



Social Impact of Parental Imprisonment on Left behind Children: A Study of Dir Lower, Pakistan

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Abstract

This study assesses the anti-social behavior of left-behind children when their parents are convicted and put in prison. The researchers conducted a primary study and collected and analyzed data through quantitative methods. The study is conducted with the randomly selected households in Dir lower, Malakand Division. The relevant literature on the effects of parental incarceration over their left-behind children is also consulted to show the contribution of the study. The study argues that unattended children of imprisoned parents tend to show anti-social and disruptive behavior. Firstly, they do not socialize with others more often and remain to themselves. They do not abide by the approved norms of society (polite manners) since they feel neglected and left behind. Additionally, they showed rude behavior and would engage in frequent brawls in the neighborhoods. Furthermore, teasing and taunting others for their racial backgrounds or other dominant features of identity is another activity they found engaged in. The study recommends taking holistic measures for mainstreaming these children and engage them in positive activities so that they do not fall prey to criminal tendencies.

Keywords: Anti-social Behavior, Social Interaction, Left-behind Children, Children, Parental Imprisonment, Social Impact of Imprisonment

1. Introduction

The parental imprisonment refers to the confinement of parent (mother or father) in the jail when convicted. The literature on convicted parents and its effects on their left-behind children show that imprisoning of parents negatively affects their children. When parents are incarcerated in jail, their children become marginalized socially, economically, psychologically. In the absence of parents, they are deprived of proper socialization, care, and basic needs. Additionally, they are stigmatized in society and face psychological stresses. Despite their miseries, the government and society ignore them. These children face the brunt of the crimes committed by their parents. The children of imprisoned parents are the victims of misbehavior and neglect of society. The studies on this subject focus more on individual crimes and trends of punishment and rarely measure the adverse effects of parental imprisonment on their left-behind children. This study attempts to assess the social impacts of the imprisonment of parents on their left-behind children.

2. Literature Review

The studies of Johnston (1995) and Farrington (2002) show that the parental imprisonment has a profound negative effect on their left-behind children. The parental imprisonment has been related to different short-term and long-term hazard elements for children, including an expanding risk of imprisonment (Johnston, 1995). Furthermore, children with imprisoned parents practice the ill effect of emotional wellness issues, attitude problem, drop out of school, or experience issues identified with school performance (Farrington, 2002). Berry & Eigenberg (2003) have studied the effects of parental incarceration variability in the analysis of whether the children mother or father is imprisoned. The duration of sentencing and situation of children during imprisonment vary from imprisoned mother vs. father. Wide separations from children have been appearing to effect imprisoned parents, too (Schafer & Dellinger, 1999). Some studies show that 1.5 million children managed parental imprisonment consistently (Harrison & Beck, 2006).

According to the Department of Justice, in 2005, one out of every 136 inhabitants of the United States was imprisoned in prison or jail. Although this already represents a large sector of the inhabitants, the number of prisoners is increasing (Harrison & Beck, 2006). Hagan (1998) argues that it is crucial to recognize that the removal or loss of a parent affects the economic wellbeing of children and their social capital (social relations). Children may have to adopt new roles following parental imprisonment to give emotional, domestic, or financial support to other family members. Their relationships with the imprisoned parent (s) and friends are frequently suffered. For example, they may have to relocate, find a new residence or a new school because of parental imprisonment to avoid stigmatizing by society. It is necessary to act individually or locally to compensate for all these feelings and must consider the happiness of children is the main issue (Reberston, 2007). It is not easy to list the effects of parental imprisonment on children because it relates to many problems. Every day there are millions of children who are experiencing parental imprisonment all over the world and a predictable number of 800,000 children in the European Union alone. This figure is not only likely to be a traditional estimate, but also connected to children with parents in prison. Consequently, children of imprisoned parents have been labeled the ‘forgotten victims’ of our system of punishment (Walmsley, 2005).

Children with imprisoned parents are prone to antisocial behaviour (Farrington, 2002). Research shows that the overall effect of parental imprisonment differs based on whether the children father or mother is imprisoned and for how long (Berry & Eigenberg, 2003; Mumble, 2000). Furthermore, widespread separations of children have been shown to have substantial effects on incarcerated parents as well (Schafer & Dellinger, 1999). According to Shaw (1987), if we do not focus on the effects of incarceration on children, we have the risk of punishing guiltless victims and probably causing wrongdoing to the future generation because these effects are long-lasting. The parental imprisonment shows a correlation with the anti-social behavior of children. As one of the female prisoners in the study conducted by (Healy, Foley & Walsh, 2000) stated that “the damage was done before I came to prison.” This perspective corresponds to the “selective perspective.” Furthermore, children with imprisoned parents reveal emotional wellness issues, attitude problems, drop out of secondary school, or experience issues identified with school performance (Farrington, 2002). Healy et al. (2000) argue that parental imprisonment is a strong motive for aggressiveness among children, introvert conduct, guilty feelings, emotional wellbeing issues, drugs abuse, and school disappointments. Children might be protected from harmful impacts of parental detainment by

having stable care, giving game plans by their families, social and financial support, and living in a place with more thoughtful open behavior.

Nesmith & Ruhland (2008) showed that besides anti-social behavior, children with imprisoned parents become marginalized and socially excluded from society. These children do not want people to know about parent's imprisonment for fear of discrimination from friends, teachers, and society. Tudball, N. (2000) argues that 65% of children did not want to socialize with friends and remained socially excluded. It is frequently claimed that children of imprisoned parents are five to six times more exposed to be convicted than the peer group. However, enough evidence is required to prove this claim right. From the results of several studies, it is concluded that children of imprisoned parents are about three times more exposed to antisocial behavior compared to their peer group. Most studies on the emotional wellbeing of children whose parents are imprisoned are descriptive (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999). Children whose parents were imprisoned, showed extreme behaviors like aggression, deviance, loneliness, fear, developmental regression, guilt, excessive crying, and sadness.

It is noteworthy that most of the literature on the subject is produced in the western context. The issues and challenges of the left-behind children of imprisoned parents still need digging in Pakistani society. Pakistan is a traditional society where incriminating and imprisoning entail shame and social rejection. There is a dearth of literature on the adverse social effects of parental imprisonment of the left-behind children. This study bridges the gap in the literature and brings to fore the contextual issues that the left-behind children face in the wake of their parents' imprisonment.

3. Research Methods

The study uses the quantitative methodology to assess the harmful effects of parental imprisonment, which leads to anti-social behavior and social exclusion among the left-behind children. This study was conducted in district Dir Lower of Malakand division. The households that had someone imprisoned made the target population of the study. These households were selected through snowball sample. The sample size of the study was 260 households. For the collection of the primary data, an interview schedule was used as a tool for data collection. A closed-ended questionnaire was used to collect data. The researchers administered the questionnaire since most of the respondents were uneducated and could not read and write. The software of SPSS is used to analyze the data. In order to check mutual relationships between variables, a chi-squared test is used. The data is collected in district Dir Lower of Malakand Division, which is a closed and conservative society. People are not very open to strangers, especially when they had someone behind bars; thus, the researchers contacted their respondents through local people who were friends. When the contact was made, the researchers met with them for rapport building and sought their consent officially for participating in the research. After their consent, then the researcher started the collection of the primary data, which was impossible without the help of the community. The researchers carefully observed the rules, regulations, norms, values, and the culture of the target universe. Researcher strictly followed the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents.

4. Results and Discussion

A questionnaire was developed to collect data from respondents within the selected district. The univariate test was applied to find out the frequency and percentage of every respondent.

Some key attributes are shown in the table to study the adverse effects of anti-social behavior on the children after parental imprisonment. Most of the respondents, i.e., 201 (77.3%), said that those children whose parents are imprisoned did not interact with others appropriately. However, 41 (15.8%) of the total respondents favor of the statement that children with imprisoned parents easily interact with each other and society. Similarly, most of the respondents i.e., 158 (60.8%) stated that children with incarcerated parents consistently violated the norms and rules regulation of the society, while 52 (20.0%) of the total respondents were of the opinion that children with imprisoned parents did not violate the norms of society and the remaining 50 (19.2%) respondents remained neutral on the issue. Likewise, a maximum number of respondents 160 (61.5%) said that those children whose parents are imprisoned, agitate the people late at night through making noise or visiting them, while 53 (20.4%) did not agree with the statement. 50 (19.2%) of the respondents remained undecided whether the left-behind children are a nuisance for others or not. Similarly, 173 (66.5%) of the total respondents noted that children of imprisoned parents are socially neglected. However, 47 (18.1%) did not agree, and 40 (15.4%) were undecided. Furthermore, 178 (68.5%) of the respondents stated that children with imprisoned parents involve in neighborhood disputes, whereas 70 (26.9%) of the respondents did not agree with the statement. The remaining 12 (4.6%) respondents remained undecided with the statement. Moreover, 93 (35.8%) respondents were of the view that children with imprisoned parents did not give much importance to racial issues while 19 (7.3%) respondents consider that children with imprisoned parents give much importance to racial issues and the remaining 148 (56.9%) of the respondents did not answer the question and remained undecided.

Table-1: Frequency Distribution and Proportion of Anti-Social Behaviour

Statement	Anti-social Behaviour						Total
	Yes		No		Undecided		
	O.V	% .V	O.V	% .V	O.V	% .V	
Children of the imprisoned parents tend to interact with easily.	41	15.8	201	77.3	18	6.9	260
The children of imprisoned parents are continually violating the norm of society.	158	60.8	52	20.0	50	19.2	260
The left-behind children of imprisoned parents agitate the people through making noise or visiting them.	160	61.5	53	20.4	50	19.2	260
Children of imprisoned parents are socially neglected.	173	66.5	47	18.1	40	15.4	260
The children with imprisoned parents involve in neighborhood disputes.	178	68.5	70	26.9	12	4.6	260
Children of the imprisoned parents give much importance to racial issues.	19	7.3	93	35.8	148	57	260

Source: Field Survey conducted in 2016.

Different studies have been evaluated the relationships between parental imprisonment and child anti-social behavior. The already concluded that children of imprisoned parents were about three times more exposed to antisocial behavior as compared to their peer group. They also find out that a significant number of children could not live in the same locality as their imprisoned parents were living. Social effects of parental imprisonment relate to several factors such as lack of control, lack of communication between parents and children, and the social stigma linked with imprisonment. The findings of this study shows resemblance to those of the

literature and argue that parental imprisonment has a profound negative effect on the behavior of left-behind children.

4.1. Co-relationships between Variables

Family is an agreed-upon primary agent of socialization. It is the parents in the family who socialize and make a healthy personality of their children. The relationship between parents, their absence or abuse has severe social and psychological impacts on children. For example, the imprisonment of parents put a stigma on them and on the family as well. In the same way, it has been found that children with imprisoned parents face difficulties in interacting with other people. A significant association ($p=0.013$) was found between parental imprisonment and anti-social behavior of the children. Hagan (1998) argued that parental imprisonment not only affects the economic status of the children, but it also affects their social relations and organization of family life. The children may adopt new roles to provide social and emotional support to their family due to parental imprisonment. It is further explained that due to lack of parental check and control, the children are continuously violating the norm of society. Hagan & Dinovitzers (1999) noted that a significant number of children were not living in the same homes as their imprisoned parents were living, due to which such kind of children violating the norms and rules regulation of the society.

It has been found that children of imprisoned parents agitate the people late night by making noise or visiting them. Moreover, a highly significant relationship ($p=0.000$) was found between parental imprisonment and anti-social behavior in the shape of agitating the people late at night. Cohen and Brook (1987) showed that long term risks are linked with characteristics of the family instability, poor housing, and poverty of imprisoned person. Children with imprisoned parents are exposed to all of the risks such as anti-social behavior, social stigma, and due to lack of parental check, such kind of children distributed the people late at night. Furthermore, it has been found that children of imprisoned parents are socially neglected. A positive and significant relationship was found between the independent variable, i.e. parental imprisonment and dependent variable, i.e. parental imprisonment. It is further explained that such kind of children remained under the control of other male family members such as an uncle, grandfather, etc. yet they are socially neglected. The chi-square results show that $p=0.008$, which means that there is a significant relationship between parental imprisonment and feeling of social neglect among the children of imprisoned parents. Clarke-Stewart & Parke (2002) found that parental imprisonment cannot appear as the only predictor of anti-social behavior among the left-behind children. Instead, the surrounding environment played an essential role in children adjustment. However, due to the criminal behaviour of parents, the left behind children can not adjust themselves in the society and may remain socially neglected.

Another important finding of the study shows that children of imprisoned parents are involved in neighborhood disputes. It is further explained that the worst behaviors of these children are due to the lack of proper socialization, parental check, and improper guidance of parents. A highly significant association ($p=0.000$) was found between parental imprisonment and anti-social behavior in the shape of a neighbourhood dispute. Clarke-Stewart & Parke (2002) found that children with imprisoned parents show aggression and involve in neighborhood dispute as well as such kind of children also face loneliness, sadness. Children of imprisoned parents also face difficulties in school and with other peer group friends. Furthermore, due to the lack of social control, these children are involved in racial and ethical issues. Furthermore, a highly

significant association ($p=0.000$) found between parental imprisonment and anti-social in the form of racial issues. Healy et al., (2000) also found in their study that parental imprisonment is a stronger component for a scope of aggressive results for children, containing introverted conduct, guilty, emotional well-being issues, racial issues, drug misuse, disappointment from attending the school, and unemployment.

Table-2: Association between Anti-Social Behaviour and Parental Imprisonment

Statement		Parental Imprisonment								Statistics
		Yes		No		Undecided		Total		
		O.V	% .V	O.V	% .V	O.V	% .V	O.V	% .V	
Children of imprisoned parents are to tend to interact with others easily.	Y	27	10.4	9	3.5	5	1.9	41	15.8	(p=0.013) ($\chi^2=12.759$)
	N	188	54.4	61	23.5	22	8.5	201	77.3	
	U	18	6.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	18	9.6	
	T	163	62.2	70	26.9	27	10.4	260	100	
Children of imprisoned parents constantly violating the norm of society.	Y	113	43.5	30	11.5	15	5.8	158	60.8	(p=0.001) ($\chi^2=18.463$)
	N	24	9.2	24	9.2	4	1.5	52	20.0	
	U	26	10.0	16	6.2	8	3.1	50	19.2	
	T	163	62.7	70	26.9	27	10.4	260	100	
Children of imprisoned parents are socially neglected.	Y	96	36.9	55	21.2	22	8.5	173	66.5	(p=0.008) ($\chi^2=13.660$)
	N	33	12.7	10	3.8	4	1.3	47	18.1	
	U	34	13.1	5	1.9	1	0.4	40	15.4	
	T	163	62.2	70	26.9	27	10.4	260	100	
Children of imprisoned parents in a neighbourhood dispute.	Y	129	49.5	32	12.3	17	6.5	178	68.5	(p=0.000) ($\chi^2=40.964$)
	N	33	12.7	27	10.4	10	3.8	70	26.9	
	U	1	0.4	11	4.2	0	0.0	12	4.2	
	T	163	62.7	70	26.9	27	10.4	260	100	
Children of imprisoned parents give much importance to racial issue	Y	3	1.2	10	3.8	6	2.3	19	7.3	(p=0.000) ($\chi^2=31.485$)
	N	73	28.1	17	6.5	3	1.2	93	35.8	
	U	87	58.8	43	16.5	18	6.9	148	56.9	
	T	163	62.7	70	26.9	27	10.4	260	100	
Children of imprisoned agitate people late night through making noise or visiting them	Y	120	46.6	28	10.8	12	4.6	160	61.5	(p=0.000) ($\chi^2=44.496$)
	N	13	5.0	28	10.8	12	4.6	53	20.4	
	U	30	11.5	14	5.3	3	1.2	47	18.5	
	T	163	62.7	70	26.9	27	10.4	260	100	

Source: Field Survey in 2016.

5. Conclusion

The study concludes that parental imprisonment is deleterious for the child's life and affect them in various ways. Since they are deprived of their domestic supports, it takes a toll on them socially and emotionally. The left-behind children of imprisoned parents are socially neglected and lack proper socialization. They show disruptive behavior and frequently involve in brawls in their neighborhoods. Besides, they indulge in crimes, drugs, and hostilities, which leave them emotionally stressed, nervous, and sad. Majority of them join a lousy company because they lack the watchful eye of their parents. Furthermore, lack physical comfort and facilities due to no provision of financial support from society and government. Since they feel socially

neglected and remain isolated, they lack empathy for others. To put differently, they tease and hurt people around them and become anti-social. They show anti-social behavior in different forms, namely aggression, no respect for prevalent norms of politeness, using swearing and insulting language, and careless in schools/studies. Furthermore, they are also victims of different psychological disorders. In a nutshell, parental imprisonment has long-lasting adverse effects on the left-behind children socially, economically, and psychologically. The study puts forward specific recommendations for their rehabilitation as follows:

- This study recommends that the policymakers at the local, provincial, and national level should take effective measures to mainstream these children and do necessary arrangement for their education and wellbeing.
- The media and civil society should run awareness campaigns to persuade community to make personal and communal efforts to rehabilitate the left behind children of imprisoned parents.
- The state should introduce adoption and foster care programs for the welfare of these left behind children.

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