



Juvenile Prison Reform in Sindh: Evaluating the Impact and Implementation of Juvenile Justice Policies

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ABSTRACT

Juvenile delinquency in Sindh, Pakistan, represents a significant and escalating challenge that underscores the urgent need for comprehensive policy reform. This study critically examines the current landscape of juvenile justice in the province, with a specific focus on the implementation and efficacy of the Juvenile Justice System Ordinance 2000 (JJSO 2000) and the Juvenile Justice System Act 2018 (JJSA 2018). Employing a mixed-methods approach including a structured survey of law students and thematic analysis this research identifies key gaps in policy execution, institutional capacity, and rehabilitative support for juvenile offenders. The findings reveal systemic deficiencies and socio-psychological factors that impede justice outcomes for youth, affecting not only the offenders but also their families, law enforcement personnel, and broader communities. The study concludes with evidence-based recommendations aimed at strengthening juvenile justice mechanisms through improved grassroots interventions, administrative reforms, and legislative enhancements.

Keywords: Juvenile Justice, Sindh, Juvenile Delinquency, Policy Reform, Implementation Gaps, Rehabilitation.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Juvenile delinquency which describes unlawful activities by minors under age 18 creates complex social problems together with economic issues and legal challenges. The problem in Sindh, Pakistan surpasses single offenders because it affects entire families and communities and state institutions. The national and provincial juvenile justice system functions to both judge juvenile crimes and support the rehabilitation process that leads to the successful reintegration of young offenders. The principle of protecting children in conflict with the law requires responses that respect their dignity and development stage while nurturing their self-worth and supporting their return to society (UNICEF Pakistan, 2020). The Juvenile Justice System Ordinance 2000 and Juvenile Justice System Act 2018 provide progressive frameworks, yet implementation gaps persist in achieving their objectives. The research examines current juvenile justice policy enforcement in Sindh through critical evaluation to develop specific reforms which address systemic weaknesses while protecting juvenile offender rights and promoting their rehabilitation.

1.2 Research Objectives

This research aims to:

1. Assess the effectiveness of juvenile justice policies in Sindh, specifically the JJSO 2000 and JJSA 2018.
2. Identify gaps and challenges in the implementation of these policies.
3. Evaluate the impact of these policies on reducing juvenile delinquency and rehabilitating offenders.
4. Propose practical and implementable measures to enhance juvenile justice policy effectiveness in Sindh.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How effective are the JJSO 2000 and JJSA 2018 in achieving their intended goals?
2. What are the main challenges and gaps in the implementation of juvenile justice policies in Sindh?

3. How do these policies impact juvenile delinquency rates and offender rehabilitation?

4. What measures can be taken to improve the juvenile justice system in Sindh?

2 Literature Review:

2.1 Delinquency Driven by Trauma

Trauma — whether abuse, violence or neglect — is a known contributor to juvenile delinquency. As noted by Ashraf and Manzoor (2025), Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are important predictors of youth violence and delinquent behaviour. Such trauma is likely to impair critical developmental processes resulting in aggressive behaviour, impulse control problems, and self-destructive mental health problems (Kerig & Becker, 2011). Humanize Despite increasing attention internationally paid to the association between trauma and negative behavioural patterns, Pakistan's juvenile justice system remains fraught with inadequate rehabilitation practices. According to Kerig (2014), "Schools for juvenile offender's detention centers lack psychological evaluation procedures and trained personnel, hence this facilitates the cycle of re-victimization of young offenders." A number of the juvenile offenders without any trauma focused therapy are pathologized (Khan, Ashraf, & Manzoor, 2025).

However, this gap is the most worrying because traumatic experiences need to be addressed and treated so they do not become a driver of recidivism. Domestic and international evidence collectively support the need for trauma-informed context applications throughout the entire juvenile justice process, from arrest all the way through rehabilitation.

2.2 Institutional Barriers and Implementation Challenges

Despite significant progress in the juvenile justice system, institutional limitations still persist in Sindh. These limitations include lack of trained personnel, inadequate infrastructure, low funding and poor coordination among various agencies. As proposed in Abbas, Chughtai and Hussain (2022), many juveniles are incarcerated in adult institutions due to shortage of detention facilities for juveniles (Hakeem et al., 2025). Therefore, decisions pertaining to bail, detention and diversion are largely made without any regard for psychological or social requirements and priorities of juveniles. This deficiencies in implementation underscore the urgent need for systemic reforms centered on capacity-building and the proper allocation of resources (Majeed, Parveen, & Zahoor, 2024). To address these shortcomings, the JJSA 2018 aims to strengthen the legal framework by classifying crimes, institutionalizing diversion mechanisms and mandating establishment of observation homes and rehabilitation centers (Majeed, Saleem, Ahmad, & Qudsia, 2024). Although the Act is in line with international child rights norms as mapped out in the UNCRC, the enforcement of its provisions has also not been consistent. The presence of juvenile courts remains very limited and methods used to categorize an individual's age are applied in different ways (Batool, 2024). Rehabilitation Approaches and Reintegration Mechanisms Liquor control, trafficking, and abuse of alcohol among adolescents have not been adequately addressed through alternative forms of delivery systems or alternative methods. More general recommendations were identified and recommendations to be implemented during the year 2024 (Additional Resources: Juvenile Justice Committees, Victim Assistance Centres, Crime Prevention and Control Center, etc). The purpose of juvenile justice systems around the world is to rehabilitate and reintegrate young offenders in society. In Pakistan, however, the aim of this goal is considerably compromised by lack of well structured programs and support services; the Juvenile Justice System Act (JJSA) of 2018 provides for the establishment of rehabilitation centers, however few of

them are operational and the few that are operational lack essential educational, vocational and psychological services (Haider, Begum, & Ali, n. d.).

Likewise, program use of probation and parole is poorly developed and community-based rehabilitation models are not used (Murtaza, 2023). Studies have demonstrated that after release from prison, positive results in rehabilitation are significantly enhanced by strengthening family and community support and providing access to vocational training and psychological counseling (Shahidullah & Das, 2017). Therefore, multisectoral intervention must be in place whereby social workers, educators and mental health professionals are actively engaged to ensure effective rehabilitation programming.

2.3 International Best Practices and Comparative Perspectives

International standards, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Beijing Rules, emphasize the importance of a juvenile justice system that prioritizes rehabilitation and centers around the child. While the Juvenile Justice System Act (JJSA) of 2018 in Pakistan is in line with these principles, effectively implementing them presents considerable challenges (Shahidullah, 2012).

In contrast, countries like the UK and New Zealand focus strongly on strategies such as diversion, community service, and restorative justice. Techniques like family group conferencing and victim-offender mediation have proven effective in reducing recidivism rates and improving psychosocial well-being (Winterdyk, 2002). By adopting these approaches, Sindh has the potential to enhance its juvenile justice framework, ensuring that it aims not only to punish offenders but also to reform them.

International standards such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Beijing Rules emphasize a juvenile justice system that focuses on rehabilitation and child centered. While the Juvenile Justice System Act (JJSA) 2018 in Pakistan is in line with these principles, implementation is a big challenge (Shahidullah, 2012).

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3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study uses mixed method research design to thoroughly examine juvenile justice policies and their implementation in Sindh. By combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches this methodology allows for qualitative insights from open ended surveys. This design enables to have richer understanding of perceptions, experiences and suggestions of emerging legal professionals while allowing flexibility in interpreting the data and identifying themes.

3.2 Data Collection

The primary data for this research was collected through open ended questionnaires from law students studying in higher education institutions in Hyderabad and Jamshoro regions of Sindh. These students were selected as they are the next generation of legal professionals, familiar with legal systems and can provide valuable insights on juvenile justice.

3.3 Survey Distribution:

Total 50 open ended questionnaires were distributed in two academic institutions:

University of Sindh, Jamshoro: 30 questionnaires were administered to students of Faculty of Law. This institution is a reputed center for legal education, known for its comprehensive curriculum and active involvement in legal reforms.

Hyderabad Law College, Hyderabad: 20 questionnaires were given to students of this college which is known for its specialized

legal training and encouraging student participation in legal discourse and advocacy.

Nature of Data: Open ended design of the questionnaires allowed respondents to elaborate in detail and hence rich narratives were captured with diverse perspectives. The responses revealed observations on scope of legal education, gaps in legal infrastructure and inefficiencies in judiciary's handling of juvenile cases.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

All necessary ethical protocols for academic research were followed. Informed consent was taken from each participant before data collection. Participants were informed of the voluntary nature of their participation, their right to withdraw at any time and the objectives of the study. Anonymity and confidentiality was ensured by not collecting or disclosing any identifying information. All data was stored securely and used only for academic purposes.

4. Data Analysis and Findings

The thematic analysis of the open-ended questionnaire responses obtained from law students in Hyderabad and Jamshoro revealed several important insights. Four primary ideas came from this investigation:

4.1 Theme 1: Deficiencies in Implementing Juvenile Justice Legislation

From the data, one main idea that jumped out was the evident discrepancy between policy and actual implementation. Students raised objections about the erratic and slow enforcement of these laws even though India has strong legal structures like the Juvenile Justice System Ordinance 2000 (JJSO) and the Juvenile Justice System Act 2018 (JJSA). Limited institutional capacity, red tape delays, and a lack of qualified staff were noted by delegates as major hurdles to the successful implementation of these regulations. Many of the people who responded stressed that hazy coordination between judiciary, law enforcement, and rehabilitation programs has resulted in patchy service delivery and subpar results for juvenile offenders.

4.2 Theme 2: Weak Infrastructure and Specialized Institutions

Respondents stressed the immediate requirement for juvenile specific legal and penitentiary facilities in Sindh. Students noted the lack of full operating Borstal facilities and distinct juvenile courts, which unfortunately pushes young people into adult systems. This scenario violates the rehabilitative ideas juvenile justice statutes seek to uphold. Furthermore, often cited as structural deficiencies undermining the intended child friendly approach to justice were the absence of specialized juvenile police units, badly equipped detention centers, and insufficient age determination processes.

4.3 Theme 3: Lack of Rehabilitation and Post Relaxation Support

Students also said that the almost complete absence of practical rehabilitation options was a major worry. Many of the answers noted that juveniles frequently leave the system unassisted as regards continuous education, vocational training, or mental health support. This makes it extremely challenging to readapt into society, which causes many young offenders to relapse back into criminal activity. Law students also noted the absence of trauma-informed standards in detention facilities, implying that the existing system mostly disregards the need of psychological healing and behavioral transformation.

5. Discussion

After reviewing the answers, it was evident that legal students themselves see the gaps in their curriculum where juvenile justice legislation and children's rights are concerned. Several members noted that their legal education offers either little representation or not enough actual world examples of these important subjects. This deficit creates a huge knowledge gap for would be legal professionals meant to argue for and safeguard children's rights within the legal system.

the data reveal a significant disconnect between the objectives of juvenile justice measures and the practical challenges encountered in reality. This gap not just points up logistical problems but also highlights major issues about the lack of political and administrative will to give children's health top priority in the justice system. Students' ongoing criticisms of insufficient infrastructure underline a critical need for investment in particular facilities providing juveniles the respect and treatment they genuinely merit.

Furthermore, of concern is the absence of rehabilitation and reintegration programs since this implies a revolving door scenario for juvenile offenders kept reentering the system under supported conditions. These observations correspond with current academic literature stressing the importance of a community centered, trauma awareness, and thorough approach to youth rehabilitation.

Furthermore, the deficiencies in legal education highlight the immediate need to overhaul and better the law curriculum. Since this is a critical first move in attaining significant system reform, it is imperative to make sure that future legal practitioners are well armed to handle the complexity of juvenile justice. The replies reveal that students, even during preparation, are keenly aware of organizational deficits and are anxious to drive for change. Their comments offer invaluable perspective on the changes needed.

6. Recommendations

Along with good legislation, good juvenile justice calls for a strong support network made of experienced professionals, active agencies, and a knowledgeable legal community committed to child protection and social reintegration. From the results and debates, we advise the following actions to better the juvenile justice system in Sindh:

1. Absolutely important is complete enforcement of every section of these acts all throughout Sindh.
2. Regular monitoring and review will help to establish their efficacy.
3. Dealing with circumstances including minors calls for the creation of specialized juvenile courts, which will make sure their trial separate from adults'.
4. To meet worldwide expectations, interior juvenile detention centre facilities must be improved, therefore providing enough education, medical attention, and recreation opportunities. The creation of community-based programs supporting juveniles' rehabilitation and reintegration will ultimately decide their long-term success. More financial support and supplies are needed for juvenile justice schemes to ensure enough staff, training, and infrastructure.
5. Implementing trauma screening and psychiatric counselling services in all juvenile detention and rehab facilities is essential. First and foremost, should be the use of skilled mental health practitioners to design personalized treatment plans targeting trauma and behaviour issues.
6. Develop Rehabilitation and Reintegration Programs: Together with mentorship while detained and after release, create organized rehabilitation systems for juveniles offering vocational training and academic support. Establish relationships with grassroots groups and nongovernmental organizations to help reintegration programs.
7. Police officers and judges along with probation officers must regularly attend seminars on juvenile legislation and child psychology so to be aware of little rights. Create specialized police units for children that use noncoercive child handling techniques.
8. Let Age Verification Processes Be Standard: To stop minors from being incorrectly tried as adults, apply consistent scientific and medically approved age determination methods across all regions.

9. Following JJSA 2018 criteria, set up Juvenile Justice Committees to oversee diversion programs and exercise informal resolution methods as necessary.
10. Revise legal education curricula to include extensive content on child rights and juvenile protection legislation as well as restorative justice principles while incorporating practical field learning experiences. Integrate Juvenile Justice.
11. Create separate oversight agencies to review juvenile justice enforcement and provide yearly performance evaluations to maintain responsibility.

7. Conclusion

In Sense Although a serious problem, juvenile delinquency in Sindh calls for a multifaceted strategy. Also emphasizing underlying issues, it enhances rehabilitation initiatives and guarantees a just and effective judicial system. More so Pakistan has legislative progress like the Juvenile Justice System Ordinance 2000 and the Juvenile Justice System Act 2018, but the on-ground Sindh shows there are substantial gaps with how these laws are put into practice, with not enough facilities and service delivery. Moreover, the points of view of law students—who will become future stakeholders during this legal system—clearly emphasize that we must change from punitive to rehabilitative designs these young people. Institutional changes and trauma-informed treatment should support this. The results highlight that successful juvenile justice depends not only on strong laws but also on an efficient environment. This encompasses specialized facilities and trained staff members as well as the emotional support children truly need. Still more so, in this ecosystem are crucial reintegration routes. Multisector collaboration is needed to bridge the gulf between policies and actual daily application. One also needs political will. As well, there is a dedication to respect the rights and dignity of every child in conflict with the law. Sindh can advance towards a more fair and efficient juvenile justice system by applying these policies at local, official, and political levels. Young generation's rights and future possibilities could be defended by this mechanism.

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