

Association between effectiveness of probation system and rehabilitation of offenders in the Punjab, Pakistan

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Abstract

Probation system constitutes an essential organ of criminal justice system which reintegrates criminals into society. The study aimed to know association between effectiveness of probation system and rehabilitation of offenders in Punjab Province, Pakistan. Sample of 511 probationers as respondents was selected proportionately from 10 districts of Punjab province. Results of study showed high association between supervision of probation officer and rehabilitation of probationers. Probation system was noted significant for rehabilitation of probationers with satisfactory self-esteem. Thus offenders of minor offences should be given opportunity of probation and professional training of probation officers may prove effective in reintegrating the offenders into society.

Keywords: probation, offence, prison, Pakistan, rehabilitation, Punjab, effectiveness

Introduction

Criminal justice system is the collection of all government agencies which manage criminal justice system's functions, including operations, administration or technical support (Schmalleger & Smykla, 2001). As Criminal Justice System provides a mechanism of social control (Seigel, 2005), therefore, Probation system was introduced in criminal justice with the intent of reforming offenders (Ghosh, 2006) through correctional treatment in the community (Aulakh & Khan, 2005). Hence Probation System is a correctional process (Srivastava, 1970) which allows for conditional and revocable release of convicts in the community (Macionis, 1999) under the supervision of a probation officer (Ellsworth, 1996). Probation officer gives advice to the probationer on how to live a law-abiding lifestyle (Healy & O' Donnell, 2008). According to Encyclopedia of Britannica (2002), the probation process in criminal justice system for an adult begins with a pre-sentence investigation of the offender after guilt has been established.

Probation system is effective as this emphasizes on rehabilitation and re-integration of offenders (Garland, 1997) with the aim of positive

reshaping the criminal's personality (Crow, 2001). Probation system acts in two ways; one it provides a service to offenders to stop them from becoming professional criminals (Martinson & Wilks, 1977) and second Probation system helps offenders to become useful and productive citizen of society (McAnany & Fogel, 1984). However, the practice of probation system focuses on the philosophy of rehabilitation (Brownlee, 1998) and offenders are regarded an appropriate human resource (Robinson, 2005). In probation system, rehabilitation is a treatment which aims at reducing the inclination of individual offenders to commit crimes in the future (Ellsworth, 1996). The rehabilitation, according to the probation law, follows the court orders that asks probation officer to prepare and submit a social investigation report/pre-sentence report about the offender (Zafar, 1983). The probation officer does the pre-sentence investigation to learn family and social background of the offender and, thus assesses strengths and weaknesses of the offender with a view towards working out a treatment programme for him or her (Fox, 1972). Prisons are the breeding places for professional criminals (Jilani, 1999). Prisons perpetuate criminal behavior (Garland, 2001) and it does not reform the criminals (Devasia & Devasia, 1992) but imprisonment brings a deep feeling of alienation among the inmates (Korn & McCrokke, 1959).

Rationale of the study

Alienation has a dehumanizing effect on inmates (Khan, 1981) and prisoners engage themselves in self-destructive behavior (Haycock, 1991). For this reason, probation system is alternative to harsh punishments and imprisonment (Schmallegger, 2009). Regarding Pakistan, mostly, a poor who commits crime due to poverty and sense of deprivation face imprisonment in minor offences but when he or she comes out of imprisonment, the inmates socialize them into a hardened criminals. Therefore probation is an essential component of criminal justice system in Pakistan and Probation affords the criminal another chance for rehabilitation and normalcy. However, in Pakistan there are insufficient scientific studies to prove association between probation system and rehabilitation of offenders. Thus study was conducted to know 'whether there is an association or not between rehabilitation of offenders into society and the probation system' with the following specific objectives:

Objectives

1. To examine the extent of rehabilitation of offenders under the supervision of probation officer
2. To analyze the association between effectiveness of probation system and rehabilitation of offenders

Hypotheses

H1: There is an association between supervision of probation officer and rehabilitation of offenders

H2: There is no association between supervision of probation officer and rehabilitation of offenders

Data and Methods

Methodology is essential in collecting and managing the data for statistical analysis. The population of the study consisted of all the male adult¹ probationers in 36 districts of Punjab who had also spent some duration in prisons. The sample was finalized at two stages. At first stage, random sampling technique was used to draw ten districts out of 36 districts of whole Punjab. Time and cost were the limits of the study due to which sample was limited to ten districts.

At second stage, 511 adult male probationers were selected from ten districts of Punjab by using proportionate sampling technique (table1). However the proportion of each district was fixed as 10% to total number of probationers in every district to make true representative sample.

The data was collected through a structured questionnaire. Previous literature of the study helped in devising the questionnaire. The probation officer from every district was approached by the researchers and probation officer was requested to arrange an interview meeting of the researchers with the respondent. As most of the respondents were illiterate and could not fill the questionnaire which was developed in English language therefore the researchers filled questionnaire through arranged meetings with the respondents. The collected raw data was entered into SPSS-18 to apply statistical tests for the confirming correlations among variables.

¹ Above 18 years of age

Table: I Sampling technique of the Study

District	No. of Probationers in sampled district (N)	Proportion of each district (n)
Bahawalpur	596 (N1)	60
Bhakkar	257 (N2)	26
Faisalabad	927 (N3)	93
Gujrat	372 (N4)	37
Jhelum	293 (N5)	29
Khanewal	261 (N6)	26
Layyah	324 (N7)	32
Mianwali	693 (N8)	69
Sahiwal	531 (N9)	53
Sheikhupura	862 (N10)	86
Total	5116 (N)	511(n)

Source: Directorate of Reclamation and Probation Punjab (2013)

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

- i. In the research process, only male adult offenders were included in the study because it was easy to access male.
- ii. The probationers whose probation order was for one year were included in the study.
- iii. Female offenders were excluded from the study because it was difficult to access them for data collection.

Descriptive Statistics

For bringing data in the computer, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. Simple frequency tables were made to interpret the response variables. In order to have empirical results of association between supervision of probation officer and ‘ rehabilitation of probationers, chi-square was used.

Table II: Descriptive data on rehabilitation of the offender

Rehabilitation of the Offender <i>f (%)</i>	SA	A	U	D	SD
Assistance from probation officer helps in rehabilitation of probationer	178 (34.9)	277 (54.3)	30 (5.9)	20 (3.8)	6 (1.2)
Probation period is helpful for probationer to re-integrate into society	141 (27.5)	296 (58.1)	64 (12.6)	5 (0.9)	5 (0.9)

The level of self-esteem of probationer remains satisfactory	115 (22.5)	261 (51.1)	103 (20.2)	17 (3.2)	15 (2.9)
Probationer is not stigmatized for his offense by the members of society	88 (17.3)	217 (42.5)	178 (34.9)	21 (4.1)	7 (1.2)
Probationer avails the equal opportunities as member of society	116 (22.6)	285 (55.7)	70 (13.8)	33 (6.5)	8 (1.2)
Probationer is involved in family decision as respected member of family	186 (36.4)	240 (46.9)	33 (6.5)	37 (7.3)	15 (2.9)

SA : Strongly Agree A: Agree U:Undecided: D: Disagree SD : Strongly Disagree

Table II shows frequency and percentage regarding extent of rehabilitation of the offender under the supervision of a probation officer. Thus according to information about the statement ‘assistance from probation officer helps in rehabilitation of probationer’ 54.3% of the respondents agreed, 5.9% undecided, 3.8% disagreed while 34.9% strongly agreed, and remaining 1.2% strongly disagreed. Regarding information about ‘probation period is helpful for probationer to re-integrate into society’ more than half (58.1%) of the respondents agreed, 12.6% undecided, 0.9% disagreed, 27.5% strongly agreed, and only 0.9% strongly disagreed with the statement. About the statement ‘level of self-esteem of probationer remains satisfactory during the probation period’ 22.6% strongly agreed, 51.0% only agreed, 20.2% ‘undecided’, 3.2% disagreed and only 2.9% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement that level of self-esteem of probationer remains satisfactory.

In response to the statement ‘probationer is not stigmatized for his offense by the members of society, 42.5% of the respondents agreed, 34.9% undecided, 4.1% disagreed, 17.3% strongly agreed, while only 1.2% of them strongly disagreed on with the opinion. One of the main purposes of placing offenders on probation is to bring some positive changes in their offending behavior and reintegration. Therefore, it was important to know if probationers of this research study had felt any positive changes regarding their offending behavior for which they were/are on probation.

Table 2 also gives information about the statement ‘probationer avails the equal opportunities as member of society’ in response to which 22.6% strongly agreed, 55.7% agreed, 13.8% were undecided, 6.5% disagreed and only 1.5% strongly agreed with the statement. Regarding the opinion ‘probationer is involved in family decision as respected member of

family' 36.4% of the respondents strongly agreed, 46.9% agreed, 6.5% were undecided, 7.3% disagreed and only 2.9% strongly agreed with the opinion. People commit crimes through no fault of their own but criminals themselves become the victims of social injustice, poverty and racism. Hence their acts are a response to the society that has deprived them of their fundamental rights. The destitute and impoverished upbringing may cause them psychologically abnormal and this abnormality further enhances their criminal behaviour. The people want protection from crime but they also favour programmes designed to help unfortunate people who commit crime due to social and psychological deprivations. Henceforth the Rehabilitation Model embraces the notion that proper care and treatment can modify attitude and behavior of criminals into productive and law-abiding citizens (Siegel, 2005)

Table III: Association between supervision of probation officer and rehabilitation of offenders

Supervision of probation officer	Rehabilitation of probationers			
	<i>Low</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Good</i>	31	36	45	112
<i>Better</i>	75	83	90	248
<i>Best</i>	41	52	58	151
Total	147	171	193	511

Chi-square value = 1.48 Significance Level: $\alpha = 0.05$ $p < 0.001$

Table III indicates the empirical association between supervision of probation officer and rehabilitation of offenders. The chi-square test tells that out of 511 respondents, 193 (37.8%) had high chances to be rehabilitated under the supervision of a probation officer, 171 (33.5%) had medium while 147 (28.8%) had low chances of rehabilitation under the supervision of a probation officer. The table under discussion also shows that out of 511 respondents, 151 had best opportunity of rehabilitation (29.5%) under the supervision of a probation officer, 248 respondents had better chances (48.5%) and 112 had good opportunity (22%) of rehabilitation under the supervision of a probation officer. Thus it is concluded that probation system has significant association with rehabilitation of offenders. For this reason we accept our hypothesis 1 which says; 'there is an association between supervision of probation officer and rehabilitation of offenders'. However we reject our hypothesis 2 which says, 'there is no association between supervision of probation officer and rehabilitation of offenders'. Earlier studies also found that

probation system effectively rehabilitate and re-socialize the offenders (Aulakh, 1986). According to Gullen and Gilbert (1982) rehabilitation is the only justification of punishment that obligates the probation system to care for the offender's needs.

Conclusion

Probation system is significant in rehabilitating the offenders without sending them into jail. Rehabilitation of offenders, who are involved in minor crimes, is greatly associated with probation system. The study examined the association between effectiveness of probation system and rehabilitation of offenders in Punjab province, Pakistan. Results of the study concluded that there was significant association between supervision of probation officer and the rehabilitation of offenders in Punjab, Pakistan. Probation system was found essential component of criminal justice system in Pakistan for re-integrating the offenders into normal social set up that improves their self-esteem in society.

Recommendations

1. As probation system is effective in rehabilitation of offenders therefore the number of probation officers may be increased through new recruitment. This will be helpful in giving access to maximum number of petty offenders.
2. The judicial officers should encourage the probation of those offenders who are not involved in habitual or heinous crimes.
3. Professional training for probation officers may be made mandatory to enhance their professional competency and establishing sympathetic attitude towards the adjustment of probationers.

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