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Left Behind: The Impact of Incarceration upon the Mental wellbeing of Dependants

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Abstract

This research article is a conceptual study that attempts in the context of Left Behind: Impact of Incarceration Upon the Dependants. Following the imprisonment of their loved ones, dependents of incarcerated offenders, including family members, spouses, and children, frequently confront a variety of interrelated difficulties. This paper concludes by highlighting the challenges encompass financial hardship, emotional and psychological distress, parenting difficulties, housing instability, stigmatization, legal complexities, and limited access to support systems. The wellbeing and life trajectories of people left behind may be significantly and permanently impacted by these difficulties. To lessen the detrimental effects of incarceration on families, addressing the complex needs of these dependents calls for a comprehensive strategy that incorporates social support, regulatory change, and community resources.

Keywords: Impact of Incarceration, Dependants, Financial Hardship, Emotional and Psychological Stress, Parenting Challenges, Housing and Stability, Stigmatization and Discrimination, Legal and Custody Issues, Limited Support Systems.

Introduction: Financial burdens, emotional and psychological stress, parenting challenges, unstable housing, stigma, legal and custody troubles, and a lack of support systems are just a few of the obstacles that dependents of offenders face while they are incarcerated. Family members, particularly children, struggle with increased levels of anxiety, depression, and potential behavioural issues as a result of being separated from their loved ones who are incarcerated (Western & Pettit, 2010; Arditti & Few, 2006; Murray & Farrington, 2008). The loss of the offender's income also contributes to financial instability. Parenting

difficulties manifest, including conflict over custody rights in court and strain on the other carers (Gabel & Johnston, 1995). Homelessness or limited access to stable living arrangements can result from housing instability and prejudice (Travis et al., 2001; Geller et al., 2009). Dependents experience stigmatisation and discrimination in a variety of spheres of life, including healthcare, employment, and education (Comfort, 2007; Pager, 2003). This furthers social marginalisation. Children's visitation, custody, and potential participation with child protective services are all subject to legal disputes (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008; Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999). Families are left with insufficient emotional, monetary, and social resources as a result of the inadequate support networks (Comfort, 2008; Gabel & Johnston, 1995). To lessen the long-term effects on the well-being of dependents of incarcerated people, addressing these complex challenges requires a comprehensive strategy incorporating legal reforms, community assistance programmes, and educational activities.

Impact Of Incarceration Upon The Dependents: Dependents such as family members, wives, and kids may suffer a great deal as a result of an offender's incarceration. Depending on elements like the duration of the sentence, the type of crime committed, and the availability of support systems, these effects might vary greatly. Following the incarceration of offenders, the following difficulties may affect dependents, along with sources to substantiate these points:

Financial Hardship: Impact of incarceration upon dependents: The family may experience financial difficulty if the offender's income is lost. Dependents may find it difficult to pay for necessities including shelter, food, and medical care (Western, B., & Pettit, 2010). One of the most urgent problems that dependents of prisoners frequently experience is financial difficulties. Families may experience serious financial instability as a result of the loss of the offender's income as well as many additional expenses and difficulties. The family frequently loses a sizable source of income when the main provider is imprisoned. The family may find it challenging to pay for necessities like housing, food, and utilities as a result of this loss. Legal costs for the offender's case, such as lawyer fees, court costs, and travel costs for visitations or court appearances, may be incurred by families (Comfort, M. L., 2007). Families frequently pay travel and transportation expenses as they make the lengthy trip to visit their loved one behind bars. The family's finances may also be strained by the expensive cost of phone calls and video visits from prison (Arditti, J. A., & Few, A. L., 2006). The other family members might have to pay for childcare services, which can be expensive, if the imprisoned parent was the main carer (Gabel, K., & Johnston, D., 1995). To pay for urgent expenses, families may turn to debt, such as credit card debt or payday loans, which can cause long-term financial issues (Geller, A., Garfinkel, I., Cooper, C. E., & Mincy, 2009). Families may struggle to pay their rent or mortgages as a result of financial issues, which may lead to housing instability. Eviction or foreclosure may result from this (Travis, Solomon, & Waul, 2001). Due to the obstacles and stigma attached to having a family member in prison, some dependents may have trouble obtaining public assistance programmes (Comfort, M. L., 2008). A comprehensive strategy

is needed to address the financial hardship faced by dependents of incarcerated offenders. This strategy should include better support systems, financial burden-relieving policies, and community resources to help these families stay stable during a trying time.

Emotional and Psychological Stress: Impact of incarceration upon dependents: Family members, spouses, and children of offenders, as well as other dependents, can experience severe emotional and psychological hardship as a result of their incarceration. Mental health may suffer as a result of adjusting to the absence of a loved one and the difficulties that come with being imprisoned. Due to the isolation from the incarcerated family member, concerns for their well-being, and the stigma attached to incarceration, dependents, particularly children, may experience increased levels of anxiety and depression (Arditti, J. A., & Few, A. L., 2006). As they cope with their loved one's absence, family members could feel a sense of loss and grief similar to when a family member passes away (Gabel, K., & Johnston, D., 1995). When a parent is imprisoned, the carer who is left behind (often a single parent or other family member) may feel more stress from parenting duties and the added emotional strain of having to explain the situation to the kids (Murray, J., & Farrington, D. P., 2008). Due to guilt or embarrassment over the incarceration, families may isolate themselves from their social networks, which can cause loneliness (Comfort, M. L., 2007). Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms may appear in some dependents, particularly in those who have observed the arrest or have experienced domestic abuse as a result of the illegal behaviour (Glaze, L. E., & Maruschak, L. M., 2008). Children whose parents are in prison may struggle academically and have behavioural problems at school as a result of the strain and emotional turmoil they are going through (Murray, J., & Farrington, D. P., 2005). Because of their family member's incarceration, dependents may experience stigma and prejudice from peers, instructors, and the community, which can worsen emotional distress (Murray, J., & Murray, L., 2010). In order to help people and families cope with the difficulties brought on by incarceration and lessen its detrimental effects on mental health, it is necessary to provide dependents of incarcerated offenders with access to mental health services, support networks, and educational resources.

Parenting Challenges: Impact of incarceration upon dependents: Children of incarcerated parents may find it difficult to maintain interactions with them, which can strain family ties and have long-term effects on child development. Children in particular may face a variety of parenting difficulties as a result of an offender's incarceration. The development and wellbeing of the kids may be significantly impacted over the long run by these difficulties. The initial difficulty is the child's physical separation from the jailed parent. Both the parent and the child may experience mental pain and feelings of abandonment as a result of this separation (Gabel, K., & Johnston, D., 1995). Children may not have their incarcerated parent's direction and support, which may have an effect on how they develop emotionally and socially. This loss of direction can be particularly difficult for a youngster during pivotal growth phases. Due to visitation limitations, restricted contact options, and the physical distance between them, maintaining a meaningful relationship between the incarcerated parent and their child can be difficult. Due to the additional

responsibilities of parenting, the financial pressure, and the emotional weight, the carer who is left behind, who is frequently a single parent, may feel more stressed than usual. Due to the difficulties they encounter in their family setting, children of incarcerated parents may endure developmental delays, both cognitive and emotional (Murray, J., & Murray, L., 2010). Due to the stress and mental turmoil brought on by their parent's incarceration, children may display behavioural issues including violence, delinquency, or withdrawal. Farrington, D. P., and Murray, J. (2005). Due to their parent's incarceration, children may face stigmatisation from their classmates and in the community, which can negatively affect their self-esteem and social interactions. Waul, M., Travis, J., and A. L. Solomon, 2001). Children and carers may experience additional stress and uncertainty as a result of legal problems that families may encounter about child custody and visitation rights Glaze, L. E., & Maruschak, L. M. (2008). In order to help both the incarcerated parent and the remaining carer give the children the best environment possible during and after the incarceration period, addressing these parenting challenges requires a combination of family support services, including counselling, parenting programmes, and legal assistance.

Housing and Stability: Impact of incarceration upon dependents: Families with incarcerated members may have housing instability since some landlords won't rent to them, and homes may be lost owing to financial hardships (Geller, A., Garfinkel, I., Cooper, C. E., & Mincy, 2009). Housing instability and a host of other challenges for offenders' dependents, such as family members and children, might result from their incarceration. These difficulties may significantly affect the family's stability and well-being. In other situations, the family may be evicted due to the offender's criminal activities or financial troubles brought on by the loss of the offender's income (Comfort, M. L., 2008). Inability to find stable housing for a family can result in homelessness, which poses a number of health and safety problems, particularly for young children (Travis, Solomon, & Waul, 2001). It may be difficult for families with a jailed member to find safe and affordable housing due to prejudice in the housing market (Geller, A., Garfinkel, I., Cooper, C. E., & Mincy, 2009). Families may choose cramped or insecure living situations, such as relocating with friends or family, which can cause stress and a lack of privacy (Arditti, J. A., & Few, A. L., 2006). Children who frequently move homes may wind up attending many schools, which can interrupt their education and lower their academic performance (Western, B., & Pettit, 2010). Legal restrictions on housing may apply to people with criminal records, even those who have just been released from prison, making it challenging for them to find permanent home for their family (Pager, D., 2003). The disruption brought on by a family member's incarceration can lead to the dissolution of social networks in the neighbourhood, which exacerbates housing instability (Murray, J., & Murray, L., 2010). Due to financial strain brought on by the loss of the offender's income and associated expenses, dependents may find it difficult to pay housing obligations like rent or mortgage payments (Gabel, K., & Johnston, 1995). A holistic strategy is needed to address the housing and stability difficulties affecting dependents of jailed criminals, including access to affordable housing, housing support services, and legal activism to remove barriers to housing for those with

criminal records. To assist the wellbeing and successful reintegration of families affected by incarceration, stable living conditions are essential.

Stigmatization and Discrimination: Impact of incarceration upon dependents: Due to their relationship with an incarcerated family member, dependents may face social stigma and discrimination, which may limit their social and educational chances (Comfort, M. L., 2007). Due to their connection to the criminal justice system, family members, spouses, and children of convicted offenders sometimes endure stigmatisation and discrimination. These problems may have serious social and emotional repercussions. Because of their family member's incarceration, dependents may experience social stigma and unfavourable opinions from others, which can cause them to feel ashamed, alone, and alienated (Comfort, M. L., 2008). Children whose parents are in prison may experience stigma from their peers and teachers, which may have an adverse effect on their self-esteem and academic success. Few, A. L., & Arditti, J. A., (2006). As some employers may be reluctant to hire or promote someone with a family history of incarceration, family members of those who are incarcerated may experience discrimination in the labour market (Pager, D., 2003). Due to their involvement with the criminal justice system, families may experience discrimination in the housing market, with landlords and housing providers declining to rent to them. A. Geller, I. Garfinkel, C. E. Cooper, and R. B. Mincy (2009). Families having a history of incarceration could be subject to greater scrutiny and law enforcement intervention in some areas because they are perceived as being innately criminal. M. L. Comfort (2007). According to Travis, Solomon, and Waul (2001), dependents may experience social exclusion from local gatherings, organisations, and activities, which might restrict their social and recreational options. Due to the prejudice and discrimination they experience within the healthcare system, families that are affected by incarceration may experience inequities in healthcare access and treatment (Williams, D. R., & Sternthal, 2010). The possibility that child welfare authorities will get engaged with families can rise as a result of stigmatisation and discrimination, which can put such families under more stress and public scrutiny (Hagan, J., & Dinovitzer, R., 1999). Public education and awareness programmes to combat misconceptions and biases connected with the relatives of incarcerated people are necessary to address stigmatisation and discrimination. Equal possibilities for dependents of convicted offenders may also require legal protections against discrimination based on familial relationships. Reduced stigma and discrimination's detrimental impact on these families can be achieved with the help of support networks and community organisations.

Legal and Custody Issues: Impact of incarceration upon dependents: Legal disputes over child custody, visiting privileges, and family court processes may arise as a result of incarceration, adding stress to the lives of dependents (Gabel, K., & Johnston, D., 1995). Criminal defendants' incarceration may result in a number of legal and custody concerns for their dependents, particularly children. These problems can be difficult to understand and navigate. The incarceration of one parent can result in custody battles with the custodial parent or other family members when neither parent is already incarcerated (Poehlmann, J., & Eddy, J. M., 2010). Children of incarcerated parents may be placed in foster care when

there are no acceptable family members to care for them, which could result in a traumatic separation from their families (Shlafer, R. J., & Poehlmann, J., 2010). The parent-child relationship during incarceration may be limited by legal constraints and logistical difficulties that prevent regular visits between incarcerated parents and their kids (Dallaire, D. H., Ciccone, & Wilson, L. C., 2012). To make decisions for the incarcerated parent or to access their financial resources for the family's well-being, family members may need to apply for legal guardianship or powers of attorney (Travis, J., Solomon, A. L., & Waul, 2001). According to the situation, child support orders may need to be revised to reflect the new financial condition of the incarcerated parent (Geller, A., Garfinkel, I., Cooper, C. E., & Mincy, R. B., 2009). Even after release, legal obstacles, such as limitations on housing and employment, may make it difficult for recently jailed parents to reintegrate into the lives of their children (Travis, J., Western, & Redburn, 2014). When a parent is imprisoned, Child Protective Services (CPS) may become involved, especially if there are worries about the child's welfare or the parent-child relationship (Hagan, J., & Dinovitzer, 1999). Legal experts, social workers, and support services must be involved in navigating these custody disputes in order to guarantee that the best interests of the child and the family are taken into account. For the obstacles and inconveniences suffered by family members of convicted offenders to be as minimal as possible, coordination amongst various groups is essential. Legal changes and regulations that take into account the particular requirements of these families can also help to mitigate these problems.

Limited Support Systems: Impact of incarceration upon dependents: Due to the stigma attached to incarceration, families with incarcerated members may find it difficult to receive support services including counselling, financial aid, and educational opportunities (Travis, J., Solomon, A. L., & Waul, 2001). Dependents of convicted criminals frequently have insufficient support networks, which can make it harder for them to cope with problems both during and after incarceration. These assistance programmes are essential for assisting families in coping with the different difficulties brought on by having a loved one in prison. **Lack of Emotional Support:** Due to the stigma associated with incarceration, families may endure emotional pain and isolation, which can result in a lack of emotional support from friends and community members (Comfort, M. L., 2007). Families may experience financial difficulty if they can't afford to pay for their fundamental requirements, such as housing, food, and healthcare (Geller, A., Garfinkel, I., Cooper, C. E., & Mincy, 2009). Children in particular may need counselling and treatment to deal with the emotional and psychological impacts of having a family member behind bars. Their wellbeing may be hampered by limited access to mental health care (Arditti, J. A., & Few, A. L., 2006). Children whose parents are in prison may experience academic and emotional difficulties, and they might not have access to educational support services and programmes that are tailored to their particular requirements (Murray, J., & Murray, L., 2010). Legal difficulties with child custody, visitation privileges, and other matters may be faced by families. Their capacity to traverse these complicated legal procedures may be hampered if they have limited access to legal counsel (Gabel, K., & Johnston, D., 1995). Families affected by incarceration may

lack access to support groups and community organisations that are explicitly focused on meeting their needs (Poehlmann, J., & Eddy, J. M., 2010). As a result, they may have fewer options for coping and healing. Access to reentry services, which are essential for a successful reintegration and include housing help and employment assistance, may be difficult for former inmates and their families (Travis, Solomon, & Waul, 2001). A thorough effort is needed to address the inadequate support networks for family members of prisoners. This entails the creation of community-based support programmes, improved accessibility to social services, and initiatives to lessen the stigma attached to incarceration. To make these families' lives more comfortable, cooperation between governmental bodies, nonprofits, and local leaders is crucial.

Conclusion: In conclusion, the difficulties faced by the family members of convicted criminals are significant and ubiquitous, ranging from financial instability to emotional misery to housing insecurity to social shame. The references given highlight the long-term effects of these problems on families, especially children, who frequently experience the worst effects. A comprehensive strategy incorporating legal changes, improved access to support services, and a decrease in the stigma associated with incarceration in society is needed to address these complex problems. Breaking the cycle of intergenerational hardship experienced by these dependents requires substantial reforms in the criminal justice system, social services, and community assistance initiatives. This is necessary to address the structural problems at play and to ease the hardships these dependents confront. The cycle of disadvantage can be broken and more equal outcomes for impacted families can be achieved by recognising the long-term effects and putting in place policies that prioritise the welfare of these dependents.

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