

Lived Experiences of Barangay Officials and Families of Former Offenders

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Abstract

This study examined the lived experiences of barangay officials, community members, and families in relation to the reintegration of former offenders in Barangay Balatero, Puerto Galera. Using a qualitative method grounded in a phenomenological research design, data were gathered from seven family members of former offenders, seven community residents, and barangay officials who had served for at least three years in Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro. The results showed that barangay officials implement various strategies to aid reintegration, including regular monitoring and organizing community clean-up drives. Community members, however, experience challenges such as feelings of fear and economic and social pressure. Meanwhile, families of former offenders cope with reintegration by seeking help from extended relatives and supportive members of the community to overcome stigma and related struggles. These findings underscore the importance of a collaborative and inclusive approach involving local leaders, communities, and families to ensure successful reintegration. The study adds to the ongoing conversation on reintegration by highlighting the roles of community engagement, education, and local governance.

Keywords: incarceration, reintegration, lived experiences, former offenders, stigma

Introduction

Reintegration after incarceration is one of the most complex challenges faced by individuals, families, and communities across the globe. According to the International Centre for Prison Studies, over 10.35 million individuals were incarcerated worldwide in 2020, representing a 19% increase from 2000. This growing prison population highlights the increasing reliance on incarceration as a response to crime. However, life after imprisonment often proves as difficult as the time served. Former offenders continue to face public stigma, limited employment opportunities, and social exclusion. In the United States alone, more than 2.2 million individuals are incarcerated, and many struggle with reentry due to criminal records, housing insecurity, and public rejection (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2020).

The Reintegration Handbook emphasizes that reintegration is not just about release—it involves the restoration of dignity, access to livelihood, and social acceptance. Studies show that successful reintegration depends not only on the efforts of the former offenders themselves but also on the active support of their communities (Morenoff & Harding, 2014; Marier, 2015). Unfortunately, negative public perception often impedes this process. Schnittker (2015) explains that the stigma associated with incarceration can worsen mental health issues among ex-offenders, deepening their social isolation and increasing the risk of recidivism. Other studies have similarly stressed the psychological impact of

incarceration and the need for community-centered interventions (Wicks, 2017; Anne, 2014; Grossi, 2017; Keene et al., 2018).

Restorative justice and psycho-correctional models have emerged globally as alternatives to punitive systems. Zheng (2021) highlights China's shift toward community correction that prioritizes psychological rehabilitation, while Anne (2014) notes the need for structured reintegration support, especially for vulnerable groups such as female offenders. However, even in countries that have adopted such approaches, reintegration remains difficult without sustained local engagement and family support.

In the Philippines, reintegration presents a similar challenge. In 2019, the country had an estimated incarceration rate of 200 per 100,000 citizens, with about 215,000 individuals imprisoned (Fortin & Bong, 2023). Despite government efforts, including the Katarungang Pambarangay and other local reintegration strategies, support systems for ex-offenders remain limited. According to the 2023 Global Organized Crime Index, the Philippines ranked 25th globally in terms of criminality, while its resilience score ranked only 124th out of 193 countries, reflecting weak institutional mechanisms to support reintegration and reduce reoffending.

In the MIMAROPA Region, which includes Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, and Palawan, criminal activity remains a concern, with 335.4 criminal events per 100,000 people recorded in 2014 (Statista, 2021). Within this regional context, reintegration efforts face challenges due to limited public awareness, lack of structured support, and the emotional toll on both former offenders and their families. Pfeiffer (2018) points out that while much focus is placed on the offenders, little research has explored the trauma experienced by the families and communities they return to.

The reintegration process is not only a personal journey for former offenders—it is a communal and familial endeavor. Bowen's Family Systems Theory suggests that emotional interconnection within families plays a vital role in recovery and acceptance. However, stigma often leads to rejection, making reintegration even harder. Families may struggle to forgive, especially when they, too, were victims of the crime. Schlager (2018) identifies three critical areas for successful reintegration: community collaboration, offender empowerment, and strong relationships with law enforcers.

Despite the critical role of barangay officials in this process, there is limited research exploring how they help reintegrate former offenders in Philippine communities. Barangay officials serve as the first responders to community concerns, yet their perspectives, challenges, and strategies in managing reintegration remain underexplored. There is also little qualitative research examining how community members and families navigate life with former offenders among them, particularly in places with high incarceration rates like Oriental Mindoro.

This study, therefore, aims to explore the roles and responsibilities of barangay officials in communities with a significant population of former offenders, specifically in Barangay Balatero, Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro. It seeks to understand how these officials fulfill their duties in support of reintegration, identify challenges faced by community members, and examine the emotional and social experiences of families of former offenders. Through a phenomenological approach, the study hopes to contribute meaningful insights that can inform future community-based reintegration policies and practices.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a phenomenological research design to explore and understand the lived experiences and perspectives of barangay officials, community members, and families of former offenders. The phenomenological approach was appropriate as it aimed to capture both the subjective and objective

viewpoints of the participants regarding reintegration and community dynamics. Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews, allowing for a narrative and descriptive exploration of each respondent's unique experience. A set of five open-ended questions guided the interviews to ensure consistency across participants while still allowing flexibility for deeper insights.

The study was conducted in Barangay Balatero, located in the Municipality of Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro. This location was purposefully selected due to its relevance to the research problem and the presence of a considerable number of former offenders in the community. The setting provided a rich context for examining how reintegration efforts are managed at the barangay level and how various stakeholders perceive these efforts.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, ensuring that only those with relevant experiences or positions related to the research objectives were included. The study included seven (7) family members of former offenders, seven (7) community members, and barangay officials who had been serving for at least three years. The inclusion criteria for barangay officials required a minimum of three years of service in Barangay Balatero to ensure adequate experience and familiarity with reintegration processes. Family members included in the study had to be related to the former offenders by at least third-degree consanguinity, ensuring their closeness and awareness of the reintegration experiences. Community members were included if they were residents of Barangay Balatero but were not related to any former offender, to provide an impartial perspective on community dynamics. Individuals who did not meet these qualifications, such as newly elected officials, distant relatives, or transient residents, were excluded from the study to maintain the relevance and reliability of the data.

The research instrument underwent a validation process conducted by subject matter experts to ensure the interview questions aligned with the study's objectives. Each item was reviewed for clarity, relevance, and consistency, and necessary revisions were made based on expert feedback. This validation process helped establish the trustworthiness and reliability of the instrument and ensured that the data collected would be meaningful and aligned with the study's goals.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the responses gathered from the interviews. This method allowed the researchers to identify recurring patterns, key themes, and relationships within the data. Through systematic coding and analysis, the study was able to draw out significant insights regarding the roles of barangay officials, the challenges faced by families and communities, and the overall reintegration experiences of former offenders. The process was conducted rigorously to ensure the validity and depth of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Strategies employed by barangay officials residing in communities with many former offenders to fulfill their official duties and responsibilities in response to reintegration.

The strategies employed by barangay officials reveals two teams: (1) monitoring and support; and (2) implementing common programs.

Monitoring and Support

Barangay officials often monitor former offenders through casual check-ins to help them reintegrate while respecting their independence. Their role is crucial in this process, as they are well-placed to support and oversee reintegration efforts. Community policing also helps reduce crime and solve local issues, stressing the need to assess and reward efforts that enhance public safety (Understanding Community Policing,

2021). Monitoring and checking mechanisms are key strategies barangay officials use to support former offenders' transition back into the community.

As stated by participant 1,

“We frequently check kung sila ba ay nakikibilang na ulit sa mga activities na binibigay or hinahayin ng barangay.” (We frequently check if they are actively participating in the activities provided or offered by the barangay) - P1

The statement from Participant 1 provided a proactive approach taken by barangay officials in monitoring the reintegration progress of former offenders. By actively assessing their participation in community activities, barangay officials gauge the level of engagement and integration of these individuals back into society. This practice serves multiple purposes, including assessing the sincerity of the ex-offenders' commitment to rehabilitation, identifying any potential signs of recidivism, and fostering a sense of accountability within the community. Monitoring process facilitates early intervention and support for individuals who may be struggling with the challenges of reintegration. To prove this claim, Simon (2024), mentioned that monitoring reintegrated offenders leads to a significant reduction in recidivism rates and successful local reintegration.

To support the previous claim, another participant stated that;

“Yung pagmomonitor ay nasa akin. Yung kung sino ang dumalo sa community service...ako ang may hawak nun” (I handle the monitoring. I'm in charge for whoever attends the community service) -P5

This statement from Participant 5 suggests a personalized approach to monitoring reintegration efforts, wherein a barangay official or community leader, takes direct responsibility for tracking attendance and participation in community service activities. This level of personal accountability can be advantageous in ensuring thorough and consistent monitoring, as the individual is deeply invested in the outcomes and progress of the reintegration process.

Additionally, the statement highlights the importance of effective communication and collaboration among officials and incarcerated individuals involved in the reintegration process.

“Sinusubaybayan namin hindi lang sila kundi ang buong komunidad sa pamamagitan ng pagrorobing mapa-umaga, tanghali, at higit lalo tuwing gabi.” (We monitor not only them but the whole community through regular patrols, both in the morning, afternoon, and especially during the night.) -P7

The statement from Participant 7 gave emphasis on continuous monitoring throughout the day and night underscores a dedication to vigilance and responsiveness to potential risks or incidents. By maintaining a constant presence and vigilance, barangay officials or community leaders can swiftly address emerging issues, deter criminal activities, and provide immediate assistance or intervention when needed. A study shows that implementation of curfew and monitoring in the barangay are an important tool in helping to manage and keep away the society from risky situations (Michael Dennis, PhD, 2021).

Equity in Programs

Programs offered to former offenders are the same as those available to all community members, promoting fairness and equal opportunities. Activities include community service, clean-up drives, and sports events, which are designed to integrate former offenders into normal social settings. The second theme observed in the strategies employed by barangay officials is equity in programs tailored in both common individuals and also for former offenders.

In connection to this, the adoption of these programs reflects a recognition of the interconnectedness and interdependence of individuals within the community. As specified by participant 1;

“Sa ngayon kasi, wala kasing, let's say specific na program na na-align talaga siya or talagang tutok siya dun sa mga kabataan o dun sa mga taong naging parte ulit ng komunidad. Bale ang ginagawa lang namin ay ang inooffer namin mga program ay kung ano yung program na offered sa mga individuals na hindi naman nagkasala yun din yung mga program na inooffer namin sa kanila. As for example, clean-up drives” (Currently, there isn't a specific program that is really aligned or focused on the youth or on individuals who have committed offenses and have become part of our community again. What we're just doing is offering programs similar to those offered to individuals who haven't committed any offense. Those are also the programs we offer to them.

For example, a clean-up drive) -P1

The statement highlights a practical and inclusive approach taken by barangay officials in designing and offering programs for former offenders. The decision to offer the same programs to former offenders as those available to individuals without a criminal record underscores a commitment to treating all community members with fairness and respect.

However, based on the responses gathered, the researchers can notice that there are no specific programs for ex-offenders being offered by the barangay due to several reasons which are relevant to the study conducted by Leonor (2023), who disclosed that community involvement activities were only partially implemented. Moreover, other studies also support the statement of Participant 1. According to Berghuis (2018), the main focus of the majority of reintegration programs is the needs of offenders. This implies that practitioners should reevaluate whether to provide alternative services that can give ex-offenders long-term prospects.

Challenges in Reintegration

Officials face challenges with some former offenders who are resistant to participating in community programs. This resistance is often due to a perceived authoritative approach from officials or a general distrust in the system.

According to participant 1,

“Hindi sila sobrang open talaga sa term na pagbabago. Na ang mangyayari, kahit bigyan mo sila na bigyan ng interventions or mga programs na makakatulong sa kanila hindi sila nagparticipate talaga kasi ayaw nila ng konsepto na ganun eh. Parang siguro iniisip nila it's like we're being authoritative sa kanila kumbaga alam namin nagkasala sila so basically kumbaga hinahawakan namin sa leeg, which is hindi naman talaga.” (They are not really open to the concept of change. What happens is, even if you provide them with numerous interventions or programs that could help them, they don't participate because they don't like that concept. Maybe they think it's like we're being authoritative towards them, as if we know they did something wrong and we're holding it over them, which is not the case at all)- P1

Based on the response by participant 1, it states that resistance to change poses a significant and complex barrier to the effectiveness of reintegration programs. Despite the availability and potential benefits of numerous interventions designed to assist them, individuals may choose not to engage with these programs. This lack of engagement often stems from a perception that these initiatives are authoritarian in nature. They may feel that participating in such programs means admitting guilt or being under control, which creates a sense of being judged rather than supported.

Ex-offenders encounter numerous challenges when reentering mainstream society, such as rejection by family members, societal stigma, difficulties in securing employment, and experiences difficulties readjusting to society after serving a lengthy sentence in prison. Also, as supported by the study of Fredericks et al. (2021), ex-offenders frequently experience rejection from both their families and communities, facing initial isolation and societal stigmatization.

Interventions and Activities

Barangay officials organize various community activities such as clean-up drives and sports events. These activities help former offenders to engage with other community members, fostering social interaction and rebuilding self-esteem.

As stated by participant 2,

“yun nga pagka minsan, sinasama rin naming sa mga paglilinis...ganun.. o kung ano man ang ginagawang gawain sa barangay.” (Sometimes we also include them in our cleaning activities... like that... or whatever tasks are being done in the barangay)- P2

The response of participant 2 suggests a flexible and inclusive approach taken by barangay officials when involving former offenders in community activities, including cleaning initiatives and other barangay-related tasks.

Mital et al. (2020) explored the relationship between incarceration history and overdose, suggesting the importance of targeted interventions for incarcerated individuals. This means that through creating separate or specialized programs exclusively for former offenders, barangay officials can leverage existing initiatives and partnerships to maximize the impact and reach of rehabilitation efforts.

“Kami mayroong community service sa pag sabado o kayo linggo. Tatawagan namin, sasama naman sila” (We have community service on Saturdays or Sundays. We will call them, and they will join)-P4

This demonstrates a commitment to providing meaningful activities that not only benefit the community but also offer a sense of purpose and belonging to former offenders. Moreover, the fact that they willingly participate suggests a level of engagement and willingness to contribute positively, which is essential for their rehabilitation and acceptance back into the community.

The results of Bender et al. (2016) study highlight how crucial it is to put in place all-encompassing programs for formerly incarcerated individuals that include job possibilities, social assistance, and the equitable and courteous provision of services.

The study Hechanova et al. (2023) highlights the importance of psychosocial treatment over punitive measures in addressing drug use among ex-offenders. Implementing interventions prior to an individual's release from incarceration can significantly prepare them for the challenges they might face during reintegration into society. Prior to release, these programs address underlying problems including mental health and substance misuse, which creates a solid basis for a more seamless transition back into society. This study reveals that having a specific intervention program for every ex-offender is essential because it allows for a personalized approach to rehabilitation.

Community Feedback and Behavior Changes

Positive behavioral changes are observed among former offenders who actively participate in community activities. Feedback from the community often highlights acceptance, although occasional skepticism and resistance are noted.

“Yung mga ano naman nagbago na yung iba sa kanila kasi nakikasalamuha na ulit sila normally sa mga other individuals gano'n, sa amin. Yun yun yung isang magandang

pagbabago. Nagiging ano na ulit sila open na ulit sila na tanggap na ulit sila ng community kahit meron silang tag na ay nagkasala yan dati” (Some of them have changed because they are now interacting normally with other individuals, like with us. That's one good change. They are becoming open again and accepted by the community even though they have a past where they committed mistakes) -P1

Successful reintegration efforts extend far beyond the individual level, reaching into the fabric of communities and society as a whole. When individuals who have previously committed offenses begin to interact in a normal and socially acceptable manner with others, especially within their community, it marks a crucial milestone in their journey towards rehabilitation. This transformation signifies not only personal growth but also a broader shift towards inclusivity and acceptance within the community. According to Chen et al. (2020), reintegration programs have the potential to greatly increase the self-esteem of ex-offenders.

2. Challenges experienced by individuals in the community regarding the notable population of former offenders in their area. Diving into the complexities surrounding the notable population of former offenders in their vicinity, individuals in the community encounter distinct challenges that illuminate four prevailing themes.

Perception and Fear

Perception and Fear poses a significant challenge for individuals in the community, impacting their daily activities and interactions with former offenders. Due to feeling fear and anxiety, a social distance from ex-offenders emerges which results in the manifestation of barriers to interact and associate with them. This apprehension arises from the lasting effects of prejudice, where past actions, especially criminal offenses, leave a lasting impression on community members. Negative associations linked to crimes committed by former offenders become deeply ingrained in collective thinking, shaping how they are perceived and treated. To support this claim, Rhyn (2019) concluded that one significant barrier to reintegrating into the community is stigma. It creates a sense of fear surrounding ex-offender, which discourages people from engaging in community reintegration initiatives.

As stated by the participant 3,

“matatakot, iisipin na ahhh yun pala ay ganon na nagkasala na dating nakulong...” (“I’ll be afraid, some may think ‘ahhh, so that’s how it is, that they committed a crime and were once imprisoned)-P3

The statement highlights how communities often react with fear and judgment when they learn about a neighbor’s past incarceration. Sakib (2022) supports this by noting that ex-offenders commonly face stigma and discrimination due to fear and rejection from both family and the community. For researchers, understanding these perceptions helps explain the challenges ex-offenders face during reintegration and can inform programs that promote empathy and acceptance. However, this fear may be justified, as Drawve and McNeeley (2021) found that 44% of rearrests occur within the first year after release, and 68% within three years.

This is in accordance with another participant’s statement

“matatakot ka lalo na kung...doon sa mga bagong labas pa lang sa kulungan. Syempre maiisip mo na baka ulitin nila yung mga bagay na nagawa nila” (You will be more afraid especially if...those who have just been released from prison. Of course, you might think they might repeat the things they did.)-P6

The response of participant six (6) heightened apprehension and mistrust that individuals may experience, particularly towards those who have recently been released from incarceration. This fear is fueled by the uncertainty surrounding the behavior of individuals who have previously committed crimes, especially when they are reintegrating into society after a period of confinement.

In addition, this statement highlights the difficulties experienced by people who are trying to reintegrate into society after serving time in jail. Despite their efforts to rehabilitate and reintegrate, former offenders may encounter skepticism and reluctance from others, who fear the possibility of them repeating past transgressions. This apprehension can create barriers to social acceptance and reintegration, exacerbating feelings of isolation and alienation among individuals seeking to rebuild their lives.

This statement is supported by Rade et. al., (2016), a meta-analysis that revealed the obstacles encountered by former convicts as they reintegrate into the community, which include unfavorable perceptions from the general public. This meta-analysis provides a comprehensive overview of existing research concerning the factors associated with public attitudes towards ex-offenders, encompassing public perceptions, characteristics of ex-offenders and communities, and the influence of a history of offenses as a moderating factor.

Acceptance and Support

Comprehending the theme "Acceptance and Support" reveals the significance of societal perspectives on reintegration. It portrays a story of hope and redemption, where individuals, despite initial fear, embrace the notion that former offenders, just like any person who have committed mistakes and deserves the opportunity to start over in life.

Furthermore, this theme implies that fostering an environment of support and acceptance within communities can have real advantages for both ex-offenders and the whole community. When people are treated with compassion and understanding, they are more inclined to participate in rehabilitation programs and look for chances for personal development. Communities that give second chances and lend a helping hand not only lower recidivism rates but also foster social cohesiveness and general well-being.

As suggested by an interviewee,

“Yun po ahhhhh... tatanggapin sila dahil nga po sila naman po ay myembro ng komunidad naming, tatanggapin kopo sila. Hindi kopo sila huhusgahan kasi po nahusgahan na sila doon sa bilangguan, sa kulungan dito ba naman sa sariling komunidad huhusgahan din sila” (That, ummm... I will accept them because they are members of our community, I will accept them. I will not judge them because they have already been judged in prison, here in our own community, will they also be judged?) -P3

The community member is implying that people who have been incarcerated should not be judged for their past action. As emphasized by Protzko et al. (2023), the moral status of an individual can contaminate evaluations of their actions, suggesting that judgments should not be solely based on past deeds. Moreover, participant three (3) is also stressing the importance of welcoming the former offender back into society without judging them. The statement emphasizes that community members should see former offenders as regular individuals who have made mistakes and deserve another chance at life.

In addition to what participant three (3) stated, another participant implied,

“Sadyang minsan ganon ang tao, nagkakamali. Nobody is perfect” (Sometimes that's just how people are, they make mistakes. Nobody is perfect”) -P1

Understanding and acknowledging the imperfections of human nature is essential when considering the reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals into the community. The statement mentioned above

emphasizes the common understanding within the community that individuals who have been incarcerated are not defined solely by their past actions. Rather, they are seen as ordinary people who have made errors in judgment. It is important to understand that some offenders commit mistakes while young (Guerra & Bowles, 2022). This perspective suggests a level of empathy and forgiveness towards former offenders, recognizing that their past behavior does not necessarily reflect their character or potential for positive change.

This viewpoint has significant implications for the reintegration process of formerly incarcerated individuals. By recognizing that everyone is capable of making mistakes, the community is more likely to support initiatives aimed at rehabilitation and reentry. Instead of stigmatizing former offenders as irredeemable or inherently bad, the community acknowledges that they should be given another opportunity to start over and make meaningful contributions to society. This shift in attitude can lead to greater opportunities for education, employment, and social support for individuals transitioning out of the criminal justice system.

In connection with this, another participant added,

“Normal naman sa tao na nagkakasala, normal din naman sa kanila na bilang tao, may pagkakamali din” (“It’s normal for people to sin, it’s also normal for them as humans, to make mistakes.”) -P4

The statements acknowledge that human beings are inherently prone to sin and error. This idea is further supported by the belief that human beings are born with a sin nature, making them prone to sin and inherently selfish (McCall, 2023). When individuals recognize their own imperfections, they are more inclined to extend compassion and forgiveness to others who have committed serious offense. Participant four (4) recognized that no one is immune to mistakes or moral lapses. Rather than condemning individuals for their errors, there’s a tendency to empathize with their humanity, acknowledging the complex circumstances that may have led to their action. Furthermore, this recognition of human imperfection emphasizes the importance of redemption and growth. Instead of permanently defining individuals by their mistakes, there’s a belief in the capacity for change and improvement.

Economic and Social Pressures

The community has this prevailing belief that former offenders commit crimes primarily due to poverty and adversities in life, as well as being influenced by their peers and associates. Through acknowledging these factors as influential drivers of criminal behavior, policymakers can develop comprehensive strategies aimed at addressing root causes rather than merely reacting to symptoms.

This community perception aligns with research indicating that economic status and social networks or peer relationships significantly impact individuals' decision-making processes, including involvement in criminal activities.

As stated by participant five (5),

“*Siguro dati sa hirap ng buhay nila kaya sila nakakagawa ng kasalanan, nagnanakaw ganon o siguro yung ano iba.*” (Maybe before, because of their hardships in life, they were able to commit sins, steal, and such, or probably influenced by others.) -P5

In another statement, he also claimed,

“*Ang dahilan ngayon ng pagtaas ng bilang ng mga nag-aadik parang diba yun yung mga nag aadik sa hirap ng buhay, nagugutom siguro o barkada*” (The reason for the increasing number of addicts nowadays seems to be those who are addicted is because of the hardships in life, probably due to hunger or influenced by peers.)- P5

The assertions made by participant five (5) regarding the correlation between crime and poverty, as well as social pressures, reflects the need for targeted interventions. Acknowledging the impact of socioeconomic factors on criminal behavior emphasizes the importance of implementing holistic approaches to address root causes rather than merely punitive measures. Research has shown that poverty and life hardships can lead to an increase in criminal behavior. Hesketh et al. (2020) explained how bridging and social capital gained through transitory movement can play a crucial influence in a person's decision to conform, desist, or not join an organized criminal group. Network impoverishment can also be a precondition to gang membership. This is supported by Alzouabi (2021), who applies Sutherland's theory of "differential association" to analyze how poverty can lead individuals like Nancy in Charles Dickens' novels to join gangs and engage in criminal behavior.

Furthermore, the recognition of social pressures, including peer influence, as important factors that influence criminal behavior emphasizes the value of community interventions and social support systems. Research implications suggest the need for interventions that not only focus on individual rehabilitation but also on reshaping social dynamics and promoting positive peer relationships.

Supporting the claim of participant five (5), another interviewee said,

“Siguro dala ng pangangailangan . Kase alam naman natin ang hirap ng buhay. Kase Diba pag talagang walang wala ka na at sabihin na nating wala talaga kailangang kailangan mona... Ahhhh siyempre pag may nakita ka na ano na pwedeng gawin kahit na masama ay gagawin parin. Tapos isa pa nga pala ay mga kaibigan na masama ang impluwensya.” (Maybe it's driven by necessity. Because we all know how hard life can be. Isn't it true that when you have absolutely nothing, and let's say you really have nothing left, you'll do anything to survive... Of course, when you see an opportunity, even if it's wrong, you'll still take it. And another thing is friends with bad influence.)
-P6

The interviewee's observation expounds on two significant topics for this research in understanding the drivers of criminal behavior. First is that there is a need to delve into the intricate relationship between socioeconomic circumstances and criminal activities. By conducting qualitative analyses, researchers can reveal different ways in which individuals respond to dire economic situations. This requires exploring the reason for individuals, faced with extreme deprivation and a lack of viable alternatives, resort to criminal acts as a means of survival.

Moreover, the interviewee's mention of the influence of peers reveals the importance of investigating the role of social networks in shaping criminal conduct. Actually, studies indicates that various aspects of peers' conduct individually contribute to the emergence of aggressive behavior in teenagers, which has significant consequences for interventions aimed at lowering problematic behaviors (Thompson, et.al., 2020).

Community Involvement

Research on community involvement in supporting former offenders point to an important conclusion for social advocates and policymakers. This theme reveals the transformative potential of community involvement in reintegrating former offenders into society.

Participant three (3) stated,

“So tatanggapin po sila kung inaadmit po ng barangay kung ano po ang kanilang gawin yun po sasamahan sila gawin yun para po gumaan din ang kanilang damdamin hindi po nila maisip na sariling komunidad nila ay tinatakwil sila” (We'll accept them, if the barangay admits them,

whatever they are instructed to do, we will guide them in doing it to lighten their feelings, so they won't think that their own community is rejecting them) -P3.

The statement from the community member highlights the important role of community acceptance and support in the successful reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals. In addition, the statement also shows the interconnectedness of individuals within a community and the ripple effects of criminal behavior. As emphasized by Drawve G & McNeeley (2021) prosocial local institutions and criminogenic establishments at the neighborhood level may have an impact on recidivism. This indicates that there is a significant chance that an ex-offender will either commit a crime again or totally renounce their previous bad behavior. This is also shown in the study of Schnappauf and DiDonato (2017), which suggests that the formerly imprisoned individual may be able to overcome the challenges of a successful reintegration with the aid of belonging and social support in the form of regular, pleasant encounters. In particular, the review article backs up the theory that the recidivism rate for people with criminal histories could drop if they had greater social support upon their release from prison. To further support the notion, participant four stated,

“Yung iba sadyang nagbago na sila , tumutulong sa sila sa komunidad nagiging kasama naming sila sa paglilinis ng mga kalsada at mga gawaing pangbarangay para sa kalikasan.” (Some have truly changed; they help out in the community, joining us in cleaning the streets and participating in barangay activities for the environment.) -P4

He also added,

“Siguro ano lang sumunod lang sila sa amin at gagabayan naman naming sila sa abot ng aming makakaya, sa ganoon anot-ano man ang mangyari, masasabi naman na nagbago na sya na walang problema sa ganyang illegal na Gawain at maayos na sya , makadiyos, makatao, lahat” (They just need to follow our lead, and we'll guide them to the best of our abilities, so that whatever happens, it can be said that they have changed, with no issues in engaging in such illegal activities anymore, and they are now upright, god-centered, humane, and everything else.)-P4

This statement gives emphasis on accompanying and guiding individuals in their reintegration journey. Communities can be crucial to the social reintegration of ex-offenders by fostering and creating interpersonal and group relationships (Zheng, 2021).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study explored how barangay officials in communities with many former offenders carry out their duties, highlighting five main strategies: Monitoring and Support, Equity in Programs, Challenges in Reintegration, Interventions and Activities, and Community Feedback and Behavior Change. Findings also showed that residents in these communities face challenges, mainly in terms of Perception and Fear, Acceptance and Support, Economic and Social Pressures, and Community Involvement. Family members of former offenders experienced Emotional and Psychological Impact, Financial Strain, Coping Mechanisms, and Community and Family Support. Barangay officials are encouraged to conduct seminars to help the community understand incarceration and reintegration. Family members should seek counseling to manage emotional struggles and build healthy coping strategies. Community members are urged to take part in programs that support reintegration. Future researchers may consider studying similar issues in other locations.

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