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African American, Postrelease, Opioid, Female Offenders' Experiences in Job Interviews

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Walden University

2019

Abstract

African American, Postrelease, Opioid, Female Offenders' Experiences in Job Interviews

by

Wanda Dunmore

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Human Services

Walden University

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Abstract

The increasing recidivism rate for African American female offenders is exacerbated by postrelease job candidates' difficulties with interviewing for employment. The purpose of this hermeneutical, phenomenological study was to examine experiences from postrelease, African American, female, opioid offenders when interviewing with potential employers. Critical race Black feminist theory was used as the ontological lens for this research. Criterion sampling was used to recruit 12 female African American opioid female research participants. Data collection occurred via 12 semistructured, face-to-face interviews. Thematic analysis was used to develop common emergent themes from the lived experiences of postrelease, African American, female, opioid offenders. Results showed that postrelease, African American, female offenders experienced emotional responses such as stress, nervousness, and anxiety during the interview process. In addition, they feared rejection when informing potential employers about their criminal background. The findings are significant in developing training programs for transition, human service, and criminal justice agencies that can increase the chances of postoffender, African American, female, opioid drug offender employment and decrease recidivism.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

African American female offenders' incarceration has increased between 2010 and 2018 by 37%, particularly among African American female opioid drug offenders between ages 30 to 35 (Bureau of Justice Statistics [BJS], 2014). African American opiate offenders' recidivism rates increased over time compared to European American and Hispanic American female drug offenders, making African American female offenders the largest incarcerated group (Salisbury, 2009; Willingham, 2009). A higher proportion of women are in the correctional system due to drug and alcohol misuse compared to European American women (Vigesaa, Bergseth, & Richardson, 2016). Additionally, half of women offenders confined in state prisons had been using alcohol, drugs, or both at the time of the offense (BJS, 2018). Less is known about female inmates and their reentry experiences and outcomes (Vigesaa et al., 2016).

The United States Census (2012) revealed that in 2009 there were 300,500 African American females incarcerated, not including offenders supervised in the community. In 2014, there were more than 1.2 million women supervised under the criminal justice system with over 215,332 incarcerated (Carson, 2015). The female incarceration rate has increased by more than 50% between 1980 and 2014 (Carson, 2015). Women offenders account for 16% of the total corrections population (BJS, 2016). In 2014, the imprisonment rate for African American women was more than two times the rate of imprisonment for European American women (BJS, 2016). African American women were imprisoned twice the rate at 109 per 100,000 compared to European

American women at 53 per 100,000 (Carson, 2015). The annual costs associated with incarcerating African American female offenders varies by state, ranging from \$14,823 in Kentucky to \$60,076 in New York (BJS, 2014).

In addition, U.S. taxpayers spend over 39 billion dollars annually when prior offenders are rearrested, reconvicted, or reimprisoned for a new crime (BJS, 2014). The number of women incarcerated for drug offenses increased; there were 25% female offenders serving time for drug offenses with 40% reporting drug use (BJS, 2014). The female drug offender population increased between 2005 and 2013 by an average of about 1% each year contributing to recidivism (BJS, 2014). Exfemale offenders have shared that reentry is a difficult as they seek to establish a stable living and work situation following a period of incarceration (Austin, Mohr, & Phrell 2018).

African American, female, postrelease offenders face challenges with gaining employment when transitioning to society (Bush-Baskette, 2000; Cobbina & Bender, 2012). Upon prison release, female offenders report more challenges relating to substance abuse, employment, and housing compared to male offenders (Vigesaa et al., 2016). Particularly, African American, female, postrelease offenders face challenges with interviewing (Cobbina & Bender, 2012). This low performance in interviewing can affect the chances of the post offender gaining employment. (Bush-Baskette, 2000; Cobbina & Bender, 2012; Henrichson & Delaney, 2012; Lanlonde & Cho, 2008; Liddell & Martinovic, 2013; Mandiberg & Harris, 2014; “National Drug Use,” 2013; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2015; Stoll & Busway, 2008; Trout, 2011; van Olphen, Eliason, Freudenberg, & Barnes, 2009;).

African American, female, postrelease offenders may not be prepared for the job-seeking challenges experience during transition, which may result in the offender recidivating (Alfred & Chlup, 2009; Cobbina & Bender 2013; Mandiberg & Harris, 2014; Nally, Lockwood, Knutson, & Taiping, 2013). There are a number of significant gaps in the knowledge of reentry and related programming; few studies include information about reentry for female offender populations (Vigesaa et al., 2016). After an extensive review of literature on postrelease, African American, female, opioid drug offenders and the job interview process, I was unable to find literature about interviewing with prospective employers.

Interviewing is a step in obtaining employment; however, there is a gap in literature on the interview experiences of postrelease, African American, opioid offenders and the staff who conduct employment interview training for this group of offenders (Busch-Baskette, 2000; Cobbina & Bender, 2012). Therefore, the findings from this study can be helpful in managing transition programs and services among human service and criminal justice agencies by providing information about interviewing experiences. The information can be helpful for developing employment interview training programs to assist former offenders gain employment.

Problem Statement

African American, female offenders recidivate at a rate of 74% (BJS, 2014), with opioid drug offenders, particularly between ages 30 to 35, reoffending at an even higher rate, costing the U. S. taxpayer over 39 billion dollars annually (BJS, 2014). The recidivism rate is higher in African American women compared to European American

women (Salisbury, 2009; Willingham, 2009). Compared to other women, African American women make up the largest incarcerated group (Salisbury, 2009; Willingham, 2009). Opioid drug users struggle with life challenges such as finding employment (Mandiberg & Harris, 2014; “National Drug Use,” 2013; SAMHSA, 2015).

African American, female drug offenders recidivate at a higher rate compared to other female drug offenders (“National Drug Use,” 2013; United States Bureau of Statistics, 2015). In 2010, there were 300,500 African American females incarcerated, not including offenders supervised in the community (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). African American, female offenders face barriers to obtaining employment when transitioning into society (Lanlonde & Cho, 2008; Liddell & Martinovic, 2013; van Olphen et al., 2009). Compared to other women, African American, female offenders appear to have poor interviewing skills (Bush-Baskette, 2000; Cobbina & Bender, 2012; Henrichson & Delaney, 2012). This low performance in interviewing can affect the chances of the postoffender gaining employment resulting in recidivating.

After an extensive review of literature on postrelease, African American, female, opioid drug offenders and the job interview process, I was unable to find literature about interviewing with prospective employer. I conducted a hermeneutical, phenomenological study on understanding the job interview lived experiences of postrelease, African American, female, opioid drug addicts. The results of this study include information that may be helpful for criminal justice and human service professionals who manage transition processes by providing insights about female offenders’ job interview experiences

Purpose

For this hermeneutical phenomenological study, I interviewed 12 African American, female, former opioid offenders in an urban setting in the Southeastern United States. I developed themes from their lived experiences during the job interview process. The research findings from this study can be helpful for managing transition programs and services among human service and criminal justice agencies who offer employment training for postrelease, African American, opiate, female offenders by providing information about interviewing experiences. Understanding such experiences in respect to interviewing is a step in developing training programs. Furthering the development of such programs can help this group of former offenders to gain employment and avoid recidivating.

Significance

The results of this hermeneutical, phenomenological study can contribute to criminal justice and human service professionals by providing information on the experiences of postrelease, African American, female, opioid drug offenders. The results can offer insights to researchers on what postrelease, African American, opioid, female offenders face when interviewing with potential employers. This information can be helpful in developing employment training programs for transition, human services, and criminal justice agencies by improving employment opportunities and decreasing recidivism.

Nature of the Study

For this hermeneutical, phenomenological study, I examined the lived experiences of postrelease, African American, female, opioid offenders. A hermeneutical, phenomenological research was suitable for this study. Researchers using a hermeneutical, phenomenological research method may be able to view different experiences of human acts (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) developed hermeneutics as a way to develop phenomenon by way of words to explore the meaning of an experience. By using a hermeneutical, phenomenological research concept, I was able to illuminate the lived experiences of this group of former offenders when interviewing with potential employers (Moustakas, 1990). In addition, research analysts have used hermeneutical phenomenological research methods for exploring in-depth personal lived experiences (Annells, 2006; Moustakas, 1994; Tuohy, Cooney, Dowling, Murphy, & Sixsmith, 2013).

I interviewed 12 African American, female, former opioid offenders. By conducting such interviews, I was able to review responses, analyze the words from the participants, and uncover themes from the lived experiences for developing themes of how postrelease, African American, female, opioid offenders respond when interviewing with potential employers. Additionally, the information received from such interviews can provide information to researchers, criminal justice agencies, and human services agencies with regard to the experiences and subsequent outcomes of African American, female, opioid offenders and employment.

Research Question

What are the lived experiences of African American, female, opioid drug offenders who received employment training when interviewing for employment?

Definition of Key Terms

Former opioid offenders: A person preceding in time who commits a crime that consists of opium or any of its derivatives, acting as a sedative and narcotic (Oxford English Dictionary, 2016).

Postrelease: Occurrence after release, allowed to leave, set free, remove restrictions (Oxford English Dictionary, 2016).

Recidivism: To fall back into crime or antisocial behavior that results in rearrest, reconviction, or return to prison with or without a new sentence during a 3-year period following the prisoner's release (BJS, 2010; Oxford English Dictionary, 2016)

Assumptions

Hermeneutical, phenomenological researchers examine the lived experiences of participants; subsequent data was based solely on the offenders' responses of their experiences (Annells, 2006; Moustakas, 1994; Tuohy et al., 2013). One assumption collected from the interviews was that the participants will respond to the questions truthfully. Another assumption was that the unintended issues that may arise such as emotional feelings being released, misunderstanding of the questions, and inaccurate perception of the responses can negatively affect or delay the analyzing stage. Additionally, some offenders who agreed to participant in the study may withdraw due to

fear of reprisal causing a smaller pool of participants, which can affect the accuracy of the study.

Scope and Delimitations

For this hermeneutical, phenomenological study, data were collected from 12 interviews of postrelease, African American, female, opioid drug offenders in a rural Southern state in the United States. The target population was African American, opioid, drug offenders who had been released within the past 3 years. The focus of the study was on postrelease, African American, female, opioid offenders; the study was restricted to urban locations in Southeastern United States.

Limitations

I conducted a hermeneutical, phenomenological study; however, inherent issues may possibly affect the accuracy of the study. The results from hermeneutical phenomenological studies do not transfer outside of the sample (Das, Mitra, & Mandal, 2016; Smith et al., 2015). Also, interviewees may have responses that included unknown biases and distorted understandings of questions (Babal, Peer, & Benayoun, 2012; Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013; Yanos & Hopper, 2008).

Summary

For this hermeneutical, phenomenological study, I was able to understand the lived experiences of postrelease, African American, female, opioid drug offenders when interviewing with prospective employers. Chapter 1 included information on the research problem, purpose, and significance. Chapter 2 contains an extensive review of pertinent

historical and current literature on postrelease, African American, female, opioid drug offenders and employment.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This research includes information about female, African American, former offenders and employment. This literature review contains research on postrelease, African American, female offenders, female, opioid drug offenders and employment. The focus of this literature review was on exploring African American, female, opioid drug offenders who were released within the past 3 years and their job interview experiences with prospective employers.

This is a review of information on postrelease, African American, offenders; opioid use; employment interviews; and recidivism. I addressed changes in drug use, incarceration, rehabilitation, and transitional changes, as these topics provide in-depth information related to this study. After reviewing relevant literature, the reader will have an improved understanding of the experiences that African American, female, opioid offenders face when interviewing with potential employers once reintegrated from incarceration to society.

Titles Searches, Articles, Research Documents, and Journals

I searched for and used the following databases to obtain approximately 100 literature articles via the Walden University Library: scholarly books and journals. Databases used included ProQuest, Science Direct, Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost, ERIC, SAGE Journal, Oxford Criminology Biographies, Criminal Justice Databases, and Walden University Dissertations using the following keywords: *African*

American female offenders, opioid drug use, and recidivism. I also used about 25 U.S. government Internet sources.

Overview

When female, African American, former opioid offenders reported that they faced challenges when interviewing with prospective employers for employment, additional research about the relationship between drug use and incarceration, employment challenges, and postrelease offenders is warranted (Bush-Baskette, 2000; Cobbina & Bender, 2012; Henrichson & Delaney, 2012). Staffs from justice systems, government agencies, and nonprofits began to incorporate employment interview training in 1989 (Cobbina & Bender, 2012; Henrichson & Delaney, 2012; Rezanoff, 2015). This training aimed to limit recidivism through gainful employment (Cobbina & Bender, 2012; Henrichson & Delaney, 2012; Rezanoff, 2015).

History

The societal issue of drug use started in the medieval period, 250 B.C. (Cloyd, 2005; Nolan & Bradley, 2005). During this era, wine and drugs were used as a way to heal and comfort people (Cloyd, 2005; Nolan & Bradley, 2005). Mesopotamian civilians located near the Nile and Euphrates rivers cultivated herbs to develop tea and distilled spirits as a way of comfort and relaxation (Cloyd, 2005; Nolan & Bradley, 2005). China introduced opium, the main ingredient in morphine and heroin, as a medicine to treat illness that causes relaxation, impairs judgment, and induces drowsiness. (Cloyd, 2005; Nolan & Bradley, 2005). As a result, heroin was widely used for over 150 years (Cloyd,

2005; National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2013; Nolan & Bradley, 2005; SAMHSA, 2016).

In the ancient times, drugs were prescribed and administered by master medical herbalists (Adrian, 2015; Cloyd, 2005; Nolan & Bradley, 2005). It was thought that medicines assisted people while alive and comforted them during their journey to the afterlife (Adrian, 2015; Nolan & Bradley, 2005). Traditional healers used a variety of substances to treat patients and to promote health interventions (Adrian, 2015; Cloyd, 2005; Nolan & Bradley, 2005). Substances were considered largely ineffective until activated by the elaborate rituals administered by healers (Adrian, 2005; Cloyd, 2005; Nolan & Bradley, 2005).

Marijuana, also known as cannabis, was used by the Chinese as early as 2700 B.C. to treat diseases such as gout and rheumatism (Adrian, 2015; Cloyd, 2005; Nolan & Bradley, 2005). It causes distorted perceptions and feelings of euphoria (Moeller & Woods, 2015; National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2013; SAMHSA, 2016). Cannabis dates back to 2727 B.C. in Central and South Asia (Adrian, 2015; Cloyd, 2005; Moeller & Woods, 2015; Nolan & Bradley, 2005). It was created by combining a number of plants with over 400 chemicals and over 80 cannabinoids (Adrian, 2015; Moeller & Woods, 2015).

By 1853, cannabis was known as a fashionable narcotic and was widely used in home remedies and patent medicines (Adrian, 2015; Moeller & Woods, 2015). By the 20th century, more than 19 million people used cannabis in the United States (SAMHSA, 2016). Medical cannabis became legal in 23 states and the District of Columbia, starting

with California in 1996 (Adrian, 2015; SAMHSA, 2016). As time went on, drugs derived from herbs and natural substances were gradually replaced by those made synthetically in laboratories (Adrian, 2015; Nolan & Bradley, 2005). By the end of the 19th century, drugs were used to treat health problems (Adrian, 2015; Moeller & Woods, 2015; SAMHSA, 2016). Quinine was used to treat malaria, and mercury was used for the treatment of syphilis (Adrian, 2015; Cloyd, 2005). The United Kingdom was first to invent lithium, a psychotropic drug used to treat moods and manage manic depression. The most widely used drugs in mental healthcare are opiates, bromides, barbiturates, and antihistamines (Adrian, 2015; Cloyd, 2005). Initially, people invented drugs by growing and cultivating plants products to create psychoactive substances for medical, religious, and cultural purposes (Adrian, 2015; Cloyd, 2005). Since then, manufacturing drugs has become institutionalized and a source of revenue (Adrian, 2015; Cloyd, 2005).

In addition, some herbs were not prescribed to cure illnesses but to create a good feeling that freed the patient to help himself or herself (Adrian, 2015; Nolan & Bradley, 2005). Throughout history, pharmacological drugs were classified as either effective or ineffective, unless they were monitored by patients and professionals (Adrian, 2015).

Alcohol use dates back to Biblical times (Adrian, 2015; Cloyd, 2005). There was widespread use throughout the Old World in Antiquity, with references to beer in Ancient Egypt and wine in the Old Testament (Adrian, 2015; Cloyd, 2005). During the Modern Era, the development of new production techniques and substances expanded the availability of alcohol (Adrian, 2015). Alcohol use was mainly used for recreational

purposes, causing impaired brain function, lack of motor skills, and liver damage (Adrian, 2015; National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2013; SAMHSA, 2016).

Cocaine use, extracted from coca leaves, dates back 800 years, when its primary use was for medical purposes and increased energy (Grzybowski, 2008). However, negative symptoms such as rapid heart rate, anxiety, violent tendencies, digestive disorders, weight loss, and personality disturbances accompanied prolonged consumption of cocaine (Grzybowski, 2008; National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2013; SAMHSA, 2016). In addition, cocaine has been used as an anesthetic agent and to stimulate the central nervous system in patients who suffered from Parkinson's disease (Grzybowski, 2008). Opium cultivation is widely used for medical purposes and has become the model way to cultivate drugs (Musto, 1999; SAMHSA, 2016). Opium is highly addictive in its various forms (Grzybowski, 2008; National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2013; SAMHSA, 2016). Morphine, the primary active ingredient in crude opium, was introduced in the 19th century as a pain relief agent, even though the possibility of addiction was high (Musto, 1999; SAMHSA, 2016).

The most addictive derivative of opium is heroin, introduced as a cough suppressant by the Bayer Company in 1898 (Musto, 1999). Opium and its relatives have become popular and addictive drugs (Aiken, 2015; Musto, 1999; National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2013; SAMHSA, 2016). Female, African American offenders recidivate at a rate of 74%, with opioid drug offenders reoffending at an even higher rate compared to other female drug offenders (National Drug Use, 2013).

Incarceration History

The origin of incarceration dates back to Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and the Roman Empire in the first millennia B.C. (Cloyd, 2005). Prisons were used as underground dungeons and criminals guilty of a crime were beaten, sentenced to slavery, or death (Cloyd, 2005; History of Imprisonment, 2016). The growing rate of incarceration caused an increase in guards to supervise these criminals, changing the focus of incarceration to housing certain criminals and restricting a person's liberty as a way of punishment for a crime committed (Cloyd, 2005; Patten, 2016; Woods, 2016).

The types of those incarceration included violent criminal offenses (murder, arson, sexual offenses) and nonviolent criminal offenses (drug offenses, theft, driving under the influence; BJS, 2015; National Institute of Drug Abuse, 2013). Over time, the war on drugs and tough sentencing guidelines were established, and offenders were sentenced to incarceration causing a 300% increase in recidivism (Woods, 2016). The population of offenders in federal prisons doubled for drug offenses in 2015 (Adrian, 2015; BJS, 2015).

Recidivism rates and the number of prison staff members continued to rise, causing a need to address this societal issue (BJS, 2016; Cosden et al., 2010; Gallagher, 2015; Harrison & Scheler, 2001; Johnson et al., 2015; Morenof & Harding, 2014; National Institute of Drug Abuse, 2013; Patten, 2016; SAMHSA, 2016). Incarceration rates for African American females increased at a rate of 349 per 100,000, and they are over 3.5 times more likely to be incarcerated than their European American female counterparts (Woodson, 2010). Incarcerated, African American, women offenders

reentering society face a combination of issues, including drug abuse and poor employment skills, in which they may not have had prerelease preparation (Alfred & Chlup, 2009; Christian & Thomas, 2009).

Female offenders showed more emotional difficulties, such as major depression disorder, psychosis, and substance abuse, and they differed in antisocial and criminal behaviors than male offenders (Alberda, Oosterveld, & Born, 2012; Drapaski, 2009; U.S. Department of Justice, 2015). Additionally, female African American offenders have a history of unique criminogenic needs that must be addressed to assist this group of offenders from reoffending (Alfred & Chlup, 2009; Woodson, 2010). African American females are being confined to correctional facilities for participating in illegal activities traditionally characteristic of those perpetrated by males (Johnson et al., 2015; Seal, 2005, 2004). African American, female offenders face educational factors, bullying, peer pressure, drug abuse, abusive relationships, gang involvement, and employment challenges that increase their risk of reoffending (Warthen, 2008). This group of female offenders is faced with a different set of obstacles than their counterparts (Liddell & Martinovic, 2013; Norris, 2012). Urban communities that are poverty stricken have minimal economic growth, and poor environmental conditions impact African Americans (Liddell & Martinovic, 2013; Norris, 2012).

These conditions can affect the quality of life for this group of offenders (Davis, 1999; Liddell & Martinovic, 2013; Norris, 2012; Warthen, 2008). Challenges faced by female offenders require the understanding of how these needs are shaped by both the institutional context in which women live as well as the women's locations within the

matrix of race, ethnicity, gender, and class domination (Norris, 2012; Woodson, 2010). Alternative approaches acknowledge the diversity of women's experiences at the intersection of gender, race, and class relations (Norris, 2012; Liddell & Martinovic, 2013).

Women's prisons have become warehouses for those who have committed drug-related crimes (McPhail, Falvo, & Burker, 2012). However, female offenders are often introduced to alcohol and drugs through relationships with partners, husbands, and boyfriends to hide pain and forget memories of physical and sexual abuse or low self-esteem (McPhail et al., 2012). In many jails and prisons across the United States, a typical female prisoner is a young, African American woman who is poor, a single mother, has a history of substance abuse, and has committed a nonviolent crime related to the use of drugs (Friedmann, Taxman & Henderson 2007; McPhail et al., 2012).

In many cases, drug sales and other nonviolent offenses were committed as survival crime by women in an attempt to feed their addictions (Braithwaite, 2006; McPhail et al., 2012). Abuse and substance use can be a vicious, self-destructive cycle from which many women are unable to break free (McPhail et al., 2012).

Drug Abuse

People using drugs show an inability to function daily without using drugs (Adrian, 2015; National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2013; SAMHSA, 2016; Woods, 2016). Furthermore, some drug users lose control and develop compulsive drug use, where they continue to use the drug despite aversive consequences and at the expense of other rewards (Pelloux, Murray, & Everitt, 2015). Drug abuse can affect the user's behavior,

causing impairment, alertness, cooperativeness, moods, and illegal activity that can cause incarceration and possible death. Illegal drug use is more prevalent among criminal arrestees than the general population (Adrian, 2015; Covington, Burke, Keaton, & Norcott, 2008; National Institute of Drug Abuse, 2013; SAMHSA, 2016).

The need to address drug abuse has emerged (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2013, SAMHSA, 2016). In 2013, 21 million people were diagnosed with a substance abuse disorder for nonmedical use of prescription medication that caused dependence, criminal behavior, increased incarceration, or death (SAMHSA, 2016). By 2012, 31% of all traffic-related deaths in the United States were the result of alcohol impairment, and 18% were from drugs other than alcohol (Adrian, 2015). Currently, overdose from prescription painkillers is one of the leading causes of accidental death in the United States (Andruscavage, 2017; National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2013). State, county, and municipal law enforcement officers, as well as emergency personnel, are working to combat the epidemic of opioid overdose (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2013).

Current Findings

Laws and penalties were put in place prohibiting drugs (BJS, 2014; National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2013; SAMHSA, 2016). Marijuana, cocaine, stimulants, and amphetamine drug use was slowly introduced for medical, recreational, and performance enhancement purposes (Aiken, 2015; Patten, 2016). To promote the drug war, President Richard Nixon created the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in 1973 to enforce federal drug laws (Adrian, 2015; Patten, 2016). Mandatory sentencing guidelines were also established in 1984 under President Ronald Reagan's administration, which included

a three strikes law and a mandatory 25 year imprisonment for repeated serious crimes, including drug offenses (Adrian, 2015; Patten, 2016).

In addition, crime control policies were put in place with the theory that sentencing drug offenders to prison for long periods of time will deter current and prospective offenders, leading to the reduction in drug abuse and drug-related crime (Spohn & Holleran, 2002). Since 1980, drug offense sentences are the single most important cause of the increase in the prison population in the United States (Adrian, 2015; BJS, 2015; Spohn & Holleran, 2002). The increase in drug offenders accounted for nearly three-quarters of the total increase in federal inmates and one-third of the total increase in state inmates during a 16-year period (BJS, 2015; Spohn & Holleran, 2002). A higher proportion of African American women are in the correctional system due to drug and alcohol misuse compared to European American women (Vigesaa et al., 2016). In addition, the BJS (2015) revealed an association between substance abuse and future involvement in the criminal justice system.

Rehabilitation

Offenders reoffended at a rate of 67.8% within 3 years of release, 76.6% within 5 years, and 50% within 1 year; 76.9% of offenses were typical drug offenders (National Institute of Drug Abuse, 2013). To reduce incarceration rates for nonviolent drug offenders, reduction policies, proactive crime control measures, drug courts, and jail diversion programs were established to provide an alternative to traditional, punitive proceedings for arrestees with substance use disorders by offering rehabilitation treatment in lieu of incarceration (Cosden et al., 2010; Gallagher, 2015).

Drug treatment courts were designed to reduce drug use and related criminal activity by offering drug offenders the opportunity for court-supervised, community-based, drug and alcohol user treatment in lieu of incarceration (Cosden et al., 2010; Gallagher, 2015; Patten, 2016). Drug court judges use a pragmatic judicial intervention strategy based on the development of an ongoing, working relationship between the judge and the offender, as well as the use of both positive and negative incentives to encourage compliance (Cosden et al., 2010; Gallagher, 2015; Patten, 2016; Tauber, 1994).

Drug court programs are not the same as traditional courts (Gallagher, 2015; Patten, 2016). Drug courts look beyond traditional relationships to form innovative partnerships that emphasize collective decision making, resource sharing and coordination of efforts (Cosden et al., 2010, Gallagher, 2015; Patten, 2016; Tauber, 1994). The most important principles in drug courts are immediate and up-front intervention; coordinated, comprehensive supervision; long-term treatment and aftercare; and progressive sanctions and incentive programs (Cosden et al., 2010; Gallagher, 2015; Patten, 2016; Tauber, 1994). Jail diversion programs are slightly different, as the purpose of such programs are intended to dismiss a felony drug charge by offering the defendant the opportunity to work toward dismissal of charges as a motivational tool to encourage the completion of the rehabilitation program (Cosden et al., 2010; Gallagher, 2015; Patten, 2016; Tauber, 1994).

Furthermore, many women are first exposed to substance abuse treatment programs when they enter the prison system (McPhail et al., 2012). Female offenders are in need of individual counseling, drug rehabilitation, and vocational rehabilitation for

community reentry; such services are needed (a) in prison, (b) the transition from prison to the community, and (c) within the community (McPhail et al., 2012).

Another rehabilitation program for substance-abusing female offenders is the Women's Integrated Treatment (WIT) model (McPhail et al., 2012). This model integrates substance abuse and trauma treatment, and can be used in several different settings including prisons and community treatment centers (Covington et al., 2008; McPhail, et al., 2012). The WIT mode has produced two gender-specific programs: Helping Women Recover and Beyond Trauma (McPhail et al., 2012). The programs are similar, as both integrate trauma and substance abuse treatment. Helping Women Recover and Beyond Trauma are grounded in theories of addiction and trauma (Covington et al., 2008; McPhail et al., 2012).

The Female Offender Treatment and Employment Program (FOTEP) is another community-based treatment facility model for women offenders that provide intensive case management services, substance abuse treatment, parenting and family services, and employment assistance (Grella, 2008; McPhail et al., 2012). The program uses a gender-specific approach to address substance abuse and trauma (Grella, 2008; McPhail et al., 2012). In addition, community-based halfway houses were established to provide female offenders a safe environment to receive rehabilitation and reintegration services (Grella, 2008; McPhail et al., 2012). Each house varies in accommodation and services. Some offered room and board, while others offered room, board, counseling and substance abuse treatment (Hanser, 2010; McPhail, et al., 2012).

Many correctional programs and community-based treatment programs have been implemented to address drug treatment and rehabilitation (Grella, 2008; Hanser, 2010; McPhail, et al., 2012). The existence of treatment, rehabilitation and drug court programs is vital in meeting the unique needs of incarcerated African American opioid women offenders to assist them in becoming substance free and productive citizens (Covington et al., 2008; Grella, 2008; Hanser, 2010; McPhail, Falvo, & Burker, 2012).

Transitional Changes among Criminal Justice Agencies

Evidence-based policies were established in criminal justice agencies to apply principles and techniques of evidence-based decisions and to improve social problems of affected individuals by improving public health and public safety (Cosden et al., 2010; Covington et al., 2008; Prendergast, 2011). As such, criminal justice agencies utilized such practices to understand the causes of criminal behavior and recidivism, such as lack of education, unemployment, and illicit drug use for the post-release offender (Covington et al., 2008; Cosden et al., 2010; Patten, 2016; Rezanoff, 2015).

In addition, several criminal justice agencies implemented gender responsive mental health and trauma-informed services for female offenders (Cosden et al., 2010; Covington et al., 2008; Johnson et al., 2015). It is important to understand women's issues, ethnicities and cultures when designing intervention programs and rendering services for those who are incarcerated, as well as those who have been released (Alfred & Chlup, 2009; Reid & Schram, 2012). Building rapport is a critical tool as it communicates, concern, empathy and knowledge. To build the relationship, rapport is

needed (Alfred & Chlup, 2009; Clark, 2011; Reid & Schram, 2012). Cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) was also introduced (Clark, 2011; Walter & Wesley, 2012).

From a cognitive perspective, experiences, beliefs, attitudes and values affect the way people think and how they view problems (Clark, 2011; Walter & Wesley, 2012). CBT originated when two separate strains of psychotherapy, cognitive therapy (CT) and behavior therapy (BT), were integrated as a way to change behavior (Thoma, Pilecki, & McKay, 2015). CBT can result in emotional and behavioral systems that distort the way a person views reality, interact with other people, and experience everyday life (Clark, 2011; Walter & Wesley, 2012).

In turn, this can contribute to unrealistic views and distortions in thinking and behavior (Clark, 2011; Walter & Wesley, 2012). The CBT approach represents the view that most people can become aware of their own thoughts and behaviors, and they learn how to think before acting and how to evaluate the consequences of their actions (Clark, 2011; Walter & Wesley, 2012). It has been effective with substance use offenders (Clark, 2011; Walter & Wesley, 2012).

Correctional rehabilitation, transition and prerelease programs were implemented to bridge the gap between programming in incarceration and programming in the community once the prisoner is released (Florida Department of Correction, 2015; McPhail et al., 2012). By addressing the importance of work readiness, life skills, parenting, community support, and social skills in transition, pre-release programs help the offender potentially prepare for release. (Florida Department of Correction, 2015; Hanser, 2010; McPhail, et al., 2012).

In addition, staff training programs were implemented in criminal justice and human service agencies to educate staff on the needs of inmates, how to change behavior and attitudes, and to reinforce positive behavior (Florida Department of Correction, 2015; Young & Antonio, 2009). Statistical data from Criminal Justice Agencies reported that some correction officers displayed attitudes toward retribution and punitive behaviors with no support for inmate rehabilitation; whereas health care professionals, program staff and supervisors reported the most support of inmate rehabilitation (Florida Department of Correction, 2015; Young & Antonio, 2009).

Mandatory trainings include mental health awareness, suicide prevention, cultural sensitivity, interpersonal communication skills and substance abuse (Florida Department of Correction, 2015; Young & Antonio, 2009). Such training increases awareness, promotes a positive correctional environment and educates the employee on how to respond to critical incidents (Florida Department of Correction, 2015; Young & Antonio, 2009).

Female transition and pre-release programs are gender-specific, providing comprehensive treatment and support in the following areas: mental health, substance abuse, vocational training, relationships, physical health, nutrition, housing, victimization, substance abuse, co-occurring disorders, family relationship and crisis management (Florida Department of Correction, 2015; McPhail et al., 2012). By adopting this comprehensive approach, facilitators can recognize and understand how women's pathways to prison are different from men and African American women offenders are different than White women offenders (Florida Department of Correction,

2015; Young & Antonio, 2009). By addressing the unique needs of this population, African American female offenders have a better chance of becoming productive citizens and not recidivating.

Summary and Conclusion

There continues to be a gap in knowledge among post-release African American female opioid drug offenders. The primary limitation is the offender's lack of obtaining employment by means of interviewing experience. African American female offenders appear to have poor interviewing skills (Bush-Baskette, 2000; Cobbina & Bender, 2012; Henrichson & Delaney, 2012). As such, the lack of such experience makes it difficult for opioid drug users to stay out of the criminal justice system. Opioid drug users struggle with life challenges such as finding employment (Mandiberg & Harris, 2014; National Drug Use, 2013; SAMHSA, 2015). As scholarly professionals continue to research the societal issue of recidivism, opioid drug abuse continues to be a key factor in enabling this specific population from becoming productive citizens. It is essential that criminal justice and human services evaluate the current policies they have in place that address African American female offenders, substance abuse treatment and employment.

In turn, the relevant information in this study can be used to assist the agencies in understanding the challenges this specific group of post-release African American female opioid offenders faces before, during and after they are released from incarceration. By educating such agencies new gender specific programs, trainings, policies, procedures and resources will be implemented. Understanding the needs of female offenders is essential when implementing programs that produce better outcomes.

It is critical that Criminal Justice and Human Service agencies collaborate and work together to develop and implement specific programs that meets the needs of this specific group of offenders. This group of offender's chances of reoffending is higher if programs are not implemented to meet their unique needs. This literature review showed that there were only limited studies on African American female offenders and opioid substance abuse treatment. More research studies are needed to understand African American female offenders, substance abuse treatment and post-release.

Chapter two includes history, current findings, incarceration, rehabilitation, and transitional changes. Chapter three includes the methodical framework I utilized to guide this qualitative hermeneutical phenomenological study. Information includes the method, justification for the method, sampling, data processing, informed consent, analysis and summary.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

African American, female offenders face barriers to obtaining employment when transitioning back into society (Lanlonde & Cho, 2008; Liddell & Martinovic, 2013; van Olphen et al., 2009). The recidivism rate of African American, female, opiate offenders has increased, when compared to Hispanic American and European American drug offenders (BJS, 2014; National Drug Use, 2013; United States Bureau of Statistics, 2015; “World Drug Report,” 2013). There were 300,500 African American females incarcerated, which did not include offenders supervised in the community (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

African American female offenders recidivate at a rate of 74%, with opioid drug offenders reoffending at a higher rate (BJS, 2014). U.S. taxpayers pay over \$39 billion annually for expenses associated with reoffending (BJS, 2014). The purpose of this qualitative, hermeneutical, phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of postrelease, African American, female, opioid drug offenders during the employment interview process. Scholars can use the results of this study to assist the offender in gaining employment and reducing the chances of recidivating.

This chapter consists of the methodology, justification of the methodology, purpose of the study, research question, theoretical frameworks, sampling, informed consent, interviews, interview questions, data collection and analysis, limitations, ethical considerations, and summary.

Research Method

In this hermeneutical phenomenological study, I elucidated postrelease, African American, female, opioid offenders' lived experiences seeking employment. Moustakas (1994) developed hermeneutics by using words to explore the meaning of an experience to reveal its essential structure. The hermeneutical phenomenological method is a well-established design used for exploring personal experiences (Annells, 2006; Moustakas, 1994; Tuohy et al., 2013). A hermeneutical phenomenological method is suitable for helping to understand the lived experiences of postrelease, African American, female, opioid offenders when interviewing for employment.

Hermeneutical phenomenological researchers explore in-depth personal experiences (Annells, 2006; Moustakas, 1994; Tuohy et al., 2013). Hermeneutical phenomenological researchers focus on the lived experiences of the participants (Kiefer, 2013; Mannen, 1997; Moustakas, 1994). Using hermeneutics to guide this phenomenological study, I interviewed 12 postrelease, African American, opioid offenders and analyze the words from the offenders' responses about job interview experiences. I developed themes from the responses. A hermeneutical phenomenological approach was optimal to gain a clear understanding and perception of the offender. In addition, by using a hermeneutical phenomenological design, I focused on the participants' lived experiences by developing a textual meaning through dialogue and interpretation of the experiences that postrelease offenders face during the employment interview process.

Purpose of the Study

For this hermeneutical, phenomenological study, I interviewed postrelease, African American, female, opioid offenders about their employment interview experiences. This study included 12 participants. I developed themes from job interview experiences. Understanding such experiences may provide information to develop programs that provide improved employment training for postrelease, African American, female, opioid offenders. In addition, the findings from this study may be used to improve the transition programs and services offered by human service and criminal justice agency staff.

Research Question

What are the lived experiences of African American, female, opioid drug offenders who received employment training when interviewing for employment?

Framework

For this hermeneutical, phenomenological study, I used two theories to frame this study: critical race Black feminist and hermeneutics. Critical race Black feminist theory relates to African American women and racial minorities (Alexander-Floyd, 2010; Collins, 2011). Hermeneutics relates to the experiences of the participants (Moustakas, 1990; Mannen, 1997).

Critical Race Black Feminist Theory

Adherents of critical race Black theory use this lens to examine aspects of marginalized racial groups by providing insights, detailed experiences, and in-depth understandings of African Americans and racial minorities (Alexander-Floyd, 2010;

Collins, 2011). Subsequent applications of this theory provided insight on the experiences of Black women (Alexander-Floyd, 2010; Collins, 2011). This is my personal ontology, as this worldview shaped how I made sense of data for this study.

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics allows a researcher to become immersed in the data, moving continuously between part and whole in a hermeneutic circle, employing three methods of reading: holistic, selective, and detailed (Moustakas, 1990; van Manen, 1990).

Hermeneutics participants are not taken as a representative of a broader group; researchers build trustworthiness by getting as close as possible to the experience of the participants (van Manen, 1990; Wharne, 2017).

Sampling

For this hermeneutical phenomenological study, I used criterion sampling. Researchers use criterion sampling methods when conducting qualitative, phenomenological studies (Maxwell, 2005; Palinkas et al., 2015). In addition, researchers use criterion sampling to select a sample of participants with common characteristics (Palinkas et al., 2015). The study included participants who were (a) a female offender, (b) African American, and (c) had a history of opioid use.

To find a representative sample of the population, I contacted a residential substance abuse treatment center that housed female offenders in the Southeastern United States. For the purposes of anonymity, I referred to the center as Residential Treatment Center 1. I established initial contact by sending a letter via e-mail (see Appendix A) to the program director. In the letter, I explained the study, the purpose, benefits, any

possible risks of the study, the protocol for participating in the study, and a request for permission to conduct the study within the facility.

The facility director willing to participate in the study provided a signed letter of organization permission (see Appendix B) to conduct the study within the facility. After receiving approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board, I established contact with the Residential Treatment Center by sending an e-mail invitation letter to the program director to post in the living common areas of the residential center (see Appendix C). The invitation letter included information about the study, the purpose, possible benefits and harm, and the right to opt out at any time without consequences. The letter indicated that participants would receive a \$20 Dunkin Donuts gift card. Once I received confirmation by telephone from the program director, there were several participants willing to interview, I scheduled interviews at the convenience of the participants at the residential facility. I used this sampling approach in finding 12 participants.

Informed Consent

Informed consent is integral to the research process; Informed consent is required prior to the start of conducting interviews Researchers who conduct in-depth interviews and qualitative inquiry hold personal and contextual data; therefore, researchers require the protection of participants and data (Chiumento, Rahman, Frith, Snider, & Tol, 2017; Hardy, Hughes, Hulen, & Schwartz, 2016; Morrison et al., 2015). I offered informed consent prior to the start of the interviews; I explained the informed consent process to all participants and offered time for review and questions. I requested informed consent

signatures prior to the start of the interview (see Appendix G). After obtaining informed consent forms, I conducted interviews in a private conference room at the residential facility.

Interviews

The interviews included seven structured, open-ended questions (see Appendix H). Researchers conducting phenomenological studies often use open-ended questions because questions can lead to meaningful answers by the participant (Moustakas, 1994). The interviewees consisted of 12 postrelease, African American, female, opioid offenders who were able to explain the challenges they faced when interviewing with potential employers. I designed interview questions to collect data to obtain an understanding of the perspective of each offender during the employment interview process. I used the interviews as a basis to understand the experiences of postrelease, African American, female, opioid offenders when interviewing with potential employers. I met with potential interviewees and offer informed consent. Once I received consent, I started such interviews. In addition, to promote accuracy, I used, in plain sight, audio recording. After I completed the interviews, I asked the participants for permission to contact them to review transcripts for accuracy to improve internal validity. Data collection is vital within the research process; I collected data based on information from the participants.

Data Collection

For this hermeneutical, phenomenological study, I collected data by interviewing 12 participants with seven structured questions. Scholars use a phenomenological approach to understand different perspectives of various experiences during the interview

process (Morrissette, 1999; Moustakas, 1994). Data collection consisted of information retrieved from interviews using such an instrument. Once I received final transcripts back from the interviewees, I started the analysis process. I produced verbatim transcripts, modified identifying information (e.g., employer one, interviewee one), and addressed corrected transcripts.

Data Analysis Procedures

Researchers conduct data analysis through coding and theoretical development by establishing relationships between codes (Bergin, 2011; Tessier, 2012; Yusof & Carpenter, 2015). For this hermeneutical, phenomenological study, I used thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is used to understand meanings from transcripts of data about a group, person, or culture (Leung & Chalupa, 2019). Thematic analysis includes identifying themes, observing the frequency of the themes, and comparing such trends (Leung & Chalupa, 2019). I used thematic analysis by deeply reading and listening to the data, coding and grouping the data, discerning potential themes, identifying data with the same code and grouping together under broad themes, reexamining data, discovering relationships between the various themes, and assigning meaning to such themes and completing a report.

In addition to thematic analysis, I used NVivo, a computerized software used in qualitative studies. Researchers conducting qualitative studies often use NVivo to automate analytical processes (Bergin, 2011; NVivo, 2014). I used NVivo because of the software's ability to visualize qualitative data and the relationships between them using colors, tree diagrams, and tag clouds (Bergin, 2011; NVivo, 2014).

Validity

Hermeneutic, phenomenological researchers investigate and describe a phenomenon as an experience in life through phenomenological reflection and writing (Davis, 2013; Flood, 2010; Kiefer, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; van Mannen, 1997).

Phenomenological interview questions can provide detailed and extensive information. I promoted validity by having interviewees review transcripts from questions. In addition, for consistency, each participant was asked the same question. I conducted this study within research guidelines including unknown biases and reflexivity in responses. The questions allowed the participants to bring forward biases; I anticipated minimal recollection of inaccurate information and emerging points of inquiry. I provided information relates to other sources.

Reliability

Hermeneutical, phenomenological studies should contain processes promoting reliability and trustworthiness (Davis, 2013). Researchers use reliability to check for replicability of the method (Davis, 2013; Flood, 2010). Strategies of rigor include investigator responsiveness, methodological coherence, theoretical sampling, an analytic stance, and saturation (Davis, 2013; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002; Noble & Smith, 2015). For this hermeneutical, phenomenological study, the research method and associated protocols are replicable.

Ethical Issues

Researchers who conduct in-depth interviews and qualitative inquiry hold personal and contextual data. Therefore, the protection of participants and data is required

(Chiumento et al., 2017; Hardy et al., 2016; Morrison et al., 2015). The researcher should use proper ethical standards to complete the study. In this study, participants completed informed consent forms which participants acknowledged the potential benefit and harm from participating in the study, and participants may quit the study at any time without consequence. Raw data from this study were protected using several methods including coding transcripts with 4-digit codes to protect the identity of the participant. Role names (e.g., Participant 1, Resident Treatment 1) was used to replace real names. Additionally, such data were secured on removable discs and stored in a locked file cabinet in my home.

Summary

In this hermeneutical, phenomenological study, I explored the lived experiences of a sample of postrelease, African American, female, opioid offenders when interviewing with potential employers. This chapter contained the method, justification of method, sampling, data collection and analysis, validity and reliability, ethical issues, and summary. The next chapter includes the findings.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

For this hermeneutical, phenomenological study, I interviewed 12 postrelease, African American, female, opioid offenders to understand their in-depth, lived experiences during the job interviewing process with potential employers. Interview responses from seven structured questionnaires were used to analyze the data. This chapter includes the purpose of the study, research questions, and findings.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this hermeneutical, phenomenological study was to understand the employment interview experiences of a representative sample of postrelease, African American, female, opioid offenders by interviewing African American, Female, former opioid offenders in an urban setting in the Southeastern United States. I sought to develop themes from their lived experiences during the job interview process. In addition, research findings from this study may be helpful for managing transition programs and services among human service and criminal justice agencies that offer employment training for postrelease, African American, opiate, female offenders by providing information about interviewing experiences. Furthering the development of such programs can help this group of former offenders to gain employment and avoid recidivating.

Research Question and Answer

What are the lived experiences of African American, female, opioid drug offenders who received employment training when interviewing for employment?

Postrelease, African American, female offenders experience emotional feelings of happiness, stress, anxiety, nervousness, and confidence during their interviews. In addition, postrelease offenders had feelings of fear when informing potential employers about their criminal background. The fear of revealing their criminal background led them to a feeling of embarrassment and rejection. The offenders prepared for the interview and expressed signs of excitement, relief, and shock when being called for an interview. Once the interview concluded, the offenders expressed feelings of relief that the interview was over; however, they were doubtful that they would not get the job due to their criminal record but also hopeful that they would get the job.

Findings

In this study, I found that postrelease, African American, female offenders experienced emotional feelings such as stress, nervousness, and anxiety during the interview process. The participants also experienced fear of rejection when informing potential employers about their criminal background. The findings are supported by thematic analysis. Data were separated by expressions, phrases, words, or emotional responses that were related to lived employment interviewing experiences. The emerging themes of the lived experience were happiness, stress, anxiety, nervous, prepared, confident, and criminal background constructed a descriptive transcript. In conjunction to thematic analysis, I used NVivo10 software developed by QSR International designed for organizing and managing qualitative data. Below are the participants' responses to the interview questions:

1. Describe to me your experiences when interviewing for potential job positions.

The participants stated that they were emotional, nervous, and had feelings of anxiety when describing their experiences. The participants stated that they felt disclosing information about their background would hinder their chances of being hired, and they would be disqualified. Two of the participants were wondering what the employer was thinking about when they were interviewing.

2. Describe to me how you prepared for the interview.

The participants stated that they prepared for the interview by dressing and speaking professionally, providing resumes, and including any other pertinent information related to the position. The participants conducted research on the organization to learn as much as they could about the organization and the position available. Two participants read a book on interviewing techniques prior to going on an interview. One participant stated she was worried about interviewing because she did not know what to expect.

3. Describe to me any emotional issues you experienced when you prepared for interviews.

The participants stated that they were emotional. The participants stated that they were nervous, excited, and had a level of anxiety. One participant stated that she was nervous; however, she was grateful that she was being allowed to interview because she normally does not make it to the interview stage. One participant stated that she had a feeling of confidence.

4. Describe to me how you felt when you were initially called for an interview.

The participants stated that they were shocked that they were called for an interview because it was rare that they get called for an interview. One participant stated that she was shocked but elated at the same time. One participant stated she felt like she had a chance because she was called. Another participant was happy, ecstatic, and could not wait to interview.

5. Describe to me your feelings during the interview.

The participants stated that they were nervous throughout the interview. One participant stated that she was embarrassed because she did not know what to say. One participant stated that she was confident with lingering thoughts and another participant stated that, overall, she felt good.

6. Describe to me your feelings once the interview was over.

The participants stated that they were relieved when the interview was over. One participant stated that she felt relieved that the interview was over but she also felt she was not going to get the job. One participant felt relieved; however, she also felt successful, meaning she felt she was going to get the job.

7. Describe to me what steps you took after the interview was concluded.

The participants followed up with the employer by sending an e-mail, contacting the employer by phone, sending thank you cards by mail, or by simply revisiting the employer. One participant stated that she called the employer every day to the point the employer got tired of her calling and hired her. The employer told her he never met

anyone as eager as her. Lastly, one participant stated she went to get something to eat because her nerves were bad prior to the interview and she could not eat. She stated,

I was arrested over 30 years ago. I am still being judged about a decision I made 30 years ago which has held me back from getting jobs. I am only judged in this state however if I went back to her hometown I would not be judged as much. No matter how good I am doing I will never get a chance because of my record. I was shocked to get called for an interview but felt good during the interview however when I was told about the background check I knew I would not get the job.

Another participant stated,

I started substance use many years ago. I held very good jobs including high ranking jobs such as working for judges and lawyers. When I look for a job I get a sense of anxiety. I am confident about getting a job, do the research on the company talk professionally and provide the potential employer with all the information they are looking for however once I am called for an interview and the potential employer discovered who I am (African American, drug offender) it causes me to have anxiety during the interview. I try to stay positive and make follow up calls, send thank you letters, etc. however anxiety takes over. Everyone should be treated equal no matter who they are.

Chapter Summary

In summary, 12 postrelease, African American, female, opioid offenders from Southeastern United States were interviewed. The participants described their lived

experiences when interviewing for jobs with potential employers. Chapter 5 includes the study results, conclusions, and recommendations.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this hermeneutical, phenomenological study was to understand the employment interview experiences of a representative sample of postrelease, African American, female opioid offenders. While researching this topic, I found studies that have shown improvements within transition of postrelease offenders; however, there were minimal studies related to employment interviewing. A hermeneutical, phenomenological research was used so participants could describe, in-depth, their lived experience when interviewing with potential employers. A sample of 12 African American, opioid offenders who met the research qualification criteria participated in the study. This chapter includes the summary, results, and recommendations.

Summary

In this study, I found that postrelease, African American, female offenders experienced emotional feelings such as stress, nervousness, and anxiety during the interview process, in addition to fear of rejection when informing potential employers about their criminal background. The findings are supported by thematic analysis. Data were separated by expressions, phrases, words, or emotional responses that were related to lived employment interviewing experiences. I found emerging themes of the lived experience such as happiness, stress, anxiety, nervous, prepared, confident, and criminal background constructed in a descriptive transcript. In conjunction to thematic analysis, I used NVivo10 a software developed by QSR International designed for organizing and managing qualitative data.

Implications

The findings from this hermeneutical, phenomenological study were based on the responses from the research question, which was to understand the lived experiences of postrelease, female, opioid offenders and their employment interviewing experiences. The participants expressed emotional feelings of stress, nervousness, rejection, judgment, and anxiety; however, drug use, education, and relapse were not discussed. To get a better understanding of this societal problem, scholars should continue to research this topic.

Recommendations for Future Research

I conducted research on 12 postrelease, African American, female, opioid offenders. I encourage future researchers to conduct a regression study to compare and prioritize anxiety factors for formerly incarcerated African American, women participating in job interviews whom have been released within 3 years. In addition, I encourage future researchers to conduct a hermeneutical, phenomenological study on prerelease, female, African American, opioid offenders and employment classes offered prior to release for the purposes of understanding the offenders' experiences and feelings. Furthermore, I recommend that future researchers conduct a case study on African American, female offenders' experiences with employment whom returned back to prison within 3 years. Such studies can build on this study and broaden the scholarly understanding of African American female offenders and employment experiences.

Conclusion

In this study, I found that postrelease, African American, female offenders experienced emotional feelings of happiness, stress, anxiety, nervousness, and confidence. In addition, postrelease offenders had feelings of fear when informing potential employers about their criminal background. In Chapter 5, I addressed the summary, implications, and recommendations for future researches to conduct research studies on African American female offenders and employment experiences to improve human services and criminal justice training programs.

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Appendix A: Interest Letter

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

June 19, 2018

Dear Project Manager:

My name is Wanda Dunmore, I am a student at Walden University working on a Doctor degree of Criminal Justice in the Human Services program. I am conducting a research study titled An Exploratory Study Post Release African American Female Offender's Perspective on Employment Interviews. The purpose of the research study is to understand employment interview experiences of post-release African American opioid offenders. Based on the history of residential substance abuse treatment which your organization offers; I believe the clients at your organization may be able to provide me with valuable information. Your organization would allow me to retrieve information from female residential substance abuse client's employment interview experiences. If available I would like to conduct interviews in your private conference rooms. In addition, the clients may possibly display emotional tendencies when describing such experiences, in which further support services may be needed from your organization. The study is volunteer and all information is confidential. All participants will receive a \$20 Dunkin Donuts gift card for participating in the study. The study is volunteer and all information is confidential. I will furnish a copy of my approval from Walden University

Institutional Review Board to conduct the study at your request. I would like to arrange a meeting with you at your earliest convenience so I can discuss the study in further detail.

Can you please contact me at [REDACTED] or at [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

Wanda Dunmore

Appendix B: Organization Permission

Residential Treatment Center One

South Blvd

Southeastern, United States

June 19, 2018

Dear Wanda Dunmore

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled *An Exploratory Study Post Release African American Female Offender's Perspective on Employment Interviews* within the Residential Treatment Center One. As part of this study, I authorize you to post a flyer in the living areas describing the study, risk and benefits. I approve you to conduct interviews in the facility conference room. I understand clients may possibly display emotional tendencies when describing such experiences, in which further support services may be needed from our organization.

I understand the study is volunteer; clients have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and all participants will receive a \$20 Dunkin Donuts gift card for participating in the study. In addition, I understand our organization will not be named in the dissertation that is published in Proquest. I confirm that I am authorized to approve such research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies. I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

President and CEO

Appendix C: Invitation to Participate in Research Study

I am a student at Walden University working on a Doctor degree of Criminal Justice in the Human Services program. I am conducting a research study titled An Exploratory Study Post Release African American Female Offender's Perspective on Employment Interviews. The purpose of the research study is to understand employment interview experiences of post-release African American opioid offenders who are seeking employment. I am inviting you to participate in this study. You don't have to be in this study if you don't want to.

If you decide now that you want to join the study, you can still change your mind later; refreshments and breaks will be offered. The study consists of being interviewed of responses in seven questions. I am hoping this study might be helpful by providing information on the experiences of post release African American female opioid drug offenders face when interviewing with potential employers. As a token of appreciation, for participating in this study, you will receive a \$20 Dunkin Donuts gift card. If you would like to participate in the study, I can be reached at [REDACTED] or

[REDACTED]

Appendix D: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. Describe to me your experiences when interviewing for potential job positions?
2. Describe to me how you prepared for the interview?
3. Describe to me any emotional issues you experienced when you prepared for interviews?
4. Describe to me how you felt when you were initially called for an interview?
5. Describe to me your feelings during the interview?
6. Describe to me your feelings once the interview was over?
7. Describe to me what steps you took after the interview was concluded?