

Public Perception Of Reintegration Of Offenders Into Society

¹Mr. Don Caeiro²Tanisha Bheemaiah³Dr. Devaseelan S⁴Dr. Rajan K E Varghese
⁵Dr. Saritha D'Souza

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Forensic Science, Kristu Jayanti College (Autonomous), K. Narayanpura, Kothanur, Bengaluru

¹Research Scholar, Jain (Deemed to be University), JC Road, Bangalore.
doncaeiro@gmail.com

²Assistant Manager, Department of Cyber Technology and Transformation, Deloitte, Bangalore
tanishabheemaiah@gmail.com

³Assistant Professor, Department of Forensic Science, Digital and Cyber Security, Srinivas University
devaseelan.s3@gmail.com

⁴Director, Department of Research and Innovation, KIIT School of Law, Bhubaneswar Odisha, India
dr_rv@hotmail.com

⁵Associate Professor & HOD, Department of PG Department of Criminology and Forensic Science, School of Social Work (Autonomous) Kankanady, Mangaluru
sarithavd@sswroshni.in

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Abstract:

The research presented in this paper investigates the public's perception of the reintegration of offenders into society, emphasising the attitudes, beliefs, and biases that influence the adoption or opposition of reintegration initiatives within society. It explores the factors that influence public perceptions of offender reintegration, including personal experiences with crime, media portrayals, and perceived risks. The efficacy of policies and programs that are intended to aid in the reintegration of offenders is substantially affected by these perceptions. The investigation is founded on empirical data that was obtained through an interview study that involved 50 respondents between the ages of 20 and 70. The investigation aims to comprehend the factors that influence the acceptability of former offenders by society, with a particular emphasis on public awareness and opinions regarding reintegration. The findings suggest that the majority of respondents (72%) are cognisant of social reintegration concepts, and 92% comprehend the function of correctional institutions. Nevertheless, 58% of respondents have reservations about approving individuals who have committed severe crimes, such as rape or homicide. The study concludes that the effectiveness of reintegration programs is significantly influenced by public perception. The rehabilitation process can be facilitated by positive public attitudes, whereas negative perceptions, which are fuelled by dread and stereotypes, can impede it. Strategies for enhancing public acceptance include fostering community support, providing offenders with educational and employment opportunities, and raising awareness. These measures are indispensable for the purpose of reducing recidivism and promoting a more inclusive justice system that effectively balances community safety and rehabilitation.

Keywords: offenders, reintegration, public perception, attitudes, beliefs, rehabilitation

1. INTRODUCTION

Social reintegration is defined as the social intervention or social care and support given to the offenders during their re-

entry into society after imprisonment in order to divert them away from criminal acts (Liem, 2018). The main aim is to help offenders get back to their normal life through reunion with the society, which includes acceptance by the community after release from prison. The primary purpose of correctional institutions is to prevent recidivism and stop the cycle of repeat offenses. However, upon release, offenders face various challenges that hinder their social integration and transition into becoming law-abiding citizens. According to the criminal justice system, facilitating reintegration within society through community-based sanctions is much better than subjecting individuals to harmful prison environments, which may further deteriorate cognitive and emotional abilities leading towards antisocial behavior. ([Ashley et al., 2003](#))

The public's viewpoint on the social reintegration of individuals who have committed offenses is a crucial factor in determining the success or failure of such efforts. Public perception encompasses the attitudes, beliefs, and opinions held by members of society regarding a specific topic (Reynolds, 2013). The understanding of public opinion about reintegrating offenders is vital as it shapes the level of support and acceptance that former offenders receive upon their release from prison. This perception can significantly impact the effectiveness of programs and policies for offender reintegration (Davis, 2013). Various factors, including how crime and punishment are presented in the media, personal experiences with crime, societal attitudes towards rehabilitation, and perceived risk posed by offenders can influence public views on this topic (Onwuchekwe, 2023). Therefore, it is essential to thoroughly study and analyze public perception on the social reintegration of offenders in order to develop effective strategies that promote successful rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

2. FACTORS AFFECTING SOCIAL REINTEGRATION

There are several factors that can affect the social reintegration of offenders. Some of these factors include:

- The mindset of the society to stereotyping and prejudices towards the prisoners
- Lack of knowledge about social reintegration and other offender reentry programs
- Suspicion, fear and doubts in the minds of people regarding the reoffending habit of the offender.
- Lack of job opportunities to re-engage the offenders into the normal stream
- Lack of sufficient resources and implementation of reintegration program
- Lack of strict laws regarding social reintegration
- Absence of awareness and sensitization of the justice personnel towards reintegration
- The mental state of the offender and the psychological and social status of the community and offender
 - The response of the society to accepting the offenders ([Visser & Lattimore, 2007](#)) back into their communities.
- The media portrayal and public perception of crime and offenders

Significance

In the recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on offender reentry programs as they aim to divert offenders from the criminal justice system and provide them with alternative measures. Reentry programs typically follow a case-management approach and encompass a wide range of interventions. These interventions may include employment support, substance abuse treatment, mental health services, education and skill-building programs, housing assistance, and community-based support networks. However, the success of these programs largely depends on the public's perception and acceptance of offenders being reintegrated into society. Understanding the public perception on the social reintegration of offenders is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, public perception plays a significant role in shaping policies and practices related to offender reintegration. If the general public perceives reintegration as ineffective or a risk to community safety, there may be resistance towards implementing comprehensive and supportive reentry programs. This can hinder the successful reintegration of offenders and perpetuate cycles of recidivism. ([Wheeler & Patterson, 2008](#))

These interventions are aimed at aiding offenders in preparing for their release from confinement by assisting them in acquiring the necessary skill sets to thrive in the community, addressing personal challenges and factors associated with their criminal behavior, and establishing essential contacts and relationships within the community. ([Hartwell, 2005](#))

- ❖ Objectives
- ❖ To find out public awareness of social reintegration of offenders and their perceptions towards it.
- ❖ To understand public perceptions on the effectiveness of social reintegration in reducing recidivism rates.

1.1 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY The study begins with an interview study, where the questions are set based on the awareness and opinion about social reintegration of offenders. This interview study contains 18 questions where each of the questions are based on the concept of social reintegration. Interview has to be done on people aging from 20-70 50 samples are collected pertaining to this study. The interview schedule was divided into three parts. The first part consisted of personal details about the respondents like age, gender, occupation etc. The second part of the interview schedule consisted of seven questions which concentrated on the public awareness about social reintegration. The last part was about public opinion towards social reintegration of offenders comprising of ten questions. The data tallied is then put into tables and further analysis was done.

1.1. 3.1 Tools

For the purpose of this study an open-ended interview schedule was designed. A code book was prepared in order to segregate the data and make the tabulations. This was achieved by tallying the questions and answers for that particular question with respect to the respondents. The data tallied is then put into tables and further analysis was done based on the objectives framed before the conduction of the study.

3.2 Sampling:

The study collected data from 50 respondents, aged between 20 to 70, using a purposive sampling method. Respondents were selected to represent diverse age groups, occupations, and genders, ensuring a balanced perspective on the topic.

1.2 4. ANALYSIS

Personal Profile of the Respondents:

Most of the respondents i.e. 34% were of the age group of 31-40 years and 30% of the respondents were of the age group 41-50 years. From the study it was seen that, most of the respondents were females i.e. 58%.

Respondent's general awareness towards the concept of social reintegration:

According to figure given below, the maximum number of respondents i.e. 92% was aware of the term correctional institute.

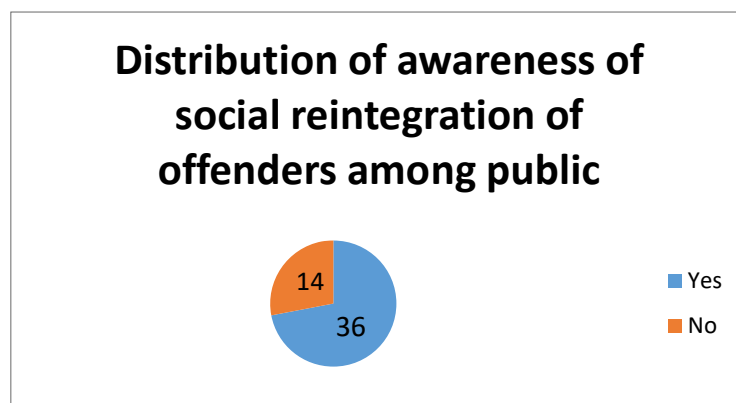


Figure 1: Distribution of awareness of social reintegration of offenders among public

Most of the respondents i.e. 38% of the respondents stated that an offender is generally not rehabilitated in prison. According to the study it is seen that the majority of the respondents i.e. 72% were aware of the concept of social reintegration. According to the study it is seen that 72% of the respondents feel that social reintegration is applicable for the offenders. The maximum number of respondents i.e. 58% stated that society would not accept a person who has committed a murder or rape.

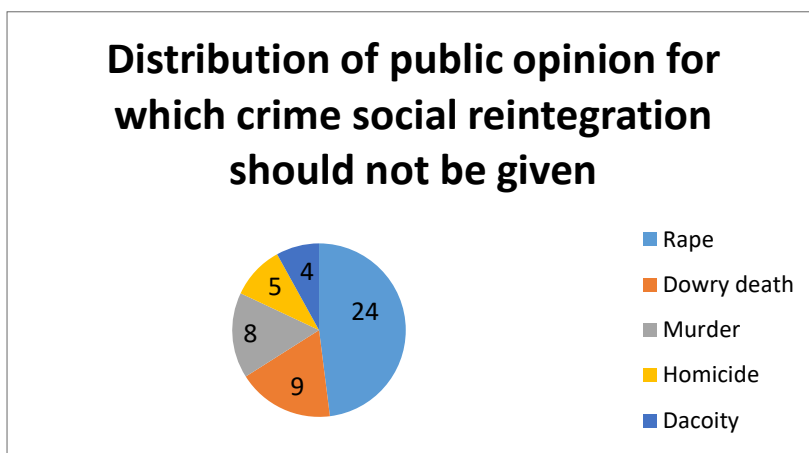


Figure 2: Distribution of public opinion for which crime social reintegration

Most of the respondents i.e. 22% feel that to keep the offender away from any criminal activity they should be provided with good employment, health and educational facilities.

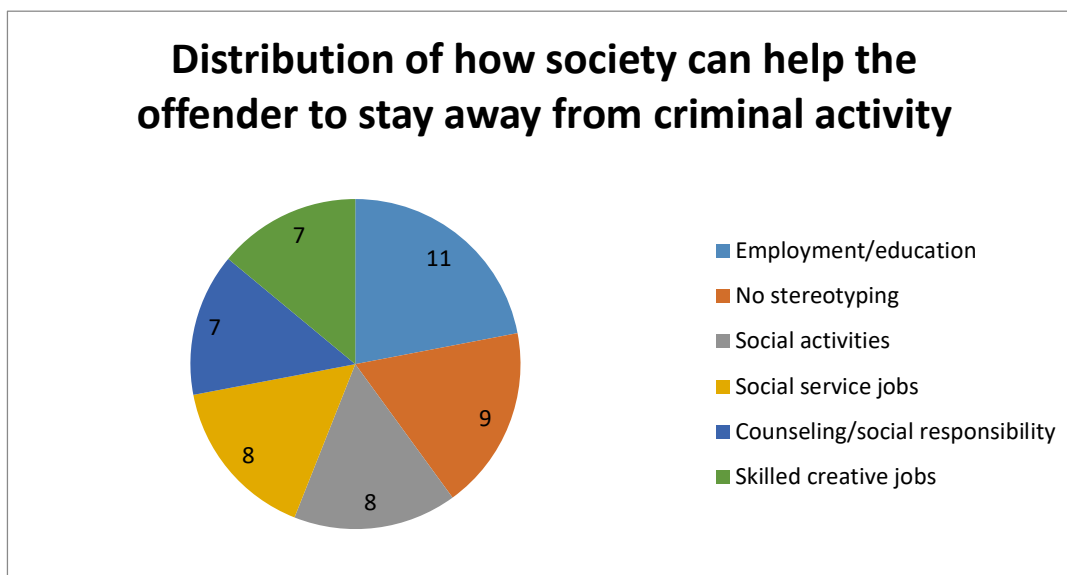


Figure 3: Distribution of how society can help the offender to stay away from criminal activity

The maximum number of respondents i.e. 24% stated that the main factors affecting social reintegration are the mindset and mentality of the individuals of the society/community.

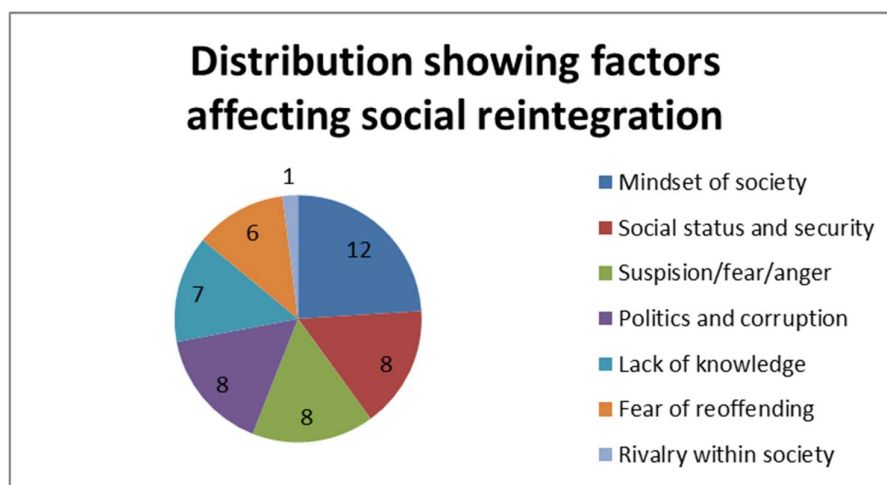


Figure 4: Distribution showing factors affecting social reintegration

1.3 Discussion and Conclusion

From the study conducted it was found out that majority of the public were aware of the term correctional institute and its objectives. Most of the respondents feel that an offender is not rehabilitated in prison as they feel that the present scenario in prison plays a destructive role on the life of an offender. Most of the public were aware of the concept of social reintegration and feel that it should be applicable for offenders to help them mend their ways and lead a stable life. According to the public social reintegration is the process of helping the offenders to get back to normal life through integration with society/community. They came to know about social reintegration through various internet sources and social media.

Majority of the public stated that on an individual level they can help an offender by providing proper employment and educational facilities, allowing them to participate in social activities and by not stereotyping them. Most of the public feels that rape is a grave offense for which social reintegration should not be given as other crimes such as murder might be circumstantial and such offenders should be a second chance. Majority of them support the idea of social reintegration and have stated that their opinion about social reintegration would be the same even if the offender was a close associate. According to the public, offenders should be given jobs such as government jobs, social service or any jobs that they are skilled at so that they gain self-confidence and are able to lead a steady life. They say that the mindset and the fear of the person committing the crime again hinder the process of social reintegration. Lack of awareness and knowledge, politics and social security are the few factors stated by the public that affect social reintegration.

1.4 References

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