# Mediating Role of Negative Emotions in Association between Imprisonment Strain and Institutional Misconduct among Juvenile Offenders of Punjab Prisons

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#### **Abstract**

The prison environment is indeed a dynamic and complex social environment where various factors and interactions shape the experiences and behaviors of the prisoners along with the staff. The present cross-sectional correlation study highlighted the impact of strain experienced by juvenile offenders during imprisonment on institutional misconduct along with the mediating effects of negative emotions. A purposive convenient sampling technique was used to recruit (N = 244)juvenile offenders with age ranged 10 to 18 years from the Punjab Prisons of Pakistan. Prison Problem Scale, Pakistan Prison Rules, and Multidimensional Emotion Questionnaire were used to measure imprisonment strain, institutional misconduct, and negative emotions respectively. Pearson correlation and simple linear regression analysis revealed that imprisonment strain was positively correlated and a significant positive predictor of institutional misconduct and negative emotions. Simple mediation analysis showed that all negative emotions i.e., afraid, sad, anger, ashamed, and anxiety were significant mediators. Despite some limitations, the current study has important implications for our understanding of imprisonment strain, characteristics of juvenile offenders and their experience of negative emotions. The findings from the current study also highlight the inclusion of treatment modules targeting the emotions in Pakistani Prisons.

**Keywords:** Imprisonment Strain, Institutional Misconduct, Negative Emotions, Juvenile Offenders, Punjab Prisons

## 1. Introduction

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Imprisonment of convicted individuals happens worldwide, which almost occurs in all societies of the world (McLeod et al., 2020). There is a total of 120 prisons in all four provinces of Pakistan with an overall capacity of accommodation for 57,712 prisoners, however, states have housed 77,275 prisoners against the standard minimum rules (Malik, 2019) where prisoners are suffering from dreadful physical as well as social conditions (Dawn, 2019). Other major issues in Pakistani prisons are congestion in barracks, unhygienic and worst sanitation, poor food and health care facilities, security and administrative issues (Khan,2010). Due to neglectful settings, individuals may suffer from psychological deficits that produce offense-related vulnerabilities (Marshall & Barbaree, 1990). Hence, prisoners, being members of at-risk groups are more vulnerable to be exposed to crime-prone strains than other people in general (Bernard, 1990).

So, states should be accountable to fulfil the requirements of the prisoners and assure their reintegration (Gullen & Gilbert, 1982). By doing this it would become possible to reduce the strain of prisoners during imprisonment. Current study is even more valuable because it has a focus on juvenile offenders as there are more chances for juveniles to get involved in criminal behavior than children and adults as well due to their susceptibility of experiencing strains (Agnew, 2006).

## 1.1 Imprisonment strain

Strains are those events and conditions which are disliked by people (Agnew, 2006). Agnew (1992) categorized strain into three main types i.e., failing to accomplish positively valued goals; the elimination of positively valued stimuli, and experiencing negative stimuli. Agnew (2002) claimed these three types of strains lead to anger, depression, and other negative emotions, which further activates coping strategies, with criminal coping as a choice that may lead to deviant behavior and crime. There are multiple factors which are responsible for increasing the possibility of undergoing strains for adolescents. For example they are more prone to criminal coping when they come in contact with delinquent peers, peer pressure, due to socialization, and as a "face-saving strategy" (Agnew, 1997).

Aforementioned justifications are enough to assume that juvenile offenders would be more prone to delinquent behaviors and misconduct during imprisonment because of greater exposure to strains in prisons.

#### 1.2 Institutional misconduct

Institutional misconduct is defined as a behavior that violates prison rules (Steiner & Wooldredge, 2014). Decreasing institutional misconduct is the major goal of correctional institutions because such actions are a threat to the order and safety of any correctional institute. By decreasing the level of misconduct in a correctional institution, correctional resources are preserved and, in this way, safe environment is ensured (French & Gendreau, 2006). Younger prisoners are more likely to get involved in serious misconduct such as assaulting staff (Lahm, 2009), assaulting other prisoners (Griffin & Hepburn, 2006), contraband-related infractions and drug involvement (Jiang, 2005), and getting involved in gang-related conflict with others (Wood et al. 2014).

Variety of imprisonment factors may also be responsible for institutional misconduct. Such as gang association, and mental illness make imprisoned population more prone to engage in institutional misconduct (Kuanliang et al. 2008). Sykes (1958) also suggested that prisoners' behavior such as misconduct is an adaptation to the strains of institutional life. Moreover, Toch (1977) suggested that prisoners cope with imprisonment either maturely or immaturely and inadequate coping resources is associated with prisoner misbehavior.

## 1.3 Negative Emotions

Negative emotions refer to a discrepancy between an ideal and an actual goal (Larson & Asmussen, 1991). Emotions are considered to be a significant driver of human behavior, and subjective as well as interpersonal well-being depends on how emotions are regulated (Baumeister, 2016). Hence, it would not be wrong to say that emotions play a vital role in human destructiveness comprising violent actions (DeLisi, 2011). General strain theory proposes that connection between strain and deviance may also be indirect i.e., undergoing strainful incidents can lead a person to feel a range of negative emotions which further elicit criminal activities (Agnew, 2001; Agnew, 2013).

Most research on emotion regulation have been done on younger children, thus, handful researches are available on regulation during adolescence (Eisenberg & Morris, 2002). Additionally, previous researches on adolescents focused mostly on behavioral regulation instead of emotion regulation, however, focusing on the role of emotional development as well as emotion regulation are crucial to develop prevention programs intended to reduce juvenile aggression and offending (Frick & Morris, 2004).

#### 2. Literature Review

Sykes (1958) suggested that prisoners' behavior such as misconduct is an adaptation to the strains of institutional life. A study was conducted in southern state by Morris et al. (2012) to investigate that how environmental strain in the prisons influences prisoners' violent misconduct. Their focus was to collect monthly records of violent misconduct happened in the first three years during imprisonment and they assessed the impact of strain of the environment on misconduct during imprisonment. Findings recommended positive relationship between prison strain and misconduct while imprisonment. Prison unit environmental strains were associated with prisoners' misconduct and the most deviant prisoners were more vulnerable to environmental strains.

McGrath et al. (2012) studied male parolees of a work-release facility to observe the impact of vicarious, experienced, and anticipated strains on prisoners' misconduct. Findings revealed that perceived risk and fear of crime were related with prisoners' involvement in substance abuse and violence. Thus, vicarious and experienced strains were related with high drug use and violent behavior among prisoners. Furthermore, Beijersbergen et al. (2015) observed the influence of perceived procedural fairness on prisoners' misconduct in the correctional setting. Findings of their study showed that prisoners who perceived that they were treated fairly had less disciplinary issues. Another study conducted by Choi (2019) revealed that perceived procedural injustice, experienced strain such as violent criminal victimization, and anticipated strain such as fear of crime badly affected prisoners' misconduct.

In addition, prisons deteriorates psychological health of prisoners, because right after entering the prison, their support system is being taken away which was otherwise easily accessible outside world and their identities become mortified as a consequence of a series of degradations of self (Goffman 1961). Due to the mortification of self, along with a sense of hopelessness, guilt and shame; purposelessness in life occurs, as a consequence, anxiety and depression arises among prisoners. These negative emotions are identified to have positive relationship with several deviant behaviors in prisons, such as suicide and infractions (Agnew 2006; Blevins et al. 2010). Therefore, connection between strain and deviance may also be indirect i.e., undergoing strainful incidents can lead a person to feel a range of negative emotions which further elicit criminal activities (Agnew, 2013). Such as strain is likely to produce the emotional state of depression, disappointment, anger,

fear, or frustration (Agnew, 2001). Consequently, these negative emotional states may work as an intervening connection between strain and delinquent behavior (Jang & Johnson, 2003).

Consistent with these researches have reported associations between high levels of negative emotionality and offending in general (Garofalo & Velotti, 2017). A study conducted by Jang (2020) in South Korea comprised of 986 male prisoners showed that prisoners' dissatisfaction with correctional officers was positively associated with anger and fear of victimization. Moreover, anger which is considered to be outer-directed emotion was positively associated with outer-directed deviance such as anticipated reoffending, aggressive and property misconduct. Whereas, fear which is considered to be inner-directed emotion was positively associated with inner-directed deviance. Another findings revealed that emotion of shame was linked with internalizing symptoms and behavioral tendencies such as withdrawal or avoidance (Howells et al. 2004), but shame can also produce externalizing response and aggressive acting out (Elison et al., 2014; Ribeiro da Silva et al., 2015).

Thus, research have consistently reported that strain is positively associated with delinquency in both ways directly as well as indirectly such as mediated by negative emotions (Johnson & Morris, 2008).

## 3. Rationale

The universally recognized objective of punishment is to protect the society. This goal can be achieved only if prisons are organized to reform as well as rehabilitate the delinquents, and not just punish them (James, 1998). But, usually in correctional facilities inmates as well as officers experience extremely hostile environments including varying degrees of violence such as witnessing or experiencing physical attacks between prisoners (Wooldredge & Steiner, 2013) or inmates and officers (Konda et al., 2012) sexual assault among inmates (Kubiak et al., 2018), or sexual harassment by forensic workers (Faulkner & Regehr, 2011) to name only a few. These adverse experiences may cause imprisonment strain which further leads to institutional misconduct. By understanding the factors contributing to misconduct among juvenile offenders during and after imprisonment, the study can contribute to understand recidivism and the efforts to reduce reoffending rates in juveniles.

Furthermore, as compared to younger or older people, adolescents experience more frequent and intense emotions (Larson et al., 1980). Experiencing negative emotions may lead to variety of problematic or risky behaviours, moreover, one may get involve in risky behaviours to avoid painful negative mood states (Pizaro &

Salovey, 2002). Therefore, the socioemotional trajectories of adolescents are important to study in order to understand individual differences in behavioural and adjustment issues during this vulnerable period. This empirical research provide concrete evidence of the challenges and consequences of imprisonment strain along with adverse effects of the negative emotions. This study can be used to advocate for reforms and changes in the juvenile justice system.

#### 4. Method

## 4.1 Hypotheses

- 1. Imprisonment strain will be the positive predictor of institutional misconduct among juvenile offenders.
- 2. Imprisonment strain will be the positive predictor of negative emotions among juvenile offenders.
- 3. Negative emotions will mediate the relationship between imprisonment strain and institutional misconduct among juvenile offenders.

### 4.2. Research design

Cross-sectional correlation research design was used in the present study.

## 4.3 Participants

Purposive convenient sampling technique was used to recruit juvenile offenders (N=244) with age ranged 10-18 years from Rawalpindi Central Jail, Lahore District Jail, Sargodha District Jail and Faisalabad Central Jail of Punjab Prison, Pakistan.

#### 4.4 Measures

## **Prison Problems Scale**

In the present study imprisonment strain was measured by Prison Problem Scale consisted of forty items (Zamble & Porporino, 1988). This is a 5-point likert scale (0 = not at all to 4 = all the time). Total scores of the scale range from 0–160 and its Coefficient alpha is = .93 (Zamble & Porporino, 1988).

This scale was translated into Urdu language in the present study before being used.

## 4.5 Prison Misconduct Scale

In the present study, institutional misconduct was measured by according to the prison offences under section 45 and 59 in accordance with Pakistan Prison Rules (The Prisons Act, 1894).

# 4.6 The Multidimensional Emotion Questionnaire (MEQ)

In the present study negative emotions were measured by the Multidimensional Emotion Questionnaire developed by (Klonsky et al., 2019). This scale measures the experience of different emotions such as anxiety, afraid, and anger. Total scores for each emotion are calculated by summing frequency, intensity, and persistence items. The coefficient alpha for overall negative emotions is .79 (Klonsky et al., 2019).

## 4.7 Procedure

Departmental permission letter was taken for data collection. Before approaching juvenile offenders, permission was acquired from concerned authorities (Inspector General of Punjab Prisons) then juvenile offenders were contacted directly by the researcher after obtaining consent from them and their parents/guardians for participation. Identities of juvenile offenders were kept hidden to maintain confidentiality. Furthermore, participants were told that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time if they feel uncomfortable. Moreover, participants were reminded that their participation will in no way connected with the loss (e.g., punishment) or gain of any privileges (e.g., early release etc).

#### 5. Results

Table 1 Psychometric Properties and correlations of study variables, i.e., Imprisonment Strain, Institutional Misconduct and Negative Emotions among Juvenile Offenders (N=244)

Sr. No.	Scales	Cronbach $\alpha$	М	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	PP	.87	72.34	21.52	1	.13*	.28**	.21**	.51**	.20**	.21**
2	IMC	.96	31.63	29.48		1	.16**	.26**	.20**	.21**	.16**
3	SAD	.70	.70	10.50			1	.27**	.28**	.17**	.22**
4	AFR	.73	.73	8.59				1	.14*	.23**	.22**
5	ANG	.72	.72	10.13					1	.06	.17**
6	ASH	.76	.76	10.59						1	.36**
7	ANX	.74	.74	10.56							1

*Note.* PP = prison problem scale; IMC = institutional misconduct scale; SAD = sad scale; AFR = afraid scale; ANG = anger scale; ASH = ashamed scale; ANX = anxiety scale; M = mean; SD = standard deviation

\*
$$p < .05$$
. \*\* $p < .01$ .

Result in table 1 demonstrated alpha reliabilities and correlation analysis indicating that Prison problem scale, Institutional misconduct scale and sub scales of multidimensional emotion questionnaire (i.e., sad, afraid, anger, ashamed and anxiety) had satisfactory Alpha Reliabilities. Moreover, Imprisonment strain had significant positive correlation with institutional misconduct and all negative emotions (i.e., sad, afraid, anger, ashamed and anxiety).

Table 2
Simple Linear Regression Analysis on Institutional Misconduct and Negative Emotions by Imprisonment Strain (N= 244)

		95%	i CI				95%	6 CI				95%	CI
SE B	β	LL	UL	В	SE B	β	LL	UL	В	SE B	β	LL	UL
.08	.13**	.01	.35	.04	.00	.28***	.02	.05	.03	.01	.21**	.01	.05
= .01, (F =	4.55**)			R = .28	8 , R <sup>2</sup> = .07,	(F = 20.56*	**)		R = .2	$1, R^2 = .04$	4, ( <i>F</i> = 11.73	3**)	
Aı	nger					Ashamed					Anxiety		
SE B	β	95%	CI	В	SE B	β	95%	· CI	В	SE B	β	95%	CI
	<del>-</del>	LL	UL	•		_	LL	UL			_	LL	UL
.01	.51***	.07	.11	.03	.01	.20**	.01	.05	.03	.01	.21**	.01	.05
	.08 = .01, (F = An SE B	$08   .13**$ = .01, (F = 4.55**)  Anger  SE B $\beta$	0.08   0.13**   0.01 = .01, (F = 4.55**)  Anger  SE B	08   .13**   .01   .35 = .01, (F = 4.55**)  Anger  SE B	$\begin{array}{cccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccc$	$\begin{array}{cccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccc$	$\begin{array}{c ccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccccc$						

*Note.* ISTRN = imprisonment strain

\*\*p < .01. \*\*\*p < .001

Simple linear regression analysis in table 2 showed the impact of imprisonment strain on institutional misconduct and negative emotions (sad, afraid, anger, ashamed, and anxiety) among juvenile offenders. All findings were significant which indicated that imprisonment strain positively predicted (B = .18,  $\beta = .13$ , p < .01) institutional misconduct signifying that one unit increase in the imprisonment strain will result in .18 unit increase in institutional misconduct. Moreover, imprisonment strain accounted for 1% of variance in the institutional misconduct of juvenile offenders with a significant F ratio (F = 4.55, p < .01). Imprisonment strain positively predicted  $(B = .04, \beta = .28, p < .001)$  sad emotion signifying that one unit increase in the imprisonment strain will result in .04 unit increase in sad emotion. Moreover, imprisonment strain accounted for 7% of variance in the sad emotion of juvenile offenders with a significant F ratio (F = 20.56, p < .001). Imprisonment strain positively predicted (B = .03,  $\beta = .21$ , p < .01) afraid emotion signifying that one unit increase in the imprisonment strain will result in .03 unit increase in afraid emotion. Moreover, imprisonment strain accounted for 4% of variance in the afraid emotion of juvenile offenders with a significant F ratio (F = 11.73, p < .01). Imprisonment strain positively predicted (B = .09,  $\beta = .51$ , p < .001) anger emotion signifying that one unit increase in the imprisonment strain will result in .09 unit increase in anger emotion. Moreover, imprisonment strain accounted for 26% of variance in the anger emotion of juvenile offenders with a significant F ratio (F = 84.90, p < .001). Imprisonment strain positively predicted (B = .03,  $\beta = .20$ , p < .01) ashamed emotion signifying that one unit increase in the imprisonment strain will result in .03 unit increase in ashamed emotion. Moreover, imprisonment strain accounted for 4% of variance in the ashamed emotion of juvenile offenders with a significant F ratio (F = 10.42, p < .01). Imprisonment strain positively predicted ( $B = .03, \beta = .21, p < .01$ ) anxiety signifying that one unit increase in the imprisonment strain will result in .03 unit increase in anxiety emotion. Moreover, imprisonment strain accounted for 4% of variance in the anxiety emotion of juvenile offenders with a significant F ratio (F = 11.66, p < .01).

Table 3
Simple Mediation of the Effect of Imprisonment Strain on Institutional Misconduct by Negative Emotions (N = 244)

	Model 1 (without mediation)	Model 2 (with mediation)				
Predictors			95% CL			
	В	В	LL	UL		
Constant	18.17	5.22	-7.83	23.95		
ISTRN	.19*	0.13	05	0.31		

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Sad		1.33**	.11	2,56
ISTRN→SAD→IMC		.05	.00	.11
$R^2$	.02	.04		
$\Delta R^2$		.02		
F	4.55*	4.59*		
ΔF		0.04		
Constant	18.17	4.71	-9.61	19.02
ISTRN	.19*	0.11	-0.06	0.28
Afraid		2.18***	1.08	3.28
ISTRN→AFR→IMC		.07	.02	.13
$R^2$	.02	.08		
$\Delta R^2$		.06		
F	4.55*	10.04***		
ΔF		5.49		
Constant	18.17	13.47	0.07	26.88
ISTRN	.19*	0.06	-0.14	0.26
Anger		1.34*	0.25	2.44
ISTRN→ANG→IMC		.12	.03	.22
$R^2$	.02	.04		
$\Delta R^2$		.02		
F	4.55*	5.23**		
$\Delta F$		.68		
Constant	18.17	5.91	-9.15	20.97
ISTRN	.19*	0.13	-0.04	0.3
Ashamed		1.52**	0.53	2.52
ISTRN→ASH→IMC		.05	.01	.10
$R^2$	.02	.05		
$\Delta R^2$		.03		
F	4.55*	6.91**		
$\Delta F$		2.36		
Constant	18.17	7.88	-7.89	23.64
ISTRN	.19*	0.14	-0.03	0.32
Anxiety		1.26*	0.14	2.38
ISTRN→ANX→IMC		.04	.00	.09
$R^2$	.02	.04		
$\Delta R^2$		.02		
F	4.55*	4.79**		
$\Delta F$		0.24		

Note. ISTRN = imprisonment strain; IMC = institutional misconduct; SAD = sad; AFR = afraid;

ANG = anger; ASH

<sup>=</sup> ashamed; ANX = anxiety

\*
$$p < .05$$
. \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Simple mediation analysis in table 3 showed that imprisonment strain predicted institutional misconduct through sad and anger emotions which accounted for 2 % variance in institutional misconduct. Imprisonment strain predicted institutional misconduct through afraid emotion and accounted for 6 % variance in institutional misconduct. Imprisonment strain predicted institutional misconduct through ashamed and anxiety emotions which accounted for 3 % variance in institutional misconduct (see Fig.

**Figure 1** *Impact of imprisonment strain on institutional misconduct through sad emotion.* 

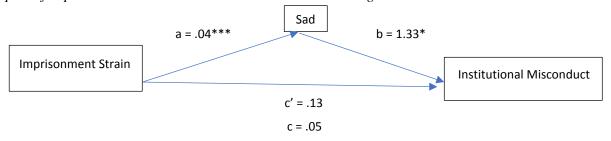
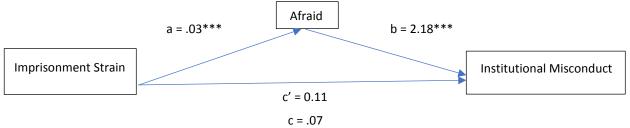
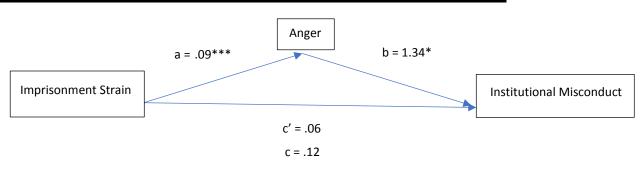


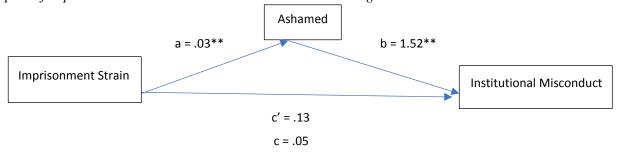
Figure 2
Impact of imprisonment strain on institutional misconduct through afraid emotion.



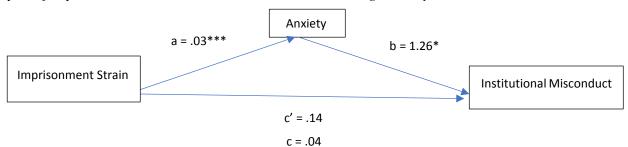
**Figure 3** *Impact of imprisonment strain on institutional misconduct through anger emotion.* 



**Figure 4** *Impact of imprisonment strain on institutional misconduct through ashamed emotion.* 



**Figure 5** *Impact of imprisonment strain on institutional misconduct through anxiety emotion.* 



#### 6. Discussion

The first hypothesis of the study was confirmed and it is in line with the previous study which suggested that imprisonment strain was positively associated with institutional misconduct. Moreover, prison environmental strains were related to prisoner misconduct and the most deviant prisoners were more vulnerable to environmental strains (Morris et al., 2012). A variety of features such as staff characteristics, prison architecture, and even temperature can provoke misconduct among offenders at any time (Camp et al., 2003; Jiang & Fisher-Giorlando, 2002; Morris & Worrall, 2010).

The current study further confirmed the second hypothesis of the study. Past literature suggested that strain produced feelings of depression, disappointment, anger, and fear (Agnew, 2001). By keeping in mind, the prison setting various sources of strains are experienced by juvenile offenders during imprisonment. Thus, it would not be wrong to assume that they are more vulnerable to experience negative emotions. It is also following the study proving that victimization experiences indeed provoke negative emotional responses for example depression, frustration, or anger (Aseltine et al., 2000).

Moreover, the third hypothesis of the study was also confirmed. Research has shown that imprisonment strain was positively associated with deviant behavior among criminals through negative emotions induced by strains. Such as anger and fear of victimization were found to have a positive relationship with prisoners' dissatisfaction with correctional officers, however, fear was associated with in-prison victimization. Furthermore, anger (outer-directed) emotion was positively associated with aggression, misconduct regarding property, and expected reoffending (outerdirected deviance). In contrast, fear which is an inner-directed emotion was positively associated with the inner-directed deviant behavior (Jang, 2020). Thus, exposure to negative life occurrences influences delinquent behavior indirectly through negative emotions (Bao et al., 2014) such as adverse emotions, anger, frustration, and depression, which contribute directly to delinquent behavior (Agnew, 1992). So, juveniles who are exposed to numerous victimization often undergo negative emotions, such as depression or anger, and through indulging in juvenile delinquency resultant negative affective state is reduced. Thus, criminal behavior is influenced by co-occurrence of negative emotions (Ganem, 2010).

### 7. Implications

By addressing the occurrences of institutional misconduct, the possibilities of modifying the culture of the prison system to make it safer for both offenders and officers could be increased. Furthermore, prison psychologists working in different prisons in Punjab can perform an effective role in screening for risk factors in juvenile offenders and providing support and resources to address these issues before they escalate into criminal or deviant behavior. They can provide counseling sessions to juvenile offenders, prison officers, and prison staff as well to promote a non-threatening yet controlled prison culture.

#### 8. Conclusions

The present study concluded that high imprisonment strain experienced by juvenile offenders led to high institutional misconduct. Moreover, high imprisonment strain also steered negative emotions. In turn, those negative emotions i.e., sadness, afraid, anger, shame, and anxiety mediated between imprisonment strain and institutional misconduct. In short, due to high imprisonment strain, negative emotions are aroused which leads to institutional misconduct among juvenile offenders. Thus, instead of threatening the environment, strain strain-free environment should be provided to the offenders in prisons to rehabilitate them which will ultimately help them to reintegrate into society.

#### 9. Recommendations

- Current study was restricted to male juvenile offenders only, future studies should involve female juvenile offenders as well for gender differences comparison.
- Multi-method approach i.e., information from parents, jail staff, and official records should also be used in future studies for in-depth knowledge.
- Future studies should also include uneducated juvenile offenders to investigate the role of illiteracy with reference to study variables.
- Current study used self-report measures only, it is recommended to use other methods of data collection and observation as well to avoid social desirability biasness.
- Present study was cross sectional correlation study, it is recommended to conduct longitudinal studies to see long term effects with reference to study variables.

- Future studies should combine qualitative research method with quantitative method as mixed method approach will provide detailed information.
- Juvenile offenders filled questionnaires in the presence of jail officers/staff which
  made them feel pressurized, thus one to one communication between offenders
  and researcher is recommended to avoid undue pressure.
- Prison psychologists working in Punjab prisons may implement interventional studies in their respective jails on the basis of present study in order to prevent institutional misconduct.
- Educational training or vocational training is recommended for juvenile offenders to reduce the risk of institutional misconduct.
- Training of jail staff and officers is also recommended which may help to reduce the strains induced by imprisonment.

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