

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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## Criminal Recidivism in Pakistan: A Grounded Theory of Social & Environmental Causes and Psychological Consequences

Kanwar Hamza Shuja, Muhammad Aqeel & Jaffar Abbas

### Abstract

**Background:** Pakistan is a country where the rate of crime is constantly increasing, with many ex-convicts committing the crime again after getting released from prison, with no knowledge of the antecedents of their recidivism or their psychological consequences. The current study was conducted in order to develop a theory about the social and environmental causes of recidivism along with the psychological consequences for Pakistani recidivist ex-convicts.

**Methods:** The sampling technique used was theoretical sampling, amounting to a total sample of 20 recidivist ex-convicts before reaching the saturation point. A grounded theory method was incorporated for the current research as the objective of the study was the development of a theory on the social and environmental causes of recidivism along with its psychological consequences. A semi-structured interview protocol was used for the purpose of data collection. Whereas the interview transcripts were coded in three phases, including open, axial, and selective coding for theory generation.

**Results:** The individuals shared their detailed experiences of social and environmental factors which contributed to recidivism, and three main antecedents were identified, including negative social experiences, hatred for society, and a toxic environment. Additionally, several psychological symptoms as a consequence of the negative social experiences were also found.

**Conclusions:** The findings of the study have added new information to the concept of recidivism as there were no previous theoretical concepts pertaining to recidivism in the context of Pakistan. These identified antecedents can be useful in strategizing interventions in Pakistan, as currently there are no such intervention programmes in Pakistan due to a lack of prior studies on the subject matter.

**Keywords:** Ex-convicts, semi-structured interviews, grounded theory, socio-environmental causes, antecedents, and consequences of recidivism.

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## Background

“Crime” a term applicable to many types of behavior, some of which almost all of us have been guilty of at some time in our lives (Walsh & Ellis, 2006; Walsh & Hemmens, 2010). A likely person who commits a crime is often referred to as a typical criminal and within modern criminology a widely researched area is methodically searching for the origin of unlawful behavior which is currently being dominated by micro level explanations focused on the specific individual, i.e. criminologists concentrate considerable attention on strategically locating the probable causes of offence in a specific individual’s psychology or biology or their unique relationship to other and to social institutions (Lynch et al., 2015, 2016; Muftić, 2009). A substantial number of researches suggests factors of crime include poverty, inequality, disrupted families, inadequate socialization, and the presence of criminal opportunities (Britt et al., 2012; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Land et al., 1990; Marsden, 1985; Reiss, 1993; Sampson & Laub, 1993; Taylor, 2015). To explain and understand crime and the associated causes in detail criminologist, sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists all have given several theories relating to crime (Akers, 2013; Heidt, 2011; Stalans & Finn, 2016). At present, there is an ample amount of theory on crime, mostly suggesting and focusing on social causes of crime (Bruinsma, 2016; Jefferson et al., 2011). Such as the strain theory (Agnew, 1992, 2011) and anomie theory (Cullen & Messner, 2007; Schneider & Merton, 2019), suggest crime and criminal behavior are the consequences of external forces in society to which an individual or group responds. Similarly, according to learning theories criminal behavior is the result of learning processes favoring committing criminal acts over law-abiding behavior (Akers, 2011; Akers & Jensen, 2011; Bruinsma & Weisburd, 2014; Sutherland et al., 1992).

## Recidivism and its increasing prevalence

With all these theories relating to crime and criminal behavior, the most important and crucial subject matter in criminology in present time is recidivism in crime (Bernard & Engel, 2001). Recidivism can be specifically defined as the relapse of an individual in criminal activity based upon re-arrests for new offenses that lead to incarceration (Awilly, 2015). In a 2002 study conducted by the Bureau of Justice on criminal recidivism it was typically found that the released prisoners with the highest re-arrest rates in common were robbers 70.2%, burglars 74.0%, larcenists 74.6%, motor vehicle thieves 78.8%, those inside local prison for possessing or selling stolen property 77.4%, and those in the penitentiary for possessing, using, or selling illegal weapons 70.2% (Langan & Levin, 2002). Similar results were found in more recent research conducted on recidivism, property crimes were again the highest with robbers 77%, burglars 81.8%, larcenists/motor vehicle thieves 84.1%, those in prison for fraud/forgery 77%, and others 83.6%, (Durose et al., 2014). Specialists in the field have conducted several researches and have identified several factors responsible for recidivism including demographic factors, social or cultural factors and predictive factors (Montoya, 2009). However, Pakistan up until recently has been a country that lacked proper identification documents of criminals who served as major hindrance for law enforcement personnel when they tried to identify criminals and suspects. In the

absence of identification papers, many criminals would pretend to be first-time offenders. Others would take refuge in different districts. As a result, police and law enforcement agencies did not have a proper mechanism to maintain profiles of criminals. Finding information about one criminal from a huge set of paper records was almost impossible (Fasihuddin, 2013).

## Socio-Environmental causes for recidivism

Most researchers have argued that the social factor for recidivism can be due to the individual returning to an area that is not conducive to their success or they may have been returned to the community before they are ready. Or before they have typically served their outstanding debt to local society because of legitimate issues regarding prison overcrowding (Reisig et al., 2007; Wang et al., 2010). Kelly and Ekland-Olson (1991), suggested that higher early release rates can cause the courts and parole officers to make quicker decisions to send individuals back to prison. The research suggested that factors outside of the recidivating inmate’s control can contribute to his return to prison as well (Kelly & Ekland-Olson, 1991). Factor such as social stigmatization as criminal offenders are a highly stigmatized group, marginalized via temporary and sometimes permanent restrictions on voting rights, housing, financial aid, employment, and other aspects of community involvement (Moore et al., 2016; Pogorzelski et al., 2005), yet however further exploration is much needed.

By examining the previous researches, it can be established that a huge variety of factors are directly and indirectly responsible for high-risk recidivism (Harer, 1995; Langan & Levin, 2002). Qualitative researchers have examined the problem of recidivism through an in-depth exploration of the causes and experiences of prisoners inside and outside of prison which were hardly previously found in other researches. By discovering new themes and providing treatment to handle these issues is still in need as the rate of recidivism is still increasing.

The purpose and aim of the current study are to identify and explore additional factors which are directly and indirectly responsible for increasing rates of recidivism using a qualitative method. Moreover, using a qualitative method of research may provide a deeper and more rigorous understanding of the causes involved in recidivism. Another reason for conducting this research is due to cultural differences as most studies on crime, criminal behavior and recidivism are performed in Western countries. Though there are typically overlaps across distinct cultures on their precise definitions, novel development regarding the criminal behavior and their probable causes. They can differ significantly because of societal norms, private morals, specific religion, cultural taboos as well as social expectations (Bhugra et al., 2010; Lahlah et al., 2013; Lai et al., 2015). For example, different researches indicate that cultural factors are related to the risk and protective factor of offending (Flanagan et al., 2011; Soriano et al., 2004). Due to such reasons, it is a dire need to conduct an extensive research in Pakistan for two main reasons. The first to confirm to what extent does Western theories and researches correlates and are applicable in Pakistani culture. And second to identify indigenous causes and factors relating to recidivism in Pakistan and its cultural settings.

## Method

### Research design

The research method used for this study was qualitative in nature mainly classical grounded method was used as it gives complete freedom to the researcher to explore in whatever direction the researcher deems it necessary (Glaser et al., 2013; Moore, 2010). Grounded theory details a systematic way to produce theories that explains human behavior (Clarke, 1987). This method is suitable as it highlights an in-depth insight regarding the social issues such as that of recidivism, generating more new unanswered questions for future researches. Utilizing grounded theory aids in the formation of a new theory based on the data from reality or as experienced by individuals. Validity of such researches is solely based on the firm groundworks of the findings in the data gathered for the purpose of the specific research (Weiss et al., 2010).

Grounded theory method suggests that people with comparable situations, such as recidivism, share an unfamiliar social and environmental difficulty (Weiss et al., 2010). By using data analysis, the investigators pursue to determine and communicate the issues the participants share and the procedure or fundamental variable they use to present the problem (Weiss & Hutchinson, 2001).

### Research Questions

The research questions for the present study are as follows.

1. What are the social and environmental antecedents and consequences of criminal recidivism?
2. What are the additional unique social factors, present only in Pakistan that may contribute to the recidivism among ex-convicts?
3. What are the types of crimes that are most prone to recidivism in Pakistan?

### Participants

For this study, the targeted population was of ex-convicts who have recidivated at least once, using theoretical sampling technique (Breckenridge & Jones, 2009). The total number of interviews were conducted in four phases. This was done as grounded theory rely on the continuous comparative method and requires parallel analysis and data gathering (Kennington, 2013). Initially, five ex-offenders were selected with the help of various policemen and lawyers in the first phase. After the data were collected and analyzed, three more similar phases of selection and data collection were performed. Though the saturation point was reached after 18 recidivated offenders were interviewed. Additional 2 interviews were conducted to complete the fourth phase and also be sure of the saturation point.

**Inclusion criteria.** The criteria were set as those, offenders, who were identified as being to prison after a period of at least 3 months but no more than 3 years after their last incarceration. This period of time was chosen for the reason that government agencies often use 3 years as the cut off for recidivism statistics (Langan & Levin, 2002). The inclusion criteria for recidivated offenders were their age to be 18 or above, can communicate in a proper manner and who have been to jail and has relapsed into criminal activity based upon re-arrests for new offenses that had led to incarceration (Awilly, 2015).

**Exclusion criteria.** Likewise, exclusion

criteria for recidivated offenders were any individual who was released directly from trial prison or had never been sentenced to prison.

**Table 1**

*Demographic information of the participants of the study*

Demographic Variable	Frequency	Range	Mean (S.D)	%
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	20	-	-	100%
<b>Age</b>				
	-	22-30	25.7(2.41)	
<b>Age During First Arrest</b>				
		17-27	20.8(2.95)	
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
Asian	18	-	-	90%
Non-Asian	2	-	-	10%
<b>Education</b>				
No Education	2			10%
Below Matriculation	4			20%
Matriculation	4			20%
Intermediate	2	-	-	10%
Undergraduate	4	-	-	20%
Graduate	4	-	-	20%
<b>Demographic Region</b>				
Punjab	8	-	-	40%
Sindh	2	-	-	10%
Kashmir	6	-	-	30%
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	4	-	-	20%
<b>Number of Incarcerations</b>		2-5	2.70(1)	
<b>Marital Status in Abroad</b>				
Single	16	-	-	80%
Married/Engaged	4	-	-	20%
<b>Socio Economic Status</b>				
Lower	12	-	-	60%
Middle	6	-	-	30%
Upper	2	-	-	10%

### Measures and Instrument

For this particular study, a semi-structured interview was used which is the most used method of data collection in a qualitative research for in-depth and rigorous understanding of a phenomenon.

### Procedure

The first step was creating an interview protocol in accordance to the purpose of the research and approval from the ethical committee of Foundation University. After that permission participant were approached where they were explained of the intended purpose of the research and their right of withdrawal or skipping a question whenever they want to. Each interview was conducted at a quiet room at participant current living place or at a hotel room. During the interview the participants were encouraged and praised for their participation and were asked to give as much detailed answers about the questions as much possible. After the interviews were completed, they were translated and transcribed into English language. Whereas, demographic form information was analysed using descriptive statistics through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). All the ethical concerns, while only marginals were considered, throughout the research to reduce risk.

### Coding Process

The present study coding process was comprised of two stage coding which included initial coding and focused coding (Charmaz, 2014). The initial coding involved line by line coding of the data which incorporates naming each line of the transcript. After the initial coding of all the present data was done, focused coding was applied. The focused coding involved more selective, directed and conceptual coding of the data (Glaser & Strauss, 2017).

## Data Analysis

The grounded-theory approach was used to analyze the data in the current study. The steps involved critical reviewing of the responses to decide suitable coding and the development of themes from those codes. (Castillo et al., 2010; Heydarian, 2016). Thematic analysis was performed on the transcripts of the responses by the participants. The reason for choosing this method was that rigorous thematic approach can produce an insightful analysis that answers particular research questions' (Anderson et al., 2014). All the precautionary measures were taken to ensure that the data used are of the participants and are without any influence from the side of the researcher. In order to achieve this, random transcripts were forwarded to few individuals who were unrelated to the research for analyzing that allowed a form of interrater reliability for the research.

## Results

Throughout the period of data collection, the participants were asked series of broad ranged questions relating to the causes and factors which led them towards crime in the first place and their experiences outside of the prison in society. Also, they were interviewed regarding their current experiences and issues they have been facing which could lead them to recidivate towards a life of crime again

Table 2 displays the demographics about the form of crime committed by the participants of study in total they were arrested 27 times and all the participant's charges fell into three categories: property crime including theft, burglary, extortion, carrying illegal weapon (n= 11, 40.74%), person crime including assault, beating someone with intent to rob, kidnapping, political party related assault (n= 10, 37.04%) and statutory crimes including selling pornography, selling drugs, using drugs (n= 5, 18.52%), whereas one person was sentenced under civil case which was negligence of duty (n= 1, 3.70%).

This is one of the major factors which was almost in direct or indirect way discussed by every participant of released prisoner population. Since the purpose of the interview was identifying the causes or factors in society and environment responsible for criminal recidivism. Under this category, the Primary theme that was established was Negative Social Experiences which was further probed and explored resulting in several sub themes including *Social Stigma*, *Social Rejection/Isolation*, *Negative Labelling*, *Negative Comments by People*, *Being Negatively Used by Other People*, *Societal Expectations* and *Unfavorable Social Interactions* respectively with the highest frequency on Social Stigma (70%) and Negative Comments (70%).

Consequently, the second discovered theme was Hatred for Society comprising of three subthemes such as *Hatred towards others*, *being robbed of rights by society* and *Society's lack of response to wrong doings* with the leading cause in this theme to be of the hatred which the individual felt towards others (30%). The last theme found was that of Toxic Environment and had subthemes pertaining to *Living in area with many criminals*, *Glorification of criminals in particular area* and *Discriminating Environment*, whereas the leading cause from this to be of living in area with many criminals (30%) which several previous researches do indicate to as a cause of recidivism.

## Negative Social Experiences

Most of the participants from released prisoner

population shared their negative experiences after being released from prison. They also described how these negative social experiences led them back towards life of crime. One of the participant's stated: *"The judgmental looks of the people, the negative things they said not a single person asked me why I did it or tried to show any kindness or positive support to me everyone was alike and so if they all are going to keep calling me a criminal so yes, a criminal I will be."* "This shows that these participants have gone through several negative social experiences. These experiences include several kinds of factors discussed under the sub-themes as follows;

**Social stigma.** The most widely discussed sub theme which was found in almost every interview was Social Stigma. Through content analysis it was noted that in 70% of the interviews it was discussed as a cause for recidivism in released prisoners. Few examples of it can be seen in interviews from participants such as one participant said: *"First time it was shame for the crime I was arrested for even though I was not even aware of it yet knowing after being arrested that what my charges are I felt so embarrassed going back into the society and the people really rubbed that onto me they made me remember that over and over again really good."* "Showing that even though a man has spent the time in jail for his crime yet the society won't let him move on it keeps stigmatizing the person, keep reminding him of his mistake over and over again.

**Social rejection/isolation.** It is commonly been seen that people who have been convicted of a crime are often shunned by the society and are often isolated based on their prior behavior or acts. As one participant recalled, *"Even at my own home I was a stranger no one would talk to me my own family members call me thief it was like I had lost all my respect for one single mistake."* "It can be clearly observed that these criminals are not just rejected by the society but even from the people at home. With no one to confine in to leads such individuals back in to a life of crime.

## Negative labelling and negative comments.

These two are also important sub-themes that reoccurred in most of the interviews of the released prisoners. Negative labelling and commenting refers to calling released prisoners with labels such as criminal, thief or such resulting in anger and hate from the side of the released inmate. One inmate said during his interview that:

*"After getting out of the jail I didn't had any work and somehow in the whole area it was spread that I was in jail for selling pornographic videos and after that no one would even sit with me or talk to me and many hooligans of the area used to call me by names like totaybaz (pervert) and such."* "Further, he also shared that upon recidivating into crime due to certain circumstances when he again got released from prison still the society labelled him, as he said:

*"Before they used to call me totaybaz (pervert) or tota supplier (porn supplier) after that thief and now they are afraid of me."* From these it can be understood how these labelling effects these released inmates to the point where some of them just commit crime out of spite for all the name callings. Similar points can be observed in interviews given by law officials in which they talked about how labelling someone as criminal can affect that person causing him further towards a life of crime.

### **Being negatively used by other people.**

This was one lesser discussed sub theme during the interviews with released prisoner's participants. Nevertheless, it was discussed making it a factor to some extent as well. During one of the interviews, the participant reported: *"The first crime was selling pornographic videos to people, as my own friend used me. I was not an educated person, so the only thing I do knew was what people told me so this friend of mine asked me if I wanted to earn some money and since I had no job I said ok and he used to give me this bag with cd's inside it all I had to do was distribute those cd's to different shops around the city."* An issue which some law officials stated as how due to different reasons such as low education and helplessness of many individuals some people take advantage of them.

### **Societal expectations.**

This refers to the norms and expectations which people in the society have from others and any violation of these norms can lead to dire consequences as in the case of one of the participants who shared his experience by saying, *"There were certain expectations which I was taught from early age that one has to follow being part of society, and I was tired of following expectations of people who don't give a f\*\*k about you."* The burden of carrying these expectations especially in collective cultural societies is sometimes too much to bear and sometimes can lead a person to commit acts of crime just to break themselves free from these customs and societal expectations.

### **Unfavorable social interactions.**

While for many getting into crime was a conscious choice which they made willingly without any stressors present. For some this was solely due to their circumstances in which they are caught in such a way that crime seems the only way out to them. One of the participants shared their experience as, *"I got involved in gambling and had a lot of debt and those people you don't want to piss off, so I tried stealing money to pay them and got caught."* This shows how one bad move can lead to several other bad decisions and often times can lead to a life of crime and recidivism.

### **Hatred for Society**

Another important and mostly ignored factor is the hatred many of the criminals carry for the society and how it acts, as can be seen by an earlier example discussed in societal expectations as well. This hatred can be for the particular individual, family or the society as whole. Such as in case of one of the participants who said, *"Other factor would be my hate and anger for the people outside, I shouldn't say this but the hate is even for my own family."* From this statement alone, it can be understood that for many similar experienced criminals this hatred is the vital core factor which motivates them to keep committing crime over and over again. While the reasons for which these ex-convicts hold such a grudge against the society can be further explained in the sub-themes below;

### **Being robbed of rights by society.**

Some of the participants felt that they were robbed of their rights by the society and how it works and functions, leaving them with no other option then to commit heinous acts of crimes. As one participant shared, *"Where ever you go they are all robbing you in form of bribes, taxes, this and that so what if I did the same in return."* As it can be clearly seen that the participant suggested that he is robbed in form

of taxes and bribes which maybe truer in context of developing country where the law and its implementation is not as much strict as in some of the developed country, leading to people in believing they are being robbed so they should do the same.

### **Society's lack of response to wrong doing.**

Another important factor which suits more to developing countries is the fact that many people keeps their eyes close to the wrong doings of other. This leads to a power imbalance and for some becomes the motivating catalyst which pushes them in to a life of crime which can be observed from the statement of one participant as, *"People here are all dead from inside they just keep their eyes close and don't bother to help anyone in need and later calls you a criminal."* This clearly reflects how the said participant perceived the people and his sheer frustration on such society and their silence on the wrong doings. Such ignorance of people can be considered as the factor which drove the participant to commit criminal acts.

### **Toxic Environment**

A topic which many researchers have discussed and stated clearly as an important predictive factor for recidivism is the toxic environment in which an ex-convict is released into. This can either be an environment full of other criminals or that of discriminatory nature. The types of environment which the participants experienced in Pakistan includes the following;

### **Living in area with many criminals.**

A most common issue discussed in researches with recidivism is that of the area in which the ex-convict goes to after be released from prison. It is similar to that when a substance abuse patient is let out in community and he/she goes back to a place with other drug abusers. As one participant shared his experience by stating, *"Maybe I was just brought up in a place where crimes were a normal thing and I just adopted that from my environment."* A clear representation of how people adapt to their surrounding environment when the environment itself is filled with many other criminals can clearly be assessed from the statement of this participant. Showing how important it is to understand the impact of the environment on this vulnerable population, which unfortunately in developing countries is hardly ever possible.

### **Glorification of criminals in particular areas.**

Though to some it may sound as fiction but in developing countries many of these criminals have a lot of influence and power which many of the time attract new upcoming criminals into a life of crime. As it was seen in the case of another participant who stated, *"In Pakistan even, the politicians are all criminals like take Zardari he has been in prison and then he became the president, our country glorifies criminals, maybe someday I will also become the Prime minister."* The statement clearly represents the condition of a developing country where criminals can even become prime minister of the country. Such incidences become inspirations for many of the criminals as they recidivism more and more with similar goals in mind.

Table 2.

Demographic Table Representing Types of Crimes Committed by Ex-Convicts.

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Crime Category	No.	Crime Type	Crime Committed					Percentages
			1 <sup>st</sup> Time	2 <sup>nd</sup> Time	3 <sup>rd</sup> Time	4 <sup>th</sup> Time	5 <sup>th</sup> Time	
Property Crime	1	Arson						
	2	Robbers	**					10
	3	Thieves	****	****	**	**		60
	4	Burglars			**			10
	5	Harassment						-
	6	Embezzlement						-
	7	Fraud/Forgers/ Scammers						-
	8	Larcenist						-
	9	Extortionist			****	**	**	40
	10	Trespassers						-
	11	Mischief that have caused damage						-
	12	Criminal breach of contract						-
	13	Carrying/Selling Illegal Weapons	**					10
Personal Crime	14	Political Party Related Assault	**	**				20
	15	Thugs						-
	16	Professional contract taker						-
	17	Battery						-
	18	Rapist						-
	19	Assault	**	*****				50
	20	Kidnappers	**					10
	21	Domestic Violence						-
	22	Criminal Intimidation						-
	23	Gang Related Assault						-
Inchoate Crimes	24	Attempt to Any Crime						-
	25	Solicitation						-
	26	Conspiracy						-
	27	Bribery						-
Statutory Crimes	28	Selling Pornography	**					10
	29	Selling Alcohol						-
	30	Selling/Using Drugs	****	****				40
Civil Case	31	Negligence of Duty	**					10



**Table 3**

*Categories, Themes, Sub Themes and Statements of Causes of Criminal Recidivism in Ex-Convicts*

Category	Theme	Codes	Sub Theme	Statements
<b>Social and Environmental Factors</b>	<b>1. Negative Social Experiences</b>	1.1	Social Stigma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The judgmental looks of the people, the negative things they said not a single person asked me why I did it or tried to show any kindness or positive support to me.</li> <li>I felt so embarrassed going back into the society and the people really rubbed that onto me they made me remember that over and over again really good.</li> </ul>
		1.2	Social Rejection/Isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Even at my own home I was a stranger no one would talk to me my own family members call me thief it was like I had lost all my respect for one single mistake.</li> <li>After releasing from prison no one would even sit with me or talk to me, I was all alone.</li> <li>If they all are going to keep calling me a criminal so yes, a criminal I will be.</li> </ul>
		1.3	Negative Labeling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I went to a shop and this guy looked at me and started telling his other friend look this guy is a thief and such things happened on daily basis.</li> </ul>
		1.4	Negative Comments by People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The first time after getting released I came out I got and I got the name “powdery” and things which normally people won’t ignore and it was a constant embarrassment for me as well as my family.</li> <li>The first crime was selling pornographic videos to people, which I was unaware of as I didn’t have much education and my own friend used me by lying to me.</li> </ul>
		1.5	Being negatively used by other people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I was simply asked by a friend to deliver the car to its owner and he even gave me the keys and it was a stolen car and I was arrested for it.</li> </ul>
		1.6	Societal Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There were certain expectations which I was taught from early age that one have to follow being part of society, and I was tired of following expectations of people who don’t give a f**k about you.</li> <li>It was just my bad luck, I bumped into my friend who was a thief and suggested me to do same for easy money and stupid me did that.</li> </ul>
		1.7	Unfavorable Social Interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I got involved in gambling and had lot of debt and those people you don’t want to piss off, so I tried stealing money to pay them and got caught.</li> </ul>
	<b>2. Hatred for Society</b>	2.1	Hatred towards others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other factor would be my hate and anger for the people outside, I shouldn’t say this but the hate is even for my own family.</li> <li>I am more hardened criminal but it’s not due to the experience inside but the experience outside the prison which made me like this.</li> </ul>
		2.2	Being robbed of rights by society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I was robbed of my job because the other guy had sources and even though I was deserving he got the job.</li> <li>Where ever you go they are all robbing you in form of bribes, taxes, this and that so what if I did the same in return.</li> </ul>
		2.3	Society’s lack of response to wrong doings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People here are all dead from inside they just keep their eyes close and don’t bother to help anyone in need and later calls you a criminal.</li> </ul>

3. Toxic Environment	3.1	Living in area with many criminals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>I lived in an area where every other person you encounter is a criminal in his own way so in such an environment only criminals will be born.</i></li><li>• <i>Maybe I was just brought up in a place where crimes were a normal thing and I just adopted that from my environment.</i></li><li>• <i>Where I live here criminals are rather seen as respect everyone respects them and meet them in such a humble way and that really inspired me.</i></li></ul>
	3.2	Glorification of criminals in particular area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>In Pakistan even, the politicians are all criminals like take Zardari he has been in prison and then he became the president, our country glorifies criminals, maybe someday I will also become the Prime minister.</i></li></ul>
	3.3	Discriminating Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>I was from another province and faced discrimination from the regional locals, and I didn't know what else to do.</i></li></ul>

Table 3. Represents all the main categories along with their related theme, sub themes and few statements along with their percentages respectively.



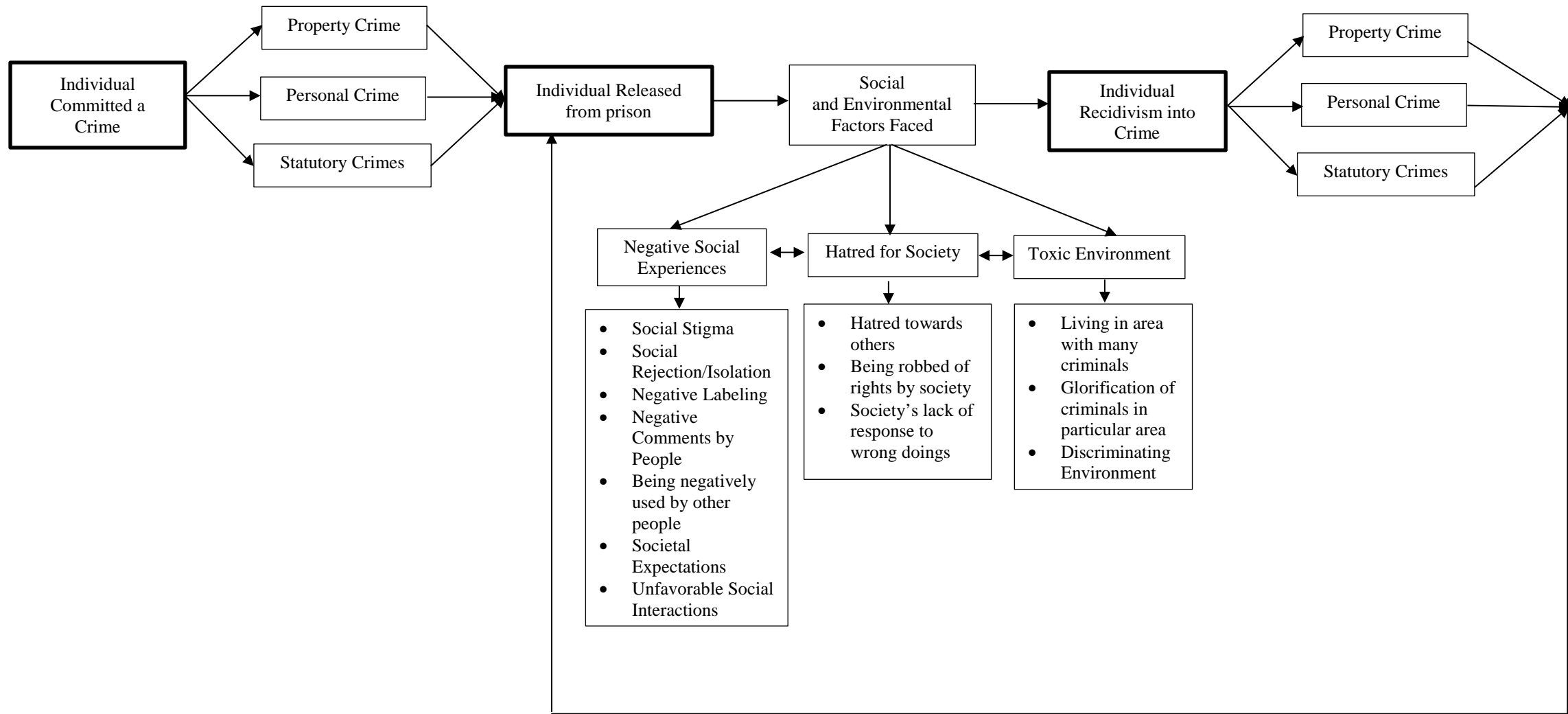


Figure 1. Processes Model for Social and Environmental Factors for Recidivism of Ex-Convicts

**Discriminating environment.** One prevalent thing to this day in developing and even in many developed countries is the discriminatory behavior by other people in the society or environment based on race, ethnicity, culture, religion, etc. One participant who experienced such discrimination stated, "I was from another province and faced discrimination from the regional locals, and didn't know what else to do. "Even when the participant was from the same country and believes he faced discrimination due to being from another province which led the person to commit crimes. This shows that how deep this infectious nature of discrimination runs in people minds and their daily lives. And can sometimes results in pushing people in to a life of criminal activities.

### **Processing Model for Social Recidivism Model**

The model describes the process through which a criminal after completing his sentence goes through when he is re-entered into the society. The initial stage depicts the most common and susceptible types of crimes related to recidivism including property crime, personal crimes and statutory crimes. Such criminals usually have fewer years of sentences and are mostly released earlier in comparison to other crimes like murders and rape in Pakistan. The next stage presents the hurdles and difficulties which these ex-criminals face after being released from prison and includes a multitude number of causes which forces them back into a life of crime the hurdles faced includes negative social experiences, hatred for society and toxic environment all containing several different aspects within them, thus leading the ex-convicts back to a vicious cycle of crime all over again. And unless some effective strategies which can genuinely aid these ex-convicts to settle back in to the civil society, this typical process will undoubtedly continue. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to properly implement effective strategies like those in other developed countries to carefully help these ex-convicts to mend with the unaccepting public and be able to move out of their toxic environment.

### **Discussion**

Criminal breeding a process consisting of one or multiple causes at the same time, regardless of the cause relating to be of any category, responsible for the recidivism of an individual. Relating to this several different varieties of experiences and causes the participants of the study revealed during their interview. Many of the leading causes and social experiences concerning several of the key participants were similar in apparent nature. The most common thing almost all of the participants debated was about was the way the society treats them after their initial release from prison. They referred to it mostly as *the hateful look people had in their eyes* or the *judgmental faces* and how much participant hated it or how much those things made the participants guilty or frustrated or stressed and how many times such action from the society pushes them towards life of crime again. They also talked about the constant labelling, commenting, the discrimination and ridicule they have to face even after they have done their time in prison

already. This correlates with the theory of labelling that suggests that criminal behavior is the ramification of informal labelling of initial or successive deviant behavior (Becker, 2018; Farrington & Murray, 2014; Lemert, 1967).

Many of the participants because of such behavior of the society recidivism as was observed in most of the participant's cases. The most common second time crime was assault by the participants which was result of the anger and frustration caused upon them by the society. Many of the participants shared that rather than feeling happy or excited about their release many of them contemplated about the difficulties and other issues regarding adjusting to societal norms after being in prison for a period of time making society related factors such as *social stigma*, *negative labelling* and *negative commenting* as one of the major factors or cause of criminal breeding. One reason for social causes to have such a huge impact could be the fact that Asian countries mostly have collectivism culture which can be defined as cultures that stresses the necessities and goals of the group as a whole rather than that of the individual. In such cultures, relationships between people play a central role in each person's identity (Powers, 2013).

For this reason, when in such cultures someone commits a crime the whole group perceives it as a crime against all of them and punishes the individual by isolating him from the whole group which also has been discussed as participants as a factor for recidivism. An addition uncommon cause discovered was *glorification of criminals in certain areas*, the reason it is considered as un-common is due to the fact that in most cases criminals weather current of ex-criminals they are treated with hatred and dejection as can be observed in most cases. However due to the current glorification of criminals in media, it has led to an effect on the mind set of some people to say the least which has led to this phenomenon in real-life situations, thus causing the ex-convict to not feel as if he has done something wrong rather consider it as a heroic act that he has performed.

Many of the identified causes do correlate with the previous researches done on crime and the causes of crime or recidivism. Such as in the study conducted by Pogorzelski (2005), which suggested that social factors such as social stigmatization and having withdrawn rights such as financial, employment and such can become a key factor in criminal breeding. Similar results have been observed in the current study as well (Moore et al., 2016; Pogorzelski et al., 2005). This indicates that factors such as social stigmatization, social discrimination, social labelling, etc., can all significantly contribute in the recidivating of an ex-convict. Similarly, Peersen et. al (2004), found in their study that in social settings an ex-convict with poor living situations, drug abuse, and dysfunctional families were highly likely to recidivism. The current study findings are similar in nature as well, it was observed that those ex-inmates who don't get employment and have poor living conditions, are drug abusers and are rejected by their families do have a higher rate of recidivism.

The current study yields several different strengths as this study was designed to be of exploratory nature. With this a qualitative method was selected with

special precautionary measures to ensure no preconceived hypothesis was formed. By using qualitative interviews, it gave the participants a chance to share their experiences and point of views in details about the causes which led them to recidivism instead of giving answers to previous studies questions. The study also produced a number of new results that have not yet been discussed in any of the previous literature. Another uniqueness of the study was the cultural settings in which the study was conducted as many previous researches of similar nature were conducted in Western culture so conducting one in Asian culture gives a new perspective to it.

The method for choosing participants for the study also included several advantages. By using snowball technique rather than any law official recommending me a participant of their liking I got the opportunity to randomly select participants in their original form and with their own willingness rather than under any restriction or obligation on them by any law enforcing authority which led them to share their experiences and perceptions truthfully. Also, because of the technique several potential participants came forward for the study which gave more global experience than a restricted sample would have given.

Throughout the current study process several people, including law officials, other professionals were consulted. Law officials and supervisor both participated with their valuable knowledge during the construction of the questionnaire. By forwarding transcripts for secondary theme analysis it created an inter-rater reliability for the study. The purpose of creating inter-rater reliability was to avoid chances of any biasness on the part of the researcher. As biasness is a threat in all researches, especially in case of qualitative studies here researcher influence can impact the data collection of study.

### **Limitations and future implications**

During the study some of the limitations that were encountered are as follow.

- Snowball technique was selected because of convenience it had in reaching out to the potential participants as no proper record system was present.
- Another limitation was the fact that since the study had to be completed in a fixed amount of time due to the requirement of the university.

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### **Availability of data and materials**

The data sets used and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

### **Authors' contributions/Author details**

Kanwar Hamza Shuja, Muhammad Aqeel and Jaffar Abbas performed and wrote the article under the guidelines of Nature-Nurture Journal of Psychology.

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- Further limitation was the area of the study as the participants were all from one city and although few of them had spent time in prisons other than the regional prison still it could have been broadened to other studies if timing and budget were not an issue.
- Another limitation is of generalizability as which is a common issue with qualitative studies.
- Involving female participants in similar study could lead to newer different themes than the ones discovered as of now.
- The development of a scale to identify the predicting factors which could potentially lead a person towards recidivism.
- Establishing intervention programs to rehabilitate the released individual into society with social and psychological support.

### **Conclusion**

The main focus of this study was to allow the participants of the study to share their experiences and point of view in their own words regarding criminal breeding and recidivism. The results from this study confirmed few of the conclusions drawn from previous literature, but along with it the results added to the existing body of knowledge. Practical suggestions have been conscientiously recommended for future researches for the possible development of alternative hypotheses and comprehensive theories typically relating to criminal breeding. This can undoubtedly help to reduce and intentionally limit the prevailing rate of recidivism in male ex-convicts. Which is typically caused by such contributing factors which were not considered as possible cause before this extensive study. By exploring the concept of recidivism using qualitative method several different areas were discovered that may lead to a deeper understanding and uniqueness of the needs, characteristics and challenges that becomes the primary causes of criminal breeding in ex-convicts.

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### **Ethical Consideration**

The study was approved by the National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Pakistan. Consent Form was taken before taking data and participants were asked to take voluntary participation

### **Ethics declarations**

#### **Ethics approval and consent to participate**

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (*National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Pakistan*). A written informed consent was obtained from all participants.

#### **Consent for publication**

Not applicable.

#### **Competing interests**

The authors declare to have no competing interests.

#### **Additional Information**

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