

	<p>A peer-reviewed, double-blind, open-access Journal</p> <p>Research Journal of Human and Social Aspects</p> <p>Web link: https://rjhsa.com/index.php/rjhsa</p> <p>P-ISSN: 3006-9696, E-ISSN: 3006-970X</p> <p>Volume 2, Issue 3, 2024</p>	
---	---	--

From Marginalization to Reformation: A Socio-Ecological Analysis of Juvenile Delinquency and Rehabilitative Efficacy in District Jail Lahore

Zoya Abad 

BS Diplomacy and Strategic Studies, Department of Political Science, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan

Correspondence: zoyaabad7765@gmail.com

Article information

Article History:

Received: 2024-07-27

Received in revised form: 2024-08-29

Accepted: 2024-09-09

Published Online: 2024-09-21

Keywords:

Juvenile Delinquency; Pakistan Penal Code (PPC); UNCRC; JJSA; Qualitative Thematic Analysis.

ABSTRACT

This research work highlights the issues of “Juvenile Delinquency” in the criminal justice system of Pakistan. It examines the social, economic and psychological factors that compels minors into criminal activities. Major Key factors of juvenile delinquency that came out after the study interviews of the minors indicate that Poverty, broken family, Domestic Violence, wrong peer group’s influence, vulnerability to different gangs and lack of education are prime contributors to juvenile crimes. This study also sheds light on the role of Pakistan’s Legal Frame work and the working of Criminal Justice System including Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) 1860, Juvenile Justice System Act of 2018 and different Provincial child protections laws dealing with Juvenile offenders. This study also explores the facilities of education, sports, vocational training, healthcare and religious learning available to these minors in the Juvenile ward of District Jail Lahore and what kind of impact these facilities are creating on the minor offenders of jail. The policies and strategies which are addressing these juvenile delinquents confined in different jails of Pakistan need more and effective reforms.



© 2024 by the Authors. Licensee Abad. This article is an open-access distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) License <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Introduction

"Juvenile delinquency is a term commonly used in academic literature for referring to a young person who has committed a criminal offence, although its precise definition can vary according to the local jurisdiction. The specific reasons underlying these differences are unclear, but they may arise from the lack of an agreed international standard" (DJ Cornwell, 2013).

Violations of laws by minors that would have been considered as a crime if committed by an adult is called Juvenile Delinquency. The minimum age for being responsible for a crime varies around the world but most of the countries consider 18 years of age as legally an adult responsible for a crime.

Delinquency is one of the most pressing issues Pakistan is facing today. Crime rates among minors seems to be rising day by day. Children from marginalized community are more commonly observed in engaging criminal activities. Before starting my study survey in juvenile ward of Camp Jail Lahore, I had few of questions, what provokes them to commit crimes at such young age of 8 to 18? What makes them different than the normal children who are having fun with their families and friends, while the juveniles may have friends in jail but not a family. While the normal child is going school on time, learning and playing with freedom while the juveniles are provided by private teachers sponsoring by the NGO (Parhai School), normal children are provided by attention, care and love from their parents while the juvenile is deprived of all these things. These young individuals are confined in a large barracks with others like them, cut off from the outside of the world. There is the concern about the major reasons and conditions that make the children to commit terrible crimes in little age. Which factors became the root causes of snagging their childhood? What made them "Juvenile"? Everyone has long stories behind the crime. After conducting an Interview, I have come to understand that why 9 years old boy stolen the gold jewelry from the shop, why 12 years old boy started selling drugs, why 13 years old boy threaten a shopkeeper with a gun when he was

denied food? And why did a 15 years old boy murder a man who was three times of his age? There were multiple things were common in their background, they were growing up in the environment of poverty, illiteracy, family negligence, peer pressure which shaped their behaviors unethically. This article will provide a review about the lives of the juveniles in Jail, reason behind their crimes, facilities available to them, what the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) states regarding the juvenile offenders, and the future they envision for themselves.

Literature Review

The study of juvenile delinquency in Pakistan is increasingly focused on a socio-ecological framework, acknowledging that a minor's deviant behavior is seldom an isolated choice but a reaction to intersecting systemic pressures.

The Domestic Sphere: Family Dynamics and Parental Influence

The family is widely considered the primary institution of socialization. When this structure is compromised, the likelihood of delinquent behavior increases. Research by **Ahmed and John (2023)** suggests that parental behavior has a significant negative relationship with delinquency; specifically, authoritative and supportive parenting acts as a protective shield (Ahmed & John, 2023). Conversely, authoritarian or permissive styles often moderate the path toward a "criminal social identity" (Ahmed & John, 2023).

In Pakistan, domestic factors such as family disorganization, parental separation, and domestic violence are critical triggers. Studies conducted in Faisalabad and Peshawar prisons indicate that a high percentage of juveniles charged with violent crimes, including murder, belonged to families characterized by chronic social and economic conflict (Khan & Qureshi, 2022). This "broken home" phenomenon creates an emotional vacuum, leaving minors susceptible to antisocial influences as a form of "cultural resistance" (Ahmed & John, 2023).

Peer Pressure and the "Differential

Association" Theory

As a child transitions into adolescence, the influence of the domestic sphere often yields to peer networks. According to **Sutherland's Differential Association Theory**, delinquent behaviors are learned through interactions with peers who endorse antisocial conduct (Das & Sajidul Huq, 2025).

In Pakistan, researchers have developed the "**Peer Pressure and Tendency of Juvenile Delinquency Scale**" to measure this impact. Findings by **Khan (2018)** reveal that peer pressure in social settings is a more decisive factor for male adolescents than females, particularly in urban slums where gangs provide a surrogate sense of family and protection (Khan, 2018). For many marginalized youth, the peer group acts as a primary social unit when formal school and family supports are absent (Das & Sajidul Huq, 2025).

Socio-Economic Marginalization and "Status Frustration"

Poverty remains a primary driver of juvenile crime in developing nations. **Das and Sajidul Huq (2025)** report that over 80% of juvenile offenders in recent samples came from low to lower-middle-income families, and 82% had little to no formal education. Economic instability creates a state of "status frustration," where youth, unable to achieve social success through legitimate means, turn to crime—particularly robbery and drug-related offenses—as a survival mechanism (Das & Sajidul Huq, 2025). This is often exacerbated by "educational deprivation," where schools fail to provide a welcoming environment, pushing youth toward street life (Khan & Qadri, 2023).

Rehabilitative vs. Punitive Justice in Pakistan

The shift from the **Juvenile Justice System Ordinance (2000)** to the **Juvenile Justice System Act (2018)** reflects a growing academic consensus on the need for rehabilitative justice. However, evidence suggests a significant "implementation gap." Many facilities intended for counseling and vocational training are underfunded and lack trained personnel (Ahmed et al., 2025). Furthermore, the lack of dedicated

juvenile courts in regions like Punjab leads to "institutional overlaps," where minors are occasionally mixed with adult offenders, turning jails into "schools of crime" rather than centers of reform (Khan & Qadri, 2023).

Methodology

This study applies the Qualitative Research approach to understand the lives of the juvenile prisoner in District camp jail. I used survey-based design and collected data by conducting structured interviews of the juvenile offenders in juvenile ward of camp jail. Purpose was to identify the nature of their offenses, their family backgrounds, level of parental support they receive, and the conditions they are experiencing in Jail.

Sample Selection: With consultation and guidance of my subject "Research Methodology", Dr. Abdul Jabbar Awan, we selected sample of 50 male juvenile prisoners for study. Participants were chosen through purposive sampling and it's make a diverse representation in terms of the types of committed crimes, age groups and socio-economic background. Juvenile under the age of the 18years included in the research. All the participants were the male, so that study provides gender specific insights of incarcerated juvenile male's experiences and does not account for female juvenile offenders. The primary data collections tool was structured questionnaire which I designed to gather the information covering following areas:

1. Name of the offense: Type of the offense committed, imprisonment duration, reasons that caused offense.
2. Family background: Economical status and education background of the family, Family support.
3. Facilities in Jail: Availability of food, education, religious learnings, libraries, medications and interactions with jail authorities.
4. Social and psychological impact: effects of imprisonment on the mental health, behavior, and futures aspirations.

I examined the responses by applying the Qualitative thematic analysis, just examine the common reasons and circumstances that lead them to commit offense and to identify the shared challenges they have faced which help to provide the clear picture of their experiences.

Ethical Consideration: I obtained written permission letter from the Department of Political science, Punjab University approved by the IG prisoners Mian Farooq Nazir. Juvenile participated voluntarily in this survey, and their identity were kept confidentially by protecting their privacy. The interview was conducted in very non-judgmental and neutral manner with surety of no harm and distress to the participants.

Analysis

Juvenile Delinquency in Pakistan

Unfortunately, Pakistan is among countries where child delinquency rate is relatively high. What make the situation more critical is that out of Pakistan's population of 200 million, half or about 49% are under the age of 18. Among them, 22% are adolescents of age 10-18. (Ahmed, 2017) Juvenile rates high specifically in Lahore and Karachi.

In recent report of State of Children in Pakistan suggest that: In Punjab, there were around 540 minors in Prisons, Sindh reported 260 minors, Kyber Paktunkhwa (KPK) had 510 minors. Balochistan reported 55 minors. Most of these juvenile was undertrial, reflecting the ongoing delays and blockage in the judicial system.

In 1989, UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) was adopted by the United Nations. It is based on the basic principles and standards that every society should obey while treating the Children. It has helped the Children's wellbeing in developed countries. Nelson's Mandela called it, "a luminous, living document that enriches the rights of every child". Pakistan has made some progress in implementing the UNCRC, but many challenges remain and state needs to do much more to ensure the children Rights. Minor's participations in crimes is going in high rates and it has been creating significant

tensions for the government and Nationals. Through the lenses of legal framework Pakistan is dealing Juvenile offenders with Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) of 1860, The Juvenile Justice System of 2018, and the Juvenile System Ordinance 2000. The following are the exact provisions of the legislations:

1. Pakistan Penal Code (PPC):

- Section 82 states, "Nothing is an offence, which is done by a child under seven years of age" (Pakistan Penal Code, 1860).

If the offender is under seven years old, they cannot be held responsible for any action, and the case is dismissed.

- Section 83 states, "Nothing is an offense which is done by a child above seven years of age and under twelve, who has not attained sufficient maturity of understanding to judge of the nature and consequences of his conduct on that occasion" (Pakistan Penal Code, 1860).

For offenders in this age group, the courts must determine whether the child has the sensibility and maturity to understand and evaluate their actions. If the court decides that the child does not satisfy the requirement of understanding the nature and consequences of their actions, they cannot be held responsible.

1. Juvenile Justice System Act, 2018 (JJSA):

Section 2(b) states, "'child' means for the purposes of this Act a person who has not attained the age of eighteen years" (Juvenile Justice System Act, 2018)

2. Juvenile Justice System Ordinance, 2000 (JJSO):

Section 2(2) states, "'child' means a person who at the time of commission of an offence has not attained the age of eighteen years;" (Juvenile Justice System Ordinance, 2000)

3. Provincial Child Protection and Welfare Act:

Each province in Pakistan regulate laws to protect rights and welfare of the children. Aiming to prohibit the major social factors reasoning the

delinquency. For example,

- Punjab Destitute and Neglected Children Act, 2004: enacted to provide rescue, protective custody, care and rehabilitation to destitute and neglected children in Punjab.
- Sindh Child Protection Authority Act, 2011: aim to ensure the rights of the Children are upheld and to coordinate efforts to child protection in Sindh
- KPK Child Protection and welfare Act, 2010: goal is to provide care, protection, welfare, training, educations, rehabilitations and reintegration of children risk in KPK
- Balochistan Child Protection Act, 2016: providing children protection in Balochistan against violence, abuse, negligence and exploitation.

Moreover, there are many non-profit organizations like Zindigi Trust, Child Life Foundation, Transparent Hands and The Citizen Foundation (TCF) are also working in Pakistan to safeguard vulnerable children. These organizations provide safest place to these children who belongs to the working class (Child labor). According to an estimate, more than four million children in Pakistan are engaged in Child labor, which means there more chances of these children to get easily involved in Delinquency. Hence, despite of facing many challenges, Government and NGO's collectively performing their duties to mitigate the Delinquency from the Pakistan.

Aim of the Study

The study objective of this research is to analyze the juvenile delinquency in Pakistan, root causes of the delinquency, Pakistan juvenile justice system including Juvenile Justice System Act (JJSA) 2018 and the life of juveniles in Jails including the rehabilitations and facilities are being provide them. It will evaluate the availability of the food, education, libraries, religious learning, vocational training, indoor games, health care and psychological support in Champ Jail Lahore. Furthermore, this study will examine the different kind of offenses, juvenile perpetrated and

highlight the reasons and situations behind their crimes. Another purpose for this study is to observe what future juvenile predict for themselves after the termination of penalty.

Leading causes of Juvenile Delinquency in Pakistan:

I identified the few of the most common causes behind the juvenile conducted crimes.

1. **Economic hardship:** The first and foremost, juveniles faced in their lives is economic challenges and poverty. There is a famous saying: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere" by Martin Luther King Jr. Most of the juvenile belongs to the Child labor occupation, which gradually led them on the ways of crime. After working 7/9 hours a day, they used to get minimal wage which was not fulfilling for their basic necessities of life. Violence and abusive behavior of society towards them thought nothing but to opt crimes like burglary, shoplifting, robbery and drugs selling. Under the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC), robbery and is addressed in Section 390, 392, 394 while the section 9(C) deals with the offense like drug selling, particularly, "The Control of Narcotic Substances Act, 1997". To meet the basic necessities of life, these individual were forced to do petty crimes. As Henry Ward Beecher once said, "A man who is poor has no choice but to take what he can get, and often that means crime."
2. **Family Issues:** Another common problem amongst juveniles were domestic violence they experienced by their parents, teachers and relatives. They have grown up in toxic environment of violence. Broken families and lack of parental supervisions contributed to the delinquency. Being the part of violent society caused them some mental health issues as well because violence shaped their ethics and morals. Illiterate backgrounds and lack of religious knowledge made it difficult for them to choose between the right and wrongs. Sometimes belongings from these kind of scattered background, forced them in illegal works and crimes and lack of awareness and

guidance made them the part of Black Hand.

3. Peer pressure and Gang influence: Children from the broken families faced the continuous negligence of attention and supports from the parents, easily got influenced by the Gang which exposes them to the criminal networks. Becoming the part of black world made the access of drugs easy for them which lead them into addiction. Drug addicted children could leave without food but not without drugs, which indulged them into more terrible activities like rape, same-gender sex and murders etc. Pakistan Penal Code address the Murder under the section of 300 (in-intentional murder) and section of 302 which prescribes the punishment for

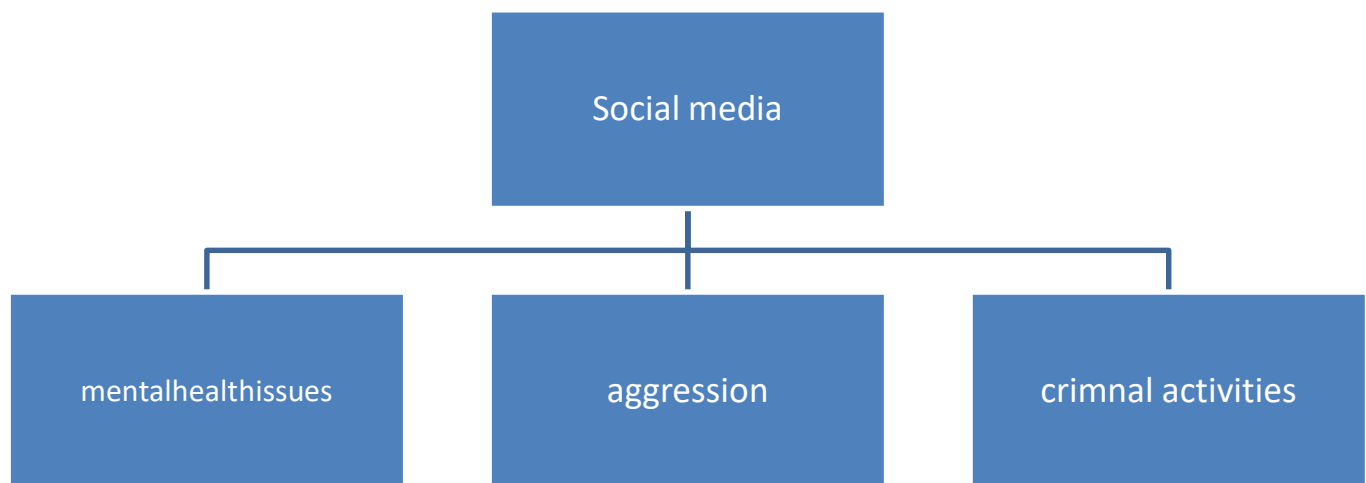
qatl-i-amd which can be Death penalty and imprisonment. Section 377 of PPC criminalized the sexual acts that are deemed unnatural. The exact provision states that:

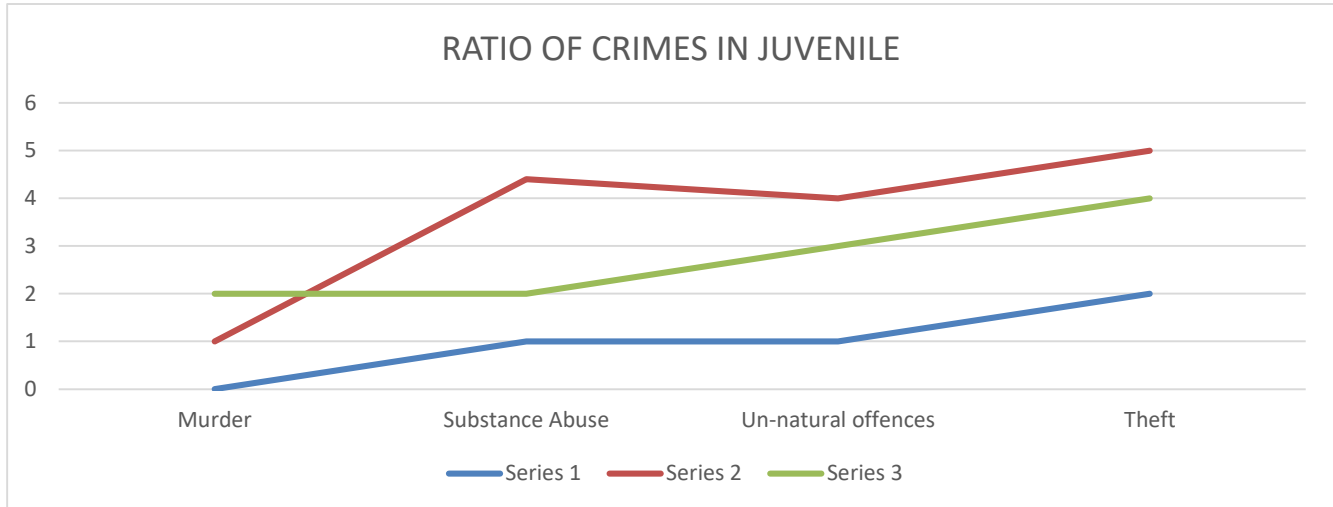
“Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman, or animal shall be punished with imprisonment for life or with imprisonment of either description for a term which shall not be less than two years nor more than ten years, and shall also be liable to fine”.

This provision has been historical used to

criminalize the same-sex relations and other acts which considered unnatural by law.

4. Media and Social influence: Violent content and criminal activities in movies, TV shows, video games and social media became the common reasons in modern age not only ruptured the young minds but also desensitized their minds to aggression and normalized criminal behaviors. The capability to tolerate small things faded away from their nature. Many forms of media depict criminals as powerful alpha male and wealthy which influenced the juveniles to perceive crimes. They thought crimes as an attractive means to gain power, respect and financial success. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram, games like PUBG and Free fires, Facebook, Snapchat created the risky and stressful environment of certain jealousy and desires for luxurious resources. Also engaged them illegal activities to gain social validations, liked and followers. Cyberbullying, agony and online challenge also contributed to delinquent delinquency. Media often glorifies the drug usage, drinking, and party culture in Pakistan. This created the curiosity and experimentations among teenagers, which has resulted in in criminal activities like drug possession and selling.





Above mentioned issues are most commonly seen in almost every juvenile in jail? The answer is yes, **Discussions**

After having discussion with the juveniles, it was very prominent in their conversations that they are being well facilitated by the jail administrations. They have been provided by all the basic necessities. There is availability of food, education, library, washrooms, proper medication and psychological support to juveniles. All of these availabilities are being very effective to them. Jail's library has 2000 of books, religious books, novels, humanity lessons based books and educational books are also included. Although the library is small but those juvenile who loves reading are taking complete advantage by reading books. After the lockout, every morning starts in jail with Namaz and Holy Quran recitation, after that juveniles go for exercise activities. The education which is being providing in created the huge difference in their behaviors. Most of the juvenile happily completed their Matriculations and they are very optimistic for further studies after confinement will complete. Some of the juvenile has completed the Quran-e-Pak with translation which became the ultimate source of their internal peace and spirituality. The interior of jail was very clean and free of dirt which indicates the jail administration take complete care of sanitation. A well mature head warder stays with juveniles all the time taking care of their regular activities. There is refreshment like indoor activities and outdoor activities available like

these reasons collectively made them different that the normal child outside. ludo, badminton, cricket and table tennis. Computer lab is also available in Jail, almost every juvenile has interest to learn computer studies. I also got to know that some of the juveniles are very good in sports and they want to become athletes. When I asked them, where they see themselves after the termination of their punishment. I saw the light of excitement on their faces, happily everyone answered with full of energy: some of them want to get higher education, some of them have skills like tailoring, welding, and mechanizing, so they were confident that they could make a fresh start using their skills and few of them are will to start their own business. Medication and healthcare are provided properly. Psychological support by expert's psychologist, benefiting the emotional well-being which helps them cope with stress, anxiety and depression. Moreover, Rehabilitation is providing to prepare them for reintegration into society, Special care and guidance are being given juvenile which is supporting them to opt calm behavior and reduced incidents of violence. Family members of these juvenile often visit them and after meeting with parents, they feel a sense of happiness. Every juvenile is full of stories, 45% percent wants to go back home because they miss their siblings and parents. They miss the homemade food. They eagerly await the moment to start living their family members. Discussions examined that these juveniles have dreams for their futures. They want to take a fresh start of life

once their sentenced gets complete.

Conclusions

Poverty is the mother of evils. In my study, I examined the poverty reflects in almost every juvenile's background. As I mentioned, there are also major social issues like domestic violence, mental health issues, gaming, social media and peer influence etc. exist in our society which lead to the delinquency in Pakistan but economic hardships are the most highlighted. As like normal child of the state, these juveniles are the future of this country. Two significant events shape their lives: first, when they commit a crime for various reasons, and second, when they are imprisoned.

References

Ahmed, F. A., Irfan, A., Urooj, A., & Shaikh, H. L. (2025). Analyzing the effectiveness of rehabilitation vs. punishment in the criminal justice system. *Review of Education, Administration & Law*, 8(1), 15–28. <https://doi.org/10.47067/real.v8i1.400>

Ahmed, M. M., & John, J. (2023). Perceptions of mental health services among the children who are in conflict with the law in Jammu and Kashmir. *Cambridge Prisms: Global Mental Health*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.1017/gmh.2023.70>

Ahmed, Q. (2017). Delinquency and Juvenile Justice System in Pakistan. *voice of journalists*.

Pakistan Penal Code. (1860). Section 82.

Das, R., & Sajidul Huq, M. (2025). The socio-economic factors impacting juvenile delinquency: An exploratory study. *International Journal of Adolescent Medicine and Health*.

The question is “How they will be treated in jail” and “Will the providing treatment in jail help to become better nationals?” It was satisfying to observe the continuous efforts of the jail superintendents in providing rehabilitation for these juveniles, helping them become better individuals for society.

Suggestions and Implication:

Keeping an eye on current Pakistan's condition, there is a still need of policy reforms, starting of the better rehabilitation programs and more vigorous support from the concerned government and different NGOs and revamping the criminal justice system with respect to minor offenders.

<https://doi.org/10.1515/ijamh-2013-0327>

DJ Cornwell, J. B. (2013). UK Aid the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility (Justice for Children Briefing No. 4). *Penal Reform International*,

Juvenile Justice System Ordinance. (2000). section 2(2).

Khan, M. J. (2018). Role of peer pressure towards tendency of juvenile delinquency among male and female adolescents. *Pakistan Journal of Criminology*, 10(1), 1–15.

Khan, S., & Qadri, H. (2023). Juvenile recidivism: Analyzing the rehabilitation strategies for delinquency in criminal justice system of Sindh. *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, 9(1).

Khan, Z., & Qureshi, A. (2022). Legal and policy responses to child abuse in Pakistan: A critical analysis of current approaches. *Journal of Development and Social Sciences*, 6(3), 738–750.

Declaration of Conflicting Interest

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to research.

Funding Statement

No funding is received for this project.