

Ex-Offenders' Labelling, Stigmatisation and Unsuccessful Re-Integration as Factors Leading into Recidivism: A South African Context

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Abstract : For successful re-integration, the individual offender must adapt and transform, which requires that the offender should adopt and internalise socially approved norms, attitudes, values, and beliefs. However, the offender's labelling and community stigmatisation decide the destination of the offender. Community involvement in ex-offenders' re-integration is an important issue in efforts to reduce recidivism and to control overcrowding in our correctional facilities. Crime is a social problem that requires society to come together to fight against it. This study was conducted in the Limpopo Province in Vhembe District Municipality within four local municipalities, namely Musina, Makhado, Mutale, and Thulamela. A total number of 30 participants were interviewed, and all were members of the Community Corrections Forums. This was necessitated by the fact that Musina is a very small area, which compelled the Department of Correctional Services to combine the two (Musina and Makhado) into one social re-integration entity. This is a qualitative research study where participants were selected through the use of purposive sampling. Participants were selected based on the value they would add to this study in order to achieve the objectives. The data collection method of this study was the focus group, which comprised of three groups of 10 participants each. Thulamela and Mutale local municipalities formed a group with (10) participants each, whereas Musina (2) and Makhado (8) formed another. Results indicate that the current situation is not conducive for re-integration to be successful. Participants raised many factors that need serious redress, namely offenders' discrimination, lack of forgiveness by members of the community, which is fuelled by lack of community awareness due to the failure of the Department of Correctional Services in educating communities on ex-offenders' re-integration.

Keywords : ex-offender, labeling, re-integration, stigmatization

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