



ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

University Students' Perceptions of Prisoner Reintegration in Pakistani Society: A Survey-Based Study in Lahore

Kashif Raza¹*, Ali Raza², Maimoona³, Sahar Fatima Tirmzi⁴

¹Institute of Social and Cultural Studies, University of Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan

²University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan

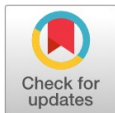
³Govt. Graduate College for Women, Vehari, Pakistan

⁴Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan

Abstract— This study uncovers the perceptions of university students of Lahore, Pakistan, regarding the reintegration of prisoners into society, a vital aspect of the criminal justice system that has received limited attention. As Pakistan is grappling with high recidivism rates and overcrowded prisons, understanding the attitudes of future leaders is essential for shaping effective rehabilitation strategies. A quantitative research approach was used, and the research surveyed 303 university students by random convenience sampling method from various disciplines using the Attitudes towards Prisoners (ATP) scale to assess their beliefs about prisoner reintegration into society in Lahore. Pearson correlation (one-tailed t-test) was applied to all the hypotheses. The findings indicate that university students of Lahore generally hold positive attitudes toward the reintegration of offenders, suggesting a potential shift towards more rehabilitative approaches in the criminal justice system. The study examines how demographic factors such as age, gender, academic major and religious beliefs influence these attitudes. Results show that older students and female students tend to be more sympathetic toward prisoners, while criminology students exhibit more critical views. This research highlights the importance of public attitudes in facilitating successful reintegration and addressing the stigma associated with incarceration. By identifying the factors that shape these perceptions, the study aims to inform policymakers and stakeholders about the potential for a more compassionate approach to prisoner reintegration in Pakistan. The outcome of the study highlights the need to foster positive societal attitudes to break the cycle of recidivism and enhance community safety, paving the way for a more just and rehabilitative criminal justice system in Pakistan.

Index Terms— University students, Prisoner reintegration, Criminal justice, Pakistan

Received: 12 February 2024 ; **Accepted:** 30 April 2024; **Published:** 25 July 2024



Introduction

Criminology is a relatively new developing field of study in Pakistan, and it lacks a lot in the field of research, which is why it is not addressing the issues related to the criminal justice system and its components like police, prosecution, courts and prison. The Criminal Justice System of Pakistan is still punitive in nature, but a more rehabilitative strategy that emphasizes the reintegration of offenders into

*Email: kashifraza5016@gmail.com

society has been more and more prevalent in the global discourse on criminal justice in recent years. Before moving to rehabilitation from punitiveness, the comprehension of key stakeholders' perspectives is crucial as Pakistan attempts to address issues of criminal recidivism and the reintegration of individuals with a history of incarceration into society. Like many other criminal justice systems across the world, Pakistan has always focused primarily on punitive measures meant to serve as a deterrent and a form of retaliation. Nonetheless, there is a growing understanding that an ex-offender's effective reintegration into society is essential to community safety and general well-being in addition to being an issue of social justice. With the introduction of reforms by the Pakistani government aimed at facilitating rehabilitation and reintegration, it is critical to assess the viewpoints of younger generations, especially university students, who are poised to become the nation's next administrators and stakeholders.

This study explores the opinions of university students of Lahore regarding the reintegration of prisoners into society, a significant but little-researched area of this discourse as different rehabilitation programs like criminal, probation, parole diversion, etc., have been introduced in Pakistan, but still, there is a need to know their effectiveness and reactions and perception of the public toward these programs. Research on the opinions of university students regarding their attitudes toward prisoners' reintegration has not been published or conducted in Lahore, Pakistan. The focus of this research is on university students as this group can be future policymakers and professionals, and their attitudes toward prisoners will help us to determine whether the future policy of Pakistan regarding prisoners is going to be more punitive or rehabilitative in nature. Decision-making in society is heavily reliant on public opinion, which shapes social and political dynamics, which in turn influences political decisions, support for policies, and social movements (Gadzali, Harahap, Tarigan, Nasution, & Ausat, 2023). Furthermore, state lawmakers and the government are researchers when creating policies, take public opinion into account often and reference public opinion as a rationale for employing custody more frequently and limiting prisoner facilities even more (Cafferata, Gingerich, & Scartascini, 2023; Walgrave & Soontjens, 2023).

This research attempts to investigate age, gender, religion, degree and academic year as the independent variables observed as a potential factor that influences university students' attitudes toward prisoner reintegration into society. Even while prisoner reintegration is becoming more and more important, research on university students' perspectives on this crucial social issue is notably lacking. This research endeavours to address this gap by examining the attitudes, beliefs, and views among university attendees toward the reintegration of people with past convictions.

The whole focus of this research is on university students, and the reason for being particularly interested in students is that they will probably go on to become future practitioners, professionals and policymakers, which means they will have frequent opportunities to come in contact with prisoners down the road. As future professionals and policymakers are among the student body, their attitudes and perceptions have the possible ability to impact future policy, and that makes the opinions of university students noteworthy. The result of this research after analysis reflects how students currently view prisoners, and that will help to determine how future prisoners may be treated within the Criminal Justice System, whether the Criminal Justice System is going to become more punitive in nature to deter the offender, which will ultimately result in hardening of offenders or going to adapt more rehabilitative strategy in order to deal the issues like high recidivism rates and prison overcrowding by reintegration of prisoners into the community.

The importance of the study is that before starting treatment, it is crucial to know about public attitudes because it is the public who stigmatizes the offender, and this process of labelling usually results in reoffending. To ensure effective treatment, begin with discovering the public's attitudes towards sexual offenders and investigating factors that are leading to these beliefs. Knowing about the attitudes towards offenders is like the backbone of an effective criminal justice system, and also, the definition of criminology is incomplete without society's reaction toward the offending. Until now, laws and regulations and treatment strategies regarding prisoners' reintegration have been founded by those who have not gone through the process those who have not offended, these laws and regulations are shaped by members of the community and their perceptions, politicians and persons providing treatment (Henderson et al., 2016; Mancini, 2016) hence this makes this research study worthy, and researches in the world showed that when a prisoner is released into the community, researches have demonstrated that a person's relationship to their community is associated to recidivism (Folk, Mashek, Tangney, Stuewig, & Moore, 2016) and that positive social bonds enhance resistance reduces recidivism (Kay, 2022; Walker, Bowen, & Brown, 2013). However, it's difficult for ex-offenders to start over. Because of the stigma, bias and instability they experienced in the community, some of them commit offences again after being released (Baffour, Francis, Chong, Harris, & Baffour, 2021; Muthee, Barasa, & Adeli, 2019).

According to researchers, it was considered crucial to measure attitudes about prisoners since it was thought that a key element in certain inmates' successful reintegration into society was the good attitudes of the prison staff toward them (Hambleton, 1985). (Kjelsberg, Skoglund, & Rustad, 2007) also underscored the significance of this in order to change attitudes and successfully reintegrate prisoners into society. The findings of this study support the views of Hambleton (1985) and Kjelsberg et al. (2007), who stated that improving attitudes can be facilitated by identifying the variables that can influence or predict attitudes in particular. People with a criminal past may worry about biases and prejudices they will face at college because there is a dearth of research on how students perceive their peers who have served time in prison.

According to studies, students who have had regular, in-person interactions with people who have served time in prison are more likely to have positive opinions of that group. This finding is consistent with earlier studies that found intimate relationships help lessen

unfavourable perceptions of stigmatized groups.

The study provides several theoretical contributions that enhance our understanding, particularly in the context of rehabilitation and societal attitudes toward offenders.

This research study demonstrates how demographic variables, including age, gender, academic major, academic year, and religion, affect opinions towards prisoner reintegration; this study adds to the body of literature already in existence. It highlights how social perceptions influence criminal justice practices and laws, especially in developing nations like Pakistan. This study adds credence to the growing body of research suggesting that rehabilitation works better than punitive methods to reduce recidivism. The study is in line with modern criminological theories that support restorative justice and rehabilitation as ways to lower recidivism by showing that university students generally have good attitudes towards reintegration (Braithwaite, 1989). The research highlights the importance of societal reactions to offender's reintegration, and the study aligns with social reaction theory, which posits that societal labels and perceptions significantly impact an individual's reintegration process (Becker, 1973). Understanding these attitudes can inform strategies to mitigate stigma and promote acceptance. The focus on university students as future policymakers and professionals provides insights into how educational experiences shape perceptions of prisoner reintegration. This study establishes a foundation for further research into the attitudes of different demographic characteristics toward prisoner reintegration. It opens avenues for exploring how educational institutions can influence public perceptions and foster more rehabilitative approaches within criminal justice systems. The theoretical implications extend to policy formulation as well, and this research provides valuable insights for policymakers aiming to reform Pakistan's criminal justice system by guiding the development of programs and initiatives aimed at fostering community support for reintegration efforts.

This study highlights several critical research gaps in the existing literature concerning prisoner reintegration. There is a notable lack of studies specifically examining the perceptions of university students towards the reintegration of offenders into society in Lahore, Pakistan. This demographic is crucial as they represent future policymakers, professionals, and community leaders whose attitudes can significantly influence criminal justice reforms (Mancini, 2016), and there is insufficient research focusing on how these factors interact specifically within the context of Pakistani society. The study aims to fill this gap by analyzing how these demographic variables shape university students' perceptions of prisoner reintegration (Hogan, Chiricos, & Gertz, 2005). Much of the existing literature on prisoner reintegration and public attitudes comes from Western contexts, which may not be directly applicable to Pakistan's socio-cultural landscape and challenges faced by Pakistani prisoners, such as high recidivism rates and societal stigma, necessitate localized research to understand public perceptions better (Shuja & Abbas, 2022). The influence of educational background on attitudes toward prisoners has been inadequately researched (Falco, 2008). The impact of societal stigma on the reintegration process has not been thoroughly examined in relation to university students' perceptions. This study aims to investigate how stigma influences attitudes toward prisoners and their reintegration into society, contributing to a broader understanding of the social dynamics at play (Maruna, 2013).

The objectives of the study are

- To investigate the perceptions of students of the university towards the societal reintegration of prisoners.
- To scrutinize whether age, gender, and academic level significantly influence the attitudes of students toward prisoners and reintegration programs.
- To identify differences between the young and seasoned minds of prisoners
- To assess the unique influence of university majors on students' attitudes toward prisoners - Can a major shape your perspective?
- To investigate the role of religion in shaping students' Attitudes toward Prisoners - Do Faith and Compassion Go Hand in Hand?"

Literature Review

Prisoners, in terms of the context of this research topic, refer to all convicted criminals who have served or are currently serving prison sentences in Pakistan irrespective of the crime committed, length of the sentence, gender or any other category. The prison population in Pakistan (including pre-trial detainees/remand prisoners) was 87,712 in August 2022 (National Prison Administration) against the official capacity of a prison system, which was 64,099 in August 2022, and this overcrowding depicts the importance of successful reintegration into society. Pakistan was at 5th number of nations with the greatest rates of recidivism in 2020, according to a report produced by the World Population Review. Both of these issues, prison overcrowding and high recidivism, can be solved by effectively reintegrating the offenders into society.

A punitive or less punitive approach to describing public opinion has been employed in research during the past two to three decades worldwide (B. K. Applegate, Cullen, Fisher, & Ven, 2000; C. F. F. B. Applegate B.K., 1997; Haney & Zimbardo, 1998).

However, it's difficult for ex-offenders to start over. Because of the stigma, bias and instability they experienced in the community, some of them commit offences again after being released (Baffour et al., 2021; Muthee et al., 2019). While it is acknowledged that a great deal of punishment may suggest a bad attitude toward inmates, this is not always the case. There is not enough research for researchers to rely solely on when examining attitudes toward prisoners. Additionally, to underline the paucity of research on this particular topic of

university students' attitudes regarding prisoners' reintegration, this review of the literature attempts to identify relevant earlier research and their outcomes.

Numerous researches on relevant topics abroad have revealed that students of criminal justice had a more unfavourable opinion toward prison inmates (Lambert, 2004a; Mackey & Courtright, 2000), which means that they score low on the ATP scale. However, it's unclear if studying criminal justice leads to a rise in more punitive attitudes or if negative or punitive sentiments drive people to choose criminal justice as their field of study, but it is prominent that Melvin, Gramling, and Gardner (1985) discovered that law enforcement personnel have the worst attitudes about prisoners, in spite of the fact that graduates of criminal justice programs are encouraged to pursue professions in law enforcement (UL, 2016; WIT, 2016). However, Park and Peterson (2009) discovered no distinction between other majors and criminal justice, but Falco (2008) examined students studying criminology and non-criminology and discovered that punitiveness levels may be predicted by major and academic level (year of course).

Past researches have also demonstrated that demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, and religion, may be connected to college students' harsher opinions (Hogan et al., 2005; Lambert, 2005) that's why demographic characteristics are taken as a variable in this study. However results with these variables were again inconsistent. It is unclear what factors largely shape opinions regarding the reintegration of prisoners. The attitude toward prisoner's (ATP) scale, created by (Melvin et al., 1985) is one tool to measure these attitudes. It will be exciting to see if Pakistani university students' attitudes are comparable to those of students from foreign nations, since there is possibility that geographic factors play a role.

Some of studies conducted in past, on attitude frequently concentrated on particular categories of criminals, particularly sexual offenders. (Craig, 2005; Harper, 2012; McAvoy, 2012) but in case of this study there is no such categorization is made as it is mentioned earlier that prisoners include all convicted criminal who has served or serving punishment. According to the literature review, there is a considerable correlation between college students' punitive attitudes towards convicts and certain demographic variables (Hogan et al., 2005; Lambert, 2005).

Research has indicated a correlation between the age of officers and their sympathetic attitudes and support with the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders into society. Specifically, older officers exhibit greater support for this process. (Farkas, 1999; Jurik, 1985; Klofas, 1986) the results of these studies, which used correctional officers as their sample rather than students, are consistent with the alternative hypothesis that students older in age will have more sympathetic view of offenders.

Kjelsberg et al. (2007) found his study that students with gender identity as male held worst attitudes with score of 86 on the ATP scale while female students scored 93 with the range of 0-144. With an ATP score of 86, it was discovered that male students had some of the worst attitudes. Furthermore, there is a need for more research on the gender component because the data about gender and attitude towards prisoners are inconsistent and same was in the case of relation of religion with the punitiveness. However it was found in research study that religious affiliation was not statistically significant in the relation to punitiveness (Falco, 2008). However, the type of religion—rather than a particular religious devotion—is the religion variable in the current research. Now comes College major and literature review showed that is the widely researched variable when we considering at college students' attitudes towards prisoners (Courtright, Mackey, & Packard, 2005; Lambert, 2004b; Mackey, Courtright, & Packard, 2006).

Research studies examining students of criminal justice's perceptions regarding the rehabilitation and punishment come out with varied outcomes ranging from being more supportive to some less supportive, and some found no relationship (Falco, 2008; Hensley, Miller, Koscheski, & Tewksbury, 2003; Lambert, 2004a; Mackey & Courtright, 2000; Mackey et al., 2006).

Pakistani prisons do not serve as 'correctional facilities (Ishfaq & Kamal, 2022) conditions are adverse and these rather harden the offenders. Every year prisoners in large number are released from prisons in Pakistan to their communities but a fraction of total prisoners became capable of reintegrating themselves into their communities effectively and rest of them will start criminal career by commit crimes again and again and be re-incarcerated and this cycle continues. Successful reintegration is key to break that cycle of recidivism. Most probably this is the reason that Pakistan was on 5th number on the list of countries having higher recidivism rates in 2020, a survey published by World Population Review (Shuja & Abbas, 2022). There are lots of reasons behind this high recidivism but one of the most obvious reasons is the failing to reintegrate into society because of labelling or stigma. At first hand prisons are not functioning as correctional institutes and on the other hand society is also not playing its role, rather making the conditions adverse by showing their negative attitudes towards prisoners either by labeling or stigmatization. Community with religious beliefs, enriched with moral values like empathy, integrity and forgiveness, is thought to have central role in facilitating the prisoners after release from the prison by providing assistance in terms of tangible and intangible backing for prisoners so that they can reintegrate back into society, particularly intangible backing, is critical for dealing with stigma and degradation related with incarceration and the availability of that support is impossible without community's positive attitude towards prisoners. The drive of facilitating or favoring the reintegration of prisoners into society is based on the religious teachings of empathy and compassion to help others in their difficult times and not excluding them from the society (Vanstone, 2017).

Major concerns related to prisoners after the release from prison are their re-integration and settlement into the society but these are misunderstood as it is thought that prisoner was integrated and settled at certain level prior going to prison but it is neglected that post-

prison conditions are far more different than the pre-prisons experiences of prisoner in society. Rather after the release the conditions become more adverse with the stigmatization and labelling and other deficits in the social economic aspects of life (Thornberry, Krohn, & Farrington, 2003) but the life of prisoner becomes more adverse after the release of the prison as he has to deal with grim conditions of his pre prison life and additionally the stigma and labeling. Upon conviction, being as convicted prisoner these deficits become the cause of addition of stigma, labeling, shame, negative experiences prison environment and social exclusion (Maruna, 2013).

Additionally the prisoners' perceptions of themselves as well as fellow prisoners are of very importance because these attitudes are likely to have impact the way prisoners perceive and respond to the correctional programs and the efficiency of the different rehabilitation programs administered. Moreover the success or failure of rehabilitation heavily relies on society's attitudes and perceptions, into which the prisoner will be released. As there is crime triangle, there is also rehabilitation or reintegration triangle and each corner of the triangle represents prisoner, correctional institute including reintegration programs, techniques and society respectively.

However it is important to emphasize that positive attitude toward prisoner or support will only led him/her to successful reintegration or desistance from crime only when the prisoner himself is committed to move away from crime. Otherwise for the prisoner who has not made any commitment to refrain from committing crime, and then positive attitude or help has nothing to do with successful reintegration into society. Society's role is crucial for reintegration when the prisoner has made personal commitment and has gone through the rehabilitation program. Effectiveness of rehabilitation program and efforts putted by the rehabilitation officers are also necessary for successful reintegration into the society.

It is very important to know the attitudes because cognitive and affective attributions are based on these attitudes and these attitudes leads to behaviors towards sexual offenders (Awais et al., 2024; Harper, 2012). These behaviors may provide the hurdles in the way of re-entry and reintegration of prisoners into community (Willis, Levenson, & Ward, 2010), because the stable social ties are vital factor for offender reintegration (Bahr, 2010; Iqbal, Shah, & Tabassum, 2022), and the conviction is like a corrosion to these social ties as prisoner's post release life experiences affect their relation with family, friends, and colleagues and might be totally different than pre-prison relations of prisoner. Prisoner' perspective on reintegration is that "a suitable support system" is crucial for them to successfully reintegrate into society (Tarpey & Friend, 2016). Literature review showed that the relevant researches in the past also used the same variables but there were no consistent results, various researches showed mixed results and that's why there is need to conduct this research study so that we can compare the results and to know that how can we make the positive attitude towards prisoners. Results would be useful in establishing the factors that influence attitudes towards prisoners and hoe these attitudes to toeards the prisoners can be improved in future.

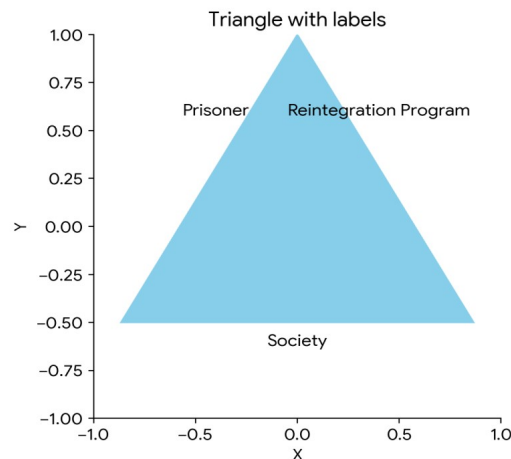


Fig. 1 Reintegration triangle

The hypotheses of the study are :

Hypothesis 1: Students older in age will show a more favorable attitude towards prisoner's reintegration into society.

Hypothesis 2: Female students will show a more sympathetic attitude towards prisoners than male.

Hypothesis 3: Criminology students will show more undesirable attitude towards prisoner's reintegration than other.

Hypothesis 4: A student with more years of university's education will show more positive attitude towards prisoner's reintegration into society. **Hypothesis 5:** Muslims participants will show a more negative attitude towards prisoner's reintegration.

Methodology

In this study age, major or degree, gender, year of study and religion are considered as variables that affect university students' attitudes about prisoners' reintegration into society in Pakistan. There were both male and female students in the sample, ranging from their first year to final year of university education and random sampling technique is used in this study. Attitudes Toward Prisoners scale (ATP) containing 36 items, in addition to demographic questions, was used in this study to measure the dependent variable, which was attitudes toward prisoners' reintegration into society. The ATP scale has 36 statements about attitudes toward prisoners. Participants were asked to score to how much extent they agree or disagree with each statement, which include "Prisoners respect only brute force" and "Most prisoners can be rehabilitated." Likert-style scale is used by the ATP, responses were ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, and neutral to agree and strongly agree. The range of scores on the scale was 0 to 144. Higher scores means that prisoners are perceived as ordinary individuals capable of bring positive change and can be successfully reintegrated into society, while low scores depicts that prisoners are viewed as really deviant people who are incompetent to bring positive change or who simply cannot be reintegrated into society.

Participants were selected using simple random convenience sampling technique. Participants completed the questionnaire in as much privacy as they desired because the survey was done online and then data were downloaded and analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The quantitative approach has been used in order to analyze the data using statistical data analysis procedures. The Pearson correlation one t test is applied in this research study. All questions were closed ended and quantitative in nature, each of the demographic question served as a separate independent variable and was evaluated based on how it affected the dependent variable. The total of 303 students from various universities of Pakistan completed the questionnaire, which was used to collect data and then that collected data was transformed into a Google spreadsheet. IBM SPSS Statistics was utilized to do statistical analysis on the gathered data. The correlation between the each of the variables was measured by running a Pearson r bivariate analysis on all the hypotheses. Further detail is that Pearson correlation one tailed test is applied in this study to test the hypotheses of this research study. Due to presence of more than one independent variables in the research the multiple regression model was used to measure the impact of all the independent variables on dependent variable.

Results

The total participants participated in this research is 303 (N=303) and the same number is used for the analysis, the total ATP score for all university students was 115, (range =0-144, where a higher score shows a more positive attitude) meaning that university students in Pakistan hold positive attitudes towards prisoner’s reintegration into society. High score on ATP scale by Pakistani students means that in future criminal justice of Pakistan is going to be less punitive and more rehabilitation and reintegration oriented in future. Here is the table of results, showing the correlation between the variables of this research study.

Table I
Descriptive statistics

Variable 1	Variable 2	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (1-tailed)	N
Age	Attitude Towards Prisoners Scale	-0.156	0.003	303
Gender	Attitude Towards Prisoners Scale	0.099	0.042	303
Your major/ degree?	Attitude Towards Prisoners Scale	-0.017	0.444	74
Year of course? (Academic Level)	Attitude Towards Prisoners Scale	-0.117	0.021	303
Religion	Attitude Towards Prisoners Scale	0.078	0.087	303

Note: Significant correlations are bolded (p-value < .05)

Age

Ha (1), Students with high age/ mature, will illustrate kinder attitude towards prisoner’s reintegration into society... Age was categorized into three sections, teenager, young adults and mature students and teenager includes 18 to 19 years old, young adults consists of students of age 20 to 22, mature student is anyone 23 or over. There were 13.2% teenagers, 56.4% young adults and 30.3% mature students in the sample. Pearson r bivariate test was applied to know the relation between the Age and scores on the Attitude Towards Prisoners Scale then it showed a statistically weak negative association (-0.156). As there is negative correlation then increase in age causes or shows the pattern of decrease in the score on the ATP scale. Findings do not support the hypothesis and that why the alternative hypothesis is rejected.

Participant's Age

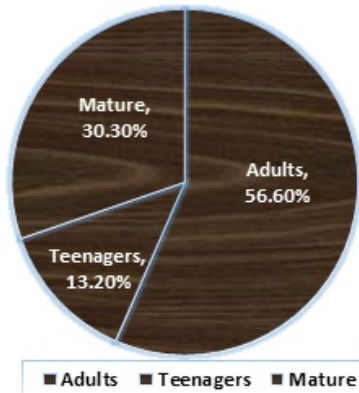


Fig. 2 Participant's Age

Gender

Ha (2), Female students will demonstrate a more sympathetic attitude towards prisoners than the students of other gender. There were 69.6% male and 30.3% female and this split between the genders occurred due to random sampling.

The correlation 0.099 between the gender and score on ATPS scale has been found in little positive but is statistically significant at a one-tailed level of 0.042 so these finding suggests a possible trend of females scoring slightly higher on the scale, indicating a potentially more positive view of prisoners, but the correlation is too weak to draw any definitive conclusions.

Gender

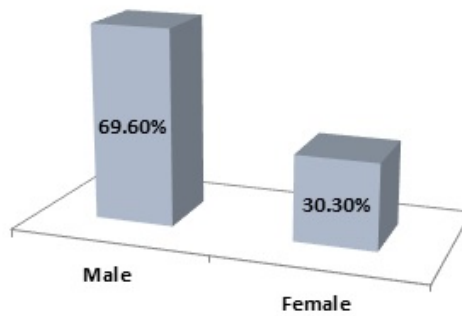


Fig. 3 Gender

Major/ Degree

Ha (3), Criminology students will depict more undesirable attitude towards prisoners reintegration than others.

The sample contained 15.1% students of Criminology and 7.2% of Law and 9.2% were of Sociology and other non-criminology students were from English, Psychology, Economics, Social Services, French, Biotechnology, Engineering, Demography, Public Health, Finance ,Accounting ,Gender Studies, Statistics, Chemistry, Physics, Education, MBA, Marketing, Mathematics, Sports Science and Islamic Studies. The correlation between major or field of study and scores on Attitude Towards Prisoners Scale is weak (-0.017) and not statistically significant (p-value = 0.444) so we can conclude that the student's field of study doesn't shape their attitude towards prisoners.

Academic level

Ha (4), Student with more years in university will express more favorable attitude towards prisoners reintegration into society. The sample contained 14.2% students of 1st year in university, 23.7% students of 2nd year, 17.8% of 3rd year and 43.8% Students of final

year.

When we tested correlation between the year in school (academic level) and students' scores on the Attitude Towards Prisoners Scale then it showed the little connection between these two. The "correlation" is -0.117, which is a small negative number, which means that as the year in school goes up (higher academic level), the scores on the Attitude Towards Prisoners Scale tend to go down a little. This could mean students in higher years have slightly less supportive views of prisoners and we can conclude that our alternative hypothesis is rejected.

Religion

Ha (5), Muslims participants will demonstrate an undesirable attitude towards prisoners reintegration.

99% participants were Muslims, 0.6% Christiana and 0.3% were Hindu. A weak connection between religious background and students' scores on the Attitude Towards Prisoners Scale found. The "correlation" is 0.078, not as strong to approve our alternative hypothesis, which is a small positive number. Positive means that there is a slight tendency for students with a religious background to have slightly more supportive views of prisoners or students who are more religious or more interested in religion are with higher tendency to have in favor of the reintegration of the prisoners into society.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that university students in Lahore generally hold positive attitudes towards prisoner reintegration, indicating a potential shift towards rehabilitative approaches in Pakistan's criminal justice system. This aligns with global trends that recognize rehabilitation as more effective than punitive measures for reducing recidivism as researches shows that when a prisoner is released into community, researches have demonstrated that a person's relationship to their community is associated to recidivism (Folk et al., 2016) and that positive social bonds enhance desistence reduces recidivism (Kay, 2022; Walker et al., 2013).

The higher scores on the Attitudes Toward Prisoners (ATP) scale suggest that the younger generation may be more open to restorative justice practices, which could lead to significant policy reforms in the future. Age and academic level were found to significantly correlate with students' attitudes, with younger students and those in earlier years of study showing more favourable views towards prisoner reintegration. This result implies that exposure to academic content over time, or perhaps the specific content of advanced courses, may influence students towards more punitive attitudes. Similar findings were observed by (Hogan et al., 2005), who reported that increased exposure to criminal justice education can lead to more negative views of offenders. These findings emphasize the importance of integrating restorative justice education throughout academic curricula to foster more supportive views. Interestingly, no significant correlation was found between gender or religious background and attitudes towards prisoners, suggesting that these factors may not play as crucial a role as previously thought. Although some studies, like those by Kjelsberg et al. (2007), indicate that women may have more positive attitudes towards prisoner reintegration, this study found only a weak correlation. It might reflect cultural specificities or limitations in sample diversity that warrants further exploration. The results also highlight the critical role of societal perception in the reintegration process. Negative public attitudes, shaped by stigma and labelling, are substantial barriers to successful reintegration (Becker, 1973). By addressing negative perceptions, we can create an environment that encourages engagement with rehabilitation and reintegration programs, therefore can contribute in reducing recidivism (Ali, 2024). Positive results throughout the reintegration process depend on the emotional and practical assistance of the family, which is known as family social support (Daftary-Kapur, Zottoli, Faust, & Schneider, 2022). Consistent familial social support has been shown in research to be protective against recidivism in young people who are re-entering society (Liu & Visher, 2021).

The findings suggest a need for public education and awareness campaigns to foster positive attitudes, which can directly contribute to reduced recidivism and successful reintegration. Study supports this approach, emphasizing the value of community acceptance in the reintegration journey (Maruna, 2013)). After serving a time in prison, the religious community may be very helpful in helping prisoners reintegrate into society by offering them both tangible and intangible assistance (Irfan, 2022).

This study's focus on university students is particularly relevant, as they are future policymakers and professionals who can influence the direction of Pakistan's criminal justice system. Understanding their perspectives provides insight into how societal attitudes may evolve and highlights the need for educational interventions aimed at promoting a rehabilitative rather than punitive approach. Similar conclusions were drawn by Mancini (2016), who stressed the importance of targeting young adults to shape future criminal justice practices.

Conclusion

This research was conducted to explore the perceptions of university students of Lahore regarding prisoners reintegration into society to solve the issue of high recidivism rates in Lahore, Pakistan, by identification of factors that shape the university students' attitudes towards prisoners reintegration into society, as successful reintegration into society will automatically lead to lower recidivism rates in the society and low recidivism rate will contribute in reducing overcrowding in prisons as well. It is already mentioned that the positive attitudes will be very beneficial and are one of the very crucial factors that play key role into prisoners' successful reintegration, and negative attitudes have the opposite effect. It is possible to improve attitudes towards prisoners, but first we need to identify the possible factors that contribute to or influence the attitudes, that would help with taking the measures that are appropriate for future interventions. Knowing and developing the understanding of the factors that play role in developments of attitudes toward prisoners is of great significance and further research on this topic is necessary for checking the effect of measures taken by the government to change or improve the negative attitudes of students towards prisoners. As the adverse attitudes are consistently reported toward prisoners' reintegration, university students are a perfect group for the testing of interventions based on the findings of the research studies. Study conducted by Rubio (2014) found that the negative attitudes towards the prisoners reintegration can be improved by presenting the emotional movie.

The attitudes of university students has become increasingly important in determining how society views and formulates policies as we explore the complicated terrain of criminal justice and reintegration into society. The paper acts as a call to action, asking interested parties to partner together in the quest of a more compassionate and inclusive strategy for the reintegration of people who have previously been incarcerated. By improving the positive attitude or changing the negative attitude into positive regarding the prisoners and clearing up misunderstandings, we can create a society that is more equitable and favorable to rehabilitation and reintegration.

This study adds to our understanding of society perceptions on prisoner reintegration broadly and attitudes of university students toward prisoners' reintegration in the particular setting of Lahore, Pakistan specifically. This study's focus on university students has brought attention to the viewpoints of an important group that will have a significant impact on the social landscape going ahead. The knowledge acquired serves as a basis for further research and useful projects meant to promote a more sympathetic and encouraging attitude to reintegration throughout the nation. The overall ATP scale score of students is 115 as the ATP Scale ranges from 0-144, while higher score means positive attitude towards prisoner's reintegration and the score of students in Lahore, Pakistan is much higher so it is indicating that in future Pakistani criminal justice system is going to adopt the policies and laws that are in favor of rehabilitation and reintegration. This research study can be briefly concluded as it was aimed to investigate the association between demographic characteristics of the students and their attitudes towards prisoners and Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to examine these associations. Results of this study indicate that age and academic level significantly correlate with attitudes towards prisoners. Specifically, younger individuals and those in lower academic years tend to hold more positive views towards prisoners. This finding suggests a potential generational shift in perceptions of incarcerated individuals. However, it is essential to interpret these results cautiously, as this correlation does not guarantee any sign of connection. Additional research is necessary to reveal the underlying mechanisms driving these associations.

While gender, religious background and degree did not demonstrate significant relationships with attitudes towards prisoners in this study, these variables deserve more investigation in research studies going to be conducted in future with larger sample sizes. It is possible that these factors may influence attitudes towards prisoners in more nuanced ways that were not captured by the current analysis. Generally, the results of this particular study are addition to a developing body of existing literature on public perceptions of imprisonment. By identifying demographic factors associated with attitudes towards prisoners, this research provides a groundwork for further research studies to explore the complexities of these attitudes and their effects on criminal justice policies and practices in Pakistan.

Implications for policy and practice

This research study suggests several implications for policy and practice. First, there is a pressing need to incorporate more rehabilitative content into educational curriculum related to criminal justice to ensure future leaders are better equipped to support reintegration efforts. Second, public campaigns aimed at reducing stigma associated with former prisoners could help foster a supportive community environment for reintegration, as advocated by Vanstone (2017). Finally, further research should focus on the long-term impact of educational interventions on students' attitudes towards rehabilitation, with a particular emphasis on how different academic disciplines influence these views.

Limitations and future research

It is critical to recognize the study's limitations, such as its concentration on university students of Lahore only and the possibility of response bias. The participants themselves are also limited because this is a sample of university students, and it is always important

to use caution when extrapolating this demography to the larger student population. In general, the total sample size of N=303 would not be regarded as small but the further categorization within the independent variables the sample sizes were reduced and the issue with smaller sample is that due to small sample size the chances of getting results that are extreme increases, so sample containing larger number of participants would be useful in a way that it avoids the probability of biased findings in the research study. Other limitation of this study is that there is no previous research on this topic in Lahore or Pakistan with which results can be compared. By incorporating a wider range of demographic groups and utilizing longitudinal techniques to monitor attitudes over time, future research could expand the scope. Furthermore, examining the impact of certain interventions on changing attitudes and behaviors may prove to be a worthwhile line of research.

References

- Ali, Z. (2024). Perceptions of police among juvenile probationers in sargodha, pakistan: Influencing factors and implications. *Research Square*, 1-11.
- Applegate, B. K., Cullen, F. T., Fisher, B. S., & Ven, T. V. (2000). Forgiveness and fundamentalism: Reconsidering the relationship between correctional attitudes and religion. *Criminology*, 38(3), 719-754.
- Applegate, C. F. . F. B., B.K. (1997). Public support for correctional treatment; the continuing appeal of the retributive ideal. *The Prison Journal*, 77(3), 237-258.
- Awais, B., Daradkah, A., AlKhatib, F., Telfah, E., Al-Shunnaq, Y., Tawalbeh, M., ... Daradkah, H. (2024). Students' attitudes towards e-learning in jordanian universities. *Pakistan Journal of Life and Social Sciences*, 22(1), 3006-3015.
- Baffour, F. D., Francis, A. P., Chong, M. D., Harris, N., & Baffour, P. D. (2021). Perpetrators at first, victims at last: Exploring the consequences of stigmatization on ex-convicts' mental well-being. *Criminal Justice Review*, 46(3), 304-325.
- Bahr, H. L. F. J. K. . H. A. A., S. J. (2010). Successful reentry: What differentiates successful and unsuccessful parolees? *International journal of offender therapy and comparative criminology*, 54(5), 667-692. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X09342435>
- Becker, H. S. (1973). *Outsiders studies in the sociology of deviance. free p.* Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press Glencoe.
- Braithwaite, J. (1989). *Crime, shame and reintegration.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Cafferata, F. G., Gingerich, D. W., & Scartascini, C. (2023). Tempering the taste for vengeance: Information about prisoners and policy choices in Chile. *Comparative Political Studies*, 56(10), 1506-1536.
- Courtright, K. E., Mackey, D. A., & Packard, S. H. (2005). Empathy among college students and criminal justice majors: Identifying predispositional traits and the role of education. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, 16(1), 125-144.
- Craig, L. A. (2005). The impact of training on attitudes towards sex offenders. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 11(2), 197-207.
- Daftary-Kapur, T., Zottoli, T. M., Faust, T., & Schneider, R. (2022). A first look at the reentry experiences of juvenile lifers released in Philadelphia. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 28(3), 400.
- Falco, D. L. (2008). *Assessing students' views towards punishment: A comparison of punitiveness among criminology and non-criminology students.* Indiana, PA: Indiana University of Pennsylvania.
- Farkas, M. A. (1999). Correctional officer attitudes toward inmates and working with inmates in a "get tough" era. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 27(6), 495-506.
- Folk, J. B., Mashek, D., Tangney, J., Stuewig, J., & Moore, K. E. (2016). Connectedness to the criminal community and the community at large predicts 1-year post-release outcomes among felony offenders. *European journal of social psychology*, 46(3), 341-355.
- Gadzali, S. S., Harahap, M. A. K., Tarigan, I. M., Nasution, A. A., & Ausat, A. M. A. (2023). Women's entrepreneurship: An examination of government support and the role of knowledge skills. *Community Development Journal: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 4(1), 713-717. doi:<https://doi.org/10.31004/cdj.v4i1.12464>
- Hambleton, R. K. (1985). Criterion-referenced assessment of individual differences. In C. R. Reynolds & V. L. Willson (Eds.), *Methodological and statistical advances in the study of individual differences.* New York, NY: Springer. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4684-4940-2_10 doi:10.1007/978-1-4684-4940-2_10
- Haney, C., & Zimbardo, P. (1998). The past and future of US prison policy: Twenty-five years after the Stanford Prison Experiment. *American Psychologist*, 53(7), 709.
- Harper, C. A. (2012). In pursuit of the beast: Undergraduate attitudes towards sex offenders and implications for society, rehabilitation and British psychology education (Online First). *Internet Journal of Criminology*.
- Henderson, C. E., Wevodau, A. L., Henderson, S. E., Colbourn, S. L., Gharagozloo, L., North, L. W., & Lotts, V. A. (2016). An independent replication of the adolescent-community reinforcement approach with justice-involved youth. *The American Journal on Addictions*, 25(3), 233-240. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/ajad.12366>
- Hensley, C., Miller, A., Koscheski, M., & Tewksbury, R. (2003). Student attitudes toward inmate privileges. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 27, 249-262.
- Hogan, M. J., Chiricos, T., & Gertz, M. (2005). Economic insecurity, blame, and punitive attitudes. *Justice Quarterly*, 22(3), 392-412.

- Iqbal, K., Shah, S. A., & Tabassum, S. (2022). Impact of university student's academic self-efficacy and achievement goals on their academic achievement. *Journal of Management Practices, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 6(2), 51-58.
- Irfan, L. (2022). The religious community: A space that facilitates successful resettlement for muslim offenders. In H. Schmid & A. Sheikhzadegan (Eds.), *Exploring islamic social work: Between community and the common good* (pp. 47--64). Cham: Springer International Publishing. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-95880-0_3 doi: 10.1007/978-3-030-95880-0_3
- Ishfaq, N., & Kamal, A. (2022). Explaining the predictive relationship between early life trauma and comorbid psychiatric symptoms among convicts in pakistan. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, 37(2), 423-432.
- Jurik, N. C. (1985). Individual and organizational determinants of correctional officer attitudes toward inmates. *Criminology*, 23(3), 523-540.
- Kay, C. (2022). Rethinking social capital in the desistance process: The 'Artful Dodger' complex. *European Journal of Criminology*, 19(5), 1243-1259.
- Kjelsberg, E., Skoglund, T. H., & Rustad, A.-B. (2007). Attitudes towards prisoners, as reported by prison inmates, prison employees and college students. *BMC public health*, 7, 1-9.
- Klofas, J. M. (1986). Discretion among correctional officers: The influence of urbanization, age and race. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 30(2), 111-124.
- Lambert, E. G. (2004a). Assessing the crime and punishment views of criminal justice majors: How different are they from other majors? *Criminal Justice Studies*, 17(3), 245-257.
- Lambert, E. G. (2004b). The impact of job characteristics on correctional staff members. *The Prison Journal*, 84(2), 208-227. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/ajad.12366>
- Lambert, E. G. (2005). Worlds Apart: The views on crime and punishment among white and minority college students. *Criminal Justice Studies*, 18(1), 99-121.
- Liu, L., & Visher, C. A. (2021). Decomposition of the role of family in reentry: Family support, tension, gender, and reentry outcomes. *Crime & delinquency*, 67(6-7), 970-996.
- Mackey, D. A., & Courtright, K. E. (2000). Assessing punitiveness among college students: A comparison of criminal justice majors with other majors. *Criminal Justice Studies*, 12(4), 423-441.
- Mackey, D. A., Courtright, K. E., & Packard, S. H. (2006). Testing the rehabilitative ideal among college students. *Criminal Justice Studies*, 19(2), 153-170.
- Mancini, B. K. M., C. (2016). Is the public convinced that "nothing works?": Predictors of treatment support for sex offenders among americans. *Crime & Delinquency*, 62(6), 777-799. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128715597693>
- Maruna, S. (2013). Reintegration as a right and the rites of reintegration: A comparative review of de-stigmatization practices. *Effective interventions in the lives of criminal offenders*, 121-138.
- McAvoy, J. (2012). *Birds of a feather? irish public attitudes towards sex crime and sex offender reintegration. is there a publically perceived scale of sexual deviance?* (Tech. Rep.).
- Melvin, K. B., Gramling, L. K., & Gardner, W. M. (1985). A scale to measure attitudes toward prisoners. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 12(2), 241-253.
- Muthee, J. M., Barasa, F. O., & Adeli, S. (2019). Relationship challenges facing re-integration of women ex-offenders in nyeri county, Kenya. *International Journal of Social and Development Concerns*, 10(7), 77-91.
- Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2009). Character strengths: Research and practice. *Journal of College and Character*, 10(4), 1-10.
- Rubio, F. D. (2014). Self-esteem and self-concept in foreign language learning. *Multiple perspectives on the self in SLA*, 4158.
- Shuja, K. H., & Abbas, J. (2022). Criminal recidivism in Pakistan: A grounded theory of social & environmental causes and psychological consequences. *Nature-Nurture Journal of Psychology*, 2(2), 41-53.
- Tarpey, E., & Friend, H. (2016). A place to call home: Perspectives on offender community reintegration. *Journal of Forensic Practice*, 18(4), 283-291.
- Thornberry, T. P., Krohn, M. D., & Farrington, D. P. (2003). Key results from the first forty years of the cambridge study in delinquent development. *Taking stock of delinquency: An overview of findings from contemporary longitudinal studies*, 137-183.

- Vanstone, M. (2017). *Supervising offenders in the community: A history of probation theory and practice*. England, UK: Routledge.
- Walgrave, S., & Soontjens, K. (2023). How politicians learn about public opinion. *Research & Politics*, 10(3), 20531680231200692. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/20531680231200692>.
- Walker, K., Bowen, E., & Brown, S. (2013). Psychological and criminological factors associated with desistance from violence: A review of the literature. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 18(2), 286-299.
- Willis, G. M., Levenson, J. S., & Ward, T. (2010). Desistance and attitudes towards sex offenders: Facilitation or hindrance? *Journal of Family Violence*, 25, 545-556.