

ICCP/SL/OP/243

Rehabilitation and reintegration of juvenile offenders: Strengthening family resilience and enhancing child protection post-incarceration; A study of Palansena Prison, Negombo, Sri Lanka

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Background: Juvenile offenders are likely to be challenged with family and socio-economic problems that drive them to crime. Rehabilitation and reintegration upon release from prison are issues of prime concern in rehabilitating the lives of such youth. This study aimed at exploring the impact of rehabilitation among juvenile offenders within Palansena Prison, Sri Lanka, through strengthening family resilience and protection of children.

Method: Purposive sampling with a qualitative study design was utilized. The study was conducted between January and April 2024, involving 30 juvenile offenders, family members, and community stakeholders were used. Data were collected using semi structured interviews which were thematically analyzed to ask questions about participants' experiences, attitudes, domestic relationships, and reintegration. This method was highly informative for juvenile delinquency and allowed broad based understanding of perceptions at the community level.

Results: Key findings were that 72% (n=22) of the adolescents with strong support from their family following rehabilitation had significant reduction in recidivism. In addition, 65% (n=20) of the families had improved relationships and economic conditions, thus contributing to an improved home environment. Further, 50% (n=15) of the adolescents were well-adjusted in society since family bonds were enhanced.

Conclusion: The research recommends bringing family-based rehabilitation schemes to halt delinquency among youths and to ensure sustained behavioral change. It also recommends continuous family counseling, community programs for rehabilitation, and child protection systems to effectively safeguard vulnerable youths.

Keywords: Juvenile rehabilitation, family resilience, child protection.