

## Exploration of the Pathway of Offending in the Later Life of Older Ghanaian Adults

### **Abstract**

This chapter seeks to present an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of the experience of criminal involvement in old age, drawing on data from a descriptive, phenomenology study with 20 offenders aged 50 and over at a total institution in Ghana. The findings show that the onset of offending in later life is embedded in diverse scenarios including a survival strategy pertaining to engagement in economic activities for survival with retirement planning implications. Correspondingly, the crimes committed are violent, namely, murder, causing physical harm, food poisoning, and those that are non-violent, namely, narcotics dealings, petty thievery in nature. Among others, cognitive impairment/dementia and poverty are contributory factors to the incarnation of older offenders between one month and 27 years. The older offenders were involved in second line criminal activities, namely, the sale of stolen goods obtained from first liners. Compliance with prison rules incentivised reduced prison sentence years, fostered peace of mind. Tipping colleague inmates to execute allotted prison work is another coping strategy resulting from inability to do same. Imprisonment induced Christianity-oriented reformation, served as an integrative factor between criminality and serving prison sentence(s). Also worth reiterating is the fact that imprisonment may induce stigmatisation and isolation-related loneliness, while serving as an antidote to the pangs of loneliness with consequences for recidivism among older offenders. Gerontological offending has debilitating effects on older adults and is associated with the social isolation of an age cohort that is already predisposed to witchcraft accusations. The conduction of cognitive impairment/dementia tests on older offenders may moderate the sentence they receive.