

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

**EXPERIENCES OF RELEASED JUVENILE OFFENDERS IN
GREATER ACCRA, GHANA**

BY

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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

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DECLARATION

I, Ebenezer Kwesi Bosomprah, do hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own research work carried out under the supervision of Dr. Kwabena Frimpong-Manso and Dr. Abena Ampomah and that to the best of my knowledge, it has not been submitted by another person for the award of any other degree by this University or any other institution. However, all references used in this work are duly acknowledged.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my loving and caring parents; Mr. Charles Okoe Bosomprah and Mrs. Joyce Bosomprah.

And to

Prof. Akosua Keseboa Darkwah, my mentor, for her sponsorship, encouragement and immense contribution towards my education.

God richly bless you all.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACRWC	– African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
BECE	– Basic Education Certificate Examination
CRRECENT	– Child Research and Resource Centre
GSS	– Ghana Statistical Service
IPA	– Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
JHS	- Junior High School
JJA	– Juvenile Justice Act
MGCSP	– Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection
NGO	– Non-Governmental Organization
NVTI	– National Vocational Training Institute
OIC	– Opportunities Industrialization Centre
SHS	- Senior High School
UNCRC	– United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	– United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
UNODC	- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

ABSTRACT

This study explored the experiences of released juvenile offenders in Accra and was underpinned by Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress, Appraisal, and Coping. The study sought to find out (1) what challenges do released juvenile offenders in Accra encounter. (2) the factors that contribute to challenges faced by released juvenile offenders in Accra and (3) the coping strategies employed by released juvenile offenders in Accra to deal with challenges they experience. Twelve male released juvenile offenders, were recruited purposively to participate in the study. Data was gathered through in-depth interviews and was analyzed using Smith and Osborne's (2008) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) method.

The study found out that, released juvenile offenders in Accra had some challenges in education and employment. The study further found out that, poverty, stigmatization, and lack of state transitional support contributed to some challenges encountered by released juvenile offenders in Accra. Finally, the study identified both formal and informal social support from family and friends, non-governmental support, source of income, and independent living as coping strategies employed by released juvenile offenders in Accra. In view of these findings, the study recommended that reintegration provisions made in the "Justice for All Children" policy should be implemented to help reduce challenges encountered by released juvenile offenders in Accra. Also, the study recommended that artisans association should be involved in the reintegration process of the released juvenile offenders to help reduce the risk of reoffending. Non-governmental organisation and agencies should continue working and helping with the reintegration of released juvenile offenders in Ghana.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

A juvenile offender is defined by UNICEF (2007) as any person below the age of 18 who comes into contact with the justice system as a result of being suspected or accused of committing a crime. In 2010, an estimated 1.1 million juveniles were detained by law enforcement officials worldwide (UNDOC, 2010), indicating that juvenile delinquency is a social problem in many societies.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), both child rights instruments, have sections that serve as a foundation and guide for many national legislative, institutional and policy initiatives (Ayete-Nyampong, 2012). These initiatives enable nations to promote the universal human rights of children including juvenile offenders. The UNCRC and the ACRWC aim at promoting the protection of children and their rights which include juveniles. Act 40 and 17 of the UNCRC and ACRWC respectively deal particularly with issues pertaining to juveniles.

Ghana has a juvenile justice system that is regulated by the Juvenile Justice Act (JJA) 2003, which guides the administration of justice for children who come into conflict with the law. The JJA draws some of the tenets it operates with from the Children's Act (Act 560, 1998). The JJA was enacted to protect the rights of juvenile offenders and make provisions as to how they are treated while they go through the juvenile justice system. It was instituted to ensure an appropriate response for juvenile offenders regarding reformation, rehabilitation, and reintegration.

Between 2011 and 2013, among crimes recorded in Ghana by juvenile offenders, stealing and defilement were the most. This was influenced by factors such as poverty, parental neglect, peer pressure, drug and alcohol use (Government of Ghana and UNICEF, 2014; Government of Ghana, UNICEF, 2011).

Borstal institutes started out as industrial schools, in 1947 under the British Colonial Administration to help juveniles found going wayward (Ame, 2017). Before the Borstal institutes started in Ghana, the Children Care and Reformation Act of 1928 of the United Kingdom gave juvenile courts the authority to confine orphans, juvenile delinquents, neglected or ill-treated children under age 15 to the reformatory (Craven, 1935). After Ghana's independence, a Criminal Procedure Code (Act 30, 1960) with a section on juvenile committed offenders to the Borstal institutes for reformation and rehabilitation. However, with the inception of the JJA in 2003, the Borstal institutes transitioned into what is currently known as correctional centres. This was because the focus of the institutes changed from punishment to correction. The correctional centres are intended to help juvenile offenders acquire vocational skills as well as religious and moral training to help them become productive citizens after serving their sentence period (Ame, 2017; Ame, 2018).

Niriella (2011) asserts that the environment in the correctional institution is different from that of the home environment; hence the need to take practical steps to ensure that, released juvenile offenders become productive members of society. She further opined that, in some jurisdictions such as the U.S.A., reintegration is a key component of the rehabilitation process of any juvenile offender. This helps in ensuring that the released juvenile offender does not re-offend and also reduces the challenges they are likely to face. When juvenile offenders are released, there is a need for a systematic program that will ensure that they fit well within their various societies.

Reintegration, therefore, is expected to be a part of the rehabilitation process seeking to ensure that released juvenile offenders settle well within society. Released juvenile offenders without a proper or adequate reintegration programming are likely to be more vulnerable to reoffending and other challenges. This is because if the factors that led to their offense still exist within the environment to which they are returning, they are likely to encounter same challenges (Niriella, 2008).

Reintegration in simple terms therefore refers to the transition from the correctional centre to the community (Moore, 2011). Griffiths, Dandurand and Murdoch (2011) define reintegration as the support and services that are given to released juvenile offenders over a period of time to ensure that they do not re-offend. Reintegration processes, therefore, can take different forms in various countries and jurisdictions. Hence, there are no universally accepted set of standard processes for reintegrating released juvenile offenders into their home environments. This study however adopts Griffiths, Dandurand and Murdoch's (2011) definition of reintegration as its operational definition.

Dawes (2008) posited that "reintegration" is a broad term that partly focuses on the offenders' ability to function in a society. Their ability to function in a society includes their interaction with family members as well as the entire communities. Their functionality includes their ability to join mainstream education, vocational training as well as being gainfully employed if they have reached the employable age. Reintegration takes a look at the transitional processes from the detention or correctional centres into the community (Niriella, 2008).

1.2 Problem Statement

Between the years 2005 and 2010, 1409 juvenile offenders in Ghana were committed to probation and reformation (Government of Ghana, 2015). A number of these juvenile offenders were committed to correctional centres for rehabilitation. They were released after they had served their period of the sentence where rehabilitation took place, which usually ranged between one month and three years as required by the J.J.A. However, much attention has not been given to what happens to released juvenile offenders in Ghana with regards to areas such as education, employment, accommodation, social relationships and others.

Ghanaian literature has focused specifically on juvenile delinquency, deviant behaviour, causes of delinquency among juveniles, life at the correctional centres including reformation and rehabilitation as well as governance at the correctional centres (Ashiabor, 2014; Ayete-Nyampong, 2013; Ayete-Nyampong, 2014) and rights of children in conflict with the law (Ame, 2011). Consequently, there is a considerable gap existing in literature in the area of juvenile offenders' experiences after release.

Evidence from countries such as Australia, U. S. A., and South Africa suggests that released juvenile offenders can become vulnerable due to likely obstacles such as stigmatization, unstable family relationships, unemployment, inferiority complex and lack of after-care services (Chikadzi, 2017; Dawes, 2011; NCSL, 2015). This vulnerability has the potential of leading to re-incarceration. Altschuler and Armstrong (2004) posited that there are seven factors that can hinder a successful reintegration of a released juvenile offender into a community. They include family and living arrangements, peer group influences, mental behavioural and physical health, substance abuse or misuse, vocational training and employment, leisure and recreational interests as well as education and schooling.

It is, therefore, necessary to explore the lived experiences of released juvenile offenders in Accra to find out challenges they encounter after their release and the coping strategies they adopt in dealing with the challenges.

1.3 Objectives

Generally, this research sought to explore experiences of released juvenile offenders and how they were managing these challenges associated with the experiences. Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following objectives;

- To explore challenges encountered by released juvenile offenders in Accra;
- To describe the factors contributing to the challenges faced by released juvenile offenders in Accra;
- To investigate the coping strategies employed by released juvenile offenders to deal with the challenges they experience.

1.4 Research Questions

The researcher in this study sought to find answers to the following questions;

- What challenges do released juvenile offenders in Accra encounter?
- What are the contributing factors to the challenges released juvenile offenders in Accra face?
- How do released juvenile offenders in Accra cope with challenges experienced?

1.5 Relevance of the Study

Exploring the experiences of released juvenile offenders with regards to the challenges they encounter and the coping strategies they employ will add to the scope of knowledge regarding

reintegration of juvenile offenders particularly in Accra, Ghana. Findings from this study will inform policymakers such as Department of Social Welfare and Community Development to implement existing juvenile justice policies pertaining to juvenile offenders such as justice for children policy. Moreover, findings from this study may serve as an advocacy tool for social workers and other professionals and stakeholders with an interest in issues pertaining to juvenile justice.

1.6 Definition of terms

The study made use of the following working definitions to accomplish the study;

Aftercare: it can be defined as reintegrative services that prepare out-of-home placed or discharged juveniles for reentry into the community by establishing the necessary collaboration with the community and its resources to ensure the delivery of prescribed services and supervision (Altschuler & Armstrong, 2001).

Correctional Centre: A secure facility where a juvenile offender is committed or placed when the sentence is passed (Juvenile Law Centre).

Probation: Refers to cases in which juvenile offenders are placed on court-ordered supervision (NJJDC, 2007).

Social Support: it is the process of interaction in relationships which improves coping esteem, belonging and competence through actual or perceived exchanges of physical and psychosocial resources (Gottlieb, 2000). Social support is provided within four main constructs, namely; emotional, instrumental, informational and appraisal support.

Informal Social Support: It is support received or provided outside the confines of a formal setting such as workplace, health professional or social service provided by either governments or private organisations. It includes support from family, friends and other informal groups. (Campbell, Wynne-Jones & Dunn, 2011).

1.7 Organization of the study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one focuses on the background of the study, the problem statement, research objectives, and questions as well as defining key concepts of the study. The chapter looks at the relevance of the study.

Chapter two focuses on a review of related literature in the study area, dealing with specific themes based on the objectives of the study. The theoretical framework within which this study was carried out is elaborated in this chapter as well.

Chapter three deals with the methodology by which this study was carried out. Attention is given to the area within which the study was carried out and the population as well as the sampling. This chapter takes a look at data management as well as the analysis methods and ethical considerations under which the study was carried out.

Chapter four deals with the presentation of findings from the data collected. Chapter five discusses the findings and makes conclusions based on the findings as well as their implications for social work education, research and practice. Recommendations are made based on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the subject of reintegration of released juvenile offenders. Literature was reviewed under the following thematic areas: reintegration challenges, contributing factors and coping strategies.

2.2 Challenges

2.2.1 Education

Studies have documented the outcomes of reintegration of released juvenile offenders which include challenges and successes achieved (Cavendish, 2014; Moore, McArthur & Saunders, 2013). Raphael (2011) identified in an evaluation study conducted in the United States of America that released juvenile offenders tend to possess lower educational qualifications mainly due to the high school dropout rates. This is evidenced by the lower educational level usually found among released juvenile offenders. Another study by Blomberg et al. (2011) in Florida indicated that released juvenile offenders who were far behind in education were less likely to go back to school and continue. This is because incarceration and other factors such as dropping out of school interrupted their educational progression. This increased their likelihood of re-arrest if not engaged in something productive apart from education. Interruptions in the educational progression are indicative of the fact that not all released juvenile offenders go back to school. Some others focus on something else apart from education such as employment or learning a new skill (Blomberg et al., 2011).

For released juvenile offenders returning to school after being released from the correctional centre, there is no sure guarantee of success or completion. This is because according to Hagner et al. (2008), some obstacles stood in the way of released juvenile offenders completing school even after enrolment. One of such obstacles is the released juvenile offender struggling to integrate into the peer network. Cavendish (2014) also documented the high drop-out risk and academic struggles for released juvenile offenders who returned to school especially those with learning disabilities. The academic struggles include a released juvenile offender's inability to make the grades required and the credit hours expected due to a learning disability they may have.

2.2.2 Employment

Closely related to education is employment as education equips a person with the necessary employable skills (Anthony et al., 2010). According to Arditti and Parkman (2011), released juvenile offenders identified that employment was important to their survival in their communities. The authors noted that gainful employment was out of reach of juvenile offenders which could be attributed to the lack of work histories (Anthony et al., 2010). Their criminal record could also be a hindrance. The absence of gainful employment has the potential of leading the released juvenile offender back into the old ways of crime. Arditti and Parkman (2011) asserted that the lack of employment leaves released juvenile offenders vulnerable to crime temptations. Chui and Cheng (2014) hinted that released juvenile offenders who are transitioning into society might struggle to find employment because of the stigma of incarceration. This challenge with employment can affect the stability of released juvenile offenders and as well lead them into reoffending.

Most released juvenile offenders return to environments or situations that present a number of barriers to acquiring gainful employment (Anthony et al., 2010). These barriers include restrictive policies on employing individuals with criminal history. Social forces which mostly suggest that behaviour cannot be changed (once an offender always an offender) serve as a barrier to employment. A background check of released juvenile offenders' job applications is a major barrier to employment (Henry and Jacobs, 2007; Varghese et al., 2010). Released juvenile offenders require skills, credentials as well as real and immediate work experience in order to acquire gainful employment (Bullis and Yovanoff, 2006). However, most of these were not readily available to the released juvenile offenders. Some of them may have the skill due to partaking in vocational training during incarceration but may not have the work experience and the needed credentials.

2.2.3 Social relationships

Several studies indicate that as a result of the stigma attached to incarceration, released offenders' often lose their connections with family, friends, and the community at large (Bahr, Harris, Fisher and Armstrong, 2010; Byrne and Trew, 2008; Halsey 2006). In addition, some released offenders purposely avoid old friends and associates to prevent falling into activities related to crime (Moore, McArthur and Saunders, 2013). A breakdown of these social relationships, however, hinders their smooth transition and survival in the wider society. Arditti and Parkman (2011) in a study conducted in the USA asserted that released juvenile offenders admitted to needing family members to depend on in order to start their lives all over again. Released juvenile offenders' dependence on family and friends was important for the establishment of connections with employment as well as education and other necessary services, are important to their desistance from crime and its associated activities.

2.3. Contributing factor: Unstable family system

A study has identified that some released juvenile offenders return to their families in order to start life after the correctional centre (Mills & Codd, 2008). However, not all released juvenile offenders have family support to draw on. Some released juvenile offenders are unsuccessful in staying away from crime because they return to families who encourage a life of crime (Davis, Bahr & Ward, 2012). Other released juvenile offenders return to families that are disadvantaged and plagued with intergenerational poverty limiting the social support they are likely to receive from their families (Uggen & Wakefield, 2005). Serious problems such as divorce and poverty which sometimes leads to break-down of the family contributed to challenges encountered by released juvenile offenders (Mills & Codd, 2007).

Social capital is an individual's social connections, family, and community ties as well as employment networks and the benefits secured from them. Families of released juvenile offenders could serve as a rich source of social capital which in turn could help reduce the risk of re-offending (Mills & Codd, 2008). However, incarceration can place a restriction on an individual's social capital formation leading to challenges when released from detention (Sampson & Laub, 2005). Foster and Hagen (2007) asserted that incarceration leads to deficiencies in the social capital of released juvenile offenders. These deficiencies include the inability to find a stable work; delays in acquiring basic education and social support, living independently from parents and getting married.

A released juvenile offender will be able to stay away from crime due to the necessary support received from family as well as the community (Bahr, Armstrong, Gibbs, Harris & Fisher, 2005). Arditti and Parkman (2011) revealed that released juvenile offenders expressed the need for family in order to stay out of prison indicating their ability to handle challenges being linked to

family support. Accommodation, monetary, food as well as emotional support is essential to the released juvenile offender's survival within the community. Limited social capital most likely serves as the informal social support necessary for the survival of the released juvenile offender. It is therefore necessary for released juvenile offenders to build their social capital in order to benefit from informal social support.

2.3.1 Stigma

Juvenile offenders receive stigmatizing labels such as "criminal offender" upon incarceration (LeBel, 2012). Juvenile offenders are one of the most stigmatized groups of people. Stigma has become a contributing factor to challenges that released juvenile offenders encounter, for instance in the area of employment (Uggen, Wakefield, Travis & Visser, 2005). At job interviews, criminal histories are enquired before work histories and this can lead to discrimination against released juvenile offenders (Henry & Jacobs, 2007; Siwach, 2017). Stereotyping, discrimination and labeling are invisible punishments sometimes experienced by released juvenile offenders (Henderson, 2005). This can impede their reintegration into society and their stability within a community setting. Furthermore, a study conducted by Chui and Cheng (2013) reported that discrimination, which is a form of stigmatization, was a major factor that contributed to unemployment of released juvenile offenders. Prospective employers were not willing to hire them due to their criminal histories. It also led to a strain on their relationship with their families.

In addition, stigmatization can lead to the social isolation of released juvenile offenders. The process where an individual is affected by stigma from within themselves is known as self-stigma (Corrigan, Watson & Barr, 2006; Moore et al., 2016). Self-stigma or discrimination can contribute to a released juvenile offender's exclusion or isolation in terms of social relationships,

education as well as employment (Chui & Cheng, 2013). Some participants expressed how they felt unworthy as compared to other young ones who haven't been to prison before. Social isolation will, in turn, limit the social capital formation of the released juvenile offender. The released juvenile offender's survival becomes challenging, not being able to accept his past and move on.

2.3.2 Lack of transitional support

With regards to preparation for reintegration and reentry practices, less attention has been given to it within most juvenile justice systems such as the USA (James et al., 2013). In the discourse and practice of reintegration and reentry of released juvenile offenders, attention is on what happens after release rather than seeing it as a continuous process right from the detention centers or the correctional facilities all the way into their communities. Roush et. al. (2005) asserted that, every juvenile detention or correctional centre must operate on two pragmatic principles. The first one demands that reintegration and reentry programs and services must begin the moment a juvenile offender is confined. The programs and services should continue throughout the period of confinement and transition and stabilization in the community.

According to Roush et. al. (2005), the second principle in reintegration and reentry programs must take into consideration strengthening the families of juvenile offenders in confinement. A lack of these principles in the juvenile justice systems also accounts for the high rates of recidivism in youth offenders. James et al. (2013) in their study identified that, no difference in reintegration and reentry programs starting during and after detention. But this was as a result of the fact that just a few studies have focused on reintegration and reentry programs during detention.

The juvenile justice system is well structured in certain jurisdictions such as Australia, United Kingdom, and others. However, few transitional programs have been found to be effective for released juvenile offenders (Uggen, Wakefield, Travis & Visher, 2005). Most of the social supports needed by released juvenile offenders come from informal sources like family. A study conducted by Abrams, Shannon and Sangalang (2008) revealed that follow up or aftercare services for released juvenile offenders were either ineffective or lacking. This, in turn, increases the tendency of released juvenile offenders facing challenges. Even though transitional programs are available in some jurisdictions they are not relevant to the challenges released juvenile offenders face (Abrams, 2006).

According to Loeber et al. (2008), certain risk factors affect the effectiveness of transitional programs. They include peer delinquency, psychopathology, age, number of offenses, just to mention a few. If transitional programs do not take into consideration these factors, its effectiveness will be watered down in the face of challenges. James et al. (2013) identified transitional programs to be effective when they focus on the released juvenile offender instead of the social system. The focus of the transitional program is important in determining its effectiveness.

2.4 Coping Strategies

Moore, McArthur and Saunders (2013) reported that released juvenile offenders needed series of supports, both formal and informal in order to transition successfully and handle challenges that may arise. They further posited that for a released juvenile offender to cope positively with challenges, they require assistance, encouragement and certain skills. Hawkins and Abrams (2007) identified the need for social networks and increased social capital for these released juvenile offenders. This social capital and networks could be seen as factors that enhance coping

with challenges for released juvenile offenders as well as their families. Coping positively required exploring the benefits of social networks (Barker, 2012).

2.4.1 Crime desistance

Maruna (2000) identified three key theories of released juvenile offenders desisting from crime and its associated behaviors. They consist of maturational reform, social control, and narrative theories. His assertion is that these theories determined whether a released juvenile offender either stops crime or stays away from criminal behaviour. The maturational theory examines the connection between staying away from crime and age. This theory identified that released juvenile offenders making the transition into society from detention face more challenges than adults because they are as well transitioning from teenage years to adulthood. And with the transitioning from teenage years to young adults comes maturing from getting involved with certain criminal behaviour (McNeill & Weaver, 2007).

Social control theory focuses on the association between the external environment of a released juvenile offender and desistance from crime. It deals with the degree to which a juvenile offender returning home is able to re-connect with institutions such as education, employment, and families and commit to them (McNeill & Weaver, 2007). It focuses on how released juveniles are able to function in society. However, the engagements or re-connections that will be made when they return from the correctional centre could lead to the juvenile desisting from crime. Thirdly, the narrative theory makes use of individual and structural factors to explain the desistance process of released juvenile offenders. It seeks to identify how individuals make the transition over time taking into consideration other factors which can lead to desistance or persistence with a crime.

2.4.2 Self-motivation

Paternoster and Bushway (2009) asserted that in order for motivation to desist from crime to work, the juvenile must aim at self-improvement as well as have a means of achieving that self-improvement goal. Motivation is more than just expressing the desire to change to actually setting goals and achieving them. Motivation in itself may not necessarily ensure desistance from crime (Panuccio et al., 2012). Yet it is the first step in staying away from crime. Most juveniles may come out of corrections with the desire and goal to change or stay away from crime. However, the means to do that may not be available to that juvenile and that can lead him/her back into the life of crime.

Gideon, (2009) maintained that change will not occur unless released juvenile offenders have the internal motivation to change. Desistance is the result of internal motivation and external social forces combined (Davis, Bahr, and Ward, 2012; Lebel et al., 2008). Change and desistance from crime could only be possible when released juvenile offenders have an internal force or motivation to stay away from crime. Shapland and Bottoms (2011) further assert that internal desire to change and desist from crime should be a key component of any desistance model.

In order for released juveniles to build a better coping strategy, there is a need for a sense of personal identity to be developed in them. Hence the need for a comprehensive reintegration programming which will equip the juvenile returning home with the necessary skills to deal with challenges of various forms as they arise (Maruna and LeBel, 2010). The juvenile justice systems could make use of a comprehensive reintegration system that can help them focus on not just the juvenile offender but also the family community setting, educational system, employment as well as other areas. This is because all these factors work together to help the released juvenile offender build a better self-identity which in turn becomes a source of motivation.

2.4.3 Availability/Provision of Transitional Supports

Reintegration of juvenile offenders is a complex issue that involves vast ranges of social and governmental programs and policies (Healy & O'Donnell, 2008; James, 2011; Shinkfield & Graffam, 2009). Support received by released juveniles during the transition from the correctional centre helps them build a better coping strategy in dealing with challenges that may arise. Spencer and Jones-Walker (2004) asserted that for a released juvenile offender to reintegrate successfully into a community, certain specific provisions have to be made for them.

A focus on the community and the family will help the returning juvenile build a good coping strategy. Social influences such as friends, family and treatment programs within the community help released juvenile offenders cope with challenges or desist from crime (Maruna & LeBel, 2010). The responses, reception and the acceptance of the family and community as a whole of a returning juvenile will help build better defenses in order to stay away from a life of crime. The first point of call for a released juvenile is likely to be the family; hence their reception is necessary to desist from crime. Engaging a variety of agents including the community helps address the various ecological risks that can continually influence criminal behaviour.

Some jurisdictions like the U.S.A. have focused on social programs such as drug treatment program, halfway housing programs and vocational skills training as key part of reintegration programming (Panuccio et al., 2012). They further assert that social programs that support a juvenile out of corrections help them desist from crime. Hence the availability of social support programs helping juveniles build a good coping system for dealing with the challenges that are bound to arise (Maruna & LeBel, 2010). However, a relationship exists between the juvenile's ability to desist from crime and the social support program that is available. A juvenile may not necessarily desist from crime even with the availability of social support. Internal motivation to

desist from crime helps the juvenile build a better strategy to cope with challenges (Panuccio et al, 2012). They further assert that social support in itself could be a motivation to returning juveniles to desist from crime.

For most of the released juvenile offenders, they return as young adults (Altschuler & Brash, 2004) hence the feeling of independence. This independence comes along with the released juvenile offender trying to survive on his own, including acquiring his own accommodation. According to Altschuler and Brash (2004), independent accommodation arrangements may be appropriate for released juvenile offenders coming out as young adults. This will enhance their independent living skills and also help them in desisting from crime. Unruh and Bullis (2005) however assert that a lack of independent living skills is a barrier to successful transitioning of released juvenile offenders into communities to which they belong. For a released juvenile offender to be able to survive there is a need for necessary survival skills that will enable him to succeed on his own (Anthony et. al, 2010).

However, Altschuler and Brash (2004), opine that, for released juvenile offenders who cannot go back to their neighborhood, community or home, alternative accommodation arrangement is made. Alternative accommodation arrangements can be made with extended family members or other older, trusted adult guardians. This arrangement will allow the released juvenile offender the opportunity and the environment to maintain a stable life. Released juvenile offenders who may have an intimate move in with them and this helps them manage the challenge of accommodation (Bottoms and Shapland, 2010). Such intimate relationships sometimes become a reason for which released juvenile offenders may abstain from a life of crime. The situation improves if there is a child involved. The sense of responsibility becomes an encouragement to the former offender to stay away from crime.

2.5 Theoretical framework: Transactional model of stress and coping

The transactional model of stress and coping is a means for measuring or assessing the processes of coping with stressful events or experiences (Glanz, Rimer & Viswanath, 2008). The transaction, known as interaction has to do with how stressful experiences are constructed by the person-environment relationship. This model was first propounded by Dr. Richard Lazarus and Dr. Susan Folkman in 1984 with a major focus on how life events affect the emotional wellbeing of an individual. Stressors are demands made by an individual's internal and external environment that upset balance between physical and psychological wellbeing, therefore, requiring an action to restore balance (Lazarus & Cohen, 1977). Stress was considered as a transactional phenomenon dependent on the meaning an individual gives to a stimulus (Antonovsky, 1979; Lazarus, 1966). However these person-environment transactions are dependent on the impact of the external stressor, it is resolved by the individual's assessment or appraisal of the stressor and the resources at his or her disposal to manage the stressor (Antonovsky & Kats, 1967; Cohen 1984).

The central concept of the transactional model is that different people perceive events or situations differently and therefore their perception becoming the basis for their behaviours and actions in response to the situation (Glanz, Rimer & Viswanath, 2008). The way an individual will experience a stressful situation will determine whether help will be sought or it will result in another means of coping or managing that stressful situation. Some individuals may seek help in the area of counseling or some other means in their quest to cope with the stressful situation. Others may just resort to dealing with the situation in their own way without seeking help or advice from any external means. The interaction between the individual and the environment is evident in how stressful situations are managed. Whereas some individuals will deal positively

with the stressful situation, others will resort to negative approach and it is dependent on the mode of experience (Carver & Antoni, 2004).

The study, therefore, was underpinned by this theory to help explain how released juvenile offenders evaluate the stressors or challenges they encounter and how they are likely to deal with the stressor or challenge.

2.5.1 Key concepts and application: *Stress*

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), stress is seen as a specific relationship or interaction between an individual and his environment. This is expressed through an assessment of the event or situation faced with a significant burden exceeding the mental resources of the individual. This then leads to an imbalance in the life of that individual. The individual's assessment or evaluation process is dependent on the stressful event or experience that took place (Mitrousi et al., 2013). The transactional model asserts that there is an interaction between the individual and the stressful situation in the environment, and this interaction has a bearing on the individual's assessment or evaluation.

For juveniles leaving the correctional centre to their various communities and societies, there is an obvious interaction or relationship between the individual and his immediate environment which can lead to the individual feeling stressed. For that released juvenile offender going back to school, other students and even teachers are likely to label them (for instance, deviant). This can be stressful for the released juvenile offender in question and it will obviously have an effect on how the released juvenile offender evaluates the situation.

2.5.2 Appraisal

Appraisal has to do with how an individual evaluates or processes a stressful experience or situation and then based on that adopt a strategy to handle the situation. An appraisal can take place both primarily and secondarily and they both have a crucial importance on the outcome of the stressful situation or event (Mitrousi et al., 2013).

Primary appraisal evaluates the significance of a stressful situation or event, identifying whether that event is controllable, positive, challenging, irrelevant or benign (Glanz, Rimer & Viswanath, 2008: 215). The individual during a stressful encounter primarily evaluates the situation to see if it is challenging or harmful or rather controllable, which will then inform the strategy for managing the situation or stressful event. Mitrousi et al. (2013) explain primary appraisal as a cognitive assessment referring to the extent to which a stressful situation relates to the individual. Primary appraisal therefore focuses on the features of a stressful situation rather than the resources.

Secondary appraisal occurs concurrently with the primary appraisal but sometimes precedes primary appraisal. It sometimes triggers the primary appraisal process. Cohen (1984) asserts that secondary appraisal is an assessment of an individual's coping resources and options. It takes a look at what an individual can do about a situation rather than the features of the stressful situation. These assessments are mostly carried out through feelings; that is, if an individual feels he can control the source of the stress and the stress itself, then it can lead to a positive coping style but on the contrary, if the individual feels that he/she has no control over the source of the stress and the stressor itself, then the individual is likely to resort to a negative coping style.

A released juvenile offender who may have encountered being labeled at school will usually go through a cognitive assessment of the labeling situation. This is to evaluate whether the

necessary resources needed to handle the labeling situation are available. The cognitive assessment can be stimulated by the feelings associated with the stressful experience. A primary appraisal could be the released juvenile offender seeing the labeling situation or experience as a challenge and then appraising it secondarily as the moment that shall pass hence the ability to manage the situation over the period.

2.5.3 Coping

Coping is seen as a constantly changing cognitive and behavioral effort to manage specific internal and/or external demands that are evaluated as exceeding the resources of an individual. Coping here is seen more as a process than just a style. If a stressful situation changes, the strategy for managing the changing situation also changes. Coping is in two forms; the problem-focused coping and the emotion-focused coping.

Problem-focused coping involves trying to manage the stressful situations and this can be carried out through information-seeking, problem-solving among others (Glanz, Rimer & Viswanath, 2008). The individual employing problem-focused coping feels he can control the source of the stressful situation and the stressors as well. There are four steps in the problem-focused approach, they include; defining the problem, generating alternative solutions, learning new skills to deal with the stressor and reappraising and finding new standards of behaviour.

Emotion-focused coping seeks to manage the way an individual feels and thinks about a stressful situation rather than employing active problem-solving strategies (Glanz, Rimer & Viswanath, 2008). An individual employs this strategy if he/she feels he cannot control the source of the stressful situation. The individual therefore finds ways of regulating the stressful situation, which

includes; avoiding, distancing, acceptance, seeking (medical) support and turning to alcohol or drugs.

A released juvenile experiencing labeling as a stressful situation in school can cope with the stressful situation focusing on the problem. That individual will consider the possibility of changing from one school to another in a different community where the individual is not known. But if the individual feels he cannot control the source of the stressful situation, he turns to emotion-focused coping by either distancing himself from his friends at school and keeping to himself or avoiding school altogether.

2.5.4 Usefulness of the theory of the study

The model helped the researcher understand how released juveniles evaluate challenges and experiences that they go through when they get back to their homes and communities and schools as well. In addition, the model helped the researcher understand how released juveniles manage the challenges that they are confronted with and how they choose a particular strategy to deal with the stressful situation or experience. Finally, the model helped appreciate individual differences with regards to challenges and its management of them as well. It helped the researcher understand that released juveniles deal differently with challenges when confronted with them because they are different and their circumstances and environment are sometimes different.

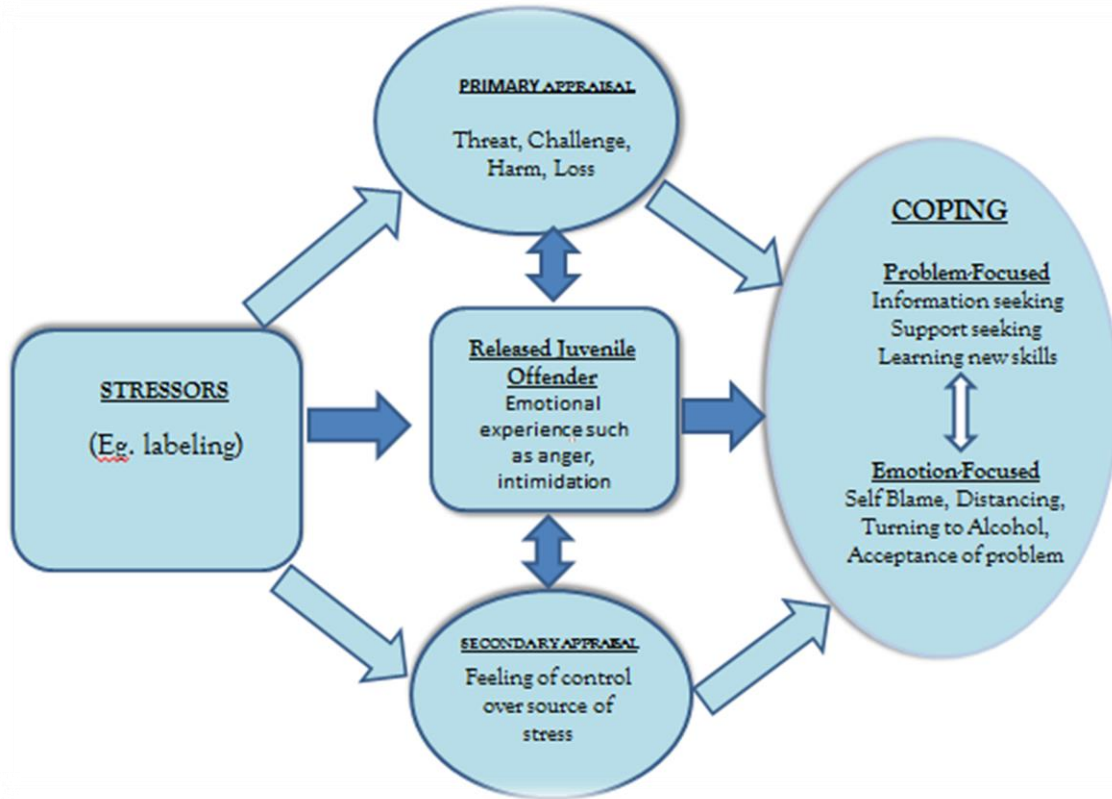


Figure 1: Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress, Appraisal, and Coping

Adapted From: Poirel, E., & Yvon, F. (2014). School principal's emotional coping process.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the experiences of released juvenile offenders. The researcher sought to capture the experiences of released juvenile offenders living in various communities in Accra. This was done by exploring the challenges they faced and the coping strategies they employed to manage the challenges. Creswell (2012) asserts that qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The researcher seeks to get into the world of released juvenile offenders to understand their challenges from their perspective.

The researcher carried out the study using the phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is concerned with the study of a phenomenon, specifically an experience, from the perspective of participants (Lester, 1999). The researcher makes meaning or tries to understand a phenomenon, particularly an experience through the eyes of participants. The phenomenological approach helps researchers explore individual's perspectives and meanings they ascribe to experiences or events that take place in their lives. The phenomenological approach, therefore, allows the researcher glean in-depth knowledge about an experience from participants.

The challenges they faced in the form of activities they undertook or the processes they went through and also the coping strategies which they adopted to deal with the challenges can be explored using the phenomenological approach.

3.2 Research Site

The study was conducted using the Senior Boys' Correctional centre as starting point to track released juvenile offenders. This is because the study focused on male juvenile offenders released from the senior correctional centre. The study utilized the research site because it is the only senior correctional centre within the Greater Accra region and the country as a whole. The research site was chosen because it allowed the researcher access the contacts of released juvenile offenders.

The juvenile correctional centres in Ghana started as industrial schools. These industrial schools became known as the Ghana Borstal Institute when the Ghana Prisons Service took over in 1958 (Bosiakoh & Andoh, 2010). The philosophy for running the senior correctional centre is different from that of adult prisons. The general aim of the borstal institute was to generate within juveniles the desire to know what is good and how to achieve it (Bosiakoh & Andoh, 2010). The colonial masters established the industrial schools, now the correctional centres with the idea that truant boys will be taken off the streets into these institutions to acquire a vocational skill. Vocational learning is the main focus of the correctional centre as it is compulsory for every juvenile offender (Sampong, n. d.). This is expected to equip juvenile offenders with skills that will make them useful citizens upon their completion and release from the correctional centre. Inmates who express interest in continuing with education are assessed and placed in school. According to the 2003 Juvenile Justice Act, a juvenile offender stays between three months to three years at the centre. The length of stay at the correctional centre is determined by the degree or gravity of the offense committed and also the age of the juvenile offender.

3.3 Target population

The study targeted all juvenile offenders in Ghana regardless of which correctional centre they were released from. Released juvenile offenders were made up of young males who had an encounter with the justice system, incarcerated, released and resettled in their communities.

3.4 Study population

The study population was made up of released juvenile offenders who completed their sentence period at the senior boy's correctional centre and lives in Accra. Released juvenile offenders had currently resettled in their various communities within the Greater Accra region.

3.5 Sampling

Purposive sampling technique was employed by the researcher to select participants for the study. This choice of sampling was selected because it allowed the researcher to select participants or informants deliberately based on a set criterion (Tongco, 2007). The inclusion criterion was that participants had been released for over a year. This was because a year was a considerable time for released juvenile offenders to have varied experiences to be able to share with the researcher.

Creswell and Creswell (2017) assert that to reach data saturation, the sample size for qualitative research should range from five to twenty-five. The researcher contacted officials of the senior correctional centre with a letter from the Department of Social work of the University of Ghana. An officer of the Ghana Prisons service assisted the researcher to access contacts of released juvenile offenders released from 2010 until 2016. This time frame was chosen because, it is enough time for released juvenile offenders to have had experience to share. The researcher under the guidance of the officer made telephone calls in an attempt to reach released juvenile

offenders. Some contacts did not go through whereas some other released juvenile offenders had changed residency. Because of the change of residency, there was difficulty in locating or reaching them. With the released juvenile offenders reached, some declined to participate in the study. However, 12 of them agreed to participate in the study and were recruited. Based on their agreement, a date and time were scheduled to meet at a venue convenient and agreed upon by both participants and the researcher. Interviews were then carried out.

3.7 Sources of data

The source of data for this study was solely primary, which was accessed through in-depth interviews with participants of the study. The interviews were conducted with the aid of an interview guide in order to gather the necessary information needed from the participants for the study. While the interview was ongoing, the researcher took note of non-verbal communication cues of participants.

3.8 Methods of data collection

The type of data collection instrument or method employed to collect the data was the semi-structured interviews guided by an interview guide. While data collection was ongoing, non-verbal actions of participants that took place during the interview as well were noted. Data were collected between March and September 2017.

Permission was sought from participants to audio record the interviews in order to allow the researcher to focus on participants without distracting them. The languages used for the interviews were English, pidgin, and Twi, according to the proficiency and preference of the participant. The researcher's proficiency in the above languages helped in the data collection exercise. The interview guide was pre-tested and the necessary changes made before beginning

the actual interviews. The average length of each interview was between 20 to 40 minutes. Interviews were held at a location and time agreed upon by both the researcher and the participants. Some of the interviews were held at participants place of work, home and within their community as well as over the telephone.

3.9 Data handling and analysis

Interview data was recorded by an audio recorder while notes were taken when necessary. The audio recorded data was stored on a password-protected computer with a backup stored on an external hard drive and cloud storage specifically, Google drive and dropbox. Interviews were transcribed into text format for data analysis. Data was analyzed using Smith and Osborne's (2008) four key stages of the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to make meaning of the data collected.

The Researcher read one transcript for familiarity. This stage begins right after the transcription of the audio recorded data in text format or Microsoft Word format. The researcher picks one transcript and reads through for familiarization with the data. While reading through the transcript, the researcher annotates significant or distinguishing features of the text for an insight into the participant's world of experiences. The annotation was closely done by the researcher so as not to lose interesting aspects of the data. The Researcher clustered connected or related themes. After familiarization of the data, the researcher identified patterns within the annotations. The researcher then proceeded to cluster emerging themes which was achieved by connecting related themes to form broader themes or superordinate themes. Smaller or ordinate themes that are related were clustered or placed under the superordinate or broader themes. The researcher then tried to make meaning of the meanings participants ascribed to their experiences. The researcher analyzed subsequent transcripts. At this stage, the researcher repeated the

processes in stages one and two of the first transcript with the subsequent transcripts. The ordinate and superordinate themes were further adjusted with some broader themes breaking up and merging with other themes. However, annotations from the first transcript became the framework within which the subsequent transcripts were analyzed. Further adjustments were made to the existing framework as subsequent transcripts were analyzed. A narrative account was generated at this stage by the researcher based on the data analyzed. The account was in a narrative form with quotes from the interview supporting the claims made in the write-up. The narrative account discussed each theme as it related to the study findings and the literature available.

3.10 Ethical consideration

Informed consent has to do with the purpose of the study. . This as well as the procedures of the study, was clearly explained to the understanding of the participants to enhance the free provision of information. Any kind of misleading information or communication, as well as the biased presentation of findings, was avoided. For confidentiality, information gathered from the interviews was not given out to a third party without knowledge of the participants. Findings of the research were however presented to the Department of Social Work of the University of Ghana. Anonymity had to do with the use of pseudonyms in place of actual names and places of the research participants to ensure that, their identities were concealed and protected. Protection of the privacy of participants was ensured to avoid revealing their identities. This was accomplished by not sharing details of participants with third parties not involved with the study. Voluntary Participation saw to it that, coercing participants to partake in the study was avoided allowing participants to freely decide to participate and to withdraw at any point within the study. In order to avoid plagiarism, all works of other authors used in this thesis have been duly

acknowledged. The American Psychological Association (APA) style of referencing was incorporated in this thesis specifically, as per the requirements of the College of Humanities of the University of Ghana. This was done to ensure that Plagiarism was avoided or minimized.

3.11 Ensuring Trustworthiness

Peer Debriefing sessions create an opportunity for growing insight and probing exposing them to searching questions (Guba, 1981). This helps researchers to fine-tune the questions to arrive at some level of trustworthiness of data being collected. During the process of research, the qualitative researcher is required to seek support from professionals like the academic staff and this will serve as a form of scholarly guidance for the entire research process and especially the data being collected (Anney, 2014; Shenton, 2004). Feedback received from senior members during presentations, supervisory appointments, and other means helped shape the findings and bring improvement in the inquiry being done.

3.12 Limitations to the Study

There may be potential loss of data through translation from the local language into English. However, the researcher took conscious steps to ensure minimal loss of information. The researcher employed the forward and back translation method to minimize the loss of data through translation. After translation from the local language to the English language, the English translation was given to another person to translate to the local language. Another person was made to translate it back into English. The first English translation and the second one were then compared by the researcher to see the differences in translation and then reconcile them.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study. This first section takes a look at the demographic characteristics of participants of the study. The next section will concentrate on presenting the findings of the studies.

4.1 Demographics

A total of 12 male participants released from the senior boys' correctional centre between the year 2010 and 2016 were recruited and interviewed for this study. The ages of the participants at the time of interview ranged from 19 years to 28 years. The number of years after the release of juvenile offenders was between 1 and eight 8 years at the time of interview.

Released juvenile offenders in Accra were charged with various offenses. These were as follows: six for defilement, two for assault, three for stealing and one for unlawful entry into someone's property. With regards to educational level, at the time of the interview, six of the participants had just basic, primary and junior high school education. Five of the participants had also attained senior high school education. One participant at the time of the study had attained tertiary level of education. With regards to education while at the senior correctional centre, two of the participants who had primary education before entering the centre did not continue with their education while at the centre. Four of the study participants continued schooling while at the correctional centre, all of which were at the junior high school level. Two out of the four participants schooling undertook vocational training in ceramics making while at the correctional centre. The remaining eight participants undertook vocational training while at the correctional centre, which included tailoring, carpentry, general electrical and leather work. Four participants

wrote National Vocational Training Institute (NVTI) examinations while at the correctional centre and received their certificates. The above information has been presented in the tables below;

Representation of demographics

Participants	Age at Entry into SCC	Age at Exit of SCC	Duration at SCC (Years)	Age at Interview (Years)	Educational Level	Offense Charged with	Activity Undertaken At SCC
Simon	17	19	2	22	JHS	Assault	General Electricals
Saul	18	20	2	24	SHS	Defilement	Ceramics
Justus	15	17	2	19	SHS	Stealing	Schooling
Andrew	16	19	3	25	SHS	Assault	Carpentry
Matthew	17	20	3	28	JHS	Stealing	Tailoring
Johnkay	18	19	1	22	SHS	Defilement	Schooling
Peter	19	20	1	22	Diploma	Defilement	General Electricals
Philip	18	20	2	22	JHS	Unlawful Entry	General Electricals
James	17	18	1	20	SHS	Stealing	Schooling
Mark	18	21	3	25	JHS	Defilement	Carpentry
Jude	17	18	1	23	JHS	Defilement	Ceramics
Paul	18	21	3	24	JHS	Defilement	Schooling

Source: Field Data, 2017

4.2 Released juvenile offenders' challenges

Under objective 1, which was to explore challenges encountered by released juvenile offenders in Accra; findings were categorized under the following themes; education and employment.

4.2.1 Educational challenges

The study identified that five released juvenile offenders went back to school. However, due to financial challenges, two had to drop out of school. They did not have the necessary financial support to pay fees, get provisions as well as required textbooks. The study also identified that six released juvenile offenders had lost interest in school by the time they got to the correctional centre. They therefore chose vocational training instead of schooling when given the opportunity at the correctional centre. Four of the released juvenile offenders opted for schooling while at the correctional centre. One of them passed the BECE and therefore continued schooling after release but encountered some financial challenges. The means to enroll in school was not available in some cases. Another participant could not pass the WASSCE and therefore had to re-sit the examination before progression. This was what some participants had to say with respect to educational challenges:

“Yes, I went back to school after I came out of the correctional centre, but I didn't get enough money to complete. Buying books, provisions and paying fees became a problem.” (Saul, 24 years)

“Concerning my results, I didn't pass math and science. So I'm currently doing a remedial course to better the grades.” (Peter, 22 years)

“....after I came home, I had to wait for the results. When it was released, I had passed but it was difficult getting money to go to the secondary school.” (James, 20 years)

The study found out that, for released juvenile offenders interested in school, they would have gone back to school if they got the necessary support. Because they did not get the opportunity,

whether, from the government or family members, some had lost interest in education. They focused on getting employed and getting a source of income to support themselves. Also a shift in focus from education to employment and lack of money aided the dropping out of school for two of the released juvenile offenders. This was a result of having to work to provide for themselves. The study identified that a health-related issue affected the education of one of the released juvenile offenders in Accra. This was because he was taking care of himself. These challenges sometimes threaten the stability of the released juvenile offenders' educational interest and dreams. Some participants had this to say:

“I tried working to support my education but at a point, I fell sick and had to use the money for hospital bills and drugs, so I couldn't go back to school.” (Saul, 24 years)

“At first, paying fees was a problem. I used to starve, because it takes a long while before they send the fees. I'd have to pay about half of my fees before I can go for dining. When I call, they will tell me they will send the money, but it comes after a long while. So I had to stop that school and go to a school where I can work on weekends.” (JohnKay, 22 years)

With respect to these educational challenges, provision should be made for released juvenile offenders in the reintegration programs. This will ensure that, provision is made for released juvenile offenders from family backgrounds where education cannot be supported. Reintegration into mainstream education is necessary for released juvenile offenders interested in going back to school. This is because released juvenile offenders may not have the needed resources to enroll and maintain their education.

4.2.2 Employment challenges

Closely related to education is employment. For released juvenile offenders who had either lost interest in education or were having challenges relating to education, employment became the

way out. Despite the involvement of some released juvenile offenders in some form of employment, they faced the challenge of getting a stable employment. Seasonal employment was mostly what released juvenile offenders had because they did not have the employable skills needed for permanent jobs. Because they work based on referrals from friends and other relatives, when there are no referrals, there will be no job for them. Seven released juvenile offenders had National Vocational Training Institute (NVTI) certificates, yet they were not able to acquire a permanent or stable employment. This is indicative of the fact that, the vocational training certificate was not enough in acquiring a job. Added to the difficulty is the stigma of incarceration on released juvenile offenders. This can be attributed to the fact that some employers did not want to work with released juvenile offenders because of their past. This reinforces the notion that, once a person commits an offence, he will always be seen as an offender or someone incapable of changing. This phenomenon can in turn affect released juvenile offenders' acquisition of jobs. Seven of the released juvenile offenders are involved in artisan jobs like carpentry, masonry, ceramic making and electrical works. This accounts for the unstable workflows. This is what some released juvenile offenders had to say concerning workflow:

“I have an NVTI certificate and I want to open my own carpentry shop but I haven't got the necessary help to do it. It has made life very difficult and disturbing. No one is willing to help me especially when they get to know that you have been to the correctional centre before.” (Andrew, 25 years)

“One place I've worked for about eight months was a pub that belonged to my stepdad. But I also taught for 6 months then I fell sick and have been home since then.” (Saul, 24 years)

Although these challenges exist, released juvenile offenders in Accra leave the senior correctional centre with the hope of making it and staying away from crime and criminal

activities. They strive to work even if it's out of their area of expertise. Their involvement in work helps them manage their financial challenges that is already existing and fueling other challenges.

4.3 Contributing factors

This section sought to describe the factors that contributed to the challenges faced by released juvenile offenders in Accra. The following themes were derived from the findings; poverty, stigmatization and lack of state transitional support.

4.3.1 Poverty

Findings of the study indicated that, poverty, though not a peculiar phenomenon to released juvenile offenders was a major reason why they were not able to go back to school. Poverty limited released juvenile offenders from attaining achievements like education. Parents and relatives did not have the financial resources to support released juvenile offenders achieve educational objectives as well as employment. Therefore, the existence of poverty can contribute to challenges released juvenile offenders are likely to face. These assertions are supported by excerpts of interviews with participants:

“....well my parents don't have money, they are farmers so I couldn't continue my school when I came back from the correctional centre. I work with the general electrical I learnt from the correctional centre, if I get enough money I send some to my parents.” (Justus, 24 years)

“Oh I mean, let's say in this modern Ghana, there are people who come from well to do families and others whose families are not well to do. Excuse me to say that me for instance my family is not well to do so I struggle for myself.” (Andrew, 25years)

“When I got home from the correctional centre, I tried every means possible to go back to school but I could not get any helper so, I could not continue.”(Simon, 22 years)

“Yeah, because it’s not always that you ask for money that they give you. My mum doesn’t have any good job. My dad is also a government worker, always complaining about money.”(Johnkay, 22)

Some released juvenile offenders’ inability to sustain interest and attendance in school was due to associated poverty. Parents of five released juvenile offenders did not have the means to cater for fees and other provisions of education for the released children. They were forced by circumstances to drop out of school and focus on other things such as employment. Due to poverty, four of these released juvenile offenders had already dropped out of school before incarceration. Because they dropped out of school, they had joined bad company that led to the crime they committed and subsequently incarceration. A participant had this to say about his father’s lack of support:

“I wanted to further my education to the tertiary level but since I left the correctional centre I haven’t gotten any support. And my parents are also at the North and don’t have money.”(Peter, 22 years)

The study further revealed that lack of support contributed to challenges faced by released juvenile offenders. Divorce, separation of parents as well as a child being born out of wedlock was found to be contributing factors to challenges faced by released juvenile offenders. These factors indirectly contributed to poverty and lack of parental support for the released juvenile offenders. Not knowing where to stay, whether with mother or father or other relatives affected the stability of released juvenile offenders. Who to take care of the released juvenile offender became an issue. Three released juvenile offenders had no choice but to assume the position of the breadwinner in the absence of a breadwinner in the family. They had to work to provide for the home. The following quotes from the interviews support this assertion:

“I cannot tell the reason for which he did not cater for me, because he is no more with my mother. They have separated; he is only catering for children of the current woman with whom he is staying.” (Paul, 22 years)

“My dad and mum had separated. So, it was all about my father and along the lines, my father also left me for my grandmother. My grandmother was not well to do so she had to go and work for people before she could bring something home. She was working in a certain school and she took me there. So it was as a result of that I was able to get to class six. But when she left there, everything became messed up.” (Simon, 22 years)

Findings of the study indicated that some juvenile offenders were released into distorted family backgrounds. As a result, they encountered challenges caused by bad peer influence. From the study, eight of the participants had parental backgrounds such as divorce or separation. Neglect of parental duties such as payment of fees and other needs of children are as a result of broken parental backgrounds. Death of parent accounted for challenges faced by released juvenile offenders. A participant had this to say:

“My mum passed, but my father lives in the Ashanti region. I came to live with my sister here in Accra and that is where I got into trouble.” (James, 20 years)

These released juvenile offenders went back to the same family situation at home in terms of parental structure. They encountered challenges like inability to continue education and accommodation issues as a result.

4.3.2 Stigma

The study identified that stigma contributed to the disconnection of released juvenile offenders from their friends and sometimes family. Stigma in itself was a challenge released juvenile offenders had to deal with. The stigma associated to being sent to the senior correctional centre led to name calling or labeling. The offence committed was used as a reference point to either

tease or insult released juvenile offender and in some cases their family as well. This contributed to the limiting of association with peers within their community. Limiting their association limited their emotional social support as well. The stigma was as a result of them having been committed to the correctional centre. For those in the community who have knowledge of the crime, some went further to tag released juvenile offenders by the crime. They were seen as incapable of reforming or changing, hence once an offender, always an offender. This finding is supported by what Andrew had to say:

“Someone could say that for someone who has been to a correctional centre before, there is no way the person will come back to show gratitude for the help given or something of that sort. Or even if I help him he wouldn’t use the money for anything profitable so why help him. That’s how a lot of people think.”
(Andrew, 25 years)

Being stigmatized of incarceration can affect the stability of released juvenile offenders. Some released juvenile offenders felt that changing residency and community can help them to manage their stigma. Change of residency and community, therefore, was a way to cope with the stigma they were facing. Stigmatization in some cases went beyond just the released juvenile offender to sometimes affect other family members. This was as a result of both the victim of the crime and the released juvenile offender living in the same vicinity or area. Johnkay, a participant had this to say:

“The person with whom I got the issue stays right beside us so the least thing that comes up, or if any of my family members offend them in any way, they insult them referring to the issue and it hurts me a lot” (Johnkay, 22 years)

Stigmatization contributed to challenges faced by released juvenile offenders such as the inability to stay in a community. However, some of the participants did not want to associate change of residency to being labeled and stigmatized. They tried to avoid it totally by not

informing their friends about their whereabouts. Released juvenile offenders faced challenges in education that had stigmatization as its contributing factor. Therefore, if stigmatization is handled well, released juvenile offenders can maintain some level of stability within the community without a thought of changing residency and community.

4.3.3 Lack of state transitional support

The study revealed that there was no form of support from the state for juvenile offenders when they were released. According to the Justice for children policy, when a juvenile offender is released from the senior correctional centre, a probation officer must be assigned to the child and the family to help design a reintegration program suitable for them. The probation officer is expected to carry out monitoring and evaluation at certain periods of time to ascertain the specific programs suitable for the released juvenile offender. But this has not been the case; the findings from the study revealed that, after release, no one paid attention or followed-up on the participants. Released juvenile offenders were left to their parents, relatives or friends, considering the fact that some of them were not able to manage challenges that came up. This is supported by what participants had this to say:

“For them [prison officers], you are done serving under them so they will always say goodbye to you, God bless you, take good care of yourself and that is all. No one will come and check up on you or anything.” (Andrew, 25 years)

“The only place where I got help from was an NGO. If it were not for these people, I won’t be able to do much. They were even the ones who went to get my certificate for me from borstal. Because they said I had to bring my serial number to get the certificate. They kept tossing me. They said they couldn’t remember my name.” (Philip, 22 years)

The study further found out that the absence of reintegration arrangements came with challenges that released juvenile offenders faced. Without adequate reintegration support, released juvenile

offenders were prone to the very same conditions that led to their incarceration. Probation officers according to the Justice for Children policy are to work with released juvenile offenders and their families to draw up appropriate programs that will help them reintegrate successfully.

This has not been the case. Peter commented on the lack of support:

“There’s no support from anywhere. As for the correctional centre, when you are done serving that is all. They have no business with you again. Since I left the correctional centre I had so many calls from people who wanted to help me but up till now, I haven’t heard from them again. I had wanted to go to School.” (Peter, 22 years)

Article 51 of the 2003 Juvenile Justice Act makes provision for supervised release of juvenile offenders. This is supposed to be carried out by district probation officers within whose jurisdiction the released juvenile offender lives. However, this provision has not been carried out as required therefore posing challenges in accommodation arrangements and employment for the released juvenile offenders.

4.4 Coping strategies

The section of the study investigated the coping strategies employed by released juvenile offenders in Accra, to deal with the challenges they experience. The following themes were derived from the findings of the study; Informal social support, non-governmental support source of income, and independent living.

4.4.1 Informal social support

The study revealed that all released juvenile offenders managed challenges encountered through the support from family members and friends. The support from these sources helped them deal with their accommodation, employment and social relationship challenges. Due to the lack of state support for released juvenile offenders, family members, both nuclear and extended as well

as some friends became a source of survival for the released juvenile offenders. These informal supports came in the form of accommodation, financial provision and support for education. Their association with friends led to their acquisition of jobs. Participants had this to say about informal social support:

“As at now, my uncle doesn’t bake as often, so I don’t get enough money for school, to buy books and to buy a bag and all. He provides me with money for school, books, and bag. Even when he travels he calls every day to check up on me.” (James, 20 years)

“After my release, my aunty came to pick me up and I came to live with her. Life was not so difficult then, because she was taking care of me, my feeding and other things she took care of them. She was taking care of me, including my schooling.” (Matthew, 28 years)

Acceptance from the family was pivotal to the survival of a released juvenile offender within the home and community at large. The study found out that five of the released juvenile offenders had support from friends. Reliance on friends, for the provision of accommodation and a link to finding jobs, helped released juvenile offenders stay away from crime. Even though bad peer association was a major cause of incarceration of some of the juvenile offenders, a good and healthy peer association was a means for survival for released juvenile offenders. Some participants had this to say:

“My parents really like me and have been supportive since I came back from the correctional centre. Even though I have caused them much pain, they still like me. They spoke to my aunt so I can go and stay with her and my aunty too has been very good to me ever since I came to live with her.” (Peter, 22 years)

“Sometimes when you are going to work, you meet other people who may also be your colleague masons, so you liaise with them and in case they chance on any job they link you up.” (Paul, 23 years)

In the absence of state reintegration support for released juvenile offenders in Accra, family and friends played a key role in their ability to cope with challenges. Acceptance from family members and friends helped released juvenile offenders cope with challenges they were facing. The study identified a relationship between employment, accommodation and the informal social support available to released juvenile offenders in Accra.

Another informal social support released juvenile offenders relied on was accommodation. Eight of them resulted in changing residence and the community entirely. Four of them moved in to stay with friends, whereas the other four moved in to stay with other relatives. This indicates that the extended family relations though dispersed still have strong bonds and these bonds helped some of the released juvenile offenders cope with challenges. Two participants as well commented on wanting to live on their own and to be able to provide for themselves. This was as a result of attempting to manage pressure at home. Pressure from parents was an attempt to prevent any further case with the justice system and their quest for the released juvenile offender to become better citizens in society. The two released offenders assumed that in an attempt to deal with pressure, they had to leave home and be on their own. This is confirmed by excerpts of interviews held with released juvenile offenders.

“When I left the correctional centre, I came to live with my Aunt who visited me while at the centre. She is the one who is taking care of me and also paying my fees at the school where I am doing a diploma.” (Peter, 22 years)

“I will like to live on my own. I’ll get everything I want. My being here, the last thing I do results in insults from my parents.” (Johnkay, 22 years)

An interesting feature the study identified concerning accommodation arrangements is that released juvenile offenders served as caretakers of people’s houses in order to sort out their

accommodation issues. They lived either in an uncompleted or a completed building in the absence of the owner as caretakers. This way, they were able to manage challenges with accommodation but for a period of time. When the house was completed or the owner returned, the released juvenile offender had to make another arrangement for accommodation with friends. One of the released juvenile offenders had this to say concerning such accommodation arrangements:

“My uncle is a contractor and he was doing a certain work so he gave me a place to stay at the site though they are not yet done. When they finish I will relocate. It’s stores they are building.” (Matthew, 28 years)

The study identified that one of the released juvenile offenders lived on his own in a kiosk he built up by himself even though the mother has a place he could have stayed. He took care of himself and so assumed that staying by himself apart from family members helped him achieve the plans he has put in place for himself. Andrew and Philip respectively had this to say as to why they are living on their own:

“I decided that I wanted to separate myself so I went to see the owner of the building and he asked me to stay there and take care of the place for him.” (Andrew, 25 years)

“I sometimes do carpentry work so I make kiosks, and sell it. I sleep in one of them sometimes. I have made one which I want to use to open a spot.” (Philip, 22 years)

For a released juvenile offender who wants to live on his own, he must have some source of income or must have acquired some form of employment that brings income. This establishes a relationship between accommodation, employment, and self- motivation. In order for a released juvenile offender to be able to decide to live on his own he must find some source of employment and motivation. However, the motivation came from either acquiring a job and

determination to stay away from crime. The relationship between self-motivation, accommodation, and employment are intertwined and interdependent as well.

4.4.2 Non-governmental organization support

The study further found out that some released juvenile offenders managed challenges through the support of a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). Six of the released juvenile offenders cited a particular NGO as being a source of help to them after they got back from the correctional centre. The non-governmental organization focuses on children including juvenile offenders. It is part of the mandate of the NGO to help juvenile offenders to cope with challenges associated with reintegration. They work in collaboration with the senior correctional centre and the ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection in an attempt to promote the reintegration of released juvenile offenders. The NGO supported the education of two of the released juvenile offenders which sustained them in school until completion. Some participants currently schooling had this to say:

*“After I left the correctional centre with my Basic Education Certificate Examination certificate, it’s an NGO that has been helping me by paying my fees from SHS 1 till now”
(James, 20 years)*

“Yeah, by the grace of God when I go to the NGO, I’m given a little money and that is how I buy my books and other things” (Matthew, 28 years)

The study identified that the NGO helped four released juvenile offenders to get their vocational training certificate. Some released juvenile offenders left the senior correctional centre before their certificate was ready. They made financial contributions towards helping released juvenile offenders in various forms such as education. Counseling for released juvenile offenders was

provided by the NGO to help them cope with challenges such as being stigmatized. Participants had this to say about support from the NGO:

“The only place where I got help from was the NGO. If it were not for these people, I won’t be able to do much. They were even the ones who went to get my NVTI certificate for me from the correctional centre.” (Philip, 22 years)

“I called the NGO and they were like, there’s no money for now. But they gave me the C100 to buy the form. I bought the forms...” (Peter, 22 years)

“Like, Mama Kate (Director of the NGO) for instance, I can say that she cares a bit. They care for us a bit, but for those who come to counsel us, they don’t care. They (NGO) help people; whatever you want to do. So for those who want to go to school, they help them. They sponsor you for you to be able to go to school and do what you want to do” (Paul, 23 years)

The study revealed that support from non-governmental organizations helped released juvenile offenders cope with certain challenges. However, such NGOs can be limited in resources that will help them support released juvenile offenders adequately. NGO’s usually rely on funding from donor organizations and other forms of donations. Therefore NGOs are limited in their support of programs such as the juvenile reintegration program. Such NGO’s served as a complementary support in addition to the informal social support for released juvenile offenders in Accra.

4.4.3 Source of income

Some participants asserted that getting a job helped them deal with issues that had finances as the root cause. Four of the released juvenile offenders were not in school due to lack of funds whereas others either worked or wanted a job so they would be able to take care of themselves. Others acquired a job in order to be well able to find accommodation. Two of the released

juvenile offenders while schooling, worked alongside in other to support either their education or acquire certain things that they needed. Some participants made this comment on working or wanting to work and schooling at the same time:

“I have to work. Even when I’m not well, I try to go to work so I can get some money to support myself and sometimes my mother.” (Saul, 24 years)

“Even though I work and earn money, I am not the only one who spends the money. My mother doesn’t have and because I am now working, I am the one who takes care of her.” (Simon, 22 years)

“I am in school but sometimes I go and work, because I want to get money to buy my things. Sometimes when I ask my father for money, he complains.” (Johnkay, 22 years)

Finding work or a source of income gave released juvenile offenders a focus. For those who could not continue schooling, they focused their life on finding work. Considering the fact that vocational training is a key part of the rehabilitation process of the juvenile offenders, their ability to put the training received to work made them focus their life. The reintegration aspect of the Justice for Children makes provision for vocational training while at the correctional centre. Continuous vocational training while in the community is proposed but provision for employment opportunities are not made.

4.4.4 Independent living

One way some of the released juvenile offenders coped with challenges was a feeling of some sense of independence. This made them want to live on their own and work to take care of themselves. This sense of independence and responsibility for their lives became the source of motivation for them to stay away from the life of crime and to manage challenges that came up. Excerpts of interviews confirming this assertion read:

“I know it’s going to be difficult and I’ll face a lot of challenges but, you know, my ambition is to become a military man. That’s always been my ambition and that’s what I always say. So I want to get my diploma or at least a degree to get into the military.”
(Peter, 22 years)

“Oh, I didn’t feel like going back to my mother’s house because there was no help there. You see, when you get to a certain stage in life you want to separate yourself and be on your own.” (Andrew, 25 years)

There are two forms of transitioning that take place for every released juvenile offender. The transition from the correctional centre, as well as transition into adulthood, takes place. However, transition into adulthood can take place while the juvenile offender is still in the correctional centre. For such juvenile offenders, they came out from the correctional centre already grown. Therefore in order to manage the challenges that came with transitioning into society, they assumed maturity or a sense of independence. This sense of independence is what motivated them to make their own accommodation arrangements as well as employment. Whereas transitioning into society comes with its own demands, transitioning into adulthood as well comes with its peculiar demands and challenges. When released as young adults, the obvious choice available to them was to assume responsibilities as adults. The absence of parents and state transitional support led to challenges. The assumption of duties such as finding employment and accommodation gave released juvenile offenders a new focus and hence their desistance from crime. Some participants had this to say concerning how they saw life after release:

“People ask me a lot of questions and sometimes, some of them get me angry, but usually I take such things lightly because these were some of the things that led me to the correctional centre. I am growing so I am learning somethings.” (Simon, 22 years)

“At first I used to feel bad when I think about the fact that I relied on people to help me out. There is no way that if such a person should call me I will go again. These days I try my very best to do things for myself.” (Andrew, 25 years)

Motivation to desist from crime and to become productive was essential for the survival of the released juvenile offenders within the society. However, the motivation was mostly supported by a quest. Employment or any kinds of accommodation arrangement were quests that became a source of motivation for released juvenile offenders in staying away from crime.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into four sections with the first section focusing on a summary of findings of the study. The second section focuses on the conclusions drawn based on the findings of the study. The third part focuses on the recommendations made based on the findings while the last section is focusing on the implications the findings of the study have for social work as a professional discipline.

5.2 Discussion of findings

The findings of the study support Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of stress, appraisal and coping. Released juvenile offenders in Accra encountered stressful situations. These situations included educational challenges where reintegrating into the mainstream educational system was difficult. This was due to unavailability of resources and loss of interest in education. Difficulty in finding employment was another challenge released juvenile offenders encountered. Released juvenile offenders primarily appraised stressful situations such as labeling as controllable and challenging as well. Some of the released juvenile offenders asserted that, it is a lesson for them to learn and to control themselves. Released juvenile offenders asserted that primarily, educational issues that were challenging were controllable. This was because some of the released juvenile offenders believed that they could work to support their own education.

In an attempt to cope with the stressful situations, some released juvenile offenders felt they can do something about the stressful situations. They sought employment to help them manage their

educational challenges as well as employment issues. Released juvenile offenders coped with employment challenges by seeking help from friends and other relatives. Emotionally, released juvenile offenders distanced or totally avoided some friends in an attempt to stay away from trouble. They limited their associations with friends as a way of coping with temptations from a life of crime. Some of them, however, believed that making productive friends was a means of sustaining life while out of the correctional centre.

5.2.1 Reintegration challenges

The findings of this study indicated that, released juvenile offenders in Accra sometimes isolated themselves from friends to avoid getting into trouble. Participants intimated that limiting their association with friends was important to their survival outside the senior correctional centre. Limiting friendship ties was based on the fact that, friends had an influence on their incarceration. This reinforces the cultural notion that a bad nut affects the whole batch. Limited friendship associations affected their social capital. Some social networks were broken as a result of the limited friendship association. However, some of the released juvenile offenders asserted that keeping good friends helped them survive. This fact was attested to, as some juvenile offenders sorted their accommodation and employment needs through the help of some friends. The above findings are in consonance with the findings of Moore, McArthur and Saunders (2013) who found out that, released juvenile offenders were not able to connect with peers.

Findings from this study indicated that released juvenile offenders in Accra faced some challenges in education. Some released juvenile offenders who wanted to continue with school had challenges reintegrating into the mainstream education. Some released juvenile offenders asserted that they have lost interest in education. The loss of interest was attributed to not having

the necessary support after re-enrollment in school. Change of focus of released juvenile offenders from education to the search for money is another challenge that affected their education. There was a lack of encouragement as well for released juvenile offenders to pursue education. Incarceration caused delays in educational attainments where comparatively, mates of released juvenile offenders have far advanced. The mainstream educational systems do not have the necessary support systems that released juvenile offenders' need for a successful reintegration. Therefore the interest of released juvenile offenders in education was not sustained. This finding is in line with Moore, McArthur and Saunders (2013), who found out that, not all released juvenile offenders acknowledged the benefits of education and did not consider going back to school.

The study further found out that released juvenile offenders faced some challenges in employment. Acquiring gainful employment, to some released juvenile offenders was a challenge. Because most of the released juvenile offenders came out of incarceration as young adults, gainful employment was important to their survival. As young adults, mostly with broken family backgrounds, it was necessary for them to acquire employment to aid their survival. The study found out that employment was closely associated with vocational training. Some released juvenile offenders had difficulty making meaningful gains from the vocational training acquired. These findings are in consonance with Arditti and Parkman (2011), who identified that lack of employment leaves released juvenile offenders vulnerable to crime.

5.2.2 Contributing factors

The study identified poverty as a contributing factor to challenges encountered by released juvenile offenders in Accra. Most of the released juvenile offenders were from a background of poverty. Due to the poverty, family members were not able to sustain released juvenile offenders

when they got back home. As a result of the poverty, released juvenile offenders encountered challenges with accommodation and education. Poverty, therefore, contributed greatly to the challenges encountered by released juvenile offenders. From the study, broken homes contributed to the challenges released juvenile offenders encountered. A broken home is closely associated with poverty and unstable family systems. Released juvenile offenders with family backgrounds such as divorce, separation, and death of either one or both parents encountered challenges like lack of support. Broken homes sometimes are the root cause of incarceration and therefore continue to be a contributing factor to the challenges released juvenile offenders encounter. Foster and Hagen (2007) identified that incarceration leads to deficiencies in social capital formation as families may not be in the position to support the released juvenile offender and this is in agreement with the findings of the study.

The study further identified stigmatization as a contributing factor to the challenges faced by released juvenile offenders. Gaining employment was difficult for released juvenile offenders due to stigmatization. This is because most of the employers believed that released juvenile offenders are incapable of changing from their criminal tendencies. Some released juvenile offenders changed residency in an attempt to avoid stigmatization. Others limited their friendship association because of fear of stigmatization. Stigmatization of released juvenile offenders usually led to social exclusion. Social exclusion prevented the formation of a proper social capital for the released juvenile offenders. They excluded themselves from activities that could be beneficial to their survival. Labeling or stigmatization prevented released juvenile offenders from building a social network or social capital which could have enhanced their survival within the community. This finding is in agreement with Chui and Cheng, (2013) who identified that stigmatization leads to social exclusion and isolation by released juvenile offenders.

Lack of state reintegration support was identified by the study as a contributing factor to challenges encountered by released juvenile offenders. The ineffectiveness of a state reintegration program in Ghana was a major contributor to the challenges encountered by released juvenile offenders. Released juvenile offenders were either left on their own or with friends and family to handle challenges associated with reintegration. The lack of state reintegration support left parents of released juvenile offenders without the necessary skills in handling released juvenile offenders. This finding slightly disagrees with Uggen, Wakefield, Travis and Visher, (2005), who identified that few transitional programs have been identified to be effective for released juvenile offenders. The difference can be identified in the various established juvenile justice systems in the various jurisdictions. This is because according to Dawes, (2011) and Arditti & Parkman, (2011), in countries such as the U. S. A. and Australia, there is well structured juvenile justice system with a better reintegration program for released juvenile offenders unlike that of the developing countries like Ghana.

5.2.3 Coping strategies

Findings of the study revealed that informal social support from family members helped released juvenile offenders cope with challenges. Both nuclear and extended family members supported some juvenile offenders upon their release. The study identified that in as much as the family dynamics are fast changing from the extended family system to the nuclear system; released juvenile offenders relied on some members of the extended family other than parents for support. The study further identified friends as means of informal social support for released juvenile offenders. Some friends provided released juvenile offenders with accommodation and links to employment which helped them survive. This is consistent with the findings of Moore, McArthur and Saunders (2013) that identified the hope of returning from detention centres to

supportive and protective families among released juvenile offenders. Panuccio et. al. (2012) found out as well, that family support is necessary for released juvenile offenders' crime desistance. Arditti and Parkman (2011) identified that reliance on family for support was important for crime desistance and the early days of the release of juvenile offenders.

There is in existence, a formalized reintegration system and institutional set-ups that manage reintegration of released juvenile offenders in other jurisdictions like Australia and U.S.A. However, in Ghana, policies regarding reintegration of released juvenile offenders have not been successfully implemented within the juvenile justice system. There is in place the Justice for Children Policy which has an aspect that deals specifically with reintegration matters of released juvenile offenders. Therefore non-governmental organizations partner with the correctional centres to help in reintegrating released juvenile offenders. The study found out that non-governmental organizations played a role in the reintegration of released juvenile offenders. They played varying roles such as helping in their education as well as employment issues of the released juvenile offenders. The non-governmental organizations carried out follow up or monitoring sessions with released juvenile offenders to ascertain how best they can contribute to the wellbeing of the released juvenile offenders

The findings further indicated that, some released juvenile offenders engaged in some form of vocational training. For some of them, it was a continuation of the training they acquired while in detention. But for others, they actually put the training into work to gain some form of income. Some of the released juvenile offenders attempted working with the training to get better at it. Others went to school to better the training acquired while at the correctional centre. This finding, therefore, indicates that there is a correlation between vocational training and employment. A released juvenile offender who has had vocational training is likely to acquire

employment faster than one without any form of vocational training. Vocational training which is already a key part of the educational curricula must be encouraged, promoted and supported especially for released juvenile offenders, in order to help them reintegrate into society properly and become productive citizens.

From the study, it was found out that, released juvenile offenders coped with challenges by acquiring accommodation through the help of friends and family members. For some released juvenile offenders, accommodation arrangements were made by family members for them. Others made their own arrangements with friends, before finally gathering enough resources to be able to sustain themselves. For some released juvenile offenders, relocating or changing of residence was important to their survival. The relocation was as a result of avoiding stigmatization or labeling in their former place of residence before incarceration. It afforded released juvenile offenders the opportunity to start life on a new page. These findings are in agreement with Unruh and Bullis (2005) who identified that independent living skills lead to successful transitioning of released juvenile offenders, and Altschuler and Brash (2004) who found out that independent accommodation arrangements were appropriate for released juvenile offenders coming out as adults.

Findings of this study indicated that acquisition of employment by released juvenile offenders in Accra helped them stay away from a life of crime. Employment provided a focus for released juvenile offenders who could not continue education or has lost interest entirely in education. To some released juvenile offenders, their ability to acquire gainful employment gave them some sense of purpose and achievement. It gave them the willpower to focus their strength on the employment instead of the acts that are likely to lead to their incarceration. Some of the released juvenile offenders applied the vocational training they had acquired at the correctional centre to

the job they found. Developing a sense of responsibility helped some of the released juvenile offenders take up employment in order to cater for their accommodation and family members as well. Employment, therefore, helped them refocus their lives and cope with the temptation of a life of crime. This finding is in line with findings of Arditti and Parkman (2011) identifying employment as equated to desistance from crime; inability to acquire employment leaves released juvenile offenders vulnerable to temptations within the community. This finding is as well in line with Anthony et. al. (2010), who found out employment among those long and short-term needs of released juvenile offenders as they exit the correctional centre.

Findings of this study further indicated that most of the released juvenile offenders were self-motivated to desist from crime. They had a sense of responsibility which became a motivating factor to stay away from crime. Some released juvenile offenders assumed the responsibility of taking care of themselves while under the care of their parents or other family members. Experience in incarceration built a sense of independence in released juvenile offenders. They were motivated into taking certain steps like acquiring a job to survive and making accommodation arrangements. Finding ways to survive either alone, with friends or with family members were key characteristics of released juvenile offenders' sense of motivation. Self-motivation, therefore, helped released juvenile offenders to cope with challenges of the temptation of going back to crime. This finding is in agreement with the study of Panuccio et al (2012) who found out that the availability of social support without motivation will not lead to crime desistance and Paternoster and Bushway (2009) who identified that motivation to desist from crime stems from the feared-self that released juvenile offenders do not want to become.

5.3 Summary of Findings

The findings of the study indicated that released juvenile offenders encountered some challenges. These challenges were in the area of education, and employment. The educational challenges included non-enrollment in schools and low school attendance. For some released juvenile offenders, their inability to sustain their interest in the educational system was a challenge. Motivation to continue schooling especially in the mainstream education was minimal. Released juvenile offenders' challenge with employment was one key area the findings of the study revealed. Most of the participants who had dropped out of school had difficulty finding employment. Some of the participants followed friends and relatives to work in order to be able to get some money for their upkeep and for others, to support family members. Others did not have job experience even though most of them had gone through vocational training while at the senior correctional centre. The training was not enough to equip them to acquire a job. Some of the released juvenile offenders tried working with the vocation learned while at the senior correctional centre whereas others took up some other vocation. However, the challenge with their employment was that some of the participants did not have the required tools and the startup capital for a trade.

Evidence from this study further revealed that poverty was a contributing factor to the challenges released juvenile offenders in Accra faced. Some released juvenile offenders left home to find their own survival and livelihoods in terms of accommodation and employment as a result of poverty. Stigmatization as well contributed to some challenges faced by released juvenile offenders in Accra. For some of the participants, they resolved to change residency as well as the community in order to avoid being labeled and stigmatized. Released juvenile offenders with broken parental backgrounds were likely to encounter challenges. Lack of state transitional

support contributed to challenges released juvenile offenders in Accra faced according to the findings of the study. Released juvenile offenders were left to their own fate and that of their family to survive. Even though there is a policy in place to guide reintegration, implementation is lacking and therefore contributing to challenges released juvenile offenders face.

As a means of coping with challenges by released juvenile offenders in Accra, this study identified informal social supports. They included support from family members and friends. Friends and relatives provided support in the form of accommodation and support for education. Support from Non-governmental organizations in various forms such as provision for educational needs was identified as a part of the informal social supports. Another key strategy identified in the findings of the study was accommodation arrangements. Accommodation arrangements were made either by the released juvenile offenders or other family members on their behalf. Employment was another strategy by which released juvenile offenders coped with challenges. Released juvenile offenders followed either friends or relatives to find work to do to gain some form of income. Through the income generated some of the released juvenile offenders were able to acquire the necessary tools for work and secure accommodation. They asserted that being gainfully employed prevented them from being involved in other vices. Self-motivation was identified as a part of the personal strategies adopted by released juvenile offenders to manage their challenges. The idea of re-incarceration deterred and motivated released juvenile offenders into becoming productive citizens.

5.4 Conclusion

The study sought to identify challenges juvenile offenders encounter after their release. It sought to identify factors that contributed to these challenges and how released juvenile offenders coped with these challenges. The study indicated that a considerable number of juvenile offenders were

released periodically based on the sentence period given. The released juvenile offenders are vulnerable to some situations that are likely to pose challenges to them.

Challenges are inevitable for released juvenile offenders as indicated by findings of the study even though they may be faring well in certain aspects of their lives. Based on these findings, the study concludes that lack of state transitional support is a major contributing factor to most of the challenges faced by released juvenile offenders. The Juvenile Justice Act speaks of supervised release for about one year. However findings indicate that implementation has not been carried out successfully. Some released juvenile offenders are likely to re-offend in the absence of the reintegration provisions and programs. This is because the factors that led to their incarceration may still be in place in the environment within which they are released into.

The study further concludes based on the findings that the involvement of non-governmental organizations in the reintegration of released juvenile offenders in Accra was a great source of help. Most of the released juvenile offenders relied on help offered by some non-governmental organizations to manage some of the challenges they encountered. This support included educational support, provisions and job arrangements. The role of non-governmental organizations in the reintegration of released juvenile offenders in Accra was crucial to their survival. This included their re-enrollment in school as well as payment of fees.

Family and friends played a major role in the stability of a juvenile offender when released. Social ties were necessary because they became the foundation and immediate social capital available to the released juvenile offenders to which they can rely on. Evidence from the study indicated that, some of the released juvenile offenders did not return to their families whereas others limited their associations with friends. Friends and family members served as social

capital and social network, which were usually necessary for the stability of the released juvenile offenders within the society. Contrary to this, released juvenile offenders were counseled against friendship as it is seen as a major contribution or influence in the offenses committed.

5.5 Recommendations

Reintegration of released juvenile offenders into society is important as it helps them manage challenges they are likely to face in their daily lives. An appropriate reintegration program will, therefore, equip released juvenile offenders with the necessary help needed to manage challenges and to avoid re-incarceration. The provision made for reintegration in the Justice for Children policy is pivotal to creating a change in the juvenile justice system of Ghana. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations have been made to improve upon the reintegration section of the Juvenile Justice system;

5.5.1 Policy

The government of Ghana should make provision for half-way houses or shelters for released juvenile offenders to aid their transition into society. Through the establishment of half-way houses, educational needs of the released juveniles can be reconnected. Half-way houses are temporary accommodation provided for released juvenile offenders for a period of time before fully reintegrating them into their respective societies. Family needs and permanent accommodation issues can be resolved before the released juvenile offender completely reintegrates into society. It will be an assessment point and evaluation of the rehabilitation process and what needs to be done to sustain it. This recommendation is based on the finding that, state transitional support or services are inadequate.

The government of Ghana through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection should emphasize community probation service as a form of correction and rehabilitation. This

should be dependent on the gravity of the offense committed to helping prevent labeling of released juvenile offenders from the correctional centre. Community probation service can serve as a continuation of the rehabilitation process. It can contribute immensely to the reduction of challenges encountered by released juvenile offenders such as stigmatization. This is based on the finding that, stigmatization is a contributing factor to the challenges encountered by released juvenile offenders.

This recommendation is based on the findings that released juvenile offenders encounter challenges with acquiring gainful employment. Therefore, the government in collaboration with organizations and associations such as artisans association can help reduce challenges faced by released juvenile offenders. This can be achieved through the provision of employment and continuous training opportunities to help make released juvenile offenders productive. It will ensure that the rehabilitation process is continued.

5.5.2 Practice

Department of Social Welfare and Community Development, as well as the Ghana Prisons Service, should enforce the implementation of the reintegration aspect of the Justice for Children Policy to enable released juvenile offenders attain some level of stability when released into the community. The provisions made for reintegration, when implemented, can help sustain released juvenile offenders in various spheres of life. This is based on the finding that released juvenile offenders relied on support from informal sources to cope with challenges. Therefore, if a formal support system is put in place, released juvenile offenders will be better sustained.

Agencies and non-governmental organizations should help in the reintegration process and support released juvenile offenders in terms of education. This will, in turn, lessen the burden of reintegration on the government. Reintegration does not end with the released juvenile offender

getting home but also includes what happens over a stipulated period of time. This recommendation was based on the finding that the lack of state transitional support can be a contributing factor to challenges faced by released juvenile offenders.

The findings include unemployment as one of the challenges as well as employment being one of the strategies adopted by released juvenile offenders in dealing with the challenges. In line with these findings, artisans associations such as dressmakers and tailors association, woodworkers association among others should be involved in the reintegration process as they will be in the right position to offer help in terms of job and skills training. This can be achieved by taking these artisan associations through some form of training and sensitization in order for them to be able to make the necessary provisions for released juvenile offenders in Accra.

5.5.3 Education

Based on the finding that released juvenile offenders sometimes encounter challenges in education, the ministry of education should design a special educational package for released juvenile offenders. This educational package will address and sustain the interest of juvenile offenders in education after release from the correctional centre. The special education package should have the capacity to handle people with learning disabilities.

Researchers should further interrogate the reintegration provision in the 2003 Juvenile Justice Act and the Justice for Children policy. Barriers to successful juvenile offender reintegration as well as probation officers' perspective to juvenile offender reintegration can be explored by researchers. Family and community reception of released juvenile offenders as well as the gender dynamics involved in juvenile offender reintegration can be explored in future. This will help in designing appropriate programs that will help both the family and community as well as released juvenile offenders in reintegrating into society.

5.6 Implications for social work

Social workers should offer counseling training and services for parents, relatives and other caretakers on the need to support their children in every possible way. Specifically, parents, relatives and caretakers should be trained in handling the psychological and counseling needs of released juvenile offenders. School social workers in conjunction with educational authorities should establish counseling units within schools to help counsel released juvenile offenders who return to school to motivate and sustain their interest in education. Social workers as advocates based on the “Justice for Children” policy and evidence from this study should advocate for a well-structured reintegration program for released juvenile offenders.

Additionally, social workers should research more into juvenile offender reintegration and make appropriate recommendations that will inform policymakers especially with regards to the implementation of the existing reintegration policy.

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**APPENDIX A
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA**

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR RELEASED JUVENILE OFFENDERS

I am Ebenezer Bosomprah, a student in the Department of Social Work of the University of Ghana conducting a research. The purpose of this study is to explore the challenges released juvenile offenders face and the coping strategies they employ to deal with the challenges. The outcome of the study will help implement existing policies on juvenile justice.

I would be glad if you can respond to these questions by sparring some few minutes of your time. Any information given will be treated as confidential and used solely for the intended purpose.

Demographic Data

- Name
- Age
- Age at incarceration
- Age at the time of release
- Educational Level

Education

- Can you tell me about your education after your release from the correctional centre?
- What challenges have you encountered with respect to education after your release?
- What do you think contributed to the challenges you faced?
- How do you manage challenges you have encountered?

Employment

- Can you tell me about your employment after release from the correctional centre?
- What challenges have you experienced in terms of employment after release?
- What factors do you think contributed to the challenges you faced?
- How do you manage challenges you have encountered?

Accommodation

- Can you tell me about your accommodation after release from the correctional centre?
- What challenges are you facing in terms of accommodation after release?
- What do you think contributed to the challenges you faced?
- How do you manage challenges you have encountered?

Social Relationships

- Tell me about your relationship with your family?
- How is your relationship with your friends?
- What challenges have you encountered in terms of your relationships?
- What do you think contributed to the challenges you faced?
- How do you manage challenges you have encountered?

APPENDIX B

INTRODUCTORY LETTER TO DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE

A390



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

P.O. Box LG 65, LEGON-GHANA Tel: 233-21-513051/500300 Ext: 3289
Fax: 233-21-513051 E-mail: socialwk@ug.edu.gh

Our Ref.....S.1 (a).....

Your Ref.....



March 14, 2017.

The Chief Director
Department of Social Welfare
Ministry of Gender, Children & Social Protection
Ministrie-Accra.

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION
EBENEZER KWESI BOSOMPRAH – 10278117

This is to certify that the above-named is an M.Phil student of the Department of Social Work. He is writing his thesis and needs to collect data on the topic: "Experiences of Released Juvenile Offenders in Accra: from your outfit.

This is purely for academic purpose and should be treated as such. The Department will be grateful for your assistance.

Yours faithfully,

Johnson Aduah
(Senior Administrative Assistant)

② JJA
pg. assist.
23/03/17



Johnson
23/03/17

APPENDIX C

COVER LETTER FROM DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE

*In case of reply the
Number and date of this
Letter should be quoted*

Our Ref. NO: * 390/68
Your Ref. No:



**Department of Social Welfare
Post Office Box MB. 230
ACCRA-GHANA**

**Tel: +233-302-684536
Fax: +233-302-663615
E-Mail:- dsocwel@yahoo.com**

REPUBLIC OF GHANA

27th March 2017

**RE: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION
EBENEZER KWESI BOSOMPRAH - 10278117**

I attach herewith the above mentioned letter dated March 14, 2017 for your action.

Thanks for your usual cooperation.

Best regards.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frederica Owuani'.

**FREDERICA OWUANI
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
For: Ag DIRECTOR**

The Head,
Probation Unit
Accra