THE PSYCHOSOCIAL CHALLENGES AND RESILIENCE OF CHILDREN OF IMPRISONED PARENTS: THE CASE OF ADAMA TOWN

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Abstract

Despite the burgeoning trend in parental incarceration, little is known about the situation of children whose parents are behind bars in Ethiopia. The objective of this study is to assess psychosocial challenge and resilience patterns of children of the imprisoned parents in Adama “Dipo Jail.” In-depth interviews were conducted with 14 parents in prison, 12 children of incarcerated parents, 6 caretakers, 2 prison guards, 1 prison administrator and a social worker. For this study, purposive sampling method was used to select respondents and NViVO 10 version of qualitative analysis software used to analyze the data. Findings showed that children of imprisoned parents have experienced various psychological and behavioral challenges due to their parents’ imprisonment. Witnessing parental arrest was found to be highly traumatizing. However, experiencing stigma and isolation due to parental incarceration was hardly reported. It was found that children employed both active and passive strategies i.e. keeping imprisonment a secret, maintaining contact with parents and family support to cope with the impacts of their parents’ incarceration. The study suggests the importance of designing child-friendly services and support systems to reduce the adverse impacts of parents’ imprisonment and to optimize children’s resilience.
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1. Background

Predicaments of children with parents behind bars are global phenomenon steadily mounting along with the ever increasing incidents of incarceration worldwide. (King, 2002; Braman, 2004). Today, unprecedented numbers of people are being imprisoned and in many countries incarceration is on the rise. (King, 2002; Braman, 2004). Evidences indicate that with 2.3 million people in prisons or jails, the United States has the highest rate of incarceration around the globe—a 500% increase over the past 30 years (Mulready-Jones, 2011). Estimates also suggest that millions of children have a parent in jail. Although the actual number of affected children is unknown, because this information is not systematically collected by correctional, school, or other service systems, Currently, more than one in 100 adults in the U.S are in jail or prison, and most prisoners have at least one minor child. (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). Black children are approximately 8 times more likely, and Hispanic children are nearly 3 times more likely, than white children to have an incarcerated parent (ibid).

Imprisonment of parents can be a very stressful and powerful traumatic event that leaves children to be at higher risk of developing various psychological problems which can be present in many different dimensions of their life. Murray (2007) found that children of imprisoned parents were about twice as likely as their peers to exhibit antisocial behavior and other mental health problems. They also tend to experience aggressive behavior problems which are related to reduction in school performance, truancy, disciplinary problems, alcohol and other drug use, and running away (Reed & Reed, 1997; Travis & Waul, 2003). Recent studies also provided
promising evidence of an independent, causal relationship between parental incarceration and its associated emotional and behavioral outcomes on children (Murray and Farrington 2011).

Owing to the nature of their vulnerability, children of incarcerated parents are often considered as invisible victims who are behind the attention of the public. This is an oversight which runs the risk of punishing innocent victims, and hence children of prisoners have been referred to as the ‘forgotten victims’ of crime, or the ‘hidden victims of imprisonment (Lee, 2005). Regarding this assertion, a recent Meta analysis report by Robertson (2009) states:

Children with incarcerated parents have been referred to as the “forgotten victims” of crime…, the “orphans of justice” …and the “unseen victims of the prison boom” … They can experience multiple emotional and social difficulties during their parent’s incarceration, which may develop into a range of adjustment problems in the long term. When one considers the indirect social exclusion that comes from the stigma of having a parent in prison, or the increased risk to children of prisoners becoming a part of this socially excluded group themselves, important questions must be raised about the consequences and social costs, the ‘collateral damage’ of criminal justice processes that fail to consider the impact on children left behind. (p.2).

Paucity of a well organized and updated data on the situation of children of incarcerated parents is also a great concern. Despite fragmented evidences surfaced, unfortunately, much of the research on the effect of parental incarceration on children’s wellbeing lack complete evidence (Lavigne, Davies & Brazzell, 2008). One major challenge confronting researchers is disentangling the effects of parental incarceration from the effects of other factors that could
have existed long before incarceration, such as child maltreatment, parental use of alcohol or drugs, parental mental illness and domestic violence. On contrary, some studies argue that parental incarceration has an independent effect on a child’s behavior, academic performance and mental health (Murray & Farrington, 2008) A causal relationship between a parent’s incarceration and children’s problems has not been established (Hariston 2006).

There is, however, consensus in the field that these children are exposed to many risk factors and the effects of parental incarceration on children are subject to a host of variables. Variables that effect children because of parental incarceration are pre-incarceration living arrangements; the quality of the parent-child relationship; the degree to which inmate parents participated in daily care and financial support of their children prior to confinement. Other variables are also children’s current living arrangements; the amount of contact children have with their incarcerated parents; and children’s age, temperament, gender and coping skills, among other factors (Parke & Clark-Stewart, 2003)

Another area of controversy surrounding parental incarceration lies on the impact of informing children about their parent’s arrest and the reasons behind their incarceration. Some suggest that keeping this knowledge from the children will minimize the trauma associated with being separated from their parents while others argue that children will suffer more emotional distress if other family members do not discuss their parents’ incarceration (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). Some evidence suggests that, when not informed or given too little information about their parents’ incarceration, children are less able to cope and may experience more anxiety and fear. Harison (2008) argues, “Children need honest, factual information, and they need to have their experience validated. Providing these children with this information gives them a chance to cope with the changes in their new life situation.”
Although theories focusing on parent-child and family relationships clearly point to certain resilience processes that could be examined for children with imprisoned parents (e.g. relationships with alternate caregivers, development of empathy, family-level security), much of the literature focusing on this population has documented risks and emphasized negative developmental outcomes in children (e.g., Murray et al., 2007). However, children do not exhibit uniform reactions to significant risk or adversity, and some children function well despite their experience of parental incarceration. Indeed, many children of imprisoned parents show resilience, or the process of successful adaptation in the face of significant adversity (Mazza, 2002). It is crucial that the emphasis on disrupted family relationships and multiple risks in children with imprisoned parents does not overshadow the examination of possible resilience processes in these children.

The aforementioned controversial findings, the growing size of the problem and its tendency to impact minors of hidden victims signal a need to explore more on the unique experiences and challenges shared by these children as well as their individual qualities of resiliency. It is imperative to consider that further examination of the problem would augment the breadth of knowledge on the issue under investigation in the local settings. This study is therefore, designed to qualitatively explore the perspectives of incarcerated parents, their children and caretakers, on the psychological impacts of parental incarceration in context of Ethiopia.
1.2. Statement of the Problem

Protection is a universal and greatest need of children. By virtue of their physical and social and cognitive immaturity, children require close protection and care from parents, caregivers and significant others. Empirical evidences suggest that deprivation of parental attachment significantly affect the wellbeing of children in various domains of life (Neale & Flowerdew, 2010). Separation from or loss of parents due to death, divorce, incarceration or removal to foster care will have a major impact on the child’s psychological development and possibly on his/her cognitive and physical development as well. Researches on the impact of separation on children suggest that regardless of the causes and nature of separation, from lower scores on educational achievement to, psychological adjustment, self-concept, and social competence what are among common denominators experienced by children (Amato, 2005).

However separation between parent and child caused by parental imprisonment leads to worse damage in the child’s life when compared to other types of separation (ibid.). In addition to the emotional and behavioral impacts of parental incarceration, many children will also be exposed to considerable stigmatization. While children who lose a parent for reasons other than incarceration will likely receive sympathy and care from others, children who have lost a parent to incarceration face social burdens and potential stigma (Kelly, 2006). When stigma surrounds the loss of a parent, the child is denied many necessary supports and normal social outlets for grieving the departed parent (Smith, 2004).

As it stands out now, it is hardly possible to know with any precision how many children in Africa are affected by their parents or primary caregivers coming in conflict with the law, let alone in Ethiopia. Even though children from all socioeconomic classes and ethnicities experience parental incarceration, many research evidences highlighted the disproportionate
impacts of parental incarcerations reporting higher scale and magnitude among children of the minorities, the disadvantaged and low income communities/nations. For instance, a recent study in Uganda indicated that children whose parents are in prison often come from the most disadvantaged and vulnerable backgrounds and may have had direct experience of poverty and unemployment (International Centre for Prison Studies, 2013). Given these realities, the prevalence and challenges of children with parents in prison can’t be ruled out in Ethiopia. However, empirical data on the issue are hardly present and very little has been known so far about the psychological impacts of parental incarceration in the country. It is however logical to assume that the problem persists to escalate with large number of victim children left with the problem unnoticed and their challenges an investigated. If unaddressed, the problem may also remain as a serious social and psychological burden to the country. The aim of this research is therefore, to investigate the psychosocial impacts of children in one of the prisons in the country so as to liven up similar research in the area and inform concerned bodies to respond to the problem.

1.3. Research Questions

Against the backdrops mentioned above, this study sets out to investigate the following research questions:

- What kind of psychological and socio-emotional challenge do children of imprisoned parents face?
- What kind of coping styles do children of imprisoned parents use to overcome the challenges and enhance their resilience?
- What kind of local support and care services are available to assist recovery of children of incarcerated parents?
1.4. Objectives of the study

1.4.1. General objective

The general objective of this study is to assess psychosocial challenge and resilience patterns of children of the imprisoned parents.

1.4.2. Specific objectives are:-

- To examine the psychosocial wellbeing of children affected by imprisonment of their parents, specifically their experience and outcome and social isolations.
- To investigate the coping strategies children used to cope up with the challenges of parental incarceration.
- To explore existing support mechanisms in and outside of the prison for children of incarcerated parents.

1.5. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study would be manifold. Theoretically, the findings shade light on the existing knowledge and the realities about the situation of children of incarcerated parents and inform the academic community who are interested to conduct basic researches, further, into this area. This study specifically provide additional source of information for parents, developmental psychologist and legal representative or policy makers about psychosocial challenge of children of imprisoned parents with particular emphasis on Adama Dipo” prison. Practically, concerned government bodies, non-governmental institutions and society organization, involved in child welfare services, can make use of the findings as qualitative baseline understanding for designing program interventions. Finally, given the absence of empirical data on the topic, this original work will be a merit to the researcher and contributes to
other researchers as a stepping stone to make further exploration in the area.

1.6. Delimitation of the Study

The scope of this study is only limited to qualitatively exploring the psychosocial challenges and resilience styles of children of incarcerated parents imprisoned in “Dipo jail” located in Adama Town, Kebele 04. The study also includes children between the ages of 10-15, who live outside of the provision. Data were collected using only using qualitative interviews.

1.7. Definition of Terms

- **Psychosocial challenges**: For the purpose of this study, psychosocial challenges refer to the reported emotional and behavioral outcomes of trauma and social stigma experienced by children age 10-15, due to parental incarceration.

- **Children**: Children between the ages of 10-15 whose parent/parents are in prison during the study period.

- **Parental Incarceration/Imprisonment**: For the purpose of this study parental incarceration/imprisonment refer to the detention of fathers or mothers who are imprisoned in “Dipo Jail”, except being held overnight in police cells.

- **Resilience**: Coping style and phenomenon of successful development of children of imprisoned parents through the hardship of incarceration.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

2.1. Global and Regional Context of Parental Incarceration

Parental imprisonment affects millions, probably tens of millions, of children around the world, who often come from the most disadvantaged and vulnerable sections of society. Precise figures on the scale of the issue are unavailable as authorities seldom hold details about prisoners’ children, but various studies have attempted to quantify the extent of the problem in particular countries (Dallaire & Wilson, 2010). In Australia, an estimated 145,000 under-16s (almost 5% of children in Australia) have had a parent imprisoned, rising to 20% of under-16s from the minority Aboriginal communities. The children of roughly 20,000 Brazilian women have their mother in prison. As of 2007, 2.3% of U.S. children had a parent in prison, an increase of 80% between 1991 and 2007. In other words, 1 in 50 children in the U.S. has a parent who is currently incarcerated. For every incarcerated parent, there are 2.1 children under 18 with a parent currently in prison (Kelli, 2008).

However, these children are not a representative cross-section of the societies they live in. Research suggests that compared to the general population, they are more likely to have come from families which have experienced unemployment, multiple mental health problems, marital difficulties, abuse, neglect and the problems associated with low social class (Murray, 2007). Experiences of abuse or mental health problems within the family are particularly likely for children with imprisoned mothers, as women prisoners have been affected by these issues at far higher rates than male prisoners or women in the general population (Joyce, et al. 2003).

Children whose parents or primary caregivers are in conflict with the law in Africa are an invisible and often highly vulnerable group whose rights and welfare can be gravely affected at
every stage of their parent’s criminal proceedings and term of imprisonment (Robert, 2005). Although empirical evidences are minimal and hard to find in Africa, given the dire poverty, poor administrative and governance structures in low income countries, the problem is estimated to be highly pervasive. Recent finding by the International Center for Prison Studies (ICPS, 2014) estimates that there were just over one million prisoners in Africa (excluding Eritrea and Somalia) in October 2013. In about half of these countries, very large proportions of prisoners-more than 40 per cent were in pre-trial detention.

A combined rate of imprisonment of both men and women vary across the continent. A study by Robert (2005), found that the combined median rate for western African countries was 52 per 100,000, while in southern African countries it was 324. There are also some evidences that women’s imprisonment may be on the increase. Between 1995-2005, women imprisonment in Southern Africa increased by 68 per cent where as that of men increased by 69 per cent (Phillips & Erkanli (2008). From this data, it is reasonable to assume that the rights of a large number of children are affected by the imprisonment of over a million adults in Africa, the vast majority of who are likely to be parents/primary caregivers of at least one child and most likely more. Research by the UN Development Program and Open Society Justice Initiative conducted in Sierra Leone in 2013 found that 80 per cent of the detainees in pre-trial detention, who participated in their questionnaire, had children and half had four or more children of dependent age.

In a survey conducted by the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (2014), of 194 women prisoners in Uganda (10 per cent of the total women prisoner population), an overwhelming 92 per cent of surveyed women had children and over 86 per cent of these children were under 18 years old. Five per cent of the women surveyed were pregnant. The
Ugandan NGO, Wells of Hope, estimates that 200,000 children in Uganda have a parent in prison at any one time.

2.2. Psychosocial Impacts of Parental Imprisonment on children

2.2.1. Witnessing parental arrest

The occasion of a parent’s arrest is often the very first time a child comes into contact with the criminal justice system and, the way the event is handled can permanently affect the child’s attitude towards law enforcement and criminal justice officials. The arrest of a parent can be shocking and distressing for children (interviewed children have described the first days and weeks after the arrest as the worst period during parental imprisonment), but if handled sensitively can actually lead to increased toleration of the incident by the children (Maureen, 2006). Other findings also suggest that children who are not present at the arrest have their own difficulties, often related to a lack of knowledge about what has happened or will happen to their parent (Murray, 2007; Phillips & Erkanli, 2008).

Currently, the best available information on children’s reactions to witnessing their parents’ arrests comes from individuals who work with children whose parents are incarcerated and journalistic interviews with a small number of children (Robertson, 2009). According to these sources, children are sometimes frightened by events that occur in the course of police taking their parents into custody (which can involve the use of force). Some children report feeling as if they too were in trouble and under arrest because they were taken away from their homes in police cars, held at police stations while waiting for someone to come get them, or detained in emergency shelters. They also experience anxiety because they do not know where their parents were taken or when, or if, they would see them again (King, 2002).
There are also occasions when young children have been left without adult supervision for days and even weeks following their parents’ arrests. Kampfner (1995) found that all else being equal, witnessing the arrest of a household member either alone or in conjunction with the recent arrest of a parent is predictive of elevated posttraumatic symptoms. Approximately 1 in 4 children who witnessed an arrest and also had a recently arrested parent had elevated symptoms of posttraumatic stress.

Advocates for the development of protocols to guide how law enforcement agencies respond to children when parents are arrested argue that witnessing a parent’s arrest contributes to trauma-induced psychological symptoms (Puddefoot & Foster, 2007). A study by Robertson (2009) found that, children who witnessed the arrest of someone with whom they lived had approximately a 57% greater likelihood of having elevated PTS symptoms relative to children who never witnessed an arrest. Children who witnessed a household member’s arrest and also had a recently arrested parent had a 73% greater likelihood of having elevated PTS symptoms relative to children who had never seen an arrest and whose parents were not recently arrested.

More recently, law enforcement and child welfare agencies in some jurisdictions have also been working together to establish procedures that take into consideration children’s needs in all instances in which parents are arrested (Children & Families of Incarcerated Parents Sub-Committee, 2008; Hirschfeld, 2009; Pima Prevention Partnership, 2007; Puddefoot & Foster, 2007). The goals of these procedures are: (1) preventing the unnecessary placement of children in shelters or foster homes when police take parents into custody; and (2) making the arrest of a parent less traumatic for children.
2.2.2. Emotional and Behavioural Impact

When a child is separated from a parent, this leads to traumatic symptoms, and the period of parental incarceration becomes a period of great vulnerability (Ziebert, 2006). This separation will bring feelings of loss and rejection to the child (Travis et al., 2005). Often this separation is a traumatic experience for the children independent of the circumstances of the arrest (Waul, Travis & Solomon, 2002). Adalist-Estrin (1994) adds that just a small number of children experience parental imprisonment without severe outcomes such as trauma, disturbance and disorders. Kampfner (1995) found that a great number of the small children in his study children (75%) exhibited high levels of PTSD after their mother’s imprisonment. The symptoms were sleep and attention problems, depression, anger, fear, blame and flashbacks of the traumatic episode (ibid).

Separation from a parent for any reason will likely result in stress, sadness, and fear; indeed, many scholars have likened the experience of losing a parent to incarceration to that of losing a parent to death or divorce (Lowenstein 1986 as cited in Hagan & Dinovitzer 1999). However, while death is naturally occurring and final, separation due to incarceration is ambiguous; children may not know how to grieve the loss of a parent who is alive, yet emotionally and physically absent (Miller 2006). Children may be seriously emotionally affected by this sudden and ambiguous loss (Miller 2006). One study, although limited to 36 children of incarcerated mothers, found that the trauma of parental incarceration often triggered chronic sleeplessness, difficulties concentrating, and depression (Kampfner 1995 as cited in Ziebert 2006). Another study found that 16 percent of children with a parent behind bars developed temporary school phobias that made them unwilling to attend school for up to six weeks following their parent’s incarceration (Sack et al. 1987 as cited in Parke & Clarke-Stewart 2001).
A recent study by Murray and Farrington (2007), provided promising evidence of an independent, causal relationship between parental incarceration and its associated emotional and behavioral outcomes. Using results from studies with representative samples, the analysis revealed that, after controlling for other risk factors, three of five studies demonstrated an independent effect of parental incarceration on child anti-social behavior; two additional studies showed an independent effect of parental imprisonment on child mental health, drug use, school failure, and unemployment.

The trauma to which children may be subjected as a result of parental imprisonment can be further increased by the uncertainty and disruption that often affect them as families attempt to adjust to the loss of a caregiver and/or primary income provider. It has been noted that some children can become defiant or aggressive and can display antisocial behavior as a result of having a parent imprisoned (Springer et. al, 1999). According to one of the first studies carried out on the children of prisoners by Skinner and Swartz (1989), typical reactions that can characterize their responses to parental imprisonment include more aggressive and disruptive behavior, reduced levels of obedience and a decrease in school performance.

2.2.3. Stigma and isolation
Studies found that it is common for families to feel stigmatized when one of their members is imprisoned, which can have long-term effects on children’s development. According to Robertson (2009), stigmatization can be very difficult for children and can “place an enormous burden on a child and compound the trauma of separation from the parent.” The study carried out by Murray (2007) found that children did not want their neighbors or friends to find out about their parent’s imprisonment, in addition to which parents were concerned that their children would be singled out or ostracized at school. Fear of stigmatization can place children under
further stress, in that they may feel pressurized into keeping the reason for their parent’s absence a secret from their peers or people in the wider community.

The stigma associated with parental incarceration may prompt family members to cover up the parent’s whereabouts, both from the child and from the community. Children may be lied to about the reasons for their parent’s absence and not find out until much later the real cause for their departure (Hairston 2008). According to one report, a quarter of female prisoners’ children did not know that their mothers were in prison (Kiser 1991 as cited in Hostetter & Jinnah 1993). Although the specific consequences of such deceit are not known, researchers generally agree that children need to receive honest, factual information and to have their experiences validated (Miller, 2006); by trying to “protect” the child from the truth, family members may actually cause worry, uncertainty, fear and distrust. Children may wonder if they too will mysteriously disappear (Herrmann-Keeling 1988 as cited in Hostetter & Jinnah 1993), or find out about the incarceration through other sources and learn to distrust those closest to them (Poehlmann 2005). Children who are deceived about their parent’s absence are also unlikely to visit their parent while incarcerated (Hairston 2008) and hence, cannot maintain a relationship with the parent while in prison and encounter greater reunification challenges upon the parent’s release.

Studies indicate that children of incarcerated parents often feel a strong sense of alienation from their parents, caregivers and other children. Caretakers sometimes attempt to protect children by avoiding the truth about their parent’s incarceration. Common stories used to explain a parent’s absence are that the parent is “away at school”, “working far away”, “in the military” or even “in the hospital”. However, this approach to protecting children often has a negative impact on the child’s sense of trust of the caregiver (Mumola, 2009). It must be noted that this
reluctance by the caregiver to disclose the parent’s whereabouts “stems from a legitimate concern about confidentiality, criminal liabilities, child custody matters, and public assistance” (Johnston & Waldfogel, 2002).

Poehlmann (2005), observed that deception and secrecy contribute to the difficulty in identifying children of incarcerated parents. Children whose parents are incarcerated often demonstrate an extreme desire for privacy. In one study, professionals leading a support group for children of incarcerated parents noted that confidentiality was a central desire of the participants and that in casual conversation these children would go out of their way to avoid revealing the nature of their participation in the support group (Mumola, 2009.)

2.3. Children’s Resilience and Coping

Resilience in children has been studied since the 1960s and 1970s as researchers started to look at human strengths rather than shortcomings and dysfunctions. Although resilience proves difficult to define, it generally refers to “patterns of positive adaptation during or following significant adversity or risk” that allow individuals to “bounce back” to their previous level of well-being or even to attain a higher level of functioning (Naglieri & LeBuffe, 2005; Lopez & Snyder, 2009). In the past, much controversy surrounded the study of resilience due to the difficulties associated with “translating definitions into operation in research” (Lopez and Snyder, 2009). Researchers often failed to examine differences in resilience associated with cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Now, researchers are moving towards more standardized measures to obtain greater validity and reliability of their data. Resilience research focuses on assessing risk factors such as stressful life events and protective factors such as the child’s personal qualities and environmental interactions such as positive family relationships. Protective factors “moderate the effect of one or more risk factors” (Rodgers & Rose, 2002).
Despite the significant stressors associated with separation, approximately 75-80 percent of children develop into well-adjusted adults with no lasting psychological or behavioral problems (Lopez & Snyder, 2009). They achieve their education and career goals and have the ability to build close relationships. A study by Amato (2005) estimated that “42 percent of young adults from separated families” received higher well-being scores as compared to young adults from non-separated families. Therefore, the hardship and pain associated with their parents’ separation made them stronger individuals (ibid).

2.4. Factors Reducing Risk for Children of incarcerated parents

Many internal factors such as age, gender, temperament and physical characteristics influence children’s resilience to the negative effects of parental separation. Studies have shown that interfamilial protective factors such as authoritative parenting, children’s residence in maternal or paternal custody homes, involvement of noncustodial parents, effective joint-custody arrangements, and involvement of supportive stepparents can significantly reduce the children’s risk of developing externalizing or internalizing behaviors. Furthermore, extra familial factors such as relationships with peers and non-parental adults, authoritative schools, and interventions such as educational programs for separated parents to improve parenting or youth groups can also help ease the transition and adjustment of children to their new life situation. (Rodgers & Rose, 2002).

Internal factors such as the child’s psychological and physical characteristics and external factors such as the immediate and extended family and the community environment influence a child’s resilience and ability to cope with parental separation (Amato, 2005). Good parenting and extra-familial protective factors such as peer relationships, schools, and support from non-
parental adults including mentors and neighbors also contribute to children’s resilience and effective coping (Naglieri & LeBuffe, 2005).

2.5. **Relationship with parent before and during incarceration**

The closeness of the parent-child relationship before incarceration will likely determine how well a child copes with the loss once the parent is behind bars. Clearly, losing a parent to which one is close will likely produce more disruption and sadness than losing an absentee parent. However, a positive pre-incarceration relationship can impact parent-child communication during the period of incarceration. One study determined that the relationship between mother and child before incarceration impacted the frequency of visits: 54 percent of mothers who lived with their child before arrest received at least one visit in prison, compared to 28 percent who did not live with the child (Bloom & Steinhart 1993, cited in Block & Potthast, 1998).

Indeed, maintaining contact with one’s incarcerated parent appears to be one of the most effective ways to improve a child’s emotional response to the incarceration and reduce the incidence of problematic behavior. Children who maintain contact with their parent during incarceration exhibit fewer disruptive and anxious behaviors and overall improved outcomes (Edin, Nelson & Paranal, 2004; Klein, Bartholomew, & La Vigne et al. 2005). In addition to these direct benefits to the child’s emotional health and behavior, maintaining contact helps the incarcerated parent as well. Studies suggest that it lowers recidivism rates and is linked to positive outcomes associated with successful reentry (Klein et al. 2002). These improvements for the parent will indirectly benefit the child by adding a greater degree of stability to their life once their parent has left prison. Given these empirical findings, it comes as no surprise that several
programs that offer enhanced visiting programs for incarcerated parents and their children show promising results (La Vigne et al. 2005).

2.6. Support from Family, Caregivers, and Members of the Community

Strong relationships with primary caregivers, family members, friends and other members of the community can support children as they negotiate their parent’s incarceration. These relationships may be particularly important for children who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to have a close, positive relationship with the incarcerated parent (Potthast, 1998). Research suggests that close emotional relationships with extended family members may ease the trauma of incarceration and mitigate the associated negative effects (Bloom & Steinhart 1993 as cited in Parke & Clarke-Stewart, 2001), particularly if the children lived with those family members before their parent’s incarceration. One study found that urban black adolescents who resided with their mothers and their grandmothers prior to maternal incarceration tended to already view the grandparents as their primary caregivers, making incarceration less disruptive to daily life (Hanlon et al. 2005). Indeed, a close, positive relationship with an adult caregiver may represent one of the strongest protective factors for youth.

Children of incarcerated parents may also derive support from outside of the home, particularly through mentoring programs. Although no studies have specifically examined the impact of mentoring programs on children with a parent behind bars, research has found that mentoring in general leads to marked improvements in the academic performance, social behavior, relationships and decision making skills of a range of children (Grossman & Garry 1997), particularly those exposed to multiple risk factors (Johnston, 1995). One study found that when compared to controls, children who participated in the mentoring program were
significantly less likely to initiate drug use or consume alcohol; the effect was even stronger among minority youth (Grossman & Garry 1997). Mentored youth in mentoring program were also significantly less likely to skip school and reported more feelings of competence about school work; perhaps as a result, they also demonstrated a modest improvement in their grades. Mentees also reported improved relationships with their parents by the end of the study. Unfortunately, it is difficult to know how mentoring specifically impacts children of incarcerated parents (ibid).

Social support can also be as simple as the acknowledgement and acceptance of the parent’s incarceration. By having individuals around them who neither stigmatize nor ignore their parent’s imprisonment, children can begin to cope with and move beyond the trauma. Children with incarcerated fathers are more likely to find this level of acceptance, as the loss of one’s mother to prison is likely to represent more of an anomaly and hence, will receive harsher judgment (Hariston, 2002).

2.7. Prison Visits and Prison Environments

Parent-child visitation is one of the most important elements to ensure the well-being of children when their parent is incarcerated. Most literature suggests that separation due to incarceration has immediate effects on children such as feelings of guilt and shame, social stigma, loss of financial support, weakened ties to the parent, poor school performance, increased delinquency, and increased risk of abuse or neglect (Edin, Nelson & Paranal 2004; Klein, Bartholomew, & La Vigne et al. 2005). Long term effects of separation can range from the questioning of parental authority, negative perceptions of police and the legal system, increased dependency or maturational regression to impaired ability to cope with future stress or trauma, disruption of development, and intergeneration patterns of criminal behavior (ibid). These
negative outcomes can be sustainably decreased through a regular parent-child visitation and keeping the child in contact or in relationship with the parent (Hanlon et al. 2005)

Maintaining parent-child contact during incarceration has also been correlated with reduced recidivism rates, thereby minimizing the re-traumatizing of the child. The most effective form of visitation is contact visitation. Contact visitation means that the child actually has the ability to touch his/her parent (La Vigne et al. 2005). Research indicates that consistent and continued parent-child contact is necessary for a child to successfully bond with a parent and has positive implications for forging positive relationships later in life. Regarding the advantages of visitation and contact Murray (2011) states;

Among others, consistent contact with between the child and incarcerated parents allows children to express their emotional reactions to the separation from their parent, helps parents deal with separation and loss issues, helps the child develop a more realistic understanding of their parents circumstances and allows parents to model appropriate interaction. It also allows children to maintain existing relationships with their parents-contributing to a successful family reunification. It improves recidivism rates-parents who maintain contact with their children are shown to be less likely to recidivate than inmates who do not maintain contact with families. The connection allows children to know that their parent is safe and helps to develop and maintain the role of the parent. p42)

Contact visitation helps normalize the situation and the interaction between parent and child, and benefits children emotionally and behaviorally (Grossman & Garry, 1997). Contact visitation is recommended in most cases unless contact with parents is determined not to be in
the child’s best interest by the court. Coached or supported visits are encouraged. In the event that contact visitation is not available at the facility or is not feasible due to distance, best practice encourages visitation by telephone or video conferencing (when available). Additionally, children and parents should be encouraged to maintain contact with one another through letter writing, pictures, etc (Lopez & Snyder, 2009).

There are several various factors which influence the child-parent contact. Researchers identified barriers to parent-child contact which require to be addressed in order to maintain positive relationship between the child and the parent (Edin, Nelson & Paranal 2004; Klein, Bartholomew & La Vigne et al. 2005). These include:

- Inadequate information about visiting procedures.
- Difficulty scheduling visits.
- Geographic location of prison facilities.
- Family’s inability to afford transportation.
- Visiting procedures that are uncomfortable or humiliating.
- Visiting rooms that are inhospitable to children.
- Foster parents or caregivers who are unwilling to facilitate visits.

2.8. Foster care Placement for Children of Incarcerated Parents

Foster care is not inevitable for children with incarcerated mothers, but it is often the only viable option. Approximately 68% of incarcerated mothers in state prison have children who are cared for by grandparents or other relatives (Glaze & Maruschak, 2010). Some of these children have plans to return to their mother’s care after her release (Miller, 2006). This can be the most reasonable and least disruptive option for children. Kinship foster care is an arrangement in which a child’s relative assumes the role as caregiver as a foster parent when a child is placed in...
custody of the state. Kinship foster care can be a positive alternative to living with one’s mother, but not every child has a family member willing or able to take on this responsibility. A relative with a criminal history or past involvement with the child welfare system is likely to not be approved as a kinship foster caregiver. If a kinship foster care placement is not secured, then a child must be placed in a non-familial foster care arrangement. Eleven percent of incarcerated mothers in state prison have children in a foster care home or agency, compared to only 2.9% of incarcerated men who report their child’s caretaker as a foster care home or agency. (Glaze & Maruschak, 2010). Incarcerated mothers with children in the foster care system face numerous barriers to exercising their parental rights from the correctional facility and often struggle to maintain strong ties with their children (Miller, 2006).

Subjection to numerous foster care placements is common yet problematic for children with an incarcerated parent, placing children at greater risk for the aforementioned externalized negative behaviors (Shlafer & Poehlmann, 2010). Attachment theory research demonstrates the detrimental psychological outcomes of movement from one caregiver to another within the foster care system, which is the unfortunate reality for many children whose primary caregiver becomes incarcerated (ibid).

2.9. Theoretical perspectives:

2.9.1. Attachment theory

Attachment theory provides a deeper understanding of the profound impact that caregiver separation has on both the immediate and lifetime behavior of young children, including children’s ability to develop future healthy relationships (Bowlby, 1980; Bowlby et al., 1956; Shlafer & Poehlmann, 2010). Bowlby et al. (1956), explain that young children who are deprived of maternal care and affection not only experience temporary trauma, but also may suffer long-
term effects. Externalized negative behavior, which results from insecure caregiver attachment, can negatively affect peer relationships, lower self-esteem, and even hinder children’s ability to exhibit empathy toward others (Bretherton & Munholland, 2008; Shlafer & Poehlmann, 2010).

Attachment theory states that a child develops into a healthy, functioning adult in the context of a continuous relationship with and emotional attachment to a parent figure. Achieving and maintaining proximity to that parent figure provide the child with a feeling of safety; separation from a nurturing parent, on the other hand, produces stress for the child. A child’s response to separation from his or her parent depends on several factors, including the child’s age and the nature of the relationship between the child and parent.

The small body of literature suggests that, children of incarcerated parents are more likely to have poorer emotional, behavioral and psychological development than children whose parents have not been incarcerated. Attachment theory also argues that disruption of the attachment process has important consequences on the development of these children. As Papalia (1996), stated “Attachment is the strong, emotional tie we feel for special people in our lives that leads us to feel pleasure and joy when we interact with them and to be comforted by their nearness during times of stress”. Researches that have considered parental incarceration from this perspective posits that trauma is experienced as a result of parent-child separation or disruption of the parent-child bond. In addition, parental incarceration not only includes disrupted attachment, loss, or separation from a parent, but trauma can also result from disrupted living arrangements or changes in caretakers (Miller 2006).

29.2. Resiliency Theory

Resiliency Theory provides a conceptual framework for considering a strengths-based approach to understanding child and adolescent development and informing intervention design
(Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Zimmerman & Brenner, 2010). Resiliency theory supplies the conceptual scaffolding for studying and understanding why some youth grow up to be healthy adults in spite of risks exposure (Masten, et al., 2007; Rutter, 1987; Werner & Smith, 1982, cited in Stoddard, et al. 2012). Resiliency focuses attention on positive contextual, social, and individual variables that interfere or disrupt developmental trajectories from risk to problem behaviors, mental distress, and poor health outcomes. These positive contextual, social, and individual variables are called promoting factors, operate in opposition to risk factors, and help youth overcome negative effects of risk exposure (Garmezy, 1991). Fergus & Zimmerman (2005) identified two types of promoting factors: assets and resources. Positive factors that reside within individuals such as self-efficacy and self-esteem are defined as assets. Resources refer to factors outside individuals such parental support, adults mentors and youth programs that provide youth with opportunities to learn and practice skills. Assets and resources provide youth with the individual and contextual attributes necessary for healthy development.

Resiliency theory provides a useful framework for considering how promotive factors may operate for encouraging positive adolescent development. It is not an adolescent trait that can be measured by a self-report questionnaire (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). Rather, resiliency models posit relationships and processes, and concomitant analytic strategies for testing them. Although many researchers study resiliency by examining single risks and promoting factors, a burgeoning area of research focuses on the cumulative effects of multiple promoting factors across ecological domains (e.g., individual, family, community) to more accurately reflect the complex nature of influences on adolescent development (Ostaszewski & Zimmerman, 2006; Stoddard et al., 2012).
The compensatory and protective models of resiliency are the two most commonly studied in the research literature (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Masten, et al., 2007). In the *compensatory model*, promoting factors neutralize risk exposure in a counteractive fashion. Thus, compensatory factors have an opposite effect on a developmental outcome (e.g., healthy eating, violence) than risks. Parental support, for example, was found to compensate for risks associated with fighting and being around violent adults. Parent support predicted less violent behavior among their adolescent children and this effect was independent and in the opposite direction of the risks. (Zimmerman, et al., 1998).

The *protective factor model* suggests that promoting assets or resources modify the relationship between a risk another promoting factor and outcomes. Two possible protective models are risk-protective and protective-protective. Risk-protective models indicate that promoting factors operate to moderate or reduce the association between risks and negative outcomes. Protective-protective models operate to enhance the effects of either promoting factor alone for predicting an outcome (Garmezy, 1991).
CHAPTER THREE

Methods

**Study Design:** This is an exploratory qualitative study. This design was selected to deeply explore the impacts of parental incarceration on children and their resiliency from the perspectives of their parents, caregivers and views of children. This approach was chosen because parental incarceration is a sensitive topic and representative sample is hard to reach. The design used in-depth interviews with purposively selected respondents (children, imprisoned parents, caregivers, a prison administrator, a social worker and prison guards). Data were also captured from observations in the field.

3.1. Study Setting

The study was conducted in Adama town, targeting children whose parents are detained at the zonal prison literally named ‘Dipo jail’. Among the two prison facilities available in the town, the researcher chose ‘Dipo jail’ considering its relative accessibility. Close scrutiny of the second jail was strictly forbidden by the prison administrators for it harbors offenders incriminated with high profile charges, and therefore, the researcher was not permitted to reach the respondents.

Adama is a town located in the central part of Ethiopia, in East Shoa Zone of the Oromia Region, 99 km southeast of Addis Ababa. It is situated at an elevation of 1712 meters above sea level. According to the 2007 Census report of the Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia (CSA), the city had a total population of 220,212 of which 108,872 were men and 111,340 women. With an area of 29.86 square kilometers, Adama has population density of 7,374.82.
3.2. Participants

The sample in this study was eventually composed of 36 respondents (14 imprisoned parents, 6 caretakers, 12 children between ages 10-15, one social worker, one prison administrator and 2 prison guards) identified through convenient sampling method. The reason behind selecting children age from 10-15 from the purpose of this study is because they can simply express their emotion and feelings easily. To be eligible for the study, a prisoner had to be a parent having children between the ages of 10-15 and willing to give parental consent to have their child interviewed. The sample size in this study was determined based on the concept of saturation (Mason, 2010) as guiding principle during data collection. As evidences suggest, the number of interviewees needed to achieve theoretical saturation varies among researchers and ranges from 3–10 participants (Dukes, 1984) and 8–15 participants (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997), to 20–30 participants (Creswell, 1998). So for this study 14 imprisoned parents and 3 experts in the prison and 12 children were interviewed.

3.3. Instruments

Extensive review of related literatures was made on the topic which informed the development of interview guides for generating information from respondents. Separate interview guides were designed for children, parents in prison and caretakers with contents addressing each of the research questions. To maintain validity, the researcher drafted the interview guides and reviewed them involving two professionals, (Developmental Psychologist and Sociologist), who had rich experience in qualitative research. After addressing the professional’s comments, the tools were refined by pretesting them on 2 children and 2 adults who were not included as primary target of the study. Each interview guide was designed including the following main sections i.e, profiles of the respondent, experiences and feelings
and experiences during incarceration, challenges and impact after incarceration, resilience and coping strategies, care and support subsystems for children of incarcerated parents.

3.4. Data Collection

Data collection was carried out in April and May 2015. In the beginning, a round work was done with the administration of the jail to facilitate the process of data collection. The researcher presented a formal request with detail explanations to the “Dipo Jail” administration and approval was secured. Similar explanation was given to prison police officers who are in charge of the inmates’ affairs, who collaborated in identification of parents in line with the inclusion criteria consent form. Once the list of sample of parent respondents was formulated, appointments were scheduled to each respondent for face to face interview. Consequently the egiven by parents. Some children and caretakers were approached at the time of prison visits.

The researcher conducted face to face interviews with all respondents wherever they felt most comfortable and making sure that their privacy is protected. For example, most interviews with children and caretakers were conducted in their homes or compounds, in the shades around the prison compounds during the monthly visits or in the hotel rooms where there were no interference from others. All incarcerated parents were interviewed in separate rooms in the premises of the prison. Before each interview, respondents were informed about the purpose of the study (Appendix A) information sheet and written consent was secured (Appendix B). In recognition that their time and information was valuable, participants were compensated for their time…… On average, interviews with parents and caretakers lasted for 50 minutes while with children, 30-35 minutes. Interviewing children have been a very challenging time they had inconsistency in their feeling and in the middle of the interviews most of the time they become emotional thinking about their parents and missing them. However, in the event when
interruptions and incomplete discussions occurred, respondents were visited again with convenient appointments. All interviews were tape recorded using digital recorders. Once the interviews were completed, they were downloaded, assigned a confidential ID and transcribed.

The experience of the interview was a challenging process for my interviewees, particularly for parents in prison and their children. The respondents had gone through a difficult and very personal experience as prisoners. The emotional pain and feelings accompanying their response about children also had not been easy. As a result, the researcher tried all her best to make the respondents as comfortable as possible. Respondents were encouraged to take their time in responding to questions and not to disclose information they are not comfortable with. In some cases, reluctance of respondents, tracing locations of their homes and interference of some prison police officers during interviews were some of the major challenges encountered during the data collection process.

3.5. Data Quality Assurance

The researcher undergone various processes to meticulously minimize social desirability biases and maintain quality of data throughout the research life cycle. Inclusion criteria were put in place. Participants were clearly communicated about the purpose of the study through delivering them information sheet and oral presentation. At most attention was given to ethical considerations that addressed obtaining informed consent, keeping privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. All the interviews were conducted in Amharic language as respondents were fluent speakers of Amharic with no language barriers. Inclusion of various target groups was also another asset for ensuring data quality that enabled the researcher to counter check and triangulate data and eventually identify convergence of ideas and themes. Conducting interviews with children requires careful professional approach to actively engage
them and handing the discussions in psychologically sound manner. Techniques such as rapport formation, storytelling, picture drawing, using similes using paintings, etc were used appropriately to generate information and put children at ease throughout the interview session.

Data analysis was carried out using qualitative analysis software, where two coders identified the themes and results in agreement.

3.6. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, in which the main themes and categories were identified, synthesized and analyzed using NViVO 10 version of the qualitative analysis software. The analysis was done by the researcher with an assistant expert who is qualified in qualitative analysis and software use. This software enabled the researcher to identify themes, relationships, connections and patterns, to make systematic comparisons and develop interpretations. The steps followed are described as follows:

1. The analysis commenced by thoroughly reading all the transcribed data and identifying list of tentative themes from the body of the documents in order to develop coding structure. 

Cl;yuph8.b.;hlchildren’s experience during parental arrest, impacts of incarcerations, contacts and relationships, scenario of prison visits, coping strategies, care and support, access to services, suggestions and recommendations, were overarching themes identified.

2. Coding the transcripts was carried out by two coders (the researcher and an assistant) using NVivo-10 qualitative analysis software. By looking at the data with the research questions in mind and after several processes of recoding, segments of an overlapping coded data were created. In order to ensure inter-coder reliability, any inconsistencies and disagreements, were resolved through discussions between the two coders and emerging themes and subthemes were retained with agreement.
3. After the data had been coded and classified, substantive connections by associating categories or linking data were established. Throughout the process, the researcher was taking memos, making a reflective notes from the data.
CHAPTER FOUR

Results

In this chapter, findings are presented and described in a thematically organized sub-sections. Respondent’s profiles, children’s response to the arrest of their parents, psychosocial impacts, nature of contacts after incarceration, children’s coping styles and alternative care and support systems were overarching themes drawn from qualitative analysis.

4.1. Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1: Profile of Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>13-15</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>1-4</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent in prison</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lived with parent before</strong></td>
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</tr>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Siblings</td>
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</tr>
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</table>
As shown in table 1, among the total of 12 children interviewed, 5 of them were boys and 7 were girls, with age range from 10-15. Three of the children were drop outs, 5 of them were attending primary schools and 6 were in junior secondary level. Eight of them had a father in prison at the time of interview and 4 of them had a mother. 8 children had lived with parents before incarceration while 4 didn’t. More than half of the children also had frequent contact with a parent in prison. Except one boy who was living without a caretaker, because his mother was a single mom prior to incarceration, the rest had someone (a parent or close relatives) to look after them at home.

**Table 2: Profile of adult respondents (parents and caretakers)**

<table>
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<th>Attributes</th>
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<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-35</td>
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</tr>
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<td>36-50</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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</tr>
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<td>Divorced</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed/Widower</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td>Illiterate</td>
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<td>Secondary</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Duration in prison</strong></td>
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Table 2 presents the profile of adult respondents. Among parents in prison, 6 were women and 8 were men. The lowest age was 28 and the highest 65. All the caretakers were females and their average age was 40. Half of the parents were married and 5 were divorced, (out of which 3 divorce cases happened after incarceration), 1 of them was a widower and another one was never married. Of the caretakers, 4 were widowed and 2 of them were married. More than half of the parents had a high school education and above, but caretakers had lower level of education i.e, 3 illiterates, 2 in primary and 1 in secondary level respectively. Among the prisoner parents, 5 of them were in prison for less than one year, 6 of them spent between 1-3 years and 3 were imprisoned between 3-6 years during the time of interview.

4.2. Psychosocial impacts of parental incarceration on children

Emotional impact during parent’s arrest: Regarding the experiences of witnessing parental arrest, children involved in this study can be classified in to two: those who observed the parents’ arrest and those who were not exposed to the event. The latter group gave reasons such as; they were not around home during arrest, they did not remember the incident at all or their parents were arrested elsewhere outside of their home. A 12 years old boy, replying to this question said, “I was at school when my father was arrested. I had no idea why they arrested him. My mother told me that he would stay in custody for few days, but three years have elapsed since he was arrested”. Responses given by some children illustrated that; even not witnessing the arrest can have traumatic outcomes. For instance, a girl, 14, mentioned, “…that day, I was expecting my mom to come back home, but she didn’t. My elder brother told me about her arrest. I was shocked and couldn’t believe that she was alive”. 
With regards to feelings of children the first time they learned about a parent’s arrest, *shocked, sad, cry and depressed* were the most frequently mentioned words used by children to express their feelings. Even though traumatizing experiences were reported by children who did not witness the arrest, the reaction of those who observed their parental arrest was much worse. As one of the boys, age 15, reported, “I was ashamed of the incident and wish I was dead that day. I couldn’t forget the dreadful police man shouting at my mom when she took much time greeting and talking to us before departure.” Another respondent (11 years old girl) also mentioned the incident in the following detail;

I couldn’t tolerate seeing my mother handcuffed. I cried before the prison police officer to set her free, but to no avail. They had a gun pointed at her. I was shaking at that moment and my soul was about to escape. I thought that they would shoot her sooner or later. Since that very day, I fell sick with diarrhea and couldn’t take enough food for days. I had quitted school for a week and joined after I was recovered. I used to cry and cry every day until I was able to see my mom safe in the prison.

Some parents and caregivers also shared similar observations about the children’s feelings during the time of arrest. One caregiver said, “…a boy was 10 years old when her mother was put under arrest. He saw his mother taken by police and run away the very day in dismay. We had a hard time to find his whereabouts…” A father prisoner also reported his feeling about the time of arrest which was caused by a car accident that happened in the presence of his son and a daughter.
Six months ago, when I was driving a car taking my wife and two children, suddenly we came into crush with another car. No one was hurt from my part, one parson died from the other car for which I was convicted as responsible. The incident was shocking and was a double jeopardy especially to my children. They were shocked by the horrible accident and by incident of my arrest on the spot. That was terrible to remember. The younger child (a girl who is turning 10 now, couldn’t really cope with the incident and she was suffering too much missing me. She lost interest in everything since then and often times she spends crying. As her mother told me, she couldn’t even perform well at school.

However, Most of the children had reflected a similar opinion regarding the intensity of the trauma caused by witnessing arrest of a mother than a father. They had captured a terrifying memory of observing mothers hand cuffed at gun point than their fathers. As one girl, 13, mentioned, “I know that my father’s presence is vital to fulfill our financial needs, but it is so painful to see a mother arrested in such condition. Men can easily cope up than females…” A boy, 12, also reported, “seeing a mother under arrest is shameful, it was ok if that could have happened to my father, for he can tolerate it” One caretaker, (a father of 2 children) said, “when you lose a father, you lose him, but if you lose a mother you lose the whole family.”

Most parents are highly concerned about their children’s condition. When asked bout their daily worries, they reported concerns regarding how their children are emotionally affected. Most of them of them also feel guilty of being a cause for putting children under stressful situation. As one father explained, “what I did was absolutely wrong. I could have taken a little patience in my action at least for the sake of my children.” A woman also said, “I couldn’t bear
the remorse. Every minute, I am worrying about the safety of my child. It is too late now, though I got a big lesson not to repeat my mistake again.”

Another concern that was highlighted by some parents was their worries about being away from their children when they were ill, especially if they had to go into hospital. The respondents stated that they felt very powerless to do anything to help their children during times of sickness. One parent, expressing his feeling said, “The first sentence, when I had no kids, it never bothered me at all, but it’s getting harder now because you’ve kids and all. Holidays and birthdays … you know, things like that. It’s a lot harder.” Another parent also mentioned, “That’s the worst part, thinking about them and hoping they’re okay. I couldn’t sleep, hoping that she [daughter] was alright. I know she was with her mother and all and her granddad, but I wasn’t there, so I was worried and sick about it”

Several parents mentioned the fact that being a parent had provided them with a motivation for getting out of jail and not returning. One mother stated that she had come to realize that she couldn’t “mess up again” because she would lose her children for good if she did. Another mother said that she needed to get out and spend time with her children, because it would be too late otherwise and she would have no relationship with them. One father stated that he had been in prison before when he had no children, but having 2 children had had a big impact on how he viewed his sentence.

4.3. Longing for Parents (Fantasy and Day Dreaming)

Many of the children reported that they long for the day when their parents join the family to be physically close to them and play with them as they used to before imprisonment. When asked what they most looked forward to when their parents are released, many of them
replied that they want to be with their parent and see them every day. A boy, age 13, said, “it really hurts being separated from a parent. I'm not happy now. I would be happy only if I could live with my mother.” Another boy, age 12, also reported, “I always miss my mother and she is often in my dream. I wake up in the middle of a dream, but she is not there. I sometimes cry when I discovered it was just a dream…” A girl, 14, also mentioned that she could not pay attention to the class in the school and often absorbed thought, daydreaming about her father who is in prison. She said, I don’t think I would see my father any more for he is divorced with my mom after he went to the prison. My mom is not happy when we ask her about the condition of our father.”

Most caretakers and parents also share the feeling of children reported above. Regarding this point, one father reported the following:

I know that my wife often hides information about the emotional trauma my children are experiencing at home. However, I cold easily read from the children themselves when they come visiting me. In one of the visit days, my daughter asked me a question whether I will be killed by prison authorities. That question signaled me how my children were emotionally hurt over my detention and worried about what will happen to me next.

Another caretaker also reported, “My grandson, (age 11) highly misses his mother who was divorced with her husband after imprisonment. His father does not allow him to visit her. Most often he dreams about joining her.” In some cases children lose concentration and spend time day dreaming. A caretaker (a father) informing about the his son whose mother had been imprisoned since 2 years ago reported the following;
Few months after his mother had been detained; I received a call from the school principal. The principal inquired me to come to the school and discuss about some behavioral problems of the child. When I went there, he informed me the problem which I had never noticed on my child at home. His teacher also told me that sometimes he cries in the middle of class out of the blue and he lost interest in doing class works and homework. The teachers have discovered from the child that he cried because he felt insecurity as his mother was separated. Day dreaming his mother, my son couldn’t attend his education properly. Since then I started to make a close follow up to encourage him to the best of my capacity.

4.4. **Behavioural impact: Changes in Children’s Behaviour**

Parents and caregivers were asked about any changes that had taken place in their children’s behavior since their sentences had started. Most of the respondents stated that their children’s behavior had changed in noticeable ways, the most common of which included hyperactivity, becoming more withdrawn and aggressive and involving in antisocial activities. Many of the parents said they felt that their absence from the home or from their children’s routine was the main cause of these changes. One father said that since he came into prison, his child had become “disobedient and also become bolder and was acting up with her caregiver. Another father felt that the biggest effect of his imprisonment on his son was the fact that he had no male role model in his life in his life any more: “He has no father figure for a start. He has no-one to look up to.” His wife had told him that she was finding it more difficult to control the son’s behavior and that there was no family structure or routines in the household any more.
Another respondent expressing his concern about the changes in educational performance of her daughter mentioned the following:

My daughter is now in grade 4. She was in grade 3 when i was detained. I used to mentor my child in her school work. Every day I used to check her exercise books and assist her in doing homework assignments. She was a bright minded girl who stood 2nd or 3rd rank in class. My wife couldn’t take over the role as she is not educated. However we hired a tutor to fill up the missing link. However, for the surprise of all of us, this year, she stood 15th in class. I am so worried about her condition.

A father also stated that his youngest son in particular had been affected by his absence he said, “My youngest seems to have gone into himself, I mean he’s withdrawn. He’s not the same since I’ve come in. If I were out there, he’d be more talkative and all that.” One care giver expressed his concerns about the effects of the absence of a father on the children’s behavior: “They’ve got out of hand. They try to take advantage of the absence of their father. They play up on me, being bold.” She stated that when their father was at home, he usually disciplined the children. In his absence, I found it difficult to take over the role. She felt that the children have gone astray. One of the mothers also said, “My son is only 12, but I heard from a caretaker (his grandmother) started taking a drug (chat) and involved in group fighting in the school after I had been arrested.”

When asked about making an alternative caretaking arrangement to their children during arrest or prior to imprisonment, 10 parents did not make any arrangement while two fathers did. The remaining two were not willing to respond to this question. Those parents who made child
care arrangement for their children were asked about the kind of arrangement they made. One father
gave his child to grandmother because he was a widower and thought that was a proper
and safe location to place the child. Another parent a woman, 35, reported that she placed her
children in her elder sister’s home. They were also asked whether they are happy about the
arrangement they made for their children, both of them responded affirmatively that their
placement decisions were appropriate. However, for most parents, making a caretaking
arrangement at the time of arrest was impossible because, most often their imprisonment was
happened suddenly or they were sent to prison directly from court. Commenting on this, one
parents said,

The process of the court was so terrible and inconvenient. They often send
offenders directly to prison after issuing a sentence. This makes it difficult
for us to make caretaking arrangements to our children. I appeared to be
here directly from court even without greeting family. I had no chance to
see them, let alone arranging alternative care to my children. Thanks to my
relatives who are shouldering this burden. Otherwise, there is no way to
make any arrangements. This is inhuman practice.

Another prisoner explained, “My husband is taking care of my children and I have no
worries in this regard. However, there was no room to discuss with him during arrest as to how
he should look after the children.”

Failure to make caretaking arrangement has its own impact on children. This finding
showed that in some families, oldest children took over parents’ role in looking after the younger
siblings- a responsibility which might deter their dream of achieving academic success.
Reflecting on this point, one of the girls, 14, said, “I took over the responsibility of a mother to help my siblings. I had to quit schooling until my mother comes back, just for the sake of helping my sister and brother. A 15 years old girl, physically abused by a grandfather, after her father incarcerated, informed the followings story:

“My grandfather used to always beat me and call me names, like snake and witch and stuff like that especially when he was drunk. Wherever he comes home, he wants to get food ready on the table. Otherwise he will kill me. I can’t bear his harsh blow. Therefore, after school, I had to cook and do all the household chores along with my study. I even had a knife that I kept under my pillow to kill him if he keeps on beating me.…”

Because her the girl is experiencing emotional abuse.

4.5. Stigma and Isolation Due to Parental Imprisonment

Amongst the 14 imprisoned parents, two of them did not want their children to be informed about their whereabouts. The children were rather misinformed about the reasons why their parents left home for reasons such as, attending colleges, military service, going abroad, etc. These parents had no contact with their children at all. Justifying the reasons for not informing or misinforming the children, a mother of two children reported, “I did that just for the sake of protecting my children from stigmatizing and offending remarks of the people in the community and friends. Another prisoner, father of a boy, mentioned, “My family lives in the rural area. It is too far for my child to come here and visit me. As I am sentenced only for one year, It was not necessary to inform him as I would join them very soon.”
Informants were asked about the reaction of other people in the neighborhood or community, about the parents’ imprisonment; and their responses underlined on the supportive and sympathetic reactions of others. Many caretakers witnessed receiving sympathy from many people around the community. As one of them said, “Our neighbors are so collaborative and supportive. They take care of the children in my absence. Nobody is stigmatizing them.” Another caretaker mentioned, “We live in harmony and helping each other on circumstances like this. Our neighbors are supportive. I have never encountered any overt rejection or stigmatizing reaction so far against these children. People are so sympathetic.” Other caretaker also admitted that the family has never faced any social stigma, although no support was extended to the family from anyone. Most of the children also share similar opinion. No child has reported experiencing social stigma. Many of them stated that they had received a lot of support from their families, friends, schools and community. However extended families were mentioned by most of the respondents as the main source of support.

Another mother stated that her family and friends had been very supportive, and said that she would not worry about what other people thought. When asked if she felt that people would treat her child differently if they knew where his father was, one caregiver stated, “No, I wouldn’t. Neighbors are very supportive and it wouldn’t be a problem.” One mother also said that she did not like her children discussing their father’s sentence with people outside the family circle because she was afraid of how they might react and that they might treat the children differently if they knew their father was in prison.

One mother stated that although her daughter did not mind discussing the reason for her father’s absence, with her friends, the situation could change as she got older: “She wouldn’t have any stigma attached to her at that age. I think when she gets a bit older, it’ll change. But it’s
not really an issue, like, she’s too young.” Two other respondents stated that they felt their children would not feel stigmatized by their parent’s absence because they were too young, but that the situation would probably change as they got older.

4.6. Children’s Resiliency & Coping

The study also explored how children found healthy outlets for their feelings and the type of coping mechanisms which helped them get through hard times of parental incarceration. Getting involved in different activities, secrecy, parental contact, getting support from significant others were the most prominent coping styles reports by most of the informants.

*Engagement in various activities:* Most of the children emphasized on turning into various activities such as playing games with friends, attending churches with caretaker and spending time with friends in school activities etc to stay away from stressors of their parents imprisonment. Concerning this issue, a boy, 14, pointed out, “I play games such as soccer and ping pong with other children in and outside of school, just to forget those disgusting memories about my father’s arrest. When I consistently engaged myself on these activities, my worries gradually subsidize.” Another boy 12, said, “I feel something good about myself when I turn into games and watch films at home.” A girl, 15 also mentioned that attending religious services and domestic chores helped her in coping up the challenges. As she reported:

> After school, I often got caught up with so many activities. I sometimes watch entertaining films at home or play with other girls in the neighborhood. I also assist a family on domestic chores and go to church on Sundays and with my grandmother. Songs and prayers during religious services give me encouragement to feel good about myself. My
grandmother often informs me that God makes everything for reason and
my mother is in the hands of God and under his will, she will join the
family soon. I like going to church. There, I meet friends and we have a lot
of fun.

**Keeping imprisonment a secret:** Some informants reported that they deliberately hide or make
up a different story about the imprisonment of a parent. They tried to cover up the case for the
sake of avoiding unpleasant reactions from others. A 10 years old girl said, “I am not sure if my
friends and classmates had information about the situation of my parent. I haven’t informed
anyone. I would not bear their insults.” Another girl, age 15, remarked, “Every one nags you
asking about my mother if they are informed about the situation of my parental arrest. Better to
keep silent and feel safe than facing their reactions”.

Non-disclosure was also reported among some parents for children would not feel
embarrassed when they are not informed imprisonment as a cause for separation. For instance,
among the prisoner parents, two of them did not disclose their situation to the children. The
rationale behind concealing the truth was to make children easily to cope with the separation. As
one of the parents said, “My daughter will stay safe and sound if he is not informed. I know how
hard it would be when she discovers the truth.”

**Maintaining contact with parents:** Most of the interviewed respondents underline on
parent-child contact as an important mechanism to get recovery from stress against parental
arrest and imprisonment. All children, except few had regular contact with their parents by
making visits at the prison. For many respondents, prison visits were considered as crucial outlet
to share emotions. As one parent pronounced,
“I always long for the visit day, just because I would see my son and daughter. On that day, it feel like I am not in prison. We all forget the traumatic event and assume that we are set free. I also imagine that my children get the happiest moment and feel happy finding me in such safe and healthy condition. I hope they feel much better when they go back home as well.

Another parent, (a woman) also articulated, “I see significant improvement in the condition of my child over time. He was emotionally high and couldn’t bear the cry every time we see each other. Now, he is becoming strong and feeling so happy.”

Regarding the advantages of prison visits and child-parent contacts, a social worker in at Dipo Jail reported the following:

We encourage families to maintain contact with the incarcerated parent. It is highly beneficial to both children and their parents. It helps children to cope the adverse experiences in short time. It is generally recommended that maintaining parent-child contact through personal visits during incarceration is important for the well-being of the children. In this prison, family visits are scheduled on every Sundays. We allow kids to get into the prison compound and physically meet their parents. Parents can hug kiss and take a walk with them around safe location and restricted areas in the compound. However, I have a concern about the short visit time and inconvenience of the environment to the children. I have proposed to the administration to consider some changes in order to make the visit to children and families as pleasant as possible.
From children’s perspective, it is found out that the experience of visiting a parent in jail entailed mixed feelings. As one child (a boy, age 10) revealed, “At the time of prison visits, I usually feel afraid of the prison police officers, but at the same time feel happy to see my father.” A girl, age 13, also explained, “I feel both happy and sad or happy and upset. I feel happy because, I meet my parent, but sad to come to the noisy place as it is often over crowded.” Other children also reported said that they were angry and sad because there are no play materials for children during waiting times, but at the same time happy to see their parents. Many children commented that the waiting time was boring for the children and sadness and crying resume when the moment to leave arrives was also mentioned. Other three children just mentioned the happiness of visiting a father whom they really miss, and one boy, age 11, said that he felt happy and relieved when he used to visit his mother. For some children, the idea of going to the prison is horrifying. As one girl commented, “it is so exciting to visit a parent. It gives me relief to find my mother in safe condition. However, It is really awful to see prisoners dressed uniform. The compound looks a hell and soldiers so frightening.”

Caregivers also shared these mixed feelings. One caregiver described, “Visits were important but not as inviting as they should be. The children are usually unhappy after the visit for it is not attractive to the children.” Another caretaker described, “parent-child visits is good because the child can play with his dad. Children are fine and happy to visit the father, but when they are leaving they cannot understand why they have to leave him with short visit and feel upset.”

When asked how frequently they visit their parents in the prison, children’s responses include: every week, once in a blue moon and not at all. Some caretaker also reported the difficulty of taking children to the prison every week for reasons associated with distance of the
prisons and financial problems to cover transportation for all the children. A grandmother, explaining on this matter pronounced, “I can’t send children to visit their father in the prison on every Sunday, because I am physically weak enough to travel to such a long distance and also unable to afford their transportation costs.” Some children also share the idea of a distance as a barrier to frequent prison visits. A boy, 10, said, had it been not too far, I could have visited my mother every day. It is too far and I can’t travel there without a company of somebody. A 12 years old girl also remarked,” the prison is a frightening place and I am not up to visiting it frequently.”

The study also revealed that few children had no interest to visit the prison all together, because their parents were divorced before the parent was arrested and were under custody of the other parent. A boy 14, explained, I don’t want to visit my dad. He is the cause for our adversities. We are safe her with our mother.” Another child, a girl, 15, said, “My father should be punished for violently beating my mother.”

**Family support:** Most of the informants have reported that those children, who feel they are in good hands, were able to cope up the adversities of parental incarcerations very easily. As one girl, 12, said, I have no worry living with a grandmother. She provides me everything that I used to get from my mother.” A boy, 10, also reported, “Although my dad is in prison, my mom is taking me to visit places, buy me clothes and all the school materials and so on. I missed my father in person, but not the materials I need”.

4.7. **Prison service and arrangement for children**

As most respondents reiterated, there is no support available for children whose families are incarcerated. There is also no special arrangement for children’s visit. As
one parent commented, “our children are not prisoners. They come here to see us and should be treated well. They want to play and enjoy the environment. As you see the place is not inviting for children.” Another parent, also said, “had there been play materials, our children would have enjoyed the place and feel that we are in good hands and contributes a lot to their emotional safety.” A 12 years old girl said, “Visiting time is not enough to interact with my father. Only small kids are allowed to enter and have physical contact with the parent.” This is disappointing.”

All respondents mentioned that there is a possibility to have a physical contact between small children and parents. One prisoner mother who have two children stated, “it is possible to hold, hug and kiss if the children are small and to shake hands and to talk sitting side by side if the children are older.” Regarding services for children, a prison administrator, reported the following:

We don’t have services for children outside of the prison. The prison allocates budget only for meals and formula (milk) to feed infants who are living with mothers in the prison. We also provide medical services to the children if they get sick. Children who live outside of the prison setting are treated differently. On family visit day, kids are allowed to enter in the compound to play with their parents. For security reasons, we do not allow older children (above the age of five) to the compound.

When asked about their opinion regarding the conditions of prison visits, most parents, children and caretakers found it upsetting. All complained over a Sunday visit schedule that they found it as uncomfortable and insufficient, because visiting place
becomes over crowded on that day. As one parent reported, “a weekly visit is the only means of contact we have. Telephone call is prohibited. Few hours visit on Sundays is not enough to share feelings with our children.” Another prisoner (a mother), although my son often wishes to hug and hold me, he could not do that because he is not feeling at easy…” A 14 years old girl also said, “It is so frightening. Sometimes prison police officers stand next to us, kind of listening to what we are talking. I don’t feel comfortable at all.” One care take also mentioned the following:

The prison environment is frightening to our children, both in the attitudes and behavior of prison staff and the physical setting. Visits include long waits, rude treatment during body search, and crowded visiting place with no activities for children. These conditions do not encourage frequent visits.

Parents were asked about how they evaluate prison staffs during their children’s visit. As one mother stated, “some of them are welcoming while others are not. It varies depending on their personal qualities. Some are good and others are bad.” Those prisoners who mentioned receiving a good treatment from staff reported attributes about their kindness, friendliness and being considerate to the children as commendable qualities of the staff. Those who were considered as “bad” by the respondents are those who mistreat their children during visit and those who are aggressive and inconsiderate.

Children were also asked about how frequently they visit parents in the prison. Their responses range from every week to once in a blue moon. Some caretakers also reported the
difficulty of taking children to the prison every Sunday for reasons associated with distance and financial problems.

When asked if they know about alternative care services to children of incarcerated children, no one responded affirmatively. However, most of the parents preferred to give their children to a close relative than to a foster parent. As one parent (a father) explained, if you have no alternative, foster care could be a good option to place children. However, it may not be a suitable place for a child to live with a person they had no exposure before.” Another parent, reported:

Nothing can substitute a parent. In my opinion, it is better if children could live with both parents to the best or with a single parent to the least. I have no information so far about foster care service in our locality let alone in the country. It is ok if children could be taken care of by foster parents, who are economically better off than the biological parents. There are some families who are so kind and dedicated to raise children as foster families. Luckily some children may grow up properly.

Another parent mentioned that he knew about adoption, but has no idea about foster care. The question this parent asked the researcher about what foster care would mean illustrates his level of awareness or information about foster care was low. A social worker in the prison explained that she knew very well about the alternative care packages designed by the federal government and guidelines developed for implementing the services. And she added, “However, there is no such service practically put in place to serve children of incarcerated parents in our institution or elsewhere.”
CHAPTER FIVE

Discussions

5.1. Psychosocial Impact

The current study revealed that parental imprisonment poses a wide range of negative effects on the psychosocial wellbeing of children. Majority of the children reported experiencing adverse emotional feeling such as fear, shock, sadness and stress due to their parents’ imprisonment. Previous researches conducted with children and families of prisoners in various settings also suggest similar outcomes (Maureen, 2006; Murray, 2007; Phillips & Erkanli, 2008). The findings highlighted that psychological and behavioral outcomes of parental incarcerations on children could vary depending on various circumstances, such as: witnessing violent arresting procedures, gender of the parent serving the sentence, relationship and contact of the child with the parents, the quality of care taking and availability and accessibility of services.

Moreover, the study also showed that divorce due to incarceration is apparently evident, that caused double burden of separation against children. When the demographic data was examined, out of 5 divorced families 3 (more than half) of them were divorced after incarceration of a parent. This implies that parental incarceration, which his one form of separation could become a cause to make some families to end up in divorce and bring about further separation and increased stress against children. This is in congruence with findings by Hairston, (2008), which obtained significant association between post-incarceration and divorce. However, this finding was not in agreement with another study conducted by (Kampfner 1995) who found no significant association between parental incarceration and divorce and children’s stress reactions. This has implication for considerations for future researches.
In the current study, findings on witnessing violent arrest of parents were reported as causing serious traumatic consequences. Similar results were found by Murray and David (2011), involving a sample of 150 children who witnessed and not witnessed an arrest. He found that, the prevalence of elevated Post Traumatic Stress (PTS) symptoms were most prevalent among children who witnessed the arrest of someone with whom they lived and who also had a recently arrested parent (27.4%) followed in turn by children who witnessed an arrest whose parents were not recently arrested (15.7%). In another study, Mumola (2009), suggested witnessing arrests is a risk factor for PTS independent of other acts of violence children may have experienced. Findings showed that in addition to emotional effects, parental imprisonment led to changes in children’s behavior, manifested specifically in their academic achievement and involvement in anti-social behaviors. Several anecdotal evidences in the study revealed that these behavioral changes stem from psychological consequences with which children respond to the traumatic experiences of their parents’ imprisonment. This finding also supports the results by Murray & Farrington (2005), which suggests that having a parent in jail increases the probability of developing antisocial and delinquent behavior in the future.
5.2. **Stigma and isolation**

Many researches done elsewhere on the impacts of parental incarceration confirm stigma and isolation as the most serious consequences affecting children of imprisoned parents. For instance, Murray (2007), in his study conducted in Brazil, found that majority of the interviewed children who had a parent behind bars, did not want their neighbors or friends to find out about their parent’s imprisonment, for fear of stigmatization. In the same study, parents in prison were concerned that their children would be singled out or ostracized at school. Contrary to these findings, this research identified limited impact of parental imprisonment on stigma and discrimination against children or their families. Although some respondents kept the matter a secret in the interest of avoiding stigma, respondents did not report practically experiencing stigma due to reasons attached to parental imprisonment. Conversely, most of the informants were to the opinion that they received supportive and sympathetic responses from relatives, friends and community members. It is assumed that such discrepancy of finding might be either due to the low profile crime categories on which most prisoners were convicted or the limited sample size used in this qualitative study. This may require further investigation with a different sample size and research design.

5.3. **Resilience and Coping**

The study found a significant role of contact and family supports in boosting children’s resilience and coping adversities associated with parental incarceration. This has implications on the importance of strengthening children’s resilience in order to improve coping capacity as a key path to empowering these children and their families. Consistent with this, a study by Landreth and Lobaugh (1998), found an increase in children’s self-esteem through a 10-week intervention in which children could physically interact with their incarcerated fathers in a child-
friendly environment. Another qualitative study by Poehlmanns (2005) on a sample of 34 incarcerated mothers showed that more frequent contact during incarceration was associated with more positive parent-child relationships and increased resilience particularly among older children.

Application of active coping styles such as making contact with parents, seeking social supports and engagement in various games and activities reported by children are positive variables which contribute to overcome the adverse effects of parental incarceration. This result is also consistent with the conceptual frameworks of Resilient Theory (Garmezy, 1991), which underlines on the perspectives that identifying and understanding how protective factors operate is crucial for positive development of children in adversities.

Majority of parents in this research had contact with their children through visitation. These parents believe that having contact with the family and their children gives them a chance to keep the smooth relationship and feel they are connected. Contrary to this, few respondents who preferred non-disclosure about their imprisonment held the belief that informing children about their parent’s imprisonment would cause severe psychological damages, expose children to social rejection and stigma and makes the reunion harder. These parents claimed that they had no contact with the children all together. However, researchers suggest that this approach of protecting children often has a negative impact on the child’s sense of trust on the caregiver (Poehlmann, 2005; Mumola, 2009). Honest disclosure can help children see the consequences of actions and they become more resilient and adaptable to adversity. Disclosure of the imprisonment (in an age-appropriate way) was suggested by many scholars as an important factor in assisting children to easily adjusts to the situation and attenuate their feelings of anxiety and guilt (Murray, 2007; Kelli, 2008; Shlafer & Poehlmann, 2010).
5.4. Services and Support Systems

Regarding services and support systems, findings in the current study revealed that provision of care and support for children whose parents are in prison, are largely handled at the family and extended family levels. Most of the children were taken care of by the other parent, a grandparent or extended families. This being a positive trend, however, there were few children who were struggling to survive without any adult support. Still some children were also forced to prematurely takeover parent’s role in order to assist the family. These evidences assert a call for evidence-based initiatives to care and support these highly vulnerable groups. In general, results indicate a sheer absence of formal services or support system for these high-risk children. Initiatives were not laid down either by the prison administration or other concerned social institutions particularly to assist the children to cope the challenges of parental incarceration. Prison visit programs were found to be entirely uncomfortable and stressful for children, and often times discouraging them from attending the visit. In a nutshell, from the perspectives of respondents and also from personal observations of the researcher, services were absent and prison facilities were not child-friendly.

Large body of research pronounce the need for availing a developmentally appropriate child care services and support systems to address the psychosocial and economic challenges of children of incarcerated parents.(Braman, 2004; Kelly, 2006; Hairston, (2008); Glaze & Maruschak, 2010). Majority of practice researches on alternative child care services programs suggest, that children with parents in prisons who have access to proper placement for care in the family-like environments and those who received familiar support were more resilient and were better able to meet the challenges. However, finding of this study uncovered that, initiatives on
alternative care support and family preservation efforts are far from existence or unknown to the prison community and the families at all.

Responses also indicate for many prisoner parents, having children may impact on the ways that they view their sentences. This can also influence the criminal behavior of their parents after they are released. Many of the respondents expressed their concern about the effect of staying in prison on their relationship with their children. In some cases, being away from their children had encouraged respondents to decide on never committing crime again. This suggests that positive sentence management programmers for parents in prison could perhaps focus on issues relating to their children. Best practice results explored by Mulready-Jones (2011), from Brazil, Mexico, Sweden and United states demonstrated that working on intervention programs related children with the prisoner parents contributed to the reduction of return rate of prisoners and maximized smooth reunion of prisoner with their families.

There are a number of challenges and limitations to this study that should be noted. One of the first things learned from this experience is that the children of imprisoned parents are not easy to reach. Some parents were not willing to allow their children take part in the research. Some who seemed disposed to take part were clearly not coping with the situation. Others did not feel they could participate because their children were not aware that their parent was currently in prison. The researcher would like to state that the small sample size and limited prison setting explored could raise concerns about the generalization of the findings. Further research would benefit from better understanding of children of incarcerated parents by using large scale quantitative methods that build on these qualitative findings. Despite these shortcomings, the researcher believes that this empirical report can assist in casting light on the growing problems of these hidden-victim populations.
CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1. Conclusions

In this research, adverse effects of parental imprisonment were explored as to how the children underwent the psycho social challenges stemming from trauma associated with parental arrest and imprisonment. Despite the impacts of incarceration of parents depend on numerous factors, respondents in all categories reported varying degrees of psychological and behavioral problems experienced by the children. Taking together, problems such as: depression, fear of stigma, lack of sleep, longing for parents, loneness, and uncertainty and fear of losing a parent, lack of interest in education and involvement in antisocial behaviors were common expressions used by respondents in all categories to explain the psychosocial challenges experienced by children after parental incarcerations.

Overall, the current study indicated that data about the magnitude problem in the region is so scanty that it is difficult to present valid figures to precisely inform the extent of the problem. However, qualitative data captured from few sample and the absences of evidence based- interventions inform that children of incarcerated parents in Adama Dipo prison did not get attention from concerned bodies and the challenges of these invisible-victims remained unaddressed. Based on the results of this study, discussed in the previous sections, the following conclusions could be made:

- The findings indicated that the impact of parental arrest and imprisonment on children goes far beyond affecting the relationship between the child and imprisoned parent. It affects a wide range of psychological, emotional and social aspects of a child’s life. As psycho socials
impacts are diverse and interlinked, it suggests the importance of understanding the problem in various domains and in holistic manner.

- The study found out that children’s presence during arrest of their parents and circumstances during arrest determines the intensity of psychosocial burdens experienced by the children. These findings have an implication for law enforcements bodies to take precautions on the ethical procedure of parental arrest particularly when children are present.

- The study clearly showed that children can positively thrive through adverse effects of parental incarceration when they have close family support, smooth interactions and engagement in various entertainment activities. Understanding and promoting these promoting factors is paramount to enhance their coping capacity and improve resilience to counterchallenge the risk factors associated with parental imprisonments.

- The findings showed that the quality of visits is more likely to be affected by the institutional settings, which may be highly stressful for children. This has implications on widening the emotional distance and attachment between the child and the parents, which in turn intensify psychological, burned on children. These results assert the need for considering a developmentally appropriate and child-friendly visit programs.

- Although a considerable amount of information currently exists on children of incarcerated parents, more research is needed to understand variation within this unique group of at-risk children. Particularly, the research community should examine the impact of parental incarceration on different types of children and family situations, looking at factors such as age and gender; the sex of the incarcerated parent; and the relationship with that parent prior to incarceration.
6.2. Recommendations

General recommendation: The following recommendations are crosscutting issues which need to be considered in all efforts to address the problems of children of incarcerated parents:

Challenges of children of incarcerated parents are diverse and complex. Addressing these problems require integrated interventions through partnership and networking. Partnership with legal institutions, social welfare organizations, schools, families, etc, could enhance the efficiency of interventions through proper allocation of resources, sharing experiences and fostering referral systems. Findings have an implication for law enforcements bodies to take precautions on the ethical procedure of parental arrest particularly when children are present.

- Every initiative targeting children of incarcerated parents should take into account the best interest of the child as a matter of overriding importance.

- Systematically recorded data is a cornerstone for any intervention. Therefore, up-to-date information about the number and profiles of children of incarcerated parents, their caregivers, and their needs should be systematically solicited, recorded, and shared to design effective services.

- Programs and services for incarcerated parents and their children must acknowledge and include the non-incarcerated parent or caregiver.

- More research is needed to understand scope and magnitude of the problem. The full range of risk factors affecting children of incarcerated parents must be recognized and accounted for in research, programs and policies.
6.3. **Specific Recommendations for key Stakeholders**

**Policy makers:**

Policy makers should give protection of children of incarcerated parents a priority agenda. This could be put in place through formulating policy and guidelines and ensuring the implementation of existing policies and alternative childcare programs in accordance to the best interests of the child.

**Law enforcement bodies and prison administrations:**

The law enforcement bodies should take appropriate legal and administrative measures taking into account the caretaking responsibility of the parent and safety and security of minors. This can be addressed through:

- Training prison police officers on specific protocols and practices to make sure the arrest of a parent is done in a different way if a child is present.

- Reducing the use of pre-trial detention for parents/primary caregivers.

- Strengthening the capacities of the social welfare workforce in the prisons to create functioning case management and referral mechanisms for children of prisoners.

- Setting up a child-friendly parent-child visit programs and family centers in the prison to encourage parent-child contact during the incarceration period.
Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs):

NGOs engaged in social welfare activities could mainstream in their projects and services the issue of children of incarcerated parents to address the immediate and long term needs of the children. This could be achieved through:

- Assisting and building the capacities of the low enforcement/prison administration staff.
- Providing financial supports to the initiatives to improve parent child relationship and minimize impact of parental incarceration on children.
- Supporting and facilitating alternative child care (foster care) placements for children who are in need after parental imprisonment.
- Identifying children of incarcerated parents in collaboration with the community structures and local institutions.
- Providing counseling services to boost children’s resilience and parenting skills training to the caretakers.
- Assist poor families/caretakers with income generating schemes.

Schools/educational Institutions:

Schools can make a significant difference in addressing the educational needs of children with special focus on those high-risk children whose educational achievements are significantly jeopardized by parental incarceration. This can be achieved through the following strategies:

- Establishing school-based counseling programs.
- Encouraging peer relationship and support through involving children in various extracurricular activities.

- Organize tutorial programs for assisting children to make up for the missing classes due to their time spent on visiting their parents.

- Establish a referral system to link /connect children with special needs to the concerned institutions.

- Working with the caretaker on school follow up to keep track of changes and improvements of the children in school activities.

**Community-Based Organizations:**

Involving Community-based organizations (CBOs) at the grassroots level is a viable approach to ensure sustainable change and improvement in the process of addressing the problem of children of incarcerated parents. CBOs can play a role in:

- Identifying and reporting children with parents in prison with in the community.

- Mobilizing local resources (human, financial and knowledge) for the purpose of assisting children.

- Providing social support and economically assisting children and caretakers of families with incarcerated parent.
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Appendix A
Addis Ababa University
Graduate program in Developmental Psychology

The Psychological challenges and resilience of children of imprisoned parents: The case of Adama Town

**Interview guide for imprisoned parents**

1. **Profile of the respondent**

   Age _________ Sex_________ Marital status: ____________

   Educational level __________________

   Religion_________Occupation (before imprisonment) _______________

   Duration in prison __________________

   Address: Woreda ______________Kebele___________

   How many children do you have? __________M________.F_________

2. **Background (Pre-detention information)**

   2.1 Would you please tell me about your family? **Prob:** Whether the respondent lived with his/her children before imprisonment, age and schooling background of children, and relations with the children before the time of arrest, respondent’s role in raising the children, etc.

   2.2 Can you tell me about how and why you were imprisoned? **Prob:** How children were informed about the arrest, their feeling and reactions at the time of arrest or at the time they found out about the arrest, etc.
2.3 Did you make any childcare arrangement for your children before imprisonment? If yes, what kind of arrangement? If no, why?

3. **Parent-child relations and challenges during detention**

3.1 Do you have contact with your children? Prob: about frequency of the visit, their feeling during the visit, the last contact they had, what the parent makes of the visits, whether the parent still feel attached to their family and children?

3.2 Do you think that your imprisonment has changed the wellbeing of your children differently? How? **Prob:** Specific social, behavioral, emotional and economic concerns challenging their life, what the parent feels missing most about his children and vice versa, concerns on household (marital) stability, etc.

3.3 Who is taking care of your children now? Prob: relationship with the caretaker, parent’s feeling whether children are receiving proper care, any concern on the role of the caretaker, etc

3.4 Do you think your children understand very well about your situation? Prob: how the parent explains his/her situation to the child.

3.5 How do you fulfill your roles as a “parent” while separated from your child? **Prob:** If the parent still feels attached to his/her children, feeling about being a parent in prison.

4. **Resiliency and coping**

4.1 Tell me how you managed to cope with incarceration? What do you do to maintain independence?

4.2 Do you feel that your children are now able to cope with the difficult time of separation? If yes, how are your children dealing with your separation? and what factors contributed to facilitate their adjustment? if no why?
4.3 From your observation and conversations with your children during visit, can you tell me some of the situations that could indicate your children’s sense of resilience and coping to the adversity of separation in relation to your imprisonment?

5. **Available Support system/interventions to assist children/**

   5.1 Is there any especial arrangement made for supporting children of incarcerated parents by the prison? (Extended visit hour or special hour/room)?

   5.2 Are you allowed physical contact with your child during visit?

   5.3 How do prison staffs treat your children when they visit you?

   5.4 Are there any formal or informal service provisions (interventions) outside the prison to assist children of incarcerated parents? If yes, how and to what extent do such services/supports contributed to make a difference in the wellbeing of your children?

6. **Suggestions:**

   6.1 In your opinion, what should be changed to improve the wellbeing of incarcerated parents? (inside and outside of the prison setting)

   6.2 Any other comments ________________________________

   **I am done. Thank you very much for sharing your time and information.**
Appendix B
Addis Ababa University
Graduate program in Developmental Psychology

The Psychosocial challenges and resilience of children of imprisoned parents: The case of Adama Town

Interview for caregiver/Guardian

1. Profile of the respondent

Age _________ Sex_________ Marital status: ____________

Educational level __________________

Religion________Occupation (source of income) ___________

Relationship to the prisoner: ____________

Address: Woreda ____________ Town,__________Kebele_________

How many children are you taking care of ? __________M_______F________

2. Relationship and role of caregiver

a. What is your relationship with the children? Prob: the role of a caregiver, if caregiver is not biological parent, how the care giving was arranged, who was involved in the arrangement /placement?

b. How do you explain the relationship and emotional attachment between the children and incarcerated parent before imprisonment?

c. How was the child/children informed about the imprisonment of their parent? Prob: about the reaction and feeling of children when they learn about their parent’s detention.
3. **Perceived influence of parental incarceration on children**
   
a. In your experience, what are the different ways that the everyday lives of children are being influenced by having an incarcerated parent? **Prob:** the social, emotional, behavioral, educational/academic and economic challenges faced by the children after the parent’s imprisonment.

b. What do you think are the things that the children missed most about their parent who is in prison?

c. What are the unique aspects of care giving for raising a child of incarcerated parent? What are you major concerns about your role as caregiver to the children of imprisoned parents?

d. How are children treated by their peers when peers have knowledge of a child’s incarcerated parent?

4. **Resiliency and coping**
   
a. Do the children always share their feeling about the parent in prison with you? If yes, do you see any gradual change or improvement in their feelings and emotions?

b. Do you feel that the children are now able to cope with the difficult time of separation? **Prob:** how are the children dealing with separation of their parent, about factors contributing to facilitate their adjustment, reasons if children are not able to cope, etc.

c. From your day to day observation of the child/children, can you tell me some of the situations that could indicate the children’s sense of resilience and coping to the adversity of separation in relation to parental imprisonment?
5. Available support/intervention to assist children
   a. Is there any especial arrangement made for supporting children of incarcerated parents by the prison? Prob: if there is extended visit hour or special hour/room, how the prison staff treat the children during visit? Barriers for visit, etc.
   b. Are there any formal or informal service provisions (interventions) outside the prison to assist children of incarcerated parents? If yes, where do the children get support from? Type of supports/services received, how and to what extent do such services/supports contributed to make a difference in the wellbeing of your children?

6. Suggestions
   a. Do you have any suggestions for the betterment of support programs related to children?
   b. In your opinion, what should be changed to improve the wellbeing of incarcerated parents? (inside and outside of the prison setting)
   c. Do you have any further points to share?

I am done. Thank you very much for sharing your time and information.
Appendix C
Addis Ababa University
Graduate program in Developmental Psychology
The Psychosocial challenges and resilience of children of imprisoned parents: The case of Adama Town

Interview guide for children (age 10-15)

1. Background Information

   Interviewee's Age ........ Sex........ Education level /grade ........

   Parent in prison: Father □ Mother           How long ..............

   Child’s age at the time of the parents’s arrest (detention)_________

   Address: Woreda,........ Town, ........Kebele.............

2. General (icebreaking information)

   2.1. I would be glad if you could introduce yourself to me. Prob: where the child lives now?

      With whom? About his parents and siblings, if the child is attending school, type of school, hobbies, friendship, reasons if the child is not currently attending school, etc.

   2.2. What do you like most about your family (parents)?

   2.3. What is your greatest worry about your family?

3. Psycho social challenges related to parental incarceration:

   3.1. How did you know about your parent’s imprisonment? Who informed you about it?

      Prob: when did the child learned about his/her parent’s imprisonment, reason for imprisonment, the child’s reaction/feeling by the time he/she knew the parent in detention, what did he/ she remember about the situation at the time of arrest, whether the child’s feeling gradually changed or not, etc.
3.2. How did your parent’s imprisonment affect your life? Prob: if the child faced challenges in the family, schools, with friends, concern about stigma, behavioral problems etc. How life changed since their parent went to prison?

3.3. What do you miss most about your parent who is in prison?

4. Resiliency and coping

4.1. Are you in contact with your parent in prison? Prob: about how the contact is made? How often? Feeling about the contact and its benefits.

4.2. What did you do to cope the adversities after your parent’s imprisonment? Prob: about circumstances that contributed to help the child adjust the adverts experience in relation to his parent’s imprisonment, if the child shares his feeling with significant others, etc.

5. Support system:

5.1. Who is taking care of you now? Prob: if there is any support rendered or placement options made to the child after the parents’ imprisonment, to what extend the supports considered the child’s interest?

5.2. If you are visiting your parent in prison, how do you feel about the prison visits? Prob: whether the prison visits arrangement are child friendly, how frightening/stressful, how pleasant and entertaining and safe, are there barriers to visit your parent?

5.3. Were you offered support from anyone or anywhere else? If yes, from whom? What kind?

6. Suggestion:

6.1. What should have been changed to improve the wellbeing of children who are in similar situation like you?

6.2. Any further point or concerns you want to share?

I am done; thank you very much for your time and information
Appendix D
Addis Ababa University
Graduate program in Developmental Psychology
The Psychosocial challenges and resilience of children of imprisoned parents: The case of Adama Town

Interview for Social worker and police officer

1. Profile of the respondent

   Age _________     Sex_________ Marital status: __________
   Educational level __________________
   Responsibility in the prisoner: __________
   Address: Woreda ____________ Town,__________ Kebele_________

2. Services in the prison

   a. What kind of services are available in the prison for imprisoned parents who have children outside the prison?
   b. Is there any special visit time and place for children when they come to visit their parents?
   c. Is there any special treatment when children come to visit their parents?
   d. Is there any professional counselor in the prison for parents in prison?
   e. If yes, do parents in prison have counseling sessions with counselor? What about children of imprisoned parents?

I am done. Thank you very much for sharing your time and information.
Appendix E
Addis Ababa University
Graduate program in Developmental Psychology
A qualitative Study on the psycho-social challenges and resilience of children of incarcerated parents. The case of Adama Town.

**Information sheet and consent form**

Greetings! My name is Hawi Mekonnen I am a second year graduate student at Addis Ababa University. I am conducting a research on the psycho social challenges of children of incarcerated parents in Adama Town, for the partial fulfillment of my Masters Degree in Developmental Psychology. I am interested in finding out the influence of parental imprisonment on the psychosocial wellbeing of children, coping mechanisms and support systems available to overcome the challenges.

Thank you for sparing your precious time to come and attend this interview session. In our stay, you shall share your experiences, ideas and knowledge about parental incarceration and its impact on the wellbeing of children. The interview might take one hour. I have some questions to discuss in line with this interview guide. If we raise anything you have not heard before or don’t understand, please feel free to ask for clarification.

I hope you do not mind if I take notes and tape-record the discussion. I am doing this so that I can store the information for report writing and future use or reference. I assure you that any information you give will be kept confidential and your name will not appear on any report. No
one other than the researcher will see your responses to the questions. You do not have to take part in this study if you are not willing. If you choose to take part, you can stop at any time. What you say and whether you take part in this study will not affect you in any way. Some of the questions could make you feel uncomfortable, but you can skip or choose not to answer questions if you want. You will not receive any benefits from this study. However, your ideas and suggestion would help to generate knowledge and attain purpose of this study.

**Consent Form**

1. I confirm that I have understood the Information Sheet.

2. I have been offered the opportunity to ask questions.

3. I am willing if I myself or a family members under the age of 18 to participate in this study

Signature or thumbprint of participant or/guardian: _______________________________