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Factors Contributing to Recidivism among Inmates in Selected Ghana Prisons

Thesis submitted by

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November 2020

For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work and Human Services in the College of Arts, Society and Education

James Cook University

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Statement of the Contributions of others

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Declaration on ethics

Human research was conducted under the approval number H7124. Ethics approval was obtained from the Human Research Committee of James Cook University and the study was conducted under the guideline provided by the Australian National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, 2007.

Frank Darkwa Baffour October 2020

Abstract

This study employed the critical social work theory, social learning theory, and labelling perspective to explore factors contributing to recidivism in selected prisons in Ghana. Qualitative data were collected from 53 (n=53) participants including 25 prison inmates who had served two or more terms of incarceration, 15 prison officers, and 13 community members. Thematic analysis performed on the data revealed that social learning and labelling were endemic among the inmates in the selected prisons, and communities, respectively. Using the critical social work theory as the overarching framework, the study found that entrenched social learning in the prisons, and endemic labelling perpetrated by non-ex-convicts against ex-convicts in their communities, were both reinforced by mediating factors: In the prisons, overcrowding causes harsh prison conditions, inmate-to-officer ratio gaps, and inadequate rehabilitation, which in turn reinforces inmate-inmate interactions over inmate-officer interactions, as well as subsequent differential association. Further, all four components of social learning (differential association, definition, differential reinforcement, and modelling) were present among inmates in the selected prisons. The study reported three types of differential associations (survival or circumstantial, reciprocal, and old friend reunion differential association), which created the space for modelling, definition and differential reinforcement to thrive. On the other hand, factors including lack of community re-entry plans and traditional myths surrounding the purpose of imprisonment, were found to have shaped perceptions about prisons and inmates, causing formerly-incarcerated people to be stigmatised and discriminated against in the community. Findings of this study suggest that social learning among prison inmates, and labelling perpetrated against them post-prison, accounted for the inmate participants' reincarceration. Implications for policy, research, and criminal justice social work practice are discussed

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PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This study is located in the field of criminal justice social work [CJS]. CJS is an interdisciplinary field of social work education that applies social work values and criminal justice procedures to design programs and interventions aimed at improving the general welfare of both staff and people who are in conflict with the criminal justice system (Chong & Francis, 2017). I employed social work and criminology theories to explore factors contributing to recidivism among inmates in selected prisons in Ghana, and to suggest tailored-to-fit programs and interventions to address it. This chapter starts with a contextualisation of recidivism and how it was defined in this study. I proceed to discuss my prior experience, especially within the prison system, that influenced my choice of topic and context for this research. The next section discusses political, historical, and cultural contexts within which the study was conducted. The scope and research problem are discussed, followed by aims, research questions, significance of the study, and a thesis overview.

Conceptualising Offender Recidivism

Recidivism in its literal meaning is a relapse into prior behaviour, where behaviour can mean any human behaviour. The term recidivism has gained popularity in criminology, social work and other disciplines due to its adoption in the criminal justice system to describe a person's relapse into criminal behaviour (Armstrong, 2013). To date, there is no universally agreed single definition for recidivism. The divergence in recidivism definition is methodical and contextual (Fortune & Lambie, 2006; Johnson, 2017).

A report prepared by Hunt and Dumville (2016) to the United States Sentencing Commission defined recidivism to include the rearrest, reconviction and reincarceration of a person who has previously served a custodial or non-custodial sentence and undergone treatment. The definition by Hunt and Dumville (2016) measures recidivism with three

variables: rearrest, reconviction and reincarceration. A person is therefore classified as a recidivist if he or she satisfies any of the three variables. In this definition, an offender does not need to be only reincarcerated to become a recidivist, but is considered to have relapsed into crime when they come into contact with the criminal justice system for the second time or more through arrest. Rhodes, Dyous, Kling, Hunt and Luallen (2013) define recidivism to include a person's rearrest for a serious offence, revocation of parole, supervision or probation or a combination of rearrest and revocation. Relapse into minor offences such as traffic offences or disturbing public peace are excluded from this definition.

Most recidivism scholars use terms such as re-offend, rearrested, reconvicted, and re-imprisoned to interpret a person's relapse into criminal activities (Collins, 2010; Hakansson & Berglund, 2012; Kubiak, 2004). Divergent to the definitions above are classic studies by Brannon & Troyer (1995) and Weinrott (1996), who did not define recidivism to include re-offend and rearrest but included reconviction or re-imprisonment. While definitions of recidivism that include parole and probation revocations may be appropriate in developed nations, in most African countries and other developing regions where parole, supervision, and probation do not exist, adopting the western definition may be problematic. For example, in Ghana where this study was conducted, recidivism is defined to exclude parole and probation revocation, but includes re-imprisonment of ex-prison inmates on three or more counts (Ghana Prisons Service, 2013). Unlike most western studies that include second time offenders in the recidivism rate (Hunt & Dumville, 2016), the Ghana Prisons Service exclude second time offenders when measuring recidivism rates.

Notwithstanding the differences, recidivism definitions irrespective of the method, research purpose, and context share some commonalities. Among these are relapse into criminal behaviour, release from a correctional facility, treatment for previous criminal behaviour, rearrest, reconviction and re-imprisonment (Zgoba & Salerno, 2017). Drawing

from past definitions of recidivism and considering the context of this research, this study conceptualises recidivism to be a process involving imprisonment, release from the correctional facility, re-offence, rearrest, reconviction and re-imprisonment by a competent court of law after a person has been punished or treated for previous crime. Further, in this study, the term recidivist (from this point, the term "inmate" will be used instead of "recidivist" to avoid stigmatic labelling of participants in this project by the researcher) will describe a person who has been incarcerated on more than one occasion. The decision to substitute the term "inmate" for "recidivist" in this study is consistent with other fields of practice where, for example, people undergoing treatment are referred to as inmates rather than recidivists to avoid stigma, and is intended to avoid negative and damaging impacts on study participants (Dalrymple & Burke, 2006; Fook, 2016).

My Prior Experience with the Prison and Motivation for this Thesis

Qualitative researchers are encouraged to document the motivation behind their choice of topic and context of their study (Ngunjiri, Hernandez, & Chang, 2010). Sometimes the topic of interest may be as a result of the researcher's professional or lived experience (Fenge, Oakley, Taylor, & Beer, 2019). A researcher's prior experience of the subject under study is considered an invaluable resource in the research process. According to Holloway and Biley (2011), experience of the topic and context helps the researcher to be "aware and sensitive, rather than overemotional or self-absorbed, qualitative research can be enlightening, person-centred, and humanistic" (p.965). Fenge et al. (2019) reason that the emotional and sensitive nature of some qualitative inquiries, such as those involving marginalised groups, require preparedness and consciousness from the researcher in order to maintain academic rigour. To that end, given that prison research (especially involving inmates) is classified as sensitive and emotionally draining (Jewkes, 2014; Liebling, 1999),

my prior experience living in a Ghanaian community, and as a voluntary worker and researcher in the prison system of Ghana, was an invaluable asset.

My perceptions about prison were shaped by socialisation and lived experience growing up as a Ghanaian in a traditional-centric community in Ghana. Among the perceptions I had harboured over time about the prison system were that the prison is a dangerous place where criminals are kept, and that inmates are callous and one should not get close to them, among others. My perceptions, which are largely shared by the average Ghanaian, were challenged shortly after I was enrolled in my Bachelor of Social Work degree at the University of Ghana. The core social work values of social justice, respect for persons, and professional integrity (Chenoweth & McAuliffe, 2018) helped change the way I looked at marginalised groups such as prison inmates. Social justice theories such as critical social work theory and anti-oppressive practice (Dalrymple & Burke, 2006) directed my passion towards a career that challenges the status quo that perpetuate social inequality, especially among vulnerable populations (Jonsson & Flem, 2018; Kamali, 2015; Stepney, 2006).

My passion for working with marginalised groups motivated me to enrol in a course in social deviance and control (an elective course that introduces students to the theories that explain the causes of crime and crime prevention) at the University of Ghana. Theoretically, the course highlighted the nature of the prison system, specifically the behaviour of inmates and prison officers' responses to such behaviours, which has led many prison scholars to identify the prison as a conflict environment (Abotchie, 2016). Deprivation theory and how liberty deprivation compels inmates to form social networks to cope with their situation (Sykes, 1958), and the argument put forward by Thomas and Foster (1973) that all inmates import vices from the community to prisons, were also illuminated during this course. My first encounter with the prison was in June 2009 during my social work field placement with the Department of Social Welfare. The Department was responsible for aftercare duties at the

Kumasi Central Prison and juvenile correctional centre. As part of our training we visited these two institutions with the aftercare agent to observe how she went about her duties. In addition to my social work practicum, I joined Christian Care (a prison and community faith-based organisation in Ghana) as a volunteer. This presented me with countless opportunities to visit the country's prisons. From 2010 to January 2017 I performed the roles of liaison between inmates and their family members and victims, counsellor, fundraiser, and financial proposal writer for Christian Care. This work, and especially the liaison and counsellor roles, meant I was closer to inmates and their communities.

The more time I spent in prisons, the more the questions I asked myself, and most commonly: Why would people want to come back to live in the harsh prison conditions? This question may sound unambiguous to many, but the answer is actually complex, and my thesis, to some extent, addresses it. My traditional belief system (inmates are evil and as such they must be made to pay for their crimes; it is unacceptable for a "law abiding" person to associate with inmates), classroom knowledge, and the opportunity to meet prison inmates and staff and interact with them, shaped my views about the prison and why people re-offend. I formed the view that recidivism could be a product of systemic inequality in the prison and community. My orientation and practice principles, shaped by theoretical tenets of critical social work theory, anti-oppressive practice and a self-reflective position (Jonsson & Flem, 2018) influenced my opinions about the state of Ghanaian prisons and the treatment of inmates in the prison and community.

Despite the stressful nature of conducting research in prisons (see Nielsen, 2010; Rossiter, Power, Fowler, Elliott & Dawson, 2020), my personal belief that a problem is effectively addressed if the source is known motivated me to conduct this study. Predisposing factors of a social problem are known through the application of a rigourous methodological procedure that is reflexive and can be validated. Research has proven to be one of the

essential ways to scientifically identify contributing factors to social problems and suggest measures to address them (Zain et al., 2011). My experiences living in the Ghanaian community and with the Ghanaian prison system, coupled with my social work theoretical foundation, led me to suppose that to properly understand the multifaceted causes of recidivism requires diverse theories and study populations. As a result, in this thesis I use the critical social work approach as the overarching theory and two criminology theories, namely social learning theory (Akers, 1985) and labelling perspective (Becker, 1963), to understand factors contributing to recidivism among inmates in four selected prisons in Ghana. Viewing the causes of recidivism through the critical lens helped to understand criminogenic factors that could cause recidivism, as well as how structural inequality and systemic failures allow it to prevail (Dill, McLaughlin & Nieves, 2006). Even though my personal experience and values motivated this study, I prioritised the views of people who had lived the problem under study throughout the research process (Nilson, 2017).

Situating the Study (context of the study)

In this section I situate the study by highlighting the political, socio-cultural, and historical contexts of the study area (Ghana). Figure 1 shows the map of Ghana and the study sites. I also describe the historical and current context of imprisonment and explain why the current situation does not encourage offender rehabilitation or support community re-entry. This provides a critical statement of context by depicting the status quo and the need for this study. Accordingly, the first section outlines the political context of Ghana, followed by the socio-cultural context of Ghana, and ends with an historical account of penology development in Ghana.

Political Context of Ghana

The study was conducted in Ghana, West Africa. Ghana is an anglophone country; the Gulf of Guinea lies to its south, and three francophone countries, Togo, Burkina Faso and

Cote d'Ivoire border it to the east, north and west respectively. Ghana became a republic in 1960 after attaining independence from the British in 1957. After years of political instability, including several military coups d'état between 1966 to 1991, Ghana has been politically stable since 1992 with seven successive peaceful elections and three harmonious transfers of power between political parties. Ghana's current population is estimated at about 30,280,811 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2019). About 33.3% of Ghana's population is aged 15 to 35, most of whom are unemployed due to low and/or lack of employability skills (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013). While there are no nationwide statistical survey data of the ages of prison inmates in Ghana, available data indicate a high rate of youth crime and imprisonment (Appiahene-Gyamfi, 2002).

There are 43 prison establishments in Ghana, including the senior correctional centre which admits juvenile offenders. The remaining 42 prisons include nine agricultural settlement camp prisons, 13 local prisons, three open camp prisons, seven female prisons, seven central prisons (minimum security), one contagious disease prison, one medium-security prison, and a maximum-security prison. This study focused on four prisons including a central prison located at Kumasi in the Ashanti Region, medium security and female prisons located at the Nsawam township in the Eastern Region, and a maximum security prison at Ankaful in the Central Region of Ghana.

Figure 1 Map of Ghana and the study sites

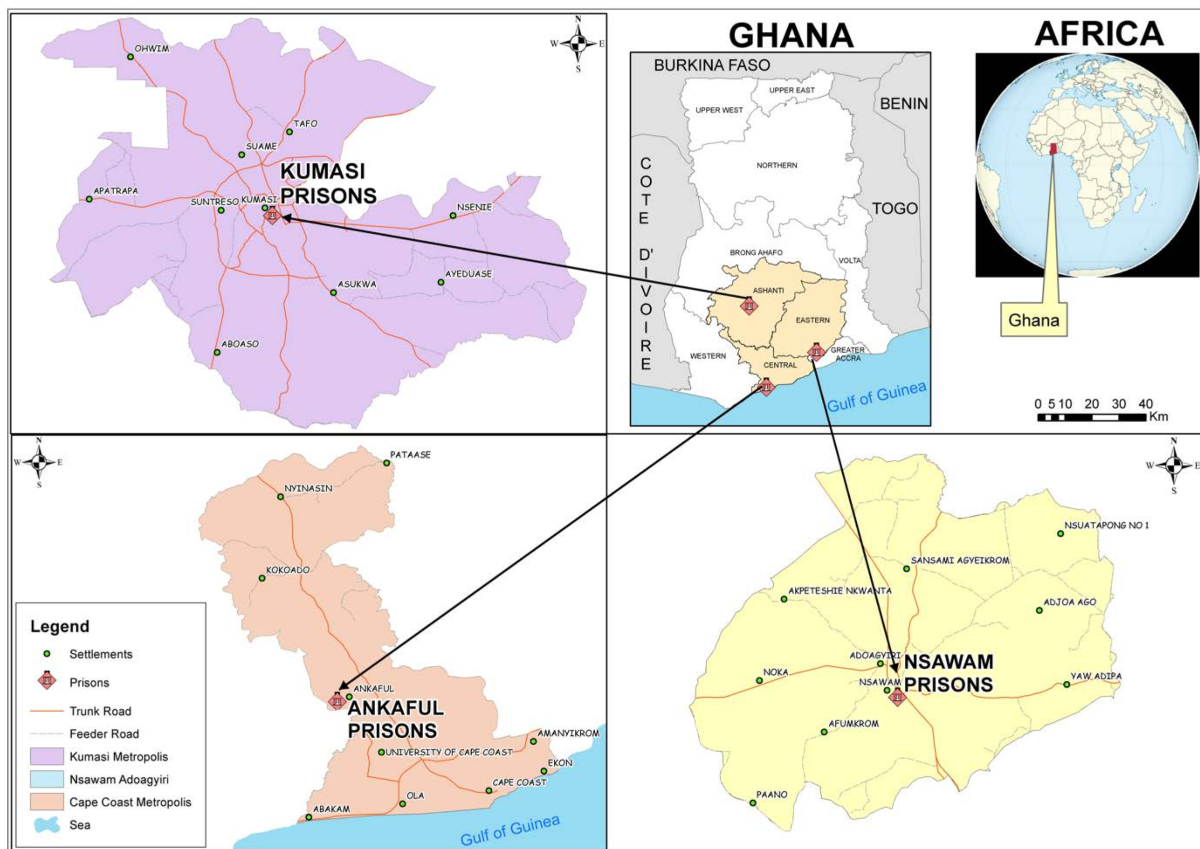


Figure 1 Map of Ghana and the study sites.

Originally established by British colonial administrators in 1901 to ensure safe custody of not more than 600 inmates, the Kumasi central prison now houses more than 2000 inmates. The Kumasi central prison is among the most overpopulated in Ghana, with scholars describing the state of congestion as unbearable (Afari, Osei, & Adu-Agyem, 2015). Due to overcrowding, Kumasi prison has the problem of inadequate rehabilitation and lack of counselling services (Afari et al., 2015). Similar to other prisons in Ghana, inmates at Kumasi are not classified (with exception of those with capital punishment disposition), irrespective of the magnitude of their crime/s. The prison accepts convicts, remand, trial, and condemned inmates. The prison is located in the central business district of Kumasi, adjacent the Ashanti Regional police headquarters and Wesley Cathedral in Adum, Kumasi.

The Nsawam medium security and female prisons are located on the Nsawam-Accra road in the south eastern part of Ghana's Eastern Region. The Nsawam medium security prison admits only males, while the female prison accommodates women aged 18 years or over. The female prison is about one kilometre from the medium security prison. Even though they are located close together on the same parcel of land, administratively they are different facilities. The Nsawam medium security prison was established in 1960, while the female prison was established in 1973. The Nsawam female prison is among the few prisons in the country that is not overpopulated. It is the largest and most populous female prison in Ghana with 89 inmates and 143 officers as at the time I visited.

As with the Kumasi central prison, the Nsawam medium security prison is overpopulated. Originally established to accommodate 700 inmates, it currently holds almost 4000 inmates. As a result, a cell established to accommodate four now houses 40 or more inmates who sleep in turns during the night (United States Department of State [USDS], 2018). In 2013 the Ghana Prisons Service reported the Nsawam medium security and Kumasi central prisons recorded the most deaths (18 and 13 respectively) among inmates. Due to the overcrowding in the Nsawam medium security prison, authorities are forced to intermingle convicts and pretrial inmates in one cell (USDS, 2018). Lack of inmate classification processes is therefore a shared problem between the Kumasi central prison and the Nsawam medium security prison. Further, according to one prison officer, rehabilitation in the Nsawam medium security prison is inadequate. Overcrowding and inadequate rehabilitation are high-risk recidivism indicators (Murhula, Singh, & Nunlall, 2019). For inmates, it is assumed that overcrowding and inadequate rehabilitation lead to inmates spending most of their prison sentence living idle, increasing the likelihood of social distancing between inmates and prisons officers (Mesko & Hacin, 2019). This has the tendency to leave the

inmates incorrigible with no job skills for effective community reintegration, which may in turn increase recidivism risk.

The maximum security prison located at Ankaful, on the main Ankaful-Elmina road adjacent to the Ankaful psychiatric clinic in the Central region of Ghana, was established in 2011. The prison does not admit offenders directly from the court but on referral from the medium and minimum security prisons, generally offenders with high sentences, and incorrigible inmates who may require special security or other treatment that the lower security prisons cannot provide. According to the Ghana Prisons Service (2015) the Ankaful maximum security prison started admitting inmates in 2011 when the first phase of construction was completed. It is worth noting that the first phase contains the administration block, inmate cells and exercise yard, and kitchen. A second phase, planned to contain an education block and other rehabilitation facilities, is still incomplete, as confirmed by a staff member and direct observation.

Socio-Cultural Context (Oral traditions that perpetrate stigmatisation and discrimination)

Ghana is a multicultural, multi-religious, multiethnic, and multiparty democratic country with diverse traditions and languages spoken. Five main ethnic groups include the Akan, Mole-Dagomba, Ewe, Guan and Ga-Dangme and three major religions include Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religion. In Ghana, cultural norm, religious belief, and tradition are entrenched. Cultural expectations, norms and traditions, such as respecting the elderly, are considered basic responsibilities for all age groups, but particularly the youth, with those who deviate labelled as “bad”, “bad example”, and/or deviant (Akoensi, 2018). Therefore, the community classifies people who engage in nonconforming acts such as stealing, rape, defilement and murder as troublesome, and they may be subjected to lifelong discrimination and stigma. Such people are perceived as odd, and religiously and morally unfit to mingle with conformist society.

Local figurative languages reflect the culture of intolerance to unacceptable behaviours among Ghanaian communities (Kyiileyang, Debrah, & Williams, 2017). As with other Sub-Saharan African communities, Ghanaian oral traditions such as proverbs and folkways are used to express pleasure and displeasure with community members' actions. While these figurative languages may serve as a social control mechanism, encouragement, and expression of hope, empathy, and compassion, some perpetuate and instil discrimination and stigmatisation against those who break norms and rules. Examples of such proverbs include (translated from Twi to the English language): "the same stick they used to beat the foolish can be used on the wise should they behave same"; "if you befriend the goat you grow a beard"; and "a crab can never give birth to a bird". These proverbs reflect the cultural tradition and belief system of an average Ghanaian community and are symbols of speech that discourage any form of association between a conformist and nonconformist. These oral traditions socialise community members to dissociate themselves from law breakers in order to avoid community wrath.

Other Ghanaian proverbs promote revenge and are believed to create a culture and belief system that encourages community members to harbour pain and bitterness toward people who break societal rules and norms. Examples of such proverbs include: "if cancer is not shy to infiltrate your nose, you will not feel shy to cover with a cottonwool"; "a persistent demonstration of unacceptable behaviour is tantamount to revenge"; and "a merciless step on the scorpion attracts a reverse of a merciless bite". These oral traditions normalise a lack of empathy and compassion from the community toward people who offend and may become prison inmates. They enhance the culture of retribution by socialising community members to perpetuate neglect and ostracise inmates, while they are in prison and after their release, as evidenced in offenders' widespread experiences of discrimination and stigmatisation in most Ghanaian communities (Dako-Gyeke & Baffour, 2016).

Other oral traditions characterise rule breakers as threats to the community who should be treated with caution. Examples include: "if the animal will not bite you it will not show you its teeth"; and "an impotent penis can still be used to urinate". These popular adages are commonly used to advise community members to exercise caution and not engage or associate with people who have been in conflict with the norms and rules governing a group. From the above, it could be argued that the Ghanaian social context, culture and traditions perpetuate discrimination and stigmatisation through oral traditions and symbols.

Historical Account of Penology Development in Ghana

Ghana, a country in the western part of Africa, has three historical periods related to British colonisation from 1844 to 1957. In the quest to understand factors contributing to recidivism in Ghana it is imperative to understand its historical penology development through pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial eras (Bryant, Black, Land, & Porra, 2013).

Precolonial Criminal Justice and Penology in Ghana

Criminal justice systems existed before the arrival of the Europeans in West Africa, including in Ghana (Dalgleish, 2005). In precolonial Ghana, the main social control agents were family heads (lineage leaders of the extended family), traditional leaders (kings and queens), and councils of elders (including priests). Ame (2018) posits that individuals who violated community norms were put before either lineage leaders and heads of the extended family, or chiefs and a council of elders, depending on the magnitude of the deviation. This implies that the justice system of precolonial Ghana consisted of the king, queen, traditional religious leaders, council of elders and family heads or lineage leaders who, to ensure conformity, were charged with political and judicial powers to punish nonconformists.

In precolonial Ghanaian ethnic groups, deviation was perceived as a sin against the ancestors and community, requiring punishment and compensation (Ame, 2018). Notable among the punishments meted out to nonconformists during the precolonial era were slavery

or spiritual servitude, banishment, and the death penalty for serious deviations such as homicide and offences against the gods and ancestors, such as perjury (Novac, 2018). Minor offences such as petty theft, assault, disobedience to the elderly, and other crimes of similar magnitude attracted restitution or compensation to the victim (Onyango, 2013). Deviations that were adjudicated to be accidental attracted spiritual atonement to compensate the gods and ancestors in order to prevent a curse on the culprit and his or her lineage (Ame, 2018). According to Ame (2018), in precolonial Ghana the larger community informally responded to both minor and serious offences by stigmatising and socially isolating the offender.

Critical reflection on Ghanaian precolonial justice and penology indicates that it was practicing a culturally accepted justice system, executed differently from that of the subsequent colonial and post-colonial eras (Dalgleish 2005). In precolonial Ghana, deviations seen as a sin to community and ancestors attracted responses such as discrimination, stigmatisation and ostracision, or social isolation from the entire community (Ame, 2018). However, community responses aimed at shaming offenders through ostracision and stigmatisation allowed re-socialisation by keeping most offenders in their respective communities. Incorrigible and hardened offenders were either banished or subjected to capital punishment (Novac, 2018), deemed not fit to live in the community or not fit to live at all (Ame, 2018).

Colonial Ghana Criminal Justice and Penology

During the precolonial era, most African communities, including Ghana, did not have prison systems. Colonial administrations introduced prisons, which further adapted into criminal justice systems postcolonial (Onyango, 2013). In Ghana, the arrival of the British in 1844 saw the introduction of a new criminal justice system, new crimes and new forms of punishment. Tankebe (2013) explains that the British established a new order by creating a criminal justice system and penology that were new to the indigenous Ghanaians but aligned

with that of the British. From this point in the history of Ghana, a new way of addressing crime and punishing offenders was preferred over the traditional methods. Even crimes that did not directly affect the colonial administrators, such as civil disputes delegated to be settled in the local community, were dealt with under the laws set forth by the colonial rulers (Tankebe, 2013).

Tankebe (2013) notes that colonial administrators introduced the criminal justice system, and specifically prison, to keep and punish indigenous people whose actions and conduct threatened the colonial administration. This suggests that the prison system was initially introduced to instil fear in the indigenous Ghanaians and not to rehabilitate rule breakers. As a result, prison facilities such as the Cape Coast Castle, James Fort, Usher Fort, James Camp and Anomabo Castle were constructed (Ghana Prisons Service, 2015a).

During the colonial era, the police were responsible for law enforcement and prison management. From 1844 to 1920 the Gold Coast Militia and Police (police service during the colonial era) were in charge of prison administration. The colonial police force was recruited from Nigeria, allowing colonial administrators to avoid familiarity and existing relationships leading to police-civilian friendships (Hills, 2007). Appiahene-Gyamfi (2009) notes that the idea behind the importation of police officers was to ensure that police exercised their powers without favour or prejudice. Imprisonment during this time was to remove offenders from the community and stop them from committing additional offences (Bernault, 2003).

This colonial criminal justice system was brutal, as the focus was to excessively punish nonconformists (Boateng & Darko, 2016). Seidman (1969) reflects that punishment of offenders during colonisation was inhumane and focused on solitary confinement and torture rather than rehabilitation. The 1860 Prison Ordinance mandated prison inmates to be flogged, given insufficient food, prevented from talking among fellow inmates during the night and subjected to hard labour while in chains (Appiahene-Gyamfi, 2009). Subsequent legislation,

notably the 1876 Gold Coast Prisons Ordinance, encouraged punishment over treatment as a deterrent to offenders and future offenders (Seidman, 1969).

Nevertheless, poor prison conditions coupled with harsher treatment did not deter offenders, rather the prison population had increased substantially by 1902. The number of prison facilities had increased from four to 21 and inmates from 129 to 1620 (Ghana Prisons Service, 2015). As a result of the increased number of prison facilities and inmates, the office of the Superintendent of Prisons was created to partner the police in prison administration. In 1920, prison administration was completely separated from the police service and the first Inspector General of Prisons was appointed. Seidman (1969) notes that the change in prison administration in the later colonial days did not address the harsh treatment of inmates, which continued into the postcolonial era.

Postcolonial Ghana Criminal Justice and Penology

Ghana was the first Sub-Saharan African country to attain independence in 1957. Post-independence legislation that governed the Ghana Prisons Service included the 1958 Prison Regulations, 1960 Prison Standing Orders, 1970 Prison (Amendment) Regulation, 1971 Prisons (Declaration of Prisons) Instrument, 1972 Prisons Service Decree, 1991 Ghana Prisons Service Scheme of Service Administration, and 1992 Constitution of Ghana. However, fundamentally Ghana's criminal justice system was and is a direct reflection of its British predecessor (Adjorlolo, Abdul-Nasiru, Chan, & Bambi, 2018). Tankebe (2013) reasons that Ghana's criminal justice system was colonially created and imposed. For example, some provisions in the 1972 Prisons Service Decree of Ghana (the major prison legislation of Ghana) mirror those of the 1876 Gold Coast Prisons Ordinance, which did not prioritise inmate reformation and rehabilitation, but focused instead on safekeeping and harsher punishment. Consistent with the 1972 Prisons Service Decree, as stipulated in Section 1, is a primary focus on safe custody. Further, Section 43 of the 1972 Prisons Service

Decree stresses flogging and minimum diet as means of punishing offenders whose conduct may conflict with prison rules.

Seidman (1969), an early Ghana prison scholar, concludes that prisons in Ghana epitomise colonial rule. Appiahene-Gyamfi's (2009) findings support this claim by highlighting the poor sleeping and living conditions of inmates in Ghana prisons. These poor prison conditions can be attributed to decades of a complete focus on imprisonment as a means of punishment. The Criminal Offence (Amendment) Act (2012) (an act that sought changes to the 1960 Criminal Offence Act 29) maintained imprisonment and fines as the means of punishment. According to the Ghana Prisons Service (2015) most offenders are unable to settle fines placed on them by the court and end up in prison as the only alternative. As a result, most offenders go to prison, putting further pressure on the insufficient existing prison facilities and resources.

Today, more than half of the 43 prison facilities in Ghana were inherited from the British colonial administration. Notable among these prisons are the Kumasi Central Prison (1902), Secondi Central Prison (1910), Tamale Central Prison (1914), Koforidua Central Prison (1946), and Ankaful Contagious Disease Prison (1948). These prisons were originally built to meet safekeeping and punishment needs during colonial rule and had not undergone any transformations to meet modern standards. Appiahene-Gyamfi (2009) observes that prisons in Ghana, especially those constructed during the colonial era, do not have modern rehabilitation facilities. For example, the Akuse Prison was converted from a warehouse to a prison facility in 1886 to ensure safekeeping of offenders. It is worth noting that the Museum and Monument Centre of Ghana has converted historical forts and castles such as the Cape Coast Castle, James Fort, Ussher Fort, and Anomabo Castle, from prisons to museums without replacement.

Ghanaian prison facilities currently accommodate over 15000 inmates, which exceeds the total 9000 inmate capacity (Ghana Prisons Service, 2015). The 2013 Ghana Prisons Service annual report outlined some issues with prison conditions that have prevented effective inmate rehabilitation and reformation since independence. Among these were inadequate prison infrastructure, including buildings and rehabilitation equipment. Overcrowding and lack of inmate classification were other important issues bedevilling prisons in Ghana. These problems were inherited from the colonial administration and have existed for over six decades. In 2015, the Ghana Prisons Service acknowledged the country's increasing recidivism rate and poor prison conditions in its ten-year development plan. The strategic development list prioritised a shift from safekeeping to inmate correction and education, with the goal of changing public perception towards inmates as means of reducing recidivism. The importance of this research is its ability to add to the understanding of contributing factors to recidivism and the measures to address them.

Ghana's chequered history with prisons and penology is partly attributable to its being caught between modernity and tradition (Rozalska, 2016). Although the arrival of the British changed the accepted ways of punishment, traditional customs and beliefs about offenders were strongly adhered to. It is assumed that the sudden change in punishment was a cultural clash that was overwhelming, creating misconceptions about the colonial criminal justice system. As noted earlier in this section, precolonial penology relied on banishment and capital punishment as an elimination strategy, with shaming and stigmatisation as deterrents to lesser offences. The reality of imprisonment is that it removes offenders temporarily from the community, however their return to the community, reintegration, resocialisation and reacceptance becomes problematic. Traditionally, offenders were supposed to be either taken away permanently or subjected to a lifelong tag from the larger community. As a result, the

return of prison inmates back to Ghanaian communities is frowned upon (Abrah, 2019; Dako-Gyeke & Baffour, 2016).

Other historical problems associated with prison, especially in the Ghanaian context, are overcrowding, poor living conditions, and lack of classification. As noted above, most prisons in Ghana were inherited from the colonial administration and have barely undergone renovation or expansion. Boateng and Hsieh (2019) reflect on the deplorable conditions in Ghana prisons and why failure to address them would continue to impact on correction. It is against this backdrop that this study explored the systemic failures and societal reactions, if any, toward inmates that could give rise to recidivism in Ghana.

Background to the Study

Globally, recidivism attracts a lot of studies. The concept of recidivism gained attention in the early 1970s, when the reconviction rate of ex-convicts began to increase at a rapid pace (Martinson, 1974; Wolfgang, Figilo & Sellin, 1972). The recidivism rate is one of the indicators used by the criminal justice system to measure the success of correctional programs across the globe (Langan & Levin, 2002; Petersilia, 2004). Incarcerated offenders are expected to be discharged to the mainstream community reformed, skilled and ready to contribute to the development of their respective communities. However, most ex-convicts return to prison a few months after completing their sentence (Asiedu, 1999; Bales & Piquero, 2012; Chamberlain & Wallace, 2016; Wehrman, 2010).

The purpose of imprisonment is to achieve specific or general deterrence, incapacitation, retribution, protection of the public, deprivation of liberty and rehabilitation (Abotchie, 2016; Morenoff & Harding, 2015). Imprisonment deprives offenders of their liberty (punishment), through incapacitation, and prevents them from committing another offence against individuals, properties, public order and the state. Whilst deprivation of liberty and incapacitation is automatically achieved immediately after a prison sentence has

been imposed, rehabilitation and reformation must be properly designed and implemented to influence inmate behaviour.

Globally, all prison inmates (except inmates who die in the prison) are expected to be discharged back into the mainstream society (Siren & Savolainen, 2013). Perhaps there is the need for effective preparation of prison inmates towards community re-entry. The assumption is that a custodial sentence without proper reformation, rehabilitation, and reintegration programs could be considered a waste of time and resources because of the problem of recidivism. Therefore, immediately after an offender is given a custodial sentence, all attention and resources should be directed toward reformation and rehabilitation to ensure a successful community re-entry (Petersilia, 2004). Inmate reintegration programs encompass all activities (reformation, rehabilitation and counselling) designed to help the offender fit well into the community and behave in accordance with societal laws and norms following their release from incarceration (Petersilia, 2004).

Community reintegration has been highlighted as one of the important criminal justice measures used to address the cycle of reoffending and re-incarceration (Dawes, 2011). Effective community reintegration programs help ensure that inmates are prepared to overcome challenges they may encounter when they return to their communities (Moore, McArthur & Saunders, 2013), such as re-socialisation, isolation and unemployment (Denver, 2020; Halsey, 2006). Any intervention that assists former inmates to live in harmony with their communities, and secure employment, is considered important in reducing the reoffending rate (Bales & Piquero, 2012).

However, reintegration programs in most prisons, including in Ghana, to date have failed, at least to some extent, to yield the expected results (Alvarez & Loureiro, 2012; Dawes, 2011). Today, recidivism and mass incarceration are global social problems that affect every aspect of society (Mears and Cochran, 2015; Bales & Piquero, 2012).

Accordingly, criminologists and criminal justice scholars advocate for more research into factors that could give rise to recidivism (House, Laan, Molden, Ritchie, & Stowe, 2017; Mitchell, Cochran, Mears & Bales, 2017). For example, in Ghana, Akpalu and Mohammed (2013) conclude that "due to poor records on criminals, there was limited information on recidivism" (p. 125). They recommended more studies be conducted to unearth the rate and consequences of recidivism in Ghana (Akpalu & Mohammed, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

Ghana, a developing country in West Africa, has a large proportion of its population falling within the youth age bracket. A youth in Ghana is a person between the ages of 15 to 35 (Republic of Ghana, 2010). According to the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS, 2013), youths constitute around one third of Ghana's population. The country's high youth population has not impacted on economic growth, rather, since young people commit most offences crime rates are rising (Appiahene-Gyamfi, 2002; Warner, 2011).

Over the last four decades Ghana's crime rate has been on the upward surge. For example, available data indicates that from 1980 to 1999 the crime rate was 35%, but by 2010 it had increased to 54% (Oteng-Ababio, Owusu, Wrigley-Asante, & Owusu, 2016). In 2015, a report by the Ghana Prisons Service [GPS] revealed a prison population of 15,203 (GPS, 2015). This number is more than 5000 above the number (9,945) the 43 prison facilities were established to accommodate. In addition, out of the 7,709 inmates who were convicted in 2014, 5,425 of them (representing 69.37% of the total number) were aged between 18 and 35 (GPS, 2015).

Globally, Ghana has the 33rd highest imprisonment rate (54 per 100,000 residents). In Africa, Ghana is the 6th most imprisoned country behind Rwanda (492 per 100,000 residents), South Africa (294 per 100,000 residents), Kenya (121 per 100,000 residents), Angola (105 per 100,000 residents) and Egypt (80 per 100,000 residents) (Walmsley, 2013). In West

Africa, therefore, Ghana is the most incarcerated country, ahead of Nigeria (most populated country in Africa) and Cote d'Ivoire and Cameroon (whose populations are almost the same as that of Ghana).

Further, this research arises from the need to identify contributing factors to recidivism in Ghana where there are continuing high rates of youth reincarceration, indicating that recidivism is an issue that requires significant investigation. This is supported, in part, by evidence showing that in 1992 the recidivism rate of Ghana was 9.2%, which by 1996 had increased to 14.1% (Asiedu, 1999). In 2013, this rate had increased to 23% (GPS, 2013). Given this escalation, there is urgent need to explore the factors that contribute to recidivism and identify appropriate measures to address them.

Despite this documented upsurge in recidivism rates, there is still a paucity of studies on recidivism in Ghana. For example, studies on prisons have focused on the socioeconomics of crime and discretional punishment (Akpalu & Mohammed, 2013); challenges faced by prison officers (Baffour, 2016); human rights issues of inmates (Amnesty International, 2012); alternatives to imprisonment and community service (Parimah, Osafo, & Nyarko, 2016); and stigmatisation and discriminatory experiences of inmates (Dako-Gyeke & Baffour, 2016). Unfortunately, criminologists, social workers and policy makers in Ghana have not conducted detailed investigations into recidivism (Akpalu & Mohammed, 2013). It is hoped that this study will contribute to addressing these knowledge gaps by employing the critical social work theory, social learning theory and labelling theory to qualitatively explore contributing factors to recidivism, based on the experiences of participants in this project.

a. After scanning through the literature, to the best of my knowledge I have not identified any scientific evidence using the critical social work theory, social learning theory and labelling perspectives that explains why people reoffend, in the Ghanaian context. This study contributes to filling the knowledge gap by employing the critical

social work theory, social learning theory, and labelling perspective to understand the contributing factors to recidivism among inmates in Ghana prisons. This will considerably add and extend the existing literature on recidivism in Ghana, as it is going to be the first study to employ such theories in this geographical context.

b. Unlike previous studies on recidivism that focus on at most two prisons, and either male or female inmates (Ayamba, Arhin & Dankwa, 2017; Dako-Gyeke & Baffour, 2016), this study adds to knowledge by extending the scope of the investigation to four prisons (Nsawam Medium Security Prison, Nsawam Female Prison, Kumasi Central Prison and Ankaful Maximum Security Prison in Ghana) and including male and female inmates in one study.

Project Aims

This project is aimed at qualitatively understanding factors that could give rise to recidivism among inmates in selected Ghana prisons. To achieve this aim, I tried to understand the causes of recidivism from the perspectives of the critical social work theory, social learning theory and labelling perspective. A critical lens was applied as the overarching framework of the study to understand the extent to which systemic failures, social injustice and discrimination perpetrated against inmates, if any, reinforces social learning in the prisons and labelling in the Ghanaian communities.

Research Questions

Based on the aims set for the study, I sought to answer three broad questions:

1. To what extent can social learning theory and the labelling perspective explain why recidivism is increasing among inmates in four selected prisons in Ghana?

2. What are the mediating factors that gave rise to social learning in the selected prisons and labelling in the communities?

3. To what extent can the critical social work theory be applied to understand and respond to the issues of recidivism raised in the first and second research questions?

Significance of the Study

Research or Academic Importance

a. The study contributes to filling the knowledge gap on recidivism, specifically factors that contribute to reoffending in Ghana.
b. The findings of the study serve as an academic reference material for researchers and students in Ghana as well as other parts of the world.
c. The findings will contribute to future research directions that will help expand the recidivism literature in Ghana.

Social Problem-Solving Importance

a. Identifying causal factors to a social problem (recidivism) is important to the problem-solving process.
b. Limited studies on recidivism, and the contributing factors to recidivism, in a Ghana context, restrict understanding of this problem. Criminal justice policy solutions may therefore not properly address this issue. Consequently, this study identifying contributing factors to recidivism may allow for better-tailored interventions that will increase the likelihood of success.

Organisation of the study

The thesis has been organised under four parts. Part one contains one chapter that contextualises the concept of recidivism and what it means in this study. I have detailed the socio-political context within which the study was conducted and its significance to the thesis. Prison policies for Ghana considering precolonial and postcolonial eras have been discussed. I have highlighted the knowledge gap the study seeks to fill, and based on this the study's aim, as well as the main research questions.

Part two of the thesis contains two chapters: review of related literature and the theoretical framework. Chapter two reviews related literature on the contributing factors to recidivism. The chapter takes into consideration the impact on recidivism of poor prison conditions, inadequate rehabilitation, reformation, and community reintegration, unemployment, education, mental health, substance use and inmates' return to disadvantaged communities. Chapter three interprets the theories (social learning, labelling and critical social theories) that underpin the study. It stipulates how the theories were used to help in understanding the findings of the study.

Part three of the thesis comprises chapter four, which outlines and explains the qualitative method used to collect data and analyse findings of the study. This chapter covers the ethical protocols that were followed to recruit and collect data from participants in the study. Additionally, a section of this chapter discusses overcoming difficulties in conducting research with vulnerable groups such as prison populations.

Part four contains five chapters that cover the findings and discussion. Chapter five covers mediating factors of social learning in the selected prisons. This chapter critically and realistically presents participant views on systemic failures in the selected prisons. Some issues these failures contribute to include social injustice and abuse of inmates' fundamental human rights as a result of protracted overcrowding, inadequate rehabilitation, sentencing-related problems, weak welfare systems, and unmanageable inmate-to-officer ratios. Chapter six details findings on social learning in the selected prisons. The types of friendship and differential associations that prevailed in the prisons are presented. The chapter highlights how social learning contributes to inmate behavioural transfer and learning, which could contribute to recidivism among the inmate participants. In chapter seven, mediating factors to labelling in the community, and their potential impacts on recidivism, are presented. Findings presented in this chapter focus on issues such as poor community re-entry planning, myths

and perceptions about the prison, and traditional Ghanaian belief systems and their contribution to protracted labelling, stigmatisation, and social inequality perpetrated against ex-convicts. In chapter eight, I present findings on the evidence of labelling among inmates in the Ghanaian communities. The impacts of stigmatisation and discrimination on the inmates' lives and how this might have created a pathway to recidivism are also presented. It is essential to note that chapters five and seven critically and realistically highlight the status quo that perpetuates social injustice, human rights abuses, and discrimination which may contribute to social learning and labelling, and consequently impact recidivism. The final chapter places the findings of the study into context. Discussions of the findings in relation to prevailing studies are presented. Policy, future research, and criminal justice social work practice implications are suggested to ensure that tailored-to-fit alternatives that could address recidivism are based on findings.

Summary of the chapter

This chapter detailed the purpose of the research and my experience that motivated it. Offender recidivism was defined to ensure that the study is put into context. I have also detailed the sociopolitical context of the research by outlining the history of penology in Ghana. The precolonial way of punishing offenders, as well as the colonial and postcolonial penology have been documented in this chapter. In summation, this chapter has highlighted my motivation to conduct this research, defined the main keywords (recidivism and recidivists) of the study, highlighted the status quo, identified the main knowledge gap that this study is designed to address, as well as provided a general overview of the content of the thesis.

PART TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter explores the literature relevant to the topic under study, which was retrieved from diverse sources including Google Scholar, One Search (JCU), Scopus, PubMed, ProQuest, PsycInfo, and Informit. The literature comprises studies employing qualitative and quantitative methods, as well as theoretical papers, with an emphasis on primary and secondary studies. Due to the significance of classical criminological studies such as by Clemmer (1940) and Sykes (1958) to this study, this review considers literature from 1940 to present, with most emphasis on studies conducted after 2004. While peer-reviewed literature were prioritised. a lack of studies in the sub-Saharan context compelled the inclusion of relevant Masters and PhD theses. Keywords for literature searches included: the purpose of incarceration; incarceration and recidivism; inmate rehabilitation and recidivism; unfavourable prison conditions and recidivism; causes of recidivism; contributing factors to recidivism; the most at risk group to reincarcerate; mental health and recidivism; gender and recidivism; inmates return to unfavourable communities and recidivism; and understanding recidivism from the perspective of social learning theory and labelling theory. Studies reported in languages other than English were excluded from this review.

Firstly, this chapter will explore the purposes of incarceration, whether mass incarceration, including in Ghana, is supported by critical and empirical reasoning, and whether it achieves its intended purposes, and if not, why not. Solutions proposed by previous scholars will be investigated.

The following section will review world literature on contributing factors to recidivism. Preliminary readings of recidivism literature revealed few studies in this field conducted in Ghana or other sub-Saharan African countries. Therefore, the search was

broadened to the body of global literature on recidivism and related topics such as rehabilitation and mass incarceration, especially from North America, Europe and Australia. As a result, this literature review explores factors contributing to recidivism from a global perspective, as well as narrowing down to look at recidivism in sub-Saharan Africa, and in particular, Ghana.

The final part of this chapter explores age at first reincarceration, why certain demographic groups are reincarcerated more than others, and possible strategies to reduce risks of recidivism. The chapter ends by identifying a literature gap that this research seeks to fill.

The Purpose of Incarceration

Incarceration is generally believed to serve the interests of either the offender, victim, or the community at large. In most instances, public reactions to crime and crime rates influence decisions and policies about incarceration (Enns, 2014). According to Kramer and Ulmer (2009), judicial decisions about custodial sentences are based on three concerns: “defendant blameworthiness, defendant dangerousness and community protection” (p.7). As a result, judges take the offender’s criminal history and the severity of the current crime into consideration when making sentencing decisions (Smith & Schriver, 2018). A custodial sentence is usually imposed to remove the offender from the community through incapacitation, and thereby protect the interests of victims and the community (Warren, Chiricos, & Bales, 2012; Van Slyke & Bales, 2012). Therefore, an offender who commits an aggravated crime such as murder or armed robbery, among others, and/or was previously incarcerated, he or she is more likely to receive a custodial sentence.

Fagan (2010) argues that the criminal justice system uses incarceration to punish wrongdoing, while imprisonment also prevents the offender from future involvement in criminal activities (see Katz, Levitt & Shustorovich, 2003; Morenoff & Harding, 2015). To

that end, the punishment is expected to cost the offender, and serve as a specific deterrent to discourage him or her from returning to crime post-prison (Lab, 2010). In this scenario, the offender realises, according to the cliché, that 'crime does not pay', and is more likely to desist. However, a number of researchers raise arguments in contrast to the deterrent and rational choice theories (see Anwar & Loughran, 2011; Mitchell, Cochran, Mears, & Bales, 2017; Listwan, Sullivan, Agnew, Cullen, & Colvin, 2013). In fact, a large body of literature, past and current, is inconclusive about whether incarceration as a punishment reduces future involvement in crime (Bales & Piquero, 2012; Green & Winik, 2010; Clemmer, 1940; Listwan et al., 2013; Sykes, 1958; Tollenaar, van der Laan, & van der Heijden, 2014).

With the exception of those serving life sentences or subject to capital punishment, inmates are expected to return to the community at some point. Rehabilitation of inmates during incarceration is therefore important. There is a body of literature contending that one of the purposes of incarceration is to provide offenders with an environment conducive to rehabilitation and treatment aimed at achieving successful community re-entry (Graffam, Shinkfield, & Lavelle, 2014; Mohammed & Mohamed, 2015). While the search for what works best continues, criminology researchers report that rehabilitation programs that include community re-entry plans are effective in reducing recidivism (Berghuis, 2018; Ray, Grommon, Buchanan, Brown, & Watson, 2017). For example, an experimental study by Schaftenaar, van Outheusden, Stams, & Baart (2018) in the Netherlands, reported reduced recidivism rates where inmates received treatment in custody and the community. Regardless of whether the purpose of incarceration is to incapacitate or deter, most inmates will return to the community, hence there is a need to prioritise rehabilitation.

Imprisonment is generally intended to reduce crime and subsequent offending: "… Punishment's central justifying aim is the prevention of crime" (Howard, 2017 p.71). However, Kramer and Ulmer (2009) argue that judges do not consider the offender's

recidivism risk when deciding about sentencing, so despite mass incarceration, crime and recidivism rates continue to increase in many countries (Mears & Cochran, 2015). The next section reviews literature on factors contributing to recidivism.

Factors Contributing to Recidivism: A Global Perspective

Globally, criminal justice scholars report contributing factors recidivism, among others, include: imprisonment and prison conditions (Bales & Piquero, 2012); inadequate rehabilitation (White, Saunders, Fisher & Mellow, 2012); education and employment (Lockwood, Nally, & Ho, 2016); unsupportive receiving communities after discharge (Denver, Siwach & Bushway, 2017); mental health and drug abuse (Hakansson & Berglund, 2012); and gender (Collins, 2010). The studies about factors contributing to recidivism reviewed in this section were all conducted away from Africa, with most from Australia, Asia, Europe, and North America.

Imprisonment, Prison Conditions and Recidivism

Criminal justice scholars and practitioners seek to understand the impacts of custodial sentences, coupled with prison conditions, on recidivism rates (Listwan et al., 2013; Mears & Cochran, 2015). Early classical prison studies, such as Clemmer's (1940) The Prison Community, and the Society of Captives, by Sykes (1958), explore the direct and indirect impacts of imprisonment, and its deprivations, on inmate behaviour, misconduct and recidivism. Sykes (1958), in particular, concludes that incarceration deprives a person of his/her liberty, heterosexuality, goods and services, security and autonomy (pains of imprisonment). More recently, Listwan et al. (2013) report that the pains of imprisonment, such as the controlling nature of the prison environment, and its perceived dangerousness and unpredictability, cause insecurity and strain among inmates, which could increase recidivism risk. According to Lahm (2008), inmates who feel threatened are highly likely to act aggressively towards other inmates, while numerous studies describe how inmates who

engage in misconduct in prison are likely to transfer this conduct to the outside community, thereby increasing their chances of recidivism (Berg & DeLisi, 2006; Dooley, Seals, & Skarbek, 2014; Cochran, Mears, Bales, & Stewart, 2014).

The above-quoted studies rely largely on inmate prison experiences to understand misconduct and recidivism, with little or no thought to imported biopsychosocial factors (the behaviours inmates bring with them to the prison). A Romanian study finds that a combination of behavioural importation and deprivation predicted inmate misconduct and subsequent reincarceration (Damboeanu & Nieuwbeerta, 2016). Although behavioural importation and deprivation are reported as antecedents to inmate misconduct, on the other hand, prison management that promotes a friendly environment is reported to reduce violence among incarcerated inmates (Morris & Worrall, 2014), reinforcing that imprisonment in a crowded (Damboeanu & Nieuwbeerta, 2016) and distressing (Listwan et al., 2013) environment could subsequently lead to recidivism.

Furthermore, other literature explores the criminogenic effects of incarceration (Bales & Piquero, 2012; Mitchell, Cochran, Mears, & Bales, 2017; Siren & Savolainen, 2013). Results from a three-year follow up study of 79,000 prison inmates, and 65,000 offenders placed on non-custodial sentences in Florida, USA, by Bales and Piquero (2012) highlights the criminogenic effects of incarceration when compared with non-custodial sentences. Siren and Savolainen (2013) compared recidivism rates among first-time offenders sentenced to prison, and those given suspended sentences and community service, in Finland. They followed offenders first sentenced in the years 1996 and 2000, and tracked future offences from 2001 to 2002. Their results agreed with Bales and Piquero (2012), in that those who received custodial sentences for theft, drink driving, and violent offences had an increased risk of re-offending compared to violent offenders who received suspended or community service sentences.

Other reasons for criminogenic effects of incarceration the literature identify range from behavioural learning or contamination (Listwan et al., 2013; Cullen, Jonson, & Nagin, 2011), to destruction of romantic relationships (Fallesen & Andersen, 2017) and family ties (Berg & Huebner, 2011). Clemmer (1940) theorises that separating offenders from the society through imprisonment forces them to abandon mainstream societal acceptable norms for prison-based normative values, often at least hampering inmates' smooth adjustment and effective reintegration into the society, and at worst destroying any chance of resocialisation (Marcum, Hilinski-Rosick, & Freiburger, 2014). Cullen et al. (2011) put it that "imprisonment is not simply a 'cost' but also a social experience that deepens illegal involvement." (p. 48S).

While the impact of imprisonment on criminogenic behaviours and recidivism is inconclusive (Mitchell et al., 2017; Windzio, 2007), some criminology literature cautions against incarceration, especially in a rehabilitation-unfriendly environment, or where proper measures for rehabilitation and community re-entry are not taken. For example, over the last four decades the impacts of prison overcrowding on inmate rehabilitation and reformation have been well documented (Kensey & Tournier, 1999). In recent times, the population of inmates across the globe has increased enormously, while prison officer numbers decreased (Mears & Cochran, 2015; Mesko & Hacin, 2019). Overcrowding has been highlighted as one of the main contributors to recidivism (Drago, Galbiati & Vertova, 2011). Ruderman, Wilson and Reid (2015) compared reoffending rates of 13070 parolees who had been exposed to proportionately less or more prison overcrowding in California over 2 years (January 2003 to December 2004). With a focus on substance recidivism, they reported that offenders who experienced more overcrowding had less chance of correctional officers identifying their substance abuse disorders and therefore a lower chance of receiving interventions designed to address their individual problems, thereby increasing their chances of re-incarceration.

The extant literature also report the impacts on individuals' incarceration through separates from their communities. In their quantitative study, Wolff, Shi and Schumann (2012) examine the impact of long-term prison sentencing (three to 10 years or more) on 4000 inmates in the United States. Their data suggests that long-terms in prison impact negatively on community reintegration. Further, inmates lack self-confidence and question their abilities to succeed in the mainstream community because of weak or no social networks, limited employability skills, and limited, or no financial security. The authors recommend correctional institutions do more to prepare long-term prison inmates for community reintegration.

However, some studies on prison conditions report divergent findings, possibly because of the methods used by individual authors, differing contexts, or data collection over different time periods. Katz et al. (2003) analysed data from the Universal Crime Report from 1950 to 1990 in the United States, to investigate whether prison conditions and death rates impact on recidivism. They report that poor prison conditions and high death rates do deter inmates (specific and general) from returning to criminal activities post-prison. On the other hand, a recent study by Mitchell et al. (2017) found no relationship between incarceration and recidivism rates. For the purposes of this study, factors reported in this section as contributing to recidivism are consistent with other studies conducted in Ghana (Abrah, 2019; Adjorlolo & Chan, 2019).

Inadequate Rehabilitation and Recidivism

Martinson's (1974) report on imprisonment and rehabilitation concludes that prison-based rehabilitation programs do not reduce recidivism. Since Martinson's conclusions, researchers have been attempting to understand the impact of prison-based rehabilitation programs on inmate recidivism risks (White et al., 2012). While some studies report that well-designed prison-based rehabilitation programs reduce future re-offending (Graffam et

al., 2014), others suggest that such programs have little or no effect on recidivism (White et al., 2012).

Offender rehabilitation is a practice-based intervention that assesses the individual's recidivism risks, criminogenic needs, and responsiveness (Rettinger & Andrews, 2010). Every inmate has reasons peculiar to them that influence decisions to reoffend post-prison. Without a thorough assessment of an inmate's biopsychosocial status, past and present criminogenic needs, and risk factors, any intervention may prove futile (Andrew, Bonta & Wormith, 2006). In fact, treatments not tailored to the individual tend to be ineffective (Hubbard & Mathews, 2008). To achieve the maximum benefit from rehabilitation programs, correctional institutions should consider the needs of individual inmates (Andrew, Bonta and Hoge, 1990).

Despite evidence of effective rehabilitation reducing future crime among inmates (Haviv & Hasisi, 2019), interventions that do not adjust to treat the broader criminogenic needs of inmates may prove counterproductive. For example, Kubiak (2004) compared inmates who participated in prison-based substance abuse treatments and recidivism-prevention programs focused on substance use disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder together, with inmates who participated in only substance-use disorder treatment programs in the United States. Data were collected from 199 (139 males and 60 females) inmates. Those who participated in only the substance-use disorder program were at higher risk of relapsing into drugs and reincarceration. Further, Kubiak reports that as incarceration is commonly associated with other conditions, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs lies in their ability to identify and address all possible risk factors. Ray et al. (2017) concur, suggesting that incomplete rehabilitation programs are ineffective in reducing recidivism.

White et al. (2012) explored the impact of prison-based rehabilitation programs on recidivism in New York City. The study compared discharged inmates who participated in prison-based rehabilitation programs with discharged inmates who did not. The authors also compared discharged inmates who completed 90 days post-release program to their counterparts who did not complete any post-release program. They report similarities in the recidivism risk among all the groups except those who completed the 90-day post-release program, who had a reduced incidence of reincarceration, suggesting that follow-up programs are effective in reducing crime among formerly-incarcerated people.

The literature suggest that effectively-executed rehabilitation interventions reduce recidivism rates (Andrew et al., 2006; Bosma, Kunst, Reef, Dirkzwager & Nieuwbeerta, 2016). A quasi-experimental study conducted in Canada by Duwe and Goldman (2009) examined the recidivism rate among 2,040 (1,020 treated and 1,020 untreated) sex offenders discharged during 1990 and 2003. The study finds that recidivism risk among participants who were treated and equipped with skills prior to their release reduced by 27%, whilst the untreated participants' recidivism risk increased substantially.

Offender rehabilitation programs should be guided by risk assessment and/or biopsychosocial report. Monahan and Skeem (2016) reasoned that risk assessment guides the development and delivery of tailored-to-fit programs that are capable of addressing inmates' criminogenic needs. Risk assessment tools (such as Salient Factor Score instruments, Static Risk and Offender Needs Guide, Wisconsin Risk and Needs, Ohio Risk Assessment System-Prison Intake Tool and Correctional Offender Management Profile for Alternative Sanctions) have been employed by researchers and criminal justice professionals alike to understand an individual's criminogenic needs (Desmarais, Johnson & Singh, 2016). Desmarais et al. (2016) suggest that "risk assessments completed using the SFS [Salient Factor Score] instruments, for example, performed especially well in predicting any recidivism (i.e., new

offenses and/or violence” (216). The onus, therefore, lies on correctional service institutions’ ability to employ risk assessment instrument that identifies inmates’ criminogenic needs and design rehabilitation programs accordingly.

Education and Employment as Contributing Factors to Recidivism

Educational attainment is an important indicator of success in the job market. A significant number of ex-convicts have fewer or lower educational qualifications than individuals who have never been imprisoned (Abrams & Lea, 2016), and are therefore disadvantaged in the jobs market. As well as being disadvantaged through a lack of education, ex-offenders are subject to structural discrimination in the workplace because of regulations (public and private) that require job applicants to undergo criminal background checks (Rodrigues & Emsellem, 2011). In many cases, difficulty in securing employment pushes ex-inmates back to prison (Blomberg, Bales, & Piquero, 2012).

Scholars have explored ex-inmate educational and employment status as an indicator of recidivism risk (Aos, Miller and Drake, 2006; Blomberg et al., 2012). In 2001, a United States Department of Justice report revealed that almost 90% of crime is committed for economic reasons, affirming rational choice and economic theories about links between employment status, crime, and recidivism (Becker, 1968; Nordin & Almen, 2017). While being employed keeps people occupied and provides income for their basic needs (Graffam et al., 2014), unemployment exposes individuals to crime as a means to provide for their basic needs (Nordin & Almen, 2017; Raphael & Winter-Ebmer, 2001).

Lockwood, Nally, Ho, and Knutson (2012) found correlations between limited education, post-release unemployment, and risk of recidivism among 6,561 inmates in the United States, concluding that “. . . an offender’s education and employment were the most important predictors of postrelease recidivism.” (p.380). Lockwood et al. (2012) further found that school dropouts are more likely to be reincarcerated (55.9%) as compared to

college graduates (31%). The importance of education as an intervention in prison facilities to enable inmates to address educational deficits cannot then, be understated (Hall, 2015). Nelly, Lockwood, Knutson, and Ho (2012) reported more than twice the recidivism rate (67.8%) among inmates who were not enrolled in correctional education programs compared with those who were (29.7%).

Gavazzi, Yarcheck, Sullivan, Jones and Khurana (2008) used the Global Risk Assessment Device (a globally-recognised recidivism risk assessment tool that includes the variables of accountability, family related issues, influence from peers, drug use, mental health, exposure to trauma, education, and health risks) to predict recidivism among 711 first-time offenders in United States prisons. They found two variables, education-related issues and accountability, are most influential in recidivism risk, and recommend offender educational background assessments as a basis for appropriate treatment interventions.

A meta-analysis by Ellison, Szifris, Horan, and Fox (2017) comprising 18 recidivism studies suggests that prison education programs that equip inmates with vocational skills, academic, and basic skills, increase inmate employment opportunities post-prison, and in turn, reduce recidivism. A recent study by Thomas (2020) supports these findings, reporting a positive correlation between corrective education programs and reduced recidivism rates. Nelly et al. (2012) finds that inmates who do not participate in education programs and/or skills training prior to their release struggle to compete in the job market, which has implications for their community re-entry success.

Correctional systems, and inmates themselves, have no control over community reactions and attitudes to ex-inmates, which can manifest in issues such as difficulty securing employment and housing (Berg & Huebner, 2011). Scholars characterise negative community reactions towards inmates as constituting a ‘disadvantageous community’ (Cochran, Mears, and Bales, 2017; Kubrin & Stewart, 2006; Sampson, Morenoff & Gannon-

Rowley, 2002). As the limited number of studies from Ghana expose negative community attitudes towards prisons and ex-convicts (Abrah, 2019; Dako-Gyeke & Baffour, 2016), an expanded discussion of impacts of neighbourhood factors on recidivism follows in the next section.

Disadvantageous Community and Recidivism

Around 20 years ago, criminology scholars began using the terms disadvantageous, unfavourable, or unsupportive to describe communities that discriminate against inmates and ex-convicts (Chauhan, Repppucci & Turkheimer, 2009; Dawes, 2011; Lockwood et al., 2016) and less-privileged communities (Peterson & Krivo, 2005). In unsupportive communities ex-offenders often experience difficulties securing employment because of requirements for criminal background checks (Stoll & Bushway, 2008). High crime rates and easy exposure to criminal activities may also characterise disadvantageous communities (Sampson et al., 2002). In such communities, reintegration is difficult for ex-inmates, who consequently often return to criminal activities (Holzer, Raphael & Stoll, 2007). Further, because of entrenched community attitudes it is rare for inmates from disadvantageous communities to receive visits from friends or family (Cochran et al., 2017), which further weakens social ties on the ‘outside’ and reinforces relationships within the prison.

A longitudinal study of 40 inmates in North Queensland, Australia, by Dawes (2011), found that 30 ex-prisoners who returned to an unfavourable community where they received limited or no support from family, and experienced discrimination based on their status as former-inmates, were reconvicted within one year. The remaining 10 inmates in the study, who maintained strong family ties and were assisted with their reintegration into the community, did not reoffend. Fox (2016) believes that inmates who transition to communities under a structured reintegration program are at far lower risk of recidivism, and vice versa. In his classical study, Braithwaite (1989) found that communities who take the responsibility to

reintegrate former inmates build trust and instil confidence, and as a result, reduce recidivism. Notwithstanding, as detailed in the literature, the positive impacts of supporting communities on recidivism rates, inmates continue to experience neglect, isolation and discrimination during and post-prison. For example, Winnick and Bodkin (2009) find that ex-convicts face discrimination in employment and socio-religious activities. Westrope (2018) suggests that:

> Gaining employment is one of the most crucial steps for returning citizens to take in order to regain stability in their lives. Yet, it remains one of the biggest obstacles. Employers are often wary of hiring persons with criminal records due to fear of liability and the social stigma that frequently attaches to formerly incarcerated individuals. (p.375)

Employment is crucial to reducing recidivism because it provides former inmates with economic opportunities (Berg & Huebner, 2011; Denver et al., 2017). Stoll and Bushway (2008) argue that ex-convicts, where possible, want to provide for themselves by socially-accepted means, and that economic opportunities in the community limit their desire to commit crime. Employment has been highlighted as providing motivation to keep ex-convicts happy in society, thereby reducing re-offending and recidivism (Denver et al., 2017). Regardless of the positive aspects of employment for ex-inmates, many fall at the hurdle of criminal background checks for job applicants (Blumstein & Nakamura, 2009; Jacobs, 2015).

Stoll and Bushway (2008) examined the effects of criminal background checks on recidivism among ex-convicts in Los Angeles in the United States. The quantitative data support that ex-convicts decide whether to apply for a particular job based on whether or not a criminal background check is required. Further, they find that criminal background checks are not only in the domain of employers, with some real estate agents requiring clean

criminal record checks before offering a tenancy. Denver, Pickett, and Bushway (2018) also find that homeowners insist on criminal background checks for potential tenants, and are unlikely to accept a person with a criminal history as a tenant, while Denver et al. (2017) show that criminal background checks are discriminatory, and used as a tool to segregate those with criminal records from "law abiding people."

In most societies, state and local policies make it difficult for former prison inmates to live a normal life. Freudenberg, Daniels, Crum, Perkins and Richie (2005) explored, through interviews, the experiences of male adolescents (491) and adult women (476) one year after their release from New York City prisons, as well as analysing re-entry policies and advocacy reports. The authors reported that ex-convicts face discrimination on numerous fronts, including around employment, access to health care, and most importantly, shelter. As a result, the unemployment rate of participants was high, with a majority re-incarcerated within the year, which caused the authors to conclude that access to employment and health care is significant in ensuring successful community reintegration, together with working policies to address prejudice against ex-convicts in the community.

Mental Health, Licit and illicit Substance Use, and Recidivism

The increasing rate of recidivism among forensic inmates and drug users has attracted studies across the globe (Castillo & Alarid, 2011; Fazel, Bains & Doll, 2006; Hakansson & Berglund, 2012; Hodgins, Mednick, Brennan, Schulsinger, & Engberg, 1996; Wilson & Wood, 2014), with inmates with mental health and substance abuse issues classified as of high risk for recidivism (Tsai, Finlay, Flatley, and Kasprow, 2018). In the United States, as at 2006, it was estimated that 8 million property crimes and 5.4 million violent crimes were associated with substance abuse (Miller, Levy, Cohen & Cox, 2006). Hakansson and Berglund (2012) followed 4,152 inmates in Sweden for 2.7 years to investigate recidivism risk factors. Their data show that 2,862 (69%) were later reincarcerated after initial discharge.

These inmates were charged with heroin use, injection of illegal drugs, and amphetamine and other illicit drug use. In addition, inmates with other substance issues, such as alcohol abuse, were reincarcerated because of violent conduct, while others were reincarcerated as a result of psychiatric conditions that resulted from substance use. The authors recommend post-imprisonment substance treatment for addicted inmates.

Reasons for substance-abusing inmates' reincarcerations are various, with a number of factors at play. According to Fridell, Hesse, Jæger, and Kuhlhorn (2008), most substance users commit theft repeatedly in order to finance the purchase of drugs, particularly illicit drugs. A United Kingdom study supports this finding, showing that inmates who abuse heroin and cocaine are more likely to engage in acquisition crimes, such as shoplifting and theft, for funding purposes (Breedvelt, Dean, Jones, Cole, & Moyes, 2014). In addition, substance abuse has been reported to cause substance addictive disorder, which is associated with aggressive behaviour (Doran, Luczak, Bekman, Koutsenok, & Brown, 2012), a major cause of recidivism.

Between 2006 and 2007, Castillo and Alarid (2011) compared 107 mentally-impaired inmates receiving treatment while under custodial sentences, with 100 people receiving specialised interventions while on probation in the community. Participants were abusing substances such as alcohol (36%), cocaine and crack (36%), cannabis (31%), opiates (11%) and amphetamines (8.5%). The authors report that alcohol abuse is a predictor of recidivism in people with mental illness, and that offenders with mental health issues receiving treatment while imprisoned are at higher risk of recidivism than those who receive treatment while on probation. The authors suggest that interventions designed to reduce recidivism among offenders with mental health issues should be community-focused.

Ray and Richardson (2017) employed the Ohio State University Traumatic Brain Injury Identification method for a quantitative study into the impacts of traumatic brain injury

(brain injury caused by external force to the head) on recidivism. Comparing inmates in Indiana prisons with and without traumatic brain injury, the authors identify a positive correlation between traumatic brain injury and recidivism, which they put down to brain injuries causing psychiatric disorders that often manifest in aggressive, violent, and criminal behaviours. A Kosovo-based study by Hundozi, Ibishi, and Musliu (2016) agrees, finding that people with psychotic conditions, such as Schizophrenia, who exhibit aggressive behaviours, show a high tendency to engage in violent crimes (Swogger et al., 2015). A number of other forensic mental health studies also report relationships between psychosis and aggressive behaviours (Hundozi et al., 2016; Veeh, Tripodi, Petus-Davis & Scheyett, 2018; Wilson & Wood, 2014).

Gender and Recidivism

Where contributing factors to recidivism across the gender divide were investigated (Rettinger & Andrews, 2010), results vary, with some scholars finding similarities between the criminogenic needs of males and females (Vitopoulos, Peterson-Badali & Skilling, 2012), while others report disparities in their criminogenic needs (Hubbard & Mathews, 2008; van der Knaap, Alberda, Oosterveld & Born, 2012). Understanding its gender-specific causes is vital for tailored-to-fit holistic interventions aimed at reducing recidivism. Experiences such as domestic violence, sexual abuse and assault, unwanted pregnancy, teenage pregnancy, abortion, and parenthood affect females and males differently (Poel, 2007), and impact on inmate reformation and rehabilitation (van der Knaap et al., 2012). Correctional institutions' inability to identify reoffending pathways of men and women is detrimental, and leads offenders, especially females, back to prison (Covington & Bloom, 2004).

In a meta-analysis of 57 peer-reviewed articles in the area of recidivism, Collins (2010) finds that factors contributing to recidivism among male inmates are history of violent offences and antisocial behaviour, while for females, having served long prison sentences

plays a major role in re-offending and re-incarceration. Generally, marital status also strongly correlates with recidivism among both genders, with single inmates more likely to be reincarcerated than married inmates. However, A US based study by Conrad, Tolou-Shams, Rizzo, Placella, & Brown (2014) that examined the examined the differences in risk factors for recidivism among males and females suggested that sexual abuse history increased females' re-offending risks than their male counterparts. In addition to sexual abuse history, a Swedish based study by Sivertsson (2016) highlighted that females who were convicted with drug-related offences were more likely to reoffend compared with males sentenced on similar offence.

Van der Knaap et al. (2012) examined criminogenic causes of recidivism among 14,635 male inmates and 1,691 female inmates in the Netherlands. The study reported that while low skill and educational levels, difficulties in securing employment, and continuing relationships with friends who defined crime as favourable were factors leading men to recidivism, poor emotional wellbeing and psychological issues were more of an influence towards recidivism for women. The authors recommend that correctional institutions design treatment interventions tailored specifically to the needs of male and female offenders.

Further, various studies have focused on contributing factors to female recidivism. Huebner, DeJong and Cobbina (2010) conducted a follow-up study on 506 female inmates on conditional release from prison in 1998. Data from this cohort reveal that those lower educated, overdependent on substances, and/or with long-standing criminal history were reincarcerated more compared to other participants. However, the study findings contrast with Collins (2010), who reports marital status is a contributing factor to female recidivism, while Huebner et al. find no relationship between social bond, employment, or marital status and recidivism. Different research methods could explain the divergent findings, as Collins

bases his conclusions on secondary data (meta-analysis), while Huebner et al. rely on their own primary data.

Nevertheless, there is contention around risk factors and criminogenic needs of male and female inmates, and impacts on recidivism, with other scholars also reporting conflicting findings. Vitopoulos et al. (2012) did a comparative study among 37 female and 39 male inmates in Ontario, Canada, and found no difference between risk factors, criminogenic needs, or responsiveness, that caused recidivism. Similarly, Freeman and Sandler (2008) compared factors contributing to sexual offence recidivism among a cohort of 780 (390 female and 390 male) inmates who had been re-convicted with sexual or nonsexual offences in New York state. Data were retrieved from the New York State Sex Offender Registry and New York State Division of Criminal Justice Service, with the authors finding no difference between male and female sex offenders. However, they do recommend more thorough investigations into male and female recidivism.

Factors contributing to Recidivism: The sub-Saharan African Perspective

While research about contributing factors to recidivism in sub-Saharan Africa, Ghana included, is scanty, this section reviews the relevant body of literature from studies conducted in the sub-Saharan African region, most of which come from South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Kenya. Although most of these studies explore more general challenges to prison systems, inmates, and ex-convicts in this region, rather than focusing particularly on recidivism, their scope includes factors such as inadequate rehabilitation, prison conditions, and weak family ties that studies from North America, Europe, and Australia identify as contributing to recidivism (Gaum, Venter & Hoffman, 2006; Osayi, 2013; Sifunda et al., 2006).

Osayi (2013) explores contributing factors to recidivism in the sub-Saharan African region through rehabilitation theory and ecological theory, and reports that reincarceration

was primarily due to poorly-administered treatment programs in the prisons and unwelcoming receiving communities. A Nigerian study by Otu (2015) suggests that inmates are likely to be reincarcerated because they do not receive the education, or learn the skills and behaviours needed to succeed in the community post-prison. In fact, rehabilitation interventions, such as counselling services, are lacking in most sub-Saharan African prisons (Afari, Osei, & Adu-Agyem, 2015).

Gaum et al. (2006) explored predisposing factors to adult recidivism among inmates in South African prisons through focus group discussions and individual interviews, which revealed that rehabilitation was ineffective, and only attempted late in the inmates' prison sentences. As a result, inmates returned to their respective communities unreformed and with inadequate skills for successful community reintegration. In fact, when inmates are unsuccessful in community re-entry due to inadequate rehabilitation, Gama, Chipeta, Phiri, and Chawinga (2020) note that they are at a higher risk of reincarceration. Prisons in this region are generally allocated insufficient budgets and experience delays in disbursement of resources (Mfum, 2012). Similarly, Meseret (2018) reports a paucity of rehabilitation equipment, as well as qualified rehabilitation officers to design appropriate interventions for inmates. A recent study by Adjorlolo and Chan (2019) establishes that assessments to gauge offender recidivism risk, optimum treatment type, or judge whether post-release treatment programs are appropriate, are non-existent in Ghana. It is therefore not surprising that Ngozwana (2017) reports that inmates are discharged into the community without reintegration plans.

An Ethiopian study by Meseret (2018) outlines six challenges to offender rehabilitation: "inadequacy of treatment personnel, underfunding of programs, absence of treatment personnel on administrative positions, weak inmate classification system, correctional officers' low level of treatment orientation, and the inmate subculture" (p.1).

According to Parimah et al. (2016) rehabilitation in most sub-Saharan African countries struggles to achieve its intended purpose due to poor program administration. Sarkin (2008) explains that intractable issues in the region's prisons, such as overcrowding, create a challenging rehabilitation environment, renders officers inefficient, and makes inmate rehabilitation and reformation unachievable in most sub-Saharan African countries, Ghana included (Ofori-Dua, Akuoko, Bernie, Kwarteng, & Forkuo, 2015; Omboto, 2013).

Another challenge confronting prison inmates in sub-Saharan Africa is prison conditions that are tantamount to human rights violations (Dixey, Nyambe, Foster, Woodall, & Baybutt, 2015; Telisinghe et al., 2016), with basic welfare needs such as food, and sleeping and medical facilities, in limited supply (Danjuma, Nordin, & Muhamad, 2018). Nieuwoudt and Bantjes (2019) report that most sub-Saharan African prisons are overcrowded, inmates are subjected to aggressive behaviours and violence, and are generally in poor physical and mental health. In a Ugandan study, Forry, Kirabira, Ashaba, and Rukundo (2019) establish that although many inmates suffer with depression (which the authors identify as the main cause of recidivism), access to psychiatric services is problematic. This is consistent with reports from across the region that a lack of recreational, vocational, and medical facilities in prisons compromises inmate physical and mental wellbeing (Danjuma et al., 2018).

Further, aftercare, counselling, and welfare services to liaise between the prison and community are lacking in most prison facilities (Danjuma et al., 2018; Nieuwoudt & Bantjes, 2019), with inmates discharged to the community without any intervention to smooth the transition (Uddin, Igbokwe, & Olaolu, 2019). The inability to rehabilitate and plan for inmate community re-entry is described as problematic, and risking inmate exposure to criminal activities post-prison (Oluyemi & Norma, 2014; Osayi, 2013). In relatively-developed parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, such as South Africa, where rehabilitation is more effective compared

to other countries, inmates still struggle to transition to the community due to negative community reactions and attitudes towards ex-convicts (Chikadzi, 2017). Inmates returning to the community face economic hardships (Jefferson, 2010) because they lack skills needed for successful reintegration (Ngozwana, 2017), and face protracted rejection (Dako-Gyeke & Baffour, 2016; Rutayisire & Richters, 2014), which reduces their employment opportunities. For example, ex-convicts are perceived to be incorrigible, callous, and not to be trusted around 'law abiding' people in the community (Ahmed & Ahmed, 2015).

Age at First Incarceration and Recidivism

The surge in the number of young offenders who reoffend has attracted studies from developmental criminologists all over the world (Piquero et al., 2001), who stress that one of the strongest predictors of recidivism is "age at first incarceration", particularly for male offenders (Plattner et al., 2009, p.404). In their Cambridge study, Picquero, Farrington, and Blumstein (2007) report that a person's criminal activities begin to increase at age 17 and decrease by the age of 40. Given the young median age of Ghana's prison population (Ghana Prisons Service, 2013), it is appropriate for this study to focus on young reoffenders (including on age at first incarceration) and why they are at high risk of recidivism (Indig, Frewen & Moore, 2016; Pizarro, Zgoba, & Haugebrook, 2014).

The extant literature highlights that young people are most likely to join gangs, which in turn exposes them to criminal peers (Chu, Daffern, Thomas, & Lim, 2011). In a 2013 study by Melde and Esbensen, the authors state: ". . . the frequency of offending in gang groups [emphasis added] is substantially higher than that of demographically similar peers, and perhaps most importantly the level of violence associated with gangs far surpasses normal level of such behavior" (p.144). For example, a study of 140 gang members by Melde, Diem, and Drake (2012) suggests that youths who have engaged in prior criminal activities, and do

not have access to legal social support, may join gangs to satisfy their needs, and in turn become embedded in criminal behaviour.

Gang affiliation is known to expose members to licit and illicit substance use and misuse (Chu, Daffern, Thomas, & Lim, 2012), a major cause of recidivism (Pizarro et al., 2014). A follow-up study of 447 youths released from detention in South Australia by Putnins (2003) reports that youths who used alcohol and/or inhalants were reincarcerated within six months. In fact, being an incarcerated youth ticks most of the boxes that indicate an increased recidivism risk, such as having served a prior sentence (Indig et al., 2016), having been imprisoned at an early age (Plattner et al., 2009), more likely than older inmates to join gangs (Chu et al., 2011), and abuses substances (Chu et al., 2012; Indig et al., 2016).

While evidence supporting the need for correctional institutions to pay particular attention to young inmates, due to their high risk of recidivism, is prevalent in the literature (Unruh, Gau, & Waintrup, 2009), successful interventions to address any phenomenon must start by identifying its causes (O'Brien et al., 2013). Given the paucity of research about recidivism in sub-Saharan Africa, this study is urgently needed to guide policy to address recidivism, particularly in Ghana.

Summary of the Chapter and Knowledge Gap

In summary, this chapter has demonstrated the paucity of research on recidivism in sub-Saharan African countries in general, and Ghana in particular. Extant literature about recidivism is mostly from North America, Australia, and Europe, while scholarship about causes of recidivism in sub-Saharan Africa is in its infancy. There is a demonstrated need for this area of knowledge to be expanded. Irrespective of context, the literature all point to the conclusion that prison conditions, rehabilitation (or lack of), unemployment and weak family ties all contribute to recidivism. While the sub-Saharan African studies do not explicitly explore factors contributing to recidivism, they are useful in providing preliminary empirical

information about the challenges confronting the region's prisons, confirming that challenges for sub-Saharan Africa are consistent with factors influencing recidivism in other regions, and highlighting research and knowledge gaps.

Most literature, both foreign and local, tries to understand factors contributing to recidivism from the perspective of the prison system, as well as community factors such as social cohesion, discrimination, and unemployment. However, even studies that explored factors at the neighbourhood level to date have not involved individual community members (Cochran et al., 2017; Dawes, 2011). It is therefore assumed that expanding research to explore other factors, and extending investigations to include community members and other stakeholders in addition to inmates, may provide more balanced and comprehensive findings. This study proposes to address this research gap by qualitatively exploring contributing factors to recidivism in Ghana from the perspective of prison inmates, prison officers, and community members. A further gap in the literature is to understand how entrenched stigmatisation in sub-Saharan African communities contributes to recidivism through labelling (Baffour, Francis, Chong, Hasrris, & Baffour, 2020; Chikadze, 2017). This study will therefore contribute to recidivism literature, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, by attempting for the first time to understand factors contributing to recidivism from the perspective of critical social work theory, social learning theory, and labelling perspective, with the intent of informing policies and practices aimed at reducing recidivism.

The following chapter introduces and explains the key theoretical frameworks for this study, critical social work, social learning, and labelling theories, through which it is hoped to better understand recidivism among inmates in Ghanaian prisons.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Critical Social Theory, Social Learning Theory, Labelling Theory

Introduction

This study employs critical social work theory, social learning theory (Akers, 1985), and labelling perspective (Becker, 1963; Lamert, 1967) to understand the factors that contribute to recidivism among inmates in Ghanaian prisons. The three theories were selected after considering the purpose of the study and the researcher's prior experience as a criminal justice social worker and insider in the Ghanaian community, and a thorough reading of the extant literature. As indicated in chapter one, the colonial administration imposed the current prison system on the Ghanaian people, and there have been few efforts since to improve or modernise its infrastructure and practices (see Tankebe, 2013). Physical and operational structures, as well as treatment of offenders, therefore, have changed little to date (Onyango, 2013). As indicated previously, ingrained myths and community perceptions about the prison, and inmates, foster inequality and discrimination towards inmates and ex-inmates in the Ghanaian community (Baffour et al., 2020). Meanwhile, systemic failures in the prisons (such as overcrowding and inadequate rehabilitation), and social inequality (such as discrimination in employment and romantic relationships) affecting formerly-incarcerated people in the Ghanaian communities (Dako-Gyeke & Baffour, 2016) also influenced decisions about theoretical frameworks for this study.

Table 1 shows the theories used in this study, their tenets, and how they apply to this study, including how the theories collectively provide insight into contributing factors to recidivism in Ghana.

Table 1 Theoretical framework of the study

Theories	Tenets	Application
Critical Social Work Theory (Allan, 2003; Rossiter, 1997)	Challenges the normative values and practices of the society that may perpetrate injustice and oppression, Promote social justice and equality by challenging oppression that exist in Institution, Prioritises the empowerment of marginalised groups to participate in their transformation Traces the source of a problem and promote social change	Helps the study to understand how systemic failures, social injustice, and structural inequality, if any in the prisons and community could give rise to social learning among inmates in the prisons and discrimination and stigmatization in the societies inmates returned to.
Social Learning Theory (Akers, 1985)	Criminal behaviour is learned in nonconformists' association, Criminal conversations are prioritised, frequent, last for a period of time, and are intense. A person becomes a criminal after evaluating the	Helped the study to understand how inmates' associations in the prisons, if any could impact on the behaviors of the inmates and may give rise to recidivism.

	criminal conversation and having a definition that favours criminal behaviour. Criminal behaviors in the association are mostly enforced and approved by other members. Members in such association model the behaviors of others.	
Labelling Perspective (Backer, 1963, Lamert (1967)	Incarceration is an official confirmation of an existing negative perception held by the populace about a person The application of the label by the society encourages subsequent criminal behaviors by segregating former inmates from "law abiding people" and limiting access to legitimate opportunities in the society (secondary labelling) Subsequently, the person labelled may accept the meaning ascribed by the society (master status) and this may reflect in their behaviours – leading to their relapse into crime (self-fulfilling prophesy)	Understand how the society's reactions towards people post-prison may reinforce future criminal bheaviors. understand how the reaction of former inmates towards the response of the society on their incarceration contributed to recidivism, if any.

Critical Social Work Theory as the overarching framework for the study

Critical social work theory traces its roots to critical theory which has been credited to Karl Marx (Pease, Allan, & Briskman, 2003) and was later developed by the Frankfurt School, with the work of Jorgen Habermas, Theodor Anardo, Herbert Marcus, Max Horkheimer and Eric Fromm (Dalrymple & Burke, 2006). Like critical theory, critical social work theory seeks to eliminate injustices in the community and institutions by tracing and explaining sources of a social problem and finding solutions to address it (Allan, 2003). It guides social work practitioners in empowering the marginalised to participate in their transformation (Barry, 2016), and challenges societal and institutional values and traditions that are legitimate, but perpetuate injustice and inequality (Allan, 2003). The critical social work theory seeks to promote social justice by challenging oppression and questioning the practices and activities of societal institutions such as the family, religion, government, prisons, police, and courts, among others.

Researchers describe critical social work theory as an effective framework for understanding causes of a phenomenon and changing the status quo for positive transformation (Dalrymple & Burke, 2006; Dill, McLaughlin & Nieves, 2006). Social work is a change-focused profession, with social justice as its hallmark (Dill et al., 2006). Practitioners do not only identify problems, rather they find solutions to address them. To that end, the advantage of employing critical social work theory as an overarching perspective lies in its ability to go beyond knowing the causes of a phenomenon to addressing them (Fook, 2016).

The critical social work theory helps researchers and practitioners to ask questions such as why a particular phenomenon occurred, and how existing social structures reinforced or impacted the phenomenon (Fook, 2016). It provides impetus to critique societal structures that may give rise to a particular phenomenon (in this case recidivism) and suggest

constructive alternatives for change (Mackinnon, 2009). Further, critical social work theory promotes social change and limits social and structural imbalances by ensuring effective application of rules and ethics governing organisations and practices (Dalrymple & Burke, 2006), and targets both personal and structural changes (Fook, 2016; Leonardo, 2004). Its application will allow this study to make recommendations aimed at addressing not only structural deficiencies in the prison and community that may give rise to recidivism, but also personal factors.

The critical social work theory seeks to provide researchers with a scientific basis for structural and behavioural changes (Fook, 2016), in this case regarding the treatment of convicted inmates and ex-convicts in the Ghanaian criminal justice system and wider community. It will also assist with understanding discrimination, structural deficiencies and inequality (Ife, 1997; Mackinnon, 2009) and how they directly or indirectly contribute to social learning in prisons and labelling in the Ghanaian community. It is important to emphasise that while the critical social work theory is best applied to understand how power differences, social injustices and inequality can influence a phenomenon, there is no evidence that it has ever been applied to understand the causes of recidivism in Ghana, or any other jurisdiction.

Criminology theories such as social learning and labelling have been applied by researchers to explain why inmate interactions in intimate associations, as well as community attitudes, could give rise to recidivism (Akers, Sellers, & Jennings, 2017; Jackson & Hay, 2013). However, such theories do not explicitly explain the factors that create space for inmate-inmates association and subsequent social learning. Neither do the theories explain what it is about the communities that causes discrimination or labelling. As the strength of the critical social work theory is its ability to help social work researchers and practitioners to

understand the root cause of a phenomenon (Fook, 2016; Ife, 1997), it became the framework of choice for this study to help understand if and why social learning, and stigmatisation and labelling, occur in prisons and communities, respectively, how these phenomena could contribute to recidivism, and where to target policies and interventions to help address it.

The critical social work theory was employed for this study because of its suitability to identify practices in prisons and communities towards inmates and ex-convicts, track consequences of those practices, and respond to the practices. Critical social work scholars (see Barry, 2016) highlight the ability of the critical social work theory to understand the practices of institutions such as the prison and the family (community) and identify how their actions may cause systemic failures and structural inequalities that could create a pathway for social phenomena such as structural injustice, stigmatisation, and recidivism. To that end, the theory will help in this study to interpret the consequences of systemic failures and social inequality, if any, on the behaviours of prison inmates and ex-inmates. With regards to the response to the practices of prisons and communities, the critical social work theory helps to put recidivism into context by understanding inmate behaviours and what influenced it.

Social Learning Theory

The social learning theory combines the tenets of behavioral learning theories (differential reinforcement and imitation) and differential association theory to explain why individuals commit crime. The primary tenet of social learning posits that criminal behaviours, like all other behaviours, are learnt (Akers et al., 2017). As with the differential association theory and behavioural learning theories, the social learning theory contends that criminal behaviour is learnt through a person's association with an individual or a group that defines the act of committing crime as favourable (Chappell & Piquero, 2004; Pratt et al., 2010).

According to the social learning theory, four components influence the outcome of a person's behaviour (conforming or nonconforming). These are differential association, definitions, differential reinforcement and modelling (Akers, 1985). A person becomes a criminal (recidivist) after these variables negatively impact his or her life. Nevertheless, most often, criminal behaviour emanates from differential association, when a person associates with a deviant group within which behavioural learning and transfer occur (Chappell & Piquero, 2004).

Differential Association

The social learning theory (Akers, 1985) has the differential association theory (Sutherland, 1939) as its central variable and basis for explaining criminal behaviour. The social learning theory builds on the differential association theory by maintaining all the processes that could give rise to crime, as described in Sutherland's theory (see Sutherland, 1939). According to the differential association theory, criminal behaviour is a learning process, after a person intimately associates with, and communicates in, a group that defines crime as its subculture (Church, Jaggers, & Taylor, 2012). The learning process in differential association can be easy or complicated depending on the modalities of association (Akers & Jennings, 2019). The modalities of association include the priority (content to which the person is exposed, or the kind of behaviour deemed worthy of talking about during social group interactions), frequency (how often the members engage in such interactions), duration (how long the association lasts) and intensity (of the discussions) (Akers et al., 2017). The group interaction pattern leads the person to internalise his or her motives, drives and rationalisations, which impacts their definitions of whether the legal codes are favourable or unfavourable. The individual becomes a criminal when there is an excess of definitions favourable to violation of law over definitions unfavourable.

Differential association explains why people commit crime after associating with a deviant subcultural group (Sutherland, 1939). Abotchie (2016) suggests that inmates in Ghana prisons, having little or no contact with correctional officers, have their behaviours influenced solely through inmate-inmate interactions, implying that inmate subculture is predominant in most prisons in Ghana. Consequently, as group of offenders, inmates are more likely to learn among themselves the motives, drives, rationalisations, and attitudes (Hochstetler, Copes, & DeLisi, 2002) of committing further crimes after they leave prison. Continuous contact and interactions with individuals who define crime as favourable, without opposing views from a prosocial group, is likely to negatively impact on behaviour (Hochstetler, 2001).

Ireland, Ireland, and Power (2016) suggest that prison staff having to enforce strict rules causes inmate-prison officer relationships to be hostile in most prison settings, including in Ghana. In fact, most prison officers see recidivists and other inmates as antisocial and unfriendly, while inmates share similar perceptions about prison warders (Misis, Kim, Cheeseman, Hogan & Lambert, 2013). Losing one's liberty is a defining condition of incarceration; inmates do not live their lives as normal citizens (Homel & Thomson, 2005), and most adopt coping mechanisms and behaviours that may conflict with prison rules (Homel & Thomson, 2005; Meseret, 2018). Based on this, Giddens (1997) posits that prison conditions work in favour of inmate association by creating an environment that encourages criminogenic behaviour learning, and infractions.

Definitions of Criminal Behaviour (Recidivism) as Favourable

Sutherland (1939) originally coined definition as a tenet of differential association theory, which Akers later transferred to the social learning theory. Definitions are meanings or attitudes a person ascribes to a particular behaviour after coming into contact with others

(Akers et al., 2017). A person in a criminal association is more likely to adopt a positive definition and develop attitudes that define criminal acts as favourable (Akers & Jennings, 2019). According to the social learning theory, individuals who consistently rationalize their criminal behaviours by justification have positive definitions of, and are prone to committing, crime (Akers et al, 2017). That is, people who often justify their criminal actions and inactions (discriminative stimuli) with excuses show signs of remorselessness, which is a predictor of recidivism (Akers & Jennings, 2016).

Definitions are an interplay of factors, which includes rationalisations, orientations, situations, evaluations and attitudes about whether an act violates the laws or norms of the land (Akers et al., 2017). A personal association or interaction with a criminal subgroup influences the acceptability of committing crime by communicating positive attitudes towards nonconforming behaviours (Pratt et al., 2010). Furthermore, the activities of one's friends and associates shape the desire to define crime as positive (Kabire, Willits, & Shadmanfaat, 2019). The individual becomes a criminal when he or she develops attitudes and understandings that approve nonconformist over conforming behaviour (Fox, Nobles & Akers, 2011). Additionally, the individual becomes susceptible to criminal temptations when they have a strong definition favourable to violation of laws (Akers et al., 2017), and hence is at high risk of relapsing into criminal behaviour.

Differential Reinforcement

Individuals naturally respond to punishments and rewards in social groups and situations. According to the social learning theory, individuals tend to quantify the punishment (cost associated with a particular behaviour), and praise, associated with a particular behaviour (Cochran, Sellers, Wiesbrock & Palacios, 2011). When the group to which a person desires to belong rewards their actions, they are likely to repeat that

behaviour in an effort to gain acceptance by matching the expectations and values of the target group (Akers & Jennings, 2016).

The social learning theory further posits that differential reinforcement has modalities (amount, frequency and probability), whereby a person is more likely to repeat a particular behaviour if it attracts greater value to him or her and the group, if the group frequently rewards it, and the person believes group members will reward the behaviour (Akers et al., 2017). A person therefore defines crime as favourable if his or her differential association or significant others rewarded their previous criminal behaviour (Fox et al., 2011).

Modelling

According to the social learning theory, individuals in a criminal subgroup are likely to define criminal behaviour as favourable when they imitate fellow members who engage in criminal activities (Cochran, Maskaly, Jones & Sellers, 2017). An individual in a criminal subgroup may observe the techniques, motives, and drives of someone in the group they admire and emulate them when the opportunity arises. The most admired person in a criminal association becomes a role model for the whole group (Akers et al., 2017; Cochran et al., 2011). Further, as an individual is more likely to imitate people with whom they come into frequent contact (Kabiri, Shadmanfaat, Smith, & Cochran, 2020), those in criminal associations tend to have definition in favour of law violation.

Application of Social Learning Theory to Offender Recidivism

Criminal justice and criminology scholars employ Akers' social learning theory to understand why individuals commit crime (Cochran et al., 2017; Kabiri et al, 2019; Kabiri et al., 2020) and reoffend (Cochran et al., 2011). As indicated earlier, the primary tenet of the social learning theory is that an individual learns criminal behaviour during interactions with

people who define it as favourable. The literature establishes that criminal associations are detrimental to inmate behaviours during and post-prison (Listwan et al., 2013; Sykes, 1958). Therefore, the act of repeatedly committing crime (recidivism) can be learned in prison.

Pioneers in prison research such as Clemmer (1940); Goffman (1963); Sutherland, Cressey & Luckendill (1992); and Sykes (1958), describe the prison environment as a criminal college, where people with diverse criminal histories are held. Inmates deprived of their liberty (Clemmer, 1940) try to cope with their situations, and survive the prison demands, by developing their own social groups (Sirisutthidacha & Tititampruk, 2014). Sykes (1958), and more recently Listwan et al. (2013), describe how inmate social groups are always in opposition to prison-mandated protocols, which impacts negatively on inmate reformation, rehabilitation and community re-entry. In his seminal book, *Prisons in Turmoil*, Irwin (1980) suggests that as inmates bring behaviours that led to their incarceration into prison, if they are not corrected, interactions that occur during imprisonment will reinforce those behaviours and contribute to future crimes, especially if those interactions are prioritised, intense, frequent, and continue throughout the prison term.

Prison inmates generally have more contact and interaction with other inmates than with correctional officers (Sirisutthidacha & Tititampruk, 2014), and studies show that inmates prioritise rules of their prison subgroups over prison system rules (Sirisutthidacha & Tititampruk, 2014; Sykes, 1958). It follows that differential association and the other three components of the social learning theory (definition, differential reinforcement, and modelling), thrive in prison. Cullen et al. (2011) suggest that an environment where inmate-to-inmate interactions thrive over inmate-to-officer interactions creates space for criminal skills learning among inmates, thereby increasing their recidivism risk.

Social learning theory aids understanding of how inmates relapse into criminal

behaviour through interactions in a criminal association in prison. That is, the more time (with significant interactions) inmates spend together (differential association), the higher the likelihood they will commit other offences after discharge. Inmates interacting together transfer the types of behaviours among themselves that do not encourage prosocial conduct (Listwan et al., 2013). Rather, the criminal association designs its own favourable values and norms that violate accepted laws governing societal conduct (definition), which members promote by reinforcement (differential reinforcement), and by rewarding members who conform with group expectations. Inmates seek approval from the most successful offenders, whom they admire, by emulating them (modelling), thereby increasing their own chances of reincarceration.

While social learning theory complements the critical social work theory in understanding how prison conditions contribute to recidivism, it is beyond the scope of social learning theory to make sense of factors in the general community that may influence criminal behaviours. Therefore, labelling perspective, which has proved useful to other scholars in understanding how societal reactions and attitudes towards inmates impact on recidivism, will be employed for this study (Jackson & Hay, 2013; Payne, Hawkins, & Xin, 2019).

Labelling Theory

Central to describing the labelling process are four components including: significant audience; label and stigmatisation; looking glass self or reflexivity; and self-fulfilling prophecy or stickiness (Goode, 2014). According to proponents of the theory, labelling and stigmatisation cannot occur without a significant audience. An audience is composed of individuals who determine whether an act constitutes deviance, and whether to label or stigmatise the actor. The audience can include parents and other family members, neighbours,

peers, the criminal justice system, prison inmates, pastors and teachers, among others (Becker, 1963). While audiences do not usually have firsthand information of an act or close relationship with the actor, they can be told about an act or actor and may go on to label and stigmatise the person (Goode, 2014; Payne at al., 2019).

Actions the social audience defines as 'deviant' are frowned upon, with the actors perceived differently from those who do not engage in such acts (Lee, 2018), and often isolated, discriminated against, labelled and stigmatised (Baker, 1963; Lemert, 1967). When a person is labelled or stigmatised, it sends a message to the rest of the world that he or she is antisocial, or dangerous, and that others should be cautious around them (Goode, 2014). For example, a trial in court that may lead to imprisonment confers criminal status, which may replace prior status (Baker, 1963) and lead the significant audience to further defame the person's character and reputation, making relationships with non-labelled persons inconvenient, difficult and problematic (Kroska, Lee & Carr, 2016).

After the label has been established, pronounced, and become a part of one's new identity (master status), the person begins to manage his or her current situation (Lemert, 1967), at which point the looking glass self, or reflexivity, begins to manifest. The labelled person begins to see themselves by the definition of the significant others (Baker, 1963; Lemert, 1967; Wills, 2018). Further, the labelled person then sees themself as an odd member in the larger community and begins to question whether they still belong, and are comfortable there: they may look to join an alternative social group that conforms to their new identity (Goode, 2014).

Rules and regulations control every society, and those who behave contrary to the rules are perceived as nonconformists who require special treatment (Merton, 1968). Often, efforts by society to reform those law-breakers, differentiating them from the larger

community, tag them as criminals (Braithwaite, 1989). Criminal justice system labels pronounced through court disposition certificates (formal labelling) may subsequently attract or reinforce informal labelling in the wider community (Becker, 1963; Lee, 2018). Consequently, the labelled person, in accepting the societal label, may feel more comfortable associating with other people who share a similar label (Backer, 1963; Bernburge, Krohn & Rivera, 2003), which subsequently makes them susceptible to crime (Lemert, 1967).

According to Becker (1963); and Lemert (1967), criminal labelling hampers a person's opportunity to enjoy, access and achieve socioeconomic success through societally-accepted modes when the community treats the labelled person as socially, culturally and economically misfit, and isolate, stigmatise and discriminate against them (Kroska et al., 2016). Further, criminal labelling subsequently isolates the labelled person from those who are labelled as conformists (Bernburg, 2009). Such societal actions may result in deviant self-meaning, and reinforce the labelled person's desire to identify and join criminal social networks, increasing the risk of reoffending (Kroska et al., 2016; Lee, 2018). Consequently, a person's behavioural outcomes continuously reflect how others perceive him or her (Wills, 2018).

According to proponents of labelling theory Backer (1963); and Lemert (1967), community reactions to unacceptable behaviour may propel people into permanently deviant careers when the labelled person finds acceptance with criminal subgroups, which increases their risk of reoffending (Bernburg, Krohn & Rivera, 2006). Goffman (1963) reasoned that criminal labelling creates a boundary between the labelled and non-labelled persons, which is inconvenient and hampers relationships. As a result, labelled persons become comfortable in association with similar people and vice versa. Bernburg (2009) and Lee (2018) confirm that criminally-labelled persons are more comfortable associating with other criminally-labelled

persons.

Labelling is counterproductive because it hinders efforts to reintegrate offenders into mainstream society (Braithwaite, 1989) and motivates them to associate with criminal subgroups, potentially leading them to reoffend (Payne et al., 2019). Criminal labelling leaves an indelible tag and negatively affects the immediate social network of the labelled person (Bernburg et al., 2006), leaving little choice but to form associations with people who offer approval.

In most communities, including Ghana, prison is a negative environment for individual inmates (Nagin, Cullen & Jonson, 2009). Returning from prison to a community that frowns upon contact with prison can lead to stigmatisation, discrimination, isolation and being treated differently from people who have no prison history (Dako-Gyeke & Baffour, 2016). In trying to adjust to this situation, the labelled person may resort to alternatives that create a cycle of incarceration (Lemert, 1967).

Applying Labelling Theory to Recidivism

Labelling theory has been applied to understand recidivism and crime among offenders in the United States (Kroska et al., 2016), Europe (Bernburg et al., 2006), and recently, in Ghana (Abrah, 2019). Although most of these studies were conducted in the western context (Lee, 2018), labelling theory can also be applied to explore recidivism in the African context.

Labelling is common in Ghanaian communities (Tenkorang & Owusu, 2013), with people living with HIV/AIDS (Mumin, Gyasi, Segbefia, Forkuor & Ganle, 2018), mental health issues (Gyamfi, Hegadoren & Park, 2018), leprosy (Asampong, Dako-Gyeke & Oduro, 2018), epilepsy (Dako-Gyeke & Donkor, 2018) and who have served a term in prison

(Dako-Gyeke & Baffour), likely to experience labelling, stigmatisation and discrimination. Local adages such as: 'Blood never drains from the tsetse fly's head', 'A treated mad person always has a little madness to scare children', and 'The tree that can pierce your eyes, you uproot it but not sharpen it', also testify to entrenched labelling in the Ghanaian setting. Given the endemic nature of labelling in most Ghanaian communities, it is appropriate to apply labelling theory to investigate the causes of recidivism in Ghana.

Labelling theory has been used to prove that reactions to a person after they serve a term in prison can be detrimental to their reintegration (Kronick & Thomas, 2008), as well as determine their future behaviour (Kroska et al., 2016). While it has been shown that ex-convicts experience labelling on return to their communities (Dako-Gyeke & Baffour, 2016), no study has yet investigated how criminal labelling impacts on recidivism in Ghana, a gap the researcher hopes this work will address.

Summary

According to Messner, Liu, and Zhao (2018), researchers apply two or more theories to a single study when one alone is inadequate to address the purposes of the study, and another will enhance clarity and understanding. While Schoenberger, Heckert & Heckert (2015) used social learning theory and labelling perspective together to understand causes of crime and re-offending among inmates, to the best of the researcher's knowledge this is the first study to combine critical social work theory, social learning theory, and labelling perspective to understand factors contributing to recidivism.

In this study, labelling theory supplements the social learning and critical social work theories to help understand the surge in recidivism in Ghana. It is imperative to consider recidivism from both prison and community perspectives because inmates who serve more than one prison sentence spend time in both environments. Therefore, causes for multiple

incarcerations may originate in the prison, the community, or both.

In support of applying social learning theory to this problem, previous studies in the Ghanaian context report community stigmatisation of formerly-incarcerated people (Abrah, 2019; Baffour et al., 2020), and poor conditions in Ghana prisons (Baffour et al, 2020), while studies outside the African context report that negative societal reactions to ex-convicts contribute to recidivism (see Dawes, 2011; Kroska et al., 2017; Payne et al., 2019; Wills, 2018), and that prisons contribute to recidivism in diverse ways, including by creating space for negative behavioural learning (Auty & Liebling, 2020; Listwan et al., 2013). Therefore, to effectively understand the surge in recidivism in Ghana, it becomes essential to apply social learning theory, and labelling perspective, to prison and community contexts respectively.

The rationale for choosing critical social work theory as the overarching framework for this study lies in its ability to investigate social learning in prison, and labelling in the community, as well as identify their causes and possible solutions. While existing studies that apply social learning theory and labelling perspective to understand recidivism explore these phenomena, they give little attention to mediating factors in these environments. For this study, critical social work theory provides a framework from which to explore mediating factors to social learning in prisons, and labelling in the community, as contributing factors to recidivism in the Ghanaian context. The following chapter presents the research methodology.

PART THREE

METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter outlines the processes and procedures used to approach the topic under study. Firstly, there will be self-reflection and a critical account of the researcher's experiences and personal values about the research topic, followed by a discussion of the qualitative research and phenomenological approach. The study population, entry technique, source of data, sampling technique, sample size, data collection and analysis methods are also discussed in this chapter.

Self-reflection of my experience and critical account

Jewkes' (2012) classical study entitled Autoethnography and emotions as intellectual resources: Doing prisons research differently, advocates that prison researchers should explore how their experiences and emotions influence their research. As with other prison studies conducted in developing countries (Sivakumar, 2018) and developed (Tubex & Eriksson, 2015) settings, there were methodological, ethical, emotional and other important dilemmas that the researcher confronted during this study, including gaining human research ethical approval (academic) and institutional approval (Ghana Prisons Service), concerns from colleagues, parents, siblings, and family about security, and ethical dilemmas during data collection. These factors, together with the fact that prison inmates constitute a vulnerable research population (Fox, Zambrana, & Lane, 2011), have methodological implications not only for this study, but also other future prison research.

Whether through a simple lack of public interest or a culture of keeping prison-related issues in-house, or both, in most jurisdictions, including Ghana, issues about prisons receive little attention from people outside the justice system. Prison scholars have tried to shed light on prison issues for the past six decades. Goffman (1963) refers to the prison as a total

institution, while Sykes (1958) describes the prison as a restricted space with different rules and activities from the mainstream community. Practically, the prison edifice communicates to the external world that entry is restricted and only allowed under discretional powers of prison authorities. This is evident where authorities allow entry to some researchers (Jewkes, 2012; Kelly-Corless, 2020), while denying access to others (Norman, 2018)

According to Wacquant (2002) the prison operates under strict bureaucratic protocols, with support from the political and criminal justice systems, that make it often difficult, and sometimes impossible, for outsiders and especially researchers, to enter. Perkins and Oser (2014) report that a concentration on incarceration rather than rehabilitation makes for an environment that is not welcoming towards noncore activities such as research and community engagement. Aside from formal restrictions, some people do not consider the prison a conducive work environment (Reamer, 2004), possibly because of the frustrations one has to go through in order to gain access (Perkins & Oser, 2014).

Indeed, I experienced frustrations with the Ghana Prisons Service during the formation, approval, and interview phases of this PhD research. I hope that documenting my experiences will give future prison scholars some insight into the hurdles one has to overcome when undertaking research in the Ghanaian context.

The Formation Phase

The formation phase is the pre-admission and pre-approval stage of the research, which importantly, was the time during which, with the support of my immediate family, I decided to channel a research path in the area of prison and crime. Family support was crucial because of the risk of stigmatisation, as reported by Dako-Gyeke and Baffour (2016), to anyone in Ghana (including researchers) who has any kind of interaction with the prison system, and I must admit that my immediate family questioned my decision to undertake research in prisons. They tried to convince me to reconsider, not out of concern about

stigmatisation, more about the dangers prison, and the people in it, may present. As there had been incidents of unrest in one of the prisons in which I was intending to work, my mother was concerned that I might come to harm in the event of a prison riot. The next section documents how I resolved these issues and concerns before commencing the study.

Coming to deal with the response of closed ones (the dilemma)

In Ghana, people with incarceration history are perceived as dangerous and non-incarcerated people stigmatise them as a result (Abrah, 2019). My own perceptions changed when I started working in the prisons in 2009 and interacting with inmates and prison staff. This understanding of the prison system helped me explain to my family, for example, how my proposed study could highlight ineffective rehabilitation regimes that may pose security risks to the community through recidivism (Berenji, Chou, & D'Orsogna, 2014). Further, I talked to them about how community reactions toward the prison and ex-convicts could contribute to crime and recidivism at the local level (Chamberlain & Wallace, 2016). This approach explained the need for change in community attitudes towards inmates during and post-incarceration, and how my research could influence policies and ultimately lead to positive change and prison reforms. I'm pleased to say this approach worked in amassing the support of my immediate family and close ones.

The Approval Phase

Institutional approval (Ghana Prisons Service)

After resolving the dilemma of my research interest and the concerns raised by my immediate family, the next important stage was to work towards securing ethical approval. Much academic work only requires human research ethics approval from the academic institution that will award the qualification, however prison research is different in that prospective researchers must secure two ethical approvals (academic and sector). While both approvals must be secured before the study can go ahead, it is common knowledge among

prison researchers that the prison board approval is most important, as failure to gain approval from the prison hierarchy means having to modify your research topic or cancel the proposed research altogether (Norman, 2018; Watson & van der Meulen, 2019).

This potential threat to the study required strategies to increase the chances of securing approval for the research from the Ghana Prisons Service. The first step, as advised by established prison scholars, was to develop relationships with prison staff as a strategy for securing approval and entry to the prison (Apa et al., 2012; Sykes, 1958). The second step was to start the application process early, by submitting an expression of interest in February 2016, one year before proposed commencement of the study, a strategy Sivakumar (2018) used to secure approval for her prison research in Kerala, India.

A third and the novel approach, based on advice from prison acquaintances, was to follow-up regularly face-to-face. This turned out to be effective because it was contextually appropriate, albeit time-consuming and stressful. Despite institutions in Ghana having email addresses, most do not respond to emails. Therefore, after declaring my intention to conduct research with inmates and prison officers of selected prisons in Ghana in writing, I travelled to the Ghana Prisons head office each fortnight to get updates from the authorities. Although the Ghana Prisons Service advised me to follow up by phone, within two months of sending my expression of interest I realised I could not rely on following up by phone. This was mainly because a lack of continuity meant each time I called I had to tell my story to a new person, but also because most of my calls went unanswered or messages unreturned.

In January 2017, during my routine face-to-face follow-up at the Ghana Prisons Service headquarters, a prison officer informed me that the Ghana Ministry of Interior (responsible for the Ghana Prisons Service) also required a copy of the expression of interest. This was because my research was to be conducted with a foreign academic institution, so the

Prisons Service and Ministry of Interior would work in conjunction to decide on the suitability of the proposed study.

As I was now dealing with the Ministry of the Interior, a staunch political institution, I now needed to make contact with politicians who could assist me to secure the research approval. This had to be fast-tracked because I only had one month before migrating to Australia to start my PhD. I was fortunately able to call on a friend with acquaintances in the political space to follow up face-to-face at the two institutions on my behalf. In my absence the Ministry of the Interior approval took two months, with the Ghana Prisons Service approval being finalised a further two months later.

Human research ethics approval (academic institution)

After securing the Ghana Prisons Service approval, my supervisors assisted with drafting a fine-grained proposal to the Human Research Ethics Committee of James Cook University. The Human Research Ethics Committee would scrutinize the ethical potency of the proposed study, including the rigour of criteria used to select participants and informed consent processes (Borysowski, Ehni, & Gorski, 2017), as well as proposed ethical protocols for data management, anonymity, confidentiality, among others, during data collection, data analysis, and the thesis drafting.

On 22 September 2017, after writing to me on two counts requesting additional information and suggesting changes to the draft informed consent form and information sheet, the Human Research Ethics Committee approved the project and assigned the ethical approval number (H7124).

The Interview Phase

Most data for this study was gathered through careful and ethically structured face-to-face interviews with inmates and prisons officers conducted within the locus of high security protocol. Prison researchers do not usually conduct interviews with inmates in isolation, but

under the supervision of a prison officer [gatekeeper] (Sivakumar, 2018). Consistent with another Sub-Saharan African study (Topp et al., 2018), for my protection as well as to ensure that security was not compromised, approval for my research was contingent on prison staff supervising interviews. Based on these security concerns, Apa et al. (2012) suggest prison researchers establish collaborative relationships with the prison officers (Apa et al., 2012) during the interview stage.

Interviews with inmates and prison officers for this study were conducted in two phases, with the first taking place from December 2017 to May 2018 and the second from December 2019 to January 2020. I spent most days during this period within the prison walls in my capacity as a researcher. During the early days of the first phase of data collection I was not allowed to bring any electronic (audio recorder, phone and/or computer) devices into the prison and the officer in charge hand-searched me each time I entered the prison. In the later stages of the first phase and throughout the second phase of data collection, due to the trust established with the prison staff, except for in one prison I was allowed to audiotape interviews. Unauthorised materials were kept at the reception and returned to me on my departure from the prison. My background information and purpose for entering the premises were recorded in a notebook at the prison reception each day I entered. I went through these security protocols each time I entered the prison before receiving a researcher's tag allowing entry into the offices and cells of the prison under the supervision of prison staff. I was not allowed to stroll the prison environment (kitchen, cells, workshops, and other offices) without being accompanied by a prison staff member.

Interviews with inmates in the selected prisons were conducted in the offices of welfare officers, with the exception of one facility where the computer lab was used. In each of the selected prisons, the officers who shared these offices were charged with supervising my activities (interviews with inmates) and ensuring my safety, while also ensuring

interviews were conducted in a way that protected inmate and prison integrity. I must say there were instances where supervisors made demands that were in conflict with provisions of the human research approval ethics, but we always found a way to reach consensus, for example when a highly-ranked officer requested a copy of the written interviews (the section under methodological rigorousness has details on how this situation was resolved). Further, there were instances where the gatekeepers interfered with interviews, particularly when inmates criticised prison reformation policies and gave insights about the treatment regime.

The daily prison timetable and its impact on the interviews is illuminating. Breakfast and lunch were served together at 7:00am, while dinner was served at 12:00pm. Number checking was done three times a day (6:30am, 2:00pm and 4:30pm). Even though the interviews were not impacted by the 6:30am and 7:30am timetables, other elements of the schedule interrupted the interviews, some of which could span a whole day, while others carried over to be completed the following day. Also, most interviews that spanned a full day had at least two different gatekeepers present due to shift changes or officers needing to meet with their superiors or attend to other duties in the prison.

Dealing with Security Protocols, Emotions, and Maintaining Methodological Rigour

A concern of the ethics committee in granting human research ethics approval for this study was that it should be conducted in a way that benefits the participants. With this in mind and coupled with my desire to use research to contribute to prison reforms, I navigated the interview phase with compliance and soberness, while maintaining methodological rigour. The space within which prison research occurs is not natural and can be intimidating, emotionally draining and highly sensitive for the inmates and researcher. For example, there were instances where the interview supervisor was armed and was quite controlling. The situation was emotionally draining because one can’t help but empathise with inmates, whose highly sensitive stories were being disclosed in the presence of two people (researcher and

supervisor) who had different purposes. While the researcher is ethically compelled to ensure inmate confidentiality, the same cannot be said about the prison officer who is supervising the interviews, who is mainly concerned with protecting the prison's interests and reputation. These conflicts can compromise ethics and methodological rigour and require the researcher to make adjustments within the research space (see Table 1).

Being a controlled institution not for only convicted inmates and staff, but anybody who enters the prison with permission, researchers must familiarise themselves with security protocols prior to commencing work in the prison environment (Abbott, DiGiacomo, Magin, & Hu, 2018). This includes: (a) build professional relationships with prison staff, particularly those in charge of education, research and welfare; (b) know what is and is not allowable when conducting research in the prison; (c) explicitly explain the purpose of the research to prison staff who are directly involved in data collection; and (d) cooperate with gatekeepers, but find a way to reach consensus if gatekeeper concerns breach ethics or methodological rigour (as adopted from the work of Apa et al., 2012 and expanded and applied in the current study by the researcher).

Table 2 Dealing with security protocols, emotions, and maintaining methodological rigour in prison research

Issues encountered	**How issues were overcome**
Dealing with security protocols	Collaborated with education, research, and welfare staff to familiarise with protocols for research in the prison. Behaved respectfully and cooperated with supervisor concerns. Provided clarity about the study's purpose to supervisors.

Addressing emotions/ sensitivity	Continuously reminded myself of my study participants and tried to stay positive. Was willing to seek help.
Methodological rigour	Interviews with inmates were conducted in the presence of a gatekeeper, but I maintained anonymity in data reporting. Informed consent was adhered to in participants' recruitment and throughout data collection.

Prior knowledge of how things work in a prison facility has been touted as important to researchers in turning potential disruptions by security protocols during data collection to the researcher's advantage (Fox et al., 2011; Johnson, Brems, Bergman, Mills, & Eldridge, 2015). During this study, with prior knowledge of the mandatory number checking and food collection schedules, I was able to structure the interviews so that mandatory breaks during interviews were not disruptive [as reported by prevailing prison-based researchers (Kazemian, 2015)], but a time to reflect on previous participant responses to prompt in-depth probing upon recommencement of the interviews. It was also a time to gain the trust and nurture professional relationships with gatekeepers, which later softened the rigid supervision regimes of the early days of data collection.

Building trusting relationships with supervisors, as well as promoting understanding of the purpose of the study among prison staff, were instrumental to gathering information-rich data in the controlled environment. As I observed, in the first two days of data collection in the prisons, gatekeepers were inflexible and disruptive, as they were keen to interrupt

perceived sensitive questions from me and inmates' corresponding answers. From the third day, gatekeepers were more flexible, as they came to understand the purpose of the interviews and see potential benefits of the study for the prison system. Some gatekeepers even started encouraging inmates to try to forget their presence while narrating their experiences or excused themselves if they observed an inmate was reluctant to open up in their presence. To some extent, these actions mitigate the argument by some scholars (such as Watson & van der Meulen, 2019) that data collected in prisons can lack depth due to inmate reluctance to disclose sensitive information for fear of harm and/or reprisal from prison authorities, as some inmates in this study appeared comfortable and unafraid to share their lived experiences.

As indicated earlier in this section, audiotaping the interviews during the early weeks of data collection was not allowed, so interviews with the first 17 inmates had to be handwritten, which caused delays because the inmates predominantly spoke Asanti Twi (a dominant local language), while the interviews were transcribed in English. Being fluent in Twi and English I was able to simultaneously translate, however after writing each response in English, I reconfirmed the response to the participant in Twi before proceeding to the next question. To save time, with prison authority permission I was able to conduct the prison officer interviews outside the prisons. After explaining the importance of preventing data loss, the prison officers who had been recruited for the study agreed to being interviewed outside the prison premises and consented to audiotaping, which saved a lot of time and additional stress.

Dealing with Strains and Emotions

There is no doubt that conducting research in the prison setting can be emotionally draining and challenging (Jewkes, 2014; 2012; Liebling, 1999). As a qualitative researcher, the stress associated with seeking approvals, witnessing the hardships inmates have to

endure, and hearing their sensitive and emotional stories is emotionally draining. Jewkes argued that:

> … despite only experiencing a tiny fraction of the restrictive binds of carceral space and time, researchers nonetheless cannot help but be touched, if not deeply affected, by the cultural isolation and emotional intensity of confinement, even though they are largely experiencing it at one step removed and in relatively short doses (2014, p.389).

Jewkes' observations demonstrate the emotional drain of collecting data in prisons, which is often exacerbated in the period preceding data collection by dealing with bureaucracy, delays, stress, and fear of rejection. In addition to strict rules and security regimes (Topp et al, 2016), constantly observing the living conditions of incarcerated people can make for a daunting experience for the researcher (Liebling, 1999).

Prison scholars highlight the need to recognise their emotional experiences and show how they were overcome (Jewkes, 2012; Nielsen, 2010). According to Bosworth et al. (2005) this demonstrates the researcher's humanity and depicts the naturality of the research. A recent study by Rossiter et al. (2020) reasons that emotional experiences of qualitative prison researchers may influence the rigour of data collection, analysis and presentation. They encourage researchers in this space to be more reflexive and conscious of their emotions and stresses in order to produce knowledge that is trustworthy and reliable. To that end, my emotional experiences and resulting stresses are discussed in tandem with how they were resolved.

Like Jewkes (2012), my decision to conduct my Doctoral research on contributing factors to recidivism was about an encounter I had, as an undergraduate student, with prison inmates in Ghana in 2010. In particular, a then 22-year-old man who had already been in

prison three times for serious offences made me wonder why he would risk returning to the harsh prison conditions by reoffending after his initial incarceration. He explained:

> It is not my fault; I am a school dropout and never learned a trade prior to my first sentence. All the time I have been here I have not gotten the chance to learn a trade or join the school . . . before this sentence, the longest term I have stayed in the prison was six months, the first one, I was here for three months. I have no one to return to in the house; they see me as a bad guy, and no one is willing to help me . . . before I know I am in the midst of bad friends and I end up here again. (Anonymous)

This person's incarceration history was obviously complex and multifaceted, and caused me to think a lot about how to help inmates like him. Solutions would require empirical data such as: (1) Why would anybody want to return to this deplorable state of living after their first experience? (2) Could the myth in Ghanaian society that ex-convicts return to the prison to harvest what they sew be true? and (3) If people shun you because you commit crimes, why commit more crimes to give people more reasons to dislike you?
In fact, this encounter with the inmates caused me to feel compassion and empathy that changed my perceptions about prison and its inmates, as well as fostered the resilience to improve the inmate's situation as well as that of hundreds of other young people who are in similar situations. This willingness to find answers to address recidivism helped me overcome initial resistance from my family and later gain their support for my research interest. Additionally, even though I sometimes felt overwhelmed during data collection, inmates' stories helped me keep my cool to make this study a reality.

In my experience the assertion that "doing prison research is difficult" (Bosworth, Campbell, Demby, Ferranti, & Santos, 2005, p.249) is true. I had some idea of the challenges awaiting me after reading about the experiences of prison scholars who came before me (Bosworth et al., 2005; Jewkes, 2012; Norman, 2018; Watson & van der Meulen, 2019).

Early in the data collection, prison officers accused me of trying to expose the Ghana Prisons Service to the outside world, as well as made negative comments such as, "this is just like any other academic work and it will not change anything". While this obstructive behaviour delayed data collection, and was emotionally discouraging, it pushed me to continue with my research to contribute to addressing recidivism among inmates in Ghana.

Methodological Rigorousness and Ethical Considerations

Qualitative researchers in prisons are faced with countless methodological (Watson & van der Meulen, 2019), as well as ethical challenges (Topp et al, 2016), such as participants fearing consequences of disclosing sensitive information, so not recounting true lived experiences (Watson & van der Meulen, 2019). Other challenges include threats to confidentiality, privacy and informed consent because of the strict supervision around data collection ["…privacy is about people and their desire to limit access to themselves in ways that may or may not involve information" (Practical Ethicist, Cooper, & McNair, 2015 p.100)], and partial reliance on gatekeepers (prison officers) to recruit participants (Abbott, et al., 2018). Following is a discussion of how these issues were managed to ensure methodological and ethical rigour in this study.

In a qualitative study, the researcher's ability to collect detailed data is essential to creating credible and trustworthy knowledge (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To that end, I set out to engage interviewees in a manner that reduced tension and allowed them to narrate their stories as they experienced them. I adopted prolonged engagement of the participants (Hadi & Jose, 2016), inmates included. For example, most inmate interviews lasted between 1 hr 17 min and 2 hr 15 min, while some interviews took two days to complete because of the demands of the daily prison routine. To ensure I had recorded participant responses accurately, especially for those interviews conducted in the Twi language where field notes were taken, after transcribing the responses in English, I translated my record back to the Twi

language to the inmate for their confirmation. Other strategies I adopted to ensure participants provided accurate and detailed information included probing for further information and asking for examples, when necessary (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Additionally, prolonged engagement with the inmates allowed them to warm up to me, so they were more open and provided more in-depth information as they came to know me better.

Another important issue was the supervision regime of prison officers during interviews. I minimised fear of reprisal by guaranteeing that participant information was being gathered solely for academic purposes. I also convinced the supervisors to reassure the inmates about privacy and confidentiality protections. In qualitative prison research, I have learned to create a calm atmosphere when collecting data. There is no doubt that the prison is a tense environment (Jewkes, 2014), with data potentially lacking depth and credibility as a result. To reduce tension, researchers need to build rapport with participant inmates (Bosworth et al., 2005) and prison authorities who supervise the data collection. I achieved calm ambiance by communicating on the same level as supervisors and participant inmates. To that end, three measures were taken with participant inmates and supervisors: (a) demystifying the study purpose and eliminating ambiguity; (b) building understanding about the data collection process to alleviate concerns about confidentiality; and (c) respecting participants' decisions to disclose.

Confidentiality and privacy were observed in this study. In prison research in general, supervision requirements threaten privacy and confidentially ["… confidentiality is the agreement to limit access to a subject's information" (Practical Ethicist et al., 2015 p.100)], and putting measures in place to protect privacy must be the highest priority. According to Saunders, Kitzinger, and Kitzinger (2015) confidentiality can be achieved by anonymising participants. For this study, and with their permission, I chose pseudonyms for the inmate

participants so their responses could not identify individuals (Kaiser, 2009). The other participant groups (prison officers and community members) also opted for pseudonyms in order to protect their individual identities, however they agreed that real names of communities and prisons subject to the study should be used so that any recommendations could be directed at the relevant institutions.

As discussed earlier, supervisors were quite inflexible about most parts of data collection; there were times when supervisors requested data collected from inmates for assessment and possible appropriation, which threatened to cause an ethical breach because the informed consent and information sheet stipulated that participant information would only be used for academic purposes. This was also emphasised verbally at the commencement of each interview. The supervisor request caused data collection at that particular prison to be suspended for at least two days until a solution was reached. Although I was allowed to leave the prison with the data already collected, I was not allowed to continue with data collection the next day. After consulting my research team, we decided to engage the prison officer in charge in a thorough discussion about the purpose of the study, and this strategy eventually worked. After this incident, which occurred in the first prison at the beginning of data collection, I adopted a similar strategy (thorough explanation of the purpose of the study) in the other prisons and there were no further such incidents, which has implication for future research.

Participant recruitment for the inmate group presented another methodological and ethical difficulty. In the qualitative prison literature, gatekeepers are one of the main sources of participant recruits (Abbott et al., 2018, Johnson et al., 2015). This study was no different, as prison officers control access to the inmates, however informed consent was maintained throughout participant recruitment and data collection. The gatekeepers identified members of the inmate population who had served more than one term and were currently serving their

second or more terms. Next, I explained the purpose of the study to the inmates and showed them where they could sign up if they wished to participate in the study. More than 23 inmates, who met the inclusionary criteria, expressed interest by providing their details in a box placed in front of their prison's welfare office. To prevent the unlikely situation where an inmate or prison staff could access participant inmate information, at the end of each day I collected the box, removed the expressions of interest, and returned the empty box to the desk the next morning.

Participants who had expressed interest were then purposively ranked by their number of sentences to ensure that inmates with most experience in terms of number of incarcerations and years in the prison were prioritised highest for the interviews. Those ranked highest on the list and most willing to share their lived experiences were recruited for the study. To limit participation by influence or coercion, incentives for participation in the study were only revealed after participants finished their interviews. In the midst of my emotions, compassion, and presuppositions I maintained positive emotions and methodological rigour by being reflexive.

Reflexivity and Positionality

The literature establish that qualitative prison researchers enter the field with preconceived beliefs, values, emotions and knowledge that may affect the research process and undermine credibility (Jewkes, 2014). Therefore, it is important for researchers to acknowledge any personal biases, experiences and beliefs (Berger, 2015). This section reflects on my status in this regard, and how it influenced the choice of research topic, study design, data collection, and data analysis. Cutcliffe (2003) reasons that reflexivity aids researchers to understand their roles, and those of respondents, in the research process. The researcher's role, in this regard, is to produce knowledge that reflects participants' responses (Attia & Edge, 2017; Finlay, 2002). Reflexivity is critical in producing research findings that

are devoid of biases and demonstrate depth in data (Enosh & Ben-Ari, 2016). The following discussions clarify my position as a researcher with regard to my background and beliefs (Chilisa, 2012).

Shared familiarities with the study respondents position me in the insider role (Berger, 2015; Obasi, 2014). First, I am a Ghanaian conducting research with Ghanaians, and second, prior to commencing the PhD program I had years of experience with the prison community as a volunteer of Christian Care (a nongovernmental organisation based in Ghana that seeks to improve prison conditions). Over the past ten years of working relatively closely with the Ghana Prisons Service, I have developed professional acquaintances with its prison officers and administrators, however these ties did not shield me from the difficulties other prison researchers experience (Ross & Tewksbury, 2018).

Most of the prison officers became comfortable with participating in the study because they had seen my efforts over the years to improve prison conditions. My knowledge of the prison bylaws, beliefs, cultural protocols and local language played to my advantage. Among the community participants, there was no inherent researcher-participant power dynamic because an Assembly Member (a representative of a district in the local government structure [community of not more than 75000] democratically elected by members of the district for a four-year term) introduced me into the community. As a known and respected leader in the community, the Assembly Member's introduction to the community as one of their own nullified any anticipated power dynamic. A majority of the community members who participated in the study were almost twice my age. Culturally, in Ghana, a young person engaging a relatively older person in such a way is treated as a son or daughter, while community members nearer my age treated me as a brother. During the interviews I was addressed either as "my brother", "my son", or "my nephew".

Despite positive aspects of familiarity with the study population, my experiences agree with literature which finds that researchers with insider positioning tend to have difficulties securing in-depth information from participants (Milligan, 2016). This effect is probably due to interviewees tending to assume the interviewer already knows the answers, and/or researchers failing to probe participants for more detailed responses (Holloway & Biley, 2011). Due to my prior knowledge and experience with the Ghana Prisons service, most inmates and prison officers assumed that I already knew everything that needed to be known, which resulted in a lot of incomplete responses from participants. My existing relationships with some officers and prison managers made some participants circumspect in their responses, particularly prison officers, because they suspected I would share the findings with the prison management. One of the prison officer participants said this:

> . . . My guy, I am going to be open up to you but try and keep things between us . . . I know you have been coming here for some time now but there are things you wouldn't know until we tell you.

To overcome the challenges of an insider position, the literature suggest that researchers go beyond researcher reflexivity to incorporate participant reflexivity (Enosh & Ben-Ari, 2016). Enosh and Ben-Ari (2016) reason that participants also come to a study with prior knowledge and understanding that may influence their responses. Way, Zwier, and Tracy (2015) posit that a researcher can foster participant reflexivity during interviews through probing and counterfactual prompting, which encouraged me, for example, to critically probe participant responses in order to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences (Enosh & Ben-Ari, 2016). In this study, participants who made unfinished statements were asked to give more explanation about their responses. In the interviews with the community members I exercised counterfactual prompting by asking alternative questions to respondents' current beliefs (Way et al., 2015). An example was asking respondents what they would do if they were in

the position of inmates. This strategy encouraged community participants to feel empathy and compassion towards prison inmates and prompted responses that go beyond superficial beliefs, preconceptions and knowledge (Way et al., 2015).

Summary: Lessons Learned and Implication for Future Qualitative Prison Research

Qualitative prison research is revealing, albeit emotionally draining. The processes involved in securing institutional and human research ethics approvals can be all-encompassing. This requires not only the intellectual nuance of the researcher, but also agility, patience and perseverance, and sometimes the researcher's ability to build and sustain relationships, especially with prison authorities. The process that one will go through to secure institutional approval, in particular, is most often marked with frustrations, ups and downs, as well as mixed emotions. One moment you are fairly confident that you are on the verge of securing approval, and the next you are feeling that rejection is imminent.

Nonetheless, hurdles experienced in the early stages are only a fraction of a package of obstacles that abound in qualitative prison research. After securing approval from the Ghana Prisons headquarters, individual prisons involved in my study were instructed not to allow my field work to compromise security. While this instruction in letters to each individual prison in which I would be working were not surprising, I perceived it as an exercise of powers that may undermine methodological rigour as well as human research ethics practices. Therefore, institutional approval alone does not void security protocols. Researchers need to be innovative and formulate strategies that reconcile prison security protocols with maintaining basic research etiquette.

During the formation phase, qualitative prison researchers should educate themselves about the steps in securing approval in their respective jurisdictions. After gaining approval, the prison researcher should make time to understand the process of conducting interviews in a carceral institution. Also, a clear explanation of the purpose of the study, as well data

management and dissemination protocols, should be established before interviewing commences. Additionally, during data collection, researchers should pay attention to details and try to address supervisory (gatekeeper) concerns as they occur, even if they seem relatively trivial, before they escalate.

Where intermediaries or gatekeepers are required to lead researchers to potential inmate participant recruits, researchers must insist on voluntary participation. This is important because, as in my case, intermediaries tend to believe that, knowing the inmates better than the researcher, they should be able to hand-pick study participants. While this could be seen as coercive, it also undermines principles of informed consent and could compromise data quality.

Qualitative Research Approach

This study seeks to explore and understand lived experiences in prisons and communities that might have contributed to recidivism among inmates in selected Ghana prisons. Silverman (2013) observes that qualitative research is appropriate when exploring people's lived experiences, hence this study is qualitative research with emphasis on phenomenology approach (Beyens, Kennes, Snacken, & Tournel, 2015). Liebling (2014) encourages the use of qualitative research in prisons due to its ability to promote participation, which tends to yield more reliable and credible results. My preference for a qualitative approach is based on the view that, as social actors best explain reality, contributing factors to recidivism in Ghana can be known (epistemology) from subjective and interpretative views (ontology) of people who experience and live the problem under study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The nature of this study required that the researcher approach it from an interpretative paradigm adopting qualitative methodology to understand reality from divergent lived experiences, rather than discovering through a designated (positivist)

experimental approach singular reality (Teherani, Martimianaikis, Stenfors-Hayes, Wadhwa, & Varpio, 2015).

Qualitative research, which aims to enhance understanding of phenomena through interpretation of reality gleaned from respondents' multiple views, is interpretive (Ziebland & McPherson, 2006). It gives participants freedom to express themselves and expand the discussion to issues that the researcher may not have previously considered (Adams & Cox, 2008), and focuses on occurrences in participants' environments (in this case prison and community) that could produce particular effects (recidivism) (Teherani et al., 2015). Qualitative approaches allow the researcher to collect data from sites where participants experience their respective personal and social circumstances in relation to the study (Creswell, 2012), thereby allowing participants to narrate their own stories in a familiar environment (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). Further, the appropriateness of qualitative research to this study lies in the researcher being able to select approaches (case study, narrative, grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenology) that best address the research purpose (Creswell, 2012).

Phenomenology Approach to Qualitative Research

Based on the research questions and purpose this study is grounded in phenomenology (Acocella, 2012). Among qualitative research approaches, phenomenology has been described as appropriate to understanding phenomena through the interpretation of lived experiences and meaning ascribed to experience (Duckham & Schreiber, 2016; Liamputtong, 2013). This study draws on Heidegger's (2010) hermeneutic phenomenology to understand how participants' subjective lived experiences influenced their choices to reoffend. For example, after collecting data on participants' lived experiences of labelling after having served a term in prison, the researcher further explored how being labelled influenced participants to re-offend.

Phenomenology allows the researcher to recruit, and collect data from, people who have lived through the phenomenon being studied (Goulding, 2005), as well as to focus on participant subjective experiences, rather than generalise to other populations (Mosselson, 2010). Phenomenology is also flexible to allow subjective critical interpretations of lived experiences (van Manen, 2017), and in part allows researchers to presuppose or pre-understand the phenomenon under study, conforming to the principles of reflexivity (Reid, Brown, Smith, Cope, & Jamieson, 2018). The researcher therefore remains conscious of their own prejudices, which limits possible effects on research outcome credibility and allows a deeper understanding of the phenomenon from the participant point of view (Converse, 2012). The approach allowed me to acknowledge and declare my position in this study, and interpret participant lived experiences, to create common meaning about the phenomenon under study (Carpenter & Suto, 2008).

Qualitative research designs, such as grounded theory, narrative, ethnography, case study, and participatory action research, one way or the other collect lived-experience data from participants (Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clark, & Morales, 2007). The merit of phenomenological design lies in its analytical quest to create common meanings from lived experiences to aid understanding of the phenomenon under study (van Manen, 2017), and to interpret and identify commonalities in subjective lived experiences (Creswell et al., 2007).

Offender recidivism has one meaning, yet the mode through which one becomes a recidivist may not have a single interpretation. Bevan (2014) argues that individuals have multiple interpretations of a phenomenon based on their perspective and prejudices, which is where, given the subjective nature of the research questions, phenomenology design is particularly helpful in collecting data that reflect diverse views (van Manen, 2017).

Study Population

This study collected data from prison inmates, prison officers, and community members at Ankaful, Kumasi, and Nsawam townships in Ghana, West Africa. Data were collected from inmates serving sentences at the Ankaful Maximum Security, Nsawam Medium Security, Nsawam Female, and Kumasi Central Prisons. Additionally, community members living in the communities where the prisons are situated participated in the study. The specific prisons were selected because of their population as compared to similar prisons in the country and security levels. In terms of population, the medium security prison is the most populous, followed by the minimum security prison at Kumasi. The female prison that was selected for this study was the most populous female prison in the country and the only prison in the country that housed multiple incarcerated female inmates during the time of data collection. Further, the selected male prisons represent the three main prison categories (high security, medium security, and minimum or low security) in Ghana, which may allow transferability of findings (Polit & Beck, 2010) to other prison settings in Ghana.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Only inmates currently incarcerated in the selected prisons who: (1) had been imprisoned more than once, and (2) were living in the metropolises (Kumasi and Cape Coast) or municipality (Nsawam) where the prisons are located prior to their second prison sentence (or subsequent prison sentences) were sampled. Participation in this study was restricted to inmates who were first incarcerated at age 35 or younger (youth). This study concentrated on youth re-offending because it is the most incarcerated age group in Ghana. First time offenders were excluded from the study. Additionally, inmates who had never lived in the metropolis or municipalities where the prisons are located were excluded because a key aspect of the research was to explore the impacts of labelling occurred in the communities into which inmates were released. Correctional officers with at least five years of service in a

role responsible for inmate rehabilitation and reformation in the selected prisons were also recruited for this study. The minimum five-year tenure requirement was to ensure that correctional officer participants were experienced in, and knowledgeable about, the role. Prison officers with no responsibility for inmate reformation and rehabilitation were excluded from the study.

Community members were recruited from the Kumasi and Cape Coast Metropolitan Assemblies and Nsawam Municipal Assembly, where the selected prisons are located. Additionally, a community member was recruited if she or he was (1) 18 years or above during data collection, (2) of proven good behavior (award winner and/or a role model or a member of the family tribunal or family head), and (3) a resident in the relevant metropolis or municipality for five years or more. The stipulation about the length of time a person had lived in a community was made because it is assumed that perceptions about inmates and the prison system develop over a period of time.

Recruitment Procedure

The study recruited three groups of participants: inmates imprisoned at least twice or more in any one of the selected prisons (Nsawam Medium Security Prison, Nasawam Female Prison, Ankarful Maximum Security Prison and Kumasi Central Prison) in Ghana; correctional officers with experience in inmate rehabilitation and reformation in any of the selected prisons; and community members.

Recruitment Procedure for Correctional officers

With the recruitment of correction officers, I secured approval letters from the Ghana Ministry of Interior and Ghana Prisons Service (institutions responsible for prison administration), permitting officers of the three selected prisons to participate in the research. Upon my arrival in Ghana, I met with the relevant prison authorities to explain the purpose, risks, and benefits of the study. After these briefings, I pasted a flyer with details of the study

on the respective correction officers' notice boards and invited interested officers to contact me to express interest in participating. Through this process fifteen correction officers (who satisfied the inclusionary criteria) were recruited for the study.

Recruitment Procedure for Inmate Participants

Once the Ghana Ministry of Interior and Ghana Prisons Service had provided written approval for inmates of the three prisons to participate in the study, I scheduled meetings with the relevant prison authorities to formulate a recruitment strategy for inmates and to seek approval to approach potential inmate participants to brief them about the study. Initially, I had prepared a flyer as a way of communicating with the inmates about the study, however the prison officers explained that many inmates were unable to read, making it necessary to brief them in person. After this briefing, interested inmates were invited to write their names on a paper and leave it in a ballot-style box placed in the prison. Twenty-five inmates who satisfied the inclusionary criteria and proved to be knowledgeable about the topic under study (and did not fall within the exclusionary criteria) were recruited.

Recruitment Procedure for Community Members

In Ghana, every community has an Assembly Member who is chosen through a community-based election. These leaders were my first point of contact to discuss the purpose, risks and benefits of the study. I asked them to introduce me to other potential study participants such as community leaders, elders, family heads and others who have demonstrated good citizenship. This community referral process is a culturally acceptable way of recruiting participants in Ghana. After briefing the potential participants one-on-one, they went away with an information flyer (written in English) with my contact details on it. The first 13 community members (taking into account the inclusionary and exclusionary criteria) who contacted me by telephone to express interest were recruited for the study.

Sampling Technique

A purposeful sampling technique was used to recruit participants to the study, which is not the first of its kind conducted with prison inmates, prison officers, and community members that have sampled participants using purposeful sampling. While previous prison-related studies (Liu & Chui, 2018; Samele, Forrester, Urquia, & Hopkin, 2016; Sasso, Delogu, Carrozzino, Aleo, & Bagnasco, 2018) have employed purposeful sampling to aid gathering information-rich data, purposeful sampling technique was not selected for this study because of its popularity in qualitative research (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Rather, it was deemed appropriate to best address the research questions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) by recruiting information-rich (Paton, 2015) and sufficiently-competent (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) participants for in-depth study, including inmates, prison officers, and community members (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2015; Patton, 2002). Accordingly, purposive sampling technique ensured that selected participant inmates, prison officers and community members had sufficient knowledge and were willing to share information relevant to the purpose of this study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). For example, selected participant inmates had to have been imprisoned at least once before their current prison term, community members must have lived in the same community where the prison is situated for at least five years, and prison officers must have worked in a rehabilitation and reformation role for at least five years. In addition, I assessed anyone who expressed interest for their knowledge about the topic under study and willingness to give rich information. Purposive sampling technique therefore ensured selection of information-rich cases that satisfied the inclusion criteria, for individual in-depth interviews (Paton, 2015).

Sampling and Sample Size

The study collected, analysed, and presented primary data via interviews with inmates, prison officers, and community members. A growing body of qualitative literature stresses that theoretical saturation is the basis for achieving rigour and trustworthiness of a study (Rowlands, Waddell, & McKenna, 2015; Saunders et al., 2018). Guest et al (2006) contend that principles of data saturation are the best determinant of sample size for purposive sampling. To address the research questions, I followed what is referred to in the qualitative literature as "interview to redundancy", or saturation (Trotter, 2012), where the research questions are explored thoroughly until only information gathered from previous interviews is repeated, with no new thoughts coming from subsequent interviews (Hennink, Kaiser, & Marconi, 2017). Accordingly, using saturation as the basis principle, data was gathered from 53 participants. The sample size is considered appropriate because after conducting 47 participant interviews, a subsequent six interviews yielded only repetition of what had been established in the earlier interviews. At this point, all concepts, ideas, and issues had been well explored to address the research questions (Hennink et al., 2017).

Further, researchers contend that sample size in a qualitative study should be manageable: not so large as to make it difficult to extract rich information (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007), but not so small as to make it difficult to achieve data saturation (Flick, 1998). Furthermore, it should be noted that a qualitative study does not derive its quality on sample size, but rather the depth of information (Hennink et al., 2017). A study analysing sample sizes of 560 PhD qualitative studies revealed a mean sample size of 31 (Mason, 2010). To that end, the sample for this study constituted 25 inmates (eight each from the Ankaful Maximum Security Prison and Nsawam Medium Security Prison, seven from the Kumasi Central Prison, and two from the Nsawam Female Prison). During transcription of the inmates' interviews I found that there was an emerging issue about the inmates' mental

wellbeing, and I wanted to explore further. This led to a follow up interview to explore further with the 17 inmate participants who were first interviewed, as well as the additional eight. The follow up interviews shed light on participants' initial views on their mental wellbeing, adding to the discourse of criminal justice social work. Some results from this study were published in peer reviewed journals (see Baffour, Francis, Chong, Harris, & Darkwa Baffour, 2020; Baffour, Francis, Chong and Harris, 2020). In addition to responses from the 25 inmate participants, 13 community members (four each from the Cape Coast Metropolis and Nsawam Township, and five from Greater Kumasi) and 15 prison officers (four each from the three male prisons and three from the female prison) are represented in the current study making a total sample of 53 participants.

The study sampled reoffender inmates as the main unit of analysis of this project, who provided in-depth information about contributing factors to recidivism, based on their experiences in prison and their respective communities. Similarly, prison officers were sampled because they are responsible for inmates' wellbeing, reformation and rehabilitation in prison, and were therefore able to provide relevant information about offender rehabilitation and prison conditions, and how these factors impact on recidivism. The study included community members from the locations of the selected prisons because they were able to provide insights into community reactions and responses to inmates returning to the community post-incarceration.

Methods of Data Collection

Data were collected using qualitative semi-structured interviewing method. Of the three main qualitative research data collection methods (semi-structured, unstructured, and structured), semi-structured emerged as the best fit for this study (Chadwick, Gill, Stewart, & Treasure, 2008). The advantage of semi-structured over structured method is its flexibility, which allows the researcher to probe participants to potentially reveal new ideas and insights

(Chadwick et al., 2008). While unstructured interview method gives the researcher flexibility to probe, it has been criticised for lacking structure and organisation (Kallio, Pietila, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016). Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to conduct individual in-depth interviews, effectively conversations that amass rich information, that explore issues, concepts, and ideas (Galletta, 2012) about the research questions.

Semi-structured interviews were prepared in the format of interview guides, or topics, that related to the questions and purpose of the study (Taylor, 2005), with a separate interview schedule for each responding group. An example of a topic guide for inmates is: Why re-offending among inmates is increasing. Under this topic guide, participants were asked to narrate their experiences during imprisonment and post-prison that may have contributed to their subsequent re-imprisonment. In the interview guide for correctional officers, they were asked to shed light on how overcrowding and short-term sentencing affect the recidivism rate of Ghana. With community members, the interview guide solicited their perceptions about the prison and inmates based on their previous encounters with ex-prison inmates (detailed interview guides have been outlined at the end of the thesis report). Using a semi-structured topic guide helped to moderate the interviews in a way that allowed for in-depth exploration of the topic under study by probing participant responses while at the same time situating discussions to focus on addressing the research questions.

All interviews (with the exception of those with the first 17 participant inmates) were audiotaped with participant consent. Field notes were taken for the interviews with the first 17 inmate participants, as security protocols did not allow the use of electronic audio recording devices in the prisons at the time. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, with each participant choosing the language, English (an official language for Ghana) or Asanti Twi, with which they were most comfortable. The researcher being fluent in both languages, there was no need for an interpreter. All inmates and seven out of the 13 community

members opted for Asanti Twi interviews, while the remaining six community members and all of the prison officers were interviewed in English. Interview duration was between 1 hr to 2 hr 15 min per participant, with the first data-gathering program completed within six months and the second within two months. Prison protocols caused 18 inmate interviews to be suspended part way through and completed the next day.

Trustworthiness

Many scholars criticise qualitative research methods and question the validity and credibility of the resulting findings because of a perceived effect of researcher bias (Welsh, 2002). According to critics, qualitative research is not as rigourous or transparent as quantitative research (Cope, 2014). To address these concerns, qualitative scholars advocate that researchers critically consider the trustworthiness and credibility in the qualitative research processes (Sinkovics, Penz, & Ghauri, 2008). It is based on this that this study measures the trustworthiness and credibility of the results.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the researcher was reflexive throughout the study. Reflexivity constitutes the basis for qualitative research credibility (O’Connor, 2011). Robson (2004) reasons that the researcher’s detailed account of their biases and presuppositions are evidence of credibility and an ethically-developed study. In this study, the researcher practised reflexivity by maintaining awareness of personal biases and ensuring findings were based only on participant lived experiences. Further, results from this study rely on three discrete participant groups (data source triangulation) providing multidimensional views on the research question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). In addition to data source triangulation, theory triangulation was also employed (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014), whereby social learning theory and labelling perspective were used to interpret and assign meaning to participants’ lived experiences. Finally,

computer based (NVivo) data analysis further enhances consistency and credibility of the qualitative findings (Smyth, 2006).

Data Analysis and Presentation

After the interviews the field data was transcribed using the 2016 version of Microsoft Word. The researcher translated interviews conducted in the Asanti Twi language to English during transcription. Data were analysed using NVivo 12 qualitative data analysis software package. Analysis of data with the NVivo software followed Braun & Clark's (2006); six phases of thematic data analysis. Thematic analysis was deemed appropriate for this study due to its philosophical commonality with phenomenology. Ho, Chiang, & Leung (2017) reason that thematic analysis conforms to the tenets of phenomenology approach that allows researchers to interpret and make meanings out of raw data. Like phenomenology, thematic analysis allows the researcher flexibility to use their own judgement (presupposition) to identify what should count as a theme in the data set (Clark & Braun, 2017). Further, thematic analysis guides the researcher to identify patterns or themes based on narrations of lived experiences and perceptions (Braun and Clark, 2017).

Firstly, the researcher became familiar with the field data through transcription (Bird, 2005), and reading and re-reading the data set (Braun & Clark, 2006). The second phase involved systematically generating initial codes for interesting features of the data (Braun & Clark, 2006). In the third phase, the researcher assigned codes to potential themes and grouped all the data relevant to each potential theme (Braun & Clark, 2006). The fourth phase was reviewing the assigned themes to see if they worked in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, and if so, generating a thematic map of the analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006). A clear definition and name for each theme was assigned in the fifth phase (Braun & Clark, 2006). In the final stage, the researcher produced a detailed write-up and meaningful presentation of the field data (Braun & Clark, 2006).

Ethical Considerations

It should be noted that most study participants constituted prison inmates, who are classified as a vulnerable group because they are deprived of their liberty and do not have absolute control over their rights and wellbeing (Fisher, 1993). This study therefore was conducted in accordance with the principles that govern human research, with a particular emphasis on the vulnerable status of the participant inmates. To that end, participant respect, dignity, and rights were ensured throughout the study. Accordingly, participation in the study was voluntary; no person was exploited or coerced at any stage of the recruitment or data collection processes. Participants were recruited after the purposes, risks and anticipated benefits of the study had been clearly explained and with informed consent (Ford & Reutter, 1990). The researcher conducted the study in such a way as to maximise the benefits for the target population, as well as minimise risks in attempting to achieve those aims. For example, counsellors were employed to address any distress or discomfort that may have arisen during and after data collection. Further, participants were made aware that they had a right to withdraw from the study, if they so wished, at any point of the project.

Additionally, information from previous research used in this study was duly acknowledged to avoid plagiarism. Participant confidentiality was protected by use of pseudonyms. Some participants suggested their own pseudonyms, while others allowed the researcher to choose their alternative names. Table 2 shows pseudonyms for all 45 study participants categorised by participant group:

Table 3 Pseudonyms used for study participants

Inmates (n=25)	Rehabilitation Officer (n=15)	Community members (n=13)
Yawa	Officer Azuma	Maame Afi
Barrack	Officer Amma	Mr Kwadwo
Ali	Officer Otuo	Mr Sarkodie
Teye	Officer Baker	Maame Kramo
Kwadwo	Officer Wayo	Nana
Kumson	Officer Kumi	Sir Alfred
Kwame	Officer Ebo	Honourable Fiifi
Banda	Officer Quay	Teacher Ofori
Annor	Officer Adu	Mr Kusi
Owu	Officer Yaw	Mr Kwao
Awua	Officer Tee	Maame Akua
Ammo	Officer Ako	Maame Eto
Adom	Officer Abu	Mr Anan
Osei	Officer Esi	
Baah	Officer Atwu	
Esi		
Kafui		
Patey		
Oti		
Adam		
Fiifi		
Essien		
Nii		
Azuma		
Asante		

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter detailed methods and procedures for participant recruitment, data collection and analysis, as well as documenting the study. The researcher's experiences

during the thesis formation, sector and academic board ethics approval, and interview phases, were highlighted. There followed a discussion of qualitative methodology that guided the research approach, participant recruitment and data collection methods, inclusionary and exclusionary criteria, sample size, as well as data analysis method and ethical protocols observed in the study. This leads to the results section which presents qualitative data collected from the 45 participants of the study and results of the data analysis.

PART FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

FINDINGS

Introduction

This study set out to critically understand contributing factors to recidivism in Ghana from social learning theory and labelling perspectives, and this section presents and discusses the findings. Data analysis and critical reflection indicate that, although social learning occurred in the prisons, and labelling in the communities to which inmates returned, mediating factors reinforced their effects. The following sections will cover mediating factors to social learning in the selected prisons, contributing factors to recidivism from the perspective of the social learning theory, mediating factors to ex-convicts' experiences of labelling in the community, contributing factors to recidivism from the perspective of labelling, and discussion and conclusions.

Figures 2 and 3 depict causal processes to social learning in the prisons and labelling in the communities, respectively. Using critical social work theory as the overarching framework provides context by referencing the systemic failures, societal injustices and inequalities in the prisons and communities that are root causes of labelling and social learning (Stepney, 2006).

Figure 2: Mediating factors to social learning in the prisons

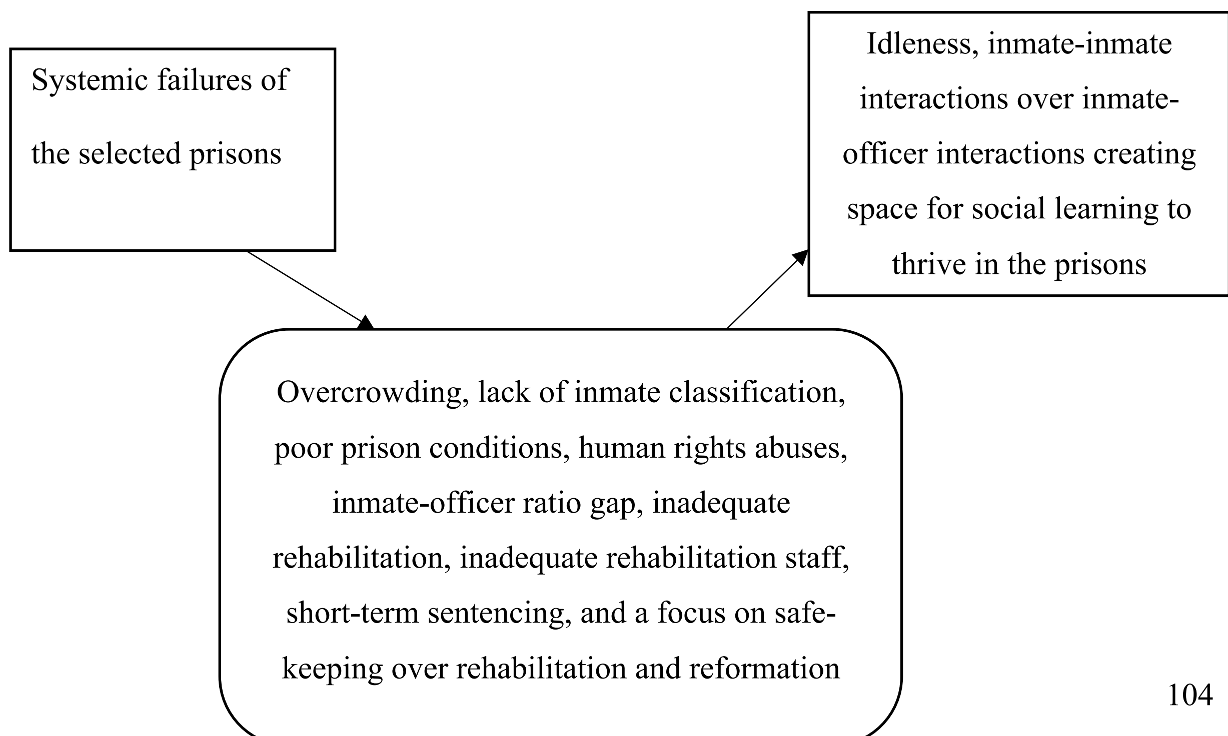
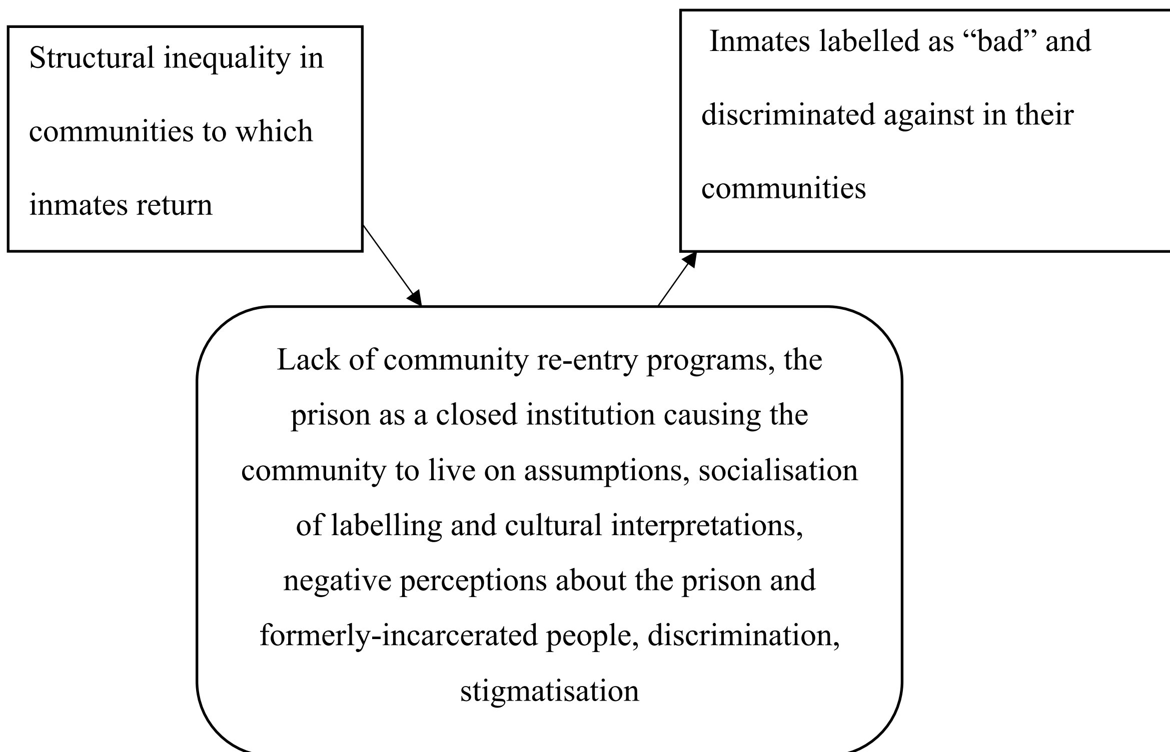


Figure 3: Mediating factors to labelling in communities to which inmates return



Critical social work theory aims to trace the root cause of a phenomenon in order to design interventions aimed at changing the status quo (O'Neil & Farina, 2018). The following sections present participant responses that describe the dominant and endemic institutional and cultural factors in the selected prisons and communities (Miller & Garran, 2017). For example, some community members perpetuate myths (Edwards, 2019) about the origin and formation of the prison system in Ghana to justify discrimination and stigmatisation against ex-convicts. I also present findings about the impacts of structural injustice and systemic failures on the power imbalance between non-incarcerated people and those formerly incarcerated.

Data presented in chapter six reveal that inmates engage in differential association, creating space for other components such as definition, differential reinforcement, and modelling to prevail among inmates, with forms of differential association including: survival or circumstantial, reciprocal, and reunion differential associations. These differential

associations negatively impact reformation and re-entry processes that may empower inmates and prevent future infractions. In addition, study findings show traditional myths that create negative perceptions about prisons and former inmates are a cause of inmate labelling in the community. Participant inmates experienced inequality in employment, romantic relationships and friendships when they returned to their communities.

The final part of this section discusses the study findings in relation to the literature and theoretical frameworks and suggests policy changes aimed at improving the lives of formally-incarcerated people and reducing recidivism rates.

Crime and Incarceration Profile of the Inmate Participants

This section presents the crime and incarceration profiles of the inmate participants. Inmates were incarcerated for a range of offences from non-criminal infractions such as traffic offences and fighting, to petty or minor offences such as pickpocketing, snatching mobile phones, and stealing farm produce and livestock, to more serious armed robbery and fraud. All 25 inmate participants were first incarcerated for either a non-criminal or minor offence. For example, 12 out of the 25 stated that their first prison sentence was as a result of either a fight with a neighbour and/or traffic offence. The remaining 13 inmates engaged in petty theft such as mobile phone snatching or stealing a neighbour's livestock or farm produce such as plantain and/or cassava.

A key finding of this study is that having served an initial prison term for non-criminal offences, such as traffic infringements, participants were reincarcerated for more serious offences such as fraud, mobile phone snatching or narcotics-related offences. Those who had engaged in mobile phone snatching either repeated the same crime or were charged with more serious crimes such as fraud, burglary, or highway and/or bank robbery in their subsequent incarcerations. At the time of data collection inmate participants were commonly imprisoned for offences such as burglary, narcotics, and bank and armed robbery. Five of the

inmate participants were serving sentences for murder and/or manslaughter. At the time of data collection 21 out of the 25 participants admitted that they were currently, or had at least once, served a term of incarceration for armed robbery or fraud.

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Table 4 demographic characteristics of participants

Total = 53 Participants (25 inmates, 15 prison officers, 13 community members)	
Years of service range for prison officers	09-31
Years lived in the community (community participants)	07-80
Age range of all participants	19-80
Age range of inmate participants	19-43
Aged below 30	19
Aged 30 or above	06
Age at first incarceration	17-21
Sex of inmate participants	
Females	02
Males	23
Educational level for inmate participants	
Basic school dropout	20
Completed high school	04
Completed tertiary	01
Marital status of inmate participants	
Divorced	09
Never married	16
Number of prison terms range	03-11
Employment status during the last period in community	
Unemployed	21
Employed	04
Time spent in their current prison terms	
One to nine months	20
One year or more	05
Duration of first sentence	03-09 months
Years of current sentence range	10-life

CHAPTER FIVE

MEDIATING FACTORS TO SOCIAL LEARNING IN THE SELECTED PRISONS

Introduction

This chapter focuses on mediating factors such as overcrowding, poor prison conditions, and inadequate inmate rehabilitation that facilitate social learning in the selected prisons. Rehabilitation Officer Azuma explains:

> I cannot deny that there are bad inmates' associations in the prison – I must also say that the formation of such friendships would have been minimised or put under check if we had a supporting environment. The conditions in the prison favour the inmate body; they are by far more than us (prison officers) and this makes it difficult for us to control their movement. They spend all the time in the prison chatting among themselves because the rehabilitation facilities are either outmoded or lacking . . . we are supposed to reform them, but because of our low capacity, that is far from being achieved.

Officer Azuma's views reflect those of almost all 15 officers who participated in this study, whose responses suggest that social learning in prisons does not happen in a vacuum: rather, multiple contributing factors make it possible. Study participants, especially the inmates and rehabilitation officers, observed that the prisons were either overcrowded, had inadequate rehabilitation services and facilities, or both. Three subthemes emerged under this theme: (i) overcrowding; (ii) poor prison conditions; and (iii) inadequate rehabilitation and supervision.

Overcrowding and Inmate Social Learning

Officer Amma laments:

> The male prisons are overcrowded because a couple of them are not in use and there has been no replacement. For example, the river has washed the Keta Prison at Volta

Region away and nothing has been done to replace it. At Accra, the James Fort and Usher Fort prisons have been closed down to be used for tourism. At Cape Coast, the Cape Coast Castle and Anomabo Prison have also been turned to tourist sites. Most of these prisons, particularly the James and Usher Fort prisons were used to accommodate remand inmates. Since their closure remand inmates are sent to the Medium Security and Central Prisons, putting intense pressure on the existing facilities, which were not expanded for this additional demand.

While increasing crime rates have affected Ghana's incarceration rate (Oteng-Ababio et al., 2016), according to the prison officer participants in this study, since the early 2000s the major decline in the number of prisons has overburdened the remaining facilities: "Resources do not match the increasing population – things are very difficult because of overcrowding" (Officer Otuo).

Overcrowding is a major problem for the Ghana Prisons Service, which 23 out of the 25 inmates and 15 prison officers who participated in this study, raised. Inmates revealed that Kumasi Central Prison and Nsawam Medium Security Prison especially, were overly congested: "In my room we are more than 100, every Friday they admit new people, once they are sentenced to the prison, they should get a place to sleep" (Yawa). The inmate population was thought to be increasing every week with little effort to address the problem. A statement by a rehabilitation officer at the Central Prison supports this:

> The Kumasi prison is too congested, and effort is not made to reduce the population . . . now, I will describe the situation as above the threshold of describing it. The prison has a current population of almost 2000 inmates whilst it is a facility that should accommodate not more than 400 inmates (Officer Baker).

Similar to the Central Prison, inmates at the Medium Security Prison reported it was accommodating more than its original capacity: "I am glad you got the chance to visit where

we sleep – it is clear that the cells are taking far more than it is supposed to – for me even if we were 600 in the prison it will still be too much" (Patey). An officer at the Medium Security Prison confirms Patey's view:

> Our prisons are very crowded, especially the Nsawam prison; the facilities we have here were constructed to accommodate 700 inmates, as I speak, the total lock up is over 3500. The cells are not supposed to accommodate more than 10 inmates but as it stands, because of overcrowding we are forced to keep 40 to 50 inmates or more in a cell (Officer Wayo).

The rehabilitation officers suggest that prison overcrowding affects rehabilitation efforts because there is no ability to classify inmates based on their number of incarcerations, crime type or crime magnitude, especially in the medium security and central prisons. Participant prison officers and inmates highlight that overcrowding makes it difficult for rehabilitation officers to connect with inmates and impart prosocial behaviours. This is because: (1) inmates have more contact with other inmates than with the rehabilitation officers; (2) overcrowding exacerbates poor prison conditions which cause inmates to adopt coping behaviours that contribute to the process of behavioural learning among the inmates; and (3) overcrowding places intense demands on limited resources, especially rehabilitation facilities.

Overcrowding: the root cause of problems in prisons

Some study participants describe overcrowding as the "root cause of all problems facing the prison" (Officer Amma; Officer Kumi; Officer Ebo). "We are facing severe overcrowding – this has affected the facilities and resources we need to run effectively" (Officer Kumi). Officer Ebo laments: "Overcrowding is affecting every effort, if their numbers are that we can manage, then we can effectively implement rehabilitation programs."

Inmate numbers completely overwhelm the prison physical infrastructure such as workshops, cells, toilets and other infrastructure: “As we speak, in my cell we are supposed to be eight people, but we are more than 50” (Ali). Aside from its physical effects, overcrowding undermines rehabilitation efforts. Officer Quay explains:

> Because of their number, all what we can do is to keep them safe . . . they are more than us, this has affected how we would have engaged them. I am saying this because even if you were employed to the service to undertake a specific activity based on your profession, you will still be deployed on general duties and this affects your performance because at the end of the day you can only do little to reform the many inmates we have.

Overcrowding: lack of proper inmate classification

Prisons generally classify inmates so that those serving sentences for similar crimes, with similar security requirements, are held together and kept separate from other categories of inmates. The rehabilitation officers in this study suggest this process would help control negative behavioural influence transfer, especially from high-risk inmates such as multiple offenders and those serving sentences for serious and/or violent crimes such as armed robbery, sex offences and fraud. However, large inmate numbers make this impossible. Officer Wayo explains with an example:

> We should be able to classify them by offences and sentences, for example, high sentenced offenders should be separated from short term sentenced offenders, first time offenders should be separated from recidivists, and hardened criminals like armed robbers should be separated from non-hardened once like traffic offenders, but due to the problem we have with overcrowding and inadequate facilities we are unable to classify them, we mingle them even with remand inmates.

The scale of overcrowding in two of the selected prisons even prevents inmate

classification based on sentencing status (remand or convicted): "Overcrowding has prevented us from classifying offenders; in most prisons remand inmates are intermingled with convicts" (Officer Adu). An inmate explains his experience in the prison: "We do not have a separate cell for different offences, everybody can live with anyone here . . . I am serving sentence for robbery, but I have not been separated from the other inmates who are serving sentences for abuse, stealing or rape" (Teye). Officer Yaw confirms:

> Under normal circumstances we are supposed to place higher sentenced inmates in the block B and lower sentenced inmates in block A. But now that they are more than the facility's capacity, we are forced to intermingle them.

Unclassified inmates are therefore housed together and treated equally, irrespective of their offences, security categories, and treatment needs. In this study, inmates and rehabilitation officers raised the issue of inmate intermingling without consideration of vulnerability and/or recidivism risk: "An inmate who came with just a petty theft – like pickpocketing, spends the whole term in the prison living with and interacting with an armed robber who robbed with a gun" (Officer Ebo). Barrack, an inmate, observes:

> As I speak to you, there are a lot of young guys who are serving four to six months and they are mixed up with hardened inmates who are serving life sentences and came in with bank robbery and other serious crimes.

Participant textual narratives suggest that lack of classification affects inmate behaviour and decisions. Officer Tee shares:

> Allowing the inmates to do everything together with no regard to their status has dire repercussions, somebody who has been sentenced for 25 or 50 years and someone with 3 or 6 months have different mindset or ideas . . . if they are allowed to mingle they will have ideas to share and those serving higher sentence with serious crimes are more likely to influence those with short-term sentence and/or minor crimes.

Officer Wayo, a rehabilitation officer, remembers a number of inmates first imprisoned for minor crimes who later returned after committing more serious crimes:

> I have been in this job for over 20 years and have seen a lot of these cases; people who came with stealing and were discharged, came back with a gang robbery; many of them . . . mingling them together is not good for them, it is very bad for their reformation and it is one of the main reasons why most of them come back.

Exploring the Consequences of Overcrowding and Intermingling on Recidivism

Participants linked intermingling and overcrowding to prison behavioural learning, or contamination. Officer Quay explains:

> From my experience, over the years I have come to believe that combining the inmates and not grouping them based on the nature of offences does not do them any good . . . it gives them more freedom to do whatever they want and the 'green' ones are influenced by the most hardened inmates. Even though we have achieved some successes, most of them leave the prison not reformed but more hardened than they came. The behaviour and attitude are learned, no doubt about that; they influence one another.

Some inmates shed further light on Officer Quay's assertion, illustrating with their lived experiences in the cells. For example, Kumson says:

> You see people who came here with very minor offences coming back with serious crimes . . . sometimes you see some smoking in the prison; they learnt it from the prison, and it is because we are packed in the same cell with different crimes and behaviours.

Another inmate, Kwadwo, echoes this sentiment:

> We are mixed together, but when you come to the cells we came with different crimes . . . this makes those who came with minor offenses listen to the conversations

> of the hardened criminals and it affects future behaviours, there are a lot of people who first came with plantain theft and they are back with armed robbery.

An officer makes this frank assertion: "Overcrowding leads to re-offending because it forces us to combine all sort of offenders under one roof – this makes it easy for them to share ideas among each other" (Officer Tee). Kwame, a recently-reincarcerated inmate, discusses how his first prison experience influenced his subsequent behaviour:

> We are mixed up in the cells, I remember when I first came to the prison, I was sharing a cell with people who were serving more than 50 years . . . I was serving only 6 months . . . in my cell there were people serving life – armed robbers, fraudsters . . . sometimes you see them making money from the fraud, even in the prison . . . how they do it is very plain . . . you cannot take your eyes off it and this will be what you are going to feed your eyes and mind on for 6 months.

Placing inmates of all criminal orientations together without proper rehabilitation programs and/or therapy is tantamount to equipping them with tools and techniques for committing further offences post-prison. Officer Otuo acknowledges that:

> The congestion has led to insufficient space to classify inmates . . . it limits our effort to do basic things . . . reformation and rehabilitation has become difficult to achieve . . . the resources remain the same, but the inmates keep on increasing . . . this has put severe pressure on the available resources and to the inmates disadvantage – their behaviours keep on getting worse and worse.

While inmates went unclassified, few were enrolled in rehabilitation and therapeutic programs. Also, there is little or no contact with prison officers, as Officer Baker confirms: "Because of overcrowding, we barely get the chance to talk to most of the inmates." The massive disparity between inmate and prison officer numbers affects inmate-officer relationships and impedes inmate rehabilitation and reformation: "For prisoners to be

reformed there is the need for officers to create a friendly atmosphere, but because of their numbers we hardly have direct contact with them" (Officer Kumi). Officer Yaw acknowledges that this situation encourages inmate-inmate interactions over officer-inmate interactions, which is not good for inmate rehabilitation: "I believe this is not good for their reformation because they converse and negatively influence each other".

Overcrowding – a stumbling block to prosocial behaviour

Incarcerated people generally import vices to the prison (Kigerl & Hamilton, 2016). Therefore, one of the purposes of incarceration is to reform people to behave in socially acceptable ways. While prison officers, if properly resourced, can be important contributors to inmate behavioural change, findings of this study suggest that overcrowding stymies any effort by prison officers to have meaningful contact with inmates. Officer Yaw, in particular, explains:

> It is affecting every effort we are making to reform them; look, there are many here who don't know why they are here . . . we the officers because of overcrowding we cannot devote much time and attention to every inmate at a time, but if their numbers were to be few we would be able to engage them in series of counselling that will shape their behaviours. It would also help us know who has changed and who has not so that when there is an amnesty, we can suggest to the government for such inmates to be released. All these are not done due to the issue of overcrowding.

Officer Yaw's experience resonates with many of the inmates. For example, Banda says: "Our number is more than that of the officers; they hardly get time for us – we have more conversations with fellow inmates than we do with officers." Findings of this study suggest that weak connections between inmates and prison officers as a result of overcrowding lead to inmate differential associations. According to Officer Quay: "Some of

the inmates teamed up to deal in contraband goods and other unlawful activities – it is hard for us to identify and punish them due to their number." Their ease and demonstrated lack of consequences make illicit activities a viable way to cope with prison conditions. Annor explains:

> People are eager to join bad friends because living on your own is not advisable – even though we are suffering, many of the people who belong to groups seems to find the prison life normal . . . those in the powerful associations own this place . . . they behave waywardly and go unpunished by the cell leaders.

The lived experiences presented in the passages above demonstrate how overcrowding affects the prison system and hampers effective rehabilitation and reformation (Musevenzi, 2018). Participant stories provide clarity about routine activities in the prisons that contribute to ineffective inmate reformation and rehabilitation (Ghana Prisons Service, 2015).

Prison Conditions: Human Rights Issues, Hardened Inmates, Illicit Alternative Means, and Perceived Officer Apathy

Officer Otuo laments:

> Give yourself a scenario where you are living in a single room with 20 people . . . that room may even be well ventilated . . . over here look at the size of their windows, and each room accommodates over 40 people.

Conditions in the prisons, particularly the Kumasi Central and Nsawam Medium Security Prisons, where inmates live under extremely poor conditions, raise human rights concerns. Participant responses in this study highlight how poor prison conditions influence inmate behaviours. Firstly, when conditions in prison harden, rather than deter inmates, their likelihood of partaking in more dangerous behaviours increases (Meseret, 2018), both in prison and the wider community. Owu says: "The way we are treated in the prison make us

very hard and trust me, we can stand any circumstance." Barrack elaborates:

> If you come to our cells in the night and see how they pack us like fish in a can . . . conditions like this do not reform but make people become resistant to change . . . we are going through hardship and it prepares you to face any challenge when you go to the community.

Secondly, inmates devise alternative means to survive and partake in activities that are often against prison rules: "In this prison, the food we eat, as I have indicated earlier is very bad and unsatisfactory . . . to be able to survive, a lot of us devise illegal means to find food" (Oti). Finally, inmates in this study joined a group or sought friendship during their term in the prison to cope with the conditions:

> Getting good food to eat in the prison is very difficult – a lot of people who join bad groups did not do so because they wanted to, but they had to; if you do not receive visits and you do not have friends who can help you out, you will die before your time (Ammo).

Ammo's comment echoes Kwame's expression: "The food is very bad, and you cannot rely only on it to survive here." Access to food of sufficient quality and in sufficient quantities in the selected prisons (the female prison excluded) was raised as an issue by 23 out of the 25 inmates as a fundamental human rights issue. Three options face most inmates – either to survive by: (1) joining a group or having a friend; (2) serving a fellow inmate who receives visits and can provide for one's basic needs; or (3) determination and self-control. Unfortunately, the first two options were predominant over the third, with the few that endured through determination and self-control doing so after serving three or more prison terms. Osei, one of the oldest inmates, explains:

> The food is not sufficient, if you are sick there is no medicine to take, a lot of hardships in the prison . . . these force less hardened inmates to mingle with the very

> hard ones . . . when this happens the less hardened offender must be obedient to the hardened one who will then give him food and take care of him. In the process, the hardened one will introduce the less hardened one to how hardened crimes are committed.

Osei, above, provides insight into how basic needs such as food and health care not being met in prison influences the formation of differential associations and exchange of criminal traits and knowledge. To meet their basic needs, inmates voluntarily submit themselves to the service of a relatively wealthier (or more powerful) inmate, or succumb to the influence of others, in exchange for food or some other improvement to their conditions (further details of this phenomenon in chapter six, under differential association).

Food

Food was a major topic for discussion during the interviews with inmates and prison officers. In fact, 32 out of the 40 inmates and officers who participated in this study express some level of dissatisfaction with the prison food and relate it to inmate behaviour. For example, Awua offers: “The food we eat here if we give to you, trust me, you will never eat.” In Ghana, at the time of data collection, prison administrators confirmed that a daily allowance of GHC1.80 (0.50AUD) was allocated to feed each inmate: “We are fed GHC1.80 a day – it is not enough, the food they prepare from the money in hand is not good” (Kwame). Officer Yaw, in particular, relates nutrition to behaviour:

> Feeding is not sufficient; we feed them on GHC1.80. The money I mentioned cater for their food, fish and water, which is not good for inmates’ reformation because if you are hungry how can you be reformed or learn a trade, I think something needs to be done to increase the money. How can you feed a person on 0.60GHC each in the morning, afternoon, and evening?

Further, phrases such as the food is "bad", "very bad", "not good" and/or "not good for humans", were mentioned during some prison officer interviews, and all inmate interviews (except two female inmates who expressed some level of satisfaction with the prison food). Apart from food, other conditions such as sleeping accommodation, health care, and water quality in the prisons were discussed with high sentiment during the interviews. Officer Wayo complains:

> Inmates were not sent here to be punished, but the fact the person is in prison is the punishment . . . here you are deprived of a lot of things and you are poorly accommodated, you fight over resources; for the past weeks the pipe has not been flowing, their feeding is very bad; GHC1.80 a day.

Inadequate healthcare

Participants also highlight a lack of basic health care services in the selected prisons:

> The infirmary to get treatment from too is in a very deplorable state; you go there and the only medicine available is paracetamol, irrespective of the seriousness of the illness, when it happens in the nights we are forced to transfer them to the teaching hospital, most times with our own car or hire a cab. It is recently that faith-based organisations and individuals started to donate drugs to the prisons (Officer Yaw).

Further, drugs in the prisons, mostly provided by philanthropists, often do not meet prison needs or are donated because they are approaching their expiry dates. Officer Ako says:

> There is no policy statement that states that treat prisoners when they come to the hospital and the government will reimburse the hospital. Individuals provide most of the drugs we have in our prisons. They bring it when it is about to expire. They also do not meet or solve our drug need.

Owu, an inmate who almost died in prison when his tuberculosis went untreated for months remembers:

> I remember contracting tuberculosis in the prison . . . I suffered for more than five months and the drug the prison nurse was giving me was not for the treatment of tuberculosis . . . the officers kept me here until it got to worse before they sent me to hospital in the community.

Sleeping conditions

Sleeping conditions in two of the selected prisons attracted lengthy and emotional responses during the interviews, with inmates describing the sleeping arrangements as "very bad and inhumane" (Adam; Azuma; Fiifi; Kwame; Owu). Overcrowding in these two prisons had reached a situation whereby inmates had to sleep in turns during the night. Owu says: "Sometimes you have to wait for a friend to wake up in the night before you can find a place to sleep."

After hearing inmate reports, any objective observer could only describe some of the sleeping arrangements in the selected prisons as inhumane: "Each cell has gotten five two-in-one beds – this means that we should be 10 in the room, as I speak, we are more than 100 in the room – no good air to breathe and we pack ourselves before everyone can get a place to sleep in the night" (Teye). Extreme crowding in the cells, with limited beds for inmates to sleep on, result in life-threatening situations. Kwame tells:

> My first time in the prison, I thought I was going to die, I slept under the bed with other six inmates . . . I was struggling to sleep . . . my prayer that night was: God, please, do not let me die. Later, I was squatting throughout the night . . . we will sit like this (show) in a row of seven each night.

Few inmates have access to a bed and mattress, with the only option to sleep on the

bare floor. “A lot of us sleep on the floor and we have to use our mind, otherwise some may have to stay outside, which is impossible” (Asante). Awua adds: “If you see the way we sleep, it is very bad – we have 13 people sleeping under a student bed.”

Inmates report being locked in their crowded cells for half of each day. Adom says: “When they lock us in the evening at around 5pm they open for us the next morning.” Inmates are apparently made to sit in rows on the floor for hours before being allowed to lie on the floor: “When they lock us around 5pm in the evening, we are made to sit in a very tight position till around 9pm in the evening before we are allowed to lie down” (Essien). In addition, inmates spend almost 12 hours locked in their cells without toilet facilities:

> We do not have access to toilet and bath . . . to cope with this we put two buckets in the cells; one for urinal and the other for toilet to be disposed of the next morning. I have lived in this condition for years and it is very bad to my health . . . you inhale the scent of the urine and toilet every night (Kwadwo).

Illicit alternative means

The conditions described above cause some inmates to resort to sedating themselves with contraband substances in order to get some sleep. Annor shares his view: “I believe this is why some people result to drugs to sedate themselves to be able to sleep.” Inmates use verbs such as ‘high’ and ‘braze’ to describe how they cope with their situation: “We are packed in the cells – a room like your single room in the house contains more than 50 inmates – sometimes, the only way to sleep is to get high” (Kwame). Other inmates also affirm this is a common coping strategy. For example, Barrack tells: “In order to sleep well in this prison, you need to braze; I mean smoke and feel fine before they lock us up, otherwise you will stay awake till morning.” Awua confidently says: “Those who do drugs sleep earlier than anybody, they do not feel anything.”

For the inmates, contraband sedatives come with a high price: “To get weed here is very expensive, if one row will cost you 5GHC in the community, here it costs four times the price and when they become scarce you can buy for 50GHC” (Banda). It is clear that some inmates engage in illegal activities to make money while in prison. Owu confirms: “I sell goods to survive in the prison.” Although Owu would not reveal what sort of goods he sold, in a later interview a prison officer alluded to the kind of business in which inmates engage: “They trade in contraband goods because they think that is the way to make money” (Officer Abu). Among the contraband described were phones, cannabis, cigarettes, and other pharmaceuticals. Officer Esi claims: “They sell and smoke Indian herb here – a majority of them are depressed so, maybe, it is the means to survive in the prison.” According to Officer Ebo, unscrupulous prison officers smuggle a lot of the contraband goods into the prison. He says:

> The contrabands are most often smuggled in by officers and sometimes they throw it over the walls. There is currently a case in court about an officer who threw cannabis over the wall and was shot by another officer.

Officer Yaw even suggests that trade in contraband drives recidivism, because the prison becomes a major source of income for some inmates:

> The poor conditions we are facing here makes them hardened and incorrigible and some even think that this place is better for them than that in the community. The condition does not deter them . . . they are aware of the conditions here, but they always come back . . . I think the system has made the prison a profitable place to be for some of the inmates.

The participants also describe a culture of ‘survival of the rich and powerful’ that fosters a desire to make money as the only way to improve one’s situation while in prison:

> We have rich site and poor site . . . the rich people sleep on the bed and we the poor

> sit on the floor while sleeping in the night and sleep on the floor and under the beds. You can sleep at the poor site till you finish serving your term . . . the only means to move to a better place is when you are able to pay your cell bills. Those who struggle to sleep in the night at the very poor site can leave to a better place when they pay money to the leaders (Awua).

The few available beds are supposed to be assigned on a first-come-first-served basis, however participants believe inmate leaders replaced these arrangements with a cash and carry system. Adom reveals:

> We struggle to get better place to sleep, I have been here for years but have never slept on a mattress . . . the beds are few, so we assign based on first come first serve . . . but this doesn't work because when it gets to your turn and you are a no body, the cell leader can sell the bed to new inmate who has the money . . . I have seen the leader selling a bed for GHC350. You do not complain, otherwise you will not enjoy living in the cell till you finish serving your term.

Desire to be powerful and rich – inmates become hardened

The above quote from Adom highlights that to improve one's individual circumstances an inmate needs to be powerful (either by individual or group strength) or relatively wealthy. It is therefore not a coincidence that inmates in this study express a desire to achieve power and wealth (see also chapter six under differential reinforcement), the process of which leads to inmates becoming incorrigible and more hardened. Officer Quay claims:

> In Ghana, the prison does not change offenders; it rather makes them very bad . . . they learn more tricks and the survival strategies they employ in the prison make them very hardened before they leave to the community.

Ironically, then, instead of harsh prison conditions serving to deter reoffending

(Windzio, 2007), inmates develop survival strategies that allow them to live comfortably during repeated incarcerations. Osei explains:

> Prisons in Ghana do not reform, it rather hardens you . . . the conditions you find yourself in make you develop foul means to survive in the prison and you may end up living more comfortable here after becoming adjusted to the system.

Strategies for coping with a stay in prison are passed on from one inmate to another. Kwadwo explains:

> Here you are not of yourself, you are locked into the cells at 5:30pm, we cannot sleep in that heat from that time to the next morning . . . to cope with this we talk about our past life . . . everything we talk about during this time is criminal life and this is what others take cue from and use to do bad things in the prison and outside.

Prison officers perceived as apathetic

While difficult conditions in the prisons are largely as a result of systemic failures, correctional officers are the face of the system to inmates. Many inmates perceive the prison officers to be apathetic and lacking compassion, which undermines trust, legitimacy, and relationships: "The officers are not good people, the food they give us, accommodation, and the treatment they give us are inhuman – to me they are very cruel" (Ali). Inmate Barrack is more stark in his assertion: "We are fed on GHC 1.80 – very poor food, after eating this poor food you go to sleep in a cruel setting, if you do this, how can you tell us to change our behaviours." Officer Atwu shares similar sentiments:

> Most of them think they are not been treated well . . . but that is a systemic problem . . . we did not create it, it is the system, there is not much we can do, but they think we treat them inhumanely.

Another officer, Ebo, describes how poor conditions create tension in the prison:

> The food they eat is not a motivation for effective rehabilitation . . . how can an adult survive on GHC1:80. They sometimes think we are the people giving them that bad food . . . but there is nothing we can do about it . . . this is the money we are given and we have to prepare them recipe that is within the money the prison has been assigned to. It puts intense pressure on us.

Conditions in the prisons affect rehabilitation in diverse ways: "The environment is sometimes not conducive to reform them, the facilities are very limited and this makes it difficult for authorities to run programs effectively" (Officer Kumi). One of the inmates, Adom, believes that the harsh treatment does not encourage reformation: "The treatments they take us through here, if you are not smarter and determined you will never reform." Inmates are also not in the right state of mind to learn a trade. Officer Bakar observes:

> A healthy mind resides in a healthy body, but here is the case you are being fed on GHC1:80 a day what will be the quality of food for you to be so much at peace that you have to learn, learning is supposed to take place in a conducive environment, how conducive is this place to enhance effective learning.

Inadequate Rehabilitation

Esi, a female inmate, acknowledges the impact of rehabilitation:

> My life is different this time that I am learning a trade . . . it keeps me busy all the time . . . I take the inmates' torn cloths and sew to make money . . . I do not need any bad friend to give me food and bad advice. I get money from the tailoring shop and I do not have to worry about visit.

Esi's story, told during her third stint in prison, was unusually positive compared with most of the inmate participants in this study. Due to a lack of resources, very few male inmates, in particular, are able to participate in rehabilitation programs. Barrack attests to this:

> The prison has gotten rehabilitation workshops, but they are very small and cannot contain all of us. Some individuals have donated sewing machines, but it cannot fit in the workshop because of limited space – this is why a majority of us are not learning a trade.

While the tailoring shop at one of the male prisons had extra sewing machines, there was no space in the workshop for the inmates to use them. At two other prison facilities there was no equipment for inmates to learn with in their workshops at all. Kwame notes:

> I have been in the prison for three times and have never had the chance to learn a trade . . . there is no tool to learn with . . . I wanted to learn carpentry during my second time in the prison – I got enrolled but realised that there was no tool to learn with . . . after one week, I stopped going there.

In two of the prison facilities rehabilitation programs were available, but limited, however the other male prison did not run rehabilitation programs at all. According to prison officers this was because phase two of the prison, which was designed to house rehabilitation workshops, had not been completed: "This prison has been in operation since 2011, but the treatment phase which is to ensure that inmates learn trade and leave the prison reformed is yet to be completed" (Officer Adu). As Esi attests, at the female prison the situation is more encouraging:

> Here you get to learn a lot of things if you want to because, though I am learning dressmaking I have had the chance to learn breadmaking, soap making and tie-and-dye.

In this study, 21 out of the 25 participating inmates were not enrolled in a rehabilitation program. Four additional subthemes emerged from participants related to inadequate rehabilitation:

1. Sentencing policy emphasises custody demand over rehabilitation

2. Systemic failure affects inmate rehabilitation
3. A general lack of counselling and treatment services
4. Poor officer-inmate relationships encourage inmate-inmate interactions

These factors all contribute to inadequate inmate rehabilitation and are here explored in more detail.

Sentencing Policy

The 1972 Prisons Service Decree, the primary legislation governing the Ghana Prisons Service, prioritises safe custody over rehabilitation: “The core mandate is to ensure safe custody – so if you came in as a tradesman you are still discharged to do general duties” (Officer Tee). Officer Wayo explains the prison mandate:

> The primary responsibility, as indicated in the prison service decree is to ensure safe custody and welfare of inmates and if possible, undertake rehabilitation and reformation of inmates. By law, rehabilitation is not the primary priority, it is a third priority of the service, we are supposed to do it and do it well, but we do not have the needed resources, so we mainly focus on the primary mandate.

Officer Ebo adds:

> That is our core mandate . . . so we are much concerned about that – safe custody and welfare are core mandates . . . rehabilitation is the last priority. We are concerned about threat to security and outbreaks more than rehabilitation programs . . . the service is much particular about safe custody and welfare.

In fact, performance measures for the Ghana Prisons Service are based solely on effectiveness of safe custody. Officer Quay suggests:

> We have achieved successes in keeping them in safe custody because that is what we most often use to measure our effectiveness; the government see us to be effective when we are able to keep them without escape rather than reforming them and

reintegrating them into the society.

According to Officer Ako, the Director of Prisons and other stakeholders, including the Ghanaian public, are more concerned about inmate safety than reform:

> I must be candid to you, the Director General of Prisons, if we count the inmates and one person has escaped . . . everybody in Ghana will hear about it. But if 1000 inmates do not get reformed, nobody will hear. What we do here is seeing to it that they are in custody and nothing has happened to them. We have this slogan in the service: hear him, see him, and proof his door.

Due to the emphasis on safe custody, and because of overcrowding, rather than running rehabilitation programs, skilled officers are mostly engaged in warden and guarding duties. Officer Kumi explains:

> The officers are not enough . . . the inmates' number far exceed ours. Because we are not many we train and equip officers to ensure safe custody and security. Even though we have some few skilled officers to train inmates they are forced to do general duties and are not able to go to the rehabilitation shops to help or train inmates.

Another participant, Officer Kumi, talks of how this contributes to inmates becoming incorrigible:

> Instead of reforming they rather go deformed. Custody demand takes priority over reformation. Some of the skilled officers who are supposed to go to the shops and school to teach inmates, are rather deployed to the wards to ensure security and safe custody.

Officer Yaw gives another example:

> The rehabilitation we have here cannot be compared to that of the western world . . . if you are given 100 inmates and 10 can be reformed then it is one over ten, which is a very poor mark. For example, at the Maximum Prisons we have placed all the

> hardened inmates there, without rehabilitating them; to me we are warehousing criminals who may be discharged at a point in time and they will torment the society.

Short-term sentencing

Inmates in Ghana prisons serving short sentences (nine months or less) do not go through rehabilitation, even when it is available, with the rationale that it is not possible to learn a trade in under a year. Officer Bakar explains:

> I am not in favour of short-term sentencing . . . in Ghana, if you are sentenced to nine months in prison, you are made to serve two thirds and the one third is waived . . . for example, if a person is sentenced to 9 months in prison, that person will serve six months and the remaining three months are waived – such inmates cannot learn any trade . . . six months is too short and they should not even come here in the first place.

Yawa, an inmate, provides further insight into the policy: "At the workshops, if you are serving below 2 years, sometimes five years, you are not allowed to learn a trade – I have come in for 6 months before and I did not get the chance to learn a trade." Apart from a lack of rehabilitation programs, counselling and therapeutic programs are non-existent in the prison. Inmates serving short sentences were also more vulnerable to influence when forced to share a cell with hardened and long-term inmates. Officer Kumi notes:

> The facilities are not enough, and we are supposed to segregate them but because of our inability to classify them due to the limited facility at our disposal. This leads to the long-term sentenced inmates negatively influencing the short-term inmates.

Officer Quay adds: "Because of the short nature of their sentences they are unable to learn any trade – they leave the prison with no training or skills, while they have listened and learned other inmates' crime techniques." Unreformed short-term sentenced inmates exposed to hardened inmates in prison are at risk of recidivism post prison. Officer Aku describes how:

> What I have observed over the years that I have been here is, there are a lot of people who were afraid of the prison until they came into contact with it. When you sentence somebody for one month, two months or six months, that person after seeing the prison life, get contact with other inmates and going out without any reformation – the person has been placed at a higher risk and may increase their chances of coming back. I have seen a lot of them going and coming back.

Lived experiences of some of the inmate participants further highlight the risks associated with withholding rehabilitation and reformation programs from short-term sentenced inmates while exposing them to hardened and long-term inmates. For example, inmates first convicted of petty crimes later returned to prison on armed robbery charges. Osei recounts: “I came with stealing and spent four months here, but I am now serving 73 years for bank robbery.” Owu gives this account of his sentencing history:

> My first prison term was a nine months period. I had no skills prior to that sentence and left the prison with none, but worse than before. I have always regretted coming here in the first place because my life is like this because of that – prison introduced me to many bad friends and ways . . . that is why I have been coming in and out.

These emotional stories raise questions about why offences that attract short sentences end with a custodial disposition, when exposing short-term inmates to people with diverse criminal traits, without any effort to rehabilitate or reform them, is clearly detrimental (Adekeye & Emmanuel, 2018).

Systemic Failure: Inadequate Personnel and Facilities

Due to fierce competition for resources, and an emphasis on safe custody, other important aspects of the prison are overlooked. All 15 participant prison officers suggested that rehabilitation resources, including human and material were underdeveloped. “We are faced with insufficient resources to rehabilitate the inmates” (Officer Bakar). At the prison

schools there is a pervasive shortage of teaching materials. Officer Tee, in charge of correction education, shares his experience: “Sometimes we have no marker or chalk for teachers to teach with, which is very worrying. We have a nice library, where shelves are always empty with no books for the students to read.”

Given these challenges, prison officers try to be creative to impart skills to at least a few inmates before their discharge. Officer Wayo acknowledges: “Even though the programs are limited we are doing our best.” Officer Atwu also explains:

> The facilities, you can see are very small, you cannot get workshop that can contain 1800 people at a time, we can only train just a meagre number and train you when your time is close to be discharged and in that case what about those serving 50 years or above, you have to be here to wait until you are left with few years to be discharged to be enrolled in training.

Notwithstanding prison officers’ efforts, rehabilitation facilities in the selected prisons are barely adequate for about 100 inmates. Anecdotally, it appears that many inmates spend most of their time in the cells with few getting a chance at rehabilitation: “A majority of us are always in the cells all the time” (Annor). “We are rehabilitating less than half of the population we have here – the deficit in training program is affecting a lot of the inmates to go back to crime after leaving the prison” (Officer Atwu). Officer Esi elaborates:

> Even though rehabilitation goes on in the prison . . . some people come periodically to train inmates . . . the problem is, they need to be expanded to be able to cover all inmates . . . now there are many inmates who are just chatting around in their cells and we say the devil always finds work for the idle man.

Osei, an inmate, expands on this:

> A lot of us wanted to learn a trade before leaving the prison, but the programs are not there, in this prison, the only thing we do is sport; we play soccer every morning, we

spend the rest doing nothing, imagine serving 10 or 20 years in prison doing nothing, what will you spend your life on, probably you will have more discussions with fellow inmates and that will only make you become a better criminal than better person.

Inadequate personnel

Despite the increasing inmate population in Ghana (Oteng-Ababio et al., 2016) there has been little effort to increase the number of prison officers: "Inmate-officer ratio is very bad in most Ghana prisons – the government has not recruited staff for the prisons for some time now" (Officer Ebo). Officer Quay shares his experience: "We have no more than 5,000 officers against 15,000 inmates. Administrative officers are not less than 2,000 – this means we have less than 3,000 officers against 15,000 inmates, which makes us less effective." According to some prison officers, limited staffing forces the prisons to rely on inmates who had teaching qualifications or experience prior to their incarceration to teach fellow inmates. Officer Wayo discloses:

> We do not have teachers; in the SHS we have only one permanent teacher, so we rely on the inmates to teach fellow inmates. These inmates are not motivated so they choose to come to school at their own convenience.

A further challenge for prison employees is a lack of in-service or training programs to upgrade or refresh skills. Officer Adu notes:

> Prison operations are dynamic, changes from time to time, we should have in-service training to inform officer's modern ways of doing things, but we do not have. After you graduate from the training school, that is all, no in-service training whatsoever.

Inadequate rehabilitation facilities

A further problem is limited and outdated rehabilitation infrastructure and training equipment. Officer Kumi explains:

> In most of our prisons the facilities that our colonial masters left us are what we are still using. Population has grown and crime fighting techniques have also changed but there has not been any real change in our techniques . . . the facilities we were using in the 1960s and 1970s are not different from what we are using now . . . this entangles our efforts and makes us less effective in the reformation mandate.

All 15 officers who participated in this study believe that the protracted lack of expansion, maintenance and acquisition of sophisticated equipment prevented effective reformation in the prisons. Officer Bakar asks: "The equipment to train them are not there – how then do we reform them?" Officer Kumi says: "We do not have the right resources to rehabilitate them so we are forced to keep them in custody in order to protect them from the public – that is all what we can do at the moment."

Although prison officers are motivated to train and reform inmates prior to discharge, they face multiple challenges. Officer Amma explains: "The workshops are too small to engage all the inmates . . . we are forced to take very few of them – it is our wish that we could train more, but the facilities are limited." The few who are able to participate in rehabilitation programs struggle to get the necessary learning materials and tools. Officer Otuo, a tailor in one of the prisons, shares his experience: "Tools to train them with are insufficient – we need materials to train them on . . . you cannot give them somebody's uniform for them to learn on." Officer Yaw, the rehabilitation officer of the furniture department in one of the prisons adds his experience:

> Look at this list (show) you can see there are supposed to be more than 30 inmates in this workshop, but look at the number of inmates here, less than 10 . . . when you ask them why they are not coming, they tell you when they come there is nothing here for them to do . . . we do not have materials and equipment to work with . . . once a while, an officer will come and order a bed stand, other than that, they will be doing

their own thing, when they come here, the materials are not available . . . look at the shop, no training material to teach inmates with – there is no budget set aside for prison rehabilitation.

To sum up, there is a long way to go when it comes to rehabilitation, as Officer Ebo identifies:

> With the safe custody aspect, we are doing really well but for the rehabilitation we have a long way to go . . . I am a technician but where is the workshop to train them . . . sometimes you see some of them and they are ready to learn something. If we have the workshops it could keep them busy and they will not have time to talk about other things that could lead them to crime again.

Some of the prison officers claim rehabilitation in Ghana prisons is just a myth. For example, Officer Kumi: "Funds and resources are not available to train inmates and rehabilitation of inmates in Ghana prisons is not achievable." "If you go to the rehabilitation centres, the inmates there are too many for them to accept new inmates" (Banda). Officer Abu: "We have rehabilitation workshops, but it can contain no more than 100 inmates." Inmate Owu adds:

> This prison has been operating for the past seven years but there is no workshop to train us . . . we are here learning no trade . . . this means that we are going to go home with no job skills to survive on.

Another prison officer backs up Owu's statement: "In this prison the rehabilitation side to ensure that inmates come, learn trade, and leave the prison reformed is yet to be completed."

Existing rehabilitation programs perceived as unattractive

Participants believe that if the Ghana Prisons Service improved and expanded rehabilitation facilities, they would be more attractive to the inmates. Officer Tee explains:

> We lack sufficient resources to expand the capacity of the school, but we are doing our best. Naturally, the inmates do not like the formal education . . . what I have observed is that the students want to enjoy certain privileges over the other inmates, which I think it is right, because we need to attract a lot of them to be enrolled in the school since it has been proven to be one of the best reformation and rehabilitation program we have.

Officer Tee's experience underlines the need for incentives to attract and retain inmates in a trade, school, or other rehabilitation program. Yawa, an inmate, explains why he has not thought about enrolling in a rehabilitation program: "I wish I could learn a trade, but I do not receive visits and the food is not sufficient to survive on – I have to wash clothes and do other things to make money." Banda tells a similar story:

> Because of food rationing, if you get enrolled in the program you cannot survive on the food served in the prison . . . I was washing my seniors' clothes to survive in the prison . . . I never thought of going to learn a trade.

Officer Tee, again explains:

> I think they need to be separated from the other inmates, in terms of bedding, feeding and other social services so that it can be a morale booster and attract a lot of inmates to get themselves enrolled. From where I sit, I think that arguably it is the most effective tool for rehabilitating inmates. Most of our students are attending universities and nursing training. The problem we are facing now is because they have to fight over the same food with those who are not enrolled in the school or trade, they come and the next day they will not come, you will ask why, and they will tell you, last time when I came, I missed the morning food and slept in hunger.

Some participants attributed lack of inmate interest in prison rehabilitation programs to their being perceived as outdated and uninteresting. Officer Abu notes:

> We have good trainers who are ready to train the inmates, but the equipment we have are outmoded, for example, in the carpentry shops, the trade they teach there is bench and traditional table making . . . now the societies have moved from traditional furnishing to modern furnishing . . . we do not teach how to make modern furniture like hall furniture sets, TV stands and others.

Officer Abu's insights point to prison-based rehabilitation programs that are not geared towards preparing inmates to survive on their skills in the contemporary community post-prison. Officer Quay supports this assertion: "In the prison, the little training we give are not marketable in the community nowadays."

Inadequate institutional support

While the prison officers acknowledge that formal education (school) programs have a positive impact on inmate rehabilitation and reformation, they are not officially supported in the selected prisons: "Formal education is not part of the mainstream rehabilitation for Ghana prison" (Officer Yaw). Yet prison officers say that since its introduction in 2008, the formal education program has been the most effective form of rehabilitation. None of the participant prison officers could recall any graduates of the formal education programs returning to prison. However, Officer Abu reveals:

> We are forcing to put it in . . . as a result, we have not been able to register those who are due to sit for the final exam . . . this has made the school unattractive and majority of the inmates are not motivated to get themselves enrolled.

One of the inmates, Osei, laments the limited rehabilitation facilities: "The workshops are not functioning, so you spend all your life in the prison not learning anything, you go home with no job skills just as you came." Owu agrees:

> There is no rehabilitation program here, this is my fifth time and everywhere that I have spent a prison term there are no proper rehabilitation facilities . . . some of the

prisons have workshops, but the places for the training are very small and cannot contain all of us.

Lack of Counselling and Treatment Programs

Counselling and treatment programs are also not a priority, or resourced, in the selected prisons. Participants spoke of counsellors recruited into the Service being permanently occupied with general duties aimed at ensuring safe custody, leaving limited or no time to counsel inmates. Officer Yaw explains:

> There was a counselling unit but the men brought here to counsel inmates were at the same time doing general duties – what we have is an officer in charge of inmates' welfare who is not a counsellor and also has no office for his own to be able to engage the inmates one-on-one. I do not think anybody would want to share his secrets in the midst of people he does not trust . . . at the end the welfare officer also became underutilised and is now doing a lot of general duty activities.

The above excerpt illustrates the lack of resourcing for services such as biopsychosocial assessment. Officer Bakar confirms: "We do not do any background check, even if we do, they will still end up in the same cell – the rooms are already full, and it makes it impossible for us to categorise them." Officer Otuo concurs:

> The prisons do not do any checks on inmates . . . most of the officers here were not trained to do that and there has not been any skill training to equip us to do it – we used to recruit clinical psychologists, but they always left the job because they were deployed on general duties. In reality, we just admit them, and they go straight to the cells . . . it is not helping them at all, in any way.

Weak supervision and a general lack of professional counselling, especially in the male penitentiary, create the space for inmates to engage in nonconforming behaviours while in prison. In this study, most inmate participants were abusing substances pre and during

incarceration, but there was no counselling or drug treatment program to rehabilitate such inmates. Awua reveals: “We came here as drug addicts but there is no treatment for addicts in the prisons I have visited.” Annor adds: “I have never seen any program designed to prevent people from smoking.” The findings of this study are that many inmates start abusing drugs after they are incarcerated. Officer Amma’s observations confirm this:

> Majority of our inmates abuse drugs and they are struggling to quit, most of them learned smoking within the prison walls. But we do not have drug treatment related programs that will ensure that they do not come here to learn smoking and leave as drug addicts but leave as treated persons who have the resilience to quit smoking and affect their lives and that of community positively.

Kumson reveals: “Weed is always in the prison – some people cannot stay a day without smoking weed.” Such people can become a threat to other inmates and the prison officers. Banda notes: “There are some guys here who have a strong desire for smoking and if they do not get it, they behave like mad people and turn very aggressive.” Some inmates who were abusing drugs in the prison requested treatment and attribute their recurrent imprisonment to their drug habit. Awua, in particular, explains:

> I wish I could go home and not come here again . . . I am getting old, but with no children, not even a girlfriend, I really want to change . . . the problem is, I am still doing what I used to do, I still do drugs in the prison, if I can stop before I go home, it will help me . . . I have come here many times because I am a drug addict.

Another inmate, Ali, narrates a similar lived experience:

> I will say I have gotten myself to this situation because of the drugs . . . whenever I leave the prison, I go straight to where I will get drugs . . . I need money to buy the drugs and I do not have any job to provide me that money . . . the only means is to steal to make money to buy the drugs . . . in the process, I get arrested and I end up

here.

Overreliance on faith-based organisations

Due to the lack of professional counsellors, the prisons rely on faith-based organisations to provide inmates with religious teaching and counselling. Officer Amma reveals the religious groups are delegated reformation duties by default:

> We rely heavily on the pastors and religious leaders when it comes to inmates' reformation. It is like we have delegated the reformation aspect of the prison to the pastors and religious leaders. They are here seven days a week preaching and teaching inmates about the world of God and why they should not return back to their old deeds. But when it comes to the rehabilitation part, we the officers do our best based on the resources available.

However, some officers admit that depending on the faith-based organisations to provide reform services has not proved effective. Officer Bakar, in particular, notes: "Every morning we invite pastors to come and preach to them – if it is the pastors' teachings that change people, then none of them will go and come back." As this is neither professional counselling nor evidence-based treatment, most inmates are at risk of re-incarceration. Officer Esi recounts:

> The inmates were brought in here to be reformed; but we do not have the means to reform or rehabilitate them as we want it. I am saying this because proper counselling is missing in most of the prisons I have worked with since I started working with the Ghana prisons Service over the past 19 years.

Idleness reinforces inmate associations

Without meaningful work or education opportunities, most inmates spend their incarceration period living idle. Officers and inmates recognise the danger inherent in this pervasive lack of engagement in rehabilitation: "If there are better rehabilitation programs, it may keep people

busy – there is no such program, it keeps us doing nothing and all we do is to chat among ourselves" (Patey). Officer Abu, in particular, laments: "The only thing they do to occupy themselves is to have games in the morning up to 10am. They spend the rest of the day doing nothing but interact among themselves." During these idle times, inmates are more likely to engage in conversations about crime. Officer Bakar suggests: "Crime is planned during idle hours – if you are occupied you may not have time to plan or talk about crime." Inmates spend this ample idle time chatting with one another: "We spend most of our life engaging other inmates in conversations that will only bring us back" (Kwadwo). Banda speaks passionately about this issue:

> We are always living idle; we do not have rehabilitation facilities . . . we do not work for the country . . . we are just here, always in the cells, doing nothing . . . we do not work in the prison, we do not go outside to work . . . we are just wasting the government's money . . . this is why the public and everyone see us a burden.

Officer Adu further describes the danger in inmates spending so much time unoccupied:

> In the school, if I have five students, within the period I am teaching them I have engaged them and prevented them from staying idle and planning evil things, thinking about how to break the system. The carpentry shop and other workshops, if they are well equipped could help in keeping them busy, they are always sitting idle and teasing the few who are enrolled in trade.

Officer Ebo gives his opinion on causes of reincarceration: "We need to reform the inmates, but the workshops are not completed . . . as we are here they are in the rooms conversing, doing nothing . . . this is the more reason they leave the prison worse off than they came." Kwadwo, an inmate, confirms Officer Ebo's theory:

> Staying in the prison for so long without learning a trade has not been helpful, it has rather cost most of us; we ended up doing what most inmates were doing . . . I have

myself to blame but my inability to learn a trade to get skills that could help me find a job in the community has also played a part.

Weak officer-inmate relationships

It is assumed that effective rehabilitation and reformation will take place in a professional officer-inmate relationship in a respectful and dignified environment for both parties. However, low officer-inmate ratios, poor rehabilitation facilities, overcrowding and harsh prison conditions are not conducive to constructive relationships. Officer Kumi explains:

> The trust is not there because of the existing condition and relationship we came to meet, because of the institutional framework we work within; to maintain order and security and because these rules need to be enforced in a form of punishment and the deprivation system in the prison, it is the officer who is supposed to ensure this, they see the officers to be their enemy and team up against you, in general terms, the relationship is not that good.

Further, Officer Esi blames overcrowding for a lack of basic contact between officers and inmates:

> Because they are overcrowded, we hardly got to know them . . . they will be here for years, but you may not know the true character of the person – if you do not know a person, how will you know his true character – how do you change the character?

Most inmates will spend their entire sentence without coming into contact with a prison officer. Annor confirms: “I have never encountered any advice from an officer – they leave us to live our lives – they only make sure we do not escape; they are very serious about that.” Yawa notes: “During my first and second sentences, I did not have any contact with an officer apart from the first day I got to the prison and when I was leaving the prison.”

While inmate-inmate interactions dominate at the male prisons, the opposite appeared

to be true at the female prison, where officer/inmate ratios are far higher. For example, Kafui acknowledges:

> Here we are not many, the officers are even more than us, we talk to them a lot and the officers seems to know what brought each and every one of us here, they call us most times on one-on-one to advise us – me for instance, they know I have been here a number of times, they call and talk to me and advise me to not come back again but I do not know, I still come back, but they are not fed up they still talk to me to consider my children and not come here again

This is encouraging because at the female prison, the inmate population at the time of data collection was fewer than half of its maximum capacity, with a ratio of almost two prison officers (150) to one inmate (80). Unsurprisingly, prison officer-inmate interactions in this prison are effective. It is no coincidence that of the 80 inmates who were in the prison during this study, only two were recidivists, and plans to add another female prison became irrelevant because of the extremely low recidivism rate amongst females.

By contrast at the three male prisons relationships between the inmates and officers were far from positive. Baah describes his perceptions of prison officers: "Some are very bad – some of them if you look at them, they ask why you are looking at them. They are very fearful especially, when they are coming for a search." Other inmates avoid the officers to save themselves from humiliation: "Some of the officers will insult you with all kind of words and you feel very bad for days" (Ali). Banda adds that encounters with the officers "made him feel like an evil person."

Some prison officers also admit to keeping distance from the inmates because they felt that inmates disliked them. As Officer Wayo says: "No matter what the officers do, inmates will not like us – the reason is simple; we control them against their wishes, so all the time they have some kind of hatred for us." Nevertheless, the main reason officers stayed

away from the inmates was fear of being tagged a 'traffic officer', as Officer Tee explains:

> The mindset of some officers is not the best, sometimes you struggle to understand how things are going . . . officer-officer relationship is cordial but with a lot of challenges. Sometimes your colleague officer will see you somewhere and straightforward concludes that you are engaging the inmates in something else that may not be mandatory . . . it makes you feel insecure and if there is something you may want to do voluntarily to contribute to inmates' reformation you are in between and that is affecting our deliveries . . . all the times we are forced to distance ourselves from inmates; you do not want people to be thinking about you and you will have your dignity protected.

Another participant, Officer Quay, talks of how fraternising with inmates is against prison bylaws:

> It is in our by-laws that as an officer you are not supposed to be too close or befriend an inmate . . . it is a major challenge for us, and something needs to be done since it goes a long way to affect the development of the inmates.

Some inmates also recognise that prison officers likely avoid relationships with inmates because of probable negative reactions from inmates and officers. Barrack, in particular, observes: "Over the years, the officers who are very close to us are tagged as traffic officers – so hardly will you see an officer who is always closer to an inmate." At the same time, the inmate population shuns inmates who get too close to the officers. Kumson explains:

> If an inmate gets closer to the warder man, other inmates become cautious to deal with you . . . they start to call you an informant (stoolpigeon), they think you are disclosing information concerning inmates to the warder – when this happens, you will be isolated by your fellow colleagues . . . because of this, inmates do not want to

get closer to warders.

At the female prison, officers who are close to inmates are tagged as lesbians. Officer Aku discloses:

> At the female prisons if they get to find out that an officer is very closer to an inmate, they mistakenly perceive that you are engaging in lesbianism with the inmate . . . this scares us away from having any reasonable chat with them and help them to reform. The inmates then chat more among themselves than we do.

Indeed, responses from some of the participants (inmates and officers) confirm that there are prison officers who smuggle contraband to inmates. Officer Abu cites an incident that occurred in the prison:

> The inmates think everybody has a price and can be bought . . . they have their subculture, their own way of thinking . . . as an officer, if you are not careful they can put you into trouble . . . they are not willing to change . . . a guy gave an officer GHC800 to buy phone and smuggle it to him in the prison. The officer was caught and jailed – so nobody wants to associate with them and get into such trouble.

Weak officer-inmate relationships pave the way for inmate associations

A number of factors discourage officer-inmate interactions, which in general has negative impacts on reformation and rehabilitation. Kumson, an inmate, explains:

> From where I sit, I see the officers have given up on us – all my time here, I have seen they do not care about us; whether we change or become worse, they do not care . . . they only come to the cells when they suspect us of something otherwise they will not talk to you throughout your time here . . . a lot of the guys are now more dangerous than when they came in; all because they do not get good advice, but bad one from other inmates.

This study suggests that the harsh prison conditions, and perceived lack of empathy on the part of prison officers, creates a hostile ambiance in the prison, turning inmates towards one another: “As inmates we rely on one another to survive – we are there for the other when you are in need. We share our problems and find solutions together” (Ali). Inmates confide in each other rather than prison officers. Kwadwo describes how:

> We talk to each other most times, me for instance, I have never had any conversation with an officer since I came here, I do not get closer to the officers, the inmate is my brother and I have to talk to them, if you fall sick in the cell it is your brother jail man who will come to your help, not the officer . . . which of these people do you want me to get closer to, my brother jail man.

The limited contact between prison officers and inmates in their everyday lives is detrimental to their rehabilitation and reformation. Officer Aku notes:

> We the officers who are reformers are not having any good relationship with the inmates because we are afraid that other officers will think otherwise . . . what happens is they get to interact more with other inmate, trusting them more than they trust us and it has a very bad impact on their behaviours.

Inmates also believe that preferencing relationships with other inmates over prison officers does not help their reformation. Osei recounts:

> We do not talk to the officers as we should, this makes us spend more time with other inmates . . . inmates do not have any good advice for you – those who get closer to you only want to engage in criminal activities with you in the prison and meet you outside to commit more crimes with you.

Osei’s insights demonstrate that as inmates become closer to each other, their likelihood of re-offending post-prison increases. Most study participants (inmates and prison officers) agreed with these observations, pointing to the fact that many inmates became

hardened while incarcerated, which they attributed to a combination of factors in prison, including inadequate rehabilitation facilities and programs, overcrowding, harsh conditions, inadequate staffing, sentencing policy and a general lack of counselling and treatment programs.

Summary of the chapter

This chapter presented data about mediating factors to social learning among inmates in the selected prisons, including systemic failures and injustices, overcrowding, harsh prison conditions, and inadequate rehabilitation. Per the results presented in this chapter, it is unequivocal that inmates in these prisons were vulnerable to behavioural learning, with two of the selected prisons massively overcrowded, and inadequate or no reformation, counselling or treatment programs across all prisons. Inmates barely have contact with prison officers and rely heavily on fellow inmates for support and advice. The next chapter (chapter six) presents an argument about how weak supervision, overcrowding, and inadequate rehabilitation services, among other factors, impact inmate behaviours in the prison and facilitate social learning, which plays a major role in recidivism.

CHAPTER SIX

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO RECIDIVISM AMONG INMATES IN GHANA PRISONS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

Introduction

This study investigates contributing factors to recidivism from the perspective of the prison and community. This chapter focuses exclusively on the perspective of the social learning theory. Based on the data collected for this study, five emerging themes will be presented, including the four components of the social learning theory (differential association, definitions, differential reinforcement and modelling). The fifth emerging theme will explore consequences of social learning on inmate behaviours and subsequent recidivism.

Differential association

This study adopts differential association from Akers' (1985) social learning theory to explain how an individual inmate's priority, frequency, duration, and intensity of interactions in intimate relationships with other inmates (significant others) could reinforce future criminal behaviours. Inmate and prison officer responses evidence that differential association occurs among inmates in the selected prisons. Every inmate participating in this study tells of spending a large proportion of their sentence in the company of other inmates in whom they trust and confide. At the female prison, Esi speaks of how she and other inmates rely on each other to cope with prison life and the inevitability of differential association:

> As a human, it is almost unlikely to live in the midst of others for two months or more without making friends . . . that is the nature of humans, we love to be in a company, to have a person you can rely on and share secrets with, that keeps us going . . . I have gotten a group of friends I trust; we talk about how we can stay here peacefully and let the officers know we are humans and they cannot treat us anyhow.

Some inmates, especially in the male prisons, say association with fellow inmates is "the only means of survival" (Ali, Essien, Nii; Osei, Yawa). These and other inmates are also of the view that the ability to cope with life in prison largely depends on with whom one associates. Adom, in particular, explains: "The food we eat in the prison is not sufficient, so without a friend who receives visits, you will struggle to survive here." While Adom relies on his friends for food, others choose to associate with those who will protect them from abusive inmates. Ammo discloses: "You have to be strong to survive in this prison and sometimes even if you are the strongest you still need that protection from your friends – in short, you have no option than to belong to a group to feel better and protected."

Inmate participants reveal that they survive by relying on fellow inmates for protection rather than the prisons officers, with inmates eventually becoming significant others, trusted confidants and advisors. While there are elements of friendship in these interactions, many of these relationships would be better characterised as master and apprentice, where one party seeks protection and/or direction from the other. Kwadwo illustrates:

> In most of the relationships here, there is a senior man and a corner boy – the senior man has influence over the boys because he is rich and can protect them . . . at the end of the day the boys become more dangerous than the senior man due to the type of conversations they engaged in.

Two sub-themes emerge from the data under differential association:

1. Exploring the nature of the differential association in which the interactions with significant others take place; and
2. Exploring the priority, duration, frequency and intensity of interactions that transpire within the differential associations.

Exploring the Nature of the Differential Association

After establishing that differential association occurs in the selected prisons, it is necessary to explore motives for forming the associations and their impacts on inmate behaviours. As outlined in the previous chapter, extremely challenging prison conditions lead inmates to find solace in relationships with their peers. All 25 inmate participants in this study reveal that the decision of association is voluntary, and grounded on purpose, with inmates initiated into a differential association with at least one of three expectations: (a) protection, (b) reciprocity and (c) strengthening or creating ties.

According to inmate participants, an association consists of a person who requires protection and survival needs (food) and another person who has the capacity to meet these needs, but only in return for some anticipated future gain. Most of the inmates who seek protection and survival serve shorter sentences than their significant others and are therefore expected to visit and provide financial and other in-kind support following their discharge. The third type of differential association is intended to create and maintain ties for future criminal activity. Three additional sub-themes therefore emerge:

1. Survival or circumstantial differential association
2. Reciprocity differential association
3. Old friend reunion differential association

Differential Association Formed on the Basis of Survival (or Circumstantial)

In survival, or circumstantial, differential association, survival or security motivates the inmate. "For me, my main motive for joining a group was to eat well, but others want to associate with other people because they will be protected in the prison" (Ali). As most inmates do not receive prison visits, where friends or relatives bring food and other supplies, a desire to get extra food is a significant motivation to associate with significant others who do. Kwadwo explains:

> I will say it is difficult staying in the prison without having friends . . . you can stay here for years without a visit from anyone in your family . . . the food they give us is very small which you cannot survive on . . . you need your friends who receive visit and are rich to help you with food and other things. The problem is, these guys you associate with for food and other assistance will lead you to do bad things.

These associations come with a cost; that is, the subordinate inmate must adopt behavioural values of the significant other. Kumson explains:

> The food is not sufficient, and you want to get extra food to be able to survive, the people who have the food are the notorious criminals and they are ready to give you food if you will conform to what they do. You will end up leaving the prison as a more aggressive person than before.

Ammo describes a popular way for inmates to initiate associations: "An inmate will walk to a senior man and give him the telephone number of a rich friend or family member for them to dupe him or her – that is how you become one of them." Same, like Annor, was recruited by other inmates:

> Those of us who do not receive visit are more likely to get into troubles in the prison . . . the senior men will approach you, knowing that you are in need of food, start giving you better food than the one served here . . . you will start getting closer to him because of the money and food they have been giving you . . . the person will then introduce you to whatever he does to make money and you will later become more interested in doing it.

The passage above introduces a new reference: senior man. Inmate participants describe the senior man as one who wields influence among ordinary inmates either because they were successful in their criminal activities 'outside' or have been in prison for a significant period of time and have access to resources through visitors. Awua, in particular,

tells: “Somebody who has been here for long, has everything that will make your stay comfortable, but will be giving you bad advices . . . they take the young ones and feed them with bad information.” Yawa adds: “The only means to eat well in the prison is to have a senior man.”

Senior men usually have strong ties with others in the community outside prison who engage in illicit activities. These contacts visit the senior man, bringing food, money and other supplies which confer significant power on the ‘inside’. Barrack notes: “We have people who lure others to commit more crimes – those who struggle to find food in the prison are lured by those who have food.” Younger inmates are particularly vulnerable to this type of influence. Kwadwo observes: “Here you can lure somebody to do bad things with common food . . . the younger ones are the most at risk, the food in the prison is not sufficient and they resort to any means to get food”

Senior men adopt younger inmates and those serving short sentences over time and gradually influence their behaviours. Officer Tee shares his perception: “The senior inmates informally adopt the younger ones and before you know they have negatively influenced them.” Owu recounts his lived experience:

> When I came here as a young man, there was this senior man who was serving life sentence . . . I used to be his corner boy, I used to fetch him water and clean his corner all the time in exchange for food . . . it is through my relationship with him that I gathered the courage and when I left the prison I was engaging in armed robbery.

Inmates liken this type of association to a master-apprentice relationship: “It is like learning a trade, he is your master, you eat what he eats” (Yawa). The adopted inmate learns many things from the senior man: “They are very rich – they are the ones serving the long sentences – if he smokes, he passes it on to you” (Ali).

Apart from food, senior men often provide security for younger and weaker inmates.

Inmate participants say frequent violence between inmates causes them to seek protection. Osei explains:

> Here, it is like we are a bunch of every home's bad child . . . everybody is aggressive . . . the weak ones are mostly abused and forced to do what they may have not done . . . at the backyard, you have no option than to go there . . . we bath and ease ourselves there – they can force you to smoke . . . if you refuse they will beat you.

Exploring Reciprocity Differential Association

Reciprocity differential association is grounded in the basics of mutual benefit, where the individual inmate expects to receive something from the group or friend, and vice versa. Awua explains: "You will be washing their clothes, cook for them and sometimes cut their nails and wash their foot in exchange for food and protection." Banda describes prison as an environment where the strongest dominate: "We are living in the survival of the fittest and whom you know kind of community. If you do not have any association, you struggle to survive here –nobody will come to your aid in your difficult times."

These types of transactions mostly involve younger inmates serving short sentences: Kwadwo explains:

> Most times, it is the young ones who they use . . . they are new and do not know the prison life. They are lured by the hard guys who are not ready to change – they give them whatever they need in the prison while training them to follow their footsteps during their time here and in the community . . . they return to the prison within three months after discharge.

This suggests that hardened or incorrigible inmates see the young inmates, who initially enter prison on shorter sentences, as a potential resource for the future. An investment now in food and security can pay off later. Officer Teye explains:

> What I have observed over the years is those serving long term sentences think their

lives have come to an end and they are going to spend the rest of their lives in the prison . . . as a means of survival, they make sure they get closer to the youths who are in to serve up to four or six months. They do everything for these young ones and show them how to be successful in crime after discharge . . . they show them how they can rob big time, make money and pay them visits to support them financially and in-kind.

Yawa, an inmate, describes his experience:

> During my first time in the prison, I had a senior man who was serving 30 years . . . I was serving two years, he encouraged me to go and rob people and bring him his share in the prison . . . he was always showing places to go and rob . . . he had taught other people who were paying him visits . . . he used them as an example and told me to be hard and smart when I get home.

This practice, if not addressed, seems to produce a revolving recidivism cycle. This is because even on the verge of discharge, inmates entered into informal verbal agreements with their senior men. Osei discloses:

> When I was about to go on discharge during my first sentence, a colleague who was very supportive and have had many discussions with came to me and secretly gave me the direction to where he hid his robbery tools and had a deal with me that when I succeed I should bring him a certain amount of money every month . . . when I went home and things started getting difficult I followed his direction to the tools and found them at the exact place and this is why I am here again.

Exploring Old Friend Reunion Differential Association

Old friend reunion differential association may occur in the prison or community between persons who either knew each other prior to incarceration, or as inmates in prison. Officer Wayo talks of these types of association from the community:

I must tell you that most of the inmates knew themselves from the communities before they were given a term to serve in the prison . . . these inmates, even though they knew themselves came to the prison with different offences . . . in the prison, they form a very close friendship – they influence themselves and introduce one another to what they were doing prior to their sentence.

These reunions affect inmate behaviours, with inmates negatively influencing one another by sharing criminal tricks:

We narrate stories on how we operated, you will get people telling you that if you are discharged come to this place, it is easier to commit crime and escape than where you were living before you came to the prison . . . influence in the prison from friends . . . that is why we have a lot of case partners . . . they met in the prison, become friends and go out there to partner and commit crime (Baah).

Officer Tee further highlights the impact of reunion of old friends on reincarceration rates:

Inmates make friends or most often came to re-unite with old friends. What happens is, they are given bad advices and do all kinds of bad things together which goes a long way to affect them both in the prison and after they are discharged.

These types of relationships are particularly damaging because of their dynamic nature. They continue to affect behaviours wherever the reunions may occur: "People come to the prison to make new friends or meet old friends and they are given bad advices, do bad things together in the prison and it affects them when they are discharged into the community" (Ali). Kwadwo shares how his second prison sentence came about: "The friend I made here followed me to the house and I later engaged in robbery with him."

Differential associations that form in prison may end up as criminal gangs in the community: "The friends I made here led to my subsequent arrest – I met some in the community and we formed an armed robbery gang" (Awua). Officer Quay explains how

prison friendships can reignite criminal activity on the outside:

> You hear them saying my boy and the other saying my senior. If they get discharged on the same day or month, they are likely to team up, form gangs and start engaging in serious crimes that could lead them back to the prison . . . there are a lot of such cases here.

Officer Quay's statement is consistent with that of Asante, an inmate who knew two young men who later operated as criminal partners post-prison:

> Always it is the younger people who come here – I have seen only one old man who has come back. The rest are young . . . these young guys try to form an association that involve inmates that will be discharged at a particular time . . . they will be doing things together in the prison . . . there are these young guys whom I know, I spoke to them and they were going to be discharged in the same week . . . I started suspecting some danger – one day I told them I will make sure they do not go home together, one of them put his hand in the gutter, brought it out and sworn with the name of God that whatever I do they will go together . . . trust me the two of them are back again.

Seventeen of the 25 participant inmates disclose that they engaged in crime outside prison with people they met while in prison. For example, Osei recounts: "In the armed robbery operation that brought me back, there was a guy I knew in the prison, he introduced me to the gang and later became our driver until we were arrested." Sometimes friends from prison will get in touch on the outside offering a criminal operation. Banda shares his experience:

> I was convinced by my past prison friend who was always asking me to join him and others for an operation. He will say, if we succeed, this will be your share, you get tempted and that is the operation that got me here this time.

Some inmates indicated they did not necessarily need to be close friends of someone

to team up with them for criminal activities in the community, so a casual acquaintance made in prison could potentially trigger a differential association and subsequent re-arrest. Yawa, in particular, explains:

> We meet ourselves in the community . . . they may not be close friends in the prison, but you knew them in the prison . . . if we meet accidently in the community after discharge, we talk and remember each other the hardships in the prison and community . . . sometimes you get to follow the friend and find other people – you form a gang and you start robbery.

Some inmates with drug habits go straight to the ghetto after discharge where they meet old friends who lead them back to criminal activities. Awua recounts his lived experience:

> When I was discharged, I was still doing drugs so I went to the ghetto . . . one day, a guy I knew from the prison just walked in and said, I have just been discharged so he passed to check if we were still around . . . this guy never went home he lived there till we were both arrested.

While Yawa and Awua's stories show that some inmates are persuaded to join criminal gangs post-prison, most decide to do so while incarcerated. Owu explains:

> When we meet, we talk about individual criminal tricks . . . in our conversations, we are encouraged to disclose our discharge dates . . . this was important because those who have similar dates for discharge can link-up to each other and decide where to go after discharge . . . sometimes, straight after discharge we are off for an operation.

The view expressed above suggests that most inmates already know where, when and with whom their next criminal activity will take place when they leave prison. Teye's experience is a clear example:

> Sometimes, days before you leave the prison you and your friends already knew the

> next move and how it will be done to prevent any arrest – because we became aware that when caught we were going to rot in the prison. I have spent less than four weeks in the community after discharge and got imprisoned again.

Most inmates admit to operating in a criminal gang post-prison through prior associations in prison, usually with former prison inmates and headed by a prison senior man. Baah, in particular, recounts:

> My friends were made up of old jail men . . . most of us have had a lot of discussions in the prison and we met in the community . . . the leader in the prison was the leader in the community gang . . . he died along the line . . . what I have observed is if you go home and you re-associate yourself with old criminal friends – those in the community and others you met in the prison, you will go back to crime . . . I had the determination that I was not going to come back, but my association with friends cost me to come back.

Baah's is not an isolated case. Most of the inmates who engaged in criminal associations in prison regrouped with the same cohort post-prison. In extreme cases, inmates who were discharged before their criminal partners sustained the relationship through regular visits: "He left the prison before me, but he always came back to visit me in the prison – when I went out, we joined and did a lot of crimes together" (Osei). Some participants report that other inmates gave them contact details so they could easily link up on the outside: "In my case, my friend gave me a phone number I could reach him on after my sentence" (Ali).

Exploring Priority, Duration, Frequency and Intensity of Differential Association Interactions and Effects on Recidivism

The data indicate that inmate interactions with significant others in the differential associations usually begin in the early days of incarceration (priority), with interactions tending to last throughout the inmate's sentence (duration). Conversations about criminal

activities are frequent and intense because the inmates are not only attached to the senior men – they also depend on them for survival and protection. Kumson acknowledges:

> The younger ones among us are always eager to get closer to the very bad guys in the prison as soon as they enter the cells and at the end of the day they go and come back . . . I did same when I started coming in as a young guy . . . the conversations that goes on can never make you change; rather you become worse over time and that is why a lot of us kept on coming back.

Priority

The timing of interactions in a differential association influence whether a person sees crime as favourable or not (Akers et al., 2017). In this study, inmate initiations into differential associations occurred in the early days of their sentences: “It took me one week to know how to smuggle weed into the prison” (Ali). Most inmates entered prison for the first time before 20 years of age. These young inmates rely on the senior men for survival immediately after they begin their sentence. Osei shares his experience:

> I started coming to the prison when I was 18 – during this time, the only person I was made to trust was my senior man . . . aside from taking care of me during that time he also made me develop interest in going back to crime.

Newly admitted inmates start having social contact with older inmates whose motives are to introduce them into new ways of committing crime. Barrack explains:

> I learnt how to break into people’s property during the early days of my first sentence . . . some of the senior men I met and was washing their clothes taught me how to climb tall walls and buildings . . . they taught a majority of us how to break into people’s building to steal.

Duration

Criminal-talk conversations tend to last throughout the inmate’s stay in the prison:

"We do not get proper advice in the prison from the first day you enter the prison to the last day you leave" (Ali). Inmates having little contact with prison officers, and not engaged in skill-building or counselling interventions spend most of their time with other inmates who prioritise criminal-talk. Kumson explains:

> We spend most of our time living together among ourselves in the cells . . . when we are there, we do not talk about things that will change us but those that will make us devise other means to succeed as armed robbers when we go to the community.

This emphasis on discussions about criminality mean there are few other topics of discussion among inmates: "We always talk about crime during our stay here and that is the main reason some of us have been coming back all the time" (Azuma). The pervasiveness of these discussions is such that one need only be within the cell, not even an active participant in a conversation, to be soaked in criminal-talk interactions about criminal behaviour. Owu laments:

> In the cell we talk about how we committed crime back in the community, if you are there you cannot put your fingers in your ears but to listen to everything . . . majority of us kept those discussion and we went home doing as they were narrated in the prison.

Frequency

Criminal-talk conversations are usually relatively long and frequent, favouring content that promotes nonconformity. Kumson explains:

> We talk more about bad things . . . it is hard to see two inmates who are talking about good things . . . we rather talk about going home to commit more crime . . . I will say we talk more about crime, where to get cheap weed and cracks to buy in the community . . . where to get money to buy the weed and cocaine when we get to the community.

In their cells, before they go to bed every night, inmate conversations reinforce future criminal behaviours. "Every night we talk about our past activities and we allow questions – some can start from age 10 what they did to date." Teye recounts:

> I came here at a very early age after I stole our neighbour's money . . . at that time I was sent to the James Forth prison for four months . . . the room I was living in was just like those we have here and I was placed in the midst of armed robbers and other offenders . . . in every night we had a conversation about what brought us to the prison and our past activities back in the community . . . as a young person, the conversations did not benefit me after I left the prison.

Sadly, these interactions do not remind inmates of what led to their imprisonment, rather, they reflect on why they were arrested and what they could do to prevent future arrests. "We used to talk about what we will do when released and how we can escape arrest in future" (Ali). Baah adds: "We talk more about our past offences and how we committed them – we talk about how we should have acted in order to escape arrest." Interest in escaping future arrests is high, so these criminal-trick-talks are frequent and most sought-after in the prisons. Ali explains:

> When you come for the first one or two weeks, you see the conversations we have every night as nonsensible, but if you stay for one month or more you start to develop interest in it and every night you want us to have such conversations.

Officer Abu tells what he overhears inmates saying during night shifts: "When you are on a night duty, you will be hearing them, 'I did this and I was caught', and you will hear the other saying 'you are foolish, I did this for years and never got caught, next time you should do this or that.'" Some participants, such as Kwame, disclose that they discuss how to escape arrest:

> You have others encouraging you to try and get a gun . . . they will talk more about

> the benefits of owning a gun – if you have a gun and they try to have you arrested, pull the gun and show to them, they will be afraid and allow you to go . . . if they proof stubborn, kill them.

Another inmate, Owu, adds:

> We used to have this slogan; kill them before they call for your arrest . . . you become familiar to this and you are determined to do anything possible to escape arrest during robbery.

Role play: The process of criminal-trick learning sometimes takes the form of role play. An issue frequently raised by inmates and prison officers is how contraband goods are smuggled into the prisons. Prison officers speak of how inmates with three or fewer months left to serve are taken to the communities to fetch firewood and do other work as way to reintroduce them to socioeconomic activities in the community. A majority of the inmate participants revealed that it is during this outing that the inmates smuggle contrabands to the prisons. According to inmates, contraband such as cannabis, cigarettes, pharmaceuticals (blue-blue and tramadol), mobile phones and money smuggled into prison is lucrative. As a result, inmates learn on their arrival in prison how to smuggle such goods. To avoid being caught, they have to improvise safe means of getting them into the prison, frequently by inserting the contraband in their anus. To do this successfully, they go through lengthy training and role playing. Ammo explains how:

> When I first came to the prison, I was convinced that I could make money while in the prison, the way was to bring weed for people to buy. For me to be able to do it, the senior man used to teach us how to. The only means you could bring them into the prison without being caught was to insert in the anus; we practiced by wrapping rubber over garri and insert it. I remember we will do, and the senior man will be watching, and guiding us through till we all became perfect.

In addition to demonstrating how to smuggle contraband, inmates learn how to break and enter. "We used to demonstrate how to break into people's room and stores" (Awua). One of the senior men, Annor, recalls how he teaches burglary skills to other inmates:

> I used to show others how I succeeded, showed them how I managed to get the acid from the retailers and how I used it to open the padlock. I did this for years and succeeded before I got arrested and sentenced. I also told them other alternative like using lighter around where we insert the padlock keys. Other inmates will also demonstrate theirs after I am done.

Inmates who come into prison for offences such as petty theft and pickpocketing are constantly encouraged by others to engage in more dangerous crimes upon their release. Osei shares his experience: "I came with stealing, but I was the best friend of an armed robber – he continuously told me that what brought me to the prison was needless and I should consider going into robbery after my four months sentence." Hardened inmates frequently encourage those with a lower profile. Annor states: "If you came with stealing and you are in the midst of armed robbers, they will say next time make sure you go for robbery – you will get quick money."

Intensity

Inmates form close attachments that lead to intense conversations. Ammo recalls:

> During my first time, I was very young and smallish so I was always closer to my senior man – I was always listening to their conversations and because I trusted him I did not see anything wrong with that kind of conversations – now when I look back I regret because I am like this because of that.

Relationships between inmates and their significant others are important to both parties. The one imparting the criminal tricks is seeking a positive outcome, and the student is expected to show signs of behavioural change over time. Yawa, in particular, explains:

> When you come and a senior man protects and feeds you, he will at the same time teach you how he managed to get what he is feeding you on – over time he expects you to starting doing same to contribute and that is when if you are not careful you start behaving like him.

Some inmates seek recognition (to be seen as hardened and callous), so they deliberately associate with the notorious inmates, who will pass on their values through a differential association. Officer Ebo explains:

> For those with minor offences to be recognised in the cells they form strong association with the notorious offenders and by the time they leave the prison, they may look aggressive and hungrier to commit more offences than ever . . . I have seen most inmates who came with minor offences, for like six months and now they are back with notorious offences and are serving more than 60 years in the prison.

Differential association creates the space within which the other three components of social learning (definition, differential reinforcement and modelling) take place. The process of definition, modelling, and deferential reinforcement becomes possible after inmates begin association with significant others.

Exploring Definitions Favourable to Criminal Behaviour Post-prison

Interactions that occur within differential associations do not necessarily lead to continued criminal behaviour post-prison (Akers et al., 2017). However, they contribute to shaping normative values that colour evaluations of what constitutes crime. Significant others generally impart their patterns of norms and values to other inmates, some of whom will successfully put tricks learned into practice while in prison. "We have people who lay eggs in the prison, they insert weed or mobile phones in their anus and lay it on the toilet – they sell them to make money." At some point, significant others make criminality seem worth pursuing. Awua shares:

> The way they talk about crime, makes it look enticing to you . . . the way they will present it; like, me if I start my motorbike and pick the fire in my pocket and go to the city, I come with a lot of money. The way they will describe how they explore and get money from others; it made crime more attractive.

Esi, one of the two female inmate participants in this study shares her experience:

> I must admit I am back here because of a friend I had during my first term in the prison . . . she was not a Ghanaian but was serving a term for narcotics in this prison, she made me understood the money I could make in narcotics . . . she made it look attractive in every discussion we had about it each day . . . that time, the way she was enjoying in the prison you will think that she made a lot of money and is spending whilst in the prison, the officers liked her and she could cook her own food whilst we were not allowed to do same . . . she was having a lot of friends and had the final say in the cells . . . anything she said at the time was taken.

Eventually, the priority, duration, frequency and intensity of these interactions, promoting benefits of crime, have a cumulative effect on the individual, who begins to view nonconforming and criminal behaviours as normal and a viable means of achieving success. "Issues we discuss among ourselves make you forget that what brought you to the prison is a crime – you meet people who feel okay about killing or robbing people" (Barrack). Banda agrees: "We talk about how we can make more money from robbery and escape arrest – this time, we were not thinking about stealing but robbery because we found that it was the best way to succeed." This mindset is further reinforced when inmates observe others earning money through illicit activities in prison. Owu admits:

> I have used phone many years, but I never knew it can be used to make money; my time in the prison taught me how to use phone to make money . . . I could use the phone to defraud people . . . if we can do it in the prison, it is easy in the community.

Inmates see themselves as preparing to commit more crimes on their return to the community. Kumson further explains:

> There are a lot of people here planning to go home and do more than what brought them here. When we group in the night, you hear people who are planning to go home to commit more crimes . . . I know what I am saying because I have done it before.

In the prison social context, and particularly in the male prisons, interactions promoting criminality are by far dominant over any other type of interaction, with 19 out of the 25 inmate study participants confirming significant others influenced them to continue with criminal behaviours during incarceration. Banda acknowledges:

> In the prison, there are some people who have not decided to change and if you get closer to them, the only thing you will hear from them is how to engage in stealing . . . we were more interested in committing crime than obeying the rules – we plan in the prison and go home to do it . . . when I came for the second time, I told myself that I will engage in a dangerous crime than what brought me back . . . now, I am back serving life sentence.

In this study, one of the arguments that shaped participant behaviours was that of perceived lost years, where inmates are made to believe that the only way to make up for their unproductive time in prison is to engage in illegal activities that will net them more money in a short space of time. Some inmates refer to their 'pension': "You hear some inmates saying they will go back to the community for their pension" (Oti). This figure of speech is interpreted to mean inmates intend to commit more crimes to make up for lost years in prison: "You have people saying, if I go home I will work to pay for my time here – the work is to steal people's money" (Awua). Banda's disclosure is unsettling:

> We used to say that we were arrested because we were careless, when we go home, we will match people boot for boot, if we die, we go, if we succeed, we make money

and enjoy life.

Another product of interactions in the differential association is inmates being made to feel ‘unlucky’ to have been arrested during their earlier criminal activities and building confidence in escaping future arrests. “I did a lot of things and escaped arrest, even in the prison – I was very intelligent and difficult to be arrested, so I was in a rush to leave the prison and go and do more in the community” (Asante). Inmates become more confident of escaping arrest on the outside when they were not caught by prison officers after months of illicit activities in the prison.

Some inmates are determined to be smarter in their future criminal life: “Sometimes, during our conversations, you hear people saying that, when I leave here, I will be wise – I will make sure I do not get arrested” (Kwame). Inmates also believe that criminal activities will earn them enough money to pay their way out, should they get arrested: “You hear people saying that, if I go I am going to rob big time – after all if I am arrested I can hire a good lawyer to get me out of here” (Barrack). Baah expands on the theme:

> Conversations that go on here make us see the prison as a normal place to be . . . it gets you feeling that you should go and do high robbery and make money . . . sometimes you think that, after all if I get money and I am arrested I can use the money to hire a good lawyer to defend me and I will go free . . . some inmates whom we know and are engaging in armed robbery have succeeded by having their lawyers intervene for them to be discharged from the prison by the court.

Moving from regret (discriminative stimuli)

The data suggests that after a little time in prison exposed to criminal interactions inmate participants in this study began to justify their actions by saying that crimes that landed them in prison were their only option. Officer Atwu explains:

> An inmate will come to the prison and you will ask him, did you do it? He will say yes, I did, and I regret. You will ask this same person after some days and he will say, I didn't, or I did because of this or that. This tells you they have been taught certain things in the cells and have become remorseful.

This neutralising definition of their behaviours leads inmates to believe their actions are right and justifiable: "I thought at the time, that it was the best way to get money – I found it very helpful because I got money for myself and others and used some for transportation to work" (Ammo). Some participants see their actions as a means of survival. For example, Banda says:

> After I left the prison I did it for several years until I got arrested – I earned money to rent flat and got myself a woman to live with . . . all because of the armed robbery . . . I found it to be a very good job and never thought of arrest. At a point, I was determined to do more as the means to make more money.

Another inmate, Ammo, says dealing drugs was the only way he and his grandmother could survive:

> I went back to sell weed to make money . . . I came from a poor family and my mother died when I was very young, I spent most of my childhood living with my grandmother . . . because she had no means to take care of us, I had to work to pay for my school fees and give some to my grandmother.

Other inmates did not admit to their offences, instead normalising by defining them as too trivial to warrant a prison sentence: "The case that brought me this time was not any issue that should have ended me in the prison" (Annor). Most inmates showed no remorse, blaming their relapses on either poverty, their associates, or informants in the community: "I needed the money to get a driver's license – if I had gotten help from someone, I wouldn't have gone to steal – nobody wanted to work with me, I felt that if I get a license then I may get a cab to

drive and make money" (Baah).

Others shifted blame while denying and justifying their roles in the offences that led them into the prison: "This one that I am serving sentence for, it was not my fault, it was the other guys who led me here – I did not want to go for that operation that night" (Awua). Conversations during incarceration are aimed at normalising crime to make it attractive. Most participants eventually conclude that robbery to make ends meet was not a crime. "I went back to crime because, I did not have anyone to help me, my family disowned me and I became frustrated – man must survive, I cannot starve to death, so if there are means to find food you have to do" (Osei). Banda tells a similar story:

> I joined gangs to rob because there was poverty in the house, my granny was not providing for my needs, the main reason I resulted to stealing to survive. There was nobody to help me, after my first sentence I felt at the time that, the means to survive was through stealing . . . I have been coming back and forth to the prison because of poverty.

Another participant, Ammo, justifies dealing drugs:

> I was selling weed to cater for myself and the family . . . in my family we have gotten no one . . . because of that I have been trading weed and cocaine all the time . . . it helped me a lot, that was our means of survival.

One inmate, Kumson, believes a family member bewitched him, causing him to repeatedly commit crimes: "I attribute it to witchcraft; my cousin is responsible for all this – she is bewitching me and that is why I can't stop stealing." Differential associations cause some inmates to believe they are the victim of an informant, on whom they exact revenge on return to their community, leading back to prison: "There are a lot of people who are waiting to be released to go and get revenge from those who they have been made to believe to have influenced their coming here" (Ali).

Without equivocation, differential associations in the selected prisons expose inmates to future criminal activities. Definitions favourable or unfavourable towards continuing criminal activities post-prison are also determined in these associations, and inmates see incorrigible inmates and significant others as role models they want to emulate.

Exploring Differential Reinforcement and Recidivism

In social learning the perceived consequences of a behaviour play a major role in one's decision to continue or desist from committing future offences (Akers et al., 2017). In this study, inmate participants value the views of significant others who approve of criminal and nonconforming behaviours. More importantly, inmates generally find criminal activities to be profitable after they leave prison.

Consequently, approval of senior men depends largely on behavioural demonstrations. For example, in this study, participants report that inmates who show signs of reform are mocked: "We discourage people who will insist that they will not go back to their bad deeds after prison, we call them names and they are more likely to remain isolated in the prison" (Ali). Also, advice geared towards reformation is frowned upon. Kwadow, one of the oldest inmates, shares his experience:

> Sometimes you try to advice the younger ones because you have been there before, but they wouldn't listen – some of them go extra mile to insult you, only because you tried to let them know the good way that will not make them jailbirds like me.

Good behaviour and advice may attract insults and other physical abuses as the reward. Kafui, one of the female inmates says:

> Here if you are not careful and you fall into the trap of someone, especially the younger ones, the way they will insult you . . . if they do something bad and you want to correct them, they will say if you are this good and know all these advices, why are you here with us, why didn't you stay home when you went and you have come

back . . . because of this you are afraid to correct them, you keep your mouth shut and pray for an officer to find them and deal with them.

In the male prisons, inmates who exhibit good behaviour are targeted and physically abused: “One day a guy reported an inmate who was smoking in the cells to the officers – till now that guy is abused by the guys, they call him an informant and try to beat him most times” (Barrack). “In this prison, if you tell people what is good, they dislike you and make this place a difficult place to live” (Kwadwo). According to Barrack: “Those who do not tolerate crime in the prison are hated and attract abuses from other inmates.” In addition to physical abuse, inmates who try to learn a trade or take advantage of available rehabilitation programs are mocked. Officer Adu observes:

> My students, some may come today and the next day they will not come . . . the reason is the many who do not come will be sitting and teasing the few who want to learn something – ‘old fool, when you were home you didn’t go to school, now that you have been imprisoned, you want to go to school.

The inmate and prison officer responses suggest that in the prisons, the longer your sentence, and the more severe your crimes, the more popular you are: “We give respect to others based on the sentence and cases that brought them here” (Osei). Banda further explains:

> Those with higher offences are worshipped in the prison, we hail them and respect them a lot . . . we are all offenders, but you could see that others are seniors in the job, and you have to respect them. We praise inmates who do not show mercy and can go extra step than the ordinary inmate – those who can challenge officers and do not care about the kind of punishment that meted out to them by officers.

By contrast, inmates convicted of petty crimes such as phone snatching and pickpocketing are unpopular: “We do not value inmates who came with minor offences – we

make them feel like they did a mistake by getting prison sentence for such a minor offence and encourage such inmates to commit serious offences when they get discharged" (Kumson). Annor adds:

> Friends in the prison kind of compete among themselves by trying to let other inmates know how dangerous they were in the communities . . . everybody wants to show that he was very popular criminal in their community . . . some will say I was a killer in my community, I did this and that . . . they make you feel inferior among them and if you are not careful, you will feel that you have to be hard when you go home.

Another inmate, Teye says:

> When we are in the cells, you hear people boasting and challenging themselves with their offences . . . this one thinks his crime was dangerous than the other and you will see that the cell has been divided, the other side claiming that this one is harder than the other one, it can sometimes lead to a fight between the groups.

To prove themselves to their peers, inmates are expected to successfully engage in crime in prison. For example, an ability to successfully smuggle contraband goods receives recognition, as Adom discloses:

> To rise to the stage you will be respected by all, you had to do what will attract reward from the group . . . you have to show them you are hard . . . when you go out with officers, you should be able to bring weed for the other members to smoke . . . if you succeed in that, you will be rewarded and you can rise to become a leader when the leader is not there.

Apart from demonstrating criminal prowess, reimprisonment is applauded. Baah says:

> When you go out of the prison and commit serious crime and come back . . . the moment you enter the prison, the inmates start shouting and singing praise on you . . . you feel like you have come to your home and where you are accepted.

Yeye's comment concurs:

> The only time you realise that you have committed an offence is when you are arrested . . . the moment you enter the prison, they make it look like a normal routine . . . if you narrate your offence to other inmates, they shout in joy and sometimes go to the extent of lifting you up and sing praises on you.

Kwadwo added:

> Those who have not changed are praised and attract admiration from inmates – if you behave waywardly, you feel more accepted in the prison than in the community.

Further, financial rewards of crime are perceived by many to outweigh the punishment. Ali explains:

> There are people who are in the prison, but they are enjoying more than a lot of people in the community – they never worked, all they did was fraud and armed robbery. They piled a lot of money and still have people in the community who are using his tools to rob – every week they receive visits from them.

To the inmates, crime offers more rewards than obeying institutional and societal norms.

Modelling

Modelling and emulating behaviours of senior men and significant others is common in the prisons. Other inmates see the senior men serving long term sentences as successful in their chosen criminal behaviours. As a result, inmates who wish to be successful at criminal activities post-prison observe and copy their ways. Kwadwo explains:

> When I first came to the prison as a young guy, I was always in the company of this guy who was a fraudster . . . I cooked and washed for him until I was discharged. During this time, I watched him duping people on the phone and making a lot of money from it. Before I left the prison, I knew all the tricks to dupe people.

Inmates particularly see the most successful senior men as role models and want to emulate them. Owu shares his lived experience:

> When I first came to the prison, I wanted to be like the senior man whom I was serving, he was in the prison but was enjoying life – all because of what he did back in the community . . . I wanted to be like him so that l could enjoy life, even in the prison.

Owu suggests that success for an offender could be measured by living conditions in prison. If, in prison, an inmate can eat what they want, command respect, and have other inmates to serve him or her, then others will look to them as a role model. This mindset discounts concerns about future reincarceration in favour of aspirations of criminal actions that will ensure a successful lifestyle in future prison sentences. Ammo recounts:

> When I came to the prison as a young guy, got carried away about how others were enjoying life even though they were in the prison. At that time, I was not concerned about the term they were serving; all I was asking for was to be like them. When I got closer to them, I observed their lifestyle and started behaving like them – I became aggressive and violent just like them and was also smoking.

In addition to modelling a colleague based on perceived successes, some inmates are admired and emulated because of the magnitude of their offences. Banda shares his experience:

> When I came to the prison to serve my second term, there was this guy who came to the prison with murder case and it was shown on the television . . . a lot of people in the prison admired him for how hard they perceived him to be . . . I remember when I heard he had been transferred here I approached him, commended him and expressed the desire to be his friend . . . I walked with him, learned how he operated and when I went home, I did a lot of things that mirrored his courage and behaviour.

The inmates with special criminogenic skills also attract admirers. Kumsom says:

> There was this guy I met at Secondi Prison, he was very smart and could copy any key, no matter the design . . . when I became his corner boy I took time to observe him and before I left the prison, I could duplicate keys that opened a handful of doors.

Aspirants to the lifestyle of a perceived successful criminal will copy the behaviours of the role model. That most of these role models are incorrigible means that the aspirant becomes more hardened and hungrier to commit serious offences. Annor, in particular, explains: "You try to do something that will overpower the person you are following and by the time you leave the prison, you are thinking of one thing – committing dangerous crimes."

Another inmate, Teye, explains how observational learning influences inmate behaviour:

> In this prison, you are called a senior man based on the offence that brought you to the prison or how stubborn you are . . . everybody wants to be called a senior man . . . you want to be like the person who feeds and protects you – this means that you will have to do what he does . . . the more you aspire to be called a senior man, the more your behaviour gets worse.

Exploring the Consequences of Social Learning in Inmate Behaviours (Recidivism)

Advocates for incarceration argue that it minimises crime by instilling fear in those who contemplate criminal acts (general deterrent) and costs anyone imprisoned so much that they desist from future crimes that may warrant another prison sentence (specific deterrent) (Drago, Gilbiati, & Vertova, 2009). While incarceration may be successful to some extent, particularly as a general deterrent, in the context of this study it seems not to be the case.

The prison environment, though harsh, does not seem to be costly to most inmates. On the contrary, some find it profitable compared to life on the outside: "I do buy and sell to survive in the prison and sometimes I can send money home through mobile money" (Osei).

Having proved that social learning occurs in prison, it is worth exploring how social learning influences inmate behaviours post-prison. After forming criminal associations in prison, inmates define crime as favourable based on perceived successes of other inmates, and rewards they anticipate will flow from future criminal activities. This section details outcomes of learned behaviour and how the prison acts as a criminogenic, rather than a reforming, institution.

Findings of this study suggest that inmates do not decide to live nonconforming lives post-prison in a vacuum, rather, important others strongly influence their decisions. Officer Bakar explains:

> There is a lot of bad advice among the inmates and it is one of the main reasons they always come back . . . I can cite numerous instances – a petty thief who stole chicken and was imprisoned comes back with armed robbery . . . they coached such inmates with smarter skills to operate on and they come back very hardened and incorrigible.

An inmate, Yawa, supports Officer Bakar's view:

> Some people come here as young guys and very quiet . . . after one month of association with the bad guys, their life changes. They will now be causing troubles, attracting punishment from the officers . . . when this happens you begin to sense that this person is following the prison behaviour – before you know they are back shortly after discharge.

Conversations that transpire in the differential association are persuasive, encouraging inmates to escalate the seriousness of their crimes. Awua explains:

> Most of the advice we get here are bad . . . you will get people telling you that if you stole phone do not go back to phone stealing but try and go for robbery . . . if you used knife, make sure you get a gun . . . most of the boys in the cells are willing to go back to hard time robbery . . . they believe that is the means to succeed outside.

In this study, every inmate admits that experiences during earlier prison terms at least partly contributed to their subsequent incarcerations. For example, Ali discloses that after his first sentence he graduated from petty thief to armed robber: "Those bad conversations transformed me from just a thief to one of the feared armed robbers when I returned into the community and it is still happening to others as we speak." People who before going to prison would never contemplate using weapons, wantonly robbed with guns after their release: "I never thought of becoming an armed robber, let alone pulling guns at people – all of these became normal after I came to spend some months here" (Ammo).

The inmates also tell of applying their learnings from prison in the community, which contributed to their subsequent imprisonments. For example, Awua says: "At some point, I was part of carjacker gang in the community and could walk like disabled or dress like a pregnant woman and talk like a female – we used to practice them in the prison." Others learn techniques to dupe tourists: "I learnt how to steal from tourists in hotels" (Ali). Annor, who served his first term in a camp prison, was later amazed at what he observed in prison:

> We have people who lay eggs in the prison, they insert weed or mobile phones in their anus when they go on outside duties and lay it on the toilet . . . I did not see such acts, when I was at the camp prison. At the camp prison, we found a way to put the weed in the middle of firewood and retrieve it after we get to the prison.

Other inmates master disguises for criminal operations. Kumson tells: "There is a fashion here where people wear three or four boxer shorts . . . we do this here so that we can put weapon in it wherever we go." Definitions of crime in prison is a key reason why many inmates continue criminal life post-prison. Barrack shares his lived experience:

> I am a victim of this; I first came to the prison at age 18, I was living with adults who were armed robbers and fraudsters . . . in the nights, they shared their experiences to the ears of every inmate and that is the reason I am here serving life sentence.

For all study participants, the severity of subsequent offences escalated after their first incarceration. About an associate, Banda says:

> I know a guy who I came with the same time during my first sentence, he came with an assault, unfortunately, he associated himself with the most hardened armed robbers in the prison and became very aggressive along the line . . . he is back here serving 25 years with a robbery case.

Summary

This chapter explored contributing factors to recidivism among inmates in selected Ghana prisons from the perspective of the social learning theory. Data presented describe that all components of social learning (differential association, definition, differential reinforcement, and modelling) exist among the inmate participants. I have explored three forms of differential associations (survival/circumstantial, reciprocal, and reunion differential associations) that emerged from the data. It is essential to note that these differential associations created conditions for other social learning components such as definition, differential reinforcement and modelling to operate. Interactions within the differential associations started early in inmates' sentences, lasted throughout their terms of imprisonment, were frequent and intense, and favoured nonconforming over conforming content. This chapter also explored the consequences of the social learning on inmate behaviours and demonstrated increased risks of recidivism. While chapters five and six have focused on factors in the prisons (systemic factors) that contribute to recidivism, the next chapters will focus on neighbourhood or community factors (situational factors) that may increase the likelihood of recidivism.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MEDIATING FACTORS TO EX-CONVICTS' EXPERIENCES OF LABELLING IN THE COMMUNITY

Introduction

Data from the study participants suggests that labelling of inmates and ex-convicts is entrenched in the community. However, a critical and realistic interpretation is that structural inequalities create the space for labelling to occur in the communities. This chapter analyses such structural inequalities and explores how they reinforce the labelling phenomenon. As previously detailed, traditionally in Ghana the prison is perceived as an institution where people whose behaviours and actions pose danger to the community are kept (Ame, 2018). While this may explain the origins of community attitudes to ex-convicts, in contemporary society a complex set of factors is at play. Inmate participants in this study attribute labelling and discrimination to historical factors, as well as lack of engagement with the community around offender rehabilitation, while prison officers and community member participants describe the prison as a "closed institution" because of the same lack of contact, engagement and outreach. It appears therefore, that labelling, stigmatisation and discrimination towards ex-convicts in their respective communities do not occur in a vacuum, but rather are a product of combined systemic failures and structural inequalities. Four subthemes on this topic emerge from the data:

1. That a person is sentenced to an institution that has long been perceived as a dangerous place, and there is little effort to maintain inmate ties with the community during their imprisonment (imprisonment and lack of re-entry plans).
2. The prison, unlike other institutions, is structured to be an unfriendly and hostile environment to the public (prison as a closed institution), which does nothing to address negative perceptions and assumptions.

3. Traditional beliefs about the prison are longstanding and unaltered (socialisation of labelling and cultural interpretation).
4. Community perceptions about the prison and inmates.

Imprisonment and Lack of Proper Re-Entry Plans

Planning for an inmate's effective community re-entry should ideally commence as soon as a person enters prison, where the prison and community, and particularly the inmate's family and significant others, collaborate with the purpose of imparting prosocial behaviours needed for successful community reintegration. However, for most inmates the reality of returning to the community after completing their sentence is completely different. When it imprisons a person, the criminal justice system alienates them from the community and sends a signal that they are nonconformist. Nana, a community member study participant, describes how negative perceptions are perpetuated:

> There is the saying in Akan – if a person was a mad man and gets rehabilitated, he can still scare off children based on his past . . . those who go to the prison are addicted to committing crime, what got them to the prison was not their first. As they say, every day for the thief one day for the master . . . nowadays we have some ex-convicts who are claiming to be pastors, those are the pastors who have been stealing our monies.

Negative community perceptions and attitudes are often based on lived experiences of crime, recidivism and ignorance of the prison environment. Re-entry plans that equip inmates with skills and prosocial behaviours to smooth the return to the community, as well as liaison between inmates and their families that encourages visitation and acceptance post-prison, may prepare the community to embrace ex-inmates, rather than labelling them. Maame Afi, a community member, discusses the potential benefits of improved communication between the prison and community:

> There should be people in the prison who will educate the public about the prison . . .

> they should go to the families of the inmates and educate them about their member who is coming back into the community . . . they should let the family know why the person was kept in the prison and the benefit the person has derived from serving a term in the prison.

Two selected prisons for this study do not have a discharge board or special community re-entry program. Officer Kumi discloses:

> We are supposed to have a discharge board to facilitate community re-integration programs, but we are not having . . . what we do is to give them transportation, which is calculated based on where they were arrested and convicted. As an officer, my work ends in the prison yard . . . it is the duty of the aftercare agent to ensure that a discharged inmate goes to the family.

Officer Esi confirms that while some prisons have a discharge board, their involvement is not comprehensive:

> We have a board that takes charge of discharge, but their activities start two weeks prior to the release of an inmate. They use this time to prepare the inmate to the challenges ahead of them back in the community.

While the prisons appear to begin preparing inmates for community re-entry very late in the game, what little preparation there is focuses only on the offender, with no involvement or input from the receiving community. Officer Wayo laments:

> Before an inmate’s sentence is about to elapse, the aftercare agent is supposed to go to the community in which the inmate will be discharged to. His duty is to give the community prior notice about the imminent arrival of their son and help in creating a friendly atmosphere in the community for the about to be discharged inmate. We are lacking this important aspect of the prison and it is one of the reasons why the communities do not see the need to welcome ex-convicts.

A situation where there is a total lack of interaction between inmates prior to their release and their families poses two major problems:

First, inmates are pushed into the community without their prior knowledge (especially significant others), or any orientation about their role in assisting re-socialisation and adjustment. Officer Esi explains:

> Some spend longer years in the prison so if you discharge them to go home without prior knowledge of their families, you make life difficult for the inmates and their family. The family members are not sure where to involve them in conversations and when not to . . . at the end, because whatever we did here was at the blindside of the family, they see the inmate as a strange person whom they should not engage with.

It also became clear during interviews for this study that many inmates were having issues with their families prior to their incarceration, some of whose families had disowned them and wanted no further contact. Without any liaison, family engagement, or comprehensive re-entry plans, protracted differences between individual inmates and their families go unresolved prior to their discharge, thereby increasing challenges associated with their return to the community. An officer participant remarks:

> Some have done something to their families and as a result the families are fed-up and don't even want to see them again . . . when they come here, it becomes our duty to resolve such issues and make sure they are in good terms with the family before discharge . . . unfortunately, we do not have the resources – we keep them here and when their time is up we discharge them to these same people they have issues with (Officer Abu).

Some of the inmates recount how problems with their families made life in the community upon discharge unbearable. For example, Kumson laments: "…if you come to the prison and go back to the same community where you were arrested, you will not find it easy

– they will make life difficult for you." Inmates perceive that community members cannot get past what led to their incarceration and do not believe rehabilitation in prison is possible. Awua explains:

> They see us as wounded lions; we are returning to the community with a lot of pains . . . this is how people see us . . . they are afraid of us, they think we can hurt them because of what happened that resulted to our imprisonment, so they do not want to get closer to us.

Mr Kwadwo, a community member, says:

> The families see ex-convicts as a disgrace . . . they see them as an outcast, to prevent this, I think the prison should have people who will sit the involving families down and let them know what the prison has done to reform the inmates and what they should do to help complete the reformation of their family members as they come back to the society.

Second, a decision to remain in the townships where the prisons are situated: A number of factors, including family members not knowing about their imminent discharge, and insufficient transportation, influence inmates to decide to remain in the community where the prison from which they have been released is situated, which has implications for whether the community will accept them. A police officer, Mr Sarkodie, who has lived and worked in a prison community recounts:

> I have been in this community for some time now, what I have observed as a police officer is the inmates, when they are discharged, the officers give them money to go to their homes, some are escorted to the lorry station . . . you know what? They wait for the officers to go and they get out of the bus and stay in the community . . . they do not have their families here and they do not have their homes here – because this is

not a very big town, they are easily identified by the community members and they are given the name Jail Man.

When inmates remain in the towns where the prisons are situated, they become more vulnerable to labelling because they are easily identified in the community and have no family or social ties. Homelessness adds to the difficulty of their situation. Meeme Kramo, a community member tells:

> In this community, the youth who were born and raised here do not go to the prison often . . . those who go there are the migrants . . . most of them remained here after serving their sentences . . . there is this guy from the north, he has been imprisoned many times . . . most of them he committed the offence in this community . . . after he served his prison term and was discharged he did not go back to his hometown, but chose to stay in our community. They do not have any family member here and they have to find a way to survive, through that they steal from the community members and those who get caught are sent back to the prison.

An inmate, Ali, describes how inmates who do not return to their community of origin experience discrimination from the locals:

> When you are about to leave the prison, there is no one to sit you down to talk to you . . . nobody seems to care, so you get into the community like a stranger who is trying to find his way to survive in a new place. They only give us money that can take us to the place we were arrested, most of us were arrested miles away from our homes . . . sometimes you are left with no option than to remain in this town and the people because you are a stranger and do not have a place to sleep they tag you as an ex-convict, even when there is no evidence that you are a former inmate.

The view above demonstrates that after serving their terms, inmates may receive insufficient money for transportation, creating challenges to returning to their home communities. Adom, in particular, illustrates:

> Imagine staying in the prison for 15 years, no job to earn you money and after discharge, you are not given any money for transport or the money is too little to get you to your hometown . . . meanwhile, all this time you did not have any contact with your family . . . what happens is we remain in the community with the aim of finding a job to raise money to go home – but because this has been going on in the community and some end up stealing their monies, they think we are all like that and treat us anyhow.

Officer Esi also explains:

> Inadequate skills of the inmates who are discharged into the community is causing them to come back . . . if you have skills to survive on, the society will not struggle helping you to reintegrate, but if this is not the case, they tend to see them as a threat and treat them anyhow.

In fact, 21 of the 25 inmate participants in this study shared similar experiences and concerns. Officer Amma talks about the systemic failure to help and support the few inmates who do learn skills in prison:

> In most of our workshops we are faced with insufficient equipment, the question we need to ask ourselves is, if we are unable to equip our workshops in the prisons how can we equip those who have served their time and are leaving us? Whatever we do in the prison ends as soon as the inmate is discharged; no follow up whatsoever, we escort them to the prison's gate and what happens to them next is their own business, before you know they are back again.

Officer Bakar further explains:

We have the passion to help the inmates but there is a lot of challenges . . . those who learned a trade and are going on discharge are left with no start-up funds, given that they do not get the support from their families, they are unable to use the skills . . . in the communities they are then seen as they left and people start to see them as useless and danger to their security.

The Prison as a Closed Institution (Community Members Living on Assumptions)

Traditionally, the prison as an institution has operated as a secure zone where unauthorised persons are prevented entry. This study finds that stringent security checks discourage people with family or friends serving terms in the prison from visiting. Further, the prison is seen only as a hostile environment designed to punish offenders. Nana, a community member, shares his view:

Looking at our history, how the prison system came about; as an avenue to punish people who were resisting the colonial master's rule . . . this has become part of us and we also think that it is a place disobedient and bad people are sent to be punished . . . I believe a majority of the public do not see it as a reformation place, rather, a place people are sent to lean their lessons through punishment.

While the colonial administration's historical reasons for incarceration undoubtedly shape community perceptions about the prison and incarceration, stereotypes and assumptions persist while there is continued limited community exposure to contemporary incarceration practices. Sir Alfred, a teacher in one of the communities, says:

Ghanaians are traditionalist, we have a lot of superstitious beliefs, already people are brainwashed, and we grow with it – it will take time and effort to remove this mindset . . . we have our own belief and we have been brought up to believe that the prison is a no-go area.

Even though some of the participants acknowledged that perceptions about the prison

are changing, albeit slowly, they were quick to point out this was mostly amongst the few who have had the chance to visit the prison: “ I will say this perception is changing, but what about those who have not gotten the chance to be educated and visit the prison like we have been going there all the time” (Honourable Fiifi). To date, the Ghana Prisons Service has made little effort to reach out to communities regarding the purpose of imprisonment. Officer Otuo remarks:

> The perception the society have about the prison is bad . . . you do not get the chance to come inside . . . it is like a mortuary, if your deceased is not there you do not get the chance to go in . . . it is same in the prison when your family member is not here – this has shaped the public’s perception about officers and the prison.

Honourable Fiifi, who visits the prison in his position as a member of the local government, shares his frustrations:

> I have come to realise that the prison is too closed on the community, the prison do not open-up to the community and it makes people stick to their perceptions . . . if I had not held this position I wouldn’t have gotten this close to the prison and I may still be sticking with my childhood perception.

Mr Sarkodie, a police officer in one of the selected communities reveals how a lack of engagement with the prisons shape ex-convict experiences in the community:

> People live on assumptions when it comes to what really goes on in the prison . . . even some of us who have devoted to help they sometimes do not want to give us the needed information . . . if we continue to make people live on assumptions and not facts, ex-convicts will continue to suffer in the community and re-offending will never end in the country.

Another community participant shares:

> These people are taken far away from the community and after years they come back

> and say they have reformed . . . will you believe them, the officers and the ex-convicts are saying that person is now a reformed person . . . how do they expect us to believe while we don't have a clue about how that miracle was performed (Teacher Ofori).

Community myths are believed to have resulted in people being socialised to see prison inmates and ex-inmates as unfit to associate with "law abiding people".

Socialisation of Labelling and Cultural Interpretations

In this study, participants revealed that labelling directed at the prison and ex-convicts is historical and entrenched, having been passed on for generations. Mr Kusi illustrates:

> Ghana, we have a discriminating perception . . . take for instance those who have contracted HIV/AIDS how we treat them . . . greeting them becomes an issue, people think that they may contract the disease when they greet them. Coming back to prisoners, we do not welcome them, we do not want to get closer to them, but I think getting closer to them to hear what they went through while in the prison could do them a lot of good than shunning them, as we were taught to do.

This is evident in some folkways and proverbs participants cite, especially the community members: "From where I am coming from, if you go to the prison we interpret it as you have caused dirt to your spirit and your entire life – they are pretenders and you have to be careful when dealing with them" (Mr Kwao). As a result, in most homes, people are advised not to associate at all with an ex-convict. Honourable Fiifi, in particular, explains:

> During your young age, when your mother finds out that you are in association with someone the society see as a bad person, your mother will flog you and warn you not to go closer to them . . . it is same when somebody comes from the prison, we see them as bad peers and nobody wants his or her relative to get closer to bad people.

Nana mentions a popular local proverb:

> There is a saying that goes as show me your friend and I will show your character; we

perceived that they have spent time with armed robbers, rapists, and other criminals, so they may behave as such, this makes us shun them.

Maame Akua cites another adage:

> A person who has chewed a crab has the tendency of chewing wood, mad person will always have something to scare off children . . . it will be difficult to love a thief or trust them with anything because they are heartless people who do not think about the outcome of whatever they do to you.

Additionally, this form of socialisation is not only rooted in tradition, but linked to religious practices in the community. Mr Kusi reveals:

> When you go to our churches, people who commit crime are excommunicated . . . the church discriminates against people who commit crime . . . if this is happening in our churches and these same people go to church every Sunday, then we should expect more of discrimination.

Teacher Ofori adds:

> Discrimination is entrenched in our tradition and religion . . . now I think things are getting better . . . in the olden days if you are caught committing a crime you will be banished from the community, where you are going to settle, they do not care.

Participants of this study perceive that there is a culture in the community of seeing people with a criminal history as irredeemable: “The culture of once you have done something there is the tendency you will repeat the offence is what is making a lot of Ghanaians to exercise carefulness when dealing with an ex-convict” (Nana). Mr Kwao has some stark advice:

> For me, the Ghanaian community needs a total reformation, this issue that we are discussing, I think it is not only the offender that needs reformation, the community needs reformation as well, if we reform only the offender they will still come to the

community and face stigma. To keep people calm after serving a term in prison, we should be able to visit them while they are in prison and accept them when they come . . . doing this will make them feel calm and we can live happily in the community together.

Community Perceptions about the Prison and Inmates

People's behaviours towards others reflect their opinions, perceptions and prejudices. For example, if Ghanaians see the prison as an unacceptable place, individuals who serve terms there as inmates may not be accepted upon their return to the community. Some of the participants indicated they were discriminated against after being remanded to prison.

In order to change the status-quo it is important to find out what causes labelling. Data from the study demonstrate that in the absence of any factual information, community members form their own understanding about the purpose of prisons, and the activities and behavioural outcomes of people who serve terms in the prison. These understandings play a part in labelling.

Perceived purpose of the prison

Most community members who participated in this study share the belief that the prison is there to punish people who break society's rules: "The prison is there for thieves and those who have offended us . . . it is there for criminals and abusers" (Maame Afi). Maame Akua has a similar view: "We send them to the prison for them to be punished and keep them there for some time and make sure they do not come back into the society to continue their bad deeds." Others also perceive the prison as a retributive institution where people must go to "pay for the offences committed" (Maame Kramo; Nana). In this study, most community members expressed that the prison is a place for criminals: no matter the amount of time a person spends there, if they have been in prison, they are criminals. Mr Anan insists:

> We perceive the prison as a place for criminals, so a person who was once a prisoner, whether one or two months, we know you are part of them; you are a criminal . . . this is why when they come out, people shun from them.

Other community participants in this study believe that the prison is there to ensure that communities remain peaceful: "We send them there so that they will not continue their bad deeds in the community – they lock them there so the community members will be at peace" (Maame Kramo). Some in the community are more likely to discriminate against ex-convicts because they believe punishment breeds incorrigibility. Maame Eto explains:

> The prison is there to punish offender who misbehaved in the community . . . if you punish people for a longer time, they tend to forget and go back to crime, thinking that at the worse of it, they will only be punished.

Perceived worsened personality

Twelve out of the 13 community members who participated in this study share the opinion that the prison worsens behaviour: "I believe that a lot of them go to the prison to get worse, some pretend to be changed people but in reality, they are not – the main aim of the prison is not achieved, that is how I see it" (Maame Eto). Others believe rather than reforming, the prison hardens inmates: "People who go there become hardened and unremorseful – it is inherent in them and they cannot reform irrespective of what you do to them" (Maame Akua). Maame Afi believes that the prison: "Teaches inmates bad behaviours". Teacher Ofori believes that imprisonment changes one's personality:

> People are confined between walls to be reformed but that is not the case, they go in and out over and over . . . sometimes, you begin to wonder what is going on in our prisons, because the moment you go to the prison you do not get back to your normal self.

Most of the community members shared the view that people with prison records

were likely to commit more crimes post-prison. Mr Kusi, in particular, cited an adage about recidivism:

> There is a saying in Akan that, the one who has been bitten by a snake is afraid of a worm . . . that is the society we are living in, we do not believe in reformation, we think once they have had contact with the prison, they are capable of repeating what previously led them to the prison.

Nana believes an imprisoned person is incapable of reformation:

> When they go to the prison, they know they have spoilt their integrity already, so they do not care what will happen . . . they mix with all other type of criminals so when they come to the community their behaviours are the opposite of that of the majority of the society and they become unfit to live in the society, so they go back.

Maame Afi believes that people with prior prison contact have a different mindset from the larger community:

> The prison is not a good place for people to live, the place is very degrading for human beings to live . . . the treatments in the prison affect their thinking . . . they come back to the community with different mindset and they cannot live with others who have not been to the prison before.

Mr Anan believes imprisonment deforms a person's character:

> They come to the community deformed and if you are not careful, they can destroy your life . . . they do not change in the prison before they come back into the community . . . they are more willing to commit offence.

Perceived doubts about the complete reformation of previously-incarcerated inmates

A majority of the community members in this study do not believe in reformation: "We do not entertain them – irrespective of what you do they will not change" (Maame Akua). Even though some were aware of the prison's reformation functions, they doubted the

ability of the prison to reform. Mr Kusi explains:

> In Ghana, if you send 10 people there you should expect only 2 or less to come reformed. Some pretend to be preachers, the next day you see them in the police custody . . . they have gone back to their old lives . . . you ask yourself why . . . the society do not trust their reformation, there is a saying that goes as, a healed mad man still have something to scare off children. We believe that once they have been to the prison, they have some criminal traits to be concerned about.

This mistrust tends to lead to discrimination: "Society discriminate against them because they are afraid that they have not reformed and there is the likelihood that they will repeat the offence is very high" (Mr Anan). Community participants also perceive that prison improves a person's criminal skills. Maame Eto explains:

> Prison is a very bad place to be – you cannot trust them, they learn something new in the prison, it is only criminals who are in the prison, so after prison, they become very smart and can commit more crimes . . . so you need to be careful when you have one living closer to you.

Sir Alfred agrees:

> We do not trust them, we do not believe in total reformation of an ex-convict, even when they are in the prison, they still organise and commit crime in the community . . . sometimes when they discharge them they do not go to their homes, they target us and break our stores and get what they want before they leave . . . this area if we get to know that you are an ex-convict we will not entertain you.

Nana believes that incarcerated inmates are incapable of change:

> People form a habit and whenever they come back they continue . . . just about last year somebody entered one of my rooms and took away almost everything . . . it was

during investigation that the prosecutor found that he had been to the prison two times . . . trust me the mother was praying he comes in the next 20 years.

Some community members do not believe those who come to the community post-prison and behave as if they are changed. Maame Kramo insists:

> They come to the community unchanged so if you allow them by making them come closer to you, they will hurt you . . . some even fake and start acting as pastors, later they end up stealing again and they end up where they belong.

Perceived apathy on the part of formerly incarcerated people

Some community members believe that people with prison records do not care about how their actions impact on others: "I believe anybody who has gone to the prison deserves to be there – the community members see them as enemies. The least careless you are they will take your valuable; they do not care if you are the mother, father or sibling they do not care" (Maame Akua). Maame Kramo adds:

> One of my brothers was a jail bird . . . there was nothing that my father did that could change him . . . he was very heartless, and he showed it on us . . . he was imprisoned for several times, but he never changed until he died out of his bad deeds.

Community members also believe that ex-convicts do not fear punishment. Sir Alfred argues:

> They do not show any sign of remorse . . . the hardened ones and those that go and come all the time are full of bad behaviours . . . they do not have good character by nature, they have done it throughout their lives and it is difficult changing them . . . punishment means nothing to them . . . they do not care about punishment.

Mr Kwao agrees: "Most of them are hard hearted, whatever they go through in the prison they will still come and commit more offences." Maame Akua says: "A thief is like a mouse, no matter how you hide your money they can find it, they are very heartless people that nobody should entertained."

Perceived informants

Most community members are reluctant to open up to ex-prisoners because they perceive them to be stool pigeons: “People have been made to believe that if they entertain ex-convicts, they will get to know their homes and will inform friends to come and steal their properties” (Honorable Fiifi). Maame Akua insists: “When they come, we will not smile at them . . . they will even give tip off to other criminals to come and hurt you.”

This perception is entrenched and forms the basis for prejudice against former prison inmates: “They know a lot of bad people due to their time in the prison – if they get to know about you, they will inform them to come and steal everything you have toiled to make” (Mr Kusi). Mr Kwao says allowing an ex-convict to live with you or work for you is like: “living in a house without locks – at any point in time the thief and his friends can enter and steal your belongings.”

Perceived comfortability

Some community members believe that the prison is a comfortable place for offenders, otherwise they would not be so willing to go back. Teacher Ofori explains:

> The people have become used to the place and do not care going in and out . . . they are comfortable in the prison more than they are in the community . . . in the prison I know they are fed three times a day with our tax, so they see no reason going there. If they do not like the place, I don’t think they will be going there back and forth.

On the other hand, some in the community believe that ex-convicts feel uncomfortable living in the community, so they deliberately commit crime in order to return to prison. Nana explains:

> Most of these prisoners when they come to the community they do not have a place to sleep and getting food to eat is another problem because they are lazy and do not want to work – in the prison they get free food and accommodation so I think that is why

they always go back.

Mr Kumi believes that offenders feel accepted in prison:

> They love going there because they think they are not welcomed in the community and they should commit offences and be taken to where they will be accepted. If they are not accepted by their own family, why the need wasting time in the community?

Prison is an unhealthy environment

Community members fear that they will catch diseases from people who have been in prison: "They come with skin rashes and nobody wants to share even a drinking cup, some come with diseases" (Mr Anan). Mr Kwao asserts: "People see the prison as a dangerous place where all forms of diseases are – so, when a person comes from such a place, we get overwhelmed, thinking that they came with diseases." Inmates agree that this perception is common: "In the community, people watch you with a strange eye and think that you have come with strange diseases that you are coming to infest them with" (Owu).

Perceptions in the general community about the prison, and ex-inmates, coupled with other mediating factors, contribute to labelling. These are critical issues to address to promote social justice and equality for people who have served terms in prison.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter presented data about structural inequalities in the community that lead to inmates being labelled when they return from prison, and described how myths and mistrust feed discrimination and stigmatisation against formerly-incarcerated people. In summary, this chapter explored the traditional and institutional practices that reinforce prejudices, inequality, and stigmatisation against formerly incarcerated people. The next chapter presents data on the evidence of the inmates during their time in the community and their experiences of labelling in their day-to-day lives post-prison.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO RECIDIVISM AMONG INMATES IN GHANA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF LABELLING

Introduction

All inmate participants in this study experienced labelling after returning to the community from prison, which demonstrates the receiving communities were disadvantageous, in turn influencing ex-inmate behaviours and decisions with implications for their psychosocial functioning in diverse ways. Participant responses include accounts of labelling expressed as stereotyping and stigmatisation that degrade ex-inmates and subsequently affect their ability to function in the community, with negative consequences on their social, cultural, and economic lives. Challenges they face include inability to gain employment or hold positions of trust, exclusion from romantic relationships and friendships, and being consigned to the periphery of almost all community activities.

Exploring Inmate Experiences of Labelling in the Community

Nana, a community participant, explains the situation in the average Ghanaian community:

> Whether you reform or not, your criminal records will never be wiped off; you will be judged by what sent you to the prison in every step you make. It becomes difficult for people to accept you as a leader or changed person . . . we do not want people to be saying this person stole or killed but now he has reformed . . . remember, they did not just got convicted, but after their cups were full. We knew them as bad persons before they were sent to the prison – the people discriminate because nobody wants to associate himself with a person who is seen by all as a bad influence.

The criminal justice system confers a label through incarceration which confirms community attitudes and prejudices (Kroska et al., 2016). For example, all 25 inmate

participants express that they attracted labels such as: bad, thief, murderer, criminal, and jail bird. Ammo shares his experience: "Prior to my first sentence, I was seen as a bad guy, but everybody was referring to me by my name . . . after I left the prison to the house, people started calling me all sort of names; prisoner, criminal and a whole lot of other names I cannot remember." Some inmate participants attribute their weak social ties, discrimination and stigmatisation experiences post-prison to incarceration. For example, Esi, a female inmate, says: "One thing is, in Ghana, once the people get to know you have served a term in prison, they do not care what brought you there, they will perceive that you are a bad person." Honourable Fiifi elaborates:

> I think the society is not helping, we punish to correct not to worsen behaviour . . . for instance somebody has been imprisoned, the society do not care about what sent the person to the prison - but quick to call the person a criminal and all sort of names.

Other inmate experiences include:

> There was a lot of complaints from the community members to my father – everybody was calling me a criminal, later my father sacked me from the house (Annor).
>
> They call us old-jail-man and attribute any bad thing that happens in the community to us (Awua).
>
> They call you all kind of disgraceful names; if they do not call you a thief, you hear them calling you a criminal or jail man . . . all these make you feel uncomfortable around them (Barrack).
>
> To them you are a thief, murderer, criminal, and a person they cannot do anything with for the rest of your life (Kwadwo).

Despite the support of her family, a female inmate, Kafui, says there is little tolerance for ex-inmates in the community:

> They never forget about your past – wait till you have a little quarrel with a family member or friend, it is during this time that you get to know that you have been to prison before and you are not fit to have argument with them . . . it really hurts.

Mr Kwao remarks: “We call them jail men or ex-convict or long hands – they are very fast; they can steal from you within a second. They are very aggressive when they come back.” Mr Kusi adds: “We call them murderer, thief, criminal, a whole lot – these names are degrading in our communities, once you have these names on you, you are finished, nobody wants to have anything to do with you.” Some also refer to ex-convicts as: “Jail bird, useless people, bad people, heartless and people who can kill for no reason” (Maame Akua).

Inmates even find they lose their original names: “People will be calling you all kinds of names – in my community, I don’t remember anybody calling me by my name” (Teye). Instead, they are referred to by their crime: “When you are discharged back to the community, people will always remember you with the offence that sent you to the prison. They will say the armed robber or thief is in, take good care of your things” (Officer Adu). To this end, if a person was charged with armed robbery, he or she is referred to as an armed robber. Nana explains: “Whatever you did that sent you to the prison, we name you after it – if you stole a plantain, when you came back to the community we will start calling the plantain stealer, if you killed you will be called the murderer and so on.”

A rehabilitation officer who witnessed community members’ behaviour towards inmates he recently escorted to the community tells:

> In Ghana, the public see prison inmates as people who have offended them so they should perish here . . . they see the prison as a burden institution that should not receive any public sympathy . . . sometimes when we escort them to the community you will hear people insulting the inmates; thief, criminal . . . they do not know what brought the person to prison, but they are referring to him as a thief. Because of this

> most of the inmates, when they are discharged, they do not go home . . . they go straight to the ghettos (Officer Ebo).

However, some in the community can empathise with former inmates. Honourable Fiifi reflects:

> We do not make them feel a part of the community, we insult them, call them all kind of degrading names . . . if they see they are not welcomed they will definitely go to where they will be welcomed.

This comment recognises the community contribution to the recidivism revolving door. Ammo also shares his experience:

> After my first term in the prison, committing crime again was the last thing I thought of . . . I needed help and never got one . . . if the help is coming, you get somebody, sometimes your family member, will tell the person this guy is bad . . . you should be careful with him.

Inmates encounter numerous challenges in the community as a result of labels ascribed to them. Labels limit their opportunities to compete with "law abiding people" as they are perceived to be socially and economically misfit. Yawa lamented: "Where I was staying, nobody talked good things about me – little children know me . . . they know me as a dangerous person that they should not get closer to."

Two additional themes emerged from the interviews:

1. The challenges inmates face when they return to the community (such as employment, housing, relationships); and
2. Inmates' responses to these challenges (pathway from labelling to recidivism – secondary deviance).

Exploring the Post-Prison Challenges

Challenges ex-inmates face in the community include the intrapersonal (loss of self-confidence and emotional stress) and interpersonal (employment, relationships, and isolation). Most challenges relate to hostility and lack of acceptance, discrimination (employment, accommodation, and position of trust), relationship problems, and injustice and false accusations.

Hostility and Lack of Acceptance

Officer Aku laments:

> When a person embarks on a journey, he or she aims to return home one day – the prison is like embarking on a journey . . . but when inmates return to their communities they do not receive the same love that people who return from their long journeys do – they are rejected and feel unwelcomed in their own homes.

Officer Aku's view reflects exactly the sad tragedy the inmates face upon their return to their respective communities. Inmate participants describe the extreme negativity they encounter in the community: "In the community you are faced with a real hatred – it is only after you return from prison to the community before you will see real hatred" (Yawa). Kwadwo, in particular, explains how the prison sentence becomes a barrier between the inmate and the community: "the moment you come to the prison, you have separated yourself from the community, they will never get closer to you and you dare not get closer to them." Ali takes a slightly different tack: "After leaving the prison to the community, your old friends turn their backs at you – they judge you and you feel that you are a bad person. I felt rejected and embarrassed whenever I tried to get near them."

Kwame believes his contact with the prison turned the entire community against him: "They will not give you the chance to live with them – the moment you are sentenced to prison, you are an enemy to the public; you will struggle throughout your stay in the

community." People from Owu's life before his incarceration rejected him post-prison:

> There were some rich people I used to wash their cars and get money, but the moment I got out of the prison, they were not willing to allow me in their homes . . . one of them told me, in front of other people that he does not want me in his home . . . in front of everyone and I felt very bad.

Arguably, inmates are denied the chance to reintegrate into the community. Officer Bakar says: "The society does not accept them after prison, they do not give them the needed assistance." Most of the inmate participants spoke of being disrespected by family and friends. Kwadwo shares his experience: "My own nephews disrespected me – they made me feel like a useless person." Mr Anan, a social worker, reveals:

> I was handling a custody case, when a child wanted to leave his mother's home to the father's . . . the reason given was that, one of his uncles had returned from the prison and he was not comfortable sleeping in the same room with him . . . the uncle was smelling, coughing, and all kind of issues . . . let's take for instance if the uncle came from overseas, would the child had behaved like he did.

Honourable Fiifa, cites some common derogatory words:

> Some comments put them off: You are a thief, if we talk about humans are you one, isn't not you who stole the other day? Such comments make them feel useless and they feel that they should never come closer to you again . . . such comments are emotionally provoking, and it can reignite someone's criminal behaviour.

"Some of us, our families have not been helpful, they got us from bad to worse – their actions toward us made us feel useless" (Osei). Adom adds: "To our families we are useless – after prison, you become less important and a person they cannot do anything good with." Some of the inmates perceive they were excluded from family discussions. Banda shares his experience with his family:

When my family members are talking about something, they do not want to involve me and when I tried to contribute, they will be looking at each other's faces as if I am not making any sense to them.

Teacher Ofori, who once witnessed the treatment a person had to go through due to his prison history acknowledges the unfair treatment ex-convicts experience in the community:

> The society see ex-convicts as mad people, they talk to them harshly . . . I have been living in this community for some time now and the way people behave toward them is not fair . . . one day I went to the shop to buy something and the way the shop keeper was acting toward one of the customers I was shocked, it was later that I got to know that the guy was an ex-convict and they did not want to entertain him in their shop.

Sir Alfred adds:

> I must say what we do to the inmates drag them back to crime . . . we do not deal with them fairly when they come to the community . . . we make our homes very difficult for them to live in . . . but what can we do, they are dangerous to the community that is why they were sent there.

Discrimination in Employment, Positions of Trust and Accommodation

Interviews with prison officers and inmates highlight perceived lack of community support as one of the reasons for recidivism. Officer Bakar tells of an encounter with some inmates:

> A lot of them, after discharge they come back . . . I have trained a couple of guys who came back to the prison months after discharge . . . I got the chance to speak to some of them and they attributed it to lack of support in the community.

Participants interpret support in the community to include returning to an

advantageous community where they will be accepted, assistance with accommodation, equal employment opportunity without reference to prison history, and opportunities to hold positions of trust, such as King or Queen. From this study, it appears that in most Ghanaian communities, these supports were either absent or scarce.

Discrimination in employment

Incarceration has economic consequences on a person's life post-prison, with ex-inmates facing discrimination in employment. Some of the participant comments demonstrate this discrimination is structural. For example, Officer Ako highlights:

> The laws in this country do not allow the employment of ex-convicts . . . if you are a teacher and you get convicted, unless you are pardoned, otherwise you cannot come back to re-assume your position . . . I always say if the government is not willing to employ ex-convicts who should employ them . . . this is something we have been pushing to change, but to no avail.

Awua, a teacher prior to his incarceration, shares his experience:

> When I was discharged, I went to the school I was teaching in before I came to the prison . . . everybody was looking at me strangely and never reacted like they knew me . . . I spoke to the headmaster about my possible re-appointment and he said he does not think there was a space for me . . . I followed to the Ghana Education Service, but it never worked out.

Other state institutions such as the prisons, police, and criminal justice system also will not employ ex-convicts: "Before you will be employed in the military, police, criminal justice and other state jobs you need to provide police report and if it is found that you have been to the prison before you will not be considered" (Officer Kumi). Mr Anan further explains: "There are some jobs you cannot do as an ex-convict – for example, you cannot vie for parliamentary position or presidency – in the various financial sectors they will not offer

you a job even when you qualify."

This practice by the Government also applies in the private sector. Officer Otuo notes: "Most of the private agencies also ensure that you provide police criminal record before your application can be processed for employment." Officer Aku attests:

> In Ghana, it is very difficult for ex-convicts to find a job . . . we take inmates' biometric so after serving their term and they want to work, if the employer got to know from their biometrics that he or she is an ex-convict they do not have the motivation to employ them.

Mr Sarkodie, a police officer, also explains: "When you apply for a job, they take your fingerprint to the Criminal Investigation Department to crosscheck if you have no criminal records – we do this to ensure that a significant amount of caution is taken before a person is employed." Sir Alfred insists that any serious organisation will insist on criminal background checks prior to offering employment:

> There is no better organisation that will employ you without doing a criminal background check, not even a Christian organisation . . . every organisation wants a healthy and decent people that they can entrust in them their asset, trust that when they go out they will bring accurate and right report, when we have gone to sleep he will not come back and tamper with document . . . there are some organisations that will not hire you even when you have been a suspect and the police have taken your fingerprint . . . let me tell you if you are an ex-convict your own father will not employ you in his company.

Mr Kusi is an employee of a top government institution:

> Here that I work, before you will be offered a job, you have to go through a whole lot of processes and one is a clearance from the police investigative department . . . if you have a criminal history, I do not think you will be allowed to work here.

My Kwao, a bank manager, insists:

> I do not see it as a discrimination, because we need to know the kind of people we are working with . . . if we do not check and something happens, we did not do due diligence . . . here is a financial sector and we have a lot to protect, if you do not do a criminal background check we may end up putting criminals in a position where they can collapse the business.

Apart from conducting criminal background checks in structured organisations such as banks, schools and other government agencies, some in the community simply would not offer an ex-convict a job, or trust them with their assets. Teacher Ofori explains: "They do not get job in the community because we do not trust their full reformation – the government do not believe in their reformation, that is why they are exempted from certain jobs." Maame Eto says: "I will never employ an ex-convict – I have to trust anybody I work with, but I cannot trust them, and I do not want somebody to go to the prison because of me – because of this I wouldn't want to hire them." Maame Afi expands on this theme:

> I will not want to employ an ex-convict because they are liars and you cannot trust them . . . when they were living with us as good people, we were living with them as good people, so now if they have become bad people we have to live with them as bad people.

The community members hold the perception that people with a criminal history cannot change. Mr Kwao, in particular, believes: "Employing an ex-convict will be difficult, let's be realistic, who will want to employ a thief as his accountant, the thinking is that one day this person will pull the knife and take all what you have gained from your sweat away." Maame Akua shares a similar sentiment: "It will be difficult to employ a thief who has been to the prison before . . . the theft is in him, so if you employ him, he will end up stealing your money and if you are not careful, he will collapse your business."

Maame Kramo shares her fear about employing ex-inmates: “If you employ them they will turn against you and steal all your money and products – I will not feel secured to trust them with my store; that will be the last thing I will think of.” Sir Alfred adds:

> If you give your job to somebody who has been to the prison before, then you have chosen not to have your peace of mind . . . you are always thinking about what that person can do to bring down your business . . . if the person is a teacher and we give him a job after his sentence . . . what if he comes and rape one of the children . . . what will be the public’s response . . . at the end the school will collapse because of just one person.

Further, some of the inmates who were enrolled in apprenticeships during their time in the community share their workplace experience:

> After the prison, I went to learn auto mechanic . . . when they found out that I was an ex-convict, everybody was careful dealing with me . . . I had no friend and sometimes I felt unhappy going for work . . . I had to quit at some point (Annor).

Asante adds:

> I have been a trader all my life; before my first sentence I was selling used clothes in the market . . . after discharge I tried to go back to the business, but those I called my friends made sure I did not share with them the same working environment.

Maame Eto suggests that the only way for ex-convicts to get a job is to “create one from their own skills”. However, ex-convicts tell of difficulties finding community members who will patronise their businesses: “I know driving and had a licence but people were not ready to trust me with their cars to work with as a commercial driver because of my past” (Teye). Officer Adu recounts the lived experience of an inmate he encountered:

> There is this guy who always come to the prison with short sentences; at most 6 months or one year, at that time I was working as a receptionist, so whenever he

> comes, I received him and also discharged him after he finishes his prison term. He was a very good painter and artist, one day I asked him; if you have this talent why do you always come to prison? He did not answer but requested for my picture, the next day he came with a painting that looks exactly like the picture I gave him. He placed it in front of my office and asked I should not touch it; he came back in the afternoon and the painting was there unmoved. He then told me that, this is what I have been experiencing any time I am discharged into the community; nobody wants to hire me or patronise my products, simply because I am an ex-convict. The stomach has no time to entertain this; the stigma comes before the talent. The community is not helping.

Teye says: "As an ex-convict, you will only get employed by people who do not know your past, even when they give you the job and later find out that you are a former inmate they may find a way to dismiss you."

Discrimination in positions of trust

Ex-convicts are not allowed to hold positions of trust such as Chief/King or Queen (sub or paramount), family head, and other public leadership positions such as assembly member, member of parliament or president. Mr Anan explains:

> Thank God you and I know a bit of tradition, who is a chief? He is somebody who commands respect, who is to be revered, we honour him in the society, it is his moral upright that makes him a leader, so if your chief has been found culpable and served a term in the prison – a chief commands and when you command the followers will not obey, somebody will tell him in the face that you are a thief and now you are calling yourself a chief. This is done to ensure orderliness in the continuity and to tell children that if you want to hold any position of trust or be respected then you should behave well.

Traditionally, a chief is considered brave and sacred, while the prevailing culture says inmates possess neither of these attributes. Mr Kwao argues: "To be a chief in our community we expect you to be brave and brave people do not rely on crime . . . they are an example for others to follow, to be a chief we expect you to be holy." Maame Aku adds:

> In my culture, if you go to prison you can never become a traditional leader; if you are from the royal family . . . you will not even try, because your own family will not allow it let alone the rest of the community . . . if your mother or sister is the one choosing, she will not even shortlist your name.

According to Nana, the Chieftaincy Act of Ghana excludes people with prison records from holding a traditional position:

> A person does not qualify as a chief if that person has been convicted of high crime, fraud, dishonesty, or moral deformation . . . it has been clearly stated in the Chieftaincy Act, clearly and it is very broad, so once you commit an offence and proven guilty you do not qualify to be a chief in Ghana.

Mr Sarkodie further explains:

> Being a chief in Ghana is a leadership position, as a leader, you are being looked up to by the society, a lot of people learn from you and if your character is suspicious, then it is preventable not to put such person in such a respectable position . . . we do not know if you have changed or not, so to be on a safer side the state came out with the act to prohibit such people from assuming such a highly respectable position.

The disqualification is irrespective of sentence duration: "No matter the duration of your conviction, whether one day or 10 years, you still have that tag on you as an ex-convict" (Honourable Fiifi). Nana gives a lived example: "At Bekwai, a chief was dethroned in 1991 when he was jailed for one day and a fine of old GHC100,000 – because of the conviction he was dethroned." The only exception is politically-motivated imprisonment, as Nana explains:

"…the exception is when it was because of political conviction – Baffour Osei Akoto after serving a term in the prison became the chief linguist because he was imprisoned because of political decision." Public office is also off-limits, as Mr Anan explains:

> When you engage in dishonesty offences like malfeasance, misappropriation, fraud and any of the felonious crime or second-degree felony you will be discriminated against by the constitution to hold certain positions or offices in the state.

Discrimination in accommodation

While shelter is a basic need, many participants in this study were denied access to accommodation in their family homes after their release from prison. However, Kafui, one of the two female inmate participants, tells: "Whenever I have come here and go, I still have my room untouched, sometimes my children will be living in it when they come home from their father." Esi, the other female participant, adds:

> When I went home, my family accepted me and I was given all the respect I should be given . . . the room I was living in before I came to the prison was still there waiting for me and it was even cleaned the day I returned home.

The positive experiences of the female participants are counter to those of most males. According to Kwadwo:

> I told myself, when I left the prison that I will not come back to this place . . . the conditions at home was very bad – my room had been given out for rent and no matter how I tried the room was not given back to me . . . I struggled to eat or have a decent shelter.

Annor recounts a similar experience: "After leaving the prison I went through a lot from my own people, the room I used to live in had been given out for rent and place to sleep was difficult, so I was not home at most times." Another inmate tells a harrowing story:

> When I got back from the prison, they had removed my wife and children from the

> room we were living in and I did not know the whereabouts of my wife and children. My room had been given out for rent and there was nowhere to sleep, and life became uncomfortable for me (Osei).

Community participants justify this discrimination. Nana says:

> We do not want them at where we live because they did not behave well and we do not want children to copy them, so we think they should not come closer to us . . . we as a people we want people to behave the acceptable way, if you misbehave then you are telling us you are not fit to be in our midst.

Most landlords have a policy not to rent to former inmates. Maame Akua remarks: "I will not rent out my room to an ex-convict – they can bring tension to your home with their bad activities . . . a thieve is a thieve, no matter what you do they will go back to it one day and you or your tenants may be the victim." Maame Kramo elaborates:

> If you rent your house to them, nobody would want to live in the same compound with them so you will end up not getting others to rent the remaining rooms. In order to prevent myself from this, I have asked all the rent agents to check before they bring people to my place for rent.

Some in the community, such as Sir Alfred, while willing to consider cohabitating with former inmates, have reservations:

> I will say yes and no, yes in the sense that you can accept them, but with some scepticism . . . you are suspicious dealing with them at the same time, for the comfortability, it is very relative, you cannot be completely comfortable with them. No, in the sense that most times when they go and come, they are more likely to depict the same behaviour that sent them there . . . you cannot trust them.

Relationship Problems and Gender Concerns

Ex-convicts also tend to face challenges with forming and maintaining intimate

relationships in friendship and romantic contexts. In this study, all male inmates say they experienced difficulties with relationships post-prison, however the two female inmate participants relate different experiences. Esi tells:

> I have two children, all after my first imprisonment . . . I am a woman and if a man loves me, he will not stop because of my crime history . . . he did ask but after a short explanation he was okay, and we went on to have two children before he travelled overseas.

Kafui adds:

> As a woman, you will always have a man trying to approach you to ask you for a hand in marriage . . . once they know you are beautiful, they do not care about your past . . . I have different fathers for my four children and a lot of men have come to my life, even in my old age.

While incarceration status does not appear to play any major role in female inmates' relationships, the same cannot be said for their male counterparts. When probed further about this dichotomy, study participants say that females are traditionally thought of as compassionate and empathetic, and commit crime only with good reason, as Nana explains: "Women commit crime, no doubt about that, but check the crimes they commit and compare with males, you could see they do out of necessity – naturally, they are very caring than male." Mr Sarkodie, a police officer, further shares this insight based on his encounters with female offenders and their families:

> Through my years in this profession, I have come to realise that the reaction of the family towards their female offenders if same can be extended to male could reduce the rate of crime and re-offending. When there is a case that involves a female, all the family members will congregate here, and you could see they are ready to do anything within their means to keep them out of the justice system.

Officer Esi, having worked in both female and male prisons, agrees:

> Having worked in the male prisons for over 10 years and six years in the female prison, I have come to understand why a lot of the males are likely to come back . . . the seriousness of the community when a female is sent here is not same as when a male is sent to the prison . . . the women are always receiving visitors – there are some women here who get visit from family and friends at least once every fortnight, but go to the male prison, only few of them receive visit – some have been in the prison for more than 20 years and have received visit from no one.

Officer Amma also adds: "On the day of discharge their families are here to take them home but same cannot be said about the males." Maame Kramo shares her perceptions: "I have seen women who have come out of the prison and behave calmly and never returned to the prison – they go to the extent of begging for food to survive than to go back to crime." Maame Akua perceives that "women who were possessed by evil spirits will relapse into crime after they have gone through the hardship experiences in the prison," but believes "males do not care about their experiences in the prison and cannot be predicted." Mr Kwao suggests that gendered stereotyping plays a role in the divergent community attitudes towards male and female inmates:

> In Ghana, women are very important and their absence in our homes is very costly . . . imagine a woman with children serving a term in the prison, what will the children do? They have a lot of role to play to bring our homes to order even after returning from the prison . . . this makes them loving even if they have been to the prison before.

Rehabilitation officers observe that family support, especially by wives, husbands, and children, lessens the likelihood of a return to prison:

One guy was discharged and few weeks later he came to thank the officers with the wife . . . this person's wife has accepted him and it will be difficult for him to come back . . . a lot of inmates are rejected . . . they do not feel welcomed by the society . . . this hinders all the effort we made here to reform them and they will not be reintegrated into the community (Officer Atwu).

Incarceration means the end of many marriages, as Kwadwo shares:

My wife left me for another man because I was in the prison. When I went home, my wife was nowhere to be found, when I asked, they said she had followed a guy who came to work in the village, and they are now living together in the next town.

Ammo also shares his experience: "My wife came to the prison to throw my ring at me – she said she did not know this was the kind of life I was living. It affected my whole stay in the prison and followed me to the house." Osei tells how his family treated his wife and children during his incarceration: "My family sacked my wife and children because they perceived that my children too will grow and behave like me – if the child does not resemble the mother, he resembles the father." Similarly, Maame Akua remarks:

I will not allow my child to marry a criminal . . . I do not trust that a criminal can change . . . if I allow that then I am pushing my child for doom . . . they may end up given birth to a child who will grow up to become a criminal and no family wants to breed criminals . . . if the child does not resemble the mother he resembles the father.

Some of the single inmates struggled to develop relationships post-prison. Ali tells:

The prison has affected me so badly that at this age (42), I do not have a wife or child, my younger brothers are married with children. I have tried on several counts to find wife whenever I am home, but no woman seems to want to live with a prisoner.

According to Kwame: "Nobody wants to marry us – even if the woman agrees to marry you, their family members will not agree." In Ghana, marriage is between two families

and requires the approval of both families. Honourable Fiifi explains: “Where I come from, if you are an ex-prisoner and you want to marry, nobody wants to give his or her daughter’s hand, simply because you have served a term in the prison before.”

Some inmates become alienated from their children, as Banda shares his lived experience:

> Nobody wanted to talk to me, the children looked me as a very strange person and will not want to come to where I was . . . my own child showed that he was not comfortable around me . . . they have let the child know that I am not a good father.

Another inmate, Awua, shares:

> My relationship with my siblings has changed a lot . . . at first my senior brother was very close to me . . . he sponsored my study in the UK . . . after I was imprisoned he got angry with me, felt disappointed and now he does not want to have anything to do with me.

Perceived Injustice and False Accusations

Another challenge inmates encounter is injustice and false accusations. While most inmates acknowledge that they engaged in most of the crimes that put them in prison, some also said they were vulnerable to being ‘framed’ for crimes they had not committed because of their history. Maame Afi relates the story of her late uncle:

> One of my uncles was imprisoned for assault, after his sentence he came back home but was not accepted – he was very forceful, so he started selling second-hand clothes. One evening we heard that armed robbers had come to rob some of our neighbours . . . the next morning, the police came and took him to the police cells, and he ended up in the prison. I can put my life on it that we were with him that whole evening the incident occurred.

An inmate, Ammo, relates a similar experience of his own:

> During one of my time in the community I was fellowshipping with a church and everyone was happy . . . I had changed, deep within me . . . one day, the police came to the house, where I was staying and arrested me . . . according to them, one of my neighbour's house had been broken into by someone and had accused me of doing it.

The participants suggest that ex-convicts are the first suspects when an offender cannot be readily identified: "In the community, when something bad happens, the ex-prisoner is the first point of suspect" (Osei). Maame Akua affirms:

> There is one in our community . . . he comes and goes every time . . . when anything lost in the community, he is the first suspect . . . last week or so I saw him, and I said this guy is back again – I think he heard me and started looking at me strangely . . . our things are coming to get missing and he will be the one we will suspect.

Ali shares his lived experience:

> I cannot lie to you, two of the prison terms I served were because somebody decided to let everyone believe that I was responsible for some crimes in the community . . . even though I knew nothing about those crimes, I was remanded for one and after the woman was not following up on the case they discharged me, but the second landed me in the prison for three years.

Oti adds: "In the community, they point fingers at you – even now that I am here, when their properties are stolen, they will still attribute it to me." Awua narrates his own story of false accusation:

> One day my mother rushed to the prison looking very anxious, she said somebody called my father that I had broken into their car, he thought I escaped from the prison, so she came to check. This time I was not in the community, but they associated with me . . . I am saying this because, once you are an ex-convict, anything that goes

> wrong in the community is associated with you and if you are not careful that alone will bring you back to the prison.

According to Barrack, police coercion is common: “Sometimes they will arrest you and because you have been imprisoned before, even if you did not do it, the police will torture you until you say you did it, out of force.” Some inmates, such as Owu, believe they are discriminated against in the justice system:

> Our cases are different, those of us who have been in the prison before . . . the police hate to hear that . . . the little thing you do attracts higher sentence . . . I am serving 30 years for GHC500. If I had not been to the prison before, this would not have ended me in the prison.

Yawa shares his account of discrimination:

> When I went to court for the second time, after the laptop theft case, the judge asked if I have anything to say about the sentence he had pronounced, I said to him that, he should make me sign a bond, the prosecutor jumped in and opposed, saying that I just returned from the prison, so I am a criminal and should not be allowed to sign a bond . . . the judge responded by saying: if I have been to prison before then I should come and serve 14 years in hard labour.

Inmate Responses to Labelling and the Pathway to Recidivism

Maame Afi, a community member, tells:

> . . . after serving two years in prison, my uncle went through harsher treatment from the family . . . later he became a notorious armed robber and ended up in the prison again . . . after he came back, he decided to do construction work, but faced a lot of challenges because nobody wanted to hire his service . . . one day we found him hanging dead.

While this story is an extreme example, inmate labelling has serious impacts and implications for the incarcerated. For many, labelling leads to poor decisions out of desperation, and behaviours such as linking up with criminal gangs and old friends, which often result in subsequent crimes and incarcerations (secondary deviance). Officer Aku believes there is a direct link between labelling, unemployment, and subsequent incarceration:

> Most of them do not find a meaningful job in the community so they become idle . . . Idleness gradually persuade them to join criminal groups in the neighbourhood, which will lead that person to the prison again.

Officer Amma, based on her interactions with inmates as a prison welfare officer, shares her view:

> When you listen to those inmates who have been coming on several counts, their families have made the home difficult to stay, making association with criminal gangs more convenient and the prison a rest place and a place to stay away from the worrying society out there.

Baah explains how he ended up back in his old criminal group: “After I left the prison to the house, I struggled. Nobody was there to help – my own brothers and very good friends disowned me, so I did not feel welcomed and went back to my old squad.” Most inmate participants in this study had been involved with at least one criminal gang. Banda relates his experience:

> Using myself as an example, I was not accepted at home whenever I was discharged into the community, I became convinced that they do not like me, so I do not have to get closer to them . . . I got more closer to the gangs I knew before I went to the prison.

Mr Kwao, a community member, further explains:

> I grew up in the slum and let me tell you, the most accommodating family is the weed smokers, if you do not have a home and you identify a smoking gang they will find a place for you to sleep, push some drugs for you to smoke and sell to make money, my brother you will not even think about going home.

Kwadwo is clear about community contributions to recidivism:

> A lot of us when we go back to our families we are not accepted, we are treated like we are not of any good use . . . one thing I know is, pets feel comfortable around owners who show them love and flee from owners who do not show them love, how much more humans. If we go home and our own families reject us, where do we go? We go to those who will show us love and value us as humans.

A local proverb goes: Even an animal likes to feed at where it will have a peace of mind. This could just as easily apply to ex-inmates. Taye, in particular, explains:

> I was not feeling comfortable in the house because of their attitudes toward me – even though I had vouched not to go back to the ghetto, I later had to give in because at some point, even where to sleep became a problem.

For many inmates, conditions in their homes and communities serve as a push factor that drives them to risky places and associations: “Our own families do not like us, they do not want to see us. Sometimes the best option is to leave the community outright – but that can be dangerous because my move to the city is why I am here serving this term” (Owu). Owu goes on to explain: “When I went to the city, I knew no one there at the time, so I was living and sleeping in the street . . . this is where I met an old friend from the prison who later introduced me to a robbery gang.” Osei narrates his story: “I tried to find a more decent job, but I couldn’t – I later found myself with a group of armed robbers.” Other ex-inmates find themselves with few, or no, options, as Yawa shares:

> When I left the prison, I went home straight . . . I spoke to my grandfather, begged

him to buy me a car to work with and pay him back . . . my grandfather told me that, he can't do that because of my behaviour – I will use the car for robbery . . . it did not end there, he sacked me from home . . . in fact, when I got out from his house I was sad . . . I ended up in the ghetto again, they reintroduced me to crime and I got to the prison again . . . now if I will get somebody to talk to my grandfather, I will be happy . . . he is the only one I have and he can help me, if not my prison history.

Osei is blunt in his remarks:

> Sometimes, in the prison, when you are about to be discharged, you think about whether you will be accepted by your family or not, some of us who feel we will be disgraced by the family and community do not go home but walk straight to the ghetto after discharge.

Inmate participants describe the looking-glass-self, with 20 out of the 25 inmates admitting that at some point in their lives they accepted how they had come to be viewed (master status) by the larger community: "Now I need nobody to tell me, I know I am a criminal' (Yawa). Baah similarly tells:

> Sometimes I think if my family will accept me when I go back . . . they made me know I am a bad guy . . . I think I am a bad guy too . . . I felt at a point that a lot of people in my community were afraid of me and I thought I could do anything I wanted.

Ali also shares his experience:

> The truth is I still see myself as a bad person . . . I don't remember the last time somebody said to me that I am a good person – even though now I have changed, previously, I looked at myself as a criminal and that became normal in most part of my life.

Some inmates internalise the labels and decide to act in the way they are perceived in

the community: “I realised my family saw me as a threat and dangerous person to deal with . . . this made me feel uncomfortable around them. At some point I felt I should offend the people who were always referring to me as a criminal” (Banda). “I felt alone and was always thinking about doing something bad because it was not going to be new to them” (Annor). Some decide to do what they have been wrongly accused of. Yawa reveals: “When something gets missing, they associate it to me in the community – it continued for some time and I told myself that, why don’t I steal from them and know that I am the one who has been stealing from them.” Azuma, in particular, explains the pull of other criminals:

> People will always behave toward us badly because nobody likes a thief . . . that is how they see us, to them we are nothing but thieves and heartless people . . . for me I go to where I will be happy not to such people whenever I go to the community.

Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, data were presented in relation to labelling of inmates in the communities they returned to post-prison. Inmate participants in this study were discriminated against in employment, holding positions of trust, accommodation, and personal relationships. According to the inmate participants, any form of association with non-ex-convicts is challenging and as a result, most end up in the company of people similarly labelled. This and other factors had implications on recidivism among the inmate participants. The next chapter will discuss the study findings, suggest policy, research, and practice implications, and conclude the thesis.

CHAPTER NINE

DISCUSSIONS, POLICY IMPLICATIONS, SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

This chapter marks the conclusion of the thesis. The first section will provide context for the current study with a discussion about prevailing studies and highlighting some novel findings. Based on the findings, discussions, and academic outcomes of this study I outline a call for action with policy and social work practical implications to address recidivism and work towards removing barriers to effective rehabilitation, post-release programs, and successful community re-entry. Additionally, I will identify limitations of this study and suggest where further research could expand knowledge about recidivism, especially in the Ghanaian context. Finally, I will draw the concluding remarks of the study.

Discussions

This study broadens the understanding of recidivism among inmates in selected prison facilities in Ghana, a sub-Saharan African country where crime and recidivism rates have been rising for the past four decades (Walmsley, 2018), while during this same period empirical information about its causes, effects, and preventative measures continues to be scanty. As indicated earlier in this study, recidivism rates in Ghana increased from 9.2% in 1992 to 23% in 2013 (Asiedu, 1999; Ghana Prisons Service, 2013). Studies such as this one can provide empirical reference on which to base policies, programs and interventions to reduce the rate of recidivism and improve prison conditions for inmates and prison staff. Further, research can assist with tackling systemic and structural inequalities in prisons and the community that work against ex-convicts and contribute to recidivism.

This study suggests that recidivism among inmates is primarily due to systemic failures in the selected prisons, where overcrowding and harsh conditions lead to inadequate

inmate rehabilitation, as well as discrimination and stigmatisation in the community towards formerly incarcerated people. These findings are consistent with the extant literature that attribute recidivism to institutional factors such as prison administrators' inability to control overcrowding and roll out successful rehabilitation programs that impart prosocial behaviours in inmates prior to their release (Gul, 2018; Singh, 2017), as well as neighborhood factors, especially discrimination and weak social ties (Auty & Liebling 2020; Berg & Huebner, 2011; Gunn, Sacks, & Jemal, 2018). Based on the literature, and the results of this study, it is fair to suggest that no single factor causes recidivism, which therefore supports Burch's (2017) argument that "when (re)entry practice is grounded in a critical and holistic framework, it can have a significant, positive impact, by simultaneously supporting individual processes of healing and self-actualisation and actively confronting oppressive structure" (p.371). To that end, any attempt at stopping the revolving door among incarcerated people must make a holistic effort that engages all essential professionals, including criminal justice social workers and psychologists, to work towards changing social and institutional structures that may give rise to recidivism.

Findings of this study in relation to incidents of social learning in the prisons and labelling in the selected communities were not surprising. In fact, prevailing literature highlights that stigmatisation is entrenched among vulnerable populations in Ghanaian communities (Affram, Teye-Kwadjo & Gyasi-Gyamerah, 2019). The overcrowded nature of most prison facilities in Ghana is also well documented (Ghana Prisons Service, 2015), raising the possibility of poor prison conditions and inmates' classification creating space for differential association in the prisons and subsequent manifestation of the other social learning components. What is novel with this study, that has particular policy relevance, are mediating factors that give rise to social learning in the prisons and labelling in the communities. While most previous studies applied the social learning and/or labelling

(Abrah, 2019) to understand why people commit crime and/or reoffend, analysis from this study, through a critical social lens, suggests what accounted for the social learning and labelling in the first place that might have subsequently led to inmate reincarceration.

Another important finding of this study relates to the demographic of the inmate participants: Age at first incarceration of the 25 participants ranged from 17 to 21 years, with 21 out of the 25 inmate participants indicating they were unemployed during their last time spent in the community, which adds to the youth-unemployment-crime discussion in the recidivism literature (Denver et al., 2017; Pizarro et al., 2014). That more than 15 of the 25 participants had been reincarcerated four or more times by the age of 30 raises critical and realistic policy concerns. In terms of inmate participant gender, 23 out of the 25 participants were male, the high proportion of which compared to female participants at first glance could be attributed to the fact that three of the prisons were male-only, while one was a female-only prison. However, a preliminary inquiry at Ghana Prisons Service revealed that out of its seven major female prisons, only the Nsawam Female Prison had recidivists at the time of approval. This could be as a result of these factors: (1) the number of incarcerated males in Ghana (15,015) is more than female inmates (188) (Ghana Prisons Service, 2015); (2) the study found that the female prison was not congested, with living conditions much better than the male prisons; and (3) prison officers had more contact with the female inmates, most of whom were enrolled in trade programs such as bread making, tailoring, tie and dye design, among others. Unfortunately, the study does not have much information to draw a definite conclusion, which has implications for future research. However, a study conducted by van van der Keep et al. (2012) suggested that emotional wellbeing and psychological issues impact women more than males, while unemployment and relationship issues affect males more than females. These factors affect male and female recidivism outcomes differently. In the current study the females revealed that their relationships with family and friends were

not affected, while 19 out of the males indicated their relationships with family and friends were beyond mending.

This study has identified mediating factors to social learning in the prisons including overcrowding, poor prison conditions, and inadequate rehabilitation. In the communities, inadequate community re-entry plans leading to poor coordination between the prison and communities, as well as traditional belief systems that reinforce socialisation of labelling and encourage negative perceptions toward the prisons and ex-convicts were the mediating factors to labelling, social injustice and inequality (Danjuma et al., 2014; Willging, Nicdao, Trott, & Kellett, 2016)). From the critical lens, issues such as overcrowding, poor prison conditions, and stigmatisation perpetrated against inmates and previously incarcerated people represent structural and social injustice. This analysis supports Willging et al. (2016), whose qualitative study suggested that opportunities for ex-convicts to attain economic successes and other social activities are scanty, as such injustices affect successful community re-entry. Addressing the mediating factors should be integral in any effort that seeks to reduce recidivism among inmates in the selected prisons.

Studies conducted in Ghana (Ayamba, Arhin, & Dankwa, 2017; Boateng & Hsieh, 2019) and other sub-Saharan Africa countries (Murhula, Singh, & Nunlall, 2019; Musevenzi, 2018; Ngozwana, 2017; Ajah, 2018; Singh, 2017) report the problem of overcrowding and inadequate rehabilitation in a majority of the region's prisons. Further, studies conducted in other developing countries such as Pakistan (Asia) (Gul, 2018) and Peru (South America) (Salazar-De La Cuba, Ardiles-Paredes, Araujo-Castillo, & Maguina, 2019) also identify overcrowding as the root of most challenges faced by their respective prisons. This study adds to these important findings and moves beyond reporting the incidents of overcrowding and inadequate rehabilitation to demonstrate how they constitute a pathway to social learning and subsequent recidivism among inmates.

Overcrowding, poor prison conditions, and inadequate rehabilitation reported in this study as the mediating factors to social learning constitute the pathways that characterise the prevalence of behavioural learning and transfer among the inmates. This analysis suggests that the mediating factors constitute a chain of events that reinforce differential association, definition, differential reinforcement and modelling among the inmates. These findings are endorsed by an Ethiopian study (Meseret, 2018). Elsewhere, inmate classification has been identified as an important strategy adopted by prison staff to prevent social learning and recidivism (Hamilton & Drake, 2018). Participants in this study were intermingled in the same cell irrespective of their offences and incarceration history. As reported by Meseret (2018), and supported by this study, this practice encourages inmate-inmate interactions which eventually promote infractions and future recidivism. With overcrowding and intermingling of inmates affecting the recidivism rate, Windzio (2007) suggested that "the more prisoners isolate themselves from other inmates, the lower the rate of recidivism is" (p.341).

Consistent with the findings of this study are results from an Italian study by Drago et al. (2011) which suggested that poor prison conditions contribute to recidivism through overcrowding, creating inconducive prison environments and hindering effective rehabilitation of inmates. This is so because it puts pressure on limited resources (Prinsloo & Ladikos, 2006) and creates tension between inmates and prison staff (Smoyer & Lopes, 2017). On one hand, prison officers are perceived by inmates as apathetic due to the harsh conditions created by overcrowding – this affects inmates' perceived trust, legitimacy and procedural justice, all suggested as contributing factors to recidivism (see Beijersbergen, Dirkzwager, & Nieuwbeerta, 2016). On the other hand, limited resources curtail prison officers' ability to improve inmate living conditions. For example, this study found that the daily feeding fee allocated to each inmate in the selected prisons was GHC1.80 (US$0.49).

The Global Living Wage Coalition (2017) estimates the minimum cost of a nutritious meal per person per day in Ghana at GHC5.36 (AUD$1.45). Per the cost difference it is not a coincidence that a majority of inmates and prison officers in this study complained about the quality and quantity of the food served in the prisons.

A question of interest is: do harsh prison conditions lead to behavioural change? Available literature in the African (Musevenzi, 2018), Australian and Euro-American contexts (Bierie, 2012; Drago et al., 2011; 2009; Listwan et al., 2013) suggests that harsh prison conditions impede prosocial behaviours among inmates. Findings from this study endorse Musevenzi's (2018) conclusion that overcrowding reinforces harsh prison conditions and promotes the formation of inmate associations within prisons because inmates, in their quest to improve their conditions, adopt coping strategies which are at the detriment of prosocial behaviours. Inmates in this study adjusted to prison conditions by identifying other inmates (significant others) who were in a position to provide food and security. According to the interviewees the criminogenic interactions that transpired within these associations propelled a majority of the inmates towards future criminal behaviours.

With overcrowding and poor prison conditions promoting inmate-inmate over inmate-officer interactions, the other pressing issue for this study was inadequate rehabilitation. Throughout their interviews inmates and prison officers raised the issue of lack of, and inadequate, rehabilitation programs and therapies. While the post-prison effect of rehabilitation has been well documented (Mohammed & Mohamed, 2015; Ray et al., 2017; Richmond, 2014), its impact during incarceration is still not clear. However, results from this study highlight the idleness effect of inadequate rehabilitation. Perhaps staying idle during inmates' time in prison has negative effects on their future decisions and behaviours. In this study, idleness played a major role in inmates' decisions to join a differential association.

None of the inmates in this study was taken through biopsychosocial assessment upon their incarceration to understand whether their behaviours were influenced by biological, and/or psychological, and/or social factors, neither were they enrolled in any treatment programs whatsoever. Biopsychosocial assessment has gained attention over the past decade, especially in the West, because it assists practitioners such as social workers, psychologists, and criminologists to identify environmental, historical, and biological factors that contribute to the inmate's situation and design interventions to resolve it (Burns, Dannecker, & Austin, 2019). The extant literature has suggested that every inmate enters the prison with a unique behaviour that highlights their recidivism risk and must be addressed prior to discharge (Kigerl & Hamilton, 2016; Lahm, 2016). The current analysis suggests that absence of biopsychosocial assessment of inmates has serious implications on behaviours during and post-prison due to the endemic social learning. It is therefore not a coincidence that a majority of the inmates in this study indicated they learned smoking (drug use) and other criminal behaviours during earlier prison terms. This has implications for policy and future research.

Inadequate rehabilitation, in tandem with overcrowding and poor prison conditions, creates a culture in prisons where inmates can spend so much time with other inmates that some may not have contact with a prison officer from their admission until their discharge. Another factor contributing to inadequate rehabilitation and the formation of inmate associations is short-term sentencing. While some studies from the western context do not support this finding (Rydberg & Clark, 2016; Wermink, Nieuwbeerta, Ramakers, de Keijser, & Dirkzwager, 2018), there is consistency with a Nigerian study which suggests that imprisoning offenders for short-terms (less than 12 months) negatively impacts on their behaviours, as short-term sentenced inmates were more likely to be reincarcerated (Adekeye & Emmanuel, 2018). This could be because of contextual disparities: in the western studies

cited, inmates who were serving short-term sentences were treated and underwent rehabilitation, while the inmates who participated in this study did not. Specific to this study, the rehabilitation officers revealed that the inmates who were serving terms of six months or less were not allowed to be enrolled in any trade. The explanation given by the prison officers was that these inmates' sentencing terms were too short for them to acquire meaningful skills, should they be enrolled. Without biopsychosocial assessment to suggest appropriate programs and interventions to address their criminogenic needs prior to their release, however, these prisoners were at a high-risk of reincarceration. These findings have implications for immediate and future policy considerations.

This study finds that overcrowding, poor prison conditions, and inadequate rehabilitation reinforces social learning, leading to a majority of inmates engaging in minor and major infractions while serving their prison terms, in turn increasing their chances of reoffending post-prison (Cochran & Mears, 2017). Some of the inmates were already engaging in fraudulent activities such as smuggling phones into prison and trading in food stuffs and contraband items such as cannabis, tobacco, and pharmaceuticals such as Tramadol. This finding diverges from a Philippine study that found prison trade and association among inmates was effective in supporting and promoting prosocial behaviour among inmates in an overcapacity prison (Narag & Lee, 2018). However, in contrast to the Philippine study, this research suggests that the inmates' engagement in trade in prison could promote use and misuse of licit and illicit drugs and other substances which could play a part in their recidivism. Such transactions in the prisons are seen by the inmates as lucrative despite such acts being in conflict with prison bylaws.

This study so far suggests that the treatment of inmates, and the conditions under which they are incarcerated, when viewed through the critical social lens, could be described as perpetuating and condemning the inmates to protracted disempowerment and

powerlessness (Fook, 2016). Structures in the prison that are influenced by short-term sentencing, overcrowding, low inmate-officer ratios, among others, do not support effective inmate rehabilitation, denying programs and interventions that could promote prosocial behaviour and skills needed for empowerment (Haugh & Talwar, 2016). Aside from disempowerment, inmates and rehabilitation officer participants described prison conditions as inhumane, as prisoners were denied access to nutritious food and quality sleeping facilities. A majority of the inmates responded to these institutional injustices by joining a differential association which is believed to have contributed to their relapse into criminal behaviour. Nieuwoudt and Bantjes (2019), as well as Danjuma et al. (2018) in their respective studies described the challenges human rights violations in sub-Saharan African prisons pose to inmates and their reformation.

Evidence of Social Learning among Inmates in the Selected Prisons and Recidivism

Akers' social learning theory has attracted empirical studies in the Euro-American context and non-Euro-American settings. However, a majority of these studies have focused on explaining substance abuse (Capece & Lanza-Kaduce, 2013), intimate partner violence (Cochran, Maskaly, Jones, & Sellers, 2017), and sexual offences (Klein & Cooper, 2019). Even though the theory is grounded on peer interactions and classical studies have reported evidence of inmate social associations (Sutherland, Cressey, & Luckenbill, 1992; Sykes, 1958), few studies have looked at social learning among prison inmates and recidivism. Given the harsher conditions, overcrowding, inadequate rehabilitation, and intermingling of offenders, irrespective of their crime history among inmates in most sub-Saharan Africa countries, including Ghana (Musevenzi, 2018; Messeret, 2018), it is ideal that this study utilised social learning to understand how the prison promotes criminogenic learning and subsequent reoffending among inmates.

In this study, the dominant culture of inmate-inmate interactions that gave rise to criminogenic discussions is consistent with two sub-Saharan African studies (Meseret, 2018; Musevenzi, 2018). Thus, inmate-inmate interactions lead to behavioural learning that contributes to recidivism among inmates post-prison. It is worth noting that while the other studies reported the detrimental impact of the predominate forms of inmate-inmate interactions, they did not explain their findings from the perspective of social learning, which this study does. The social learning theory is rooted in the context that criminal behaviour is a learning process that occurs in an intimate relationship, where individuals decide to commit more crimes after evaluating the cost and benefit of a behaviour and defining whether it is favorable or unfavorable (Akers & Jennings, 2019). Results from this study are consistent with this tenet, as all 25 inmate participants recounted detrimental effects on their value systems about crime from their communications with other inmates during their previous incarcerations. A pathway characterised by overcrowding, poor prison conditions and inadequate rehabilitation had reinforced differential association among the inmates. According to the inmate participant statements, that revolved around escaping arrest, getting arrested for offences such as armed robbery (that yield more money than petty theft), among others that were discussed in the differential associations, which created the space for the other three components of social learning (definition, differential reinforcement and modelling) to prevail.

Differential association is perceived by this study as the major component within which other social learning components thrive. Similar findings have been reported in Euro-American settings as well as non-Euro-American contexts (Cochran et al., 2017; Yun & Kim, 2015). This is not to say that the other three components were not identified as possible causative factors, rather they would have been minimised in the absence of differential association. The study has reported three novel types of differential associations including:

survival or circumstantial, reciprocity, and old friend reunion differential associations. Inmate-inmate interactions were more intense, frequent, lasted throughout the inmates' sentencing terms and occurred in the early days of their terms. These had implications for how the inmates perceived criminal behaviour during incarceration, which might have further influenced their decision to desist from, or relapse into, criminal behaviour post-prison.

It is important to emphasise that interactions within these differential associations in the selected prisons impacted inmates' behaviours because they were purposefully formed and sustained largely due to the parties' willingness to compromise. The findings of the current analysis, and other research, suggest that this is due to the unsupportive prison social climate that gives the inmates reasons to adopt coping behaviours to aid their immediate survival (Musevenzi, 2018; Sikkens & van San, 2015). In fact, inmates' formation of association was transactional in nature, having formed on the basis of survival, reciprocity, and future benefits. To this end, the inmate's decision to associate him or herself with another was largely based on the expected benefits. This could explain why many inmates learn to conduct themselves in accordance with the shared value to be recognised as a committed member entitled to benefits like every other group member. This has implications for policy and practice.

In the differential associations (particularly survival and reciprocity) two types of inmates were identified: (1) the senior man who is resourceful and can provide for the needs of other inmates; and (2) the corner boy who seeks survival and protection from the senior man. As explained by the inmates, the senior man possesses any or all of the following attributes: (a) successful in his or her chosen criminal dealings and perceived by inmates as wealthy and incorrigible; (b) serving longer term; (c) commands power and respect from fellow inmates; (d) has the courage to disobey prison regulations; (e) imprisoned on several counts; and (f) is in the position to provide for other inmates' survival and protection. The

corner boy is seen as: an apprentice, weak, immature, easily influenced (due to their quest for survival), and social security for the long-term sentenced inmates due to their short-term sentences. Listwan et al. (2013) and Meseret (2018) cautioned in their respective studies that where inmates give allegiance to fellow inmates their behaviours are negatively impacted.

The corner boy enters the relationship to satisfy their immediate needs, while the senior man's aim is to provide for the corner boy's needs, while they are in the prison, with the hope that they will return the gesture by paying them visits after they are discharged and successful in the community. Thus, it was revealed during the interviews that a majority of these inmates who relied on other inmates for survival during incarceration engaged in heinous crimes post-prison and were using the proceeds to provide financial and in-kind support to their senior men on revisitation. This was not surprising because the classical social control theory posits that people who are in a haste to satisfy their current need have the tendency of resorting to crime if provided with the means (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). While the corner boys exchanged services for survival, the space within which this occurred created a suitable ambiance for the senior men to impart criminogenic behavioural values over time which might contribute to inmate reincarceration.

Within the differential associations, the senior men's ability to provide for other inmates' survival and security needs placed them at a level ahead of their colleagues. Per the inmates' experience, such people commanded respect, were listened to, and were an example to others. Over time, they were seen as significant others and were looked up to by other inmates. Acording to Hurd, Zimmerman, and Xue (2009) significant others play significant roles in shaping behaviors. Sadly, the behaviours admired and copied in the selected prisons had the tendency of increasing the chances of the inmates' recidivism post-prison.

Admiration of the significant others and deciding to be like one was down to the conversations that transpired within the differential associations. The conversations which

two of the rehabilitation officers termed as ‘criminal trick-talks’ focused largely on criminogenic behavioural reinforcement. Thus, inmates were made to see the offences they committed that led to their imprisonment as a necessity (last resort), hence a majority of them tried to provide justifications (discriminative stimuli) for their offences. Further, inmates whose offences were perceived to be minor were seen as weak until they were able to prove to members of the association that they were capable of committing serious crimes by engaging in prison infractions such as abusing substances, smuggling contraband when the opportunity arose and defrauding the public while imprisoned. Inmates who succumbed to the above-listed normative values were evaluated as likely to continue criminal behaviours post-prison. That a majority of the inmates had come to identify their fellow inmates as significant others confirms the desire to imitate them, as well as exhibit behaviours that attract positive reinforcement. It is therefore not a coincidence that most inmates who were previously incarcerated with minor crimes were reincarcerated with higher intensity crimes that warranted longer sentences. The above findings of the current analysis are consistent with Cochran et al. (2014) who suggested that inmates who engage in prison misconduct are likely to repeat same in the community post-prison, which could lead to their reincarceration.

After finding evidence of social learning in the prisons, whether or not it contributed to inmate recidivism was then established. Logically, a person involved in an association that favors criminogenic conversations is expected to behave in a way that reflects the normative values of the group (Gaes & Camp, 2009). Whited, Wagar, Mandracchia, & Morgan (2017) reported the criminogenic impact of criminal association among prison inmates. Additionally, criminology theories such as the social learning theory, and other behavioural theories, have cautioned the impact of constant inmate discussions and associations on future crimes (Listwan et al., 2013; Messner, 2018). Having described the presence of criminal-trick talk

among inmates, findings that criminal associations in the prisons play a part in future criminal activities that result in reincarceration must pass a confidence test.

Inmates Endemic to Labelling Post-Prison and Recidivism

In this study, the predisposing factors to recidivism were holistic (Burch, 2017). This lies in the study's ability to concentrate on issues in the prisons, as well as those in the community, that may give rise to recidivism. Even though most of the findings reported in this study are consistent with prevailing studies that focus either on institutional (Auty & Liebling, 2019; Nigin, Cullen & Jonson, 2009) or community factors (Bernburg, Krohn, & Rivera 2006), this study demonstrates the indivisible nature of community and institutional factors in understanding recidivism, particularly in the Ghanaian context. It is largely due to this that after utilising the social learning to understand institutional factors to recidivism, it was deemed necessary to employ a second theory (labelling) to understand the community contribution.

To be labelled is emotionally draining and indelible to oneself. The study supports findings from prevailing literature (Gunn et al., 2018) and demonstrates that imprisonment is associated with stereotypes that prevent former inmates from enjoying equal benefits in the community as compared to their non-incarcerated counterparts. A person's contact with the prison was disapproved of, as the community reacted to returning inmates with hostility, discrimination, neglect, apathy and other negative attributes. It is essential to point out that community members' stigmatisation of the ex-convict is purely based on the grounds that they had served a term in prison. This finding diverges from a Singaporean study that reported the type of offence committed influences the society's decision to ostracise the person or not upon community re-entry (Tan, Chu, & Tan, 2016).

It is important to emphasise that the moment a person is sentenced to a term in prison, he or she is seen in the eyes of the people as a dangerous person who should never be given

the chance to interact with non-incarcerated people. This perception is largely influenced by mediating factors including poor community re-entry plans on the part of the prison, and the community living on old myths about the prison, and holding on to their perceived assumptions, and socialisation of labelling the ex-convict (Chikadzi, 2017; Dako-Gyeke & Baffour, 2016). In a nutshell, the mediating factors to ex-convict labelling in the various communities are traditionally embedded and institutionally nurtured.

Traditionally, community members perceived the prison as a place where dangerous and callous people were sent to be punished. This perception is not a coincidence because the British introduced imprisonment to Ghana during the colonial era as a punishment tool for supposed troublesome indigenous Ghanaians (Tankebe, 2013). Institutionally, since the British departed in 1957, successive prison legislation has continued to mimic the punitive approach of the colonial era. This is evidenced in the 1972 prisons service decree's primary purpose of ensuring safe custody of convicted persons, and, if applicable, to undertake rehabilitation. To date, as this study has confirmed, inmate community re-entry programs are lacking, which has created a barrier between the prison and community, as non-incarcerated people perpetuate assumptions and myths about prison and inmates. There is little trust in the community about the prison as a change institution. According to Obatusin & Ritter-Williams (2019), trust is necessary for community members to engage with formerly incarcerated people. My findings support Christian and Kennedy's (2011) argument that a lot of family members resist closeness with ex-convicts because of a lack of trust regarding ex-convicts' reformation. In the current analysis, most community members reported reluctance to rent their room (house) to and/or hire an ex-convict. This has implications for policy and practice.

The findings of this study support previous research conducted in Ghana that suggests people who have served prison terms were discriminated against in holding positions of trust (Dako-Gyeke & Baffour, 2016). What is compounding about the findings of the current

analysis is that status as a former inmate (master status) undermines a person's skills and expertise, and they are discriminated against in employment. In addition, inmates revealed they were denied the chance to establish family ties, and platonic, as well as romantic, relationships. For others, their families denied them access to shelter, and many who were given shelter were constantly treated so demeaningly that they were driven from their homes. A Nigerian study by Ahmed and Ahmed (2015) has made similar findings. Also consistent with the labelling theory were attributes such as "thief", "criminal", "bad", which affected inmates' social ties with non-incarcerated people. It is perhaps arguable that these labels made any chance of the inmates associating with "law abiding citizens" difficult, reinforcing the establishment of lasting relationships with people subject to similar stereotypes: 15 out of the 17 inmates attested to this. This has implications for recidivism among ex-convicts (Bernburg et al., 2006).

Prevailing studies on inmate community re-entry emphasise the importance of families in former inmates' readjustment and community resocialisation. For example, Mowen and Boman (2019); Hickert, Palmen, Dirkzwager, & Nieuwbeerta (2019); Martinez & Abrams (2013) stressed the family's role in helping ex-inmates readjust and lead conforming lives post-prison. While social support has been identified as important in inmates' community re-entry, over reliance on it, as well as lack of support from the prisons, can be problematic. In their study, Willging et al. (2016) suggested that inadequate community re-entry plans see ex-convicts return to unprepared communities. Similarly, results of this study show a majority of the inmates' families were not aware they were being discharged after serving their terms. This could undermine effective community re-entry as it may leave community members overwhelmed and unready to accept inmates upon their return. The findings of my study have revealed that family members who were willing to

accept their wards post-prison were afraid of inviting courtesy stigma from other community members.

The sad reality is that inmates who participated in this study barely received any social support from their families or the larger community. Instead, they were heckled and ridiculed about their offences. These informal community classifications of non-ex-convicts and ex-convicts as good versus bad benefit the never-imprisoned at the expense of those with criminal records. My findings resonate with prevailing studies that illuminate the detrimental effects of structural and social inequalities on community reintegration of inmates (Christian & Kennedy, 2011; Willging et al., 2016). Looking at this from the critical lens, labelling causes structural inequality in the community by assigning attributes to people that are stigmatising, encourage discrimination and suppression, and render ex-convicts powerless to compete legally for scarce resources in the community (Nixon, 2019). This structural injustice disempowers ex-convicts, affecting their overall functioning as members of their communities (Hong, Lewis, & Choi, 2014). It is arguable that these experiences in the community may make ex-convicts susceptible to criminal associations and/or resorting to crime as a means of survival, as suggested in studies conducted in Ghana (Abrah, 2019) and jurisdictions outside (Jackson & Hay, 2013).

The neighbourhood factors to recidivism reported in this and other studies (Wright & Cesar, 2013; Travis, Western, & Redburn, 2014) diverge from that of Stahler et al. (2013), who found that neighbourhood factors did not have a bearing on recidivism. This could be as a result of the contextual differences between the studies. However, my findings agree with a number of other studies that identify labelling-related structural inequality as a pathway to reincarceration. For example, Travis et al. (2014) concluded that ex-convicts faced difficulties securing a job even when they were qualified. Past (Uggen, 2000) and recent

(Obatusin & Ritter-Williams, 2019) studies stress the importance of employment in reducing reincarceration.

Solinas-Saunders and Stacer (2017) reported in their study that ex-convicts struggle with structural inequalities that disempower them and perpetuate discrimination against them in socioeconomic activities. They further suggested that former inmates deal with these stresses by resorting to drug use or joining criminal subgroups, either of which potentially exposes them to reincarceration. In fact, past studies have been stark on the detrimental effects on recidivism of post-prison drug use (Hakansson & Berglund, 2012). Many inmates resort to drug use to cope with feelings of hopelessness and difficulties adjusting to life in the community (Cheah, Unnithan, & Raran, 2020).

Findings of this study support the argument of prevailing literature that labelling in itself does not directly lead to recidivism (Baker 1963; Bernburg et al., 2006), rather it creates unbearable circumstances that drive the labelled to return to criminal activities. According to Whitson, Anicich, Wang, and Galinsky (2017), people who are labelled as “bad” and/or “criminals” tend to feel comfortable in association with others similarly labelled, who are more likely to accept and support them. These findings agree with this study. After receiving unfriendly treatment from family and other non-ex-convicts, a majority of the inmates in this study took up with former prison inmates and/or criminal sub-groups in their communities, which increased the likelihood of their reconviction. Some inmates indicated they were arrested and convicted with friends they had met while in prison and with whom they had reunited after their release.

According to Guzman, Goto, and Wei (2016), stigmatisation dominates a victim’s emotions and may influence them to make hasty and detrimental decisions such as to use skills acquired through criminal trick-talks and criminal friendship networks to return to crime, thereby increasing their chances of recidivism. Findings of this study are consistent

with the tenets of the labelling theory confirming the impact of labelling and other factors on recidivism. For example, actions that contributed to the inmate's first prison term constitute primary deviance. Society becomes aware that the person has been imprisoned, which activates a set of attitudes towards the inmate. Inadequate re-entry plans see inmates return to the community to face discrimination, stigma, and lack of acceptance. Eventually, these and other external factors combined make returning to crime an easier option, secondary deviance is fulfilled, and they return to prison as recidivists.

The findings of this research further demonstrate that social learning occurs in prisons, labelling occurs in the community, and these factors combined contribute to recidivism. These findings contribute to the recidivism literature and introduce new ways of addressing recidivism. Thus, the findings allow me to argue from a critical lens that offender recidivism is a journey with a start point and destination, commencing as soon as a person has contact with the criminal justice system, which may only be halted by a collective effort of the justice system, prisons, the community and other professionals such as social workers, counselors and psychologists. In the Ghanaian context where social, as well as institutional factors play an important role in determining recidivism, a focus on addressing one over the other may yield no positive outcome in the effort to address recidivism. Figure 4 shows the interaction between social learning and labelling, explaining the pathway of recidivism among inmates who participated in this study. With the exception of inmates on life-sentences and capital punishment dispositions, all other inmates are expected to return to their respective communities. This suggests that as soon as a person is sentenced to prison, all efforts to prevent them from reoffending must focus on how they can best fit into the community post-prison. Failure in this regard will affect the inmate's behaviour during incarceration and weaken family ties post-prison, both with implications for recidivism.

Figure 4 Pathway to Recidivism

Pathway to recidivism among inmates in the selected prisons

Prison ↔ Community

Imprisonment → Primary Labelling

Structural Deficiencies

Overcrowding – Harsh Conditions – Inadequate Rehabilitation

Social Learning

Differential Association;
Definition;
Differential Reinforcement;
Modelling

Inmate contamination

Inadequate Community re-entry programs and plan

Traditional myth strengthened

Community members live on assumptions

The ex-convict experiences labelling

Unrepaired relationship between ex-convicts and non-ex-convicts

Ex-convicts' vulnerability to joining criminal associations is intensified

Opportunity to return to crime is embraced

Possible reincarceration

Note: A figure showing the pathway of recidivism among the inmates who participated in this study.

The figure above demonstrates three pathways to recidivism among inmates in the selected prisons. First, the prisons fail to provide a conducive environment for effective rehabilitation that may allow inmates to be returned to the community as law-abiding citizens. Second, the prisons fail to plan and prepare for inmates' re-entry into the community, and third, the community demonstrates hostile attitudes towards inmates and former inmates.

A critical and realistic interpretation of the factors listed in Figure 2.1 raises social justice and human rights concerns. The Kampala Declaration on Prison Conditions in Africa [KDPCA, 1996], to which Ghana has assented, entreats state parties to address overcrowding, improve prison hygiene, provide inmates with sufficient and nutritious meals, as well as to make available recreational facilities, while ensuring the rehabilitation of inmates. The KDPCA, as well as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, of which Ghana is a

signatory, entreat state parties to not subject any person, irrespective of their status, to inhuman and degrading treatment. In fact, however, conditions in Ghanaian prisons, as described by inmates and rehabilitation officers alike, are below the standard set forth in the Ghana Prisons Service Standard Operating Procedure, which mandates the Ghana Prisons Service to provide for inmates' basic needs (Government of Ghana, n.d). Findings of this study also support the Amnesty International (2012) report which documented human rights violations against inmates in Ghana prisons. These findings raise concerns that actions designed to address problems in prisons and the community actually seem to escalate these problems (Besemer, Farrington, & Bijleveld, 2017), requiring urgent redirection and new approaches aimed at altering the status quo to embrace positive change.

Call for Action and Policy Implications

It is essential to emphasise that as well as critical issues such as prison conditions and lack of rehabilitation programs be addressed, systemic discrimination in the Ghanaian community must be looked at to support successful re-entry of inmates into the society. Other concerns, such as the protracted disconnect between the prison and community, require a holistic response from policy makers and other stakeholders if recidivism rates are to be reduced.

From a critical and realistic point of view, it is clear that the way inmates are treated in the prisons and communities perpetuates an unwanted phenomenon in crime and recidivism. In jurisdictions outside Ghana, practices such as short-term custodial sentences (Someda, 2009), violation of inmate rights (Sikkens & van San, 2015), weak supervision (Auty & Liebling, 2020), and inadequate rehabilitation (Ngozwana, 2017), can be directly correlated to recidivism. As with this study, a North Queensland (Australia) study by Dawes (2011) finds that inmates who return to unfavourable communities are reincarcerated within one year. Similar findings in Europe (Kubrin and Stewart, 2006), North America (Berg &

Huebner, 2011), and Asia (Chui & Cheng, 2014) point to a need to change the status quo and embrace effective treatment and rehabilitation programs during and post-prison (Caldwell & Rybroek, 2013; Passey, Boilitho, Scantleton, & Flaherty, 2007).

From a policy perspective, findings of this study demonstrate that harsh prison conditions, overcrowding, and inadequate rehabilitation constitute the pathway to recidivism. Thus, the focus on safe custody rather than inmate welfare and rehabilitation will continue to cost the country by entrenching reincarceration rates. The findings also raise awareness about the effects of poor community re-entry plans on inmates' social ties and community reintegration. Another relevant finding for policy relates to national security, whereby a hostile environment for returning prison inmates contributes to future crimes against members of the community. This study calls for short- and long-term actions by policy makers and other stakeholders, with the following recommendations:

1. Implement policies to comply with international declarations to which Ghana is a signatory, such as the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of People in Prison Custody and the 1996 Kampala Declarations on Prison Health and Conditions in Africa. Locally, the main legislative act of the Ghana Prisons Service (Prisons Service Act, 1972 [NRCD 46]) stipulates that the prison should ensure the welfare of inmates and prevent overcrowding. An Attorney General report on the Ghana Prisons Service Standard Operating Procedures tasked the individual prisons to assign inmates to cells based on their offences and terms of sentences (Government of Ghana, n.d). Per the findings of this study, these international agreements and local legislation are currently not being adhered to. Implementing these actions would improve the welfare of inmates and limit their negative prison experiences by addressing issues such as overcrowding, inadequate food, and the dignity and worth of inmates.

2. Create efficient and proactive welfare departments in the selected prisons and similar ones, resource them to a reasonable standard, and staff them with qualified personnel such as social workers, counsellors, psychologists and health workers: Chapter 16, section 2 of the Constitution of Ghana stipulates that the prison service must be equipped and maintained to perform its primary purposes, which, in addition to safe custody, is the welfare of convicted inmates, as codified in the Prisons Service Act, 1972. Findings of this study suggest that inmate welfare in the selected prisons is compromised due to resource constraints such as insufficient and poor-quality food, and poor living and sleeping conditions. These hardship experiences contribute to strengthened inmate-inmate interactions at the expense of inmate-officer relationships, leading to ineffective rehabilitation. To implement these changes the Ghana Prisons Service needs to create welfare departments in prisons and resource them sufficiently, as well as equip them with qualified personnel.
3. Decongest prisons, particularly the Nsawam Medium Security and Kumasi Central Prisons: Overcrowding has negative consequences on inmates and prison staff, especially for public health if there is a disease outbreak. As documented in this study, overcrowding, particularly in the Central and medium security prisons, also plays a role in the reincarceration of the sampled inmates. Two recommendations suggested by 12 out of 15 rehabilitation officers sampled were:

- Transfer inmates serving sentences of 20 years or more to the maximum security prison at Ankaful which has a capacity of 2000, yet currently accommodates fewer than 1000 inmates, to reduce crowding in the central and medium security prisons.
- Consider transferring inmates serving short (one to nine months) sentences for minor infractions to the camp prisons, which will have two significant impacts on recidivism by (a) decongesting the prisons and therefore increasing prison officer-inmate contact;

and (b) reducing interaction between minor offenders and felons, which may in turn reduce social learning and subsequent reincarceration.

4. Create an inter-institutional public education taskforce: This study highlights the importance of strong family ties in building ex-convict-non-ex-convict relationships necessary for successful community reintegration. This taskforce could be charged with public education about incarceration and addressing some of the stigma towards inmates. This project must be spearheaded by the Ghana Prisons Service in conjunction with the National Commission for Civic Education (a national institution charged with public education in Ghana) and the Department of Social Welfare. This team would constitute expertise in public education, prison administration and welfare and interpersonal relationships, who can engage with families and close neighbours of inmates, encourage visits to incarcerated relatives or friends, and prepare the community to accept inmates post-prison.

Other important longer-term policy interventions include:

1. Implement alternatives to the two forms of punishment (custodial sentences and fines) mandated under Ghana's Criminal Offence (Amendment) Act 2012, as failure to pay fines is currently tantamount to incarceration. This study suggests community service as an alternative to custodial sentences and fines. Forty seven out of the 53 participants suggested that community service would benefit individual offenders, their communities and the state at large by:

- Preventing a category of people whose crimes are considered minor, such as those who commit petty theft and/or break traffic rules, from exposure to prison behaviours and associated stigma. Keeping people who commit minor infractions in their communities would inform community-based rehabilitation and socialisation and prevent lifelong consequences associated with incarceration.

- Providing unpaid service to the community.
- Allowing the community to monitor the reformation and rehabilitation progress of the offender, promoting resocialisation and acceptance.
- Reducing costs to the state of accommodating offenders. It is essential to note that the scope of this study did not include investigating potential benefits of community service, and future study in this area is required to inform policy direction.

2. Improve the quality of food served in the prison, including increase the number of daily meals as well as the portions served at each meal, as well as increase the amount of money allocated for feeding each inmate per day. The current GHC1.80 ($0.50) per inmate per day allocated for food is less than half the amount of money (GHC5) required to meet basic nutritional requirements per day for the average Ghanaian (Global Living wage Coalition, 2017). I argue that insufficient and poor-quality food is an extra form of punishment that affects inmate behaviours. I also suggest that the Ghana Prisons Service revamp prison agriculture and use the produce to supplement inmate food supplies. An example of how this may work is at the maximum security prison which has its own garden, produce from which supplements the prison-supplied food, and where there were few complaints about the quality of food.
3. Encourage reconciliation and reflection for inmates in prison, together with victims of crime and community members. Opening the prison could allow for meetings between inmates and their family members, friends, and/or victims under welfare department and inter-institutional public education taskforce supervision, to help empower inmates during their imprisonment, change families' perceptions toward the prison and inmates, mend relationships prior to their discharge, and prepare inmates for a successful community re-entry.

4. Make rehabilitation the primary purpose of imprisoning offenders in Ghana. Currently, the main legislation (Prisons Service Act, 1972) makes rehabilitation an optional responsibility for the service. That is, the main purpose of incarcerating offenders is unequivocally to ensure safe custody and welfare of inmates (Prisons Service Act, 1972). It is essential to note that the prison service's success is measured by the primary task, which is safe custody. Rehabilitation is a third priority which the service is not required to undertake under the legislation. I suggest that to effectively tackle recidivism in Ghana, the country's prisons must evolve from just confining inmates to a system that reforms inmates and discharges them into their respective communities with tailored plans that enhance community re-entry and reintegration.
5. Assess inmate recidivism risks in prisons via biopsychosocial testing, and design interventions for inmates at high risk of reoffending. The assessment will also help improve understanding of why males re-offend far more than females.

Implications for Social Work Education and Practice

To implement the above recommendations, professionals such as counsellors, psychologists and social workers, with skills in working in the prison environment, risk assessing, and treatment program design, must be trained and posted to the various prison facilities. The Ghana School of Social Work and other institutions that run programs to train such professionals will need to foster students' interest in working in prisons and with inmates.

The findings of this study highlight the gaps that need to be filled by aftercare agents and other criminal justice social work practitioners. Social workers aim to empower marginalised and oppressed groups and advocate for policies that will remove all forms of inequality and social injustice in the community (Australian Association of Social Workers [AASW], 2010). The inmates who participated in this study were largely marginalised,

oppressed, disempowered and discriminated against, which calls for pragmatic social work actions. Social workers should be employed to assist inmates to deal with the deprivations and hardships of prison, such as adjusting to a new environment, separation from loved ones, and neglect by families and friends. Permanent prison-based aftercare staff are also required, because, as rehabilitation officers point out, the current system of assigning a social worker from the Department of Social Welfare to occasionally visit the prison to perform aftercare duties has yielded little benefit.

While the Ghana Government does not currently post social workers to work in its prisons, non-governmental and faith-based organisations do offer social work services for inmates and prison officers in the selected prisons. The social work, according to the AASW (2010), seeks to:

> Promote social change in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance wellbeing, utilising theories of human behavior and social systems, social work interventions at the point where people interreact with their environment. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work (p.7).

In this study, participants' stories demonstrate inequality, injustice, discrimination, stereotyping, and stigmatisation, coupled with poor therapeutic interventions, counselling, and re-entry plans (Adjorlolo & Chan, 2019), which together have implication for social work practice. In fact, the factors listed above collectively create a space that reinforces disempowerment and powerlessness, with implications for inmate behaviour and future recidivism.

Social work practice and interventions should be designed to empower inmates and change community perceptions about incarceration. Based on the findings of this study, interventions designed to empower inmates and reduce structural inequalities and injustice, would be significant in the effort to address recidivism. Factors such as inadequate

rehabilitation and harsh prison conditions further punish offenders for their actions rather than support behavioural change that empowers through rehabilitation, therapeutic intervention, and capacity building. In the community, structural inequalities and traditional belief systems disempower inmates, affect their self-confidence and engender hopelessness, making the return to crime a viable choice and survival decision. Disempowerment, which need to be addressed at all levels of social work practice (micro, mezzo, and macro) (Rothman & Mizrahi, 2014), come with risk and may increase the individual's chance of recidivism (Toussaint, 2016).

At the micro level, the social worker must design case management interventions aimed at assisting inmates to identify and nurture their strengths and potential, in collaboration with prison officers and family members, both during and post-prison. Social workers must therefore engage prison staff and encourage them to communicate with inmates in a manner that reminds them they are worthy. My findings demonstrate that incarceration begins the process of disempowerment. For example, the problem of inadequate rehabilitation in prison denies inmates the opportunity to learn a trade and acquire the skills to compete in the wider employment market upon discharge.

The process of empowerment must therefore start with the social workers and prison officers compassionately working to bridge the power gap between innates, prison officers, and the community. This study suggests a strength-based approach intervention, with a focus on helping inmates rediscover strengths needed to promote reformation and successful community re-entry (Francis & Pulla, 2014). Clark (2014), in his effort to encourage strength-based intervention in the criminal justice setting, asked this question: "why does criminal justice focus almost exclusively on problems, failure, and flaws when it's an offender's strengths, resources and aspirations that propel law-abiding behavior" (p.238).

This study reiterates this question and extends it to the community to which inmates return after serving their sentences, where there is a focus on ex-convicts' failures and faults.

Still at the micro practice level, as most inmates return to their families upon discharge, any effort to empower inmates must engage family members as active participants in achieving inmates' behavioural outcomes during and post-prison. Family visits during incarceration could mend relationships needed for social bonding, build self-confidence and impact positively on inmate behaviours during incarceration and post-prison.

Addressing empowerment at the micro level without efforts to challenge the status quo in prison and the community, as well as the national level, may be an incomplete effort. This is why interventions at the macro level are important. The primary purpose of incarceration (safe custody) and the management of offenders during and post-prison in Ghana are in conflict with principles of social justice and empowerment. The findings of this study are that inmates barely benefited from their time in prison, mostly because hardly any were enrolled in interventions, treatment or rehabilitation programs. As a result, they returned to their respective communities lacking employability skills and facing constant discrimination. At the macro level the social worker should advocate and challenge policies in prisons that impede effective delivery of rehabilitation and therapeutic programs.

Further, in the community, social workers can use available resources (businesses, non-governmental and faith-based organisations) to empower inmates and support them during and post-prison. For example, as described earlier in the findings of this study, the selected prisons depend largely on philanthropists and non-governmental organisations for food and reformation services. More importantly, collaborations with businesses in the community can teach inmates to manufacture market-ready products such as soaps, hand sanitisers and jewellery.

Social work as a profession seeks to advocate to remove barriers that perpetrate discrimination and ensure equal distribution of resources (AASW, 2010). That said, social workers can improve the lives of ex-convicts by advocating for policies that remove constraints on employment associated with criminal background checks. This study does not advocate for abolishing criminal background checks. However, it seeks to achieve a community where a criminal record does not determine future job or other opportunities. Social workers need to advocate and educate the public, especially policy makers, to promote equal employment opportunity, and other community services, for formerly incarcerated people and non-incarcerated people alike.

Based on the findings of this study, social work practice in Ghana should create awareness of systemic and structural issues in prisons and the community that perpetuate injustice, human rights abuses, and subsequently increase inmates' criminogenic needs. Developed countries such as Australia, United States, and United Kingdom have excellent examples of treatment programs supporting inmate welfare and treatment during and post-release (Caulfield, Wilkinson, & Wilson, 2016; Inciardi, Martin & Butzin, 2004; Michael et al., 2018) that Ghana could replicate and modify based on its capacity.

The importance of this study is its ability to critically highlight contributing factors to social learning in the prisons and labelling in the community. Further, the study has produced results that show a sharp contrast to good practices of reducing recidivism among inmates, as suggested by scholars in jurisdictions outside Ghana. For example, Cook, Kang, Braga, Ludwig, and O'Brien (2015) who reported in their research that post-release programs support inmates to readjust into their societies post-prison by ensuring positive social ties and other opportunities to ex-convicts in the community – the lack of such programs in place, as reported in this study have adverse effects on recidivism. Further, studies focusing on programs and practices that could reduce recidivism globally (Auty & Liebling, 2020;

Listwan etal., 2013; Mohammed & Mohamed, 2015) emphasise vocational training, healthy inmate-officer relationships, and strong family ties and positive community responses that allow formally incarcerated people to have equal access to resources in their societies. Given the case of the current study, where all of the above good practices were lacking, failure to address systemic failures and structural inequalities in the prisons and communities could increase the recidivism rate of the country exponentially.

Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations of this study that need to be highlighted in order to enhance effective application and transferability. Its results should be interpreted as from participants in a qualitative study. Although transferability is advised when interpreting qualitative research, and given that conditions in most prisons in Ghana and other parts of sub-Saharan Africa may be similar (Meseret, 2018), it must be done with caution because subjective experiences of inmates, prison officers, and community members in other settings may be different. Another methodological challenge was the presence of the prison officers during recruitment of participants and interviews. This arguably had implications on the inmates' involvement in the study and responses to questions. Some inmates who might have perceived their participation and responses in the interviews could result in further punishment will have decided against participating in the study even if they satisfied the inclusion criteria. Such inmates' information would have increased the depth of the study. However, for this study to gather in-depth data, I ranked inmates based on their number of sentences, which is believed to have helped the study to purposefully recruit inmates who were knowledgeable and able to provide rich information which enhanced understanding of the topic under study.

Further, most participant interviews were completed in the Asante Twi language. According to Adomako and Baffour (2019), transcribing interviews from one language to

another may lead to data loss due to the lack of direct meanings of some terminologies. Nevertheless, the researcher minimised this effect by taking time to translate participant views as expressed originally in Twi in near seminal meaning in the English language, with a second opinion and confirmation of the transcript by a language expert. Another limitation was the inability to audiotape over half of the inmate interviews. Interviewing while taking notes is stressful and time-consuming, which leads to data loss. By spending more time for the inmate interviews, I was able to minimise data loss. My previous experience as a prison worker and researcher, as well as a member of the Ghanaian community, made some participants presuppose that I was already aware of their experiences, leading to incomplete responses during the interviews, especially with the community participants. This challenge was minimised after making the participants aware their experiences were unique, as well as probing responses.

In most parts of the discussion, comparisons were made with studies conducted in the developed world (North America, Australia, and Europe), with few comparisons from similar settings to Ghana, because there are only a handful of studies on this topic in the sub-Saharan and developing-world contexts. Therefore, comparisons must be made with caution due to the contextual differences. Factors identified as contributing to recidivism were based on participant textual narratives; the scope of this study did not include clinical assessment of individuals to identify risks of recidivism. A risk assessment of the inmates in Ghana prisons is needed to inform treatment and policy directions.

Implications for Future Research

Additional research to supplement the findings of this study is needed in the Ghanaian context to provide more policy and practical direction. First and foremost, another qualitative study should be conducted on a similar topic in other prisons in Ghana to provide broader information. This study did not set out to assess the potential impact of community service as

an alternative punishment to incarceration on inmate behaviour and recidivism. While there are no community service programs currently existing in Ghana it will be difficult to conduct research on this topic, however as a start, stakeholder views on its feasibility to properly inform policy recommendations should be sought. Future research should employ a qualitative method to understand the effects of overcrowding and harsh prison conditions on inmates' wellbeing (physical and mental). Another study is needed into coping strategies adopted by inmates to deal with the conditions in which they live in the prisons. Future research should investigate inmates' perceptions about procedural justice and consequences on their behaviours during and post-prison. Another issue that needs clarity with future research is illicit trade among inmates in the prisons – causes and consequences on inmates' behaviour. The challenges faced by rehabilitation officers and the impact on inmates' behaviour must also be investigated further. The mental wellbeing of prison officers needs to be studied. Another area that should attract researchers' interest is assessment and treatment interventions suitable for inmates in Ghana prisons.

Conclusion

The findings of this study add value to the body of literature on prisons and recidivism. I have highlighted factors contributing to recidivism in selected prisons in Ghana from the social learning and labelling perspectives, while critically outlining the roles of systemic failures, social injustice, and social inequality. The study has produced essential information about a marginalised group whose experiences have received little attention from researchers, policy makers, and the media. To that end, this study, in addition to its contribution to the body of knowledge, has given voice to inmates to share their experiences and suggestions for addressing their situations.

The participants suggest that recidivism is a major problem confronting inmates, prisons, their communities, and the state at large. Given the cost of incarceration in a

developing country like Ghana, returning former inmates to prison through recidivism is an impost that should be avoided. A major concern is that most recidivists are young people who constitute the country's workforce. Aside from the costs associated with recidivism, neighbourhood security issues arise when youths repeatedly reoffend.

A critical and realistic discussion of the findings from this study suggests that recidivism among inmates in the selected prisons was as a result of systemic failures in the prisons and structural injustice and inequality in their communities. Thus, the unresolved prison infrastructure deficit that has confronted Ghana post-independence and over-reliance on custodial sentences have created protracted congestion in most of Ghana's prison facilities, including two of the prisons selected for this study, which were among the most affected. Another issue is inadequate rehabilitation facilities such as workshops, training equipment, and personnel to administer skills training and treatment programs. Lack of coordination between the prison and communities, and other factors such as traditional belief systems, reinforce negative perceptions about inmates causing socialisation of labelling, stigmatisation, and discrimination against formerly incarcerated people.

Textual narratives of participants describe how systemic failures and structural inequalities in prisons and communities are to the detriment of inmates. Not only were the "normal" ways of treating inmates, during and post-incarceration, perpetrating fundamental human rights abuses, they also gave rise to behavioural learning among inmates in the prisons, labelling in the communities, and degrading treatment of inmates in prisons and their communities. The treatment and management of offenders seems to have focused on retribution for far too long and as Clark (2014) argued, the "reliance on punishment to change behavior" (p.238) can prove costly to the person, the community, as well as the state.

There is no doubt that this study raises a worrying state of affairs in the selected prisons and communities about recidivism. It is also clear that Ghana's criminal justice

system is in urgent need of a paradigm shift, especially for the prisons in this study. It is fair to suggest that without intervention the institutional and community factors raised in this study as causes of recidivism will continue the cycle of recidivism. It is not a coincidence that most of the inmate participants in this study had been imprisoned three to 11 times. The cycle of recidivism can be ended if: (a) prison conditions are improved to ensure the welfare of inmates; (b) modern rehabilitation facilities and skilled practitioners such as psychologists, social workers, and counsellors are introduced to prisons to conduct biopsychosocial assessments and design tailored-to-fit interventions for individual inmates; (c) treatment and empowerment of inmates occurs prior to their discharge; (d) effective relationships between the prison and community during and post-release are created; (e) follow-up programs for inmates are implemented, together with support to ensure successful community re-entry; and (f) education and sensitisation programs are undertaken by the Ghana Prisons Service, the Ministry of Interior, non-governmental and faith-based organisations to change perceptions and promote healthy social ties between families, neighbours and people who have previously served terms in prison.

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Appendix 1 Interview Guide

Interview guide for inmates

In partial fulfilment of the requirement for Doctor of Philosophy [PhD] in Social Work and Human Service, I am conducting a research on the topic "factors contributing to recidivism among inmates in Ghana Prisons". I would be pleased if you could spend a few minutes of your time.

Any information given will be treated as confidential and used for only the intended purpose.

Demographic characteristics

- Age
- Gender
- Educational level
- Marital status
- Employment history
- Types of crime committed
- Ethnicity

Why re-Offending among inmates is increasing

- Participants' narrations on why they were sentenced to prison.
- Participants' narrations on circumstances that led to the first sentence and subsequent sentence(s).

- Participants' relationship with family and friends before and after the first sentence of imprisonment.

Differential association

- Participants' narrations on the type of friends (prison social group) they associated with in the prison during their first (second or subsequent) sentence of imprisonment.
- Participants' narrations on issues that were discussed most in the group.
- Participants' descriptions on how the issues discussed in the group affected their rehabilitation and reformation in the prison and re-integration after discharge.
- Participants' descriptions of how the issues discussed affected their behaviour?
- Participants' descriptions about the kind of communication that was considered worthy talking about in the prison social group.
- Frequency of participants' engagement in the group and a description of the type of behaviour that was discussed most often in the group.
- The duration and consistency of interaction with group members.
- How the interactions with the inmate social group impacted the participants' decision to live conforming or non-conforming lives after discharge?
- Participants' impression as to whether the issues that were mostly talked about had any influence on their current re-incarceration?

Definitions

- Participants' narrations on how the prison social group influenced them regarding their definitions on criminal behaviour as appropriate or inappropriate.
- Participants' opinions as to whether they viewed what they did that led to their last arrest and imprisonment as being morally or legally wrong.

- Frequency of participants being able to evade arrest.
- Participants' opinions as to whether being able to successfully evade arrest increased their motivation to continue to commit crimes until they were arrested and imprisoned.
- Participants' opinions as to whether they think or believe the criminal laws that they had breached were difficult to obey.

Differential reinforcement

- Participants' narration on acquiring status in their prison social group.
- Participants' descriptions of what made a particular inmate in their prison social group a leader?
- Participants' knowledge, if any, as to why this particular inmate leader had been imprisoned.
- Participants' descriptions of what were the qualities needed in order to take up a leadership position in the prison social group.
- Participants' descriptions of the type of behaviour that was encouraged and awarded by the prison social group.
- Describe how a person can rise to become a powerful person in the group.
- Participants' descriptions of the type of rewards meted out to members who conformed to the norms of acceptable behaviour within the prison social group.
- Participants' descriptions of the type of punishments meted out to members who did not conform to the norms of acceptable behaviour within the prison social group.
- Describe the impact of punishment and reward meted out by prison officers on your behaviour.

Modelling

- Participants' narration on whom they were looking up to in their groups and other inmates.

- Participants' description on whether they have admired the crime/s committed by an inmate and/or leader of the prison social group.
- Participants' descriptions on whether more often than not, the crime/s committed by an inmate and/or leader of the prison social group rewarded in punishment or reward.
- Participants, descriptions as to whether they would be inspired by the positive or negative of offending experiences of inmates in their prison social group to commit similar, as the case may be, when released from their incarceration.
- Participants' narration on the overall influence the prison social group they associated with had on them.

Other issues relevant to the study

- Participants, narration on the issue of overcrowding in the prison and how it affects their rehabilitation and reformation.
- Participants' access to rehabilitation and reformation programs.
- Participants' skills acquired and its usefulness after first sentence.
- Participants' description of the prison environment and its effects on rehabilitation and reformation.
- Participants access to community re-entry programs prior to first discharge.
- Participants means of income and survival during first discharge.
- Participants conclusion on what led them to re-offend and what should be done to reduce re-offending.
- Participants narration on the importance prison officers attach to inmates' security and rehabilitation and reformation.
- Participant's narrations on how often they interact with correctional officer (inmate-correctional officer) or among themselves (inmate-inmate interaction).

- Participant's narrations on correctional officers' attitude towards them and how it affects inmate-correctional officer relationship.
- Participants' narrations on their perceptions about correctional officers.
- Participants' narrations on correctional officers and fellow inmates, whom they feel comfortable sharing their concerns with.
- Participants' participation in post-release training or program.
- Participants opinion on short term (three to six months) prison sentencing and alternative punishments.
- Availability of aftercare (social worker) agent in the prisons and how often they interact with each other.
- Participants opinion on whether the sole focus of the Ghana sentencing policy on custodial sentence is affecting prison conditions, rehabilitation and reformation.
- Participant's narrations on the impact custodial sentence had on them during their discharge into the community.

Society's actions toward ex-convicts (labelling)

- Participants' perceptions about the attitude of the society towards prison inmates and ex-convicts and how he or she thought they were perceived by member of the community.
- Participants' description on how the attitude of the community members made him or her accept that he or she was a criminal.
- If you have experienced stigmatization during your time in the community, how did you feel about it?
- Did the attitude of the community towards you influenced your decision to adopt the behaviour that brought you back to prison? If so, how did it happen?

- Did the community's attitude make you feel more comfortable with offender subgroups? And if so, why?
- Did it influence you to commit crimes against the community members? And if so, why?
- Describe how the attitude of the community affected your emotions and thinking.
- Describe if at a point you accepted the label placed on you as a criminal by the society.
- Describe if being labelled a criminal made it difficult or easy for you to live a conforming or non conforming life.
- Describe the trust the community members had in you being a reformed person during your first (second or subsequent) discharge.
- Participant's sources of support before and after their first sentence.
- Participant's narrations on experiences of securing employment after first (second or subsequent) discharge.
- Participant's experiences on stigmatization and discriminatory experiences after first (second or subsequent) discharge.
- Participants description about their experiences in the communities they returned to after first discharge and its impact on reintegration.
- Participants relationship with family and friends before and after discharge.
- Participants perceptions about the trust the society had in them, regarding reformation, during first (second or subsequent) discharge.
- Participant's narrations on inmates return to an unsupportive community and how it impacted on reintegration and re-offending.

THANK YOU

Interview Guide for Correctional Officers

In partial fulfilment of the requirement for Doctor of Philosophy [PhD] in Social Work and Human Service, I am conducting a research on the topic "factors contributing to recidivism among inmates in Ghana Prisons". I would be pleased if you could spend a few minutes of your time for this interview.

NOTE: Any information given will be treated as confidential and used for only the intended purpose.

Demographic Characteristics

- Age
- Gender
- Level of education
- Years of Service
- Ethnicity

Shed Light on how overcrowding, intermingling and short-term sentences affect Recidivism

- Correctional Officers' narrations on their primary responsibility.
- Correctional Officers assertion on how overcrowding, in the prisons affects rehabilitation and reformation, as well as community re-entry programs.
- Correctional Officers' narrations on the impact of prison overcrowding on intermingling of offenders.

- Correctional Officers' narrations on how intermingling of offenders could impact on the recidivism rate.
- Correctional Officers' narrations on the treatment programs available and the criterion set for enrolment.
- Correctional Officers' narrations on how often they interact with the prison inmates.
- Correctional Officers' perceptions about inmates' attitude towards them and how it affects correctional officer-inmate relationship.
- Correctional Officers' narrations on their perceptions about the prison inmates.
- Correctional Officers' narrations on whether inmates feel comfortable sharing their concerns with them.

Sentencing Policy

- Correctional Officers' narrations on the availability of post-release training or programs for inmates.
- Correctional Officers' narrations on the kind of court dispositions that are available to offenders.
- Correctional Officers' opinion on short term (three to six months) prison sentencing and alternative punishment.
- Availability of aftercare (social worker) agent in the prisons and how often they interact with inmates.
- Correctional Officers' opinion on the impact of the sole focus of the Ghana sentencing policy on custodial sentence on prison conditions.
- Correctional officers' perceptions on the impact custodial sentence have on inmates during their discharge into the community.
- Correctional officers' narrations on whether every offence should be punishable by custodial sentence.

- Correctional officer's narrations on whether the prisons make provisions to ensure that unskilled inmates are skilled before discharge, irrespective of their jail term.

THANK YOU

Interview guide for community members

In partial fulfilment of the requirement for Doctor of Philosophy [PhD] in Social Work and Human Service, I am conducting a research on the topic "Factors Contributing to Recidivism among Inmates in Selected Ghana Prisons". I would be pleased if you could spend a few minutes of your time.

NOTE: Any information given will be treated as confidential and used for the intended purpose.

Demographic Characteristics

- Age
- Gender
- Level of education
- Number of years lived in the community
- Ethnicity

The Public Perceptions About Prison Inmates and Recidivism (Labelling)

- Community members' perceptions about the prison environment
- Community members' perceptions about convicts and ex-convicts.
- Community members' narrations on how they would relate with a person who have been imprisoned before.

- Community members’ thoughts on paying a visit to a prison inmate (a visit to a friend or relative).
- Community members’ narrations on the impact of custodial sentence on individual offenders.
- Community members’ narrations on the experiences of ex-convicts in the community.
- Community members’ narrations on potentially sharing a home or being a neighbour with an ex-convict.
- Community members’ narrations on employing or working with an ex-convict
- Community members’ narrations on the prospect of being friends (for example spending leisure or recreational time) with an ex-convict.
- Community member’s view on prisons conditions.
- Community members’ narrations on what needs to be done to reduce re-offending among ex-convicts.
- Community members’ narrations on their believe in a complete reform of an ex-convict.

THANK YOU

Appendix 2 Informed Consent Forms

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Appendix 3 Information Sheets

INFORMATION SHEET FOR INMATES

PROJECT TITLE: **FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO RECIDIVISM AMONG INMATES IN SELECTED GHANA PRISONS**

You are invited to take part in a research project about the contributing factors to prison re-entry in selected Ghana Prisons. The study is being conducted by **Frank Darkwa Baffour** as part of a PhD study at James Cook University, Australia.

If you agree to be involved in the study, you will be interviewed.
You may share your experience through your participation in an interview. With your consent, the interviews will be audiotaped, and should only take approximately 1 hour of your time. The interview will be conducted at the Prison premises.

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and you can stop taking part in the study at any time without explanation or prejudice. Participation or nonparticipation will have no impact on your treatment at the prison.

Risk: It is anticipated that participating in this study may cause distress. If you do experience distress or depression, please make contact with the counselling department at the Prison (Ankaful Prison: ; Nsawam Prison: ; Kumasi Central Prison:).

Benefits: the result of the study would enhance understanding of the criminal justice system of Ghana, regarding the contributing factors to recidivism, which may inform policies that would contribute to reducing recidivism in the selected Ghana Prisons.
Expected Outcomes: to gain a better understanding of the contributing factors to recidivism in Ghana. The findings would be published in journals and conference proceedings; enhance easy access and positively affect policies on prisons and inmate sentencing.

Your responses and contact details will be strictly confidential. The data from the study will be used in research publications (copies of the published thesis will be sent to the Ministry of Interior, Ghana and Ghana Prisons Service). However, you will not be identified in any way in these publications.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact Frank Baffour or Professor Abraham Francis.

Principal Investigator:
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Supervisor:
Name: A/Professor Abraham Francis
College: Arts, Society and Education
James Cook University (or other institution)
Phone:
Email: Abraham.francis@jcu.edu.au

If you have any concerns regarding the ethical conduct of the study, please contact:
Human Ethics, Research Office
James Cook University, Townsville, Qld, 4811
Phone: (07) 4781 5011 (ethics@jcu.edu.au)

Cairns - Townsville - Brisbane – Singapore
CRICOS Provider Code 00117J

JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY
AUSTRALIA

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PRISON OFFICERS

PROJECT TITLE: **FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO RECIDIVISM AMONG INMATES IN SELECTED GHANA PRISONS**

You are invited to take part in a research project about the contributing factors to prison re-entry in selected Ghana Prisons. The study is being conducted by **Frank Darkwa Baffour** as part of a PhD study at James Cook University, Australia.

If you agree to be involved in the study, you will be interviewed at your place of convenience.
You may share your experience through your participation in an interview. With your consent, the interviews will be audiotaped, and should only take approximately 1 hour of your time. The interview will be conducted at the Prison premises, or a venue of your choice.

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and you can stop taking part in the study at any time without explanation or prejudice. Participation or nonparticipation will have no impact on your treatment at the prison or in the community.

Risk: It is anticipated that participating in this study may cause distress. If you do experience distress or depression, please make contact with the counselling department at the Prison (Ankaful Prison:
Nsawam Prison: ; Kumasi Central Prison:
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Benefits: the result of the study would enhance understanding of the criminal justice system of Ghana, regarding the contributing factors to recidivism, which may inform policies that would contribute to reducing recidivism in the selected Ghana Prisons.

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JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY
AUSTRALIA

INFORMATION SHEET FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

PROJECT TITLE: **FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO RECIDIVISM AMONG INMATES IN SELECTED GHANA PRISONS**

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Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and you can stop taking part in the study at any time without explanation or prejudice. Participation or nonparticipation will have no impact on your treatment in the community.

Risk: It is anticipated that participating in this study may cause distress. If you do experience distress or depression, please make contact with the counselling department at the Prison (Ankaful Prison: ; Nsawam Prison: ; Kumasi Central Prison:).

Benefits: the result of the study would enhance understanding of the criminal justice system of Ghana, regarding the contributing factors to recidivism, which may inform policies that would contribute to reducing recidivism in the selected Ghana Prisons.

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Appendix 4 Ethics Approval

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Appendix 5 Institutional Approvals

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