



Exploring the Integration of Restorative Justice into the Criminal Justice System of Pakistan

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Abstract

The concept of restorative justice has recently evolved into a practical framework for criminal justice systems worldwide, as it offers new techniques to reduce recidivism and facilitate the successful reintegration of individuals who have previously committed offenses into the community. Currently, the criminal justice system of



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Pakistan is confronted with the problem of growing recidivism rates, which raises questions about the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs and the reintegration of offenders into society. The current study investigated the feasibility of integrating restorative justice practices into the criminal justice system of Pakistan to decrease recidivism and improve rehabilitation procedures. Through interviews with a wide range of stakeholders, including legal experts, correctional officers, religious scholars, and community development members, valuable insights were obtained regarding the perception, barriers to integration, and crucial measures associated with the integration of restorative justice in Pakistan. Findings support its role in rehabilitation, reconciliation, and community healing, suggesting it will help reduce the current recidivism rate. Cultural tendencies towards community dispute resolution could make integration easier, but barriers such as institutional opposition, resource restrictions, and social stigma also exist. Public awareness campaigns, focused education, and legal reform were among the recommendations by stakeholders. This study provides a foundation for future research and policymaking to establish a more equitable, effective, and humane justice system by shedding light on the difficulties associated with employing restorative justice in traditionally punitive systems.

Keywords: *Restorative Justice, Recidivism, Criminal Justice Reform, Legal Framework, Qualitative Research*

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The criminal justice system is meant to uphold social order, deter and reduce criminal behavior, and punish and rehabilitate offenders (Davies et al., 2005; Feeley, 2019). Its

three primary parts are the judiciary, which interprets and applies the law in court; the police, who are in charge of upholding the law and capturing offenders; and the correctional system, which supervises different types of punishment as well as rehabilitation for those found guilty (Lynch, 2014). Recidivism, or the tendency of a previously convicted criminal to re-offend, is a crucial factor in evaluating the effectiveness of the criminal justice system's rehabilitative goals (Hemphill et al., 1998; McKean & Ransford, 2004).

The criminal justice system in Pakistan has been profoundly influenced by its colonial past, during which British legal traditions and Islamic law components have been extensively incorporated (Ali, 2015). The system involves multiple entities, including the legislature, law enforcement agencies, correctional facilities, and prosecution services. Every entity fulfills a substantial function; however, it frequently encounters criticism concerning its performance in reducing recidivism (Jamshed et al., 2020; ur Rehman et al., 2021).

The present judicial system faces growing recidivism rates, which test the efficacy of correctional facilities' rehabilitation initiatives and offenders' reintegration into society (Shuja & Abbas, 2022). The failure of existing reform policies to disrupt the recurring offense pattern highlights the limitations of conventional punitive approaches, which prioritize punishment (Ahmad et al., 2022).

Current reform strategies have yet to break the cycle of re-offense, drawing attention to the constraints of traditional punitive methods that emphasize retribution (Anwar et al., 2015). In light of the 40% overcrowding in correctional facilities and the escalating rates

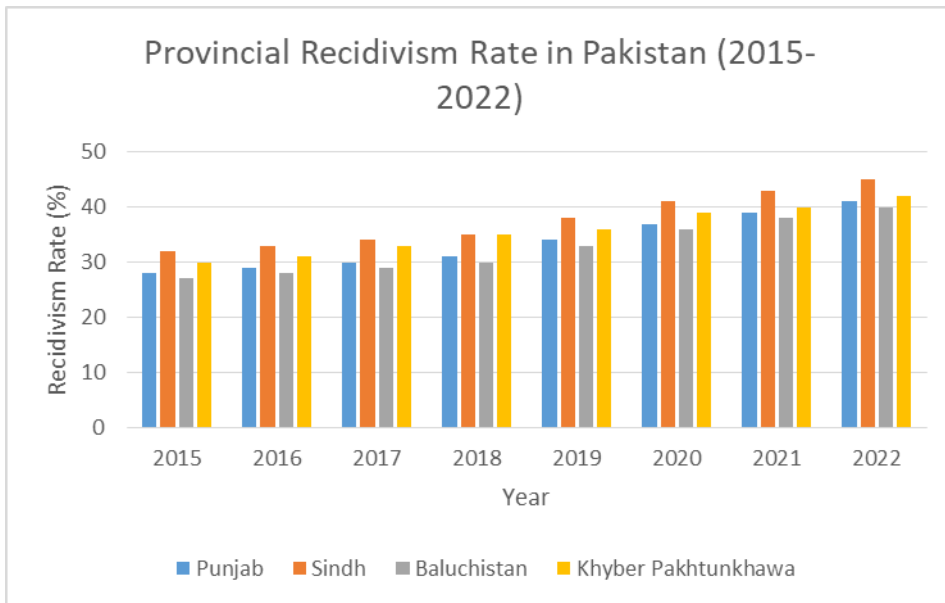
of recidivism, there is an urgent need for novel and efficacious rehabilitative strategies (Nabi et al., 2021).

Present Condition of Recidivism

According to Figure 1 data from the Ministry of Human Rights in Pakistan, recidivism rates varied across the country's four provinces (Sindh, Punjab, Baluchistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) between 2015 and 2022.

Figure 1

The recidivism rate in Pakistan



Source: Ministry of Human Rights, Pakistan (2023)

Notably, Sindh has the highest recidivism rate, 45%. In contrast, Punjab's rate is 40%, Baluchistan's is 39%, and KPK's is 41%. These results underscore the need for focused criminal justice reforms and successful rehabilitation and reintegration programs.

Ex-inmates are unprepared for life after release and more likely to commit crimes again since the prison system places a strong focus on punitive measures rather than rehabilitative treatment (Khokhar et al., 2023). Furthermore, correctional institutions do not offer crucial rehabilitative programs, including elementary schooling, career development, and psychological assistance (Gul, 2018; Khan, 2010). An additional factor recognized as contributing to increased recidivism rates is the prolonged duration of the court process, as 1.9 million cases await a ruling (Javed et al., 2021). Altering the existing approaches to offender rehabilitation is the only feasible course of action (Ali, 2015; Nadeem & Khan, 2017; Rajput & Benavides-Vanegas, 2022). As the rate of recidivism continues to rise, it is imperative to investigate alternative methodologies that may bolster the justice system's capacity for rehabilitation, such as restorative justice.

Current Study

The current study examines the possibility of adopting RJ techniques into the criminal justice system of Pakistan to reduce its prevailing recidivism rate. In pursuit of this aim, interviews were conducted with various stakeholders, including legal experts, law enforcement personnel, correctional officers, religious scholars, and community welfare members, to obtain their viewpoints regarding the adoption of RJ techniques into the criminal justice system. The main aim of the present study was to ascertain any impediments that might hinder the effective execution of RJ in Pakistan and to offer

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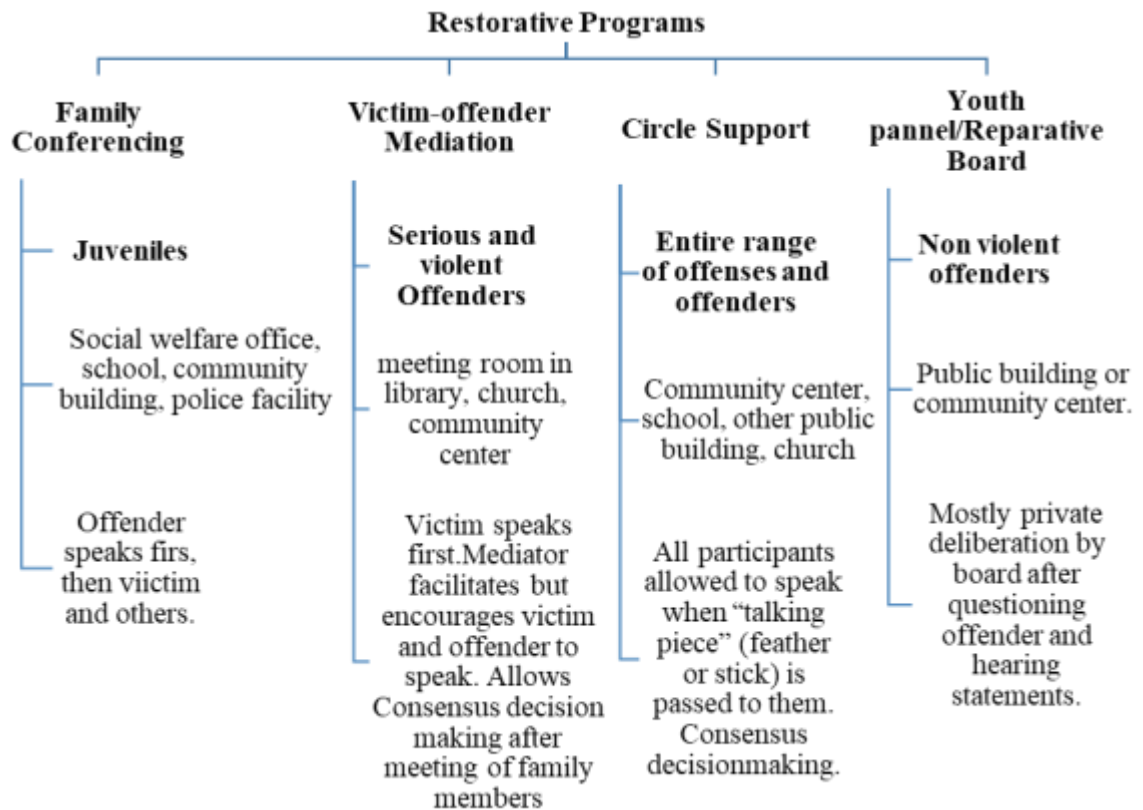
pragmatic suggestions for surmounting these obstacles. The objective of this research is to make a scholarly contribution to the ongoing discourse regarding criminal justice reforms in Pakistan by developing a comprehensive framework that advocates for effective rehabilitation, reintegration of offenders into society, and ensuring social peace.

Restorative Justice

Restorative justice (also known as RJ) functions as a substitute for punitive measures (Brooks, 2017). Instead of punishment, it prioritizes victims' interests and restores social peace by reintegrating offenders into society (Braithwaite, 2003; Daly, 2000). RJ encompasses a wide range of approaches (figure 2), including circle sentencing, offender-victim mediation, and family group conferences.

Figure 2

Restorative Justice Programs



Source: Zehr and Mika (2017)

RJ techniques have been associated with decreased rates of recidivism on a global level (Hayes, 2013; Robinson & Shapland, 2008; Shapland et al., 2006), providing nations with practical models to consider as they seek alternatives to conventional punitive systems (Piggott & Wood, 2018).

RJ conferencing, an approach that facilitates direct interaction between offenders and their victims, has demonstrated encouraging outcomes in deterring recidivism (Hayes, 2013; Jeong et al., 2012; Strang et al., 2013), particularly among youths. By

expanding this to adult populations, Sherman et al. (2015) discovered comparable patterns in decreased arrests subsequent to RJ engagement, strengthening the argument for the wide-ranging applicability of RJ.

A systematic review by Fulham et al. (2023) demonstrated that RJ programs can lower offenders' rates of recidivism. In Dallas, parole offenders who participated in the Bridges to Life program (BLP) had lower recidivism rates (Armour et al., 2005). Similarly, a study examining the Halt program in the Netherlands revealed that RJ initiatives have the potential to enhance academic achievement and decrease rates of recidivism among youth (Vooren et al., 2023).

Rj in Pakistan

The fundamental Islamic tenets that guide the legal system of Pakistan intrinsically endorse notions of restitution, healing, and forgiveness. These principles are in accordance with the tenets of restorative justice, which seek to restore integrity and foster unity within the community (Absar, 2020; Hascall, 2011). Islam, being the predominant religion in Pakistan, exerts a substantial influence on the legal and ethical structure, specifically concerning matters of justice (Lau, 2005). The Islamic tenets of Afw, which pertains to forgiveness, and Diyya, which pertains to compensation, are in close accordance with the principles of restorative justice, which are reconciliation and reparation (Absar, 2020; Muhammad, 2020).

In addition, the creation of dispute resolution councils (DRCs) in tribal communities in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) facilitates this process of transition by

offering mechanisms for resolving disputes at the community level (Khan et al., 2022). However, these initiatives are limited and disintegrated within a punitive legal structure.

Braithwaite and Gohar (2014) investigated conventional approaches to resolving conflicts, including the Panchayat and Jirga systems, and found evidence of a cultural preference for restorative practices. However, there is a dearth of comprehensive research examining the precise impacts of RJ on recidivism in the criminal justice system of Pakistan, which underscores a substantial domain that warrants further investigation.

The Juvenile Justice System Ordinance (2000), an example of progressive legal reforms, signifies an effort to incorporate restorative principles into the juvenile justice system. These reforms prioritize rehabilitation and social reintegration for juvenile offenders under the supervision of a probation officer and rehabilitation center rather than incarceration, showing efficient results in decreasing recidivism (Rana, 2022; Shah et al., 2020).

A study conducted in a correctional facility in Sindh Province demonstrated the benefits of implementing RJ practices, such as the Criminon Model, which prioritizes education and practical skills for incarcerated individuals and has shown positive results in lowering recidivism rates when compared to traditional methods (Memon et al., 2022) et al., 2022). However, a more comprehensive assessment of RJ's effectiveness within the Pakistani criminal justice system is required to understand its effects on recidivism.

Methodology

Research Design

An exploratory qualitative approach was chosen because it provides the varied perspectives of diverse stakeholders, as opposed to the more limiting lens of quantitative research (Newman & Benz, 1998), leading to a better understanding of complex social phenomena and generalization (Maxwell, 2021).

The purposive sampling method was used to guarantee that a wide range of expert's viewpoints was represented (Campbell et al., 2020), thereby augmenting the depth and relevance of the findings (Palinkas et al., 2015). The participants were selected from the Multan District in the Pakistani province of Punjab.

Data collection

Interviews

We conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with a carefully selected group of 55 stakeholders¹, including legal experts, correctional officers, community development workers, and religious scholars (Table 1). We aimed to explore three questions: 1) How do different stakeholders in Pakistan perceive restorative justice? 2) What barriers exist to integrating restorative justice practices into Pakistan's criminal justice system? 3) What key steps must be taken to integrate restorative justice into the Pakistani criminal justice system? Each interview lasted about 60 minutes, which was considered enough for a thorough examination of opinions while keeping participants interested (Silverman, 2017).

¹ We wanted to include Judges but due to current political unrest situation, Judges were excluded from the participant selection criteria.

After 45 interviews², we reached data saturation, an essential point in qualitative research that signifies the absence of fresh material or themes in the information being collected (Baker et al., 2012). However, to make sure that the themes were thorough and supported by evidence, we adhered to the idea of scientific rigor and performed ten further interviews to confirm saturation (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

Data

Analysis

After the interviews, we translated the conversations from Urdu to English word-for-word and used thematic analysis to find common themes. By employing this methodological approach, we were able to extract valuable themes from complex data in a structured yet adaptable manner (Guest et al., 2011). As a result, we were able to synthesize the perspectives of stakeholders regarding the feasibility, barriers, and suggestions.

Informed Consent

We ensured that the interviewees were aware of the objectives of the study, the confidentiality measures, and their level of autonomy in participation (Crow et al., 2006) by obtaining their informed consent prior to conducting the interview.

Findings and Analysis

Theme.1 Stakeholders' Perspectives on RJ

² The interviews were conducted from 14 January to 04 March, 2024.

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Many stakeholders (70%) demonstrated a profound comprehension and support for the core principles of RJ. They perceived RJ as a method of reconciling and mending relationships (Table 2), as opposed to simply penalizing wrongdoers.

Stakeholders' familiarity with RJ: Although some stakeholders (5%) considered it a new name for the jirga system, the majority of the participants (95%) had an in-depth knowledge of RJ. Regarding reducing the current recidivism rate, a lawyer who has been practicing criminal law in Multan High Court for six years stated,

“Europe developed the RJ model in prisons to increase empathy and minimize recidivism, but Pakistani prisoners are typically considered as a strain on society.”

(Legal expert)

Additionally, a correctional officer who is working in a correctional facility for two years stated,

“While working in prisons, I learned that punitive rehabilitation tactics fail. Criminal justice might benefit from restorative justice.” (Correctional Officer)

The officer's statement illustrates that present correctional methods, which only focus on punishment rather than rehabilitation, fail to reduce recidivism and promote good behavior.

The officer and lawyer support RJ by emphasizing rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders rather than punishment. This strategy restores communal safety and individual integration.

Community members praised RJ for upholding community values and promoting peace and trust. A member who has been working in community service for more than ten years expressed,

“I like RJ mediation because it resolves disagreements without tearing communities apart. It follows our forgiving and peacemaking principles.” (CDW)

Community member highlights the importance of RJ as a method for resolving disputes and preserving social cohesion, along with traditional beliefs that prioritize communal harmony above punitive actions.

Cultural practices of RJ in Pakistan: RJ concepts are deeply ingrained in cultural and spiritual practices within Pakistan. The Islamic doctrines that advocate for harmonious cohabitation and reconciliation are similar to the concept of RJ. Closely aligning with the ideas of RJ are the Islamic notions of Afw and Diyya, which pertain to forgiveness and recompense. A religious scholar who has been preaching Islam for eight years stated,

“Islam has stressed atonement and reparation. Muslims may apologize for injury by paying Diyya (Money).” (Religious Scholar)

Additionally, another religious scholar explained the whole philosophy,

“If he[the victim] accepts the money and forgives him[the offender], then he[the offender] should ask for forgiveness from Allah[GOD] and promise to Allah he will not repeat it.” (Religious Scholar)

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Diyya supports RJ's goal of fulfilling victims' needs and allowing offenders to make amends for their wrongdoings.

Pakistan has a lot of history and culture, and the inhabitants have been following traditions for a long time. These traditions derive from religious principles and opinions. Many regional and tribal communities use Jirga or Panchayat to resolve disputes. These strategies promote conflict resolution via agreement and reconciliation. One member who has been serving in the community for six years explained,

“The Jirga has always stressed community cohesion above punishment. We seek advice from respected community members and affected parties to identify resolutions that achieve mutual satisfaction and preserve harmony.” (CDW)

In addition, a lawyer who is practicing family law in Multan High Court stated,

“The community's belief in fairness aligns with RJ principles like mediation and circle sentencing. Similar to jirga or panchayat, these ideas emphasize on dispute resolution and relationship preservation.” (Legal expert)

Since RJ and traditional dispute resolution are similar, Pakistan's cultural environment may be helpful in integrating RJ techniques within the formal legal system.

Potential Strengths: The stakeholders acknowledged that restorative justice promotes the healing process, peacemaking, and reformation of offenders and reduces the workload of the criminal justice system.

A correctional officer who has been working in prisons for seven years expressed,

“The strategy supports accepting responsibility for criminal behavior, enabling corrections as well as reintegration, and lowering the chance of repeat violations.”

(Correctional Officer)

Additionally, another correctional officer who has been working in the parole and probation department for six years stated,

“RJ methods such as community work, technical education, and religious activities can reduce current recidivism rates and facilitate the successful reintegration of offenders into society.” (Correctional officer)

The correctional and probation official believes RJ's community-based offender management might reduce Pakistan's prison system's workload as this system often struggles with overpopulation and shortages of resources. Furthermore, RJ places significant emphasis on the rehabilitation of offenders. This practice eventually lessens the probability of recidivism and contributes to the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of the criminal justice system.

On the other hand, a victim's lawyer stressed the benefits of RJ, particularly in improving the satisfaction of the victim.

“The RJ mediation approach gives victims a chance to see offenders own up to their wrongdoing and make positive behavioral changes, giving the sufferer pleasure.” (Legal expert)

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Since traditional legal institutions focus on punishment, victims sometimes feel excluded.

In order to help victims find closure and healing, RJ emphasizes their active participation in the justice process. This approach may help victims get justice and emotional healing.

The current court system lacks community engagement in the justice process, separating the justice system from citizens. A community member explained, *“The lack of community engagement in our judicial system creates a division between lawbreakers and the general public, whereas RJ practices place community participation at the forefront in order to address the deficiencies of conventional legal procedures and offer a more comprehensive and effective strategy for managing offenses.”* (CDW)

By fostering community engagement, RJ builds trust and confidence in law enforcement. It improves community-law enforcement cooperation, ensuring public protection and safety.

Theme 2. Barriers to integrate RJ

Pakistan's criminal justice system may benefit from RJ integration. However, stakeholders expressed concerns about institutional opposition, lack of funds and support from the government, negative perception of offenders in society, and limited awareness among institutions (Table 2), which might delay RJ integration into the current criminal justice system.

Institutional resistance: The existing legal framework prioritizes punishing offenders above repairing the harm they create, making RJ difficult to accomplish.

For instance, a correctional officer stated,

“A judge may simply pass a verdict, the police can apprehend the perpetrator, and lawyers can profit from both the victims and the criminals.” (Correctional officer)

Further, a lawyer stated,

“The concept of RJ is rarely addressed in our legislative and the court systems.” (Legal Expert)

According to some participants, local politicians and influential people are taking advantage of the present legal system and are against any kind of systemic reform. A lawyer explained,

“They [Politicians] put pressure on the Ministry of Human Rights and legislative assembly to not change the current justice system because most of the time they are behind the criminal act and support the offenders”(Legal expert)

The Minister of Human Rights in Pakistan is required to get a vote of confidence from members of Parliament in order to not only become the Minister but also to continue serving in his current role. On the other side, local power brokers are crucial to a member's re-election prospects in Parliament. As a member of a community service summarized,

“The system has become politicized, with large jails built for political purposes rather than rehabilitation of offenders.” (CDW)

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Due to political favoritism and structural flaws in the current criminal justice system, 87,712 people in jails (National Prison Administration, 2022) do not have access to recovery and reentry programs.

Lack of resources and support: One major issue stakeholders raised was the shortage of resources and trained staff to support the justice system, community organizations, and correctional facilities. As stated by a correction officer, " These initiatives are challenging to implement due to the absence of funding and trained individuals."

Furthermore, a lawyer stated,

"RJ projects in the present justice system need enormous encouragement and funding from the government and human rights authorities." (Legal expert)

The absence of support from politicians and judges of the Supreme Court makes it difficult to obtain money for RJ implementation. As a community member stated,

"Lack of funding [national or international] limits RJ training and pilot operations, limiting our ability to prove RJ's efficacy." (CDW)

Obtaining funds for RJ programs is challenging because of the emphasis on corruption among institutions. As a community member explained,

"If the Ministry of Human Rights or government provides funds, then a large portion goes directly into politicians' pocket." (CDW)

Social stigma: Individuals who have committed offenses are seen negatively in society. This widespread social hatred creates enormous barriers to efficiently executing programs

aimed at rehabilitating or reintegrating criminals into society. As stated by the correctional officer, *“Once a criminal, always a criminal,”* he added, *“A snake never forgets to bite.”* (Correctional Officer)

Additionally, a community member stated,

“Offenders are often seen as a societal burden. After his release, others [Individuals in society] stigmatize him as a “criminal.” If a crime occurs, people automatically presume that he is the perpetrator.” (CDW)

The social disapproval linked to previous criminal conduct may create obstacles for individuals with a criminal record to get education, jobs, and housing, all of which are essential elements in facilitating their ability to live a stable and fruitful life. Moreover, this social stigma may also severely impact the psychological welfare of individuals who have committed offenses, impeding their ability to recover and overcome their past.

Lack of Awareness among Public Institutions: According to the participants, one of the obstacles to this process is the current lack of awareness and education among institutions. For instance, a correctional officer stated,

“One major barrier to implementing restorative justice processes is the institution's lack of understanding and awareness. To successfully execute this plan, each officer must have a comprehensive understanding of its significance and procedural elements.” (Correctional officer)

Additionally, another correctional officer said,

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“Their training predominantly relies on traditional policing techniques, which encompass the utilization of physical force, such as employing sticks to strike offenders or confining them in isolation.” (Correctional officer)

Integrating RJ into the Legal system will involve significant changes to attorney and judge training programs, legal ministries, and the Senate, which supervises the justice process. It would also require a thorough system review, including revising offender rehabilitation programs, changing correctional officer training, and adopting a new approach like RJ to reduce recidivism, promote rehabilitation, and improve social welfare.

Theme. 3 Critical Strategies for RJ Integration in the Criminal Justice System

Stakeholders stressed that Pakistan's criminal justice system needs legislative and educational modifications. Participants said that legislation is required to recognize and support RJ in the law. They also underlined the need for educational improvements to ensure judges, lawyers, and law enforcement officials understand and effectively implement restorative justice methods (Table 3). The stakeholders also stressed the need for public knowledge and support for RJ as a viable alternative to punishment.

Pilot Programs and Legal Amendments: Using pilot programs within certain jails and court processes is an effective way to evaluate and improve the RJ principles. This technique makes it possible to properly plan and strategically apply RJ procedures, which in turn increases the likelihood of attaining favorable results. As a community member said,

“A pilot project in correctional facilities is required in order to demonstrate the efficacy of RJ.” (CDW)

The judicial system of Pakistan has to undergo legislative adjustments to integrate RJ techniques. As a lawyer explained,

“Developing a restorative justice framework requires significant legislative changes, including recognizing restorative practices as legitimate court measures for addressing crime.” (Legal expert)

Additionally, another lawyer explained,

“A bill passed by the parliament (senate) could effectively promote the practice of RJ in Pakistan.” (Legal expert)

These changes will make it easier to restore traditional cultural dispute-resolution techniques while making sure the tactics follow international legal standards.

Educational reforms: The participants emphasized the inclusion of RJ principles into the academic curriculum for interested legal practitioners. They suggested that individuals can improve their skills by studying RJ in depth in an academic environment, which will enable them to raise questions about the current criminal justice system and also allow them to apply these concepts effectively. A correctional officer stated,

“Law schools can instruct future legal professionals on the efficient and careful application of RJ.” (Correctional officer)

Law schools can promote RJ as an alternative to the punitive method of punishing

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offenders. Additionally, the scholars will be promoters and implement these principles as mediators or community reparations in the future. A lawyer further explained,

“RJ studies will not only give future lawyers the skills they need to do well in their field, but they will also help everyone understand how the law affects their daily lives.” (Legal expert)

Inclusion of RJ in education is essential as education has two primary functions: providing people with the information and abilities to understand the social problem and participate in legal procedures and establishing a cultural environment that promotes and maintains these changes.

Public Awareness: The participants suggested many strategic approaches for spreading awareness about RJ in Pakistan. Each strategy focused on distinct techniques and aimed at different population sectors. For instance, a correctional officer highlighted the need for comprehensive training sessions for our community leaders and educators. He stated,

“We can empower individuals to promote RJ and build a network of informed practitioners who can successfully promote its ideas in their communities by giving proper information and skills.” (Correctional officer)

Additionally, a lawyer proposed,

“Local NGOs should host workshops and podcasts with RJ professionals from other nations to offer knowledge on RJ's functioning and implementation.” (Legal expert)

Conducting workshops for educators and other community members is essential for spreading knowledge about RJ. These seminars should provide individuals with key information that will assist them in advocating for and implementing RJ practices within their communities. By using online platforms such as live sessions and podcasts, we can expand the reach of RJ teaching to a broader audience. Online platforms such as Facebook and Instagram will provide information about RJ to various audiences (from young to old), promoting a worldwide discussion on the most effective methods and difficulties associated with implementing RJ.

Moreover, Academic institutions have a vital role in advancing RJ by including it in coursework and encouraging student engagement via research and discussions. As stated by a community member,

“Students-led RJ research initiatives and conferences are crucial to training future RJ scholars and practitioners.” (CDW)

Applying RJ in scholarly research may help institutions promote the development and use of these strategies in professional settings. It allows a fresh cohort of professionals to gain the necessary expertise and commitment to execute restorative justice principles effectively.

Discussion

The present study's findings offer insight into integrating RJ techniques in the Pakistani criminal justice system, which is struggling against recidivism. Pakistan's high recidivism rate underscores the need for alternate approaches to rehabilitate and reintegrate

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offenders. On a global scale, RJ approaches have been linked to reduced rates of repeat offenses, offering practical models for countries exploring alternatives to traditional retributive systems (Kimbrell et al., 2023; Sherman et al., 2007; Sherman et al., 2015; Wilson et al., 2018). Through an in-depth examination of stakeholder interviews, it has been found that RJ is a feasible approach to decrease recidivism rates by eliminating the root causes of criminal conduct and fostering a rehabilitative atmosphere. RJ principles are well aligned with the traditional and cultural practices of justice in Pakistan, the concepts of Afw and Diyya in Islam, which refer to forgiveness (reconciliation) and compensation(reparation), jirga, and panchayat (mediation and circle sentencing). However, these practices are only found in tribal areas, which provides foundational support for integrating RJ in the judicial system. While there is a trace of RJ in cultural practices, the current justice system prioritizes punishing offenders over addressing the harm caused by their actions. Stakeholders pointed out some critical barriers to integrate RJ into the criminal justice system, which include a negative perception of offenders in society, lack of financial support from the government, and institutional resistance. To integrate RJ into the criminal justice system, stakeholders suggested that legislative and educational changes and community participation are essential. Proposed changings include amending current laws and creating a legal framework that enables and encourages alternative methods of justice. Additionally, inclusion of RJ principles in the curriculum of educational institutions. Stakeholders emphasized community engagement in social transformation. By implementing public awareness campaigns through seminars, social platforms, and community activities, we may effectively disseminate the ideas and benefits of restorative justice. Zehr (2015) emphasized the importance of

community participation in establishing a conducive atmosphere for implementing RJ techniques. Engaging the community in the rehabilitation process can potentially decrease the rates of repeat offenses (Cullen et al., 2017). We may create a judicial system emphasizing restoration by providing education and training for judges, lawyers, and law enforcement officials. The transformation described here involves transitioning from a punishment or isolation mindset to a focus on achieving peace and resolving conflicts (Sherman et al., 2007). Promoting awareness of restorative doctrines among justice personnel may diminish the probability of future offenses (Menkel-Meadow, 2007) and enhance the justice system's capacity to cope with the complexity of offenses and punishment (King, 2008).

Conclusion

The present study highlights the consensus among Pakistani stakeholders on the significance of restorative justice in enhancing the criminal justice system's ability to decrease recidivism, facilitate victim healing, and strengthen community solidarity. This study recommends that significant legislative changes to formally integrate RJ into the criminal justice system based on particular findings gathered from in-depth interviews with many stakeholders. In addition, it suggests establishing specific education and training initiatives for legal and law enforcement personnel to enhance their comprehension and expertise in restorative practices. Moreover, the present study suggests using well-planned public awareness efforts to obtain social support for RJ. The recommendations are derived from an in-depth examination of the existing legislative structure and the need for a more efficient and equitable judicial system that caters to the

requirements of all parties involved. The legislative and educational modifications suggested by stakeholders must ensure the uniform application of RJ concepts throughout the criminal justice system, leading to a more compassionate, improved, and productive justice system for individuals.

Future research should focus on quantitatively evaluating the effect of RJ practices on the recurrence of criminal behavior in Pakistan. Additionally, it should investigate the long-term consequences for both victims and offenders engaged in restorative justice processes and analyze the practicality of expanding pilot projects to various regions and legal frameworks.

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