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## **Overcrowding in Correctional Centres and Community Reintegration of Offenders: Implications for Correctional Officials of a Facility in North West Province, South Africa**

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**Abstract:** As part of the rehabilitation of offenders, South Africa has emerged as one of the countries in the world that uses programmed reintegration of offenders into the communities. However, overcrowding in correctional facilities has implications for correctional officials' work in the reintegration of offender's programmes. This paper discusses overcrowding at Rooigrond Correctional Centre in the North West Province in South Africa and the implications it has for the work of correctional officials at the facility. The study applied a qualitative approach and a descriptive research design to capture the experiences of the correctional officials on the implication of overcrowding on the reintegration of offenders. Using the quota sampling method and semi-structured face-to-face interviews, ten correctional officials of different ranks participated in the study. Thematic data analysis employed showed that overcrowding in a correctional facility affects negatively the reintegration programmes at Rooigrond Correctional Centre making the rehabilitation process difficult and less effective. To enable and facilitate the successful reintegration of offenders into the communities, the study makes significant recommendations for consideration by correctional officials.

**Keywords:** overcrowding, community reintegration, rehabilitation, correctional officials' experiences, rooigrond correctional centre

### **Introduction**

Overcrowding has been deemed to be the biggest issue in correctional centres worldwide which has a huge impact on the offenders, their families, correctional officials and society as a whole. However, there are very few methods of reducing overcrowding that are effective and not costly. As a way of reducing overcrowding, correctional centres tend to release offenders before completing their sentences. Community reintegration of offenders is used as a method of reducing overcrowding in correctional centres. In the views of Morgan and Owers as cited by Singh (2016, p. 3) reintegration can be defined as "an organized and evidence-based process by which actions are taken to work with the offender who is in custody and released, so that the communities are better shielded from danger and re-offending is significantly lessened". Van Hout and Mhlanga-Gunda (2019) opine that overcrowding in correctional centres, human rights abuses and growing numbers of vulnerable groups of inmates represent contemporary challenges for administration and are underpinned by the disproportionate use of pre-trial detention and imprisonment for non-violent or minor offences. Prior research has shown that South Africa had the 11th greatest population in the world consisting of 159 241 inmates. United States of America has 4 575 detention centres, each with a carrying capacity of 2 157 769, China has 1,65 million offenders while Russia has 644 700 offenders. Haiti also has the world's most overcrowded correctional system. Overcrowding can lead to deficiencies of food, water, beds, and basic personal hygiene items and it can also lead to an unambiguous absence of internal security, with now gangs controlling numerous Latin American correctional facilities. Wu and Beken (2018) state that in Chinese society, the only way people can conduct themselves appropriately and accomplish a society that has order is

by an unbiased system of rewards and penalties. This means enforcing punishment through incarceration which causes overcrowding in correctional centres.

Correctional centres in Africa experience severe overcrowding too. According to international human rights standards, Ugandan correctional centres are failed and fragile with excessive numbers of 55,9 per cent of inmates who have not yet been convicted, 1113 per cent of overcrowding, poor health services, forced labour, run-down facilities, violence, limited access to justice and insufficient administrative structures (Martin, 2014, p. 45). Omboto (2010) as cited by Nyaura and Ngugi (2014) points out that harsh conditions in correctional centres in Kenya are mostly characterized by overcrowding and congestion, poor diet, degrading clothing and beddings, lack of clean water, poor sanitation, communicable diseases, and homosexuality among other vices, can be attributed to several factors. In this paper, we argue that African correctional centres are not human friendly as it is the right of every person to have food, water and clothing as basic needs even if they are incarcerated. We further point out that imprisonment does not take one's human rights away as it is seen as a correction of behaviour and not a dehumanising exercise. Research as shown that African correctional centres face a lot of challenges which result in overcrowding and abusive conditions in correctional centres (Nawa, 2017). For example, it is argued that African countries such as Cameroon, Zambia, Burundi, Kenya and Rwanda include most of the overcrowded correctional facilities in the world (Nawa, 2017). Correctional centres throughout Africa suffer from desolation, as the buildings are ancient, have poor ventilation and the sewage systems are average. This implies that the health of offenders in correctional centres in Africa is compromised as such circumstances are ready for infectious illnesses to be transmitted.

In the views of Ballard (2014), regardless of the laws and policy advances inside the punitive framework which have occurred since the arrival of democracy, situations in South African correctional centres have continued to be deprived of resources and are overcrowded. Even though there is very slight South African pragmatic research on overcrowding in correctional centres, it is distinguished that the utmost current reported occurrences of violence within correctional centres happened in some of the country's most overcrowded correctional centres. Sibisi and Olofinbiyi (2021) mention that because of rising levels of crime in South Africa, correctional centres have become congested because new inmates swell statistics of those already serving sentences or pending trial. Overcrowding in South African correctional facilities causes a lot of problems which include, gangs and large numbers of offenders who tend to attack the correctional officials because they are aware that they can simply overpower them due to a shortage of staff. There has been growing concern over the smuggling of drugs, increase in the workload of officials, health issues for both the offenders and the correctional officials and the escapes of inmates as is the case with Rooigrond Correctional Centre which recently experienced a prison escape.

The Republic of South Africa (1998) as cited by Sibisi and Olofinbiyi (2021) explains that the obligation of the Department of Correctional Services includes safe custody, rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders into the community. Despite the need to correctly rehabilitate offenders in South Africa, there is very slight South African pragmatic research on overcrowding in correctional centres. This undoubtedly affects the work of correctional officials and implies that there is lack of evidence-based rehabilitation programmes which raise more questions as to whether such rehabilitation and reintegration programmes may be of help to the dire need for rehabilitation of inmates in South Africa.

Despite the fact that overcrowded affects the work of correctional services officials, there is has been increases in overcrowded correctional facilities over the past years. For example, Cruywagen (2022) shares that the national overcrowding rate in South African correctional centres is now 31.65%, versus the 2020/2021 rate of 23% and there are about 18,000 offenders serving life sentences, as opposed to just 400 in 1995. According to the Department of Justice and Correctional Services' Annual Report 2021-2022, overcrowded facilities create difficult and widespread challenges for correctional officials including housing inmates and providing a safe environment. According to the report, the inmate population increased by 2,275 from 140,948 to 143,223 between 2020/21 and 2021/2022 financial years. This sadly affects the quality of work when reintegrating offenders back into their communities as quality assessments are compromised with haste responses to release offenders for community reintegration.

Community reintegration begins when the offender starts applying for parole and the correctional officials start preparing for restorative justice. The victims and secondary victims are invited to participate in

a Victim Offender Dialogue where they will have a conversation with the offender through the mediation of a social worker. Community reintegration means taking the offenders back into their respective communities, once the requirements of parole have been met offenders are reintegrated back into their communities. Such reintegration becomes problematic with overcrowded correctional centres as proper rehabilitation work and assessments can easily be overshadowed by the need to relieve correctional centres of overcrowding by incorrectly initiating community reintegration. Such initiatives may not suit the South African contexts as a strategy to combat overcrowding in correctional facilities.

In the North West Province, like elsewhere in South Africa, offenders serve their sentences in correctional facilities. However, after they have served, they must go back to their families and communities and live a fulfilling life outside the Correctional Centres. Mogoeng (2019) argues that in the North West Province, Rooigrond Correctional Centre is a highly overcrowded correctional facility which is in the most rural area of the province. Rooigrond Correctional Centre has an approved accommodation for 1038 inmates; however, 1170 inmates occupy the cells which makes the facility have an overcrowding of 22%. This implies that there is no space for other offenders, so those in the facility must be released on parole, medical parole or due to hastily assessed good behaviour to reduce the numbers. However, while that is the case with Rooigrond Correctional Centre, there could be many other facilities in south Africa experiencing this situation. Sadly, research on how the work correctional facilities officials has not been well- researched to inform evidence-based practices hence the need for this research.

## Literature Review

### 1. Policy Frameworks on community reintegration of offenders in South Africa

The White Paper on Corrections 2005 and the Correctional Services Amendment Act no.25 of 2008 are the policies on community reintegration which are applicable in South Africa. Community has long been identified as the third key party in community reintegration (Rossner & Bruce, 2016). One of the guidelines for the community participation policy is ensuring effective reintegration of offenders into the community (White Paper on Corrections, 2005). If all stakeholders can be permitted to take part in the process of community reintegration, the rehabilitation of offenders can become a success and a meaningful social reintegration can be achieved. The White Paper on Corrections (2005) also envisages that the participation of the community in strengthening and enhancing rehabilitation of offenders is crucial. The Department of Correctional Services through its officials attempts to create an environment that allows the community to effectively be involved in the rehabilitation of offenders through various initiatives and projects with restorative reintegration being a critical programme. Restorative reintegration in Maglione (2020)'s explanation is the offender's return to the larger community after their "redemptive" journey through restorative justice, is a key goal pursued by Restorative Justice Policy. The officials organise for the offenders, victims, and secondary victims to have a conversation through the Victim Offender Dialogue (VOD) so that the offender can show remorse and have an opportunity to apologise while the victim as well as secondary victims get a chance to ask questions and get the closure they need (Maluleke, Matshaba, Leepilekgosimore, & Barkhuizen, 2020). However, with overcrowded correctional facilities, such complex programmes of the Department of Correctional Services are likely to be affected negatively as they demand much more time and resources from correctional facilities personnel.

The Correctional Services Amendment Act no.25 of 2008, section 45 (1) states that a sentenced offender must be prepared for placement, release and reintegration into society by participating in pre-release programme. Fitz (2013) states that the Offender Rehabilitation is a path that joins the rectification of offending behaviour, human growth and the elevation of social accountability and standards in the Department of Correctional Services and demands adequate time and resources from correctional officials. In the processes of the Offender Rehabilitation Path (ORP), the offenders are subjected to assessment, rehabilitation and placement or reintegration. Section 4(1) of the Correctional Services Amendment Act no.25 of 2005 states that the National Commissioner may grant permission in writing on conditions and for such periods as he or she may specify, for a sentenced offender to leave the correctional centre temporarily for any other reason related to the successful reintegration of the sentenced offender into the community.

Due to overcrowded correctional facilities, the Department of Correctional Services' policies lack proper implementation. The case in point is that of victims who do not want to take part in community reintegration as they lack proper interventions to prepare them to meet their perpetrators. In extreme circumstances, some communities still resort to taking matters into their own hands because they have lost confidence in the justice system and rehabilitation processes and find it difficult allow offenders on community reintegration to live with them again in the communities. This perpetuates the reoffending behaviours among offenders because they do not feel accepted by the communities. Being resented and stigmatised, (Frantz, 2017, Ahmed & Ahmad, 2015), by the community leads to recidivism, (Barraza, Collme, Meza, & Penunuri, 2015). The loophole in these policies is that they advocate for community reintegration to happen but have not done justice to deal with ensuring quality work of the correctional officials in overcrowded facilities such as Rooigrond.

## 2 Theoretical Frameworks

### *Labelling theory*

Magadze (2021) states that for community reintegration of offenders to be successful, 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 stigmatisation decide the destination of the offender. In the efforts to reduce reoffending and control overcrowding in correctional facilities, it is important for the community to be involved in the community reintegration of ex-offenders. Involving and preparing the communities for receiving the offender, requires enough human resources that many crowded correctional centres such as Rooigrond do not have, therefore compromising the reintegration processes. Magadze (2021) emphasises that crime is a social problem that requires the society to come together to fight against it. Formal labels which insist that "once a criminal always a criminal" may lead to failure of community reintegration and contribute to the increasing recidivism rates in the country (Magadze, 2021). Labelling theory also suggests that when a person is described as a deviant, he will be deprived of significant opportunities in life because of the stigma, and hence will have a better tendency to continue behaving in a deviant manner (Quinn-Hogan, 2021). Being labelled has effects with exterior restrictions being enforced on the deviant by the community. Due to lack of proper preparation of community members for reintegration of offenders which results from facilities overcrowding, community perceives ex-offenders with various attitudes, which makes ex-offenders' reintegration very difficult and end up being unsuccessful (Magadze, 2021).

### *Strengths-based approach*

The strength-based approach emphasises individual empowerment to regain control over their environment and their lives. An offender who is empowered may succeed in having the ability to acknowledge their crime and work enthusiastically to change such negative behaviours. An alternative philosophy for community reintegration, strength-based perspective re-entry, treats people returning from correctional centres as assets to be used rather than threats (Hunter et al 2016). Strength-based efforts work as a stigma management strategy and makes ex-offenders feel at the centre of care. Being put at the centre is bound to make ex-offenders happy and encourages them to stay away from the life of crime. The strength-based perspective identifies constraints that might hinder the process of community reintegration. It does not only focus on the ex-offender but also examines the ex-offender's environment to avoid reoffending which can lead to overcrowding in correctional centres. The strength-based perspective encourages ex-offenders to be resilient and not judge themselves based on their past crimes. The strength-based perspective proposes that distressed people should be engaged with respect and compassion which encourages ex-offenders to do good deeds and stay away from criminal activities.

Strength-based perspective encourages ex-offenders to understand that they cannot change their past mistakes hence they should build their self-esteem and competence in order to be better members of the society. Hunter et al (2016) opines that for criminal justice populations, researchers have called for comprehensive interventions that span correctional systems and the community to build offenders' strengths while attending to the risks and needs that impact successful community reintegration. In accordance with

Hunter et al (2016, p. 3) scholars have noted that the strength-based perspective allows offenders to recognize that they are of value and can positively contribute to the community and larger society.

### *Ecological perspective*

The ecological perspective illustrates that challenges in the social environment must be addressed using cost effective strategies and interventions involving all stakeholders (ex-offenders, professionals, policy makers and correctional staff. Raboloko and Maripe (2019) state that the community must encourage ex-offenders self-development and discard all negative labels and associations and give them a chance to become law abiding citizens. The ecological perspective emphasises that the families and communities must shape these individuals and provide them with a platform to contribute meaningfully to reinforce positivity. In the study, it emerged that the community around Rooigrond Correctional Centre is minimally involved in the reintegration process and does not trust the ex-offenders. Since the period of confinement has negative effects on the offender, community's involvement in the reintegration process is fundamental to build lost relationships, restore family ties and repair damages. This is the favourable position lacking in the Rooigrond and community relationship discovered in this study.

From the ecological perspective, there should be assessment of individual's unique needs and the designing of appropriate programmes of interventions. Intervention strategies are essential for the positive reintegration of the ex-convict. A supportive social environment and inclusive policies will enable the success of healthy reintegration process by minimizing the barriers (Teater, 2014). A coordinated approach is highly recommended to ensure that intervention strategies are closely monitored and evaluated. Practitioners need to know interventions yielding the desired reintegration results. To ensure this, much effort and resources must be directed to rehabilitation programmes.

## **Research Methods**

### **1. Research Approach**

This study adopted a qualitative research method (Tracy, 2013, p. 23) to purposefully examine and make note of small cues in order to decide how to behave, as well as to make sense of the context and build larger knowledge claims about a certain phenomenon and to provide an in-depth understanding of what people experience (Louw & Louw, 2015, p. 26). This method gave correctional officials to share their experiences on how overcrowding influences community reintegration of offenders. This approach helped the researcher to develop an understanding of correction officials' opinions on overcrowding and the role that it plays in the social reintegration of ex-offenders. It also assisted the researcher to generate an in-depth account that will present a lively picture of the reality of correction officials.

### **2. Research Design**

For the purpose of this study, the researcher used qualitative descriptive research design. Sandelowski (2014, p. 338) states that qualitative descriptive design allows the researcher to direct data collection towards discovering the who, what and where of the events or experiences or their basic nature and shape. To this advantage, this research design has enabled the researcher to do a comprehensive summarization of the events experienced by correction officials in reintegrating ex-offenders who came from overcrowded correctional centres. Qualitative research design enabled the researcher to discover and understand a phenomenon, the process of social reintegration, or the perspectives and worldview of the participants. Sandelowski (2014, p. 336) adds by saying qualitative descriptive studies entail interpretation in that researcher set the horizon of expectations of the study by pre-selecting the variables that will be studied and in that they draw conclusions from the results of statistical tests, which are based on the set of assumptions. Hence, this design helped the researcher to collect as much data as possible so that the all the elements of events are thoroughly captured.

### **3. Population of The Study**

In the view of Dawis (2015, p. 45) population refers to the number of people whom the intended study will be conducted on. The population of the study were the correctional officials from Rooigrond Correctional Centre in the North West Province. These officials were all participating in community reintegration of ex-offenders,

for example, social workers, prison wards, parole officers or managers at different workshops (units) in the correctional facility who were responsible for social reintegration in the correctional centre. This means that all the managers from the facility who facilitates social reintegration programme as well as other managers who facilitate other programmes were recruited to participate in the study as they were familiar with the role that overcrowding plays on social reintegration.

#### 4. Sampling Methods

Quota sampling method was used in this study to engage the ten correctional officials from Rooigrond Correctional Centre. This was the most appropriate sampling method to enable correctional officials who work in an overcrowded correctional centre to be part of the study in order to share their experiences. Yang and Banamah (2014) defines quota sampling as a non- probability sampling method which researchers create a sample by involving individuals that represent the population. It has enabled the researcher to sample a subgroup that is of great interest in the study. Although the required sample of the study was the minimum of ten correctional officials who have taken part in the reintegration programmes in Rooigrond Correctional Centre in the North West Province, the researcher did not limit the number of participants but collected data until data saturation point was reached (Eschel, Price, Staffan, Josephsson, & Schulze, 2019).

#### 5. Data Collection

A semi-structured interview schedule, (Bearman, 2019) was used to collect data using an interview schedule that contained the questions that guided the interview process. The one-on-one individual interviews were conducted by the researcher.

#### 6. Data Analysis

Thematic data analysis, (Gupta, Shaheen & Reddy, 2018), was utilised where the researcher listened to the recorded audios of interviews and transcribed them verbatim so that there was no omission of important information. Data analysis is the classification and interpretation of linguistic (or visual) material to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is represented in it (Flick, 2013). Data presentation was done according to predetermined themes and themes that emerged compared and supported by existing literature.

#### 7. Ethical Considerations

The researcher obtained ethical clearance from Research Ethics Committee to enable carrying out the study outside the university. Also the researcher obtained approval from Department of Correctional Services and the management of Rooigrond Correctional Centre, gained access from the gatekeepers and got informed consent from the correctional officials who were participants of the study. The researcher ensured that the information gathered was kept private and confidential by using pseudonyms instead of participants' real names. Privacy, (Surmiak, 2018), was ensured by making sure that the data collected was only seen by the researcher and the supervisor. Before conducting the interviews, the correctional officials were given all the relevant information regarding the study to avoid deceiving them.

### **Findings of The Study**

#### 1. Biographical Information of The Correctional Officials

The participants provided their biographical information which described their age, gender, place of residence, work experience and where they were stationed. This information provided useful information which describes the participants and provides a "biographical picture" of them. Table 1 summarises the biographical information of the participants.

From the biographical information, it is clear that correctional officials were both males and females between the ages of 30-60 years residing in different areas of Mafikeng in the North West Province. The gender of participants shows that both male and female correctional officials have different roles to play in the correctional facilities and for the development of offenders. Their place of residence has been added to indicate how familiar the participants are with the Rooigrond Area and how they are affected by both

overcrowding both as correctional officials and members of the community. Work experience shows for long the participant worked in the facility and how long they have been experiencing overcrowding and what they have learnt in terms of how overcrowding impacts on their work as correctional officials. From the findings, male participants in this study have worked for longer years than female participants which means they have more experience and knowledge about overcrowding and social reintegration.

Table 1. Biographical information of the participants

Name	Age	Gender	Place of Residence	Work experience in years	Workplace
Modise	49	Male	Magogoe	33 years	Rooigrond Correctional centre
Layla	38	Female	Rooigrond	8 years	Rooigrond Correctional centre
Bridget	32	Female	Rooigrond	6 years	Rooigrond Correctional centre
Keneilwe	38	Female	Rooigrond	10 years	Rooigrond Correctional centre
Kagiso	39	Male	Rooigrond	10 years	Rooigrond Correctional centre
Rorisang	42	Male	Rooigrond	13 years	Rooigrond Correctional centre
Tshiamo	44	Male	Magogoe	20 years	Rooigrond Community Corrections Office
Kevin	59	Male	Magogoe	30 years	Rooigrond Community Corrections Office
Billy	49	Male	Montshioa	20 years	Rooigrond Community Corrections Office
Masego	43	Female	Golf View	13 years	Rooigrond Community Corrections Office and Rooigrond Correctional Centre

Sources: Legodi and Dube (2022)

## 2. The Effect Overcrowding Has on The Work of Correctional Officials

In the study, participants were asked about the effect of overcrowding on the work of correctional officials to determine whether overcrowding affects operations of the correctional officials. From the findings of the study, it was apparent that overcrowding in a correctional facility does not only affect the offenders but also affects the correctional officials’ work. All the ten participants in the study were of the view that overcrowding affects their work and then articulated how they were affected by overcrowding in the correctional facilities. Below is the discussion of how overcrowding affects the day-to-day work of the officials.

### *Facilitation of programmes*

The programmes that offenders must take part in from the time of incarceration until their release are facilitated by correctional officials. The effectiveness of diversion programmes in reducing recidivism among youth offenders came under the spotlight when the redrafted Child Justice Bill (Bill 49 of 2002) was brought before Parliament on 5 and 6 February 2008 for the final round of public hearings in South Africa (Gxubane (2019). In sharing on the facilitation of all programmes when there is overcrowding, Modise said:

*“Number one I can’t facilitate all the programmes I’m supposed to facilitate effectively”.*

Rehabilitation of offenders is the most important aspect that has to be done effectively so programmes have to be facilitated in a manner that is effective too. The offender must go through all the programmes chosen for him/her as per need and the correctional officials must see to it that the offender participates in these programmes. Overcrowding makes it difficult for officials to make sure that offenders really participate and benefit from these problem in order for them to change and become better people. Dealing with many offenders makes the facilitation of programme to be difficult because the officials do not have time to focus much on the programme as their focus is mostly on meeting deadlines and targets set by the department. This scenario militates against the strengths-based perspective discussed in this study earlier, which encourages

correctional officials to- focus on what offenders can do better to improve their behaviour and prepare them for community reintegration (Hunter et al (2016).

### *Health*

Ferdik and Smith (2017) articulate that officers are further responsible for maintaining safety in a setting with significant numbers of gang members, offenders with mental illnesses, drug addicts and even terrorists, all of whom pose elevated safety and health risks to correctional officials. In relation to the presence of health risks when the prisons are overcrowded, Modise had to say:

*“Health wise we are affected as well as psychologically. Overcrowding can cause fights, for example, on the meals there are different sizes of meat, so others request more meat in exchange of sex. “Give me meat in return I will thank you sexually. “Another thing is that offenders do not bath because they are overcrowded, even lice start to increase, other diseases develop. Others do not wash their clothes because they sleep on the floor”.*

Ferdik and Smith (2017) further state that evidence is abundant in research that correctional officials in overcrowded correctional facilities experience mental ill-health, such as high levels of stress, anxiety and burnout. This means that working in an environment that has offenders incarcerated for different kinds of crimes including murder poses a lot of danger to the mental health of correctional officials. Ferdik et al (2014) as cited by Ferdik and Smith (2017) mentions that more than 35 percent of officers recorded high stress levels in overcrowded facilities.

Correctional officials also are at risk of contracting infectious diseases. Ferdik and Smith (2017) states that there is ample evidence that inmates disproportionately suffer from infectious and communicable diseases for example, Hepatitis B and C, Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Tuberculosis. Correctional officials are susceptible to the risk of contracting potentially fatal diseases on account of occupational mandates that require them to routinely perform pat-down and cell searches, intervene in offender altercations and respond to medical emergencies, accidents and other situations where they may encounter sharp objects, blood and bodily fluids (Ferdik & Smith, 2017).

### *Piling up of work*

In the study, participants agreed that having to deal with many offenders at the same time can be very demanding. From the responses they provided in the interviews, it is evident that correctional officials found themselves in situations where their workload continually increased, and they had to work extra time or for longer hours than expected.

Layla had to say:

*“I work under a lot of stress because my transfers pile up while awaiting approval from above. Overcrowding increases my workload and it is affecting me psychologically”.*

Working under such demanding conditions can either make a person or destroy him/her. Kagiso who was in management position said:

*“It also depends on the individual. You know when you are used to working under adversity you end up adapting and you don’t even realize that you have pressure (NEH!!!) but in reality, it is affecting me in many ways”.*

It is very likely that officials will be unhappy about working in such conditions that are demanding. Kagiso who gave a managerial perspective to the workload further elaborated that:



*“Like my subordinates will lodge a complaint maybe they feel overworked then feeling overworked, I as a manager must come up with strategies to reduce workload. For example, an offender is told that he/she will be arrested on this date and released on a certain date, it means an offender will spend half of the sentence within the correctional facility so along this process we have to encourage behaviour which will result in an offender being released on minimum. But if we don’t encourage good behaviour, if we become reluctant to correct in terms of policies, penalties and procedures when offenders are not behaving good, we will end up having more offenders not going out. So, in a nutshell, we rehabilitate come time for profile submission, (akere) offenders before they go out on parole, we submit their profiles to parole board and they will take a decision. That means my office must also play its part because there are documents that are needed from my office like the SAPC 62 AND 69 sentencing marks and previous convictions. So, if my office submits those documents on time offenders will be released on time and there will be lesser bargain on overcrowding. Crime is high in South Africa, other correctional centres are also overcrowded (neh) so in a nutshell encouraging good behaviour and maintain order in terms of what is needed for example issues of uniform, shoes, toiletries and food...if they get, they will not complain. So, it won’t create pressure for the officials. But if managers fold our hands and not apply our managerial skills and policies then we are going to create pressure. So, I am everything in the centre, to try and calm and ensure we don’t have more complains and so forth”.*

Masego had to say:

*“Yooh!!! (SIGHS)...mhmm !!!I have high case load because I am working in two centres alone. It affects me in a way- yes, I can make an intervention but in terms of administration...sometimes I can’t attend cases and do administration. Sometimes I knock off early because clients are consulting, and I can’t say no. Even if I prioritize my work and have monthly and weekly plans. At the centre I assess offenders, do group work, the community work at Community Corrections Office...I have to meet the target set by the department. IT IS TOO MUCH!!! One of the most challenging duties for officials is paperwork”.*

Managers share the same views as other officials on overcrowding and workload. Overcrowding indeed increases the workload of all the officials even managers have a very high caseload. It is evident that the work of correctional officials piles up daily as more and more offenders are incarcerated. It can be concluded that piling up of work affects these officials negatively as most of them have indicated that they were overwhelmed by the workload (Mkosi, 2013). Working in an environment that is demanding in terms of having to solve a lot of cases causes stress and burnout. Also correctional services officials have limited time to rest and to meet deadlines and targets set by the Department of Correctional Services on time which the ecological perspective bemoans as another factor contributing to lack of proper community reintegration processes for the offenders (Teater, 2014).

#### *Inadequate resources*

It was also evident that the issue of resources affected the work of the correctional officials from the responses they provided in the data collection process. Despite the South African correctional centres being overcrowded, the Department of Correctional Services is still not hiring enough officials. In response to the shortage of human resources, Tshiamo said:

*“We don’t have enough resources and manpower. We have drastic increase in our caseload but not enough officials to conduct visits. Our work is very difficult. The core aim of the correctional services is no longer only punishment now but to correct the behaviour of offenders. No matter we are working with rehabilitation, security is another challenge, so overcrowding is stretching us we can’t do our work effectively”.*

The intake of offenders continues to increase on a daily in South Africa correctional centres due to the escalating levels of crime rates. This is indicative of the indeed for the department to hire more people in order to tackle the problems faced by correctional officials and meet the targets set by the department itself. Overcrowding may also has a negative impact in the rendering of programmes within the correctional environment due to insufficient resources (Mkosi, 2013).

Kevin said:

*“In the first place we don’t have enough resources, the issue of overcrowding is making our work difficult because large number of offenders are being pushed out by the system and we have to reintegrate them back into their families and communities. The more we get offenders released from correctional centres our caseload increases but the number of officials doesn’t increase we have problems, it is like these offenders are overcrowding us. We can’t manage them or visit them according to schedule. We are affected negatively; we don’t have enough officials and cars to conduct visits”.*

From the findings of the study, it makes sense to comment that the only way to make social reintegration effective and reduce and prevent reoffending is to make sure that there are enough resources available for correctional officials especially those at Community Corrections Offices. This is because there is need to travel to supervise parolees daily and monitor those released for community reintegration.

From the responses of the correctional officials, it can be deduced that supervising and monitoring many offenders at the same time because officials are under the pressure of meeting targets, simply means everything is likely to be rushed and mistakes are bound to be made which can contribute to a large number of offenders reoffending and going back to correctional centres.

Billy said:

*“Overcrowding affects our work because we can’t focus on one offender and fully monitor him/her. Another thing is the issue of resources, the offenders we have to integrate increase however we have minimal resources”.*

In a more critical sense, it can be argued that the Department of Correctional Services has overlooked the issue of resources. This gives a negative analytical perspective that there is no way correctional officials can be productive and effective in their work when they have minimal resources to work with. For example, not having enough cars to conduct visits is a problem because offenders end up idling around the streets knowing exactly that official cannot make it to their residential areas due to lack of cars which can cause recidivism to increase. In this manner, social analysts can reiterate the negative foresight that social reintegration will forever remain ineffective and impossible if drastic changes to increase resources cannot be implemented.

## **Discussion**

The findings of the study show that overcrowding in correctional facilities does not only affect offenders but also affects the work of correctional officials. In the following section, the article discusses the findings of the study. The objectives of the study were to explore the experiences of correctional services officials when they reintegrate offenders into their communities and families when the offenders did not finish their sentences within a correctional facility, assessing the extent to which the problems of overcrowding of offenders affect the work of the correctional service officials in reintegrating offenders into their communities and to describe the measures that can be taken by correctional service officials to ensure that the ex-offenders are fully reintegrated into their respective families and communities despite the fact that they were released due to overcrowding.

### **1. Facilitation of Programmes**

Procedurally, from the day of incarceration, inmates go through programmes until they are ready to exit the system (Department of Correctional Services Act 111 of 2008). This paper however, gathered evidence that working in an overcrowded facility makes it difficult for correctional officials to facilitate programmes effectively as they must work with a large number of inmates. It is sad that despite the need for correctional officials to ensure quality rehabilitation processes, they do not get the chance to make sure that the aims of the programmes are sufficiently met as they have to rush everything in order to meet deadlines and ensure that offenders complete these programmes to released offers and reduce overcrowding in the correctional centre.

## 2. Health

It is noteworthy that health is an essential component of human life. The health of both offenders and correctional officials is compromised when working in an overcrowded correctional centre. This paper argues that it becomes easy for communicable diseases to spread as the cells carry more offenders than they should. Diseases like HIV and AIDS and communicable diseases like Tuberculosis are spread from offender to offender and officials. Overcrowding is an obvious cause of and contributing factor in many of the health issues in correctional centres, most notably infectious diseases and mental health issues (McDonald, 2018).

## 3. Piling Up of Work

There is also a direct relationship between the amount of work for correctional officials and the number of offenders. Having large number of offenders means the workload of correctional officials also increase. Deficiency in the number of officials influences offenders' ability to effectively take part in rehabilitation programmes in a maintainable manner. It also aggravates the outbreak of violence which threatens the security of offenders who want a better life for themselves after confinement (Nkosi, 2018). Dealing with a lot of offenders is demanding and it increases the workload of officials.

## 4. Inadequate Resources

Correctional officials do not have enough resources to do their work effectively. For example, the Department of Correctional Services does not have enough cars for parole officers and social workers to conduct their parole supervision. This is part of the reason why recidivism increases. Correctional centres often have inadequate fundamental resources for offender programmes (Mkosi, 2013). This raises questions as to whether the rehabilitation of offenders can be effective to ensure proper reintegration into the community. The work of correctional officials is affected due to insufficient resources; they are less productive in what they do and often fail to meet deadlines and targets set by the Department of Correctional Services.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

In lieu of the findings of the study, correctional officials are negatively affected by overcrowding in correctional centres. Facilitation of programmes is meagre because the focus is on getting offenders to go through the programme and meeting departmental targets and less favourable quality of work. For this reason, this paper recommends that there should be educational campaigns teaching communities about Offender Rehabilitation Path which is the step-by-step process that an offender goes through from the minute they are sentenced in court until they are released. This will benefit the community because they will gain a full understanding the offender rehabilitation processes including the importance of community participation.

The risk of illness for both offender and correctional officials in correctional facilities in dire for overcrowded facilities. In this paper, we recommend that the department should build more units to accommodate offenders and prevent overcrowding. The researcher further recommends that the Department of Correctional Services should hire Employee Wellness Practitioners to provide and psychosocial support to deal with the officials' stress and burnout problems associated with work.

In the study, correctional officials emphasised the issue of piling up of work and inability to finish work in scheduled time frameworks. It is further recommended that the Department of Correctional Services employs a multisectoral approach and seek the services of other stakeholders like the Department of Social Development. This will relieve the workload on correctional official and facilitate meeting deadlines with improved quality services. In this paper we envisage that such as approach can stimulate community understanding on the importance of community reintegration processes of ex-offenders. We also see this as an important step in victim empowerment process as social workers from the Department of Social Development are well equipped with counselling skills needed for victim empowerment.

The study found that lack of resources such as fleet vehicles was problematic for correctional officials at Rooigrond Correctional Centre. In light of this finding, we recommend that the Department of Correctional Services should make it a mandate that they ensure that the officials have enough resources. We recommend that the department considers subsidising vehicles for officials to ensure that offenders on parole and other community-based reintegration programme are monitored effectively.

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