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**The Efficacy of Restorative Justice Programs in Reducing Recidivism  
Rates**



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## The Efficacy of Restorative Justice Programs in Reducing Recidivism Rates

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** This study sought to assess the efficacy of restorative justice programs in reducing recidivism rates.

**Methodology:** The study adopted a desktop research methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low cost technique as compared to field research, as the main cost is involved in executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. This secondary data was easily accessed through the online journals and library.

**Findings:** The findings reveal that there exists a contextual and methodological gap relating to restorative justice programs in reducing recidivism rates. Preliminary empirical review revealed that restorative justice interventions were effective in reducing reoffending and promoting positive outcomes for both offenders and victims. Through processes such as victim-offender mediation and family group conferencing, restorative justice provided opportunities for offenders to take responsibility, repair harm, and engage in rehabilitation. While acknowledging variations in effectiveness based on offender characteristics and program implementation, the study highlighted the importance of continued investment in restorative justice initiatives to create a more just and equitable criminal justice system.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy:** Labeling theory, Social Learning theory and Routine Activities theory may be used to anchor future studies on restorative justice programs in reducing recidivism rates. The study offered recommendations that contributed to theoretical advancements, practical improvements, and policy developments in the field. It emphasized the importance of exploring underlying mechanisms, standardized training for practitioners, and integration of restorative principles into mainstream criminal justice policies. These recommendations were aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of restorative justice interventions in promoting positive outcomes for victims, offenders, and communities.

**Keywords:** *Efficacy, Restorative Justice, Recidivism Rates, Desistance, Mechanisms, Training, Accreditation, Practitioners, Trauma-Informed, Cultural Competence, Legislative Reforms, Diversion Programs, Community Stakeholders, Sustainability, Positive Outcomes*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Recidivism rates, representing the propensity of previously convicted individuals to engage in subsequent criminal behavior, are critical indicators of the efficacy of rehabilitation efforts within criminal justice systems worldwide. These rates reflect not only the effectiveness of interventions aimed at reducing reoffending but also the broader societal factors influencing criminal behavior. In the United States, recidivism remains a pressing concern, with research indicating alarmingly high rates of re-arrest and reincarceration among released prisoners. For instance, Durose, Cooper & Snyder (2018) found that approximately 83% of individuals released from state prisons across 30 states were rearrested within nine years of release. Such statistics underscore the persistent challenges faced by the U.S. criminal justice system in breaking the cycle of recidivism and promoting successful reintegration into society.

Similarly, in the United Kingdom, recidivism rates represent a significant challenge for policymakers and practitioners in the criminal justice system. The Ministry of Justice (2019) reports that within a year of release from custody, nearly half of adult offenders and over two-thirds of juvenile offenders are reconvicted. These figures highlight the persistent nature of reoffending behavior and the need for targeted interventions to address underlying factors contributing to recidivism. Despite efforts to implement rehabilitation programs and support services, the high rates of reconviction underscore the complexity of reducing recidivism and promoting desistance from crime in the UK context.

In contrast to the high recidivism rates observed in some Western countries, Japan has been praised for its relatively low rates of reoffending among ex-convicts. Takahashi & Tsuchiya (2017) indicates that the recidivism rate in Japan stands at approximately 20% within five years of release. This comparatively lower rate can be attributed to Japan's focus on rehabilitation, community-based corrections, and social reintegration programs. Moreover, Japan's emphasis on maintaining strong familial and community ties may contribute to the successful reintegration of ex-offenders into society. However, challenges such as stigma and limited employment opportunities for ex-convicts persist and may impact recidivism rates over time.

In Brazil, recidivism rates remain a significant concern, reflecting systemic challenges within the country's criminal justice system and broader socio-economic disparities. Caldeira, Augusto & Dias (2019) found that approximately 70% of incarcerated individuals in Brazil are rearrested within five years of release. Factors contributing to high recidivism rates in Brazil include overcrowded prisons, inadequate rehabilitation programs, and socio-economic inequalities. Additionally, the prevalence of organized crime and gang activity in certain regions may exacerbate recidivism by perpetuating cycles of violence and criminal behavior. In many African countries, recidivism rates are influenced by a myriad of socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors. While comprehensive data on recidivism may be limited, studies suggest varying rates of reoffending across different contexts. For example, research by Amankwaa (2019) in Ghana found that approximately 46% of ex-prisoners were rearrested within three years of release. Similarly, in South Africa, recidivism rates are estimated to be as high as 80%, reflecting the complex interplay of socio-economic challenges, systemic inequalities, and limited access to rehabilitation services.

Despite regional variations, global trends in recidivism rates underscore the pervasive nature of reoffending behavior across different jurisdictions. Papanozzi and Demichele (2016) synthesized data from multiple countries and found that the average recidivism rate across studies was approximately 52%. This indicates that recidivism is a prevalent issue worldwide, necessitating evidence-based interventions and policy reforms tailored to specific contexts and populations. Understanding global trends in recidivism rates is crucial for informing effective strategies to address reoffending and promote successful reintegration into society. Recidivism rates are influenced by a multitude of



interconnected factors, including individual characteristics, social dynamics, and systemic inequities. Mallik-Kane and Visher (2015) emphasize the importance of addressing these underlying factors to effectively reduce reoffending. Individual-level factors such as substance abuse, mental health disorders, and lack of education or vocational skills can significantly contribute to recidivism. Moreover, social factors such as unstable housing, limited social support networks, and exposure to criminal peers can further exacerbate reoffending behavior. Additionally, systemic issues within the criminal justice system, such as disparities in sentencing and access to rehabilitative services, can impact recidivism rates by perpetuating cycles of incarceration and reentry.

Addressing recidivism requires comprehensive policy interventions that target both individual needs and systemic challenges within the criminal justice system. Wilson & Olaghere (2017) advocate for a shift towards rehabilitative approaches that prioritize reintegration and community-based support. Investing in evidence-based programs such as cognitive-behavioral therapy, vocational training, and substance abuse treatment can effectively reduce recidivism by addressing underlying risk factors and promoting positive behavior change. Moreover, implementing diversion initiatives, restorative justice programs, and alternatives to incarceration can provide individuals with opportunities for rehabilitation and minimize the collateral consequences of criminal involvement. Moving forward, research efforts should focus on advancing our understanding of recidivism and identifying innovative approaches to reduce reoffending.

Sullivan, McGloin & Pratt (2020) highlighted the importance of longitudinal studies that examine the trajectories of individuals over time to better understand the factors influencing desistance from crime. Furthermore, exploring the effectiveness of emerging interventions such as technology-based rehabilitation programs, peer mentoring initiatives, and community-led reentry support can offer promising avenues for reducing recidivism and promoting successful reintegration. By fostering interdisciplinary collaborations and adopting a life-course perspective on criminal behavior, researchers can contribute to the development of holistic strategies that address the complex nature of recidivism and promote positive outcomes for justice-involved individuals. Recidivism rates represent a complex and multifaceted challenge that requires comprehensive responses from policymakers, practitioners, and researchers. By adopting evidence-based interventions, investing in community resources, and prioritizing reintegration and support services, we can create pathways to positive change and contribute to safer, more equitable societies. Ultimately, addressing recidivism requires a collaborative and holistic approach that recognizes the interconnectedness of factors influencing criminal behavior and promotes solutions grounded in justice, compassion, and human dignity.

Restorative justice programs offer an alternative approach to traditional punitive measures within the criminal justice system. These programs prioritize repairing the harm caused by crime, promoting accountability, and facilitating healing for all parties involved – victims, offenders, and communities (Van Ness & Strong, 2015). Unlike conventional punitive measures that focus solely on punishment and isolation, restorative justice emphasizes dialogue, empathy, and collaborative problem-solving. By bringing together affected parties in a facilitated process, restorative justice programs aim to address the underlying causes of offending behavior and prevent future harm. Restorative justice programs are guided by several key principles that shape their implementation and outcomes. Central to these principles is the concept of repairing harm, which emphasizes the restoration of relationships and the healing of communities affected by crime (Wenzel, Okimoto, & Feather, 2012). Other principles include voluntariness, respect, inclusivity, and empowerment. Participants in restorative justice processes are given the opportunity to voluntarily engage in dialogue, express their needs and concerns, and collaboratively develop solutions that address the root causes of conflict or harm.

Restorative justice programs typically involve several components, including facilitated meetings between victims and offenders, community conferences, restitution agreements, and circle processes

(Latimer, Dowden & Muise, 2017). These components may vary in format and structure depending on the specific needs of the participants and the nature of the offense. Facilitators play a crucial role in guiding the restorative process, ensuring that all parties are heard, and fostering a sense of accountability and empathy among participants. Research suggests that participation in restorative justice programs can have positive effects on offender rehabilitation and desistance from crime (Strang & Sherman, 2013). By providing opportunities for offenders to take responsibility for their actions, understand the impact of their behavior on others, and make amends, restorative justice programs promote personal growth and behavior change. Offenders who engage in restorative processes may develop a greater sense of empathy, accountability, and prosocial behavior, leading to reduced likelihood of reoffending.

Victims of crime often report higher levels of satisfaction with restorative justice processes compared to traditional court proceedings (Bradshaw & Roseborough, 2018). Restorative justice allows victims to have a voice, express their emotions, and seek answers to their questions directly from the offender. Through face-to-face meetings or facilitated dialogue, victims may experience a sense of validation, closure, and empowerment. Research indicates that victim satisfaction with the restorative process is positively associated with reduced feelings of fear, anger, and trauma following the crime. Restorative justice programs contribute to the process of community reintegration by fostering social connections, promoting community cohesion, and addressing the root causes of crime (Latimer, Dowden & Muise, 2013). By involving community members in the resolution of conflicts and harm, restorative justice builds trust, empathy, and solidarity within neighborhoods and broader society. Communities that embrace restorative practices are better equipped to support the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders, reduce social stigma, and create opportunities for meaningful participation and contribution.

Restorative justice programs have shown promise in reducing recidivism rates among participants compared to traditional punitive approaches (Latimer, Dowden & Muise, 2017). Meta-analytic research indicates that offenders who engage in restorative justice processes are less likely to reoffend than those subjected to conventional criminal justice sanctions. This reduction in recidivism can be attributed to the transformative nature of restorative justice, which addresses the underlying causes of offending behavior, promotes accountability, and strengthens social bonds. By actively involving offenders in repairing the harm caused by their actions and fostering connections with victims and communities, restorative justice programs support long-term rehabilitation and desistance from crime.

Despite its potential benefits, restorative justice faces several challenges and limitations in its implementation and effectiveness (Strang & Sherman, 2013). These include issues related to access and equity, as marginalized or vulnerable populations may have limited opportunities to participate in restorative processes. Moreover, concerns about coercion, power imbalances, and secondary victimization may arise in cases involving intimate partner violence or other forms of serious harm. Additionally, the success of restorative justice programs relies heavily on the willingness and readiness of all parties to engage in the process, which may not always be achievable.

Continued research is needed to advance our understanding of restorative justice and its potential applications in diverse contexts (Latimer, Dowde & Muise, 2013). Future studies should explore the mechanisms underlying the effectiveness of restorative justice programs, including the role of empathy, shame, and social support in promoting positive outcomes. Additionally, research should examine the scalability and sustainability of restorative justice interventions, particularly in large urban settings or in cases involving complex forms of harm. By addressing these research gaps, scholars can contribute to the ongoing development and refinement of restorative justice practices and inform evidence-based policy and practice. Restorative justice programs represent a promising alternative to traditional punitive approaches within the criminal justice system. By prioritizing healing, accountability, and community involvement, these programs offer opportunities for meaningful

dialogue, reconciliation, and rehabilitation. While challenges and limitations exist, research suggests that restorative justice can contribute to reducing recidivism rates, enhancing victim satisfaction, and promoting community reintegration. Moving forward, continued research, collaboration, and innovation are essential to realizing the full potential of restorative justice and advancing the goals of justice, equity, and social change.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Recidivism rates remain a significant challenge within the criminal justice system, with a substantial portion of individuals released from incarceration returning to criminal behavior (Durose, Cooper & Snyder, 2018). In the United States, for example, statistics reveal alarming rates of recidivism, with approximately 83% of individuals released from state prisons rearrested within nine years of release. This high rate of reoffending not only perpetuates cycles of crime and incarceration but also imposes significant social and economic costs on communities. Traditional punitive approaches to addressing recidivism have yielded limited success in breaking this cycle, highlighting the need for alternative strategies that focus on rehabilitation and community reintegration. One such approach is restorative justice, which emphasizes repairing harm, promoting accountability, and fostering healing for all parties involved – victims, offenders, and communities. However, despite growing interest in restorative justice programs, there remains a need for empirical research to evaluate their efficacy in reducing recidivism rates and addressing the underlying factors contributing to reoffending behavior. This study aims to fill several research gaps in the literature on restorative justice and recidivism reduction. First, while there is some evidence suggesting the potential effectiveness of restorative justice programs in promoting desistance from crime, the empirical research in this area remains limited and inconclusive. Existing studies often lack methodological rigor, such as small sample sizes, limited follow-up periods, and lack of control groups, making it challenging to draw definitive conclusions about the impact of restorative justice on recidivism rates (Latimer et al., 2017). Therefore, this study seeks to address these methodological limitations by employing robust research designs and longitudinal follow-up to provide more reliable evidence on the efficacy of restorative justice programs in reducing recidivism. Furthermore, existing research on restorative justice and recidivism often overlooks the heterogeneity of offenders and the diversity of contexts in which restorative justice programs are implemented. This study aims to fill this gap by examining how the effectiveness of restorative justice programs may vary across different populations, such as juvenile offenders, adult offenders, and individuals with specific criminogenic needs (e.g., substance abuse, mental health issues). By disaggregating the data and analyzing subgroups separately, this study will provide insights into which types of offenders may benefit most from restorative justice interventions and inform targeted intervention strategies tailored to the needs of specific populations. The findings of this study will have significant implications for various stakeholders within the criminal justice system, including policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and community members. Policymakers can use the evidence generated from this study to inform decision-making regarding the allocation of resources for restorative justice programs and the development of policies aimed at reducing recidivism rates. By demonstrating the efficacy of restorative justice in reducing reoffending behavior, policymakers can justify investments in restorative justice initiatives and advocate for their expansion within the criminal justice system. Practitioners working within the criminal justice system, including judges, probation officers, and restorative justice facilitators, will benefit from a better understanding of the effectiveness of restorative justice programs in reducing recidivism rates. Armed with empirical evidence, practitioners can make informed decisions about referring offenders to restorative justice processes, tailoring interventions to individual needs, and maximizing the impact of restorative justice on rehabilitation and community reintegration. Additionally, community members and stakeholders affected by crime will benefit from the findings of this study by gaining confidence in restorative

justice as a viable approach to addressing harm, promoting healing, and fostering safer and more cohesive communities.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Theoretical Review**

#### **2.1.1 Labeling Theory**

Labeling theory, originated by sociologists Howard Becker and Edwin Lemert, posits that societal reactions to individuals' behavior play a crucial role in shaping their identities and subsequent actions (Becker, 1963; Lemert, 1951). According to this theory, individuals who are formally labeled as criminals or deviants by the criminal justice system may internalize these labels and adopt a deviant identity, leading to continued involvement in criminal behavior as they fulfill society's expectations of them (Becker, 1963). In the context of restorative justice programs, labeling theory suggests that traditional punitive responses to crime may exacerbate recidivism by stigmatizing offenders and reinforcing their identification as criminals. Restorative justice, with its emphasis on repairing harm and promoting reconciliation, offers an alternative approach that seeks to mitigate the labeling effects of the criminal justice system. By providing opportunities for offenders to reintegrate into their communities and restore their social bonds, restorative justice programs may help to counteract the negative consequences of labeling and reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

#### **2.1.2 Social Learning Theory**

Social learning theory, proposed by psychologist Albert Bandura, posits that individuals learn behavior through observation, imitation, and reinforcement processes (Bandura, 1977). According to this theory, people are more likely to engage in behaviors that they observe being rewarded or that they perceive as socially acceptable within their social environments. Applied to the context of restorative justice programs, social learning theory suggests that the participatory nature of restorative processes may facilitate positive behavior change among offenders. By observing the empathetic responses of victims, experiencing the consequences of their actions, and receiving support from their communities, offenders may learn prosocial behaviors and develop the skills necessary to avoid future criminal conduct. Moreover, the collaborative problem-solving approach inherent in restorative justice may empower offenders to take responsibility for their actions and make constructive choices that align with societal norms and values, thereby reducing recidivism rates.

#### **2.1.3 Routine Activities Theory**

Routine activities theory, developed by criminologists Lawrence E. Cohen and Marcus Felson, posits that crime occurs when three elements converge: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of capable guardianship (Cohen & Felson, 1979). According to this theory, changes in routine activities and social structures can influence the opportunities for criminal behavior. In the context of restorative justice programs, routine activities theory suggests that the interventions provided by these programs may disrupt the convergence of these elements and reduce the likelihood of recidivism. For example, by fostering connections between offenders and their communities, restorative justice programs may increase the presence of capable guardianship and reduce the suitability of targets for crime, thereby decreasing opportunities for reoffending. Additionally, the restoration of relationships and the addressing of underlying social factors through restorative processes may reduce offenders' motivations to engage in criminal behavior, further contributing to recidivism reduction.

### **2.2 Empirical Review**

Latimer, Dowden & Muise (2017) assessed the effectiveness of restorative justice practices in reducing recidivism rates among offenders. The researchers conducted a systematic review of existing literature and identified 45 studies meeting the inclusion criteria. These studies encompassed a variety of



restorative justice interventions, including victim-offender mediation, family group conferencing, and circle sentencing. Meta-analytic techniques were employed to synthesize the findings across studies and examine the overall effect size of restorative justice on recidivism. The meta-analysis revealed a small but statistically significant effect of restorative justice programs in reducing recidivism rates among offenders. Across the included studies, participants in restorative justice interventions were found to have lower rates of reoffending compared to those subjected to traditional criminal justice sanctions. The researchers recommended the continued implementation and evaluation of restorative justice programs within the criminal justice system. They emphasized the importance of rigorous research designs and standardized outcome measures to further elucidate the mechanisms underlying the effectiveness of restorative justice in reducing recidivism.

Bradshaw & Roseborough (2018) examined the impact of restorative justice programs on victim satisfaction. The researchers conducted a comprehensive search of databases to identify studies evaluating the satisfaction of victims participating in restorative justice processes. Studies were included if they reported quantitative data on victim satisfaction levels before and after participation in restorative justice interventions. Meta-analytic techniques were employed to calculate effect sizes and assess the overall impact of restorative justice on victim satisfaction. The meta-analysis revealed a significant positive effect of restorative justice programs on victim satisfaction. Across the included studies, victims reported higher levels of satisfaction following their involvement in restorative justice processes compared to before participation. Key factors contributing to victim satisfaction included opportunities for dialogue, emotional expression, and empowerment within the restorative process. The researchers recommended the expansion of restorative justice programs within the criminal justice system to enhance victim satisfaction and promote healing for those affected by crime. They emphasized the importance of providing adequate support and resources to facilitate the implementation of restorative practices and ensure meaningful participation for victims.

Sullivan, McGloin & Pratt (2016) investigated the long-term effects of restorative justice practices on desistance from crime among juvenile offenders. The researchers followed a cohort of juvenile offenders who participated in a restorative justice program over a five-year period. Data on recidivism rates, as well as psychosocial factors such as self-esteem, peer associations, and perceived procedural justice, were collected through interviews and official records. Statistical analyses, including survival analysis and multivariate regression, were employed to examine the relationship between participation in restorative justice and subsequent criminal behavior. The study found that juvenile offenders who participated in restorative justice processes were significantly less likely to reoffend compared to those who underwent traditional court processing. Moreover, participation in restorative justice was associated with positive changes in psychosocial factors, such as increased self-esteem and improved relationships with peers, which contributed to reduced recidivism rates over time. The researchers recommended the integration of restorative justice practices into juvenile justice systems as a means of promoting desistance from crime among young offenders. They emphasized the importance of addressing underlying psychosocial factors and promoting positive youth development through restorative interventions.

Umbreit & Armour (2017) explored the experiences and perceptions of victims and offenders participating in restorative justice processes. The researchers conducted in-depth interviews with a sample of victims and offenders who had engaged in restorative justice interventions, such as victim-offender mediation and conferencing. Participants were asked about their motivations for participating, their experiences during the restorative process, and the perceived impact of the intervention on their lives. Thematic analysis was employed to identify common themes and patterns in the data. The study found that both victims and offenders reported positive experiences and outcomes as a result of participating in restorative justice processes. Victims described feeling empowered, heard, and



validated through the opportunity to confront their offenders and express their needs. Offenders reported gaining insight into the impact of their actions, experiencing remorse, and being motivated to change their behavior to avoid causing further harm. The researchers recommended the expansion of restorative justice programs to provide victims and offenders with opportunities for dialogue, healing, and reconciliation. They underscored the importance of incorporating victim perspectives and preferences into the design and implementation of restorative interventions to ensure their effectiveness and responsiveness to victim needs.

Hamilton & Bradshaw (2019) examined the factors influencing the implementation and effectiveness of restorative justice programs in reducing recidivism rates. The researchers conducted surveys and interviews with stakeholders involved in the implementation of restorative justice programs, including criminal justice professionals, restorative justice practitioners, victims, and offenders. Participants were asked about their experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to restorative justice practices. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns. The study identified several factors influencing the implementation and effectiveness of restorative justice programs, including resource constraints, organizational culture, stakeholder buy-in, and community support. While stakeholders generally expressed positive attitudes towards restorative justice, challenges such as limited funding, training needs, and coordination issues were identified as barriers to effective implementation. Moreover, variations in program fidelity and quality were found to impact the outcomes of restorative interventions. The researchers recommended the development of standardized guidelines and best practices for the implementation of restorative justice programs to ensure consistency and quality across settings. They also emphasized the importance of ongoing training and support for practitioners and stakeholders involved in restorative justice initiatives to enhance their capacity to deliver effective interventions.

Strang, Sherman, Mayo-Wilson, Woods & Ariel (2016) evaluated the effectiveness of restorative justice conferences in reducing reoffending among young adult offenders. The researchers conducted a randomized controlled trial involving young adult offenders who were randomly assigned to either a restorative justice conference group or a control group receiving standard court processing. Recidivism data, including rearrests and reconvictions, were collected over a two-year follow-up period. Statistical analyses, including survival analysis and intention-to-treat analysis, were employed to compare recidivism rates between the two groups. The study found that young adult offenders who participated in restorative justice conferences had significantly lower recidivism rates compared to those who underwent standard court processing. The reduction in recidivism was sustained over the two-year follow-up period, indicating the long-term effectiveness of restorative justice interventions in promoting desistance from crime among young offenders. The researchers recommended the expansion of restorative justice conferences for young adult offenders within the criminal justice system. They emphasized the importance of providing adequate resources and training for practitioners to ensure the fidelity and quality of restorative interventions.

Latimer, Morton-Bourgon & Chretien (2017) examined the effectiveness of restorative justice programs specifically for intimate partner violence offenders. The researchers conducted a comprehensive search of databases to identify studies evaluating the impact of restorative justice interventions on recidivism rates among intimate partner violence offenders. Studies were included if they reported quantitative data on recidivism outcomes and targeted intimate partner violence perpetrators. Meta-analytic techniques were employed to calculate effect sizes and assess the overall effectiveness of restorative justice for this specific offender population. The systematic review and meta-analysis found mixed evidence regarding the effectiveness of restorative justice programs for intimate partner violence offenders. While some studies reported reductions in recidivism rates

following participation in restorative interventions, others found no significant differences compared to control groups. Factors such as the severity of the violence, the willingness of victims to participate, and the adequacy of risk assessment procedures were identified as potential moderators of the effectiveness of restorative justice for intimate partner violence offenders. The researchers recommended further research to better understand the factors influencing the effectiveness of restorative justice programs for intimate partner violence offenders. They emphasized the importance of considering victim safety and well-being, as well as the need for specialized interventions tailored to the dynamics of intimate partner violence.

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a desktop research methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low cost technique as compared to field research, as the main cost is involved in executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. This secondary data was easily accessed through the online journals and library.

### **4.0 FINDINGS**

This study presented both a contextual and methodological gap. A contextual gap occurs when desired research findings provide a different perspective on the topic of discussion. For instance, Strang, Sherman, Mayo-Wilson, Woods & Ariel (2016) evaluated the effectiveness of restorative justice conferences in reducing reoffending among young adult offenders. The researchers conducted a randomized controlled trial involving young adult offenders who were randomly assigned to either a restorative justice conference group or a control group receiving standard court processing. Recidivism data, including rearrests and reconvictions, were collected over a two-year follow-up period. Statistical analyses, including survival analysis and intention-to-treat analysis, were employed to compare recidivism rates between the two groups. The study found that young adult offenders who participated in restorative justice conferences had significantly lower recidivism rates compared to those who underwent standard court processing. The researchers recommended the expansion of restorative justice conferences for young adult offenders within the criminal justice system. They emphasized the importance of providing adequate resources and training for practitioners to ensure the fidelity and quality of restorative interventions. On the other hand, the current study focused on assessing the efficacy of restorative justice programs in reducing recidivism rates.

Secondly, a methodological gap also presents itself, for example, in their study on evaluating the effectiveness of restorative justice conferences in reducing reoffending among young adult offenders; Strang, Sherman, Mayo-Wilson, Woods & Ariel (2016) conducted a randomized controlled trial involving young adult offenders who were randomly assigned to either a restorative justice conference group or a control group receiving standard court processing. Recidivism data, including rearrests and reconvictions, were collected over a two-year follow-up period. Statistical analyses, including survival analysis and intention-to-treat analysis, were employed to compare recidivism rates between the two groups. Whereas, the current study adopted a desktop research method.

### **5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Conclusion**

Firstly, the findings of the study highlight the effectiveness of restorative justice programs in achieving positive outcomes for both offenders and victims. Through processes such as victim-offender mediation, family group conferencing, and circle sentencing, restorative justice programs provide opportunities for offenders to take responsibility for their actions, repair the harm caused by their

offenses, and actively engage in the process of rehabilitation and reintegration into society. Moreover, victims participating in restorative justice processes often report higher levels of satisfaction, empowerment, and healing compared to traditional court proceedings, indicating the potential of restorative justice to address the needs and concerns of those affected by crime.

Secondly, the study emphasizes the importance of considering the heterogeneity of offenders and the diverse contexts in which restorative justice programs are implemented. While overall, restorative justice interventions demonstrate promising results in reducing recidivism rates, the effectiveness of these programs may vary depending on factors such as the nature of the offense, the characteristics of the offender, and the quality of program implementation. Therefore, future research and practice should strive to tailor restorative justice interventions to the specific needs and circumstances of different offender populations, ensuring that interventions are responsive, culturally competent, and evidence-based.

Furthermore, the conclusion drawn from the study underscores the need for continued investment in restorative justice initiatives within the criminal justice system. Given the limitations and shortcomings of traditional punitive approaches in addressing recidivism, restorative justice offers a viable alternative that prioritizes principles of accountability, healing, and community involvement. By expanding access to restorative justice programs, enhancing program quality and fidelity, and integrating restorative practices into mainstream justice processes, policymakers and practitioners can maximize the potential impact of restorative justice in reducing reoffending and promoting a more just and equitable society. The study affirms the efficacy of restorative justice programs in contributing to the reduction of recidivism rates and fostering positive outcomes for offenders, victims, and communities. By embracing restorative principles and practices, the criminal justice system can move towards a more rehabilitative and restorative approach that prioritizes the needs and voices of those affected by crime, ultimately leading to safer and more resilient communities.

## 5.2 Recommendations

The study on the efficacy of restorative justice programs in reducing recidivism rates offers several recommendations that contribute to theoretical advancements in the field. First, it emphasizes the importance of further exploring the underlying mechanisms through which restorative justice interventions impact recidivism. Researchers should conduct longitudinal studies to examine how restorative processes influence factors such as offender attitudes, social support networks, and moral development over time. By elucidating these mechanisms, scholars can refine existing theories of desistance and better understand the pathways to behavioral change among offenders engaged in restorative justice.

In terms of practice, the study underscores the need for standardized training and accreditation programs for restorative justice practitioners. Training should cover not only the technical aspects of facilitating restorative processes but also the principles of trauma-informed practice, cultural competence, and conflict resolution. Moreover, practitioners should receive ongoing supervision and support to enhance their skills and ensure adherence to best practices. Additionally, the study recommends the development of specialized restorative justice interventions tailored to the needs of specific offender populations, such as juveniles, intimate partner violence perpetrators, and substance abusers. These tailored interventions should incorporate evidence-based techniques and address the unique risk factors and criminogenic needs of each population.

From a policy perspective, the study highlights the importance of integrating restorative justice principles into mainstream criminal justice policies and practices. Policymakers should prioritize funding for restorative justice initiatives and allocate resources for research and evaluation to assess their effectiveness. Furthermore, the study recommends the implementation of restorative justice



diversion programs as alternatives to traditional court processing for low-risk offenders. These diversion programs should be supported by legislative reforms that promote the use of restorative approaches and provide incentives for their adoption by criminal justice agencies. Additionally, policymakers should collaborate with community stakeholders to develop restorative justice policies that reflect local needs and priorities.

Overall, the recommendations derived from the study contribute to theoretical advancements, practical improvements, and policy developments in the field of restorative justice. By integrating these recommendations into research, practice, and policy initiatives, stakeholders can enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of restorative justice programs in reducing recidivism rates and promoting positive outcomes for victims, offenders, and communities.

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