

Reintegration after Prison: Encouraging Employers to Hire Ex-Offenders to be a Part of the Society.

Ousmana Gana, Khadheeja Nabeeha Saeed and Hafinas Halid

School of Business and Social Science, Albukhary International University, Alor Setar Kedah, Malaysia

ousmana.gana@student.aiu.edu.my

nabeeha.saeed@student.aiu.edu.my

hafinas.halid@aiu.edu.my

ABSTRACT

Employing Ex-Offenders has become one of the controversial topics of discussion these days. The purpose of this study is to examine the importance of hiring and supporting ex-offenders to re-join society and the workforce. The information for this paper was collected using published articles and news reports. The objective of this study is to encourage employers to hire Ex-offenders to be a part of society after taking part in rehabilitation training and discuss the advantages and challenges they face while returning to society. Therefore, to learn more about how NGOs and Governments are helping the ex-offenders to join the labour force and society. This study further revealed numerous factors that can positively influence effective reintegration from prison to community. Moreover, definitions of important key terms will help the reader understand this study's primary objective.

Keywords: *Employment, Ex-offenders, Reintegration, Recidivism.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

According to Lockwood, Nally, and Ho (2016), the number of prisoners released from prison has dramatically increased in recent years. Almost every year, more than 1 million people are released from jail around the world after completing their penalties. As we know the main objective of incarceration is to minimize potential offending by ensuring that the prisoner has learnt from their mistakes and be able to lead a law-abiding and personality life upon his or her liberation. It is clear that every former offender's hope is to reintegrate into the community. Unlikely, only a few of them are able to find jobs after being released. Even though they had already undergone their sentences, but it still complicated for them to secure the job because employers are often hesitant to recruit them due to the offender's

criminal record, which is a major obstacle for them (Ahmed & Lång, 2017).

Economic indicators of progress have revealed major inequalities between ex-prisoners and non-prisoners in the labour market in several nations (International Labour Organization, 2016). In Sweden for example, the data collected based on ex-offenders' labour market performance shows that a criminal record has a negative impact on various labour market results, such as jobs and earnings repercussions on people (Ahmed & Lång, 2017). This really is troubling for both individuals and society, because these situations could indeed motivate or compel ex-prisoners to go back to their previous jobs such as drug dealers, crime, violence, and so on.

As mentioned by Yang (2016) in his report, approximately two-thirds of released prisoners are incarcerated again within three years of release, more than half are reconvicted, and more than 40% are returning to prison. All these are because ex-offenders' restricted labor market opportunities which could be one reason for their high recidivism rates. Moreover, barriers to the labour market for ex-offenders have significant impact on economic consequences in society in terms of increased crime and criminal victimization along with lost human resources and productivity. Consequently, the unemployment rate increase among ex-offenders because of they fail to get job placement after released from prison.

Employment has long been recognized as instrumental in reducing recidivism from crime after incarceration and supporting desistance from crime for former prisoners (Sheppard & Ricciardelli, 2020). However, when it comes to jobs it still difficult for them to get work (Nally, Lockwood, Ho, & Knutson, 2014). Hence, it is important both from an individual and societal point of view to get ex-offenders integrated into the labour market and into society. For that reason, this study is going to elaborate more on the employment barriers facing ex-prisoners and following by suggesting some recommendations to encourage employers around the world to hire ex-offenders. Thus, the purpose of this article is to encourage employers to hire ex-offender in order to help them to do not return to jail.

The main objective of this study is to encourage employers to hire ex-offenders to be a part of the society after taking part in rehabilitation trainings. As well as to discuss the advantages and challenges they face while returning to the society. Therefore, to learn more about how NGO's and Governments are helping the ex-offenders to join the labour force and society.

The structure of this study leading from introduction, discussion on the relevant literature about ex-offenders, and procedure methodology used. Further ahead, the last part

is a discussion that explains how employers are struggling during the hiring process and recruitment indifferences throughout the. Finally, this study will conclude with implications and future directions.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Incarceration around the world has long been such a complicated problem, and with rising imprisonment and recidivism rates, it has become far more so. As a whole, the emphasis of this section is on the literature about reintegration after prison and the factors that influence the reintegration of the ex-offenders. This section also includes an explanation of keywords such as recidivism, reintegration and ex-offenders.

2.1 Definitions of Key Terms

2.1.1 Ex-offenders

According to Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.), ex-offender means a person who has pled guilty, no contest or nolo contendere to a felony offense; or has been found guilty of a felony offense by a judge or jury; regardless of adjudication of guilt. The term ex-offender can be to refers to a person who has been convicted of a criminal offence and has completed their sentence (Fletcher, Taylor, Hughes, & Breeze, 2001). Consequently, the research team uses the term 'ex-offender' to denote anyone with a criminal record.

Chen and Shields (2020) found that ex-offenders had lower job rates than the general population prior to their imprisonment because they have very little training and employment experience before to and after their incarceration. Hence, due to lack of schooling, training, expertise, and skills, ex-offenders frequently demonstrate low self-esteem in their talents, self-efficacy, motivation, and performance expectancy. This study is concerned with employment barrier among ex-offender in the labour market. Besides that, this study also has discussed on the possibility ex-offender to return to the prison (recidivism) and reintegration of ex-offenders into new life.

2.1.2 Recidivism

Mears, Cochran, and Ba (2016) define recidivism as illegal acts which lead to a return to jail with or without a new sentence following an offender's discharge. Recidivism as well as the factors that contribute to it must be understood in order to achieve effective rehabilitation. In addition, recidivism is defined as an offender's return to criminals and illegal lifestyle or practices after having been accused of a crime rather than once (Lockwood et al., 2016). People who break the rules or laws repeatedly, get arrested, and are handled by the justice system are known as recidivists.

The number of recidivisms across U.S. was risen, within three years, five out of six (83%) state prisoners released in 2005 across 30 states were arrested (Mears et al., 2016). These increases serious concerns regarding ex-offenders' ability to reintegrate into society after imprisonment, particularly whether they return to a life of crime.

2.1.3 Reintegration

According to Bahr, Davis, and Ward (2012), reintegration is known as the method of transition from incarnation into society, returning to life outside of prison, and struggling to maintain a crime-free lifestyle. Reintegration is indeed a challenging process that takes place throughout time because there is still a lot we don't know about it. Furthermore, approximately 95% of all ex-offenders have been released from prison, their re-entry into the communities and society is amongst significant challenges they are facing nowadays (Bahr et al., 2012).

The reintegration of ex-offenders is an important aspect of social inclusion. Research conducted by Bahr et al., (2012) found that ex-offenders have pointed up six factors that they suspected impacted their reintegration into a new life after prison. The factors listed were lack of employment, drug abuse, lack of family support, groups of bad friends, lack of self-esteem to change, and age. Employment is one of significant factors that influence their

reintegration after prison. They need support from many parties to start their new life. Thus, some study reported that the most successful method for supporting ex-offenders into employment are those which involve collaboration between governments, employers, non-government organization (NGO) and communities (McNeill, 2017). For example, government policies encourage collaboration, such as social procurement, have become a cornerstone of contemporary public policy in many countries, with the construction industry being a major focus (Loosemore, Bridgeman, & Keast, 2020; Raiden, Loosemore, King, & Gorse, 2018; Barraket, Keast, & Furneaux, 2016).

2.1.3.1 Factors Influencing Reintegration

Numerous factors can lead to a positive influence on effective reintegration from prison to the community; scholars indicate that strong familial support is one of those factors. As mentioned by Visher (2011) preserving parenting contact after discharge succeeded in favourable re-entry results. In the same research, it was discovered that a relationship between parental support before and after release has a positive result such as job stability and drug and alcohol abuse avoidance. According to a report of O'Connell and Visher (2012) which stated that approximately 75% of former offenders have confirmed that family was a key factor in driving them out of jail. For example, offenders recognized family members as structural components that helped them reintegrate by offering a room to live and assisting them in finding jobs.

As reported in previous study, employment may have an effect on reintegration (Liem & Weggemans, 2018). According to Gideon and Sung (2010), getting ex-offender too work is a necessary step in keeping them out of jails and prisons, full-time employment also encouraged offenders to form bonds with law-abiding co-workers and reduced their chances of associating with deviant peers. Furthermore, Bahr et al., (2012) also discovered that all those who were re-employed have a tendency to have lower

recidivism rates than those who were unemployed.

Self-perception and encouragement have been identified as important factors in rehabilitation research. Individuals who have successfully reintegrated into their families have a strong sense of self-worth (O'Connell & Visser, 2012). Some people believe that criminals will not recuperate until they have an intrinsic desire to become law-abiding citizens (Gideon & Sung, 2010).

A willingness to improve is essential for effective reintegration and desistance (Bahr et al., 2012). Colleagues have a significant effect on the initiation and persistence of criminal activity, according to one of the most reliable findings in the literature. Furthermore, Bahr et al., (2012) stated that law-abiding colleagues appear to continue to provide law-abiding examples, which promotes law-abiding behaviours while discouraging illegal ones. These researchers have discovered that "specific participation," or avoiding old factors, is a common risk-reduction technique.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

To accomplish the objective of this study, a narrative review method was conducted. We reviewed the literature and drew the results and further research directions. A narrative review's primary objective is to provide a complete overview of the topic and highlight significant investigation areas. Narrative reviews may also assist in identifying gaps in the research and refining and defining research objectives.

A literature review has been performed using available articles on the topic of interest. This study demonstrates a methodology to review the articles cited in the databases such as Emerald, Taylor and Francis Online, Sage, Science Direct, and SpringerLink with the current topic of unemployment and ex-offender. The keywords utilized for related article retrievals include "unemployment," "reintegration," "ex-offender," and "former inmates" on the Google Scholar database. Many original and review articles have been

obtained according to the selected title, abstracts, and keywords. These studies were included in research areas, some of which are expressed in the literature discussed above and further emphasized in the following section.

4.0 DISCUSSION

4.1 The Employment Challenges Facing By Ex-Offenders

Bryan et al, (2008) stated that the most challenging obstacle they encountered throughout a survey involving 201 ex-offenders was discovering they have always been plagued regarding their criminal acts, yet the penalty earned for those crimes throughout the process of imprisonment and detention might have been a barrier towards finding employment and making a better life. After release from prison, the most difficult obstacle that ex-offenders must overcome is to enter the labor market. It was reported by Obatusin, Ritter-Williams, and Antonopoulos (2019) that many ex-offenders struggle to reincorporate or re-join communities, as a result, it led to problems in obtaining employment opportunities following the completion of imprisonment, based on prior offenses or criminal histories, a shortage of workforce knowledge, a poor career background, and even a lack of practical training. Undeniably, the offender's criminal record becomes a significant barrier to employment because employers are reluctant to hire ex-offenders (Lukies, Graffam, & Shinkfield, 2011; Gunnison & Helfgott, 2013)

Social stigma and prejudice are major challenge to ex -criminals to re-join societies. They are rejected by others based on their past wrongdoing. An ex-offender who worked with an appropriate penalty for particular violence supposed to get second chance in their life. However, classification or social exclusion causes societal resentment against ex-offenders. Besides that, according to Obatusin et al., (2019) there is no evidence seems to emerge upon its basis of the resentment. Ex-offenders also have a number of traits that significantly hinder their chances

of getting a job and income. Which include a lack of qualifications and academic abilities, as well as a lack of employment experiences.

Holzer, Raphael and Stoll (2003) stated that approximately 70% of criminals and ex-offenders seem to be high schoolers', It seems that in certain surveys, essentially 50 % of the population is "completely uneducated". Leading up to the prison, the job statistics of people engaged with illegal activity are far from negligible, but they usually fall far lower than the average other millennials, including those with equally weak qualifications and living in deprived maintained neighbourhoods.

As a result, whatever career path they gained even before going to prison was significantly just below where it would be if they have never participated in the violence. Furthermore, the duration of imprisonment certainly kept them from having any further exclusive industry exposure, and therefore no questions on the outcome diminished any career prospects, better workplace patterns, or references of employers they once had previously. Aside from the "barriers", these persons confront, among whom they undoubtedly really had no influence, their behaviours, as well as preferences, can still restrict their career development. Ex-offenders encounter obstacles due to their very confined qualifications, weak fitness, background, or place of origin and mostly represent an "inconsistency" among these traits and those experienced by companies on the overall economy of its workforce (Holzer et al., 2003).

4.2 Employment Reduces Recidivism

Some of the Researchers are supportive of the fact that employment might help to decrease the propensity of a convicted criminal to reoffend which also known as reoffend. Recidivism between ex-offenders has mostly been characterized by an inability to attain a long-lasting, rewarding career as well as negligence to stabilise human capital. Three years after their serving time in prison,

many ex-offenders go back to imprisonment. Ex-offenders confront several challenges in finding work, such as government constraints as well as a poor talent, qualifications, or even professional development. Among these several elements the one which influences criminals' ability to refrain from misconduct after discharge is their ability to find work (Zakaria, Jaafar, & Lazim, 2018). Furthermore, Ramakers, Nieuwbeerta, Van Wilsem, & Dirkzwager (2017) in their studies revealed that employment could help reduce crime rates among these high-risk offenders. Many ex-offenders face a human capital deficit that complicates the guidance to high-quality jobs. It might, however, be possible to help place ex-prisoners in stable employment.

4.3 Encouraging Employers to Hire Ex-Offenders to be a Part of the Society

Currently employers are struggling due to the lack of candidates applying for jobs in their companies. However, most employers tend to take no notice of some prospective applicants like ex-Offenders who are re-entering the employment area after their allotted period of time in prison. Some of the research proved that ex-offenders can be honest towards their employers and achieve recognition from their employers even though they had some unacceptable practices in the past. In a research conducted by SHRM which is also known as Society for Human Resource Management, it is stated that the biggest harmony between HR professionals and managers in their employment history was to influence others by showing their interest in hiring the people who have criminal records or who have gone through imprisonment due to the unacceptable action they did before. (Sparkman, 2018)

The top factors for recruiting people with criminal backgrounds listed by employers include a willingness to hire the right employee for the position in terms of criminal background, trying to make the world a safer environment, and granting offenders a fair opportunity. Organization that have employed ex-offenders measure the effectiveness of

their jobs as exactly equivalent to those who do not have any criminal background. In addition, 82 percent of managers and 67 percent of HR practitioners think the structure of recruitment for employees having criminal backgrounds is comparable to or greater than employees who never had any records (Sparkman, 2018). HR experts have revealed that the value of hiring people either with or without felony convictions is comparable (Sparkman, 2018). This result may be attributed to the recognition that recruiting choices are taken on a particular circumstance, based on the qualifications and backgrounds available in positions as well as the qualifications of future job applicants. Despite the fact that some cities and counties recently limited what companies can ask candidates about their criminal backgrounds, 46 percent of HR practitioners say their business needs applicants in order to demonstrate their criminal background over a preliminary employment agreement (Sparkman, 2018).

Former prisoners have often been unprepared in joining together again with the people of their community they used to stay in before going to prison due to many different causes they had to face. Societal pressure that distinguishes them from other people in the society, misguided tendencies towards their own personalities, as well as a bad community environment prior to their confinement would contribute to relapse to criminal behaviours. Throughout recovery process, it necessary to investigate two dimensions which are often designated broadly accepted aspirations for human basic need: facilities as well as work. Sponsored accommodations and work are two aspects of the recovery process highlighted among health professionals throughout the psychiatric community. Cost effective, government subsidized accommodation alongside integrated support rendered by authorities including certain house calls by case workers to monitor how ex-offenders are doing and how they have been handling things, medics to examine treatment adherence for drug addicts, but also psychologists to see if there are any abnormalities (Zakaria, 2021).

Released prisoner, regardless of their crime, need work in order to live in their new adventure. Trimbur (2009) Stated that jobs reduce the likelihood of recidivism and help ex-offenders to adapt to civilian life in a variety of ways. When ex-offenders are working, the chance of criminal activity decreases dramatically. For instance, employment allows ex-offenders to earn money, which enables them to pay for transportation, food, and other everyday expenses, as well as re-establish lost relationships with their children and families. Second, work allows you to make social connections with co-workers while still providing you with structured activities. Ex-offenders may use employment to improve their social standing and demonstrate to the community that they have learned their lessons.

For example In Malaysia, NGO and Prisons Department has requested on employers around Malaysia should give a second trial to the ex-offenders by employing them in the medication believing this can reduce unemployment rates and dependence on foreign labour (Hisamudin, 2020). The Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) stated that though the total employment among ex-offenders continues to decrease, the I-Kembali initiative seems to have the potential to enhance recruitment. I-Kembali is a partnership seen between correctional authorities as well as a non-profit organization that helps ex-offenders but also drug users find work across six industries: manufacture, service providers, constructions, agricultural, product development, and managing. It's often predicted that the initiative would minimize reliance on foreign employees. Nevertheless, MEF board member Shamsuddin emphasized such workforce initiatives for former inmates should not be confined to areas that are primarily designed for overseas employees, according to MEF board chairman Shamsuddin. Shamsuddin additionally highlighted that more and more job programs for ex-offenders and substance abusers are run through non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and as such, the government should play a very significant role. He responded by

saying that the government must offer rewards to companies employing ex-offenders. Furthermore, he expressed reservations about certain job initiatives, claiming that they might exacerbate the dangers associated with former criminals. He also urged that if none of them refer to them as ex-offenders, but instead as people who are jobless like some other people in society. The issue was if they put individuals and ex-offenders together, individuals might begin to stare towards them with hostility. Allow the country to reintegrate into social structure again with no tags (Hisamudin, 2020).

5.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the primary goal in imprisonment is to reduce future wrongdoing by ensuring that the inmate has learned from their mistakes and would be prepared to lead a law-abiding and personality-driven existence following release. However, it is also difficult for them to find employment. Ex-offenders' employment and wages are lower than other people, but in most instances, they have more knowledge and are hard working since they might have been involved in the labour market before the imprisonment. Low job rates seem to be directly linked to very strong incarceration rates found for people who have been freed from prison. Reintegration is described as the process of transitioning from incarnation into the community, returning to life other than prison, and seeking to live a crime-free way of living. Lack of work, substance addiction, a lack of family support, groups of poor friends, a lack of self-esteem to improve, and aging were among the factors explained by a few ex-offenders. A variety of aspects may have a positive impact on successful reintegration from jail to society. Released offenders, regardless of their conviction, need jobs to support themselves in their new life. Ex-offenders will benefit from the fact that while they are employed, their chances of engaging in illegal crime declined significantly. Ex-offenders may use jobs to boost their social status and show the world that they have learned their lessons. Ex-offenders may have a host of characteristics that make it difficult

for them to find work and earn a living. Both deficiencies include a lack of credentials and academic skills, as well as a lack of work experience.

Employers who are failing due to a shortage of candidates applying for positions in their businesses nowadays appear to ignore certain prospective hires, such as ex-offenders who are re-entering the labour force after serving their time in prison. Studies have shown that ex-convicts can be frank with their employers and get praise from them, even though they have engaged in some unethical behaviour in the past. Hence, it is important to give ex-offenders a chance to prove that they can do a good job and try their best to earn the trust and praise for their works and changes they made in society.

This present study also provides some important contributions. Examination of the unemployment problem among ex-offenders can benefit many parties such government agencies, non-government organization, and employers to hire ex-offenders in their organisations. Based on the comprehensive discussion in this study, it is proposed that the government develop employment policy related to ex-offenders to help them get place in society and in workplace. In the same time, this study helps eliminate stigmas and prejudice toward ex-offender.

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