

# Assessing the Influence of Levels of Education and Contact on Public Attitudes Towards Ex-Offenders

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**Abstract:-** Recidivism, which is the possibility of offenders reoffending, was mostly influenced by how the community perceived them. Negative attitudes towards offenders influenced the development of policy restrictions and barriers for ex-offenders in areas such as education, employment, health, housing, and voting rights. In this study, we aimed to investigate the significant relationship between levels of education and contact with ex-offenders, and public attitude. Understanding the indicators impacting public attitude was significant in light of the growing interest in rehabilitation and social reintegration programs. Using a quantitative research methodology, specifically a correlational design, provided for a thorough evaluation of these factors without requiring experimental modification. It allowed for the detection of relationships and patterns within the data, which improved the reliability and validity of the results. This study intended to provide reliable information into the complicated social dynamics underlying attitudes toward ex-offenders by surveying 384 participants. The study used Pearson's correlation coefficient to determine whether there was a relationship between levels of education and contact influencing public attitudes towards ex-offenders. Findings revealed that the study found no significant correlation between levels of education and contact, and attitudes towards ex-offenders. A multifaceted approach incorporating social, psychological, and environmental influences was essential for fostering positive societal attitudes toward ex-offenders. Finally, the purpose of this research was to influence policy and intervention measures targeted at increasing societal understanding and acceptance of individuals with a criminal history.

**Keywords:-** Educational Level; Level of Contact; Attitude; Ex-Offenders; Explicit Attitude; Labeling Theory; Stigma.

## I. INTRODUCTION

When an individual commits a crime, one of the forms of punishment they may receive is imprisonment. This serves not only to correct their behavior but also to encourage the adoption of normative social behavior (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2019). Upon completing their sentences, these individuals are released back into society with the aim of reintegrating as law-abiding citizens (Liem, 2018). However, this process is fraught with challenges, primarily

due to the stigma and discrimination that accompany the "ex-offender" label. Such societal prejudice often creates insurmountable barriers to successful reintegration, contributing significantly to the cycle of recidivism (Warren, 2022).

Recidivism, defined as an offender's relapse into criminal activity, is a persistent global issue with significant societal and economic implications. A systematic review found that released prisoners had 2-year reconviction rates ranging from 18% to 55%, while individuals given community sentences had rates between 10% and 47% (Yukhnenko et al., 2023). For instance, Denmark's recidivism rate, measured by reconvictions within two years, stands at 68%, underscoring the systemic challenges in addressing this issue (Yukhnenko, Sridhar, & Fazel, 2019). In the Philippines, while there is no comprehensive data on recidivism rates, the country faces a unique set of challenges, including overcrowded jails and limited resources for rehabilitation. The Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) reported a staggering prison occupancy rate of 534% as of 2021 (Narag & Jones, 2017).

In response, initiatives like the Community Service Sentencing Program, launched by the Department of Justice in 2013, aim to alleviate prison overcrowding and foster community involvement in the justice system. However, barriers such as public stigma, limited employment opportunities, and insufficient support remain significant obstacles to successful reintegration (De Guzman et al., 2020; Jones & Narag, 2019). Research also highlights the importance of societal attitudes in shaping reintegration outcomes. Negative attitudes towards ex-offenders influence policy restrictions, particularly in areas such as education, employment, housing, and voting rights, further perpetuating cycles of marginalization (Wertheimer-Meier, 2023).

The reintegration of ex-offenders is crucial not only for reducing recidivism but also for ensuring public safety and promoting social cohesion. Education and contact with ex-offenders have been identified as critical factors influencing societal attitudes. Education is associated with increased empathy and tolerance, potentially reducing stigma, while positive interactions with ex-offenders can challenge stereotypes and foster acceptance (Chan, 2022; Velásquez, 2023). However, limited research has examined these factors

in the Philippine context, where societal attitudes and structural barriers remain significant challenges.

This study seeks to explore the influence of educational level and contact with offenders on public attitudes towards ex-offenders and their reintegration. By understanding these factors, we aim to provide insights that can inform targeted interventions and policies to support successful reintegration, reduce stigma, and ultimately lower recidivism rates.

#### ➤ *Research Question or Problem Statement*

This study comprehensively examined the underlying issues of public attitudes towards ex-offenders, with a specific focus on how these attitudes were influenced by educational level and levels of contact with ex-offenders. This research investigated factors that could foster more positive perceptions and support the reintegration of ex-offenders into society. Specifically, it aimed to answer the following question:

- What are the attitudes towards ex-offenders as perceived by the respondents?
- What is the educational level and level of contact of the respondents?
- Is there a significant relationship between educational level and attitudes towards ex-offenders?
- Is there a significant relationship between level of contact and attitudes towards ex-offenders?

#### ➤ *Purpose or Objectives*

The objective of this study was to investigate the various factors that influence societal attitudes about ex-offenders, with a particular emphasis on the relationship between levels of education and levels of contact with this demographic. The study examined the attitudes of individuals with different educational levels towards ex-offenders and their impact on their criminal record. It aimed to identify factors that could influence interventions and policies aimed at fostering more inclusive attitudes and facilitating the successful reintegration of ex-offenders into society.

#### ➤ *Scope of the Study*

This research investigated the correlation between levels of education and attitudes toward ex-offenders. It assessed how direct contact with ex-offenders influenced these attitudes. The study did not delve into broader societal factors unrelated to education or specific policy recommendations for ex-offender reintegration. This study was conducted in Angeles City, Philippines, focusing on the six barangays surrounding six police stations in the city: Barangay Sto Domingo, Pulung Cicutud, Pandan, Balibago, Cuayan, and Sta Teresita.

#### ➤ *Significance or Importance*

The results of this study benefited the following:

- Policymakers. They can utilize the data to shape legislation and programs targeted at rehabilitating and reintegrating ex-offenders into society, based on public views and perceptions.

- Educators. Understanding public perceptions regarding ex-offenders can help them customize educational programs to overcome misconceptions and prejudices, resulting in a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.
- Criminal Justice Professionals. Understanding public opinions can help criminal justice professionals build more effective interventions and programs for ex-offenders, resulting in better recidivism rates and community safety.
- Social Workers. They can use the study findings to create treatments and support systems that are consistent with public beliefs, supporting effective reintegration and lowering societal stigma for ex-offenders.
- Community Leaders. Understanding public perceptions regarding ex-offenders can help community leaders advocate for resources and support systems that reflect the community's needs and concerns, resulting in a more unified and understanding society.

## II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The reintegration of ex-offenders into society is a complex and critical issue that has garnered significant attention in the field of criminological research. In accordance, the attitudes of the public towards ex-offenders play a significant role in their successful reentry, as negative perceptions can create formidable barriers to employment, housing, and social acceptance (Wolfson, Schmidt, Stinson, & Poole, 2021). In America, which is known for the high rate of criminal offending, an estimated 60% of their ex-convicts are unemployed a year finding a job after leaving prison (Smith 2023). On the other hand, the United Kingdom only has 17% of ex-offenders who are in work within 12 months after leaving prison and half of employers would not consider recruiting applicants with a criminal record (Ambrose, 2023). While the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) reported a 13.8% unemployment rate among crime-convicted individuals, nearly double the national average of 7.1%, in January 2021. Unemployment is a significant predictor of recidivism among ex-prisoners, with studies consistently showing that individuals who are unemployed are more likely to reoffend. According to Smith (2021), formerly incarcerated individuals are only eligible for employment if their offenses were minor and unrelated to their employment due to the ex-offender label.

Recent meta-analyses have synthesized the current research on public attitudes towards ex-offenders, revealing that factors such as political ideology, interpersonal contact, and the nature of the offense significantly influence public perceptions (Rade, Desmarais, & Mitchell, 2016). These studies suggest that while there is a general trend towards more supportive attitudes for rehabilitation and reentry efforts, stigmatization remains a significant hurdle, particularly for those with a history of sexual offenses (Tuschick et al., 2024).

The aim of this review is to delve deeper into the degree of public attitudes towards ex-offenders, examining the impact of these attitudes on the reintegration process and

identifying strategies to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment. Understanding these attitudes is important for developing policies and interventions that facilitate the reintegration process.

#### ➤ *Stigma and Discrimination*

Reintegrating ex-offenders successfully in the community can be hindered by social stigma and discrimination, which can lead to recidivism. The study of Ike, Jidong, Ike, M. L., & Ayobi (2023) explores public perceptions and attitudes towards ex-offenders and their reintegration in Nigeria and focuses on issues such as stigma, discrimination, and the indirect impact of the label of being a prisoner or ex-offenders on reintegration and growing recidivism. Stigma, defined as a social phenomenon involving labeling, separation, and discrimination within a power dynamic, manifests at structural, social, and individual levels (Feingold, 2021). Structural barriers such as employment restrictions and limited housing options, exacerbate social stigma, leading to prejudiced responses and discriminatory behaviors from the public. It also highlights the predictive role of criminal records and social discrimination in criminal recidivism. The study finds that embodied experiences of release and reintegration, including prison time being inscribed on the body, prove problematic for ex-offenders' re-entry into society.

Stigmatization poses a formidable barrier to the successful reintegration of released offenders into society, manifesting at structural, social, and individual levels (Feingold, 2021). Ex-offenders face stigmatizing attitudes from the public, leading to adverse social and psychological effects, including reduced self-esteem and heightened levels of depression and anxiety. Moreover, the anticipation of discrimination leads to social withdrawal and decreased help-seeking behaviors, exacerbating challenges in reintegration. Sakib (2022) underscores the detrimental impact of this stigma on ex-offenders' ability to secure employment and housing, ultimately contributing to higher recidivism rates. Addressing incarceration stigma necessitates comprehensive interventions aimed at challenging societal norms and promoting rehabilitation to facilitate successful reintegration into the community. According to Mosser (2022), attitudes towards offenders are influenced by the observer and the person being observed. It reveals the influence of observer characteristics, including race, age, political affiliation, and gender emphasizing the role of stigmatization as a major hindrance to successful reintegration, leading to increased ostracism and anxiety within the wider community (Sakib, 2022). The meta-analysis study found that age does not significantly predict public attitudes towards offenders. Political conservatism predicts negative attitudes, while liberal views soften them. Gender differences also play a role, with women showing more punitive attitudes and less belief in redeemability. Minority groups, like Black and Hispanic individuals, hold more favorable attitudes towards offenders. This highlights the complex interplay between individual characteristics and societal attitudes towards ex-offenders, requiring a nuanced understanding for effective interventions.

Community perceptions significantly influence attitudes towards ex-offenders' reintegration, with negative attitudes often prevalent due to factors like stigma, discrimination, and crime type. Limited community involvement in reintegration exacerbates challenges faced by ex-offenders, hindering successful societal integration (Ike, Singh, Jidong, Murphy, & Ayobi, 2021). While the study of Ike et al. (2023) emphasizes the importance of legal awareness in fostering confidence and trust in ex-offenders' reintegration. It suggests that being aware of legal platforms for perceived relapse is crucial in the reintegration process. Location may influence participants' perception, as seen in Anambra state, which is characterized by high crime rates and secessionist agitations. These factors could influence participants' perception of ex-offenders and the need for awareness of available channels. The findings differ from previous studies that emphasized ex-offenders as a limitation to reintegration.

Ex-offenders and single parents often face stigmatization due to stereotypes and societal perceptions (Wertheimer-Meier, 2023). They are often viewed as dangerous, dishonest, and disreputable, reinforcing negative stereotypes and a risk of recidivism, regardless of the severity of their offenses.

Stereotypes are generalized beliefs about a group based on characteristics like age, race, gender, sexual orientation, or social class, while stigma is a negative attitude that can lead to discrimination and prejudice (Dhillon, 2023). Prisoners are often stereotyped as dangerous, uneducated, and lacking empathy, contributing to negative attitudes towards them. Stereotypes and stigmatization hinder ex-offenders' success in reintegration into society, limiting access to resources like housing, and making the transition more challenging, both individually and institutionally (Keene, Smoyer, Blankenship, 2018).

Ex-prisoners face numerous challenges upon reintegration into society, with approximately 94% experiencing discrimination from their families and societies. This discrimination stems from a lack of trust in individuals with a history of incarceration, leading to their marginalization within communities (Benard, Msomba, & Pesha, 2023). Ex-prisoners face significant stigma and discrimination, often perceived as rejected and subjected to lifelong discrimination. This rejection perpetuates their punishment and hinders their ability to function as normal citizens. Reintegration is a maintenance process reliant on reciprocal interactions between ex-prisoners and the wider community. However, ex-prisoners often face segregation and negative perceptions from society, impacting their smooth integration and increasing the likelihood of re-offending. Additionally, many prisoners and ex-prisoners face additional challenges such as low education levels, low income, and high unemployment, exacerbating their isolation from family and society. Ex-prisoners face a multifaceted form of discrimination, including social exclusion and employment barriers. 38% of ex-prisoners report being isolated by family members and society, while 22% are not accepted, and 20% lack trust from their communities. 16%

experience derogatory name-calling, and only 4% have been terminated from employment at their former workplaces. Key informant interviews provide further insights into the nature of discrimination faced by ex-prisoners, such as total isolation, discrimination from neighbors, and stigma upon returning to their communities. These accounts corroborate findings from Chikadzi, which identified social challenges faced by ex-prisoners during their integration into society. Family and community members often reject and ostracize ex-prisoners, hindering their reintegration and increasing the risk of recidivism. Additionally, ex-prisoners are frequently marginalized and face lifelong discrimination, further complicating their reintegration efforts.

The study of Tenorio, Janer, & Manaig (2019) explores the impact of incarceration on families, revealing significant strains in spousal and parent-child relationships, disruptions in family functioning, emotional and psychological burdens, financial hardships, social stigma, and isolation. Despite these challenges, families show resilience, employing coping strategies like seeking social support and engaging in faith-based activities to navigate their circumstances and promote well-being.

#### ➤ *Demographic Factors and Attitudes towards Offender*

Employment is a crucial factor in reducing recidivism and facilitating ex-offenders' adjustment to civilian life. It provides financial stability, fosters social connections, and contributes to their sense of belonging. However, ex-offenders often face stigmatization upon reentry into society, being labeled as "ex-prisoners," which may lead to discrimination and societal exclusion (Shamooil, 2022). Employers' perceptions of ex-offenders also play a significant role in their employment prospects, influenced by personal experiences, media reporting, and societal attitudes. Employers often express concerns about ex-offenders' trustworthiness and potential backlash from customers, making hiring decisions challenging. Despite acknowledging the potential value ex-offenders could bring to the workforce, employers remain cautious due to these concerns. Understanding employers' perceptions and considerations regarding ex-offenders' employment is essential for addressing barriers to their reintegration into society and reducing recidivism rates. In relation, ex-prisoners who have served their sentence and are released, face numerous challenges upon reintegration into society (Vivares, 2023). These include lack of education, societal stigmatization, isolation, societal rejection, employment difficulties, readjustment to life outside prison, feelings of inferiority, and limited access to after-care services (Batur & Akbaş, 2023). These obstacles not only hinder the reintegration process but also increase the risk of recidivism among ex-prisoners.

The social reintegration of offenders is a crucial process that involves reintegrating individuals released from rehabilitative and penal institutions back into society (Alvarez, García-Carrión, Puigvert, Pulido, & Schubert, 2018). However, this process is accompanied by numerous challenges, including financial, social, and psychological obstacles (Gul, 2018). These include homelessness, unemployment, financial instability, discrimination, low

education levels, harassment by law enforcement, and difficulties in forming new social connections. These challenges significantly impact the social reintegration process and can contribute to recidivism among ex-inmates.

Family support plays a crucial role in preventing recidivism (Liu and Visser, 2021). Studies have identified low family and partner support, shorter incarceration periods, and negative family dynamics as potential determinants of reoffending. Ishola (2022) supported these findings stating that positive family support can act as a protective factor against recidivism, while strained relationships may increase the likelihood of drug use and further criminal behavior. Family relationships and support structures significantly impact the success or failure of ex-inmates to reintegrate into society (Liu & Visser, 2021). Negative family dynamics can contribute to recidivism among ex-inmates. Therefore, interventions that strengthen family support networks are essential for individuals transitioning out of incarceration.

Obatusin, & Ritter-Williams (2019) stated that the most significant challenge they faced was coming to terms with their past deeds and the realization that their punishment, such as conviction and incarceration, could hinder their ability to secure employment and earn a decent living. Other obstacles faced by ex-offenders include past convictions, lack of job-seeking experience, absence of work history, and inadequate occupational skills, which impede their ability to settle into society and increase the likelihood of reoffending. The stigma attached to being labeled an ex-prisoner exacerbates the process of reintegration, perpetuating the cycle of discrimination and isolating them from society. Consequently, employers view ex-offenders as needing support for successful integration into society due to the absence of a defined support system. They also believe that ex-offenders lack basic work readiness skills, making them less competitive in the job market. Trustworthiness is a significant barrier to hiring ex-offenders, as employers are hesitant to risk hiring someone with a criminal record without sufficient evidence. Concerns about customer backlash complicate hiring decisions, as employers fear negative consequences. Public perception and stigma often undermine efforts to provide employment opportunities, leading some employers to resort to under-the-table practices. The findings underscore the need for comprehensive support systems and societal attitudes towards ex-offenders.

Ex-offenders face stigma, lack of support, and limited job opportunities, which hinder their integration into society. Employers perceive them as needing education and skills development. Trust-building and social support networks are crucial for reducing recidivism, and lack of family and social support increases the risk of criminal behavior (Schnappauf & DiDonato, 2017).

Stigma significantly impacts reentry outcomes, and understanding the mechanisms behind negative attitudes towards ex-offenders can inform evidence-based reentry practices and policies (Rade, Desmarais, & Burnette, 2018). Addressing these mechanisms may lead to interventions and public education campaigns to improve public attitudes and

support for reentry. Public attitudes generally involve a willingness to associate with ex-offenders and assess their character, while support for reentry involves endorsing policies to facilitate community reintegration. Both constructs have distinct elements that must be considered when addressing stigma and discrimination experienced by ex-offenders during reentry.

#### ➤ *Effects of Negative Attitudes Towards Ex-Offender*

Attitudes are judgments or evaluations about people, places, events, or behaviors, influenced by experiences and beliefs. Although they can influence behavior, they may not always align with actual actions (Dhillon, 2023).

Negative attitudes towards ex-offenders and single parents, exacerbated by biases, can significantly influence housing providers' discretionary rental decisions, involving cognitive, affective, and behavioral components (Briñol, Petty, & Stavrakaki, 2019).

Negative attitudes and discriminatory practices by housing providers, such as disproportionately denying housing to ex-offenders and single parents, exacerbate the difficulties they face in accessing safe and affordable housing, perpetuating systemic biases and exacerbating the difficulties they face in reentering society (Wertheimer & Wiener, 2020).

The impact of personal narratives from ex-prisoners on attitudes toward prisoners found that exposure to such testimonials did not significantly alter participants' attitudes or beliefs about fair treatment of prisoners in the U.S. Demographic factors such as race, age, family incarceration history, and personal experiences with crime were significant predictors of attitudes and fear of crime, suggesting stability in existing attitudes or potential inadequacies in the narrative's content or delivery (Dhillon, 2023). Further investigation is needed to understand the implications of personal narratives for interventions targeting perceptions of prisoners and fear of crime.

Employers' attitudes towards hiring ex-offenders are influenced by perceptions of trustworthiness, job readiness, and potential customer backlash (Schnappauf & Didonato, 2017). Attitude is a person's belief in the potential consequences of a behavior (Khasni, Keshminder, & Chuah, 2021). Before committing to a behavior, individuals assess the advantages and costs. Confidence in the positive outcome increases the likelihood of committing. Employers' attitudes play a crucial role in hiring individuals with psychiatric or criminal backgrounds. Attitude affects intention and predicts behavior, and demand-side barriers to hiring ex-offenders are highly influenced by employer's attitudes. The relationship between attitude and behavior is similar in many cases, such as in social psychology, where attitudes are studied as a crucial antecedent to recycling behavior. Studies have shown that employers' attitudes can influence the likelihood of hiring individuals with psychiatric or criminal backgrounds.

The reintegration of individuals released from prison into society is a complex process, with nearly two-thirds of a

million people released annually (Rade, Desmarais, & Burnette, 2018). However, barriers such as difficulty in obtaining housing or employment, often rooted in societal stigma and discrimination, can hinder successful reintegration. Ex-offenders often face differential treatment in employment, housing, and healthcare due to their criminal background, highlighting the need for improved support and resources for those transitioning back into society.

The study of Rade, Desmarais, & Burnette (2018) explores how mindsets, particularly growth versus fixed mindsets, impact public attitudes towards ex-offenders and their reintegration into society. Study found that fostering a growth mindset led to more positive attitudes towards ex-offenders and increased support for their reentry. It also replicated these findings in a community-based sample, finding that growth mindsets mitigated negative attitudes towards Black ex-offenders. The research underscores the importance of mindset in shaping attitudes and behaviors related to ex-offender reentry, suggesting that interventions promoting growth mindsets could improve public support and reduce discrimination against marginalized groups.

#### ➤ *Explicit Attitudes*

Explicit attitudes are conscious beliefs, opinions, or feelings about a person, object, or issue that individuals are aware of and can be reported (Martinussen, Petranca, & Sømshovd, 2018). These attitudes are deliberate, controllable, and can be communicated to others (Hong, Hong, & Kim, 2021). They are typically measured through self-report methods such as questionnaires or interviews, where individuals reflect on their attitudes and report them (Vesely, 2021). Attitudes are shaped by personal experiences, societal norms, education, and reflection, and can be influenced by social desirability bias, as individuals report acceptable behaviors.

Correspondingly, Muschalik, Elfeddali, Candel, Crutzen, & de Vries (2019) states that explicit attitudes are conscious, deliberate beliefs, values, and perceptions about a behavior or concept, formed through reasoned evaluation and cognitive processes. They are self-reported and measured using self-report questionnaires consisting of instrumental and affective components, with the instrumental component focusing on anticipated outcomes and the affective component involving emotion-laden judgments.

Explicit attitudes are consciously formed evaluations of social issues or objects, resulting from introspection and controlled by individuals (Lawal, 2023). These attitudes are crucial in shaping individuals' views and behaviors, especially in crime perception. Trust and distrust are fundamental aspects of explicit attitudes, while identification refers to individuals' cognitive, affective, and evaluative connection with social groups or organizations. Perceived malevolence refers to individuals' cognitive evaluations of social objects, influencing their intentions and motivations. Understanding explicit attitudes can provide insights into addressing societal issues. Explicit attitudes involve conscious judgments and feelings towards individuals who have committed crimes (Sandhu et al., 2019). These attitudes

can range from punitive and hostile to merciful and supportive of rehabilitation, influenced by factors like the nature of the crime and societal norms.

Nayfeld (2022) identifies six primary explicit attitudes towards offenders: retributive, hostile, moralistic, paternalistic, merciful, and actual. These attitudes are based on moral standards, risk assessments, and statistical data. Second-order attitudes, such as egalitarianism and particularism, involve adjusting attitudes based on individual offenders, ensuring consistency in addressing offenders. Explicit attitudes are verbalized evaluations of objects, expressed through declarations of how one views a particular group, individual, or issue (Vesely, 2021). They require mental effort to retrieve and articulate and are usually gathered via self-reports. Explicit attitudes are easier to measure than implicit attitudes and have been studied more frequently.

The study of Charlesworth & Banaji (2022) found that since 2007, all explicit attitudes have decreased in bias, with a reduction between 22% for age attitudes and 98% for race attitudes. This suggests a significant shift towards more neutral explicit attitudes over time. However, implicit attitudes, which are unconscious associations, showed mixed results. While implicit attitudes related to sexuality, race, and skin-tone decreased in bias, attitudes related to age, disability, and body-weight showed little to no long-term change.

#### ➤ *Social Distance and Perceived Dangerousness*

Desistance signaling was a criminological concept that suggested prospective employees signaled their value through observable characteristics, such as educational degrees (Mosser, 2022). In criminology, a desistance signal was an external characteristic of an ex-offender that suggested they would successfully desist from crime. This concept was applied to a broader context, focusing on responsibility. The study expected that this would lead to more favorable attitudes towards ex-offenders, demonstrating their commitment to abstain from criminal behavior through observable traits, which extended beyond employment to social judgments.

Peka's (2021) study focuses on understanding attitudes towards prisoners and ex-prisoners, focusing on social distance and perceived dangerousness. Social distance refers to individuals' willingness to interact with a particular group, such as prisoners or ex-prisoners. Higher contact with these groups reduces the desire for social distance, suggesting exposure to stigmatized groups influences attitudes. Factors such as political affiliation also influence social distance desirability, with liberal participants showing a lower desire for distance. Nevertheless, perceived dangerousness refers to individuals' perceptions of how threatening or harmful prisoners or ex-prisoners are. Implicit attitudes significantly shape perceptions of dangerousness, with more positive implicit attitudes associated with a lower likelihood of perceiving prisoners or ex-prisoners as dangerous. This suggests that underlying attitudes can influence perceptions of the threat posed by this population.

#### ➤ *Prosociality & Belief in Redeemability*

The research of Moser (2022) focuses on the belief in the redeemability of ex-offenders, a participant-level variable often measured using scales like Maruna & King's (2009) and Reich's (2017). The higher the total score, the more participants believe an offender can change their ways and move on from a life of crime. This belief is influenced by studies by Leverenz (2011) and Reich (2017), which show that belief in redeemability negatively correlates with strong attitudes towards punitiveness and positively correlates with an employer's willingness to hire someone with a criminal record. It aims to interpret this as the ex-offender wanting to desist from crime, suggesting greater redeemability and resulting in more favorable attitude judgments about the ex-offender.

Peka (2021) emphasizes the impact of individuals' beliefs in redemption and second chances on their attitudes and behaviors towards ex-offenders. Despite positive opinions, individuals may still engage in discriminatory behavior. Those who believe in redeemability support progressive policies for social inclusion and reintegration, and are more likely to engage in prosocial behaviors like volunteering or financial assistance.

#### ➤ *Relationship of Level of Contact and Attitudes Towards Ex-Offenders*

##### • *Personal Familiarity*

Human behavior is influenced by factors such as the level of interaction within and between groups (Boissovain & Mitchell, 2018). Level of Contact refers to an individual's familiarity and exposure to stigmatized groups, which significantly impacts their attitudes and behaviors towards these groups (Peka, 2021). Research shows that increased contact with marginalized groups reduces prejudice and discrimination. Interpersonal contact theory suggests that interactions with out-group members challenge stereotypes and reduce prejudice. Factors such as cooperative interaction, frequency of contact, intimacy, and opportunities for interaction further enhance the effects of interpersonal contact on attitudes. People with higher levels of contact to stigmatized individuals are less likely to perceive them as dangerous or undesirable, demonstrating more positive attitudes and reduced discrimination. Communities with common stigmatized experiences tend to have lower levels of ostracism towards affected individuals.

Rade, Desmarais, & Burnette (2018) supports that liberal political beliefs and prior contact with ex-offenders lead to more support for reentry. Interpersonal contact may be an intervention point to improve attitudes towards ex-offenders. This is the first study to establish a relationship between belief in a just world and support for ex-offender reentry, adding to the existing body of research supporting the association between belief in a just world and attitudes towards marginalized populations and punishment. In addition, stigmatized groups' familiarity with them and the credibility of labeling systems like the court system can influence attitudes towards them (Dhillon, 2023). The normalization thesis suggests that familiarity with a

stigmatized group can influence attitudes towards it. The legitimization thesis, on the other hand, suggests that credibility given to the structures labeling the stigmatized person, such as the police and court system, can also influence attitudes. People who do not credit or respect these systems, such as the American court system, are less likely to stigmatize prisoners.

#### ➤ *Relationship of Educational Level and Attitudes Towards Ex-Offenders*

The level of highest educational attainment refers to the highest level of school or its non-school education a person has completed, which is validated through the assessment of acquired knowledge, skills, and competencies, and is the highest level of education successfully completed (Statistics Canada, 2021).

The study of Ike et al. (2023) explores the relationship between educational attainment and attitudes towards ex-offenders. It reveals that higher education levels in general do not necessarily correlate with greater support for ex-offenders' reintegration. Contrary to expectations, no positive association was found between education level and attitudes towards reintegration, indicating the need for further research on the role of education in fostering societal acceptance of ex-offenders.

#### ➤ *Theoretical Framework*

Labeling theory offers a sociological perspective on the role of social labeling in shaping criminal behavior and deviance (Bernburg, 2019). According to this theory, individuals labeled as deviants face new challenges stemming from negative stereotypes and stigmatization attached to the deviant label, which can exacerbate deviant behavior. Antwi (2016) identified social rejection and stigmatization as significant transitional challenges for ex-convicts, predisposing them to further criminal activity. This labeling effect impacts their ability to secure employment post-release. The theoretical framework supporting this study, the labeling theory, underscores how stigmatizing labels like "ex-offenders" hinder reintegration efforts by impeding access to employment and education (Abrah, 2019). Consequently, the stigmatization of ex-offenders perpetuates their social isolation and marginalization within society, contributing to continued criminal behavior even after release from prison.

A study reveals that the perceived trauma experienced by victims of ex-offenders, regardless of their education level, reinforces a negative outgroup social identity towards them and their positive reintegration (Schneider & Weber, 2020). This suggests that the community and victims play a significant role in reintegration, and policies aimed at improving reintegration should involve the community in addressing the trauma suffered (Ike, Jidong, Ayobi, 2023). Labeling theory suggests that individuals may adopt behaviors consistent with the labels they are given, particularly in the context of the criminal justice system (Burnberg, 2009). Attitudes towards ex-offenders can be influenced by various factors, including education levels. Educated individuals may possess a nuanced understanding of criminal behavior and the challenges of reintegration, potentially fostering more empathetic attitudes towards ex-

offenders (Van Slyke, 2009). However, higher education levels do not automatically translate to positive attitudes, as educated individuals may also harbor strong convictions about accountability and justice, leading to more stringent views of ex-offenders (Roberts, 1992). On the other hand, the contact hypothesis suggests that increased contact with a specific group can improve attitudes towards that group (Peka, 2021). For ex-offenders, frequent and meaningful interactions can lead to more positive attitudes, as direct contact can diminish prejudices and dismantle stereotypes, allowing for a more personalized understanding of ex-offenders beyond their stigmatized group identity (Quinn-Hogan, 2021).

#### ➤ *Conceptual Framework*

##### • *Educational Level and Attitudes Towards Ex-Offenders.*

This hypothesis proposes a possible link between individuals' educational achievement and their perceptions or attitudes toward those with criminal records. It implies that higher levels of education may alter one's perception of ex-offenders, potentially leading to more favorable or compassionate sentiments than those with lesser educational levels. This hypothesis argues that educational experiences can change people's views and attitudes toward rehabilitation, recidivism, and societal reintegration of ex-offenders, necessitating empirical research to determine the validity and complexities of this relationship.

##### • *Level of Contact and Attitudes Towards Ex-Offenders.*

The hypothesis held that the amount of contact people had with ex-offenders influenced their sentiments toward this demographic group. This hypothesis proposed that direct interactions, such as personal connections or professional encounters, could influence perceptions and attitudes toward people with criminal records. This conceptual framework implied that increasing exposure to ex-offenders had the ability to reduce negative preconceptions and promote more compassionate attitudes, whereas limited interaction may have reinforced societal stigma and maintained discriminatory ideas. Researchers hoped to understand the fundamental mechanisms driving public opinions of ex-offenders by investigating the relationship between contact levels and attitudes, which would then drive targeted treatments and social policies aimed at decreasing stigma and encouraging reintegration.

##### • *Explicit Attitude Toward Ex-Offender.*

The hypothesis proposed that people had explicit views toward ex-offenders, which might have varied in kind and degree. Explicit attitudes were actively held views and opinions that people were aware of and may have expressed. Hence, the discrepancy and relation of explicit attitude were examined. The hypothesis suggested that individuals may have supported rehabilitation efforts while also harboring explicit biases against ex-offenders, which could have impacted their decision-making and reintegration into society.

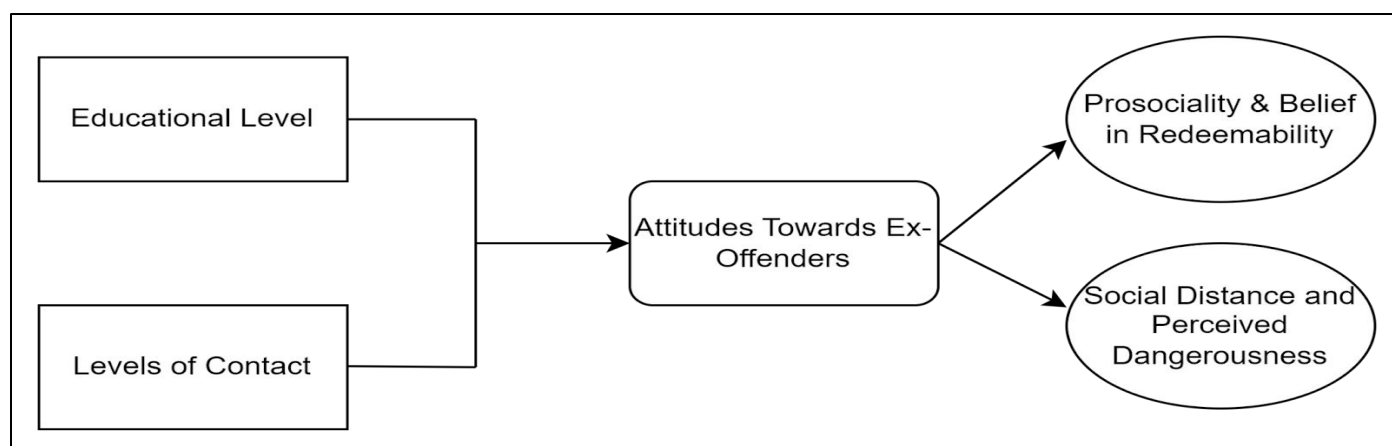
➤ *Paradigm of the Study*

Fig 1 Paradigm of the Study

**III. METHODS**

This chapter analyzes the design and methods that direct our study on determining how education level and levels of contact affect public attitudes toward ex-offenders. In this chapter, we discussed the research design and methodology, providing an overview of the measures and procedures involved in collecting and analyzing data.

➤ *Study Design*

This study used a quantitative research design, specifically a descriptive survey correlational design, to measure variables like educational level and contact with ex-offenders. The primary objective was to examine the correlation between these variables. Correlational research, chosen for its non-experimental nature, offered a nuanced understanding of how they influenced public attitudes towards ex-offenders (Bhandari, 2023). Statistical techniques were employed to identify patterns, trends, and correlations within the data, enhancing reliability and validity while minimizing subjective bias. This approach facilitated the

analysis of extensive datasets, providing valuable insights into factors shaping societal attitudes towards ex-offenders and promoting their successful reintegration into society.

➤ *Study Participants*

The study employed cluster sampling to select participants from six barangays in Angeles City, each with its own population size, to accurately represent the approximate population of 176,889. The total population of the selected barangays in Angeles City, Philippines, amounted to 176,889 residents. Barangay Sto Domingo had the largest population with 61,092 individuals, followed by Barangay Balibago, with a population of 42,274 residents. Brgy Pulung Cacutud was next with a population of 25,385, followed by Barangay Pandan with 23,928 residents. Barangay Cuayan had a population of 15,046 individuals. Lastly, Barangay Sta. Teresita had the smallest population among the selected barangays, with 9,164 residents. This diversity in population sizes allowed for a comprehensive examination of attitudes towards ex-offenders across various demographic contexts within Angeles City.

Table 1 Study Participants

Barangay	Population	Percentage	Computed Sample Size
Sto. Domingo	61,092	34.53%	132.59
Pulung Cacutud	25,385	14.35%	55.1
Pandan	23,928	13.52%	51.91
Balibago	42,274	23.89%	91.73
Cuayan	15,046	8.5%	32.64
Sta Teresita	9,164	5.18%	19.89
<b>Total</b>	<b>176,889</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>384</b>
<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>384</b>		

This study investigated attitudes towards ex-offenders in six barangays in Angeles City, Philippines, focusing on their diverse population and socio-economic backgrounds. The research aimed to capture a wide range of experiences and perspectives, influenced by local demographics, crime rates, and community resources. The study's location offered logistical feasibility, accessibility, and community engagement, facilitating the development of targeted interventions to support reintegration efforts and promote

positive community perceptions. This approach ensured a comprehensive exploration of attitudes towards ex-offenders in Angeles City.

➤ *Sample Size*

The sample size is calculated by multiplying the percentage of each barangay's population by the desired total sample size of 384 participants calculated using Raosoft Calculator. The final sample sizes are rounded up to the

nearest whole number to ensure each barangay contributes at least one participant. The final sample sizes are 133 for Barangay Sto Domingo (61,092), 56 for Brgy Pulung Cacutud (25,385), 52 for Barangay Pandan (23,928), 92 for Barangay Balibago (42,274), 33 for Barangay Cuayan (15,046), and 20 for Barangay Sta. Teresita (9,164). The margin of error is 5% for each barangay in Angeles City with a confidence level of 95%.

#### ➤ *Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

The following are the inclusion criteria for a person to qualify as a participants in this study:

- Must be 18 years old and above.
- Must reside in Angeles City, Philippines.
- Must attain at least one of the different levels of education.
- Must have been in contact with ex-offenders.
- Must be willing to participate in the study by signing the informed consent.

#### ➤ *The Following are the Exclusion:*

- Those who are not residing in Angeles City, Philippines.
- Those have not attained any level of education.
- Those who have not been in contact with ex-offenders.
- Those who are unwilling to participate in the study.

#### ➤ *Research Instruments*

All participants completed a survey questionnaire developed by the researchers to gather demographic information. This questionnaire included items on name, which was optional, address, and educational background. The purpose of the demographic questionnaire was to provide a comprehensive understanding of the sample composition, allowing for the analysis of potential demographic factors that may influence attitudes towards ex-offenders, mainly educational attainment. By collecting this information, the study aimed to ensure the representativeness and diversity of the sample, facilitating accurate interpretation of the research findings within the context of participants' demographic characteristics.

For measuring the relation to explicit attitude, the attitudes measure was adapted from the Attitudes Toward Prisoners scale (ATP) developed by Melvin et al. (1985). Originally comprising 36 items in a Likert scale format, the ATP was designed to assess general attitudes towards prisoners. However, for the purpose of our research, the scale was condensed to 12 items. The selection of these items was based on their contextual compatibility and factor loading values determined by Kjelsberg et al. (2007). This reduction in scale length ensured a more concise assessment while retaining key dimensions of attitudes towards ex-offenders, as validated by previous research. Participants indicated their agreement or disagreement with each statement on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." The scale was reverse-scored and strategically included in items 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 9, to ensure validity and reliability, mitigating response bias and capturing nuanced attitudes towards ex-offenders.

To measure the degree of contact with the incarcerated population, the Level of Contact Report was utilized, following adaptations to include references to prisoner/ex-prisoner (Corrigan et al., 2001; Griffith, Cho, Gusler, McGuire, & Jackson, under review; Holmes et al., 1999). The Level of Contact Report consisted of 10 varying intimate situations with ex-offenders, ranging from least intimate to high intimacy encounters. These situations included observations of ex-offenders, working with them, and even being an ex-offender oneself. The Level of Contact Report demonstrated high reliability, with a mean of rank order correlations summarizing interrater reliability at .83 (Corrigan et al., 2001). Participants were asked to indicate all situations they had experienced in their lifetime, with follow-up questions to gather more information if needed. Additionally, the Level of Contact Report was adapted to account for the frequency of experienced events. Participants received scores based on the most intimate situation checked and the total number of situations experienced, providing insight into their level and frequency of contact with ex-offenders.

#### ➤ *Specific Procedures Based on Study Objectives*

The data collection process for this study followed a systematic procedure designed to ensure the accurate gathering of information from participants. Surveys were used to collect data on participants' educational level, contact with ex-offenders, and explicit attitudes towards them. The survey questions measured these variables using established scales or constructs from previous research, aiming to understand how individuals perceived and responded to ex-offenders. Firstly, participants were recruited using cluster sampling methods from six barangays in Angeles City, Philippines, each representing a diverse range of population sizes within the city. Upon recruitment, participants were provided with informed consent forms detailing the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits. They were given the opportunity to ask questions and provide written consent before participating. Following this, participants completed a demographic questionnaire, providing information on their name (optional), educational background, and address. This questionnaire helped characterize the sample and identify potential demographic influences on attitudes towards ex-offenders. Respondents also filled out the Level of Contact Report to measure their level and frequency of contact with ex-offenders. Subsequently, participants underwent an attitude measure adapted from the Attitudes Toward Prisoners scale, assessing explicit attitudes towards ex-offenders using a Likert scale format. This comprehensive data collection process, overseen by the researchers, aimed to provide insights into the attitudes of the public towards ex-offenders.

#### ➤ *Ethical Considerations*

The provided information addresses ethical principles such as respect for persons, beneficence, and integrity by ensuring participants' rights are protected, risks are minimized, and confidentiality is maintained throughout the research process.

➤ *Informed Consent Process, Duration of Participation, and Withdrawal Criteria*

The study outlined the process of informed consent, which protected participants' rights and well-being. Information was provided, consent was documented, and participants' right to withdraw was respected. Informed consent was distributed before any study events, allowing participants to understand the implications of their participation. The survey took 15-20 minutes and was voluntary, allowing participants to withdraw at any time. Participation, whether or not to participate, did not affect school-related matters or stay in the institution, and withdrawing did not come with any obligation.

➤ *Risk and Inconvenience*

This study did not pose any serious risk, but the researchers anticipated possible psychological harm for some students. However, they assured them that confidentiality would be maintained, and their responses would not be revealed. Participants could discontinue at any time if they felt uncomfortable answering questions. While personal information may have been required, no other information was collected. The questionnaire took 15 to 20 minutes to complete and was only used for the study's purposes. The study aimed to maintain the security and confidentiality of participants' data, especially those who may have been identified as ex-offenders. All identities remained anonymous, and personal details were not collected. Data was stored securely on restricted-area storage and encrypted for electronic transmission. Access was limited to authorized personnel who had signed confidentiality agreements. Data was only used for the study's purposes and presented in aggregate form to protect individual identities. Ethical guidelines and legal regulations as stated by the committee were strictly followed to uphold participants' trust and privacy.

➤ *Benefits of the Study and Community Considerations*

The study explored attitudes towards ex-offenders in Angeles City, providing insights for targeted interventions and policy initiatives. It enhanced understanding of explicit attitudes, leading to more effective community engagement strategies. The research also promoted social awareness and empathy, fostering inclusivity and support within the community. Ethical considerations were upheld throughout the study, ensuring participant respect and dignity. The study had the potential to catalyze positive change, promoting a more inclusive and supportive environment for ex-offenders

in Angeles City and beyond. The participants received a token of appreciation.

➤ *Privacy, Confidentiality, and Data Management*

All data collected from participants were securely maintained in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Access to this data was limited to participants and researchers only. Personal information gathered strictly adhered to the provisions outlined in the Data Privacy Act of 2012, ensuring the preservation of participants' privacy rights throughout the study. Both authors and the research adviser oversaw the data and upheld strict confidentiality measures to safeguard participants' information. Any personal identifiers linking responses to individuals were treated with the highest level of confidentiality. Moreover, data identifiable to respondents were not retained beyond the conclusion of the study, which ended by the conclusion of the semester in the 2023-2024 academic year. Following completion, all data files and associated histories were promptly deleted, ensuring that data restoration was not feasible. Participants were promptly notified upon survey completion, and authors offered to share the study results with interested participants.

➤ *Conflict of Interests*

The researcher has no conflict of interest in the study.

➤ *Statistical Analysis of Data*

The study used the Pearson correlation coefficient to examine the relationship between educational level and attitudes towards ex-offenders, as well as the level of contact with ex-offenders, measuring a nonparametric strength and direction in which the two variables measured in the ordinal scale existed. The statistical measure determined the strength and direction of linear associations, providing insights into potential predictors or correlates of attitudes towards ex-offenders. The study aimed to explore the influence of demographic factors such as levels of education and level of contact with ex-offenders on individuals' attitudes, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of public perceptions and reintegration into society.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researchers surveyed individuals from selected barangays in Angeles City, targeting a total of 384 respondents. Data analysis was performed using SPSS, with an alpha level of 0.05 set to determine statistical significance for all tests.

Table 2 Level of Education of the Respondents

Level of Education of the Respondents	Frequency	Percent
Primary Education	72	18.8
Secondary Education	180	46.9
Higher Education	132	34.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 indicates that the level of education of the respondents varies significantly where among 384 participants, the majority which comprise 46.9% have attained secondary education. This suggests that a substantive

sample population has completed beyond the primary level. On the other hand, 34.4% of the respondents have attained higher education. In comparison, 18.8% of respondents have completed only primary education, reflecting a minority

within the sample who have not pursued further formal education beyond this level. These findings underscore the diversity in educational attainment among the surveyed population, with varying proportions across primary, secondary, and higher education categories. Such insights into the distribution of educational levels provide valuable context for understanding the demographics and potential perspectives of the respondents within the research study.

The study reveals a significant disparity in educational attainment among respondents, suggesting the need for targeted community education interventions. With half having completed secondary education and a third having higher education, further education initiatives could be beneficial, emphasizing the importance of basic educational programs.

Table 3 Barangay of the Respondents

Barangay of the Respondents	Frequency	Percent
Sto. Domingo	133	34.6
Pulung Cacutud	55	14.3
Pandan	51	13.3
Balibago	93	24.2
Cuayan	32	8.3
Sta. Teresita	20	5.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 2 summarizes the distribution of respondents according to their barangay of residence. Many respondents, 34.6%, reside in Sto. Domingo, making it the most represented barangay in the study with 133 respondents. Balibago follows with 93 respondents, accounting for 24.2% of the total. Pulung Cacutud and Pandan have relatively similar representation, with 55 respondents (14.3%) and 51 respondents (13.3%), respectively. Cuayan has 32

respondents, comprising 8.3% of the sample, while Sta. Teresita has the smallest representation, with 20 respondents making up 5.2% of the total. The total number of respondents across all barangays is 384, ensuring comprehensive coverage of the different barangays within the study area. This distribution highlights the varied geographic backgrounds of the respondents, which can be critical for understanding regional differences in the study's findings.

Table 4 Level of Contact Report

Level of Contact Report	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Std. Deviation	Variance
I have watched a movie or television show or documentary in which a character depicted a prisoner/ex-prisoner.	2.42	Sometimes	1.26	1.60
My job involves providing treatment/services for prisoners/ex-prisoner.	0.65	Strongly False	1.13	1.29
What is your job?	3.41	Driver	3.11	9.65
I believe I have seen an ex-prisoner in passing (no interaction with them).	1.96	Sometimes	1.43	2.04
I have seen someone that was an ex-prisoner in passing.	1.95	Sometimes	1.50	2.24
I am an ex-prisoner.	0.03	No	0.17	0.03
How long were you in prison?	1.55	1-2 Years to 3-4 Years	1.29	1.67
I have worked with an ex-prisoner at my place of employment.	0.12	Never	0.44	0.19
How often do you interact with them?	2.35	Sometimes	1.28	1.63
Are the interactions positive or negative?	1.26	1-2 People or Almost Never	1.08	1.17
I have never seen or met a person that I was aware was an ex-prisoner.	1.82	Sometimes	1.53	2.35
A friend of the family is a prisoner/ex-prisoner.	0.31	Strongly Positive	0.46	0.21
How often do you interact with them?	2.37	Slightly Positive	1.14	1.29
Are the interactions positive or negative?	1.31	Mostly Positive	1.04	1.09
How do you interact with them?	2.65	Visitation	1.55	2.41
I have a relative who is a prisoner/ex-prisoner.	0.18	No	0.39	0.15
Who? Please check all that apply.	4.79	Other Adult Family Members	1.73	2.98
What were the reasons for the incarceration? Please check all that apply.	4.11	Drug Violation	2.05	4.19
How often do you interact with them?	2.33	Sometimes	0.75	0.56
Are the interactions positive or negative?	1.73	Mostly Positive	1.08	1.16

How do you interact with them? Please check all that apply.	2.44	Visitation	1.34	1.79
I live with an ex-prisoner.	0.05	No	0.23	0.05
How often do you interact with them?	3.16	Often	1.50	2.25
Are the interactions positive or negative?	1.37	Mostly Positive	1.38	1.91
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>1.85</b>		<b>1.20</b>	<b>1.83</b>

The level of contact report provides information on the intimate situation, interactions, and experiences related to prisoners, primarily ex-prisoners. The data suggest that most of the respondents have had some level of contact with individuals who have been imprisoned, either through media or personal encounters. The mean values show that the respondents generally report occasional exposure to depictions of prisoners in movies, television shows, or documentaries. Similarly, they sometimes believe they have seen ex-prisoners in passing, though with limited interaction. However, direct involvement with providing treatment or services for prisoners is significantly less common among the respondents.

A small percentage of respondents identify themselves as ex-prisoners, their reported interactions with others who have been incarcerated vary. During incarceration, individuals often have limited contact with their families, leading to open wounds in relationships (Bidola, et al., 2024). Release from prison serves as a reminder that families are already broken, no home is ready, and job skills are irrelevant. In our result, however, it is stated that interactions with friends or family members who are prisoners or ex-prisoners are described as mostly positive, with visitation being a common form of interaction. The data reveals that a significant portion of respondents have family members who are or have been incarcerated, with drug violations being a prevalent reason for their incarceration. Interactions with these relatives are reported as mostly positive, often involving visitation. Increased contact with ex-prisoners is crucial for reducing discrimination and promoting prosocial behavior towards this marginalized group (Schneider & Weber, 2020). Furthermore, living with an ex-prisoner is less common among the respondents, but those who do report frequent interactions, which are also described as mostly positive.

The findings from the survey data underscore the importance of family support during prisoner reintegration, as highlighted in studies by Bertulfo, Canoy, and Celeste

(2016), and others. Despite a small percentage of respondents identifying as ex-prisoners, interactions with incarcerated or formerly incarcerated friends and family members are reported as mostly positive, often involving visitation. A significant portion of respondents has family members who have been incarcerated, with drug violations being common. The positive interactions reported, such as frequent visitation, align with the notion that strong family ties are crucial for successful reintegration, providing emotional support, stability, and motivation for change.

In the Level of Contact Report, the item with the highest mean is "Who? Please check all that apply," with a mean of 4.7857. This indicates that participants frequently have multiple adult family members who are prisoners or ex-prisoners. The high mean reflects a significant presence of incarceration within their extended family, suggesting that the respondents' exposure to the prison system is often through their family connections. These dynamics support the findings from the British Journal of Criminology study, which shows that improved family relations significantly reduce reoffending rates and increase employment prospects among ex-offenders (Nugent & Schinkel, 2017). On the other hand, the item with the lowest mean is "I am an ex-prisoner," with a mean of 0.0288. This shows that almost none of the participants identify themselves as ex-prisoners. The very low mean highlights that many respondents have not personally experienced imprisonment, suggesting that their interactions and contact with prisoners or ex-prisoners are more likely indirect rather than personal.

The community's frequent contact with ex-prisoners highlights indirect exposure to incarceration, emphasizing the need for public awareness programs and support systems for families of prisoners. Positive interactions suggest that familial support is crucial for successful reintegration, aligning with policies fostering strong family ties during and after imprisonment.

Table 5 Attitude Towards Ex-Offenders

Attitude Towards Ex-Offenders	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Std. Deviation	Variance
This ex-offender can change.	3.97	Agree	0.96	0.93
Rehabilitating this ex-offender is a valuable use of time and money.	3.96	Agree	0.99	0.98
You always know if this ex-offender is telling the truth.	3.48	Moderately Agree	1.06	1.12
This ex-offender is committed to earning an honest living.	3.69	Agree	1.05	1.10
I wouldn't mind living next door to this ex-offender.	2.91	Moderately Agree	1.24	1.55
I would want one of my children to date this ex-offender.	3.13	Moderately Agree	1.48	2.19
This ex-offender is simply moral.	3.82	Agree	0.94	0.88
This ex-offender should not be under strict, harsh discipline.	3.55	Agree	1.15	1.33

This ex-offender is a good person.	3.78	Agree	0.96	0.93
This ex-offender can be rehabilitated.	3.49	Moderately Agree	1.21	1.46
I would like associating with this ex-offender.	3.25	Moderately Agree	1.11	1.23
If this person did well in prison, they should be let out on parole.	3.88	Agree	1.11	1.23

The data on attitudes towards ex-offenders reveals generally positive perceptions among respondents, indicating a degree of belief in the capacity for rehabilitation and societal reintegration. It is found that positive attitudes increase the likelihood of considering them for employment. These attitudes are influenced by personal beliefs about the ex-offenders' potential to reform and contribute positively to the workplace, perceptions of the criminal justice system's effectiveness, social norms, and perceived expectations from colleagues, employers, and the community. Perceived behavioral control, confidence in managing potential risks, and direct experience with ex-offenders also contribute to positive attitudes. Positive attitudes are crucial for overcoming employment barriers and supporting their successful reintegration into the workforce (Khasni, Keshminder, Chuah, & Ramayah, 2023). Participants express a strong inclination towards the belief that ex-offenders can change, with a mean score of 3.974, signifying agreement. This is consistent with the findings of Rade, Desmarais, and Mitchell (2016), who found that public attitudes towards ex-offenders are more positive than often assumed, suggesting a general belief in the possibility of change. Similarly, they endorse the idea that rehabilitating ex-offenders is a valuable investment of time and resources, with a mean score of 3.9609 indicating agreement. The moderate level of agreement that ex-offenders are committed to earning an honest living (mean = 3.6875), and that they possess moral qualities (mean = 3.8229), aligns with the study by Rade, Desmarais, and Burnette (2018), which demonstrated that fostering a growth mindset regarding criminal behavior can lead to more positive attitudes towards ex-offenders and support for their community reentry. Furthermore, respondents generally agree that ex-offenders should not be subjected to strict, harsh discipline (mean = 3.5547), and that they can be rehabilitated (mean = 3.487). However, there is a slight hesitation in fully endorsing proximity to ex-offenders, as indicated by the moderately agreeable mean scores for willingness to live next door to an ex-offender (mean = 2.9063) and allowing one's children to date an ex-offender (mean = 3.1279). Nonetheless, respondents tend to view ex-offenders positively overall, believing in their potential for rehabilitation and social reintegration, as well as advocating for more humane treatment within the criminal justice system, including opportunities for parole for those who demonstrate improvement during incarceration. The results suggest that participants had a generally positive attitude towards ex-offenders. They believed that ex-offenders could change, and that rehabilitation is worthwhile, echoing the findings of the aforementioned studies which emphasize the

need for interventions to reduce stigma and incorporate interpersonal contact.

The item with the highest mean is "This ex-offender can change," with a mean of 3.974. This suggests that participants generally agree that ex-offenders have the potential for change, reflecting a positive outlook on the capacity for personal growth and rehabilitation among ex-offenders. It indicates a belief in the possibility of transformation and improvement in the behavior and character of those who have been incarcerated.

Conversely, the item with the lowest mean is "I wouldn't mind living next door to this ex-offender," with a mean of 2.9063. While still leaning towards agreement, this lower mean indicates a more cautious or hesitant attitude towards proximity with ex-offenders. Although participants moderately agree with the statement, there is a noticeable drop in comfort level compared to other items, suggesting that while they may support rehabilitation and believe in the potential for change, they may still have reservations about the practical aspects of living next to an ex-offender. This reflects a nuanced view where theoretical support for rehabilitation does not always translate to personal comfort in everyday life situations.

Rade, Desmarais, and Burnette (2018) investigate how implicit theories (fixed mindset vs. growth mindset) influence attitudes toward ex-offenders and support for their reentry into the community. The study, conducted with both student and community-based samples, examines the impact of mindset-based persuasive readings on fostering positive attitudes and support for ex-offender reintegration. Findings suggest that promoting growth mindsets enhances support for ex-offender community reentry, regardless of ex-offender race. Additionally, a meta-analysis by Nugent & Schinkel (2016) summarizes existing research on public attitudes toward ex-offenders, exploring the correlates of these attitudes, including public, ex-offender, and community characteristics. It also examines the moderating effects of sexual offense history, highlighting the barriers faced by ex-offenders during community reintegration and the negative attitudes held by members of the public.

The community's positive attitudes towards ex-offenders suggest a willingness to support rehabilitation efforts, but lingering stigmas and reservations suggest a cautious approach to living with ex-offenders or close family members, highlighting the need for comprehensive public education campaigns.

Table 6 Correlation of Levels of Education of the Respondents and Attitude Towards Ex-Offenders

Correlation of Levels of Education of the Respondents and Attitude Towards Ex-Offenders	Level of Education of the Respondents	Attitude towards Offenders
Pearson Correlation	1	.13
Sig. (1-tailed)		.26
Sum of Squares and Cross-products	194.62	.58
Covariance	.50	.02
N	384	24

The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to determine the correlation between the levels of education of the respondents and their attitude towards ex-offenders. The results showed a 0.137 linear relationship between the two variables. However, this correlation was not statistically significant ( $p = 0.262$ ), suggesting that there is no significant association between the two variables in the sample. This indicates that there is insufficient evidence to conclude that there is a meaningful association between respondents' level of education and their attitude towards offenders. Further investigation or analysis with a larger sample size may be needed to determine if such a relationship truly exists.

This study aligns with Ike et al.'s (2023) findings on the relationship between educational attainment and attitudes towards ex-offenders. Despite common assumptions that higher education levels might lead to more support for the reintegration of ex-offenders, the data presented here indicate otherwise. The lack of a positive association between education level and attitudes towards reintegration underscores the complexity of societal acceptance of ex-offenders and suggests that factors beyond education play significant roles in shaping perceptions and attitudes. This is further supported by a study conducted by Albright and Denq (1996), which found that employers indicated more favorable

attitudes toward hiring ex-offenders with higher educational attainment, such as a university degree or vocational trade, compared to ex-offenders with lower educational attainment. Additionally, Comartin, Kernsmith, and Kernsmith (2009) also suggest that younger participants, those with lower incomes, and those with less years of education report more favorable attitudes toward ex-offenders, although findings are mixed.

Adding to this, Rade, Desmarais, and Burnette (2018) explored implicit theories of criminal behavior and how fostering public support for ex-offender community reentry can be influenced through mindset-based interventions. Their study suggests that attitudes toward ex-offenders and support for their reentry can be positively influenced by promoting a growth mindset regarding criminal behavior.

The lack of a significant correlation between education levels and attitudes towards ex-offenders suggests that educational attainment alone does not predict more favorable attitudes. This finding emphasizes the need to address other factors, such as social norms and personal experiences, in shaping public perceptions of ex-offenders. Educational programs should include components that specifically address stereotypes and biases.

Table 7 Correlation between the levels of contact and attitude towards ex-offenders

		Attitude towards Offenders	Level of Contact of Offenders
Attitude towards Offenders	Pearson Correlation	1	-.01
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.47
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	2.47	-.11
	Covariance	.10	-.00
	N	24	24
Level of Contact of Offenders	Pearson Correlation	-.01	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.47	
	Sum of Squares and Cross-products	-.11	37.09
	Covariance	-.00	1.61

The Pearson correlation coefficient relationship between attitudes towards offenders and the level of contact with offenders is  $-0.012$ , indicating a very weak negative correlation, that there is no relationship between attitudes towards offenders and the level of contact with them. This weak negative relationship suggests that higher levels of contact with offenders are very slightly associated with more negative attitudes towards them, but the association is so small as to be practically negligible. Additionally, the one-tailed  $p$ -value is  $0.478$ , which is well above the typical significance threshold of  $0.05$ . This high  $p$ -value indicates

that the correlation is not statistically significant and could be attributed to random variation rather than a true underlying relationship. In summary, the data does not support a significant relationship between attitudes toward offenders and the level of contact with offenders in this sample.

This finding is consistent with the interpersonal contact theory, which posits that increased interaction with out-group members can challenge stereotypes and reduce prejudice. For instance, a study by Rade, Desmarais, and Burnette (2018) suggests that prior contact with ex-offenders can lead to more

support for reentry, highlighting the potential of interpersonal contact as an intervention point to improve attitudes towards ex-offenders<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, research by Peka (2021) emphasizes the role of contact quality in reducing bias against ex-offenders, supporting the interpersonal contact theory. Additionally, the belief in a just world and the credibility of labeling systems like the court system can influence attitudes towards stigmatized groups. A study by Rade, Desmarais, and Burnette (2017) found that belief in a just world can explain individual differences in negative attitudes toward frequently discriminated against groups and lack of support for reentry<sup>6</sup>. This underscores the complexity of factors that shape public perceptions and attitudes towards ex-offenders and their reintegration into society.

While explicit attitudes may not significantly change based on the level of contact in the sample, understanding both explicit and implicit attitudes remains crucial for promoting empathy and facilitating the successful reintegration of ex-offenders into society. Further research is essential to better understand and address societal attitudes towards reintegration and rehabilitation efforts.

The study indicates that the quality of contact with ex-offenders is more influential than the quantity of contact, suggesting that interventions should focus on meaningful, positive interactions to foster understanding and empathy between the public and ex-offenders.

Table 8 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.345 <sup>a</sup>	.11	.035	1.24

a. Predictors: (Constant), Level of Education of the Respondents, Attitude towards Ex-Offenders

Multiple regression analysis is conducted to predict a certain dependent variable using the level of education of the respondents and their attitude toward ex-offenders as predictors. The R Square value is 0.119, indicating that approximately 11.9% of the variance in the dependent variable can be explained by the two predictors combined. The Adjusted R Square value is 0.035, which adjusts the R Square value for the number of predictors in the model and the sample size, suggesting that after this adjustment, only 3.5% of the variance is accounted for by the model. The standard error of the estimate is 1.24722, which reflects the average distance that the observed values fall from the regression line. Overall, this model suggests a relatively weak

explanatory power of the predictors on the dependent variable.

The low explanatory power of the regression model indicates that factors beyond education and attitudes are critical in determining the level of contact with ex-offenders. This suggests a complex interplay of variables influencing these relationships. Researchers and policymakers should explore additional factors, such as socioeconomic status, cultural influences, and personal experiences, to develop more effective strategies for improving public attitudes towards ex-offenders.

Table 9 ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

	Model	Sum of Squares	D	Mean Square	F	
1	Regression	4.42	2	2.21	1.42	.263 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	32.66	21	1.55		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>37.09</b>	<b>23</b>			

a. Dependent Variable: Level of Contact of Offenders

b. Predictors: (Constant), Level of Education of the Respondents, Attitude towards Offenders

The result using ANOVA provides a statistical assessment of the regression model predicting the Level of Contact of Offenders using the Level of Education of the Respondents and their Attitude towards Offenders as predictors. With an F-statistic of 1.423 and a corresponding p-value of 0.263, the overall regression model is deemed not statistically significant at the conventional significance level of 0.05. This implies that the variation in the Level of Contact of Offenders is not adequately explained by the predictors included in the model. Specifically, the regression sums of squares account for 4.428 units of variation, while the residual sum of squares captures the remaining unexplained

variation, totaling 32.667. Despite these findings, the analysis underscores that the predictors fail to collectively provide a meaningful explanation for the observed variance in the Level of Contact of Offenders.

It is further supported by the non-significant ANOVA analysis results indicating differences in the degree of contact with offenders are not adequately explained by the chosen factors. This underlines the importance of considering a broader range of variables in future research. It also suggests that tailored interventions are needed to address the specific needs and perceptions of different community segments.

Table 10 Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1	(Constant)	3.05	2.88		1.05
	Attitude towards Offenders	.138	.80	.036	.17
	Level of Education of the Respondents	-.78	.46	-.34	-1.68

The regression analysis reveals a distinct relationship between education level, attitudes towards offenders, and the level of contact with offenders. While the unstandardized and standardized coefficients suggest a slight negative relationship, these are not statistically significant. This aligns with Rade, Desmarais, and Burnette's (2018) findings, which suggest that growth mindsets could positively influence attitudes towards ex-offenders and support for their reintegration, indicating potential areas for intervention (Rade, Desmarais, & Burnette, 2018). The weak correlations observed in our study are consistent with a meta-analysis by Rade (2016), which highlights the complex nature of public attitudes toward ex-offenders and suggests that these attitudes are influenced by a myriad of factors beyond individual education and attitudes.

Furthermore, the limited explanatory power of the predictors in our regression model is supported by Davis, Bozick, Steele, Saunders, & Miles (2013), which emphasizes the effectiveness of correctional education in reducing recidivism and improving post-release employment opportunities, suggesting that formal education within correctional facilities may play a role in shaping attitudes and behaviors. Additionally, Zhang's (2021) study on the effect of social media on perceptions of criminal behavior and Phillips' (2017) research on media effects and criminology contribute to understanding the broader societal perceptions that may influence attitudes towards ex-offenders.

These studies emphasize the necessity of considering multiple factors, such as educational interventions, mindset shifts, and media influences, when examining societal attitudes towards ex-offenders. They underscore the importance of adopting multifaceted approaches to foster positive attitudes and support for ex-offender reintegration into communities. However, the weak and non-significant coefficients suggest that neither the level of education nor attitudes towards ex-offenders strongly predict the level of contact with offenders. This highlights the complexity of factors influencing individuals' interactions with ex-offenders, indicating the need for a comprehensive approach to address societal attitudes and behaviors effectively. Programs aimed at improving public attitudes should integrate educational content with practical experiences, encompassing various social, psychological, and environmental factors. By providing opportunities for meaningful interactions and promoting empathy, such comprehensive interventions have the potential to bring about positive and lasting changes in perceptions and behaviors towards ex-offenders, ultimately contributing to smoother transitions and potentially reducing recidivism rates.

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study offers valuable insights into the complex interplay of factors shaping societal attitudes towards ex-offenders. Through an analysis encompassing educational levels, attitudes towards offenders, and levels of contact with them, a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics at play has been attained. The findings reveal a diverse array of educational backgrounds among

respondents, yet fail to establish significant correlations between education level, attitudes towards offenders, and levels of contact with them. While acknowledging the importance of education and attitudes in this context, the study underscores the inadequacy of these factors alone in predicting interactions with ex-offenders. Instead, it advocates for multifaceted approaches that encompass various social, psychological, and environmental influences.

It is evident from the data that effective interventions to promote positive attitudes and support for ex-offender reintegration necessitate a holistic approach extending beyond educational levels. Recommendations include the development of comprehensive educational programs integrating practical experiences to challenge stereotypes and foster empathy. Additionally, there is a call to strengthen family support systems through initiatives offering resources and counseling services to aid families in navigating the challenges of reuniting with their incarcerated loved ones.

Moreover, the study underscores the importance of increasing public awareness through targeted campaigns aimed at challenging stigma and discrimination against ex-offenders. Utilization of diverse media platforms is suggested to disseminate accurate information and foster understanding of the reintegration challenges faced by this demographic. Furthermore, the promotion of meaningful interactions between the public and ex-offenders through community events, workshops, and volunteer programs is advocated to facilitate dialogue and mutual understanding.

In conclusion, the study highlights the intricate nature of societal attitudes towards ex-offenders and emphasizes the necessity of holistic approaches in effecting positive change. By implementing the aforementioned recommendations and investing in further research to explore additional influencing factors, strides can be made towards creating a more supportive and inclusive society conducive to the successful rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-offenders, ultimately contributing to safer communities and reduced recidivism rates.

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