

2020

Effects of Prerelease and Reentry Programs on Male Recidivism in the Midwest

Tenisha N. Mack
Walden University

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Walden University

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Tenisha Nichelle Mack

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

Effects of Prerelease and Reentry Programs on Male Recidivism in the Midwest

by

Tenisha Nichelle Mack

MA, American Public University, 2013

BS, Cleveland State University, 2010

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Criminal Justice

Walden University

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to determine the effectiveness of prerelease and reentry programs on recidivism from the perspective of male ex-offenders. The prison population in the United States is 2.3 million according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics. Most ex-offenders recidivate in the first 3 years. Prerelease and reentry programs are responsible for successful reintegration for many ex-offenders. However, this study revealed that a holistic approach to rehabilitation pre-and postrelease contributed to a better quality of life for ex-offenders, their families, and communities. The operant conditioning and social cognitive theories provided the theoretical foundation for this study. The central research question addressed how prerelease and reentry programs impact recidivism. This research study was a qualitative case study. Semistructured interviews were conducted with 41 male ex-offenders who had not been rearrested in the past year. Data were analyzed using NVivo to determine codes and themes to answer the research questions. The key results of the study were that prerelease and reentry programs need to be gender-based and culturally competent. Risk assessments need to be completed to determine the best programming for the inmates in a specific institution. The study also found that incarceration is effective in deterring crime, but not in reducing recidivism. The goal of incarceration should be rehabilitation. The implication for positive change is that policymakers, corrections officials, and other stakeholders will consider that many factors contribute to unsuccessful reintegration and programs prerelease and reentry programs must focus on reducing the risk factors for committing crimes.

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Dedication

I want to dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my granny, Maggie Dorsey, who passed away before I was able to obtain my doctoral degree. Without you, I could have never reached this current level of success. You have always been my biggest supporter. Your motivation, support, and encouragement have inspired me to complete my dissertation. Every day that goes by, I miss you more and more. I wish that you were here to enjoy this moment with me. I know that you would have been so proud of me. Thank You! Thank You! May you continue to rest in paradise.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the effectiveness of prerelease and reentry programs on recidivism. I collected data on ex-offender experiences in confinement and if participation in prerelease and reentry programs influenced their decisions to reoffend. In Chapter 1, I will introduce the background, problem statement, purpose statement, research questions, theoretical foundations, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, limitations, and significance of the study.

Background

The incarceration rate in the United States has risen steadily since the 1970s (Bhuller et al., 2020). The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2019) reported that the U.S. prison population was 2.3 million. The U.S. prison population increased from 220 per 100,000 in 1980 to over 700 per 100,000 in 2012. More than 640,000 individuals were released from state and federal prisons in 2015 (Lindquist et al., 2017). Most offenders recidivate within the first 3 years (U.S. Department of Justice, 2018). Most individuals who are incarcerated will return to the same community with considerable deficits (Lindquist et al., 2017). Several factors contribute to high recidivism rates such as limited education, few marketable job skills, no stable housing, chronic health issues, a lack of mental health and substance abuse treatment, and poor support networks (Lindquist et al., 2017).

Significant amounts of resources are allocated annually to improve the correctional system to eradicate cases of reincarceration, but the progress made is very minimal. (Hall, 2015). The Second Chance Act of 2007 directed the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) to provide

grants to provide successful reentry programs for offenders (Lindquist et al., 2017). The funds must be used to create strategic, sustainable plans to facilitate successful reentry, ensure collaboration among state and local justice officials and social services systems (Lindquist, 2017).

Incarceration in the United States has become a normal occurrence for many disadvantaged men. (Bindler & Hjalmarsson, 2017). The lack of resources among inmates is often the reason why they reoffend. When the inmate has a lack of treatment, employment, family structure, and education, it leaves them with little to no hope, leading to reoffending (Bindler & Hjalmarsson, 2017). This is why post incarceration resources and services are critical and are established to help former inmates with things they will need to successfully remain in the community.

Ex-offenders who served long sentences have a difficult time leaving prisons and adjusting to the new life in society (Pitts, 2017). Research on recidivism has demonstrated that ex-offenders will be more disconnected from the communities, more estranged from family and friends, and will have served longer prison sentences than those released in the past (Pitts, 2017). Pitts suggested that evidence-based practices such as prerelease and reentry programs will help offenders successfully reintegrate into the communities (Pitts, 2017). Prerelease and reentry programs are also provided to help those ex-offenders who require help in the transition from being an inmate to a productive citizen. (Moore, 2019). According to Michelle (2015), these programs assist offenders to mitigate the difficulties they face and allow them to concentrate on building a life outside prison. The majority of the programs provide short-term housing, therapy, spiritual help, substance use/abuse treatment, and employment planning. Prerelease programs

aim to prepare a prisoner for their reintegration back into society (Moore, 2019). Reentry programs provide services for ex-offenders when they reintegrate into society (Mizel & Abrams, 2019). Recidivism rates continue to increase in the United States. Therefore, programs that aim to reduce recidivism are crucial (Mizel & Abrams, 2019). My goal for this study was to address the gap in the literature on male ex-offenders' experiences with incarceration and the impact of prerelease and reentry programs on recidivism.

Problem Statement

Recidivism can be reduced by prerelease and reentry programs (Mizel & Abrams, 2019). However, many ex-offenders recidivate within the first 3 years (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2019). Cochran and Mears (2017) argued that experiences in prison could negatively contribute to recidivism. Cochran and Mears stated, "Prison experiences do not necessarily result in changes that occur in the desired direction and indeed may result in changes that create more rather than less recidivism (Cochran & Mears, 2017). Male offenders are an at-risk population based on data from the Bureau of Justice statistics on jail inmates in 2018. According to Zheng (2020), the percentage of men in prison is 84.4%. The recidivism rate among men is 84% within 9 years after being released from prison (Alper, 2018). Therefore, more research is needed to determine why male offenders recidivate within the first 3 years of being released from prison (Alper, 2018).

Cochran and Mears (2017) determined that jail misconduct was an indicator of future recidivism. Cochran and Mears posited that more research was needed on whether trajectories of misconduct and their effects on recidivism are related to inmate experiences. Many scholars have studied the experiences of younger male inmates and reentry programs. Most scholars

agreed that many factors contribute to recidivism such as gender, education level, age of the first arrest, and an inability to secure employment (Pitts, 2018; Wang et al., 2019). Wang et al. (2019) posited that childhood trauma experience and low emotional intelligence could contribute to recidivism. Wang et al (2019) suggested that programming in prisons should focus on interventions, which address trauma.

Mizel and Abrams (2019) noted that young adults need more support as they reintegrate into society because they are still developing the necessary psychosocial skills to make law-abiding decisions. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2019), 50% of offenders arrested after their release were ages 24 or younger. Mizel and Abrams (2019) and Pitts suggested that risk assessments should be used in prison as a predictor for recidivism. Cochran and Mears (2017) explained that evidence-based programs should focus on desistance from crime. Mizel and Abrams (2019) found that reentry is effective when organizations begin their work while confined have an advantage because they allow the reentry organization to establish relationships with their clients. Moore (2019) posited that programs should promote pro-social behavior. According to Moore (2019), “equally important to supporting individuals in challenges of release are efforts to prepare inmates for the challenges ahead: finding a job and avoiding habits linked to criminal behavior (p. 6). Therefore, programs that address trauma, mental health, substance abuse, education, and employment are necessary to reduce recidivism among male ex-offenders (Mizel and Abrams, 2019; Moore, 2019). In this study, I addressed a gap in the literature on the effectiveness of prerelease and reentry programs on adult male ex-offenders ages 22–70.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine and evaluate the effects of the existing prerelease and reentry programs on male recidivism in the Midwest. For this study, I defined recidivism as any offender who returned to jail or prison, for any reason, within 1 year of being released from jail or prison. Annually, hundreds of thousands of offenders complete reentry programs before being returned to the community (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2019).

In this study, I compared attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of offenders who have been successful in their reentry into the community (no recidivism after 1 year) with those who recidivated within 1 year of reentry into the community. The central research question of the research was: How do prerelease and reentry programs impact the recidivism of male offenders?

The follow-up questions were:

- What resources do offenders identify that they needed to avoid reoffending?
- If and how they feel the reentry programs impacted their lives?
- Were these programs effective in the reduction of the likelihood of reoffending?'

My goal for this study was to develop an understanding of the reasons why the rate of reincarceration of male ex-offenders of any age, race, or criminal conviction in the Midwest is on the increase despite the increase in reentry and transition programs (NIJ, 2018). I also gained insight into the perspective of male offenders and what they find significant in reducing recidivism.

Research Questions

Research Question 1 (RQ1): How do prerelease and reentry programs impact recidivism?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What impact do prerelease programs have on male recidivism rates?

Research Question 3 (RQ3): What impact do reentry programs have on male recidivism rates?

Theoretical Framework

I used the operant behavior theory and social cognitive theory as the theoretical foundations for this study. The operant behavior theory originated with B.F. Skinner. According to B.F. Skinner (1957), *operant behavior* affects the environment and generates stimuli which *feed back* to the organism (p. 1). Skinner posited that positive reinforcement strengthens a behavior by providing consequences an individual found rewarding (Skinner, 1957). Skinner's theory can be applied to recidivism because if offenders see the positive rewards of obeying the law then they might successfully reintegrate into society. Cochran and Mears (2017) stated, "inmates who choose to refrain from misconduct or choose to participate in nonmandatory programs, especially those that require considerable effort may be sending a signal that they have changed" (p. 6). Commons and Giri (2016) explained that operant behavior theory has three steps. Step 1 is "what to do." Step 2 is "when to do it" and step 3 is "why to do it" (p. 19). An offender chooses to recidivate due to challenges faced after being incarcerated such as returning to a community with limited opportunities (Mizel & Abrams, 2019). Therefore, Skinner's operant behavior theory is effective in understanding how "the chaos of behavior" is related to an organism as a whole (Rachlin, 2018, p. 100).

Bandura developed the social cognitive theory in 1989. The theory is based on the exercise of agency through self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1989), "self-efficacy beliefs

function as an important set of proximal determinants of human motivation” (p. 1175). For example, people’s self-efficacy beliefs determine how much effort they will exert in an endeavor (Bandura, 1989). This idea applies to this research study because some ex-offenders are motivated to never return to prison because of their experiences. According to Bandura, “people must have a robust sense of personal efficacy to sustain the perseverant effort needed to succeed” (p. 1175). Johnson, Brezina, and Crank (2019) reported that an increase in desistance self-efficacy would decrease criminal involvement. Prerelease and reentry programs have a similar goal, which is to prevent recidivism and help prisoners to successfully reintegrate into society (Mizel & Abrams, 2019). The theoretical frameworks will be explained in more detail in Chapter 2.

Nature of Study

I used a qualitative research approach with a case study design for this study. According to Yin (2018) as cited in Riddler (2019), “a case study is an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in a real-world context” (p. 113). The phenomenon of interest was the effectiveness of prerelease and reentry programs on the recidivism rates of male ex-offenders. The case study approach was appropriate because case studies focus on understanding a real-life phenomenon in depth in context (Riddler, 2019). I collected data from semistructured interviews with 41 ex-offenders. Semistructured interviews are used in most social science research (Evans, 2017). Semistructured interviews were appropriate because they allow researchers to explore subjective viewpoints (Evans, 2017). I conducted data analysis through NVivo. I used NVivo to identify common characteristics. I created parent and child nodes and performed a thematic analysis based on data from the semistructured interviews.

Definitions

Desistance: The process of an individual recovering their core good self and constructing a positive view of the future (Nugent & Shinkel, 2016).

Deterrence: The severity of punishment may influence behavior if potential offenders consider the consequences of their actions (Sentencing Project, 2019).

Incapacitation: The effect of a sanction to stop people from committing a crime by removing the offender from the community (NIJ, n.d.).

Incarcerated population: The number of inmates confined in prison (Bureau of Justice Statistics, n.d.).

Prerelease programs: a program that is used to assist offenders before they leave prison (Moore, 2019).

Prison: A long term facility owned by a state or federal government that houses prisoners sentenced for more than a year (Bureau of Justice Statistics, n.d.).

Recidivism: A prisoner's likelihood of committing a crime after spending time in confinement (Dressel & Farid, 2018).

Rehabilitation: The extent to which a program is implicated in the reduction of crime by fixing the individual by addressing his or her needs or deficits (NIJ, n.d.).

Reentry programs: Programs that are implemented to help with successful reintegration into the community (Jonson & Cullen, 2015).

Assumptions

Assumptions are presuppositions that influence the choices that a researcher makes during the research process from design to reporting (Ospina, Esteve, & Lee, 2018). I made

several assumptions during this research process. First, I assumed that the participants would be truthful. Qualitative research must be trustworthy. Court (2018) described truth in qualitative research as accounts that are accurate and valid representations of reality (p. 8). I also assumed that all participants had the same experiences in prison. The study is based on the lived experiences of ex-offenders who were incarcerated. Finally, I assumed that the participants all had the same challenges after leaving prison. The assumption is relevant because recidivism is unique to the individual.

Scope and Delimitations

I excluded ex-offenders who were women because the focus was male ex-offenders and their experiences with prerelease and reentry programs. The participants in the study were from the Midwestern United States because of geographical convenience. The delimitation was that this sample is representative of male recidivism rates in the United States. The addition of female offenders would not answer the research questions on whether prerelease or reentry programs were effective in decreasing male recidivism. However, this research could be conducted in another area of the country with a similar population.

Limitations

Limitations in qualitative research are potential weaknesses that are out of the researcher's control (Theofandis & Fountouki, 2018). I identified several limitations. The first limitation was the recruitment of the population because it was harder to access them. I studied ex-offenders. Some participants might have been living in halfway houses and homeless shelters. I used purposive sampling to find participants. I used snowball sampling and added participants to ensure that I reached data saturation. Another limitation was that participants may have been

unwilling to report new arrests. This was a limitation because my goal was to include participants who reoffended within 1 year of leaving prison. The final limitation was researcher bias. I had previously worked with a similar population. I used an audit trail and reflective journal to ensure that I accurately captured the essence of the participants' perspectives.

Significance of the study

I sought to address gaps in the knowledge of which programs are effective in reducing recidivism and providing tools for successful reintegration into society. The acquired research knowledge will be key in guiding policy and solving issues around the efficacy of pre- and postrelease programs. My goal was to examine the experiences of ex-offenders and get their perspective regarding prerelease and reentry programs. I documented the ex-offenders' perceived impact of the prerelease and reentry programs on recidivism. The research findings may inform new programs that are designed to help the offenders in successfully reintegrating into society. The research will positively impact social change by informing the delivery of human services regarding the community reentry needs of the ex-offenders. The findings will be valuable to the program administrators as they will be able to develop the programs in a manner that is consistent with the needs of the ex-offenders.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided information on the background of the study, research problem, the purpose of study, research questions, theoretical framework, operational definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance. In this qualitative case study, I examined the reduction of male recidivism through the reentry and prerelease programs in the Mid-West Region. In the next chapter, I will provide a comprehensive literature review of this

study. The literature review includes a discussion of the current knowledge on an issue and the findings and methodological as well as the theoretical contributions to a given topic.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In this qualitative study, I focused on the effectiveness of prerelease and reentry programs in reducing recidivism from the perspectives of male ex-offenders. The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2019) explained that the recidivism rate among male offenders was 44% in 2005 and 73% in 2018. Most offenders recidivate within the first three years of being released from prison (BJS, 2019). Duwe (2018) explained that education and employment training within prison helped to reduce recidivism. Duwe (2018) explained that education and employment programming are cost-effective interventions that produce positive outcomes. Jonson and Cullen (2015) posited that the reentry movement should focus on developing programs to facilitate the successful return of prisoners to the community. This research project will fill a gap in knowledge on male ex-offenders' experience with incarceration and prerelease and reentry programs. I organized the literature review in the following sections: literature strategy, theoretical foundations, and included literature, which supported the research questions and focus.

Literature Strategy

The literature review was conducted through the Walden Library and Google Scholar. I identified peer-reviewed articles, dissertations, and books through ProQuest Criminal Justice, ERIC, and Academic Source Complete. I used the following keywords: *recidivism, deterrence, incarceration, reentry programs, prerelease programs, and male offenders*. These terms were used because of their relationship with the research topic and research questions.

Theoretical Foundation

The theories which were used in this study were the operant conditioning theory and social cognitive theory. B.F. Skinner developed the operant conditioning theory. Skinner believed that the best way to study behavior was to look at the cause of the action and consequences (Skinner, 1971). According to Skinner (1971), operant behavior is related to how people respond to feedback such as punishments or rewards (p. 1). Skinner (1957) stated, “the consequence of behavior whether positive or negative and the control acquired by various stimuli related to them do not exhaust the variables, which behavior is a function” (p. 4). Offenders choose whether to obey the law. Skinner would call this “selection by consequences” (Vargas, 2016, p.1). Skinner noted in his research that it was easier to shape behavior by hand instead of by mechanical means (Vargas, 2016). Chavira (2017) researched cybersecurity. Chavira’s study was based on insider threats from employee behavior. Chavira posited that with operant behavior, whether or not positive actions are repeated depends on the consequences. Operant conditioning theory is appropriate for this study because operant conditioning emphasizes the reinforcement of behavior by positive or negative conditioning (Chavira, 2017).

The social cognitive theory was used in my research study. Bandura developed the social cognitive theory. Bandura believed that behavior is motivated through anticipated outcomes (Bandura, 1989). People strive to gain anticipated beneficial outcomes and reject negative outcomes (Bandura, 1989). Beauchamp, Crawford, and Jackson (2018) posited that self-efficacy affects human behavior both directly and indirectly through mediating factors. Beauchamp et al. (2018) stated, “People envision certain positive outcome expectations emanating from their behaviors only if they have the perceived capabilities to perform the behaviors” (p. 10). Research

conducted by Bhuller, Dahl, Loken, and Mogstad (2020) revealed that imprisonment increases participation in programs directing at improving employability and reducing recidivism. Dahl et al. (2020) suggested that the ability to find employment and increase earning discouraging criminal behavior. The social cognitive theory is relevant to my research study because ex-offenders' self-efficacy is related to whether they will recidivate or thrive in society (Bandura, 1989, Dahl et al., 2020). Strong self-efficacy influences the outcomes people envision for themselves.

Review of Literature

The literature review will include a synthesis of the literature on the impact of prerelease and reentry programs on male offenders. The literature review will address the following: background, the purpose of prerelease and reentry programs, types of programming (substance abuse, mental health, educational, employment programs), reentry programs, predictors of male recidivism, principles of effective interventions, the positive impact of treatment programs, the future generation of programs, faith-based programs, and a summary.

Background

Male recidivism is a significant problem in the United States. Recidivism is the habit of repeating criminal acts that result in rearrests, reconviction, or return to prison with or without a new sentence over a period of years (NIJ, n.d.). Over the years, different programs have been developed to manage the problem. However, more measures need to be taken to reduce recidivism rates (BJS, 2019). Prerelease and reentry programs provide ex-offenders with skills that will reduce their likelihood of reoffending (Moore, 2019).

The Virginia Department of Corrections conducted a study in 2018 on recidivism. Data were collected from 43 states including some in the Midwest. The rate of recidivism is 30.5% in Ohio, 37% in Wisconsin, and 39.9% in Illinois. Delaware had the highest recidivism rates. Virginia has the lowest recidivism rate in the country. The VADOC (2018) is invested in the successful reintegration of sentenced men and women through supervision and control and effective programs and reentry services in safe environments.

This research focus of this study was the effectiveness of prerelease and reentry programs on reducing recidivism in the Midwest region. The U.S. prison population has increased to 2.3 million people since the 1970s (Sentencing Project, 2019). The recidivism rate is currently 73% within the first 3 years of being released from prison (BJS, 2019). The rate of recidivism is significantly lower for offenders placed on federal community supervision. The recidivism rate among offenders on community supervision is 43% within 5 years (Markman et al., 2016). The Second Chance Act, sponsored by the Department of Justice, provides funds to states and organizations, which provide reentry programs that reduce recidivism. Green (2018) posited programs need to be implemented to decrease recidivism.

Treatment Programs

Treatment programs are effective for offenders with co-occurring addictive and mental disorders (Mauruca & Shelton, 2017). Treatment programs often include substance abuse treatment, cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) and intensive outpatient therapy (IOP) According to Maruca and Shelton (2017), “Treatment interventions are essential in supporting psychosocial skills, health promotion and successful reintegration to community living for incarcerated persons” (p. 1). Maruca and Shelton suggested that intervention should occur in the community

after release to reinforce skills and behavior learned while incarcerated. Underwood and Washington (2016) studied mental illness and juvenile offenders. Underwood and Washington (2016) posited that it would be more economically practical to focus on preventing juveniles from becoming adult criminals. Providing mental health counseling will decrease aggressive behavior. A relationship exists between mental health difficulties and youthful offending.

Another treatment program for reducing recidivism is sexual offender treatment. Schmucker and Losel (2017) suggested that CBT could be effective in treating medium to high-risk offenders. Schmucker and Losel (2017) reported that there is a significant reduction in recidivism rates among sex offenders who have received treatment. A holistic approach to treatment is more effective including psychosocial interventions such as cognitive-behavior therapy programs, relapse prevention, hormonal treatment to decrease testosterone, and other therapeutic measures (Schmucker & Losel, 2017).

Substance Abuse Treatment

Substance abuse treatment is a type of rehabilitative programming in prison. Substance abuse treatment has been successful in reducing recidivism (Scaggs et al., 2016). Scaggs et al. (2016) stated that prison-based SAP should focus on reentry skills that prepare offenders for the labor market. Substance abuse treatment should be continued upon release from prison. Scaggs et al (2016) cited aftercare in the community as a critical component to success among former prisoners.

Hiller and Saum (2017) posited that prisons are meant to punish offenders for breaking society's laws and show others the consequences of breaking the law. However, criminal justice professionals and policymakers have not considered that prisoners with mental illnesses have co-

occurring substance abuse problems. Hiller and Saum suggested that therapeutic communities could decrease the likelihood of recidivism. A therapeutic community functions like a real community outside of prison. Participants are assigned jobs, attend group and individual counseling, participate, and community meetings and progress through program stages (Hiller and Saum, 2017). Hiller and Saum (2017) concluded that in-prison therapeutic communities are most effective when continuity of care is maintained during reentry and community aftercare. The study also found that therapeutic communities had a stronger impact on recidivism than drug use 1 year after prison.

Wu et al.'s (2017) study on substance abuse in prison yielded similar results as Hiller and Saum (2017). Hiller and Saum (2017) and Wu et al. (2017) posited that there are co-occurring incidences of substance abuse and mental illness. Wu et al posited that mental illness related to substance abuse affects up to 83% of prisoners. Policymakers in Taiwan are encouraging judges to impose mandatory mental illness treatment on offenders with substance-related charges (Wu et al., 2017). However, individual judges have the authority to impose sentences. Wu et al. (2017) found that only 13% of offenders with substance-related charges have received mandatory treatment. Additionally, the study revealed that the lack of treatment for heroin and methamphetamine abuse in prisons has created a 67.9% recidivism rates for drug offenders.

Reentry into the community is challenging for incarcerated individuals who have co-occurring mental health and substance abuse problems (Luckey, 2016). According to Luckey (2016), although some inmates engage in mandatory reintegration planning to reduce the possibility of recidivism, individuals with mental health and substance abuse problems have higher rates of recidivism. Individuals with co-occurring mental health and substance abuse

addiction struggle with adjustment due to lack of housing, employment, substance abuse rehabilitation, and medical or mental health treatment in the community. Luckey (2016) posited that although ex-offenders may participate in reentry programs that it does not guarantee their success outside of prison. Luckey (2016) found that increasing access and adherence and substance abuse treatment was important to successful transition postrelease. Luckey (2016) also found that support from family, friends, and professionals pre and postrelease increased the likelihood that ex-offenders would engage in treatment programs.

Melnick, Mckendrick, and Lehman (2017) suggested that multiagency change teams involving the Department of Corrections and community substance abuse agencies should coordinate substance abuse treatment programs. According to Melink et al. (2017, change teams have been effective in creating organizational change in a variety of settings. Melnick et al. (2017) concluded that multi-agency treatment programs could provide more resources and improve offender assessments.

Mental illness treatment

Mental illness treatment is a necessity in prison. Many scholars believe that most inmates with substance abuse problems are dually diagnosed with mental illness (Hiller & Saum, 2017; Luckey, 2016; Wu et al., 2017). Travis, Western, and Redburn (2014), explained that a large population of inmates suffers from mental illnesses and disorders. The conditions include severe depression, bipolar, and, schizophrenia. Travis et al. (2014) reported that 8 to 16% of inmates have at least one mental illness. In addition, most disorders are associated with substance abuse (Travis et al., 2014). Bronson and Berzofsky (2017) studied mental health problems reported by prisoners and jails. According to Bronson and Berzofsky (2017) about 1 in 7 state and federal

prisoners (14%) and 1 in 4 jail inmates (26%) reported experiences that met the threshold for serious psychological distress. Bronson and Berzofsky (2017) found that prisoners who spent 5 years or more previously incarcerated were more likely to have met the threshold for serious psychological distress (SPD). Bronson and Berzofsky (2017) discovered that only 36% of prisoners and 30% of jail inmates were receiving mental health treatment. Most inmates who met the threshold for SPD were less likely to report receiving counseling or therapy (Bronson & Berzofsky, 2017). The common treatment for SPD is medication.

There are more than 10 million incarcerated individuals in the world at any given time (Fazel et al., 2016). Research has shown that there is a high prevalence of mental illness in prisons and a need for specialized services. However, the reality is that many psychiatric disorders are frequently underdiagnosed and poorly treated (Fazel et al., 2016). According to Fazel et al. (2016), suicide and self-harm are more common in prison and that male prisoners seem to be prone to suicidal ideation. Another issue in prison is adverse outcomes that may arise because of psychiatric disorders such as violence and victimization (Fazel et al., 2016). Fazel et al. (2016) suggested that are several interventions are needed to improve the mental health of prisoners. A one size fits all approach does not work. Fazel et al. (2016) recommended a combination of medication, CBT, individual therapy, group therapy, and some cases substance abuse treatment. Fazel et al encouraged collaboration between scholars and the justice department to address a paucity in treatment research to propose interventions for mental illness in prisons.

The impact of mental health and substance abuse treatment pre and postrelease has been analyzed in many research studies (Begun et al., 2016). Fazel et al. (2016) explained that the

availability of substance abuse and mental health treatment in prison is important to ensure successful reintegration. Begun et al posited that individuals reentering the community following incarceration are at high risk for experiencing mental health and substance use problems. Continuity of behavioral health and addiction services during the transition from incarceration to community reentry is crucial (Begun et al., 2016). Begun et al. (2016) reported that in the first year of release that few ex-offenders receive adequate levels of mental health services and experience significant service breaks. Begun et al posited that barriers to receiving services include eligibility problems, loss during incarceration, and not having the income to pay for treatment. Begun et al (2016) determined that substance abuse treatment and mental health counseling in prison should be focused on planning for reentry transition.

Educational Programs

Educational programs are offered in some facilities. Some programs allow inmates to finish high school, complete a GED, earn a bachelor's degree, or complete a certificate program. Bergstrom (2019) posited that inmates who invest in themselves in the learning process often have a better chance of achieving successful reintegration. Participants in correctional education either volunteer or are court-mandated. According to Bergstrom (2019), inmates who are not mandated to take programs are more successful than their peers. Education programs will increase opportunities for securing employment after prison (Bergstrom, 2019). Bergstrom noted, "Until formerly incarcerated individuals shift their attitudes from the challenges of stigmatization associated with having a criminal record to one of self-worth" (p. 14).

Participation in education programs in prison reduces the likelihood of recidivism by 43% (Delaney and Smith, 2019). According to Delaney and Smith (2019), higher levels of

educational attainment could have a significant impact on the quality of life for incarcerated individuals as they are reentering their communities. Delany and Smith (2019) discovered that prisons should implement more cognitive skill-building programs to generate more interest among underrepresented populations.

There is a link between employment status and criminal behavior. Delaney and Smith (2019) posited that providing education could increase employment opportunities postrelease from prison. Smith, Mueller, and Labrecque (2017) noted, “Programs aimed at reducing problems related to risk factors are a cost-effective way to increase employability and reduce recidivism” (p. 1). Prison industry programs provide participants with a structured work routine and wages. According to Smith et al. (2017), vocational education in prison may reduce prison misconduct and improve an inmate’s chances for successful rehabilitation. Vocational training and employment service programs provide inmates with opportunities for vocational training and apprenticeship training (Smith et al., 2017). Several programs prepare inmates for life after prison. Programs such as Project Re-Integration and Project Community assist offenders with setting up job interviews and establishing relationships with outside agencies that help with job placement.

Employment Programs

Many prisons include programs, which focus on employment outcomes postrelease. It is known that the ability to secure employment is important to postrelease success. Baldry et al. (2018) completed a study on the relationship between recidivism and employment in Australia. According to Baldry et al. (2018), about two-thirds of re-incarcerated people are unemployed at the time that they are rearrested. Correctional programs in Australia have typically focused on

education and vocational training courses as an approach to rehabilitation. However, Baldry et al. (2018) explained that programs must be multi-faceted. Some inmates may need more than one program based on their risk factors (Baldry et al., 2018). The stigma of a criminal record also is a barrier to securing employment. Baldry et al.'s (2018) study is similar to other research on incarceration and recidivism, which recommends a comprehensive approach to education, vocational training, substance abuse treatment, and mental health counseling for inmates' postrelease and job support with case managers.

Some prisons offer employment opportunities for low-risk offenders. One program is a dog training programs. Dog training programs can lead to reductions in prison misconduct and the likelihood and timing of re-arrest (Hill, 2016). Low-risk inmates train dogs to support people with health problems and veterans with PTSD. Hill (2016) determined that the prison animal program improved outcomes for offenders who were substance abusers. According to Hill (2016), the prison animal program helped participants to develop acceptance of one's emotions, emotional regulation, and emotional self-control. Hill (2016) also advocated for a holistic approach to rehabilitation in prison including opportunities to obtain vocational training and education. Hill stated, "The dog training program participation is not effective enough to overcome the violent environment of prison but can influence behavior once released" (p. 147).

Reentry Programs

Reentry programs have been developed to improve released offenders' chances of avoiding the return to incarceration (Taylor, 2018). Taylor suggested that attrition rates in reentry programs could be decreased by offering rewards such as education, housing, and other basic needs that are provided to participants. Successful reentry programs use rewards and

punishments (Taylor, 2018). Taylor (2018) also advocated for a holistic approach to reentry programs to reduce recidivism. Many ex-offenders have barriers that they must overcome to reduce recidivism such as substance abuse, mental illness, education deficits, and lack of job training (Taylor, 2018). Therefore, some ex-offenders do not participate in reentry programs. Taylor (2018) said that optimism about the future was expressed by participants who completed reentry programs. According to Taylor (2018), “They expressed a sense of confidence about finding a job and having the money they needed to support their families” (p. 76).

The majority of ex-offenders released from prison are not equipped to deal with the challenges in society today (Burden, 2019). Ex-offenders are unaware of support resources (Taylor, 2018). Burden (2019) posited that reentry programs are an essential component of recidivism programs. According to Burden (2019), a collaboration by community leaders, stakeholders, and decision makers is needed to offer services that focus on successful reintegration into society. Ex-offenders return to prison due to a lack of information on reentry services and necessary skills for finding employment, housing, and other resources (Burden, 2019; Taylor, 2018). Burden (2019) stated that release back into the community starts on the first day of being incarcerated. According to Burden (2019), “reentry programs will help with what you need to do better and be better” (p. 95). 9 Yards reentry is a successful reentry program in Rhode Island.

9 Yards Reentry Program

The 9 Yards Reentry program is a plan that aims to provide several supportive services to inmates (Jung, 2014). 9 Yards is a program through the Rhode Island Adult Department of Corrections. The services include academic and vocational training, prerelease preparation, and

cognitive self-change classes. In the facility, eligible inmates are chosen based on a set criterion. Participants must be 22-40 years, have 16-28 months left on their sentence, have no out of state holds, must be housed in medium security, has not been paroled, must be from Providence, and eligible for GED classes. Services are offered in phases. Phase 1 is classroom instruction. Phase 2 is when clients are paroled and in transitional housing. A condition of the program is that clients, must either work, be enrolled in school, or actively participating in a structured readiness program while in transitional housing.

Individuals who are paroled must reside in transitional housing for 6 months. The participants in 9 Yards committed fewer felonies after release and served a less minimal jail term. According to Open Doors (n.d.). the 9 Yard Reentry program was effective in reducing crime and recidivism. The program reduced felony convictions by 71% and time sentenced to prison by 63% (Open doors, n.d.). Department of Corrections reported inmates who took part in 9 Yard programs were re-incarcerated fewer times within 12 months and 3 years. (Jung, 2014). The program completion rate is 85% (Open Doors, 2017).

Price-Tucker et al. (2019) explained that successful reentry programs addressed risk factors such as health, employment, housing, and skill development. According to Price-Tucker et al. (2019), “Community programs, which provide training and placement services to returning citizens are most effective in ensuring successful reentry into society” (p. 5). Price-Tucker et al. posited that successful programs should have educational employment-oriented training and holistic support.

Citizens Circle

Citizen circles are used for reentry in Ohio. The Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (ODORC) (2020) stressed the importance of creating partnerships that promote positive interaction and accountability for offenders upon release. Citizen Circles address several dynamic domain areas such as employment, education, family/marital, associates/social interactions, substance abuse, community functioning, personal/emotional orientation, and attitude. According to ODORC (2020), “The Citizen Circle creates an environment fostering acceptance and focuses on an offender’s personal strengths.” Price-Tucker et al (2019) suggested that collaboration between community- based and government agencies are more efficient and provide better outcomes for ex-offenders.

Safer Foundation

Safer Foundation is a successful reentry program in Chicago. The mission of Safer Foundation is, “To support through a full spectrum of services, the efforts of people with arrest and conviction records to become employed, law-abiding members of the community and as a result, reduce recidivism.” The vision of the Safer Foundation is to achieve equal employment opportunities for people with criminal records (Safer Foundation, 2020). The Safer Foundation offers education, community-based services, supportive services, and workforce development. According to Price-Tucker et al. (2019), the Safer Foundation is successful because it provides dedicated wrap-around services and programs. Price-Tucker et al. (2019) reported that Safer Foundation reduced recidivism to 17.5% for a client who has maintained employment over a 30-day period.

Predictors of male recidivism

There are various causes of male recidivism. Seto and Eke (2015) explained that motivation to change can be viewed as a clinical evaluation for the ex-offender. Factors that contribute to recidivism are known as criminogenic factors (Walsh, 2016). According to Walsh (2016), “An offender’s criminal history, for instance, is a static, unchangeable factor is highly predictive of recidivism” (p. 9). In addition, offenders’ criminal history does not take into account the complex underlying factors, which cause habitual criminal behavior (Walsh, 2016). Inmates who accept their crimes are at low risk for recidivism (Seto & Eke, 2015). However, offenders who breach treatment procedures or rehabilitation programs are at higher risks of recidivism (Seto & Eke, 2015).

Walsh (2016) revealed that rehabilitation interventions have a significant impact on recidivism. However, most rehabilitation in prison focuses on the procedure rather than the results, and they commence the process when it is too late which makes it less effective (Bindler & Hjalmarsson, 2017). Wang, et al. (2014) conducted a study on social behaviors among male inmates. They found that male ex-offenders engage in various impulsive behaviors like frequent changes in jobs, substance abuse, and reckless driving. Notably, factors of an antisocial lifestyle have predicted recidivism in domestic violence offenders, meaning that convicts have a higher probability of committing violent crimes if they have a history of substance abuse or antisocial personalities (Wang et al., 2014).

Ray and Richardson (2017) found out that traumatic brain injury and pro-abuse attitudes were among the major causes of recidivism among male inmates. The Ray and Richardson (2017) revealed that offenders are mainly expected to show negative attitudes towards

conventional organizations like criminal justice systems, work, or school. Yoder, et al. (2015) revealed that negative family background was among the predictors of recidivism for male offenders. The aim of Yoder et al.'s (2017) study was to evaluate the effect of family service involvement on treatment completion as well as general recidivism among the male youthful offenders. The study found that most offenders have high chances of recidivism if they had an abusive childhood or have had parents who barely have time to talk to their children due to work or other engagements. Notably, the children ended up being rebellious students in schools, but their parents barely had the time to follow up on the issues (Yoder et al., 2015). In most instances, adverse childhood trauma, abuse, and a lack of parental involvement contribute to criminal behavior and recidivism for juvenile offenders (Vitopoulos et al., 2018).

Principles of effective interventions

To reduce recidivism, interventions need to focus on the known predictors of recidivism (risk factors) (Yukhnenko et al., 2019). Some risk factors are demographics and prior contact with the justice system. Other risk factors include psychiatric disorders and the misuse of illicit substances (Yukhnenko et al., 2019). Yukhnenko et al. posited that having antisocial peers, mental health needs, and being unemployed are significantly associated with recidivism. Yukhnenko et al. (2019) encouraged the integration of mental health services within criminal justice community supervision agencies. Yukhnenko et al. (2019) explained, "Integration requires careful thought and should be based upon the understanding of the treatment needs and recidivism mechanisms of these specific populations" (p. 14).

Drug misuse and dependence in offending populations present significant challenges for public health and justice officials (Andrade et al., 2018). According to Andrade et al., in

Australia and the United States prisoners are 5-7 times more likely to have a substance abuse disorder. Ex-offenders return to risky behaviors after prisons such as alcohol and drug use. Hazardous drug use after release increases the risk of infectious disease (Andrade et al., 2018). The risk of recidivism increases with specific drugs such as alcohol, cannabis, amphetamines, and opioids. (Andrade et al., 2018). Several psychological treatment options have been used in prisons to address drug use and mental health. One of the interventions is a therapeutic community. Therapeutic communities provide inmates with accountability in terms of their drug use. They are housed with other prisoners who have similar challenges and have to attend meetings, counseling, and complete tasks. According to Andrade et al. (2018), "There is some evidence that therapeutic communities are effective in addressing drug use and to a lesser extent recidivism in prison populations" (p. 122). Cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) is another approach to addressing drug use. CBT programs are designed to help prisoners to change thinking patterns that may foster criminal behavior and substance abuse. Andrade et al. posited that CBT provides prisoners with coping strategies to deal with high-risk situations for drug use.

The positive impact of treatment programs

Walters (2017) revealed that it is important to note that a simple word like "well done" or "you did it better than most people" has a positive effect on the behavior of an ex-offender. When they know that the correctional officers and staff were appreciating them positively, both verbally and in through actions, they tend to feel the urge to continue with the good work (Walters, 2017). Blagden, Winder, and Hames (2016) focused their study on therapeutic sex offenders in prison and the impact on prisoners and staff. Research has been conducted on the usefulness of therapeutic, but there is a gap in the literature on how prison culture and climate

affects prisoners (Blagden et al., 2016). Blagden et al. (2016) posited that focusing on positive behaviors and rehabilitation reduced the likelihood of recidivism. According to one participant, “It’s about rehabilitation and changing your beliefs, changing yourself, and looking at your offending behavior so when you get out you don’t repeat your mistakes (p. 380).

Durose, Cooper, and, Snyder (2014) suggested that rewiring the brain can be used as a positive treatment for inmates. According to the study, this form of treatment has a positive impact. The program emphasized cognitive-behavioral strategies facilitated by well-trained staff who have a record of successful results (Durose et al., 2014). Life skills are not only taught to the offender but also put in role-play or practiced, which is also part of the treatment. However, this could take quite some time due to the repetition, which comes along with it. The whole treatment program is similar to the repetitive practices of pro-social behaviors. Maruca and Shelton (2017) also found that cognitive behavior therapy had a positive effect on inmates. Maruca and Shelton (2017) posited that practicing new skills outside of treatments helped to reinforce positive behaviors, which replace negative and problematic behaviors that offenders struggle with.

Prior studies on the predictive value of motivation for treatment among offenders assessed motivation at the beginning of treatment instead of at the start of community supervision and reentry programs (Shaul et al., 2019). Shaul et al. (2019) revealed that offenders have low levels of motivation if they feel that they were forced into a treatment program. Conversely, offenders who feel like it is their choice to participate in addiction programs had a high motivation. Shaul et al. (2019) posited that addressing offenders’ lack of motivation during reentry could be effective in increasing participation in the treatment program and reducing recidivism.

The future generation of programs

Prior research on programming in prison revealed that prisoners who participate in post-secondary education are less likely to recidivate (Sokoloff, 2017). According to Sokoloff (2017), attending school behind bars reduces the likelihood of recidivism by 29%. Sokoloff (2017) posited that several factors influence successful reentry into the community including securing employment, education, housing, mental health, and substance abuse treatment. The findings of Sokoloff's (2017) study were that college programs were successful in reducing recidivism. Sokoloff (2017) suggested that programs, which offer a hybrid of courses with community colleges in prison and grants to help them finish their education outside of prison. A prison in Jessup Maryland has the Jessup Scholars program coordinated by Loyola University. Loyola has a bridge program for Inside-Out classes, supplies the prison library, sponsors speakers who speak about a myriad of topics, and students have the opportunity to publish an article in a professional journal. According to Sokoloff, the focus of prison should be on rehabilitation and successful reentry to prevent reoffending.

Mass incarceration has caused an increase in the number of parents in prison (Jackson, 2016). Prior research on parenting programs in prison revealed that parenting programs reverse the negative effects of incarceration. According to Jackson (2016), "the need for prison parenting programs is urgent to address the emotional, psychological, and societal issues related to children with incarcerated parents. Jackson suggested that these programs are needed to preserve the relationship between parents and children in prison and when the parent returns home.

Kupers (2017) studied mental illness treatment in prisons. Kupers (2017) believed that it is time to take a serious look at deinstitutionalization and community mental health. According

to Kupers (2017), there are ten times as many individuals with serious mental illnesses behind bars. Kuper (2017) found that prisoners with serious mental illness who are not provided with therapeutic programs are at risk for victimization by staff and other prisoners. Individuals who suffer from mental illness but receive adequate treatment and spend time in an environment that allows them to form healthy relationships and work toward becoming stable have better outcomes after release from prison (Kupers, 2017).

Faith-based programs

Faith-based programs have been successful in reducing recidivism. Yucel and Paget (2017) interviewed Muslim parolees in Australia. The study found that familial and community support reduced the recidivism rate among Muslim parolees. Postrelease mentoring is credited with successful reentry for Muslim parolees. According to Yucel and Paget (2017), mentors provide a bridge between the ex-offender, their families, and the community. The mentorship program reduces risk factors, which can lead to reoffending and recidivism. The program also provides culturally relevant community-based services and supports (Yucel & Paget, 2017). The mentorship program also assists parolees in securing employment.

Duncan, Stansfield, Hall, and O'Connor (2018) explored the relationship between spirituality and recidivism. The study found that prisoners who attended prison church services were motivated to do so by intrinsic or meaning-driven reasons. Duncan et al. (2018) posited that prison chaplains made a valuable contribution to the lives of women in prison and helped them develop pro-social behaviors. The study also found that faith-based programs in prison positively influenced the offender's journey of desistance after prison (Duncan et al., 2018).

Summary

Chapter 2 (the literature review) explored literature related to the effectiveness of programs in prerelease and reentry programs on recidivism. The literature revealed that there is a positive relationship between effective programming and successful reintegration. The literature review explored the following themes: treatment programs, mental illness, educational programs, employment programs, reentry programs, predictors of male recidivism, principals of effective interventions, the positive impact of treatment programs, the future generation of programs, and faith-based programs. A significant amount of literature exists on the challenges that juvenile offenders face when transitioning from detention to the community. However, there is a gap in the literature on the effectiveness of prerelease and reentry programs on male ex-offenders. This study will fill a gap in the literature on the lived experiences of male offenders and how programs offered in prerelease and reentry increase desistance after prison. In the next chapter, I will explain the methodology, theoretical orientation, data collection, data analysis, and ethical procedures used during this study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study will be to determine the effects of prerelease and reentry programs on male recidivism through the data collected by the researcher from the target population in the Midwest Region. In Chapter 3, I discuss the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, methodology, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures.

The research design and rationale

The central research question for this study was: How do prerelease and reentry programs impact recidivism? The subquestions were:

- What impact do prerelease programs have on male recidivism rates?
- What impact do reentry programs have on male recidivism?

The phenomenon that will be studied is the lived experiences of male ex-offenders and the effectiveness of prerelease and reentry programs on male recidivism. The methodology for this study was the qualitative case study. A case study allows you to focus in-depth on a phenomenon with a ‘holistic’ and real-world perspective (Yin, 2018). The case study approach was appropriate for this study because I studied the lived experiences of ex-offenders in a real-world context.

The role of the researcher

The role of the researcher is an observer. I conducted 41 semistructured interviews with male ex-offenders in the Midwestern region. I did not have any personal relationships with the participants. However, I have worked in the criminal justice field for many years. My experience in the criminal justice field could influence my perspective on male ex-offenders and recidivism.

Hadi (2016) explained that several strategies could ensure trustworthiness. These strategies are triangulation, self-description/reflexivity, member checking, prolonged engagement and audit trail, peer debriefing, and thick description. I used a reflective journal and field notes to recognize any personal biases. I conducted member checking to ensure that I captured each participant's experiences. The purpose of member checking is to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research (Hadi, 2016). I also kept an audit trail to ensure that my data collection and analysis were appropriate for my research study.

Methodology

Participants

The participants in this study were 41 male ex-offenders who were incarcerated and had experience with prerelease and reentry programs. The participants were ages 22-70. All participants were male and charged with various nonviolent and violent offenses. Participants were sentenced to at least one term in confinement. The participants were located in the Midwestern region. The reason for choosing the Midwestern is due to large prison populations. For example, Ohio's prison population is 69,668 people. The prison incarceration rate is 441 per 100,000 (Sentencing Project, n.d.). According to the BJS, the imprisonment rate for men was 87% at the end of 2017. The data from the BJS showed that racial and gender disparities in incarceration rates. The inclusion criteria were male, ex-offender, 22-70, served at least one term in confinement, had access to prerelease and reentry programs, and lived in the Midwestern region. Purposive sampling was used for this research study. According to Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016), purposive sampling does not require a set number of participants. Once the researcher identifies their phenomenon of interest then they set out to find people who can

provide knowledge or experience (Etikan et al., 2016). I recruited participants by posting flyers in public areas such as libraries and local coffee shops.

Once contact was made with potential participants, I sent out emails with a brief overview of my research study and informed consent forms. If interested in participating, these individuals provided consent via email. I informed participants about the voluntary nature of this study and that they could withdraw at any time during the study. In order to reach data saturation, I interviewed 41 participants. According to Fusch and Ness (2015), data saturation is reached when no new information emerged from the data and the study can be replicated.

Instrumentation

Data were collected from semistructured interviews with male ex-offenders in the Midwestern region. I used an interview guide. The research created the interview guide. I audiotaped each interview with participant permission. Semistructured interviews were chosen as the data source. The purpose of semistructured interviews is to gather information from key informants who have personal experiences related to the phenomenon of interest (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). According to DeJohnckheere and Vaughn (2019), semistructured interviews are effective if a researcher wants to collect open-ended data, to explore participant thoughts and feelings on a specific topic, and to investigate personal and sometimes sensitive issues. Follow-up questions were asked to ensure that I received in-depth data from participants. According to Turner (2010), researchers should use follow-up questions or prompts to obtain optimal responses from participants. I used the follow-up questions to understand what resources offenders need to avoid reoffending, how they felt the reentry programs affected their lives, and if these programs were effective in reducing the likelihood of reoffending.

Procedures for recruitment, participation and data collection

Data were collected from semistructured interviews if potential participants met the inclusion criteria. I sent out consent forms via email with instructions to read the form in its entirety, sign it, and send it back via email. The interviews were conducted in person. The interviews were held in a place that was convenient for the participant. All interview questions were identical for each participant. Participants were informed of the interview protocol and how long each interview would last. Interviews lasted for 45-60 minutes. Each interview was audiotaped with participant permission. Data were collected until I reached data saturation. I added participants through a snowball sampling to reach data saturation. The transcripts of the interviews were sent to the participants to review for accuracy. According to Birt et al. (2016), member checking is used to explore the credibility of results. Member checking allows participants to check for accuracy and resonance in their experiences (Birt et al., 2016). Participants were given a \$5 gift card as a thank you for participating in the study after member checking and debriefing.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted after interviews and member checking. The data from the interviews were used to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of the lived experiences of male ex-offenders in prison and if prerelease and reentry programs reduced the likelihood of recidivism. Transcripts were exported into NVivo. NVivo was used to categorize and code the data that emerged from the interviews. A word query was used to identify emerging codes and themes. A word cloud was created to help me visualize which codes and themes were related.

Parent and child nodes were created in NVivo. Data from the interview were used to support thematic analysis and answer the research questions.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness simply means the validity and reliability of a data collection instrument (Birt et al., 2016). Trustworthiness in qualitative research is characterized by four components: dependability, confirmability, credibility, and transferability. Dependability refers to the stability of findings over time. Confirmability refers to the degree to which findings could be confirmed by other researchers (Birt et al., 2016). Credibility is when confidence can be placed in research findings (Birt et al., 2016).

Credibility

Multiple methods can be used to establish credibility such as triangulation, prolonged contact, member checks, saturation, reflexivity, and peer debriefing (Hadi, 2016). I used field notes and keep a reflective journal to minimize bias. I used member checking to ensure dependability and credibility. According to Birt et al. (2016), member checking strengthens the data because researchers and participants look at data with different eyes (Birt et al., 2016, p. 121). I also used prolonged engagement. The interview took place over 60 minutes, which allowed sufficient time to allow participants to share their stories. According to Birt et al (2016), prolonged engagement helps the researcher to become familiar with the setting and context and test for misinformation.

Transferability

Transferability is based on whether a researcher can conduct the same research in a different setting (Birt et al., 2016). Birt et al. (2016) posited that transferability can be supported

by using a thick description. I described the data collection in great detail to ensure that other researchers can replicate the study with different participants in a different setting. Hadi (2016) explained that the researcher must give sufficient details about settings, inclusion/exclusion criteria, data collection and analysis so that another researcher can see if the conclusions are transferable to another study.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to whether another researcher can confirm the research findings (Korstjens & Mosher, 2018). Korstjens and Mosher (2018) posited that confirmability could be achieved through reflexivity. Hadi (2016) explained that qualitative researchers should use field notes and maintain a reflective journal to eliminate personal biases. I kept a reflective journal and took field notes after each interview to ensure the validity of my research findings.

Ethical considerations

The main purpose of ethics in research is to protect the research subjects or participants from any possible harm (Belmont Report, 1979). The Belmont Report (1979) explained that there are three basic ethical principles. The ethical principles are respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Respect for persons means that individuals are treated as autonomous agents (Belmont Report, 1979). I did not coerce participants to participate in the study. I informed them of the voluntary nature of the study and that they could leave without retribution. Beneficence means that the researcher considered the possible risks and benefits to the research participant (Pillai, 2019). Informed consent was collected from all participants in the study. According to the Belmont Report, informed consent requires researchers to inform participants of the risks and benefits associated with participating in research. Justice means that the

selection of subjects would require the researcher to exhibit fairness (Kahn et al, 2018).

According to the Belmont Report, a researcher should have fair procedures and outcomes in the selection of research subjects. I included participants who meet the inclusion criteria and sign informed consent.

The research study commenced after I received IRB approval. My IRB approval code is: 08-29-19-0578020. I protected the identities of the participants by assigning pseudonyms. The data will be stored for 5 years on a password-protected thumb drive locked in a cabinet. I will be the only one who will have access to this data. After 5 years, the data will be destroyed. There are no conflicts of interest. I have worked in the criminal justice field but does not interact with ex-offenders in reentry programs. There are no power differentials. I was not sanctioned by any agency to conduct this study. I provided a \$5 gift card for participation in the study to help with gas or bus fare. Participants received this incentive after they completed the study and member checking.

Summary

In Chapter 3, detailed information about the target population, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection, data analysis, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures were presented. In the next chapter I will discuss data collection and results.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine and evaluate the effects of the existing prerelease and reentry programs on male recidivism in the Midwestern United States. The research focus for this study was the impact of these programs on ex-offenders as they were reintegrated into society. I sought to explore the lived experiences of ex-offenders and who these experiences influenced their behavior after incarceration. The central research question is How do prerelease and reentry programs impact recidivism? The subquestions were:

- What impact do prerelease programs have on recidivism rates?
- What impact do reentry programs have on male recidivism?

In order to address the research questions, I used a qualitative approach. Specifically, I conducted a case study inquiry to address the lived experiences of ex-offenders who participated in prerelease and reentry programs while incarcerated. In Chapter 4, I discuss the means of data collection, the setting in which collection took place, and the demographics of participants. I also discuss the methodology used to analyze the data and the process in which I found themes throughout the interviews. In Chapter 4, the themes and answers to the research questions that are the basis of the study.

The purpose of this study was to address a gap in the literature about recidivism and whether prerelease and reentry programs are effective in preventing recidivism. This research may help criminal justice professionals, law enforcement, correctional officers, and policymakers to create policies that are focused more on rehabilitation and less on punishment. The results of this study revealed that programming inside jails and prisons should include

mental health, substance abuse, housing assistance, education, vocational education, and job skills to ensure successful reintegration into society.

Setting

This focused of this case study was ex-offenders' experiences with prerelease and reentry programs. Prerelease programs were programs offered while participants were incarcerated. Reentry programs are programs, which helped participants as the reintegrated with society. Some participants did not complete prerelease or reentry programs because of the nature of their crimes. Other participants explained that the prerelease programs were not helpful because they did not include job training or education. Participants who attended prerelease and reentry programs shared that they were effective only if they provided tools to survive outside of confinement.

Demographics

The participant pool was comprised of 41 individuals who were located in the Midwestern United States. The participants ranged in age from 22–70 years of age. All participants were males and charged with various nonviolent and violent offenses. Participants were sentenced to at least one term in confinement. All participants had an opinion on the effectiveness of prerelease and reentry programs and their impact on recidivism. Some participants were reintegrated successfully and others reoffended within a period of years.

Participant recruitment

Participant recruitment was completed once I obtained IRB approval through Walden University. My IRB approval code was 08-29-19-0578020. Once approval was obtained, I

posted flyers in public areas such as the library and local coffee shops. Once contact was made with potential participants, I sent out emails with a brief overview of my research project and informed consent. If interested in participating, these individuals provided consent via email. I informed participants about the voluntary nature of this study and that they could withdraw at any time.

In order to obtain data saturation, I interviewed forty-one (41) participants. According to Fusch and Ness (2015), data saturation is reached when no new information emerged, and the study can be replicated. The participants completed semistructured interviews that were geared toward the demographic and qualifying criteria of the participants. All participants had to meet the inclusion criteria. The participants had to be male offenders who participated in a prerelease or reentry program in the Midwestern United States and spent at least 1 year in confinement.

Data Collection

Once participants declared their interest to volunteer in the study, I sent them a consent form via e-mail. The consent form was sent via email with instructions to read the form in its entirety, sign it, and send it back to me. The interviews were conducted in person. Once the consent form was signed, I scheduled interviews that were convenient for the participant, in accordance with their specified date and preferred time. All interview questions were identical for each participant. Participants were asked follow-up questions during the conversation to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences while incarcerated and how these experiences shaped them after their release. Participants were notified of the interview protocol and how long each interview would last. The participants were reminded that their answers would be confidential

and that they could stop the interview and withdrawal from the study at any time. The interviews lasted 45-60 minutes.

Each interview was recorded with the participant's consent. The recorded interviews were transcribed for data analysis and participant review. All recorded audio will be stored on a password-protected flash drive in a locked file cabinet in which I will be the only one with the key. The transcripts were then sent to the participants to review for accuracy. If participants had any additional information to add or correct a statement they made, they could add/or correct information. Once the transcripts were reviewed, they were used for data analysis.

Data analysis

The data were analyzed from the semistructured interviews. In order to ascertain themes from interviews, I read each interview several times to familiarize myself with the interview and participants' answers. I also began to highlight keywords and phrases that pertained to the participant's experience with prerelease and reentry programs and their opinions and attitudes toward incarceration. Once these keywords and phrases were highlighted, I again reviewed the transcripts and used NVivo to identify codes and perform thematic analysis. Once I found common meanings and words among the participants' responses, themes began to reveal themselves. The themes identified were: do reentry and prerelease programs positively impact recidivism, the effectiveness of prerelease and reentry programs, the impact of education, the impact of familial support, age and criminal activity, incarceration experiences, the effectiveness of programs, and life after incarceration.

Evidence of trustworthiness

Trustworthiness

According to Lincoln and Guba, as cited in Korstjens and Mosher (2017), trustworthiness in qualitative research must meet several criteria. The criteria are based on credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and reflexivity. Credibility is the confidence that can be placed in the truth about the findings. Transferability means that the results of the study can be transferred to similar studies. Dependability refers to the degree to which the study results can be supported by data. Confirmability is the degree to which the findings of the study can be confirmed by other researchers. Finally, reflexivity is when the researcher can reflect on her own biases, preferences, and preconceptions. I used strategies to ensure trustworthiness. I created an audit trail, provided a debriefing, kept a reflective journal, took field notes and performed member checking. Korstjens and Mosher (2017) stated that reflexivity was important in qualitative research because it ensures transparency and the quality of qualitative research.

Credibility

In order to maintain a credible outcome, I used a participant pool of 41 participants to meet theme saturation. Member checking was utilized to verify the data collection and findings. According to Birt et al. (2016), member checking is a tool to enhance trustworthiness. Birt et al. (2016) explained that researcher bias could be reduced by actively involving the participant in checking and confirming results. The participants were given a copy of their transcripts, interpretations, and conclusions to verify if they were accurate and credible. The participants also had the opportunity to notify the researcher if any information was incorrect. The participants

were also able to add any information that they felt was pertinent to their experiences with the criminal justice system.

Transferability

The final form of verification was having a rich and thick description. Korstjens and Mosher (2017) described thick description as recording more than behavior and experiences but their context as well. The use of thick and rich descriptions will increase transferability. Korstjens and Mosher (2017) posited that transferability allows the reader to assess whether the research and findings are transferable to their own setting. This study could be easily replicated in another region of the United States and with a different population.

Dependability

I ensured that the study could be replicated if another interviewer asked the same questions of the participants. The questions and themes derived from the questions were done with a rich detailed description so that another researcher could easily identify the themes and replicate the study. The process of reading transcripts several times and coding significant statements also provided dependability.

Confirmability

In order to assure confirmability, I also clarified any researcher bias. I used a reflective journal, wrote detailed field notes, and kept an audit trail to ensure that I accurately captured participant data and minimized personal bias. According to Fusch, Fusch, and Ness (2018), triangulation can enhance the reliability of study results. Fusch et al. (2018) posited that researcher bias cannot be eliminated but triangulation or the use of multiple sources will add depth to the data and mitigate bias.

Results

A qualitative case study was used to answer several questions about the effectiveness of prerelease and reentry programs on recidivism. The central research question is: How do prerelease and reentry programs impact recidivism?

Table 1 describes the themes, axial codes, and participant responses, which correspond to Research Question 1. The central research question was how do prerelease programs impact recidivism? The responses were mixed. Some participants praised the prerelease and reentry programs for decreasing the likelihood of recidivism. Other participants criticized the programs in prison and explained that although prerelease and reentry programs are helpful, but programs should focus on securing employment, housing, and education.

Table 1

How do prerelease and reentry programs impact recidivism?

Open coding	Axial coding	Themes
I (CE32) – “Incarceration punishes. some people, saves some people, and destroys some people.”	Incarceration	Influences
I (CS5) – “Reentry programs should be more flexible in who they allow into programs because a lot of brothers need help who are getting left out.”	Recidivism	Reentry Programs
I (MB27)- “More outside support. Someone to reach out and support us First hand.”	Reintegration	Reentry Programs
I (KW8)- “I had to struggle and I can’t find a job because of my record.”	Obstacle	Reintegration

I (MW4)- “It is a mechanism To keep the Black man down.” FFI (C55)- “It keeps a lot of brothers such as myself lockdown in mind and body.”	Incarceration	Deterrence
I (RJ39)- “They don’t help get us jobs when we get out.” FFI (MC30)- “Give better resources for people. A lot of people don’t have stuff but shelter.”	Reintegration	Employment

continues

I (AA34)- “I know exactly what I wanted and I wanted to improve myself.” I (CS5) – “Without the Ohio Ex-offender program Reentry Program I would still probably	Support	Impact
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Note. Table Key: Interviews (I)

Research question 2 is What impact do prerelease programs have on male recidivism?

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2019), sex offenders under age 24 were twice as likely to be rearrested as violent crime than sex offenders age 40 and over. The National Institute of Justice researched prerelease programs. The study found that educational and employment programming positively impacted incarcerated individuals. Participants in the study also cited a lack of educational and vocational programs as reasons why they were unsuccessful after being released from confinement.

The data revealed that participation in prerelease programs does not guarantee that offenders will not recidivate and return to jail. Age was also a factor in recidivism. Participants were more likely to reoffend if they committed their first crimes at a younger age. The U.S. Sentencing Commission (2016) published a report on recidivism among federal offenders. The U.S. Sentencing Commission posited that age at release is associated with different rates of recidivism. The U.S. Sentencing Commission (2016) reported that the recidivism rate for ex-offenders who were below 21 at age of release had the highest recidivism rates (67.6%) compared to older offenders over 60 with the lowest recidivism rates (16.0%).

Most of the participants in this study were violent offenders. Ohio Department of Corrections (2020) data shows a similar trend. There are 33,459 incarcerated adults in the prison system. The Ohio Department of Corrections (2020) data on the ages of offenders was similar to the U.S. Sentencing Commission report. According to the Ohio Department of Corrections (2020), 3,017 offenders under age 24 are in confinement compared to 1,591 in the 50 plus population.

Table 2 represents that age, how many prison sentences, violent or nonviolent offenders, and if he entered a reentry program.

Table 2

What impact do prerelease programs have on male recidivism?

Participant	Age	Frequency	Violent/Nonviolent	Program
AA34	46	3	Violent	None
AB23	30	4	Violent	None
BT33	48	1	Violent	Yes
CC10	44	1	Violent	Yes
CE32	42	2	Violent	None
CL20	47	1	Violent	Yes
CS5	30	1	Violent	None
DD35	28	2	Nonviolent	None
DJ24	53	9	Both	None
DM9	39	3	Violent	Yes
DT16	38	1	Violent	Yes
EA22	58	6	Violent	None
EE7	56	1	Violent	Yes
EL21	52	1	Violent	Yes
HD41	22	1	Violent	Yes
IB25	46	4	Both	None
JJ6	27	5	Both	None

continues

JR36	23	1	Both	None
JS2	46	1	Violent	None
JT18	41	1	Violent	Yes
LB3	47	6	Both	None
KB31	50	1	Nonviolent	Yes
KW8	37	1	Violent	Yes
MA28	64	4	Nonviolent	Yes
MB27	52	1	Violent	Yes
MC30	40	11	Both	None
MJ15	42	3	Violent	Yes
MJ17	34	1	Nonviolent	Yes
MS38	28	3	Violent	Yes
MW4	38	2	Violent	Yes
RJ39	43	1	Nonviolent	None
RS19	47	3	Nonviolent	None
RW1	54	6	Both	None
RW13	36	1	Nonviolent	Yes
SP37	46	1	Nonviolent	Yes
ST26	43	2	Violent	Yes

continues

TF29	24	1	Nonviolent	Yes
TG40	38	3	Violent	Yes
TM14	70	1	Violent	Yes
WJ11	32	1	Nonviolent	None
WK12	36	2	Violent	Yes

The participant data showed mixed results. Some participants entered into programs and did not return to jail. The prerelease programs positively impact their re-integration into society. Other participants received education, job training, domestic violence counseling, mental health therapy, and substance abuse treatment and still reoffended multiple times. The research on recidivism from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2019), Ohio Department of Corrections (2020), and the U.S. Sentencing Commission (2016) are consistent with the findings of this research study. Several factors influence recidivism including prerelease and reentry programs. The age in which the crime was committed. The data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, Ohio Department of Corrections and the U.S. Sentencing Commission revealed that younger offenders tend to recidivate. One of the participants in this study was 13 when he committed his first crime. He served six prison sentences and explained that if he was given an opportunity to pursue a career that it would be violent. The National Institute of Justice (2017) posited that most offenders do not have an adequate education. The study showed that poor academic performance among adolescents is a predictor for juvenile delinquency and future offending. The National Institute of

Justice also reported that education programs reduced the odds of recidivism by 43% and increased the odds of postrelease employment by 13 percent.

The Ohio Department of Corrections (2020) offers many prerelease programs. Offenders can work in penal industries, which produce goods and offers services. There are 30 shops in operation and 1,506 offenders working in the Ohio Penal Industries. Offenders can earn certificates like forklift operators, CAD, hazardous exposure, and American Welding Society certifications. The Ohio Department of Corrections takes a holistic approach to rehabilitating prisoners. According to the Director of the Office of Holistic Services, “OHS is designed to promote an individualized focus on the mind, body, and spirit of each individual” (Ohio Department of Corrections, 2020, p. 57). She added, “By enhancing collaboration among these key support services barriers to success are removed” (Ohio Department of Corrections, 2020, pg. 57).

Table 3 will include data about the age that the offender committed the crime, education level, frequency (how many times incarcerated), and prerelease program. The focus on this chart will be participants who committed their first crimes at an age younger than 24.

Table 3

What impact do prerelease programs have on male recidivism?

	Age	Education	Frequency	Prerelease
AA34	19	GED	3	Yes
AB23	18	10 th grade	4	Yes
CC10	23	Some College	1	Yes
CE32	21	11 th grade	2	No
CS55	20	8 th grade	1	No
DD35	24	11 th grade	2	No
DM9	18	10 th grade	3	Yes
DT16	21	High school	1	Yes
EA22	13	11 th grade	6	No
EE7	23	12 th grade	1	Yes
EL21	21	12 th grade	1	Yes
HD41	20	10 th grade	1	Yes
IB25	22	11 th grade	4	No
JJ6	19	9 th grade	5	Yes
JR36	20	12 th grade	1	Yes
JS52	19	9 th grade	1	Yes
JT18	20	10 th grade	1	Yes
LB3	19	9 th grade	6	Yes
MA28	21	11 th grade	4	Yes
MC30	18	GED	11	Yes
MJ17	23	11 th grade	1	Yes
MS38	19	9 th grade	3	Yes
MW4	19	10 th grade	2	No
RJ39	22	10 th grade	1	Yes
RS19	19	9 th grade	3	Yes
ST26	22	12 th grade	1	Yes
TF29	18	12 th grade	1	No
TG40	21	12 th grade	3	Yes
TM14	24	11 th grade	1	Yes
WJ11	20	10 th grade	1	Yes

Note. Participants are identified by Alphanumeric codes

Research question 3 is what impact do reentry programs have on male recidivism? A significant number of participants did not complete reentry programs. However, the National Institute of Justice (2017) posited that prison reentry programs reduce recidivism rates. The National Institute of Justice suggested that prison reentry programs focus on prison misconduct, postrelease employment, recidivism, and cost-benefit. The National Institute of Justice credits CBT (Cognitive Behavior Therapy) will reducing prison misconduct. The National Institute of Justice explained that social support interventions have been successful in decreasing misconduct and reducing recidivism. Education and employment programs in prison positively impact recidivism rates (National Institute of Justice). The National Institute of Justice suggested that mental health counseling and substance abuse treatment should be part of reentry programs.

The Ohio Department of Corrections (2020) reported that 5,082 inmates participated in Video In-Reach programs. The purpose of this program is to connect resource providers with offenders preparing to return to the community before being released from prison. The Ohio Department of Corrections shared that prisoners had 412,592 visits from family members. According to the Ohio Department of Corrections (2020), “visitation from family and friends is an important component of incarceration and critical to the reentry process” (p. 33). Citizen Circles is a program where community members assist ex-offenders and their families in transitioning the ex-offender from prison and preparing them for reintegration into the community. Several participants explained that more support was needed outside of prison. Participants explained that they are branded because of their convictions, which makes it difficult to find a job, housing, or provide for their families. The Office of Enterprise Development has also been an effective tool for reducing recidivism. The Office of Enterprise Development in

Ohio has provided jobs to 1,078 ex-offenders through programs and partnerships. According to Participant MW4, “I know that prerelease and reentry programs has helped reintegrate into society because I am no longer engaging in criminal activity.”

The U.S. Department of Justice (2018) reported that 2.3 million people are incarcerated in the United States. Statistical data collected by the U.S. Department of Justice showed that about 30% of adult offenders released from state prison reoffend within the first 6 months. The U.S. Department of Justice tasked the U.S. Attorney’s office of the Southern District of Alabama with implementing Project H.O.P.E. (Helping offender pursue excellence). According to the U.S. Department of Justice, 328 ex-offenders in the Southern District of Alabama were rearrested and sent back the prison. The cost to incarcerate those offenders was 9.2 million dollars annually. According to the U.S. Department of Justice (2018), “Project H.O.P.E. is a restorative initiative to give ex-offenders a chance to become good citizens while simultaneously affording the greater community with the opportunity to enjoy safer neighborhoods.” Employers are paid initiatives for employing formerly incarcerated people.

Table 4 will show reentry programs and purposes for each (Educational/Vocational or Therapeutic). The table will only show the participants who participated in reentry programs. Table 5 will be a summary table, which will provide the average age and percentages of violent/nonviolent offenses, prerelease, and reentry program participants.

Table 4

Reentry Programs

	Name	Vocational/Education	Therapeutic
CL20	Thinking For change		CBT

CS55	Ohio ex-offender reentry coalition		CBT
DD35	Edwins	Bakery	
DM9	Thinking for Change		CBT
EE7	Fresh Start	Job Training	
HD41	Thinking For change		CBT
JJ6	Mats for Homeless		SA
KW8	Janitorial Program	Job Training	
MA28	North Star	Job Training	
MJ17	Second Chance	Job Training	
MW4	Second Chance		CBT
RJ39	Harbor Lights		SA
RW1	IOP		CBT
RW13	IOP		CBT
TG40	Harbor Lights		CBT
WK12	North Star	Job Training	

Note. Table Key: CBT =Cognitive Behavior Therapy, SA= Substance Abuse,

IOP =Intensive outpatient

Figure 1

Demographic data

Average	Violent	Non	Prerelease	Reentry
Age:	offenders	Violent	Program	Program
41.9	61%	39%	68%	39%

Several themes were identified through data analysis. The themes were the impact of prerelease and reentry programs, the impact of education, the impact of familial support, age and criminal activity, incarceration experiences, the effectiveness of programs, and life after incarceration. Each theme will be presented with the participants' responses.

Theme 1: Impact of prerelease and reentry programs

Prerelease and reentry programs are designed to help offenders successfully transition and reintegrate into society (NIJ, 2017). The National Institute of Justice (2017) suggested that programs should be focused on the needs of each individual. Programs should be focused on reducing prison misconduct, postrelease employment, and reducing recidivism rates (NIJ, 2017). Participants in this study attended various prerelease and reentry programs, which addressed substance abuse, cognitive behavior therapy, job training, providing job skills and education, and IOP (intensive outpatient placement). About half of the participants in the study participated in reentry programs. The reentry programs had positive effects on their lives after confinement. 31 participants shared that they participated in some type of prerelease programs such as GED, victim awareness, job training, substance abuse, mental health, domestic violence counseling, and educational programs. Some participants were successful in completing the programs and

did not return to prison. Many participants continued to recidivate. One participant returned to jail 11 times. The same participant went to jail for the first time when he was 18 and continued to reoffend. The impact of age when committing the first offense will be discussed in another section.

Participants were asked this question: Do you think a prerelease or reentry program has improved your re-integration into society? Participant AB23 said, "It's helped because of your progress. Waiting for housing." Participant AA34 agreed with this statement. Participant AA34 explained, "Yes, I know exactly what I wanted and I wanted to improve myself and was successful."

Theme 2: Impact of education

The impact of education on offending is well-known. Many participants in this study were under 24 years old when they were arrested and incarcerated for the first time. A significant number of participants did not finish high school. There is a link between educational level and offending in adolescence (Schubert et al., 2018). School achievement, low academic expectations, and peer rejections are reasons why juveniles commit crimes (Schubert et al., 2018).

Participant EA22 was arrested for the first time when he was 13 years old. He served six prison terms. Many of the crimes were violent felonies such as assault and burglary. He was not eligible for any programs because of his violent behavior. Another participant DM9 was arrested for the first time when he was 18. He left school in 10th grade. He returned to jail three times. However, participants who finished high school or attended college did not return to jail after the first offense.

Education programs in prison have a moderate effect on recidivism. According to the National Institute of Justice (2019), inmates who participate in education and vocational education programs in prison are 12% more likely to secure postrelease employment compared to the inmates who do not participate in these programs. Adult based education, GED, and postsecondary education have a moderate impact on recidivism (2019). Farley and Pike (2016) found that engaging prisoners in education could alleviate security risks in prison and reduce prison misconduct. A reduction of prison misconduct has a positive relationship with recidivism rates (Farley & Pike, 2016).

Theme 3: Impact of familial support

A positive relationship exists between familial support and incarceration. According to Meyers, Wright, Young, and Tasca (2017), social interaction is a basic human need, and incarceration restricts the ability for offenders to have positive relationships with their support system. Meyers et al. posited that prison visitation is associated with positive behavioral outcomes. Meyers et al. suggested that social support plays an important role in the reduction of criminal and delinquent behavior. In addition, family-centered classes such as parenting classes, anger management, and violence prevention could have family strengthening effects (Mckay et al, 2017). Many participants shared that they participated in domestic violence and anger management programs while in prison.

A lack of familial support can contribute to delinquent behavior. Patterson, Debaryshe, and Ramsey (2017) explained that antisocial behavior due to family violence, marital discord, divorce, and other family stressors are associated with delinquency. Many of the participants in this study were younger when they committed their first crimes. Some had support from parents

such as their grandparents, parents, spouse, or siblings. Other participants said that they had no support from family before, during, or after they were released from prison. Participant DD35 said that he had no family support but moral support. Most of the participants with familial support were successful in their reentry into their communities. Participant HD41 said his mom, dad, and brothers helped a lot. Participant JS2 said, “When incarcerated, It was minimum. I made some friends. Mom was on crack. I was not close to my sister and mother.” Participant WJ11 was asked if prerelease or reentry programs had improved your reintegration into society. He said, “No! It did not really help me. My dad did.”

Theme 4: Age and criminal activity

There is evidence that the age that you commit a crime influences the likelihood of recidivism. Pardini, Byrd, Hawes, and Docherty (2018) reported that children with antisocial behavior in childhood are at risk for exhibiting severe and protracted criminal behavior. According to Pardini et al., most youths desist from criminal offending by their mid to late 20s. Very few participants in the current study started offending in their mid to late 20s. The majority offended when they were between the ages of 18-23. Offending often peaks between 15-19 years old (Hagan & Daigle, 2018).

Other factors can contribute to the age that children and youth offend and face incarceration. Dustman and Landerso (2018) explained that young fathers who are aged 20 often more at risk for criminal behavior because they are trying to provide for their families. Participant CS5 is married with children. He started his first jail sentence at age 20 for aggravated assault. He did not return to jail. Desistance after age 20 is due to life events such as

marriage, employment, and better residential environments. Participant CL20 was 36 when he was convicted of robbery. He is also married. He served one sentence.

Theme 5: Incarceration experiences

A relationship exists between the social climate in prison and desistance after release. Auty and Liebling (2020) posited that therapeutic can lower the risk of reoffending. Auty and Liebling explained that therapeutic relationships between staff and prisoners and counseling postrelease can be useful in improving prosocial behavior. Mears, Cochran, Bales, and Bhati (2016) explained, that incarceration has deterrent effects, but does not necessarily prevent recidivism. Atking and Armstrong (2018) supported Autry and Liebling's view that social support, prison visitation, and support systems outside of prison are important to an offender's successful reentry.

The participants in this study had varied responses to the questions: "What is your opinion of incarceration?" "What was your experience in prison?" And "What is one thing that can be improved in the justice system?"

Interview Question 9: "What is your opinion of incarceration?"

Participant AA34 "It don't help until the 3rd number (trying to do the right thing)."

Participant AB23 "It sucks."

Participant BT33: "It was helpful."

Participant CC10: "It's pointless, A waste of time."

Participant CE32: "It punishes some people and save some people and destroy some people."

Participant CL20: "I don't like it because there is no privacy."

Participant CS5: "It keep a lot of brothers such as myself lockdown in mind and body."

Participant DD35: "I believe it is necessary. It helps people."

Participant DJ24: "It help mold you."

Participant DM9: "I hated it. There's no privacy. I need more privacy when using the bathroom."

Participant DT16: "It's a need for it. For people that deserve it."

Participant EA22: "They overcrowding prison for B.S. like drug users."

Participant EE7: Don't go. It ain't what you think it is.

Participant EL21: "It don't work. It's a meat warehouse. They can't evolve not going to grow."

Participant HD41: "It's just to make money."

Participant IB25: "Some people deserve to be there."

Participant JJ6: "I don't know. I hate it but I guess it is necessary."

Participant JR36: "It should be for murder and rapist only."

Participant JS2: "It's like a warehouse. It's necessary but what does it do. It doesn't change them. It's just not helping anyone."

Participant JT18: "Very slow process. But it is needed to house offenders."

Participant KB31: "Over indict people. They have to take a plea. Build to and led to overcrowding."

Participant KW8: "It's the worst and it does not rehabilitate."

Participant LB3: "It's not effective and it's a joke."

Participant MA28: "You have to be teachable. It was ok if you used the resources they provided."

Participant MB27: "Some need to be incarcerated. Some need mental health."

Participant MC30: "Some people deserve to be there and some reasons are for anything."

Participant MJ15: “It help save your life sometimes when you just moving on the streets. It stops you.”

Participant MJ17: “It doesn’t change you.”

Participant MS38: “It’s all fun and games, we just locked up.”

Participant MW4: “It is a mechanism to keep the Black man down.”

Participant RJ39: “I didn’t like it. I had no privacy.”

Participant RS19: “It’s too many people in the jail. Crowded.”

Participant RW1: “Some people need to be there. It is a need for it.”

Participant RW13: “It grew me up quick.”

Participant SP37: “It just for money. They don’t care about inmates.”

Participant ST26: “Tough but standard law.”

Participant TF29- “You get locked up. You get locked up. Although some guys didn’t suppose to be locked up.”

Participant TG40: “It’s whack. It don’t do shit, everything inside the jail need done.”

Participant TM14: “It helped me become a better person.”

Participant WJ11: “It doesn’t work and a waste of time.”

Participant WK12: “It’s a waste of time.”

Interview Question 10: “What was your experience in prison”

Participant AA34- “It was normal, Muslim (They don’t mess with Muslims in prison).”

Participant AB23- “You observe a lot. It was awful.”

Participant BT33- “Manageable, ran (laundry), gambled to make money.”

Participant CC10- “It was ok, I stayed to myself.”

Participant CE32- "It can be as fun as freedom (party time). I decided to take time to relax and get my mind right."

Participant CL20- "It was rough, but I made it through."

Participant CS5- "I had to protect myself at all costs because prison was a dangerous place."

Participant DD35: "Wasn't a target. Made some associates. Got raped in jail before. Living conditions is messed up. I don't like restrictions."

Participant DJ24: "I did what I had to do. But it gave me a reality check."

Participant DM9: "It was ok. No one messed with me."

Participant DT16: "I was in a couple of fights. It was draining."

Participant EA22: "Soft ass fuck. (They kiss ass). Rebels."

Participant EE7: "You feel out of place."

Participant EL21: "It didn't like it but it was good for me because I brought the best creative potential ever."

Participant HD41: "It was ok because I had family in there with me."

Participant IB25: "It was party time cause my friends was there. It was like the streets. I smoked and kicked."

Participant JJ6: "It was a lot to deal with. I got stuff stole from me all the time."

Participant JR36: "It was ok. I was ready to go every day."

Participant JS2: "It helps you if you want it."

Participant JT18: "It was slow. Felt like it was 20 years not 5 years."

Participant KB31: "It wasn't bad. I was a bookworm. I stayed away from gangs and spent time alone."

Participant KW8: "It was cool. I didn't have any problems with just a couple of fights."

Participant LB3: "It was ok. Didn't nobody mess with me."

Participant MA28: "Humble, gave him a lot of time to think about my life."

Participant MB27: "Made me grow up."

Participant MC30: "It sucks, out of sight, out of mind, time drags, not the place to be. \$18 a month state pay."

Participant MJ15: "It was a joke. We party all the time. We was just locked up."

Participant MJ17: "I was ok, I stayed isolated."

Participant MS38: "It was a drag. Seems like it was forever."

Participant MW4: "It was dangerous. I feared for my life every day."

Participant RJ39: "I kept to myself."

Participant RS19: "It was ok! I made money in prison so I was ok."

Participant RW1: "It was easy. I just don't like following rules."

Participant RW13: "I read a lot and learned a lot."

Participant SP37: "I kept busy for the most part. So the time can fly by."

Participant ST26: "It was tough. Had to prepare for change. I am a people person and in jail, it's not like that."

Participant TF29: "I was protected, stayed focused, and moved in."

Participant TG40: "It was nothing, it was a joke. Did my time and got it over with."

Participant TM14: "I deserved it. It was ok! I stayed to myself."

Participant WJ11: "It took forever, everything moves slow in prison."

Participant WK12: "It was boring with too many people."

Interview Question 11: What is one thing that can be improved in the correctional system to make reentry more successful?

Participant AA34: "Employees needs training to treat inmates with respect."

Participant AB23: "Employer help us upon release. Waiting list. Got out before your name's called."

Participant BT33: "They need to rebuild- Heat don't work or no AC (need AC)."

Participant CC10: "Help people had jobs when they released."

Participant CE32: "How people take advantage of the personal time."

Participant CL20: "Get some better correctional officers."

Participant CS5: "Reentry programs should be more flexible in who they allow into programs because a lot of brothers need help who are getting left out."

Participant DD35: "Improve Education!"

Participant DJ24: "Separate the older population from the younger populations."

Participant DM9: "Put us in ready to work programs."

Participant DT16: "Give us jobs when we get out."

Participant EA22: "Should have been with real niggas."

Participant EE7: "The guards need to be more relaxed."

Participant EL21: "A program that actually dedicated to helping people once released that start in jail such as welders. Need to work."

Participant HD41: "Give us more rec time and better food."

Participant IB25: "More education. Can't get degrees anymore in jail."

Participant JJ6: "Separate the younger inmates from the older inmates."

Participant JR36: "Keep violent offenders separate."

Participant JS2: "More labor directed programs."

Participant JT18: "Separate the younger from older inmates."

Participant KB31: "Put more education in the system."

Participant KW8: "Provide more resources after getting out to help us get on our feet."

Participant LB3: "Don't know. Maybe help people get stable housing and jobs."

Participant MA28: "Better stuff. Some ain't care. Crazy stuff."

Participant MB27: "More outside support. Some to reach out and support the prison."

Participant MC30: "Give better resources for people, a lot of people don't have stuff but shelter."

Participant MJ15: "Better food."

Participant MJ17: "They need to give us more rec time."

Participant MS38: "Better Food."

Participant MW4: "There should be more educational programs outside of just GED."

Participant RJ39: "Keep the violent offenders separate."

Participant RS19: "Give us more time outside and better food."

Participant RW1: "Give inmates more respect."

Participant RW13: "We need better living conditions."

Participant SP37: "Hire better prison guards."

Participant ST26: "Less commissary during the week. Saturday is not enough."

Participant TF29: "Better food."

Participant TG40: "Better food. Food is nasty."

Participant TM14: "Give us better food."

Participant WJ11: “Put more educational programs in jail.”

Participant WK12: “Give us more rec time.”

Summary

The purpose of Chapter 4 was to answer the research questions presented at the beginning of the research study. I used supporting data from semistructured interviews to answer each question. The central research question was how do prerelease and reentry programs impact recidivism. The study showed that many factors contribute to recidivism and desistance after prison. Social support in prison, the ability to secure employment, cognitive behavior therapy, substance abuse treatment, vocational, and educational programs contribute to reduced recidivism and desistance after prison. The study also revealed that continuous care for mental illness and substance abuse is necessary for successful reintegration into society.

The second research question was how do prerelease programs impact recidivism rates. The study found that prerelease programs have a positive impact on recidivism. Ex-offenders who participate in vocational education and education programs are more likely to gain secure employment. Secure employment will create better opportunities for ex-offenders so they can find housing and take care of their families. Many of the participants in the study wished that more programming was offered in their facilities and resources when they are released from prison.

The third research question was how do reentry programs impact male recidivism. Reentry programs have positive impacts on recidivism rates if they include programs, which address the reasons why the offender went to prison. The study found that substance abuse and mental illness from trauma are the main factors for why people offend. The research showed that

the criminal justice system cannot simply drop offenders into the same neighborhoods with the same habits. Criminal justice professionals need to address those habits and help them create positive behaviors. Successful integration should include transitional housing, treatment for mental illness and substance abuse, and job training, and job placement.

In Chapter 4 the results of the study were discussed. In Chapter 5, I will provide discussion, conclusions, and future recommendations for research and practice.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to determine and evaluate the effects of the existing prerelease and reentry programs on male recidivism in the Midwest. This research study was conducted because of the high recidivism rates among males in the United States. A case study was used to investigate the phenomenon of interest. Prior research on recidivism showed that prerelease and reentry programs have a positive impact on reducing recidivism and successful reintegration into society. This study revealed that other factors contribute to successful reintegration including education, job training, therapeutic communities, cognitive behavioral therapy, substance abuse treatment, and social support.

Recent research on the effectiveness of prerelease and reentry programs cite a failure to address negative behaviors in prison that contribute to unsuccessful reentry postrelease. Trauma is one of the main factors that contribute to delinquent or criminal behavior. A considerable number of offenders suffer from mental illness and substance use due to trauma. Many offenders have victims of sexual, emotional, and physical abuse and witnessed domestic violence in the home. The study also revealed that the age of offense is relevant when determining the likelihood that a person will offend. Participants in the study who were arrested for the first time at ages 18-24 were more likely to offend. Education is a factor in whether a juvenile will offend. The results of this study were that the completion of secondary education decreased the possibility of recidivism.

The central research question was: How do prerelease and reentry programs impact recidivism? The key findings were that prerelease and reentry programs have a moderate impact

on recidivism and that some prerelease and reentry programs fail to provide support as offenders transition into their communities. Another finding was that some prerelease and reentry programs do not include programs such as vocational, job training, and housing assistance, which could improve inmates' lives postrelease. Prerelease and reentry programs need to develop a partnership with social services and nonprofit organizations to ensure successful integration.

Interpretation of findings

I explored the following topics in my literature review: theoretical framework, the purpose of prerelease and reentry programs, types of programming (substance abuse, mental health, educational and employment), reentry programs, predictors of male recidivism, principles of effective interventions, the positive impact of treatment programs, the future generation of programs and faith-based programs. Prior literature revealed that incarceration is not a deterrent to crime. The War on Drugs increased the U.S. prison population by 400% from the 1970s to the present. Recidivism rates continue to rise in the United States, although the prison population is at 2.3 million. Many offenders who are arrested for a nonviolent offense are more likely to be rearrested for a violent offense. Most ex-offenders recidivate within the first 3 years of being released. Prerelease and reentry programs need a broad spectrum of programs to improve recidivism rates postrelease.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical frameworks that I used during this research project were operant conditioning and social cognitive theory. The operant conditioning theory describes how people react to feedback about their behavior. People will repeat behaviors when they receive a positive

response. (Blackman, 2017). The operant conditioning theory also forces people to see the consequences of their actions through rewards and punishments. The operant conditioning theory is well-suited for this study because people consider the consequences of their actions when they decide to commit a crime (Blackman, 2017). Offenders weigh the risks and benefits. According to Leslie and O'Reilly (2016), human behavior is affected by conditioned reinforcement. For example, the behavior is changed when the consequence is a stimulus (Leslie & O'Reilly, 2016). The participants in this study explained that they believed that their behavior was wrong, but incarceration was not the answer. A person has to change on their own.

The second theory that I chose for this research study was the social cognitive theory. The social cognitive theory refers to self-efficacy and what motivates someone to engage in some type of behavior. Bandura's social cognitive theory has been used successfully when considering a prisoner's prerelease expectation regarding future criminal behavior and their actual behavior postrelease (Doekhie et al., 2017). The social cognitive theory was appropriate for this study because the purpose was to evaluate the effectiveness of prerelease and reentry programs based on the lived experiences of male offenders. The participants in this study explained that their experience in prison contributed to their expectations of life postrelease. Many participants found that it was difficult to adjust even with participation in prerelease and reentry programs.

Purpose of prerelease and reentry programs

The purpose of prerelease programs is opportunities in prison to prepare for release and release into the community. A successful prerelease program involves the collaboration of all stakeholders in the criminal justice system and community (Moore, 2019). The participants in

this study agreed that vocational education programs, job training, and education were needed for offenders to be successful after release. Some participants participated in programs such as domestic violence, substance abuse, victim awareness, GED, and gained transitional employment. The majority of the participants who participated in these programs successfully reintegrated. A few participants said that they were excluded from the program because they were violent offenders. However, they would have benefited from cognitive behavior therapy (CBT), anger management, and substance abuse treatment. According to Moore (2019), the environment of programs can be significant in their effect on recidivism. Moore explained that prerelease programs provide an opportunity to shape the offender while transitioning back to their community.

Reentry programs can be effective in reducing recidivism. It is well-known that individuals who are released from prison are reincarcerated within 3 years (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2019; Doleac et al., 2020; Sentencing Project, 2019;). Most of the participants in this research study completed a reentry program. The reentry programs ranged from transitional housing, job assistance, citizens circle, and job placement. Therapeutic communities in prison prepared some ex-offenders for life outside because it simulated what a community should look like. Therapeutic communities have been effective in addressing substance abuse and promoting prosocial behavior (Kreager et al., 2018). Therapeutic communities emphasize drug abstinence through individual responsibility and group interaction (Kreager et al., 2018). Reentry programs must offer some type of substance abuse treatment program because many offenders have drug addictions when they enter the prison and the temptation is there to return to that life. Research

on reentry programs has shown that forced attendance in prerelease and reentry programs have a negative impact on recidivism due to high attrition rates (Kreager et al., 2018).

Treatment programs

Substance abuse treatment

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (2017) reported that 58% of state prisoners met the criteria for drug abuse. A significant number of state prisoners and jail inmates were incarcerated because they committed property crimes to buy drugs (BJS, 2017). Scaggs et al. (2016) explained that therapeutic programs in prison may reduce recidivism, but drug offenders face challenges with sobriety when released from jail or prison. Scaggs et al. (2016) posited that the challenges that drug offenders face postrelease negatively impact their reintegration efforts and desistance process. Scaggs et al. (2016) argued that substance abuse programs need to be continued during reentry and postrelease. Several participants in this study were convicted of drug trafficking, drug possession, robbery, receiving stolen property, and assault. Most of these crimes are property crimes and indicate drug use or the possession of drugs. The need for reentry programs, which provide mental health and substance services, is evident. According to Begun, Early, and Hodge (2016), many barriers exist that lead to fragmented care after release from prisons such as an inability to pay for substance abuse and mental health services.

Mental illness treatment

Mental illness treatment is available in some jails and prisons. However, the accessibility of these programs is a challenge after release. According to Doleac (2019), wraparound programs do not improve recidivism outcomes because half of the individuals released from prison in the United States are rearrested within the first 3 years. It has been suggested that

wraparound programs that originate in jail and continue postrelease are successful in reducing recidivism. However, a collaborative effort is necessary to increase the effectiveness of this type of program. Kendal, Redshaw, Ward, Wayland, and Sullivan (2018) posited that effective community reentry programs reduce recidivism and assist in a successful transition into the community. None of the participants in this study admitted to mental health issues. However, several participants were incarcerated for committing violent crimes and took anger management, domestic violence, and victim awareness classes.

Educational programs

Some participants in this study participated in educational programs to obtain their GEDs, college diplomas, and certifications. People in prison who participate in education are more likely to be employed after incarceration and less likely to recidivate (Sokoloff, 2017). Some participants were not able to participate in programs for various reasons but wished that education was an option. One participant said he wanted to attend college, but the program was discontinued. Some college education programs have been successfully implemented in jails. The Bard Prison Initiative provides classes for associates and bachelor's degree students in New York state prisons. The inmates participate in classes full-time in the same courses as students on campus. According to the Bard Prison Initiative (n.d.), "BPI students discover new strengths and direction that often fundamentally alter their relationship to themselves, their communities, and the world in which we live." Arroyo, Diaz, and McDowell (2019) posited that building relationships with incarcerated students is important. According to Arroyo et al. (2019) having someone who understands their struggles and challenges made it easier for incarcerated students to open up and ask for help. Delaney and Smith (2019) conducted a study of prison education

programs. Delany and Smith (2019) discovered that higher education attainment improves the quality of life for offenders, their families, and their communities in the future.

Employment programs

Prison industry programs give inmates opportunities to work in prison while earning a wage and gaining valuable experience. According to Smith, Mueller, and Labrecque (2017) prison-based employment programs reduce barriers faced among ex-offenders when seeking employment. Prison industrial programs allow inmates to produce products and services for government and private sector consumers. Some prison industry programs train inmates for a specific type of job or profession. Some programs include laundry, food service, license plate manufacturing, and computer refurbishing (Smith et al., 2017). Baldry et al. discovered that employment programs in prison should focus on approaches to programs that are responsive to the identified needs of prisoners, ex-offenders, and the community. In addition, Baldry et al. stated that community engagement and culturally competent and gender-informed practices could make the transition easier. Participants in this study shared that the inability to secure employment caused many problems and barriers such as homelessness, substance abuse, and depression. Duwe and McNeeley (2020) said that many ex-offenders explained that they had difficulty obtaining work due to the stigma of having a criminal record, low levels of education, and job training. Ex-offenders with a job were more likely to be successful on parole (Duwe & McNeeley, 2020).

Reentry programs

Reentry programs have mixed results for offenders. The participants in this study said that reentry programs taught them valuable tools, which made them successful postrelease. Some

reentry programs were unsuccessful because they did not offer transitional programs or job training. Prisoners face considerable difficulty in obtaining and maintaining paid employment (Newton et al., 2018). One participant was in a job training program with a bakery. He trained as a baker in his reentry program and then worked in the bakery afterward. His transition was successful. Newton et al.'s study highlighted two programs. The Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) is a comprehensive employment program for former inmates. Participants were offered basic job search assistance along with other services in the community. Newton et al. tracked low, medium, and high-risk ex-offenders for a year. The study found that recidivism outcomes were better for those in the high-risk group. The re-arrest rate was lower for the first two years following release from prison (Newton et al., 2018).

The Milwaukee Safe Streets Prisoner Release Initiative provided inmates with assessment and 6 months of needed services before their release from prison and secure employment for 6 months postrelease (Newton et al., 2018). This program was targeted toward older offenders with gang affiliation and a history of violence. One of the participants in the study said he was ineligible for prerelease and reentry programs because of his violent behavior. This program had a positive effect on employment after the first six months. Newton et al (2018) determined that programs that provide "reach-in" services, as well as community-based services following release, had the most positive effects on ex-offenders (p. 203). Whitman (2018) posited that an effective risk assessment and targeted programs in prisons will assist the offender in assimilating into the community and reduce taxpayer costs associated with recidivism.

Predictors of male recidivism

Duwe and Rocque (2019) analyzed a risk assessment tool that addressed the recidivism risk. Most inmates are categorized as low risk, medium risk, and high-risk offenders. According to Duwe and Rocque (2019), risk assessments are valuable for deciding custody levels of inmates, whether prisoners should be paroled and the intensity of community supervision. The results of a risk assessment in this study were that non-White males were more likely to recidivate. The results of the current research study revealed that participants with lower education levels and arrests before age 24 were more likely to recidivate. Scott and Brown's (2018) study focused on risk factors among justice-involved youth. Scott and Brown cited antisocial behavior, antisocial associates, family circumstances, education/employment, leisure/recreation, and substance abuse as risk factors for committing crimes. Scott and Brown explained that criminal history, family circumstances, educational level, employment, and mental health should be measured in a risk assessment. Prior research on risk factor assessments revealed that mental health and substance abuse were predictors for crime (Maruca & Shelton, 2017). The current study also showed that the absence of familial support and personal support contributed to recidivism rates.

Principles of effective interventions

Targeted programs and interventions are more successful in reducing recidivism (Duwe & McNeeley, 2020, Newton et al., 2018;). Radatz and Wright (2015) studied batterer intervention programs. According to Radatz and Wright (2015), batterer programs, which mixed low and high-risk offenders, were ineffective in reducing recidivism. Instead, implementing programs with evidence-based practices would be more effective in reducing recidivism. Duwe and Clark (2016) found that mandatory/coercive programs were unsuccessful when reducing

recidivism. Prison programs may lessen an inmates' likelihood of prison misconduct during incarceration and may reduce the risk of recidivism postrelease (Hill, 2016; Lugo et al., 2019). Lugo et al. (2019) found that not all programs are equal in their impacts on future deviance. Several participants in the current study stated that a person had to take the opportunity to be a success. Participant AA34 said, "I know exactly what I wanted and I wanted to improve myself and it was successful." Participant DD35 explained, "Gave me a chance to focus on a new thing and improve my life." However, one participant explained that the reentry program did not help with job placement. It is already known that there is an association between employment and recidivism (Newton et al., 2018).

The positive impact of treatment programs

Targeted treatment programs like medication-assisted treatment for Opioid use have been successful in reducing recidivism in jails and prisons (Moore et al., 2019). Moore et al.'s study found that when incarcerated individuals started methadone treatment in prison and continued postrelease were less likely to reoffend. Auty, Cope, and Leibling (2017) studied how psychoeducation programs reduced prison violence. One of the participants in the study said he was raped in prison. Several participants said they were in programs for domestic abuse. According to Auty et al. (2017), institutional violence is a barrier to social order in prison. Auty et al.'s (2017) study found that cognitive-behavioral therapy and social learning were effective in reducing violent antisocial behavior and recidivism risk. Antisocial behavior is one of the risk factors for crime (Scott & Brown, 2018).

Bales, Clark, Skaggs, Ensley, Coltharp, Singer, and Bloomberg (2015) studied the effects of prison work release programs on postrelease recidivism and employment. It is well known

that ex-offenders thrive when they secure stable employment. Work-release programs are community transitional programs that are available to low-risk offenders to the outside community (Bales et al., 2015). The study found that work-release program effectiveness varies according to race, gender, age, offense type, and postrelease supervision status. In addition, the study found that males, Blacks, and Hispanics benefited from work release more than their female or White counterparts.

The future generation of programs

Evidence-based practices should be used in intervention programs (Duwe & Clark, 2016; Duwe & Rocque, 2019). Pettus-Davis, Veeh, and Eikenberry (2019) posited that most reentry programs only focus on recidivism. Pettus-Davis et al. explained that the focus of reentry programs should be an offender's overall well-being. The key ingredients for reentry interventions are healthy thinking patterns, meaningful work trajectories, effective coping strategies, positive social engagement, positive relationships, enrollment and retention, and strategies (Pettus-Davis, 2019). Adverse childhood experiences trigger adult mental illness, drug addiction, and crime (Mahoney, 2019). Prior research has proven that addressing childhood trauma, establishing healthy relationships, and increasing community connections will decrease aggressive, risky behavior, and recidivism (Kupers, 2017; Mahoney, 2019). Mahoney's study found that COSAs (Circles of Support and Accountability) increase accountability and support for high-risk offenders. According to Mahoney, COSAs have effective in trauma healing and alleviating trauma-related drug addiction. Education in prison alleviates the self-stigma of being incarcerated and empowers offenders (Evans et al., 2017). Evans, Pelletier, and Szkola (2017)

explored higher education as a moderator of self-stigma. Evans et al. posited that being incarcerated had detrimental effects on self-esteem and that incarcerated individuals who participated in higher education programs felt empowered in prison and postrelease.

Faith-based programs

A small number of participants mentioned religion in prison. Two participants were in reentry programs sponsored through Catholic charities. Another participant explained that he is Muslim and no one bothers Muslim people in prison. It is known that faith-based activities have a positive impact on prisons (Robinson-Edwards & Kewey, 2018). The primary aim of faith-based programs is to reduce reoffending. According to Robinson-Edwards and Kewey (2018), faith-based programs are successful in providing counseling, support, and advice. Leary (2018) posited that faith-based mentorship could improve the quality of life for prisoners and ex-felons. Jang, Johnson, Hays, Hallet, and Duwe (2019) studied the field ministry program in Texas, which enlists inmates who have graduated from prison seminary. The purpose of the field ministers is to serve other inmates in various capacities. The field ministry program has been successful in reducing antisocial behavior and influencing prosocial behavior. Jang et al. posited that prisons should focus on the rehabilitative value of ex-prisoners instead of punishment.

Limitations

Several limitations were revealed because of the study. One limitation was sampling. Purposive sampling was used initially. However, snowball sampling was used to identify more participants to reach data saturation. Another limitation was access to this population. Some participants lived in halfway houses and others in homeless shelters. It was difficult to choose a central location, which was convenient for all participants. Another limitation was that some

participants had access to programs in their facilities but were unable to participate because of the violent nature of their crimes.

Recommendations

Future research should include more research on male recidivism in general. Many studies on recidivism discussed young males and female prisons. There is a gap in research on gender-based programs prerelease and postrelease, which target adult males. Future research should also include culturally competent programs that are tailored to Black and Hispanic males. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (n.d.), Black and Hispanic males make up most of the prison population in state and federal facilities. More research should be included in improving self-efficacy of incarcerated people to ensure that prosocial behaviors are developed and maintained postrelease.

Implications for positive social change

This research on male recidivism will help criminal justice officials and policymakers to see that more effective programming needs to be implemented to reduce the recidivism rate. Incarceration is not an effective deterrent and rehabilitative programs should be implemented to address the needs of offenders pre and postrelease. Prerelease and reentry programs must include cognitive behavior therapy, education, job training, job placement, mental health counseling, and substance abuse. The focus of prerelease and reentry programs should be more about rehabilitation than recidivism. Risk-assessments will help criminal justice officials to determine cost-effective ways to implement programs, which promote prosocial behavior and desistance. Community partnerships should also be implemented to offer wrap-around care for ex-offenders.

Theoretical implications

This research study used operant conditioning and social cognitive theories to explain the causes of recidivism for male ex-offenders. Skinner's operant conditioning theory explained why people engage in prosocial behaviors. People engage in prosocial behaviors when they receive a positive benefit. The focus on rehabilitation in prerelease and reentry programs could positively impact the recidivism rate because of the focus on developing prosocial behaviors and improving the likelihood of successful integration. The social cognitive theory supported this research on recidivism. Bandura posited that people are essentially products of their environments. Behaviors are learned. Programs, which focus on addressing risk factors for crime such as antisocial behavior, family dysfunction, and substance abuse, could be effective in successful reintegration into society.

Recommendations for practice

The participants in the study explained that the stigma from being in prison was a barrier to successful reintegration. Community-based services including job placement, therapy, education, and substance abuse treatment could help ex-offenders as they transition into the community and provide additional support within the first three years postrelease. Most ex-offenders recidivate within the first three years. Opportunities for higher education during prerelease programs could help ex-offenders secure employment and increase self-efficacy. Housing assistance could also be useful because many ex-offenders need housing while they are transitioning and working on successful reintegration. Finally, community partnerships could help prisons to provide programming cost-effectively because each stakeholder will share the costs and benefits.

Conclusion

Studies on recidivism have focused primarily on youth offenders and women and the challenges and barriers to successful reintegration. This study filled a gap in research and practice on the lived experiences of male offenders who participated in prerelease and reentry programs. The study found that although some prerelease and reentry programs are successful that they are not one size fits all. Programs need to address the needs of each inmate. A risk assessment must be conducted to determine which programs are best for each inmate. Targeted programs and evidence-based practices that address challenges and barriers to prosocial behavior in prison should be implemented.

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