

Psychosocial Impacts of Labeling on Reintegrated Offenders

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Abstract - *This study aimed to determine the impacts of labeling on reintegrated offenders lives. It sought to determine the profile of the reintegrated offenders, to identify the psychological and social impacts of labeling and lastly, to determine the significant difference on the psychosocial impact of labeling on reintegrated offenders when grouped according to profile. The researchers used the descriptive type of research and utilized twenty-nine (29) reintegrated offenders as respondents. Data were gathered through self-made questionnaire. The results showed that majority of the respondents were male, elementary and high school graduate, single and unemployed. Most of them had served their sentence institutionally and committed drug-related cases. The respondents agreed that they were able to experience depression and rejection as they were judged negatively. They also agreed that they experienced hardships in finding a suitable job after their release in prison. Their imprisonment had created a permanent and unbridgeable distance between the respondents and their families. There is no significant differences exist and the respondents have assessed the psychosocial impacts of labeling on reintegrated offenders to be the same. This means that respondents have experienced the same impact; whether it is psychological or social, of being labeled as reintegrated offenders.*

Keywords: *Psychological; Social; Labeling; Reintegrated Offenders*

INTRODUCTION

Deviance, like beauty, is in the eyes of the beholder. There is nothing inherently deviant in any human act; something is deviant only because some people have been successful in labeling it so (Simmons).

Labeling theory is the act of naming, the deployment of language to confer and fix the meanings of behavior and symbolic interactionism and phenomenology. Tannenbaum defines labeling as the process of making the criminal by employing processes of tagging, defining, identifying, segregating, describing, emphasizing, making conscious and self-conscious.

Labeling theory claims that deviance and conformity results not so much from what people do but from how others respond to those actions, it highlights social responses to crime and deviance (Macdonis & Plummer, 2005) Deviant behavior is therefore socially constructed. However, not everyone that is labeled turns out to be what they have been pinpointed as. Labeling theory is one of many criminological theories that try to explain a person's behavior. Does labeling a person really have an effect on that person's behavior? Is a person's behavior shaped by social labels? Does labeling a person just reintegrate what society already knows? Labeling theory is a complex theory that explains why people think certain acts and behaviors are deviant and why others are not. The labeling theory becomes dominant in the early 1960s and the late 1970s when it was used as a sociological theory of crime influential in challenging orthodox positivity criminology. The key people to this theory were Becker and Lemert. The foundations of this view of deviance are said to have been first established by Lemert (2010) and were subsequently developed by Becker (2009). As a matter of fact, the labeling theory has subsequently become a dominant paradigm in the explanation of deviance. The symbolic interaction perspective was extremely active in the early foundations of the labeling theory. The labeling theory is constituted by the assumption that deviant behavior is to be seen not simply as the violation of a norm but as any behavior which is successfully defined or labeled as deviant.

Deviance is not the act itself but the response others give to that act which means deviance is in the eyes of the beholder.

Actually the labeling theory was built on Becker (2009) statement that "Social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitute deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them as outsiders----deviance is not a quality of the act of a person commits, but rather a consequences of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an 'offender' The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied.

The labeling theory links deviance not to action but to the reaction of others. The concept of stigma, secondary deviance and deviant career demonstrates how people can incorporate the label of deviance into a lasting self-concept. Political leaders recognize that labeling was a political act for it made them aware on which rules to enforce, what behavior is to be regarded as deviant and which people labeled as outsiders may require political assistance (Becker, 2009). Political leaders went on to produce a series of empirical studies concerning the origins of deviancy definitions through political actions in areas such as drugs legislation, temperance legislation, delinquency definitions, homosexuality, prostitution and pornography.

Becker (2009) examines the possible effects upon an individual after being publicly labeled as deviant. A label is not neutral; it contains an evaluation of the person to whom it is applied. It will become a master label in the sense that it colors all the other statuses possessed by an individual. If one is labeled as a pedophile, criminal or homosexual it is difficult to reject such labels for those labels largely overrides their original status as parents, worker, neighbor and friend. Others view that person and respond to him or her in terms of the label and tend to assume that individual has the negative characteristics normally associated with such labels. Since an individual's self-concept is largely derived from the responses of others they will tend to see themselves in terms of that label. This may produce a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby the deviant identification becomes the controlling one. This links to the interactions approach which emphasizes the importance of the meanings the various actors bring to and develops within the interaction situation.

However, the labeling theory has its weaknesses which includes Liazos (2010), who noted that although the labeling theorists aims to humanize the deviant individual and show that he or she is no different than other individuals except perhaps in terms of opportunity. It however by the very emphasis on the deviant and his identity problems and subculture the opposite effect may have been achieved. He further suggested that while considering the more usual everyday types of deviance such as homosexuality, prostitution and juvenile delinquency the labeling theorists have totally ignored a more dangerous and malevolent types of deviance which he termed covert institutional violence. He pointed out that this type of violence leads to such things as poverty and exploitation for example the war in Vietnam, unjust tax laws, racism and sexism. It is questionable whether labeling theorists should even attempt to discuss forms of deviance such as this in the same way as more commonplace individual crimes or whether the two should be kept totally separate being so different in subject matter.

Akers and Sellers (2011) also criticized the labeling theory by pointing out that it fails to explain why people break the law while the majority conform explaining that people go about minding their own business and then wham-bad society comes along and stops them with a stigmatized label. The theory fails to explain why the moral entrepreneurs react in the manner described but rather blames society and portrays criminals as innocent victims which is not always the case.

The researchers conducted the study to determine the impacts of labeling on reintegrated offenders lives. And also the researchers aimed to seek how being labeled as ex-convicts have long term consequences of a person's psychological and social identity.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study generally aimed to determine the impacts of labeling on reintegrated offenders' lives. More specifically, it sought to determine the profile of the reintegrated offenders, to identify the psychological and social impacts of labeling and lastly; to determine the significant difference on the psychosocial

impact of labeling on reintegrated offenders when grouped according to profile variables.

METHOD

Research Design

This research work was intended to determine the psychological and social impact of labeling and its degree of impact as perceived by reintegrated offenders.

With this objective in mind, the researchers used the descriptive type of research. Descriptive type of research is used to describe what exists and may help to uncover new facts and meaning. The purpose of this type of research is to observe, describe and document aspects of a situation as it naturally occurs. Descriptive research is used to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomena to describe —what exists| with respect to variables or conditions in a situation. The methods involved range from the survey which describes the status quo, the correlation study which investigates the relationship between variables, to developmental studies which seek to determine changes over time.

Participants

The respondents of the research study were composed of 29 reintegrated offenders who were requested and who showed willingness to answer the statements/items presented to them in the form of the formulated questionnaires.

Instrument

The researchers used a self-made questionnaire which is designed to obtain substantial information regarding the psychosocial impact of labeling on reintegrated offenders.

The questionnaire underwent thorough collection and data gathering procedure from books, internet and other relevant literature in order to come up with the best set of questions.

Procedure

The researchers presented the questionnaire and interview tool to their research adviser and the chosen panel with broader expertise on the field for validation and approval.

The researchers distributed the questionnaire individually to each respondent. They briefly oriented the respondents about the purpose of the study before asking them to answer the questionnaire. They were allowed with ample time and effort to answer the questionnaire completely. This was done voluntarily and such information that will be obtained will be treated with strict confidentiality. After reasonable length of time, questionnaires were retrieved for tallying, interpreting and evaluating.

Data Analysis

The data that were gathered by the researchers were organized, tallied, tabulated and analyzed. Different statistical tools such as Frequency count, weighted mean, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used. Frequency count was used to determine the number of response in each item in the questionnaire. Weighted Mean was used to assess the psychological and social impacts of labeling on reintegrated offenders. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if there exists significant difference on the psychosocial impact of labeling on reintegrated offenders when grouped according to profile variables. All data were treated using SPSS software. The given scale was used to interpret the result of the data gathered: 3.50 – 4.00 – Strongly Agree (SA); 2.50 – 3.49 – Agree (A); 1.50 – 2.49 – Disagree (D); 1.00 – 1.49 – Strongly Disagree (SD)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the distribution of the respondents according to profile. It was observed that majority of the respondents were male since it obtained the highest frequency of 23 or 79.3 percent and only 20.7 percent are female. The result revealed that males were more likely to commit crimes than compared to females.

David Rowe stated on his study that more men than women commit crimes. This fact has been true over time and across cultures. Also, there is more equal number of men that commit serious crimes resulting in injury or death than women. Compared to men, women are more likely to refrain from crime due to concern for others.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents According to Profile N=29

Sex	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Male	23	79.3	1
Female	6	20.7	2
Highest Educational Attainment			
Elementary Undergraduate	1	3.4	5
Elementary Graduate	10	34.5	1.5
High School Undergraduate	6	20.7	3
High School Graduate	10	34.5	1.5
College Undergraduate	2	6.9	4
Civil Status			
Single	13	44.8	1
Married	11	37.9	2
Separated	2	6.9	4
Widowed	3	10.3	3
Employment Status			
Employed	10	34.5	2
Unemployed	19	65.5	1
Type of Correction			
Institutional	23	79.3	1
Non – Institutional	6	20.7	2
Nature of Offense			
Drug Related Offenses	24	82.8	1
Robbery	5	17.2	2

Men, on the other hand, are more socialized toward status-seeking behavior and may therefore develop an amoral ethic when they feel those efforts are blocked. Women's risk-taking preferences differ from those of men. Men will take risks in order to build status or gain competitive advantage, while women may take greater risk to protect loved ones or to sustain relationships. Criminal motivation is suppressed in women by their greater ability to foresee threats to life chances and by the relative unavailability of female criminal type scripts that could channel their behavior (Simpson et al., 2013).

As to the educational attainment of the respondents, there is an equal distribution of elementary graduate and high school graduate with 34.5 percent which is 20 out of the total population. Economists Bruce Weinberg, Eric Gould, and David Mustard hold

a view that higher crime rate is linked to unemployment. They also argue that it is the unemployed, low-skilled workers who tend to turn towards crime, more than those who are highly educated. The respondents commit themselves to subversive activities because they lack the capabilities to find a good job for them to suffice their family's everyday needs.

It was also revealed that majority of the respondents were single with the frequency of 13 or 44.8 percent. Studies regarding crime rate and occurrences shows that most criminal offenders were single and of at the early stage of adulthood. This is because according to the respondents, they were forced to involve themselves to illegal activities due to peer pressure and their environment. They wanted to feel that they belong to a particular group they wanted to be in so they have no choice but to do such things.

The results also present that majority of the respondents were unemployed with a percentage of 65.5 percent. Unemployment refers to joblessness. When, in spite of the will of the people to work, they do not find it, it amounts to unemployment. Most people believe and postulate that unemployment is by far, one of the major factors leading to an increase in crime rate. Numerous statistical studies have also pointed in this direction, stating that crime rates may indeed elevate with the increase in the rate of unemployment. Unemployment may lead to several factors, which may, force people to take the path of crime. For instance, unemployment may lead to social vices, such as poverty and malnutrition, which may make some people turn towards crime. To sum up, unemployment is definitely one of the factors that may lead to an increase in crime rates.

Majority of the respondents served their sentence institutionally with a percentage of 79.3. The purpose of committing them to prison is to segregate them from society because they were proven to become a danger to the free community. According to the Custodial Model it was based on the assumption that prisoners have been incarcerated for the protection of the society and for the purpose of incapacitation, deterrence and retribution. It emphasizes maintenance and security and order (Manwong, 2008).

Lastly, most of the respondents committed drug related offenses which is evident to the result of having 82.8 percent. This because the respondents were mostly single, they commit themselves to the illegal use of drugs due to peer pressure and to suffice their physical and psychological dependency to it.

Table 2. Psychological Impact of Labeling Reintegrated Offenders

Indicators	WM	VI	Rank
1. Depression	2.69	A	2
2. I find difficulty in reforming myself outside the correctional institution.	2.07	D	13.5
3. Labels are becoming my personal identity	2.66	A	3
4. Labelling stops me from doing something I wanted to do.	2.31	D	10
5. I find it difficult expressing my feelings and opinions.	2.48	D	5
6. Diminished sense of self-worth and personal value.	2.38	D	7.5
7. I worry about being a typecast.	2.31	D	10
8. I often seek to avoid behaviors or actions that would result in the confirmation of the labels.	2.97	A	1
9. I begin to see myself as a loser due to other people's opinion and treatment.	2.07	D	13.5
10. People on the outside always think, —Once a criminal, always a criminal.	2.03	D	15
11. Once labelled, I feel like I'm always being embarrassed and disgraced.	2.21	D	12
12. I feel like I am being avoided because people see me dangerous and undesirable.	2.38	D	7.5
13. I feel like I cannot afford the same respect as those in the society who did not have criminal record.	2.31	D	10
14. I refrained from disclosing my criminal records to those whom I think will react negatively.	2.41	D	6
15. I don't really care if people judge me negatively.	2.62	A	4
Composite Mean	2.39	D	

Table 2 presents the psychological impact of labeling on reintegrated offenders. The psychological impact of labeling has a composite mean of 2.39 and was verbally interpreted as disagree. Among the items cited, item number 8 which is they

often seek to avoid behaviors or actions that would result in the confirmation of the labels got the highest mean score of 2.97 and was interpreted as agreed. Offenders leaving prison may find themselves in an unfamiliar world. Simple things such as ordering from a menu can seem alien and anxiety-provoking. Offenders may be ashamed of their lack of familiarity with things other people take for granted (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK64295>). For this reason, the reintegrated offender tends to avoid doing activities which will confirm his/her past record as an offender.

It was followed by item number 1 which is depression with a weighted mean of 2.69 and item number 3 stating that labels were becoming his personal identity. Two other items were assessed as agree with weighted mean of 2.69 and 2.48, respectively. For some prisoners, incarceration is so stark and psychologically painful that it represents a form of traumatic stress severe enough to produce post-traumatic stress reactions once released. Moreover, there is an understanding that there are certain basic commonalities that characterize the any of the persons who have been convicted of crime in the society. The most negative consequences of institutionalization may first occur in the form of internal chaos, disorganization, stress and fear (Human Rights Watch, *Out of Sight: Super-Maximum Security Confinement in the United States*, February, 2013).

Offenders face feelings of failure and hopelessness. Ex-offenders tend to have long history of failure behind them and may feel that there is little they can do to change their lives (<http://www.buzzle.com/articles/does-unemployment-increase-crime-rate.html>).

Other items such as the respondents felt embarrassment and being disgraced (2.21) that they find it difficult in reforming themselves outside the correctional institution (2.07) and that people on the outside always think that once a criminal will always be a criminal (2.03) ranked the least and were assessed to have no impact to them. This result was supported by the study of Stephenson and Jamieson (2011) stating that there were institutional programs designed to prepare the offenders to re-enter the society. Effective institutional programs tend to focus on a number of dynamic risk factors and offenders' challenges or

needs that require attention in order to prepare the offender for release and successful reintegration. In such case, the reintegrated offenders become more ready with the possible challenges he may encounter and will not be affected if such will occur.

Table 3. Social Impact of Labeling Reintegrated Offenders

Indicators	WM	VI	Rank
1. I feel that I am being excluded from a certain group. (Social withdrawal and isolation)	2.21	D	10.5
2. A feeling of rejection always seems to arise.	2.17	D	12.5
3. People find me difficult to be trusted.	2.17	D	12.5
4. It is usually difficult to find employment after release from prison.	3.00	A	1
5. Tending to go back or lean on criminal activities because this is what the society think of me.	2.07	D	14.5
6. Labelling stops me from doing something I wanted to do.	2.48	D	8
7. I feel nervous talking to other people.	2.07	D	14.5
8. Labelling has created a permanent and unbridgeable distance between me and my family.	2.90	A	3
9. I find it hard to find suitable accommodation with very limited means.	2.21	D	10.5
10. People treat me differently because I have a criminal record.	2.59	A	6
11. I find it hard to manage financially because of little or no savings until I begin to earn from some lawful remuneration.	2.72	A	5
12. I find it hard accessing services and support for our specific needs.	2.48	D	8
13. Lack of social or community bonds.	2.52	A	7
14. I experience lack of support from my family and friends.	2.97	A	2
15. I was pushed to commit myself to unlawful activities to earn a living.	2.76	A	4
Composite Mean	2.49	D	

Table 3 presents the social impact of labeling on reintegrated offenders. Item number 4 which states that it is usually difficult to find employment after released from prison ranked first with a weighted mean of 3.00. Ex-offenders may be viewed as unreliable and morally deficient and feared as volatile

and dangerous. When this attitude is combined with the lack of marketable skills and scant work experience common to many ex-offenders, there seems to be little to recommend ex-offenders as employees. There are those who believe that once a person has been convicted of a felony, they should be treated as felons and denied opportunities for the rest of their lives (Andrus, 2015).

Even if the labeled individual does not commit any further deviant acts than the one that caused them to be labeled, getting rid of that label can be very hard and time-consuming. For example, it is usually very difficult for a convicted criminal to find employment after release from prison because of their label as ex-criminal. They have been formally and publicly labeled a wrongdoer and are treated with suspicion likely for the remainder of their lives (<http://study.com/academy/lesson/labeling-theory-of-deviance-definition-examples-quiz.html>).

It was followed by items number 14 and 8 with a weighted mean of 2.97 and 2.90, respectively. Respondents agreed that they experienced lack of support from their family and friends and being labeled made a permanent and unbridgeable distance between him and his family. Among the many challenges facing prisoners as they return home is their reunification with family. For most former prisoners, relationships with family members are critical to successful reintegration, yet these relationships may be complicated by past experiences and unrealistic expectations. Research has documented that many family members of returning prisoners are also wary about their loved ones' return from prison and that a significant adjustment in roles is often necessary (Furstenberg, 2010). Family is undoubtedly important to understanding the reintegration process confronting former prisoners. Recent studies indicate that upwards of three-quarters of former prisoners reside, at least initially, with family members after release. However, little systematic information exists about the nature of the family members' relationships with former prisoners. The subject has been virtually ignored in theories of recidivism, although desistance research indicates that the family may be critical to explaining individual pathways after release from prison (Laub & Sampson, 2013).

Items number 15 and 11 ranked 4 and 5 with weighted mean of 2.76 and 2.72, respectively. Respondents agreed that they

push themselves to commit unlawful activities to earn a living and that they find it hard to manage their finances because of little or no savings. After release, offenders may experience emotional shock. Life in prison can be brutal. From the prisoner's perspective, the world outside can take on a rosy glow. The disappointments and difficulties the offender experienced prior to incarceration are often forgotten. Many ex-offenders are overwhelmed by personal and financial troubles. Some have difficulty adjusting to relationships with spouses and families who have changed and learned to live with greater independence while the ex-offenders were away.

Respondents assessed items 2, 3, 5 and 7 the least. The items state that the respondents agree that upon their re-entry in the community they do not experience any feeling of rejection, that they were not trusted by other people, that they tend to go back or lean on criminal activities because that is what the society thinks of them, and that they feel nervous talking to other people. Ex-prisoners have paid their debts for their wrongdoings and have been deemed fit for re-entry into society. At the time of their release, ex-prisoners should be allowed all of all of their human rights, including the right to vote, the right to work and the right to access affordable housing. People with criminal records should be able to turn their lives around without being denied the resources needed to do so. Research has found that ex-prisoners who are able to secure a legitimate job, particularly higher-quality positions with higher wages are less likely to recidivate than those ex-prisoners without legitimate job opportunities (Finn, 2009).

Based on Table 3, the computed F – values of the profile variables were all less than the critical value and the resulted p -values were all greater than 0.05 level of significance, thus the null hypothesis of no significant difference on the psychosocial impacts of labeling reintegrated offenders when grouped according to the aforementioned profile variables is accepted. This means that no significant differences exist and that respondents have assessed the psychosocial impacts of labeling reintegrated offenders to be the same. This means that respondents have experienced the same impact; whether it is psychological or social, of being labeled as reintegrated offenders.

Offenders confined in correctional institutions are confronted by a range of social, economic and personal challenges that tend to become obstacles to crime-free lifestyles. Some of these challenges are a result of the offender's past experiences and others are more directly associated with the consequences of incarceration and the following difficult transition back to the community. Offenders, regardless of their gender and status in life, may have a history of social isolation and marginalization, physical or emotional abuse, poor employment or unemployment, and involvement in a criminal lifestyle.

Table 4. Difference on the Psychosocial Impacts of Labeling Reintegrated Offenders when Grouped According to Profile Variables $\alpha = 0.05$

Profile Variables	F_c	p-value	Interpretation
Psychological Impact			
Sex	0.013	0.910	Not Significant
Highest Education Attainment	0.624	0.650	Not Significant
Civil Status	0.761	0.526	Not Significant
Employment Status	0.626	0.436	Not Significant
Type of Correction	2.631	0.116	Not Significant
Nature of Offense	0.161	0.692	Not Significant
Social Impact			
Sex	0.989	0.329	Not Significant
Highest Education Attainment	1.323	0.290	Not Significant
Civil Status	0.776	0.519	Not Significant
Employment Status	0.395	0.535	Not Significant
Type of Correction	0.008	0.928	Not Significant
Nature of Offense	0.313	0.580	Not Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.05; HS – Highly Significant; S – Significant; NS – Not Significant

Many offenders are challenged by skills deficits that make it difficult for them to compete and succeed in the community; poor interpersonal skills, low levels of formal education, illiteracy and innumeracy, poor cognitive or emotional functioning, and/or lack of planning and financial management skills. There are also several practical challenges that must be faced by offenders at the time of their release, including finding suitable accommodation

with very little means, managing financially with little or no savings until they began to earn some lawful remuneration, accessing a range of everyday necessities, and accessing services and support for their specific needs.

The period of transition from custody to community can be particularly difficult for offenders and contribute to the stress that is associated with being supervised in the community. The period of incarceration itself may itself have had several—collateral effects upon many offenders: they may have lost their livelihood, their personal belongings, their ability to maintain housing for themselves and their families; they may have lost important personal relationships and incarceration may have damaged their social networks; they may have experienced mental health difficulties or acquired self-defeating habits and attitudes. (Stephenson & Jamieson, 2011)

CONCLUSIONS

Majority of the respondents were male, single, elementary and high school graduate, were employed, served their sentence inside the prison institution and committed drug-related offenses. As per psychological impact of labeling, the respondents agreed that they often sought to avoid behaviours or actions that would result in the confirmation of the labels. Respondents also agreed that they experienced difficulty to find employment after their release from prison. There is no significant difference on the psychosocial impacts of labeling on reintegrated offenders when grouped according to profile variables.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The jail institution may conduct programs that will enhance the self-esteem of the future reintegrated offenders. The jail management should intensify the institution's pre-release program to prepare the ex-offenders for reintegration in the community. The institution may extend their counselling services to the reintegrated offenders especially to those suffering from the psychological effects of being incarcerated. The government may provide the reintegrated offenders employment interventions such as job readiness classes, vocational education, job training, job placement and job monitoring. The lawmakers may consider the

inclusion of a new provision requiring the restoration of the civil and political rights of all reintegrated offenders. The legislators may review for amendment certain provisions of the civil, political and penal codes depriving rehabilitated offenders of their civil and political principles of equality under the constitution. The future researchers may conduct similar or related study to validate or contradict the findings of this study.

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