

Beyond Attendance: Practice-Based Observations of Probation Supervision at a Reporting Site, Pakistan

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Abstract

This paper explores the implementation of probation in practice in Pakistan where despite the enabling legislation for probation there is hardly any research that has been published on the routine practice of probation. It is based on structured field observations recorded during a research data collection exercise with the probationers in Rawalpindi, Punjab which highlighted the practical and organizational impediments for rehabilitative supervision. Field notes were taken on multiple data-collection visits to a probation reporting facility in a district court complex, during which data was collected concurrently. Observations were not collected using an ethnographic protocol but were systematically recorded by the research team as a contextual record alongside the quantitative study of the probationers and reviewed and summarized into common patterns of observation and then mapped against constructs from literature in international probation and correctional psychology. The following seven recurring patterns were identified: supervision as attending to court instead of rehabilitating probationers; lack of any officer-probationer relationship or relationships that are constrained; overly high probationer caseloads; poor physical facilities and lack of confidential access; limited legal knowledge among probationers; mistrust and guardedness of probationers in the institution; and social-desirability effects related to proximity of staff. A series of clearly defined policy and practice ideas are suggested, such as caseload reform, provision of a dedicated confidential interview room, a standardized induction for probationers and embedding psychologically informed practice into the probation service. This paper provides one of the first comprehensive, documented and practice-based descriptions of probation supervision in Pakistan.

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1. Introduction

Community-based supervision has become a defining feature of criminal justice systems worldwide, driven by concerns over prison overcrowding, the fiscal cost of incarceration, and a growing evidence base suggesting that community supervision, when properly resourced, can reduce reoffending more effectively than short custodial sentences. Probation itself holds a special place in this dynamic: it is not a punishment nor a conditional release, but a conditional, supervised release designed to be a compromise between public protection and rehabilitation and reintegration of the offender.

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The rehabilitative potential of probation, however, relies greatly on the effective supervision provided on the ground and in particular on the relationship between the probation officer and the probationer. High-income jurisdictions have quite a bit of research that suggests that officers who engage in both firm monitoring and genuine care and procedural fairness experience more compliance and lower recidivism than officers who engage in only enforcement (Kennealy et al., 2012; Sturm et al., 2021). However, this evidence base is predominantly from North America, Western Europe and Australasia. Very little is known about the way probation is delivered in practice in low- and middle-income countries where probation services are often under-resourced and under-researched.

This is precisely where Pakistan shows its mark. Although probation has been in statute since 1960, published studies of the implementation of probation have been limited to a few studies that depend on structured questionnaires completed by probationers regarding their overall satisfaction with probation, rather than direct observation of probation as it happens (Khokhar et al., 2023). There is very little known about the interactional and organizational landscape of reporting in Pakistan: what happens when a probationer arrives in the office, how do the officers and probationer interact, what factors are responsible for shaping that interaction?

This paper seeks to fill that gap. It was taken from the field observation recorded during a research study that looked at psychosocial predictors of criminal thinking among probationers in Rawalpindi, Punjab. The observations are not collected through a formal ethnographic protocol but are documented systematically and contemporarily in multiple data collection sessions at a single reporting site for probation and are one of the first systematically documented, practice-based observations of probation supervision in Pakistan. This paper aims to identify some of the issues that were observed during the implementation of probation in this site in Pakistan, contextualize this within the international literature on effective probation supervision and translate these issues into concrete recommendations for policy and practice.

2. Probation in Pakistan

The Probation of Offenders Ordinance 1960, is the primary law that governs the probation system in Pakistan, where the courts have the power to set an offender free instead of sending them to jail for a period of up to three years, depending on the circumstances, and subject to the supervision of a probation officer. The central goal of the Ordinance is rehabilitation: offenders found guilty of relatively moderate crimes have the chance to be rehabilitated while they are under the watch of a probation officer and continue to be a part of their families and communities instead of being removed through prison, which can have disruptive and often criminogenic consequences. In principle probation officers have a dual role of monitoring and a case-work type function with rehabilitative intent and are formally mandated to supervise and guide the conduct of probationary periods during the probationary period and to report on it.

However, in reality, the probation and parole services in Pakistan have been reported to be always facing severe resource constraints. Poor funding, inadequate training of probation officers, poor inter-agency collaboration between probation offices, courts and prisons, and inappropriate administrative systems are recurring challenges to effective implementation (Penal Reform International & DOST Welfare Foundation, 2012). Only 53 probation officers, including 13 female officers, were deployed in the entire province of Punjab to monitor around 36,015 cases of probationers in 2024, more than 600 per probation officer, on average (National Commission for Human Rights et al., 2025). In Pakistan, the studies on probation have been largely conducted in a retrospective fashion with structural questionnaires, which

offer inferences on the effectiveness of the probation, albeit indirect; these inferences are valuable but can only be made on the basis of the perceived effectiveness of probationers themselves (Khokhar et al., 2023).

What is not captured by the written word are the actual, experiential circumstances in which a probation session takes place: the physical space where it happens, the nature and extent of the officer and probationer's interaction, and the organization's routines that shape the experience of the interaction. While the law in Pakistan presents probation in explicitly rehabilitative terms, and successive reports following the reform have highlighted the need for better training, staffing and infrastructure, little is known about how probation is put into practice in the moment-to-moment experience of officer and probationer. This is what the present observations aim to redress.

3. What Effective Probation Supervision Looks Like: International Evidence

It is helpful to define from the international literature, what constitutes good probation supervision before presenting the field observations because the Pakistani findings can be compared against this benchmark and not alone.

3.1 Rehabilitation, Case Management, and the Risk-Need-Responsivity Model

The Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model is the most powerful framework to inform contemporary correctional supervision, which posits that supervision and intervention must be tailored to the offender's level of risk, address the offender's specific criminogenic needs that drive offending, and be delivered in a manner responsive to the offender's learning style, motivation and personal circumstances (Andrews, Bonta, & Wormith, 2011). This approach to probation views it as less of a monitoring exercise and more of a case-management process which involves officers identifying needs, planning for interventions, and tailoring the amount of interaction based on the risk level of the individual. There is meta-analytic evidence that programmes that closely follow RNR principles have significantly higher reductions of recidivism than non-RNR programmes (Andrews et al., 2011).

3.2 The Officer-Probationer Relationship and Therapeutic Alliance

A parallel body of research highlights interpersonal relationship between officer and probationer as a key driver of behavior change. Officers who employ a 'firm, fair, and caring' approach that clearly demonstrates care for the wellbeing of the probationer have been found to be more effective at preventing supervision failure than officers who adopt an enforcement-oriented approach or a lenient approach (Kennealy et al., 2012). The same is true of the trust aspect of the working-alliance between officers and probationers, as demonstrated in a longitudinal study of recidivism in the working-alliance framework taken from the world of psychotherapy (Sturm et al., 2021). However, for this relationship to grow at all, officers must have continuous, individualized contact with each probationer; a condition which is jeopardized with high caseloads, as explored below.

3.3 Procedural Justice and Legitimacy

Another strand of developing research is based on the concept of procedural justice, which suggests that individuals are more likely to obey the law and legal actors when they believe the actors are using their lawful authority in a fair, respectful, and open manner, rather than based on the substantive justice they receive (Tyler, 2006). A large meta-analysis of 64 studies in various criminal justice contexts finds that perceived procedural justice is a stable predictor of perceived legitimacy which predicts legal authority compliance (Walters & Bolger, 2019).

In the context of probation, it implies that the brief interactions between the officer and probationer can have an impact on compliance and reoffending, depending on whether the interaction is respectful and fair, or perfunctory and impersonal.

3.4 Officer Caseload

Caseload size has long been debated as a determinant of supervision quality. Early research on intensive supervision have yielded inconsistent or even contradictory results, and some have found that decreasing the caseload of an intensive supervision program alone without an intervention in supervisory practice does not significantly reduce recidivism (Fox, Harrison, Hothersall, Smith, & Webster, 2022). More recent studies, however, suggest that, at least in some cases, caseload reductions combined with evidence-informed supervision practices can lead to meaningful reductions in reoffending: One quasi-experimental study reported that a 30 per cent reduction in the number of officers assigned to approximately 106 medium- and high-risk probationers was associated with a corresponding 30 per cent drop in recidivism, along with a slight increase in the number of technical violations—which appeared to be due to closer supervision, rather than poor offender behavior; Jalbert & Rhodes, 2012). In addition to its impact on probationers, unmanageable caseloads have been identified as a key source of operational and organizational stress for officers, which can lead to burnout and decreased occupational wellbeing (Norman & Ricciardelli, 2022); a recent commentary on the identity of the probation profession also acknowledges in at least one high-income jurisdiction that caseload is a key source of operational and organizational stress and that job satisfaction is low (Canton, 2024). This literature collectively indicates that caseload size will also affect supervisory practice; neither will supplant the other, but that large caseloads make individual, rehabilitative forms of supervision virtually impossible, irrespective of the training and intentions of the officers, and will significantly burden officers as well as probationers.

3.5 Environmental and Organizational Conditions

Finally, the environment in which supervision and any associated research or assessment takes place carries its own influence. The following are reflections on conducting research in carceral and quasi-carceral contexts: The visibility of institutional personnel, the lack of private space, and the overt power imbalance between client and institution influence what people will share and how they will act (Lafferty, 2023). In the same way, the design of self-reported offending measures in prison populations shows that non-confidential questioning is prone to large social desirability effects, leading to the creation of alternative non-direct questioning methods that safeguard the confidentiality of the respondents (Cobo et al., 2021). The findings generated in research settings also hold true for the routine supervisory contact in which probationers report in unscreened and overcrowded environments, from which staff cannot avert their gaze. Where staff are directly in view of probationers reporting in the same environment, both disclosure and genuine engagement are likely to be inhibited. Overall, this literature provides a clear description of the characteristics of effective probation supervision: risk-matching; individualized case management; firmness but also caring; procedural fairness and respect; caseload that allows for meaningful contact; and privacy and confidentiality. Each of these benchmarks is discussed considering the observations reported below.

3.6 Desistance and Supportive Supervision

A further body of theory, developed specifically within probation and offender-management research rather than imported from psychotherapy or social psychology, concerns desistance: the process by which people who have offended come to stop offending over time. In contrast, desistance narrative and identity research suggests that long-lasting behavior change is tightly connected to the emergence of a coherent pro-social identity, which is often the result of a

relationship or situation where the person feels believed in and accepted as changing. (Maruna, 2001). This and related research on the life course has informed a compelling alternative conceptualization of offender management which suggests that the best way to supervise is to work with them on the change in identity they wish to make, and to encourage their own sense of agency and motivation to make that change, not to monitor, enforce, or treat them regardless of their personal feelings about what is happening in their life (McNeill, 2006). In this perspective, the direct mechanism of influence of supervision on reduced reoffending is not just about eradicating an official record or a risk score, but rather the development over time of a supportive relationship and social environment that makes desistance more probable. This desistance-centered view is not an alternative to the other literatures described above, but rather complements each, with each leading to the conclusion that it is important to have sustained, individualized, respectful contact between the officer and the probationer, and each suggesting that brief, impersonal attendance marking is likely to have a minimal impact on the desistance process in any of these ways.

4. Why Field Observation Matters

These benchmarks are largely based on research conducted since the end of the probation year that relies on retrospective, self-reported experiences of probationers or probation officers, usually in the form of structured questionnaires or interviews. These self-report techniques are appropriate for determining probationers' and probation officers' thoughts, feelings or beliefs about probation, and prior Pakistani research on probation has used such methods, having respondents rate their satisfaction with, or perception of, probation (Khokhar et al., 2023). What self-report cannot readily capture is how supervision unfolds in practice: the length of a reporting session, what is said and not said, who is involved, the impact of the physical space and environment. How people think about a system and what one observes happening in it are two different types of evidence and relying on one type alone can lead to confusion in the role between what people think about supervision and what it is, in practice.

Even if it does not meet the criteria of a formal ethnographic protocol, direct field observation provides another form of evidence: A record of what happens as part of supervision, in the moment, not afterwards. This can be useful in a probation service environment like Pakistan's, where the routine practice has not been recorded in this manner before and has been based on resourcing statistics and stakeholder testimony to date, with reform recommendations only partly based on the observation of the reporting encounter itself (Penal Reform International and DOST Welfare Foundation, 2012). The following observations are made as a complement to probationers' experiences of the system but are not intended as a replacement for probationers' own experience of the system.

5. Context of the Observations

5.1 Setting and Data Collection

The observations reported in this paper were collected as part of a study examining psychosocial predictors of criminal thinking in 268 male probationers supervised by the Probation Department of Punjab. Data collection took place at the Civil Defense Office within the Rawalpindi District Court complex, the designated reporting site for probationers attending scheduled supervision appointments. Field visits were made during multiple sessions over the course of the quantitative data-collection period, each typically associated with a scheduled group reporting date and lasting several hours.

It is important to note that these were not collected as part of a formal ethnographic study and no separate ethnographic protocol, interview guide or observation schedule was prepared in advance. These are instead field observations recorded contemporaneously by the research team which capture the physical setting, the observable conduct of probationers and staff, and informal exchanges taking place while administering a structured research instrument. The probation department's cooperation was consistently supportive throughout data collection, with departmental staff facilitating access, scheduling and logistics, and this is acknowledged as a significant contributing factor to the completion of the underlying study. The observations that follow relate to the structural and organizational conditions of supervision itself and are not intended as a critique of individual staff members' conduct or willingness.

5.2 Analytic Approach

Field notes were written contemporaneously by members of the research team during and following each session, capturing the physical setting, the observable conduct of probationers and staff, and any informal exchanges relevant to the administration of the research instrument. At the end of each session, notes made independently by team members present were compared and consolidated into a single running record, with discrepancies discussed among the team before the next session; this was an iterative exercise, with recurring conditions being able to be distinguished from session-specific incidents across the data-collection period.

No formal qualitative coding software or inter-rater reliability procedure was used, as is consistent with these not having been gathered under a dedicated ethnographic protocol. Instead, the consolidated record was reviewed collectively by the research team once data collection had concluded and recurring patterns were identified through repeated reading and discussion, retaining only those conditions which recurred across multiple sessions rather than being specific to a single visit. These were then mapped deductively onto existing constructs in the international probation literature reviewed in Section 3 (risk-need-responsivity, therapeutic alliance, procedural justice, caseload, and environmental conditions), rather than inductively, ground-up coding as might be associated with formal qualitative methods such as grounded theory or thematic analysis in the strict sense. This deductive, framework-based approach is offered as an appropriately modest description of what was done, and the patterns should be read as a structured practice record rather than the product of a dedicated qualitative study.

5.3 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the research, of which these observations were a contextual part, was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee of Rawalpindi Women University. Probationers who participated in the underlying quantitative study gave informed consent of participation in that study, were assured of confidentiality, and told that participation would be unrelated to their legal proceedings or probation status. The field observations reported in this paper are secondary to and were recorded in the course of that consensual data collection; no additional individual-level data beyond what is already covered by the study's ethical approval were collected for the purposes of these observations, and no individually identifying information about probationers or staff is reported.

6. Major Observations

The observations recorded across the data-collection period converge on seven recurring observational patterns, identified through the analytic approach described in Section 5.2. These are summarized below with links to the international literature reported in Section 3

and include implications for probation practice at the site observed. These patterns are depicted at one reporting site and are presented as characteristics of the site studied and not the claims of probation practice in Pakistan.

6.1 Pattern 1: Probation as Administrative Attendance Rather Than Rehabilitation

The probation reporting process was described in the observation as a predominantly administrative attendance procedure, with probationers turning up on a pre-arranged date, their attendance recorded, a new probation reporting date given and they were then sent home, typically within a couple of minutes. There was no case work activity, structured discussion or rehabilitative content accompanying this exchange. This is in direct contrast to the role of the case manager that was envisioned in the Risk-Need-Responsivity model where supervision should include continuous assessment of need and continuous active intervention tailored to the individual (Andrews et al., 2011) and to desistance-focused accounts of supervision as a relationship that supports changes over time (McNeill, 2006). If this kind of contact is lacking, opportunities for supervision to address the unique criminogenic needs of the individual, reinforce behavior and progress, and assist with the identity shift that accompanies desistance are unlikely to be realized. What is seen, rather, is supervision at its most basic level; a documentation of presence, but without evaluation, planning, and engagement, which are assumed by the rehabilitative model. The actual effect is that probation, as it is implemented, is more of a monitoring tool for the courts than a rehabilitative tool for the probationer.

6.2 Pattern 2: Limited Officer-Probationer Relationship

One thing in particular that was noted at the site observed was the lack of any personal relationship between probationers and their officers. There were a high proportion of probationers who did not know their name as the probationer assigned to them in informal conversation during sessions. This result is significant as international research has identified the officer-probationer relationship as a key mechanism of behavior change – a firm, fair, caring relationship has been shown to reduce supervision failure (Kennealy et al., 2012) and the trust dimension of the working alliance predicts recidivism independently of risk level (Sturm et al., 2021). If probationers are not even able to recognize the name of the officer that is overseeing them, then what kind of relationship would it be, let alone one that could have a protective and rehabilitative effect? This lack of relationship is in line with, and likely directly caused by, the attendance-only pattern of contact in Pattern 1.

6.3 Pattern 3: Excessive Probation Officer Caseloads

During informal discussions with officers within the department and from observation of the number of probationers processed during each session, it was observed that the officers observed on this site were responsible for very high numbers of probationers. This impression is corroborated by official province-wide data: there are 53 officers working in the entire probation service across the province, with about 36,015 probationers, which averages to more than 600 probationers per officer, well above the upper limit in the international literature of the number of probationers that is considered manageable (Jalbert and Rhodes, 2012) and the lower limit of the number of probationers (50 to 54) which has been shown to be associated with meaningful reductions in recidivism when working with evidence-based practice (EBP) (National Commission for Human Rights et al., 2025). These loads are also like what is found internationally, with evidence that unmanageable loads negatively impact officers' occupational wellbeing and professional identity (Canton, 2024; Norman & Ricciardelli, 2022). If these are province-wide caseloads as is implied, then individualised, rehabilitative

engagement by officers, as is the aim of the RNR model, or as is found in therapeutic-alliance research, becomes structurally difficult, regardless of individual officers' skill, motivation, or training. This is not a reflection of the abilities of individual officers in this pattern, but rather a likely result of a caseload which demands an administrative, attendance only approach to supervision in this setting.

6.4 Pattern 4: Infrastructure Constraints and Absence of Confidentiality

The physical environment in which probationers reported at this site was a single large, crowded hall, with no partition, private room, or secluded space available for individual interaction. This is a significant problem because there are two consequences. First, research in the institutional and carceral contexts suggests that staffing proximity and lack of privacy have a tangible effect on what is disclosed, and the nature of the institutional-to-individual power dynamic (Lafferty, 2023). Second, any significant casework or counselling role that is to be attributed to probation officers must have, at a minimum, a space for a probationer to have a private conversation with other probationers and staff as if to be heard by a dozen or more probationers—with regard to a personal or sensitive issue. The lack of such space in the Rawalpindi facility would prevent even if the officers wanted to move away from administrative processing, from doing so in actual practice. The remark must be understood as a limitation of the premises of the court, and not as a reflection of any reluctance on the part of the probation department which was always helpful in the facilitation of the underlying research.

6.5 Pattern 5: Limited Legal Awareness Among Probationers

Interaction with probationers at this site revealed considerable variation, and in many cases a fundamental lack of understanding, regarding the purpose and conditions of probation itself. Some probationers seemed to have viewed probation as a punishment, others as a softer alternative to the legal consequences; a significant number had limited literacy and thus limited knowledge of formal legal procedures generally. The lack of any formal orientation that describes the purpose, conditions, and expectations of probation observed here suggests a further increase in vulnerability to offending: probationers who are not oriented by the officials who are supervising them – but not merely attending them – are less able to meaningfully comply with probation supervision than they are to comply with any other form of supervision.

6.6 Pattern 6: Institutional Mistrust and Guardedness

Often, the attitude of probationers in the first sessions at this location was one of caution, guardedness, and at times, even defensiveness, especially at the beginning of each session, until the research team's purpose and independence from the probation department had been made clear. This guardedness aligns with the findings from procedural justice studies which suggest that people's acceptance of, and compliance with, legal authorities are significantly influenced by their perceptions of trustworthiness, fairness and legitimacy of those authorities (Tyler, 2006; Walters & Bolger, 2019). Where probationers feel they have had less positive contact with their probation officers; and where the general institutional climate is felt as opaque or threatening, it is not surprising that they have poor trust of legal authority more generally, and that this trust would apply to any research carried out within the probation system.

6.7 Pattern 7: Social Desirability and the Influence of Staff Proximity

A clear and consistent pattern was observed at this site whereby probationers' responses became noticeably more guarded, brief, and socially desirable whenever probation staff were

in close physical proximity, particularly on questions touching the probation department, legal experiences, or family matters; responses were comparatively more candid when staff attention was minimal. It is well established in research on sensitive self-report in institutional and criminal justice populations, where social desirability bias is known to produce self-reported offending and related behaviour that may differ from the actual, leading researchers to seek methods for addressing this distortion of self-report, such as using indirect questioning techniques (Cobo et al., 2021). This is not a research issue, but an issue within the supervision itself: Information that the probation officers acquire during the relatively short period of their attendance-marking contact with the probationer – for example, about the circumstances or compliance of a probationer – may be shaped by that probationer's awareness of being observed by institutional personnel, in turn further limiting the usefulness of supervision as structured at this site.

7. Discussion

Taken together, the seven patterns described above reveal one pattern, not seven problems. In the observed setting, probation supervision seemed to have evolved from a rehabilitative case management role to a more narrowly administrative, compliance monitoring role, with limited attendance and minimal relationship building and guidance: in practice, probation engagement and supervision appear to be limited to what is required for compliance monitoring. This argument is summarized schematically in Figure 1, which shows the path that was envisaged by the Probation of Offenders Ordinance, 1960 and the path that has been seen as existence at this site. This change cannot be blamed on any single factor but instead on a confluence of factors like caseloads that make meeting an individual client difficult, physical facilities that make it harder to maintain confidentiality, and a lack of standard orientation or training which means officers have little time, space, and institutional assumption to do more than process attendance.

This is in line with, but goes beyond, the existing survey research in Pakistan on their general satisfaction with probation (Khokhar et al. 2023) which only focused on general levels of satisfaction, not the methods by which it is or is not provided. This is also aligned with past research on the probation and parole system in Pakistan that has repeatedly pointed to issues of resource, staffing, and coordination as key challenges (Penal Reform International & DOST Welfare Foundation, 2012), and with broader research that indicates the strain of caseload on a probation system can lead to a shift in the focus of practice from a caring, relational role to a more enforcement-oriented one, even in well-resourced systems (Canton, 2024). What the present observations bring is a picture of how the structural deficiencies relate to the lived reality of a structured session of the probation reporting officer at this place: a packed hall, a few minutes of interaction, an unfamiliar officer, a probationer who is not always fully aware of what probation is about.

Therefore, an important theoretical implication that warrants testing but not assuming in future research at other sites is that the gap between Pakistan's rehabilitative probation law and its operation as witnessed here is not about the law itself but about the operational capacity and organizational practice. International studies are clear that rehabilitative supervision must have manageable workloads, individualized supervision, an environment that promotes fairness and genuine care, and an environment that supports confidentiality (Andrews et al., 2011; Kenealy et al., 2012; Tyler, 2006), and that desistance in particular is fostered by a supportive relationship over time, in which the probationer's own agency and identity become recognised (Maruna, 2001; McNeill, 2006). Regardless of the intent of the law as it reads,

where it is not present, as it seemed to be in the case observed, the rehabilitative purpose of the law might never be realized in practice on the ground.

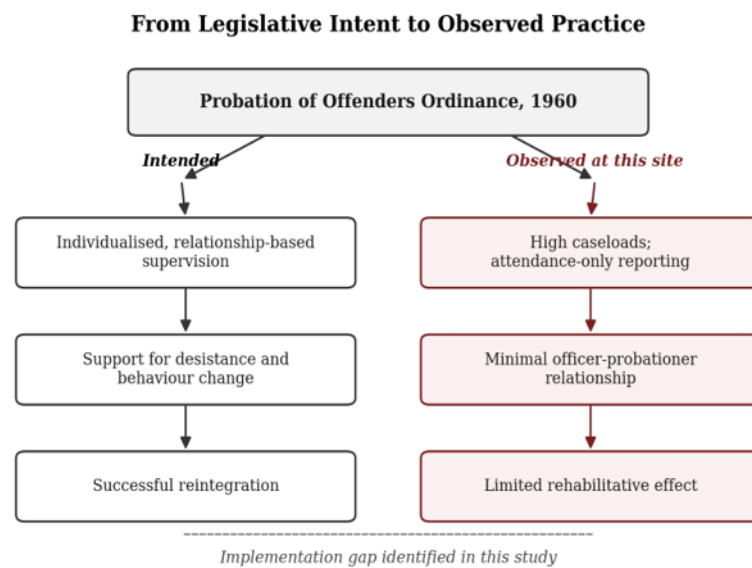


Figure 1. From legislative intent to observed practice at the study site.

8. Policy Recommendations

Each recommendation below follows the same reasoning: an observed condition at this site, read against the international literature reviewed in Section 3, carries an identifiable implication for probation outcomes such as needs identification, compliance, and desistance, which in turn motivates a specific, actionable recommendation. For instance, 'attendance only' reporting (Pattern 1) and read against RNR and desistance studies suggest that opportunities to identify criminogenic needs and to support behavior change through a sustained relationship are currently limited, which justifies the recommendation below for introducing structured supervision sessions separate from attendance-marking. Table 1 provides a summary of all recommendations grouped by problem observed. These are not listed as a single set of high-priority reforms, but as immediate, medium- and long-term reforms, according to the time it will take, the complexity and cost.

Immediate reforms (low cost, short lead time)	Medium-term reforms (moderate cost, organizational change)	Long-term reforms (higher cost, structural investment)
Introduce a brief, standardized orientation session for new probationers explaining the purpose and conditions of probation (addresses Pattern 5).	Establish a dedicated, confidential interview space at reporting sites, separate from the group-attendance hall (addresses Pattern 4).	Reform officer caseload allocation across Punjab to bring average caseloads within internationally recognized manageable ranges (addresses Pattern 3).
Introduce a short, structured supervision interaction distinct from attendance-marking, even	Provide basic training for probation officers in engagement, motivational, and	Digitize case records to enable systematic caseload monitoring

within existing resource constraints (addresses Pattern 1).	procedural-justice-consistent communication skills (addresses Patterns 2 and 6).	and workforce planning (addresses Pattern 3).
Assign and formally introduce each probationer to a named supervising officer (addresses Pattern 2).	Develop a standardized, psychologically informed risk-need screening instrument suited to the Pakistani context (addresses Patterns 1 and 3).	Integrate psychologically informed, desistance-focused supervision practices into the probation service's operating model (addresses Patterns 1, 2, and 6).

Table 1. Observed problems and corresponding policy recommendations, by implementation timeframe

9. Implications

The findings reinforce for probation officers the need for changes in the structure of caseload and infrastructure before they can exercise a rehabilitative function – if they choose to, and if they are suitably trained and not as an alternative to better practice at the individual level. The findings provide a clear opportunity to integrate psychologists in clinical roles in probation services or to offer training to probation officers on basic engagement and motivational skills within the probation process or in designing a standardized risk-need screening instrument for use in Pakistan.

The implications for courts are that probation orders, in their current practice, do not appear to offer the rehabilitative role required by the sentence itself and may have a negative impact on judicial confidence in probation as an effective alternative to imprisonment. For policy makers, in particular, the findings suggest the need to focus on the caseload reform, investment in dedicated infrastructure, basic training of police officers and the digitization of case records to provide basic caseload monitoring and workforce planning that is clearly lacking at the present.

10. Limitations

Some caveats are in order. The findings reported here are from a single probation reporting center in Rawalpindi and are not generalizable to probation practice in other districts in Rawalpindi or to probation practice in other parts of Pakistan, taking into account the differences in staffing and resourcing between districts. Observations were not systematically gathered using a formal ethnographic protocol with a pre-established observation schedule or interrater reliability procedure, but rather were collected as a contextual record, along with a separate quantitative research study, which may have affected what was and was not documented systematically. In a like manner, the very fact of the presence of the research team and the knowledge that they are being watched by a research team may have affected the behavior of the probationers observed, including any social desirability effects discussed in Pattern 7. Lastly, the findings from the study are not representative of the smaller number of women on probation in Punjab, whose situation and supervision requirements may vary significantly.

11. Conclusion

Effective probation is more than just sitting in the chair. It needs to involve some meaningful contact or rapport between officers (s) and probationers, be supervised with enough organization resources (manageable caseloads, confidential physical space), and use an

understanding of risk, need, and behavior change to guide supervision practices. Through the observations described in this paper, it was found that these were very much absent from the site examined, and probation supervision at this site had become more of an administrative role, rather than its statutory duty of rehabilitation. Based on these observations, it seems that there are reasonable recommendations for improving provision of community corrections in Pakistan, to achieve the rehabilitative aims that are currently embedded within the law and to develop an evidence base for community corrections in a setting where there is little evidence available; these recommendations include strengthening caseload allocation, infrastructure, probationer orientation, and incorporating psychologically informed practice within probation.

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