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Experiences of ex-offenders when reintegrating into mainstream society : the case of ex-convicts in the Ekurhuleni Region.

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DECLARATION

I declare that this is my own unaided work, and I have given full acknowledgement to the sources that I used. This study has not been submitted previously for any degree or examination at any other university.

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Patricia Chanakira

Date: 15 February 2013

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to establish the experiences of ex-offenders during reintegration into mainstream society in the Ekurhuleni region. The population, from which the study sample was drawn, comprised of adult ex-offenders in the Ekurhuleni region who have served time in prison. The research population also comprised of key informants, this category of participants targeted people with expert knowledge in the science of offender reintegration. The study utilised two semi-structured interview schedules comprising of open-ended questions as primary data collection tools. Thematic content analysis was used to analyse data. The research adopted a qualitative approach and an exploratory research design was used. The findings that emerged from the study show that both ex-offenders and the key informants regarded socio-economic problems such as poverty and inequality as the main factors contributing to the commission of crime. Participants highlighted that other causal factors of crime such as peer pressure and substance abuse are derived from the afore-mentioned socio-economic factors. Regarding the participants' views on the rehabilitation programmes; many were of the view that they play a central role in reducing recidivism by confronting the risks and needs which lead to offending. Gaps were also identified by both ex-offenders and key informants in the rehabilitation system of South Africa and these ranged from the lack of continuity of services after release from prison; crime in prisons, idleness in prisons, appalling prison conditions such as overcrowding, lack of sanitation and maltreatment of offenders by prison officials and these pose a challenge to rehabilitation. Offenders face a litany of problems during reintegration and some of these are rejection by family and community, lack of a holistic approach to reintegration and unemployment problems. The conclusions drawn from the study are that most of the ex-offenders are repeat offenders and as such society needs to put in place structures and preventative measures to reduce the recidivism rates among ex-convicts. These structures and preventative measures should focus on the holistic needs and risks of offenders.

ACRONYMS

NICRO	: National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders
GRT	: Gauteng Rehabilitation Trust
DJ	: Department of Justice
ILO	: International Labour Organisation
DCS	: Department of Correctional Services
EOP	: Economic Opportunities Programme
TEP	: Tough Enough Programme
SIYB	: Start and Improve your Business
NEF	: NICRO Enterprise Finance
RNR	: Risk-Need Responsivity
NGO	: Non-Governmental Organisation
VEP	: Victim Empowerment Programme
CSA	: Criminal Services Act