

ASSESSING THE COMMUNITY PERCEPTION ON REINTEGRATION OF EX-PDLS AND COMMUNITY BEHAVIOR TOWARDS THEM AT BARANGAY CAMINAWIT, SAN JOSE, OCCIDENTAL MINDORO

Marco N. Manzano*, Clarizza Mae C. Marcelo, Alfa Mae G. Magluyan, Lynn-Ai Kate D. Francisco, Roxanne R. Yutoc, Aleah Janna G. Quijano, Vince Alfred C. Orsos, and Ariz Mc Lean E. Ordanes, Mary Grace F. Barolo

*Bachelor of Science in Criminology
College of Criminal Justice Education
Occidental Mindoro State University*

*marcomanzano992@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to assess the community perception on reintegration of Ex-PDLs and community behavior towards them at Barangay Caminawit, San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, consider as one of the key factors in successful reintegration. The study shows that the community shows a favorable attitude on the reintegration of Ex-PDLs and communities remains neutral about the risk and possibility of re-offending of those ex-PDLs. Moreover, a correlation analysis revealed that there is no association between profile of the respondents and community perception on reintegration of Ex-PDLs. The qualitative findings reveal that community perceptions regarding the reintegration of ex-PDLs show feelings of distrust, hope for their positive change, chances to rebuild their lives, and the possibility of re-offending among ex-PDLs. Furthermore, community response to government initiatives for reintegration reveals that failure to address the core needs of Ex-PDLs affects community perspective, lack of livelihood opportunities towards Ex-PDLs breeds negative views, and job opportunities for ex-PDLs is essential to poster positive community perception. Simultaneously, the community evaluation on government initiatives suggested that the success of government programs depend on ex-PDLs and limited efficacy of programs leads to recidivism. In line with that, community suggestions to improve reintegration is the need for community empathy toward ex-PDLs and livelihood support for them.

Keywords: *Community perception, community behavior, reintegration, Ex-PDLs, community empathy*

SDG: SDG 16 – Peace and Justice

INTRODUCTION

Community is one of the five pillars of the Philippine Criminal Justice system. It is the place where the Ex-PDLs is reintegrated as a law-abiding citizen after serving their final sentence in the correctional facilities.

Community perception plays a crucial role in this process; their opinion and judgments often lead to either positivity or negativity, but still affect both aspects of life, the community itself, and the Ex-PDLs. It creates conflicting ideas affecting the community's perception of Ex-PDLs; they are frequently stigmatized, discriminated against, and labeled as individuals with no chance of reformation, leading them to be more adept and leading to recidivism. The dispute arises when the deficiency of both the community and the Ex-PDLs to establish a harmonious relationship is not addressed, which results in social stigma or negative labeling and recidivism on the part of the Ex-PDLs. According to Feingold (2021), the stigmatization creates a gap between the community and the reintegration of Ex-PDLs due to their social status, which affects their individual level. However, community perception towards Ex-PDLs is highly driven by their subjective interpretation, believing that the reformation and rehabilitation program conducted by the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology and the Bureau of Corrections to reform and correct their antisocial behavior is not effective. As stated by Caeiro et al. (2024), 38% of their respondents stated that the PDLs are not rehabilitated inside the institutional correctional system.

Effective reintegration of Ex-PDLs is extremely important for public safety and well-being, for both individuals and communities. The experience of detention, often characterized by feelings of fear, shame, and loss, has a major impact on a person's ability to integrate into society. Often called "life through beans," this transition presents a complex set of difficulties that go far beyond the emotional impact. Loss of connectivity, the burden of partial actions, and obstacles to existing social structures are considerable challenges. Despite remorse and a sincere desire to improve, dealing with the opinions and judgments of the community remains a significant issue.

Furthermore, former scholars argue that recidivism is a failure of the correctional facilities to rehabilitate Ex-PDLs. There is a need for more comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration programs that address these underlying factors to reduce the likelihood of repeated offenses and promote successful re-entry into society.

METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a convergent parallel design, a mixed-methods approach. This design was utilized to gain an in-depth understanding of the community's perception of the reintegration of Ex-PDLs and community behavior towards them.

Participants

In the quantitative phase, three hundred seventy-one (371) residents of Barangay Caminawit, San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, who answered the adapted questionnaires of the researchers. Moreover, in the second phase, the respondents from quantitative phase were participated in in-depth interview but the researcher will stop in interviewing after the occurrence of data saturation.

Research Instrument

In this mixed-method study, the adapted Likert-type questionnaire from the study of Ayobi et al. (2023) were used in the quantitative phase, which was evaluated and approved by research adviser, data analyst, and critic reader. The instrument was tested on 15 residents who were not respondents to measure the internal consistency and reliability. The reliability test yielded coefficient range to .716, indicating generally good reliability of the items and suggesting that the instrument could be administered to final set of respondents.

The researchers used one questionnaire for each respondent during the conduct of the study. The questionnaire is composed of two parts; the first part contains the profile of the respondents, and the second part consists of items to assess the community perception of the reintegration of Ex-PDLs. Using a five-point Likert Scale, 5 as strongly agree, 4 as agree, 3 as neutral, 2 as disagree, and 1 as strongly disagree; 5 is the highest and 1 is the lowest.

In the qualitative phase, the researchers utilized in-depth interviews to collect reliable data regarding the behavior of the community towards Ex-PDLs. During the process of one-on-one in-depth interviews, the researcher started asking the participants an open-ended question, and their responses were recorded with their permission.

Data Collection

For the quantitative phase, survey questionnaires were administered to selected residents of Barangay Caminawit, particularly those residing near the vicinity of the households of Ex-PDLs. The respondents were given sufficient time to accomplish the instruments, and assistance was provided when necessary to ensure proper understanding of the items.

For the qualitative phase, interviews were conducted among selected participants to further explore and deepen the findings obtained from the survey. The interviews focused on the participants' perceptions and experiences regarding the reintegration of Ex-PDLs within the community.

Ethical Consideration

The researchers ensured that all respondents were treated with utmost respect and care throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. The purpose of the study, including its objectives, procedures, and use of data, was clearly explained to secure informed consent.

Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly observed to protect the identity and dignity of the participants. All data were handled responsibly, and no manipulation or misrepresentation of findings was conducted to ensure the integrity of the research.

Data Analysis

In the quantitative phase, after gathering all the necessary information for the study, the researchers applied the percentage and frequency to determine the profile of the respondents and Pearson's r correlation to identify the significant relationships among the variables presented in the research paradigm. Also, the researchers interpreted the positive and negative response rates of the respondents based on their perceptions of the reintegration of Ex-PDLs.

Moreover, in the qualitative phase, the recorded responses of the participants from the one-on-one interviews were transcribed by the researchers to obtain the necessary data for the study. The thematic modality approach was used to identify the central themes of the participants' responses and the corresponding follow-up questions during the interviews.

RESULTS

Profile of the respondents

The findings show that among the 371 respondents, most were aged 18–25 years (27.2%) and were female (56.1%). In terms of civil status, the majority were single (46.4%), followed by married (44.5%). For educational attainment, most were college undergraduates (24.0%), followed by high school graduates (22.1%) and college graduates (19.7%). Regarding occupation, most were unemployed (42.9%), followed by employed (31.0%). In terms of length of residency, the majority had lived in the area for 16 years and above (77.6%).

Table 2. Profile of the respondents (n=371).

Profile variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
18-25 years old	101	27.2
26-35 years old	47	12.7
36-45 years old	55	14.8
46-55 years old	83	22.4
56 years old and above	85	22.9
Sex		
Male	163	43.9
Female	208	56.1
Civil Status		
Married	165	44.5
Single	172	46.4
Widow	7	1.9
Separated	27	7.3
Educational Attainment		
Elementary Undergraduate	22	5.9
Elementary Graduate	43	11.6
High School Undergraduate	53	14.3
High School Graduate	82	22.1
College Undergraduate	89	24.0
College Graduate	73	19.7
Post-Graduate	1	.3
Vocational	8	2.2
Occupation		
Employed	115	31.0
Unemployed	159	42.9
Self-employed	97	26.1
Years of Residency		
5 years and below	15	4.0
6-10 years	21	5.7
11-15 years	47	12.7
16 years and above	288	77.6

Community Perception on Reintegration of Ex-person Deprived of Liberty

The overall mean (3.37 ± 0.44) indicates a neutral community perception toward the reintegration of Ex-PDLs [Table 3].

Table 3. Assessment on community perception on the reintegration of ex-person deprived of liberty

Community Perception	Mean	SD
1. I'd consider volunteering my time or donating money to an organization that supports toughening of sentencing law in Philippines.	3.46	1.53
2. With most PDLs, we need to 'condemn more and understand less'.	2.89	1.47
3. My general view toward person deprived of liberty is that they should be treated harshly.	2.05	1.36
4. Person deprived of liberty should have access to televisions or gym facilities.	3.36	1.43
5. Ex-person deprived of liberty should be treated harshly.	1.99	1.40

6.	Ex-person deprived of liberty should be given housing and funding support to aid reintegration.	3.63	1.42
7.	I do not mind living and working with an ex-person deprived of liberty.	3.54	1.33
8.	Ex-person deprived of liberty is a bad person.	2.49	1.33
9.	Ex-person deprived of liberty could return back to crime if the opportunity arises.	3.10	1.25
10.	Ex-person deprived of liberty should be given opportunity to reintegrate positively into society.	4.32	1.04
11.	Most people deprived of liberty can lead productive lives with help and hard work.	4.31	1.04
12.	Even the worst person deprived of liberty can grow out criminal behavior.	4.36	1.06
13.	Opportunities for rehabilitation should always be available no matter how serious a crime someone has committed.	4.32	1.05
Overall Mean		3.37	.44

Relationship between the Profile of the Respondents and Community Perception on Reintegration of Ex-Person Deprived of Liberty

The results showed no statistically significant association with community perception toward the reintegration of ex-PDLs [Table 4].

Table 4. Relationship between the Profile of the Respondents and Community Perception on Reintegration of Ex-Person Deprived of Liberty

Profile	Community perception on reintegration of ex-person deprived of liberty	
	r	p value
Age	0.47	.369
Sex	.028	.588
Civil status	-.031	.553
Educational attainment	.028	.588
Occupation	-.067	.198
Years of residency	.009	.870
Educational attainment	-.009	.862

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Community behavior regarding the reintegration of Ex-PDLs

The analysis identified four themes from the participants' insights on the reintegration of Ex-PDLs: distrust toward Ex-PDLs, strong hope for their positive change, willingness to give them a second chance to rebuild their lives, and perceived possibility of re-offending.

Theme 1: Feeling of distrust towards Ex-PDLs

There is a prevailing distrust toward Ex-PDLs regarding their genuine reintegration into the community. This is driven by fears and doubts about their willingness to engage as law-abiding citizens. Concerns about possible retribution from Ex-PDLs further contribute to the community's hesitation and lack of trust.

P20: "Meron kasi di ba 'yong nababalitaan natin 'yong mga lumabas, kumbaga inuulit pa rin nila 'yong ginawa nila dati, kaya may pagdududa pa rin." (There are cases we often hear about those who get released still repeating their past actions, that's why there's still a doubt.)

P120: "Natatakot ako baka mamaya maglaban pa 'yan. Dahil 'yong iba naghihigante eh." (I am afraid that it might fight back. Since some take revenge eh.)

P240: "Siyempre unang-una, matatakot ka siyempre dahil galing sila sa ano eh, sa bilangguan. Baka mamaya pakisamahan mo 'yon eh, iba ang ano niya, iba ang ugali niya." (Of course, first of all, you will be scared because they came from prison. You might get along with them, but they have a different attitude.)

Theme 2: Strong hope for the positive change of Ex-PDLs

The community possessed strong sense of hope towards the positive change of Ex-PDLs. They expected that since the Ex-PDLs already experienced the life inside the prison, they are more likely to reintegrate in the community as law-abiding citizen.

P120: *"Dapat magbago na sila. Kasi kung sa ano eh, naparusahan na sila, ganiyan. Dapat magbagong buhay na sila."* [They should change. Because they have been punished. Therefore, they should change.]

P150: *"Magbago sila para kahit papaano 'yong iba pakitunguhan sila ng maayos."* [They should change so that the other people will treat them properly.]

P210: *"Aba'y dapat lang! ibalik natin 'yong dati nilang pamumuhay, i-welcome sila. Hindi naman nakatatak sa kanilang noo ang kanilang kasalanan eh, ganun pa rin sila, tao pa rin."* [Yes, we must return them, so that they can continue their old lives, let's welcome them. The crime they committed is not branded on their foreheads; they are still human.]

Theme 3: Willingness to give second chance to rebuild their lives

The acceptance towards Ex-PDLs is a key in a successful reintegration. Beyond offering a chance to change, it is essential to give them an opportunity for sustainable livelihood and support.

P40: *"Bigyan ng chance para magbago."* [Give them a chance to change.]

P100: *"Okay lang naman na bumalik sila at bigyan sila ng maaayos na pagtanggap at kung suwerte pa, kung pwede pa, bigyan sila ng maayos na trabaho."* [There's no problem in their reintegration and provide them a proper acceptance, and if they are lucky, give them a decent job.]

P270: *"Ang pananaw ko diyan ay bigyan natin sila ng pagkakataong magbago, bigyan natin sila ng paraan para makapag-hanapbuhay 'yon lang."* [My view on that is let's give them a chance to change, let's give them a way to make a living, that's all.]

Theme 4: Possibility of re-offending among Ex-PDLs

The doubts on reintegration of Ex-PDLs y into community fuels the possibility of re-offending. It is one of the factors why community has distrust towards their genuine reintegration. Since most of them after reintegration still engaged into their old way of living like engaging in criminal activities.

P10: *"Hindi kase 100%, kase 'yong iba dito bumabalik pa rin sa dati eh."* [It's not 100%, because some of them still return to their old way of living.]

P50: *"Meron kaseng ano na talagang ang iba talagang nagbabago, ang iba talagang hindi rin. Kase uulit ang iba kung hindi talaga sa puso ang kanilang pagbabago, talagang babalik at babalik sa kanilang dating gawain."* [There are some that really change, but some of them are not. Because some of them still re-offend if there's no willingness to change their lives.]

P160: *"May tendency kase kagaya nga 'yong mga nagtitinda ng droga, sabi nila hindi raw sila magtitinda. Pero noong nakalaya, nagtinda ulit sila."* [There's a tendency that those who sells drugs, says that they will no longer sell drugs. But after their reintegration, they sell again.]

Community behavior on government initiatives for reintegration

There are three themes that emerged on the community response to government initiatives for reintegration such as failure to address the core needs of Ex-PDLs affects community perspective, lack of livelihood opportunities towards Ex-PDLs breeds negative view and job opportunities for Ex-PDLs is essential to poster positive community perception.

Theme 1: Failure to address the core needs of Ex-PDLs affects community perspective

Participants expressed that the government's programs are insufficient for the successful reintegration of Ex-PDLs into the community. Due to the government shortcomings, Ex-PDLs often return to their old ways of living. Furthermore, they are often avoided and abandoned.

P90: *"Kulang ang ano ng gobyerno, hindi nila na-aano 'yong gusto nila makamit. Kaya 'yong iba bumabalik pa rin."* [The government is lacking in something; they don't achieve what they should be achieving. That's why they still engaging into criminal activities.]

P170: "Para sa akin gawin nila 'yong the best, kung anong dapat, kung ano ikabubuti ng mga dating bilanggo para magbagong buhay na sila." (The government should do their best, do what is right and what is good towards ex-person deprived of liberty for them to change.)

P290: "Mabagal 'yong ginagawa nila; hindi nila natututukan lahat ng mga lumayang bilanggo." (The program is too slow; they can't totally monitor those ex-persons deprived of liberty.)

Theme 2: Lack of livelihood opportunities towards Ex-PDLs breeds negative views

The lack of livelihood opportunities towards Ex-PDLs is considered as a barrier on their reintegration. The limited access on employment opportunities and financial assistance caused them to re-offend after reintegration.

P10: "Bigyan ng anong tawag dito... ng parang suportang kabuhayan para tuluyan silang magbago." (They should be given a livelihood support for them to renew their life.)

P160: "Meron bang ganun? parang wala naman. Ewan ko, siguro mas magandang bigyan siguro sila ng pabahay o hanapbuhay para hindi na sila bumalik sa ginawa nilang masama." (Is there such a thing? It seems like isn't, I don't know, but it's probably better to give them housing or jobs so that they won't all go back on doing bad things.)

P220: "Bigyan nila ng talagang pagkakakitaan 'yong mga lumaya. Bigyan sila ng gobyerno natin ng panghanap-buhay at pangalawang pagkakataon na magbabago na talaga sila." (They should provide a way to earn money for those ex-persons deprived of liberty. Our government should give them a job and chance to change their life.)

P230: "Kulang sa suporta ng gobyerno natin, kaya 'yong iba bumabalik sa pagiging masama. Dahil nga sa kawalan ng unang-una pera o hanap-buhay." (There's a lack of support from government that's why some ex-person deprived of liberty still re-offending. Because of lack of money or job.)

Theme 3: Job opportunities for Ex-PDLs is essential to foster positive community perception

The job opportunities are essential to reintegrate those Ex-PDLs in the community successfully. However, the lack of access on employment opportunities hinders them to rebuild their lives.

P40: "Bigyan sila ng magandang trabaho, bigyan nila ng pagkakataon na makaahon. Para hindi na sila gagawa ng masama." (Give them a good job, provide them an opportunity to renew their lives and they will stop doing illegal activities.)

P60: "Dapat bigyan sila ng hanap-buhay, para hindi na nila maisip kunwari ang kagaya nang nakaw o kahit ano, magtinda ng shabu." (They should be given a job so they won't think about stealing or selling a methamphetamine hydrochloride.)

P310: "Bigyan sila ng hanap-buhay para sila'y makapagsimula, maka-recover sa kanilang dating buhay sa kulungan, na paglaya nila meron silang hanap-buhay." (They should be given a job opportunity so they can start over, recover from their past life in prison, when they reintegrated, they already have a job.)

Community behavior on the effectiveness of these initiatives

This analysis generated two themes such as success of government programs depending on Ex-PDLs and limited efficacy of program leads to recidivism.

Theme 1: Success of government program depends on ex-person deprived of liberty

The success of the government programs still depends upon the Ex-PDLs themselves. If they don't value the assistance provided by the government, they may end up re-offending. However, if the Ex-PDLs use the government's support properly, it will help them to change or renew their lives.

P40: "Epektibo ang programa ng ating gobyerno, ang problema lang nasa kanila. Hindi nila ginagamit na para magbagong buhay." (Government program is effective; the problem is on the ex-person deprived of liberty itself. They aren't use it to start a new life.)

P50: "Sa kanila kase iyon, kung gagamitin nila ng maayos, epektibo. Pero kung kung hindi nila gagamitin ng maayos, ay wala rin, walang kuwenta. Kahit bigyan pa sila ng gobyerno ng isang libo, kung iyon ay gagamitin nila sa maayos ay aasenso sila. Kung hindi, edi wala, babalik sila sa dati." (That depends on them, if they will use it properly, it's

effective. But if they don't, then it's useless. Even if the government gives them only one thousand pesos, if they use it properly, they can prosper. But if not, nothing will change, they'll just go back in their old lives.)

P180: *"Nakadepende po iyan sa lumayang bilanggo, kung magbago talaga siya. Dahil sa binigay na programa ng government sa kaniya para mabawasan 'yong mga iisipin para sa sarili niya."* (That depends on experson deprived of liberty, if he will change himself. Because of the given program by the government for him to lessen his burdens.)

Theme 2: Limited efficacy of program leads to recidivism

Government programs for ex-PDLs have shown limited efficacy. This is because some of their needs upon reintegration into the community are not being met or addressed. Due to these shortcomings, the program's effectiveness is reduced.

P230: *"Depende kase ilan lang iyong maririnig mo na epektibo, dahil ilan lang ang umunlad o ilan lang talaga 'yong totally na nagbago."* (It depends since the effectiveness are too limited, because the progress is too little or only few among them totally changed.)

P370: *"Para sa akin mababa 'yong pagiging epektibo, kase mababa ang tiyansa na sabihin nating epektibo iyong ginagawa nila dahil marami pa rin 'yong tao na gumagawa ng parehong krimen na ginawa nila na katulad niyan na robbery, ang mga pagnanakaw gaya ng akyat-bahay na 'yan."* (For me, the effectiveness is too low, the chances are low to say that what they are doing is effective, because there is still ex-person deprived of liberty who commit the same crime they committed like robbery and burglary.)

Community behavior for improving reintegration efforts

Community involvement is essential in reintegration of Ex-PDLs by developing national reintegration strategies and policies aligned with Ex-PDLs conditions, needs, and abilities.

Theme 1: Community empathy towards Ex-PDLs

The community empathy and openness to ex-PDLs is a crucial factor in their successful reintegration. When the community is willing to accept them or give them a second chance, trust them, understand them, and not judge them, this will lead to a positive outcome in their reintegration into the community.

P70: *"Ganoon pa rin, pakitunguhan sila ng mabuti. Kaso ang iba nga lang ayaw kapag nanggaling ng loob ng kulungan ay bad na sa kanila."* (Still the same, treat them well. However, the other people don't like them since they came from prison.)

P270: *"Pakisamahan natin sila ng maayos nang sa ganun makabalik sila sa atin ng normal, iyon ang aing ideya. Huwag naman natin sila husgahan, tanggapin natin."* (Treat them well so that they can reintegrate as law-abiding citizen, that's my idea. Don't judge them, let's accept them.)

Theme 2: Livelihood support for Ex-PDLs

Providing livelihood support for ex-PDLs will help them to renew their lives. Financial support and job opportunities for them can significantly support their successful reintegration into the community. By addressing it, recidivism will be prevented and they will be helped to start anew.

P40: *"Bigyan 'yong lumayang bilanggo na walang trabaho ng trabaho para magkaroon ng bagong kinabukasan, iyong pamilya nila mabigyan nila ng magandang buhay."* (Give those ex-persons deprived of liberty a job opportunity so they can have a better future, they can give their family a good life.)

P50: *"Siguro unang-una nga diyan, dapat sila ay may mga trabaho, trabaho ang dapat ibigay sa kanila para hindi na nila na maisipan na gumawa ng kung ano man na dati nilang ginagawa."* (I guessed the first thing is they should have a job, provide them a job so they don't think about doing what they used to do.)

P160: *"Subaybayan sila na bigyan ng pinansiyal na suporta para makapaghanap-buhay sila nang maayos at hindi na sila bumalik sa dati nilang gawain."* (Monitored them by giving a financial support so they can find proper work and avoid returning to their previous lifestyle.)

DISCUSSION

The results reveal that the community holds a generally neutral perception toward the reintegration of Ex-PDLs. This neutrality reflects a balance between community openness to acceptance and underlying concerns regarding safety and recidivism.

Moreover, the findings reveal that even though the community is willing to provide Ex-PDLs a second chance and accept them during the reintegration process, this willingness is accompanied by an awareness of potential risks in security and the possibility of re-offending among them. The community agrees that the government should extend support through housing and financial assistance programs to aid reintegration. Similar to findings of Applegate et al. (2016), who emphasized that communities are willing to support government housing initiatives for Ex-PDLs. However, despite this general support, most of them still expressed hesitation when it comes to living in close proximity to Ex-PDLs, highlighting discomfort and concern about safety. Only a minority indicated that they would not mind having an Ex-PDL as a neighbor, suggesting that acceptance is often conditional rather than absolute.

Additionally, the community generally disagrees with the idea of labeling the Ex-PDLs as inherently bad individuals or treating them harshly, implying that retributive behavior are not strongly dominant among the respondents. This indicates a more rehabilitative perspective, where individuals are seen as capable of changing. Consistent with the findings of Martinez & Buan (2025), emphasized that individuals have the capacity to transform their behavior, thoughts, and actions when given the opportunity. Contrary to the study of Ikenna et al. (2023) claimed that residents in their study held a strong negative perception, often viewing Ex-PDLs as criminals, incapable to change, or evil individuals. In the present study, however, respondents believe that Ex-PDLs should be given the opportunity to reintegrate positively into society, and that active community involvement can help them become productive members of the community.

On the other hand, the study reveals that the community maintains a neutral perception regarding their willingness to contribute time or financial resources about promoting strict sentencing laws in the Philippines. Similarly, the community remains neutral about whether Ex-PDLs will reoffend if the opportunity arises. This contrasts with the findings of Cohen et al. (2015), which argued that households were willing to donate financial assistance annually to support strengthening sentencing policies, since crime severity increases. Furthermore, the study reveals that there is no significant relationship between the profile of the respondent and community perceptions on reintegration of Ex-PDLs. Factors such as age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, occupation, and length of residency did not significantly influence community attitudes, suggesting that perceptions are relatively consistent across different demographic groups.

Furthermore, it contradicts the findings of Ceylan-Batur (2023) that younger adults (aged 18–24) become more comfortable living near Ex-PDLs compared to older groups. Similarly, Mosser (2022) argued that age plays an important role in shaping perceptions, because individuals become more open to reintegration as they grow older. As Slauson-Blevins and Johnson (2016) noted the lack of significant relationship in terms of sex may be influenced by various contextual factors. The differences in responses based on sex have diminished over time, depending on modes of survey and topics. However, Caeiro et al. (2024) suggested that sex differences are still a factor influencing perceptions, since female respondents often exhibit more cautious attitudes toward reintegration of Ex-PDLs.

Civil status was also found to have no significant relationship with community perceptions, which contrasts the findings of Visser (2025), who argued that married individuals tend to be more cautious while single individuals generally show openness to interact with Ex-PDLs. Similarly, educational attainment showed no significant correlation with perceptions, consistent with the findings of Ayobi et al. (2023), who reported that education level does not necessarily predict support for reintegration. Furthermore, occupation did not significantly influence community perceptions, contradictory to what Visser (2025) suggested that employed individuals are more supportive for reintegration rather than unemployed individuals who may view Ex-PDLs as competitors for limited job opportunities. The length of residency also showed no significant effect, opposing the claims of Caeiro et al. (2024) that long-term residents are often more resistant in accepting Ex-PDLs, while new residents show openness and accepting them.

The qualitative findings offer deeper insights into the community behavior, revealing a mixture of distrust and hope towards the reintegration of Ex-PDLs. Most of the respondents expressed distrust toward Ex-PDLs, particularly regarding the sincerity of their reformation. The community often doubts the genuine behavioral changes of Ex-PDLs, believing that former offenders may still engage in criminal activities. Additionally, there is concern that they may have been negatively influenced by hardened PDLs during incarceration. As stated by Curib et al. (2023), communities often respond to Ex-PDLs with hesitation, doubt, and discrimination. It corroborates by Wertheimer-Meier (2023) that the persistence of the belief that "once a criminal, always a criminal," indicates that stigma still exists even after rehabilitation.

Moreover, study reveals a strong sense of optimism within the community. Respondents believe that punishment serves as a molding point forcing Ex-PDLs to live better lives after reintegration. They emphasized the important role of acceptance, implying that Ex-PDLs should not be permanently defined by their past actions. The idea that Ex-PDLs are still human which deserve dignity and empathy was a recurring theme. Strong community bonds contribute to successful reintegration. Forms of optimism can positively influence reintegration outcomes.

Additionally, the community expressed a willingness to give Ex-PDLs a second chance, considering that opportunities for change are essential for successful reintegration. As claimed by Arreola et al. (2024), many Ex-PDLs view reintegration as an opportunity to transform their lives. However, Feingold (2021) shows contrasting findings, suggesting that stigma and lack of acceptance remain significant barriers. The study also highlights concerns about recidivism among respondents acknowledging that some individuals may still re-offend, specifically if their transformation is not genuine. There is a higher rate of reoffending among negatively labeled Ex-PDLs. The lack of community acceptance further contributes to this issue.

In terms of government initiatives, respondents believe that government efforts are insufficient to rehabilitate the Ex-PDLs, promoting a negative perception. Cabel (2025) emphasized the need for comprehensive reintegration programs to win public trust towards Ex-PDLs. The lack of livelihood opportunities was identified as a contributing factor towards community concern of community regarding recidivism. According to Muasya (2015), improved livelihood programs for Ex-PDLs can build a positive perception towards them.

Furthermore, employment offers a significant factor in shaping both reintegration outcomes and community perceptions. Stable employment is important in reducing recidivism and fostering positive relationships. However, the community believes that effectiveness of these programs depends not only on government support but also on the willingness of Ex-PDLs to utilize them. Additionally, the study underscores the importance of empathy and community support in improving reintegration outcomes. Acceptance and family support can help Ex-PDLs to live a better life (Reamico, 2022). The need for employment opportunities and policy development can foster positive perception towards Ex-PDLs. By addressing these factors, the community and government can work together to support Ex-PDLs in rebuilding their lives and becoming productive members of society to eliminate stigma towards them (Curib et al., 2023; Vivares & Cuevas 2023).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The community generally shows a neutral perception toward the reintegration of ex-PDLs, expressing willingness to accept and live with them while remaining neutral about potential risks and re-offending. They support housing and financial assistance and believe that opportunities and community involvement promote successful reintegration rather than harsh treatment. However, neutrality remains about stricter sentencing laws, and no significant relationship was found between profile of the respondent and perceptions. Qualitative results reveal mixed views, including distrust, hope for change, and recognition of second chances, alongside concerns about recidivism. The findings emphasize the need for livelihood opportunities, effective government support, and community empathy to improve reintegration outcomes. The researchers recommended the Barangay Caminawit to build a program to maintain or strengthen community acceptance towards Ex-PDLs and encouraged them to implement structured monitoring systems to enhance community safety and reduce the risk of re-offending. Future researchers should explore additional demographic factors that may influence community perceptions of reintegration. Furthermore, the study suggests strengthening community education programs to reduce distrust and highlight the potential for positive change among ex-PDLs. Improving government reintegration efforts through partnerships with public and private sectors is also essential, particularly in providing sustainable livelihood and employment opportunities. Fostering community-based initiatives that encourage empathy and social support, simultaneous with structured assistance programs, can help ensure successful reintegration and minimize recidivism.

REFERENCES

- Arreola, L. C., Mabbayad, D. S. D., Pilar, N. M. D., Bosito, R. R., Corpuz, J. C., & Galumba, J. B. K. (2024). Lived Experiences of Ex-Offenders in their Reintegration in the Community. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, VIII(VIII), 498-512. <https://doi.org/10.47772/ijriss.2024.808040>
- Applegate, B., Ouellette, H., & Vuk, M. (2016). The public's stance on prisoner reentry: policy support and personal acceptance. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 42(4), 768-789. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-016-9382-2>
- Ayobi, E., Jidong, D., Ike, M., & Ike T. (2023). Public perceptions and attitudes towards ex-offenders and their reintegration in Nigeria: A mixed-method study. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 25(5), 1362-1384. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17488958231181987>
- Cabel, A. L. (2025). Aftermath of Incarceration: A phenomenological investigation of ex-inmates' reintegration to society. *SUKISOK Journal of the Arts and Sciences*, 5(1). <https://ejournals.ph/article.php?id=26314>
- Caeiro, D. B. (2024). Public Perception Of Reintegration Of Offenders Into Society. *Library Progress International*. <https://doi.org/10.48165/bapas.2024.44.2.1>
- Ceylan-Batur, S. &. (2023). Attitudes Toward Ex-Prisoners (ATEP) Scale: A Scale Development and Validation Study. *International Journal of Social and Humanities Sciences Research*. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10036897>
- Cohen, M., Rust, R., Steen, S. & Tidd, S. (2015). Willingness-To-Pay for Crime Control Programs. *Criminology*. NCJRS Virtual Library. <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/willingness-pay-crime-control-programs>

- Curib, E.L., Mamowalas, J., Namoco, R., Sanchez, J.C., Canape, B., & Cuevas, J.J. (2023). Aftermath of Incarceration: Lived Experiences of the Ex-Convict. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4772/IJRISS.2023.7668>
- Feingold, Z. R. (2021). The stigma of incarceration experience: A systematic review. *Psychology Public Policy and Law*, 27(4), 550–569. <https://doi.org/10.1037/law0000319>
- Ikenna, O. S., Chimaobi, I. C., Sunday, E. S. & Chisom, O. F. (2023). Public Perception of Ex-Convicts Reintegration in Idemili-North Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria. *Journal of Law and Judicial System*, 6(1), 15–29. <https://doi.org/10.22259/2637-5893.0601002>
- Martinez, R. J. & Buan, R. (2025). Behind Bars: Unveiling the Narratives of Persons Deprived of Liberty (pdls). *Psychology and Education a Multidisciplinary Journal*, 38(10), 1115–1129. <https://doi.org/10.70838/pemj.381003>
- Muasya, J. K. (2015). Impact of Prison Rehabilitation Programmes on Self Sustainability of Ex-convicts: a Case of Thika Sub-county, Kenya. *University of Nairobi*. Retrieved October 21, 2025, from <http://hdl.handle.net/11295/62950>
- Reamico, C. P. (2022). Lived Experiences of Reintegration: A Case Study of How Former Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL). *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 7, 428. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6609365>
- Visher, C., Knight, C., Chalfin, A., & Roman, J. (2025). The impact of marital and relationship status on social outcomes for returning prisoners. Urban Institute. <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/impact-marital-and-relationship-status-social-outcomes-returning-prisoners>
- Vivares, K. M. & Cuevas, J.J. (2023). The Reintegration of Ex-Convicts in Society: A Case Study. *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research*. <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijsshr/v6-i10-52>
- Wertheimer-Meier, J. (2023). *Housing discrimination and negative attitudes towards Ex-Offender parents*. DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/dissunl/21/>

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The researchers would like to sincerely thank everyone who made this study possible. We are especially grateful to the residents of Barangay Caminawit, whose willingness to share their time, experiences, and insights played a central role in the success of this research. Your participation and openness have brought depth and meaning to this work, and we extend our heartfelt appreciation to each of you.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DECLARATION OF AI USE

The authors used Grammarly for grammar checking and language editing. All outputs were reviewed and validated by the authors, who take full responsibility for the content.

AUTHOR CRediT STATEMENT

Manzano, M. N.: conceptualization, methodology, investigation, formal analysis, and writing – original draft; **Marcelo, C. M. C.:** conceptualization and writing – review & editing; **Magluyan, A. M. G.:** review and editing; **Francisco, L. K. D.:** formal analysis; **Yutoc, R. E.:** conceptualization; **Quijano, A. J. G.:** review and analysis; **Orsos, V. A. C.:** data curation; **Ordanes, A. M. L. E.:** conceptualization.