hurdle in the way of readjustment of probationers in the same society (Walsh and Ellis, 2003).

The concept of probation, from the Latin, *probatio*, "testing," has historical roots in the practice of judicial *reprieve*. Probation first developed in the United States when John Augustus, a Boston boot maker, persuaded a judge in the Boston police court in 1841 to give him custody of a convicted offender, a "drunkard," for a brief period and then helped the man to appear rehabilitated by the time of sentencing (www.answers.com).

In short, this modern era highly requires the transformation of correctional services along with the readjust mental issues of petty offenders. For this approach, a person who is sitting under the roof of parliament building can never expose the miseries of an offender detained in a dark cell. But through social researches, case histories of these marginalized offenders and the criminal life we, the social workers, can attract the attention of our legislature/policy makers or administrators about this hot issue.

The present study was conducted with the general objective of identifying the hurdles for the readjustment of offenders in the society, released on probation. The specific objectives, however, were: (i) To investigate the factors behind committing the crime; (ii) To study the attitude of society towards the

probationers;(iii)To know about the activities in which probationers are currently indulged;(iv)To understand social environment of probationers before committing crime; and(v)To assess the professional capabilities of probation officer.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Bahawalpur district. The geographical universe of the study consisted of three (3) Tehsils of Bahawalpur district namely: (1) Bahawalpur Saddar; (2) Yazman; and (3) Ahmadpur East. Human universe, target population, consisted of all the probationers living in these Tehsils. It should be noted a Tehsil is an administrative unit of a district.

Interview schedule was the tool which was used to collect data. As majority of the respondents were illiterate and unable to fill the questionnaire, therefore, interview schedule was quite justified for this sort of population. Convenience sampling technique was used for this study. Sample size consisted of 154 respondents with the following break-up:

- (1)Bahawalpur: 72
- (2)Yazman: 45 and
- (3)Ahmadpur East: 37

It was very difficult to contact all the respondents simultaneously. Therefore, the researchers collected data at their convenience.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data was analyzed through SPSS-Version15.Frequencies and percentages were calculated only.

The significance value of all the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents was also noted in the consolidated table for the same. The other tables provide information like hobbies of respondents nature crimes committed by the respondents, respondents' satisfaction over the behavior of the probation officer, respondents' views about change in their personality , respondents' level of adjustment in the society and reasons of low adjustment level.

Table 1 provides socio-demographic profile of the respondents. The results indicate that the highest percentage i.e. 49.35% of the respondents fall in the age range between 26 to 35 years. Most of the respondents (68.43%) have their monthly below Rs.15, 000. Majority of the respondents (i.e. 78.57%) consist of those who are engaged in labor as their source of income. Most of the respondents (70.78%) are illiterate. A great number of respondents' i.e.87.01% is married. An overwhelming majority of respondents (92.86%) lives in joint family system. As far as respondents' family size is concerned, a great majority (54.55%) are those who have their families consisting of 6 to 8 members.

The Table 2 shows the hobbies of respondents. Majority of respondents 46.75% enjoy gossips, 16.23% have no hobbies, 9.74 % smoke *Huqqah*, 7.14% watch TV, 5.19% enjoy outdoor games, 3.90% pass their time in indoor games and quite same number pass their time in discussing political issues. Another 3.25 % of the respondents enjoy competition among pet animals, whereas 1.95% and similarly another 1.95% involve themselves in mobile chatting and reading newspaper.

The Table 3 describes the nature of crimes committed by the respondents. Slightly less than one third i.e.33.52 % respondents were involved in the crime of thieving goods other than cattle and vehicles, 22.73% respondents were drug dependents,12.34% committed crime of personal conflicts with others,8.44% respondents were involved in cattle theft, 7.14% respondents involved in vehicle theft, 4.54% respondents did mobile snatching whereas another 4.54% were involved in recovery of weapons. Again 3.90% were involved in fraudulent activities and another 3.90% respondents were arrested due to miscellaneous crimes. The rest 1.95% were arrested due to their involvement in gambling.

The Table 4 shows satisfaction level of respondents over the behavior of Probation Officers. Roughly half of the respondents (i.e.44.81%) possess low level satisfaction over the behavior of Probation Officers whereas 55.19% respondents show medium to high level of satisfaction.

The Table 5 shows the nature of change in respondents' personality after they have been released on probation. Overall 27.92% respondents claimed to stop thinking about the commission of crimes, 20.13% got improved their relations with others, 17.53% have become more religious. The rest 15.59% found varieties of changes in their personality, 12.13% observed honesty in their dealings and 6.49% stopped smoking after they were released on probation.

The Table 6 shows the respondents' level of adjustment in the society. Half of the respondents (i.e.50.65 %) possess low level of adjustment whereas 49.35 % respondents show medium to high level of adjustment.

The Table 7 describes the causes of no change in respondents' behavior after PO's counseling. About 37% respondents told the reason of the low level adjustment was due to improper services from POs, told the duration of their meeting with PO had been very short, nearly 8% complained the sitting place to be improper, about 6% could not hear the PO clearly during the counseling. Another 5% complained against the strict behavior of the PO and rest four and a half percent criticized joint meetings to be a hurdle in the change of their personality.

Conclusions& Recommendations

This is the first ever research about societal adjustment of probationers in Bahawalpur (City, Yazman & Ahmadpur). The findings can be summarized as follows: The results indicate that the most of the respondents fall in the age range between 26 to 35 years having their monthly below Rs.15, 000, earning

their livelihood from labor as their source of income. Most of the respondents are illiterate, married and living in joint family system and in the family consisting of 6 to 8 members. Majority of respondents enjoy gossips or don't have any hobby or smoke *Huqqah*, watch TV or play outdoor and indoor games etc.

Most of the respondents were involved in theft, drug addiction, quarreling with others and gambling etc.

As far as their satisfaction level over the behavior of Probation Officers is concerned most of them show medium to high level of satisfaction whereas less than half of the respondents (i.e. 44.81%) possess low level satisfaction over the behavior of Probation Officers due to unknown reasons of this behavior. As far as the change in respondents' personality after they have been released on probation is concerned, most of the offenders have quit even thinking about the commission of crimes, many have got improved their relations with others, some others have become more religious. The rest found varieties of changes in their personality, like those of being honest in their dealings and stopping smoking etc. However, slightly more than half of the respondents (i.e.50.65 %) show low level of adjustment. The reasons of which multiple that could be dominance of respondents' revengeful feelings, improper services provided by the POs and least contact with the POs, improper sitting place in PO's offices and strict behavior of the POs etc.

On the basis of above findings following recommendations can be made: (1) Present number of Probation Officers is insufficient, so it is felt that their number should be increased up to one PO at Tehsil level;(2) Religious scholars should be invited during counseling session of probations for their religious teachings; (3) Islahi Committees should be formed for the moral training of the youth, especially in rural and suburb areas of Bahawalpur;(4) Vocational training facilities should also be arranged for the best utilization of leisure hours of the probationers.; (5) Majority of probationers were illiterate, and have committed misdemeanor crimes. So Government should enhance adult literacy programmes in the area; (6) Drug dependent probationers should not be released on probation until their medical treatment and rehabilitation

process is complete; (7) The environments of POs' offices are not suitable for counseling sessions. So it is recommended that sitting arrangements for probationers should be improved; (8) All the major economic determinants of crime – unemployment, inequalities, GDP growth etc. are needed to be adequately addressed by the policy makers to check the crime rate in the country by survey; (9) In order to rehabilitate the probationers it is important that economic growth has to be favorable for poor class of the society. It should follow a path that directs resources to those sectors where majority of the poor exist like agriculture sector and the areas where they live (comparatively less developed areas); (10) Probation Officers must be trained by the government with new approaches and techniques which are used in case work method for rehabilitation of drug addicted probationers; and (11) During every meeting with probationer, Probation Officer should give written schedule of next meeting.

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Annexure

Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Items	Frequencies (%)	P Value
Age(years)		<.001
18-25	43(27.92%)	
26-35	76(49.35%)	
36-45	20(12.99%)	
46-55	9(5.84%)	
56-63	6(3.90%)	
Monthly Household Income(Pakistani Rupees)		<.001
<15,000	106(68.83%)	
15,000-30,000	28(18.18%)	
31,000-45,000	16(10.39%)	
>45,000	4(2.60%)	
Profession/Source of Income		<.001
Government job	3(1.95%)	
Private Job	6(3.90%)	
Business	6(3.90%)	
Labor	121(78.57%)	
Farming	18(11.68%)	
Education		<.001
Illiterate	109(70.78%)	
Primary	32(20.78%)	
Matric	9(5.84%)	
FA/FSc	4(2.60%)	
BA/BSc	NIL	
Marital Status		<.001
Married	134(87.01%)	
Un-married	17(11.04%)	
Widower	3(1.95%)	
Family System		<.001
Joint	143(92.86%)	
Nuclear	11(7.14%)	

Family Size		<.001
<3	13(8.44%)	
3-5	37(24.02%)	
6-8	84(54.55%)	
9-11	11(7.14%)	
12-14	6(3.90%)	
>14	3(1.95%)	
Total	154(100%)	

Table No.2: Hobbies of Respondents

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Mobile chatting	3	1.95
Indoor games	6	3.90
Outdoor games	8	5.19
Reading newspaper	3	1.95
Competition among pet animals	5	3.25
Discussion on political issues	6	3.90
Gossips	72	46.75
Smoking <i>Huqqah</i>	15	9.74
Watching TV	11	7.14
No hobby	25	16.23
Total	154	100

Table No.3: Nature Crimes Committed by the Respondents

Crimes	Frequency	Percentage
Mobile Snatching	7	4.54
Theft of Cattle	13	8.44
Theft of Vehicle	11	7.14
Theft of Goods	47	30.52
Drug Addiction	35	22.73
Gambling	3	1.95
Quarrels	19	12.34
Fraud	6	3.90
Recovery of Weapons	7	4.54
Any Other	6	3.90
Total	154	100

Table No.4: Respondents' Satisfaction over the Behavior of the Probation Officer

Satisfaction Level	Frequency	Percentage
High	37	24.03
Medium	48	31.16
Low	69	44.81
Total	154	100

Table No.5: Respondents' Views about Change in their Personality

Nature of Change in Personality	Frequency	Percentage
Stopped Thinking about the Crime	43	27.92
Stopped Smoking	10	6.49
Improvement in Relations with Others	31	20.13
Honesty in Dealing	19	12.34
To be More Religious	27	17.53
Any other	24	15.59
Total	154	100

Table No.6: Respondents' Level of Adjustment in the Society

Adjustment Level	Frequency	Percentage
High	39	25.32
Medium	37	24.03
Low	78	50.65
Total	154	100

Table No.7: Reasons of Low Adjustment Level

Reasons of Low Adjustment	Frequency	Percentage
Due to dominancy of feelings of revenge	41	26.62
Improper services from P.O.	57	37.02
Short time of meetings	20	12.99
Strict behavior of P.O.	8	5.19
Voice problem	9	5.84
Due to joint meetings	7	4.55
Improper place for sitting	12	7.79
Total	154	100

About the Authors

Dr. Mohammad Iqbal is Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Social & Behavioral Sciences, Department of Social Work, University of Sargodha, Punjab-Pakistan. He can be reached at drmibasit@uos.edu.pk

Asiya Anwar is a Lecturer at the Faculty of Social & Behavioral Sciences, Department of Social Work, University of Sargodha, Punjab-Pakistan.