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Reliability and Validity of Project Success Achieved Instrument (PSAI): A Perspective from Small Public Construction Projects (SPCPs)

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Abstract

This study was conducted to examine the relationship between social support and reintegration of parolees into the community. Respondents were 240 parolees who were released on Parole Order for not less than one month and who were employed. A set of questionnaires comprising of sociodemographic background, social support and reintegration of parolees into the community was administered. Data obtained were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 19.0. The findings show that social support has been significant and positively correlated with reintegration of parolees into the community (r=.78, p<.01). Of the four sub-dimensions of social support, parole officer's support (r= .80, p< .05) was most significant, followed by peer support (r= .34, p< .01), family support (r= .30, p< .01), and finally employer support (r= .06, p< .01). Results indicated that social support received from parole officers, peers, family and employers were significantly and positively correlated with reintegration of parolees into the community.

Keywords: Social Support, Family Support, Reintegration, Parolee, Community

Introduction

Malaysia accounts for approximately 96.9% of inmates who are released into the community yearly (Ibu Pejabat Penjara Malaysia, 2015). A majority of them are released on expiry of imprisonment term while about 2.5% are being released on Parole Order. Releasing these offenders into the community raises concern over public safety as to whether they have been fully rehabilitated and whether they will be accepted by the society including their family. Nevertheless, community reintegration of the ex-offenders is vital in efforts to reduce recidivism (Shinkfield and Graffam, 2007; Wan Shahrazad, et al., 2016). Although it is an important exercise, it is deemed very challenging. This is due to numerous factors which determine the success of the reintegration process including self-ability, social support, job, accommodation, managing addictions and dealing with stigmatization (Maruna, et al., 2004).

Social support has been cited as a crucial factor in determining successful reintegration of ex-prisoners or parolees into the community. Unfortunately, imprisonment sever social ties which may stem from little or no family and community support for individuals upon release from prison (Petersilia, 2003).

To facilitate the release and reintegration process of inmates into society, the parole system was implemented in Malaysia in year 2008. Inmates are released on parole by the Parole Board to complete their sentence in their communities under the supervision of a parole officer. Parolees re-enter the community after serving at least half of their term imprisoned. To govern this transition, specific eligibility criteria and conditions are attached to parole release to ensure public safety and smooth reintegration of parolees into the community. The conditions associated with parole release can vary from case to case but typically include home visit, employer visit, drug testing and regular contact with a parole officer. Violations of these conditions can result in the parolee returning to prison to serve the remaining portion of his or her sentence including revoking all or any part of the remission by the Commissioner General of Prison (Prison Act, 1995).

Purpose and scope of the Study

Although ex-prisoners and parolees have cited social support as an important factor which determines successful reintegration support (Mac Kenzie, 2000; Naser and La Vigne, 2006; Visher and Courtney, 2006; Melde and Esbensen, 2012; Fountaine et al., 2012), yet presently the relationship amongst Malaysian parolees is understudied. Hence, the objective of this study is to examine the relationship between social support and reintegration of parolees into the community.

Concept of Social Support and Reintegration

Ecological System Theory pioneered by Bronfrenbrenner states that elements in the environmental system are interdependent (Ceci, 2006). The theory entails that the environment which is the closest and most influential to one's development is family members, neighbours, friends and other institutions including policy, law, culture and politics of the country. Social Process Theory, on the other hand, expounds that most people are influenced either by their family relationships, peer group, educational experiences and interactions with agents or authority figures who appear in their environment (Siegel, 2009). It is shown that if these agents provide adequate support, it will have a positive impact on a person's development (Faizah, et al., 2018). Hirschi (2009) affirms that parents, peers and school environment are important social institutions with which a person should maintain ties. Besides that, attachment, commitment and healthy involvement in activities with community leave little time for illegal behaviour.

Both theories highlight the importance of social environment and its components in an individual's life. The dynamic interconnection between individuals and its social environment have a direct impact on their sociological and psychological growth (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). As pointed out by Leverentz (2006), human agency plays a key role in constructing one's life. The intimate social networks and the availability of supportive settings determine the level of support received by an individual. Acknowledging the pivotal role of social support, it has also been found to be instrumental in shielding one from crime propensities therefore making community and community involvement to be an essential component in ensuring crime

prevention which in turn results in successful reintegration (Leverent, 2006). Thus, communities have a key role to play in the successful reintegration of ex-offenders including parolees (Mac Kenzie, 2000; Tharshini, et al., 2018). When this support is absent, individuals have less to lose from reoffending. Melde and Esbensen (2012) emphasise that there are instances whereby offenders with strong negative social ties may have something to lose if they do not reengage in offending behaviours.

Social acceptance is another major element towards successful reintegration. Research shows that people who are labelled with positive traits, help improve their self-image and social standing. In contrast, negative labels stigmatise the recipients and effect their self-image (Adams et al., 2003). Negative labels inevitably engender stigma where the person inflicted becomes a social outcast and may be prevented from having social benefits. When people are labelled as deviant, they are placed with similarly outcast peers who facilitate their negative behaviours (Bernberg, et al., 2006). This consequently makes the breaking of crime cycle difficult thus they end up repeating their crimes and returning to prison.

Family

Evidence presently favours the critical role family plays in an individual's attainment of success within societal rules and norms. Lack of familial love and support affects their behaviour and contributes to the crime-promoting forces in the environment (Formoso, et al., 2000; Norulhuda, et al., 2020; Shankar, et al., 2019). Naser and La Vigne's (2006) study on 413 male prisoners prior and post release from prison found that these prisoners relied extensively on family members' support. The respondents expected greater role of family in their reintegration process compared to while they were incarcerated. According to Caldwell, et al. (2004), even children who live in high-crime area are able to resist the temptations of the streets if they are being cared for and received support from parents who provide them with strong and positive role models. Findings by Hay (2001) demonstrate that antisocial behaviour is reduced if parents provide the type of structure that integrates children into families. The support provided by the family may also decrease the possibility of reoffending. Hairston (2002) stresses too that prisoners who maintain family relationship during incarceration are able to preserve the stability of family which enhances the well-being and facilitates their post-release success.

Peers

On the influence on decision making and behaviour choices, psychologists have long recognised the powerful effect of peer group on human conduct (Janis, 1982; Ali and Wan Shahrazad, 2012). The more antisocial the peer group, the more likely its members to engage in delinquency. Warner-Robbins and Parsons' (2010) study on 315 women released from jail or prison who participated in the program focused on peer support concluded that women in this programme had low rates of drug use and less involvement in criminal justice system. The findings suggest that peer support may help reduce involvement of released women in substance abuse and criminal activities which may result in re-arrest. Other studies too recognised the significance of peer support on reoffending (Cobbina, 2010; Cochran, 2014). However, peer support did not significantly predict re-offence as Taylor and Becker (2015) elucidate. The difference in results from these studies may be due to the different measurement tools used to measure peer support.

Employer

The support received from employers in providing employment is another salient factor towards successful reintegration of ex-offenders (Fauziah, et al., 2016). Employment does not only provide income but also provides structure and routine in filling of time. Additionally, employment also expands social networks, opportunity to be productive members of the society and enhances one's self-esteem. Statistics reported by the Victorian Department of Justice (2000-2001), estimated that approximately 60-70% of people who re-offend are unemployed at the time that they re-offend. This indicates that unemployment contributes significantly to recidivism which is a indicator of reintegration. It has been identified that there are numerous barriers to employment. Wester et al. (2001) cite such barriers include attitude of employers towards ex-offenders and crime, lack of job contact due to segregated social networks and financial difficulties. Besides that, employer discrimination was also identified as the most common barrier faced by ex-offender in employment (Heinrich, 2000; Fletcher, 2001). While Solomon, et al. (2001) found that parolees who have successfully reintegrated into the community consist of all those who were employed. These findings show that support from employers is definitely needed in ensuring success during post release of inmate.

Parole officers

Parole officers play a vital role in the reintegration process of a parolee from prison to the community. This involves legal responsibilities as stated in the Section 46J and 46K of the Prison Act 1995 and through support given during parole supervision (Borzycki, 2005). Basically, parole officers play a combined role of a rehabilitating agent which involves social work oriented practice and also function in the policing aspects which include surveillance and control (Yvon, et al., 2008; Abadinsky, 2009; Zaiton and Rafizah, 2012). Mac Kenzie (2000), confirms that supervision accompanied with assistance and treatment in the community may decrease the risk of reoffending, thus ensuring successful reintegration. Research findings by other researchers indicate that the support from parole officers is important in determining successful reintegration of parolees into the community (Seiter, 2002; Lutze, et al., 2004; Visher, et al., 2004; La Vigne, et al., 2009)

Methodology

The respondents for this study consist of 240 parolees who are serving their Parole Order in all the District Parole Office throughout Malaysia. Inclusion criteria of respondents in this study are parolees who were released on Parole order for more than a month and must be employed. While exclusion criteria are parolees who were undergoing Parole Order for less than a month, not yet employed, aged more than 60 years. Parolees were gathered at their respective state parole offices and a briefing on the purpose and objective of the research as well as how the data collection process will be conducted are given by the researcher. The execution process depended on the literacy level of the national language (Bahasa Melayu). Those who possess written skills, two sets of questionnaires were distributed to them. Conversely, respondents with low proficiency in written skills, an oral administration of the questionnaire was performed where items in the questionnaire were read verbatim to them and the parole officer recorded their responses respectively. Questionnaire for this study comprised of items related to demographic background of respondents, social support and reintegration of parolees into the community. To measure the social support dimension, The Multidimensional Support Scale developed by Procidano and Heller (1983), combined with

social support items developed by Fauziah (2018). There are four sub-dimensions under the social support dimension namely family, peer, employer and parole officer's support. While for the dimension on reintegration, two sub-dimensions are identified, which are stigma and involvement in activities with community. Data obtained were analysed using version 19.0 of the SPSS.

Results

Background of Respondents

A majority of the respondents are Malays (70.8%), followed by Others (13.3%), Chinese (10.5%) and Indians (5.4%). The respondents mostly belong in the 31-35 years age range (25.4%), followed by 36-40 years old (17.1%), between 26-30 years (17.1%) and 21-25 years old (18.4%). As for education level, 43.4% of the respondents finished until the upper secondary level followed by 30.0% from the lower secondary. 20.8% had primary education and about 4.6% of the respondents possess either a diploma or degree. Only about 1.2% of the respondents have never attended school. The distribution of respondents in terms of marital status shows that a majority of them are bachelors (49.2%), followed by married (32.9%) and widowers (17.9%). Regarding visitation during imprisonment, 59.2% of the respondents mentioned that they were often visited by family, 33.3% of the respondents were seldom visited while 7.5% of the respondents had no visitation. Respondents were also asked on accommodation while released on Parole Order where they are mostly living with their family (87.1%), followed by living in half-way houses (12.1%) and only about 0.8% of the respondents are living with their employers. In terms of status of their current employment, 33.3% of the respondents have permanent jobs while 66.7% of the respondents were temporarily employed. On person responsible in obtaining job, 50.0% of the respondents gave credit to their family, while 43.3% of them admits that their parole officers were responsible in obtaining a job. 6.7% claims that they were successful in securing a job through their own initiative.

Relationship Between Social Support and Reintegration of Parolees into the Community

The relationship between social support and reintegration of parolees into the community showed positive and significant correlation with r values between .30 to .80 as shown in Table 1. Of the four sub-dimensions of social support, parole officers' support was most significant ($r = .80$, $p < .01$), followed by peer support ($r = .34$, $p < .01$), family support ($r = .30$, $p < .01$). Surprisingly, there was no significant correlation between employer's support towards the reintegration of parolees into the community. Based on the correlation results, there is a significant, strong and positive relationship between the support received from parole officers with the reintegration of parolee into the community. While, support from family and peer were significant and positive but were moderately correlated.

Table 1
Relationship Between Social Support and Reintegration of Parolees into the Community

Social Support	Reintegration of Parolees into the Community
Family	r = .30** p = .01 n = 240
Peer	r = .34** p = .01 n = 240
Employer	r = -.06 p = .01 n = 240
Parole Officer	r = .80** p = .01 n = 240

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

Discussions

This study examines the relationship between social support and reintegration of parolees into the community. Overall, social support is positively and significantly correlated with the reintegration of parolees into the community ($r=.78$, $p<.01$). While specific results indicate that parole officers' support was the strongest, followed by family and peer while there was no significant correlation for employers' support. Parole officers play a vital and most important role in ensuring the success of reintegration of parolees into the community. This is because parole officers have a duty to provide guidance and assistance to parolees under their supervision. Data analysis shows that there was a positive and a strong significant relationship between parole officers' support towards the reintegration of parolees into the community ($r=0.80$, $p<0.01$). In addition, parole officers' support also prevails in matters of importance towards reintegration such as employment opportunity. About 43.3% of the respondents agreed that their parole officers were the person responsible in obtaining jobs for them. Besides employment, about 12.1% of the respondents resided in half-way houses established by the Prison Department. These houses are managed and supervised by parole officers who provide the social support needed by these parolees in the community. Results from this study support previous findings that parole officers play a vital in determining successful reintegration into the community (Hussey & Briggs, 2010; Chamberlain, 2017) and as Cobbina (2010) shows, parole officers who were unsupportive made reintegration challenging for the parolees. Clear, et al. (2006) and Phelps (2013) also reveal that parole officers with large caseloads were unable to provide assistance needed by parolees. This is

because larger caseloads will make it difficult for parole officers to provide essential services. This ultimately impacts the nature of relationships and support provided, hence possibly decreasing the likelihood of reintegration.

This study yields positive and significant correlation between family support and reintegration of parolees into the community (r=.30, p<.01). This reaffirms that family support has been found to play pivotal role in ensuring individual's ability to successfully reintegrate into the society after incarceration (Laub and Sampson, 2003; Visher and Travis, 2003; Naser and La Vigne, 2006; Leverentz, 2006; Visher, 2007; Visher, et al., 2008). Besides emotional support and care, 87.1% of the returning parolees in this study relied on family members to provide accommodation. This situation is possible and not surprising because the data is consistent in that family support for parolees in this study was prevalent even during their incarceration period. About 59.2% admitted that their family visited them often in prison while 33.3% agreed that they were seldom visited. Only 7.5% of the respondents claimed that they were never visited by their family throughout their imprisonment term. Family support is further accentuated by the fact that 50.0% of the respondents admitted that their families were responsible in securing employment for them. Therefore, the evidences generated from this study index to parolees receiving good family support during incarceration through visitation which was also extended throughout their parole period.
On the other hand, peer support was moderately correlated with the reintegration of parolees into the community (r=.34, p<.01). This may be due to the inability of the peers to provide the necessary support needed by the parolees. Findings by Graffam, et al. (2007) show that a majority of inmates in his study has their relationship with their peers disintegrated. In addition, the respondents's peers may also face similar challenges and they too might be in need of aid and assistance, thus limiting their ability in providing support needed by the parolees. Besides that, the condition in their Parole Order and provision in the Prison Act 1995 restricts parolees from associating with individuals of negative influence thereby limiting the possibilities of peers rendering assistance to parolees.

Employment does not only provide financial stability but also ensures time is spent on productive engagements which may hinder an individual from engaging in negative activities. Employment is important in assisting ex-prisoners or parolees to become a productive member in the community and helps in developing personal responsibility and gaining independence and self-reliance. However, it is found that employment support was not significant towards the reintegration of parolees into the community. This result contradicts to the findings of previous research on the importance of employer support by providing employment opportunity in preventing ex-prisoners or parolees into engaging themselves in crime and going back to prisons (Uggen, 2000; Maruna, 2001; Graffam et al., 2004; Uggen et al., 2005). This may be due to the perception of respondents that the employers might be reluctant to hire those with criminal records. In addition, the lack of education and skills among parolees continue to become an obstacle to obtain and maintain stable and gainful employment (Nally, Lockwood, Ho & Knutson, 2014). This is evident by looking at the job status held by the respondents of this study. About 33.3% of the respondents held a permanent job while 66.7% are temporarily employed. This uncertain status does not convince the respondents that employment is an important contributing factor towards the success of reintegration.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Imprisonment has been a prominent approach in the criminal justice system. Although to some extent it helps to reduce crime, but it bears disadvantages. One of it is that it affects the social ties between the offender with his or her family and community. However, most individuals are released from prison into the community without proper re-entry services. The majority of prisoners return to a community with high rates of poverty, crime, unemployment, as well as minimal economic opportunity and support. These barriers and others, present challenges that contribute to recidivism which are closely related to reintegration process. In a conservative country like Malaysia which upholds traditional values, imprisonment is a taboo that shames the family and community. Preparing the community and creating conditions that encourage sustained desistance from criminal behaviour by ex-offenders is vital although challenging in ensuring successful reintegration of ex-offenders into the community. Hence, their eventual release into the community necessitates a concerted effort to prepare the wider community to accept, accommodate and support the released offenders who are willing to live as law-abiding citizens.

Reintegration of parolees into the community is an essential and important process. Nevertheless, an individual's transition from prison to the community is often difficult and it can be further worsened when he or she does not receive the support from family and community. One of the profound challenges being faced by the offender and the community is the reintegration process (Petersilia, 2003; Maruna, 2011). However, attention to this process is not given as more focus is given to recidivism, thus ignoring the reality that recidivism is directly affected by post-prison reintegration and adjustment. Family, friends, employers and prison or parole officers play an important role in ensuring smooth and successful reintegration. By expanding access to social support, returning prisoners including parolees will be better equipped to have a successful transition. When ex-offenders or parolees return to prison rather than successfully reintegrating into the communities, the countries face loses economically such as lost in potential earnings and the need to spend money to keep them in prisons. However, to understand and illuminate these issues for better understanding, there should be more longitudinal research in what and how social support affects an individual transition from prison to community. This is because understanding the role of social support on paroled individuals and returning prisoners lives is essential to explicating their experiences in the success or failure of reintegration. A better understanding of the reintegration process would enable policy makers, professionals, family and community members to help more offenders adjust to life outside of prison and learn to desist from further criminal activity (Davis, et al., 2013). A comprehensive approach and strategies should be used to meet the needs of parolees during post imprisonment as suggested by Richie (2001); Bloom, et al. (2004). Failure to adopt such strategies may hinder parolee's ability to successfully reintegrate. Cobbina (2010) further stressed that incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women described that their association with negative support networks led to their reintegration failure. Thus, it is necessary to develop programmes for community of inmates that foster healthy ties. Programmes should focus on strengthening relationships between inmates and their community. This effort should begin even during incarceration period. Programmes should also focus on strengthening relationships between parolees and their social environment for effective and positive outcome. The Circles of Support and Accountability (COSA) model of reintegration which is popular in Canada since 1994 could be used as a way forward in providing support and guidance to released parolees.

Addressing the importance of social support should thus be the key effort for policy makers, correctional institutions, NGOs and significant others in ensuring successful reintegration of parolees or individuals released from prison into the community.

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