Investigating the Potential interventions and policy Recommendations for Reducing Criminal Recidivism: Qualitative study in the Eastern Cape, South Africa

Luphumzo Dwabayo[1], Oluwayemi IbukunOluwa Odularu[2]

Abstract

Purpose: the purpose of this paper is to identify potential interventions and policy recommendation for criminal recidivism in Chris Hani community, Eastern Cape, South Africa. This paper endeavors to combat re-offending whilst affording offenders the opportunity to prove that they are worthy of the trust of the community. Research problem: Despite numerous interventions aimed at reducing recidivism, its persistence underscores the existence of underlying social dynamics that perpetuate cycles of re-incarceration. The research identifies key challenges, including limited economic resources and a lack of access to critical support systems, which increase the vulnerability of ex-convicts to re-offend. Containment theory: The study is grounded in Containment. This theory uses two reinforcing structures such as inner containment and outer containment, which posits that both internal and external factors influence an individual's ability to resist criminal behaviour. Provides a basis for designing interventions that strengthen personal and social containment mechanisms to minimize the likelihood of re-offending. These two structures also act as buffer or insulator between the individual and deviant behavior. Sample size: Sample size of 30 respondents of which 15 are males and 15 females was carefully selected from Chris Hani X-convicts to represent the whole population. Data collection method: semi-structured interviews were used as primary data collection method for the study. Research design: the study adopted observational research design which allows the researcher to study and measure variables of interest in their natural settings without directly intervening in participant's lives. Delimitations to the study: Delimitations of the study involve geographic scope, timeframe, participant demographics and ethical considerations.

Keywords: *Criminal Recidivism, Re-offending, Delimitations, Containment theory, Purpose.*

Introduction

According to Mayowa (2024), criminal recidivism the tendency of individuals to re-offend after being released from prison is a multifaceted issue influenced by socio-economic factors, inadequate rehabilitation programs, and societal stigma. These challenges severely hinder successful reintegration into society. The term "recidivism" is derived from the Latin roots *re*, meaning "back," and *cadere*, meaning "to fall," and it is commonly used to describe the relapse of individuals into criminal behavior after serving their sentences. Mayowa (2024) further notes that various factors influence recidivism, including the length and severity of prison sentences, particularly when sentencing does not correspond to the gravity of the crime committed. This study aims to examine potential interventions and propose policy recommendations to address criminal recidivism within the Chris Hani community.

Globally, the United States records the highest recidivism rates. In 2001 alone, over 1.2 million individuals were incarcerated. According to recent data from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, the country continues to lead in recidivism. In South Africa, the situation is similarly alarming, with between 86% and 94% of convicted offenders reportedly reoffending after their release, indicating a deeply entrenched cycle of criminal behavior. South Africa's punitive approach to crime is widely criticized as a systemic failure. Notably, individuals incarcerated for property crimes exhibit the highest rates of recidivism, with 78% being re-arrested within five years. The concept of criminal recidivism gained scholarly attention in the early 1970s, during a period marked by rising reconviction rates (Mreda, 2020). Recidivism is now viewed as a key metric for evaluating the effectiveness of correctional programs and is defined as the continued involvement of formerly incarcerated individuals in criminal activities (Molina-Coloma & Salaberria, 2022). Ideally, incarceration should serve a rehabilitative purpose by equipping inmates with life skills and

[1] Faculty of Law, Humanities and Social Sciences, Walter Sisulu University, Mthatha 5100 Eastern Cape, South Africa. E-mail. dwabayoemihle@gmail.com

[2] Faculty of Law,Humanities and Social Sciences, Library and information unit, Mthatha 5100. Eastern Cape, South Africa (ORCID: 000-00032089-7970). E-mail: oodularu@wsu.ac.za (Corresponding Authors)

promoting lawful behavior to support reintegration. However, Newman and Lamberti (2020) report that a significant number of ex-convicts return to prison within months of release, suggesting the system's failure to meet these goals.

Several economic, social, and cultural factors shape recidivism trends. Brown (2024) identifies homelessness, peer influence, age, media exposure, family structure, gender, and inadequate parenting as key social drivers. Bowers (2021) emphasizes that neglect, poor child-rearing practices, family stress, and lack of parental care contribute to the development of deviant behavior. The role of education is also critical. Preda and Erkan (2022) argue that school dropouts and low educational attainment are strong predictors of reoffending. Substance abuse remains a major contributing factor. Rahman (2020) asserts that drug and alcohol abuse significantly drive criminal behavior, with many violent crimes committed under the influence. Gana et al. (2021) support this view, observing that many delinquents engage in offenses while intoxicated, underscoring the connection between substance abuse and crime. The pharmacological effects of substances such as alcohol and drugs impair judgment, increase impulsivity, agitation, and aggression, all of which elevate the risk of violent behavior (Lamberti et al., 2020). Offenders are often more impulsive than the general population, a tendency also linked to psychological disorders. Goodley et al. (2022) highlight the connection between mental disorders, psychopathy, and criminal conduct. While extensive global research exists on recidivism, there remains a significant gap in literature focusing on this issue in Ethiopia. Effective interventions must include educational initiatives, structured rehabilitation programs, and comprehensive reintegration strategies to prevent reoffending and support former inmates in becoming productive members of society.

Aims of the study

The study investigates potential intervention and policy recommendations for criminal recidivism.

Research Gap

According to Rainer (2022), a research or literature gap refers to areas in a field where knowledge is lacking or unresolved, indicating the need for further study. A tragic case in Lusikisiki, Eastern Cape, where parolee Siphosoxolo Myeketa was rearrested for allegedly killing 18 people, underscores the severity of recidivism. This incident illustrates the threat it poses to community safety. Justice Minister Ronald Lamola highlighted South Africa's high recidivism rate, noting its role in eroding public trust, increasing incarceration, and escalating crime. Recidivism affects not only the justice system but also families, the economy, and social welfare. Probst (2021) emphasizes that high recidivism rates traumatize victims and destabilize families, often leading to broken homes, poverty, and limited resources. It also contributes to prison overcrowding, legal costs, and burdens probation departments, straining South Africa's already limited public resources. In the Chris Hani Community, these impacts are particularly severe. Raveena (2022) notes a rise in child-headed and single-parent households due to recidivism, forcing children into adult roles prematurely. SAPS statistics indicate the Eastern Cape has one of the country's highest recidivism rates, with repeat offenders increasing from 112 in 2018 to 200 in 2022, raising public safety concerns.

This study aims to explore policy and intervention strategies to reduce recidivism in the Chris Hani Community. Despite its importance, the topic remains under-researched, poorly understood, and insufficiently clarified. Literature on interventions such as reintegration programs, employment support, and treatment of substance abuse and mental health issues helps identify these gaps. A key factor driving recidivism is unequal access to social resources. Cameron (2020) identifies lack of digital access, education, and job opportunities as major barriers. Many ex-offenders return to society without digital tools, job listings, or community support, making reintegration difficult. This digital divide worsens marginalization and limits employment and education opportunities. Andersen et al. (2020) highlight the importance of digital access for reintegration in today's society, yet Kithinji and Wagner (2021) note that how ex-offenders in the Chris Hani Community navigate digital tools remains unclear. Addressing these challenges is crucial for creating effective digital inclusion strategies. Poverty and limited resources further increase vulnerability to reoffending (Robinson, 2022). Understanding the intersection of these factors with recidivism is essential to dismantling structural barriers.

Support systems such as families, peer networks, and local services play a key role in reintegration. Lamberti et al. (2024) stress that these systems can either reduce or increase the risk of recidivism, making it vital to examine their influence in developing community-based solutions. Effective interventions must tackle digital illiteracy, provide economic support, and strengthen community safety. Tailored strategies that reflect the unique challenges faced by ex-offenders in the Chris Hani Community are essential for meaningful reintegration. Recidivism also poses challenges in other African contexts. Jacobs (2015) identifies similar issues in Nigeria, such as inadequate rehabilitation, limited vocational training, and outdated correctional facilities. These conditions leave ex-offenders unequipped to reintegrate, leading to joblessness and economic instability. Societal stigma and high neighborhood crime levels further marginalize them, increasing reoffending risks. A holistic approach is required. Following Mengist and Ransford's (2004) framework, Otu (2015) advocates for interventions targeting substance abuse, education, and employment key factors that influence successful reintegration. Substance abuse treatment addresses psychological triggers for crime, while education and skills training enhance employability. Employment offers stability and supports reintegration, ultimately lowering recidivism risk. The Chris Hani Community's challenges highlight the need for interventions that improve access to social resources, strengthen rehabilitation, and expand job opportunities. Governments and communities must focus on education, training, and employment to support reintegration, improve public safety, and reduce reoffending. Through a thorough review of literature, the researcher has identified critical knowledge gaps, contradictions, and inconsistencies across studies, reinforcing the need for focused research on criminal recidivism and sustainable reintegration strategies.

Justification of the study

This explains why a particular study is necessarily and important, linking the research questions to existing knowledge and highlighting gaps or issues that the study aims to address. The justification for this study lies in addressing critical interventions and recommendations for criminal recidivism to yell positive outcomes on controlling criminal recidivism (Farrington, & Herrero-Solana, 2024). High rates of recidivism highlight the need for a deeper understanding of the social factors driving ex-convicts to re-offend. This understanding is particularly relevant in the digital era, where access to online information plays a pivotal role in post-release outcomes, including employment, education, and support services. Social factors such as community support, family relationships, and peer influence profoundly affect an ex-convict's behavior and decision-making (Molina-Coloma et al., 2022). These social factors are crucial for reducing crime rates, promoting public safety, and improving the lives of former offenders. It's necessary for the communities to identify effective strategies and interventions. This study is crucial because high rate of re-offending hinders societal progress, impact public safety, and require understanding to develop effective interventions and recommendations to minimize recidivism. The findings of this study have the potential to inform evidence-based policies and intervention programs that address the root causes of recidivism. Policymakers can use these insights to allocate resources effectively and design impactful strategies, such as creating accessible digital literacy programs, online job boards, and targeted social welfare initiatives.

Literature Review

Its purpose is to investigate interventions and recommendations for reducing criminal recidivism. In particular, it finds problems associated with recidivism in this region, investigates the effects of information availability and social variables on recidivism in Chris Hani Community, and suggests interventions and recommendations or policy suggestions. Correctional facilities frequently implement group-based programs to address the limitations posed by a shortage of professional staff required to manage the complex issues inmates face (Stone et al., 2022). Research indicates that inmates generally express satisfaction with these group sessions, emphasizing the confidentiality and mutual trust that develop during and after these interactions (Bogna et al., 2020). To meet the diverse needs of inmates, specialized mental health training for service providers is essential (Povidaichyk, et al., 2022). While core correctional counselling services, including psychotherapy, behavioural therapy, in-patient hospitalization, activity-based therapy, and the administration of psychotropic medication, are necessary, these roles are frequently carried out by general prison staff. These staff members include correctional officers, nurses, case managers, and prison

administrators (Molina-Coloma et al., 2022). Typically, general prison staff adhere to regular work schedules, while other personnel, such as emergency response or crisis intervention teams, may be required to work extended 12-hour shifts (Sherrard, 2020). Efforts to manage inmate anger often involve social skills training, which equips them with non-hostile verbal communication techniques for handling tense situations (Agtong et al., 2023).

Criminal Recidivism

The concept of criminal recidivism gained prominence in the early 1970s, coinciding with a significant rise in the re-conviction rates of ex-convicts (Butts, 2021). Recidivism, now recognized as a key indicator of the effectiveness of correctional programs, is defined as the repeated engagement of offenders in criminal activities post-incarceration (Soothill, 2023). Ideally, incarceration aims to rehabilitate offenders, equipping them with skills and promoting lawful behaviour, enabling them to reintegrate into society. However, evidence indicates that many ex-convicts return to prison within months of release (Bogna, 2020). The objectives of imprisonment such as deterrence, incapacitation, retribution, public protection, deprivation of liberty, and rehabilitation are only partially achieved, as rehabilitation and reformation require deliberate and sustained efforts (Stone et al., 2022; Povidaichyk, et al., 2021). This underscores the critical need for structured reformation and reintegration programs to reduce recidivism and ensure successful community reintegration (Herrera, 2022; Bogna, et al., 2022). Reintegration programs, including counselling, training, and rehabilitation, aim to prepare ex-convicts for re-entry into society by addressing challenges such as unemployment, social isolation, and resocialization difficulties (Shahid & Ashraf, 2022; Riechmann, 2021). Effective programs are essential for reducing re-offending rates and promoting public safety. However, many such initiatives, including those in Ghana, have not significantly impacted recidivism rates (Jacobs et al., 2020). This global issue of recidivism has led to calls for more research to identify contributing factors and evidence-based solutions to reduce the societal and financial burdens of mass incarceration (Jacobs et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023). Studies show that individuals released from custody are at higher risk of reoffending than those who receive non-custodial sentences. For example, in the United States, 20% of released prisoners commit violent offences within three years, while in the United Kingdom, the economic and social costs of reoffending are significantly higher among released prisoners than those serving community sentences (Denver, 2020; Riechmann, 2021). The financial burden of recidivism, combined with its broader social implications, highlights the urgency of developing effective rehabilitation and reintegration strategies. Holistic approaches focusing on offender reformation, skills development, mental health support, and post-release supervision are recommended to address the gaps in current systems (Mareda, 2020). Recidivism rates also serve as benchmarks for evaluating the effectiveness of criminal justice policies and interventions globally. Comparative studies have revealed that individual, social, and environmental factors, such as economic disadvantage and exposure to criminogenic environments, significantly influence recidivism rates (Stone et al., 2022).

Impact of Criminal Recidivism in South African Society

According to Bogna et al. (2020), South Africa, as a developing country, faces many challenges high crime rates being among the most critical. The Chris Hani Community reflects this, grappling with recurring criminal behavior that threatens public safety and highlights the social, economic, and psychological drivers of recidivism (Bogna, 2021). Crime hampers national development, affecting financial stability, infrastructure, education, poverty reduction, and land reform efforts (Sotenjwa et al., 2023). Despite various prevention strategies, interventions have largely failed to ensure lasting behavioral change (Trood et al., 2021). Wang et al. (2023) identify recidivism as a key aspect of persistent criminal behavior, while Erdoğan and Erkan (2021) emphasize the urgent need for effective rehabilitation, reintegration, and post-release support. The Department of Correctional Services continues to face difficulties in providing such support. Collaboration among government, NGOs, and communities is essential to offer counselling, therapy, job assistance, and access to support networks. Early intervention and sustained care improve reintegration outcomes (Cronje & Peacock, 2023). Recidivism the tendency of ex-offenders to re-offend remains a major issue in South Africa's justice system. Many offenders remain caught in cycles of crime, contributing to rising social and economic costs (Sotenjwa et al., 2021). These costs go beyond re-incarceration, placing strain on public finances, welfare systems, and community stability. Addressing root causes such as

unemployment, substance abuse, weak social support, and limited rehabilitation access is vital. Strengthening correctional services and post-release programs is necessary to promote public safety and economic growth.

Comprehensive mental health and substance abuse treatment are critical for rehabilitation, helping offenders develop the coping skills needed for reintegration (Mareda, 2020). Strong family and community support structures through counselling, mediation, and reunification also reduce the risk of re-offending. Addressing these social factors plays a central role in breaking the cycle of recidivism. As Cameron (2020) states, recidivism demands a holistic response. Reducing re-offending requires targeted interventions and ongoing post-release support. Leeper et al. (2021) argue that investing in rehabilitation and tackling crime's root causes can help build safer, more resilient communities. With this approach, South Africa can make significant progress toward reducing recidivism and achieving social equity. Below is figure 1 depicts the Crimes Often Committed by Recidivists.
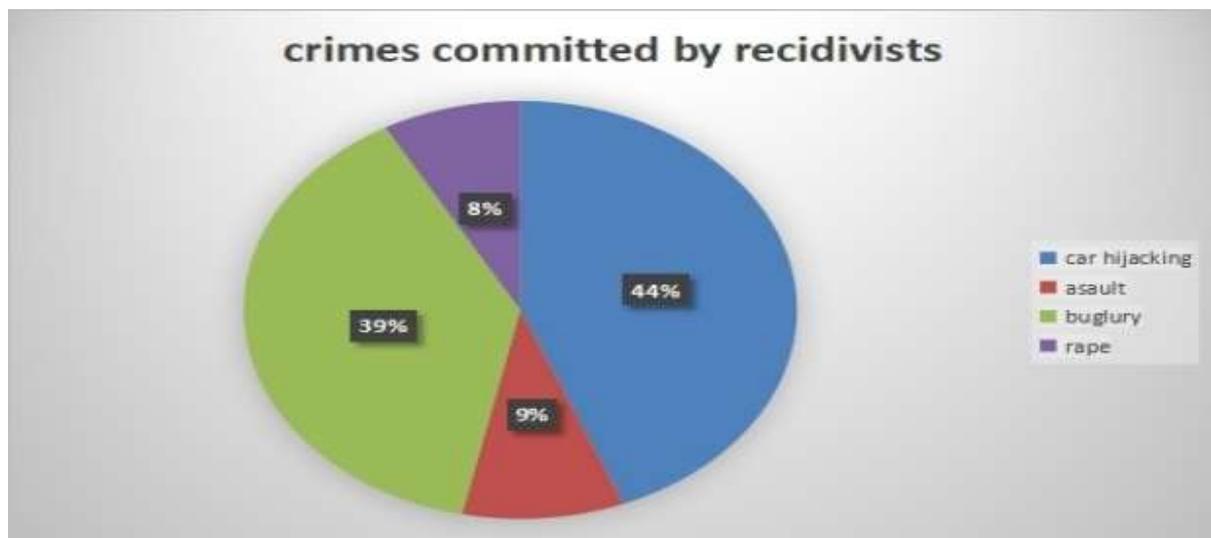

Figure 1: Crimes Often Committed by Recidivists.

 Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of crimes committed by recidivists, offering a visual depiction of the prevalence and patterns of criminal behavior among ex-convicts. The data indicates that car hijacking is the most common offense, accounting for 44% of the total crimes committed by recidivists. This is followed by burglary, which constitutes 39% of the offences. In comparison, assault and rape account for 9% and 8%, respectively. This breakdown highlights the dominance of property-related crimes, such as car hijacking and burglary, among recidivists, while violent crimes like assault and rape occur less frequently.

Potential Interventions and Policy Recommendations for Criminal Recidivism

Forensic counsellors use cognitive approaches to address negative attitudes and manage emotional and behavioural aspects of anger (Farrington, 2020). To improve social behaviour, they employ techniques such as role-playing, modelling, feedback, coaching, and anxiety-reduction methods like motivational interviewing (Sotenjwa et al., 2021; Trood et al., 2021). Given the complexity of offenders' needs, working with inmates requires specialized training (Sotenjwa, 2022). Though not trained as forensic counsellors, correctional officers often assume dual roles, primarily focusing on security, inmate conduct, and facility safety, while also supporting rehabilitation (Molina-Coloma et al., 2022; Andersen et al., 2020). Correctional officers interact closely with inmates, their contribution to rehabilitation is critical (Olsson, 2021). They are trained in essential counselling techniques, including communication, behaviour modification, conflict de-escalation, relaxation, and active listening, enabling them to manage behavioural crises effectively (Leeper, 2021). One such method is transcendental meditation, involving repeated key phrases to promote calmness and mental alertness (Ghasemi, 2021). These interventions have shown significant improvements in

inmates' mental health and behaviour (Shuja & Abbas, 2022). However, many rely on VRAG scores and overlook post-release support effectiveness, which is crucial for reducing recidivism (Shuja & Abbas, 2022). Latessa et al. (2020) studied probationers and parolees, finding that incarceration harms mental health and that support services are underused. When accessed, they improved inmates' well-being (Goodley et al., 2022; Gana et al., 2021). Literature highlights the need for more research on mental health and long-term reintegration outcomes (Butts, 2021). Identifying recidivism risk factors can help design targeted interventions.

To tackle criminal recidivism, comprehensive strategies must address education, mental health, substance abuse, social support, and systemic issues (Povidaichyk et al., 2021).

Educational and Vocational Training: In-prison education, including literacy, GED, and higher learning opportunities, reduces recidivism (Circo & Wheeler, 2021; Lamberti et al., 2020; Mayowa, 2024). Vocational training tailored to job market needs improves employment prospects (Sotenjwa et al., 2021).

Transitional Job Programs: Work release initiatives help inmates gain experience pre-release, paired with services like resume writing and interview preparation (Bansal et al., 2020).

Systemic Reforms: Policies should extend post-release counselling and combat employment and housing stigma (Shuja & Abbas, 2022).

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment: Comprehensive mental health care must include mandatory screenings, ongoing treatment, and post-release support (Busetto et al., 2020). Substance abuse programs should be in-prison and post-release, offering outpatient treatment and support groups (Bowles & Guerra, 2022).

Community-Based Re-entry Programs: Re-entry programs offering housing, jobs, and support reduce relapse rates (Farrington, 2020; Andersen et al., 2020).

Family Engagement: Family visits, counselling, and therapy rebuild relationships and aid reintegration (Probst et al., 2020; Bowles & Guerra, 2022).

Mentoring and Peer Support: Mentors guide former inmates through re-entry challenges, with peer support groups providing shared experiences (Probst et al., 2020).

Sentencing and Parole Reforms: Non-violent offenders should access alternatives like community service or probation (Maruna, 2020; Bowles & Guerra, 2022). Parole should focus on reintegration, supported by trained officers and comprehensive plans.

Reducing Re-entry Barriers: "Ban the Box" policies can reduce job discrimination. Employers should assess skills over criminal records (Circo & Wheeler, 2021; Molina-Coloma et al., 2022).

Housing Assistance: Programs offering transitional housing and rental support are critical. Collaboration with landlords can reduce discrimination (Circo & Wheeler, 2021).

Addressing Systemic Inequalities: Reducing racial disparities requires bias training and policy reforms (Bansal et al., 2023; Raveena, 2022). Data analysis can expose structural inequalities (Maruna, 2020).

Economic Opportunities: Job training and small business grants empower ex-offenders and reduce poverty-driven crime (Bansal et al., 2021; Brown, 2024).

Mapping Legal Frameworks: Reintegration policies require reviewing existing laws and eliminating inter-agency barriers (Olsson et al., 2023; Ghasemi et al., 2021).

Sentencing and Police Policies: Sentencing laws should promote non-custodial options. Police laws should enable collaboration with support agencies (Leeper et al., 2021;Olsson et al., 2020; Raveena, 2022).

Probation and Juvenile Justice: Probation services need better resources for monitoring and support (Dufour et al., 2023; Nnam et al., 2023). Juvenile justice reforms should focus on education and diversion (Lattimore, 2022; Robinson, 2022).

Privacy and Diversion Laws: Balancing privacy with efficient reintegration requires better information sharing among stakeholders (Goodley et al., 2022; Brown, 2024). Diversion programs help avoid incarceration and encourage early rehabilitation (Circo & Wheeler, 2021; Olsson et al., 2023).

Re-entry Data and Social Investment: GIS mapping helps identify high-risk communities and allocate resources (Lattimore, 2022; Raveena, 2022). Investments in community programs and outcome evaluations are vital (Irankunda et al., 2020; Gana et al., 2021; Agtong et al., 2023; Mayowa, 2024).

Peer and Family Influence: Criminal peer associations and lack of familial support increase risk (Beesley & McGuire, 2009; Murray & Farrington, 2010). Supportive networks are essential for breaking the cycle of reoffending.

Theoretical Framework

The researcher investigates various criminology theories pertinent to the study, referencing key insights from established criminology scholars. This exploration encompasses diverse perspectives to reveal potential interventions and recommendations for policy makers in criminal recidivism and strategies to mitigate it. Incorporating these theories supports the study's objectives, lending credibility to the research by grounding it in scientifically validated frameworks.

Containment Theory

Developed by Walter Reckless in the 1960s, containment theory explains criminal behaviour by focusing on the forces that either deter individuals from engaging in crime or propel them toward it. This theory emphasizes the interplay between **internal** and **external containment factors** as critical in shaping an individual's likelihood of committing criminal acts.

According to Olsson (2022), internal containment factors include:

- **Self-Concept:** This refers to an individual's self-esteem, self-image, and ability to exercise self-control. A strong, positive self-concept acts as a deterrent to criminal behavior, as individuals with high self-worth and confidence are less inclined to engage in illegal activities.

- **Goal Orientation:** A person's aspirations, moral compass, and value-driven goals play a key role. Those who pursue clear and constructive objectives are less likely to resort to crime, driven by an internal desire to achieve beneficial societal outcomes.

External containment factors identified by the theory include:

- **Social Ties:** Relationships with family, friends, and institutions such as schools and religious organizations act as crime deterrents. These bonds provide a sense of belonging and social approval, reducing the motivation to commit crimes.

- **Supervision and Control:** External oversight, such as law enforcement, community policing, and social structures, also helps deter deviant behavior. Effective mechanisms of external control are pivotal in maintaining societal order.

Preda (2022) expands on containment theory by highlighting two key mechanisms that shield individuals from deviant tendencies:

- **Outer Containment:** This involves societal mechanisms, including community norms, family structures, laws, and cultural expectations, which regulate behavior and ensure compliance with acceptable social standards. Outer containment is effective in curbing recidivism by reinforcing adherence to societal norms.

- **Inner Containment:** Bansal et al. (2023) describe this as an individual's inherent capacity to self-regulate and align with socially acceptable objectives. Positive self-image and goal-directed behavior form the cornerstone of inner containment. It empowers individuals to exercise self-discipline, make pro-social decisions, and resist the temptation to re-offend.

The Containment Theory provides a robust framework for understanding the potential interventions and policy recommendation for criminal recidivism. It underscores the importance of fostering both internal mechanisms, such as self-regulation, and external supports, such as social connections and structured supervision. This theoretical foundation informs the development of programs and policies aimed at reducing recidivism by enhancing self-control, strengthening social bonds, and ensuring effective oversight.

Application of the Containment Theory to the Study

Applying containment theory to identify potential interventions and recommendations for reducing criminal Recidivism among ex-convicts in the Chris Hani Community.

Inner Containment Factors: Internal containment elements, such as self-concept and goal orientation, significantly influence the likelihood of re-offending among ex-convicts. Participation in programs that enhance self-esteem and encourage prosocial objectives has the potential to diminish tendencies toward criminal activity. Providing access to education and resources equips individuals with the tools needed to pursue legitimate opportunities, thereby strengthening their self-concept as productive, law-abiding members of society. Vocational and educational training initiatives offer alternative pathways, fostering personal development, self-efficacy, and a renewed sense of purpose. These interventions empower ex-convicts to establish a positive self-identity and recognize their capacity to make constructive societal contributions.

Outer Containment Factors: Strong social connections and effective external oversight are critical for preventing recidivism (Bansal et al., 2023). Within the Chris Hani Community, family support systems and positive peer influences act as essential external containment factors, deterring ex-convicts from engaging in further criminal behavior. Supportive family relationships and constructive peer networks facilitate reintegration by providing emotional, psychological, and financial assistance. These networks foster a sense of belonging, enhancing social connectedness and reducing dependence on criminal associations. Conversely, the absence of supportive relationships or ongoing interactions with criminal peers can weaken external containment, leaving ex-convicts more vulnerable to re-offending. Negative peer influences often encourage illegal activities, perpetuating the normalization of criminal behavior. Returning to environments where such behavior is accepted heightens the risk of recidivism.

Containment Theory Application: The application of Containment Theory highlights the importance of addressing both internal and external factors to reduce recidivism (Ranaweera, 2020). Enhancing inner containment requires rehabilitation efforts focused on improving self-perception, instilling prosocial values, and creating pathways for education and employment. Psychological counselling and skills development programs play a pivotal role in building personal resilience and promoting a positive self-image. These efforts enable ex-convicts to recognize their value and motivate them to engage in lawful activities. Simultaneously, measures to fortify outer containment should include the development of robust support systems and enhanced external supervision. Community-based initiatives aimed at building social connections, encouraging family involvement, and providing mentor-ship opportunities can create a supportive environment conducive to reintegration. Strengthening family ties, establishing mentor-ship

programs, and involving local stakeholders in reintegration efforts are essential for ensuring sustained external support. Fostering access to stable social networks and community engagement, the reinforcement of external containment factors reduces the likelihood of recidivism. Such initiatives provide continuous guidance, accountability, and a sense of belonging, all of which are crucial to the reintegration process.

Research Methodology

Research methods are generally categorized into quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Aslim,2022). For this study on social factors influencing criminal recidivism, a qualitative approach is appropriate for several reasons (Stone & Spivak 2022). Qualitative research enables a deep exploration of lived experiences, social interactions, and perceptions surrounding criminal behavior (Nnam et al., 2023). Using tools like interviews and participant observation, it offers rich, nuanced data. It is also well-suited to examining contextual factors unique to the Eastern Cape, including socio-cultural, economic, and environmental dynamics (Shahid & Ashraf, 2022; Andersen et al., 2020). This methodology further captures subjective interpretations and underlying beliefs that influence repeat offenses (Baffour, 2021). Its flexibility also supports trust-building with participants, improving data quality especially when dealing with sensitive issues like criminal behavior (Loraine et al., 2020). As such, qualitative research is justified for understanding the social factors affecting recidivism, aligning with insights from Mareda (2020) and Herrera et al. (2022).

The approach allows for an in-depth investigation of personal experiences, contextual influences, and reasons behind reoffending (Rahman, 2020). Open-ended interviews, observations, and document analysis were used to examine sociocultural, economic, and institutional factors within the Eastern Cape. These methods captured the perspectives of recidivists and stakeholders, providing insights for designing targeted interventions (Olsson, 2020). An observational research design, combined with qualitative interviews and thematic analysis, was employed to explore social factors influencing recidivism in the Chris Hani Community. This design supported a comprehensive understanding of ex-offenders' experiences, generating insights to inform policies and intervention strategies aimed at reducing recidivism and enhancing reintegration.

Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and organize data. Iterative coding helped categorize data into relevant themes, which is ideal for exploring social phenomena like recidivism,(Bogna,2020). Semi-structured interviews were conducted to understand participants' perceptions of recidivism. The interviews, recorded with consent, were transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Sampling continued until data saturation was reached when no new insights emerged (Newman & Gough, 2020). Using purposive sampling, 30 recidivists were interviewed, revealing complex social dynamics linked to reoffending. Interviews enabled participants to articulate their lived experiences, and open-ended questions explored their views on recidivism, information literacy, decision-making, and reintegration (Loraine et al., 2020). Field notes captured non-verbal cues and context.

The data was analyzed using inductive thematic analysis, deemed suitable for exploring recidivism, analysis included: Transcription: Verbatim transcription of audio recordings, Coding: Data was coded to identify initial patterns, Theme Development: Codes were grouped into broader themes, Thematic Analysis: Patterns were analyzed to identify key issues (Mareda, 2020). Content Analysis: Keywords and recurring phrases were identified (Mengist, 2020)) Narrative Analysis: Participants' stories highlighted how social factors influenced their behaviors (Lakens, 2022), Framework Analysis: Themes were organized systematically for a structured understanding, Constant Comparative Analysis: New data was compared against existing data to refine themes and achieve saturation (Leavy, 2022). Qualitative data analysis software (SPSS), NVivo, and ATLAS was used for coding, retrieval, and data visualization through charts and diagrams, enhancing interpretation and presentation of findings.

According to Aslim (2021), employing literature as a research tool for investigating the social factors affecting criminal recidivism in a selected Eastern Cape community holds significant importance for several reasons. Firstly, a literature review serves as a foundational step in understanding the existing knowledge and theoretical frameworks surrounding the topic (Rahman, 2020). Reviewing academic studies, scholarly

articles, and relevant reports, researchers can gain insight into the key concepts, debates, and empirical findings related to social factors and recidivism (Hamilton et al., 2021). This comprehensive understanding provides a solid theoretical basis for designing research questions, selecting variables, and interpreting findings within the context of existing literature. Drawing on methodological insights from existing literature allows researchers to make informed decisions about study design, data collection methods, and analytical techniques that are most appropriate for investigating social factors and recidivism in the study area. This ensures the rigour, validity, and reliability of the research findings and enhances the credibility of the study within the academic community. Thus, literature as a research tool in the study is essential for grounding the research within existing knowledge, identifying gaps, integrating theoretical frameworks, and informing methodological decisions (Newman and Gough, 2020).

Accurately defining the study population is fundamental to the research process as it directly impacts the validity and generalizability of study findings. Researchers must carefully delineate the characteristics and boundaries of the population to ensure that their study yields meaningful and applicable results. This study was conducted at the Chris Hani Community in South Africa's Eastern Cape. The study population consists of thirty (30) recidivists. The chosen sample size is deemed appropriate as the study employed a qualitative approach utilizing data saturation, which enabled conducting in-depth interviews with each participant, thus providing comprehensive data sets for analysis. To mitigate bias, the sample population will be equally selected with consideration given to gender representation.

Table 1: Study population

Gender of Recidivists	No of participants
Males	15
Females	15
TOTAL	**30**

In qualitative research, smaller sample sizes are often preferred, allowing researchers to delve deeply into participants' experiences and perspectives (Lamberti, Katsetos,2020)). This approach facilitates the collection of rich, detailed data that provides a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Participant willingness to share personal insights plays a key role in generating meaningful data, as it fosters a deeper exploration of the topic. Purposive sampling is frequently employed in qualitative studies due to its ability to identify cases that are most relevant to the research objectives (Lattimore, 2022). By carefully selecting participants with the requisite knowledge and experiences, purposive sampling ensures that the data collected is both relevant and insightful. Additionally, this approach allows researchers to optimize their resources by focusing on a targeted group, thereby streamlining the research process and enhancing its efficiency. In the present study, purposive sampling was used to ensure that all participants possessed relevant knowledge and experiences related to the social factors influencing recidivism. This deliberate selection process enabled the collection of data that is both rich in context and directly aligned with the study's objectives.

Research Findings and Results
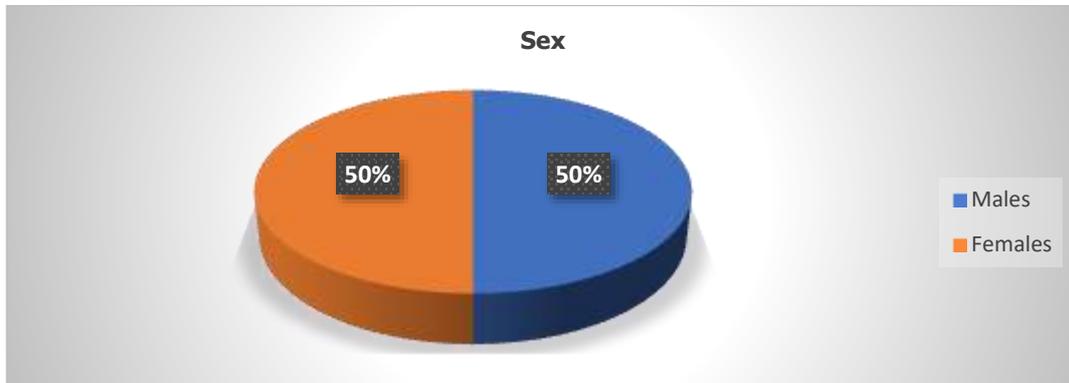
Demographic profile

Figure 2 shows the number of males and females participated on the study project. There were 15 males and 15 females. The total number of respondents who participated on the study is 30 respondents. The whole population of Chris Hani will be represented by 30 respondents and the conclusion will be made from the data obtained from those participants. The study is comprised of 50% of males and 50% of females and this helps to reduce biasness as far as possible. Finding of the study will be generated from the data obtained from these participants.
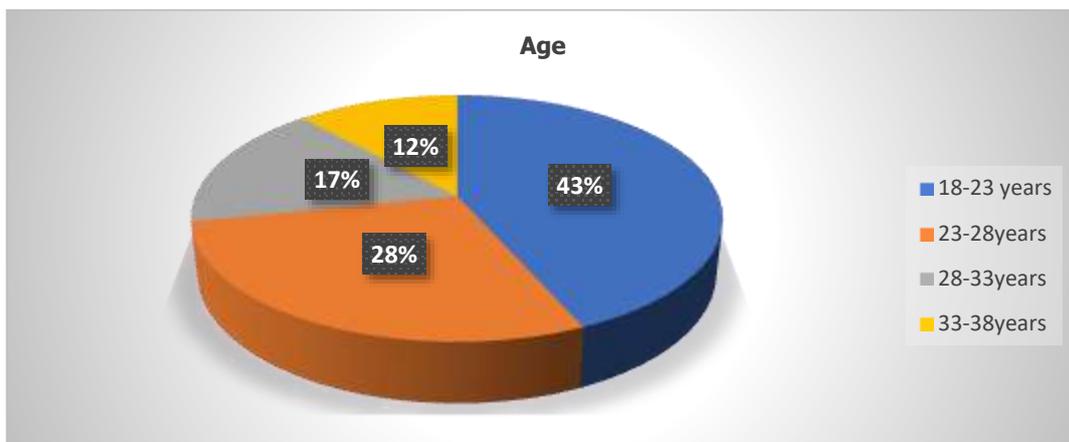

Figure 3: Figure 3 shows the ages of people who participated on the study. The researcher employed these ages because various studies such as deviant place theory by Edwirn (2004) which show that people who are more likely to engage in criminal activities are between the ages of eighteen to late thirty and they are likely to re-offend after their initial release. According to the chat above people whose age between 18-23 years of age participated the most as compared to any other age group and accounted for 43%, followed by those between ages of 23-25 years and accounted for 28% on the study. Those between the ages of 33-35 participated less as compared to any other age group and accounted for 12%.

Sampson and Lauba (2007) on age graded theory explains crime according to age groups. This theory says criminal behaviour increases in adolescence and decreases in adulthood; it is also known as the theory of turning point which describes the change in the crime load of individuals as a function of biological events. However, this is also supported by life exposure model which explain crime trough demographic profile such as social class, age, gender and race. This theory entails that black male Americans are more likely to be involved in criminal behaviour as compared to any other race.

Interviews

Interviews were the primary method of data collection for this study. Qualitative data were gathered through audio-recorded, semi-structured personal interviews with recidivists. These in-depth interviews provided the researcher with valuable insights into the participants' perspectives. To enhance clarity and participant comfort, the interview questions were shared with the participants in advance (Newman & Gough, 2020). This approach allowed participants to prepare for the discussion, thus improving the quality and depth of the responses provided. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes, ensuring sufficient time for participants to express their views comprehensively. The interviews were digitally recorded using a cell phone, a method that streamlined the data collection process by eliminating the need for manual note taking and minimizing potential distractions. Before starting each interview, consent to record the session was obtained from the participants, ensuring compliance with ethical research protocols. The recorded data were later transcribed verbatim to facilitate a thorough and accurate analysis.

The interviews were recorded using a mobile phone, and the analysis was conducted as follows:

Table 2

Content Analysis
Data Preparation: Similar to the approach used in thematic analysis   the interview data has been transcribed and is now prepared for further analysis.
Unit of Analysis: The unit of analysis will be clearly defined and may include specific sentences paragraphs   or sections of the interview data that suggest potential interventions or policy recommendations.
Coding System: A coding system will be designed based on the content of the interview segments categorizing various types of interventions or policy proposals. These segments will be systematically coded in accordance with the established categories.
Quantification: To determine the most frequently cited interventions or recommendations   the frequency of specific codes or themes will be counted.
Analysis and Interpretation: The coded data will be examined to identify patterns   trends   and relationships within the material. The findings will be evaluated in terms of the possible interventions and policy modifications suggested by the identified themes.
Report of Results: The findings will be presented   including relevant quantitative data such   as   frequency counts   along with proposed actions or policy suggestions. Illustrative examples from the interviews will be provided   supported by the context and background of the suggested interventions.

Challenges of Recidivism in the Chris Hani Community

This objective is aiming at identifying the challenges of recidivism in the Chris Hani community. This objective also helps the researcher to gather all necessary data about any obstacles caused by recidivism in the community. Below are the questions and answers around the challenges of recidivism in the Chris Hani community.
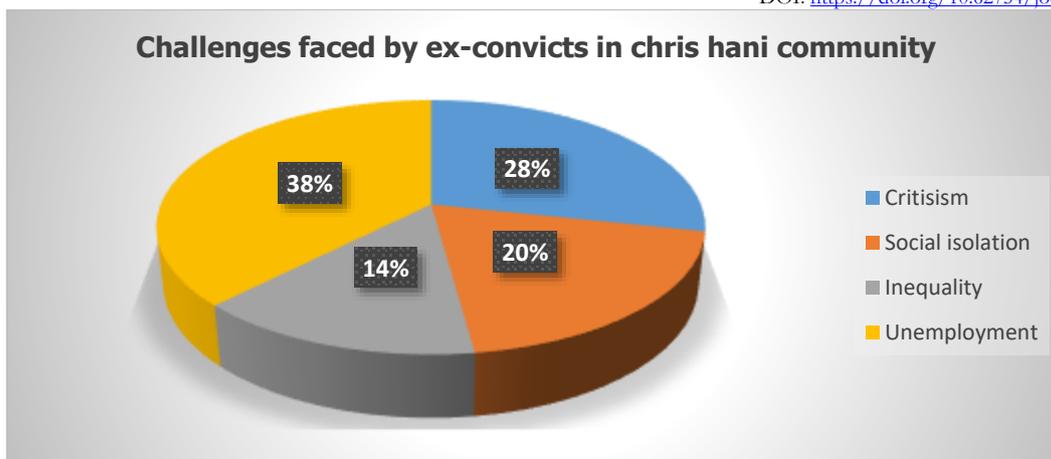
Figure 4: Challenges faced by ex-convicts in the Chris Hani community

Can you mention the challenges that ex-convicts in the Chris Hani Community face?

According to Figure 4, ex-convicts in the Chris Hani Community face several significant challenges that hinder their successful reintegration into society. The primary challenges include criticism, social isolation, inequality, and unemployment.

Criticism: Ex-convicts often face negative judgment and criticism from community members, family, and peers. This social stigma can discourage them from pursuing opportunities for self-improvement and can negatively impact their mental well-being. Constant criticism may also reinforce feelings of hopelessness, which can push ex-convicts back into criminal behaviour as a coping mechanism.

Social Isolation: Upon release, many ex-convicts experience social exclusion and isolation, as they struggle to reconnect with family, friends, and the broader community. This isolation can be a result of stigma, broken family ties, or rejection from community members. Without social support, ex-convicts are left vulnerable to feelings of loneliness, which increases the likelihood of recidivism. Rebuilding social connections and fostering community acceptance are crucial for successful reintegration.

Inequality: Ex-convicts often face systemic inequalities in access to education, employment, housing, and community support services. These inequalities arise from discrimination in hiring practices, limited access to educational opportunities, and a lack of social welfare support. As a result, ex-offenders face significant barriers to reintegration, which perpetuates the cycle of poverty, crime, and re-incarceration. Addressing these inequalities through inclusive policies and targeted support programs is essential to reduce recidivism.

Unemployment: Unemployment is one of the most critical challenges faced by ex-convicts in the Chris Hani Community. Due to their criminal records, ex-convicts often encounter employment discrimination, making it difficult for them to secure stable jobs. Many employers are reluctant to hire individuals with criminal histories, thereby limiting their ability to achieve financial independence. This lack of employment opportunities can lead to financial hardship, which may prompt some ex-convicts to resort to crime as a means of survival. Providing vocational training, employment support, and access to job placement programs can reduce the impact of unemployment on recidivism. These challenges highlight the complex nature of reintegration and underscore the need for targeted interventions and support systems. Addressing criticism, social isolation, inequality, and unemployment is essential to support ex-convicts in their transition from incarceration to community life. Tailored programs that promote community acceptance, employability, and equal access to resources can significantly improve the chances of successful reintegration and reduce the risk of re-offending. The major challenge faced by ex-convicts is unemployment it has accounted for 38% followed by criticism which has accounted for 28%. The isolation of recidivists accounted for 20% of the study. The least challenge faced by ex-convicts is the inequality which accounted for 14%. The South African National Institute for Crime Prevention indicates 2016 that

ex-offenders struggle to adjust because of broken family and community relationships, unemployment and lack of after-care services, among other factors. Rejection by family members and being stigmatized by the society. Inability to break into the labour market, struggling to adjust to a new environment after spending many years in prison. Inferiority complex which affects mental health, and lack of or inadequate aftercare services. Re-establishing intimacy with loved ones and bonds with children, family, and friends can be difficult. Finding gainful employment and stable housing may be challenging. According to South African National institute these are the challenges faced by recidivists on the society. These challenges are similar with those identified by recidivists in Chris Hani community such as isolation, criticism and inability to secure employment.
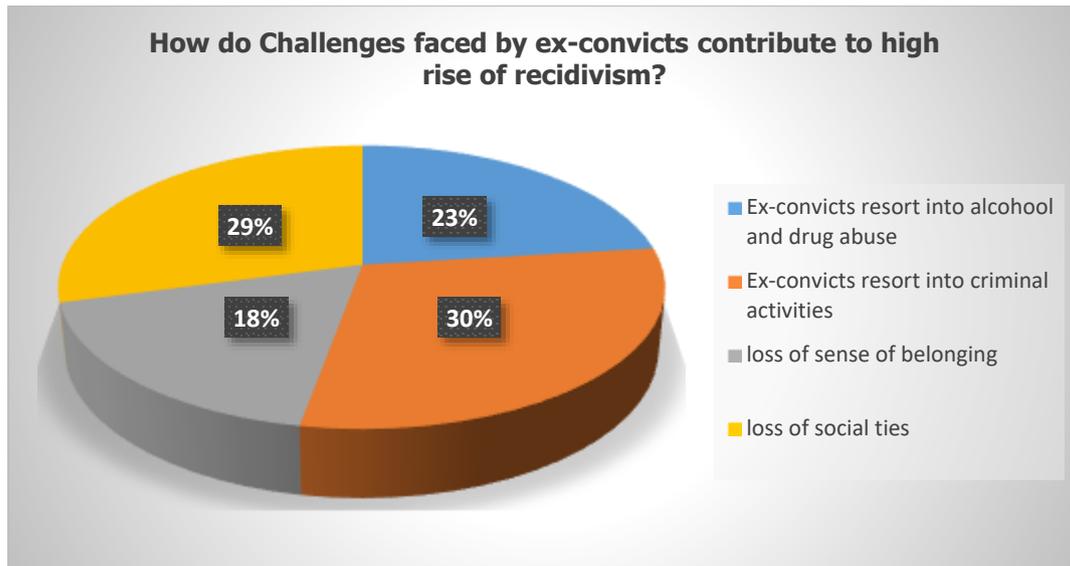

Figure 5: How do challenges faced by ex-convicts contribute to the high risk of recidivism?

According to Figure 5, there are many challenges faced by the ex-convicts in Chris Hani resulting in a high risk of criminal recidivism. The list involves resorting to criminal activities, resorting to drug abuse, Loss of sense of belonging and loss of social tires and social morals. Those who resort to drugs and alcohol abuse account for 23%. Those who resort to criminal activities accounted for 30% those who lost a sense of belonging accounted for 18% and those who felt they lost social ties accounted for 29%. The South African National Institute on Recidivism Across the Country (2017) states that, consequently, ex-offenders struggle to find employment because of stigma, which often translates into family breakups. They are then expected to invent new ways of making a living and surviving without any help from society, in consequence, they resort to crime, which in turn results in recidivism. The participants in the study indicated that ex-offenders resort to drug and alcohol abuse, resort in to criminal life as the result of challenges they face when re-entering the community. They also indicated that lack of support and assistance provided to them, isolation by the society and loos of social tires were the major problems
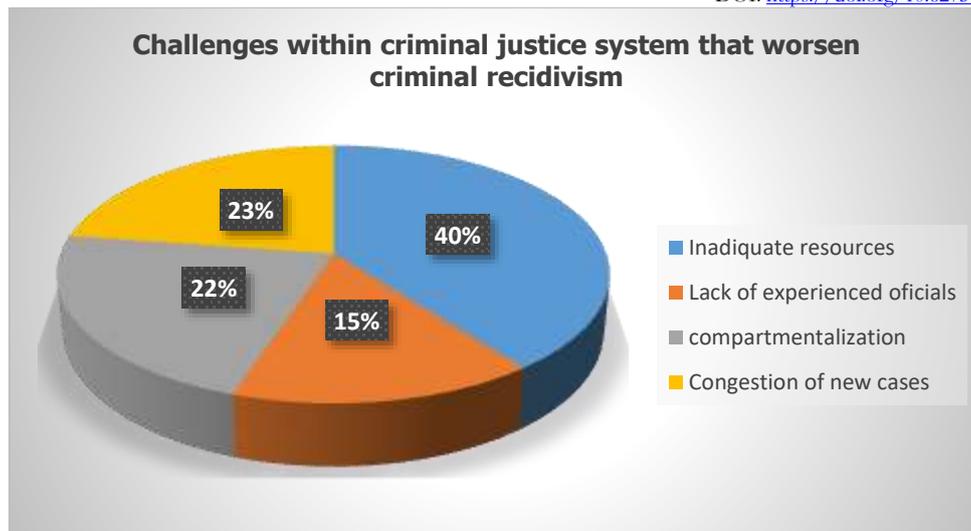
Figure 6: Challenges within criminal justice system that worsen criminal recidivism.

From your perspective, what are the challenges within the criminal justice system that worsen criminal recidivism rates in the Chris Hani Community?

Figure 6 shows Challenges within the criminal justice system that fuel criminal recidivism in the Chris Hani community. Inadequate resources within the criminal justice system are viewed as the major challenge, constituting 40%, followed by the congestion of new cases constituting 23%. lack of experienced officials is viewed as the least problem of all the problems that the participants listed, and it constitutes 15% Compartmentalization accounted for 22% of the study. Enrico (2008) indicated that many challenges within the criminal justice system worsen criminal behaviour, and these include racial disparity in the criminal justice system, drug crime and drug policy reforms, challenges of prison reforms, challenges with law enforcement agencies, and stretchered of law enforcement agencies. SADC states that the criminal justice system in South Africa is generally weak in responding to organized crime, particularly in financial crimes and money laundering. South Africa lacks the legislation and prosecutorial capacity to tackle transitional crimes, including terrorism, and this causes people to commit crimes again and again. However, inadequate resources, lack of experienced officials, congestion of new cases and compartmentalization are viewed as major challenges in the criminal justice system that perpetuate criminal recidivism.

For a qualitative interview study on the social factors affecting criminal recidivism in a selected Eastern Cape community with a sample size of thirty (30) recidivists, careful consideration of the study population and sampling procedure is essential to ensure the richness and depth of data obtained. The study population comprises individuals who have a documented history of criminal recidivism within the selected Eastern Cape community. Recidivists are defined as individuals who have previously been convicted of a crime and have subsequently reoffended, resulting in their re-involvement in the criminal justice system (Hennink et al., 2020). This population encompasses individuals from diverse demographic backgrounds, socioeconomic statuses, and criminal histories residing within the community.

The researcher is exploring what potential intervention can be implemented in an attempt to control criminal recidivism in Chris Hani community. The researcher is also intended to gather data regarding recommendations on how recidivism can be controlled. Below is the illustration showing the responses of participants based on strategies in place to prevent criminal recidivism.
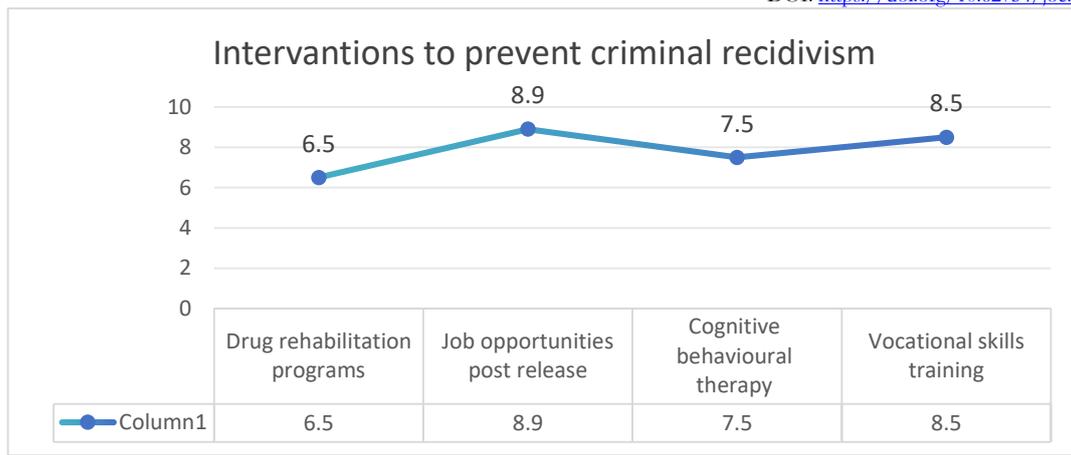
Figure 7: Strategies in place to prevent criminal recidivism in the Chris Hani community.

In your opinion, do you think that there are strategies currently in place in addressing the challenges of criminal recidivism in the Chris Hani Community?

According to the illustration above, there are many strategies in the Chris Hani community, in place to prevent criminal recidivism. According to the chart above vocational skills training programme is the main strategy in Chris Hani to prevent recidivism and it constitutes 32% It is followed by Cognitive behavioral therapy(CPT) also known as psycho-social intervention and it makes up 28%. Drug rehabilitation programmes accounted for 24%. Job opportunities for post-release make up 28%. Enrico (2006) states that while reducing recidivism through education is a popular and effective approach, so too is improving substance abuse treatment for inmates. Substance abuse treatment programs s are among the most effective in reducing recidivism. He also stated that being in employment reduces the risk of re-offending. Erico states that programs that works the best to prevent recidivism are as follows cognitive behavioral programs which helps people who have committed crimes identify how their thinking patterns influence their feelings, which in turn influence their feelings, which in turn influence their actions.

These programs include structured social learning components where new skills, behaviour, and attitudes are constantly reinforced to identify strategies that can be put in place to control recidivism. Prison-based education programs focus on high school diploma education as well as college degree programs. In addition, vocational training may be offered. These education programs are designed to help inmates gain skills they can utilize when they are released into society. The mechanisms utilized in the Chris Hani community are also similar to those suggested by Enrico (2006) and can play an effective role in controlling the rate of recidivism in the community.
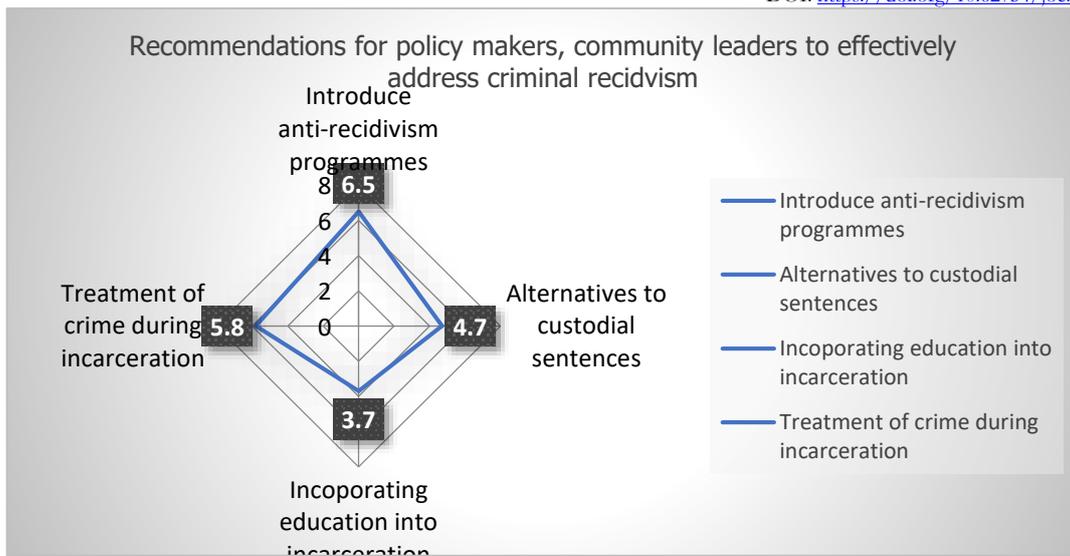
ready to re-enter.

Figure 8: The above illustration shows recommendations for policy makers, community leaders to effectively address criminal recidivism

According to this illustration there are many recommendations for policy makers, community leaders and other stakeholders to effectively address criminal recidivism. Introducing anti-recidivism programme is one of the recommendations to address criminal recidivism for policy makers and other stakeholders and it makes 31% on the illustration above. Alternatives to custodial sentences was also recommended and it makes 23% on the illustration. Treatment of crime during incarceration makes 28% on the study and incorporating education during incarceration makes 18% on the study.

Enrico (2006) indicate that the more training, education and support that incarcerated individuals receives whilst in prison, the higher their chances are of successfully avoiding recidivist actions. Changing the environment that former prisoner returns to after being in jail, giving them opportunity to direct their focus and do something they enjoy, provide support they need to heal inwardly, and stop judging them from their past can also play a significant role on reducing the likelihood to relapse. Adequate rehabilitation programs, effective policing, strengthening community policing forums, and harsh penalties for those arrested more than once could possibly prevent recidivism. This links with what Chris Hani community members have recommended. The recommendations made by South African crime analysis includes providing basic needs for ex-offenders, medication, emotional support, financial support, help them improve themselves and become ready to re-enter society,

Limitations

The limitations of the study potential interventions and policy recommendations for criminal recidivism in the selected Eastern Cape community are as follows:

Sample Size and Generalizability: The study's sample size, comprising 30 recidivists, may limit the generalizability of its findings to broader populations or communities. Although efforts were made to ensure diversity within the sample, the relatively small size constrains the extent to which the results can be extrapolated to other contexts.

Selection Bias: The use of purposive sampling to select participants may introduce selection bias, as participants were chosen based on specific criteria. This method may not fully capture the diversity of recidivists within the community, potentially impacting the validity and applicability of the findings.

Subjectivity of Interviews: Despite measures to minimize bias, the qualitative nature of the study and its reliance on interviews as the primary data collection method may introduce subjectivity. Participants'

responses could be influenced by social desirability bias or their interpretation of the research questions, potentially affecting the accuracy and reliability of the collected data.

Summary and Conclusion

In this study the data was gather through in-depth interviews conducted by the researcher among the participants. The interview questions were designed to answer the research questions. Various pie-chats are utilized to analyse qualitative data. Data analysis comprises categorizing, sorting, altering, summarizing, and describing data in intelligible terms. Findings of the study are based on the data obtained from participants in Chris Hani community. These findings are pointing to in ability to secure employment, poor levels of education, poor treatment of drugs during incarceration, and poor reintegration process as the direct influence to criminal recidivism. The study accounted for series of demographic features such as age and sex.

According to the findings of the study conducted relapse is more prevalent on certain age groups possessing certain demographic profile. Young stars aged between 18-23 years are more likely to reoffend after their initial release as compared to any other group because of their lifestyle. This is evident from various studies such as life style exposure model by Wang (2023) which states that 68% of re-offenders are those whose age is below 30 years of age. According to this theory the more a person grows the lesser they engage in criminal activities. The findings of this study also prevails that, for some reasons certain racial groups are more likely to relapse as compared to others. These racial groups include blacks, and coloreds. This is evident from racial theory of crime by Yukhnenko (2023) which states that black Americans are more likely to relapse to criminal behaviour as compared to any other racial group in America. This theory indicates that 73% of the relapse in America is black Americans. The data also reveals that different levels of occupations have great influence on the relapse, as those who occupy no position in the community are more likely to relapse as compared to any other group.

The study also reveals that recidivists are more likely to commit crimes such as property crimes, robbery, cash-intrans, burglary, shoplifting, fraud, bribery, pickpocket and this correlates with social determinants of recidivism theory by Shishane (2020) which says criminals are likely to relapse to crimes to secure their financial needs. They commit these crimes because they are trying to provide for their families and some to buy drugs and alcohol. Crimes such as assault, rape, murder are less likely to be committed by the recidivists because they don't have profile. Various pie-chats are utilized to analyse qualitative data. The study accounted for series of demographic features such as age, sex, race, occupation, levels of education and so forth when selecting sample.

Typically, general prison staff adhere to regular work schedules, while other personnel, such as emergency response or crisis intervention teams, may be required to work extended 12-hour shifts (Sherrard, 2020). Efforts to manage inmate anger often involve social skills training, which equips them with non-hostile verbal communication techniques for handling tense situations (Agtong et al., 2023). Forensic counsellors adopt cognitive approaches that target clients' negative attitudes and address the emotional and behavioral aspects of anger (Farrington, 2020). To mitigate socially inadequate behaviors, forensic counsellors utilize social skills training strategies, including role-playing, modelling, feedback, and coaching. Additionally, anxiety-reduction techniques, such as motivational interviewing, are incorporated into the training process (Gana et al., 2021; Trood et al., 2021).

Recommendations

Multiple interventions can help control criminal relapse, including in-prison drug treatment, anti-recidivism programs such as education, vocational skills training, rehabilitation, and reintegration initiatives. Alternatives to custodial sentences and addressing crime during incarceration also play a role in reducing recidivism. Factors contributing to recidivism include poor reintegration, inadequate rehabilitation, lack of skills, unemployment, limited education, and weak family support. Recidivism leads to serious consequences, such as poor parenting, single-headed households, increased crime, victimization,

stigmatization, and financial and emotional distress. Working with offenders requires specialized training due to the complex needs of inmates. Although correctional officers are not formally trained as forensic counsellors, they often perform both roles in prison settings. The following programs can be implemented by communities and the criminal justice system to reduce recidivism:

Educational and Vocational Training: Providing literacy, numeracy, GED preparation, and higher education within correctional facilities significantly reduces re-offending. Governments should fund these programs and partner with institutions for accredited training.

Vocational Training: Vocational programs in trades like carpentry, plumbing, and IT, aligned with labor market demands, improve employability Certification and industry partnerships further enhance outcomes.

Transitional Job Programs: Work release initiatives allow inmates nearing sentence completion to gain work experience. These should include job placement, resume building, and interview skills

Mental Health Services: Many inmates suffer from untreated mental health issues. Mandatory screenings, ongoing treatment, and post-release support must be integrated into correctional systems.

Substance Abuse Treatment: Effective, evidence-based in-prison and post-release treatment programs, including AA or NA, are crucial for rehabilitation.

Community-Based Reintegration: These programs offer housing, employment, and support services. Strong partnerships among correctional institutions, NGOs, and local governments ensure coordinated service delivery.

Family Engagement: Family support enhances reintegration. Initiatives such as visitation assistance, flexible hours, and therapy help restore family ties.

Mentoring and Peer Support: Mentorship offers guidance during re-entry. Funded programs should connect former inmates with trained mentors and peer support groups.

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