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Abstract: *This research focuses on the released juvenile offenders' reintegration within Dir Valley, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The study uncovers prison experiences' impact on juvenile offender's reintegration. Adopting a qualitative phenomenological approach, the data is collected by conducting semi-structured interviews with forty-five juvenile offenders. Thematic analysis revealed prison experiences, significantly influencing the reintegration process. The juvenile offenders perceived their prison experiences as flawed, marked with challenges that adversely affected their reintegration process. The research findings emphasized the urgency to develop comprehensive reforms within the system of prisons, thereby advocating to improve and enhance the access to education, healthcare, vocational training, behavioral interventions, and robust planning of pre-release for juvenile offenders.*

Introduction

The global surge in juvenile delinquency has compelled scholars and practitioners recognize the need for effective rehabilitation and reintegration strategies for juvenile offenders (Denney & Connor, 2016). However, Hubbell et al., (2021) considers reintegration process as a complex where the socio-cultural contexts of different regions makes it more challenging. According to Batyrgareieva (2019) reintegration encompasses all pre- and post-release programs and services aimed at aiding offenders in becoming law-abiding citizens. The primary objective of social reintegration program is to provide juvenile offenders, the necessary support, assistance, and supervision to abstain from criminal behavior, reintegrate effectively into the community, and prevent relapse into criminal activities. Broadly, social reintegration programs fall into three main categories: (a) prison-based rehabilitation programs; (b) reintegration and aftercare programs provided upon release; and (c) non-custodial, community-based programs (Kendall et al., 2018). Additionally, Travis et al., (2001) argues that positive reintegration outcomes are more likely successful when the offender's physical and social needs are addressed comprehensively, particularly focusing on addressing continuous and holistic criminal behavior during and after imprisonment.

Pakistan grapples with the complexities of juvenile rehabilitation and reintegration. Owing to the non-existence of rehabilitation centers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, the juveniles are imprisoned, after which they are not provided adequate resources for efficient rehabilitation (Abbas et al, 2022). The

intricate interplay between prison encounters and the juvenile offender's reintegration journey has gained attention from policymakers, practitioners, and researchers Wong et al. (2024). With the Pakistani context, research studies include scarce amount of data and evident insights of the release of juvenile offenders, which hampers the execution and formulation of highly effective strategies for their effective reintegration within the society. Additionally, the scant data of juveniles obscures the effectiveness of Pakistan's justice system towards their successful societal adjustment (Al et al., 2020).

The juvenile's societal integration is a subsequent challenge in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The province possesses inadequate rehabilitation resources for juvenile offenders (Goswami & Mehra, 2014). This study aims to focus on Dir Upper and Lower districts to assess the experiences of juveniles in relation to their imprisonment and reintegration into society. The valley lacks sufficient intervention programs and resources for juvenile offenders, leaving them no choice but to adjust with adult criminals. However, the adult criminals are not the only apparent cause behind the juveniles' behaviors, but the government's negligence poses significant damage towards them, therefore simultaneously becoming a hurdle towards their smoother reintegration into society.

Moreover, significant inadequacy of healthcare services within the prison becomes an even greater challenge for juveniles. Sufficient medical help remains restricted for juveniles, which significantly hampers their emotional, physical, and psychological well-being. The insufficient and unsatisfactory level of education and vocational training significantly hinders the juvenile's reintegration process (Altaf et al., 2009). Moreover, inadequate counseling services related to psycho-social factors and rehabilitation programs against drug abuse, exacerbates countless challenges for juveniles. Additionally, lack of pre-release planning and the behaviors and attitudes of the prison staff add additional complexity within the behavior of juveniles (Al et al., 2020). Therefore, this research delves into the complexities and intricacies related to the reintegration of juveniles within Upper and Lower Dir districts, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan (Hussain, Ibrahim, Daraz, Hakim & Hussain, 2025). This research explores the challenges faced by the juveniles and their experiences related to imprisonment and reintegration into the society.

Research Problem

Exploring ex-juvenile offenders' experiences within the prison and their reintegration into society, is highly pertinent for various reasons. The global interest towards juvenile delinquency, gathers the need to understand challenges faced by the juvenile offenders with respect to their societal reintegration (Al-Rantisi et al., 2024). While focusing on the research context, this study aims to provide and highlight context-specific insights, informing context-targeted interventions, policies, and regulations. Moreover, the geographical landscape is unique due to its geographical and socio-cultural aspect. This province faces numerous challenges, for instance, resource inadequacy, thus adversely impacting the juvenile offenders' process of societal reintegration. Thus, it is essential to understand factors related to the context of the research, thereby developing strategies for successful reintegration. The Dir Valley remains inadequate towards potential rehabilitation centers and healthcare facilities, which imposes significant challenges for juvenile offenders, along with their experiences related to imprisonment and societal reintegration. Thus, this research aims to highlights the context-specific challenges, thereby exploring potential solutions.

Research studies related to juvenile reintegration in Pakistan, particularly within KP and Dir Valley's context, are rather scarce and fragmented. Previously published studies lack sufficient and comprehensive insights related to juveniles and their societal reintegration, which hinders the efforts to develop evidence-based interventions. Thus, the present study aims to fulfill the need to examine the

challenges related to juvenile's offenders in Dir Valley. This research analyzes themes, for instance, impact of prison environment, access to healthcare services, access to education and vocational trainings, and juvenile's pre-release planning. It develops an in-depth analysis of complications related to juvenile's societal reintegration. Moreover, this research highlights the existence of contextual factors; within the Dir Valley, which influence the experiences of juveniles towards imprisonment and reintegration into society. Furthermore, the research emphasizes the need for evidence-based interventions and their potential to inform policy and practice, thereby effectively contributing to the juvenile justice system in Pakistan.

Literature Review

Research studies show that juvenile offenders face psychological consequences, when imprisoned with adult criminals (Lambie & Randell, 2013; Anthony et al., 2010). Such activities thus increase the chances of juveniles to engage in morally unethical behaviors even after being released from the prison (Reef et al., 2023; Copeland et al., 2023). Kumwenda et al. (2017) highlight the importance of easy access to healthcare services in the integration of juvenile offenders. There exist disparities towards the adequate provision of healthcare, which exacerbates the essence of deprivation within juvenile offenders, often leading to aggression and hatred (Western, 2021). Moreover, Anthony et al. (2010) and Jozan (2020) emphasize on the importance of maintaining contacts with the outside world for successful reintegration. Bosomprah (2023) argued that restrictions on familial contact and other significant institutions like education adversely affect the reentry of juvenile offenders. Researchers acknowledge the role of education and vocational training in the reintegration of juvenile offenders and argue that the absence of such services within prisons hinder successful reintegration of such offenders (Newton et al. 2018; Kazi et al., 2022; Mahlangu & Zivanai, 2023). Casimir (2023) found that interventions for behavior modification and rehabilitation programs for mental health and substance abuse issues make the reintegration of juvenile offenders more successful. Moreover, researchers like Walker et al. (2022) and Belenko et al. (2013), opined that substance abuse if remain untreated increases the risks of recidivism among juveniles. Hence, substance abuse treatment is a mandatory component for successful reintegration. Prerelease planning during institutionalization plays vital role in reintegration of juvenile offenders (Smith et al. 2018; Hamilton and Belenko, 2016). Brown (2022) underscores that successful prerelease plan must include close coordination among prison staff, juvenile's family members and respective community organizations. Another, component that is highly important for the post release successful reentry of juveniles is the positive attitude of the staff working in prisons. Positive interactions with prison staff enhance juveniles' motivation to engage in rehabilitative programs and support their reintegration efforts. Conversely, negative staff attitudes have detrimental effects on juveniles' mental health and behavior. Since, the juvenile justice system in Pakistan, in general, and particularly in KP and Dir valley is characterized with scarcity of resources and the juvenile offenders are housed in prisons instead of rehabilitation centers. Consequently, the juveniles are prone to the adverse impacts of imprisonment which hinder the post release reintegration success of the juvenile offenders. Accordingly, this study explores the impacts of imprisonment on the reintegration process of the juvenile offenders in the unique socio-cultural context of Dir valley.

Theoretical Framework

The research's theoretical framework entails the model of Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR), theory of Social Learning (SLT), and the (ESA) Eco-Systems Approach in the contextual setting of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The framework inherently focuses of Dir Valley, Pakistan. As per the RNR model, this framework provides the assessment of risk factors and juvenile offender's criminogenic needs within

the prison's system (Ward et al., 2007). The specific needs are thus addressed by tailoring the interventions as per the research context; maximizing reintegration effectiveness of juvenile offenders in Dir Valley, KP. Moreover, the theory of social learning offers valuable insights into the experiences related to imprisonments and its influence on the juvenile offenders' post-release attitudes and behaviors (Akers & Jennings, 2015). This theory leverages observations, reinforcement, and role modeling, which induce positive behaviors in the prison system of KP. The ESA considers the broader socio-cultural and environmental factors that impact juvenile reintegration in Dir Valley, KP. This approach acknowledges the unique cultural norms, socio-economic circumstances, and local resources available within the region, shaping the roles and responsibilities of prisons in facilitating successful reintegration (Noyori-Corbett & Moon, 2013).

Methodology

A phenomenological study design was adopted to uncover the experiences of the forty-five released juvenile offenders who completed their sentence during the year 2020 and rejoined their respective communities. Through convenient cum snowball sampling the research participants were selected and the data collection was stopped considering saturation point theory (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Semi structured interviews, guided by interview guide were used to collect data from the understudy ex-juvenile offenders to reflect on their imprisonment and reintegration experiences (Abrams, 2006). The data was analyzed through thematic analysis technique following Braun and Clarke (2012) and Bryman (2016) conceptualizing a rigorous perspective towards interpretation of data (Khan, Zeeshan, Hussain & Khan, 2025).

Results and Analysis

Impact of Prison Environment on Reintegration of Ex-Juvenile Offenders

Ex-juvenile offenders perceived the prison experiences as adverse on account of remaining mixed with adult and convicted criminals that increased the risks of reoffending after release. Moreover, compounded by systemic failures in legal procedures and deprivation of fundamental rights. In this context, a participant explored:

"As far as I remember, most of the juvenile prisoners were awaiting trial, with only a small percentage, around 10 to 15 percent, being convicted. Both accused and convicted juveniles were allowed to interact and share their views. Additionally, there were no restrictions on mixing juvenile prisoners with adults. We observed several cases where this mixing led to the continuation of deviant behavior among the juveniles even after their release."

Later, a participant expressed frustration:

"Their process is prolonged and frustrating. I appeared before the court three months after my initial imprisonment.".... .

Moreover, a participant recounted an experience:

"This happened to me just once when my friend advised me to give some money to the jail staff. However, I have extensively observed that juveniles were enduring a fearful life in jail. They were subjected to the rude behavior of the jail staff, including shouting, bullying, and physical abuse. Furthermore, the juveniles were mistreated by adult inmates as well."

Similarly, a participant exposed:

"I do remember the frustrating days when I was accused for the offense I never did and I was kept with convicted and professional offenders in the prison. The lack of

proper legal procedures and harsh treatment by both staff and inmates left a lasting impact on my reintegration journey.”

Moreover, another participant shared:

“I suffered from the lack of legal protection and basic rights in prison. The inhumane treatment by staff and inmates left scars, making it challenging to reintegrate into society with dignity and respect.”

It must be noted that the incarceration of juveniles predisposes no separation from adult prisoners. Moreover, there were no parameters for selecting convicted or non-convicted prisoners. The process seemed prolonged and frustrating for the prisoners in their first hearing in Pakistani courts. The prison's staff had the upper hand on other inmates, including bullying, shouting, abuse, and the conviction of prisoners. One of the participants responded that the antisocial environment for juvenile and adult prisoners was harsh, toxic, and demotivating, which made them emotionally and psychologically vulnerable. The prisons lacked proper legal procedures and documentation for non-convicted prisoners (Holla, 2020). However, it must be noted that there is a lack of fundamental human rights and legal protection in the prison, which makes the prisoners underconfident about reintegrating into society (Jackson & Jackson, 2019).

Prisons, Health Facilities, and Juvenile Reintegration: Unveiling Challenges

Participants highlighted the dire need for health facilities within Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's prisons, particularly for juvenile offenders. Despite the existence of prisons, no appropriate health services were available for juveniles, exacerbating their challenges. In this regard, a respondent articulated:

“It would be advantageous if we were provided with healthcare services promptly, ideally at the initial onset of an illness. Instead, we received medication, etc., at a stage where typically other children would require admission to specialized hospitals.”

Similarly, another participant recorded:

“The imprisoned juveniles were confined solely to prisons, lacking the freedom to leave unless ordered by the court. They were denied treatment for serious health issues outside the prison. Once, my friend fell seriously ill with a high fever and body aches. Despite being treated in the prison hospital, the next day, the session judge, during a visit, observed his deteriorating health and ordered his transfer to a nearby hospital.”

In a similar manner, a participant described:

“Among other problems, the major issue in the prison was the lack of access to quality health services. Perhaps, for the wealthy, there were health facilities, but for people like us, it was not easy to avail of them within the prison.”

In the end, the participant opined:

“Depriving juveniles of adequate healthcare instilled a sense of injustice, fostering aggression after release. Addressing these disparities is crucial to facilitate smoother reintegration into society.”

The prisons lacked medical facilities, nutritional resources, and fundamental human rights of juvenile offenders. The ex-juvenile offenders felt that the jail staff was biased and harsh towards them, which invoked resentment and hatred. The juvenile's health condition deteriorated due to lack of exposure to basic facilities; prison room's ventilation and unhygienic restrooms (Ashraf et al., 2020). The prisoners were discriminated based on their

familial backgrounds. Most juvenile offenders were bullied and ridiculed, which affected their physical and mental health. Furthermore, the lack of medical, educational, and psychological therapeutic sessions in the prisons increased the chances of recidivism in juvenile offenders (Hussain & Sajid, 2024).

Challenges of Reintegration: Prisons and the Contacts of Juveniles with the Outside World

In the context of exploring the experiences of ex-juvenile offenders the theme of prisons and contact with the outside world unveils significant challenges. Juveniles are usually not permitted to visit the outside world, which hinders their interactions with friends, family, and educational opportunities. Such practices pose hurdles in their reintegration post-release. In this regard, a respondent conveyed:

"We were perceived as hardened criminals and were denied permission to go outside, similar to other adult offenders."

Another participant expressed:

"I cannot believe that someone can even see outside world once imprisoned. One of my fellows witnessed a single instance when a prisoner was referred to the hospital and I have no any other evidence to share except the prisoners are permitted to meet their family members or other relatives, friends etc. but at prison."

The other participant explained:

"I could not obtain any permission to leave the prison for my education purpose which made my post-release life very challenging"

Moreover, the participants expressed the following:

"Being confined without permission to go outside limited my interactions with friends, family, and teachers. It disrupted my social connections and made it harder to re-adjust to life after imprisonment."

In the same context, a participant visualized:

"I felt isolated and disconnected from the outside world. Without visits or interactions, I struggled to maintain relationships and lacked the support to transition back into society smoothly."

The juveniles were treated like regulars, much similar to non-juvenile offenders in the prisons of Pakistan. A common practice seems to be that adults and juvenile offenders have been given permission to meet with their relatives, families, and friends on decided days, which is recognized as "MULAQAT" (Nisa, 2024). However, the prisons did not support the idea of reconnecting with friends and family, which infested hatred and resentment among the juveniles. Additionally, they were also restricted from attaining education or learning opportunities outside prison, which hindered their societal growth and smooth transition and reintegration into society.

Prisons, Lack of Education and Vocational Training: Hindering Juvenile Reintegration

The absence of education and vocational training in prisons severely impedes juvenile reintegration in Dir Valley, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Consequently, the imprisoned juvenile offenders are not prepared for employment and remain economically dependent post release. Accordingly, a participant stated:

"During my time in prison, education never ever remained a priority. I could not continue my education journey since imprisoned when I was in class five. The prison only provided meals and nothing in regards to education".

Another participant explained:

"We, the unlucky, were not supposed to get education or any sort of professional training in prison. We were there to get tortured and abused. Education or training was not prioritized or provided for us. This absence of educational and vocational services has adversely impacted our abilities to pursue employment and achieve economic independence."

In like manner, a participant noted:

"I struggled to find employment after release due to the absence of education and vocational training in prison. It perpetuated our dependence and hindered our path to economic independence."

There was a lack of educational and vocational training opportunities in prisons since education was not considered a priority for the prisoners, whether adult prisoners or juvenile delinquents. The prisoners were insulted and tortured in jails. However, the lack of educational and vocational activities created problems for the juveniles with respect to adjusting and reintegrating into society after release (Blomberg et al., 2011).

Lack of Programs to Modify the Behaviors of Imprisoned Juvenile Offenders: Impeding Successful Reintegration

In Dir Valley, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, the lack of proper psychosocial counseling services to motivate juvenile offenders impedes successful reintegration. The absence of behavioral modification programs, reliance on power tactics by jail staff, and a focus on order maintenance rather than rehabilitation hinder the development of critical social and behavioral skills. A participant narrated:

"The staff employed in prison had neither time nor interest to guide or motivate us. Occasionally, but infrequently, we received sporadic advice from adult inmates, primarily focused on promoting behavioral change and encouraging the adoption of positive lifestyles."

In similar accord, participant insisted:

"I experienced the absence of any programs or therapies aimed at modifying our behavior while in prison. Instead, the focus was on control through power and inhuman treatment, which did little to address underlying issues."

Moreover, participants argued:

"I felt the dearth of consistent counseling and motivational guidance during my time in prison. The focus on control over rehabilitation hindered our development of crucial social and behavioral skills needed for reintegration."

The counseling, motivational, and rehabilitation facilities for juvenile prisoners were scarce; instead, they became underdisciplined and were regularly punished by the jail staff. This invoked aggressive behavior within the juveniles, thus causing them to become rigid towards society and their personal lives post-release. However, in some instances, the juveniles have reported that the adult prisoners used to protect juvenile offenders rather than the prison staff themselves (Bishop, 2000).

Lack of Treatment for Drug addiction within KP Prisons: A Hurdle in Juvenile Offenders' Reintegration

KP prisons are characterized with easy supplies of drugs and the lack of effective treatment strategies for drug addiction which adversely impact the rehabilitation and reintegration process of the juvenile offenders as the juvenile inmates enjoy convenient access to drugs and thus perpetuate addictive behaviors.

One of the participants stated:

“This is very common, availability of drugs within prisons is a normal routine and its use within prisons is an established norm. Keeping in view this reality on a side how the drama of treating the addicts would seem rational? This context works a breeding ground of addiction for juvenile inmates as compare to adults”.

Another participant explained:

“I was charged for theft, I am no more a thief but I am a drug addict now. It is all due to the availability of drugs within prisons and no check on drug addiction within prison”.

The availability of drugs, coupled with the absence of a rehabilitation system in Pakistan, caused addiction and difficulties in the lives of juvenile offenders’ post-release (Malik et al., 2023). There was a dearth of rehabilitation among the categories of offenders in the prisons of Pakistan. The criminal offenders who were involved in drug addiction were placed with other criminals (Ali, 2020). The prison staff imposed a lack of check and balance among the inmates, due to which the prisoners were seen to be involved in the subsequent and continuous supply of drugs.

Lack of Pre-release Reentry Planning, Interventions, and Arrangements: Assessing Juvenile Offenders’ Reintegration Hurdles

The absence of pre-release planning within the KPK juvenile justice system significantly hampers the reintegration of released juveniles. Without guidance on post-release actions and arrangements with family and relevant organizations, hurdles in post-release reintegration persist, exacerbating challenges for juvenile offenders transitioning back into society. In this connection, a participant replied:

“Neither I nor my family nor community members were the concerns of the prison staff. They were there to complete the month and get their salaries. They were not interested in me and my integration into the community.”

Additionally, another participant narrated:

“What I know is that after spending seven months in prison, I developed relationships with some of the prison staff, but none of them discussed any plans or instructions for my release. I did recall being called by the superintendent and told, ‘Congratulations, now you are a free bird.’”

Equally, respondents reflected:

“I can attest to the absence of pre-release planning in our juvenile justice system. Without guidance or arrangements post-release, we faced immense challenges reintegrating into society.”

In comparable terms, a participant suggested:

“I believe the lack of pre-release planning significantly hampers our reintegration. Arrangements with family and organizations could have eased our transition back into society.”

Finally, respondent claimed:

“The absence of pre-release planning has multiplied our reintegration hurdles. Guiding us on post-release steps and involving relevant parties could have made a substantial difference in our reintegration journey.”

At post-release, the system of the Pakistani prison lacks counseling and preparation programs for juvenile offenders. The uninterested nature of the prison staff toward the juvenile's reintegration made it even more difficult for the offenders to reintegrate into society (Altschuler, 1999).

Challenges in Juvenile Offender Reintegration: Impact of Prison Staff Attitudes and Limited Potentialities

In research locality, the inappropriate attitudes and lack of professional skills among prison staff exacerbate challenges in juvenile offender reintegration. These are the major factors adversely impacting the reintegration of the understudy juvenile offenders. One of the participants narrated:

"The staff are diligent in collecting their salaries at the end of the month, but they derive satisfaction from torturing inmates, especially children. Despite my efforts, I cannot recall a single instance where any staff member discussed anything positive related to our reintegration."

Equally, one respondent explored the following:

"If someone believes prisons serve as centers of reformation and rehabilitation, they would be mistaken. What can one expect from a teenager immersed in an environment where drugs are rampant, and the influence of hardened criminals is pervasive?"

Analogously, participants revealed:

"One of my cellmates was rearrested from Karachi three months earlier, charged with being in contact with terrorists. I believe this time, the charge against him may not be false because he was influenced by two prisoners accused of spreading extremism during his time in prison."

Similarly, the participant argued:

"I can attest to the detrimental impact of inappropriate staff attitudes on our reintegration. Their lack of professionalism exacerbates our challenges and undermines our efforts to reintegrate into society."

In the end, the respondent declared:

"I believe the inappropriate attitudes and lack of professional skills among prison staff significantly hinder our reintegration. Their demeanor and approach often contribute to our difficulties transitioning back into society."

The physical abuse in the juvenile system of Pakistan causes mental issues post-release. The lack of educational, motivational, psychological, and counseling facilities caused the juveniles to become adult offenders/criminals post-release. However, the dearth of professionalism and guidance from the prison staff creates hurdles for juvenile offenders in terms of reintegrating into society post-release.

Discussion

Previous research studies narrate that the jail system of Pakistan lacks educational and vocational training, along with facilities for psychological counseling. These factors hinder the societal growth of young individuals and provoke them to commit offensive crimes. It would have been better if the jail staff provided proper guidance and support so as to help the juveniles re-adjust and reintegrate into society. The responses from the respondents show that the juveniles faced significant challenges during their imprisonment. The prisons also lack understanding regarding the provision of basic human rights to the prisoners, whether adults or juvenile offenders. Such factors invoked demotivation and unconfident personalities within the juvenile offenders, which along hindered their chances to smoothly reintegrate into society.

Furthermore, the frustration expressed by individuals concerning prolonged criminal procedures resonates with the research studies that indicated delays inside the judicial gadget, therefore contributing to the adverse effects on juvenile offenders (Reef et al., 2023). Participants mentioned are

dire need for health facilities inside the prison. Numerous research studies stipulate a similar ideology, identifying the lack of access to the best healthcare for incarcerated individuals (Hussain, Mulk, Ali, Ahmad & Daraz, 2025; Brinkley-Rubinstein, 2013). The research studies also explore the inequality of healthcare provision among other prisoners, signifying the fact that the prisoners with the most influential backgrounds were given more protocol than those who belonged to middle-class families (Western, 2021). Moreover, the ex-juvenile delinquents also discussed challenges related to constrained contact with the outside world during imprisonment. This resonates with the research study, indicating that limited social interactions can obstruct successful reintegration (Bosomprah, 2023).

Additionally, the juveniles and the adult offenders were denied permission to meet or interact with their families or indulge in recreational or educational activities. This aligns well with the research study that emphasizes the significance of maintaining social connections and support networks for the successful reintegration of juveniles into society (Charles et al., 2019). The respondent's awareness of the absence of schooling and vocational training within prisons hinders juveniles' coaching for employment and economic independence upon release (Mahlangu & Zivanai, 2023). The participants highlighted the shortage of behavioral amendment applications and psychosocial counseling services within prisons, hindering juveniles' improvement of vital social and behavioral talents.

These perceptions align well with the research studies that advocate implementing proof-based interventions in order to address behavioral issues (Kazi et al., 2022). Respondents demonstrated the absence of treatment for drug addiction within prisons, exacerbating reintegration-demanding situations for juveniles. This corresponds with studies highlighting the prevalence of substance abuse among incarcerated individuals and warranting the need for comprehensive substance abuse treatment programs (Casimir, 2023).

Participants explain the lack of pre-release planning, interventions, and preparations, hindering the reintegration of released juveniles. These findings are parallel to the findings of the study conducted by Nguyễn & Yvon (2013) who portray the significance of pre-release planning in the successful reintegration of juvenile offenders. Further, this study endorses the findings of previous researchers who emphasize the professionalism and attitude of the prison staff in the reintegration of juvenile offenders (Kras et al., 2018; Malik et al., 2023; Nisa, 2024; Ward et al., 2006).

Conclusion

This study highlights the impacts of prison experiences on the reintegration process of the juvenile offenders within unique socio-cultural contexts of Upper and Lower districts of Dir Khyber Pakhtukhwa. The research findings include; integrating youth offenders with adult offenders in the prisons, which invokes negative behaviors in the juvenile offenders. Moreover, the deprivation of appropriate training facilities and academic opportunities creates hurdles for juveniles to reintegrate and adjust to society. Furthermore, the lack of rehabilitation programs and the uninterested nature of the jail staff contribute to lower chances of the juveniles towards smooth integration into society. These factors hinder the maintenance of encouraging effort and successful reintegration into society. Furthermore, this research warrants the need for and access to relief plans, conjugating and suppressing negative attitudes, and encouragement from prison officials towards juveniles and their readjustment in society. Beyond challenges faced by these individuals regarding appropriate guidance, support, and intervention, juvenile offenders will continuously struggle to deal with the complexities of reintegrating into society, which will often lead to further damaging the personality of the young offender and his involvement in criminal activities.

Policy Implications

These findings highlight the drastic need to cover reforms in the juvenile justice apparatus in Dir Valley, KPK, Pakistan.

1. Policies must focus on networks of rehabilitation centers for youth offenders.
2. Juvenile protection should consider separating youth offenders from adult offenders to prevent harmful effects.
3. Additionally, there ought to be provisions for proper healthcare, schooling, and vocational education inside prisons to facilitate rehabilitation and reintegration.
4. Introducing pre-release planning that work within specific contexts of Dir valley.
5. Deployment of Social Workers in prisons and arrangement of welfare services within prisons that meet the unique needs and challenges of juvenile inmates.
6. Arrangements of training for prison staff in dealing juveniles.

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