Research Article

Perceptions of Police Among Juvenile Probationers in Sargodha, Pakistan: Influencing Factors and Implications

Zeeshan Ali[1*] and Manwar Hussain[2]

[1]*Department of Criminology, the participants graduated from the University of Sargodha, Pakistan*

[2]*Bachelors in economics from Federal Urdu University of Arts, Sciences & Technology Islamabad, Pakistan*

***Corresponding Author**
Zeeshan Ali, Department of Criminology, the participants graduated from the University of Sargodha, Pakistan.

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Abstract
The purpose of the study was to investigate the attitudes, beliefs, and feelings that juveniles hold towards law enforcement officers and to identify the factors that shape juveniles' perceptions of the police, including personal experiences, interactions with law enforcement, community environment, and socio-cultural factors in Sargodha city. To achieve the intended objectives of the study, data were collected, analyzed and interpreted. Questionnaire was prepared for respondents. Accordingly, 40 juveniles were approached for the study, which were at probation under probation and parole department of Sargodha. Participants were selected using simple random Convenience sampling technique. The quantitative approach has been used in order to analyze the data using statistical data analysis procedures the findings and results obtained from the questionnaire of this study mostly showed that juvenile probationer perceptions towards law enforcement, reflecting a mixture of trust, skepticism, biasness of police and varying experiences. Understanding these perceptions is crucial for fostering positive police-community relationships and addressing areas of concern to build a safer and more inclusive society. In conclusion, addressing the findings of the survey requires a multifaceted approach that focuses on improving police-community relations, enhancing communication and transparency, strengthening accountability mechanisms, promoting fair and unbiased treatment, investing in infrastructure and resources, promoting positive messaging, and ensuring personal safety and trust. By implementing these recommendations, law enforcement agencies can work towards building stronger, more resilient relationships with the communities they serve.

Keywords: Juveniles, Delinquency, Probationers, Perceptions, Police and Pakistan

1. Introduction
The relationship between juvenile probationers and law enforcement is a critical area of study, particularly in contexts where societal dynamics and criminal justice intersect. In Sargodha City, a rapidly urbanizing area in Pakistan, understanding this relationship can provide valuable insights into the efficacy of the juvenile justice system and its impact on youth behavior and community safety. Juvenile probationers, often seen as individuals at a crossroads, may hold unique perceptions of police that can influence their rehabilitation process. These perceptions can stem from various factors, including previous interactions with law enforcement, community narratives, and socio-economic conditions. Research indicates that negative perceptions of police can hinder rehabilitation efforts and perpetuate cycles of criminal behavior [1]. Conversely, positive relationships with law enforcement can facilitate reintegration into society and reduce recidivism [2]. In Sargodha, a city characterized by its distinct socio-cultural fabric,

the perceptions of juvenile probationers toward police may also reflect broader societal attitudes. Understanding these perceptions can inform policy-making and improve community relations [3]. This study aims to explore how juvenile probationers in Sargodha City perceive law enforcement and the implications of these perceptions for both their rehabilitation and community dynamics.

1.1. Background of the Study
The perception of police by juvenile probationers is a vital aspect of understanding the juvenile justice system. In many communities, interactions between law enforcement and young individuals can significantly influence their attitudes toward authority and their likelihood of rehabilitation. Sargodha City, located in Pakistan, presents a unique context due to its socio-economic challenges and cultural dynamics. Juvenile probationers often come from backgrounds that may include prior negative experiences with police, leading to mistrust and apprehension. Research indicates

that such perceptions can affect not only individual rehabilitation but also broader community relations [4]. The societal view of law enforcement in Sargodha, shaped by local norms and historical events, further complicates this dynamic. Given the increasing focus on community-based rehabilitation approaches, understanding how juvenile probationers perceive police is crucial for developing effective interventions. This study seeks to delve into these perceptions, exploring how they impact the reintegration process and identifying potential pathways to improve police-community relations. By addressing these issues, the research aims to contribute to a more effective juvenile justice system that prioritizes rehabilitation and community safety.

1.2. Statement of Problem
The perception of police among juvenile probationers in Sargodha City is a critical issue that affects both the rehabilitation process of these youths and the overall effectiveness of the juvenile justice system. Many juvenile probationers may harbor negative views of law enforcement due to prior interactions, community narratives, and socio-economic factors. This mistrust can lead to a reluctance to engage with rehabilitation programs and hinder cooperation with law enforcement, perpetuating cycles of criminal behavior. Furthermore, the lack of comprehensive research on this topic in the local context limits the understanding of these perceptions and their implications for policy and practice. Addressing this gap is essential for fostering positive relationships between police and youth, ultimately contributing to safer communities and more effective rehabilitation strategies.

1.3. Significance of the Study
This study holds significant importance for multiple stakeholders involved in the juvenile justice system, community safety, and youth rehabilitation in Sargodha City.

1.3.1. Informing Policy and Practice
Understanding the perceptions of juvenile probationers toward police can provide valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners. By identifying factors that influence these perceptions, the study can guide the development of policies that promote positive interactions between law enforcement and youth, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the juvenile justice system.

1.3.2. Enhancing Community Relations
The findings of this research may facilitate better relationships between police and communities. Positive perceptions of law enforcement can lead to increased cooperation and trust, ultimately fostering safer neighborhoods and reducing crime rates.

1.3.3. Improving Rehabilitation Outcomes
For juvenile probationers, supportive relationships with law enforcement can enhance their chances of successful rehabilitation. By addressing negative perceptions, this study can help create an environment that encourages engagement with rehabilitation programs, thereby reducing recidivism.

1.3.4. Contributing to Academic Literature
This research adds to the limited body of literature on juvenile perceptions of police in the Pakistani context. It can serve as a foundation for future studies, stimulating further research on juvenile justice and law enforcement relationship.

1.3.5. Empowering Youth Voices
By focusing on the experiences and perceptions of juvenile probationers, the study highlights the importance of youth voices in discussions about law enforcement and justice. This empowerment can contribute to more effective community interventions and support systems tailored to the needs of young individuals.

1.4. Objectives
- To Assess Perceptions: To evaluate the perceptions of juvenile probationers toward police in Sargodha City, identifying key attitudes and beliefs.
- To Identify Influencing Factors: To explore the socioeconomic, cultural, and experiential factors that shape these perceptions among juvenile probationers.
- To Evaluate Community Relations: To investigate the broader implications of juvenile perceptions of police on community safety and trust in law enforcement.

2. Literature Review
In Pakistan, there is currently a lack of empirical evidence regarding juveniles' perceptions of the police, though some research exists on the general public's views. For instance, Akhtar, Rafiq, Asif, and Saeed (2012) conducted a study examining the quality of police services in Punjab, involving 360 interviewees selected through a generic survey approach [5]. Notably, none of these participants were juveniles. Similarly, Jackson, Asif, Bradford, and Zakar (2014) carried out a survey with 400 adults in Lahore to explore the relationships among personal experiences of police corruption, perceptions of police fairness and effectiveness, and beliefs about police legitimacy [6]. While there have been efforts to understand various aspects of juvenile justice and the interactions between police and juveniles these studies do not provide insights into the specific perceptions of juveniles regarding police [7,8].

Internationally, significant attention has been directed toward the negative attitudes of police in their interactions with the public, which have undermined trust among young people and decreased their likelihood of seeking police assistance [9]. Thus, it is crucial to investigate juveniles' perceptions of law enforcement. Understanding these perceptions is vital for practitioners, policymakers, and communities, as they can significantly influence the nature and extent of interactions individuals have with the police, as well as the level of support offered to law enforcement [10].

The determinants of juveniles' perceptions of the police are multifaceted and have been the subject of various studies. Key factors influencing these perceptions include demographic characteristics (such as race, gender, and age), crime-related

variables (including victimization and perceptions of neighborhood crime), and police conduct variables (personal and vicarious encounters) [11]. Note that American youths' attitudes toward the police are shaped by a complex interplay of personal characteristics, social environments, and individual experiences [12]. Juveniles lacking direct interaction with law enforcement often form their perceptions based on secondhand information from friends, family, and relatives who have had encounters with police. The theory of socialization emphasizes the role of various influences, including family, neighborhoods, peers, and media, asserting that these sources significantly impact juveniles' perceptions of law enforcement. Since many young individuals spend more time with peers in neighborhoods and schools than with parents at home, peer influence becomes particularly significant [13]. Moreover, research suggests that media representations-including music and lyrics-offer valuable insights into how juveniles form their perceptions of the police [14].

Demographic factors such as race, gender, and age are also considered crucial in shaping juveniles' perceptions of police. Much of the research has focused on comparing the perceptions of white and Black juveniles [15]. Studies indicate that vicarious experiences, such as witnessing police maltreatment, can lead to negative perceptions among juveniles [16]. Negative past experiences with police are likely to foster a similarly negative attitude toward law enforcement [17]. Further findings reveal a connection between perception of police and socioeconomic status [18,19]. However, existing research has not sufficiently captured the perspectives of juveniles currently navigating the criminal justice system. The literature identifies four overlapping categories of influencing factors: demography and neighborhood, prior police contact, vicarious experiences, and socialization. Nonetheless, two critical aspects have received inadequate attention: (1) juveniles' personal observations prior to their interactions with the police, and (2) the effects of poverty combined with limited education.

As delinquency increasingly poses challenges for societies, research in this field has expanded, particularly regarding how various factors influence juveniles' perceptions of the police, especially those who have not interacted with the criminal justice system. However, existing studies often overlook juveniles' firsthand experiences with police in their communities. Instead, many rely on secondhand narratives shared by family, friends, or media portrayals. Previous research typically involved interviews with youths who had no legal troubles at the time, neglecting to consider the impact of their socioeconomic backgrounds. Moreover, there is a significant gap in the literature regarding the perceptions of juveniles currently involved with the criminal justice system, particularly in developing nations like Pakistan. This study aims to explore what these juveniles have directly witnessed concerning police actions in their neighborhoods and how their economic circumstances influence these perceptions, specifically in the context of Sargodha, Pakistan. Consequently, this article serves as an initial exploration of Pakistani juveniles' views on law enforcement.

3. Research Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research design to investigate the perceptions of juvenile probationers toward police in Sargodha City. The target population for this research consists of juvenile probationers (92) currently under supervision by the Sargodha Probation Department. A sample size of 40 probationers was selected using purposive sampling, ensuring that participants were actively engaged with the probation system and could provide relevant insights into their perceptions of law enforcement. A structured questionnaire was developed to gather data from the juvenile probationers. The questionnaire consisted of 10 closed-ended questions designed to capture various aspects of their perceptions of police. Each question utilized a Likert scale (1 to 5), ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," allowing for nuanced responses while facilitating quantitative analysis. The questionnaire was designed to assess several key dimensions:

- **Demographic Information:** Age, gender, and education.
- **Perceptions of Police Conduct:** Questions focused on the fairness, approachability, and helpfulness of police officers.
- **Previous Experiences:** Questions aimed at understanding the participants' past interactions with police, including any negative or positive encounters.
- **Influence of Peers and Media:** Questions exploring the impact of friends' opinions and media portrayals on their perceptions of law enforcement. The questionnaire was reviewed by experts in juvenile justice and psychology to ensure clarity and relevance. Data collection was conducted over a period of two weeks.

The following steps were followed:

• Approval
Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant authorities, including the Sargodha Probation Department, ensuring that all participants provided informed consent.

• Distribution
Trained research assistants administered the questionnaires in a controlled environment to ensure participants felt comfortable and could respond honestly.

• Anonymity and Confidentiality
Participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential and used solely for research purposes. The study adhered to ethical guidelines, ensuring voluntary participation, informed consent, and the right to withdraw at any time. The anonymity of participants was maintained throughout the research process, promoting ethical integrity.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion
The collected data were analyzed using statistical software (e.g., SPSS). Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize the demographic characteristics and responses.

4.1. Data Analysis

Table 1 describe demographic characteristics of juvenile respondents and table 2, Descriptive statistics of juvenile perception about police department survey (n=40), showed different statements about the juvenile perception toward police and the factors that influence image in public.

Age	**15-18 year** 60.0%	**11-14 year** 25.0%	**7-10 year** 5.0%
Gender *	**Male** 100%	-	-
Education	**Student** 45%	**Drop out** 50%	**Illiterate** 5%

*There were only 2 female probationers and did not take part in the study.

Table 1: Demographic Information

Statements	Strongly agree	agree	Neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
Police treat public softly and nicely.	0	25.0	0	45	30
Feel comfortable seeking help or assistance from police officers.	0	35.0	0	55	10
Police use media to make people aware about crimes and their action.	60	20	10.0	10	0
You ever encountered fictional television shows or movies that depict police officers in a positive role.	30.0	60.0	0	5.0	5
The behavior of police officers in my neighborhood is very effective and good.	10	30	0	40	20
Family members or peers typically talk about the police.	5	30	5	50	10
Police officers are helpful and supportive when interacting with juveniles.	0	10	0	80	10
Most of the time police arrest juvenile in false cases.	30	35	5	20	10
Police become bias on the time of incident, treat poor people brutally and treat affluent nicely.	60	20	0	20	0
Police follow rules and protocols while arresting and detention.	0	5	5	75	15

[a] figures represent percentage.

Table 2: Factors or Variables Influencing Juvenile Perception Toward Police [a]

Among the juvenile participants, a significant majority, accounting for 60%, fell within the age range of 15 to 18 years. This indicates that older adolescents constitute the largest segment of the respondents. Meanwhile, 25% of the juveniles were in the 11 to 14 age bracket, suggesting that younger adolescents also represent a notable portion of the sample. Only a small minority, specifically 5%, was aged between 7 and 10 years, indicating that the older juveniles are more engage in delinquency. The educational background of the respondents presents a concerning picture. 45% of the juveniles were still attending school as students, while a substantial 50% were school dropouts, indicating that half of the sample had discontinued their education. Additionally, 5% of the respondents were classified as illiterate, as they were not currently enrolled in any educational institution. This suggests that many of the juveniles may face challenges related to education and its associated benefits. When it comes to perceptions of police conduct, the data shows a clear trend of dissatisfaction among the juveniles. A significant 45% of respondents disagreed with the statement that police treat the public gently and kindly. Furthermore, 30% strongly disagreed with this notion, indicating a strong sentiment of mistrust or negative experiences with law enforcement. Only 25% of the respondents agreed with the statement, suggesting that a small portion of the juveniles might have a more favorable view of police treatment. The comfort level of juveniles in seeking help from police officers is notably low. 65% of respondents indicated that they did not feel comfortable approaching police for assistance, reflecting a significant barrier to positive community-police relations. In contrast, only 35%

felt comfortable seeking help, suggesting that many juveniles may avoid engaging with law enforcement due to fear or distrust. Interestingly, a large majority, 80%, of the juveniles believed that the police use media as a tool to raise awareness about crime and their actions. This perception indicates that juveniles recognize the role of media in disseminating information about law enforcement efforts. Conversely, 10% of respondents remained neutral on this issue, while another 10% disagreed; suggesting a minority view that police media efforts may not be effective or trustworthy.

4.2. Discussion

The findings from the data collected provide crucial insights into the perceptions and experiences of male juveniles regarding law enforcement. The demographic distribution shows a notable concentration of respondents in the older adolescent age group (15-18 years), with a significant number being school dropouts. This presents a critical issue, as research indicates that educational attainment is closely linked to lower rates of delinquency [20]. The high percentage of dropouts among the surveyed juveniles suggests a potential vulnerability to criminal behavior and a lack of engagement with positive societal structures.

4.2.1. Age and Educational Status

The predominance of older juveniles in the sample suggests that intervention strategies should particularly target this age group. Adolescents aged 15 to 18 are often at a pivotal stage in their development, making them susceptible to peer pressure and risk-taking behaviors [21]. Furthermore, the alarming statistic that 50% of these juveniles are dropouts emphasizes the need for targeted educational programs. Effective educational interventions have been shown to reduce delinquent behavior and improve overall youth outcomes [22].

4.2.2. Gender Dynamics

The fact that all respondents were male raises questions about the representativeness of the data. But in this study there was no female juvenile delinquent. Studies have shown that male and female youths often have differing experiences with law enforcement [23]. Future research should aim for a more balanced representation to capture the nuances of how gender affects juvenile perceptions and interactions with police.

4.2.3. Perceptions of Police Treatment

The data revealing that 45% of respondents disagreed that police treat the public kindly is particularly concerning. Additionally, 30% strongly disagreed, indicating a deep-seated mistrust of law enforcement. Such findings align with existing literature that documents a significant perception of police bias and hostility, particularly in marginalized communities [24]. These negative perceptions may deter juveniles from seeking help from law enforcement, as reflected in the finding that 65% of juveniles felt uncomfortable approaching police officers. This lack of trust can have dire consequences, as it impedes effective communication between police and the communities they serve, potentially escalating tensions and contributing to a cycle of mistrust and disengagement [25].

4.2.4. Comfort Seeking Police Assistance

The discomfort many juveniles feel in seeking police assistance highlights a critical gap in community-police relations. The prevailing sentiment suggests that many juveniles may perceive police as adversaries rather than allies. This is particularly alarming, given that positive police interactions are essential for building trust and fostering cooperation within communities [26]. It is imperative that law enforcement agencies actively work to change this narrative through community outreach and engagement initiatives that prioritize building relationships with youth.

4.2.5. Media Perceptions

Interestingly, a significant majority of respondents (80%) believed that police use media to inform the public about crime and police actions. This indicates an awareness of the role of media in shaping perceptions of law enforcement, yet it also raises questions about the effectiveness of these media strategies. Research suggests that media representations can heavily influence public perceptions of safety and trust in law enforcement [27]. The mixed feelings of the remaining respondents, with 10% disagreeing and 10% remaining neutral, suggest that while there is recognition of media efforts, skepticism about their effectiveness persists.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings from this study provide a nuanced understanding of the demographics and perceptions of male juveniles, particularly those aged 15 to 18, who make up the majority of respondents. This age group is critical as they are at a stage where life choices and external influences can significantly impact their development and future trajectories. The fact that 50% of these juveniles are school dropouts, alongside the 5% identified as illiterate, raises significant concerns about their access to education and the associated opportunities that it provides. Educational disengagement is a known risk factor for delinquency, suggesting that many of these young individuals may be vulnerable to negative influences and outcomes if effective interventions are not implemented.

The data also highlights a pronounced sense of dissatisfaction with law enforcement among the respondents. With 45% of juveniles expressing disagreement with the notion that police treat the public kindly, and an additional 30% strongly disagreeing, it is clear that a substantial portion of these youths harbors deep-seated mistrust towards police. Such sentiments can deter juveniles from seeking help or assistance, as reflected in the finding that 65% feel uncomfortable approaching police officers. This discomfort is alarming, as it may lead to a cycle of fear and avoidance, preventing positive interactions that could foster community safety and cooperation.

Moreover, while 80% of respondents believe that police utilize media to raise awareness about crime and their actions, the mixed reactions-where 10% remained neutral and another 10% disagreed-suggest a lack of confidence in the effectiveness and trustworthiness of these media efforts. This ambivalence points to an opportunity for law enforcement agencies to better communicate their intentions and improve their public image through more

targeted and engaging outreach initiatives.

In summary, the data underscores the pressing need for comprehensive strategies that address educational deficits while simultaneously fostering positive community-police relationships. By investing in educational programs that cater to at-risk youth and implementing community engagement initiatives aimed at rebuilding trust, law enforcement can create a safer and more supportive environment for juveniles. Such efforts could not only improve perceptions of police but also help steer young individuals toward more positive life choices, ultimately benefiting both the youth and the broader community. Addressing these issues is not merely an option; it is a necessity for nurturing the potential of these young individuals and ensuring a safer, more equitable society [28-33].

Acknowledgement

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