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Lived Experiences of Reintegration of Malaysian Nonviolent Ex-offenders in Singapore

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Abstract

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MA, Walden University, 2015

MA, Griffith University, 2014

BS, Adams State University, 2013

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Nonviolent ex-offenders in Singapore of Malaysian descent face many challenges with reintegration into the community following incarceration. The Malaysian ethnic group comprises a small part, only 14%, of the Singaporean population, but they are overrepresented in the criminal justice system, which creates challenges for the Singapore government. The Malaysians face challenges such as the lack of support, academic underachievement, and economic and socioeconomic disparities. There is a literature gap regarding the Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders who are experiencing problems with reintegration into society and having more limitations than other ethnic groups in Singapore. There are currently no studies focusing on clarifying the connection between being a Malaysian nonviolent ex-offender and recidivism in Singapore. This qualitative phenomenological study was designed to examine the lived experiences of how Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders made their transition into the community after their release from prison. The foundational framework for this study was the risk-need-responsivity (RNR) for the adults and the Good Lives Model (GLM). The study used interpretative phenomenological analysis. Semistructured interviews with open-ended questions were conducted with eight participants. Three themes were identified from the data: feeling excluded from the community, having difficulty finding a job, and being Malaysian is not easy in Singapore. These three themes are the result of the experiences of the participants in this study and supported the importance of breaking the cycle of recidivism, which may lead to a positive social change for this specific group of Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders in Singapore.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to all Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders in Singapore who

are struggling to get their life back on track. Do not give up, you can do it!

Acknowledgments

I would like to say thank you to my partner Bertel Aukema for his support and love during the years of study and especially during the writing of this dissertation. I also want to say thank you to all staff of Walden University and my class members throughout all the years of studying together. I gained so much knowledge that I can use in my future. A special thanks to Dr. Kristen Beyer and Dr. Sharon Xuereb, who were there for me during the dissertation, that was not always a steady road.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

This study's significance was to initiate social change by examining the resources and the lived experiences of this specific group of Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders in Singapore. The government of Singapore has tried for many years to reduce re-offending. This was mostly done by giving harsher punishments for a second or third offense. However, this has not effectively deterred recidivism for Malaysian young men (Tan et al., 2016). Since 2016, there has been increased awareness about this problem, and the government has wanted to implement specific programs for re-offending offenders. These programs created a prosocial climate for the offenders by organizing employment, stabilizing relations with family and friends, and promoting commitment to make a personal change of lifestyle. The recent success of this program may suggest that this approach was more effective than traditional prison settings for this group of men and prevented them from re-offending by following the education and rehabilitation programs that were going to be offered upon release from prison (Chan & Boer, 2015).

A recent study about the factors contributing to the stigmatization of ex-offenders in Singapore showed that policymakers investigated implementing effective antistigma interventions to decrease the public's negative views about ex-offenders. One of the most important programs was the public's education to empathize with ex-offenders instead of stigmatizing them for the previous behavior. As soon as the negative feelings of fear for this group can be reduced, the trust in the socialization process can start for the ex-offenders. When the ex-offender is from a different ethnic race, for example, Malaysian,

stigmatizing is one of the most severe difficulties for this community group. Most Singaporeans, who are of Chinese descent, stigmatize this group (Tan et al., 2016).

The fact that the biggest group of offenders in prison is Singaporean Malaysian resulted in a situation where this group needed to work extra hard to gain trust. The most mentioned worry is the public's dismissal of and social distancing from offenders. This stigma (i.e., "the negative social attitude attached to a characteristic of an individual that may be regarded as a mental, physical, or social deficiency;" Vandenbos, 2007, p. 894) can have a scope of harmful psychosocial effects on offenders. The impact of these negative social attitudes included obstacles in guaranteeing public housing and jobs and a chance to develop them into victims of vigilantism and social isolation because of shame. Stigma processes may have an undermining impact on offenders (Tan et al., 2016). Research has suggested that interventions to avoid stigma, are not always implemented. This may be due to the public attitude that offenders cannot or are unwilling to change their behavior, even if there are success stories. There is a need for interventions to reduce the moral anger against Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders to raise the public's antistigma emotions (Tan et al., 2016).

By learning from these Malaysians' experiences, changes to the existing system can be made based on their experiences of going through the criminal justice system. My interviews may help this group find their way to make a positive social change in the Singapore community. The difficulties they have after they are released from prison and during their time in the half-way home are specific because of the stigmatizing from other ethnic Singaporeans (Mutalib, 2011). In this chapter, I provide background on the

experiences from the Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders; present the problem statement, the purpose statement, and research questions; and describe the nature, assumptions, delimitations, and limitations of the study. The study's significance is a factor in a positive social change for this specific group of men.

Background of the Study

Incarceration distresses many persons' relations, including their family, friends, society, and personally. When persons are incarcerated, they are detached from their societies, affecting stability and psychological and physical strength (Drakulich & Crutchfield, 2012). This instability can result in broken community relationships, increasing unemployment, and a decrease in being part of society positively (Drakulich & Crutchfield, 2012).

The moment an ex-offender is released from prison, they are going through different doubts. They are uncertain about their family situation, place to live, and work. They also need to find out where they can get support to arrange their lives as free people, which depends on whether the family was supporting them during their incarceration or stopped supporting them. In that case, there is no housing and social safety (Ewald, 2012). Relationships with their family and friends are particularly important for a person who was incarcerated. Their imprisonment affected themselves and everybody in their society, especially relatives and close friends (Charkoudian et al., 2012).

In the Singapore situation, where there is no parole, there is a problem with the government's ex-offenders' social support. Singapore is not assisting the ex-offenders

after their release from prison. There is no financial support or assistance with finding work or shelter. Specifically, for Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders, it is problematic to get their life back on track. As stigmatization is regular and a realistic fear for this group, it is essential to make a positive social change. There will be a chance that this also can help to reduce recidivism rates. In case of no social support and stigmatization from the society, there is a great chance the Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders will go back into the old criminal habits (Tan et al., 2016).

The purpose of this research was to examine the lived experiences of Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders as they made their transition into the community after their release from prison. The transition from being incarcerated to a half-way home or their family home and back into the community is a significant challenge in Singapore, a small country with a harsh criminal justice system. The transition for this group of Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders is challenging because of government organizations' lack of assistance. In this research, I cited Ganapathy and Fee (2016), Chan and Boer (2016), and other researchers about the issues this specific group had with the community's transition.

<div align="center">**Problem Statement**</div>

The transition from being incarcerated to a half-way home and back into the community is a significant challenge in Singapore, a small country with a harsh criminal justice system. Most of the ex-offenders in Singapore are Malaysian men. The Malaysian ethnic group is a small part of the Singaporean population. Only 14% of the citizens are

Malaysian, but they are overrepresented in the criminal justice system and create challenges for the Singapore government (Ganapathy & Fee, 2016).

Chan and Boer (2016), Hazifah Binte Rafie (2016), and Ganapathy and Fee (2016) discussed the issues of race and reintegration, re-offending, and stigmatization. The authors concluded a need to create a better environment for Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders because the existing rehabilitation programs and reintegration attempts are unsuccessful for this Malaysian minority group. Ganapathy and Fee's study showed that Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders are generally falling back on the so-called social capital attachment. However, Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders gained not so much assistance to recover positively into society. Those in groups with extra social capital are developing themselves more easily than those with less social capital (Ganapathy & Fee, 2016).

A strategy to decrease re-offending among high-risk offenders is by directing high-risk offenders from incarceration to post-release follow-up in society. The assessment of these offenders' risks and needs should be further evaluated to help the ex-offenders address their needs (Ganapathy & Fee, 2016). The Singapore Prison Service applied an evidence-based approach to reducing re-offending among high-risk offenders. The purpose was to involve high-risk offenders by focusing on their risk factors and anticipating and controlling personal change (Singh & Samion, 2016). Since this evidence-informed approach was implemented in 2012, the results have been a significant improvement for high-risk offenders in re-offending rates, a decrease in anti-

social manners, better housing, and lesser drug and alcohol relapse, compared to high-risk offenders who were not following this strategy (Singh & Samion, 2016).

Ganapathy and Fee (2016) indicated that most Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders face challenges such as the lack of support, the existing economic and socioeconomic disparities, and the fact that the government stated that before it would help Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders, they need to help themselves first. This means that before they can get any support, they need to find a way to live their daily life. There is also academic underachievement by Malaysians and a lack of education from secondary education about why Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders may benefit from a thorough reintegration program (Ganapathy & Fee, 2016).

Hazifah Binte Rafie (2016) studied the value of befriending inmates and Malaysian nonviolent ex-offender clients in half-way homes. These programs seem to have a positive influence on the life of Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders. Specifically, the befriender and self-esteem and self-confidence are motivated and help the Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders feel more positive about their life after release from prison. To encourage the Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders, it is of great help to have the possibility to talk to somebody who went through a similar experience and can explain what possibilities there are to re-integrate. The racial inequality in a multiracial country such as Singapore is a well-known problem for this specific ethnicity group (Hazifah Binte Rafie, 2016; Ganapathy & Fee, 2016).

The literature gap was regarding the Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders who experienced problems with reintegration into society and had more limitations than other

ethnic groups in Singapore. The trust in the social networks that needed to be contacted after their release from prison to find a home and a job was marginal, and this led to difficulties in creating trust relations with social workers. If the re-socialization process can connect the ex-offenders and the people working for these institutions by building a trustworthy relationship, it can create a link to a proper support system (Hazifah Binte Rafie, 2016). Furthermore, most Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders did not finish secondary school, are jobless, and are more vulnerable to earn money via minor criminal activities such as smuggling cheap cigarettes from Malaysia, transferring stolen cars from Singapore to Malaysia, and shoplifting. Further research may help create a better treatment program during and after incarceration (Hazifah Binte Rafie, 2016). This makes it more important to examine the barriers that Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders experienced in terms of reintegration.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to examine the lived experiences of Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders as they made their transition into the community after their release from prison. There are multiple emotional and psychological issues, suicidality, and inadequate medical status because they received limited support (Hazifah Binte Rafie, 2016). There is also a severe problem with housing; many ex-offenders live in shelters or are homeless. The basic needs such as food and housing are mostly derived from charitable contributions, but the ex-offenders want to take care of themselves. This means they are willing to go back into the criminal society to earn money (Tan et al.,

2016). It is essential to determine what this group of ex-offenders need for a better transition into the community. My research helped to get an answer.

Research Questions

What are the lived experiences of how the Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders make their transition into the community after their release from prison?

Subquestion: How does Malaysian culture impact their reintegration experience?

Conceptual Framework

The framework underpinning this study was the risk-need-responsivity (RNR) framework for adults (Andrews et al., 2011). In Singapore, the RNR framework is only used for the Juvenile Justice System. It would be a natural choice to make use of the RNR framework also for adult offenders. Using the RNR framework is complimentary, and it is the most utilized theoretical model to understand how to treat the offenders (Andrews et al., 2011).

The RNR model is universally accepted as the model to guide the assessment and treatment for offenders. It is the only theoretical model to clarify the restorative model of rehabilitation. The results of using the RNR framework for juveniles in Singapore had good results, and in this study, I examined whether making use of the RNR framework for adults would also work in Singapore as it already is proven in many other countries in the world (Andrews et al., 2011).

Singapore was the first Asian country that implemented this RNR framework and, in coordination with SPS, is trying to decrease recidivism rates. The RNR model's use

may lead to a positive change for an ethnic minority group of Malaysian young men if the community believes the positive impact of this RNR model (Tan et al., 2016).

The RNR framework (Andrews et al., 2011) theorizes that actual offender rehabilitation needs a specific category of the offender's level of risk and needs. Once the offender's risk and needs are precisely recognized and categorized, the treatment interventions' style and concentration can be specified. RNR advises that counselors discuss the offenders' crucial issues and mention every positivity that RNR has in it. RNR is about encouraging strengths and give rewards for activities without criminal intent (Chua et al., 2014).

Risk norm is to coordinate the level of program intensity to offender risk level, to determine whether there is a need for intensive programs for a higher risk offender or a less intensive program for lower-risk offenders. Need norm is to target the criminogenic needs of an offender related to criminal behavior. The responsivity norm is to coordinate the intervention style to best suit the offender (Singh & Samion, 2016).

Because of its implementation in the Singapore Prison in 2012 for juveniles, I also wanted to refer to the Good Lives Model (GLM). This model was created by Ward et al. (2012) and strengthens the RNR values of effective correctional intervention (Willis et al., 2013). The GLM is a theory that claims that people are trying to acquire a necessity or a respected lifestyle outcome. If that is not possible in an accepted way, they can try to achieve this criminally. GLM is a model based on creating strength for a person and on intervening to acquire that specific lifestyle they are looking for. It all is about creating pro-social behavior to avoid criminal offenses (Purvis et al., 2011). The two theoretical

models take into consideration the encounters the ex-offenders need to cope with while re-integrating into society. Both models focus on addressing the shortfalls in their behavior and achieving the right skills.

Nature of the Study

This was a qualitative study using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA),which involves a detailed examination of the participant's lifeworld. IPA is used to explore personal experience and is concerned with an individual's perception of an event and produce an objective statement (Smith & Osborn, 2015). At the same time, IPA also emphasizes that the research is a dynamic process with an active role for the researcher in that process. The researcher needs to try to get close to the participant's world and create an "insider's perspective." However, it is not always possible to do this directly or completely (Smith & Osborn, 2015).

The groundwork for a phenomenological approach is to let the participants disclose their life stories. This approach is also used to be a voice for this specific group of people because they usually cannot communicate about their situation after prison release. This information maybe can lower the stigma associated with being Malaysian and incarcerated. The phenomenological approach will focus on ex-offenders and their lived experiences (Creswell, 2013).

According to Smith et al. (2009), IPA started in psychology and much of the early work was in health psychology. Since then, this approach has been picked up particularly strongly in clinical and counseling psychology as well as in social and educational psychology (Smith et al., 2009). The value of IPA as a qualitative research approach is its

capability to analyze and interpret the 'lived experiences' of research participants. Smith et al. saw "phenomenological research as systematically and attentively reflecting on everything lived experience, and we see that everyday experience can be either first-order activity or second-order mental and affective responses to that activity -remembering, regretting, desiring, and so forth" (p. 33). Furthermore, Smith et al. indicated that "in IPA, we are concerned with examining subjective experience, but that is always the subjective experience of something" (p. 33). They argued that the bottom line with IPA, as a tradition that is 'participant-oriented', is that the approach is more concerned with the "human lived experience and posits that experience can be understood via an examination of the meanings which people impress upon it" (p. 34).

It is essential for IPA researchers to know that the principle of this qualitative research approach is not to be an arrogant approach mechanism, but a research approach that helps to be aware of, interpret, and strengthen the lived experiences of the research participants and make their experience an important and honorable one (Smith et al., 2009).

In this study, IPA was used to let the Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders tell their story and made it possible to use these stories to create a social change. This study can be used by the Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders, to inform the policymakers in Singapore and especially the Ministry of Justice and make it possible for them to read the personal stories of the Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders and their struggle to be accepted in the community after their release (Moustakas, 1994).

Definitions

Lived experience: The related life experiences of the offender's as seen and expressed from their perspective (Smith & Osborn, 2015).

Nonviolent offender: An individual who committed a nonviolent offense, such possession of contraband, burglary, stealing small goods, and vandalism, and is found guilty of a criminal act (Hazifah Binte Rafie, 2016).

Parole: In Singapore, there is the Conditional Remission System (CRS); a Conditional Remission Order (CRO) may be issued to prisoners to be released earlier than their scheduled release date (i.e., released on parole). An early release may be granted if a prisoner shows good conduct and behavior while serving their sentence (Li et al., 2019).

Recidivism: When an individual is relapsing into a previous criminal behavior that results in new custody after prison release (Bernstein & Dworakowski, 2014).

Re-entry: The process after an individual completes the prison term and is released into the community (Visher, 2015).

Re-entry program: A program designed to support released ex-offenders for a successful transition into the community (Seiter & Kadela, 2003).

Reintegration: The process carried out by a previously incarcerated person is following social rules and beliefs. This also contains, but is not limited to, getting paid employment, correctly finding clothes, nutrition, transport, and accommodation and guarantee secure support systems (Visher, 2015).

Risk scores: Scores founded on a sequence of static processes: age, gender, and criminal and corrections past. The risk scores replicate the possibility that an offender will re-offend (Casey et al., 2014).

Risk and needs assessment: A tool used to assess an extensive scope of offender risk and individual factors that are significant and supportive to express the treatment, training, and case management decisions (Fass et al. 2008).

Social support: The perception and actuality that one is cared for, has assistance available from other people, and has a supportive social network. This network can be emotional, informational, tangible, or companionship support (Vaux, 1988).

Stigma: is the definition that is used to associate the negative facets of an individual's lives, conditions, or circumstances. Stigmas are shameful aspects of individual's lives that members of the community will put on them because of previous activities. People stigmatize others for various reasons and facets of their lives (Moore et al. 2016).

Assumptions

Phenomenological research supports the assumption that there is a fundament of collective experiences among the participants. As this was a phenomenological study, participants had explained their own experiences, and as the researcher, I made explanations based upon the participant replies (Creswell, 2013).

This study's assumptions may be grounded after listening to ex-offenders during and after their stay in a halfway house. The problems with reintegration into the community, the difficulties of finding housing and employment, and a healthy

relationship with family and friends were similar for almost all ex-offenders. As the interviewer, I assumed that participants would arrive for their interview, be honest about their experiences, not exaggerate their stories, and not minimize or leave out essential activities because of embarrassment. The importance of telling their story was made clear to them to cooperate to create a document that can help make a social change. The assumption specific for this study was the high number of imprisonments of Malaysian nationals in Singapore and their difficulties to re-integrate into the community because of their ancestry. The information that was collected during the interviews with the Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders was coded and analyzed and summarized to develop themes. The result of this study shows whether these assumptions are reliable and trustworthy.

Scope and Delimitations

Researchers have demonstrated that community support is essential to a successful return and reduces the recidivism for individuals who have been imprisoned. The previous studies have been qualitatively focused on small sampling sizes (Fontaine et al., 2011; Fontaine et al., 2012). The scope of this study included individuals that had experienced recidivism in the criminal justice system. A positive re-entry for ex-offenders can significantly influence the social, economic status, family bonds, and a positive future without recidivism (Charkoudian et al., 2012).

In this study, it was essential to discover the Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders' lived experiences primarily by understanding their sense of harassment, psychological

trauma, loneliness, unemployment, stigmatization, and how it was still be seen as a prisoner, even outside the prison.

The theoretical framework, the RNR and GLM, was a structure that was chosen as a critical factor. The scope of this study focused on Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders and not nonviolent ex-offenders in general. I did not write about violent ex-offenders, I did not write about another minority group of nonviolent ex-offenders, and I only wrote about male Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders. This specific group was chosen, and during the search for relevant literature, there is a gap in the relevant literature about this topic in Singapore.

Limitations

The main limitation of this study was that reintegration for Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders is a topic that is not easy to discuss in Singapore. Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders may be hesitant to be open about their situation, even if confidentiality is secured.

Another limitation of a qualitative study was the problem with validity and reliability (Shenton, 2004). To focus on the topic of validity and reliability, all interviews with participants were recorded. Each interview was transcribed word-for-word, and the participants' transcripts where additional notes were used were compared with the interview transcripts' notes to intensify validity. A study by Amankwaa (2016) about trustworthiness refers to the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of a study. In each study, researchers should establish the protocols and procedures necessary for a study to be deemed worthy of consideration by

readers (Amankwaa, 2016). I needed to be objective and listen to the participants and avoided being biased (Creswell, 2014; Moustakas, 2009). In Chapter 3, I will explain more about the evidence of trustworthiness.

Significance of the Study

This study's objective was to enhance the existing literature by reviewing criminal history for Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders in Singapore, risk assessment, and influences of the GLM. It would be a gift to be a factor in a positive social change for those coming back into the community by improving awareness and knowledge of how public support can increase social stability. A recent study about the factors contributing to the stigmatization of Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders in Singapore showed that policymakers are looking into implementing effective antistigma interventions to decrease the public's opposing views about this specific group of offenders. The public needs to be educated about the circumstances of how this specific group of Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders are released from prison and not supervised or supported at all. One of the most important programs is the public's education to empathize with Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders and ex-offenders in general instead of stigmatizing them for the previous behavior. As soon as the negative feelings of fear for this group can be reduced, the trust in the socialization process will start for the ex-offenders (Tan et al., 2016). It can be an eye-opener for the public to read the stories of this group and realize that to prevent people from recidivism, it must be possible to positively re-integrate into the community.

Summary

When Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders are released from prison in Singapore, they are confronted with multiple challenges. The critical consequences of imprisonment on the ex-offender and their relatives, friends, and community are the problems with housing, employment, and being accepted by the public (Shannon & Uggen, 2012). By describing the lived experiences of the Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders, I was able to describe the factors contributing to the stigmatization and implementing effective antistigma interventions to decrease the public's opposing views about Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders. The results of this study may assist this specific group of ex-offenders to find their way into the community.

In Chapter 2, I provide a detailed literature review to illustrate the gap in the literature regarding the lived experiences of Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders. I describe how I searched the literature and found articles about this phenomenon. The stigmatization is also a problem for ex-offenders and specifically from minority groups in other parts of the world, and I managed to find literature about these groups.

Unfortunately, there are no RNR and GLM programs for most of the released ex-offenders. Ensuring these programs' availability could be a factor in providing better social support upon these individuals' return into the community.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter provides a detailed literature review to illustrate how this qualitative study addressed a significant gap in the existing literature regarding Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders' lived experiences and their transition back into the community after their prison release in Singapore. The study also examined whether the Malaysian culture has an impact on their reintegration experience. As Singapore is a small country with a limited amount of research having been conducted there, I also made use of similar research in other countries, where minorities are having similar issues, for example, the Albanese in Italy, the Moroccans in the Netherlands, and the Nepalese in Hong Kong. It was not easy to find recent literature about this topic. Malaysians are a minority in Singapore, and there is a need to create more research about the influence of stigmatization on the reintegration process. The literature about Malaysians in Singapore was complemented with literature from other countries where similar situations are taking place. In this review, I describe international reintegration, minority groups and reintegration, and the Singapore culture.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search for this study was performed using the following databases through the Walden University Library: ProQuest, Sage, Routledge, PsychArticles, PsychInfo, Research Gate, and Google Scholar. Most articles are not older than 5 years. There is not much recent research about this topic in Singapore, which means there is a gap in the literature about the situation for this specific group of ex-offenders in Singapore. There is a dearth of academic literature on prisoner reintegration in the

Singapore context except for a few academic theses. This is even though about 11,000

ex-prisoners are being released into the community every year. Some Singapore-related

articles are older than 5 years, but they are still relevant for the Singapore status. During

the research for my dissertation, there were no changes made to any program for these

ex-offenders. The search keywords to find accurate articles used are *Malaysian*

nonviolent ex-offenders, *reintegration*, *Singapore*, *ethnic minority*, *transition into*

community, *stigmatization*, *cultural aspects*, *lived experiences*, and *half-way homes*. I

found an adequate number of qualitative articles that contributed to this literature review.

I added some articles about similar situations in other countries because of the lack of

articles in Singapore about this topic.

Theoretical Foundation

The RNR model was suggested by Andrews, Bonta, and Hoge (1990) and

designed to evaluate and rehabilitate offenders. The use of the RNR model is to assist

offenders in getting more insight into their criminal behavior. It is helpful for the

individual and the community to have an intervention that can help forecast criminal

behavior in an empathic, cooperative, and honorable way (Polascheck, 2012).

RNR defines three principles to focus on the central roots of continuing criminal

behavior and extensive origins to reduce the involvement in criminal behavior

(Polascheck, 2012). As described by Bonta and Andrews (2007) the three principles are

risk, need, and responsivity. The risk principle matches the level of service and treatment

to the offender's risk to re-offend. This means that if there is a high-risk factor, there will

be more intensive treatment and less treatment in case of a low-risk factor. The need

principle states that the targets for intervention should be based on criminogenic needs, which means needs connected to criminal and anti-social behavior. The responsivity principle is to maximize the offender's ability to learn from a rehabilitative intervention by providing, for instance, cognitive-behavioral treatment and tailoring the intervention to the learning style, motivation, abilities, and strengths of the offender. The responsivity principle is divided into two sections, specific responsivity, and general responsivity. Specific responsivity refers to individual and personal factors that can enhance the treatment response. These can be the preferred learning style, reading level, cognition level, gender, mental health issues, and motivation. General responsivity refers to the fact that cognitive, social learning interventions are the most effective way to teach offenders new behavior as pro-social behavior and handle reinforcement and disapproval (Bonta & Andrews, 2007).

The three principles of risk, need, and responsivity were the start of the research of Bonta and Andrews (2007). They extended and established the central eight risk factors. These are criminal history, procriminal attitudes, antisocial personality pattern, pro-criminal associates, education and employment, family and marital, substance abuse, and leisure pursuits. The RNR model separates the risk factors in the big four and the moderate four. The big four are criminal history, antisocial personality pattern, procriminal attitudes, and antisocial associates. The moderate four are education and employment, family and marital, substance abuse, and leisure pursuits (Caudy et al., 2013).

Grieger and Hosser (2013) described the fact that the big four are the most predictive of criminal recidivism and the most important in the treatment. A criminal history will show the early onset of antisocial behavior and a variety of antisocial acts. Antisocial personality pattern is about low self-control, being hostile, thrill-seeking, and disregard for others. Procriminal attitudes are giving information about thoughts, values, and sentiments supportive of criminal conduct. Furthermore, procriminal associates talk about friends and acquaintances who model, encourage, and support criminal behavior and thoughts. The moderate risk factors are also crucial for the recidivism level and can be influenced more easily. Education and employment can give information about difficulties in school and work settings with peers and authority, poor performance, and lack of interest and ambition. Family and marital instability, poor parenting skills, and criminality within the marital relationship and family. Substance abuse is about alcohol and drug abuse, substance abuse interfering with positive behaviors and relationships within the school, work, and family. Last is leisure and recreation, where there is a lack of prosocial pursuits (Grieger & Hosser, 2013).

It is essential to know the risk level and the offender's criminogenic needs to personalize the treatment in harmony with the RNR model. Some of their needs cannot be related to their criminal behavior but need to be integrated into the treatment to avoid recidivism (Bonta & Andrews, 2007). Treatments based on the RNR model showed a substantial decrease in recidivism and are appropriate for fair use for various offenders, including violent offenders, sex-offenders, female offenders, and juveniles (Andrews et al. 2011). Correctional interventions are incredibly helpful if they aim at the criminogenic

needs. The criminogenic needs can be identified with specific assessments to focus on the best treatment for an offender that will decrease the recidivism risk (Caudy et al. 2013).

Classifying the dynamic and static risk factors is the first crucial activity to find the correct treatment. The dynamic risk factors are traits that can be modified, for example, negative peer associations and substance abuse (Yesberg & Polaschek, 2015). Static risk factors are features of the offender's history that can predict recidivism, but they are often not open to methodical treatment and, therefore, challenging to succeed (Caudy et al. 2013). A recent study by Eisenberg et al. (2019) showed that two static risk domains, criminal history and antisocial patterns, were the strongest predictors of general and violent recidivism. However, when risk domains included both static and dynamic risk factors, the dynamic risk factors were more strongly predictive of recidivism than the static risk factors. In the RNR model, the relevant risk domains found in the current study were labeled as dynamic, indicating that they describe the current situation and are changeable through intervention (Eisenburg et al., 2019).

Combining the static and dynamic risk factors will establish the global risk assessment of the offender. This assessment is substantially related to the recidivism risk that this person will go back into the criminal justice system after prison release. By making changes to the dynamic risk factors, it is possible to influence the offender during treatment and guidance (Miller & Maloney, 2013). The static risk factors, also known as the non-changeable factors, such as the age during the first offense, criminal record, past recidivism, and family situation, are used with an assessment for information about long-term recidivism. The RNR model underlines the theory that dynamic risk factors and

criminogenic needs are immediately associated with recidivism (Bonta & Andrews, 2007).

The GLM was developed based on various sources of literature and arose from the shortcomings of the RNR and the relapse prevention approach. The GLM addresses risk, incorporates the RNR principles of risk, need responsivity, and professional discretion, and provides a comprehensive framework to guide practitioners in their work with offenders. It does this in a way that accepts the ethical and legal requirement to safeguard the interests of the community while also appreciating the obligation to assist offenders to live better lives once they have completed their punishment (Yates, 2007).

The GLM is a strength-based rehabilitation theory that enhances the risk, need, and responsivity principles of effective correctional intervention by focusing on assisting clients in developing and implementing meaningful life plans that are incompatible with future offending (Purvis et al., 2011). During the GLM, the treatment is concentrated on assisting the offender to achieve the skills to make a life changing prosocial behavior instead of criminal behavior. The GLM is divided into primary and secondary goods. Primary goods are specific conditions of mental health, personality traits, and special events necessary for the offender. Secondary goods refer to the activities or strategies for achieving primary goods (Willis et al., 2013).

The fundamental differentiation between the RNR and GLM includes the criminogenic needs and how these are integrated and focused on during an intervention or treatment. The RNR claims that criminal behavior is expected because of the personal, interpersonal, and community activities positive for criminal behavior (Looman &

Abracen, 2013). The GLM is a social re-integrative approach to offender rehabilitation

and is of primary interest in enhancing the offender's well-being. It focuses on the

strengths of offenders and responds to their needs, abilities, and interests. It emphasizes

the importance of allowing the offenders to help them formulate their own goals, as the

idea of what they believe to be a "good life" is established (Casey et al. 2013). This idea

of offender rehabilitation contrasts with the incredibly risk-focused approach to

rehabilitation as outlined in the RNR model. The GLM focuses the principles on social

integration and well-being, as opposed to RNR's correctional ideology. The RNR

remains the only empirically validated guide for criminal justice interventions aiming to

help offenders depart from the criminal system. This statement reflects the positive

impacts of using this RNR model for offender rehabilitation worldwide (Polascheck,

2012).

The GLM was developed to supplement the RNR model's strength, and both

models are not mutually exclusive. The literature suggests that the areas where RNR

lacks specificity can be clarified and enriched by the GLM. Further, with a lack of

empirical literature to support the claims of the GLM, it is necessary to develop programs

that include evidence-based interventions to reduce recidivism while at the same time

increasing offenders chances of re-integrating into the community and leading a

meaningful life (George, 2016).

International Reintegration

Lebel (2012) wrote a study about the perception of formerly incarcerated persons

on stigma. There is a need to create more research about the influence of stigmatizing on

the reintegration process, specifically about the psychological and behavioral aspects. Pryor-Douglas and Thompkins (2012) described the disconnect between education and social opportunity for the formerly incarcerated. They stated that educational programs for inmates prevent them from re-offending. In-prison education is vital to former prisoners' success and is a significant component in putting an end to incarceration's revolving door; however, it must be done correctly for this to occur. It is essential to have a complementary correctional education program and a good follow-up after their release to deal with re-offending. Education and a diploma or degree can help to find the right employment and prevent recidivism. A job can assist with reintegration into the community and create a life without criminality. The current state of correctional education and issues associated with its uses, implementations, and outcomes fail to adhere to the best practices. This has grave consequences, not only for former prisoners but also for the societies to which they return. In essence, failing to carry out educational programming according to proven effectiveness is wasteful and detrimental in the effects it has on attitudes and perceptions among prisoners and staff. Visher and O'Connell (2012) discussed the inmate's self-perceptions about returning home. The most crucial factors for a positive mindset after release are good family relations and close friendships during incarceration and improved family relations to enrich behavior and attitudes during incarceration.

Binswanger et al. (2015) studied the understanding of the health-seeking experiences, insights of risk, and medical and mental health requirements for ex-offenders during the first few months of their transition from the prison to the

community. In many states in the United States, budget constraints are prompting the earlier release of prison inmates. Former inmates reported multiple challenges, poor transitional preparation preceding release, and inadequate or absent continuity of mental and physical health care in the context of significant emotional distress and anxiety. Improved release planning coordination between the medical, mental health, and criminal justice systems may reduce the risk of poor health outcomes for this population. Mears et al. (2015) researched the consequences of imprisonment and found that there is no evidence that imprisonment reduces re-offending. The considerable investment in incarceration over the past three decades, especially during a period when calls for evidence-based practice were ubiquitous, suggests that policymakers believe that prison effectively reduces crime and recidivism. The scholarly record suggests that this assumption is questionable. Compelling arguments, drawing on a diverse range of criminological theories, can be made that incarceration may reduce crime and recidivism or that it may increase it. However, the empirical record is far less compelling and concludes that methodological limitations of research to date preclude any strong claims about the effectiveness of incarceration in reducing recidivism. Theories other than deterrence need to be tested and elaborated on a thorough investigation of incarceration effects on recidivism. Imprisonment for someone who loses his job creates more significant harm to an individual than for someone who has no job, and in turn, may result in a different effect on recidivism. It will affect the reintegration process if the company is unwilling to hire the person after his release. An individual's racial or ethnic background, age, access to housing, and a social support network, residing in

disadvantaged or impoverished areas, is a disadvantage on an excellent reintegration process (Mears et al., 2015).

Porporino (2018) wrote about abstract probation, an essential option for sanctioning criminal offenses since the mid-1800s. Initially grounded in notions of volunteerism and community engagement to support rehabilitation of less severe offenders "through understanding, kindness, and sustained moral "suasion" (Porporino used this word, and it means "influence"), probation was quickly institutionalized around the world as a significant component of the criminal justice system. However, modern probation practice is now struggling to define its proper aim, priorities, and working ways. Probation varies considerably across jurisdictions in how it is structured and organized, how well it is resourced, and how commonly used. However, modern probation practices in many jurisdictions do not match what probation should do. The article of Porporino (2018) will highlight some key challenges faced by probation and suggest some ways forward for it to get closer to what it should do – in adopting a well-integrated and evidence-informed model of practice.

Minority Groups and Reintegration

So (2014) studied that reintegration into society is crucial for the rehabilitation of ex-offenders. However, in Hong Kong, ex-offenders from ethnic minority groups often face specific difficulties in re-integrating into society when they have completed their sentence and have been released from prisons and correctional institutions. Many ethnic minority ex-offenders are likely to experience difficulty in accessing support networks that can help in their rehabilitation and re-establish and sustain an identity as a law-

abiding citizen and face more barriers to reintegration than their Chinese counterparts. The difficulties experienced by ethnic minorities living in Hong Kong are well studied; findings suggest that racial discrimination was common in employment, accommodation, receiving education and training (OXFAM 2009), accessing medical and healthcare services, and using public transport (Rajwani 2004). From this, it is reasonable to theorize that ethnic minority ex-offenders face more barriers to re-integrate, and even more so than their Chinese counterparts because they live in multiply disadvantaged circumstances. This paper seeks to analyze the reintegration of ethnic minority ex-offenders into their ethnic communities using the story of a single ethnic minority ex-prisoner named Marty to learn about the lived experience of being jailed and stigmatized. This study's primary outcomes are identifying facilitative factors for ethnic minority ex-offenders to aid their re-establishment and reintegration into society and consider possible implications for rehabilitative programs for ethnic minority ex-offenders and crime prevention programs for the community. Marty's transitional pathway from prison to the community was long and winding, which was intertwined with numerous rejection episodes, relapse, and recidivism for eight years. However, his story suggests that there are ways to facilitate the reintegration and rehabilitation of ethnic minority ex-offenders.

Hansen (2018) examined risk and resiliency factors in predicting recidivism among Native Americans on a Montana reservation. According to a 2014 report, approximately one in 100 American adults are incarcerated, representing a 500% increase over the past 40 years and accounts for the largest population of prisoners in the world. Despite research that suggests incarceration is not an effective deterrent for crime,

incarceration continues to increase at a historically unprecedented rate. Mass incarceration disproportionately affects communities of color. Approximately 95% of incarcerated individuals will eventually be released back into their communities, and more offenders are re-integrating into their communities than ever before.

Given that most offenders return to impoverished communities, family systems and local resources are usually already overburdened and inaccessible to most returning prisoners. Maintaining employment is usually a requirement for most parole conditions; however, obtaining employment is one of the most significant barriers ex-offenders face when they reenter their communities. Shapiro (2011) stated, "mass incarceration has further weakened depressed communities by depopulating them and stripping even nonviolent former prisoners of opportunities to find employment and meaningfully reenter society" (p. 9). In Montana, Native Americans are overrepresented at all levels of the correctional system. Native American ex-offenders are also just over twice as likely as non-Native Americans to recidivate and be returned to a correctional institution, mostly for technical violations. Many of these technical violations could be due to an invalid risk assessment that places them in higher or lower risk categories than the risk they pose for re-offense. What is precise and well-studied by Muzzica et al. (2015) are the cultural conflicts that resulted in cultural offenses. These acts were committed by people who belong to a minority culture and were considered offenses by the majority's legal system. Is it necessary to acquit offenders of the minor cultural offenses, or is it essential for the minorities to adapt to the majority? Cultural conflicts affect all levels of social relationships between the existing majority culture that maintains control over all

institutions and the minority cultures expected to acculturate. These conflicts play out in private and public spheres; one of the most notable conflicts occurs when courts are confronted with cultural offenses.

Although defining a culturally based offense can be complicated, numerous authors have expressed the need to define a cultural offense. "A cultural offense is an act by a member of a minority culture, which is considered an offense by the dominant culture's legal system. Nevertheless, that same act is within the cultural group of the offender, condoned, accepted as normal behavior and approved or even endorsed and promoted in the given situation" (Campbell, 2012).

Discharged prisoners are faced with reintegration challenges because of some sociocultural factors that tend to affect efforts in that direction. Findings indicated that discharged prisoners are stigmatized both by societal members and existing laws (Osayi, 2015).

Minority groups (either indigenous or foreign) may have their cultural traditions contested, challenged, or changed in some other way that forces them to adapt to the majority culture, known as the acculturation process. Acculturation can be described as how individuals rearrange and change their cultural values because of blending with other cultural patterns. Minorities may spontaneously acculturate, but it is more likely that the dominant group compels the minority group to acculturate by imposing their cultural values upon them and encouraging and/or forcing the minority group to abandon their culture; in this way, acculturation becomes a homogenization process. However, the social reality is that some minority groups, when faced with the pressure to assimilate to

the dominant culture, do not always abandon their values. On the contrary, core values can be enshrined and reinforced to preserve one's traditional identity. Subsequently, minorities may be more dependent on their social groups, further reinforcing the need to preserve their cultural identity. In this sense, although the majority culture wants the minority to abandon his/her values and "acculturate," this process could produce minority culture members who are more vested in preserving their cultural origin.

In some cases, the culturally committed offense is for the minority who committed the offense, not a crime in the first place. This can be a problem with the reintegration because they do not feel guilty about their offense. For instance, when a Muslim is going to marry his bride of 12-year old, this is not an offense in his home country, but it will be an offense in many other countries. The moment this person is released from prison, he has difficulties with reintegration and will not accept that it was a crime in the first place (Van Broeck, 2001).

The literature shows that worldwide are minorities with a higher risk of committing criminal offenses. Wermink et al. (2017) studied offender characteristics and criminal processing decisions. In Western legal systems, suspects can be detained following their arrest and before their trial. The most severe indictment for their offense is at least four years. However, defendants can only be detained if the judge(s) expects that the defendant will eventually receive a prison sentence and if there are apparent presumptions that the defendant has committed the offense. The judge who presides over pretrial detention is not necessarily the same judge who imposes the final sentence. The official grounds for pretrial detention are a flight risk and public safety concerns. The

specific characteristic is the social-economic status, housing, employment, health conditions, and family ties. These have rarely been examined in sentencing research. This study suggests that only high educational attainment, age, and criminal history influenced pretrial decisions of all offender characteristics. The final sentencing decisions may be affected by stereotypical attributions. Second-generation immigrants received longer unsuspended prison sentences. Homeless offenders were more likely to receive a prison sentence that exceeded their time in pretrial detention, and the offenders in the middle age category were punished more severely than younger offenders. In line with the focal concern's framework, all these offender characteristics are likely to be linked to judicial perceptions of societal dangerousness or recidivism's future likelihood. The current results also demonstrate that legal characteristics are significant predictors of pretrial release and final sentencing decisions. This is consistent with a substantial corpus of empirical sentencing research from the US context, and it extends that conclusion to sentencing outcomes in the Dutch context. Not surprisingly, defendants with more severe offense conduct are less likely to be released and tend to be sentenced more severely.

In the Netherlands, Boon et al. (2019) studied disproportionate minority contact (DMC) in the Dutch juvenile justice system. The term DMC is used when the proportion of a racial/ethnic group within the control of the criminal justice system is greater than the proportion of such groups in the general population. This racial disparity can be caused by certain ethnic groups committing more crimes because of cultural or social-economic factors. In the past, DMC has been no political issue in the Netherlands because the country was a predominantly white society, and systematic registration of

suspects' ethnic background was unnecessary. However, in the second half of the twentieth century, the composition of the Dutch population changed, and nowadays, about 20% of the inhabitants were born outside the country or had parents born abroad. About half of this migrant population in the Netherlands originates from non-Western countries (e.g., Turkey, Morocco, Surinam, Caribbean), and of the migrant population under 18, the majority (71%) originates from non-Western countries. However, there are indications that youth with a non-Western background are overrepresented in crime statistics. The extent of the ethnic disparity has been unclear because the Dutch government is very reluctant to register young suspects' ethnic background. However, recent research, mostly based on specific minority groups (predominately boys with a Moroccan and Caribbean background), indicates that DMC exists in the Netherlands. Based on the results of this study, whether DMC exists in the Netherlands can be answered both positively and with great certainty. Young people from minority groups have more police contact, and their chances to be registered as a suspect are much higher than that of their native Dutch peers.

There is an alternative punishment called the HALT program. This program assists the offenders to have a better chance to re-integrate into the community. Statistics show that young people with a migration background are often less suited for this type of alternative punishment. In collectivist cultures, dishonor and shame are very important: a confession is seen as a dishonorable deed in this context. This might explain why minors of Moroccan origin admit guiltlessness often. As such, since a confession is not only a condition for a referral to the HALT program but also plays an essential role in juvenile

court, the unfavorable odds for non-Western minors in the juvenile justice chain can be partly explained by cultural factors (Boon et al. 2019).

Based on the statistics from 2013 in the United States–where DMC has a long history of political discussion–African American youngsters had the highest probability of detention. Compared to their Caucasian peers, their likelihood of detention was 4.3 times higher and, in some states, about ten times higher (Rovner, 2016). In the Netherlands, ethnic inequality (racial disparity) is far greater. For youths with a Moroccan or a Caribbean background, the chance of incarceration is much higher than for any minority group in the United States. Differences in socio-economic conditions are often used to explain differences in crime rates between ethnic groups. Poor conditions might lead to higher (youth) crime, and the reason behind the overrepresentation of migrants may lie in the fact that young people from migrant groups often grow up in impoverished areas (Chung & Steinberg, 2006).

Singapore Culture

Singapore is a small country with 5.64 million residents. At the end-June 2018, the Chinese made up 74.3% of the resident population. Malays followed this at 13.4% and Indians at 9.0%. According to Thirumaran (2019), The Singapore model of criminal justice is a high rate of conviction of the factually accused, which would mean that numerous aspects of the Crime Control Model must be adopted. The value system underlying the Crime Control Model is that criminal conduct's repression is the essential function to be performed by the criminal process. As a result, Singapore laws promote convicting factually guilty persons and efficiency in the system. The definition from

Thirumaran, 2019 page 1045, is that the difference between a factually accused and a factually guilty person is that the factually guilty person did perform the criminal act. However, there are also rules procedures to prevent and correct potential miscarriages of justice, which all governments have some sensitivity towards. It has been said that today's underlying values of Singapore's criminal justice system approximate to the value system of the Crime Control Model. This model makes the conviction of the accused a fact, and rehabilitation or prevention has less importance. The percentage of accused Malaysian criminals is above 60%, while 13.4% of the total population. The number of Malaysian convicted offenders is relatively high. After their release, the community's reintegration is a problem because of the over presentation and the stigmatization of this specific group.

Ganapathy (2000) focused on community policing's conceptualization in Singapore, crime prevention, and criminology. The fundamental idea behind community policing is that effective working partnerships between the police and the community can play an essential role in controlling and preventing crime. Community policing enables a reconsideration of the police's role in developing and strengthening community institutions as a means of preventing crime. By institution is meant a whole range of groupings and organizations - family, friendship networks, neighborhoods, means of employment, and administrative structures - which bring the community and police together in the form of a joint-partnership in the prevention of crime and which serve to transmit norms and values to guide and shape behavior. The Singapore situation attests to conceptualizing community policing in this manner, pointing to the importance of

considering both social measures as dealing with the root causes of crime, as in social democratic positivism and situational measures as involving manipulating aspects of the physical environment to reduce criminal opportunities. The conclusion that time was needed before a partnership between the traditional police department and the Neighborhood Watching Groups could be developed. The police must play an essential role in the awareness of the Neighborhood Watching Groups.

Ganapathy and Fee (2016) described the specific situation about race and reintegration in Singapore. A national concern is a variation in recidivism among the main ethnic/racial groups – Chinese, Malays, and Indians, the latter two being minority communities. Considering the demographics of the Singapore population, Malay and Indian recidivists' representation has been relatively disproportionate over the years. They respectively constituted only 13.9% and 7.9% of the national population. In 2010, the Chinese re-offending rate stood at 18% below the recidivism rate for the Malays and Indians, which was 28.8% and 30.8%. Social capital, or the lack of, has variously been acknowledged as contributing to criminal and delinquent behavior among certain groups in society. It has rarely been employed to explain why ex-offenders cannot break free from recalcitrant behavior and re-integrate into society. The researchers argue that Indians and Malays, as racial minorities in Singapore and disproportionately represented in the prison and re-offending population, are significantly less likely to achieve reintegration than those who belong to the Chinese majority. Because Singapore is a highly racialized society, race on recidivism and rehabilitation is identifiable. Understanding racial structuration by considering the differential impact of a

hierarchically organized network of social relationships is central to this argument. For such vulnerable groups, social capital plays a critical role. The problems with getting their life back on track are an issue for any ex-offender, but it seems an enormous issue for the ethnic Malaysians in Singapore. The uneven distribution of ethnic capital restricts the ability of the Malays and Indians and enables the Chinese to achieve acceptance into the mainstream (Ganapathy & Fee, 2016).

Hazifah Binte Rafie (2016), the staff at SACA, studied the value of befriending inmates and ex-offender clients. She realized that these programs seem to have a positive influence on the life of the ex-inmates. Specifically, the inmate's self-esteem and self-confidence are motivated by the befriender and help the ex-inmates feel more positive about their life after prison release. The Befriending Programme, which is under the umbrella of the SPS, is an initiative undertaken by trained volunteers to give offenders the necessary support and guidance before and after their release. This service is meant to give additional emotional support to participating inmates and is open to those who lack positive peer and emotional support from family and friends. The more positive feelings they have, is the difference between falling back into life before incarceration. When there are enough people around this group who can help them feel good and be necessary as a friend, it will help positively transition into the community where they feel they are an essential part of it. This program is also designed to encourage greater involvement from community members, specifically the various ethnic groups. As the community realizes the importance of their involvement in the reintegration of ex-offenders, programs such as this can be an essential platform to inspire, empower, educate and equip

both the ex-offender and society. Chan and Boer (2016) described their views about managing the offenders and establishing the impact of incarceration and what works in Singapore. To have a success story about preventing re-offending, it is essential to create a support system build on the themes the participants mentioned. The five themes that were discussed during the semistructured interviews with the ex-offenders who have successfully integrated into the community were about the personal choice to change.

The desire to change might not be enough. It needs to be supplemented with determination and commitment to see the change process occurring in their lives. The second theme was the age as an influence on the decision to change. Maturation is a crucial reason to explain desistance from crime. The participants shared that they were afraid that they might have to serve a lengthy sentence the next time they re-offend and not be able to make a life change because they would be too old. The third theme was about purpose and vision in life. As soon as they had a mean in life and knew where they were heading, they established new life goals and did not go back to their anti-social lifestyles. The fourth theme about spirituality and faith, and all participants were more aware of the importance of spirituality and faith as an anchor that gave them hope and stability and was a great contributor to their recovery process. The fifth theme was the environment and the importance of pro-social living. It allows them to learn new skills to adapt to the community instead of going back to anti-social peers for support. They did not know where to go after their release, and the easiest way was to make use of their previous peers. There were also participants who moved into a halfway home and found a

pro-social environment with supportive and positive influences to find a pro-social lifestyle.

Additional research by Tan et al. (2016) examined the factors contributing to offenders' stigmatization in Singapore. Research conducted in Western countries has suggested that increasing contact between offenders and the public is a plausible pathway to improving relations and reducing stigma. They suggest that anti-stigma interventions that focus purely on increasing contact with offenders may not be effective in Singapore. Instead, our findings suggest that interventions targeting perceptions of offenders' capacity to change, and the moral outrage people feel towards criminal behavior constitute promising avenues for reducing stigmatization of offenders in the local cultural context (Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010).

As stigmatization is a regularly and common fear for the ex-offenders, the Singapore government want to make a positive social change to create a better integration into the community. A possible predictor of stigmatizing attitudes explored in this study was the public's perception of offenders' capacity to change. Another aspect was the moral outrage. Anger, disgust, and contempt constitute moral outrage, and such feelings may motivate reactions to criminal behavior that include a desire for punishment and social distancing. Supporting this line of reasoning, this research has found that moral outrage predicted support for more severe punishment and less favorable views about the potential for offender rehabilitation. Moreover, it also depends on the type of crime that was committed. The more violent the crime, the more challenging to re-integrate into the community. This also can help to reduce recidivism rates. The problem of recidivism was

also discussed by Ang and Huang (2008). They wrote about the predictors of recidivism for adolescent offenders in Singapore. The results showed that specifically for the Malay community, related parent criminality, past of running away from home, past of aggressive behavior, and the young age of the first crime were significant risk factors for adolescent re-offending.

Gangs and gang-related crimes as drug offenses were studied by Chu et al. (2014), who studied the criminal behavior between the gang and non-gang associated offenders in Singapore. The average age of the participants was 15-year-old, and 34.8% were Malaysian boys. Chok and Auyong (2018) wrote a case study that begins with a brief statistical overview of Singapore's prison population, emphasizing drug offenders. The 'through-care' framework adopted by the SPS includes three key phases: in-care, half-way care, and aftercare. Before inmates were released, they would be assessed for suitability for community-based rehabilitation: this assessment was based on "needs and risks," with criteria including "the nature of their offenses, their conduct in prison and the presence of family support." Those viewed as low risk (in terms of re-offending) and deemed to have strong family support could be allowed to serve part of their remaining sentence at home. Under this Home Detention Scheme, inmates could be monitored by electronic ankle tags and had to abide by curfew hours. Those assessed as requiring more structured programs or who did not have adequate family support could be sent to half-way houses. When it came to half-way care and aftercare, the SPS relied on community-based rehabilitation to ease offenders' transition from the institutional setting of prison to 'regular life.' Such programs "place the responsibility for integration squarely on the

offender," while at the same time leveraged community resources to achieve rehabilitation for the 'reforming prisoner.' In Singapore, the heavy involvement of religious groups in prison and post-release rehabilitation efforts was deliberate due to the official views that religion could be a powerful and effective means of changing inmates' thinking and behavior.

At present, all half-way houses in Singapore have adopted a "faith-based approach," with religion a crucial part of rehabilitative programs. The Prisons Halfway House Scheme, founded in 1995, was a live-in program that allowed 'amenable offenders' (those deemed low to medium risk) from DRCs and prisons who did not have adequate family support to spend the last stages of their detention at half-way houses. Eight half-way houses worked with the Singapore Prisons Service that collectively could house 450 offenders. These half-way houses were carved along ethnic/religious lines. There were two "Malay Halfway Houses," one "Indian Halfway House," one "Buddhist halfway house," three "Christian halfway houses" (including one for teenagers called Teen Challenge), and one "Female halfway house." These categories were reflective of the government's tendency to refer to race and religion interchangeably, in which ethnic groups were assumed to follow specific religions (i.e., Malays were presumed to be Muslim, Indians Hindu, and Chinese Buddhist or Christian). In practical terms, this conflation could mean that Chinese ex-offenders had greater access to resources, despite the reality that the penal population included a disproportionate number of ethnic minorities. Additionally, half-way houses that were not linked to the SPS were all Chinese/Christian-based. Official and mainstream discourse in Singapore tended towards

extremes: from the adoption of 'race- and class blind' perspectives that obscured how racialized experiences differentially impacted the lives of various ethnic and socio-economic groups in Singapore to initiatives that continually emphasized the 'unique' cultural attributes of ethnic groups and the entrenchment of "ethnicized welfare" as the most effective means to deal with problems within different ethnic groups.

Koman (2018) examined the possibility of establishing Singapore's drug policy and approach, though not in tandem, is consistent with the elements espoused in the harm reduction approach advocated by the Global Commission on drug policies. The Commission believes that drug control nationally must be aligned with the sustainable development goals agenda approved by the member states in 2015. It has recommended abolishing the death penalty for all drug-related offenses, decriminalizing drug possession and cultivation for personal consumption, implementing non-penal sanctions for all low-level drug offenders, and exploring non-penal regulatory models following decriminalization. There is a paradigm shift in global attitude towards the drug problem. Traditionally, there appear to be two distinct approaches to drug issues: The so-called harm reduction and the harm eradication approach. This paper anchors upon this fundamental principle of categorization to offer a comparative analysis between the harm reduction approach used in Europe and the harm eradication approach used in Singapore. It argues that Singapore's approach, though labeled as one of harm eradication, has a strong preponderance of the harm reduction elements in rehabilitation, treatment, and reintegration of the drug inmates in the Singapore prison.

To get more awareness for the young drug offenders, Lee et al. (2018) wrote about the Singapore Anti-Narcotics Association (SANA) that revamped its preventive education strategy to target youth. Adopting a community-based approach meant modifying the anti-drug message's content away from an "enforcement" logic towards an "engagement" one. Youth groups have also been equipped to conceptualize and implement drug awareness campaigns that reach out to their fellow that ex-offenders themselves can contribute to others' rehabilitation earlier in their recovery journey, allowing a community-centric approach to complement their professional casework. One area that is critical to address in the reintegration of ex-offenders is peer group influence, though this is more difficult to develop interventions for. There is a criminogenic effect of negative peer group influence: old friends may tempt ex-offenders into drug relapse and crime.

Subsidized by the Singapore government, SACA published an article about research that has shown that offending is associated with homelessness, and housing is considered as one of the critical factors that help reduce re-offending. Stable housing is critical and instrumental in reducing the risk of re-offending. However, it cannot take place in isolation from other measures and initiatives to assist the ex-offender in his/her reintegration and resettling back into society. SACA is taking care of the ex-offenders if they cannot find a home to stay in after their prison release after the SPS established this. Chin and Iyer (2018) started their research on enhancing corrections, transforming lives: a Singapore perspective. The SPS is responsible for the safe and secure custody, rehabilitation, and aftercare of all prisoners in Singapore. SPS is preparing itself for the

future. The SPS will embrace innovation and technology as crucial enablers through our prison's twin strategies without guards (PWG) and prison without walls (PWW). We cannot move forward alone, though, because an offender must eventually return to his family and community. We must move downstream with continued community partnerships and upstream in our collaborations across government agencies, which are crucial for effective reintegration. We must continue to focus on our in-care efforts for effective rehabilitation. Together, our officers and our community partners can create a ripple effect that extends far beyond just the ex-offender to his family and his community as well.

Lin et al. (2018) also studied the SPS, who adopted correctional research as a critical strategy to inform policy and practice through evidence-based corrections (EBCs). Local research is critical in contextualizing overseas research findings for useful application by considering sociocultural and legislative differences between Singapore and other countries. This research shared two examples of how correctional research aligns with SPS's key strategies and guides disciplinary practices. The first study examines factors contributing to desistance from crime, while the second study explores barriers that ex-offenders experience upon their re-entry into the community. The two studies showed that quality pro-social support is essential in the reintegration and desistance journey of offenders. Furthermore, self-efficacy is needed for successful desistance, while a lack of employment is a crucial barrier to reintegration. Findings from such studies act as "feedback loops" that ground SPS's correctional practices in empirical

evidence. This serves to ensure efficient resource allocation through targeted intervention and enhance rehabilitation and reintegration efforts.

SACA published an article about the education and training needs of ex-offenders. SACA is a crucial aftercare agency providing welfare and rehabilitation services for discharged offenders and their families. The article describes that education and vocational training reduces recidivism, although, at the same time, some studies mentioned education might only reduce the risk for specific subgroups of the prison population, the major ethnic group in a country. The role that education plays in enhancing successful reintegration has not been explored in the Asian context yet. As there is a lack of research done in this area in Singapore, it is also important to note that more research needs to be conducted to examine how ex-offenders who have upgraded their qualifications and skills are coping with their reintegration into society. In Singapore, inmates are highly encouraged to further their education while in prison. Education is seen as a social leveling tool regardless of whether the individual has a criminal past or not. In 2000, the Kaki Bukit Centre (Prison School) was set up to centralize teaching resources. The inmate-students were taught academic curriculum and given opportunities to participate in co-curricular activities that impart life-skills and promote good social values. Apart from formal academic studies, other educational programs are offered to prisoners to enhance and accelerate their literacy levels, such as basic literacy and numeracy courses. For those who are more vocationally inclined, the Workplace Literacy and Workplace Numeracy (WPLN) series, which focuses on upgrading proficiency and skills are provided instead. Also, prisoners are matched with a

job before their release with subsequent on-the-job training attachment after release. However, there are no evaluation or follow-up studies currently being done in Singapore to evaluate the impact of education and vocational training on ex-offenders in securing and retaining employment. The authors also highlighted that upon release, many former prisoners cannot afford to capitalize on their educational foundation as there is an interplay of ethnicity, past criminal records, and gender, which may determine their ability to secure employment. This was also studied by Ganapathy (2018). The reintegration of ex-offenders into the community has emerged as a critical concern of the criminal justice system as prison populations have increased globally. High recidivism rates indicate that prisons have not adequately prepared many prisoners for life after prisons. There are three issues this article explores: first, to unpack the theoretical and methodological issues in understanding the nebulous concept of 'recidivism'; second, to provide a critique of the 'risks–needs–responsivity' model which has formed the basis of prison rehabilitation; and third, to suggest ways to mitigate the effects of institutionalization to achieve positive rehabilitation and reintegration outcomes. Singapore has been steadfast in experimenting with community-based approaches to offender rehabilitation and re-entry. Notwithstanding, reintegration raises essential theoretical and methodological issues as discussed in this paper; one point that is often glossed over is the lack of a conceptual distinction between rehabilitation and reintegration and how that leads to a misreading of recidivism statistics. The premise that 'fixing' internal deficits would render prisoners ready for reintegration is equally problematic as the locus of intervention is fundamentally different – the individual in the

case of rehabilitation, and society in reintegration. Further, Pratt (2007) argues that penal

populism, characteristic of neo-liberal economies, is compatible with the risk assessment

approach in contemporary corrections, materializing into risk aversion, and how they

both reinforce each other to not only sustain a conservative penal policy but also

effectively constrain reintegration. This factor might explain the predicament racial

minorities find themselves in as 'revolving-door prisoners' that often renders them

ineligible for emplacement in community-correction facilities due to their adverse static

and dynamic risk profile as defined by the RNR model. Perhaps, for such groups of

recidivists, a strengths-based approach could be considered alongside

psychological/cognitive interventions. This holistic intervention, undergirded by a

sociological impetus, may not only be compatible with the 'racialized reintegration'

framework endorsed by the Singapore State but one that may help prisoners secure

cultural pride by providing an avenue to a new identity, more generous social status, and

meaning.

Since its implementation in the Singapore Prison in 2012 for Juveniles, the RNR

has found optimistic findings. This was the main reason to start using the RNR in 2014

also for adult offenders and it shows immediate significant better rates of recidivism, but

also developments in anti-social thoughts, lower drug relapse rates, and more steady

housing situation for offenders who made use of the RNR approach compared to a

sample of ex-offenders who were not using RNR. The use of the RNR model in

Singapore needs to be improved and used for a more remarkable group of offenders.

Summary and Conclusion

It is unavoidable that many offenders will be freed into the community after their imprisonment. They will be confronted with various obstacles, and one of them is employment (Schmitt & Warner, 2011). Other issues are housing, relation with family, stigmatizing by the community members, and health and self-esteem (Moore et al., 2016).

The literature review showed that the Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders in Singapore have different problems with their reintegration into the community and have a greater recidivism chance. This because the chances for employment and housing and return to the family home are exceptionally low. There is also a difficulty to find friends who are not involved in criminal activities (Ganapathy & Fee, 2016).

It is expected that this qualitative research will fill the gap in Singapore literature. It is research specifically about the lived experiences of Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders and their reintegration into the community and the high risk for recidivism. Hopefully, the results can stimulate policymakers, lawmakers, and social experts to make a positive social change and create a better life for this specific group of men.

In Chapter 3, I describe how I collected the data with the help of a small group of Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders. The results of this qualitative research will be open to the public. It can lead towards more understanding for this group of men and an easier way to re-integrate into the community.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders in Singapore regarding their transition into the community after their release from prison. Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders often experience emotional and psychological issues, suicidality, and inadequate medical status because of limited support (Hazifah Binte Rafie, 2016). There is no direct support from the government after the release from prison, and Singaporean society does not readily accept ex-offenders. A study about the befriending program shows that it can be a first step for the Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders to create a new social network. This befriending program showed that activating social capital turns out to be adequately entrenched in the relationship with their befriender so that this relationship can offer capital, both practical and emotional, in their lives. An offender needs a network of positive peers (who are not currently engaged in illegal activities) to support his reintegration efforts (Singapore Prisons Services, 2015). These peers may include family members, friends, mentors, or befriender. These peers will also likely involve the offender in prosocial community activities (Hazifah Binte Rafie, 2016).

I used a qualitative research design to explore the participants' lived experiences regarding their reintegration process into the community. Research in Singapore on this specific group of Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders has been limited. The current study was needed to explore Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders' experiences regarding their reintegration into the community. Findings may be used to reduce the incidence of recidivism in this group. It is evident from the study of Hazifah Bin Rafie (2016) that the

befriending program enriches the participant's self-esteem and faith, while it gives them a more optimistic view on their life.

In this chapter, I present the research design, data collection procedures, and data analysis methods. After restating the research questions used to guide this study, I explain my role as a researcher and my potential biases, as well as the participant selection process, sample size, and snowball strategy used to recruit participants. I also describe how the semistructured interviews with open-ended questions were conducted. I explain the interview protocol, including the recording process and how participant confidentiality was ensured. The data collection procedures and data analysis plan are also discussed, including trustworthiness related to transferability, dependability, and credibility. I conclude the chapter with a summary.

Research Design and Rationale

I used a qualitative approach to provide a detailed description of the phenomenon revealed through the participant's experiences. Semistructured interviews allowed this group of ex-offenders to describe their experiences in their own words and provide valuable information to the public. The qualitative approach can help inform new concepts and strategies to create a positive social change (Creswell, 2013).

The research design I used for this qualitative study is phenomenology. Moustakas (1994) described phenomenology as a science of experiences, judgment, perception, and thought. Phenomenology is a structured methodology that focuses on subjectivity while discovering the essence of experiences (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). According to Moustakas, researchers use phenomenology to understand

participants' shared experiences, based on their feelings associated with the phenomenon in the actual setting. Phenomenological research addresses that the individual has lived experiences in the world (van Manen, 2007). The qualitative phenomenological design was appropriate for this study because I focused on the identification, nature, essence, and accounts of the phenomenon shared by the participants. In face-to-face recorded interviews, the participants described their experiences regarding transitioning back into the community after their prison release. A phenomenological design was used to explore participants' lived experiences (Groenewald, 2004). I explored the experiences of Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders in Singapore regarding their reintegration process. The phenomenological design was appropriate to explore the lived experiences of these men from their perspectives.

Research Questions

What are the lived experiences of how the Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders transition into the community after their prison release?

Subquestion: How does Malaysian culture impact their reintegration experience?

Role of the Researcher

As a volunteer in a halfway home, I had conversations with this specific group of men. I noticed the needs they have and experiences they are going through and wanted to use this opportunity to give them the necessary tools to find their direction in life without returning to the criminal world. As a researcher, I needed to have official face-to-face conversations with a list of open-ended questions recorded and confidential and anonymous (Groenewald, 2004). To work with this group of Malaysian nonviolent ex-

offenders who are released from prison and have no place to go made it an interesting topic for this study. I showed them the compassion I have for them and make them part of this study. To create a relationship, they needed to accept my role as a researcher.

My role as the researcher included that of the interviewer throughout the semistructured interview process. Using the interview protocol (see Appendix A), I asked questions about the phenomenon under study. I also asked questions for the sake of correctness, explanations, and content verification.

During data collection and analysis, I established self-control bias by excluding personal hypotheses and opinions, which Creswell (2013) specified are common in conducting a qualitative study. Before presenting any conclusions, I examined common themes emerging from data collection. To further minimize bias, I had no preexisting relationships with any of the participants, either professionally or personally.

It is particularly imperative to approach such research from an outsider's perspective (Hamill & Sinclair, 2010). Given this foresight, I fitted in bracketing throughout the research process to control for researcher bias. I kept a reflective journal to practice reflectivity, self-consciousness, phenomenon, and honesty (Hamill & Sinclair, 2010).

Researcher's Biases

I am passionate about this group of men and their issues to reintegrate positively into the community, which means I was not always objective about the rules and regulations they are subject to. I needed to be objective and only listen to their stories without showing them my emotions. To convey that I was only an interviewer, I showed

them my sympathy through my body language and reactions to their answers to my questions. It is essential to stay as neutral as possible and not promise any changes in these rules and regulations. I needed to record their answers and not lead them into any answers I would like to hear (Mehra, 2002).

Another important aspect was to be nonjudgmental and create a trustworthy relationship to give them the feeling they could be open as they want. I needed to be honest about my intentions and did precisely as my interview protocol promised. I recorded the interviews and made notes if necessary (Sorsa et al., 2015).

Methodology

Participation Selection

The participants were recruited from halfway homes and from the connections they have. There are thirteen halfway homes in Singapore, and I started my sampling in three of the houses. If necessary, I would also have visited the other halfway homes. Most of the men in the halfway homes have friends who are in a similar situation. The friendships between men in a halfway home are close, mostly because they do not have anybody else in their life after their release from prison. I used the snowball sampling technique to help me find the right participants for my research. The advantage of snowball sampling is finding participants who know the research problem and can provide data to answer the research question. The disadvantage can be to make assumptions about the participants because they all know each other (Johnson, 2014).

Sample Size

The decision to delimit the study to Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders made it easy to recruit eight male participants because many ex-offenders belong to this group. The sample size is not prescribed because qualitative studies can have a sample size between five and 50 participants. The sample size is determined when there is no new information to conclude that the saturation point has been reached. For a phenomenological study, Mason (2010) recommended sample size of at least five participants. I intended to have at least eight to 12 participants to ensure that I achieve data saturation. One of the fundamental aims during the coding was to reach saturation—"when no new information seems to emerge during coding, that is, when no new properties, dimensions, conditions, actions/interactions, or consequences are seen in the data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 136).

Sampling Strategy

According to Stark and Trinidad (2007), it is essential for phenomenological studies that the participants have comparable joint encounters. Consequently, I found the participants in a similar life situation. Snowball sampling was used to find a hidden population (Noy, 2008). These hidden populations are people who feel stigmatized or sidelined by the Singapore government and the community. The reason for this study is to give them a voice. I planned to find men in a halfway home and asked the management to introduce me. The plan was to have evening meetings in the halfway home with all the men, explaining my study during this meeting. These meetings never happened. I made a flyer with the criteria that was handed out in the halfway home by the management, and

the participants contacted me directly after reading the flyer. I started selecting the men who volunteer to be a participant, and from there, the snowball strategy also started. The halfway homes in Singapore are all privately run, and most are based on religion. There are two homes based on Islam, nine on Christianity, and one on Buddhism. Recently, they opened a new home sponsored by the government. The halfway homes run small business-like house removal activities, carpentry or gardening, and cleaning. These men often work together and know other men in similar situations, and I met them by using the snowball technique (Waters, 2015).

Recruitment of Participants

I used the necessary documents I needed to hand in for the recruitment process to receive the approval of the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The snowball strategy I chose provided me with eight to 12 participants from halfway homes. If necessary, I could have made use of the SACA database for ex-offenders.

I created a flyer for the potential participants where I mentioned the research's purpose and that they need to be Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders released from Singapore prison in the last one year. I asked if they were interested in an interview that would last 30 to 60 minutes, and the outcome of the interview would be confidential and recorded for study purposes. The interviews would be held at the meeting room in the halfway home. However, due to the COVID-19 rules in Singapore, the meetings were held at a meeting room in the library.

Instrumentation

To ensure that the interview could be completed within 1 hour and that all questions were answered, I developed a focused set of interview questions (McGrath et al. 2019). I wanted to explore the participants' lived experiences, and a semistructured and open-ended questions interview was adequate to acquire data. The interview protocol (see Appendix A) includes the semistructured and open-ended questions I wanted to ask to discover participants' lived experiences. I tried to establish rapport to help facilitate the interview. The interviewees needed to have a safe feeling. The better the relationship with the interviewee, the higher the quality data I would get. It was crucial that the interviewee can speak freely and is comfortable (Anyan, 2013).

Data Collection Procedures

The plan was that the participants would meet me during a regular evening meeting in the halfway home, where I would explain this study's content. I would leave a flyer behind with my phone number and email address that was created specifically for this purpose to ensure confidentiality. After they decided to be a participant, I would bring the consent form, written in basic English to be sure they would understand the study's purpose, over to the mailbox in the halfway home, and collect the signed form and make an appointment for the interview. They would have 1 week to give the consent form back to me, so they had time to think about their participation. I would also explain that their English needed to be good enough to have an interview with me.

Due to the COVID-19 situation, visiting the halfway homes was not allowed. Therefore, I handed the flyer to the management who distributed them to the Malaysian

men. The participants contacted me directly and also asked their contacts to get in touch with me. Within four weeks, I found enough participants for this research. The face-to-face semistructured interviews with open-ended questions allowed the participants to share their ideas and described their experiences to me. I asked the participants nine questions that I developed myself, with help from the literature, that addressed the research question I wanted to answer. The research question is about Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders' lived experiences after their release from prison in Singapore. I wanted to know more about their thoughts and experiences about how they can reintegrate into the community, how they think about getting a job and a home, and if they feel stigmatized. The interview questions were all related to the research questions and generated data to determine whether there is a similarity in the experiences the participants had.

I chose qualitative analysis because the knowledge gained through qualitative investigations is more informative and prosperous, and it offers enhanced understandings. According to Berg (2001), "qualitative research thus refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things" (p. 3). By interviewing the participants, I wanted to get an insight into their individual stories, and also get to know the participants' demographic information to be clear about their background. This study was about a specific group of ex-offenders in Singapore, and it is essential to know what their background situation was to be sure I interviewed the right group of men. Before I started with the interviews, I asked my chair and second committee member to review my questions and give feedback.

After participants gave their consent, I conducted the interviews as soon as possible, one hour per interview with eight to 12 participants. The interviews were recorded on two devices, and if necessary, I made notes. The participants got the chance to add anything they wanted to share after my questions were answered. This information would be added as a separate part per participant. With all eight interviews, this did not happen.

After each interview, I thanked the participants for their information and reassured that the personal information would be coded and their answers anonymous. The participants got a S$20 voucher for the supermarket nearby, and I explained to them that we could set up a follow-up meeting to review the transcript to ensure accuracy. They could make changes or add more information. All participants told me this was not necessary, that they trusted me and were looking forward to the result after my graduation.

Data Analysis Plan

The purpose of this research was to explore the lived experiences of Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders by interviewing them. The data collection instrument utilized were semistructured interviews with open-ended questions. Transcripts of the interviews would be completed, and if available, the notes taken during the interview. The data would be from the eight to 12 participants from their responses to the nine interview questions. This would create a substantial amount of data to analyze and summarize and develop themes. I wanted to make use of the NVivo coding software.

Analysis of Phenomenological Data

Data analysis for phenomenological research can be done by the seven-step analysis process described by Moustakas (1994). This method of organizing and analyzing phenomenological data is developed from Moustakas modification of methods of analysis recommended by Stevick (1971), Colaizzi (1973), and Keen (1975). Every step is described in the proper order of analysis. Working with a phenomenological approach, it is necessary to acquire a complete narrative of your own experience of the phenomenon. The seven steps need to be followed, using the verbatim transcript of the interviews:

1. Horizontalization, listing, and preliminary grouping: A rich transcription of data where textual meanings emerge, much like textual-structural synthesis. Every statement transcribed and coded, called epoche, eliminates prejudgments, and a clearer understanding of the textual concepts and experiences (Moustakas,1994).

2. Reduction and elimination: Review of interview expressions, redundancies, and overlapping statements eliminated. The remaining expressions were reviewed and conceptualized to ensure relevancy to the phenomenon studied. These become invariant constituents that formed the themes (Moustakas, 1994).

3. Clustering and thematizing the invariant constituents: List of categories, or invariant constituents, group together to become the core themes of the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

4. Final identification of the invariant constituents and themes by application: The themes' validation process ensures participants' data reviewed and invariant constituents and themes included (Moustakas, 1994).

5. Construct an individual textual description: Significant themes and statements employed to compose a description of the participants' experiences (Creswell, 2013).

6. Construct an individual structural description: Significant themes and statements used to explain the background and setting that influenced the participants' experiences (Creswell, 2013).

7. Construct for each research participant a textual-structural description of the meanings and essences of the experience: The researcher established a composite description of the meanings indicating the essence of all participants' phenomenon. (Moustakas, 1994)

This procedure assisted to find possible commonalities between the narratives of the participants. The participants share a common history, and their stories can have common themes. All their stories are essential for the researcher to answer the research question (Moustakas, 1994).

Software

Collected data underwent analysis using Collaizzi's seven steps aided by NVivo 12. I entered reactions into NVivo 12 software, assigning pseudonyms to safeguard participants' privacy and categorizing the collected data into themes for ease of coding. NVivo 12 is a software tool that assists qualitative researchers in managing, shaping, and

understanding the unstructured information derived from open-ended questions (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). After collecting the data, I did not make use of NVivo and analyzed the data with help from an organized system with a notebook per participant and a notebook for all commonalities that I found. These commonalities were coded and categorized in themes and sub themes.

<center>**Issues of Trustworthiness**</center>

Data collection and analysis in phenomenological research must show evidence of trustworthiness (Moustakas, 1994). Qualitative research uses the vocabulary described as in Creswell, 2013, and uses words as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

It is essential for the readers of this thesis to be sure about the results and how this research was conducted. To ensure credibility, it needs to be confirmed that the data I collected is interpreted objectively. The interviews with the participants were all recorded, and transcriptions were be made. Working this way, I will avoid assuming, misinterpreting, and avoiding personal bias to their stories. I wanted to provide transcripts of the interviews to the participants for their review to ensure that I am accurate and make changes. This process is called member checking and assists with the data's credibility (Creswell, 2013).

My dissertation committee also reviewed my drafts and assisted with their expertise about the content and the dissertation's credibility and readability. The Walden

University dissertation process will also assess my writings by the University Research Reviewer.

Transferability

Qualitative research is compared to quantitative research, with smaller sample size, by having a reader with the skill to transfer similar groups of minority ex-offenders. It was on me to present the data so that it is possible for the reader to associate my results with other comparable situations. The description of how the research is accomplished, what methodology is used, and how the participants' narratives will be described must make it possible to transfer this data to another comparative research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Transferability was established by providing readers with evidence that the research study's findings could apply to other contexts, situations, times, and populations. It is important to note that the researcher cannot prove that the research study's findings will be applicable. Instead, the researcher needs to provide evidence that it could be applicable. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) observed, "It is, in summary, not the naturalist's task to provide an index of transferability. It is his or her responsibility to provide the database that makes transferability judgments possible on the part of potential appliers" (p. 316). Thick description is described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to achieve a type of external validity. By describing a phenomenon in sufficient detail, one can begin to evaluate the extent to which the conclusions drawn are transferable to other times, settings, situations, and people.

Dependability

Dependability indicates the reliability of the procedures that are followed to collect and describe the assembled data. It must be possible for another researcher to create the same results while they are repeating this research. It is essential to describe all the steps in the research process to duplicate this study by another researcher. That means from the start of the idea to the beginning of this dissertation, the writing of the prospectus and proposal, the sampling strategy, recruitment of the participants, data collection via the interviews, data analysis, use of software, data validation with the participants and the results as in the discussion, conclusions, and ending with recommendations. If anybody wants to replicate this research, it must follow the outcome of the same procedures (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Confirmability

Confirmability is about the researcher's competence to avoid bias and be objective, non-judgmental, and not opinionated. To describe the participants' lived experiences, the interviews need to be recorded and transcribed to limit any potential bias. To help me with this process, I will ask the participants to review the transcripts to help ensure accuracy in my data analysis. Associating my involvement and expectations about the research results can negatively impact the confirmability of this qualitative phenomenological study. It is necessary to use bracketing to specify consistency in this phenomenological approach (Creswell, 2013).

Ethical Procedures

Ethical Considerations

Qualitative research can have an impact on a vulnerable group of participants. The first step was to get approval for these interviews from Walden University's IRB. The researcher must inform all the participants understandably to provide informed consent for participation in this research. Realizing that participants can experience stress during the process, the researcher needs to know how to react if this is happening. The participant may discontinue the interview at any point, with no negative consequences or repercussions. Confidentiality needs to be secured for the dissertation's whole process, including the data analysis and the result of the dissertation; this includes the storage and distribution of the data. The participants will receive a token of appreciation that is in relation to their standard of living (Creswell, 2013). I waited to find participants and start the interviews pending the approval from the dissertation committee members and the IRB. After submitting the documents for IRB approval, this study received IRB approval with number 04.28.21-0517433 and it expires on April 27,2022.

Treatment of Participants

The participants will be informed about the entire process and provided a letter in simple English language to understand what I expect from them and what they can expect from me. I realize this is about a group of men who feel vulnerable, and I treated them fairly and respectfully. I will also explain that telling their stories can help get more understanding from the public about their specific situation as Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders. To show them my gratitude, they received a supermarket voucher for S$20.

Treatment of Data

Confidentiality is essential for participants. They are stigmatized and want to avoid any involvement that can be negative for their future. Their names will not be mentioned; they will get a unique number to be only identified by the researcher and, if necessary, by the dissertation committee members. The only document that is signed by the participants will be the consent form. If one of the participants wants to withdraw during the process, I would destroy the consent form in front of the participant. I also will delete the recorded interview if there is any record taken. The paper trail of data, as in notes, journals, transcripts, and signed consent forms, and the recorders are locked in my private fireproof safe. My laptop will be stored in the same safe and has software to protect against unwanted hackers. All information and data related to this dissertation will be stored in the way Walden University's ethical and record-keeping policy is settled. This means it will be stored for five years and destroyed properly after this period. This is for the paper trail and the electronic documents and recordings.

Summary

In this chapter, I described how I would select, collect, and analyze the data. Chapter 2 described the challenges Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders and how other minorities in similar circumstances are treated after their prison release, and their problems with reintegration in the community. The research is about stigmatization and a high risk for recidivism. The data I collected will explore the processes these men are going through after their release and all their issues, in positive and negative ways. I addressed how the trustworthiness will be initiated and described credibility,

transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The researcher's role and the biases are described; the ethical considerations are consistent with the rules and regulations of Walden University's IRB.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this IPA research was to examine the lived experiences of how Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders make their transition into the community after their release from prison. There are multiple emotional and psychological issues, suicidality, and inadequate medical status because they receive limited support (Hazifah Binte Rafie, 2016). There is also a severe problem with housing; many ex-offenders live in shelters or are homeless. The basic needs such as food and housing are mainly derived from charitable contributions, but the ex-offenders want to take care of themselves. This means they are willing to go back into the criminal society to earn money to support themselves (Tan et al., 2016). This research will highlight the lived experiences of these ex-offenders to determine what might be helpful in their transition into the community. My research can help to get an answer.

Chapter 4 of the study contains the results of the qualitative phenomenological analysis of the eight interviews with Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders. Moustakas' (1994) method was used to identify the most significant experiences of the participants, addressing the two research questions of the study. I used the data analysis for phenomenological research, IPA, that can be done by the seven-step analysis process described by Moustakas (1994).

The following two research questions guided this study:

- What are the lived experiences of how Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders transition into the community after their prison release?

- Subquestion: How does Malaysian culture impact their reintegration experience?

For this research, I used a qualitative phenomenological research design to collect data, which happened through asking participants semistructured, open-ended interview questions. All the questions asked were designed to encourage conversations, providing a space for each participant to share their individual experiences and express their feelings of the phenomenon as they recall it. In this chapter, I discuss the demographics, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, findings, and summary.

Setting

I obtained data for this research through in-depth, semistructured interviews with eight Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders. Participants were recruited through flyers placed at halfway homes in Singapore. In addition, I also used snowball sampling. I conducted interviews with participants face-to-face in a meeting room in a National Library. The eight interviews lasted on average between 40 and 60 minutes. All participants were asked the same interview questions. The air-conditioned room made the place cool and comfortable, and undisturbed for the participant to speak with me privately.

All eight Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders responded to the flyer directly or got the flyer from a friend and fit the criteria for this research. Before the interview took place, I explained the content and the necessity of the consent form. I explained to the participant that I would record the interview and later transcribe it to a text document. I also reminded them they could end the interview at any time and for any reason.

Due to the COVID-19 rules, the library was almost empty, and nobody was near the meeting room where I conducted the interviews. During all interviews, the meeting room door was closed, which helped to ensure privacy during the interview.

At the end of each interview, I thanked them for their time and told them their stories were important input for my research. I told them again that they could call the counselor of one of the organizations with a 24-hr hotline, mentioned in the consent form, for feelings of minor discomfort such as stress. Finally, before leaving the room, each participant was given a S$20 voucher from a local supermarket for their participation.

Demographics

A total of eight participants were recruited to discuss or share their lived experiences and meaning-making processes. Participants were all males who had been incarcerated, and three of them had previously been detained in a halfway home. All participants had been incarcerated for between one and 16 years and were imprisoned between one and eight times. Among the eight participants, all were Malaysians, and the three who were placed in a halfway house stayed in a halfway house based on their Muslim faith. Table 1 provides information about the age, race, history of incarceration, admission into halfway houses, level of education, and where they were born.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Category	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Age	30	34	58	51	21	41	47	56
Born in Singapore	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of incarcerations	3	1	8	7	1	4	7	4
Total years of incarceration	7	16	19	18	1	11	12	8
Time out of prison	2 years	1.5 years	4 years	5 years	6 months	2 years	5 years	4 years
Admissions into halfway house	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Level of education	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary	Diploma	Secondary	Primary	Secondary	Primary

Data Collection

Data collection began once I received final approval from Walden University IRB (Approval No. 04.28.21-0517433) on April 28, 2021. Recruitment flyers were placed in three halfway homes. The management from the various halfway houses sent out the digital flyers to their ex-residents, and three participants responded to me. A snowball sampling technique (Noy, 2008) was then used to recruit five more participants. Three knew each other from a volunteer organization for after-care for Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders. Individuals who wanted to participate in the study contacted me via telephone or email after reviewing the flyer that highlighted the purpose of the study. During my initial conversation with each potential participant, I assessed them to ensure they met all the inclusion criteria of being a male Malaysian nonviolent ex-offender, 18–65 years old, guilty of a nonviolent crime, finalized the time in prison, and understand

and speaks English. When it was determined that the criteria were met, I made an appointment for the interview. I started my interviews on May 29, 2021, and did my last interview on June 30, 2021. At the end of each interview, I told them again that they could call the counselor of one of the organizations with a 24-hr hotline, mentioned in the consent form, for feelings of minor discomfort such as stress.

Each participant was interviewed once, and the interviews lasted no more than 60 minutes. The interviews were recorded on my Samsung Galaxy Tab S7 and my Samsung Galaxy Note 9. The participants agreed to have the interview recorded. There were no names mentioned in the interview, and the participants were named by their participating number. After the interview, I uploaded the digital audio recording to my external hard drive, which is password protected. I also uploaded it in Otter.ai app (https://otter.ai/) for transcription. After the transcription was sent to me via Otter.ai, I deleted the transcript from the app. I copied the transcript into my external hard drive, which is kept in a safe in my home. The safe has a key and a code, and I am the only person with the combination of that safe. The signed consent forms are also stored in this safe.

After receiving the transcript via Otter.ai, I listened to the interview while reading the transcript to ensure there were no mistakes. I needed to make some changes to the transcripts, especially about abbreviations used by the participants or specific words or names of organizations in Singapore that were not recognized by the Otter.ai app.

Data Analysis

During the process of coding the data, themes began to emerge. I used the data analysis steps for IPA that can be done by the seven-step analysis process described by

Moustakas (1994). This method of organizing and analyzing phenomenological data is developed from Moustakas's modification of analysis methods recommended by Stevick (1971), Colaizzi (1973), and Keen (1975). Every step is described in the proper order of analysis. It is necessary to acquire a complete narrative of your own experience of the phenomenon when working with a phenomenological approach. I followed the seven steps, using the verbatim transcript of my interviews:

1. Horizontalization, listing, and preliminary grouping: A rich transcription of data where textual meanings emerge, much like textual-structural synthesis. Every statement transcribed and coded, called epoche, eliminates prejudgments and a clearer understanding of the textual concepts and experiences (Moustakas,1994).

2. Reduction and elimination: Review of interview expressions, redundancies, and overlapping statements eliminated. The remaining expressions were reviewed and conceptualized to ensure relevancy to the phenomenon studied. These become invariant constituents that formed the themes (Moustakas, 1994).

3. Clustering and thematizing the invariant constituents: A list of categories, or invariant constituents, group together to become the core themes of the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

4. Final identification of the invariant constituents and themes by application: The themes' validation process ensures participants' data reviewed and invariant constituents and themes included (Moustakas, 1994).

5. Construct an individual textual description: Significant themes and statements employed to compose a description of the participants' experiences (Creswell, 2013).

6. Construct an individual structural description: Significant themes and statements used to explain the background and setting that influenced the participants' experiences (Creswell, 2013).

7. Construct for each research participant a textual-structural description of the meanings and essences of the experience: The researcher established a composite description of the meanings indicating the essence of all participants' phenomenon. (Moustakas, 1994)

I created a list of quotes, expressive, illustrative, and informal words and phrases from all participants and combined them into three themes and nine subthemes. For every participant, I used their own notebook where I wrote down all the interview questions. During the interview, I wrote down their first quotes and emotions when they answered the questions. These were just words or concise sentences to give me an idea of how they were feeling during incarceration, after their release, and during the interview. While reading the transcripts and listening to the audio recording, I made notes and created a table with the themes and subthemes with the information. This procedure helped to identify possible commonalities between the narratives of the participants. The participants share a common history, and their stories can have common themes. Participants' stories are essential for the researcher to answer the research question (Moustakas, 1994).

This process required listening to the audio recordings and reading the transcripts several times to achieve understandings into the participant's lived experience that is fundamental to interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith et al., 2009). I made a list with the codes by looking for patterns within the transcripts, similar words that appeared in all the interviews, and from there, I established clusters, which I developed into themes and subthemes. The three main themes are (a) feeling excluded from the community, (b) difficulties finding a job, and (c) being Malaysian is not easy in Singapore. From these three themes, I created nine subthemes corresponding with the participants' lived experiences (see Table 2).

Table 2

Themes, Subthemes, and Supporting Codes

Themes (T) and subthemes (ST)	Supporting codes
T1: Feeling excluded from the community	
ST 1a: No help from Singapore Prison Services	• Feeling unimportant • Feeling helpless • Being left alone • Government do not care • The punishment was useless
ST 1b: Only support from family	• Family visited in prison • Move into house of family • Feeling sorry to trouble family • Care for family
ST 1c: No respect, no opportunities	• Once an offender, always an offender • People look down on you • Loneliness
T2: Difficult to find a job	
ST 2a: Once an offender, always an offender	• Judged by the community • Only day jobs, no contract • Secretive to colleagues • If colleagues know they look down on you • Constant rejection for jobs
ST 2b: Low self-esteem	• No chances • Brainwashed in prison, "you are worthless." • They never call you back after a job interview
ST 2c: Feeling stupid because of low qualified jobs	• Feeling of being stupid • No work for the diploma they studied • Lack of motivation to do simple work • Easy to go back into criminal activities to earn money
T3: Being Malaysian is not easy in Singapore	
ST 3a: Malaysians are more accepting for each other	• Constantly judged by the community • Feel safe in your own groups • Most help from family and Malaysian friends • Every family knows somebody with a criminal history
ST 3b: Malaysians can be stopped in public by police	• Police can stop them wherever and whenever • In cases of drug use, they can be asked for a urine sample till five years after release • Police can be harsh
ST 3c: Lack of education due to large families and low wages	• A lot of siblings, not all go to school • Need to work from a young age to support the family • Youngsters easy into drugs • A lot of single parents because of incarceration of one of the parents

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Data collection and analysis in phenomenological research must show evidence of trustworthiness (Moustakas, 1994). Trustworthiness is essential in qualitative research and was established in this research by using credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as essential tools. I also maintained a reflective journal to help me to keep my personal thoughts and ideas separate from the writing process of Chapters 4 and 5. It was sometimes challenging to hear their stories, and by writing my thoughts in my journal, I could stay objective in my analysis and interpretation of the findings.

Credibility

Being aware of the procedures listed in Chapter 3 to obtain credibility, I worked with these designs. I planned the research, selected all participants to make sure they were qualified to participate in this research, interviewed all participants myself, transcribed and analyzed the data. It was essential to interpret the data I collected objectively. The interviews were all recorded on two recording devices and transcribed via the Otter.ai app. By using these recordings and transcriptions, I avoided assuming, misinterpreting, and avoiding personal biases to their stories. After interviewing eight participants, the data reached saturation, and I did not hear any new themes. To ensure credibility, I summarized the answers to the questions with the participants at the end of the interview. They confirmed to me that they agreed on the accuracy of their responses.

Transferability

Transferability is established by providing readers with evidence that the research study's findings could apply to other contexts, situations, times, and populations. It is on

me to present the data so that it is possible for the reader to associate my results with other comparable situations. The description of how the research is accomplished, what methodology is used, and how the participant's narratives will be described must make it possible to transfer this data to another comparative research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Eight participants formed the sample for this research. The sample size can give the impression to be small, but the data started to reach saturation after six participants, and I interviewed two more participants to be sure about reaching saturation. Data saturation is an essential factor for transferability and if another researcher wanted to replicate this research, they should be able to use similar settings and participants. This is also what Smith et al. (2009) suggested when using IPA.

To improve transferability, I used thick descriptions of the participant's lived experiences with direct quotations and descriptive phrases from the participants. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe thick description to achieve a type of external validity. By describing a phenomenon in sufficient detail, one can begin to evaluate the extent to which the conclusions drawn are transferable to other times, settings, situations, and people. I developed three themes and nine subthemes to support these themes to present more clarification.

Dependability

Dependability indicates the reliability of the procedures followed to collect and describe the assembled data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Dependability means the data collected are genuine and free from any way of bias that might adjust the reliability of the

findings. It is essential to describe all the steps in the research process to duplicate this study by another researcher.

Dependability in this research was reached by recording each interview and transcribed the data. I also made notes to write down specific quotes the participants mentioned and how they replied to my interview questions. I listened three times to the recording for quality assurance. The first time without making any notes, I wanted to listen without any distractions and visualize the interviews with the participants again. The second time by checking the transcript and made the necessary changes where the Otter.ai missed the words and the third time to be sure about the similarity and writing down codes, quotes, and creating themes.

Confirmability

The method to create confirmability expected me to be neutral, avoid bias and be objective, non-judgmental, and not opinionated while interpreting the data (Patton, 2014). Research must be thoughtful of the experiences of the participants and not from the researcher. The interviews were recorded and transcribed to limit any potential bias. I met the participants with an open mind and followed the interview questions. I used semistructured open questions and initiated follow-up questions if necessary to get more clarity about an answer. With their answers, I want to respond to the research questions effectively and relevant. I saved the recordings and the transcript on my laptop and an external hard drive with a password, and the transcripts were stored in a safe with a code and a lock. I also used a personal journal to write down my personal notes and impressions to avoid bias and incorrect data analyses.

Results

The purpose of this research was to examine the lived experiences of how Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders make their transition into the community after their release from prison. There are multiple emotional and psychological issues, suicidality, and inadequate medical status because they receive limited support (Hazifah Binte Rafie, 2016).

There is also a severe problem with housing; many ex-offenders live in shelters or are homeless. The basic needs such as food and housing are mainly derived from charitable contributions, but the ex-offenders want to take care of themselves. This means they are willing to go back into the criminal society to earn money (Tan, et al., 2016). It is essential to determine what this group of ex-offenders need for a better transition into the community.

Data for this research was collected by interviewing eight Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders in person. The interview protocol consisted of nine semistructured open-ended questions that were developed to respond to the two research questions:

- What are the lived experiences of how Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders making their transition into the community after their release from prison?

- Subquestion: How does Malaysian culture impact their reintegration experience?

All participants had a history connected to these research questions, and they were willing to answer the research questions during the interviews we had. After transcribing the recordings of these interviews, I read all the transcripts a few times and started coding

the data. This process helped to organize this information into three themes and each theme into three sub-themes. The sub-themes were recognized from exact words that surfaced to detect a feeling or belief. I focused on patterns in the participants' replies and the phrases and quotes that appeared repeatedly and were associated with the research questions used for writing the results. I described the themes and subthemes in Table 2 and explained more in the following pages.

Theme 1: Feeling Excluded From the Community

All participants expressed that after their release from prison, they had no support from the government. They had the idea the government only wanted to punish them and being left alone after their incarcerating. Also, friends and family members looked down on them and had no other places to go than staying with family or for three participants in a halfway home. There was no job and no money to rent their own place and depend on their family's goodwill.

I recognized three subthemes:

- ST 1a: No help from Singapore Prison Services (SPS).

- ST 1b: Only support from family.

- ST 1c: No respect, no opportunities.

ST 1a: No Help From Singapore Prison Services

None of the participants got any help from the SPS after their release. They were feeling left alone and helpless the day they were released from prison. They also felt that the government does not care about their well-being and the punishment was useless.

Participant 3, who went back to his mother's house, told me that people, like the neighbors and family friends, looked down on him and judged him because he was a repeated offender. "I had the idea that the neighbors were always checking on what I did and thought I was already planning a new crime. My mother's friends asked her if she could manage me to stay out of the crimes."

Participant 4 went to a Halfway House the second time he was released but was again with ex-convicts, which had a negative impact on him. "I even started to use drugs while in the Halfway house and was caught selling drugs and went back into the prison with a longer sentence. I was foolish that time but learned a lot from it and did not go back into any criminal activity after my release."

Participant 5 asked to be placed in a Halfway House because he did not want to be seen at his family's house. Unfortunately, there was no place in the only Muslim Halfway House, and he had no other choice than to go back to his family's home. "I was feeling ashamed to stay with my mother and younger sisters because I was wearing an ankle-tag, and everybody could see that I was an offender. This ankle-tag makes it difficult for my sisters to bring their friends to our house because my sisters did not want to be seen with a criminal brother."

ST 1b: Only Support From Family

All eight participants had family members who visited them during their incarceration, and they all stayed with family members after their release from prison or Halfway House. This solution was not what they wanted initially, but if there was no place in a Halfway House, there was no other place to go than the family house.

Participant 2 went back to his mother's home, and after she died, he needed to move into his sister's place. "I could not afford to rent my own place because I had a job with very low pay. I wanted to find a room to rent, but it was too expensive. Fortunately, I could move to my sister's house, but I needed to promise to stay out of trouble."

Participant 6 went back to his own rental place where his wife stayed during his incarceration. "I was feeling very strange because I needed to lie the whole time. My wife told the neighbors I was overseas for a job, and only close family knew about my time in prison. My family was bringing us food and household goods during the time I did not have a job."

Participant 7 said he was incarcerated seven times, and the last time he went back to his family to prove he could change. "I was afraid to go back again to a Halfway House with ex-convicts because it was easy to get back into the criminal world again. I explained to my mother that I needed a safe place to stay because I wanted to make a change this time in life. It was difficult for all of us, but we managed, and here is where I am now. Having a family and a job."

Participant 8, who was 54 years old after his last release, wanted to stop his criminal activities and finally started to take care of his family in a positive way. "I cannot go on with this life anymore. I am going to be a grandad soon and do not want to trouble my daughter anymore. She suffered a lot during her life to have a father like me, and now I want to prove I can be a good grandad."

ST 1c: No Respect, No Opportunities

The tendency in Singapore is that once an offender, you are always an offender, and people look down on you. All the participants mentioned they had feelings of shame and loneliness and always being secretive about their past in prison. It is difficult for them to always telling lies and remember what they told people. They explained there is no respect for ex-convicts, and if they want to start with a clean slate, it is almost impossible because there are no opportunities. Some companies want to hire ex-offenders or volunteer organizations to assist them in finding a job, but there are more ex-offenders than these companies and volunteers can handle.

Participant 1, who was incarcerated three times, mentioned he went to see his old friends because nobody else wanted to talk to him. Meeting up with these friends resulted in new criminal activities.

Participant 2 was 16 years incarcerated and 32-years-old when he was released eighteen months ago. "I was very lonely because I was afraid to tell anybody about my very long stay in prison. I got help from a non-profit organization named ISCOS, Industrial and Services Co-operative Society." ISCOS is the only co-operative in Singapore that actively involves the community to assist ex-offenders in obtaining a position in the community. "Without the volunteer from ISCOS, I would be totally lost because I had the feeling I was brainwashed while incarcerated, and I had no emotions anymore after my release. My emotions were like a robot, and seldom a guard asked me how I was feeling. If I keep quiet and just followed the rules, I got what I needed. I did not dare to have my own opinion."

Participant 6 felt ashamed he could not support his wife and son, who was 12 years old when he was released. His son was under a subsidy scheme, FAS, Financial Assistance Scheme for schoolchildren. FAS paid for his son's school uniform, meals, and all activities organized by the school. "My son thought I was working overseas, and he did not know why he was a "FAS-kid." He thought that I made a lot of money overseas and could afford his expenses for school. Until today I did not tell my son the truth, and it creates a lot of tension between us because he suspects something is wrong. I think I need to sit down with him now he is 14 years old, to explain my past, but I am afraid he will walk away from me."

Theme 2: Difficult to Find a Job

All participants had difficulties finding a job because of their criminal record. In Singapore, you are obliged to disclose you have a criminal record to a possible employer. This means that none of the participants got a job via the usual way of applying. Most of them got a job via involvement from ISCOS, SACA, or Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises (SCORE). These are all non-profit organizations working with volunteers. Most of the jobs are so-called day jobs where you apply for a job for the next day with immediate payment at the end of the day. These jobs are food and beverage, gardening, cleaning, relocating, warehouse assistant, and construction works. Most of the participants did not finalize any diploma or degree and had no chance for a job they dreamed about.

I recognized three subthemes:

- ST 2a: Once an offender, always an offender.

- ST 2b: Low self-esteem

- ST 2c: Only low-qualified jobs

ST 2a: Once an Offender, Always an Offender

Participant 1 wanted to get a job in the construction industry but was rejected because of his criminal history. "The problem was that I had a criminal record, and all bosses told me that once an offender, always an offender and were afraid to offer me a job. Finally, I found a job in construction via a friend who knew a boss with a similar history. We did not tell any of our colleagues about our past in prison."

Participant 2 got a job via ISCOS in food and beverage, but he only washed dishes and wanted to do more with his life. "I got a better job, also via ISCOS in sales, and told my colleagues about my time in prison, and immediately they looked down on me, and I had no opportunities to grow. I could not handle this negativity and asked a family friend who had his own company in car washing products and worked with him for half a year and have my own company now, selling car wash products. I feel so much better now to be my own boss and finally can take my own decisions."

All participants heard the quote: "Once an offender, always an offender" while looking for a job. They all felt judged by the community for not giving them a second chance. The constant rejection for employment and not getting an answer after applying for a job gave them a feeling of being rejected by the community. They had their punishment done and were looking for a new chance that unfortunately did not come for most of them.

ST 2b: Low Self-Esteem

Participant 4 got a job via SCORE in food and beverage, and he was advised to keep quiet about his past. Unfortunately, his colleagues found out, and he was feeling bad and afraid he had no chance for a steady job. "For the sake of my marriage, I keep on trying and found a job in a restaurant that is accepting ex-offenders to work for them. The owner has a history of criminal activities and knows how difficult it is for ex-offenders. It worked out well, and now I am assistant manager in a restaurant because of only this one person who assisted and believed in me."

Participant 5, who was 19 when he was incarcerated: "I was intimidated while inside the prison, and the guards told me it would be difficult to make a positive change. Once an offender, always an offender was used very frequently inside prison."

During the interview with participant number 5 and the previous four, I also realized that the guards, staff and the other prisoners constantly saying that you are still an offender after your release. Because "once an offender, always an offender."

Participant 7 was incarcerated seven times and in total 14 years and could find a job via the Halfway House he was in after the last incarceration. He came out of prison five years ago and needed to reinvent himself and to feel positive again. It was a difficult journey because he was stigmatized by volunteer organizations as SACA, Yellow Ribbon, and ISCOS. "One of my problems was to explain to others I wanted to make a real change this time. The volunteers knew I was a recidivist, and even the volunteers had difficulties believing that I wanted to make a positive change this time in my life. I could hardly find a job and was happy I could stay at my mother's house after the release from

the Halfway House. I keep on trying to do my best and finally got a job, and until today I am on the right track.

ST 2c: Feeling Stupid Because of Only Low-Qualified Jobs

All participants mentioned they were only qualified for simple jobs because of their low education. It gave them the feeling of being stupid and were not motivated to accept these jobs.

Participants 3 and 8 had simple day jobs in a warehouse and delivery of goods. They had no education and were labeled as ex-offenders by their bosses and colleagues. They mentioned that it was difficult to keep working for a low salary and thinking of going back into criminal jobs as both did a few times. Participant 3: "I had eight convictions because I could not get used to these simple jobs with a very low salary." Participant 8:" I went four times back in prison, and it was easier to go back to my friends who had small criminal jobs for me to earn more money as in a day job." Both mentioned that they went back into criminal activities because of constant rejection and negative emotions with finding a good job. Today, participant 3 is still working in a warehouse, and participant 8 is retired.

Participant 5 hoped to get a job in sales but was constantly rejected and working in a warehouse now. "I am dreaming of being a pilot since I was a kid, but I know it is not realistic for somebody like me."

Theme 3: Being Malaysian Is Not Easy in Singapore

For Theme 3, I recognized three subthemes:

- ST 3a: Malaysians are more accepting for each other.

- ST 3b: Malaysians can be stopped in public by police.

- ST 3c: Lack of education due to large families and low wages.

ST 3a: Malaysians Are More Accepting for Each Other

All participants had family members visiting them during the monthly 30 minutes visit and knew they could rely on them after release from prison.

All participants could live with their families after release from prison or halfway house. The family accepted them, and the participants felt safe with the family, even though it was not easy for them because of stigma from relatives and visiting friends. All participants had a family member or good friend who was also incarcerated.

All participants stopped their relationships with their friends from earlier days. Sometimes, the family demanded a new phone number to ensure there would be no contact about criminal jobs anymore.

Participant 3 said he could not reintegrate into the community." I only had my work and my family, and even the neighbors were not friendly."

Participant 4 mentioned that family and friends would accept him if he promised to make a change in his life. "My mantra now is: "Choice, Chance, Change." After my release five years ago, my wife told me: "This is the last time we supported you!" I was incarcerated seven times, and she told me: "I am totally done and fed up with you. This is the last time you are welcome at home." It worked; I did not go back for five years and am very happy now!"

ST 3b: Malaysians Can Be Stopped in Public by Police

Some of the participants had a history of drug dealing and drug use, and after their release, they needed to do a bi-weekly drug test for five years. Often these drug tests are random. The police are mostly not so friendly, and only participant 7 mentioned that he had an officer who motivated him to stay drug-free.

Participant 1 mentioned that they had the idea that the community constantly judged him and that he sometimes felt discriminated against. "I heard that the new COVID-19 rules allow 30 visitors for Malaysian/Muslim funerals. But for a Christian or Buddhist Chinese funeral, there are 50 visitors allowed. For a Malaysian/Muslim wedding, are also fewer visitors allowed as for a Chinese Christian or Buddhist wedding." These rules give the Malaysian/Muslim community the feeling the government does not treat them equally. During the writing of this dissertation, there are many rules to prevent more COVID-19 new cases in Singapore. Weekly changes to these rules can also give some uncertainty about the exact numbers of people allowed at any ceremony. The fact the participant mentioned this is because he is feeling discriminated against by the system.

Participants 1, 3, 5, and 7 mentioned they felt racism or favoritism for Chinese Singaporeans. They were stopped by the police in public transport or even on the street.

Participant 4 feels that the police were very harsh and told him he would be back inside immediately after his release. He said, "And I did that seven times and spent 18 years inside, and the last time I left, I promised they would never see me again. That was five years ago!"

Participant 5 said: "I have the idea that the police think I cannot change!"

ST 3c: Lack of Education Due to Large Families and Low Wages

All participants finished primary school, and six did the first three mandatory years of secondary school. Their parents did not support them to study for a diploma, mainly because there were many siblings and there was no money to have them all in school. Singapore is helping children from families by a subsidy called Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS). To be eligible for this scheme, you need to apply for specific support, and it is a strict administrative system. The application can be a problem for the parents who also did not finish their education and got lost in the administrative part. They need the assistance of a social worker to file for these subsidies. The waiting list for social workers is long. In the meantime, the children stopped school, started working easy jobs, and got easily in touch with criminal activities because of their vulnerability.

Participant 1 was incarcerated together with two of his brothers three times, and his family was visiting them together. "I knew my parents accepted my behavior, and because of that, I went to a family friend after my last release to stay away from the family influence."

Participants 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8 needed to work to support their single mother from a young age. Participant 3 said: "I was the eldest son and saw that my mother could not manage to feed all of us. I started working and got into criminal activities very easily. Selling stolen goods could give me more money than a whole day of working."

Participant 6 mentioned: "My mother had different jobs to help me, and my siblings and I wanted to help her and left after finishing primary school to get a job."

Participants 1, 2, and 5 mentioned they were incarcerated at a young age and sometimes felt better in prison. Participant 1, who was inside with two of his siblings, said: "Inside we were important and shared a cell and nobody got in between us. We were strong inside, and I had no problem going back inside for the second and third time."

Participant 2 mentioned he was feeling good inside because everybody is the same and no stigma at all. "Inside, you stay 23 hours in your cell with 3 or 5 other inmates. Where outside, you need to prove who you are. Inside there is respect for each other, and it is a safe feeling if you behave in the right way."

Summary

The purpose of this research was to explore the lived experiences of Malaysian nonviolent offenders in Singapore. I collected data by interviewing eight participants by asking semistructured open-ended questions to understand the lives of these 8 participants. After the data collection, I had eight hours of recordings and about 120 pages of transcripts. These data created three themes and nine sub-themes, and this information was used to answer my research questions:

- What are the lived experiences of how Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders transition into the community after their prison release?

- Subquestion: How does Malaysian culture impact their reintegration experience?

In Chapter 5, I will provide an interpretation of the findings, theoretical framework, limitations of the research, recommendations, implications, and a conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendation

In this study, I aimed to explore the lived experiences of Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders in Singapore and their transition into the community after their release from prison. I used IPA as the research approach to explore and understand the participants' experiences in this study. In Singapore, studies related to this phenomenon are limited, and IPA was the most appropriate qualitative approach as personal interviews with the participants provided insight into the participants' lived experiences.

The eight participants in this study talked openly about their lives and the difficulties they experienced after their release from prison. They were willing to participate because they thought by sharing their experiences, they may help to change the path for others in the future. After the analysis of the interview data, I identified three main themes and nine subthemes. The three themes were (a) feeling excluded from the community, (b) having difficulty finding a job, and (c) being Malaysian is not easy in Singapore. These themes were identified from the data collected from the participants during clinical interviews and based on the questions during the interviews with these participants.

In this chapter, I will summarize the research results by providing an interpretation of the findings and explaining the themes and subthemes. I will also discuss the theoretical framework, the limitations of the study, recommendations for further research, implications for social change, and provide an overall conclusion.

Interpretation of the Findings

In the literature review section of this study (Chapter 2), I focused on the Malaysians as a minority in Singapore and the need to conduct more research about the influence of stigmatization on the reintegration process. In this section, I relate the data from the interviews with the existing literature I described in Chapter 2 and will discuss the three themes that I identified in the context of this literature review.

As mentioned in the previous chapters, ex-offenders seem to have more difficulty regaining a place in the community after their release from prison. It is unavoidable that many offenders who will be freed into the community after their imprisonment are confronted with various obstacles, and one of them is employment (Schmitt & Warner, 2011). Other issues are housing, relations with family, stigmatizing by the community members, and health and self-esteem (Moore et al., 2016).

The literature review shows that the Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders in Singapore have different problems with re-integrating into the community and have a greater recidivism chance. This is because the opportunities for employment and housing and return to the family home are exceptionally low. The stigmatization of this group of Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders is a serious problem, and according to the participants in this study, it needs attention from the authorities. The government disregards the need to concentrate on the role of race and racism in the essential relations of a postcolonial multiracial civilization or even try to detect the life story of the Malaysians as a noticeable minority within the intersectionality of class, race, religion, gender, and historicity (Ganapathy & Balanchandran, 2019). An additional problem is that it is also

difficult to locate friends who are not involved in criminal activities (Ganapathy & Fee, 2016). The participants tried to avoid reconnecting with previous friends by not getting in touch anymore, changing their phone numbers, and avoiding contact.

This qualitative research is expected to fill the gap in the literature regarding the lived experiences of Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders and their reintegration into the community and the high risk for recidivism. In the following sections, I will discuss the three themes identified from the data: (a) feeling excluded from the community, (b) having difficulty finding a job, and (c) being Malaysian is not easy in Singapore. The hope is that the results of this study can encourage policymakers, lawmakers, and social experts to make a positive social change and create more opportunities for a productive transition into the community for this specific group of men.

Theme 1: Feeling Excluded From the Community

All participants expressed that after their release from prison, they had no support from the government. They believed that the government only wanted to punish them, resulting in these men feeling isolated and alone after their incarceration. All the participants told me there were no consultations, training, or any other sessions before or after their release to assist them with searching and applying for a job interview or even a place to stay. Resources for the transportation from the prison to their home address were also not arranged, which gave them the realization that they were entirely on their own. Most family and friends had difficulties supporting them, especially for the participants who had multiple incarcerations. Hazifah Binte Rafie (2016) studied the loneliness of ex-offenders and described the befriending program. For three participants, a halfway home

was the only possible place post incarnation as their family and friends would not allow them to live with them. Due to their limited resources, they had to rely on family or other nonprofit agencies to help them transition to the community.

None of the participants got any help from the SPS after their release. They were feeling left alone and helpless the day they were released from prison. The participants' overall feeling was that the government did not care about their well-being and the punishment was useless. The participants' prevalent complaint was the lack of assistance in finding a job or a place to stay. They thought it would be better for all ex-offenders if an aftercare program would get them back on the right track to avoid recidivism. Almost all the participants had multiple incarcerations, and they did not feel being incarcerated helped them stay out of criminal activities. SACA (2016) mentioned these issues and kept studying and interviewing this specific group of ex-offenders to determine their needs.

Within the culture of Singapore, there is a stigmatization of offenders suggesting, "once an individual is an offender, always an offender." This is mentioned in the literature by Tan et al. (2016). The participants reported feelings of shame and loneliness and being secretive about their past. For example, it was challenging to start a friendly relationship with colleagues when they found a job and did not disclose their past as an offender. The participants explained that they could not talk about their history in prison to avoid being rejected by coworkers. That resulted in only meeting during working hours and no friends outside of work.

During their incarceration, there was no program for re-entry into the community. During the weeks before their release date from prison, they were stressed and feeling

discomfort about their future. All participants were feeling discouraged and anxious about what to expect after their release. A few of the recidivist participants had the experience of being stigmatized, not getting a job or a place to stay, and keeping their past a big secret. My findings are not exclusive, as also written by LeBel (2012), who conducted a unique study with a Western sample about the perception of stigma involving formerly incarcerated persons. Therefore, the current research indicates that this experience of stigma also applies to the Singaporean setting and specifically to the Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders. There is a need to conduct more research about the influence of stigmatizing on the reintegration process, specifically about the psychological and behavioral aspects. Despite the absence (and conflicting nature) of empirical evidence, findings from this study indicate that there may be a relationship between criminal history and perceptions of stigma. Research also shows that soon-to-be-released prisoners' perception of social prejudice is a strong predictor of recidivism (LeBel et al., 2008). For that reason, it is to be expected that perceptions of stigma will reduce self-esteem and quality of life and possibly increase the probability of recidivism among previously incarcerated persons. Almost all participants mentioned that they hide their criminal history from others in social situations to manage.

Fundamental obstacles can be a factor in maladaptive cognitive patterns, such as internalized and anticipated stigma, making it harder to become law-abiding citizens. Research by Moore et al. (2016) that internalized stigma is linked to stereotype-consistent behavior (i.e., difficulty refusing alcohol for people with substance dependence) suggests that offenders who suppress labels might be at risk of repeated law-breaking behavior.

One of the statements in Moore et al.'s research is, "People think criminals are dangerous, and even though I don't, I expect discrimination." Some of the participants in my research mentioned they avoided being open about their criminal past to prevent any discrimination. Some of the participants experienced internalized stigma. They said that because they are a criminal, people cannot trust them; they only got simple work because their intelligence was below average; and due to their criminal record, they cannot keep a regular job and need to do day-jobs. I am aware of this specific behavior in my findings, and more research is required to explore how offenders can manage anticipated and internalized stigma.

Research conducted in Western countries has suggested that increasing contact between offenders and the public is a plausible pathway to improving relations and reducing stigma. Additional research by Tan et al. (2016) examined the factors contributing to offenders' stigmatization in Singapore. They suggest that antistigma interventions that focus purely on increasing contact with offenders may not be effective in Singapore. Instead, the current findings suggest that interventions targeting perceptions of offenders' capacity to change, and the moral outrage people feel towards criminal behavior constitute promising avenues for reducing stigmatization of offenders in the local cultural context (Hirschfield & Piquero, 2010).

Tan et al. (2016) made use of the Singaporean undergraduate population as the target population in their study, as they make a significant segment of potential employers of offenders and future policy-makers. They mentioned of a low frequency of personal interaction with ex-offenders. Around 20% of participants in their research

reported they had personal interaction with ex-offenders. This is a similar outcome as in

my research. During the interviews, the participants explained they did not have much

contact with other people except family or colleagues. The findings in this research

conducted in Singapore, same as Tan et al., accentuate the necessity to address the

public's perception of offenders' ability to change and the disgrace they feel for ex-

offenders. Given the Singaporean culture and the lack of transitioning resources provided

by the SPS, the Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders will likely have difficulties with the

reintegration, which was observed in this research as six out of eight participants were

incarcerated several times. In addition, most of the participants did not get a proper

education, and their upbringing can also be a part of why they behaved as they did. In

Malaysian culture, it is common to have a lot of children. This could mean that the first

children can go to school, but when they reach 15 years old, they will leave school and

start working. There are situations where no adult is with the children, and family and

friends take care of them. The Singapore culture is very focused on education, and if you

miss out on that part, it can have a negative impact on a person's career perspectives.

Since 2000, Singapore has had a Compulsory Education Act (CE Act 2000) for all

children born after 1996, between six and 15 years of age, stating that it is compulsory to

visit a primary school for a minimum of six years. The fee for primary education is since

this Act set on in the year 2000, S\$ 6.50 per child per month, to avoid children missing

the chance to go to primary school. Also, since 2000, there has been a fund for children

called FAS, Financial Assistance Scheme for school children, and it must be possible that

all children will finalize their primary education. All participants in this research

completed primary school but were not supported to follow more education. They all start working at a very young age. If there were a compulsory act for secondary education till 18 years old, it could assist these children to follow more education and get a better chance in life.

Theme 2: Difficult to Find a Job

All participants had difficulties finding a job post-incarceration because of their criminal record. Most of the jobs they found are so-called day jobs or unskilled jobs where you apply for work for the next day with immediate payment at the end of the day. They do not have reliable long-term consistent sources of income providing for themselves or their families. Examples of these jobs are food and beverage, gardening, cleaning, relocating, warehouse assistant, and construction works. Most participants did not graduate from high school or earn a degree due to a lack of interest and enough financial support to follow an education program. This resulted in the fact they could not find a job that would support themselves or their families.

All participants reported hearing the quote: "Once an offender, always an offender" while looking for a job. They all felt judged by the community for not giving them a second chance. The constant rejection for employment and not getting an answer after applying for a job gave them a feeling of being rejected by the community. They had served their time and were looking for a new chance that unfortunately did not come for most of them.

Chen and Shapiro (2007) stated that incarceration had destabilized weak underprivileged communities by abandoning them and depriving even nonviolent ex-

offenders of chances to find employment and meaningfully return into the community. Participants in my research all mentioned similar issues. Chen and Shapiro's findings indicated that harsher prison settings do not decrease post-release criminal activities and even may increase it. These authors also described a theory that harsher incarcerations might prevent criminality amongst the general population but not for the already incarcerated. They mentioned that for most of the incarcerated men, it is not working as a deterrent anymore. My research shows that six out of the eight participants were recidivists, so the theory applies to the participants in this research. They also experienced a harsh prison regime.

All participants mentioned that they were only qualified for simple jobs because of their limited education. It gave them the feeling of being stupid and were not motivated to accept these jobs. Three participants mentioned their low self-esteem while finding a job because of the constant rejection. They explained that with every rejection, they were feeling defeated to go home and explain the failure. They also mentioned that they had no sympathy or understanding for the employers during a job interview because they were immediately rejected when their imprisonment was discussed. They all said it was easier to stay out of criminal activities when they had a proper job.

Further research could address re-entry programs in general and specifically for work-related programs. Suppose SPS can assist ex-offenders in finding a workplace before their release from prison. In that case, they can rely on a steady monthly income, and they do not need to feel stupid anymore, and most importantly, they can avoid going back into criminal activities to earn money. For the aftercare, SPS can work together with

the volunteer organizations ISCOS, SACA, SCORE, and Yellow Ribbon, who are taking care of the ex-offenders at this moment.

Pryor-Douglas and Thompkins (2012) suggested past research described the disconnect between education and social opportunity for the formerly incarcerated. They stated that educational programs for inmates prevent them from re-offending. In-prison education is vital to former prisoners' success and is a significant component in ending incarceration's revolving door; however, it must be done correctly for this to occur. It is essential to have a complimentary correctional education program and a good follow-up after their release to deal with re-offending. Education and a diploma or degree can help to find suitable employment and prevent recidivism. A job can assist with reintegration into the community and create a life without criminality. As all participants mentioned, it would have made a big difference if they had more assistance to find a job. Some also said that following education or a practical course during the incarceration could be more helpful to have more opportunities after their release. One of the recommendations in this research is to create education possibilities for all offenders.

Theme 3: Being Malaysian Is Not Easy in Singapore

Nonviolent ex-offenders of Malaysian descent in Singapore face many challenges with reintegration into the community. The Malaysian ethnic group represents only 14% of Singaporean citizens, but they are overrepresented in the criminal justice system, creating challenges for the Singapore government. The Malaysians face challenges such as the lack of support, existing economic and socio-economic disparities, and lack of government support. There is also an academic underachievement by Malaysians that

starts with a lack of education from secondary education onwards. This results in low education levels for most of the participants in this research, and it is typical for this specific group of Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders. The problem of recidivism was also discussed by Ang and Huang (2008). They wrote about the predictors of recidivism for adolescent offenders in Singapore. The results showed that specifically for the Malay community, related parent criminality, past of running away from home, aggressive behavior, and the young age of the first crime were significant risk factors for adolescent re-offending. This can be a reason why Malaysians may benefit from a thorough reintegration program. Almost all of the participants in this research had a history of upbringing in a family with connections with criminal activities. They all mentioned knowing a family member or a family friend who was incarcerated, and it did not discourage them from avoiding criminal activities for themselves.

All participants had family members visiting them during the monthly 30 minutes visit and hoped they could rely on them after release from prison. The family and friends also had difficulties supporting them, especially for the participants who had multiple incarcerations. It was not easy to ask for a place to stay after their release when you know you are not welcome. They had feelings of shame for the neighbors and family or friends who did not know about the recent incarceration. But the Malaysian culture is also beneficial to others, and that's why all participants could live with their family after release from prison or Halfway House because there was no other place to go. The family accepted them, and the participants felt grateful for the family. SACA (2016) published an article regarding research that showed that criminality is related to homelessness. A

home is essential as one of the crucial factors that assist in reducing re-offending. This is related to the participants in my research because none of them had a place of themselves to go to after their release.

All participants in my research had a family member or good friend who was also incarcerated; therefore, there was a better understanding of criminal behavior and acceptance when it indeed happened. Ganapathy and Fee (2016) mentioned that numerous ethnic minority ex-inmates faced lengthy unemployment and lethargy, giving them a large quantity of free time to go back to a criminogenic life. Their family members had understanding for their behavior.

All participants stopped their relationships with their friends from earlier days. Sometimes, the family demanded that they get a new phone number to ensure no contact about criminal jobs anymore. However, one of the participants explained he went to see his old friends because nobody else wanted to talk to him. This resulted in new criminal activities.

Some of the participants had a history of drug dealing and drug use, and after their release, they needed to do a bi-weekly drug test for five years. Sometimes these drug tests are random. Some of the participants described having a negative confrontation with the police. This existed from verbal aggression, total lack of interest in their situation, and asking them when they would be back in prison. Only participant 7, who was incarcerated seven times, had a police officer who motivated him to stay drug-free after his last release. He saw this police officer regularly because of the bi-weekly drug test,

and he felt that he could discuss his issues with him. He was also feeling proud to show the police officer he could manage to stay away from drugs.

Half of the participants mentioned they had the feeling of racism or favoritism for Chinese Singaporeans. Three participants told they were stopped by the police in public transport or even on the street. Even by not behaving differently from other public transport users, there were a few encounters from these participants to be stopped by the police in the metro for no reason. They needed to show their identification card and empty their pockets or bag. At the same time, their Chinese Singaporean friends were not checked, which gave the participants the feeling it was simply because of being Malaysian. Ganapathy and Fee (2016) stated that integration is proven easier for Chinese ex-offenders because the Chinese Singaporeans control the small and medium businesses and the unofficial part of the economy, which are most open to the needs of Malaysian and Indian ex-offenders who are not trained or have skills or qualifications.

All participants finished primary school, and six participants finalized the first few years of secondary school. Their parents did not support them in studying for a diploma, mainly because there were many siblings and no money to have them all in school. Fortunately, there is the Financial Assistance Scheme nowadays, so this cannot be a reason to avoid school. However, some families have difficulties applying for the FAS because of the complex application process, and some families feel ashamed to ask for help. Participants 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8 needed to work to support their single mother from a young age. Participants 1, 2, and 5 mentioned they were incarcerated at a young age and sometimes felt better in prison.

Past research conducted by SACA (2014) published an article about ex-offenders' education and training needs. SACA is a crucial aftercare agency providing welfare and rehabilitation services for discharged offenders and their families. The article describes that education and vocational training reduces recidivism. At the same time, some studies mentioned education might only reduce the risk for specific subgroups of the prison population, the major ethnic group in a country. The role that education plays in enhancing successful reintegration has not been explored in the Asian context yet. As there is a lack of research done in Singapore, it is also important to note that more research needs to be conducted to examine how ex-offenders who have upgraded their qualifications and skills are coping with their reintegration into society.

Ganapathy and Fee (2016) described the specific situation about race and reintegration in Singapore. A national concern is a variation in recidivism among the main ethnic/racial groups – Chinese, Malays, and Indians, the latter two being minority communities. Considering the demographics of the Singapore population, Malay and Indian recidivists' representation has been relatively disproportionate over the years. They respectively constituted only 13.9% and 7.9% of the national population. In 2010, the Chinese re-offending rate stood at 18% below the recidivism rate for the Malays and Indians, which was 28.8% and 30.8%. Social capital, or its lack, has variously been acknowledged as contributing to criminal and delinquent behavior among certain groups in society. It has rarely been employed to explain why ex-offenders cannot break free from recalcitrant behavior and re-integrate into society. Six of the participants in this research fit this theory. They all re-offended multiple times, and their social capital or the

social ties they had from their life before their incarceration was not the right people to keep them out of the criminality. The six participants tried to avoid their "old" friends, but when there was no chance for a job, they returned to these friends and quickly got back into the criminal world.

Except for one, none of the participants were able to have more education than the first three years of secondary school. During the incarceration, they did not get the possibility to further their education while in prison. Only a prison school for juvenile offenders, but for adults, is only a library available where the inmates can choose one book per week. All the participants thought they could have gotten better chances if they had the possibility for more education while incarcerated. This was mentioned in the article from SACA (2014), where schooling is mentioned as one of the necessities during imprisonment. While incarcerated these ex-offenders, abandon work skills, be deprived of the chance to achieve work experience, and lost proper social contacts that could create legal employment prospects after release.

Theoretical Framework

The framework underpinning this study was the RNR framework for adults (Andrews et al., 2011). In Singapore, the RNR framework is only used for the Juvenile Justice System. It would be a natural choice to make use of the RNR framework also for adult offenders. Using the RNR framework is complimentary, and it is the most utilized theoretical model to understand how to treat the offenders (Andrews et al., 2011).

The RNR model is universally accepted as the model to guide the assessment and treatment of offenders. It is the only theoretical model to clarify the restorative model of

rehabilitation. The results of using the RNR framework for juveniles in Singapore had good results, and now this study will examine if making use of the RNR framework for adults also will work in Singapore as it already is proven in many other countries in the world (Andrews et al., 2011).

Singapore is the first Asian country that implemented this RNR framework and, in coordination with SPS, is trying to decrease recidivism rates. The RNR model's use may lead to a positive change for an ethnic minority group of Malaysian young men if the community believes the positive impact of this RNR model (Tan et al., 2016).

After the interviews, I realized that none of the participants were assessed any time while in prison. If the RNR had been implemented during their incarceration, it could have been a more positive reintegration for the participants in this research. If the participants had their risk recognized and categorized, it would have been possible to create an intervention style, and they could have undergone treatments specifically developed for them. It would have been helpful to target the criminogenic needs of the participants while incarcerated to assist them after their release. None of the participants had any treatment after their release. Bonta and Andrews (2007) stated that it is essential to know the risk level and the offender's criminogenic needs to personalize the treatment in harmony with the RNR model. Some of their needs cannot be related to their criminal behavior but must be integrated into the treatment to avoid recidivism. In this research, none of the participants underwent a risk assessment, and nobody knew the criminogenic needs of the participants when they were released. Six of the eight participants re-

offended within a few months and did that multiple times. This research proves that the SPS can try to use the RNR for adults to avoid recidivism.

The plans of SPS to implement the RNR framework are still only used for juveniles. At this moment of writing, there are no details on how the RNR is working for juveniles. I believe in the RNR framework, and I hope the SPS will also make it available for adults.

Limitations of the Study

This research presented useful in-depth information portraying the lived experiences of Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders in Singapore. This research was a qualitative research design, and eight participants were interviewed. If this research had been quantitative, it would have required a greater number of participants. However, using the qualitative design provided a more valuable insight into the lived experiences of the Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders than what a quantitative method would have offered.

Generalization, an act of reasoning that includes describing comprehensive suggestions from observations, is commonly recognized as a quality standard in quantitative research but is more debated in qualitative research. The objective of most qualitative studies is not to generalize but more accurately to deliver a deep, contextualized insight into a specific aspect of human experience through the thorough research of cases (Polit & Beck, 2010).

I interviewed a specific group of Malaysian ex-offenders who were released for a few years and could disclose their experiences about the reintegration. I had the idea they

were very open to me about their feelings, and they provided me with a meaningful look into their emotional life after their release. Realistic as I am, there is a possibility they did not explain their whole story to me.

Recommendations

Research focuses on the reintegration of Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders in Singapore are limited. I choose to write about this specific group to give these offenders a voice and to help gain more significant insights into their struggle in re-integrating into society.

A recent study about the factors contributing to the stigmatization of Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders in Singapore showed that policymakers are looking into implementing effective anti-stigma interventions to decrease the public's opposing views about this specific group of offenders. Educate the public about the circumstances of how this particular group of Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders are released from prison and not supervised or supported at all. One of the most important programs is the public's education to emphasize Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders and ex-offenders in general instead of stigmatizing them for the previous behavior. As soon as the negative feelings of fear for this group can be reduced, the trust in the socialization process will start for the ex-offenders (Tan et al., 2016). In this research, it was mentioned a few times that the ex-offenders were treated generally until it was disclosed, they were ex-offenders. It must be possible to inform the public about the needs and wishes of ex-offenders in general and Malaysian ex-offenders via social media, roadshows, and information panels in public transport. In the Heartlands are monthly meetings with the mayor, police, and

other governmental organizations. The police can invite ex-offenders to be in their booth to explain how it is to be incarcerated and that they are not bad people, they just made a wrong decision.

To avoid that children from 15-year-old will leave school, it must be possible to change the Compulsory Education Act to change the age from 15 to 18-years-old. At this moment, the children can leave school when they are 15 without any repercussions. This is a vulnerable age, and the participants in this research started with their criminal activities from a very young age.

To integrate better into the community, it is essential that before release, coordination be supposed to take place between the government, community services, and even the mosques and other volunteer organizations who can assist with finding a job and a place to stay. Hazifah Binte Rafie (2016) studied the befriending programs from SACA, where three months before release, a volunteer assists the ex-offender with being prepared for the transition into the community. The ex-offenders explained that they must know where to find the resources' support and not feel helpless after their release. To help them, they believe it is crucial to start with the reintegration process while still incarcerated to give them a chance for a new start. It would be good to start three months before their release to find out what type of job they are looking for and inviting volunteers of the organizations as ISCOS, SCORE, and Yellow Ribbon to discuss how to apply for a job and know how to be prepared for a job interview. This will be the person who can assist them with the necessary activities to find a home and a job and be a counselor.

It must be possible to educate the offenders while in prison. They can learn a practical skill as plumbing, electrician, painter, computer engineer, or anything likely to learn during incarceration. Most prisoners are incarcerated for about two years, and that is enough time to learn practical skills to have a better chance for employment after release.

Efficient help can be assistance with transportation from the prison to their home or halfway home. Now the ex-offenders need to borrow money for a bus ticket or travel without a ticket.

Re-entry interventions can be correctional-based, community-based, or both. These programs can fluctuate in terms of difficulty. Some target one aspect of re-entry (e.g., employment), while other programs target a few aspects of re-entry (e.g., employment, housing, social assistance, and substance abuse). Important is that re-entry programs should focus on the transition from prison to the community to take full advantage of reintegration (Berghuis, 2018).

The participants who had some assistance from the volunteer organizations to find a job mentioned that proper re-entry programs are necessary to avoid falling back into the same behavior.

Three of the participants in this research are working with a volunteer organization giving lectures at schools to inform young students how their lives changed after making a wrong decision and started using drugs and into criminal activities. They are also visiting the so-called "heartland meetings." The police are also present, and often the ex-offender volunteers are available to explain more about life in prison and deter the

public from criminal activities. The public must get more information about the situation inside the prison to understand how difficult it can be after release after a few years of incarceration. Singapore's hesitancy to debate racial concerns and their validation of meritocracy. It must be possible to find interventions for racism to determine the prolonged racial differences between Malaysians and the other races in Singapore (Chew, 2018).

The RNR model is universally accepted as the model to guide the assessment and treatment of offenders (Andrews et al., 2011). Making use of risk assessments can decrease recidivism rates. Singapore is the first Asian country that implemented this RNR framework for juveniles and, in coordination with SPS, is trying to reduce recidivism rates. The RNR model's use may lead to a positive change for an ethnic minority group of Malaysian young men if the community believes the positive impact of this RNR model (Tan et al., 2016). To get a better reintegration and a lower recidivism rate, it would be good to use the RNR model for all ex-offenders in Singapore prison.

It can be an eye-opener for the public to read the stories of this group and realize that to prevent people from recidivism, it must be possible to re-integrate into the community positively with the focus on housing, employment, and how they are treated. The stigmatizing of the participants makes it challenging to create a new life. I hope that this research can assist the public in understanding better what this specific group of Malaysian nonviolent offenders is going through during and after their release from prison. The volunteer organization Yellow Ribbon is well known in Singapore. Their slogan "Help unlock the second prison" is recognized because of marketing in public

transport and organizing yearly sports running contests in the area where the prison is located to gain funds. Prisoners wearing an ankle tag can also be active in these runs, and there are stands with information material for the public.

There is a restaurant called 18 Chefs, and they are working with ex-offenders. It started in 2007 with an ex-offender, Benny Se Teo, who heard about the Jamie Oliver's Fifteen Foundation. The mission of the 18 Chefs is "to wish to spread Benny's story of experience, strength and hope to inspire troubled youths and people with conviction backgrounds to find alternative positive ways to re-integrate back into society." The public knows about these restaurants, and the staff will not be secretive about their past, and if wearing an ankle tag, they can wear it openly if they want.

Implications

The results of this research can be a contribution to some implications of positive social change. This research was started because of the gap in the literature and my connection with Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders while doing volunteer work in a halfway house. I want to mention a few considerations for SPS to assess the inmates to find out the risks and needs of these men. The current study found that participants struggled to find work because of poor education, increasing their stigma. Possibly the prisons could offer some education while incarcerated can give these men a better chance of getting a job. If the offenders did not finish their secondary school, it must be possible to provide classes for groups during their incarceration. This is only useful if the offender wants to study more after their release. It may be more interesting to arrange vocational courses to study for a specific electrician, plumber, or any other hands-on diploma.

Furthermore, it could be easier for all ex-offenders if no criminal record is visible on their identification card, as the participants mentioned. There is not even a possibility to not disclose their incarceration while having a job interview. The quote "once an offender, always an offender" is so deeply embraced by the ex-offenders as with the public, and if this is not going to change, the problems of the Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders will not change.

Implementing the recommendations mentioned in this chapter could be valuable to enhance the lived experiences of the Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders who are incarcerated at this moment and waiting for their release from prison. This can assist this specific group of offenders and their family, friends, and the community and lead to fewer crimes. A positive social change for this group can give them a better chance to operate positively in the community.

Summary

I contributed to the limited literature concerning Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders. In this research, I used interpretative phenomenological analysis to explore the lived experiences of Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders and their transition into the community after their release from prison. After interviewing eight participants, the themes I found give a good insight into the men's problems and battles after the release from prison. The fact that six out of eight participants had multiple incarcerations proves that it is almost expected for this specific group to get back into criminal activities. Part of the issue is recidivism and family; friends and employers expect that they will likely engage in criminal activity again. According to my observations, all men tried to get back

into a normal, accepted lifestyle but were constantly rejected by the community. These men's negative cycle of events can only change if changes are made within SPS and Singapore government. Suppose there is a thorough re-entry intervention program that is correctional-based, community-based, or both. In that case, it must be possible to make the transition into the community for Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders after their release from prison a positive momentum.

The interpretative phenomenological analysis endorsed in-depth answers from a particular population. The three main themes that appeared were: a) feeling excluded from the community b) difficulty to find a job and c) being Malaysian is not easy in Singapore. These themes can assist as further proposed research for future qualitative and quantitative research and inform the SPS, community workers, social service organizations, and other parties to improve resources essential for this specific group of Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders. The findings from this research emphasized the necessity to concentrate on the governmental and public's opinion of Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders' capability to change their lives. The aversion people feel for this group of offenders is a factor for stigmatization and social distancing. Future research can focus on implementing efficient anti-stigma interventions and lowering the negative emotions with members of the community.

It is also essential to focus on Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders' concerns in getting and keeping employment after their release. With or without having the required qualification, it should be possible that this group of ex-offenders can re-integrate into society by finding appropriate employment. There is a lack of research done in this area

in Singapore. My research shows that it is essential that more research be conducted to assess how Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders are handling the employment issue.

Hopefully, this research can show how grateful the Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders would be if the stigma were taken away and if they had a second chance for a good life after their release from prison and could function well in the community.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to talk to me. Let us go through the informed consent form together and please ask any questions you have about the interview.

As stated before, I will audio record the interview to enable me to transcribe it correctly. May I put the recorder on now?

Put on the recorder

This is the interview of (code name) ___

Research question: What are the lived experiences of how the Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders make their transition into the community after their release from the prison?

1. What specific type of assistance was offered to you when you were released from prison?

2. How did you manage to find a home or a place in a halfway home?

3. Have you told anybody else (apart from people living here with you) about being in a halfway house situation?

       3a. If yes, why did you talk about it?

       3b. Who are the people you talked about living in a halfway house?

3c. Please explain if it was positive or negative to tell somebody else about being

a Malaysian nonviolent ex-offender living in a halfway house.

4. What was your experience in looking for a job after leaving prison?

4a. Did you find a job of your interest?

4b. If yes, what is your job now?

4c. If no, what can you do to find a job?

5. Please describe to me if you had any positive or negative issues with finding a job?

5a. If you have been in such a situation, what was it like?

5b. Has your experience matched what you expected it to be?

6. Please can you talk to me about the community and if there are positive or negative

experiences you had with people who knew you have been in prison?

6a. How are you treated by the people you were usually befriended with?

6b. Is there any feeling of discrimination or stigmatization? If yes, can you

describe that   feeling?

6c. How did the authorities, like police and community care workers treated you?

Subquestion: How does the Malaysian culture impact their reintegration

experience?

7. How did you manage to create a new network of people around you to stay out of the criminal world you were previous part of?

    7a. In getting to know people, did your Malaysian culture influenced it?

    7b. If yes, can you describe to me how?

8. Is there anything else you could tell me to help my understanding of the experience Malaysian nonviolent ex-offenders have when they want to reintegrate into the community?

    8a. Please describe any positive sides of it.

    8b. Please describe any negative sides of it.

9. Please describe to me any areas of your life or activities that are affected by being a Malaysian nonviolent ex-offender?

Thank you again for taking part. I will e-mail a summary of the transcribed interview to your preferred e-mail address, as we discussed. Please contact me if you feel any emotional reaction after today's discussion.

Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaire

1. What is your gender?

   ☐ male   ☐ female   ☐ transgender   ☐ other

2. What is your age?

   ☐ <18 years   ☐ 18-35 years   ☐ >35 years

3. Please specify if you were born in Singapore and where your parents were born.

   Born in Singapore   ☐ yes   ☐ no

   Parents born in Singapore   ☐ yes   ☐ no

4. Are you currently in a relationship?

   ☐ yes   ☐ no

   4a. If yes, do you have children and how many?

   ☐ yes   number of children …..

5. How is your health?

   ☐ good   ☐ okay   ☐ bad

6. What is the highest education level you completed?

   ☐ primary   ☐ secondary

7. How long did you stay in prison?

   ☐ shorter than 1 year ☐ 2 to 3 years ☐ more than 3 years

8. In what area did you grow up?

   ☐ North   ☐ East   ☐ Center   ☐ West