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RESTORING LIVES: SOCIAL WORK APPROACHES TO NON-VIOLENT YOUNG ADULT OFFENDERS IN THE SAUDI ARABIAN CONTEXT

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Abstract The transition to adulthood, often referred to as 'young adulthood' or 'youth,' has garnered attention in developmental psychology. Arnett's theory of 'emerging adulthood' introduced in 2000 focuses on individuals aged 18 to 25, asserting that this phase represents a distinct developmental stage. Emerging adulthood is characterized by a degree of independence from societal norms and communal roles. This period of increased social freedom can lead to engagement in risky behaviors, including unsafe sex, substance use, and criminal activities. The convergence of emerging maturity and these behaviors is well-documented. Scholars have identified commonalities in risky behaviors such as smoking, binge drinking, and reckless driving among emerging adults. These deviations from social norms are often linked to social problems like poverty and limited access to education. Addressing social issues affecting emerging adults is crucial for crime reduction and improved societal well-being. This paper explores the dynamics of emerging adulthood, its associated risks, and the role of social problems in shaping the behaviors of this distinct developmental group.

Keywords: Emerging Adulthood, Risky Behaviors, Social Problem, Developmental Psychology

Introduction

In reference to transition to adulthood, numerous scientists prefer to use a more-established term 'young adulthood' or 'youth. In 1994, Arnett proposed a new development theory (Arnett, 2000). In his theory, he focused his studies on individuals between the ages of 18 and 25. He argued that during the transition period to adulthood, one is neither an adolescent nor a young adult. Nevertheless, he or she is theoretically and empirically deemed to be distinct from both stages. 'Emerging adulthood' is also illustrated by the relative individuality from the societal communal roles and also from normative prospects (Arnett, 2000).

Many emerging adults experience an upsurge in communal freedom, since they are no longer exposed to casual adolescent communal controls, such as teaching and parenting. The increase in social freedom provides an opportunity for them to get involved in dangerous and risky behaviours that encompass indulging in unsafe sex, drug and substance use, and crime. The coming together between developing maturity and belligerent actions is well recognized. Scholars have steadily found out that risky and dangerous behaviours, such as smoking, binge drinking, and unsafe driving, are all mutual in emerging adults (Arnett, 2014). Most of the emerging adult's deviations from social norms are as a consequence of social problems such as domestic poverty or poor education. According to the theory, social problems affecting emerging adults should always be addressed all with an aim of reducing crime (Feeley and Simon, 1992).

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In recent years, juvenile justice policies across the globe have attracted great concern on how juveniles should be handled in the event of a crime. This controversy has been attributed to the increasing rates of juvenile crimes. In this regard, most of the United States jurisdictions have been geared towards designing policies that reduce the imprisonment years on the belief that lengthy incarceration of these minors is not effective in overcoming their negative behaviour and involvement in crimes. In this connection, most of the US states have initiated measures aimed at parole changes, early prison release and removing the mandatory minimum sentence, (Hutton and Tata, 2009).

With the current increase in the crime rates across the globe there have been increased concerns on the effectiveness of imprisonment in transforming offenders towards new behaviour. The concept of the application of imprisonment, despite the existing evidence of its failure in the restoration of criminals, is plainly reflected in public policy, although there are some bases through which alternative punishments are viewed as vital and contributing a constructive role (Cummins, 2017). In this regard, various conclusions have depicted the failure of imprisonment in restoring good behaviour among convicts as typically it results in reoffending once they have served their jail term. Various scholars have embarked on the proposition of alternatives to imprisonment as effective strategies to deter the increase in crimes and to reform offenders in national development. Alternative sanctions comprise any form of punishment aimed at correcting criminal behaviour and may come in the form of fines and transformative justice through activities like community service work and education. The main objective of these alternative penalties is to curb reoffending and to reduce the increased financial burden of the state and prison overcrowding (Mitchell et al., 2017).

Aims

The primary aim of this research is to conduct a comprehensive review of the literature about using community social service work programmes for non-violent emerging adulthood offenders in Saudi Arabia to establish what is known about the nature and extent of the problem. The main findings are used as a basis for making recommendations for further research, including far-reaching studies, on the efficiency of punitive community work application on juvenile offenders in Saudi Arabia. The subordinate aims of the review in relation to previous studies are to: (1) identify and evaluate the results of studies conducted in Saudi Arabia on alternatives to imprisonment; (2) identify and evaluate the prevalence of alternatives to imprisonment in Saudi Arabia; (3) explore the opinions of Saudi researchers on issues of alternatives to imprisonment in Saudi Arabia.

Methodology

The systematic literature review was conducted with a view to amplify how social work programmes are a better alternative to prison for young non-dangerous offenders in Saudi Arabia. This is prefaced by defining the selection criteria for inclusion and exclusion based on the aims of this research. The selection criteria used are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Selection criteria.

Selection criteria	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Language	English and Arabic	Other languages
Publication date	Published from 2007 onwards	Published prior to 2007

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Search in	Books Articles PhD thesis Masters dissertation Government reports	Grey literature
Conditions of interest	Studies concerned with young male offenders	Studies concerned with children and elderly people.
The degree of criminal activity of the offender	Non-violent offenders	Violent offenders
Geographical coverage	Studies concerned with Saudi system (Sharia Law) only	Other countries
Study design	Any design	-

Based on the selection criteria, the relevant forms, including research queries, were sought to achieve the main objective of this study. The literature search was conducted in the English and Arabic languages, which are commonly used for research purposes in Arabia, obviating the need to use any other languages. In addition, searches were limited to the studies conducted after 2007. The focus of the study is the period after the legal reforms undertaken by Saudi Arabia in 2007.

The research is also based on scholarly materials like books, justice ministry reports, PhD theses and Masters dissertations. In this regard, the research does not utilise any non-scholarly credible resources and summarized studies comprising only abstracts. In order to narrow the search criteria and attain the desired goals of this study, the researcher chose to focus on studies related to non-violent offenders only. The researcher utilised certain keywords: Saudi Arabia, punishment, social work, emerging adulthood, and young offenders. This identified a number of specific databases online and journal indexes.

Through the application of the exclusion and inclusion criteria, the researcher found ten studies, eight of which proved to be relevant. Out of the eight, Saudi publications on alternatives to imprisonment identified only one book and two articles that have appeared in domestic journals. From the literature searches, two are PhD theses, and five are Master dissertations submitted to only one university as detailed on Table 2. Consequently, there exists lesser diversity between literature and minimal different researchers involved than the number of studies cited. Thus, the international stature of most of the publications is not high.

Table 2 Papers, theses, and other documents identified from main search.

	Author and Date	Study Title	Nature of publication	Relevant
1	Alqahtani (2017)	Alternative punishments in juvenile cases	Book	Yes
2	Altuwaijri (2014)	Disciplinary Penalty in the Service of Society	Article	Yes

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3	Almimn (2012)	Alternative Sanctions in Islamic Jurisprudence	Article	Yes
4	Alanzi (2017)	The validity of alternative sanctions from judges and security service employees' perspective.	PhD Thesis	Yes
5	Alturiman (2013)	Tazir in working for the public benefit	PhD Thesis	Yes
6	Houtan (2015)	The role of alternative punishments in rehabilitating offenders in Saudi Arabia	Masters dissertation	Yes
7	Alqahtani (2014)	Alternative punishments in juvenile cases	Masters dissertation	Yes
8	Alkhathaami (2008)	The alternatives to the deprived of liberty punishments, between reality and hope.	Master dissertation	Yes
9	Alharthy (2014)	Applied alternative procedures to women prisoners in the Saudi prisons	Masters dissertation	No
10	Albuqmi (2012)	Alternative Sanctions for disabled	Masters dissertation	No

Results and Discussion

Several findings, including the impact of imprisonment on offenders, were made. The data showed that there is scope for alternative penalties for juvenile crimes while also highlighting the proclivity of specialists to using alternatives to imprisonment. The present study assessed the likelihood to utilise social work programmes of non-violent juvenile offenders as another option to prison in Saudi Arabia.

Literary analysis reveals that there were few normative studies on its effectiveness and success in Saudi Arabia. The information mentioned above confirms that juvenile offenders receives a special significance by the Government of Saudi Arabia (Alkhathaami, 2008). The reviewed literature has confirmed how the application of social work activities as substitute punishment is quite low. The plans concerning the criminals' rehabilitation equally suffer as a result of the inaptness of the plans plus the scarcity of social employees. Some of the advice given by the researchers comprises embracing the use of social work as another method to punish offenders, particularly using community sanctions since they are consistent with Islamic law(Almimn, 2012). They offer guiding policies to uphold the use of social work programs as well as to create controls for its use and execution technique and increase the responsiveness among judges of the significance of this form of punishment.

The reception of reform and evaluation of the young is what differentiates them from the adults regarding criminality, as the young are more receptive. Various punishment alternatives like the social/community work need to be used (Altuwaijri, 2014). Imposing harsh treatment on the young people has no justification and their characteristics are not criminally responsible sometimes. Additionally, the young people are more responsive to containment more than harshness. Therefore, to minimise the return of crime, punishment should not be coercive. Looking for inexpensive and penalty alternatives, like social work, is necessary (Alqahtani, 2017).

The outcomes of punishments given to delinquents in the Saudi Arabia community have shown sound judgment through the use of appropriate punitive measures. The findings of this study indicate the effectiveness in terms of the use of social work practice in Saudi Arabia, despite indications of scant literature published on its outcomes.

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According to Houtan (2015), rehabilitation and deterrence of young social offenders through social work has been successful in most countries hence there is a need for their application. In the process of young offender's rehabilitation and reform, the contribution of community institutions participation is boosted by community sanctions. The community sanctions application provides the offenders an opportunity of repenting and returning to the correct accepted social norms. Imprisonment of young offenders may lead them to assimilate criminal ideas in the prison environment; instead they should be kept occupied with conducting social work. According to the conclusion of Alturiman (2013), a person is made positive through culture of social work. The young people are urged to engage in the culture of social work in most countries throughout the world. The young offenders will not be alienated in the community by integrating them into the society's fabric instead of leaving them within the prison walls.

The regard for societal benefits should be instilled in the young offenders to guide them to commit to community work instead of harming the society. The young offender's productive capacity should be exploited for developing the community through implementing the community sanctions. By taking advantage of the young people's efforts, the community sanctions ensure the community achieves material benefits; the efforts of the youth who volunteer results in benefits to the community and public service providers. Though there are encouraging and motivating findings of the effectiveness and benefits of this, unfortunately, there does not exist any normative research on its effectiveness in Saudi Arabia. Expectations should be normative in reality, but at present this is not possible because it has not yet begun in Saudi Arabia. However, according to Alanzi (2017), the prison sentence system will not be abolished despite the introduction and application of social work policy as an alternative punishment, since there are some severe cases that require the offenders to be imprisoned in criminal youth prison. From a general point of view, using the proper punishment for juvenile offenders is important. While the consideration of community punishment is not fresh in Western nations, its efficiency operates in different degrees regardless of the criticisms of its ineptness in a few cases. This concept is novel in Saudi Arabia and has been meagrely covered by researchers.

Recommendation

The pertinent literature on this subject was examined, reviewed and appraised in a systematic way. The reviewed literature confirmed how the application of social work activities as substitute punishment is quite low. Judges and experts in criminal justice possess a limited expertise concerning the scientific methods while rehabilitating the juvenile offenders.

There is a need to come up with field studies of competent experiences in the Western nations to gain from their experience and establish the obstacles facing the transition of this policy in Saudi Arabia. Besides this, the study has given a recommendation for the need to motivate other scholars to engage additional researches in this field. Finally, this study offered various recommendations based on the scarcity of research in the reviewed literature. This includes devising far-reaching studies on the efficiency of social work punishment on juvenile offenders in Saudi Arabia; engaging studies on the training requirements of social workers; engaging an assessment study for the Saudi Arabia society based on its necessity for social work, as well as hosting training workshops and courses and workshops for Saudi Arabia's judges to create convictions in its efficacy.

Conclusion

The present study comprehensively evaluated the likelihood of the utilisation of social work as a substitute retribution for detention of juvenile offenders. The pertinent literature on this subject was examined, reviewed and appraised in a systematic way. The reviewed literature has confirmed that there is a clear indication of the literature gap that exists on the topic under study in Saudi Arabia. There has been little effort by researchers to understand the implications of alternatives to imprisonment in the community and community development, and the accomplishment of criminal justice. Moreover, the reviewed literature has confirmed how the application of social work activities as substitute punishment is quite low. Judges and experts in criminal justice possess a limited expertise concerning the scientific methods while rehabilitating the juvenile offenders. The

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abovementioned information indicates that the subject of juvenile offenders receives a special significance by the government of Saudi Arabia. Nonetheless, as evident from the preceding sections, there is complexity in getting appropriate social work programme for underage offenders in Saudi Arabia. This is as a result of the scarcity of expertise in this area besides the shortage of a capable authority to have this process organised. Finally, this study has offered various recommendations based on the scarcity of the relevant reviewed literature.

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