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Utilization of Religion in Rehabilitation of Prisoners in Lahore

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Abstract

The current paper aims to explore the utilization of religious teachings by the rehabilitators of prisons. Furthermore, the study explains the coping mechanism of prisoners by using religion during the process of rehabilitation. The study laid its foundation of theoretical paradigm of Reformative Theory which focuses that the object which is being used for punishment should be for reformation of the criminals instead of giving punishment. The study was conducted using a broader interpretive research design through semistructured interview guide. The population were the prisoners from the central prisons of Lahore. Considering the aim of the study, participants were recruited using purposive sampling. The police officials were gatekeepers for the study as researcher cannot directly access to the participants. To avoid any biasness, a clear criterion of participants was shared with the officials. The criterion included; the prisoners who have spent at least 6 months in rehabilitation and at least 18 months in prison, officials found active religious participation of the individuals. Considering, the participant selection criterion, the officials identified 6 participants, the collected data were transcribed into codes and themes then set in a chronological way by applying thematic analysis. All ethical considerations were made while collecting data including, anonymity, confidentiality and avoiding harm to participants and researcher. The findings of the



study suggested that prisoners are actively and effectively using religion as coping tool to overcome the hardships of the prison. Religious teaching showed them the way to seek forgiveness of God and seek their reintegration into the daily process of the society.

Key words: Importance of Religion, Prisoners, Religion, Rehabilitation, Utilization

I. Introduction

Rehabilitation is a term which is used to explain a process where an offender goes through a specific period of time in prison after committing a crime,¹ stated that the term rehabilitation is widely utilized in the literature. Within the discipline of social sciences, sociology, and criminal justice, it refers to the method which readjusts to an individual and takes him up to the amount of normalcy. This method takes place once the traditional functioning of an individual is discontinuous because of some natural or social episodes. For example, suppose someone commits a crime, afterward, he's detected, apprehended, condemned, and jailed. He will know a lot to perform within the society throughout the course of his imprisonment and quickly cuts tie from the society, he's absolute to sleep in a particular setting in the prison that is sort of completely different from the society. At this, he desires some agency that would facilitate him to readjust within the society. The rehabilitative method takes place within the social context of a state, focuses on the wrongdoer, and provides treatment to him/her to seeks orthodox behavior.

Rehabilitation means that ways or treatments which can use for the prisoner during their imprisonment to make them ready for release, the prisoners should be rehabilitated in a way that will have the permanent effects on prisoners even after release.² In the modern world the rehabilitation system has changed, from the dark ages where the prisons were used to take political revenge but now it is known as care, custody, control and correction of any person who does wrong against the norms or laws of a society to lead him toward conformity, these elements like care, correction, custody, control, cure

and re-socialization and even the use of religion where religion as a mechanism is used to overcome the non-conformist behavior are the main objectives of the whole rehabilitation system in Pakistan.³

Religion is normally considered as a matter of an individual who lives his life according to his religion and finds his reason of birth and about what is right and what is wrong in the light of religion, so, here religion plays an important role in shaping one's life and same goes for the prisoners and their rehabilitation in the prisons where a religion can play an important role and can encourage them for a second chance to go in society again as a conformist, in Pakistan the most effective and well-structured rehabilitation system was introduced in September 2009 for the militants of swat which quickly adopted by the all provinces of Pakistan, using religion as a coping mechanism for rehabilitation of the militants was a second stage of the whole process.4 Similarly, an author5 writes about the Muslim prisoners in the prisons of Britain who are labeled as terrorist and treated very strictly, he states that the chief inspector of prisons there asked to stop the labelling and rehabilitate the prisoners by using religion as a means to countering the problem, so, here the importance of religion in the rehabilitation system as a coping mechanism can be identified as a key element of the system. If as the researchers, we want to see the perspectives of other nations about religion and rehabilitation system then we must include the reference of this study⁶ which elaborate the importance of religion in rehabilitation system among Jewish prisoners via TRP (Toorah Rehabilitation Program) by the Israeli government which they enforce as a mandatory part of the prisons, in this program both the orthodox and non-orthodox must have to participate in the religious study during the period of incarceration. The above ways in which the system of rehabilitation in Pakistan, UK and Israel has been adopted in itself is explaining the importance of religion in the system of rehabilitation in prisons. Moreover, these authors⁷ talked about the importance of religiousness and spirituality and they quantified that among the population of USA 92 percent people have religion and they believe in God, they

explained that in history disabilities considered as an effect of evil spirit and its treatment was given by the religious institutes and somehow on this myth people believe and best solution of disabilities is religion. If we look upon our society with the neutral lens then we find that criminal are those who are disable to function or unable to function or to match with the standards of the societies which we call as norms and values on which our law depends and when someone is unable to follow that law we take that one as a criminal or at least consider him as a deviant, so, here is also religion can play an effective role to treat the modern disabilities of people who not able to be as conformists in their society.

Research Question

 How prisoners use religion as a helping tool for rehabilitation in prisons

2. Literature Review

In past, prisons were used to suppress the rivals in politics but with the time it has become a modern system of modern societies which is now known as a system of correction, custody, care, rehabilitation and a whole process in which a system as a whole prepares to a criminal for reintegration into society via a proper mechanism like psychologically, morally, ethically, skillfully and religiously as well. Among these mechanisms religiosity is the most effective and powerful tool to make someone understand or to put someone in the category of conformists, religion is a name of belief system which makes the values of any society and which guides people about what is right and what is wrong, on those beliefs, people spend their whole life by considering the difference between right and wrong, that's why religion is the most powerful tool in the system of rehabilitation. According to an author⁸ a patient can be served better by considering his religion and cultural belonging which clearly means that is person who is ill can be treated from his illness by religion and same in the stance of this study prisoners can be rehabilitated better by giving them religion and considering or increasing their religious attachment.

Two authors9 presented a report after doing a survey of 50 states in which they asked from the prison chaplains regarding the rehabilitation via religion and in a particular answer 57 percent of the respondents answered that the most religious extremist prisoners are Muslims that means they are more religious and are so much involved in their religious practices, so, here is a significant point that how much religious education or simply religion is important in the process of rehabilitation especially for the Muslim prisoners because, for instance, someone who gets aggressive or even cannot hear a word about or against his religion, imagine how religion does matter for him and how religion is significant to use in the opposite side like for the rehabilitation of that person. A scholar¹⁰ reviews the empirical studies on the rehabilitation of the prisoners and states that rehabilitation via religion and the function of religion in crime and deviant behavior is limited just because of lack of the interest of faith communities and actors for rehabilitation that's why a prisoner faces difficulties while going back to mainstream of society, again the importance of religion hence proved as putting as an evidence to this study, the actors in prisons are those who are responsible for implementing religious activities among the prisoners but what will happen when they do not take interest in this highly important and significant work, of course, in resultantly the crime rate will increase, the rate of recidivism will increase and religion will lose its importance in the system of rehabilitation. Rehabilitation of the prisoners, parole, probation and criminal justice system ultimately is a big question raised by the world and particularly intellectuals and scholars which also ultimately relates the rate of recidivism, the world and the developed countries today are spending a huge amount and time on rehabilitation system to make it better for the better results and less recidivism, but what is the right direction has been proved empirically by these authors¹¹, they conducted a one year religious based program for the inmates which they offered 800 religious programs or meeting to total 1,579 inmates and in which 2 prison chaplains, 4 inmates prison clerks and 232 volunteers who spent almost 21,316 hours, the approximated cost by per

inmate was 150 to 250 dollars yearly, on the other hand, other rehabilitative programs coast almost 14000 dollars yearly by per person and the results was just amazing because they noticed 779 inmates from all attended at least one religious program and they found the results as by logistic regression the more religious increase the less in-prison infraction, this is how they presented the great insights of the nature of religion in prison settings which shows the greater value of religion in the rehabilitation of the prisoners.

Although, religion plays an important role in the rehabilitation of the prisoners but in the field of criminal justice system, reformative theory plays a role of medicine for the ill criminals as crime is a disease in society which is curable, reformative theory explains that the objects of punishment should be used for the purpose of rehabilitation instead of punishment to the offenders, there is set of theories of punishment which are not mutually exclusive but give the different ways to end the criminal behavior. deterrent theory which states that the threat of punishment can stop people for doing crimes like strict laws and punishments can generate a fear of punishment to reduce the criminal behavior. Secondly, the retributive theory states that the punishment should be proportionately equal to the crime, for example, an eye for an eye. The preventive theory is from the utilitarian law reformers who stress that repetition of crimes can by reduced by disabling the offenders with various methods like punishments of serious types. Reformative theory falls on the lenient side and states that the punishment should be humanistic as the criminals are also humans and the purpose of the punishment should be to achieve rehabilitation of an individual rather than punishing him. The above mentioned theories explain the way to reduce the crimes in society but the now in modern society religion is an important key to reshape the life of an offender which can be assumed as the theory of religion and punishment.

3. Methodology

Research methodology is a way of displaying and arranging the answers of concerned research questions to make others believed on our results.

This research is a qualitative piece in nature where it has done initially studying relevant articles and books.

3.I. Population

The population of this research is central prisons of Lahore, where data have been collected from the prisoners.

3.2. Sample size and technique

Sample is a sub set of the population which has the characteristics of the population but by the nature of this study, data have collected from the prison officials and from the prisoners who are in prisons having punishments and taking interest in the religious activities in prison. The process of data collection has reached to the accomplishment by using purposive sampling technique where the researcher used a semi-structured interview guide of prior information and asked probing questions for the indepth knowledge about the topic and this process continued until getting the saturation point.

Additionally, the saturation of the data was achieved at the 4th interview from the inmates and saturation was determined on the basis of repeated patterns and responses from the respondents.

3.3. Data collection

For collecting the data initially, the criterion was set which was the prisoners should under the prison from at least last 18 months and should be under the rehabilitation process from at least the last 6 months.

3.4. Sociodemographic characteristics of the prisoners

As in sequence from respondent I to respondent 6:

	 32 45 38 34 37 	
	• 45	
	• 38	
Age	• 34	
	• 37	
	• 42	

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Gender	Male
	• I
No. of crimes	• I
T vo. of crimes	• I
	• I
	• I
	• I
	Middle
	Intermediate
	Masters
Education Level	Middle
	Middle
	Middle
	• Islam
	• Islam
Religion	• Islam
	• Islam
	Christianity
	Christianity
	Drug Smuggling
	Murder
	Murder
Crime Type	Murder
	Murder
	Rape
	• 6.5yrs
	• IOyrs
	• I5yrs
Duration of Imprisonment	• I5yrs
	• I2yrs

• 7yrs

The first step in this research was to review of the literature to be familiar with the existed knowledge about the phenomena, previous methodologies and conclusions of the previous studies were reviewed for generating the initial research questions for the study then later the research question was developed according to which the semi-structured interview guide was developed.

After developing the research guide the procedure for getting permission from the prison department was started. Initially, permission letter from the institution was sent to the prison department and all the official documents were attached. After getting approval from prison department, the visits in prison were started consisting of two days. Accompanied by an assistant for note taking purpose. After collecting the data, the data were organized, transcribed and analyzed for generating the final report.

3.5. Ethical Consideration

All the respondents were listed anonymously ensuring the confidentiality of all the respondents, all the respondents participated voluntarily and most importantly no such words were used which can harm psychologically, socially, physically and legally. The objectivity or pre-assumptions of the researcher were taken aside before conducting the interviews and pseudonyms were used in verbatim.

3.6. Rationale

The reason behind selecting the qualitative study design that interest of researcher and also the exploration of utilizing religion in the rehabilitation of the prisoners which cannot be measured but explore via in-depth interviews.

The researcher chosen the purposive sampling technique because of the criterion which was set as the inmates should be those who have been in

prison at least from the last I8 months and should be under the process of rehabilitation at least from the last 6 months.

6 interviews were conducted because the saturation of the data was achieved at the 4th interview of inmates but to enhance the validity 2 more interviews were conducted.

4. Data analysis\Results

The utilization of religion in the rehabilitation of the prisoners is a backbone of the system of criminal justice system, although, the literature critically and logically supports and explores the importance of religion and presents that how religion can reshape a personality, personality means here we consider the prisoners and their whatever biological or cultural traits for being a criminal that is not our concern but how religion can help in the rehabilitation of the prisoners is our core concern. Religion guides a person about the right and wrong no matter what religion it is but always is a source about what is right and what is wrong, similarly, in the prison, prisoners after involving in their religious practices realize about the actual position of their acts in the light of religion and this is what our study focuses to use religion as a rehabilitative tool in the process of rehabilitation of the prisoners, below the analysis of the data presents that how religion is important and effective in rehabilitation.

First of all, the collected data were transcribed into codes and themes then set in a chronological way by applying thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006).

4.I. There are 6 steps to analyze the data thematically according to Braun and Clarke (2006):

The collected data were read and reread multiple times in order to get thorough insights of the data. For further procession, the data was transcribed carefully, after the successful transcription of the data, initial codes were made out of the transcribed data. The researcher searched for the related themes and the initial themes were reviewed and major themes were developed. Then those major themes were refined, defined and named appropriately and then the final report was produced.

The major emerged themes from the data which have found on the bases of similarities and differences are as below:

4.2. Spirituality

Spirituality is an internal thing which based on an individual that how someone does his religious practices and how strong his mental level with reference to religion, mostly inmate's participants responded that religion increases their spirituality level. The overall meaning of the respondents that religion has been helping them to be more religious and more spiritual after they knew about the religious practices in prison, religious practices are the only way to survive in prison which make them more strong and hopeful as two respondents expressed below.

I offer prayer for my peace and in this way, I seek forgiveness from God, before the prison I never offered prayer but after conviction I regularly offer the prayers.

"I used to offer prayer but not strictly as I am offering here in prison and also, I have learned here the translation of the Quran which is increasing my spirituality. My concept is that by offering prayers I can make agree my God to reduce my punishment here, I was having the death sentence but with the help of my prayers and worship the court has excluded my name from the death sentence and gave me 25 years' imprisonment and now I feel like I am more religious and spiritual."

4.3. Satisfaction

Satisfaction is also an internal thing which have a huge effect on human mental level, if one is not satisfied with what he does or what he did then he cannot continue himself for that thing which he does, all the respondents said they feel satisfaction in worship which give them peace and pleasure and it ultimately helps to reduce the guilt that they were on the wrong path but now

they are satisfied, they are having punishment for what they did and is a source of satisfaction in the light of their religious guidance.

"I offer prayer to seek forgiveness of God, for my internal peace and satisfaction and I got proper education of religion like Kalma and Namaz from here and these all are mine inspirations and satisfactions, like After having punishment, I am more attracted to the religion and in future I will spend my life according to religion that is what I call my real satisfaction" "The biggest punishment in prison is to leave without your family, and my motivation when I came here, I did not know about my religion but here I learned about my religion and found the main difference of right and wrong and this is my biggest motivation which makes me satisfied."

Being a prisoner, I have learned many small things about my religion and I saw that is the only way I can satisfy myself and survive here.

4.4. Forgiveness of God

All the participants said they are seeking the forgiveness from God by offering prayers and they believe that God will forgive them for what they have done as a crime and that is what religion serves as an effective tool of rehabilitation of the prisoners. They believe God will forgive us if we seek him with a pure heart and commitment to not to repeat criminal behavior, this believe for forgiveness of God makes them strong and also helps them to survive in prison for a long time which they have to spend.

"I offer prayer to seek forgiveness of God, for my internal peace and satisfaction and I got proper education of religion like Kalma and Namaz from here and these all are mine inspirations and satisfactions, In the light of religion, I did many wrong things but now after starting religious activities I will do things which are right according to my religion and I am seeking the forgiveness of God"

"After coming in prison, I felt more fear of God as I did a wrong act that is what I call my inspiration is to I am seeking the forgiveness of God and I believe that he will forgive me as he is the most merciful"

"I offer prayer because it gives me satisfaction and peace and also reduces the fear of God that one day, he will punish me for my sin but I am continuously seeking his forgiveness by taking myself on the right path of living the life"

"My acts were totally wrong and I am ashamed on that also I found here after starting religious education that these are prohibited in my religion and now, I am scared and want God to forgive me for what I have done."

4.5. Regret

Regret means a guilt, guilt can be said as an internal destruction and this internal phenomena of human can badly effect the mental level, but religion is a weapon which has an option to forgive, the believe on God that he will forgive them if they walk on his path and ultimately it reduces the guilt and make the prisoners able to survive and rehabilitate themselves during incarceration, they all answered on the question that do you feel regret on your crime? yes, we feel regret for our committed crime.

Yes, I feel regret on my crime and mostly when I miss my family Obviously, as I am saying that I did a wrong thing which I later realized after

coming in prison and after starting my religious practices and I am ashamed for what I did.

Yes, I feel regret daily when I go for prayer.

Yes, and why should I not? I did what is against my religion.

Yes, listen, when someone lives under the walls of prison where no one hears him then the only thing which someone can have is regret.

"I mostly give education to other offenders but I have written 150 religious songs which I want to release on my religious

platforms after going back home and this feeling makes me regret of what I did and I should not be here"

4.6. Religious Practices

Religion is the basic thing for any human which guides him about what is right and what is wrong, what to carry things and how one should spend his life, when someone is more religious he feels more spiritual which exactly leads him on the right path of humanity, the most respondents said they were not used to worship before the punishment but after coming in prison the only hope they have is that God and they seek help from God, especially, two respondents of murder case stated that they were having the death sentence and they started more worship and suddenly their names were excluded from the death sentence by the court and included into the 25 years' life imprisonment.

"Before the prison I never offered prayer but after conviction I regularly offer the prayers because this is the only way I get peace and satisfaction, after having punishment I am more attracted to the religion and I recite the Holy Quran here mostly and in future I will spend my life according to religion" "I offer 5 times prayer a day because it gives me satisfaction and peace and strength for survival but before coming here, I was not like this, I was not used to offer prayers with punctuality as I am offering here and I think this imprisonment has made me more religious than ever I was and also, I have learned here the translation of the Quran which is increasing my spirituality, I think this is the result of my worship which I stared after coming here as I was on the death sentence but now, I am on the life imprisonment rather than the death sentence"

"My concept is that by offering prayers I can agree my God to reduce my punishment here, I was having the death sentence but with the help of my prayers and worship the court has excluded my name from the death sentence and gave me 25 years' imprisonment."

"I go to church three times a day and also, I am giving education to other offenders.

I feel spirituality, satisfaction, peace and to be closer with my religion that is way I am performing my religious practices

After coming in the prison, I started to participate in my religious activities

Before my imprisonment I used to go church only on Sunday"

4.7. After Imprisonment

Good and evil, both exist in society but the main thing is how someone will know about right and wrong, this is what religion holds for his followers because ultimately religion is a source of right and wrong and the theme exactly emerged that how religion has been helping the prisoners in their rehabilitation and in determining their acts as wrong, the respondents said that they have realized that they and their acts were wrong before the punishment which they know after starting the religious practices and they will not repeat the criminal behavior and will spend their life according to religion.

"There are only few years left of my imprisonment to be end and here I have learned many things about the importance of the freedom and what my religion orders me to do and how should I spend my life in society and also how should I behave with other people around me and for this time I have decided that I will spend my life under the shadow of religion which is the most peaceful thing in the world for me"

"I have clearly stated that I was wrong about what I did but I have learned and realized here in the light of my religion and I am ashamed and guilty on my crime but I will not repeat this act due to which I am suffering here"

4.8. Religion as a Rehabilitative Tool

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When inmates are asked for the reason that why they will not go for crime after imprisonment, either due to the fear of sentence or religious guidance, they all responded that they will not go for crime again because they have realized that their acts or crimes were totally wrong in the light of religion and they cannot escape from God if they do something against their religion.

I think religion is more effective than the fear of prison because religion guides us about what is wrong and what is right but fear doesn't.

"If I scare from the sentence then I will here with you but the thing is, now after learning my religion, I am scared from my God and that is the biggest reason I will not repeat the criminal behavior and this is very clear that religion effects the most"

I think religion is more effective to prevent further crime because it is a complete guideline for human beings.

5. Discussion

As this research focuses on the utilization of religion in the rehabilitation of the prisoners, having the support of the previous studies discussed in the chapter of literature review which shows that an ill person can be better cured by his faith and beliefs and universally, now it is considered that a crime is also an illness of situation, time and circumstances and can be controlled or traced out via rehabilitation system, a physical, mental, psychological and moral support to the criminals in the prisons.

An author¹² said that faith and religion of a person is a best tool to cure him, same this research which is qualitative in nature and conducted in Lahore central prison, states that there are many prisoners who have been in prison and under the rehabilitation system, during the interviews they expressed, they mostly stand by their religious beliefs and they got the power of survival from religion which means religion is an important and effective tool for rehabilitation of the prisoners. How a spiritual or hidden tool can be more effective than a tool which is visual and which can be used physically for the rehabilitation of the prisoners? Many studies show that the inner power to

fight against disease is more useful than any medicine or tool and as per this study in which researcher explores the utilization of religion by the prisoners in rehabilitation, concludes that religion which is an internal power is really useful and effective tool, it not only gives the power to prisoners to survive in prisons for a long time period but also guides them a right path of humanity and whatever the teaching of that religion, it gives them an ability to accept their wrong sides and as well as the right things, this study finds religion as more powerful and not limited as discussed by an author, 13 he said the role of religion is limited in rehabilitation system by reviewing some empirical studies, this qualitative research based on in-depth interviews shows that there is a major role of religion in rehabilitation of the prisoners, this research also supports a previous study which is conducted by two authors, 14 they experimentally proved that rehabilitation of the prisoners via religion is more cheaper and effective than other expensive programs of rehabilitation in prisons, an author 15 stated that religion guides us about right and wrong which is also one of the themes of this research where many respondents said they are realizing about their wrong acts after involving in religious practices, there are also some new themes emerged from this research like regret on crime and also how they will spend their life after completing the conviction, they responded, they feel regret and want to walk on the right path after releasing from prison. Finally, we can say that religion works for prisoners like a light in a room of darkness.

6. Conclusion/Major Findings

The study conducted to explore the Utilization of the Religion in the Rehabilitation of the Prisoners reaches to its conclusion that the most prisoners use religion as a coping mechanism to survive in their hard time in the prison which ultimately leads them toward the noble life.

Religion has a direct relation with spirituality, peace, hope and satisfaction, this study concludes that religion is the most effective and cheapest tool for the rehabilitation of the prisoners which is automatic to be adopted in the

prison but the need from the prison administration is just to give more facilities and freedom of religious activities with a proper environment.

Mostly, prisoners after committing crime, they seek something which satisfies them which give them a hope of new life in society and this research shows that religion is a perfect tool which gives a hope, a purpose of life and makes the difference between right and wrong.

Almost all the prisoners responded that they knew that they were wrong but the actual realization has been made by the religion which now seems as to be a permanent guideline for living the further life as a conformist in society.

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