

# **THE IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ON CRIMINAL THINKING AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT OF INCARCERATED POPULATION OF PESHAWAR CENTRAL JAIL**

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## **Abstract**

The main objective of the present study is to investigate the impact of religious educational program on inmates' criminal thinking and moral development in Central Jail Peshawar. A time series research design was employed, and a sample of 100 inmates was selected, including newly incarcerated individuals as well as those who had been imprisoned for no more than six months. These inmates were enrolled in educational programs. Both male and female inmates, convicted of crimes such as murder, fraud, burglary, sexual assault, terrorism, and harassment, were included. The age range of the study participants was 25 to 50 years. Inmates with psychological or physical disorders, those below the age of 25, and inmates incarcerated for more than six months already involved in prior educational programs were omitted from the study. Data was collected using standardized instruments i-e the Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles (Walters, 2006) and the Scale for Moral Development (Khanam & Iqbal, 2011). Religious education showed a negative but non-significant association with moral development ( $\beta = -0.302$ ,  $p = 0.756$ ), whereas vocational education demonstrated a positive and statistically significant relationship ( $\beta = 2.337$ ,  $p = 0.065$ ). Moral development increased significantly from Phase 1 to Phase 2 ( $\beta = 0.694$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), while no significant difference was observed between Phase 1 and Phase 3 ( $\beta = 0.237$ ,  $p = 0.115$ ). Overall, the model was statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 28.154$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that vocational education contributes positively to moral development, whereas religious education does not show a significant effect. Compared to other education programs, religious education ( $\beta = -3.08$ ,  $p = 0.379$ ) and vocational education ( $\beta = -4.017$ ,  $p = 0.379$ ) were negatively but not significantly associated with criminal thinking, suggesting only a

weak reduction effect. In contrast, criminal thinking increased significantly in Phase 2 ( $\beta = 1.489$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ) and Phase 3 ( $\beta = 1.646$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) relative to Phase 1. Overall, the model was statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 14.910$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ). Results did not support that Religious education impact on moral development and criminal thinking will be more as compared to other forms of educational intervention.

**Key Words:** Criminal thinking, Moral development, Religious Education

## 1. Introduction

Until the eighteenth century, prisons were primarily viewed as institutions of punishment. Imprisonment was introduced as an alternative to physical punishment, based on the belief that imprisonment would induce remorse among offenders, which in turn would lead to their moral reform and personal transformation (Khan, 2010). As modern correctional practices focus on criminal reforms, Pakistan prison system, in order to keep alignment with the modern correctional practices give greater importance to rehabilitation compare to punishment. On 23 June 2010, this approach towards rehabilitation was further strengthened when Article 10(2) of 1966 international covenant on civil and political rights (ICCPR) was approved, which stressed upon the importance of rehabilitation while incarceration.

Previously many theorists comprehensively study crime and criminal behavior which give rise to different theoretical perspectives. Yochelson and Samnow (1976) were one of the theorists who proposed a theory which place criminal thinking at the core of crime and this proposal of their gained significant scholarly attention (Lemieux, 2019). According to them there is a distinct pattern of maladaptive thinking which is basically responsible for criminal behavior and the only way for meaningful behavioral change is the modification of these cognitive patterns. They also talked about criminal personality as one of the factor behind the development of such thinking patterns. Building upon the work of Yochelson and Samenow, Walters (2002, 2003, 2006) developed influential models of criminal thinking. Although Walters (2006) did not fully endorse their original framework, his conceptualization of criminal thinking was grounded in their central premise that antisocial behavior is a product of free choice. According to Walters, criminal thinking represents a critical expression of this free choice, and accepting responsibility for one's actions is essential for altering criminal thinking and related criminal behavior. Walters (2001) further proposed that a "criminal lifestyle" results from criminal thinking processes, which are characterized by eight distorted thinking patterns: mollification, cutoff, entitlement, power orientation, super-optimism, sentimentality, cognitive indolence, and discontinuity.

On the other hand Moral development refers to an individual's capacity to differentiate between morally right and wrong actions (Darley, 1993). The foundational contributions to the study of moral development were made by Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg (Byrne & Hummer, 2016). Both theorists approached moral development from a cognitive perspective, asserting that advanced moral reasoning depends upon sophisticated cognitive operations (Tomlinson et al., 1974). Gibbs (2003) observed that offenders commonly exhibit

developmental delays in moral judgment, accompanied by distorted thinking patterns and deficits in social skills. He further argued that delays in moral development significantly contribute to the emergence of antisocial behavior (Clare et al., 2011). The primary objective of the present study is to examine the impact of religious education on the moral development and criminal thinking of inmates housed in Peshawar Central Jail. The importance of religious education cannot be denied as a study by Noegroho *et al.* (2018) on the use of religious counseling as an informal educational strategy in drug users' rehabilitation. The outcome demonstrated that in addition to law enforcement, medical, and psychological rehabilitation, social, herbal, and spiritual rehabilitation through religious counseling as an informal educational approach has also been used to promote the prevention and rehabilitation of drug misuse. Likewise Pettalongi *et al.* (2022) stated that in order to address the serious problems that ex-drug users encounter, such as psychological problems brought on by substance misuse, Islamic religious education is essential. Islamic therapy practices have been shown to improve the mental health, awareness, and conduct of those who are battling addiction.

## **2. Instrument**

### **2.1 Demographic sheet**

The demographic sheet will include basic information about the participants, such as their name, age, educational background, occupation, gender, place of residence, type of crime committed, relationship to the victim, religion, and marital status.

### **2.2 Psychological inventory of criminal thinking styles (Walters, 2006)**

The Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles (PICTS) is an 80-item tool aimed to evaluate different patterns of criminal thinking that are thought to support a criminal lifestyle (Walters, 2012). As outlined by Walters (2002), the inventory measures eight specific thinking styles: Mollification, Cutoff, Entitlement, Power Orientation, Sentimentality, Super-optimism, Cognitive Indolence, and Discontinuity. Each style is measured through eight items, with an additional sixteen items incorporated into the scale. Responses are rated on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly agree" (1) to "disagree" (4). The PICTS has shown high reliability within incarcerated populations, reporting an internal consistency coefficient (alpha) of .929 (Walters, 2006). For the present study, a 35-item translated version of the PICTS, validated by Rahim and Jahangir (2016), was employed.

### **2.3 Scale for moral development (Khanam & Iqbal, 2011)**

The theoretical grounds set by Piaget and Kohlberg, the moral development interview inventory was developed to investigate different stages of moral reasoning in both adults and children. There are ten dilemmas based in key ethical principles, complemented by comprehensive scoring system. The scale is highly valid and reliable with a Cronbach's alpha of .951 ( $p < 0.01$ ) and a test-retest reliability coefficient of .909 ( $p < 0.01$ ).

## 2.4 Educational Programs in Peshawar Jail

Peshawar central jail offered different rehabilitative programs to inmates and in order to examine those programs the researcher visited Peshawar central jail. These rehabilitation interventions included religious education, vocational education and academic education. Vocational education includes training in tailoring, carpentry and other technical skills which later can help inmates in getting employment after their release. Religious education in order to enhance spiritual and moral development included Quranic studies such as Nazra, translation and hifz. Along with religious and vocational education academic education is also included in the rehabilitation initiatives in which regular classes are conducted inside the prison up to class 10<sup>th</sup> following official curriculum and after that they are encouraged to continue education as private candidate. These activities are done on regular basis inside the prison for rehabilitation purpose.

### 3. Procedure

After taking formal permission from the jail authorities' data was collected from the inmates of Peshawar central jail. The researcher was not allowed to take data from the male inmates therefore a male research assistant from the psychology field was hired for this purpose. The purpose of the study, assurance of the confidentiality was given to the research participants. Formal consent was taken from them. The process of data collection occurred in three phases: at baseline, three months and six months after the start of educational rehabilitation program.

### 3.1 Result

**Table 1: Mixed-effects ML regression**

Moral Development	Coef.	St.Err.	t-value	p-value	[95% Conf	Interval]	Sig
Education base	0	.	.	.	.	.	
Other Religious Education	-.302	.972	-0.31	.756	-2.206	1.603	
Vocational Education	2.337	1.266	1.85	.065	-.145	4.819	*
Base 1	0	.	.	.	.	.	
Pahse 2	.694	.147	4.73	0	.406	.981	** *
Phase 3	.237	.15	1.58	.115	-.058	.531	
Constant	39.18	.763	51.37	0	37.685	40.675	** *
Constant	1.793	.051	.b	.b	1.696	1.896	
Constant	.318	.038	.b	.b	.251	.403	
Mean dependent var	39.720		SD dependent var	6.308			
Number of obs	539		Chi-square	28.154			
Prob > chi2	0.000		Akaike crit. (AIC)	2668.437			

\*\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*  $p < .1$

Religious education showed a negative but non-significant association with moral development ( $\beta = -0.302$ ,  $p = 0.756$ ). In contrast, vocational education was positively and significantly related to moral development ( $\beta = 2.337$ ,  $p = 0.065$ ). Moral development increased significantly from Phase 1 to Phase 2 ( $\beta = 0.694$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), while no significant difference was observed between Phase 1 and Phase 3 ( $\beta = 0.237$ ,  $p = 0.115$ ). Overall, the model was statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 28.154$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that vocational education plays a positive role in moral development, whereas religious education does not.

**Table 2: Mixed-effects ML regression**

Criminal Thinking	Coef.	St.Err.	t-value	p-value	[95% Conf	Interval]	Sig
Education base Other	0	.	.	.	.	.	
Religious Education	-3.08	3.504	-0.88	.379	-9.948	3.789	
Vocational Education	-4.017	4.564	-0.88	.379	-12.963	4.929	
Base 1	0	.	.	.	.	.	
Phase 2	1.489	.482	3.09	.002	.545	2.433	***
Phase 3	1.646	.499	3.30	.001	.668	2.623	***
Constant	79.133	2.748	28.80	0	73.747	84.519	***
Constant	3.077	.051	.b	.b	2.979	3.179	
Constant	1.52	.038	.b	.b	1.447	1.597	
Mean dependent var	77.290		SD dependent var	21.590			
Number of obs	544		Chi-square	14.910			
Prob > chi2	0.005		Akaike crit. (AIC)	4029.574			

\*\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*  $p < .1$

Compared to the baseline category (“Other Types of Education Programs”), both religious education ( $\beta = -3.08$ ,  $p = 0.379$ ) and vocational education ( $\beta = -4.017$ ,  $p = 0.379$ ) showed negative but statistically insignificant associations with criminal thinking, indicating a weak tendency toward reduction. In contrast, criminal thinking increased significantly in Phase 2 ( $\beta = 1.489$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ) and Phase 3 ( $\beta = 1.646$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) compared to Phase 1. Overall, the model was statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 14.910$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ).

#### 4. Discussion

According to Althoneibat, 2022 previously, prisons were mostly seen as places of punishment and retribution; though, this perception has slowly changed as humanistic approaches that give importance to rehabilitation, have grown in popularity. According to Hart et al., 2020 rehabilitation, which guarantees access to counseling and reformative programs while incarceration of inmates to lower recidivism, is progressively acknowledged in modern criminal justice systems as a fundamental right of criminals (as cited in Memon et al.,2022).

For rehabilitative mission educational programs are very important, according to Gerber & Fritsch, 1995 and Nieuwenhuizen & Bruyns, 2003 academic and vocational education carried out in prisons leads to lower down the disciplinary problems, control recidivism, promotes better employment prospects and provides better post release educational engagements. Religious education in particular has also been emphasized as valuable mainly in addressing psychological and behavioral issues, this education revealed to enhance conduct, mental health and awareness among criminals (Pettalongi et al., 2022). On the basis of above literature the current study investigates the rehabilitation programs (educational) that are run in the Peshawar central jail. Recitation of the holy Quran, Quran hifz (memorization), learning of Arabic language and the complete understanding of Holy Quran are all included in religious education. Tailoring, embroidery and making of Peshawari chapel are all included in vocational education while in academic education inmates are allowed and facilitated in pursuing of formal schooling. In comparison of other forms of education religious education was hypothesized to have stronger impact on moral development and criminal thinking, as it emphasis is on faith, self-control, character building and moral virtues (Mukhlas, 2023; Komariah & Nihayah, 2023). The outcome of the study however displayed that not religious education but vocational education had a positive effect on moral development, significant improvement was also seen in phase 2 as compared to phase 1 however this effect was not maintained in phase 3. There was no significant impact of religious education on moral development and criminal thinking and also no educational program significantly reduced criminal thinking overall. Similar outcomes were also demonstrated by previous researches where religious education had limited effects on criminal attitudes and behavior (Gerace & Day, 2010; Giordano et al., 2008; Hirschi & Stark, 1969). Reasons for such outcomes can include the absence of internalization of moral teachings via religious teachings alone and the greater influence of social and structural factors on criminal behavior (Kohlberg, 1981; Agnew, 1992). On the other hand with the help of real world skill development vocational educational programs seems to support different qualities such as discipline, responsibility, honesty, and social cooperation (Dewey, 1916; James, 2012; Plume, 2007).

## **5. Conclusion**

The investigation of the impact of religious education on inmates' criminal thinking and moral development within Peshawar central jail was the main objective of the present study. Incarcerated population within Peshawar central jail was approached for data collection. The outcome of the study displayed that as whole educational programs did not show any statistical significant improvements across the measured variables, though educational programs that showed a positive effect on the moral development of inmates were vocational programs.

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