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## Perceptions of Correctional Practitioners on Contraband Prevention in Maryland Adult State Prisons

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# Walden University

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Walden University  
2021

Abstract

Perceptions of Correctional Practitioners on Contraband Prevention in Maryland Adult  
State Prisons

by

Patrick Orock Agbortarh

MA, University of Maryland University College, 2014

BS, University of Maryland College Park, 2010

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy Administration

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November 2021

## Abstract

Although contraband trafficking has been a focus of scholars since 2013, researchers have yet been able to establish a more reliable contraband control strategy. The present study was based on the perceptions of correctional practitioners of Maryland State Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS). These perceptions were necessary in devising a strategy to prevent the flow of contraband items into Maryland's adult state prisons. The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of 10 correctional practitioners from Maryland correctional facilities, with the goal of providing insight into which efforts are most effective in preventing contraband from state prisons. The theoretical framework for this study was based on Beccaria and Bentham's theory of deterrence, which is the process of transmitting information to discourage violation of the law. Using the case study method, data from participants were collected virtually via telephone, Zoom, LinkedIn Facebook and WhatsApp, and the interviews lasted between 30 to 60 minutes. Data were analyzed through hand coding, with the help on NVivo software. The following themes resulted from data analysis: (a) security loopholes within the facilities that facilitate contraband trafficking, (b) correctional practitioners' risk-taking tendencies, and (c) the search for an ideal contraband intervention model. By promoting the goal of protecting the public, the correctional employees, and the inmates, the perceptions expressed by the participants have the potential of creating positive social changes within the individuals themselves, the DPSCS, and society. The results may be used as the basis for future pilots to evaluate other prisons throughout the United States.

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## Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation project to the Almighty God, Jehovah, and to my family. A special feeling of gratitude to my lovely wife Gamale, for her patience and encouragement throughout this journey. I also sincerely thank my sons Garrick and Gael for their technological support during this process. To my daughters Yvonne and Yvette, my brothers Dominique and Rene, and my uncle Jean Jacques, I would like to thank you for your valuable support whenever I needed it the most.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Maryland adult state prisons have been a center for ongoing contraband trafficking indictments and convictions since 2013, and these illegal acts have mostly been perpetrated by correctional professionals, who have taken an oath to protect the public, as well as the offenders who are under their supervision (see Department of Justice, 2016). For example, in 2013, 13 correctional officers were indicted, along with 25 Black Guerilla Family gang members, for smuggling cellphones and drugs into Baltimore city detention centers (Department of Justice, 2013). In 2014, 5 correctional officers, an inmate, and a drug supplier plead guilty in Baltimore to a jail racketeering conspiracy (Department of Justice, 2014). Another contraband related major issue struck the Maryland adult state prison when, in 2015, a former state of Maryland correctional officers was indicted in a federal racketeering conspiracy (Department of Justice, 2015a). Furthermore, in 2016, 3 correctional officers and two other individuals pleaded guilty to a racketeering conspiracy (Department of Justice, 2016a). In 2018, a former correctional officer was sentenced to six years in a Federal prison for racketeering conspiracy at the Eastern Correctional Institution (ECI) Maryland. The officer was the last of 16 correctional officers that were convicted for a federal racketeering conspiracy at ECI (Department of Justice, 2018a). The above prison contraband prosecutions and sentencing cases have clearly shown that contraband trafficking is prevalent for both Maryland state prison inmates, as well as some correctional professionals. Some of the contraband items that are smuggled into these facilities include, cellphones, and tobacco products. The current trend has shown that contraband related issues have been plaguing

Maryland adult state prisons at least since 2013, and because of the recurrent nature of the above indictments and sentencing of Maryland State correctional professionals, contraband has become a major hindrance to an effective prison management. The Maryland adult state prison facilities are governed by rules and regulations that must be always respected to assure its consistent functioning, and any violation of these rules may have debilitating consequences on correctional practitioners' duties, as well as the inmate population. This study is also directed towards establishing a prison contraband prevention model that would respond to the current correctional professional's misconduct, while also promoting the Maryland DPSCS mission of protecting the public, the correctional employees, and the offenders that are under supervision.

The purpose of the current study is to examine the perceptions of correctional practitioners on the important strategies that would effectively deter correctional professionals from engaging in the dangerous behavior of introducing contraband items into Maryland adult state prisons. This chapter provides some background literature on prison contraband prevention initiatives with the goal of deviating from previous literature that was centered on the technical aspects of prison contraband prevention. A technical aspect would include strategies like the installation of security cameras in prison facilities, or contraband cellular phone call interception systems to disable the use of smuggled cellphones by inmates in secured prison facilities. To deviate from the standard look at the issues of contraband, I interviewed 10 correctional practitioners from two correctional institutions in Maryland, on the reasons why correctional practitioners may engage in the risky behavior of introducing contraband in the prisons. This new

approach will have the potentials of creating positive social changes within the DPSCS community, and the society. This chapter also aligns the research problem with the research questions, the purpose of this study, and the significance of the study. The above strategy provided an in-depth examination of the perceptions of correctional practitioners as they related to prison contraband prevention in Maryland adult state prisons.

### **Background of the Problem**

There is a problem when offenders and prison staff members have engaged in the risky behavior that permitted them to smuggle contraband items into secured Maryland correctional facilities, and although the overarching goal of the criminal justice system is public safety, new questions have surfaced about the effectiveness of correctional practitioners in preventing contraband items from entering Maryland State prisons. To better understand the current state of this problem, I relied on multiple sources of data that were bounded by location, behavior, and time. Examples include identifying the contraband related issues that have occurred within Maryland State correctional facilities since 2013, as well as the perceptions of correctional practitioners on the reasons why correctional practitioners engage in the risky behavior that involves contraband trafficking into Maryland adult state prisons.

Furthermore, the contraband related issues within Maryland prisons originate from a security loophole that existed within the institutions. When contraband items were introduced by the correctional staff, they posed a threat to institutional safety, and when these contraband related threats were not appropriately controlled, they became a security threat to the public, the correctional staff, and the entire prison inmate population. This

type of risky behavior engaged by correctional personnel violates the prison contraband prevention laws and is considered staff misconduct. When contraband related issues are not properly handled, they escalate to prison assaults by staff on inmates, and vice versa.

### **Research Problem Statement**

There is a critical problem with contraband trafficking into Maryland adult state prisons by state correctional professionals, and this problem has escalated since 2013. The former acting secretary of the Maryland State DPSCS, Ziegler noted in April 2019, that the crackdown on prison contraband trafficking at the Maryland Correctional Institute Jessup “pushes to nearly 200 the number of guards, inmates and civilian accomplices indicted in prison-corruption cases across Maryland over the last four years” (Prudente, 2019, para.3). This risky behavior of introducing contraband products into state correctional facilities by correctional practitioners, has negatively impacted the safety of the public, encouraged prison violence, and could encourage potential uprisings that may further jeopardize the safety of the Maryland public, the correctional employees, and the offenders under supervision. As a potential remedy to the above problem, this study investigated the perceptions of correctional professionals about the influences that impacted correctional officers’ choices, to participate in the risky behavior related to the use of contraband in Maryland adult state prisons. This study uses the qualitative case study methodology.

The recent indictments and convictions of correctional practitioners for contraband related charges, showed a clear rise in contraband trafficking activities within the prison’s settings. These contraband related activities were usually perpetrated by

correctional officers, DPSCS employees, contractors, inmates, and outside facilitators. When these illegal activities were not properly controlled, they endangered the safety of the public, as well as the offenders under supervision (United States Department of Justice, 2019).

Anderson (2018a) clarified details about the prosecution of State of Maryland correctional officers charged with “bribes for smuggling drugs and other contraband into a Jessup Maximum-security prison” (Anderson, 2018a, para. 1). The two officers involved in these contraband trafficking activities were 18- and 12-year correctional veterans, and they conspired with prison inmates to smuggle contraband items into the Jessup maximum security prison. When correctional officers become corrupt, it endangers the “lives of their co-workers, and of the inmates entrusted to their care and supervision, and [subsequently] undermine everyone’s faith in the administration of justice.” (Department of Justice, 2019, para.3).

Also, in the month of June 2019, correctional officers pleaded guilty to Federal racketeering charges, as part of a “scheme to distribute synthetic cannabinoids, and opioids addiction treatment drugs [to inmates] at Eastern Correctional Institution in Somerset County” (Davis, 2019, para. 1). During that same year, a Federal grand jury indicted 20 defendants that included correctional employees, contractors, inmates, and outside facilitators for bribing correctional officers and other staff members to traffic contraband items into the prison (Department of Justice, 2019). Furthermore, during October of 2019, a correctional officer pleaded guilty to smuggling “contraband into the Maryland Correctional Institute Jessup (MCIJ), including narcotics, unauthorized flash

drives, tobacco, and cell phones” (Department of Justice, 2019a, para. 1). The sentencing for this case was still pending as of 2021, and if convicted, the officer could face up to 20 years in prison.

In November of 2020, another correctional officer was sentenced to 27 months in federal prison, and 3 years of supervised release for smuggling contraband into a Maryland State prison. The contraband included “narcotics, unauthorized flash drives, tobacco, and cell phones (Department of Justice, 2020, para 1). In addition to the above officer, “12 other defendants—six outside facilitators, three prison employees, and three inmates—have pleaded guilty to their roles in the conspiracy” (Department of Justice, 2020, para 7).

Finally, when correctional officers engage in misconduct, it endangers the lives of their coworkers, as well as the inmates that they were entrusted to supervise. This case study also sought to show the determination of the Department of Justice to prosecute employees who violate their oath of office. The goal of the Department of Justice was to assert that this corrupt behavior clearly “undermines everyone’s faith in the administration of justice” (Department of Justice, 2019, para. 3).

The above problems were expressed through the perceptions of Maryland State correctional employees on different strategies that could deter individuals from smuggling contraband into prisons, thereby preventing the flow of contraband items. The above contraband related issues, have brought into question the effectiveness of state correctional officers in securing Maryland adult state prisons, thereby promoting a

“culture of corruption and lawlessness inside the prison,” (Bui & Hermann, 2019, para. 6).

### **Research Question (RQ)**

RQ1: What are the perceptions of correctional practitioners on contraband prevention in Maryland adult state prisons?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative case study design was to gain accurate perceptions from the correctional practitioners in two Maryland State Correctional Institutions, on the influences that impacted correctional officers' choices, to adopt the risky behavior that involved the introduction of contraband items into secured Maryland Adult prisons. The goal in adopting this qualitative case study design was to devise a more strategic way of reducing the flow of contraband items into Maryland prisons. Data was obtained through in-depth interviews with State of Maryland correctional professionals from two state prisons. The result of this qualitative case study was based on the perceptions of these correctional professionals who are employees of the State of Maryland and have been assigned to the prison facilities I studied.

The results from this qualitative case study design, were used to determine the obstacles that were interfering with the efforts of the DPSCS in preventing the flow of contraband items into state prisons. The interview questions included demographic information such as participants' family background, educational history, peer relations, culture, attitude, and approach towards contraband prevention. The selected participants expressed their willingness to participate in the research by either signing the consent

form, or verbally consenting to participate in the research. The hope was to use the participants' stories to shed more light into the contraband crisis in the Maryland adult state prisons (Suter, 2012).

Finally, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to determine the different strategies that would effectively combat the flow of contraband items into Maryland adult state prisons. To address the above issues, I focused on conducting in-depth interviews with 10 correctional practitioners who were employed by the state of Maryland, and responsible for preventing the trafficking of contraband items into the secured Maryland adult state prisons. The goal in adopting this qualitative case study approach was to establish a contraband prevention model that would help in promoting best practices in correctional administration.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Deterrence Theory**

The theoretical framework of this study was based on the specific deterrence theory, meanwhile the concept of specific deterrence proposes that, when individuals commit crimes and are caught and punished, they will be “deterred from future criminal activity” (Tomlinson, 2016, p.33). On the other hand, general deterrence posits that “the general population will be deterred from offending when they were aware of others being apprehended and punished” (Tomlinson, 2016, P. 33). There was no doubt that both specific and general deterrence explained “individuals' perceptions regarding severity, certainty, and celerity of punishment” (Tomlinson, 2016, p. 33). This theory was spearheaded by Cesare Beccaria who drew upon the earlier words of Jeremy Bentham

(Tomlinson, 2016), and these theorists both asserted that “persons are punished for violating the criminal law to serve as object lesson to the rest of the society” (Kennedy, 1983, p. 3). While describing the underlying theory of specific deterrence, Cesare Beccaria (1986) argued that “individuals make decisions based on what garner them pleasure and avoid pain, and unless deterred, they will pursue their own desires, even by committing crimes (Tomlinson, 2016, p. 33). According to this theory, society required individuals to behave in a way that was law abiding, and once these individuals took the risky behavior of going against societal laws, the punishment was swift and immediate (Kennedy, 1983). Punishment in this case served as a medium to communicate the deterrent message, with the goal of creating both “conscious and unconscious inhibition against committing crimes” (Kennedy, 1983, p. 3).

Society, in this context, was sending a message that it was wrong to break the law, and when individuals broke the law, the perpetrators faced the consequences of being indicted or convicted if found guilty, as well as face prison time. Kennedy (1983) explored the deterrence model to help maximize utility by showing that, when “the probability of conviction or severity of punishment increases, the amount of crime decreases” (Kennedy, 1983, p.4). Punishment, which includes indictment of perpetrators and conviction if found guilty, should not be delayed; rather, it should be delivered quickly and be proportional to the crime that was committed. In the line of general deterrence theory, the certainty that a criminal will be punished when indicted, was far greater an influence on individual’s inclinations to commit crimes compared to the severity of the sentence once they were found guilty (Kennedy, 1983).

Furthermore, with the increase in crime rate, and increased availability of technological knowhow, deterrence theory took a broader perspective. Greenman (2014), referred to Becker (1968), who also drew from Bentham (1789), who claimed that “because people are rational and self-interested, criminal behavior can be understood just like any other economic decision making: [whereby] there are cost and benefits that can be manipulated to guide decision making” (Greenman, 2014, p.10). Punishment, through indictment, and subsequent incarceration was therefore considered as a medium to communicate the general deterrence theory to the society, as it created “conscious and unconscious inhibition against committing crimes” (Kennedy, 1983, p. 3).

The risky behavior of trafficking contraband items into secured prisons by correctional professionals who took an oath to protect the public, and the offenders under supervision, is a serious public safety issue. This kind of risk-taking behavior was defined by Beyth-Marom et al. (1993) as “an action entailing some chance of loss” (Beyth-Marom, et al., 1993, p.549). Additionally, within the context of risk perception and decision-making, this type of behavior could cause serious physical injury, medical consequences, or legal harm that could eventually lead to arrest, detention and even conviction.

Although the deterrence theory has undergone multiple modifications in recent decades, some gaps and limitations still exist. This research study has assigned a very high priority to current correctional individuals from the two state prisons in the case study, and their perceptions on the different strategies that could deter correctional professionals from adopting the risky behavior of trafficking contraband items into

secured state prison facilities. This qualitative case study design explored the perspectives of a selected correctional practitioner population of individuals in two Maryland correctional facilities, to address prison contraband prevention policy objectives, and to recommend improvements to contraband prevention initiatives in Maryland adult state prisons.

### **Operational Definitions**

The following definitions were utilized throughout the study, and they helped to foster a clearer understanding of the research question, while also maintaining validity and reliability, uniformity, and coherence in the entire research process.

*Contraband*: Anything that was unauthorized in a prison.

*Contraband interdiction or prevention model*: contraband prevention modalities used in different prisons.

*Contraband prevention joint task force*: Interagency collaboration that prevented contraband flow.

*Contraband smuggling*: Meant bringing unauthorized items into a secured prison by either inmates, visitors, or prison staff.

*Correctional facilities or institutions*: Common language that referred to a secured prison facility with sentenced adult offenders.

*Custody staff*: Correctional officers who provided direct supervision to the inmate's population.

*Deterrence theory*: Established the importance of risk perception, and its social impact on the criminal decision-making process.

*Secure correctional setting:* Prison facility.

*Social change initiatives:* Common language used to pinpoint some ills in the society and advocated for corrective legislations.

*Treatment staff:* Noncustodial staff, and included Case management, and medical staff.

### **Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations**

Obtaining access to secured prisons is always difficult to establish. However, identifying potential participants was not only difficult, but also very dangerous to collect data for my case study, especially they were employees within an agency that has been investigated. These assumptions posed serious limitations in identifying research participants.

It was very difficult to obtain the willingness of correctional officers to participate in this contraband prevention research study, and because of these difficulties, I selected participants from a pool of correctional officers who were employed at two specific institutions. The goal in interviewing Maryland correctional professional was to obtain a diverse perception of participants on the risky behavior that led to the commission of the crime. This qualitative case study also adopted an improved method of preventing contraband items from entering Maryland adult prisons, and potentially prisons in the United States more broadly.

Each participant answered openly and honestly to the questions presented during the interviews. The results of this study were limited to the perception of correctional practitioners, which included correctional officers, meanwhile the inmate population was

not within the scope of this study, since they are considered as a vulnerable population. This case study inquiry assumed that the findings from the study were centered around the qualitative interpretation of the experiences of state correctional practitioners on the risky behavior that involved trafficking contraband within Maryland adult prisons.

### **Preventing and/or Minimizing Validity and Reliability Issues**

The tendency in this study was to prevent or minimize any validity and reliability issues, while hoping that this strategy would facilitate a smooth data collection process. The virtual interviews were created to elicit the correctional professionals' perceptions on the risk involved in contraband trafficking. The study also sought different ways of preventing contraband from entering Maryland adult state prisons. The interviews lasted between 30 to 60 minutes and were based on a time that was convenient to both the participants and me.

Also, this qualitative case study minimized population sampling bias, validity, and reliability issues, by conducting a face-to-face interview with participants virtually, through telephone, Zoom, Facebook, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp. One way that these interviews minimized population bias was that they allowed me to observe the selected participants, their nonverbal behaviors, as well as foster rapport between the participants and myself. The participants who were correctional professionals, understood the risk involved in trafficking contraband into the prison system, and confidently provided firsthand information on how to prevent contraband related issues within Maryland state prisons.

Another strategy in promoting reliability was by avoiding data collection solely through telephone interviews, and the rationale was that telephone interviews alone would make it difficult to establish a rapport with the participants. Since telephone interviews are different from face-to-face interview with participants, applying it solely would have posed more strains and doubts to the validity of the information collected. Also, although distractions may have occurred during the interviews, Novick (2008) believed that some disadvantages of telephone interviews would include a high potential for participants to get distracted during the interviews, from the activities in the immediate environment, as well as the lack of visual cues during the telephone interview process (Novick, 2008).

### **Significance of the Study**

This study contributed to advancing knowledge on contraband prevention in Maryland adult state prisons, as well as advancing evidence-based practice and accountability in correctional practice and administration. The study's contributions are clearly illustrated by Borchert (2016) who noted that, elevating the voices of major prison management actors like prisoners, prison executives, and correctional officers would help greatly in accelerating the fight against prison contraband (Borchert, 2016). Prison wardens, and other correctional stakeholders could benefit from this study, by incorporating the study's contraband prevention strategies in their policies and procedures, thereby reducing contraband related incidents in the Maryland prisons, and other prisons throughout the United States.

This study also had a potential implication for creating a positive social change within the participants, Maryland prison management, and the society. The multiple perspectives on contraband control that were offered by the participants, showed how a lack of control on contraband items within Maryland state prisons could interfere with the safety and security of the correctional staff, the visiting public, and the inmate population. The findings from this study may be used as a “pilot mechanism for other prison officials to use to assess the issues surrounding cellphone contraband” in Maryland adult state prison facilities (see Williams, 2014, p.6).

This study may also contribute in advancing social change policies throughout the Maryland prisons, especially when one considered the continuous and escalating contraband issues that plagued the Maryland DPSCS. The social change initiatives prompted the National Institute of Justice to organize research funds that helped “to improve drug recognition and detection for law enforcement, medicolegal death investigations, and offender monitoring” (Truitt, 2017, para. 9). The above research funding has helped in detecting the presence of drugs in prisons, thereby reducing the percentage of drug related injuries and deaths within correctional facilities throughout the United States. Contraband related issues may have caused serious disability and subsequent death of inmates in correctional facilities within Maryland state prisons, and some common drugs found in these prisons included cocaine, marijuana, and even methamphetamines.

Wollman et al. (2000) asserted that bringing about important changes in state prisons, would require that effective strategies be put in place to influence the attitudes,

and behaviors of others. Based on the tendency to influence the behavior of correctional practitioners, this research was centered around obtaining the perceptions of correctional practitioners in two Maryland state prisons, on the influences that encouraged correctional practitioners to engage in the risky behaviors of trafficking contraband into secured state prisons. The goal in adopting this study, was to advocate for a prison management system that is more policy oriented and reflects evidence-based practice.

### **Summary**

In summary, I presented information on the issues with the risky behavior of trafficking contraband items into Maryland adult state correctional facilities, and how this risky behavior is adopted by correctional practitioners who introduced contraband items into Maryland adult state prisons. The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore the perspectives of correctional practitioners on contraband prevention strategies for Maryland adult state prisons. The investigation into this study was driven by the research question, and the goal was to describe a correctional workplace whereby contraband infiltration has become a recurring issue since 2013. In the next chapter, I will explore the research theories and their applications to this qualitative case study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature for this qualitative case study examined correctional practitioners' perceptions on contraband prevention in Maryland adult state prisons, as well as the different research theories and their foundation for the study. This literature review was relevant in creating the contraband prevention strategies that were needed to effectively intercept the influx of contraband items within Maryland secured prisons. Since it was necessary to establish continuity in this research process on contraband prevention, credibility, and reliability was maintained throughout the entire literature review process.

### **The Identifying Criteria**

The following were the criteria used to identify the literature for this review:

- Prison contraband: Definition of contraband within the prison setting, research, and statistics on the consequences of possessing or providing contraband in prisons.
- Contraband-related challenges in Maryland adult state prisons: Statistics and research on the contraband related issues that existed within correctional settings.
- Prison contraband, and public safety: Research and statistics on the introduction of contraband items in Maryland adult correctional facilities and how this affects the prison population. There were also references to Correctional staff misconduct, with the help of research and statistics on the introduction of contraband items into correctional facilities by prison staff.

- Contraband prevention strategies: Research and scholarly articles on contraband trafficking into Maryland state prisons, as well effective contraband prevention strategies that were based on the perceptions of convicted correctional professionals, will be discoursed. These articles also discoursed the imperative in adopting the theory of deterrence in contraband prevention.

After a thorough examination of both past and current literature, I found no literature that explored the perspectives of correctional practitioners on contraband trafficking in Maryland prison. I therefore relied on advocating for the creation of a more effective and reliable contraband control strategy, that would minimize the flow of contraband items into Maryland prisons. This study filled the gap in literature, while also advocating for the policy changes that may reform the Maryland DPSCS.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theory that framed this research was modern deterrence theory. This theory originated from classical criminological theories that were spearheaded by Cesare Beccaria, an Italian Economist and Philosopher, and Jeremy Bentham, an English philosopher (Tomlinson, 2016). These classical theorists believed that punishments should be administered swiftly, certainly, and it should be proportionate to the crime that was committed, to appropriately deter other individuals from violating the law (Tomlinson, 2016). They also asserted that, a delay between the commission of an offense, and the sanctions, could delay the deterrent effect of the recommended sanction. General deterrence also revealed that, the general population could be deterred from

committing a crime whenever they were made aware of other individuals who were apprehended and punished (Tomlinson, 2016)

Deterrence theory also suggested strategies or regulations that are based on threat and the use of force, and how these strategies could be successful in effective law enforcement administration (Tyler et al., 2015). A thorough application of these theories showed how the society would benefit when a psychological model like deterrence theory was imported into public policy administration (Tyler et al., 2015). Also, when deterrence theory was perceived from the light of criminal mentality, it showed how criminal behavior could be the outcome of the decisions, choices, and the benefits that the offender made from committing a crime (Dittita, 2016). The theory also provided a powerful framework that could effectively assist me in analyzing crime control policies within Maryland adult state prisons.

Also, although the concept of sanction may deter individuals from reoffending, the “certainty of being caught is a vastly more powerful deterrent than the punishment” (National Institute of Justice, 2016, para. 4). When looked at through the criminal justice lens, it meant that the chances of being caught while introducing contraband items into a secured state prison facility, were far more influential in deterring than the punishment itself. The theoretical framework of this study is therefore based on the theory of deterrence, which is the process of transmitting information to discourage the violation of the law.

In addition to the above, there was no doubt that despite the severe nature of sanctions, people have continued to commit contraband related crimes. Even though

punishment may have scared some individuals from reoffending, “the cost and benefit associated with offending, may be best understood in terms of opportunity” (Cook, 2015, p.2), which is better conceptualized as a form of capital that can help individuals to maximize their potentials. Opportunity is usually determined by the volume and the composition of an individual’s capital. An example was the fact that an individual may not be deterred by the severity of a prison sentence if “they acquire a high volume of capital in prison, as compared to their volume and composition of capital in conventional society” (Cook, 2015, p.2). This conceptual framework helped to explain the fact that an individual’s chances of re-offending depended on the nature of the capital that they have acquired (Cook, 2015).

One reason why deterrence theory was important to this study is because it addressed prison violence that was sometimes orchestrated by contraband related issues. Whenever contraband was introduced into a prison facility, it created tension between the correctional staff, the inmate population, and the visiting public. This tension potentially led to violence on inmates by staff or vice versa. Violence is considered a serious public safety issue within the correctional settings and the at-risk individuals were required to be assessed and identified, prior to engaging them in the proper intervention. Gordon and Wong (2015) assessed and measured conceptual framework that could help manage offenders’ behaviors as well as assist with teaching about the consequences of risk-taking behaviors, while also helping correctional staff with proper execution of the challenging duties of protecting the offenders that were being supervised, as well as maintaining the security of the correctional institutions.

Enforcing the theory of deterrence within the prison setting was primordial in reducing the flow of contraband into Maryland adult state prisons. In most prisons in the United States today, prison violence is sometimes initiated by the activities of prison gangs, and this confirmed Lessing's (2016) opinion that prison gangs' issues are more than correctional problems. Prison gangs pose serious issue because of "their ability to project power beyond the prison walls" (Lessing, 2016, p. 5), thereby posing a serious threat to public safety, as well as effective correctional administration.

The application of deterrence theory was also relevant to this study because, whenever a person was charged with committing a crime for example, there was usually a high probability that they will be apprehended, and if punished swiftly enough, these outcomes would scare other person, as well as educate them about the dangers in engaging in contraband related crime commission (Tomlinson, 2016). Examples of where deterrence theory was used to examine similar problems include Wright et al. (2004) who stated that, individuals who are predisposed to crime, were more likely to be affected by the perceived certainty of punishment (Wright et al., 2004). Other studies were conducted to examine the perceived certainty of sanction threats, using a group of probationers attending a drug rehabilitation program that was ordered by the courts. In this study, a simple violation such as "positive urine tests for illegal drugs indicated risk of reoffending and continued disregard for the law" (Wright et al., 2004, para.17). This study revealed that, obtaining information on perceptions of certainty of sanctions before violations occurred, and with individuals who have engaged in serious offenses (Marlowe et al., 2005; Maxwell & Gray, 2000) would reveal a positive effect on the offenders'

perceptions of the certainty of sanction, thereby deterring the offender from future crime commission (Maxwell & Gray, 2000).

Deterrence theory has been used by numerous researchers to prevent individuals from re-offending, and since deterrence theory assumed that potential offenders would have to calculate the cost and benefit of their actions prior to offending, there was no doubt that to prevent these offenders from committing crimes, the criminal justice system had to implement tougher sentences, as a way of deterring future criminal activities. For example, Cook (2015), collected data from the Central Mississippi Prison to examine the factors that might affect the likelihood of reoffending, and how the lack of economic, cultural, and social capital in a community, as well as the high incarceration rate, could greatly affect the likelihood of an individual reoffending upon release (Cook, 2015). He also identified that, since most individuals who go to prison ended up reoffending, traditional deterrence cannot entirely prevent reoffending, but at least it guaranteed that individuals could resist from engaging in criminal activities while they are incarcerated.

This study also reiterated the importance of risk perception by individuals, and the social impact of the poor choices that these individuals usually made. Beyth-Marom et al. (1993) defined risk behavior as “an action entailing some chance of loss” (Beyth-Marom et al., 1993, p.549). If not properly controlled, risk taking behavior could escalate to serious physical, medical or legal harm, and even lead to the arrest, detention, and imprisonment of the perpetrator.

While exploring the definition of deterrence, Elliott (2003) asserted that deterrence could be achieved by injecting the fear of punishment in the criminal’s mind

(Elliott, 2003), meanwhile Beyleveld (1979) attempted to identify, explain, and predict the modifications that would eventually shape the theories of deterrence and rational choice by stating that a “person is deterred from offending by sanction if, and only if he refrains from that act because he fears the implementation of the sanctions” (Beyleveld, 1979, p. 207). The above approaches aligned well with the conception that, the philosophy behind the theory of deterrence was to make the risk in committing a crime to be so great that, the law breaker would believe that they have more to lose, than to gain from the commission of the crime.

One way of deterring inmates from reoffending in most state prisons today was by housing them in segregation units, especially when prison administration believed that “segregation is an effective population management tool and is used to improve inmate’s behavior, [and] reduce aggressive behaviors inside of correctional facilities” (Olive, 2015, p.1). There are different types of segregation, and while some are for disciplinary purposes, others are to protect the offenders and the public. There was also disciplinary segregation which was directed towards inmates who violated institutional rules; administrative segregation for inmates who posed a threat to the facility, and protective custody was assigned to inmates who were at risk of victimization (Olive, 2015).

Some aspects of crime deterrence within prisons were, protective custody, and special confinement. These crime prevention strategies were helpful in fostering the safety of incarcerated offenders, and Maryland residents. Unlike the disciplinary segregation that served as punishment for inmates who have committed serious institutional rule violations like possession and distribution of contraband items while

incarcerated, protective custody was a form of protection provided to offenders who may have been at risk of victimization from violent predators, or the public.

However, although deterrence theory may have scared individuals from introducing contraband items into Maryland State prisons, it also had some setbacks when dealing with restricted housing within Maryland prison facilities. Restricted housing meant placing inmates in either administrative segregation, protective custody, or disciplinary segregation. Although these isolated housing units were meant to adjust the offender's behavior within the prison, in most cases, restricted housing also had the potential of causing serious mental and physical harm to the offender under supervision (Meyers et al., 2018). Once offenders were affected by the restrictive nature of the housing, the only escape route was to involve themselves into more criminal acts, thereby compromising the safety and security of the staff and prison inmate's population. Meyers et al. (2018) also agreed with some scholars that, both civil, and human rights activities that restricted housing had negative impact "on the physical and mental well-being of inmates" (Meyers et al., 2018, para. 1).

Furthermore, since the deterrence theory initiatives are geared towards adjusting criminal behavior, states such as Alaska, California, Maine, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Virginia, and Colorado have "taken steps to implement alternative strategies to address troublesome inmates within their facilities" (Meyers et al., 2018, para. 18). The above initiative was necessary in addressing the issues with restricting offenders in special housing for an extensive period. When offenders were isolated in special housing unit for extensive periods of time, it created serious debilitating physical and psychological

effects, as well as made the correctional working environment very difficult for the correctional staff who must deal with anger and violence from the incarcerated offenders (Meyers et al., 2018).

Deterrence is also considered as a “process of information transmission that is intended to discourage law violation” (Apel, 2012, p.71), and it entails the sanctions that may be imposed when individuals fail to conform to the prescribed behavior (Apel, 2012). The National Institute of Justice (2016) considered deterrence as “the crime prevention effects of the threat of punishment - a theory of choice in which individuals balance the benefits and the cost of crime” (National Institute of Justice, 2016, para.1). To effectively apply the above theory, I obtained different perceptions on crime and sanctions from correctional practitioners, since they were considered as experts with first-hand information on the contraband prevention and control strategies that could be instrumental in controlling contraband trafficking in Maryland adult State prisons.

### **Prison Contraband**

The following literature review provided researched and statistical information on what prison contraband represented; the different types of Maryland state prison contraband; and the difficulties in detecting prison contraband items. The Department of Justice, (2015) defined contraband as any material that was “prohibited by law, regulation, or policy that can reasonably be expected to cause physical injury or adversely affect the safety, security or good order of the facility” (Department of Justice, 2015, para. 11). The above definition of contraband reiterated the policy of the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) which required inmates to only possess the properties that they were

allowed to upon admission (Department of Justice, 2015). Sanders and Murphy (2017) raised awareness on the impact of HIV/AIDS on prisoners worldwide by categorizing the spread of this deadly disease as one of the most dangerous prison contrabands that could potentially cripple the health, safety, and security of the prison population.

The National Institute of Justice (n.d.) considered contraband items in prisons as anything that is prohibited from entering these facilities, and these items included “drugs and weapons, or items prohibited in the area being monitored such as cellphones” (National Institute of Justice, n.d., para. 1). Also, the 18 U.S Code §1719, (n.d.) considered it an offense for anybody to possess or provide contraband in any prison facility. A violation of this statute meant providing any prohibited object to an inmate in a prison, and prohibited objects included: firearm or destructive device; controlled substance; narcotic drugs; United States or foreign currency; phones or paraphernalia, and any other objects that may threaten the safety and security of these facilities (18 U.S Code §1719, n.d.). Some contraband items like “handguns, cellphones, drugs, tobacco, pornographic DVDs, implements for escape and other contraband” (Craig et al., 2016, p. 47), were smuggled into prison facilities by “unmanned aerial aircraft systems (UAS) or unmanned aerial vehicles” (Craig et al., 2016, p. 47). Samilton, (2017) also showed how prisons all over the United States were working hard to keep away drug-smuggling drones (Samilton, 2017).

Furthermore, the Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS)’s contraband delivery method made it difficult to detect contraband trafficking into Maryland prisons. Contraband detection was also rendered more difficult because of the racketeering

conspiracy that was orchestrated by correction staff within Maryland prisons system (Department of Justice, 2016). In 2016, U.S Attorney General, Rob Rosenstein attested to the fact that “prison corruption is a long-standing deeply rooted systemic problem that can only be solved by a combination of criminal prosecutions and policy changes” (Department of Justice, 2016, para. 3). One strategy that he used in detecting, preventing, and controlling contraband trafficking was by collaborating with state, federal and local law enforcement officials to prosecute correctional staff members who bring in contraband into secured facilities. In the indictment report, it was alleged that correctional officers were receiving “payments from facilitators/and or inmates or engaged in sexual relations with inmates” (Department of Justice [DOJ], 2016, para. 9) with the goal of smuggling contraband into Maryland’s ECI prison.

### **Contraband Related Challenges in Maryland Adult State Prisons**

Some research studies have explored the challenges related to implementing a successful contraband intervention program, and one major challenge in implementing a successful contraband prevention model in the Maryland adult state prisons is gang violence. The current harsher incarceration rate of offenders has strengthened the prison gangs’ activities, especially when one considers the overcrowding nature of state correctional facilities, and how the desperate situation has compromised the safety and security of those secured correctional facilities. Lessing (2016) stated that “prison gangs present new and confounding challenges to states” (Lessing, 2016, p.1), and contrary to other security threat groups, prison gangs have come to stay, since most of their leaders are already serving prison time. (Lessing, 2016). It was also critical to note that prison

gangs used the prison facilities as resources to organize criminal activities both inside and outside the prison setting, thereby compromising the safety of both the correctional community as well as the offenders who have been incarcerated.

Another challenge in Maryland adult state prison, was the presence of prison gang activities that have consolidated power inside the prison setting, by “eliminating or subjugating rivals, [and] taking control of key aspects of prison life, (including contraband flow)” (Lessing, 2017, para. 14). The presence of gang members in Maryland adult state prisons, has created a major challenge in implementing contraband intervention policies. Recently, Rodricks (2018), explained how Maryland prison administration was putting up with staff misconduct that involved, “dozens of correctional officers, and others accused of helping incarcerated gang members continue their criminal enterprises behind the walls” (Rodricks, 2018, para.1). Also, the Maryland State prison scandal that involved the Black Guerilla Family (BGF) at the Baltimore City Detention Center (BCDC) prison, was devastating to the safety of the prison facility to an extent that it led to the “shuttering of the old jail in 2015” (Rodricks, 2018, para. 1).

On the other hand, the use of drones in contraband trafficking posed a serious challenge to the contraband prevention initiatives that were carried out by Maryland’s DPSCS. Knezevich and Duncan (2015) reported how drones were deployed to smuggle “drugs tobacco and pornography [items] into a prison” (Knezevich & Duncan, 2015, Para. 1) located in Cumberland, Maryland. This emerging contraband delivery technology was also common in other states like Ohio and South Carolina State prisons,

making contraband trafficking “an emerging problem” (Knezevich & Duncan, 2015.

Para. 6) in modern day correctional system.

There was also the challenge in implementing cost-effective technology to detect contraband items entering Maryland prisons. A glaring example was the fact that, the Maryland Department of Corrections spent over “\$1.8 million worth of advanced metal detectors that can locate the smallest pieces of contraband” (Anderson, 2017, para. 1). This contraband prevention program led to the purchase of over 161 metal detectors for all 24 state run prisons (Anderson, 2017), and even though this technology helped in providing a safe environment for correctional staff and the offenders population, maintaining its efficiently appeared to be very costly to the Maryland taxpayers.

### **Prison Contraband and Public Safety**

Debus-Sherrill et al. (2017) explained how public safety cameras, also known as Closed-Circuit television (CCTV), were fast becoming instrumental public safety tools to help identify contraband items, and how these cameras were equipped with “features such as recording, panning, tilting, and zooming capabilities” (Debus-Sherrill, et al., 2017, p. 367). The CCTV cameras also aided in monitoring inmates’ behavior, identifying, and controlling contraband during visitations, and provided evidence for investigations and potential prosecution of contraband violators (Debus-Sherrill et al., 2017).

Other contraband items that existed within Maryland adult state prisons were sexually transmissible diseases such as HIV/AIDS. Whenever these viruses were not properly controlled within the prison’s settings, there was a potential of its spread through

needle use, unprotected sexual intercourse among inmates, and even between inmates and staff members. A 2016 study by Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health showed that “the cycling of inmates in and out of prisons and jails around the world contribute significantly to the global epidemics of HIV, viral Hepatitis, and Tuberculosis” (Wells, 2016, para. 1). The research further reiterated that inmates obtain a higher rate of these diseases from overcrowded prisons within Maryland correctional system.

Prison contraband trafficking has continued to be a public safety issue, and recently, the Maryland State prosecutor’s office announced the indictment of “two State correctional officers and a State Fiscal Technician with Theft, Conspiracy to Commit Theft, Bribery, and Misconduct”. (Office of State Prosecutor, 2019) The charges resulted from a joint investigation between the Office of the State Prosecutor and the Maryland DPSCS. The indictment alleged that these correctional officers conspired with the Fiscal Technician, “to alter timecard entries, so that the officers were paid for work they did not perform” (Office of State Prosecutor, 2019, para. 2).

### **Contraband Prevention Strategies**

The following selected literature was focused on fostering a growing awareness in prison contraband detection and control strategies, while also hypothesizing the fact that there were serious contraband related issues in Maryland state prisons. The U.S. National Institute of Justice, (2016) showed how “police deter crimes by increasing the perceptions that criminals will be caught and punished” (National Institute of Justice, 2016, para. 6), thereby creating fear in potential criminals from committing crimes. The crime deterrence model was also applicable within the correctional setting, especially

when viewed from the correctional practitioners' perceptions on reducing the flow of contraband within the Maryland DPSCS. To establish a relationship between deterrence and sentencing, the National Institute of Justice (2016) established five important facts about deterrence that could foster policies and create laws that are scientifically based. A glaring example was the fact that "the certainty of being caught [in a criminal act] is a vastly more powerful deterrent than the punishment" (National Institute of Justice, 2016, para 4.). The above example helped to explain the fact that, the chance of getting caught in the commission of a criminal act could be more deterring than the punishment itself.

The United States Department of Justice (2014) Hearings on Sexual Victimization in Prisons, Jails, and Juvenile Correctional Facilities were organized by the Office of Justice Programs, with the goal of preventing the "rape of individuals that are under any form of correctional supervision" (The United States Department of Justice, 2014, p.11). This study highlighted earlier efforts in preventing criminal activities within correctional settings, and at the end of the hearings, the participants came up with corrective plan of action that would eventually reduce the risk of sexual assault in prisons within the entire United States territory. Finally, funds were also allocated to support correctional institutions with the lowest risk for sexual victimization.

Furthermore, the Federal Bureau of Investigation Law-Enforcement Bulletin emphasized the dangers in using contraband cellular phones in Prisons (Burke & Owen, 2010). Individuals were made liable for their actions by reiterating the seriousness of contraband possession by incarcerated individuals, since "prisoners have used them to, for example intimidate and threaten witnesses, transmit photographs including offensive

pictures sent to victims” (Burke & Owen, 2010, para.7). The above publication helped to promote a prison environment that was less hostile for the inmates, the visitors, and the prison staff. In summary, even though some studies on contraband prevention in state prisons might have positively impacted the Maryland state prison administration, a gap still existed in the existing literature.

### **Literature Research Strategy**

First, I contacted the Walden library with questions about finding scholarly articles on contraband prevention strategies within 5 years of my anticipated graduation date of 2021. Databases searched included Criminal Justice Database, Sage Journal, Scholar Works, ProQuest Central, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Dissertation and Theses @ Walden University, Ebsco eBooks, FindLaw, Google Books, Homeland Security Digital Library, ProQuest Dissertation and Theses Global, Academic Search Complete, Walden Library Books, and Political Science Complete. The literature search strategy also involved obtaining peer-reviewed articles, browsing through search engines such as Google Scholar, and using the reference list of articles to determine how many other individuals have cited that article. I also browsed through individual articles on contraband prevention within Maryland State prisons, as well as the interagency coordination that existed within the different criminal justice agencies towards contraband prevention. My approach also involved using search terms such as: *contraband; smuggling; prisons and correctional institutions, and adult state prisons.*

## Summary

Contraband smuggling has posed a major problem in prisons and jails throughout the United States, and it was sad to learn that “often, the people doing the smuggling are guards or other correctional employees, who, motivated by greed, accept bribes from prisoners” (Clarke, 2013, para. 1). Although the Maryland prison stakeholders have implemented different ways to combat contraband smuggling such as introducing metal detectors, and instituting mandatory searches when entering the correctional facilities, prison contraband has continued to pose a major challenge within the Maryland correctional institutions. Despite the implementation of contraband control technology like metal detector, and handheld scanning devices in prisons, previous researchers have yet been able to establish a more efficient contraband control strategy.

The regulation of prison contraband items like cellphones, gang propaganda, and HIV/AIDS, is very significant to public safety. When contraband items entering prisons are not properly controlled, prison facilities may become a breeding ground for violent crimes as well as an infectious disease. Contraband trafficking in prisons may potentially orchestrate violent crimes within the prisons, as well as the streets, especially when the offenders have gang affiliations.

The arrest and conviction of correctional professionals across Maryland, was indicative of the existing prison contraband related challenges. The United States Attorney’s Office, District of Maryland. (2018) announced the conviction of correctional officer Jessica Vennie, as the seventy-seventh of the eighty defendants convicted for accepting bribes to “smuggle contraband, including narcotics, tobacco, and cellphones

into [Maryland's Eastern Correctional Institution] prison" (The United States Attorney's Office, District of Maryland, 2018). The above conviction was a part of the contraband intervention joint taskforce that was organized by the attorney general's office, with the interagency collaboration of local law enforcement and correctional intelligence agencies.

### **Conclusion**

This study was important because it increased public awareness about the prevailing dangers of contraband trafficking in state run correctional facilities, while also advocating for the social changes that would reduce the flow of contraband in Maryland prisons. The study also fostered the creation of a violent-free prison setting, whereby the safety of the prison population and the public could be properly maintained. The study also showed how the inability to stop contraband smuggling into Maryland State prisons would have the potential of compromising the safety and security of not only the incarcerated offenders, but also, the correctional employees, and the visiting public. The study also filled the gap in the existing literature, regarding contraband detection and control, and the literature review showed how contraband related challenges could compromise public safety when not properly prevented and controlled. The goal in adopting this contraband prevention strategy was to obtain first-hand information from correctional practitioners whose expertise has helped in creating a contraband prevention taskforce within Maryland correctional system, as well as. building the modern prison administration that the public strongly advocated. In the next chapter, I will discuss the research method, with emphasis on the research methodology, research design and rationale, participants of the study, measures, ethical protection of participants,

procedures for participants recruitment, data collection, data analysis procedure, verification of the findings, role of the researcher, and credibility and transferability.

### Chapter 3: Research Method

This qualitative case study explored the perceptions of correctional practitioners from two correctional institutions in Maryland concerning the difficult task of preventing contraband items from entering secured adult state prisons. This chapter discusses the following topics: research methodology; research design and rationale; participants of the study; measures; research questions; ethical protection of participants; procedures for participants recruitment; data collection; data analysis; verification of findings; credibility and transferability. Finally, the chapter also explores the role of a researcher as both an observer, as well as an active participant throughout the entire research process.

#### **Research Methodology**

The study was focused on creating a qualitative case study methodology that would align the different sections of the research with the research questions, to include data collection and analysis, the population sampling, reliability, validity, and ethical issues, in a way that would assure continuity in scholastic pursuits. Data collection was carried out virtually due to the current coronavirus pandemic social restriction standards, and through interviews with 10 selected correctional practitioners who were employed at two prisons in Maryland. I followed a qualitative method of inquiry that included participants' observations, and field work (see Patton, 2015a). In Appendix B, I have also enclosed the sample research interview questionnaire that was distributed to the participants during the data collection interview.

This case study research explored the opinions of correctional organization's practitioners, within a defined space and time, and since the boundary between the

phenomenon and the study context were sometimes unclear, the study design therefore relied on data from multiple sources to establish credibility (Yin, 2014, p.17). The defining characteristics of this qualitative case study included space and time, and these characteristics were very important in bounding the case about contraband prevention in Maryland adult state prisons. The qualitative case study examined the perceptions of correctional professionals on the influences that impacted correctional officers' choices to participate in the risky behavior related to contraband trafficking in the overall Maryland Adult State Prisons system since 2013.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The design of choice for this research was case study, and Miles et al. (2014) considered case study as a “phenomenon of some sort in a bounded context” (Miles et al., 2014., p. 28). Case study has been used in many studies since the early 1900s, and Stake (1995), Yin (2003), and Baxter and Jack (2008) have guided case study methodology. The case study design for this study was based on Baxter and Jack (2008), who agreed with Yin (2003) that potential data sources would include, “documentation, archival records, interviews, physical artifacts, direct observation, and participants-observation” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 544).

The case study design was appropriate for this study because it facilitates the “exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 544). The above strategy helped to make sure that prison contraband related issue was explored from different lenses, and in the light of the above concept, I closely examined the perceptions of correctional professionals regarding contraband

prevention strategies within the Maryland adult state prisons. Another benefit associated with using the case study design for this study was the fact that, it provided multiple data collection sources, thereby enhancing the credibility of the data that was collected (Baxter & Jack 2008). This strategy offered me an opportunity to acquire a holistic understanding of the perceptions of correctional practitioners on the risky behaviors that influence correctional officers to traffic contraband items into secured Maryland adult prisons.

### **Participants of the Study**

The participants in this study consisted of 10 recruited individuals who were selected from a convenient population sample of correctional practitioners employed at the two prisons included in the case study. The selected participants were at least 18 years of age, and willing to participate in the data collection interview.

I interviewed the selected participants virtually, using phone, Zoom, Facebook, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn, due to the current coronavirus pandemic social distancing restrictions. I furthermore arranged for an interview time that was convenient for both myself as well as the participants. The selected correctional professionals were presented a structured interview; meanwhile the interview in turn provided an opportunity for participants to deliver their personal perceptions based on their experiences as correctional practitioners. The goal in adopting this strategy was to create a more realistic environment that promotes the full understanding of the reasons why correctional officers may engage in the risky behavior that involves the introducing of contraband items into Maryland state prisons. Another goal was devising a more realistic way of deterring

individuals from committing illegal acts. An informed consent was obtained from participants. The participants' virtual recruitment process served as a catalyst to encourage the full participation of the interviewees, as well as maintaining the credibility and reliability of the information provided.

### **Measures**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of state correctional professionals about the influences that would impact Maryland correctional practitioners' choices to participate in the risky behavior related to the use of contraband in Maryland adult state prisons. The perceptions in this case were identified as practical personal experiences which occurred during the execution of duties by the participants. The research question has been stated below, and to better understand participants' experiences, a more specific list of sample interview questions is shown in Appendix B.

### **Research Question (RQ)**

RQ1: What are the perceptions of correctional practitioners on contraband prevention in Maryland adult state prisons?

### **Ethical Protection of Participants**

The participants in this study were 10 adult volunteers, and the study implemented the general ethical principles that apply to human subjects in research such as: showing respect for the participants by obtaining their informed consent; minimizing harm to participants (beneficence) and selecting participants equitably and treating them fairly through the application of the principle of justice (Laureate Education Inc, 2013). Research participants completed the consent form, and all information collected was

treated as confidential. I provided anonymity of information collected by masking the identity of the participants. The participants first and last names were excluded, as well as their emails, and home addresses. The files, transcripts, and recordings were preserved in a secured research office, meanwhile access to these data is reserved for solely me.

### **Procedures for Participants Recruitment**

I used purposeful sampling for participants recruitment, and the goal was to focus more on the phenomenon while also exploring information rich cases (see Patton, 2002, p. 46). By using purposeful sampling, I was able to find individuals or cases that would provide insight into the case that was been studied. Through purposeful sampling, I was able to select correctional practitioners since they have expertise in contraband prevention within prisons and were also willing and able to participate in the interviews.

I adopted a convenient sampling technique that targeted participants based on the value that they brought to the study, rather than just the fact that they were accessible for the study. The recruitment strategy created an unbiased guide to the participants' selection, and it also encouraged the implementation of a case study design that would foster participants' education. I carried out the participant recruitment as follows:

1. Sought and acquired IRB approval to conduct the research.
2. Contacted participants virtually to disseminate information about the research study.
3. Encouraged interested participants who were correctional professionals currently working at the institutions of interest to sign up for the initial interview virtually,

due to the current coronavirus pandemic social distancing restrictions, and the goals was to encourage their full participation in the project

4. Prior to the interview, the selected participants gave their consent by either signing the Consent Form, or just stating verbally that they have agreed to participate in the study. A sample interview questionnaire is found in Appendix A.
5. After the initial interview, I validated the research results, with the goal of building a clear picture of the correctional practitioners' strategies in identifying and preventing the risky behavior of introducing contraband products into Maryland adult state prisons by correctional officers.
6. The interview recordings were transcribed word for word, meanwhile the files and transcripts were treated as confidential and secured in a secure office.

### **Data Collection**

The goal of the study was to recruit at least 10 subjects for the study (N=10), and the data was collected from multiple sources that included in depth interviews, as well as document sources. The interview protocol was a set of questions that prompted responses from the participants through open ended questions that participants were required to respond to, and the goal was to ensure a thorough application of the data collection procedure. An example of a prompt was when I asked the participants to tell me more. The interview questionnaire included a nineteen questions interview script, and a sample interview script is found in Appendix A of this document. The interviews lasted between 30 minutes to 60 minutes and helped in building a rapport with participants.

Participants' interviews were centered on obtaining basic demographic information like the participant's age, gender, ethnicity, highest level of education, marital status, as well as their perceptions on prison contraband trafficking. Participants also provided their opinions on why correctional practitioners would engage in the risky behavior that involved the trafficking of contraband into secured prisons. Finally, during the interview, the participants shared their perceptions on what contraband intervention model would be appropriate in eliminating the flow of contraband items into Maryland adult state prisons.

The interviews were recorded with the consent obtained from the participants, meanwhile the use of voice prompts enabled me to generate "verbatim transcript of the interview" (Jamshed, 2014, para. 3). The information that I gathered during the interviews provided a better understanding of the perspectives of the correctional practitioners on the prevention of contraband infiltration into Maryland adult state prisons. Also, by sharing their experiences, the participants who were state correctional practitioners, built a rapport with me, thereby fostering credibility and reliability in the data collection process.

The questions that I reserved for a follow up interview were developed based on the data that was collected during the in-depth interview. Meanwhile, a transcript was created and crosschecked for accuracy with the participants' response (Knapik, 2018). These follow-up interview questions were intended to validate the participants' experiences on the influences that may cause correctional practitioners to engage in the risky behavior of trafficking contraband into secured state prisons. The follow up

interviews also provided more insight into the reasons why correctional practitioners engage in contraband trafficking, while also establishing credibility in the information that was collected from participants.

The data collection interviews were carried out virtually due to the current coronavirus pandemic social restriction standards, and the interview date and time were agreed upon by both me and the participants. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed for documentation, and follow-up interviews as required. The collected data was organized into different files that included the interview transcript, the observation notes, and any recordings.

Coding was conducted by hand using the interview transcript, meanwhile coding is the “identification of topics, issues, similarities and differences that are revealed through the participants’ narrative and interpreted by the researcher” (Sutton & Austin, 2015. Para. 17). Also, since it would be complex to do hand coding for a massive data set, my data set permitted me to do hand coding, as well as corroborate the outcome with NVivo software coding results. I used codes to passages of data to permit an easy understanding of the passage, as well as ensure consistency in the flow of information. This strategy permitted me to create field notes for the study, and to carefully analyse the collected data.

As soon as the data collection process began, I agreed with Yin’s (1994) suggestion that an early data analysis was very critical in interpreting the case study method. To assist with the early data analysis process, I used the coding technique. Atkinson (2002) agreed with Mile and Huberman (1994) that “codes are tags or labels

that assign units of meaning to the data and for the quick identification of the segments relating to the research questions and any potential themes” (Atkinson, 2002, p.2). The goal in using the coding method was to establish credibility in the data collection and analysis process, as well as reducing the collected data into themes, and finally representing them into tables, figures or even discussions.

### **Data Analysis**

I utilized four steps in the data analysis process that were as follows: In the first step, I transcribed the participants’ interview audio along with the field notes. This strategy assisted in the organization of the collected data. To analyze the data accurately, I used NVivo software to assist in coding the data, and the software was used in conjunction with hand coding. The second step involved reviewing the interview protocol sheet and the audiotape, alongside with the research questions, to formulate notes concerning themes, and patterns from the interview. By reviewing the interview protocol, I was able to make the adjustments required to effectively answer the research questions. Thirdly, after transcribing the first and second steps listed above, I then compared the data obtained from both steps, and then a continuous comparison proceeded after each method of data collection. This process allowed me to easily identify the themes or categories, thereby organizing the data simultaneously with data collection procedure (Merriam, 2009).

The final step in the data analysis process involved coding the information, and it included organizing the data into segments, and placing them into categories that were labelled in the language used by the participants. I also created a list of topics and placed

in columns to begin the coding process (Creswell, 2009). Descriptive words were used, and these words eventually evolved into categories. One way of doing this was by drawing lines between the different categories, to establish inter-relationships (Creswell, 2009). The type of coding that I incorporated was the settings codes, which involved the participants' way of thinking about the risky behavior that would influence correctional practitioners to introduce contraband items into Maryland adult state prisons. The last two steps in the coding process involved putting the themes and codes into narrative passages, to reveal a detailed discussion of the themes, direct quotes, and the multiple perspectives from the interviews. Descriptive information was displayed in a table as a way of conveying the participants' response to the research questions.

Based on the information gathered, and all the steps taken to analyze the data, I presented the lessons from this study in comparison with the findings from previous literature or theories (Creswell, 2009). The lessons that were obtained from the study, portrayed the reasons why correctional practitioners would engage in the risky behavior of trafficking contraband items into secured prisons, and how this unprofessional behavior was usually because of the security loopholes that existed within the correctional facilities. The goal of the study, was also to motivate the correctional stakeholders to create a contraband intervention joint taskforce that would eventually eliminate the flow of contraband into secured state prisons, thereby introducing a positive social change within Maryland DPSCS.

### **Verification of Findings**

This qualitative case study findings were verified through “the process of checking, confirming, making sure, and been certain” (Morse et al., 2002, para.18) that the research strategy would foster validity and reliability. After coding the research transcript, and arranging it according to different themes, I then created assumptions that were based on the participants’ experiences, and with the participants’ full support. Also, as the narratives transitioned from one coded theme to another, the participants’ perspectives became credible (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

Furthermore, to validate the accuracy of the research outcome, I had to discuss at least some or all the following: “persistent observation, triangulation, peer review, negative case analysis, clarifying researcher bias, members check, rich and thick description, or external audits” (Creswell, 1998, pp. 201-203). This study on its part focused on the: clarification of researcher’s bias, persistent observation, and rich description of the research experience. The above approaches helped to deepen my understanding of the entire research process as well as the verification of the findings.

Through persistent observation, I served as a collector, and observed the entire research study through the lenses of the correctional practitioners that participated in the interview process. This strategy deepened my understanding of the research subject matter. While serving as an observer, and as a data collector, multiple personal and professional learning options were available for me, as well as the participants, during and even after the dissertation has been written (Stanfield, 2016).

Furthermore, as a public policy-oriented scientist or scholar practitioner, I have always been interested in exploring, understanding, and even predicting the observables, also known as ‘empirical realities’, and represented as ‘data’. The experiences expressed by the participants of the study, presented personal preferences that were deeply grounded in human beliefs, through a keen perception of the environment in which they live (see Stanfield, 2016). The experiences were expressed voluntarily by the participants, thereby making it easier to understand the participants’ experiences, and to verify the study’s findings

Through clarification of researcher’s bias, I was prompted to adopt the virtual interviews setting, due to the current coronavirus pandemic restrictions. Maintaining field notes on the interactions between participants helped me to be able to explore the research phenomenon, as well as clarify the research problem, situation, and even the context of study (see Sutton & Austin, 2015). This strategy gave me the opportunity to put myself “in another person’s shoes and to understand the subjective experiences of participants” (Sutton & Austin, 2015, para. 2).

In addition to the above, the rich description technique permitted me to create a detailed description of the research experience, with the goal of establishing credibility in the information provided by the participants. Some of the items that required a rich and thick description included: verbatim transcript, field notes, direct quotations from participants, and observations from both the participant and my point of view. It is also very important to remember that questions that usually arise from the qualitative research data verification process are usually related to “the reliability of the interpretation and

representation of the participants' narratives" (Sutton & Austin, 2015, para. 19), and this study attempted to represent the participants' opinions on contraband prevention in a clear and verifiable manner, thereby addressing the issues concerning the credibility, and reliability in interpreting the participants' perceptions.

### **Role of the Researcher**

At the time of the study, I worked with the State of Maryland's Division of Parole and Probation as a Parole and Probation agent and had previous experience as a correctional officer and as a correctional case management specialist in the State of Maryland adult prisons. Since it is very important to avoid bias during the data collection and analysis process, I avoided any tendencies that could influence the participant's response either through facial expressions or gestures towards a particular response and did not push participants to continue answering questions that they do not feel comfortable answering. Because I was the key data collection instrument in this research, biases were mitigated using journaling, data triangulation, and members checking. The goal in using this strategy was to ensure trustworthiness in the qualitative research projects.

### **Credibility and Transferability**

In qualitative case studies, trustworthiness is necessary in establishing credibility, and any threats to the trustworthiness of information collected, would have presented a "shallow view of the participants' experience of the phenomenon, [and] bias in interpretation of participants' information" (Burkholder et al., 2016, p. 210). To avoid this backlash, I recorded the interviews, and verified the collected data as soon as

possible. To assure the trustworthiness of the information collected, I, also organized follow up interviews as needed.

Confirmability was another way that I established credibility in the information that was collected, and Korstjens and Moser (2018) considered confirmability as a way of confirming the findings of a research project with other researchers. Through confirmability, I made sure that the research question, research findings, and the interpretation of the researched data were credible and interrelated. This strategy was helpful in establishing continuity in this scholastic work (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Since the purpose of this qualitative research was to assure trustworthiness through easy transferability of information, I provided an in-depth description of the research project to the extent that the reader would be able to determine if the information is transferable to their own setting. The ability to transfer trustworthy information to a different setting is considered as establishing a “transferability judgement” (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p. 122). To assure reliability of the data, I assured that the information been transferred was credible and trustworthy.

### **Summary**

This section contains information on research methodology, research design and rationale, the participants of the study, measures, ethical protection of participants, procedures for participants recruitment, data collection, data analysis, verification of findings, and the role of researcher. I also presented information on the credibility and transferability of information provided by the participants. In the next chapter, I will

discuss the research result, the setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis and thematic outcome, evidence of trustworthiness, and the summary of the chapter.

## Chapter 4: Results

The Maryland DPSCS stakeholders have acknowledged the devastating effects of contraband trafficking into secure Maryland prisons, even though both the offenders and correctional staff have continuously minimized the deterring effect of sanctions to the perpetrators. In this chapter, I explored the participants' perceptions, including individual criminal motivations, as well as the risk-taking behaviors that translated into criminal acts. By conducting interviews with selected correctional professionals, I sought to match the goal of increasing public awareness towards Maryland's Criminal Law Article, Sections 9-410 and 9-412 through 9-417, that stated "it is unlawful for a person to possess, deliver, or possess with intent to deliver contraband in a place of confinement" (MD DPSCS, n.d., para.4). By obtaining first-hand information from the correctional practitioners, I geared the study's purpose towards creating a contraband intervention model that may eventually resolve the current contraband related issues that were physically and psychologically harming the efficient running of the Maryland adult state prisons. The purpose of the current study is to examine the perceptions of correctional practitioners on the important strategies that would effectively deter correctional professionals from engaging in the dangerous behavior of, introducing contraband items into Maryland adult state prisons. The study also showed how the risky taking tendencies by correctional professionals have encouraged violence, staff misconduct, and gang activities in prisons throughout the State of Maryland, and the United States as a whole.

### **Research Question**

The participant responses to the interview questions exposed the opinions of correctional practitioners on the reasons why correctional officers may engage in the risky behavior of introducing contraband into Maryland adult state prisons. The research question for this study was: What are the perceptions of correctional practitioners on contraband prevention in Maryland adult state prisons?

The interview protocol questionnaire consisted of 19 questions that included general demographic information such as: the participants' interview number, age, sex, ethnicity, highest level of education, and marital status. The interview questions also explored the perceptions of correctional practitioners on contraband prevention in Maryland state prisons. Other interview questions involved the quest for an ideal contraband prevention model that would effectively reduce contraband items from entering state prisons. There were also questions about the obstacles within the correctional facilities that may prevent correctional practitioners from trafficking contraband into the state prison facilities. There was also reference made to the use of background check in preventing contraband trafficking. Finally, the last part of the interview questionnaire explored the actions that have been taken by the employer, as well as the correctional practitioners to reduce contraband entry into the adult state prisons.

This chapter provides a description of the setting, the participants, the participant recruitment methods, the design of the study, and the methods used for data collection and analysis. The concluding sections includes the results of the interviews, evidence of

the trustworthiness of the study, and an introduction to the final chapter of this study. The chapter also reveals the thematic outcome of the study, as well as the table of the themes that resulted from the data analysis.

### **Setting**

The recruitment process was carried out by distributing fliers to current correctional professionals who are experienced in contraband prevention and control. The fliers were distributed virtually: through email, telephone calls, Zoom, and social media forums where the participants congregated (Facebook, WhatsApp, LinkedIn). I also used snowball sampling to recruit participants via telephone, email, and the social media forums mentioned above. I conducted 10 interviews throughout the months of November and December 2020. The information on the flyers included participants' recruitment requirements and my telephone number. I was not aware of the participants' identity, and I had not physically met any of the participants except virtually during the interview.

### **Demographics**

The participants were reminded that their real identity would be concealed, and their disclosures would be kept confidential. They were 18 years and above and employed at two correctional institutions in the State of Maryland. The data collection process did not include the participants' names or addresses, but it was rather based on general demographic information, as well as the participants' perceptions on the different strategies that would deter correctional officers' from introducing contraband in Maryland state prisons. Each participant was made aware of the anonymous nature of their declarations, and the goal was to allow them to respond freely to the inquiries.

Although recruitment was not made based on gender preferences, 60% of the participants were male. The male correctional practitioners came from both facilities, meanwhile, the remaining 40% female correctional practitioners also came from both institutions. All participants met the criteria of being over 18 years old, working in the institutions included in the case study, and possessed expertise in contraband prevention and control, based on their experiences and longevity in service. Participants were referred as Participant 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. I made each interviewee aware of the anonymous nature of their disclosures, and this declaration made them more comfortable during the interview process.

### **Data Collection**

As a qualitative case study researcher, and scholar practitioner, I took into consideration the current coronavirus pandemic social distancing restrictions as I obtained firsthand virtual interview data from participants during the data collection process. The virtual interviews were conducted via telephone, Zoom, Facebook, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp, and they lasted between 30 to 60 minutes. The participants' answers to the interview questions disclosed their perceptions as correctional professionals on the different strategies that would prevent the infiltration of contraband items into Maryland adult state prisons.

As soon as I received approval from Walden University's IRB (11-04-1-0156257), I began to distribute fliers virtually to the potential participants. The fliers were distributed to participants via emails, telephone calls, Zoom, as well as the above

listed social media platforms. The fliers listed my telephone number which participants called to schedule a time for the interviews.

During each interview, I asked the participants if they knew of others who met the study criteria and would be willing to participate. As a result of the extensive distribution of flyers through emails, Zoom, and the above listed social media platforms, 10 participants responded to the request for interview. Due to the current coronavirus pandemic social restrictions guidelines, the interviews were conducted virtually by phone, through Zoom platform, LinkedIn, Facebook, and WhatsApp. The interviews were conducted between the month of November through December of 2020, and each interview lasted between 30 to 60 minutes and was recorded. Based on the sensitive nature of this inquiry, the snowball sampling was considered a more effective way of collecting data from the participants. All the participants confirmed that they were correctional practitioners employed with the state of Maryland DPSCS and had a post at the selected state correctional institutions.

During the initial contact with participants, they were assigned identifying numbers, as well as the time and date that is convenient to both the participants and I to conduct the interview (see Wiederhold, 2015). I received the acceptance to participate in interview from participants through verbal response, consent form, or email response. Prior to the interview, I also confirmed the participants' assigned numbers that were given during the initial contact and thanked the participants for accepting the invitation.

During the interview, I read the interview protocol questions listed in Appendix B, and, as the interview proceeded, I had to sometimes repeat the questions as well as

explain some technical terms in the questions, to help the participants to better understand the question, as well as establish a rapport with participants. Some technical terms that needed further clarifications to participants included: perceptions; contraband prevention, Joint task force – Interagency collaboration, and contraband flow. Explaining these terms to participants helped increase their understanding of the research questions, while also maintaining validity, and clarity throughout the process.

The interviews were also recorded via virtual interview tools (phone, Zoom, LinkedIn, Facebook, WhatsApp), The interviews lasted between 30 to 60 minutes, and were conducted voluntarily, based on the consent obtained from the participants. At the end of every interview, the interview (audio and video) recordings were transcribed word for word, meanwhile the files and transcripts were treated as confidential and secured in a research office, away from the public.

### **Data Analysis**

The participants' responses were based on their experiences as correctional professionals, and the raw data was analyzed using Bazeley's (2011) methodology, which followed the model of Rubin and Rubin (2012), that involved conducting in-depth interviews to understand the perceptions of participants, regarding the choices to engage in risky behaviors. The information that I obtained from participants was developed into codes, with the help of NVivo qualitative data analysis software (released in March 2020). I identified evolving themes during the data analysis process, even though it became more complicated to analyze the data, since the correctional practitioners spoke using prison slang such as, "rovers" meaning, the correctional practitioner assigned to

conduct vehicle patrol around the perimeters of the prison facility. Other expressions that were used by participants were the fact that contraband was considered as a “family business,” meaning those who traffic contraband considered themselves as a family and helped each other to keep the illegal activity confidential. Participants also used expressions such as “homeboys/hommies”, meaning that the contraband traffickers were usually from the same hometown or knew each other, and this was a way to strengthen their bond to be able to continue in the illegal activity. To verify the accuracy of the prison slang used by participants, I sometimes paraphrased what they said, and then asked them if the information was accurate, or if it made sense when translated.

As the data analysis phase continued, I identified repeated words and phrases (see Bazeley, 2011), for example: “contraband; family business; front lobby; rear entrance; rovers; attitude of supervisors,” among other things. I also noticed that each time that participants were asked questions about why correctional practitioners took the risk of engaging in contraband related activities within the prison setting, there was a short moment of silence before participants spoke. The participants also acknowledged that there are good and bad officers within the prisons setting, and while the good ones do what they are supposed to be doing, the bad ones engage themselves in illegal activities for personal gains, or because of greed, or due to a lack of self-esteem.

I noted the phrases used by the participants and clustered them into a tree node with the hierarchical headings like security loopholes; Correctional practitioners risk taking tendencies; The search for an Ideal contraband interdiction model. I filed additional words or phrases into subgroups in classification folders. I continued to listen

to the recordings for emotional words, which I placed on the tree nodes. The Nodes acted as a storage container for data until there was a need for the information. The tree nodes displayed the information in a view, while allowing me to select which node to use (see Bazeley, 2011).

Even though the phrasing from the 10 participants varied, it still conveyed similar meanings. I also stacked the participants' thoughts on the tree nodes after listening to and interpreting the interview transcripts. As I listened to the recording and read the transcript, I found slight interpretive analysis differences. For example, I heard the emotional expressions in the recordings that were absent in the transcript.

As I began coding, the perceptions presented by the participants showed a clear expression of sadness, pity, and risk in the recording, and these expressions helped me to identify the nodes, and eventually the themes (Bazeley, 2011). Some repetitive words used by participants were money; contraband; and officers. A phrase that was prevalent was "the officers conducting pat down", meaning officers who conduct search of individual's outer body, by running their hands around the outer garments of the individual.

To better comprehend the participants' perceptions as they related to contraband prevention in state prisons, I used "the process of checking, confirming, making sure, and been certain" (Morse et al., 2002, para.18) that the research strategy would foster validity and reliability. While paying particular attention to the participants' slangs, I made sure that I understood the thoughts that the slangs conveyed. The participants' perceptions often included references to their tendencies to give up in the fight against contraband.

For example, Participant 8 stated that, “even though there was a general pat down procedure in place for inmates, visitors, and correctional practitioners, people still bring contraband to the facilities”. This meant that, it was almost impossible for the participant to completely stop the flow of contraband items into prison facilities, despite all the years that they have been working as a correctional officer. After conducting the interviews, I transcribed the manuscript of the recordings, to be able to identify the themes, and analyze the interview results.

As hand coding began to take shape, I started seeing repetitive information. Based on the interviews, there was no doubt that correctional practitioners were coping with the stress of not only preventing contraband items from entering this secured prison, but also the stress of betraying coworkers who were involved in contraband trafficking. Based on the answers provided during the interviews, the correctional practitioners all agreed that contraband trafficking is a major issue that had taken a toll on correctional practitioners throughout prisons managed by the state of Maryland.

While listening to the participants recordings, I also observed that their voices took different forms, ranging from excitement for participating in the study, to nonverbal expressions. Some nonverbal expressions were observed through sighing, laughing briefly, and sometimes just staying silent. Overall, all the participants were very relaxed during the interview, and they all participated voluntarily up to the end of the interviews.

During the interviews, I was able to comprehend the correctional slang used by the participants, which helped in bringing meaning to the coding process. I frequently asked for clarification of the correctional slang that the participants used to express

themselves during the interview. An example of a slang was when Participant 1 stated, “Contraband trafficking is considered as a “family affair.” This meant that the individuals who do the trafficking, would form a click that they considered as a family. However, as I proceeded with the coding process, I made sure that I listened to the recordings while having the text in front of me, to be able to obtain a better understanding of the participants perceptions as they were portrayed during the interview.

### **Thematic Outcomes**

Three themes emerged from the data that was analyzed: Security loopholes within the facilities that encourage contraband trafficking; Correctional practitioners’ risk-taking tendencies; and the search for an ideal contraband interdiction model. These themes reflect the repetitive information that were obtained from the participants during the interviews, and they also aligned with the theoretic framework that was presented earlier in this study. Table 1 illustrates the three emergent themes.

**Table 1***Themes*

Theme Number	Name of Theme
1	Security Loopholes within the Facilities that Encourage Contraband Trafficking
2	Correctional Practitioners' Risk-Taking Tendencies
3	Correctional Practitioners' Risk-Taking Tendencies

***Theme 1: Security Loopholes Within the Facilities that Encourage Contraband Trafficking***

The first theme emphasized security loopholes within the facilities that encouraged contraband trafficking. Participants were asked the following three subquestions under the security loophole theme: (a) “What are the challenges related to implementing successful contraband intervention program in Maryland adult state prisons? (b) “How has your experience as a correctional practitioner impacted your perception regarding the policies on prison management? and (c) “How have these policies encouraged contraband introduction into Maryland adult state prisons?”. The following responses were obtained from the participants.

Over 90% of the participants indicated security loopholes as a major issue within the facilities. Participant 1 cited issues like the security at the front lobby that needed to be tightened, to prevent visitors and even inmates from trafficking contraband through the front lobby. If the officers posted at the front lobby and rear entrance are not vigilant enough to control the traffic of individuals and delivery vehicles, anybody would be able to smuggle contraband into the prisons. The other participants cited technological

challenges that included the absence of modern contraband detection equipment that can detect contraband items like metal and drugs. A modern contraband detection technology is necessary to boost the security of the prison facilities, without which, any individual would easily walk into the facilities with contraband without been detected. Also, the current scanners that exist in the prisons were originally made to detect only metallic objects, thereby making it easy for drug to be smuggled into the facilities undetected.

Some participant highlighted the unhealthy relationship that existed between regular officers and the supervisory staff, and how this challenge has created a security loophole within the prisons. For example, whenever a contraband intervention proposal was made by a junior staff member, the supervisors believed that junior officers were not intelligent enough to make smart decisions. Some participants thought that some supervisors “did not go through the appropriate education that is required for them to effectively meet up to the task that is required for the job”. The above assertions went along to confirm the fact that, there was not an effective teamwork between the personnel in some facilities, thereby creating a security loophole that could be exploited by any potential criminal to traffic contraband into the facilities.

A participant mentioned that, because of the security loopholes that existed within some prisons, some outside supply staff took advantage of the situation to introduce contraband into some facilities. For example, the participant stated that, in one of the faculties, an outside contractual worker who was responsible for spraying insecticides in the facility was apprehended and charged with possession of contraband cell phone in a

prison. This individual must have evaluated the security loopholes within the facility, prior to taking the risk to introduce contraband cellphone into the facility.

Other challenges that the participants observed within the different facilities were heavy inmates' movements during the day, lack of up-to-date contraband control equipment, staff shortages, and the presence of prison gangs within the correctional facilities. The above challenges made it difficult for the correctional practitioners to effectively control the flow of contraband within the facilities. For example, the prison gang activities within the facilities have been the source of prison violence that included assault on staff, inmates, and visitors. As concerns the challenges with the lack of up-to-date equipment to detect sophisticated contraband items like apple watch, one participant mentioned that "the contraband detection equipment that we are currently using are outdated. We need new equipment to counter the new and advanced technological devices that exist today, like apple watches; etc.". If contraband items like apple watches are not detected earlier enough, they could serve as cellphones within the prison, thereby compromising the safety and security of the inmates as well as the correctional staff.

Another group of participants declared that the greatest security loophole within the correctional facilities were "dirty staff". These types of correctional practitioners were considered as inmate friendly, and they will do everything possible to please the inmates rather than adhering to the oath that they took to protect the public. Also, they would sometimes refuse to conduct the core function like conducting strip search on inmates who returned from the work release detail. The strip search policy is important in reducing the flow of contraband into the facilities, and when not properly implemented,

the security of the institution as well as the safety of the staff, inmates, and the visiting public may be compromised. Almost all the participants asserted that, when correctional practitioners fraternize with the offenders, the probability of trafficking contraband is usually very high, due to the inmates' manipulative tendencies.

The participants also discussed their personal experiences on the inadequate security measures that have created a security loophole within the prisons. They also addressed the potential detriments and negative consequences related to correctional practitioners' risk-taking tendencies. I also noticed that participants understood that the risk-taking behavior of trafficking contraband into the State of Maryland prisons was against the law, however, some corrupt correctional practitioners still took the risk of engaging in such unprofessional behaviors.

### ***Theme 2: Correctional Practitioners' Risk-Taking Tendencies***

The question that I asked the participants was: "What are the perceptions of correctional professionals on the reasons why correctional practitioners take the risk of engaging in contraband related activities within the prison setting?"

The different responses to the above interview question showed how participants believed that some officers would take any risk to satisfy their personal desires, and how this risk-taking behavior has contributed greatly to fostering the flow of contraband items into state prisons. According to the risk-taking tendency, the need to obtain material or personal gain, outweighed the potential negative consequences of being caught trafficking contraband into the prisons. These corrupt correctional practitioners were

willing to accept whatever consequences if caught with contraband, and the risk of involving themselves into such misconduct was acceptable to them.

About 90% of the participants acknowledged the fact that, some correctional practitioners took the risk to engage in contraband related activities because of the following reasons: they felt insecure, they had low self-esteem, they were greedy, and they believe that the benefit in trafficking contraband outweighed the risk of been caught. As far as insecurity is concerned, some of the reasons were the fear, and lack of courage to overcome the manipulative tendencies of the inmate population. One participant stated that they do not believe that correctional practitioners engage in contraband related activities because they lack money, and the reason is because “any average person with a family, will not take the risk of engaging in such a risky venture, knowing that he will end up spending time in prison, away from his family”.

Although the goal of the Maryland DPSCS is to protect the public, the staff, and the inmates under supervisions, one of the core functions is to prevent contraband from entering the secured facilities. Contraband items exist in different forms, and they may be homemade weapons, drugs, or other illegal items that are not allowed in the prison facility. When contraband items are not properly controlled, they would jeopardize the peace and serenity of the prison facility, while also putting the safety and the security of the prisoners, the employees, and the public at risk.

Other participants mentioned that some employees would take the risk of trafficking contraband because of their mindset, the financial reward; and because they have a low self-esteem. A participant also added that some employees treated inmates as

their “hommies (homeboys)”, and that the fraternization eventually led to professional misconduct as the employee later engaged in contraband related activities with the inmates. Some correctional practitioners became easy targets to the inmates’ manipulative tendencies, because of the financial reward that comes with contraband trafficking. A cellphone for example can be smuggled into the prison for \$3000.00, and “dirty employees” took advantage of this quick financial gains to engage into illegal contraband smuggling.

Another reason why correctional practitioners engaged in the risky behaviors of smuggling contraband was their gang affiliations, and the fear of reprisal from fellow gang members. An example was the apprehension of prison gang members in a State of Maryland prison, among which were correctional sergeants, as well as inmates (Department of Justice, 2013). Fear is one of the main reasons why correctional practitioners may take the risk of smuggling contraband, and this fear may emanate from the association with prison gang members. Ignorance is another factor, especially when the perpetrators ignored the fact that they could eventually be apprehended. Also, when officers engage in risky behaviors, there is usually a probability that the inmates will snitch on them whenever they are opportune to do so.

A participant declared that correctional officers would sometime weigh the risk involved in contraband trafficking prior to their engagement in the illegal activity. Officers who wanted to make extra cash engaged themselves into contraband smuggling activities without realizing the risk involved in it, meanwhile other officers believed that “the risk of getting caught for trafficking contraband is lower when compared to the

benefits”. This group of officers would do whatever it takes to protect their co-offenders, who may be their fellow gang members. The risk-taking tendencies of correctional practitioners sometimes went beyond contraband smuggling to illegal activities like time clock fraud. Recently, a lieutenant (Gun range supervisor) was indicted for stealing over \$70,000.00 in overtime scheme, according to Fox 45 News (Watson, 2020)

Most participants considered low self-esteem, fraternization with inmates, the quest to make more money, and risk-taking tendencies, as the root causes of correctional practitioners’ misconduct. Participants also believed that the benefits that corrupt employees obtained from trafficking contraband, outweighed the risk of their being caught. This risk-taking tendency led some participants to believe that there is no model that will eliminate the flow of contraband in the prisons. The participants also reiterated the current need for contraband prevention models that are comprehensive, and integrative, to be able to prevent the flow of contraband into State prisons. A glaring example of such a model would be the creation of a contraband prevention joint task force that would include other outside law enforcement agencies.

### ***Theme 3: The Search for an Ideal Contraband Interdiction Model***

The questions that I asked the participants were “What contraband prevention model do you believe would be more efficient in effectively reducing the flow of contraband items within the prisons under the supervision of the Maryland DPSCS?”; and “How can a contraband prevention joint taskforce initiative help in effectively reducing the smuggling of contraband into correctional facilities managed by Maryland DPSCS?”. The following response was obtained from the participants.

Over 95% of the participants attested to the fact that there is a need for an ideal contraband intervention model to combat the current contraband related issues that are affecting Maryland adult state prisons. Almost all participants agreed that the solution to the current contraband related issues within the Maryland prisons system was to institute a powerful contraband intervention unit. Other participants believed that regulating trainings for staff, as well as conducting experiments in other states on different strategies in preventing contraband trafficking, would also help to alleviate the current contraband trafficking issues.

About 5% of the participants expressed the concern that since some contraband has usually been smuggled into the prisons through the perimeter fence, it would be highly recommended that the ‘mobile rovers’ (officers who conduct vehicle patrol within the perimeter fence of the facility), intensify patrol rounds within the perimeter fence. It was also recommended that, “mobile rovers” should always be equipped with radio while patrolling the perimeter fences, and that they should always announce themselves over the unit radio during the patrol. By announcing themselves while patrolling the perimeter fence of the prison facility, other correctional staff would be on alert for any eventualities. This proposal was very important because some contraband items were being introduced into the facilities through the perimeters.

One participant declared that “currently some of the officers who patrol the perimeters of the facilities would hardly announce themselves over the unit radios, making it hard to know who is in the perimeter, especially when one considers the perimeter fence as entry point for contraband items”. Other participant added that, the

security chiefs should be very strict in following up with the institutional security directives, while also making sure that these directives are followed effectively. The participant also believed that security chiefs should be well trained on institutional security, and the dissemination of security related information, because there have cases of individuals had attempted to gain access into the facility with written authorization from the security chief, who in turn failed to alert the access control officers. The “lack of communication is a constant problem that we have to deal with each day”, the officer concluded.

Participant 2 recommended the creation of Interagency cooperation with other prisons as a way of reducing the flow of contraband. Meanwhile. Participant 3 recommended a correctional working environment that will integrate every department of the DPSCS to be able to work out a strategy that will resolve the problem of contraband trafficking. Participant 3 concluded by stating that “in a nutshell I would like an integrated model that will involve every single department”.

Participant 4 recommended that, the State of Maryland should conduct experiments on contraband prevention, to come up with a model practice that would effectively reduce the flow of contraband items into the facilities. The recommended experiments should also be conducted in other states, to be able to come up with a model correctional practice that is evidence based. The participants also believed that the search for an ideal contraband prevention model, would require that specific personnel be trained to become experts in contraband interception. Meanwhile, Participant 5 advocated for a better training on the latest technology, as well as the random postings of

correctional staff at the different entrances of the prisons. If properly implemented, the random posting of correctional professionals to sensitive areas of the facility will get all staff accustomed with working at different areas of the facilities, thereby reducing the tendency of posting the same correctional practitioners to the same posts over and over.

Participant 6 recommended reconstructing a list of allowable items into the facility for the staff and inmates, as well as random drug and alcohol testing for staff. Meanwhile Participant 7 thought that introducing the K9 units in the facilities for contraband search, and rotating officers in different posts, will prevent correctional practitioners from feeling too comfortable while on post. It was also observed that, when officers work in a post for too long, they become relaxed in executing their core functions, and may also easily fall prey to the machination of the inmate population.

Participants 8 and 9 both advocated teamwork among correctional practitioners, interagency cooperation, introduction of new x-ray machines, and officers training and recertification. They also recommended a more thorough application of the DPSCS policies and procedures, especially as regards contraband prevention. They also proposed the creation of contraband interdiction teams in every facility, as well as an increased presence of the K9 unit in the different prisons.

Participant 10 thought that DPSCS should introduce officers exchange programs, whereby officers from different agencies could serve as undercover in different facilities, to be able to detect and intercept the flow of contraband within the prison system. The participant also believed that prison management should regularly order the k9 unit to search the employee's common areas, as well as the vehicles parked in the employee's

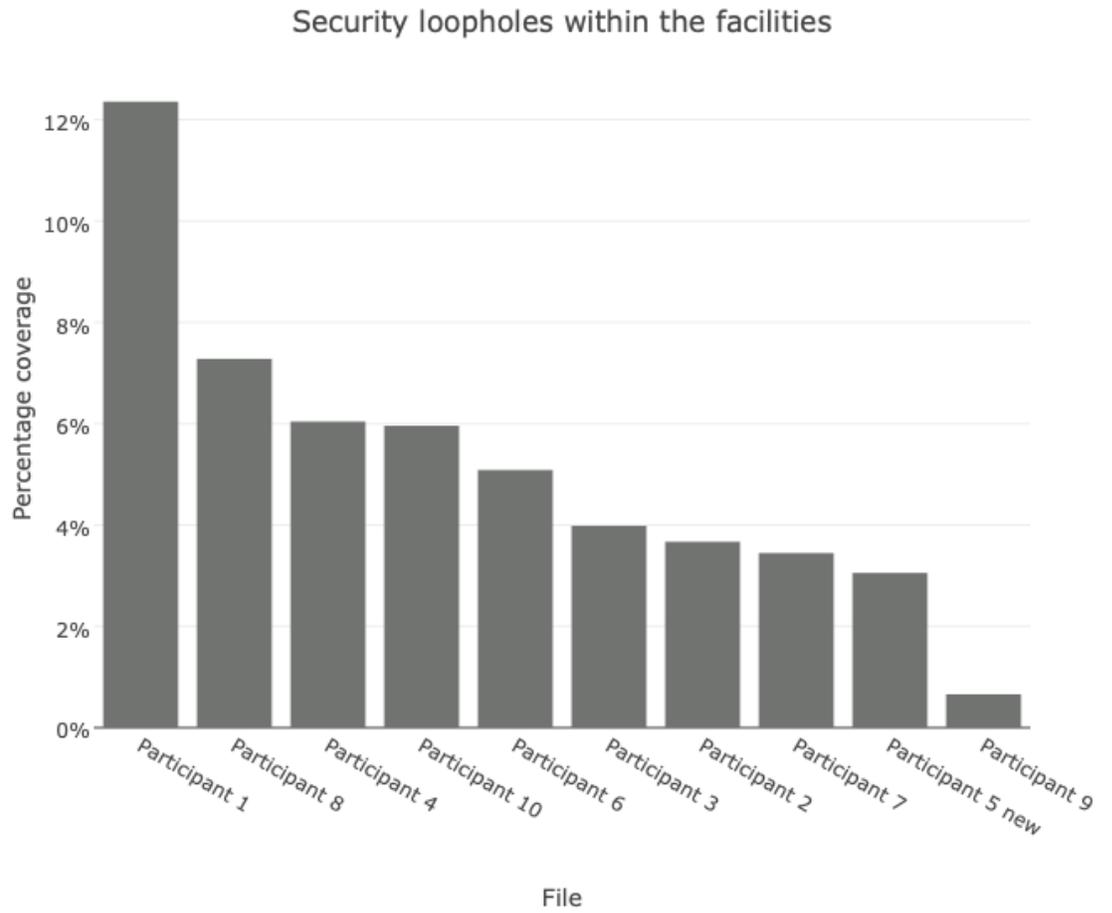
parking lots, for suspicious contraband activities. The participant concluded by stating that, DPSCS lacks the resources to undertake such an extensive contraband search procedure.

### **Major Themes Illustrated**

The figures below show the different themes that resulted from the interviews conducted with the 10 participants. In Figure 1, nine out of the 10 participants that were interviewed agreed that the security loopholes within the facilities contributed greatly to contraband trafficking. Figure 2 also shows that nine out of the 10 interviewees believed that the risk-taking tendencies of correctional professionals has contributed to contraband trafficking within the state prisons. Meanwhile, in Figure 3, all the participants believed that there is a need to create an ideal contraband intervention model that would have the potential of reducing the flow of contraband trafficking in secured state prisons.

**Figure 1**

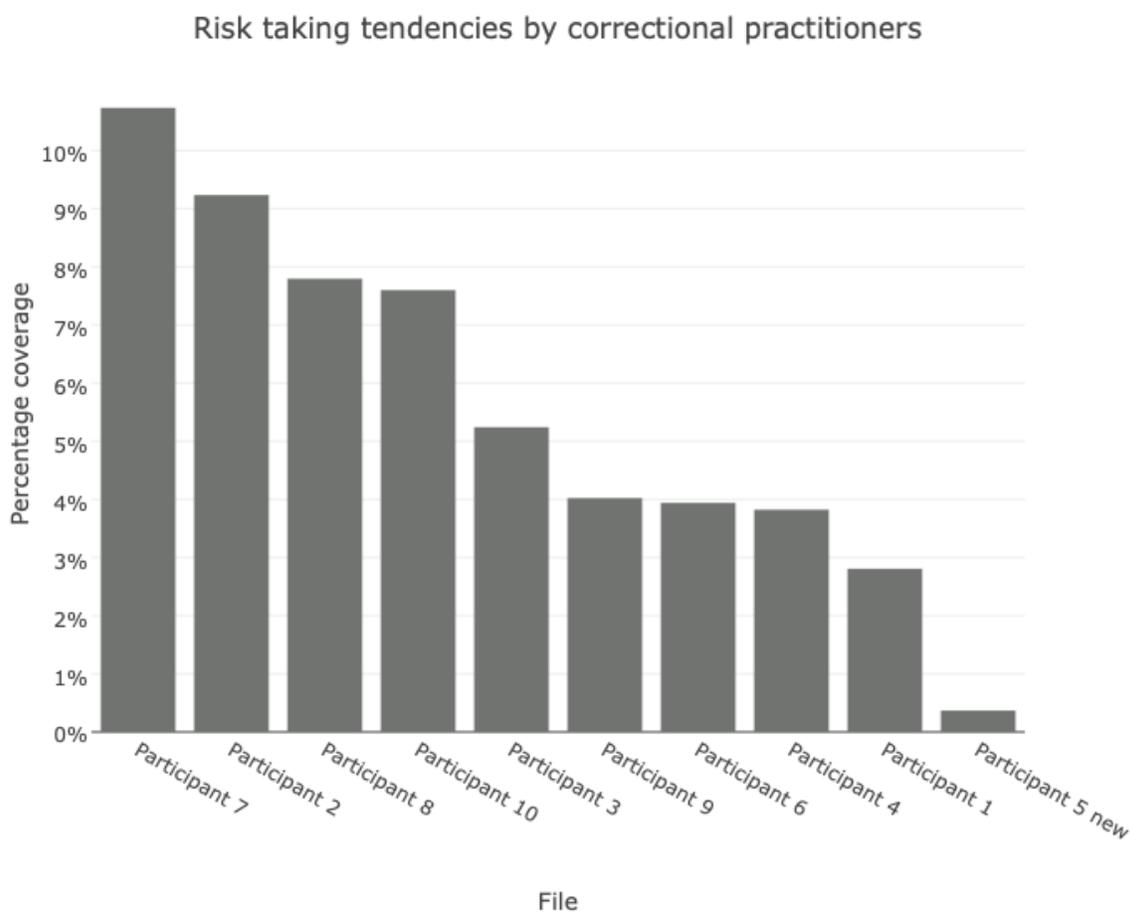
*Security Loopholes within the Facilities*



*Note.* Visual was obtained from NVivo International software, 2020.

**Figure 2**

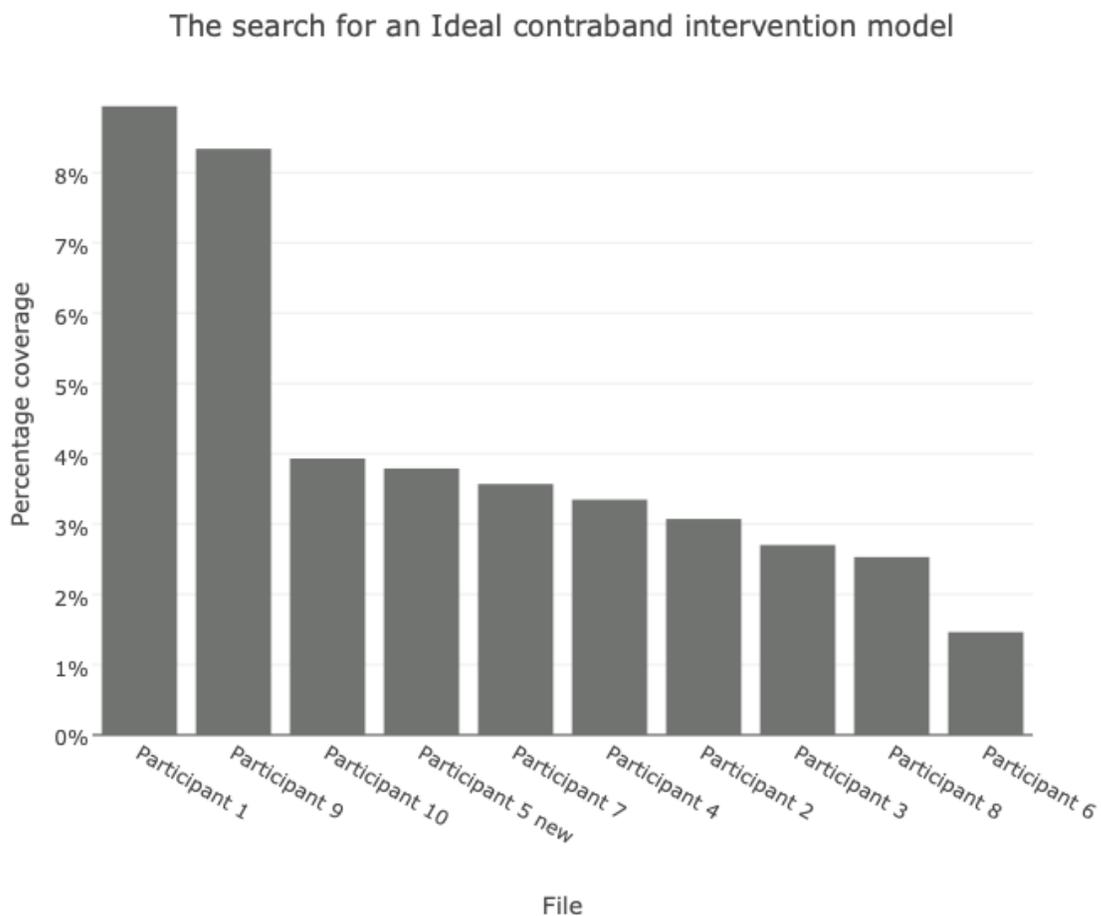
*Risk Taking Tendencies by Correctional Practitioners*



*Note.* Visual was obtained from NVivo International software, 2020.

**Figure 3**

*The Search for an Ideal Contraband Intervention Model*



*Note.* Visual was obtained from NVivo International software, 2020.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

#### **Credibility**

Trustworthiness is important to establish credibility in qualitative research, and a threat to trustworthiness would jeopardize the credibility of information collected from

participants. To avoid this backlash, I recorded the interviews, and verified the analyzed data as soon as possible. This strategy was necessary to establish credibility in the information that was collected from the participants.

I provided an in-depth description of the study, thereby facilitating a “transferability judgement” (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p. 122). The perceptions of correctional practitioners greatly influenced the outcome of this study, (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008), and there is no doubt that the information that the participant provided was credible. By ensuring that participants identity will be kept confidential, the participants were encouraged to speak confidently, and freely, and they were convinced that their input will help to create a contraband intervention model that will effectively reduce the flow of contraband in Maryland State prisons, and the prisons in the United States more broadly. While the aim of this study was to investigate the contraband prevention initiatives that have not yet been explored, I agreed with Corbin and Strauss (2015) that, although qualitative research standards may be controversial, it is imperative that the investigation meets the required standard (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

### **Transferability**

In qualitative research, transferability is very important, and Korstjens & Moser (2018), reiterated that the responsibility of a researcher is “to provide a ‘thick description’ of the participants and the research process, to enable the reader to assess whether your findings are transferable to their own setting; this is the so-called transferability judgement” (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p.122). This in a sense implies that the reader is the person making the transferability judgment, and not the researcher. To assure an easy

transferability of judgment, I made sure that the information provided by the participants was credible by checking and cross checking the interview recordings alongside the transcripts. .

### **Summary**

In this chapter, the findings were reported based on the qualitative exploration of the perceptions of correctional practitioners in Maryland adult state prisons. Responses were obtained from voluntary participants who had experience as correctional practitioners who are involved in preventing contraband items from entering Maryland prisons. Contraband trafficking is a process that involves a lot of risk, and most of the participants that were interviewed believed the benefits obtained from smuggling contraband into the prisons, outweighed the risk of being caught. Participants also showed how contraband trafficking was facilitated by the security loopholes that exist within the prisons. Finally, the different participants' insights could be further explored and developed into a model in the future.

In chapter 5, I will interpret the findings, discuss the conclusion, and recommendations. Additionally, I have included the strengths and limitations of the study, implications for social change, and recommendations for future research study. I will also discuss how the study findings sit with the existing literature review.

### **Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

This chapter explores the conclusions that were drawn from my findings. It also interprets the findings, discusses the limitations of the study, recommendations, and the

implications for social change. The chapter will then conclude with a detailed summary of the study. The chapter will also provide answers to the research interview questions, while dwelling on the themes that were created during data collection and analysis process. The chapter will end on the positive implication of social change.

The purpose of this qualitative case study design was to gain accurate perceptions from the correctional practitioners who are currently employed by the Maryland DPSCS, and working in two specific Maryland Correctional Institutions, on the influences that impacted correctional officers' choices to adopt the risky behavior that involved the introduction of contraband items into secured Maryland Adult prisons. The study is geared towards describing, investigating, and exploring the experiences of correctional practitioners on the different strategies that would help deter contraband from entering state prisons. Furthermore, the results may be used as future pilot mechanism to evaluate other prisons throughout the United States.

### **Research Question**

I asked the participants the following research question, to illuminate their perceptions on the reasons why correctional practitioners may engage in the risky behaviors of introducing contraband in secured Maryland State prisons.

RQ1: What are the perceptions of correctional practitioners on contraband prevention in Maryland adult state prisons?

The research study is geared towards exploring, describing, and investigating the experiences of correctional professionals, on different strategies in deterring correctional employees from engaging in the risky behavior of introducing contraband items in

Maryland adult state prisons. I designed and generated 19 in-depth interview questions (Appendix B) that responded to the overarching question on why correctional practitioners may take the risk of introducing contraband items into secured prisons. This case study method unveiled the perceptions of correctional practitioners based on their personal experiences in contraband prevention within their correctional environments.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

Contraband trafficking into a prison is an offense that is against the law (Burke & Owen, 2010) and even though individuals are aware of the gravity of this violation, they still take the risk of infiltrating contraband into Maryland adult state prisons. Most participants that were interviewed stated that some correctional practitioners took such risks because they believed that the benefits would outweigh the risk of being caught. Other participants advocated for the creation of a contraband prevention joint task force that would involve other law enforcement agencies like FBI, Maryland State Police, and the State Attorney's office.

The 10 participants voluntarily described their opinions as correctional practitioners on the reasons why correctional officers may engage in the risky behavior of introducing contraband in secured prisons. The participants also provided different strategies that may prevent contraband items from entering secured Maryland adult state prisons. Since the interview was conducted virtually via phone, Zoom, LinkedIn, Facebook, and WhatsApp, I gave participants the assurance that the information that they provided would be kept confidential. My intentions were to understand the reasons why correctional officers would engage in the risky behavior that involves the introduction of

contraband items into prisons, and these intentions were expressed through in-depth interviews with the participants.

The findings of my study were addressed through the following themes:

- Theme 1: Security loophole within the facilities that encourage contraband trafficking.
- Theme 2: Correctional practitioners' risk tasking tendencies; and
- Theme 3: The search for an ideal contraband intervention model.

### **Theme 1: Security Loopholes within the Correctional Facilities**

Theme 1 was pulled from the interview question: What are the challenges related to implementing a successful contraband intervention program in Maryland adult state prisons? Correctional practitioners who took the risk of trafficking usually minimized the dangers of spending time in jail if caught, as well as getting terminated from employment. They usually took advantage of security loopholes that exist within the prison to traffic contraband. The National Institute of Justice (2010) considered contraband as illegal items that are prohibited in the prison, and such items may include drugs and weapons (National Institute of Justice, 2010). Also, other contraband items include United States or foreign currency, phones or paraphernalia, and any other objects that may threaten the safety and security of these facilities (18 U.S Code §1719, n.d.).

The most important challenge in implementing a successful contraband prevention program involved the security loopholes that exist within the different prisons. These security loopholes were usually ignored by the stakeholder, while performing their functions. Participants 9 and 10 stated that the correctional supervisors' reluctance in

properly following up on contraband collection, storage, and disposal, otherwise known as the chain of custody, had greatly impacted the flow of contraband in prisons. Most participants believed that correctional supervisors' reluctance to produce contraband related reports in a timely manner has lowered the morale of their subordinates from engaging in contraband related intervention. They also stated that the supervisors believed that contraband related interventions are time consuming and would permit them to stay longer than their required work shift. This nonchalant attitude on the part of correctional supervisors alienates conscientious officers from thoroughly performing their duties. Supervisors sometimes scolded officers for apprehending contraband items and would encourage the officers to dispose of the contraband item, rather than going through the long and exhaustive report writing and contraband chain of custody process.

Almost all the participants asserted that, when correctional practitioners fraternize with the offenders, the probability of trafficking contraband is usually very high. Participant 3 attributed contraband trafficking to correctional practitioner's fraternization with inmates, especially considering "the manipulative tendencies of the inmate population". The participant also added that the inmates know what they want from corrupt correctional practitioners, and they will do everything possible to make sure that they achieve their goal.

Participants 7, 9 and 10 claimed that the lack of advanced contraband detection equipment like X-Ray machines, and digital cameras to scan and detect even the smallest contraband items, have greatly influenced the introducing of contraband items into state prisons. The participants also noted that the lack of 'mobile rovers' (officers who are

assigned to conduct vehicle patrol within the perimeters of the prisons), has contributed greatly to introducing contraband items into the correctional facilities, especially through the perimeter fence.

### **Theme 2: Correctional Practitioners' Risk Tasking Tendencies**

Theme 2 was pulled from the interview question: What are the perceptions of correctional professionals on the reasons why correctional practitioners take the risk of engaging in contraband related activities within the prison setting? It is also unfortunate to learn that contraband trafficking has been a source of prison violence, and the violence is orchestrated by corrupt correctional practitioners, who receive huge amount of money to smuggle contraband items into these facilities. Recently, a correctional officer was found guilty of prison racketeering corruption charges, and sentenced to “27 months in federal prison, followed by three years of supervised release”, for assisting in smuggling contraband into the prison (The United State Attorney’s Office, District of Maryland, 2020, para.1). According to the officer’s plea agreement, he and another MCIJ employee brought contraband into the prison for inmate Alston, in exchange for bribe payments (The United State Attorney’s Office, District of Maryland, 2020).

Participants spoke extensively about the quest for financial reward, as the reason why correctional practitioners would take the risk of engaging in criminal behaviors. They also stated that, correctional practitioners’ involvement in contraband trafficking was because of greed. These practitioners’ yearning for more material possessions has prompted them to fraternize with the offenders, who further manipulated these practitioner’s vulnerability for their personal gain. The offenders were described as

always ready to manipulate the correctional practitioners into engaging in contraband related activities, especially when one considered the fact that, a cellphone could be smuggled into the prisons setting for about \$3000.00. This financial reward was enough incentive to motivate officers into bringing contraband item into the secured facilities, for a financial reward.

A glaring example of the risk-taking tendency of correctional practitioners was the illegal breach of the access control policy, and how this breach may facilitate contraband trafficking within the Maryland prisons. Some participants stated that correctional practitioners sometimes gained access to restricted areas of the prisons, with the pretext that they had received orders from above (upper-level administration). This risky taking behavior usually ended up with the introduction of contraband into the facilities, since some of the restricted areas like rear perimeter entrance, and the emergency exits were usually entry points for contraband items.

Participant 3 also reiterated the reluctance of correctional supervisors to provide contraband apprehension chain of custody reports in a timely manner, and how this reluctance has facilitated correctional practitioners' involvement in contraband trafficking. The participant also explained how supervisors would go extra miles to discourage junior correctional practitioners from apprehending contraband, by using discouraging words like "what do you want to do with the contraband that was found", rather than commending the officers for their hard work. The negative attitude from supervisors has greatly impacted the morale of correctional practitioners, thereby creating more room for risk taking tendencies in trafficking contraband.

Participant 1 stated that correctional practitioners took the risk of engaging in contraband related activities because they felt insecure, they had a low self-esteem, they were greedy, and they believed that the benefit would outweigh the risk of being caught. The above reasons proved that corrupt correctional practitioners would take any risk to introduce contraband into a prison. These correctional practitioners did not care about the consequences that may ensue for trafficking contraband, and all they cared about was the benefits that they would reap from the illegal activity.

The theoretical framework suggested that researchers have used the risk-taking behavior theory in the past to define various risk-taking tendencies in criminal behaviors. Also, because of the increase in crime rate, and increased availability of technological knowhow, deterrence theory has taken a broader perspective. Greenman (2014), refers to Becker (1968), who also drew from Bentham (1789) who claimed that “because people are rational and self-interested, criminal behavior can be understood just like any other economic decision making: [whereby] there are cost and benefits that can be manipulated to guide decision making” (Greenman, 2014, p.10). Punishment through indictment, and subsequent incarceration would therefore be considered as a medium to communicate the general deterrence theory to the society, while hoping that this will create both “conscious and unconscious inhibition against committing crimes” (Kennedy, 1983, p. 3).

Within the risk perception and decision-making context, risk-taking behavior by correctional practitioners may cause serious physical injury, medical consequences, or legal harm to the perpetrators, as well as the victims. It could also eventually lead to arrest, detention and even conviction of the perpetrators. Risky behavior is defined by

Beyth-Marom et al. (1993) as “an action entailing some chance of loss” (Beyth-Marom, et al., 1993, p.549). Risk-taking behavior by correctional practitioners to smuggle contraband items into a secured prison, is a threat to public safety and trust, especially when one considers the fact that these officers took the oath to protect the public, and the offenders under supervision.

The collective thought on contraband trafficking into prisons by ‘dirty officers’, has provided these corrupt correctional practitioners control over their destiny. The participants collectively felt that the individuals who engaged in risky behaviors as introducing contraband in secured facilities, were not scared of getting caught because, they believed that the risk of getting caught was minimal when compared to the monetary benefit that they derived from successfully trafficking the contraband items. When individuals take such risks, they expose themselves to criminal prosecutions, and even convictions if found guilty

### **Theme 3: The Search for an Ideal Contraband Intervention Model**

Theme 3 was pulled from the interview question: What factors would most likely contribute to the creation of an ideal contraband interdiction model that will eventually eradicate the flow of contraband items into Maryland adult state prisons?

As Maryland State prisons continue to struggle with contraband smuggling issues, the correctional stakeholders would need to consider filling the current security loopholes. The interviews revealed that one way of filling the security loopholes within the prisons was by creating a contraband intervention joint task force that would collaborate with other law enforcement agencies. The outcomes of the interviews also

showed the inability of the correctional staff to prevent the continuous flow of contraband items in the prisons. The outcome further highlighted that some correctional practitioners took the risk in trafficking contraband because, they believed that the benefits outweighed the risk of being caught.

Participant 3 declared that “Interagency cooperation with other prisons may help in reducing the flow of contraband”. Meanwhile Participants 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 also believed that Maryland State prisons require a contraband prevention joint task force that would involve honest hearted individuals, all the different departments of the facility, and outside agencies like the Maryland State Police, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the State Attorney’s Office. The goal in having a joint task force would be to bring the Maryland DPSCS prisons up to speed with an advanced contraband prevention strategy.

Participants 1, 2, 3, and 9 also suggested that special trainings should be organized for correctional supervisors on the timely submission and follow up on contraband related incident reports. The above participants believed that supervisors’ reluctance in providing timely contraband related incident reports have delayed the contraband apprehension chain of custody process. The chain of custody process requires timely reporting and follow up on contraband apprehension and disposal, and this process was not followed the supervisors who believed that it is time consuming, and unnecessarily lengthy. The DPSCS evidence collection and control policy states that, the investigator or supervisor who is seizing items for use as evidence “shall preserve evidentiary value; prevent damage or deterioration; and protect an individual from

contact with a hazardous material” (DPSCS, 2007, p.5). Supervisors ‘unwillingness to adhere to the above policy would be a violation of the oath that was taken to protect the public, the employees, and the offenders under supervision.

Some participants also mentioned the hesitation of correctional supervisory staff, to accept constructive contraband intervention proposals from junior staff member. Supervisors’ tendency to turn down contraband prevention proposals from junior staff who are usually on the frontline of contraband trafficking has reduced the moral within the workforce, and subsequently created a loophole in fostering the creation of a contraband intervention joint task force. Participant 3 further declared that whenever a contraband intervention model was proposed by a junior officer, it was usually rejected by supervisors based on the assumptions that a junior officer is not knowledgeable enough to influence the policies of the DPSCS on prison administration.

As concerns the policies and how they affect prison management, some participants stated that the current policies are archaic, and not adaptable to the current correctional standards. The participants reiterated the need for policies that would align with the twenty first century prison realities. For example, the policy that requires females to be patted down by only female staff members, does not emphasize the importance of having adequate female staffing available, to effectively search all females that gained access into the different facilities. There was no doubt based on the participants’ opinions that, staff shortages have facilitated contraband related activities within the prisons.

Also elucidating Theme 3, I asked: How can a contraband prevention joint taskforce initiative help in effectively reducing the smuggling of contraband into prisons managed by Maryland DPSCS?

100% of the participants collectively agreed that a contraband intervention joint task force was the potential solution for preventing the introduction of contraband in secured prisons. Participant 10 believed, a contraband prevention joint taskforce team should include honest hearted individuals, as well as the collaborations with outside agencies. The participant added that due to the current pandemic, there have been no outside work details for the inmate population, and as such, there have been less contraband found in the prison facilities. This observation may confirm the fact that, contraband was mostly transported by corrupt correctional professionals during outside details with the work release inmates.

Participant 3 asserted that a contraband prevention joint task force would be the best solution to contraband prevention, since a joint task force will involve other departments of the DPSCS agency like the k9 unit, as well as outside law enforcement agencies like the Maryland State Police, and the FBI. Creating a contraband prevention joint task force will encourage security related communication flow among all the members within the different departments of the agencies concerned. Meanwhile, Participant 9 reiterated that creating a contraband prevention joint task force would be a great idea, since the DPSCS already operates a similar group known as the Contraband Interdiction Team (CIT) within the different prisons.

Some participants also stated that, the current DPSCS CIT team needed to be expanded, to include outside law enforcement agencies. Some outside agencies that should partner with the current DPSCS CIT team are FBI, the Maryland State Police, as well as the State Attorney's office. Research studies have shown that Institutional security is a key priority in combating contraband trafficking within prisons, and more importantly, the increase in gang identification, "intelligence-coordination, and contraband interdiction efforts throughout correctional institutions has reduced violence against both staff and inmates over the past few years dramatically" (DPSCS, 2020, para. 2).

This study also has the potential implication for creating a positive social change within Maryland prison management system, by offering multiple perspectives on contraband control within the prison system. The study further reiterated that a lack of control on contraband smuggling, could interfere with the safety and security of the secured prisons. Other limitations of the study will be addressed in the following section, for future research studies.

### **How the Study Findings Sit with the Existing Literature Review**

Elliott (2003) explored the definition of deterrence by asserting that, it can be achieved by injecting the fear of punishment in the mind of a criminal (Elliott, 2003). Even though correctional practitioners are aware of the consequences of facing jail time or losing their job if caught trafficking contraband into secured state prisons, some correctional practitioners still took the risk of committing these illegal, and unprofessional acts. Most participants that were interviewed, attested to the fact that

correctional practitioners who took such risks believed that the benefits would outweigh the risk of being caught.

Prison contraband trafficking remains a source of prison violence, and this violence was sometimes orchestrated by corrupt correctional practitioners, who minimized and bypassed the security measures that have been put in place to deter criminal activities. Some security measures that were placed in the two specific prisons were security cameras, correctional officers who are assigned to man the different security posts, as well as the metal and drug detection devices to deter individuals from trafficking contraband. Correctional officer Janel Griffin is an example of a correctional practitioner who took the risk of smuggling contraband into the prison by minimizing the security measures put in place to deter criminal activities (The United State Attorney's Office, District of Maryland, 2020). According to officer Griffin's plea agreement, he and another prison employee took the risk of bypassing the security measures that exist in the facility, to smuggle contraband into the prison for inmate Alston, in exchange for bribe payments (The United State Attorney's Office, District of Maryland, 2020).

Numerous researchers have used deterrence theory to prevent individuals from re-offending, and this theory assumes that the potential offenders would usually evaluate the cost and benefit of their actions prior to offending. Despite the tougher sanctions that have been put in place by the criminal Justice system, Cook (2015), asserted that, the lack of economic, cultural, and social capital in a community, could greatly affect the likelihood of an individual reoffending (Cook, 2015). Most of the participants that were interviewed attested to the fact that, corrupt correctional practitioners smuggled

contraband into secured prisons because of greed, or the tendency to amass wealth through illegal means. In effect, although traditional deterrence may not entirely prevent individuals from re-offending, it can at least resist them from engaging in future criminal behavior.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study included participants who were correctional practitioners, currently employed by the state of Maryland and working in two correctional facilities, and I did not recruit correctional practitioners from the Federal prisons. The study was limited to the exploration of Maryland correctional practitioners' diverse perceptions, on the risky behavior that led correctional staff to the commission of crimes, thereby adopting an improved method for preventing contraband items from entering Maryland state prisons, and prisons throughout the United States. I did not examine the role of those who traffic the contraband items, even though contraband trafficking is a whole business enterprise within American prisons (Bates, 2016). Limiting the study to 10 correctional practitioners has restricted the ability to apply the study outcomes to the inmate population.

### **Recommendation for Future Research**

This study has only built the groundwork for contraband prevention in Maryland adult state prisons and expanding it to include the perceptions of the inmate population would furnish a more balanced and advanced insight into diverse contraband prevention strategies. The study also provided pertinent information on the policies that relate to contraband possession and control in Maryland correctional facilities, as well as prisons

throughout the United States. Future researchers will no doubt benefit from comparing state prison policies side by side with federal government policies on prison management

The study only involved correctional practitioner from two Maryland adult state prisons and expanding it to other state correctional facilities would be highly recommended for future studies on contraband prevention. Also, extending the scope of the study to federal prisons, would be significant in exploring more strategies in contraband detection and control. By involving other prisons, including the Juvenile Justice system, the smuggling of contraband items into prisons throughout the United States may be drastically reduced or eliminated.

Although this study is a qualitative case study design, a mixed method study is also highly recommended for future research on contraband prevention. The mixed method study would be more appropriate to serve the population with the numbers that are required to effectively measure the participants' percentage of participation in the study. Since a qualitative methodology is more descriptive than a quantitative study that deals more with numbers, a mixed methodology would be somewhere in between, thereby establishing more credibility in the research outcome.

### **Implications for Social Change**

#### **Positive Social Change**

The research interest was to understand the perceptions of correctional practitioners, on the reasons why correctional practitioners may take the risk of engaging in trafficking contraband in secured Maryland. The participants were Maryland state correctional practitioners, and they shared their perceptions in 30 to 60 minutes virtual

interviews. During the interview process, the participants experienced different moods: at one point they were happy to participate, at another point they were angry as they expressed their opinions. The perceptions expressed by the participants had the potential of creating positive social changes within the individuals themselves, the DPSCS organization, and the society as expressed below.

### ***Individual***

Positive outcome will result when the correctional practitioners work as a team to promote the common goal of protecting the public, the correctional employees, and the inmate population. Positive outcome will occur when individuals avoid the risk-taking tendencies of introducing contraband items into the secured prison facilities, thereby maintaining the security and safety of the prisons. Positive outcome would also occur when correctional practitioners acknowledge that the consequences of smuggling contraband into a secured prison could lead to termination of employment, as well as incarceration for misconduct in the execution of functions.

### ***Organization***

The DPSCS stakeholder should review the policies that govern access control, search procedures, and officers' fraternization policy. They should also encourage the creation of a contraband intervention joint taskforce that will include other law enforcement agencies such as the Maryland State Police and the FBI, among other things. By reviewing the above recommended policies, this study could contribute to advancing knowledge, practice, and policy on contraband prevention and interception, thereby

providing the social changes that will respond to the increasing outcry over prison contraband trafficking issues.

This study has the potential of creating a positive social change within Maryland prison management system, by offering multiple perspectives on contraband prevention strategies. The study also shows how a lack of control on prison contraband trafficking could interfere with the safety of the correctional institutions, the staff, the public, and the inmate population. The study's findings may serve as a model on contraband prevention in prisons throughout the United States.

### *Society*

The outcome from this study will eventually deter the public from engaging in criminal behaviors that involve the introducing of contraband items into prison facilities, especially after knowing that such actions constitute a violation of the law. Also, the public will be deterred when they understand that contraband smuggling could lead to termination of employment, as well as jail time. The 18 U.S Code §1719 (n.d.) considered it an offense for anybody to possess or provide contraband in any prison facility. A violation of the above statute meant providing any prohibited object to any individual in a prison. Meanwhile, prohibited objects will include firearm or destructive device; controlled substance; narcotic drugs; United States or foreign currency; phones or paraphernalia, and any other objects that may threaten the safety and security of these facilities (18 U.S Code §1719, n.d.).

### **Recommendations**

A study on contraband prevention in Maryland State prisons would greatly contribute to advancing evidence-based practice, as well as encouraging accountability within the DPSCS agency. This type of study can be accomplished both on a more extensive qualitative level with interviews, or focus groups, or quantitatively with a larger population. Since this study took part in Maryland adult state prisons, expanding the scope to the Juvenile detention centers as well as the Federal prisons would be very helpful in uncovering more policies and practices that relate to prison contraband prevention. Borchert (2016) stated that by elevating the voices of major prison management actors like prisoners, prison executives and correctional officers, would help greatly in accelerating the fight against prison contraband (Borchert, 2016).

### **Conclusion**

In exploring the perceptions of correctional professionals on the reasons why correctional officers may take the risk in introducing contraband in prisons, 10 participants were interviewed virtually, and they all spoke with honesty. The interviews were conducted virtually through telephone, Zoom, Facebook, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp. The goal in conducting virtual interviews was because of the current coronavirus pandemic social distancing guidelines that have been authorized by the Centers for Disease Control and Preventions (CDC). The interviews helped in exploring contraband prevention strategies, as well as detecting the different security loopholes that may have facilitated the introduction of contraband items into the Maryland adult state prisons. The participants also spoke about the possibility of creating a contraband intervention joint

taskforce, as a potential solution in eliminating the smuggling of contraband items by correctional practitioners. The study outcome aligned with other research studies that advocated the prevention of contraband in correctional facilities, and further advocated for a contraband intervention model that would eventually eliminate the flow of contraband in secured prison facilities.

This study considers public safety as a top priority, and when contraband is not properly controlled, the prisons become a breeding ground for criminal activities like gang activities, professional misconduct when correctional officer are held criminally liable for their misconduct, and prison violence. I listened to the participants' perceptions, then analyzed and created themes that aligned with the theoretical framework of the study. While conducting this study, I also explored the views and believes of the participants, and as I analyzed the data, it was obvious that the interviews were unique, and in accordance with the themes that were created. The three themes that emerged from the interviews were: security loopholes that facilitate contraband trafficking; correctional practitioners' risk-taking tendencies; and the quest for an ideal contraband prevention model that will eventually eliminate contraband trafficking within prisons. A close analysis of the themes revealed the reasons why correctional practitioners took the risk in engaging in contraband related activities, as well as the different strategies that may reduce the flow of contraband into Maryland adult state prisons.

During the interviews, the participants' voices conveyed emotions that were characterized by anger, joy, and silence, as they justified the reasons why correctional practitioners engaged in the risky behavior of introducing contraband items into secured

prisons. The three themes that were identified are security loopholes, correctional practitioners' risk-taking tendencies, and the search for an ideal contraband intervention model. The participants all agreed that security loopholes existed in the facilities, and that corrupt correctional practitioners explored these loopholes to traffic contraband into the secured prison facilities. Participants also recommended the creation of a contraband intervention joint task force unit that will include other law enforcement agencies like Maryland State Police, FBI, and the State Attorney's Office, as an ideal way to prevent the introduction of contraband in Maryland adult prisons. The participants believed that a contraband prevention joint task force unit will be able to prevent correctional practitioners from taking the risk of introducing contraband items into the prison facilities.

The outcome of this study may inform correctional practitioners, and those who develop policies on prison management, thereby contributing towards building a healthy prison environment that will ensure the safety of the correctional practitioners, the inmate population, and the visiting public. Furthermore, the study may contribute towards developing new policies for the Maryland DPSCS, on contraband prevention and control within Maryland state prisons. Also, the study may deter individuals from engaging in the risky behavior that involves smuggling contraband into secured prisons.

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### Appendix A: Development of the Interview Protocol

Below is a summary of the development of the Interview Protocol.

1. The first 5 questions were intended to obtain some demographic information from participants that did not include any personal identifiers like their names, and addresses, and the goal was to conceal participants identify during the interview.
2. Question 6 to 15 were intended to develop an open forum that will describe the perceptions, experiences, and motivations of the correctional practitioners about the different contraband prevention strategies that will help eradicate the introduction of contraband in Maryland adult state prisons. This question also discussed the reasons why correctional practitioners engage in the risky behavior of introducing contraband items into Maryland state prisons. Incorporating risky behavior in the actions of unlawfulness allowed me to understand better the problems from the participants' viewpoint (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) about the use of contraband cellular phones.
3. Questions 16 was intended to determine the challenges that would interfere with the implementation of an ideal contraband intervention model. Through this question I was able to understand the cause of correctional practitioners' risk-taking behavior (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). I used the participants' answers to help analyze the reasons why correctional practitioners indulge in the risky behavior of trafficking contraband into secured prisons. (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

4. Question 17 was intended to explore the experiences of correctional practitioners on DPSCS policies on prison management, and how these policies have encouraged the introduction of contraband into Maryland adult state prisons?
5. Questions 18 and 19 were intended to determine the factors that would most likely contribute to the creation of an ideal contraband interdiction model.

The research questionnaire was designed to explore why correctional practitioners may take the risk of smuggling contraband into secured state prisons. I also used the case study method to obtain a better understanding of the answers provided by the participants.

## Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Date:

Location:

Name of interviewer:

Name of interviewee:

Interview number:

Question 1: What is your age?

18-24 years old

25-34 years old

35-44 years old

45-54 years old

55-64 years old

65 years or older

**Question 2: Which gender identity do you most identify?**

Female

Male

Transgender female

Transgender male

Gender variant/non-conforming

Not listed

Prefer not to answer

**Question 3:** Please specify your ethnicity origin (or Race).

White

Hispanic or Latino

Black or African American

Native American or American Indian

Asian / Pacific Islander

Other

Prefer not to answer

**Question 4:** What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

High school graduate, diploma, or the equivalent (for example: GED)

Some college credit, no degree

Trade/technical/vocational training

Associate degree

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree

Professional degree

Doctorate degree

**Question 5.** What is your marital status?

Single, never married

Married or domestic partnership

Widowed

Divorced

separated

**Question 6:** What are the perceptions of the prison staff regarding contraband prevention within Maryland's adult state prisons managed by the DPSCS?

**Question 7:** What are the perceptions of correctional professionals on the reasons why correctional practitioners take the risk of engaging in contraband related activities within the prison setting.

**Question 8:** What contraband prevention model do you believe would be more efficient in effectively reducing the flow of contraband items within the prisons under the supervision of the Maryland DPSCS.

**Question 9:** What obstacles would prevent you, as a correctional practitioner from bringing contraband into the secured prison facility?

**Question 10:** Do you believe that the use of criminal background checks is an effective screening tool in combating the introduction of contraband within Maryland State prisons by correctional staff?

Yes/No

**Question 11:** As a Correctional practitioner during this time, have you observed any specific actions that have been taken by the employers to address any contraband related issue within any Maryland adult state prisons?"

**Question 12:** How do you feel about working with the Maryland correctional community?"

**Question 13:** Can you describe the attitudes and approach to the contraband prevention initiatives that were carried out by the other people working with you at the time?"

**Question 14:** How do you describe your relationship with your peers?

**Question 15:** How Is the role of Correctional practitioner important in restricting the flow of contraband in Maryland state prisons?

**Question 16:** What are the challenges related to implementing a successful contraband intervention program in Maryland adult state prisons?

**Question 17:** How has your experience as a correctional practitioner impacted your perception regarding the policies on prison management, and how these policies have encouraged contraband introduction into Maryland adult state prisons?

**Question 18:** What factors would most likely contribute to the creation of an ideal contraband interdiction model that will eventually eradicate the flow of contraband items into Maryland adult state prisons?

**Question 19:** How can a contraband prevention joint taskforce initiative help in effectively reducing the smuggling of contraband into prisons managed by Maryland DPSCS?

**Personal Remarks:** What other steps and challenges would relate to the implementation of a successful contraband intervention program within Maryland state prisons?

If the above model is workable, and implementable, what do you think needs to be done to improve its application?

Thank you for the valuable information, and do not hesitate to contact me if there is anything else that you would like to add.