

Lived Experiences of Ex-Offenders in their Reintegration in the Community

Lean C. Arreola, Denver Shane D. Mabbayad, Nhel Mie D. Pilar, Romel R. Bosito, Jessica C. Corpuz, and John Bel K. Galumba

Isabela State University-Jones Campus

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.808040>

Received: 06 July 2024; Revised: 16 July 2024; Accepted: 20 July 2024; Published: 29 August 2024

ABSTRACT

Being convicted and staying behind bars for many years can give the convicted fear and shame during and after the conviction. To shed light on this issue, this study explored the lived experiences of ex-offenders and how they coped with their reintegration process in the community using a phenomenological qualitative approach. This study used purposive sampling in selecting the participants of the study based on the following criteria: must be ex-offenders and have experiences with or encountering difficulties throughout the reintegration process. Six ex-offenders were interviewed using unstructured interview guide questions. The response gathered from the interview was transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis, which aimed to determine the lived experiences of ex-offenders during their reintegration into the community. The findings revealed that the participants experienced bad treatment when they came back into the community. They overcame those experiences with the help and support of their family and peers. Moreover, the lack of opportunities and financial assistance was also determined by the researchers. Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the researchers came up with the following recommendations; for better reintegration of the ex-offenders in the community, the family member can strengthen their attention and help them cope-up with the challenges and symposiums about the life of the ex-offender during conviction and emphasized the importance of assisting the ex-offender on their path to a successful reintegration in the community.

Keywords: ex-offender, reintegration, conviction, lived experiences, community.

INTRODUCTION

Being convicted and staying behind bars for many years could have given the convicted fear and shame during and after the conviction. Imprisonment was a heavy burden. It could cause the loss of loved ones, especially those who were close. Even if one said they had paid for it for a long time in prison and had regretted what they had done, they couldn't control the people who dictated what they did wrong.

Faridi (2023), states that coming out from the prison of our own minds requires a willingness to embrace the possibility of something better. It means letting go of the norm and stepping into a realm of intuitive wisdom. The renewal of freedom and the thought that they will spend their time with their families brought them so much joy and comfort amidst all the experiences they encountered.

Palgan (2022), stated that the global problem of ex-offenders was disregarded because rehabilitation was prioritized over punishment. Many viewed incarcerations as a form of abuse that denied people the chance to live better lives. Rebuilding one's life after release from prison could be an exhilarating experience, but incarceration mostly served to deter crime and recidivism.

Manaig (2019), found that after serving their sentence in prison, ex-offenders went through a socialization

process where they learned values, skills, and information to help them fit easily into their new community. It could be difficult, nevertheless, to experience discrimination and stigma. For ex-offenders, reintegration into society and overcoming social and communicative barriers were critical. These were the challenges for families of ex-offenders to adapt to society since they frequently experienced rejection and judgment from society. In addition, Bowles (2022), stated that ex-offenders find it difficult to acquire the skills and knowledge required to enter the workforce. The employers were looking for a candidate that has a higher education level and is more likely suited to the professional certificates and a degree holder. Those with substance abuse disorders or other health problems do not usually their priority to be jobs that are ready or find employees. Furthermore, Quinn-Hogan (2021). Said that the successful reintegration of ex-offenders in the community is the primary factor in reducing recidivism and protecting the public. However, the successful reintegration of ex-offenders is often hard to come by because they face multiple problems in their reintegration into the community. In the research that has been examined, the ex-offender disrupts their successful reintegration into the community due to the stigmatic labeling. Further, studies have shown that the ex-offender who experiences stigmatic labeling in the community plays a bulging role in the recidivism of the offender. Chen (2020), stated that Vocational and career wellbeing is of essential importance for the successful reintegration of ex-offenders back into civil society, being healthy and productive citizens that contribute to the commonwealth of the good society in which they belong and live.

Villarmia et al. (2021), stated that for years of sacrifices and loneliness inside the correctional institution, nothing compared to happiness experienced by ex-prisoners after their release from jail. However, coming back to the community where you belong and having a notable record is quite challenging because the problems and the challenges that may face by the ex-offender are how they will cope with these challenges that may lead to their successful reintegration in their community. Also, upon facing and thinking about the challenges they face, they felt also that the people do not trust them where they reside except their peers and family, that's why they keep doing things that can regain such trust of the people in the community they reside.

The lived experiences of ex-offenders during their reintegration into the community were multifaceted and often challenging. After serving their sentences, individuals faced difficult challenges as they attempted to rebuild their lives, retrieve social acceptance, and establish stability. Qasim (2020), found out that that the common challenges that the ex-offenders faced were intractable and insurmountable, that they might regret returning to prison. Hence, their social integration after release from the prison cell was disadvantaged by the individual choices and agency. The characteristics of social relations and the unusual social structural constraint placed upon the best explained their experiences after releasing from the prison cell.

As ex-offenders worked to effectively reintegrate and prevent recidivism, these experiences might involve plenty of emotions, challenges, and tactics. Ex-offenders were sentenced to lifetime convictions and restrictions because most of the attention shamed individuals who had been sent to prison for persistent deviance. When considering these experiences, it was significant to take into consideration a wide range of aspects, including housing, job, stigma, family dynamics, and community support.

Thus, this study was conducted to explore the lived experiences of ex-offenders who are re-integrated into the community to find out their experiences when they left the prison cell, how their family, peers, and community approached and accepted them before, during, and after their reintegration in the community, and how they were treated. Aside from knowing those reasons. Additionally, this study also aims to determine if there are programs implemented for the ex-offenders to help them recover and rebuild their lives in the community.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to find out the experiences of the ex-offenders, particularly in San Vicente, Jones Isabela,

in their lived experiences during their reintegration in the community.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of the ex-offenders in their reintegration in the community?
2. How do the participants cope with their experiences in their reintegration in the community?
3. What are the suggestions and recommendations to support the ex-offender's reintegration in the community?

METHODOLOGY

Methods of Research

The phenomenological qualitative approach was employed in this study because the researchers aimed to gain insight into the phenomenon of the lived experiences of ex-offenders in their reintegration into the community. Additionally, the researchers sought to understand the coping mechanisms of ex-offenders in the community and gather suggestions and recommendations from participants for the improvement of their reintegration into the community.

Locale of the study

This study was conducted in Barangay San Vicente, Jones, Isabela. According to information provided by the Jones Police Station, this barangay is among the top 10 communities in the town of Jones, Isabela, with the highest concentration of ex-offenders. The study focused on including ex-offenders who had successfully reintegrated into the community.

Participants of the study

The participants of the study included six individuals who were formerly incarcerated and had successfully reintegrated into society. Purposive sampling was used to select these respondents, ensuring that they were chosen because of their suitability for advancing the purpose of the study.

Purposive sampling involves selecting individuals who meet specific criteria relevant to the research objectives, rather than making statistical inferences. In this case, the criteria used to choose respondents were as follows: being an ex-offender who successfully reintegrated into society; and having experiences with or encountering difficulties throughout the reintegration process (Prior, Sarah et. al., 2020).

To maintain the confidentiality of the respondents, fictional identities such as "Participant 1," "Participant 2," "Participant 3," "Participant 4," "Participant 5," and "Participant 6" were assigned to them. This ensured that their real identities remained confidential throughout the study.

Data Gathering Instrument

Data was collected through individual and comprehensive interviews using unstructured interview guide questions.

Analysis of Data

For the phenomenological qualitative research, the researchers utilized thematic analysis to organize the gathered data. Thematic analysis involves closely examining the data to identify common themes –

recurring topics and ideas (Caulfield, 2019).

The researchers adopted the six steps developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) in treating the gathered data (Caulfield, 2019):

Step 1: Familiarizing – The researchers gathered all participant responses, transcribed audio files, and analyzed them for significant patterns within the dataset.

Step 2: Coding – Specific texts were identified and highlighted, forming codes to describe the content. These codes provided concise summaries of the main points and recurring themes.

Step 3: Generating themes – The researchers reviewed the codes to identify patterns and began developing themes based on these patterns.

Step 4: Reviewing themes – The researchers ensured that the formulated themes were useful and accurately represented the subject matter.

Step 5: Defining and naming themes – Each theme was carefully defined and the researchers took time to understand what each theme represented and how it contributed to understanding the data.

Step 6: Writing up – The researchers wrote a thematic analysis, starting with an introduction describing the research questions, objectives, and methodology. They included a method section explaining the data collected. Finally, the researchers described the main points and demonstrated how their analysis addressed the research question.

Ethical Consideration

This study ensured that the character of the participants was kept confidential. All information was obtained through informed consent, and the interview was conducted without coercion. Participants' right to privacy and confidentiality was protected. The participants were given the freedom to answer questions given or may refuse to answer any question that made them uncomfortable. In addition, while the study was ongoing, honesty was observed where the researchers would truthfully report the data, results, methods, procedures, and publication status. The researchers did not falsify any data collected from this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Lived Experience of the Ex-offender in their reintegration to the community

In the lived experiences of the ex-offender in their reintegration in the community, the first theme that the researchers developed was:

Peaceful and Happy. This theme highlights the impact of freedom and family support on the well-being of the participants. Peaceful means being satisfied and feeling at ease in a situation in life and happiness is a feeling of delight or positive well-being aside from the conviction that life is amazing. Participants can discover happiness despite the ups and downs that come with every challenge. After all of the challenges, they have encountered, they can all choose to take action and form routines that promote happiness and calmness in their lives.

Participant 1, stated that:

“Ang buhay ko ay naging masaya at nakalaya sa masalimuot at masikip na kulungan malaya at nakakapagtrabaho...” (My life became happy and free from the complex and cramped prison, free and able

to work...).

Participant 2 expressed that:

“Maganda at masaya at malaya parin ang buhay sapagkat sinusoportahan ako ng aking pamilya...” (Life is still beautiful, happy and free because my family supports me...).

Participant 4 shared that:

“Simple masaya na ako dahil nakalaya na ako...” (I’m simply happy because I am free now...).

Additionally, participant 6 remarked that:

“Masaya at malaya dahil kapiling ko ulit pamilya ko...” (I am happy and free because I am with my family again...).

The ex-offenders mainly described their experiences when they reintegrated into the community. Moreover, it was observed that during the conduct of the study, these ex-offenders were at peace and happy now that they were back with their families and in the community. The day a person is released from prison is often a day of great happiness for them. Returning to loved ones and the free world can be utterly euphoric. But it is naive to think that reintegration into society will be smooth (Sean Jackson, 2020).

The second theme that emerge from the study was:

Community Judgement. Judgement is one of the struggles of the ex-offender during their reintegration into the community. Even a normal individual can’t escape the reality that they will receive judgment from other people or people around them. This can be seen from the responses of the following participants:

Participant 2 expressed that:

“Hindi ako masyadong nakakalabas dahil hinuhusgaan nila ako.” (I can’t go out much because they judge me)

Participant 3 added that:

“Maayos naman na may halong panghuhusga pero okey lang kasi ako at ang pamilya ko lang naman ang nakakaalam sa tunay na nangyare.” (It’s fine even though there’s some judgment, because only my family and I know the truth about what really happened).

Participant 5 shared that:

“Nung una nasa bahay lang ako at tanging pamilya ko lang ang kinakasalamuha ko, dahil hindi maiiwasan na bawat paglabas ko sa aming tahanan ay may masabi at may panghuhusga sila saakin.” (At first, I stayed at home and only interacted with my family because it was unavoidable that every time I went outside, they would say something and judge me).

Participant 6 continued that:

“Maayos parin naman at ang nakakalungkot lang dahil sa bawat pakikisalamuha ko sa iba ay may halong panghuhusga ganun na rin sa pamilya ng aking napatay, galit sila pero di ko na lang pinansin yun.” (Things are still okay, but what saddens me is that every interaction with others comes with judgment, even from the family of the person I killed; they are angry, but I just ignored it).

Ex-offenders emphasized the challenges they encountered when they reintegrated into the community. Accordingly, they met different judgments that resulted in difficulties in balancing previous transgressions and societal expectations with the reframing potential of acceptance, forgiveness, and personal development. This is aligned with the premise of the labeling theory of Tannenbaum (1938) where he stated that societies assign negative labels to those who are involved in unacceptable behavior and they tend to continue labeling such person even if he is no longer involved in those activities. In San Bernardino community indicates a high level of chance that the ex-offenders become productive members of society, but the people of the community want to ignore them and don't want to interact with them due to safety concerns (Herrera et. al.,2015).

The third theme that was developed from the data was:

Social isolation. The successful reintegrated of the ex-offenders into society claimed that they withdraw from society out of fear of being judged. During the course of the study, the researchers notice that these ex-offenders are isolated and have been cut off from their regular acquaintances due to circumstance. Isolation highlights a state in which one is kept apart from others, typically not voluntarily, in order to protect oneself from their criticism.

Participant 1, stated that:

“Unang lingo di nakakalabas at medyo nahihya pa. Hindi masyadong nakakalabas at tingin palaging gumagamit padin at tingin pa nila masama ang taong galling kulungan.” (The first week, I didn't go out and felt a bit embarrassed. I don't go out much, and they always seem to think that someone who came from prison is still a bad person).

Participant 2 shared that:

“Matagal din na hindi ako lumabas ng bahay sapagkat takot akong mahusgaan at mahirap ding isipin na nakulong ako ng siyam na buwan sa kasalanang hindi ko nagawa kaya paglaya ko, natuto ako na hindi nalang basta-basta magtiwala. If everyone knows the truth, they will accept you and treat you like before.” (It's been a long time since I didn't leave the house because I'm afraid of being judged, and it's also hard to think that I was imprisoned for nine months for a crime I didn't commit. So, when I was released, I learned not to trust easily. If everyone knows the truth, they will accept you and treat you like before.)

Participant 3, said that:

“Nasa loob lang ako ng bahay. Hindi ako lumabas agad at namasyal dahil gusto ko munang magpahinga at makapag isip-isip.” (I stayed inside the house. I didn't go out immediately for a stroll because I wanted to rest first and gather my thoughts).

Though these ex-offenders may have faced isolation at first, they did not experience the same level of social isolation or shyness throughout the first week. The statement that is presented provides a prism through which to examine the potential and difficulties that come with the reintegration process for people with criminal histories. This aligned with the principle of strain theory of Robert Merton. Ex-offenders choose to distance themselves from the community to avoid the judgment coming from the people in the community where they belong. Regardless of one's past experiences, communities can strive to create environments that support connection, belonging, and healing for all individuals by realizing the details of isolation on both the inside and outside and by participating in compassionate discussion and action. They are ignored and limited because most of the attention shames individuals who were sent to prison for persistent deviance

(Palgan, 2022).

Lastly,

Reminiscing. The reintegration of the ex-offender in the community said that they are still remembered about the memories that happened to them in the past. Remembering about particular moments of the past is a conscious act, and those ex-offenders frequently want to avoid thinking back on them because of their unpleasant experiences.

Participant 4 shared that:

“Inalala ko ang mga naranasan ko sa loob ng kulungan ay madami, sinsaktan kami bago kami ibilad at tatlong beses po kami na binibilad sa oras ng 6:30 am, 8:30 am at 11:30 am, at hindi lang yun ang ginagawa nila samin pinapalo pa nila kami habang nakabilad sa araw. Sumasayaw rin kami ng walang damit at ang hindi ko matanggap ay yung pinag threesome nila kaming mga PDL kaya nagsumbong kami Warden para maaksiyonan agad ang nangyari sa amin sa loob. Kaming mga PDL tinuruan kaming gumawa ng iba’t ibang activity tulad ng pag bobonsai, paggawa ng recycle na bag at iba pa.” (I remember the experiences inside the prison were numerous. We were hurt before being exposed to the sun, and we were exposed three times a day at 6:30 am, 8:30 am, and 11:30 am. And not only that, they would also hit us while we were exposed to the sun. We were also made to dance without clothes, and what I couldn’t accept was when they made us engage in threesomes as PDLs (Persons Deprived of Liberty), so we reported it to the Warden to take immediate action on what happened to us inside. We PDLs were taught to do various activities like making bonsais, creating recycled bags, and more).

Every ex-offender occasionally, or most of the time, recalled an unpleasant event they had in a prison cell and felt hurt by it. While the researcher conducted the study, the ex-offender remembered all of his experiences inside the jail. This gives insight into the struggles that ex-offenders face while incarcerated and emphasizes their experiences of vulnerability and exposure. These experiences can worsen the already difficult conditions of jail by making ex-offenders feel inferior, helpless, and humiliated. Gales et al., (2023). Stated that the important foundation that increases public awareness and understanding of the experiences of PDL who went through change but faced difficulties and challenges inside and outside the jail. It involved negative and positive experiences; negative because the ex-offenders experienced longing for their family, they felt loneliness, and hardships especially when they encountered discrimination by the people since they experienced changes inside the prison cell and learned from their mistakes in the past. At some point ex-convicts let their selves to reflect and change their lives in a good way as an example. These experiences of the PDL influence and inspire the youth to avoid committing any crimes that they might regret and help them to realize that life inside the prison cell is like more than what they think prison is. From those experiences that the ex-offender encountered, people could have understood and had insight into what life is like inside the prison cell and may develop a more productive consciousness of one’s life.

How do the participants cope with their experiences in their reintegration in the community

In the participants cope-up with their experiences in the reintegration into the community, the first theme that the researchers developed was:

Prayer and Devotion. It indicates on how we talk and ask God; how God will turn the darkness of our lives that we experienced into something beautiful that can help us to overcome all the challenges we faced. Devotion is an excellent approach to devote time and attention to restoring strength, trust, and love while also overcoming all of life’s challenges.

Participant 1 emphasized that:

“Palaging magdasal at palaging positibo at isaalang-ala na ang buhay ay iisa lang at di na pwedeng uulitin pa.” (Always pray and stay positive, remembering that life is only once and cannot be repeated).

Participant 2 shared that:

“Magdasal lang sila sapagkat ang dasal lang makakatulong sa kanila at paglaya, iwasan na ang dating barkada, magfocus na sa pamilya.” (They should just pray because only prayer can help them in their freedom. Avoid the old circle of friends, and focus on the family).

Participant 3 also stated that:

“Huwag silang sumuko dahil lagi ni lang kasama ang Diyos. Hindi lahat ng nasa kulungan ay may kasalanan kaya sana bigyan sila ng pagkakataon para ipaglaban nila ang mga karapatan na nararapat sa kanila.” (Don’t give up because God is always with you. Not everyone in jail is guilty so I hope they are given a chance to fight for the rights they deserve).

Similarly, participant 4 said that:

“Huwag silang mawalan ng pag-asa na makakalaya rin sila at magdasal lang tayo sa Panginoon dahil siya lang ang nakakaalam ng lahat ng nangyayari sa atin. At sana sa paglabas niyo huwag na kayong uulit muli sa kasalanang ginawa niyo at umiwas na sa ano mang bagay na ikakasira sa buhay niyo.” (They shouldn’t give up because God is always with them. Not everyone in prison is guilty, so I hope they are given the chance to fight for their rights).

Moreover, participant 5 stated that:

“Lagi kong pinagdarasal sa panginoon na di na maulit yung nangyari.” (I always pray to the Lord that what happened won’t happen again).

Lastly, participant 6 stated that:

“Magdasal ka lang at ipaubaya sa Panginoon ang lahat.” (Just pray and entrust everything to the Lord).

This implies that the ex-offender holds on to God, which can be an important aspect of what the ex-offender experiences because it provides the ex-offender with opportunities for personal growth in terms of their spiritual connection to God.

The importance of prayer devotion and spirituality initiates in sustaining behavioral change which spirituality promotes desistance from crime (Schroeder & Frana, 2009). This is the way, the truth, and the lies; only God knows everything that happened. Prayer and devotion have a great impact on everyone, especially ex-offenders because when they’re in prison cells, they only hold on to the words of God to have the strength to overcome their problems and challenges in life.

The second theme that was developed in the study regarding the coping mechanisms of ex-offenders in their reintegration into the community was:

Acceptance. Accepting the past behaviors and experiences of ex-offenders without passing judgment or

creating stigma is a necessary part of acceptance. Recognizing that people who have served time in prison have the right to be treated with dignity and fairness when they are reintegrating back into the community.

Participant 1 said that:

“Marami akong naranasan bago lumabas sa pagkakabilanggo na akala ko di ako makakalabas. Pagtrato? Isang miyembro padin sa komunidad at palaging pinapangaralan na huwag na maulit at huwag ng gagawin pa.” (I experienced a lot before being released from prison, thinking I wouldn’t make it out. Treatment? Still a member of the community and always reminded not to repeat and not to do it again).

Another response from participant 2, emphasized that:

“Mahirap isipin na nakulong ako ng siyam na buwan sa kasalanang hindi ko nagawa kaya paglaya ko, natuto ako na hindi nalang basta-basta magtiwala. Trato? If everyone knows the truth, they will accept you and treat you like before, no changes.” (It’s hard to believe that I was imprisoned for nine months for a crime I didn’t commit, so when I was released, I learned not to trust easily. Treatment? If everyone knows the truth, they will accept you and treat you like before, no changes).

Similarly, participant 3 stated that:

“Nakaranas ako noong una ng panghuhusga sa mga taong hindi alam kong ano ang tunay na nangyare at habang nararanasan ko ito tahimik lang ako, hinayaan ko na lang sila hanggang sa matanggap nila ako.” (I experienced judgment from people who didn’t know what really happened at first, and while I was experiencing it, I just stayed quiet, letting them be until they accepted me).

Lastly, participant 4 shared that:

“Nung una kinamuhian nila ako, at kinalaunan ay tinggap nila ako ng buo.” (At first, they despised me, but eventually, they accepted me wholeheartedly).

Ex-offenders who have a criminal record may find it more difficult to reintegrate into society because they are often the target of prejudice and social stigma. Their ability to reintegrate and start afresh may be hampered by unfavorable assumptions and stereotypes that prevent community members from welcoming them. An all-encompassing approach that addresses concerns including advocacy, education, community support, legal barriers, social stigma, and personal growth is required for ex-offenders to be accepted back into society. By encouraging acceptance and inclusion, society may help ex-offenders rebuild their lives, contribute positively to their communities, and reduce the likelihood of recidivism. The family who has positive relationship between the acceptance and reintegration has no only been conventional for the ex-offender but also it is established for the ex-combatants (Suarez & Baines, 2021). Through the hardship of the ex-offender, there are still people who will accept them without any criticism.

In order to cope with their experiences in the reintegration in the community, the last theme that the emerge from the study was:

Sharing Experiences. Experiences about the procedure, difficulties, and personal tactics should be shared. This includes giving ex-offenders advice on how to apply what they learnt in jail to their outside lives, which can assist them in making an innovative start in society. By allowing the ex-offender to share their experiences about how to start and run a business, this skills exchange intends to promote understanding in the context of supporting an ex-offender’s successful reintegration into the society.

Participant 4 expressed that:

“Pagkalabas ko sa bilangguan nakaranas ako ng panghuhusga at pagkamuhi sa mga nakapaligid sakin. Ipinakita ko sa kanila na nagbago na ako at marami akong natutunan sa loob ng bilangguan. At sa kasalukuyan meron akong business catering service at tinuro ko din sa aking komunidad ang mga natutunan ko sa bilangguan gaya ng pagbobonsai at paggawa ng recycle na bag.” (After getting out of prison, I experienced judgment and disdain from those around me. I showed them that I have changed and learned a lot while inside. Currently, I have a catering service business, and I also taught my community what I learned in prison, such as bonsai making and creating recycled bags).

Despite facing adversity, the ex-offenders demonstrate personal growth and resilience by showing that they have changed and learned from their experiences in prison that they can share to everyone. The ex-offender’s commitment to their self-improvement and a willingness to move past their criminal past, all the hardship that the ex-offender encountered and their determination to be succeed and sharing their knowledge to everyone will lead to gradually trust them again. Like Jonathan who inspired others to learn how to “teach other people to teach”. Through the process of learning to change criminal thinking to positive constructive behavior, developing a moral compass, learning right from wrong, not only benefits the learner but also the community the person will return to. Through his actions and his continued dedication to reach out to others, Jonathan has confirmed and validated his belief that “when we change the way we think we change who we are” (Varner et.al., 2014).

Suggestion and Recommendation of the Ex-offenders to Support their Reintegration in the Community

In the suggestions and recommendations of the ex-offenders to support their reintegration on the community, the themes that were developed by the researchers were the following:

Opportunities for ex-offender. Opportunity is a situation wherein positive or favorable outcome might be achieved after getting out of the prison cell or after serving the given sentence.

participant 2 said that:

“Ang Local Government Unit (LGU) ay dapat makipag-ugnayan sa Probation Office upang patuloy na gabayan ang mga nakalaya. Gumawa sila ng programa upang mas lalo pa silang magabayan sa pagpapaganda ng kanilang samahan sa kanilang pamilya at higit sa lahat mas lalo silang higitan na iwasan totally ang bisyo lalo na sa sugalan o sa mga cockpit arena.” (The Local Government Unit (LGU) should coordinate with the Probation Office to continue guiding the released individuals. They should create programs to further support them in strengthening their relationships with their families and, most importantly, to tighten measures to completely avoid vices, especially gambling or cockfighting arenas).

Similarly, participant 4 shared that:

“Para saakin ang suhasyon ko sa mga taga Local Government Unit (LGU) ay bigyan nila ng oportunidad ang mga bagong laya at gumawa sana sila ng mga aktibidades na magbibigay ng aral sa mga nasasakupan tungkol sa mga bagong laya tulad ko.” (For me, my suggestion to the Local Government Unit (LGU) is to give newly released individuals opportunities and to create activities that will educate constituents about newly released individuals like me).

Furthermore, participant 5, emphasized that:

“Ang mungkahi ko sa mga Local Government Unit (LGU) ay bigyan kaming mga ex-offender ng.

opurtunidad na bagong laya sa kulungan at sana gumawa sila ng mga aktibidades na open para samin (My suggestion to the Local Government Units “(LGU) is to give us, ex-offenders, opportunities as newly freed individuals from prison, and I hope they create activities that are open to us).

Lastly, participant 6 stated that:

“Bigyan sila ng pagkakataon makapagtrabaho at magbagong buhay.” (Give them the opportunity to work and start a new life).

The ex-offender has made their recommendation. Consequently, the ex-offender proposes that the LGU give recently released people possibilities. Initiatives like job training programs, educational possibilities, or support services that help them reintegrate into society could fall under this category. The speaker emphasizes the significance of local government in tackling social concerns and providing help to underprivileged groups by directly addressing the LGU. This is aligned with the premise of the strain theory of Robert Merton (1938) where those negative emotions brought by people around them may lead the ex-offenders to commit crimes. To decrease recidivism of the ex-offenders LGU needs to improve the opportunities for the ex-offenders for better reintegration. Chen, (2020). Stated that Vocational and career well-being is of essential importance for the successful reintegration of ex-offenders in the community, becoming productive and healthy citizens who contribute common good of the society where the ex-offender lived. Being reintegrated into the community, a lot of opportunities are waiting to be given to ex-offenders to be successful in their lives after living in the cell. Many ex-offenders realize that this could be their last opportunity to transform into the best version of themselves and a chance to work and change their lives and continue to be responsible and live better lives.

Financial Assistance for Ex-offender. Financial Assistance for ex-offenders meaning the help given to the person who have been released in prison for him to adjust in life outside the prison cell and for him to live again in his comfort.

Participants 3, expressed that:

“Ang Local Government Unit ay dapat suportahan nila ang mga taong nahatulan dahil kailangan nila ng tulong galing sa kanila lalo sa financial.” (The Local Government Unit should support convicted individuals because they need help from them, especially financially).

The ex-offender requires this financial support to stay afloat and to cover their basic expenses for housing, food, clothes, and transportation. This is especially true if the ex-offender is a recent jail release. When an ex-offender is successfully reintegrated into society, it lessens the possibility that they may turn to criminal activity again out of a need for money. This is something the researchers have observed through their study. The support needed to assist those ex-convicts in their transition back into society, with employment and a support network of community-based.

Being Vigilant: This refer to a person to be observant in everything happened surround them to look out for a possible danger to come.

Participant 1, shared that:

“Ang mungkahi ko lang maging alerto, mapagmatyag sa bawat galaw ng mga tao sa paligid”. (My suggestion is to be vigilant and observant of the movements of people around).

The ex-offenders made the implication that it’s important to watch what other people are doing, how they’re acting, and where they’re going. Concerns about security, safety, or possible threats may spur this kind of alertness. It’s crucial to be aware of your surroundings and social interactions in order to navigate them

effectively. It acts as a prompt to continue being watchful and proactive in ensuring the safety of oneself and others. Sadiq et al., (2023). Stated that the community is looking forward to effective ways to keep people safe and to decrease the future impact. To accomplish these goals, public alert and warning systems must be effective.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was not easy for ex-offenders to reintegrate into the community. There were both positive and negative aspects to their reintegration process.

On the positive side, ex-offenders successfully reintegrated into the community with the help of their family and peers. Family and peers of ex-offenders gave them strength and motivated them to overcome those challenges, along with the guidance of the Lord. On the negative side, ex-offenders did not escape judgment and mistreatment from the community, leading them to hide and isolate themselves to avoid others' judgment. Finding employment was one of the struggles they needed to overcome, as some employers did not accept them due to their backgrounds.

Hence, the ex-offenders coped with the support coming from their family and peers to easily reintegrate into the community. Acceptance from the community and hearing the experiences of the ex-offender would lessen the heartache and bring them peace.

Lastly, ex-offenders suggested and recommended assistance and opportunities coming from the LGU, which would be a great help for better reintegration. LGU had the power to provide some of the ex-offenders needs to ease the struggle they were experiencing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are hereby offered:

The researchers suggest that ex-offenders who reintegrate into the community should express their feelings and communicate with their families and the community. This communication can help them receive support that is essential for their successful reintegration.

The researchers also suggest that the community can be unbiased about the experiences of ex-offenders inside and outside the prison. Community support benefits both the ex-offender and strengthens the association within the community.

Moreover, it is suggested that employers should give ex-offenders a second chance for employment. Employers should be open-minded in all aspects.

The researchers suggest that family members can strengthen their pay attention and help their family member overcome their challenges.

To address the gap in this study, the researchers encourage future researchers to focus on the community guidance for the ex-offenders and also, on the opportunities and assistance of the LGU to the ex-offenders.

Finally, the researchers suggest that LGU (Local Government Unit) should provide opportunities and assistance for the ex-offenders and those inmates who will reintegrate into the community. They should conduct seminars regarding the reintegration process of ex-offenders in the community and give insight into life inside the prison cell.

REFERENCES

A. Journals/Article

1. British Pakistani Muslim Experiences Upon Release From Prison (n.d.). “Prisons Were Made for People Like Us”
2. Community involvement in the Criminal Justice Administration | Office of Justice Programs. (n.d.).
3. Discrimination against ex-prisoners | The Encyclopedia of World Problems. (n.d.-b).
4. Employment Barriers Facing Ex-Offenders”, by Guerra in collaboration with Bowles August 2022.
5. Exploring the Challenges of Reentry Among Female Former Offenders by Mciver, (2020)
6. Jasni, et. al (2020). Tough Life after Prison: An Analysis of 19 Former Prisoners in Malaysia.
7. Mohd Alif, (2020) Three Major Interrelated Factors Contributing to Homelessness Issue among Former Prisoners in Malaysia.
8. Sean Jackson, (2020). The 4 Biggest Challenges Facing Those Newly Released from Prison.
9. Yin, et. al (2022). Family acceptance, economic situation, and faith community.
10. Agoot, (2021). Treat ex-PDLs fairly in hiring, Baguio employers urged. Philippine News Agency.
11. GMA News Online. (2022, September 22). Robin Padilla: End discrimination over race, religion, vs. ex-cons. GMA News Online.
12. The role of community leaders in the reintegration of ex-prisoners: UNODC promotes dialogue in North East Nigeria. (n.d.). United Nations: Office on Drugs and Crime prisoners.

B. Electronic Media Sources

1. Baffour, F. D., Francis, A., Chong, M. D., Harris, N., & Baffour, P. D. (2020). Perpetrators at first, victims at last: Exploring the consequences of stigmatization on Ex-Convicts’ Mental Well-Being. *Criminal Justice Review*, 46(3), 304–325.
2. Besin-Mengla. (2020). Reintegration Difficulties of Ex-Convicts: Reasons for Recidivism of Ex-Convicts in Cameroon.
3. Borno State. (2023). The role of community leaders in the reintegration of ex-prisoners in North East Nigeria.
4. Borzycki, M. (n.d.). Interventions for Prisoners Returning to the Community.
5. Bryant, A. M. (n.d.). A Phenomenological Examination of Probation Officers’ Perception on Black Female Ex-Offenders Transition and Successful Reentry into Society. *Scholars Crossing*.
6. Buck, et.al. (2022). The Facilitators and Barriers Faced When Transitioning Back into the Community Following a Prison Sentence.
7. Caulfield, J. (2023, June 22). How to Do Thematic Analysis | Step-by-Step Guide & Examples. Scribbr. Retrieved June 11, 2024.
8. Chen, C. P. (n.d.). Career Counselling Ex-Offenders: Issues and Interventions.
9. Curib, E. L. Q., Mamowalas, J. F., Namoco, R. D., Sanchez, J. C. C., Canape, B. B., & Cuevas Jr., J. F. (2023). Aftermath of Incarceration: Lived Experiences of the Ex-Convict. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 7(6), 857–868.
10. Dove, K. (2020). Recidivism and Reintegration: Barriers facing Ex-Offenders of Color in employment.
11. Ebony. (2020). The Influence of Community-Based Reentry Programs on Reintegrating ex-offenders in Ohio.
12. Fajar et. al. (2022). Social Reintegration Approach as Deradicalization Reformation Policy for Terrorism Convicts in Correctional Institutions. Faridi
13. U. H. (2023, December 1). Breaking Free: Escaping the prison of your own mind.
14. Flor, B. G., & Flor, L. C. G. (2019). Inmate Communication as a conscientization approach to societal mainstreaming. In *Advances in religious and cultural studies (ARCS) book series* (pp. 167–193).

15. Gonzalez & Gonzalez. (2019). Inmate Communication as a Conscientization Approach to Societal Mainstreaming.
16. George, T. (2023, June 22). Unstructured Interview | Definition, Guide & Examples. Scribbr. Retrieved June 11, 2024.
17. Hameen. (2022). Lived Experiences of Black Male Ex-Offenders in Recovery.
18. H, L. (2023, August 30). What is Phenomenological Research Design? — Delve. Delve.
19. Ivery, E. A. (n.d.). The Influence of Community-Based Reentry Programs on Reintegrating ex-offenders in Ohio. ScholarWorks.
20. Janer, C., Manaig, L., & Tenorio, N. (2019). Exploring the Lives of the Families of Ex-offenders. LPU-Laguna Journal of Arts and Sciences, 3(2).
21. Jordan. (2019, November 28). Destigmatising the hiring of ex-convicts. HR ASIA.
22. Kim, & Gayadeen. (2021). Use of Critical Time Intervention (CTI) to Promote Continuity of Reintegration After Incarceration.
23. Leslie. (2019). Reintegration in Troubled Communities in Jamaica.
24. Mamowalas, J. F., Namoco, R. D., Sanchez, J. C. C., Canape, B. B., & Cuevas Jr., J. F. (2023). Aftermath of incarceration: lived experiences of the Ex-Convict. ideas.repec.org.
25. LibGuides: Section 3: Thematic Data Analysis in Qualitative Design. (n.d.).
26. Mfon-Obong. (2022). Community Bonding for Ex-Offenders: The Importance of Recreational Social Activities on the Post-Incarceration reentry Process.
27. Miklósi, M., & Juhász, E. (2019). The role of education and NGOs in the reintegration of inmates in Hungary. *International Journal of Bias, Identity and Diversities in Education*, 4(1), 100–112.
28. Milly Raboloko, B., & Maripe, K. (2019). Perceptions of ex-convicts on rehabilitation programmes in preparation for reintegration in Botswana. *Current Journal of Applied Science and Technology*, 1–5.
29. Muleya, E. (2021). Thinking about offender social reintegration: A case study of one NGO programme in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. *International Social Work*, 65(5), 1034–1042.
30. Muthee, et.al. (2020). Effects of the challenges facing re-entry of women ex-offenders in Nyeri County, Kenya.
31. Mwansa, M. E., Mwenya, B., & Agwu, U. F. (2022). An Evaluation Of Reformation And Re-Integration Programs Offered To Inmates And Ex-Convicts at Milima Correctional Institution In Kasama District, Northern Province Of Zambia. Vol.2, Issue.
32. Nixon, S. (2020). ‘Giving back and getting on with my life’: Peer mentoring, desistance and recovery of ex-offenders. *Probation Journal*, 67(1), 47–64.
33. Palgan, M. (2022). Walking a New Beginning: A Case Study on the Chronicles of Ex-Offenders in Surpassing the Challenges of Living Outside the Bars. *American Journal of Qualitative Research*, 6(1), 178–187.
34. Pamela. (2020). A Phenomenological Study of Former Prisoners’ Experiences of Prison Education Programs in the United States.
35. Putra, F. P. K. K., & M. M. S. (2022, December 17). Social Reintegration Approach as deradicalization Reformation Policy for terrorism convicts in correctional institutions.
36. Qasim, M., & Webster, C. (2020). “Prisons were made for people like us”: British Pakistani Muslim experiences upon release from prison. *The Prison Journal*, 100(3), 399–419.
37. Quarton. (2020). Recidivism and Reintegration: Barriers Facing Ex-Offenders of Color in Employment.
38. Quinn-Hogan, A. N. (2021). The Stain of a Criminal Label: Post-Release Stigmatization and its Effects on Reintegration and Recidivism among Ex-Offenders.
39. Sakib, S. (2022). An Exploration of Barriers to Offender Reintegration: Probation and Prison Officer Opinions Vs Public Opinion. Cambridge Open Engage.
40. Santhosh, R., & Mathew, E. (2021). Social Reintegration of Released Prisoners: An Empirical Analysis from Two Indian States. *International Annals of Criminology*, 59(2), 200–222.
41. Skaggs, S. L. (2024, April 15). Labeling theory | Concepts, Theories, & Criticism. Encyclopedia

Britannica.

42. The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2024, May 28). Strain theory | Social Control, Anomie & Deviance. Encyclopedia Britannica.
43. Treat ex-PDLs fairly in hiring, Baguio employers urged. (n.d.). Philippine News Agency.
44. UNODC. (n.d.). The role of community leaders in the reintegration of ex-prisoners: UNODC promotes dialogue in North East Nigeria. United Nations: Office on Drugs and Crime prisoners.
45. Villarmia, J. C., Pino, J. T., & Salibungcogon, R. M. (2021). Life after prison.
46. Vivares, K. (2023). The Reintegration of Ex-Convicts in Society: A Case Study. *International Journal of Social Science And Human Research*, 6(6).
47. Vosselman. (2021). Lived Experiences of Reintegration of Malaysian Nonviolent Ex-offenders in Singapore.
48. Wiafe & Adjorlolo. (2021). Willingness of employers to employ ex-convicts among selected SMEs in the western region of Ghana. *Cogent Social Sciences*.
49. Yankah, E. N. (2020). The right to reintegration. *New Criminal Law Review*, 23(1), 74–112.