

## Between Hope and Neglect: Juvenile Offenders' Perspectives on Probation and Reintegration in KP, Pakistan

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the role of probation officers and the effectiveness of probation in supporting the social reintegration and behavioral transformation of juvenile offenders in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Adopting a qualitative phenomenological approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 ex-juvenile offenders who were under probation supervision in District Dir. The findings reveal a sharp mismatch between theoretical considerations of probation and actual practice. Juvenile offenders reported confusion about the aims and purpose of probation services, lack of interaction with probation officers during critical phases like police custody and reintegration, and insufficient support for rehabilitation. The study highlights the need for improved communication on probation goals, increased involvement of probation officers from arrest through reintegration, and enhanced support for juvenile offenders. Recommendations include developing training programs for juvenile offenders, ensuring probation officer involvement from arrest, introducing monitoring systems, and fostering community partnerships for better reintegration outcomes.*

**Key Words:** Probation, Social Reintegration, Juvenile Offenders, Phenomenological Approach.

### INTRODUCTION

Probation is the most practicing measure for juvenile offenders (Hockenberry & Puzzanchera, 2024). Kaible, (2023); Carson (2022) and Zeng (2022) argued that probation is the popular sentence for both adult and juvenile offenders as the number of probationers override the number of prison inmates. The basic philosophy behind probation is a diversion. Diversion limits the involvement of a juvenile with the procedures of the criminal and juvenile justice system. Diversion is and has been a central objective of juvenile justice worldwide that assists reintegration of juvenile offenders. Diversion is based on the belief that if a juvenile is labeled as "delinquent" or "bad," he or she will be permanently stigmatized (Callahan et al., 2012; Heilbrun et al., 2017; Goodson & Morash, 2017). To avoid long-term negative consequences

for juveniles, diversion programs are designed to avoid labeling and work with juveniles to rehabilitate them (Allard, Ogilvie & Stewart, 2007). Consequently, probation is a sentence that does not involve confinement and imposes conditions. Probation typically entails supervision by juvenile probation officers within the youth's home and community, a set of semi-standard requirements, and regular meetings with the probation officer (Dir et al., 2021; Feld, 2017). The sentencing court retains the authority to supervise, modify the conditions, and resent the offender if conditions are violated (Allard, Ogilvie & Stewart, 2007).

Owing to the distinct bio-psycho-social traits associated with childhood the reintegration of juvenile offenders is more complex as compared to adult offenders. Because this involves two transactions; one is developmental transaction from childhood to adulthood and the other one is correctional transaction; from correctional centers to community. Resultantly, the probation supervision measures must be different for both groups of adult and juvenile offenders (Benekos & Merlo, 2019; Feld, 2017). Where researchers like Bolin & Applegate (2016, 2018, 2023) found juvenile probation practice more individual centered, rehabilitative, treatment focused and welfare oriented as compared to adult probation practice that is offense centered, characterized with punishment and control (Hussain et al., 2025).

The post-colonial era in Pakistan was marked by the enactment of most of the laws of the colonial period. In addition to other laws, probation law '*Good Conduct Prisoners Probation Release Act, 1926* and some of the sections of *Indian Code of Criminal Procedures (380, 562-564)* were enacted in Pakistan to grant probation to certain offenders (Abbas, Chughtai & Hussain, 2022). In 1960, Probation of Offenders Ordinance was passed with the notification of its rules brought forward in 1961. This legislation gave the mandate to the Reclamation and Probation Departments of all provinces to establish probation wing and appoint probation officers. The provisions with respect to probation of juvenile offenders is included in Juvenile Justice System Ordinance promulgated in the year 2000 (Hussain, 2009) and subsequent Juvenile Justice System Act, 2018.

Contrary to other jurisdictions, Courts in Pakistan often turn deaf ear to the probation system in Pakistan. With reference to Rule 8.1 *United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-Custodial Measures, 1990* (the Tokyo Rules), to award sentences through non-custodial measures for instance probation, the judge is under the obligation to comply with the '*Triangular Threshold Checks*' while fulfilling the needs of justice. This rule obliges the authority to keep under consideration the Rehabilitative requirement of the offender, the interests of the victims and the protection of society (Sajid, 2009). From the above-given factors, it has been observed that the decisions encompassing the non-custodial sentences such as probation discuss only one aspect i.e., the rehabilitative requirement of the offender.

In the same way, the other two elements: the protection of society and the interests of victims are often disregarded. In today's world many states have reshaped the dynamics and structure of probation laws according to international standards but Pakistan has yet to progress in this realm. There is a lack of substantial amendments in accordance with the international standards through which the triangular criterion could be maintained (Sajid, 2009). Additionally, there are several administrative and legal gaps existing in the legal framework of Pakistan concerning probation.

A practical requirement existing regarding the preparation of "Pre-sentence Report" states that the report must contain certain recommendations of the probation officer concerning the time-period of probation and the conditions to be imposed on the probationer for his reformation. Under the law, the provision data related to it is not a requirement. The courts are found to not wait until the probation officers submit these reports. It plays the role of an obstacle for the courts to impose alike conditions according to the offense of the offender (Sajid, 2009). Besides this, Rule 16.2 of the Tokyo Rules also mandates it necessary that

the staff should be trained before assuming such roles and responsibilities. It further states that they should be provided extensive training relating to the scope of non-custodial sentences, the objects of supervision and the modes through which non-custodial sentences can be carried out (UNICEF, 2006). Despite this, there is no substantial change reported. It is observed that the National Academy for Prison Administration (NAPA), primarily aiming to provide training for prison staff, provides brief sessions to probation officers regarding their duties. However, the nature of duties exercised by the probation staff and those by the prison staff are different in their natures which leads to perplexing impacts on probation officers (UNICEF, 2006). Moving forward, the conditions of the probation bond in each case remain similar without considering the needs of probationers. The law requires from the officers to explain the conditions of the bond and the importance of compliance with such conditions by the probationer. However, the inability to understand the condition of the probation bond results in the nonfulfillment of this requirement (Abbas et al, 2022). In addition, there is no difference between the consequences of “reoffending” and “violation of any other condition of probation bond”. If the probationers are sent to prison due to the violation of any condition of the probation bond, then it cannot be called as equal to re-offending (JJSO, 2000).

Human resources are also unavailable in the Reclamation and Probation Department, which leads to the stagnancy of the preparation of presentence reports promptly. Due to this, the courts avoid giving instructions for these presentations. Moreover, the probation officers are also responsible for conducting scheduled visits and helping the probationer to improve his behavior during the post-sentence stage. As a principle, three trips should be undertaken to reform the probationer and oversee the recidivism phenomenon effectively. It is nonetheless considered a formality by the probation officer. The purpose of every visit is only general counselling that solely depends upon the discretion and personal judgment of the probation officer. The probation officer decides the behavior of the probationer to be maintained during each visit and the method chosen at his sole discretion. No expert training programs are arranged by the R&PD (provincial level) to educate the probation officers. Thus, it becomes complex for untrained and inept probation officers to effectively execute the intended outcomes of the probation system based on theoretical education (JJSA, 2018). Furthermore, it has also been recorded that compared to the probationers, the number of probation officers working and effectively performing their duties according to the law is extremely low. As a result, it raises questions about whether the probation officer provides the required supervision and treatment to the probationer. Due to excessive workload, the probation officer faces challenges in effectively carrying out the tasks required under the law, irrespective of his dedication and commitment towards his work (Hussain et al., 2024).

Given the gaps in the implementation of probation services for juvenile offenders in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, this study aims to understand the perspectives of juvenile offenders on probation and reintegration, focusing on the role of probation officers throughout the juvenile justice process. Insights from this study are crucial for informing reforms in the juvenile probation system in Pakistan to enhance rehabilitation and successful reintegration of juvenile offenders into society.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To examine the role of probation officers throughout the juvenile justice process, including police custody, bail, court proceedings, and post-release reintegration.
- To evaluate the perceived effectiveness of probation in supporting the social reintegration and behavioral transformation of juvenile offenders.

## **METHODOLOGY**

To examine the role of probation and its effectiveness in the rehabilitation and reintegration of juvenile offenders in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, this study was conducted in District Dir. Adopting a qualitative Phenomenological approach, the lived experiences of the twenty ex-juvenile offenders were captured through semi structured interviews (Daraz & Ul Hakim, 2024). The ex-juvenile offenders were Purposively and conveniently selected for the study who remained under the supervision of the probation officers and were residing in their respective communities after the completion of the probation. The interview data were thematically analyzed for the identification of the potential themes.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Released Juveniles' Misperception of Probation**

Juvenile Justice System Act 2018 offers a holistic framework by defining the role of probation officer at each stage of the Juvenile Justice System, from the first contact of the juvenile offender with police to the juvenile's post release reintegration. The system where juvenile offenders were supposed to be provided with the benefits of probation services at each stage, the understudy juveniles were found unaware about the essence and purpose of the probation. Accordingly, when the former juvenile probationers were inquired about their familiarity and understanding regarding probation, they responded reflecting confusion and uncertainty regarding probation services.

As participant reflected:

*"I perceive probation as a kind of relaxed penalty for our criminal act. Where we are restricted to ensure attendance at the office of the probation officer and suffer from prolonged waiting hours to get called by the probation officer. We attend the office, we wait for hours, subsequently called by the officer, meet him for a while and then we are asked to leave".*

Another of the participant in this relation explained:

*"The first time I heard the term PROBATION was when the court had determined my age and it was found out that I was a child. My lawyer and father appeared to be excited and I was informed that I was the only one who had the opportunity of changing and adjusting myself according to the specifications of the probation officer. Otherwise, you would be thrown in jail".*

The response of the participants with respect to the experience with and perception of the probation was somewhat mixed and confused. Some participants saw probation as a kind of permissive punishment that included visits to the office of a probation officer, whereas others had little idea on the meaning and consequence of probation. Surprisingly, the participants under investigation showed some lack of familiarity and uncertainty with the concept of probation, some even getting introduced to the term the first time in the course of legal proceedings. The absence of such prior understanding of the role and importance of probation to their process of rehabilitation was reflected in their stories.

### **Probation Officer in Police Custody: Role**

Section 5 of the JJSA, 2018 covers issues regarding the ever first exposure of the juvenile to the justice system. The section 5 (b) is directed to ensure that the arrest of the juvenile is made known to the

concerned probation officer right away so that he can seek appropriate information about the accused juvenile and his situation to facilitate the juvenile court. Moreover, section 7 subsection 2 (1) of the Act can direct that in interrogating a juvenile, an investigating team will be facilitated with a probation officer or any social welfare officer to complete a social investigation report. Based on this, when the participants were asked what happened to the information, all of them expressed the opinion that there occurred no role of the probation officer in a manner that the arresting and placing them in the police stations occurred. A study participant revealed:

*"My arrest by the police was followed by dragging me into a dark room. They forced me to accept the offence otherwise I should suffer grievously. This scared me but I had no idea what to do. This was the appropriate time if the probation officer could intervene".*

This is how another participant shared his feelings:

*"Sir! How queer a question you are putting. Why probation officers would come and meet us in the police station and how"?*

One of the participants expressed:

*"We never, of all our lives, could see more than a couple of minutes of the probation officer in their offices----. They are not able to come and meet us in the police stations".*

The narratives of the participants create a fair demonstration of a huge inconvenience in the role of the probation officers in the arrest and police investigation. The participants did not indicate any encounter whereby probation officers were present or involved during arrest or detention in the police stations. This gap presents a very grave neglect of the aspect of putting in place probationary procedures in the first phase of the justice system. The testimonies of the participants indicate that more contact or assistance of probation officers could be sent in pivotal stages of police custody. They were confused, scared, and helpless in their communication with the law enforcement officers in the absence of the control and direction of a probation officer. The issue of missed opportunity in this absence brings up the need of timely intervention and leading roles, whereby the need of a probation officer can come in especially at particular expected sensitive and crucial situations in the police custody.

### **Role of Probation Officer During Bail Period**

The section 6 (1) of the Act, assuming the release of juveniles on bail, entails the presence of probation officer. The framework guide that where a bail is granted in bailable offences; the juvenile should be put under the supervision of a probation officer. The juvenile offender will be monitored by the probation officer. Where the accused juvenile must follow the instructions of the probation officer. In line with this, the participants concurred that the probation officer had nothing to do with the bail that had been given based on the efforts of their lawyer.

One of the participants argued:

*"The court was convinced by our lawyer to put me on bail and that was the feat and skill of our lawyer. The role of probation officer in that respect is nonexistent".*



Nonetheless, when the respondents were asked about the direction and supervision of probation officer during the bail period, the responses were different. One of the respondents cited:

*"He was ever so helpful and nice. He trusted whatever I said and did not even require intensive visits to the office".*

One more interviewee stated:

*"The probation officer, I was under, was co-operative when I provided him gifts. Whenever the gap was long, I was usually threatened by the probation officer in a serious manner and in a jovial manner as well to visit his office lest be left in jail".*

Another expressed as follows:

*"We met at the office of the Probation officer as per instruction and the schedule given by the probation officer. We were however unable to capture the attention of the probation officer there. Only at times did he find himself in a real busy state but most often he pretended he was busy".*

The diverse experiences which the participants had during their time in bail can be deemed as an amalgamation of various perceptions about the role and efficiency of the probation officers. Whereas some of the juveniles pointed out that there was little or no intervention of the probation officers when it comes to posting bail, others indicated that there was service delivery at this level. Nonetheless, different experiences exposed situations where cooperation of probation officers appeared to be conditional on the provision of gifts. The variation in the mentioned participants narratives reveals a possible incongruence in the way and manner of the probation officers during the bail stage. To sum it up, the range of experiences the participants reported throughout the period of bail points to the necessity of consistency and professionalism in the roles of probation officers.

### **Role of The Probation Officer to Monitor the Reintegration and Welfare Services**

In addition, the section 9 of the Act **favours** that the cases involving the juveniles convicted of committing a major offense and aged below sixteen years should be handled using diversion. Meanwhile, diversion applies to all juveniles who have committed minor offence too. Being a member of the juvenile justice committee under section 10 (2-d), the probation officer is crucial in disposal of cases by diversion, making visits to the reintegration and welfare services in the observation homes and rehabilitation centers among other specified functions. When the participants were queried about the visits of the probation officers to the prisons in terms of monitoring, in the observations of the reintegration services, most participants expressed the opinion that they had never met with the probation officer in the prison. According to one of the participants:

*"The only thing we have seen the probation officer is in his office. We had in the prison just seen the presence of the prisoners, the old and the new prisoners, the jail-staff, and their omnipotence".*

Another participant stated:

*"There was sometimes some cleanliness and additional discipline in the prison, on rare occasions, when a judge, it is said, inspected the prison. In the absence of that judge, the*

*members of an NGO came to visit the prison, but we had not witnessed any probation officer in prison”.*

The statements made by the participants on what probation officers had to do in keeping up with reintegration and welfare services show that there was a certain lack of them or had no existence within the prison. The experiences of the participants majorly focused on the missing presence of probation officers in the time they were in the prisons and the limits of their interaction was reduced to the four boundaries of the probation office as opposed to checking them or supporting their reentry and wellbeing. There is a clear lack of active presence of probation officers on the descriptions of the participants regarding visits to the prison environment and the lack of such regular visits. On the whole, the descriptions given by the participants support the seeming lack or low participation of probation officers in prisons implying a significant deficiency of the involvement of the latter in the reintegration and welfare programs of young offenders.

### **Probation Officer's Role in Juvenile Reintegration**

The aim of probation services is to offer effective rehabilitation to the young offenders and make them fit properly in their communities. Scholars state that aftercare services are the most important to reintegrate young offenders. Chikadzi (2017) asserted that when young offenders are released without any form of aftercare, they are bound to end up maladjusted, and eventually recidivists. Abrams (2006) advanced such an argument to the effect that probation is essential in reintegration of the young offenders especially within the initial few months of the time. The freed youths are taken care of with frequent visits with a special probation officer (Corrado, Gronsdal, MacAllister, & Cohen 2010). The probation officer advises and supervises the conduct of the juvenile in line with the conditions of the court order (Akram et al., 2025). In this regard, the participants stated:

*“Despite the fact that, originally, I communicated extensively with the probation officer and each time, I encountered him with a smile and lovingly. When I consider all these contacts and visits, however, in my case, it is just a big big zero in terms of reintegration”.*

The participant expounded more by saying:

*“Both the probation officer and I did not tell the real intention of the contacts. The sole reason that was evident to me is that without maintaining the contacts with the probation officer, I was to be reincarcerated once again in the new world in which I could see no instructions or viable skills that I could use in abandoning crimes. It was after you had asked me that I got some feeling that the aim of my meeting with the probation officer was my rehabilitation and reintegration”.*

Further, in the process of interviewing the participants regarding the guidance and assistance in regards to the reintegration received by them during their probation period, most of them felt that there was nothing great but only that they had escaped their confinement. One of the participants said:

*“The probation was a good experience because we did not have the trouble of going places; we only needed to meet the probation officer, make sure that we turn up, sit there say five to ten minutes and be on our way and we were content with that”.*

As one of the participants described:

*"I do not believe that probation is bothered about improving the young offenders. They do not often present few pieces of advice in five minutes and leave the rest. I had talked so much about the issues I had with my substance use behavior and the solutions to overcome but in response, I was simply given nothing".*

Another participant opined:

*"When I committed the crime I was underage. I own, I committed foolishness and my father tortured me and kicked me out of the house. To this day regardless, my family does not accept me and I live with my uncle. I explained the full story to the probation officer but nothing was done to adjust me to my family. The probation officer was verbally committed, although".*

On being questioned whether their needs and challenges had been considered and addressed when they were under probation, most of the participants felt that their needs were not taken care of when they were under probation.

One of the **participants** shared:

*"The probation officer was not eager to pay attention to our requirements. My education that was disrupted by my crime was never inquired. There was no request about my future planning as well as no connection with a resource".*

This participant further explained"

*"To me, the probation was also useful in the sense that, when it comes to the probation period, I was in the habit of going to my classes in school which could not have happened in case I was in prison".*

The narratives shared by the participants on their experiences with probation officers in the process of rehabilitation and reintegration into the community outlines various failures and perceived flaws in the way the participants are assisted. There was a sense of disappointment that was expressed by many of the participants who felt that their dealings with probation officers were equivalent to the norm of the procedural operation being carried out rather than a meaningful approach towards their rehabilitation and reintegration to society. The views of the participants explore that the personal and individual risk need assessment and subsequent assistance was a missing link in the reintegration process through probation.

In addition, the accounts imply lack of consistency between the oral promises made by the probation officers and their conduct with none or minimal efforts undertaken to help with concrete solutions to tackle the particular vulnerabilities the young offenders experience during the period of probation. Moreover, the experiences presented by the participants portray that there is a vacuum regarding their various criminogenic needs. Such as educational interruptions, family integrations, and substance use problem, which commonly must be mitigated, not to mention poorly recognized, during probation time. Although some participants could remember certain minor advantages of being in probation (e.g., having an opportunity to attend school) the general point that was made by the participants was the feeling of unfulfilled needs and the absence of meaningful support on the way to their successful rehabilitation and reintegration.



### **Effectiveness of the Services Provided During Probation**

When the participants' perspective was inquired whether the probation served its purpose in the context of them being re-integrated into their respective communities, most of the participants indicated that the probation served them in the way that they were out of prisons and were living a prison-free life. But they had to be assisted to discover a skill or a technique that will enable them lead a successful and productive life.

One of the participant declared:

*The best thing that Probation gave to us was the opportunity just to live our life without going to prison other than the fact that we had committed a crime and we ourselves, were willing to stay in prison until the sentence is over. Other than that all I can recall is that we have learnt nothing special in probation that can assist us in the cause of a positive or successful life"*

Another participant revealed:

*"Sorry and awfully sorry, probation was the killing off of time. The entire play was strategized on the meeting of the probation officer on a regular basis. It has been an experience during probation to be taught how to set our needles in terms of meeting the probation officer. We were also taught how to handle the probation officer in case we default on attending the meetings".*

The insights shared by the participants concerning the efficiency of the services offered to them throughout the probationary period shows that they felt disappointed and did not observe any benefits connected with personal growth or assistance in living a good life. The participants did not convey any significant advice or helpful feedback; rather, a major feeling was the procedural nature of probation in the sense that it is partially just a duty to meet with the probation officer on a regular basis. This was a case whereby the participants developed a difficult impression of probation as a mere formality without developing the thought of being in the phase to grow or undergo the process of rehabilitation or successful integration back into society. The experiences shed light on the necessity of providing more intensive support, instructions, or interventions to meet their needs, issues or personal growth in the context of the probationary stage. Furthermore, the stories provided by the respondents focus on the fact that there was nothing of substance to take away after going through the journey of their probation session, i.e. the necessity to go through scheduled tours, implying that it is not the content of the interactions and their results that may be seen as important or impactful. On the whole, the stories of the participants revealed the feelings of dissatisfaction and a sense that probation was a **life-wasting** procedure where no real tangible outcomes were given to their personal development and positive transformation.

### **DISCUSSION**

The findings of the current study offered valuable insights on the experiences of the juvenile offenders in the area of probation services in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The implementation of the role of probation in rehabilitating and reintegrating young offenders raises important issues concerning the system. Although, probation is regarded as a central mechanism of alleviating the stigma against juvenile offending and integration into the community, in this study, a sharp mismatch between theoretical considerations and their actual practice was identified. Although the JJSA, 2018 has been much more detailed in clearly specifying the role of the probation officer at different phases such as the police custody, investigation phase, during the bail stage, during the institutionalization of the juveniles,

monitoring the welfare services and the post-release rehabilitation phase, the research concludes that the probation is insignificant. Accordingly, the findings of this study endorse the findings of another study conducted by Sajid, Ahmed, and Ashiq (2021), which also highlighted such major gaps.

A common theme that emerged from the narratives of the juveniles was a confusion regarding the aim and purpose of the probation services. The understudy juveniles were not provided with the knowledge regarding the benefits, aim and objectives of the probation. Resultantly, they considered it a chilled punishment, which coincides with the findings of Khan et al. (2021) who observed a similar lack of awareness among the juvenile offenders in Pakistan on the rehabilitative nature of probation (Ullah & Daraz, 2024). This misconception shows that there is a crucial necessity of effective communication on the goals of probation by legal representatives and probation officers, which was highlighted by Ali and Raza (2022) in their research on juvenile justice reforms underway in Pakistan. The same has been summarized in different places across the globe with McNeill (2019) who explained that the discreteness in probation goals may cause confusion among the offenders who eventually become impeded in their rehabilitation process.

The fact that the participants demonstrated a lack of probation officers during police custody puts serious question marks against the enactment of the Juvenile Justice System Act 2018. Although there are legal requirements that probation officers should be informed of a juvenile's arrest (Section 5(b)), all participants expressed that there was no intervention. This result repeats the results of Ahmad et al. (2021), who also made notes about similar inconsistencies in probationary practices in the early stages of police contact. Moreover, Mears and Travis (2019) research demonstrates the necessity of early intervention of the probation officers to reduce the negative effect of the justice system on young offenders, and so their involvement could affect the outcome of the process in police custody dramatically.

At times of the bail process, the experiences of the participants unfolded significant variability in the involvement of probation officers, such as some participants reporting positive interactions, while others describing a transactional relationship, often contingent on personal favors. This observed inconsistency is deeply problematic, supporting the findings of Babar et al. (2022), who remark about the dire need for standardization in the roles and responsibilities of probation officers in order to ensure fair treatment and support for juvenile offenders. Furthermore, the concerning discrepancies in experiences bring up many questions related to the training and accountability of probation officers. They are instrumental in emphasizing the necessity for ongoing professional development and oversight. With reference to the international context, the same kind of concerns are sparked, where studies reflect that inconsistent practices among probation officers could bring about substantial imbalances in service delivery and outcomes for juvenile offenders (Petersilia, 2018).

The results reveal that the government lacks probation officers in the oversight of reintegration and welfare services to juvenile offenders remarkably. Participants complained about the lack of interactions and contact with the probation officers before or after their prison leave. This is similar to the works of Shah and Qureshi (2023), who point to the necessity of complete support on the part of probation officers when it comes to effective **reintegration**. In addition to that, according to international studies conducted by McNeill et al. (2020), one of the key factors that influence the decline of recidivism rates is a good observation and guidance during reintegration. The fact that investigators are few in the rehabilitation context alludes to the view that there is lack of implementation of the roles of probation officers that are pivotal to the successful reintegration process.

In general, most of the participants gave low ratings on the effectiveness of probation services, which is an indicator of disillusionment on the services that they are accustomed to. Even though some admitted that they were happy not to be imprisoned, many did not find in probation the instruments of personal growth or leading an effective life, or an orientation code. The finding can be corroborated with the study by Iqbal (2023), who established that juvenile probation in most cases fails to solve the underlying problems that lead to delinquent behavior. Moreover, the works compiled by Durlauf and Nagin (2019) focus on reminding that no supporting input and programming can contribute to keeping the realm of probation just an empty procedure instead of being a mean of change to young offenders. This result was highlighted by the absence of significant encounters and the customization of support, which prompts the reconsideration of probation practice so that it can tie into rehabilitative aims.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of the study regarding the experiences of juvenile offenders with probation services in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of the juvenile probation system:

- Development and implementation of comprehensive training programs to educate juvenile offenders about the objectives, services and benefits of probation services.
- Arrangement of workshops aimed at improving communication between legal representatives, probation officers, and juvenile offenders, ensuring that offenders fully understand the purpose and goals of probation.
- Making sure that the probation officers are involved from the moment of arrest, as mandated by the Juvenile Justice System Act 2018, to facilitate timely support and intervention.
- Advocate for an increase in the number of trained probation officers to ensure adequate supervision and support for juvenile offenders throughout their probation period.
- Introducing a monitoring and evaluation systems to assess the performance of probation officers and the outcomes of probation services, ensuring accountability and continuous improvement.
- Establish partnerships between probation services and local community organizations to provide additional resources and support for juvenile offenders during their reintegration process.
- Develop aftercare programs that offer ongoing support and guidance to juvenile offenders post-release, helping them to navigate challenges and maintain positive life choices.
- Collaboration with policymakers to advocate for legislative reforms that enhance the juvenile probation system and prioritize the rehabilitation of young offenders.

## **CONCLUSION**

The results of this study prove the necessity of the immediate improvement in the juvenile probation system in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. This involves enhancement of openness in communication on the purpose of probation, presence of probation agency in crucial phases and holistic assistance that suits the individual needs of juvenile offenders. These reforms are necessary so as to bring in a more helpful environment where successful rehabilitation and returning to society is encouraged. The successful implementation of the recommendations can help address the gaps identified in the current juvenile probation system in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. By enhancing awareness, strengthening the role of probation officers, standardizing practices, facilitating community collaboration, promoting holistic support, and engaging stakeholders, the system can move toward a more effective and rehabilitative approach to juvenile justice.

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