

## **Family Role in the Reintegration of Juvenile Delinquents: A Post-Release Analysis in Dir Valley Pakistan**

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### **Abstract**

This research focuses on the reintegration of released juvenile offenders within Dir Valley in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Situated within a unique socio-cultural and legal context, this region face distinct challenges that impact the lives of juvenile offenders. This study aims to uncover the role of family dynamics in shaping successful reintegration and inform tailored interventions. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, the study collected data through semi-structured interviews with twenty released juvenile offenders and twenty family members. Thematic analysis revealed intricate patterns in family involvement that significantly influence the reintegration process. The family emerged as both a source of support and challenge for these juveniles. Challenges included absent key family members, strained relationships, and dysfunctional family environments, which hindered reintegration efforts. Economic challenges, emotional support, and family criminal history were also found relevant factors in reintegration. The study's conclusions offer policy implications, including family-centered policies, tailored interventions, and holistic rehabilitation.

**Keywords:** Juvenile reintegration, Family dynamics, Socio-cultural context, Economic challenges, Emotional support, Intergenerational interventions

### **Introduction**

The phenomenon of juvenile delinquency has emerged as a global concern, characterized by a noticeable uptick in the involvement of young individuals in unlawful activities (Nisar et al., 2015). Of particular significance is the reintegration of released juvenile offenders into society, a multifaceted challenge that is central to the effective functioning of justice systems worldwide. While scholars and practitioners recognize the importance of successful reintegration, the complex and nuanced nature of this process is underscored by a scarcity of comprehensive data and insights, especially within the context of

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Pakistan. However, the effectiveness of reintegration strategies, particularly about the role of families, remains relatively unexplored within the Pakistani landscape. This study aims to address this research gap by investigating the intricate dynamics between family involvement and the reintegration process of juvenile offenders in Pakistan. The significance of this inquiry is magnified by the scarcity of official statistical data about juvenile offenders released from the Pakistani juvenile justice system. Nisar et al., (2015) emphasize the absence of concrete information regarding the numbers, reintegration efforts, and recidivism trends of juvenile offenders within Pakistan's justice system (Khosro and Kousar, 2022). This dearth of information makes it difficult to develop effective interventions and programs to support the reintegration of juvenile offenders particularly the critical role of family dynamics in facilitating or hindering the process, which remains largely uncharted territory.

With increasing attention drawn to the mistreatment and violence against children within the Pakistani criminal justice system (Ahmed & Murtaza, 2016; Shahidullah, 2017), this study fills an essential void by examining the overlooked aspect of reintegration and the pivotal role of families. Understanding these dynamics is particularly pertinent during the formative years of an individual's life. The study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding juvenile reintegration and recidivism by shedding light on the multifaceted interplay between familial dynamics and the reintegration of released juveniles.

In summary, this study endeavors to bridge the information gap regarding the reintegration of juvenile offenders in Pakistan by focusing on the crucial role of families. By providing empirically grounded insights into the effects of familial characteristics on reintegration processes, this research contributes to the development of targeted and effective reintegration strategies for young individuals transitioning from the juvenile justice system back into their communities.

### **Literature Review**

The literature on the reintegration of juvenile offenders underscores the pivotal role that family social support plays in shaping their successful reentry into society. Family social support, which encompasses emotional and instrumental provisions from the family, is vital for fostering positive outcomes during the reintegration process (Daftary-Kapur, Zottoli, Faust & Schneider, 2022). Research has consistently highlighted that consistent family social support acts as a protective factor against recidivism among reentering youth (Liu & Visser, 2021; Altschuler & Brash, 2004; Mears & Travis, 2004). This support serves as a buffer against the challenges posed by traumatic experiences, such as incarceration

(Breese, Ra'el, & Grant, 2000). Emotional support, a component of family social support, is instrumental in preventing negative outcomes including delinquency. In the context of reintegration of juveniles strong emotional bonds with family members offer comfort and stability in the face of societal reintegration pressures (Abrams, 2006).

Material support from the family, as a form of instrumental support, is equally vital in ensuring successful reintegration. Tangible assistance such as housing, employment, education, and transportation is pivotal in equipping young individuals with the practical tools needed to navigate their post-release lives (Martinez & Abrams, 2013). This material assistance alleviates the burdensome tasks that released individuals often encounter, allowing them to focus on reentry and rehabilitation efforts. The lack of such support, conversely, can hinder successful reentry and contribute to negative adjustment outcomes (Sullivan, 2004).

The availability and adequacy of both emotional and instrumental family support significantly shape the trajectories of released inmates. The expectations held by inmates regarding the provision of these types of support from their families upon release highlight the fundamental role that family plays in their reintegration (Cardona-Isaza & Trujillo Cano, 2023; Huebner & Pleggenkuhle, 2015; Pleggenkuhle et al., 2016). In the context of juvenile offenders, as found by Young & Turanovic (2022) the dependency on family support is even greater for their emotional and cognitive growth because they are legally dependents and most of them return to their families after release. However, not all families possess the same capacity to offer support, which can lead to differential reintegration outcomes (Shapiro & Schwartz, 2001).

The existing literature signifies family social support, both emotional and instrumental in influencing reintegration process for juvenile offenders. Inadequate familial support can result in heightened susceptibility to negative outcomes and recidivism. By aligning with the established body of literature and its empirical findings, this research aims to contribute to the broader understanding of how familial characteristics can be leveraged to develop more effective reintegration strategies for released juvenile offenders in the context of Pakistan.

### **Justification of the Study**

This study explores the unique challenges and socio-economic conditions of the Dir Valley in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, focusing on the experiences of juvenile offenders. It aims to provide insights that can inform tailored interventions for successful reintegration, contributing to academic knowledge and

positive change in the lives of juvenile offenders and their families. The study's area-specific insights can help develop locally relevant reintegration strategies, considering the unique needs and challenges faced by juvenile offenders in the Dir Valley.

### **Objectives of the Study**

To explore the role of familial instrumental and emotional support in the reintegration of released juveniles in Dir Valley, Pakistan

To understand the impact of family-related factors (family structure, socioeconomic status, parenting style, parental criminality) on the post-release reintegration process of juvenile offenders within Dir Valley, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

### **Theoretical Framework of the Study**

The theoretical framework of this study integrates insights from the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model, social learning theory, and the Eco-Systems Approach to comprehend the complex dynamics between family-related factors and the successful post-release reintegration of juvenile offenders in Dir Valley, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

By integrating these theories, the theoretical framework provides a comprehensive understanding of how family-related aspects interact with broader criminological theories and social dynamics. The framework acknowledges that the family serves as a vital component in the reintegration process, contributing to risk assessment, addressing criminogenic needs, facilitating positive behavior change through social learning, and collaborating with other systems within the juvenile's ecosystem. The theoretical framework recognizes the local challenges, opportunities, and resources available within this area, thus providing a tailored perspective on how the interplay between family dynamics and broader theoretical constructs shapes the successful reintegration experiences of juvenile offenders.

### **Methodology**

This article has been extracted from PhD study which was conducted in districts Upper and Lower Dir Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. A qualitative phenomenological approach was adopted and Population of the study included family members of the released juvenile offenders and the juvenile offenders who were convicted and remained in KP justice system (jail and Probation) and were residing in their respective communities after the completion of their sentence. The initial sample included twenty male released juvenile offenders who were identified through convenient-cum snowball sampling techniques. Additionally, twenty family members of the mentioned juveniles were purposively selected to

provide a comprehensive understanding of the family dynamics influencing reintegration. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and was thematically analyzed. Reliability and Validity were obtained by designing the interview questions with clarity and precision to elicit consistent responses and member checking, where participants reviewed the summarized findings, contributing to the validity of the data collected.

### **Data Analysis**

The family emerges as the primary source of socialization and rehabilitation for released juvenile offenders. Familial variables before the offense, after conviction, and after release can significantly shape the reintegration process. Through empirical data analysis, distinct themes underscore the critical role of familial factors in the successful reintegration of juvenile offenders within Dir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

### **Theme-1: Family Structure and Reintegration of Juvenile Offenders: Exploring the Impact of Parental Absence**

The influence of family structure on the reintegration journey of juvenile offenders is a significant aspect of their post-release experiences. Drawing from the insights of Farrington (2011), the configuration of families can act as a risk factor in ongoing juvenile delinquency, particularly in cases where single-parent, divorced, or separated households are prevalent, often characterized by a pattern of delinquency.

The empirical data collected from interviews with participants provides illuminating examples of the interplay between family structure and reintegration outcomes. Notably, participants such as No. 15 and No. 20 come from families where their fathers are deceased, while participant No. 9 experienced the loss of their mother. The absence of paternal guidance led to an increased burden on the participant to uplift the family's socioeconomic status, which culminated in unintended involvement in criminal activities.

In Participant No. 15's own words,

*"After being released from the criminal justice system, I returned to my family, which included my mother, two younger brothers, and a six-year-old sister. I soon realized that, in the absence of my father, I am accountable for my family's socioeconomic improvement."*

The participant's struggles to secure lawful employment and subsequent involvement in illicit activities underscore the importance of familial support in the reintegration process.

Similarly, Participant No. 9's account reflects the adverse impact of family dynamics on reintegration. Experiencing the demise of their mother during adolescence, the participant encountered a stepmother who displayed hostility and disinterest upon the participant's return from the justice system. The lack of emotional support and negative familial environment contributed to a sense of detachment and vulnerability, potentially hindering successful reintegration.

Participant No. 9's statement encapsulates this sentiment,

*"I am not a lucky person, as evidenced by the demise of my mother when I was a teen. My stepmother's first reply once I had been released and rejoined my family destroyed my heart. 'Why have you come here?' my mother asked as I entered the house, 'you should have a fixed bed in the jail for you as your life and destiny ought to be there.'"*

This reflection underscores the pivotal role of family interactions in shaping the reintegration experience.

In summary, these narratives illuminate how the absence of key family members and strained familial relationships can contribute to challenges and adverse outcomes.

## **Theme-2: Socioeconomic Status of the Family and Juvenile Reintegration: Unveiling Challenges**

The socioeconomic status of the family is essential to the successful integration of the released juvenile offenders back into society. Families' economic challenges can impede the process by making it difficult to meet their most necessities (Hazra, 2021). Notably, all participants in this study hailed from low-income households, where the socio-political context of Pakistan further underscores disparities in the treatment of juvenile offenders.

The experiences shared by the participants illuminate the significant hurdles posed by low socioeconomic status during the reintegration phase. Participant No.1's poignant reflection underscores the stark reality of financial dependence and limited resources within their family.

*"My family's poverty was the biggest issue I encountered after I was released, which was unable to help me financially. I was utterly reliant on my family, which was totally reliant on other people's sympathies."*

Similarly, a family member's account paints a distressing picture of disparities in treatment within the criminal justice system.

*"My son and the grandson of the Khan committed the crime; both were sentenced and imprisoned. However, even after completion of the sentence, only my son is at the watch list of the local police. Whenever any incident of robbery or theft occurs, police arrest and investigate my son without saying anything to the grandson of the Khan."*

The narrative of a recidivist juvenile participant further elucidates the complex interplay between family poverty and reintegration challenges.

*"I do remember the tough time I spent in jail and would never ever prefer jail for any Muslim but what I could do, my family expected from me and I too considered it my responsibility to financially support my poor parent. Resultantly, I involved in drug smuggling to earn some money for my poor family."*

In conclusion, the narratives from the participants offer a compelling view into the influence of family socioeconomic status on juvenile reintegration. The shared experiences resonate with the challenges that arise when financial resources are scarce, contributing to a range of obstacles in the reintegration journey.

### ***Theme-3: Challenges of Reintegration: Dysfunctional Families and Poor Parenting***

Released adolescents face significant challenges in reintegration into society, with poor parenting potentially hindering their progress (Kennedy et al., 2019). Researchers like Cardona-Isaza & Trujillo Cano (2023), highlight the importance of parental effectiveness in shaping behavior. While researchers like Jeong et al (2021) and Fitton et al. (2020) emphasize the role of parental maltreatment and neglect in perpetuating delinquency.

The participants in this study predominantly hail from families marked by illiteracy, unawareness, and impoverished circumstances, creating a backdrop of challenges. The prevailing pattern reveals a struggle to overcome deficient parenting that directly impacts their reintegration efforts. One participant aptly captures this sentiment, stating,

*".....My father treats me like a hardened criminal because he cannot stand my prior behavior. Neither does he permit any of my friends or relatives to come to my house. Government did not imprison me for my crime, but my family locked me up in my home because of it".*

The dysfunctionality of these families is multi-faceted. Instances of familial conflicts, neglect, and lack of support for personal growth emerge vividly from participants' narratives. Such as when a participant shares,

*"I was astonished when I went home for the initial time after getting out of prison and my father yelled at him in a louder, angrier tone, "I cannot tell him to leave my house nor can I tolerate him. He is welcome to stay as long as he doesn't reveal his face to me."*

A recidivist juvenile stated,

*"Our family too frequently resembles a violent action film, with constant hatred, fighting, and negative behavior towards one another. It appears that being morning and evening is impossible without these conflicts."*

Three juveniles belonged to families with a single parent, and one family's father and stepmother were unable to properly care for the juvenile as a result of the mother's death. As a result, the juvenile was vulnerable to the effects of neglect. A juvenile stated:

*"My parents never inquire as to where I spent the day or why I used to arrive so late at night. They don't give me instructions or show any affection for me. At times, I feel as though my membership in this family is imposed on me rather than being a natural member."*

The influence of a mother's excessive support on the reintegration of a released juvenile surfaces intriguingly. With a father imprisoned, the mother's devotion raises questions of enabling and accountability. The sibling's testimony sheds light on this,

*"My mother doesn't believe in me or anyone else's words. She has complete faith in my brother, (the released juvenile). I complained about his behavior to my mother a lot, but she disregarded me and was often angry with me because she thought I believed what I heard."*

The complexity deepens with a re-arrested juvenile and the mother's unwavering trust, regardless of evidence. A sibling's eventual disclosure highlights the mother's blind love, leading to misguided decisions that affect the juvenile's life path.



*"..... My mother is entirely to blame for my brother's imprisonment in Lahore, to me. She has blindly trusted him to be in prison once more because of her love and attachment to him."*

The overarching theme of defective socialization within families emerges as a prevailing concern. While the majority of released juveniles report a lack of proper socialization, family members often perceive a different narrative. This discrepancy underscores the challenges these adolescents face, with insights from both perspectives. A family member aptly captures this disparity, remarking,

*"..... when the kids are already having a hard time dealing with the stigma of infractions. The parent's role in this situation was highly careless and reckless. The youngster would never be in the care of bad company if this family could effectively perform its socialization and monitoring job."*

Indeed, the study's goal of understanding reintegration status hinges on comprehending the dysfunctional family dynamics. Mlay & Mpeta (2023) assertion about dysfunctional families and recidivism underscores the relevance of assessing the quality of familial environments. Through diverse participant voices, it becomes evident that poor parenting and dysfunctional families can pose substantial obstacles to the successful reintegration of released juveniles into society.

#### **Theme-4: Lack of Instrumental Support: Hindering Juvenile Reintegration**

Instrumental support, encompassing material aid and services, holds pivotal significance in ensuring the successful reintegration of juvenile offenders. However, an analysis of collected data reveals a disconcerting trend—majority of the studied juveniles were devoid of such support from their families.

The inappropriate familial attitude dealt a discouraging blow to the continuation of education and post-release employment. A poignant testimony comes from one juvenile participant, lamenting,

*"It was my bad luck that I involved in anti-social activities in early adolescence. The incident adversely affected my entire life including my education. My dream of getting education can never be fulfilled because my family never trust me and they never tried to arrange education opportunities for me. They consider me misfit for education."*

A participant expressed,

*“I didn’t like to be involved in theft or any other type of anti-social activities. This is however, a fact that without having money in pocket makes things tougher. Accordingly, I requested my uncle to keep me as sales man in his shop. He initially showed sympathies but latter on excused on the grounds that sales man was not needed at his shop. I was at the time sure that my criminal record hindered me of working at uncles’ shop”.*

Similarly, the families of these released juveniles displayed reluctance in orchestrating marital arrangements. According to Laub, Nagin, and Sampson (2017), early marriages can instill social cohesiveness and hold positive potential for young offenders. Yet, when inquiring about marital status, the majority grappled with the complexities of marriage. Perceived obstacles included their criminal history and their families' apparent lack of enthusiasm for facilitating marriages. A participant's words underscore this predicament,

*“Imaam Masjid and a few of my father's friends advised my family to marry me off... The stance of my family was very discouraging for me as they had internalized the idea that I would never be a socialized person after my contact with the justice system. My father’s remarks still astonish me as he often responded in this way, how I can send mirage requests on behalf of a criminal son.”*

Another participant’s poignant statement reflects an unfulfilled yearning,

*“I still long for my beloved. She loved me, and we both wanted to get married. She, however, turned down my proposal because of my work in the legal system. I'm not sure if her family is forcing this on her or if it's her own position. However, my family do not express any interest in my mirage. Neither my parents and siblings favor me nor my relatives accept me as son in law”.*

This data reinforces the profound consequences of inadequate instrumental support on juvenile reintegration. Education pathways are obstructed, and the potential for constructive marital prospects is severely hampered. The findings raise pressing questions about family dynamics and societal perceptions, underscoring the urgency of comprehensive support mechanisms to ensure the holistic reintegration of these juveniles.

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**Theme-5: Deficiency in Emotional Support: Impeding Successful Reintegration**

Adolescents lacking emotional support are more likely to engage in criminal behavior and substance abuse (Barfield-Cottledge, 2015). Family-based emotional support is crucial for successful reintegration, offering consolation, inspiration, acceptance, and trust (Martinez, 2006). Inadequate support can worsen problems and increase delinquency and recidivism (Flexon et al., 2012). The data collected reveals a disheartening pattern—the majority of the studied released juveniles lack essential emotional support, hindering their prospects of successful reintegration. One poignant account comes from a released juvenile, recounting the trajectory of emotional turmoil,

*“My misfortune starts the very moment I came into the hands of police. They tortured me physically and psychologically. Anger, aggression and abuses has perpetuated and have become the part of my life even after my release. My father started hating me from the first date. His words are biting me and several times I decided to run away from the home town”.*

Another juvenile expressed:

*“Even though both of my parents were still living, they sent me to live with my strict-minded grandmother. I escaped from her house and wound myself on the streets, where I got involved in street lending, marijuana smoking, and glue sniffing”.*

These narratives underscore the critical role of emotional support in shaping the outcomes of reintegration. The absence of this support can lead to a perpetuation of negative emotions, strain family relationships, and exacerbate the challenges faced by these released juveniles.

**Theme-6: Impact of Family Criminal History: A Hurdle in Reintegration**

Parents, being primary care givers significantly impact their children's life, both positively and negatively. As found by Clarke (2017) parental criminality poses a sizable risk for juvenile reoffending. Child' likelihood of engaging in criminal activity may be increased by their parents' or siblings' criminal histories.

Father's criminal involvement has been particularly linked to heightened youth recidivism risks. The backdrop of family criminal history emerges as a

significant factor hindering the successful reintegration of the studied juveniles. As one participant poignantly shared,

*"My family has never offered me any advice or direction. And what they can say to me as all my elders are accused of multiple crimes."*

Another participant further elucidated the influence of family criminal history on their own behavior, stating,

*"My brother runs a shop in the village. Apparently, he is a green-grocer but he is involved in CHARS trade and he smuggles DANDASA."*

The intertwining of criminal activities within the family dynamic becomes evident, as the participant shared a personal experience,

*"Once while going to the local district headquarter hospital with a patient in the ambulance, my brother handed over me a heavy bag of DANDASA where a person was ready to collect it from me in the headquarter."*

One of the participants revealed the role of the stigma of parental criminality in his hindrance from successful reintegration after release. He told,

*" My neighbors stigmatize us as inherent criminals because of my family's criminal history, despite my commitment to leading a good life. I suffer as a result of this on a social, emotional, and legal level because I am frequently thought to be involved in local crimes".*

These narratives underscore the profound influence of family criminal history on the reintegration journey of juveniles. The intergenerational transmission of criminal behavior places additional barriers on these youths' path to reintegration.

### **Conclusion**

The study reveals that familial factors significantly influence the reintegration of released juvenile offenders in Dir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Family dynamics, including absence of family members, strained relationships, and dysfunctional environments, pose challenges. Interventions should strengthen support networks, address underlying issues, and alleviate economic disparities. Emotional support and rehabilitation, education, and community support are crucial for successful reintegration. Policy changes and community involvement are also necessary.

### **Recommendations for Effective Juvenile Reintegration**

- **Strengthen Family Support Networks:** Launch programs fostering healthy family dynamics and communication skills—sessions to equip families with tools for emotional and practical support to aid released juveniles.
- **Economic Empowerment:** Introduce market-oriented vocational training for released juveniles to secure employment. This alleviates financial challenges that impede reintegration.
- **Parental Education Programs:** sessions on positive parenting and conflict resolution as educated parents offer stronger reintegration support.
- **Holistic Rehabilitation:** Introduce holistic rehabilitation programs within the criminal justice system that address emotional, educational, vocational, and psychological needs.
- **Legal Awareness:** Educate families about legal consequences to prevent juvenile engagement in criminal activities.

### **Policy Implications**

- **Family-Centered Policies:** Formulate policies recognizing families' reintegration role. Encourage family engagement and support for released juveniles.
- **Tailored Interventions:** Tailor interventions based on the specific needs of each juvenile and their family. Implement a multi-faceted approach that addresses economic, emotional, educational, and criminal history-related challenges.
- **Collaboration between Sectors:** Foster collaboration between families, criminal justice institutions, educational institutions, social services, and community organizations. A holistic approach requires coordinated efforts across different sectors to provide comprehensive support.

### **Gaps for Future Research**

- **Long-Term Reintegration Outcomes:** Investigate the long-term effects of family dynamics on reintegration outcomes.
- **Comparative Analysis of serious and minor juvenile offenders:** Conduct comparative studies to analyze the impact of familial factors on the reintegration of serious and minor juvenile convicts.

- **Gender-Specific Considerations:** Investigate whether there are differential implications of family dynamics on the reintegration of male and female juvenile offenders.
- **Role of Family Type:** Examine the role of different family types in the reintegration process.
- **Evaluation of Rehabilitation Programs:** Evaluate the effectiveness of existing rehabilitation programs in addressing family-related challenges.

In sum, addressing the challenges of juvenile reintegration requires a comprehensive approach that recognizes the integral role of families. By implementing targeted interventions, enacting supportive policies, and fostering collaboration, society can pave the way for successful reintegration and provide released juveniles with the opportunity for positive transformation.

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