

## **OFFENDER'S LIFE IN SOCIETY: A STIGMA TOWARDS RE-CONFINEMENT**

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### **Abstract**

Being stigmatized by members of society due to previous criminal conviction and incarceration may bring negative feelings or experiences that would lead to social exclusion that make life in the mainstream of society very hard for ex-convicts. This study analyzed the factors affecting the cause of reoffending among ex-convicts who happen to have committed a subsequent crime after release from institutional confinement. Five (5) repeat offenders who are currently detained in the Cagayan Provincial Jail and Tuguegarao city District Jail were considered as participants of this study who were subjected to interview. The hermeneutical phenomenology was utilized to describe and interpret the meanings of the phenomena of their personal experiences during the period between their institutional confinements. The experience of the ex-convict with the people around them such as family members, neighbors, friends, peers and local authorities, generally revealed the experience of rejection, cynicism, detachment, doubts and distrust. The negative or unfriendly encounters due to stigma of a previous criminal record surfaced as a secondary reason towards reoffending while peer influence was found as the most significant factor that influenced these ex-convict's towards the commission of a subsequent crime. Re-entry partnership with various sectors of the community through Faith-Based and Community Initiatives should form part of the programs of the Philippine Criminal Justice system while the Department of Labor and Employment should be actively involved in providing integrated livelihood and emergency employment for these ex-convicts.

**Keywords:** ex-convict; repeat offender; stigma; social exclusion; re-confinement.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Life in the mainstream of society may be very hard for people who once spent their lives in correctional institutions. These are the ex-convicts who usually find re-entering the mainstream of society a difficult process due to the stigma of a criminal record. Upon his release a new chapter in his life begins where he has to be re-integrated into society to be a productive and functional member, both socially and in the labor workforce if possible. However, the relationship between social stigma and its consequences are not universal. There are varied ways on how the stigmatized individuals respond to experiences of stigma-related stress (Frost, 2011). Due to stigma related stress there are a great percentage of prisoners who committed crime after release from institutional confinement.

In Europe, a monitoring report concerning recidivism (Wartna, 2009) presents the following percentages of this phenomenon: Austria - 38 %, Germany - 35.7 %, Netherlands - 40.4 %, Sweden - 36 %, Norway - 43.4%, Scotland - 53 %, England and Wales - 48 %. The findings of the above studies reveal a need to further investigate the cause of reoffending to find solutions to help minimize cases of reoffending and the re-entry of ex-convicts into the criminal justice process and eventually to the correctional institutions.

Many also experienced difficulties in returning to a problematic family and social environment,

unresolved substance abuse and mental health problems, and numerous other challenges in establishing a conventional pro-social lifestyle as revealed in the study of Mallik-Kane & Visser, (2008) and the; National Research Council, (2007). This has similarity with the present study because it attempted to discover various problems encountered by the repeat offenders within his family and interpersonal relations.

While in the study of Stahler et al. (2013), on the examination of the influence of individual and neighborhood characteristics and spatial contagion on the likelihood of re-incarceration, the results revealed that the likelihood of re-incarceration was increased with male gender, drug involvement, offense type, and living in areas with high rates of recidivism. In this study, the purpose was to examine how the different circumstances based on the experiences and encounters of the ex-convict influence him towards re-offending that may have resulted to his re-confinement or re-incarceration.

Due to discrimination and rejection, an ex-convict may experience social exclusion which is regarded as "a multidimensional process of progressive social rupture, whereby groups and individuals are disconnected from social relations and institutions, thus preventing them from full participation in the present activities of the society in which they live" (Silver, 2007, p.15).

The stigma of being a former criminal or ex-convict is unavoidable due to the possible negative perception of the people in the community that leads to social exclusion and community rejection that creates a negative feeling among the ex-convicts which hinders their successful re-entry into the mainstream of society.

The researcher then made an attempt to discover whether the discriminating experiences of the repeat offenders as a stigmatized individual really influenced them to commit a crime.

The need to obtain accurate information on the cause of reoffending within the social environment may be useful for the work on reintegration which is done to minimize or avoid the possibility of recidivism that, may lead to re-confinement is the focus and line of interest or investigation of this study. In so doing, the researcher aimed to highlight the factors that may have influenced reoffending among repeat offenders on the basis of their life experiences during the period after release from institutional confinement and before re-confinement.

The participants of this study who served as the source of information are the offenders who after having been released from a correctional institution or in jail committed a subsequent offense or crime and are currently confined in jails as a result of a subsequent arrest. They are referred to as the repeat offenders within the context and scope of this study. The researcher investigated how the repeat offenders lived their life in society between institutional confinements in terms of (1) Family situation and (2) interpersonal relations to determine whether these experiences have caused them towards re-offending.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research method that was used to obtain valid data in this research study was qualitative study utilizing descriptive or hermeneutical phenomenology as research design for five selected

repeat offenders as key informants. Padilla-Diaz (2015) underscored that a descriptive or hermeneutical phenomenology deals with the study of personal experiences requiring a description or interpretation of the meanings of phenomena experienced by participants in an investigation. The hermeneutic can be described as the art of interpretation. By using hermeneutics, the researcher will interpret the ex-convicts' social activity as it is explained from their view on their own social actions.

Interviewing the repeat offenders will give them the opportunity to express themselves and their actions with their own words and understanding. Furthermore, they can elaborate on their decisions that led to criminal behavior and the perceived effectiveness of efforts to avoid the commission of crime (Copes & Hochstetler, 2010).

However, when collecting data from individuals who have been socially stigmatized as a result of their criminal actions, it is possible that they are unwilling to discuss their criminal lifestyle (Curtis, 2010). With this possible problem to be encountered in conducting the interview, the researcher gathered the information needed to answer the research question by avoiding asking much into their crime but rather ask more about their experiences on their situation with their family and interpersonal relations that may have possibly led to the commission of a subsequent offense or crime. In that way the participants were encouraged to share what they had done or experienced during their time in the society between institutional confinements.

The informants of this study were the repeat offenders who are residents (inmates) of the Provincial Jail and District Jail. These jail facilities at present have several residents who were former ex-convicts and who were re-arrested for the commission of a subsequent crime. The researcher discussed the objective, scope and limitation of the research work to the warden and paralegal officers of both jails.

Originally there were seven (7) participants among the eight (8) repeat offenders who were currently confined in both jail facilities who voluntarily participated in this study. However, two participants showed confusing and inconsistent statements during the course of the interview that lead the researcher to exclude them. Thus, only five (5) of them were taken as informants based on their willingness to cooperate in the interview and who openly communicated well their experiences that ensured the validity and reliability of their responses to all the questions during the conduct of the interview.

By the principle of anonymity, the names of the residents (inmates) who were taken as participants in this study were withheld by assigning them pseudonyms like Jay, Jeng, Jack, Sam and Ipe.

The lived experiences of these chosen informants were used as the basis in the determination of the factors that may have caused or pushed them towards the commission of a subsequent crime. However, to validate the life experience revealed by the participants the researcher conducted a random interview with the members of their family, neighbors and barangay (local) officials to validate their statements.

The main instrument that was used by the researcher was a semi-structured interview guide.

This allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions related to the main question to facilitate an in-depth investigation as to the circumstances and situations that may have led into the cause of re-offending.

The questions were formulated in a general way in order for the researcher to ask further into certain topics based on the inmates' answers thus, giving the researcher the opportunity to ask new or follow-up relevant questions depending on their answers (Bryman, 2008: 436-438).

The interview guide delved on the concept of Social exclusion with the family situations and interpersonal relations as dimensions. Several indicators were also taken into account within the specific dimensions that ensured the completeness of the information that were gathered. While other factors such as volition, motivation, affiliation to various criminal groups and etc. was also considered. To ensure the full understanding among the participants or informants, a more detailed question was made out of the general questions in the interview guide and each specific question were translated in Tagalog (Filipino) because it is the widely used and understood medium of communication among the participants.

The interview guide was given first to the informants for them to read and to let them know the scope of each question to ensure that they fully understand the extent of what will be asked to them during the course of the interview. The researcher explained to them the purpose of each specific question in relation to the fulfillment of the objective of the research study and the significance of their participation as a source of information. The participants were made to sign a consent form after the researcher has fully explained the purpose of the study with the presence of jail personnel as witness. To ensure the privacy of the communication during the process of the interview and for the respondent inmate to feel free in giving his responses a room within the jail facility was requested by the researcher as the venue.

The researcher also looked into and requested some records of the jail to elicit information on the background of the informants such as their criminal history and the number of previous incarcerations or confinements in jails/prisons. Records that revealed the period for which the informant have been confined in the said facility were also obtained. Interpretive analysis was used wherein the interviews were transcribed and translated. The data obtained from the interviews were organized following the dimensions on the specific objectives of the study and the identification of themes for each specific dimension. The audiotaped face-to-face interview was transcribed which was done by coding the responses. Using the open coding system, the responses of the participants were listed down and analyzed according to the predetermined themes based on the specific objectives of the study then striking responses or statements were filtered to fit the identified theme.

As part of the qualitative data analysis, the data was categorized and coded into groups of significance. The similar ideas that were formed based on the life experiences of the participants as ex-convicts and the perceptions of themselves as stigmatized individuals became the basis of the themes which are not predetermined but based on the commonality of the responses of the participants guided by related studies. The study was then coded by first grouping the events processes and occurrences on the lives of the participants following the

specific dimensions on the objective of the study. Lastly, the common ideas were interpreted and were used to gain knowledge and understanding towards a theory for the research which is done by identifying significant responses from the words or statements of the participant during the course of the interview as validated by the people who have close connection with the participants. With this method, the researcher was able to conduct a comparative analysis of the similarities and differences of the responses.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### I. The Offenders Experience with the Family

After release from institutional confinement, a convicted offender will join the mainstream of society and will be reunited with his family (i.e. parents, brothers and sisters, spouse, children).

The table below reveals the responses of the participants on some aspects of their life experiences as they rejoined their family after their release from prison and the themes that defines such experiences.

**Table 1: Participants responses on family experiences and themes**

Responses	Theme
<p><b>Jay:</b> “Kuya matagal naming inantay ang paglaya mo. Namis namin yung pinagluluto mo kami ng masasarap na ulam” (Kuya we have long waited for your release. We missed the delicious dishes you cooked for us). (siblings)</p> <p>“...Tinanggap ko na lang paghihiwalay namin kasi ako naman ang may pagkukulang at dahil minor pa kami noon”. (I just accepted our separation because I was the one who has shortcomings and that we were still minor then). (wife)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Appreciation</li> <li>➤ Shortcoming</li> </ul>
<p><b>Jen:</b> “Ipinakita ng mga anak kola na sobrang mahal nila ako, mas humigpit pa ang closeness nila sa akin”. (My children showed me that they love me so much, they even got closer to me).</p> <p>“... Tanggap ako ng mga kapatid ko pwera lang sa isang ate ko. (Except for my elder sister, my siblings accepted me).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Love</li> <li>➤ Acceptance</li> </ul>
<p><b>Jack:</b> “... Bukas, maluwag at positibo ang pagtanggap sa akin ng mga magulang at mga kapatid ko” (My parents and my sibling openly, loosely and positively accepted me).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Acceptance</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sam:</b> “Masaya silang makasama ako ulit bilang rising parolado nung oras na iyon at wala akong nakitang indikasyon ng pagbabago sa pagturing nila sa akin bilang isang ama”. (They were happy to have me again in their company as a parolee at that time and I did not notice any change on how they treat me as their father).</p> <p>“... Maaring lalayo ang loob sa akin ng mga kaanak ko kung nagnakaw o nangrape ako kasi talagang sinadya at nakakahiya yon” (my relatives’ feelings of affection may be away from me if I robbed or raped because indeed it is an intended and a shameful act).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Acceptance</li> <li>➤ Love</li> </ul>
<p>Ipe “Mapalad ako na tinanggap ako ng pamilya ko. Napakasaya ko ng araw na iyon kasi may inuwian akong pamilya”. (I was lucky that my family accepted me. I was so happy that day because I have a family to return to.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Acceptance</li> </ul>

## **Acceptance**

Upon release, Jay felt the warm acceptance of his mother that made him feel that he is welcome to his family. This is a manifestation of an unconditional love of a mother that whatever are the circumstances of the child, a mother is always ready to accept her child. He also felt as if nothing has changed, because of the usual manner they treat him as a member of the family.

The release of the ex-convicts in the community entails a hard process for them because they have the feeling that they have lost the trust of their family. This is due to the manifold challenges ex-offenders face in their transition from prison to society such as social stigma and low family bonds (Arditti & Few, 2008; Opsal & Foley, 2013).

Jen on the other hand revealed her experience that though one of her siblings (a sister) could not accept her, generally she felt her acceptance in the family. This situation of Jen somehow has helped her re-establish her good relationship with her family.

Acceptance of a loved one would not be very hard most especially if his incarceration is a result of circumstances that led to the preservation of his life. Jack who was convicted of homicide revealed that the family would openly accept you most especially if you committed a crime to preserve your life. He felt that his family was always there ready to accept him as a son and as a brother and most of all as a member of the family. The assurance of support and the warm feeling of care have helped him easily adjust to his new environment with his family.

When Sam was released he did not encounter any problem getting back to his family because he did not abandon his responsibility as a father even when he is inside the prison. The kind of treatment Sam has felt from his family is an assurance of care and acceptance that guarantees genuine support to him as a newly released convict under parole conditions.

As a result of his conviction, Ipe served most of his prison term in a penal colony where he was fetched by his father when his release and joined his family in their new home in another province. He revealed that he was very happy at that time because he felt the warm acceptance of his family. This experience of Ipe suggests that a family remains to be open in accepting a member whatever his circumstances and situation in life and they are always there ready to give him comfort.

The above experiences of the participants show that the family as a basic institution in the society is always open in the acceptance of a member whatever his circumstances and they are willing to support them. With this role of the family the reformation in the lives of released prisoners as the “peculiar institution” of the correctional system (Wacquant, 2000) serves as an agent of political socialization not just in the lives of offenders but also in the lives of their families (Flanagan, 2003).

## **Appreciation**

Jay felt how his brothers and sisters missed his company and the comfort he used to do for them. His way of showing his care for his siblings through his effort of preparing and cooking food for them has gained their appreciation.

Despite the effect the efforts of ex-prisoners to re-establish their life after release one must have to understand that these ex-convicts have already served their penalty that eradicated their social debt hence the members of the society must learn to appreciate their effort of rebuilding their life with them. One factor driving these effects is the stigma of having a felony record and serving time in prison (Holzer et al., 2007)

This is a manifestation that he was really appreciated by the family that has provided him with all the necessary needs and comfort that helped her re-establish he's life in the free community. In this process of transition, scholars posited that the family is an important support system in the post-release adjustment of ex-offenders (Berg & Huebner, 2011).

### **Shortcoming**

Jay accepted their separation as a result of his shortcomings as a partner for he cannot really support the needs of his wife and his little daughter while he is inside the correctional institution which he considered as a big hindrance in performing his supposed task and responsibility as a husband to his wife and as a father to his daughter. The acceptance of their separation was not hard for Jay because he considered his own situation that time as a prisoner being completely away from his wife.

The absence of one in their union as couples may diminish the quality of relationship that might lead to emotional detachment and separation. For instance, studies showed increased personal and social vulnerabilities, which may include impaired reconstruction of familial ties between children, spouses, and ex-offenders, and family conflicts due to drug use among ex-offenders (Mowen & Visser, 2015).

This situation was supported in a study where risk of relationship strain and union dissolution is high during the incarceration period (Lopoo and Western 2005). When asked whether his separation from his spouse has pushed him towards the commission of the subsequent offense, Jay completely denied that it has any direct influence.

### **Love**

Jen revealed that she was very happy when she was released because of the feeling that she will be reunited again with her two daughters which she considered as the only wealth she possesses in life. She knew that even she was away for several years as a consequence of her incarceration she felt that she still possesses the love of her children. She knows that she really deserves the love and care of her children because she did her best to provide the needs of her children considering her being a solo parent.

The best experiences that a person may ever feel is the warm affection of love ones. This gives them the inspiration to continue their life despite of odd circumstances. The experience of prisoner reintegration in the family can be understood as a micro-transition wherein receiving members jointly construct new meanings and readjust their roles and relationships to accommodate ex-offenders (Martinez, 2006).

On the other hand, Sam believed that the extent of the stigma attached to an ex-convict depends on the nature of the offense for which he was convicted. He revealed that the closeness or

affection of the family to ex-convicts is also dependent on the nature of crime committed and this is the reason why he felt the love and care of his spouse, children and relatives.

Though the nature of the offense for which individuals were convicted may affect their image and their relations to their family, the above revelations of participants do not manifest any evidence of stigmatization among the members of the family. Therefore, the cause of reoffending could not be attributed to family situations. Davis et al. (2012) observe that a deepened understanding of offender reintegration allows the family and communities to better support the adjustment of offenders upon release, which in turn reduces their chances of recidivism.

## II. Participant's Interpersonal Relations.

The table below shows the responses of the participants on some aspects of their life experiences as they mingle with the different people in their community.

**Table 2: Participants Responses on interpersonal relations experiences and themes**

Responses	Theme
<p><b>Jay:</b> "... Noong una takot sila sa akin dahil sa aking tattoo" (at first they were afraid of me because of my tattoo).</p> <p>"Pinagsisisihan ko nga na nakasama ko ulit yung dating kakilala ko. Nasayang yung halos tatlong taon na naging matino ang buhay ko para tuluyang magbago sana". (I regretted having joined again my former associate. The almost three years that I remained to have a normal life and to really reform was wasted).</p>	<p>➤ Stigma</p> <p>➤ Peer Influence</p>
<p><b>Jack:</b> "Nababasa ko sa reaksiyon ng mga kamaganak ng biktima na parang masakit ang loob nila sa akin kasi bakit nasa labas daw ako, bakit daw ako nakalaya" (I could read into the reaction of the victims' relatives that as if they still feel pain deep inside them why I am outside the prison, why I am already released).</p> <p>"...Nakakarinig ako ng pagmumura lalo kapag nalalasing ang kapatid niya" (I do hear demeaning statements most especially when his brother is drunk).</p>	<p>➤ Rejection</p> <p>➤ Cynicism</p>
<p><b>Jen:</b> "May kapatid akong babae na tinatawag niya akong convict kapag nag-aaway kami. Palagi niya akong sinasaktan sa mga salita niya at sinasabunutan pa niya ako" (I have a sister who calls me a convict if we are in trouble. She always hurts me in her words and she even harms me physically).</p> <p>"Nakakahiya ka talaga, hayop ka" (We are very shameful for you, you're an animal). (sister)</p> <p>"Dito muna ang mga bata sa akin, iiwasan ka muna nila" (Meantime, the children will stay with me; they will stay away from you meantime). (former husband)</p> <p>"...adda ka met, haan ka unay agbaybayag ditoy" (Ilocano dialect) (You're here; please don't get any longer here. (relatives)</p>	<p>➤ Stigma</p> <p>➤ Rejection</p> <p>➤ Distrust and Doubt.</p> <p>➤ Detachment</p>

## **Stigma**

Jay recalled that just after his release he is being feared by the people in the neighbors due to his reputation as an ex-convict and because his body is also full of tattoo. Though he did not hear from them any verbal demeaning statement or even acts of cynicism, he could sense in their reactions that there is a personal distance between him and the neighbors most especially that these are migrants who are their boarders and transients.

Instances of rejection may be experienced by an ex-convict in the environment outside his home such as with his dealings with other relatives and neighbors. As a result of stigma these people (ex-convicts) sometimes suffer cynicism from the members in the neighborhood. So that returning prisoners also tend to have very unstable living situations, making it more difficult for them to build local social networks and participate in local organizations (Swaroop & Morenoff, 2005).

Being tattooed and the fact that a person is an ex-convict make the people feel afraid because of a common notion that they are feared and dangerous (Lozano et al., 2011). According to Jay this perception of the people on him did not lasted long because eventually they discovered that he is a good person. Jay having experienced this treatment for some time did not consider the stigma to have a direct influence to a subsequent crime. He actually admitted the commission of the crime due to peer influence but denied that the stigma of being an ex-convict having a direct influence for the commission of a second offense.

While Jen on the other hand could not hide her real feelings of dismay on how she is being treated. She recalled a time that she is in trouble with her sister. This is a situation where she feels the burden of the stigma of being an ex-convict that she experienced an unjust treatment even from a member of her own family. Jen revealed the feelings that it really hurts and hard for her to accept that once you are a drug user and pusher they will always see you like one.

Peer influence indeed is a very strong influence that pushed the above participants in the commission of a subsequent crime. It is a factor that most offenders consider in their involvement to a crime most especially in the case of illegal drug activities. Therefore, peer associates have a great influence on the lifestyle of their members (Allen M. et. al, 2003).

## **Peer Influence**

In the case of Jay, he considered his own mistake of having allowed himself being taken by the alluring offer of his friend to take drugs and eventually lose control over himself of being involved in selling drugs. Accordingly, he expressed his own disappointments of his own mistakes that despite of the support of his family and the good relation he has with the community he was not able to resist the evil temptation of his peers.

Former acquaintances and associates who may have influenced an individual to be involved in the commission of a crime most especially in the case of drugs which is very tempting in the current situation may again be the same person/s that will influence or push an ex-convict to be involved in the commission of a subsequent crime. In fact, peer group association as an agent of socialization, determines to a large extent, what social codes an individual learns

(Allen, 2003). This implies that a person whose core group believe in a criminal norm and will learn and internalize more of criminal codes than those that conform to the norms of the society.

It is clear that it is not the stigma of being an ex-convict that pushed Jay to commit a crime but rather a situation where he was not able to control his own will from being involved into an illegal activity. This is due to a peer influence that pushed him towards the commission of a subsequent crime and this is due to the reason that often times ties to former friends and gang networks are easily reestablished (Fleisher & Decker, 2001), increasing opportunities for reoffending.

### **Rejection**

Jack recalled the situation wherein the family of his victim had sour reactions when he was released. Sometimes he felt that as if they are not fair because he already served the supposed punishment for what he has committed. His feeling was even aggravated by the acts and verbal accusations of the relatives of the victim most especially when they are drunk. He felt a strong rejection from the family of his victim who happened to be his neighbors.

When people commit immoral and unlawful act they suffer from the stigma of such an act. As a consequence, they experience acts of rejection cynicism from the members of society due to the negative mark of such immoral and unlawful act. The impact of stigmatization is expected to cause shame responses in stigmatized people (Benson et al. 2011).

While Jen also revealed that when she is in trouble with her elder sister, she always hears all the silly and humiliating words uttered against her which she really considers demeaning her worth as a human being. Even though her elder sister is rough at her she does not consider this as a pushing factor for the commission of a subsequent crime. She does not blame such a demeaning treatment and the stigma of being an ex-convict as a factor that have influence her act of committing another crime. She admitted that it was really her own fault why she returned to her former illegal drug activities that caused her re-arrest and which she considers a result of peer influence.

In some instances, family relationship has different intensity, there may be love or hatred, acceptance or rejection and recognition or denial and this would surely affect the quality of relationships among siblings.

In another situation, though Jen was already separated from her husband she felt being humiliated on how his former husband treats her whenever she asks for favors for their children. Instead of support she felt accusations of negligence.

Studies showed increased personal and social vulnerabilities, which may include impaired reconstruction of familial ties between children, spouses, and ex-offenders, and family conflicts due to drug use among ex-offenders (Dolwick Grieb et al., 2014; Mowen & Visher, 2015; Naser & Visher, 2006).

## **Cynicism**

Being an ex-convict, Jack could not hide his sentiments that in several occasions he experienced demeaning situations. He said that people should not treat him like a criminal because he already served the penalty for the offense he has committed. He revealed that it is unfair that he should be treated like a criminal for he already paid to his victims and the community the amount of injury he inflicted as a result of committing a crime because he already served his sentence. But then Jack do not attribute the commission of a subsequent offense to the experiences of cynicism and demeaning acts of some members of the community. Jack does not attribute such experience of cynicism as a factor that pushed him to commit another crime. He was hooked into selling of drugs due to the need to support the medication of his mother and the consideration that this is the easiest and the fastest way to earn enough amount of money. Released prisoners in many cases upon their entry in the society initially experience negative perception from the community. Such situation was revealed in the study of Averill et al. (2015), society denigrates and ostracizes ex-convicts.

Jen on the other hand also experienced several times that she heard the statements of rejection from her relatives. It appears that her relatives could not convince themselves to believe that Jen already abandoned her old ways. This is an indication that who a person is before her institutional confinement due to criminal conviction will affect the effectiveness of her transition into the community. But then she denied all this experiences to have influenced her to be involved in another illegal activity.

The experience of Jen manifests that the degree of mistrust and antagonism toward agents of the law (“legal cynicism”) in a community can influence residents’ willingness to cooperate with one another and the police (Kirk & Matsuda 2011, Tyler & Fagan 2008).

## **Distrust and Doubt**

In the case of Jen, she never had the support of her former husband even just for the sake of supporting the needs their children. The feelings of distrust and doubt of her husband was really apparent in his words and actions but Jen revealed that this treatment did not affected the way how her children treated her because her children remained to be faithful and true to her.

Due to the stigma of a previous criminal record, a person may suffer the lack of trust and confidence of people around him even from the supposed closest person. There occurs a re-adjustment problem related to forming or renewing relationships with peers and family members which may lead to further social isolation (Tewksbury & Copes, 2013; Van Olphen et al., 2009). Though it seems that her husband was unfair in treating Jen as a result of the stigma, Jen somehow do not consider this situation as a factor that pushed her to commit the crime.

## **Detachment**

The circumstances of Jen being formerly convicted of a drug related case and who is again facing another related offense made her relatives manifest a detached treatment of her. She noticed the treatment that as if they assume that she is always in possession of illegal drugs.

This is the reason why her relatives do not welcome her. The mark of being a former drug pusher is a stigma that could hardly be detached from the character of a person like what is revealed in the experience of Jen. The revelation of the participants on their personal experiences and encounters do not necessarily indicate that their previous criminal record that formed the stigma upon their release in the community has influenced the commission of a subsequent or another crime.

Though in some instances the negative regard of the community people and the relatives of the participants in some extent hindered their successful re-entry into the community, this does not necessarily indicate that it pushed them to develop a negative feeling towards the people in the community. Optimism is considered to be a worldview in which people generally expect positive outcomes for themselves, even when faced with adversity (Carver, Scheier, and Segerstrom 2010). Peer influence appeared to be the primary factor to have pushed the ex-convicts in the commission of a subsequent crime while the stigma of their criminal record is considered as a secondary factor towards the reason of re-offending.

To buffer the risk of recidivism, findings showed that ex-offenders felt a higher chance of desistance and ease of reintegration due to abstinence of drug use, availability of employment, strong family support and circle of friends, personal motivation to change, and old age (Davis, Bahr, & Ward, 2012).

## **CONCLUSION**

The negative or unfriendly encounters the ex-convicts experienced with their family in some extent and other people in society due to stigma of a criminal record surfaced as a secondary reason towards reoffending, while peer influence was seen as a very strong factor that influenced the repeat offenders towards the commission of a subsequent crime. The stigma of a criminal record is still attached to the character image of an ex-convict upon release in the community and this condition hindered them to effectively mingle with the members of the community thus affected their successful transition and adjustment to the challenges of everyday life in the mainstream of society that eventually lead them into a subsequent crime or offense.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Assisting the ex-convict in his entry to the mainstream of the society should form part of the programs of the Philippine Criminal Justice System through re-entry partnership with various sectors of the community through Faith-Based and Community Initiatives that will help them to effectively mingle and interact with the members of the community. To further assist the ex-convicts, the Department of Labor and Employment should be actively involved in providing integrated livelihood and emergency employment for these ex-convicts to make them actively engaged and productive upon entry into the fold of the mainstream of society to prevent them from being idle that may give them the possibility to engage in any unlawful or illegal activity.

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