

**FAMILIES AND INCARCERATION: A STUDY OF THE KUMASI  
METROPOLIS**

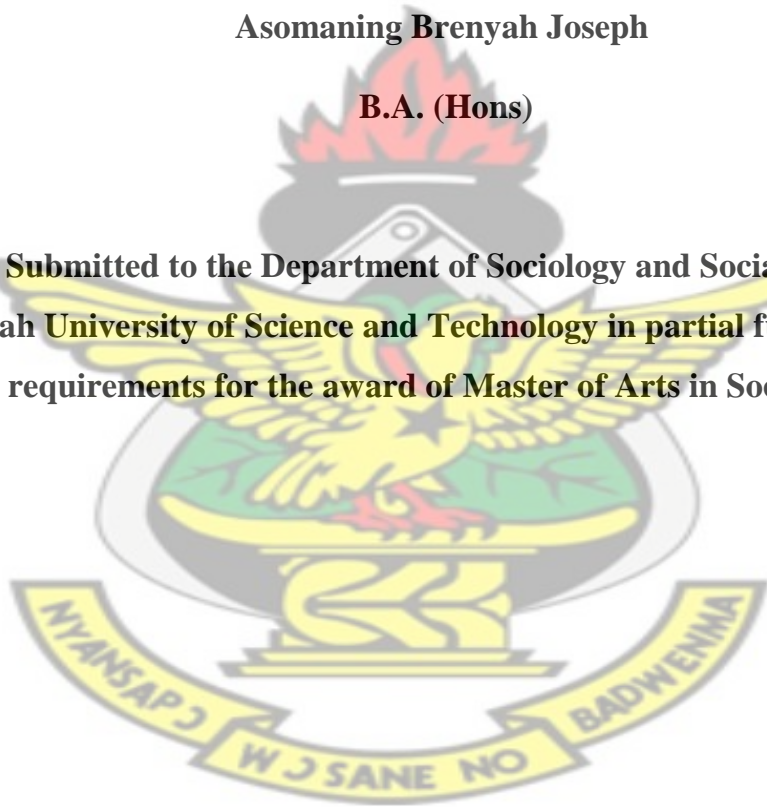
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requirements for the award of Master of Arts in Sociology.**



**July, 2013**

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the M.A Degree in Sociology and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published by another person nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree of the University, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to God Almighty whose unending love and unceasing grace has successfully seen me through my studies and for the wisdom to produce this piece. It is also dedicated to my lovely wife, Elizabeth, daughters Afua and Yaa and all remand prisoners who have been denied justice.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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## ABSTRACT

Incarceration is said to be a silent killer because nobody wants to talk about it. The incarceration of a spouse or parent makes one a silent widow/widower or orphan since it is not talked about in public. The incarceration of a family member has serious repercussions and normally leads to family crises yet it is taken for granted by the society. This study generally sought to look at the conditions of the passive victims of incarceration. The design of this study was a social survey which employed an in depth interview guide for the collection of qualitative data. Twenty five (25) respondents who were spouses of incarcerated persons at the Kumasi Central Prisons and who have spent at least two (2) years as convicts in the prison were purposively selected to give varied responses on the effects of incarceration on their nuclear families. The study revealed that the incarceration of a person has rippling effects on their spouses and children. Some of the effects of incarceration on children include: trauma and psychological problems associated with the arrest, social stigma and subsequent redraw, poor school performance and high school drop-out rate, substance and alcohol abuse as well as changes in family composition and weakened parental ties. For the spouses left behind, the effects of incarceration identified include: role changes, economic hardships as well as lack of intimacy and possible divorce due to prison restrictions. The researcher recommends that the study should be replicated in other parts of the country to see the variation of the effects of incarceration in respect of rural and urban areas because of their differential social settings. It is the hope of this researcher that this valued information will guide and influence policy in relation to the incarcerated and their relatives who need to be considered in the total process of incarceration.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the study

The development of societies throughout history, from more primitive forms to more complex forms has resulted also in vast changes in the theory as well as the method of punishment. In primitive societies, punishment was left to individuals wronged or their families. These punishments were vindictive and retributive. Usually the quality or quantity of the punishment would bear no special relation to the gravity of the offence (Foucault, 1977).

With time, the idea of proportionate punishments of which the gravity of the punishment was made to suite that of the crime was advanced, for instance, “an eye for an eye.” From this stage developed another system of punishments where individuals were given the authority to punish under the control of the state or the community. With the growth of law and order however, the state took over the primitive function and provided itself with the machinery of justice for the maintenance of public order (Foucault, 1977).

In Africa and in Ghana specifically, until colonization prisons were largely unheard of. People who committed crimes were usually punished by their communities through banishment, flogging, beheading and other such capital punishments. It was not until in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, that the British council of merchants established a harsh network of prisons in forts such as the Cape Coast Castle. These prisons were managed under no particular laws. In 1860 however, the Prisons Ordinance Act was developed to outline

regulations for the safekeeping of prisoners. Later ordinances further defined the nature of the country's prison system, which required solitary confinement by night, penal labour and a minimum diet (Owusu, 2012).

The global prison population has skyrocketed in the last three decades with ten million people worldwide now in jails and prisons. The extraordinary increase in the number of people now incarcerated has had tremendous implications for state and national governments dealing with global recession and a range of economic, social and political challenges (Stevenson, 2011). Incarceration rates in the United States are nearly the highest in the world, and are by far the highest of any Western democratic state. The U.S. locks up over 700 people per 100,000, a rate of incarceration that is one of the truly distinguishing characteristics of the American criminal justice system (Clear, 2009).

Even though Ghana still supports the death penalty, in practice there had not been any execution since 1993. In lieu of this, the deprivation of an individual's liberty through imprisonment is perhaps the most severe state sanction available in Ghana, as a result Ghana, like the U.S continues to record increasing levels of inmates in her prisons. As of August 21, 2012 a total number of 13,390 inmates were in custody in the various prisons in the country. Out of this number 13, 134 were males while 226 were females, giving a male to female prisoner ratio of 51:1. A total of 10,423 inmates were convicts, 2,747 on remand with 220 facing trial (Ghana Prison Service, 2012).

People, who commit crimes, it is widely believed, deserve to be punished. Utilitarian ideas about public safety have it that sending people to prison enhances public safety: by

incapacitating them, by rehabilitating them, by deterring them and others, and by reinforcing basic social norms about right and wrong (Tonry & Petersilia, 1999).

Globally human beings do not live in isolation. We live in an array of interdependent relationships and networking. Research has consistently shown that incarceration affects the individuals confined, their families and other close associates who are seen as passive victims of incarceration, and by aggregation, the economic and social conditions in their local community. While some research has focused on the individual effects of incarceration and some on community effects, little analysis has attempted to examine how they work together (Watts & Nightingale, 1996).

In Ghana we know precious little about the ripple effects of imprisonment on prisoners' families and the communities from which they come from. This study thus sought to examine the effects of incarceration on the families of inmates. This is based on the premise that incarceration has unintended consequences not only on the incarcerated but their immediate relations as well.

### **1.2 Statement of the problem**

The problem statement according to Wiersma 'describes the content for the study and it also identifies the general analysis approach' or is the issue that exists in the literature, theory or practice that leads to a need for the study' and when stated effectively should answer the question; Why does this research need to be conducted? (Pajares, 2007).

The fundamental reason for setting up prisons is that society finds it necessary to separate and isolate category of persons who flout its laws. Prisons exist therefore to punish individuals who commit crime in anticipation that such punitive measures will deter others from perpetuating it.

Prisons in Ghana like most prisons the world over are established to keep offenders from society and to try and reform them so that these offenders will become useful citizens in society. According to Regoli (2011) in the third edition of his book *Delinquency in Society*, the purpose of punishment is primarily to control and change behavior.

In the popular point of view, prisons are thought of as crime fighting-devices: Exposing offenders to prison reduces crime. This viewpoint began governing penal policy in the early 1970s (Clear, 2009).

Traditionally it has been understood by most Ghanaians that when all criminals are imprisoned, society will be safe, crimes will reduce and the rest of the society will have their peace of mind to undertake their daily activities without any disturbances, fear or troubles. Thus, what the prison system in Ghana has done, with the support of some public opinion is to put offenders in prison, separate from human contact to reduce further crime while they are incarcerated (Agboka, 2008).

Statistics on inmate population in the various prisons in Ghana indicates that, though the number of convicts for the years 2010, 2011 and 2012; that is (13,945, 13,565, and 13,469 respectively) does not show a seemingly increasing trend in the number of inmates, the percentage (23%) of second time offenders or recidivists is alarming. This is a clear indication that one of the rationales of the prison system which is, to serve as a reformation center is not achieving that objective (Ghana Prison Service, 2012).

Because incarceration removes an individual from society, it is expected that ties between offenders and members of their networks will be weakened (Haley et al., 2006 cited in Khan, 2008). Debates about the increased use of incarceration have focused principally on its value in reducing crime rates and intervention strategies have been directed at the

incarcerated at the expense of others who are passive victims of incarceration. These discussions have, by and large, ignored the ways in which the heavy use of incarceration affects individuals, families, and communities across prison walls (Clear, 2009). These unforeseen effects of incarceration are subtle and, in some ways modest, but over time they combine to counteract the positive effects of prison. Even though there is paucity of research in relation to incarceration in the Ghanaian literature, the very few available have concentrated on the prison system and the incarcerated to the detriment of the passive victims of incarceration. There is therefore a literature gap as far as the passive victims of incarceration matters.

A broader and more complete understanding of the effects of incarceration on persons other than the offender would enable us to understand the limits of using prison as a crime-prevention strategy (Clear, 2009). An examination of the unintended consequences of incarceration will give us a better perspective of how people other than the incarcerated suffer as a result of incarceration. This research when completed will fill the literature gap as it pertains in Ghana in relation to the passive victims of incarceration.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

For the problem stated above, the study sought to answer the following specific research questions.

1. What is the nature and extent of effects of incarceration?
2. To what extent are the families of the incarcerated affected by incarceration?
3. How are the affected persons able to cope with the situation?



4. What social support systems are available to families of prisoners while in prison?

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

Given the problem and research questions identified above, the main aim of this study is to have an insight or understanding of the different conditions of the passive victims of incarceration who in this case are the nuclear families of the incarcerated and how such indirect situations of the passive victims of incarceration could be considered in the re-integration strategies.

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine the relationship that existed between families and the incarcerated before incarceration
2. ascertain the changes that have occurred in the family as a result of incarceration
3. find out how such changes have affected the lives of families of the incarcerated
4. find out the coping mechanisms adopted by the families to deal with incarceration
5. find out the social support systems available to families of incarcerated persons

#### **1.5 Justification of study**

In the modern civilized world, scientific research has inevitably become the basic pre-requisite toward the studying and understanding of any social phenomenon. Indeed, when governments and corporate bodies seek to improve upon or enhance the performance of an aspect of their operation, they embark on social and scientific researches upon which concrete decisions are made towards modification and improvement.



Prisons are essential parts of our social system and they play a crucial role in the social life as well as political and economic life of every country. These prisons are tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that offenders who find themselves behind bars come out as better and reformed persons beneficial to society. Prisoners in spite of their situation are citizens of the country and the incarceration of a person affects people around him or her. There is therefore the need for effective meaningful strategies and interventions to be put in place to ensure that both the incarcerated and the passive victims of incarceration are put into perspective in relation to efforts at prisoner re-integration.

### 1.6 Significance of Study

The idea that crime might be part of a normal society seems untenable to many people. Yet it is the major tenant of the functionalist theory of crime. According to Durkheim deviance is not a pathological aberration in the character structure of particular individuals, but rather, it is 'an integral part of all healthy societies. In as much as societies continue to exist, crime will continue to be with us (Hamlin, n.d.). One of the key ways of dealing with criminals by all meaningful societies is incarceration. Punishment, it is often said "Is not meant to destroy but to reform." Prisons must therefore be seen as reformatory centers and not an avenue for the hardening of criminals. Periods of confinement are challenging moments in the lives of inmates, their families and the communities in which they emanate. The challenges posed by incarceration on the families of inmates and the communities from which they come from cannot be underestimated. A search for literature revealed a limited number of studies conducted in this area in Ghana, as such very little are known about the consequences of incarceration

on the family and community of the incarcerated. One can anticipate that these unintended consequences as have been documented by studies in other countries (especially the United States) may be the same in Ghana, however without empirical evidence this conclusion cannot be reached, hence the need for an indigenous research such as the one being conducted. The study when published will fill the gap in literature in Ghana as far as the effect of incarceration is concerned. It will also provide baseline data and information upon which further studies may be carried out. Findings from the study will again serve as valuable information to policy makers in correctional and reformation institutions to ensure holistic prisoner reformation.

Until a suspect is condemned to life imprisonment or to the death penalty, it is expected that convicts will return to the society after serving their jail terms. It is expedient and imperative that society understands and appreciate the need for ex-convicts to be re-integrated into mainstream society. The research will therefore give an opportunity for the general society to understand and to accept ex-convicts back into the society as well as appreciating measures and policies put in place to ensure effective prisoner re-integration.

### **1.7 Scope and setting of the study**

The unintended consequences of incarceration has many tentacles but for the purpose of this study, it will focus on the immediate family, that is spouses and children of inmates, parents of the incarcerated as well as the siblings of the inmates.

The area within which the study is conducted is the city of Kumasi. Kumasi covers an area of 115.4 square miles. As at 2012, the city had a population of 1,989,062. It is a city

at the south central part of Ghana 250km (by road) northwest of Accra. Kumasi is approximately 300 miles north of the equator and 100 miles north of the Gulf of Guinea (World Gazetteer, 2012).

The city rose to prominence in 1695 when it became the capital of the Ashanti Confederacy. Kumasi is the second largest city in Ghana and the largest ethnic group is the Asantes. Approximately 80% of the population is Christian and 20% Muslim (World Gazetteer, 2012). The Kumasi Metropolis is chosen as a study area because the metropolis has the second largest prison in Ghana which will provide the researcher with the key informants in the study. The researcher's fair knowledge of the socio- cultural setting of the study area will be an added advantage.

The Kumasi Central Prisons is selected as the main source of key informants to the study since initial familiarization visits revealed that it houses a variety of inmates across geographical as well as crime category within the country. It is hoped that such a variant of inmates will add to the diversity of the research. The choice of the study area was again informed by the proximity of the study site to the researcher.

### **1.8 Theoretical Foundations**

Researchers have employed a variety of theories and conceptual perspectives to explain the unintended consequences of incarceration. Prominent among these include the strain perspective (Merton, 1938: Cloward & Ohlin, 1960) the socialization perspective (Hirschi, 1969) and the stigmatization perspective (Hagan & Pollini, 1990: Hagan, 1991). Even though the study will be drawing inspiration from these various perspectives, the major theory underpinning this study is the systems theory with special emphasis on Bowen's family systems theory.

General systems theory was originally proposed by biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy in 1928. Systems theory thus emerged as a synthesis of developments in a variety of disciplinary fields, including the behavioral sciences as well as engineering and management. It is a method of formal analysis in which the object of study is viewed as comprising a series of distinct but interconnected and interdependent components or subsystems as well as the relationship between systems and their environments (Hammond, 2003).

The family systems theory suggests that individuals cannot be understood in isolation from one another, but rather as a part of their respective families and communities. Families are systems of interconnected and interdependent individuals, none of whom can be understood in isolation from the system. The family systems theory as propounded by Bowen has it that, a family is a system in which each member has roles to play and rules to respect. Members of the system are expected to respond to each other in a certain way according to their roles, which is determined by relationship agreements (GenoPro, 2012). Within the boundaries of the system, patterns develop as certain family member's behavior is caused by and causes other family member's behaviors in predictable ways. Maintaining the same pattern of behaviors within a system may lead to balance in the family system, but also to dysfunction.

The incarceration of a family member will definitely lead to changes in the roles of members hence a possible disequilibrium and disturbances in the family system and a push towards a new equilibrium, This new equilibrium as a result of the incarceration of a

family member is likely to have unintended consequences on the family and possible malfunctioning of it.

Since individual families constitute societies, the unintended consequences of incarceration on families will invariably transcend to the communities as well.

### **1.9 Organisation of the study**

The thesis is structured into six chapters. Each chapter addresses certain aspects of the study and it is designed in logical sequence towards achieving the general objective of the research. Chapter one is the introductory chapter comprising of the background to the study, organization of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, research objectives, justification of the study, significance of the study, and scope and study setting of the study.

Chapter two presents a thematic review of various literatures on the topic of study. It reviews the state of knowledge on incarceration with the research problem in mind. It aims at ascertaining the extent of the problem identified in chapter one including identifying and narrowing research questions. The review of the state of knowledge on incarceration is expected to provide some methodological and theoretical guidelines for this study and also clarify the identified research problem.

Chapter three presents an examination of the research methods used in the collection and analysis of data. Based on the research problem, theoretical and methodological constructs are devised to address the research problem. Chapter four also deals with the presentation of results. Significant findings under each research question are identified and discussed.



Chapter five presents a discussion of the study results. In the process contribution of the thesis to the state of knowledge on the unintended consequences of incarceration is discussed. Chapter six presents the summary of findings and conclusions of the study, recommendations for policy as well as further research in the area of study.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

The effect of incarceration pertains not only to the incarcerated but also their respective families and communities at large. This chapter presents a thematic review of literature on the following: concept of incarceration, unintended consequences of incarceration, coping mechanisms for adjustment to incarceration and social support systems available to families of incarcerated persons. Each of these themes is discussed with reference to existing body of literature. Most of the literature available, however describes the situation as it pertains in Europe, the United States of America and other developed countries. Even though the literature presented under the subsequent headings are not the only ones available, they are the ones that are of central importance to the particular literature heading.

#### 2.1 Concept of incarceration

A Prison is an institution designed to securely house people who have been convicted of crimes. These individuals, known as prisoners or inmates, are kept in continuous custody on a short or long term basis. The gravity of the offense determines the duration of the prison term imposed. For certain crimes, such as murder, offenders may be sentenced to prison for the remainder of their lifetime (Adler et al, 1996).

Individuals accused of violating criminal law are tried in a court of competent jurisdiction and either convicted (found guilty) or acquitted (found not guilty). Persons

who are convicted are then sentenced, that is, assigned specific punishments. These sentences may involve fines, probation (supervised release), or incarceration (confinement). First-time offenders may be sentenced to probation instead of incarceration. Offenders convicted of more serious crimes and those who have prior criminal records may be sentenced to incarceration in either a jail or a prison, depending on the nature of the crime (Ajayi, 2012).

Although prison structures have been in existence since ancient civilizations, the widespread and persistent use of long-term confinement as a form of criminal punishment began only in the 15th century. In the contemporary world every industrialized nation has prisons, and the role of prisons throughout the world is to punish criminals by restricting their freedom. In most countries, prison systems are constructed and operated by governments. However, several countries, including the United States, also authorize private corporations to build and run prisons under contract for the government (Ajayi, 2012).

Imprisonment has several universal functions, which include the protection of society, the prevention of crime, retribution (revenge) against criminals, and the rehabilitation of inmates. Additional goals of imprisonment may include the assurance of justice based on a philosophy of just deserts (getting what one deserves) and the reintegration of inmates into the community following their sentences. Different countries place greater emphasis on one or more of these goals than others do. For instance, prisons in the Scandinavian countries stress rehabilitation and offender reintegration. Although prisons in the United States also include rehabilitation and reintegration programs, U.S. penal philosophy

emphasizes societal protection, crime deterrence, and just-deserts justice. Thus the U S is more concerned with the welfare of the society other than the welfare of the prisoners themselves (Ajayi, 2012).

Variations among prison policies in various countries depend upon the society's experience with managing criminals, as well as its experiments with different ways of correcting and improving prisoner behavior. As the years go by and after experimenting with various systems, societies try to come out with the most effective method of treating prison inmates. In reality some countries' programs foster changes among inmates better than others do (Ajayi, 2012).

### **Societal rejection, labeling and deviant behavior**

Even though it is generally believed by the society that deviance is as a result of the internal dispositions of the deviants, there are other social factors that account for some of these deviant behaviors. Social labeling theorists see criminal behavior as a result of societal reaction to certain acts of people. They hold the assertion that deviance and criminality are a result of the response of others. According to social labeling theorists, deviance is no more than behavior that people so label (Macionis et al., 1994). If an individual commits an initial deviant act, it is society's reaction to such act that determines whether the act will be repeated and not the internal disposition of the offender. If the offender is made to feel worthless and is labeled as a deviant, these theorists believe that that particular label put on him by society is inculcated into the consciousness of the offender to the extent that the offender behaves in a way that is consistent with that label by affirming it hence, a recommitting of offense.

Macionis and colleagues in their book on sociology stated that any activity that is initially defined as deviant is basically known as primary deviance. Secondary deviance manifests if the deviant label becomes part of the person's self concept and social identity. With respect to prisoner recidivism, society's reaction to a released convict determines whether he will go back to his deviant acts or will resettle back in society. Thus if an ex-convict is accepted by society and helped, he is likely not to recommit the offense. On the contrary, if he is tagged and branded as a social misfit, the likelihood of re-offense becomes great (Macionis et al., 1994). Thus labeling can force or urge the ex-convict to fulfill the expectations of others by recommitting the deviant act. It has thus been argued, that a powerfully negative social label can drastically change a person's self-concept and social identity. Being labeled a criminal means being rejected by society, friends, close associates, employers and relatives. There is a high propensity that being negatively labeled will turn to behaviour that fulfills the observer's imagination and prophesy (Macionis et al., 1994).

### **Societal protection and crime deterrence**

Locking up dangerous criminals or persistent nonviolent offenders means that society will be protected from them for the duration of their incarceration. Thus, imprisoning criminals temporarily incapacitates them and eliminate the threat and danger they pose to society. Additionally, society expects that prisons will cause inmates to regret their criminal acts, and that when most prisoners are released they will be deterred from committing future crimes. This however is not the case. A June 2006 report from the National Prison Commission of the USA states that what happens inside jails and prisons

does not stay inside jails and prisons. On the contrary, these get to the wider society when inmates are eventually released into the society. Released prisoners tend to be more dangerous and harmful to society than when they were first imprisoned. They acquire new, sophisticated and more dangerous behaviors from other inmates in the prison (Hastings, 2006). The continuation of this trend implies that released inmates commit offenses again and are sent back to the prisons.

The prisons and the prisoners in them form some identity and a kind of family cohort that the prisoner identifies with. In furtherance, experts disagree about whether imprisoning criminals actually prevents further crime. Some critics argue that American prisons simply warehouse violence meaning that U.S. prison inmates are confined and incapacitated in large numbers, with little or no effort made at rehabilitating them. Critics have labeled the result of this process turnstile justice, referring to the fact that most inmates are habitual and persistent offenders and return to prison following conviction for new crimes (Ajayi, 2012).

Thus, in an effort by society to protect itself from criminals through mass incarceration, all that it has succeeded in doing is to keep criminals in an incubation to be released back into society later in more dangerous forms. Attempts by the society to use prisons to control criminal behavior has not only been a fiasco but has compounded the problem by making these prisons a fertile ground for the hardening of criminals.

### **Rehabilitation and reintegration**

Prisons attempt to rehabilitate inmates so they will avoid future criminal behavior. Most prisons have vocational and educational programs, psychological counselors, and an array of services available to assist inmates to improve their skills, education, and self-



concept (Glasner & Sheridan, 2005). Most prisons provide programs designed to reintegrate the prisoner into the community. Even though there is an effort by prisons to rehabilitate prisoners through education and vocational training, released inmates who benefit from such facilities are not monitored to assess the effectiveness of such initiatives. In work release and study-release programs, prisoners may participate in work or educational activities outside of prison. As prisoners near their parole or release dates, some are permitted unescorted leaves or furloughs to visit with their families on weekends. This involvement with the community may help inmates readjust to society after they have been released. Recently, there has been a growing public belief and conviction towards effective prisoner rehabilitation as the most effective way of reforming prisoners (Ajayi, 2012). This notwithstanding, societies attitudes at accepting released convicts let alone those on work release and study release programmes is much to be desired with,

However, the social structure of prisons and prison practices can actually impede rehabilitation and reintegration. For example, inmates acquire attitudes and knowledge from other inmates that may strengthen their desire to engage in criminal behavior and improve their criminal skills. Agboka when writing on the prison system in Ghana cited Lynch and Sabol as saying that prisoners acquire new behaviors in prison that strengthens the ones they already had. Consequently, these prisoners come out not as reformed individuals but rather as hardened criminals (Lynch & Sabol, 2004 cited in Agboka, 2008). The prison subculture is such that is able to initiate convicts into more sophisticated criminal orientations than they had been convicted of.



The isolation of inmates from society also hinders attempts at rehabilitation. Prison environments are unique and distinct from other populations. An American sociologist Ervin Goffman has described U.S. prisons as total institutions that is, self-contained, self-sufficient social systems that are unique and distinct. Isolated within a total institution, inmates are cut off from the rights and responsibilities of society. This lack of connection with societal norms can prevent successful reintegration into society when inmates are released. The inmate cannot conform to societal norms, rights and responsibilities if he does not understand these regulations in the first place (Champion, 2006).

Although prisoners must abide by institutional rules, they also establish their own rules for themselves. Thus, a culture within a culture, or prison subculture, exists. This subculture has its own status structure and hierarchy of authority. Thus, according to Agboka, Lynch and Sabol argued that once experienced, a prison is transformed from a mystery to a real life experience that has been suffered and survived. Prisoners are socialized into the prison subculture and upon their return, they show a greater deviant orientation than before they went in (Agboka, 2008). In many prisons therefore, inmates fear the informal prison subculture and its reprisals for rule violations more than formal administrative rules and punishments. If the prison subculture rejects the goals of the institution (such as rehabilitation), inmates are less likely to accept those goals (Ajayi, 2012). The adoption of new sub cultural goals other than the institutional goals enhances the strengthening of criminal intent and behavior upon release.

## 2.2 Unintended consequences of incarceration

### 2.2.1 Children

Losing a parent to prison affects multiple aspects of children's lives and affects them to varying degrees. Such a loss can likely have a significant impact on the emotional, psychological, developmental, and financial well-being of the child. Yet there has been little research exploring these consequences of parental incarceration. The broader phenomenon of parental separation and loss, particularly in the context of divorce or death, has, by contrast, received substantial research attention (Travis, 2005). This situation has persisted because parental loss due to incarceration have been stigmatised by the society and nobody seems to be ready to see it as a social problem that deserves absolute attention.

The incarceration of a parent has a tremendous impact on their children. Even though research has been limited, available information clearly shows that, children experience social, emotional, and developmental problems as a result of a parent's incarceration. It is extremely important to recognize that much of the research to date in this area focuses on the incarcerated mother because they are predominately the primary caregiver. Moreover, as the rate of incarcerated women increases, the impact on their children will be more traumatic due to their fundamental responsibilities as the primary caregivers. However, more needs to be known about the men who are incarcerated that are fathers as well. There is perhaps a presumption in the public perception that incarcerated men have not been and do not want to be involved in the lives of their children and families. However, research indicates otherwise. Male inmates are interested in their children and families,

would like to play a significant role in parenting their children and contributing to livelihood of their families, and will participate in programs to improve their parenting skills and their relationships with their families. Men in prison want to be active participants in the lives of their children and families (Mendez, 2001). Even though they may not be the primary caregiver, they play a role in their children's lives, either directly or indirectly, and their contribution needs to be more appropriately accounted for and considered.

Contemporary social policy may make it virtually impossible for men to be present or visible in the lives of their children. In general, a loss of a parent can cause emotional, behaviors, psychological and economic problems for a child. In particular, arrest and incarceration have a negative affect impact on the health and welfare of the child (Sack & Seidler, 1978). For example, Sack found that pubescent males exhibited anti-social behavior when a parent, the father, was incarcerated (Sack, 1977). When a parent is incarcerated, such a loss has been described to be as traumatic to a child as when a parent dies or there is a divorce. However, when a parent dies or there is a divorce, there are opportunities to openly discuss that loss and receive sympathy from others. However, when a parent is incarcerated, the topic is often considered taboo and the stigma associated with it precludes open discussion and elicits little sympathy (Fritsch & Burkhead, 1981). This inability to communicate or the failure to explain to the child what happened to their parent may create anxiety for the child and impact his or her ability to cope. The effects of parental incarceration on children are discussed below.

## **Trauma of the Arrest**

In some instances, the arrest itself is traumatic because the children may have been present when their parents were arrested, with no explanation provided to the child of what is happening. More distressing, children may be left by themselves after the arrest without a social support system and fall through the cracks (Sacks & Seidel, 1978; San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership, 2005). There have been incidents where the parent is arrested and the child is left alone without systemic intervention from social services and the criminal justice system. In other cases, the child may be taken to a shelter, placed in foster care, or placed with relative (San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership, 2005). Johnson (1991) purports that one in five children witness their mother being arrested and taken away by the police. Children who witness their parent(s) arrest are typically terrified (Myers et al., 1999). These children may not understand the circumstances under which their parents were arrested. Therefore, the child may perceive the situation as being threatening and hostile. In another study, Kampfner (1995) interviewed 30 children that witnessed their mother's arrest. Findings revealed that these children suffered flashbacks and nightmares about the incident.

When a parent is imprisoned and taken out of the child's life, it can have permanent social, emotional, and developmental impacts resulting in aggressive behavior, withdrawal, criminal involvement, peer isolation and depression. Hagan and Dinovitzer (1999) also summarize these impacts as strain, socialization and stigmatization.

## **Strain**

Strain can be manifested as economic strain on the remaining family members. When a parent is removed from the home and when he or she provides financial support, the

abrupt removal creates a vacuum (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999). Families, which are already poor and are on the edge of collapse, run into a further hopeless financial abyss. As a result, the remaining parent “may have less money and time to invest in their children.” (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999). Consequently, older children may become responsible for the care of younger children because the remaining care-giving parent may have to work longer hours or seek additional employment, therefore is not at home to care for younger children (Hagan & Dinovitz, 1999). In addition, older children may need to enter the workforce to help provide for the family, consequently, limiting their participation in school, athletics, or other social activities that define childhood (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999). Lost to prison seems to force children in the family into making choices that require them to assume adult roles that may be detrimental to their social and emotional development.

### **Socialization**

In the situation where the parent that was incarcerated provided positive role modeling, support and supervision for the family, the child may experience the emotional trauma associated with that loss. Moreover, children may become more susceptible to the antisocial behavior of peers (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999).

### **Stigma and Social Isolation**

The stigma associated with imprisonment can cause feelings of shame, anger, and rejection in the child which can impact his emotional reaction to subsequent stressful life events (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999). Children are afraid that they will be labeled by their peers, teachers, and other family members because they have an incarcerated parent



(Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999). According to the literature, the children of prisoners experience social and peer isolation, inner conflict over the imprisonment and separation from the parent, and either manifest antisocial behavior themselves or develop alternative pro-social behavior, rejecting the antisocial social behavior of the father (Travis, 2005; Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999). Initial qualitative findings from a 3-year ethnographic study of families of male prisoners in Washington, DC, suggest that children are also affected by social stigma during a parent's incarceration (Braman & Wood, 2003). Other qualitative work indicates that children of incarcerated parents may not be privy to the social support and sympathy otherwise afforded families experiencing the involuntary loss or absence of a family member (Arditti, 2005; Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999). Children may be exposed to criticism of themselves or their mothers regarding their involvement or lack of involvement with their incarcerated father (Braman & Wood, 2003). Finally, children who maintain in-person contact with their fathers during incarceration may undergo potentially stigmatizing experiences in the correctional environment as part of the visitation routine (Arditti, 2005; Hairston, 2001).

#### Prevalence of juvenile delinquency/criminality among children/wards of prisoners

According to Bilchik et al. (2001), research is beginning to reveal that children of offenders are more likely to enter the criminal justice system than children of no offenders. Estimates reveal that children of offenders are six times more likely than their peers to become criminally involved and become incarcerated. Goldstein (1984) used data collected from the Health Examination Survey conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics to study the relationship between families with absent fathers, parental supervision, and conduct disorder in youths. This survey, which was conducted between



1966 and 1970, studied thousands of youths between the ages of 12 and 17. Data collected were obtained from youth reports, parent reports, and school reports. Conduct problems were assessed using reported contacts with police, disciplinary actions in schools, and arrests.

Findings from Goldstein's study revealed that the police had questioned boys from absent father families significantly more than boys whose fathers were present. Also, boys with absent fathers tended to have more contact with the police than girls with absent fathers. In terms of parental supervision, Goldstein found that boys, but not girls, in homes with no supervision, had a greater chance of having contact with the police. Finally, this study showed that boys with absent fathers showed a greater chance of having disciplinary problems at school than boys from father present homes.

A study by Lipsey and Derzon (1998) found that 15 to 20 percent of children with incarcerated parents who had committed serious crimes are likely to exhibit conduct behaviours during adolescents. It has also been found in a study by Hungerford (1993), that 40 percent of the boys aged 12 to 17 whose mothers were incarcerated were delinquent. Sirpal (2002) examined the relationship between familial criminality and juvenile gang membership.

Two groups of families, 79 with criminality and 79 with no reported criminality were compared. The first group of parents interviewed children participated in Gang Reduction Activities and Sports programs (GRASP). The families in GRASP had children who were either identified as gang members or were at risk for becoming a gang member. The latter group of parents' children participated in the Police Athletic League (PAL). This program was open to all families. The only condition for admission was that the child

was not delinquent or a gang member. The ages of the children ranged from 12 to 18. Parents were given a self-report survey in order to measure the effects of parental criminality on juvenile gang membership. Analysis from this study revealed that parental criminality was a significant factor related to gang membership and delinquency among juveniles.

A study by the Survey of Youth in Custody conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (1988) found that more than half of all juveniles and young adults in custody reported a family member serving time in jail or prison. Furthermore, adolescent children of incarcerated parents are one-half to three times more likely than their peers to get arrested (Eddy & Heid, 2003). A study by Myers et al. (1999), reported similar findings that children of incarcerated mothers are more likely than other children to engage in lawbreaking and to be arrested.

The Oregon Youth Study (OYS) was a longitudinal study of 206 boys that began in 1983 (Eddy & Heid, 2003). The OYS participants grew up in lower to working class European American families. Participants were recruited from four grade classes in 12 public elementary schools. At the beginning of the study, 2% of the boys had parents who had been arrested as adults; 9% had a mother who had been arrested; and 22 % had a father who had been arrested. By the age of 18, 80% of participants who had had either a mother arrested or a mother and father arrested had been arrested two or three times. However, for youths whose parents were never arrested, 20% had two or more arrests. The study showed that participants with criminal parents were more likely to be arrested than those youths without criminal parents. The research reviewed indicates that children whose parent(s) are incarcerated are more likely than their peers to engage in

lawbreaking, and be arrested. Furthermore, the majority of juveniles and youth that have served time in jail had parents that were in prison. Therefore, a link is beginning to be identified that shows a causal relationship between parental incarceration and criminality in their children.

### **Poor school performance of children**

In addition to behavioral problems, children with incarcerated parents may have school related problems and problems with peer relationships. Stanton (1980) reported that 70% of 166 children of incarcerated parents studied show poor school performance and 50% exhibited classroom behavioral problems following the incarceration of their parents. Additionally, Sack et al. (1976) conducted a study of 31 families of prisoners, 20 imprisoned fathers and 11 imprisoned mothers. Wives of male prisoners reported that their children had problems in schools following their father's incarceration. Problems included poor grades or instances of aggression. Furthermore, Sack et al. (1976) found that the children ages 6-8 years of age had developed school phobia. Four of the 20 children did not want to go to school for a four to six week period after the confinement of their parent.

Trice (1997) compared the school performance of 219 children of incarcerated mothers in a state prison in Virginia with their same-gender best friends, whose parents were not incarcerated. This data was collected using the reports of the caregiver of the target child and the mother of the peer child. The investigation revealed that children of incarcerated mothers were more likely than their peers to experience suspension, mandated school visits by the guardian, extensive school absences, and failing classes. Furthermore, the

study revealed that the drop-out rate of children with incarcerated mothers was 34% compared to 10% of their best-friend peers (Myers, et al., 1999).

Henriques (1982) study of imprisoned mothers and their children included the perceptions of the guardians of the children whose mothers were incarcerated. The guardians expressed concern relating to the academic performance of these children. One guardian believed that separation from the mother affected the children's schoolwork. In school, children with incarcerated parents experience trouble with schoolwork, their peers, and authoritative figures. For this reason, these children may do poorly in school

The next section of this review investigates drug and alcohol usage among children with incarcerated parents.

### **Drug/alcohol usage**

Although numerous researchers have written about the effects of parental incarceration on children and youth, research that identifies substance abuse as a problem among this population is scarce.

Two studies, Hagen and Dinovitzer (1999) and Bilchik et al., (2001) stated that children of imprisoned parents are at a greater risk for alcohol and drug abuse. Reed and Reed (1997) also noted that children whose parents are incarcerated might be exposed to enduring trauma that leads them to abuse substances as a coping mechanism. In addition, Lowenstein (1986) studied 118 married Jewish criminal first time offenders. Husbands were interviewed in prison and wives at home. This study investigated the ability of the children to adjust successfully to their father's imprisonment. Drug problems and

involvement were measured. Results from the study revealed that some mothers identified experiencing drug problems with their children.

According to Butters (2002), the experience of family stressors such as a family unit disruption, may affect the patterns of drug use among adolescents. Butters (2002) used the 1997 cycle of the Ontario Student Drug Use Survey conducted on students in grades 7, 9, 11, and 13 in which 3,990 students were surveyed. Results from the study revealed that youths who reported being from a disrupted family were 79% more likely to use cannabis than those who had not experienced family disruption. Distant parent child relationships have also been shown to cause drug usage in children.

### **2.2.2 Spouses**

Imprisonment alters family dynamics

When a parent is sent to prison, many dimensions of family undergo significant changes. The family structure, financial relationships, income levels, emotional support systems, and living arrangements may be affected (Travis, 2005).

Intimate relationships are substantially burdened by incarceration. The forced separation of spouses and other intimate partners creates enormous strains on those relationships, frequently ending them. Few prisons allow conjugal visits or extended contact, which might ameliorate those strains. The artificial nature of same-sex institutions inhibits the cycles of dating, friendships, and courtship experienced in free society (ibid). The parent in prison is removed in a psychological sense, not just physically absent. Most aspects of family life are outside their sphere of influence and control. While a spouse or partner is in prison, life for the loved one left behind also undergoes significant changes. The



removal of a partner from the spouse has repercussions and this becomes more profound if the removed partner was attached to the spouse prior to incarceration.

The literature suggests that wives and girlfriends of inmates experience significant personal change, often gaining independence and self-sufficiency (Furstenberg, 1995). Such changes can alter the spouse's expectations of the familial role the prisoner will play upon his or her return. In addition, changes in family composition during an inmate's absence can preclude the prisoner from resuming his or her role upon return (McDermott & King, 1992). For example; the introduction of a new father figure in the lives of a prisoner's children may forever alter the father's relationship to his children (Travis, 2005).

The social stigma of incarceration may prompt adult family members to avoid complicated or difficult discussions with children to explain the absence of an incarcerated family member. Being kept in the dark about a family member's incarceration can influence the child emotionally and psychologically, and this in turn impacts the restoration of parent-child relationships (Travis, 2005).

Incarceration can also damage the financial situations of the families left behind. Most parents (71%) in state prison were employed either full- or part-time in the month preceding their arrest.( Travis, 2005).

Among incarcerated fathers, 60 percent held a full-time job prior to imprisonment, compared with 39 percent of mothers. For fathers, these wages were the primary source of income for their families (68%). Other sources of income included public assistance (13%), family and friends (18%), and illegal sources (Sullivan, Mino, Nelson & Pope,

2002). For incarcerated parents, these sources of income are terminated when they go to prison. This financial loss disproportionately burdens families already living in poverty. Mothers relied primarily on wages (44%) and public assistance (42%) as primary sources of income. They also relied on family and friends (26%) as well as illegal sources (28%) for income. Child support only accounted for about 6 percent of mothers' income (ibid). However, in some cases, parental incarceration may temporarily improve a family's circumstances. For example, if the incarcerated parent was abusive, then a period of separation may bring relief to the family and improve living conditions. Similarly, the incarceration of a drug-addicted family member who stole money and property from his or her relatives may stop the drain on family resources. But more typically, the separation due to imprisonment has a negative impact on the family (Travis, 2005).

#### Impact of Imprisonment on Intimacy and Commitment

It is difficult to carry out intimate relationships from prison. Barriers to contact and communication, transformations in family roles, and psychological changes due to detainment impede the development and maintenance of intimacy and commitment (Travis, 2005).

Many prisoners are housed far away from their families. The cost of visitation and the inhospitable prison environment may further inhibit efforts to maintain contact. Limited visiting hours, lack of privacy, and restrictions on movement and physical contact diminish the efforts men and women do make to stay connected (Fishman, 1990; Hairston, Rollin, & Jo, 2004). In interviews with 51 men in minimum security prison in Utah and Oregon, 65% of the men reported that they received no visits from their spouse or partner while in prison (Day et al., 2005).

The limited time for visitation can place undue pressure on what needs to be accomplished during these brief episodes of communication. Fishman (1990) sheds light on the range and intensity of emotions felt during these visits. Women reported feelings of intense anger, attachment, remorse, and resentment, as well as vicious fighting and passionate reconciliation. Fishman conducted repeated qualitative interviews with 65 men and 30 of their wives in prison in Vermont to examine the effect of incarceration on men and their families. She found that women's experiences during visitation varied widely. Some perceived visits as opportunities for renewed courtship, while others found the visits to be stressful and unfulfilling. In many cases, the relationship felt one-sided to the women, who were supporting their partners emotionally and materially but sometimes getting little in return (Fishman, 1990).

### **Role Changes**

Examination of Fishman's qualitative interview results revealed that relationships were sometimes compromised by the changes in roles that resulted from the men's absence. Women often became the major decision maker and head of the household, although some women tried to mitigate these changes by saving decisions for discussion during prison visits (Fishman, 1990). To counter changes in traditional gender roles, imprisoned men may seek unhealthy ways to assert their power, including entangling their partner in criminal activities by demanding that they bring in contraband or that they step into their former role in the drug trade. Men also may use dominance and threats to control women. Harassment and even violence have been reported during prison visits as men worry about losing their roles as husband and father in the family (Fishman, 1990; Nurse, 2002).

## Psychological Changes

Harsh prison policies, rigid routines, deprivation of privacy and liberty, and a stressful environment all take their toll on men's psychological development. Inmates must adapt to unnatural living conditions, and these changes often conflict with the personality characteristics needed to sustain intimate relationships with partners and children. Because of the loss of autonomy, many men experience diminished capacity for decision making and greater dependence on outside sources. The prison environment also leads to hyper-vigilance as men worry about their safety, and this may result in interpersonal distrust and psychological distancing. The "prison mask" is a common syndrome that develops; the mask is the emotional flatness men take on when they suppress emotions and withdraw from healthy social interactions. To survive in an often brutal environment, prisoners may develop hyper-masculinity, which glorifies force and domination in relations with others. Finally, many prisoners are plagued by feelings of low self-worth and symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (Haney, 2001). All of these psychological changes, which may be necessary for survival in the prison environment, can impede intimate relationships.

Marital and partner bonds are also weakened by economic strain. The majority of families affected by incarceration are of low income (Mumola, 2000), and the men's earnings are important for making ends meet (even though some of those earnings may come from illegal sources). At the time of their arrest, 61% of fathers incarcerated in state prison were employed full-time and 12% were employed part-time or occasionally. However, 27% of incarcerated fathers in state prison report that the source of their income in the month prior to their arrest was illegal (Mumola, 2000). As noted earlier,



54% of fathers in state prison reported providing the primary financial support for their children prior to incarceration (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008).

The loss of direct income can create a significant burden on struggling families, especially when it is combined with the additional costs associated with arrest and imprisonment, including attorney fees, collects calls from prison, and the expenses of traveling to the prison and providing material goods for the inmate (Arditti, 2005). According to qualitative research conducted by Arditti, Lambert-Shute, and Joest (2003), the proportion of women working actually declined (from 89% to 64%) after their partners were incarcerated because of the need for childcare and other issues. Furthermore, many women had to go on public assistance as a result of their partner's incarceration. , the stress of financial hardship has been linked with psychological distress,

For single mothers negative parenting behaviors leads to poor child outcomes (McLoyd, 1998). Single parenthood due to incarceration is a role taken on involuntarily, and anger and resentment about this new situation may weaken commitment to the imprisoned partner. Parenting also may become more challenging because many children whose parents are imprisoned show elevated rates of internalizing and externalizing problems (Jose-Kampfner, 1995; Murray & Farrington, 2005). Many women with an incarcerated partner see a reduction in available social support to cope with the stress associated with their partner's imprisonment as friends and family withdraw because of the stigma (Arditti et al., 2003). In addition, incarceration is marked as an "ambiguous loss" because the partner's absence is not publicly mourned or socially validated. This can lead to exacerbated grief and the phenomenon of being a "prison widow" (Arditti et al., 2003).



### 2.3 Coping mechanisms for adjustment to incarceration

During difficult times or times of transition, individuals rely on a variety of coping mechanisms and support systems to deal with increased pressure and anxiety from looking within to one's spirituality to turning outward to family, friends, or support groups such as one's church or mosque.

Numerous coping strategies have been identified and attempts made to classify them into conceptual domains (Moos & Billings, 1982). There appears to be no current consensus about a coping typology. However, three common dimensions of coping responses seem to include those that: (1) modify the situation from which the strainful experience arises; (2) control the meaning of the problem; and (3) manage the stress (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). These three dimensions are not considered mutually exclusive and can be applied simultaneously or sequentially to a given problem.

Virtually no research exists that specifically examines the positive or negative coping mechanisms (for example, personal spirituality, substance use) family members and communities of prisoners utilize to mitigate the strain, emotional problems, and stress associated with incarceration.

A related study by Lane (2012) on "the function of religion as a coping mechanism for prison wives and girlfriends" however revealed that religious and spiritual beliefs are important sources of strength for prisoner wives and pen girlfriends during the incarceration of their partners.

Literature on coping mechanisms adopted by individuals and families to stressful life situations indicates that a person's well being may be enhanced by certain dimensions of

spirituality (Ellison, 1991). Research has also shown that religious coping mechanisms, when compared to other coping mechanisms, help individuals to better react to stressful situations (Seeman & McEwen, 1996). Furthermore, religious groups can be important emotional and tangible support systems (Bradley, 1995).

On the other hand, non-criminal justice research indicates that drug and alcohol use is related to stressful life situations and may be used as a negative coping mechanism (Saxon et al. 2001; José et al. 2000; Butters, 2002). These issues have been virtually unexplored when it comes to understanding how families deal with the additional stress associated with incarceration.

## **2.4 Social support for incarcerated families**

### **Communities and Service Agencies**

The high rates of incarceration affect a relatively small number of communities across America. These communities already struggle with high rates of unemployment, crime, drug use, and poverty. Now they also face the added burden posed by the record levels of community residents who are sent to, and return from, prison. These communities therefore have a vested interest in the outcomes of returning prisoners and the state of their family networks during and after incarceration. Communities can play an active role in improving the outcomes of released inmates and their families. Community based organizations are well positioned to provide assistance with housing, substance abuse treatment, health care, employment, child care, counseling, and vocational training. They can make contact with prisoners prior to release to assist in the reentry process. These

groups also play an important role in preparing the community for a prisoner's return (Travis, 2005).

Many social service agencies provide services to former prisoners and their families. However, the delivery of these services may not be aligned to reflect the unique demands of the incarceration and reentry processes. For example, a returning prisoner may be eligible for community-based drug treatment but might be referred to join a waiting list upon his or her release from prison, during a high-risk time for relapse. Similarly, a public school may offer counseling to students experiencing difficult life crises, but may not be aware that a young person is severely stressed by the impending return of an incarcerated parent. By recognizing the service overlap and strategically coordinating these services to respond to the needs created by the criminal justice process, children and families are more likely to benefit. In addition, there is also a role for applied child developmental theory and research, where university-community collaborations can enhance program design and evaluate current program performance. But there is also a risk that involving multiple service agencies potentially increases the demands and conditions placed on family members, causing further strain to families. Therefore, the collaborative efforts of child protective services, health and human services, research organizations, and the criminal justice system are a central part of improving the outcomes of prisoners and their families. Creating comprehensive strategies to mitigate the harmful effects of incarceration and reentry upon prisoners, their children, and their families is an enormous challenge (Travis 2005).

In recent years, a number of innovative efforts have pointed the way to new models for reentry management. In cities such as Oakland, Chicago, Fort Wayne, and Cleveland, mayors have designated prisoner reentry a priority for their municipal administrations. These cities have created coordinating committees that cut across city services and community organizations. Other cities, including Baltimore, San Diego, and Winston-Salem, have formed community coalitions to work with returning prisoners and their families at the neighborhood level. These fledging efforts underscore both the potential and difficulties inherent in local mobilization efforts on behalf of the families and children of incarcerated members of the community (Travis, 2005).

## **2.5 Reunification and Reintegration**

Reentry is a challenging process along several dimensions. Upon release, former prisoners must find housing, employment, and health care. With access to public housing and assistance restricted by law, many struggle to find suitable living arrangements and financial support. Finding employment is also difficult for many returning prisoners, who often have limited educational backgrounds and vocational skills and face legal barriers to joining certain professions and discrimination from potential employers. Those with a history of substance abuse also confront the risk of relapse after release. For a family who has struggled in an inmate's absence, many barriers make it difficult for family members to resume support roles when the prisoner returns home. These barriers can include new relationships, relocation, limited finances, and feelings of resentment. Even in instances where families are in a position to offer support to a returning inmate, reentry is still an extremely challenging process for the ex-offender (Travis 2005).

Barriers to finding employment and housing, as well as pressures from former peer groups and detachment from loved ones, all contribute to the personal challenges with which a returning prisoner grapples. Amidst these difficulties in the reentry process, restoring the parent-child relationship after incarceration can be particularly complex. New relationships may have formed in the inmate's absence. The lack of contact during imprisonment may have attenuated the parent-child bonds. Structural changes may have altered relationships between family members. Feelings of shame and the social stigma of incarceration may create additional strains (Travis, 2005).

For a small share of returning prisoners, reunification after non relative foster care placement is an additional difficult reality. As discussed earlier, some incarcerated mothers (10%) and fathers (2%) have children placed in foster care during their imprisonment. Although a greater percentage of mothers have children placed in foster care, more children of incarcerated fathers are placed into foster care because the vast majority (93%) of parents in prison is fathers. Parents returning from prison who wish to take their children out of foster care must demonstrate that they now can adequately care and provide for their children. But little help is available to parents in finding suitable housing, employment, and child care, which are required before reunification can take place. Additional complications arise for parents who received public assistance prior to incarceration. They are one and a half times more likely to have their children placed in foster care than parents who did not receive public assistance prior to their arrest (Murray et al., 2009).



Receipt of public assistance may be associated with a weak family support network and an inability to find adequate relative care. This may present additional burdens for reunification. Some parents have their parental rights terminated while they are in prison. The 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act authorizes states to initiate termination of parental rights proceedings when a child has been placed in foster care for 15 months in a 22-month period. Many states have supplemented ASFA with legislation that relieves the state of making reasonable efforts to reunify families when “aggravated circumstances” are present. In a few states (Alaska, California, incarceration qualifies as an “aggravated circumstance.” Another issue facing some prisoners is child support. Parents who are subject to formal child support agreements are under additional pressure to find a sufficient source of income to start paying child support immediately upon release. Child support payments usually accumulate during a parent’s prison term, although a few states and localities suspend payments during periods of incarceration. For example, Iowa considers incarceration an involuntary act and the incarcerated debtor entitled to a modification of his or her child support payments (Leasure, 1988 In Baker, 1999).

Family interventions are based on the notion that strengthening the family support network for a returning prisoner will improve his or her chances of success. These interventions can thus meet the needs of the family, the released inmate, and the larger society. The few studies of these interventions are very encouraging. For example, an evaluation of La Bodega de la Familia, the direct service arm of Family Justice, Inc., which provides support to the families of drug users in the criminal justice system, found that the rate of illicit drug use among program participants declined from 80 percent to 42 percent, a significantly greater decrease than among those who did not participate in the

program. In addition, researchers found that family members participating in the program obtained medical and social services at substantially higher rates and had fewer needs than those in the comparison group. Researchers concluded that strengthening the family network improved outcomes for both the returning prisoner and the individual family members (Sullivan et al, n.d.).

### **Reentry and the Marital/ Partner Relationship**

With some exceptions, most men who are imprisoned return home. Reentry is the dynamic process of exiting prison and returning to a free society (Visser & Travis, 2003). Although this can be an exciting time for some families, it can be a fearful time for others (particularly those whose partners have a history of domestic violence). There are a number of challenges that men and women need to anticipate as men attempt to resume their roles as husbands/partners and fathers. The reentry experience for each inmate is shaped by his pre-incarceration history (e.g., substance abuse, domestic violence history, job skills and experience); his prison experience (i.e., mental and physical health status); and his attitudes, beliefs, and personality traits (Travis, Solomon, & Waul, 2001). This section focuses on common obstacles to family well-being, including role renegotiation, negative emotions, relapse, interpersonal conflict, and the threat of domestic violence.

Inmates frequently look first to their families to meet their immediate needs for money, housing, and emotional support (Fishman, 1990; Visser & Travis, 2003). The majority of prisoners being released report feeling close to their family, and 70% of the men in the Ohio Returning Home Study expected to live with their family upon release from prison (however, in this study the definition of family was not restricted to partners and children) (Visser, Baer, & Naser, 2006). Research suggests that married men who reside

with their wives and children upon release have a more successful transition (Visser & Travis, 2003). Although families play a substantial role in the reentry process, the criminal justice system does little to prepare families for their reunion (Fishman, 1990).

### **Reestablishing Roles**

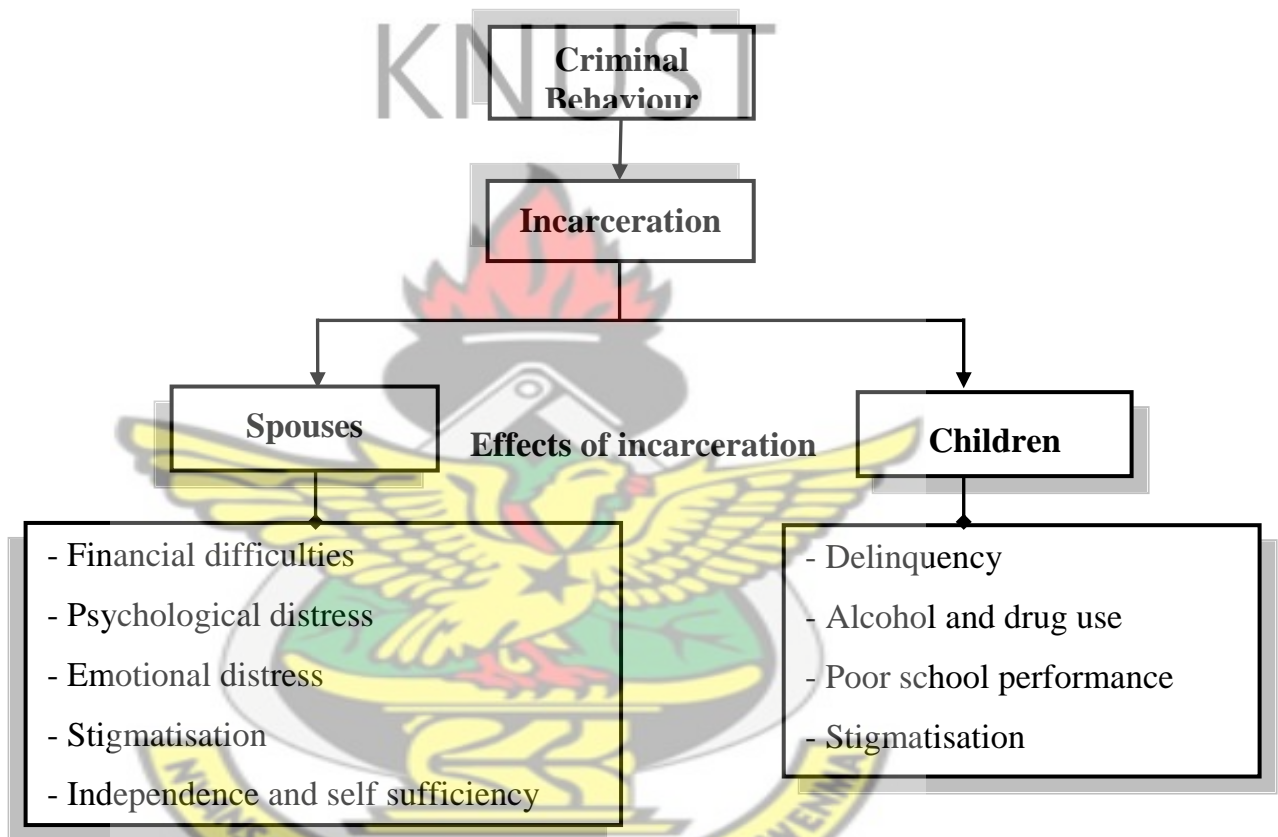
There is paucity of research available to reliably document the process of reintegrating into the marital/partner relationship at reentry. The very few research about this process emanates from small qualitative studies of men who were imprisoned and released and their partners (Fishman, 1990; Hairston & Oliver, 2006). Contextual summaries from these qualitative interviews and focus groups suggest that reintegration often starts with a “honeymoon period,” where the couple gets reunited. Many women have the belief that their partners will fulfill the promises they made while in prison with regards to stopping their criminal behaviors. However, numerous misunderstandings may arise as the couple attempts to reorganize their lives and reestablish their roles in relation to the relationship and the household (Fishman, 1990). It must however be emphasized that it is not always in all cases that conflicts will arise.

One issue identified in the available research involves power struggles and renegotiation of roles. Ex-convicts who have lost control of their families and have been forced to revert into dependency during their imprisonment may seek to assert their own power and control within their family upon return. However, women who gained independence and self-sufficiency and resilience during the period on their own may desire more egalitarian roles and struggle with their partners for control (Travis, McBride, & Solomon, 2005). On the contrary, men and women who desire traditional roles in their partnership may feel thwarted if the man has difficulties finding employment and establishing himself as

the financial breadwinner (Fishman, 1990). One of the most challenging tasks faced by prisoners and their partners upon release is recreating a sustainable family process that acknowledges the inevitable changes that take place during the period of imprisonment

## 2.6 Conceptual framework

Fig.1.0 Conceptual Framework for Unintended Consequences of Incarceration



**Source:** Authors own construct

When an individual engages in a criminal behavior, the person is fined or incarcerated after being tried in a court of competent jurisdiction and haven't been found to be guilty. The essence of incarceration could be retributive, reformatory or for rehabilitation purposes. The incarceration of a person has ripple effects on their relationships which could be positive or negative and networks who are the passive victims of incarceration. The incarceration of a person therefore has repercussions on their family. The spouses

and children of the incarcerated are the most affected. The effects of incarceration on the immediate family of inmates could be numerous as depicted in the conceptual framework diagrammatically.

# KNUST





## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section discusses the research design, population and target population for the study, the sampling size and sampling techniques used, methods used in the collection of data as well as how data collected was analysed.

Field research does not simply entail the process of collecting, analysing and interpreting data and producing written accounts detailing conclusions and recommendations drawn from the data (Dugbazah, 2007). Rather, the process of fieldwork is deliberate and bi-directional as it entails a process of social interaction and exchange between the researcher and participants, with each bringing their own subjectivities, expectations, values and intentions to the research (Patton, 2002). Both researchers and participants envisage and expect a variety of things from the research process and both have their unique and peculiar ways of guiding, manipulating and changing the research process (Maguire, 1987).

Any researcher setting out to understudy any new field must make a series of decisions. In most cases, the very first decision that a researcher must make in an effort to carry out a piece of research is the choice between qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Dugbazah, 2007). The choice between these two research methods is important because they reflect entirely different underlying ideologies, research philosophies and orientations. The issue at stake is not about superiority of one methodological approach over the other, but rather the identification of the approach that is most suitable for a particular study.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher employed qualitative methods as the main research methodology.

The strengths of qualitative research methods is derived primarily from its inductive approach, its focus on specific situations of people and their values as well as its emphasis on words rather than numbers (Patton, 2000). It is used to reflect on, understand, and interpret the shared meanings of people's everyday social worlds and realities.

### **3.1 Research Design**

The research design for this study was a social survey that employed an interview guide for the collection of qualitative data. Social survey is a method of collecting data and facts by putting questions to people that is, a systematic fact-finding from people. The emphasis on social indicates that information obtained is about some aspects of the way people live as social beings and actors (Kumekpor, 2002).

In a social survey research, the researcher asks many people numerous questions in a short and stipulated time frame.

Though the social survey was used the study also was cross-sectional as it considered study participants at one time. As such data collected is only being applicable to that time frame. The social survey is appropriate for this study because social surveys do not normally cover every individual in the group being investigated. Resources in term of time and finance are crucial in determining the coverage of social surveys. Only a part (fraction) of the total population is covered. It is possible, by careful sampling procedures, to select a sample as to represent or reflect the most important characteristics of the population being investigated and this research adopted rigorous sampling

procedures to select the inmates and their respective families who served as respondents for the study.

### **3.2 Sources of data**

#### **Secondary Source**

The research was initially based on secondary source of data which was obtained from the prison service and appropriate state institutions.

#### **Primary Source**

Primary data was basically sought through the administration of the research instrument which was an interview guide. The use of in-depth interviews as the major source of data collection method was influenced by the nature of the research problem and research questions, which in the case of this study, is an attempt to understand the effects of incarceration on the lived experiences of people, their culture and value systems of which the researcher intended not to be a passive participant but rather an active one.

### **3.3 Population**

Families of incarcerated persons who are in custody at the Kumasi Central Prisons constituted the population of the study.

#### **3.3.1 Study Population**

The study targeted nuclear families of inmates who have been incarcerated for the past two years and had spouses and at least one child before incarceration. Prisoners who have been in custody for a minimum of two years were targeted because it was anticipated that the consequences of incarceration would mostly be felt by their families as the longer an

inmate spends in custody the likelihood the severity of the effects of incarceration on his/her family and community. Contact was made with the inmates in the prisons who directed the researcher to their respective families and their communities in the study area.

### **3.3.2 Process of Selecting Research Participants**

The purposive sampling technique which is a non-probabilistic technique was used to select 25 prisoners from the Kumasi Central Prisons who hail from the Kumasi Metropolis. The selected inmates directed the researcher to their various families. Contacts were made with the prison authorities after going through all the necessary protocols. The prison officers assisted the researcher to select the inmates whose families served as respondents in the study. Since the prison is a security institution the researcher was not given the sole responsibility of selecting the inmates but was rather given a list of all inmates who met the criteria for the study population. Based on this a meeting was scheduled between the researcher and the inmates. After explaining the intent of the study to the categorised inmates, over fifty of them readily agreed to allow their families to be part of the study.

Purposeful sampling is a criterion-based selection in which particular settings, persons, or events and areas are selected deliberately in order to provide important information for the researcher (Patton, 2002). In purposive sampling, the sample units are chosen per the fact that they have particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration, examination and understanding of central themes and puzzles which the researcher wishes to investigate (Maguire, 1987). The purposive sampling has a major advantage in the sense that the researcher relies on a predetermined selection criteria and

an estimate of an anticipated sample size which enhances fast and speedy collection of data.

The purposive sampling was used to select the respondent families because the researcher believed that those families were the ones who have access to the needed information.

The choice of the study area was informed by its proximity to the researcher's institution of learning. Twenty-five (25) families were selected because of time and resource constraints. In addition the nature of the study which is a qualitative one does not place emphasis on numbers but rather on the rich nature of the data obtained hence the need for such a small sample size.

### **3.4 Methods of data collection**

In-depth interviews were the main tool for the collection of data. An interview guide was used when conducting interviews with participants. This method is selected and used for several reasons. The interview guide approach allows the interviewer to have full control and to select the order in which questions are asked and to modify the phrasing of questions to best suit the particular interview (Rubin & Babbie, 2008 cited in Abraham, 2011). Use of the interview guide approach helped the interviewer establish some level of rapport and trust with participants by encouraging interaction rather than just asking for answers to specific questions. It also enhanced the opportunity for the interviewer to convey empathy to participants and also to share in their emotions. As the researcher is very conversant with the study area in relation to language, culture and socio-economic characteristics, he intended to do all interviews transcriptions and translations by himself to ensure that collected data is valid. However, preliminary visits to the field revealed that the variety of languages spoken by respondent families could not be managed by the



researcher. Accordingly two postgraduate students in the Department of Sociology and Social Work, KNUST who are familiar with the spoken languages in the study area were recruited and trained to assist in the research.

All the interviews were conducted in the homes of participants. After approval from the inmates to allow their families to participate in the research, initial contact was made with the spouses through telephone calls. Thereafter appointments were made for face to face interaction at which the purpose and intent of the research was made known to participants. Upon participants consent to take part in the research, interview appointments were booked for the interview sections.

Twenty (20) out of the twenty five (25) interviews were conducted in the homes of participants while the remaining five (5) were conducted at the liaison office of the Kumasi Central Prisons. The five (5) interviews were conducted at the premises of the prisons because participants preferred there to their homes. Each interview section lasted for between forty five (45) minutes and one hour.

In addition to in depth interview as the main method of data collection, observation was used as an added method of data collection.

### **3.5 Data Management**

Social research generates information that must be coded, analysed and interpreted. In order to interpret the data, the researcher had to organize all observation and collate all data into meaningful forms. The initial qualitative data was managed manually. This process consisted of transcribing and translating responses from participants and organizing them into meaningful categories. Coding was used to classify the data in a

way that allowed the researcher to look for patterns and to create a retrieval system for later review of specific pieces of data (Patton, 2002; Rubin & Babbie, 2008 cited in Abraham 2011).

### 3.6 Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed qualitatively. The analysis and interpretation of data is a key component of any qualitative research effort. Rubin and Babbie (2008) denote qualitative analysis as “the nonnumeric examination and interpretation of observations for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships”.

Patton (2002) described *content analysis* as a term “used to refer to any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings”.

The Nvivo (version 7) software programme was the main tool employed for the analysis and interpretation.

The raw data collected from the field using the interview guide were entered into the programme to create a data file which was then analysed. In the analysis, responses were grouped under various themes by identifying key ideas of the research questions and relating them to the objectives of the study. Attempts were made to draw inferences as to whether a particular finding is supported or not by the reviewed literature. The researcher acknowledges the fact that notwithstanding the main themes which were the focus of the investigation, there were other themes that came to light in the course of the study which needed to be investigated accordingly.

### 3.7 Ethical Consideration

The study sought approval from the Ethics Committee of the University and the Faculty to ensure that it conformed to the standards of social science research. Ethical clearance was sought from all the major stakeholders before data collection. To satisfy ethical considerations in relation to intellectual or academic property and honesty, all secondary data used in the study were cited accordingly.

Individual informed consent was obtained from all participants before conducting the interviews. In order to ensure anonymity of interviewees, they were not made not to provide any form of personal identification. Confidentiality of the information provided by study participants was ensured by not sharing the data collected with those who are not closely associated with the study.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

This chapter presents a thematic presentation and analysis of data collected from the field. Data was collected from twenty five (25) respondents who were the spouses of incarcerated persons through the use of structured interview guides. It must, however, be emphasized that even though the researcher intended to interview children of the incarcerated as part of the research process, the incarcerated inmates as well as the remaining spouses disagreed with the initial proposal and for that matter had to seek responses from only the spouses. Varied reasons were given for the refusal of the children to participate in the research. Among the main reasons was the fact that the children were not aware of the incarceration as well as the fact that they were too young to give any meaningful responses. In addition to this, it was also purported by the parents that the inclusion of the children in the research will inflame passions and emotions among their children as they were yet to recover from the initial incarceration crisis.

This chapter is organised under the following sub-headings: the demographic characteristics of the respondents as well as the incarcerated spouses, the relationship that existed between the family and the incarcerated before incarceration and changes that have occurred in the family as a result of incarceration. In addition how such changes resulting from incarceration have affected the lives of family members as well as the coping mechanisms adopted by families to deal with incarceration and the social support systems available to families of the incarcerated are discussed.

#### **4.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents and their Incarcerated Spouses**

The spouses of the incarcerated were the key respondents in the research and for that matter the researcher found it ideal to collect data on their demographic characteristics to aid the analysis. In addition it was also found expedient to collect data on the demographic characteristics of the incarcerated to enable the researcher have a clearer view of the situation on the ground as such information was going to aid the discussion of findings. Based on this premise, there was the need to collect some vital demographic information of the incarcerated in addition to that of their spouses.

##### **4.1.1 Socio-demographic characteristics of non-incarcerated spouse**

As discussed earlier, these interviews were conducted with the spouses of the incarcerated who are the key respondents in the research. The purpose of the interview was to solicit how the incarceration of their spouses has affected them and their children. In all twenty-five (25) spouses of incarcerated persons were interviewed. Their ages ranged between twenty-three (23) and fifty-seven (57) with majority of them being within the age bracket of twenty 20 – 35 years. The majority of the spouses interviewed were females (22) while the remaining three (3) were males. While majority of the respondents had some level of education but never completed basic school, two of them had completed their basic education with another two (2) having fully completed secondary education. However, there was one peculiar situation where the respondent had attended a university. Occupational wise most of the respondents had learnt a trade but never practiced them and had resorted to petty trading especially among the women respondents as a means of livelihood while the rest of them were unemployed with one



respondent working as an accountant in a private firm. In relation to their religious affiliation, it was found out that the majority of the respondents were Muslims. Precisely twenty-one (21) were Muslims with the remaining four (4) being Christians. Majority of the respondents had four (4) or fewer children with their spouses although there was a respondent who had nine (9) children.

#### **4.1.2 Socio-demographic characteristics of incarcerated spouse**

To ensure consistency and coherence in the data collected, the researcher saw the need to collect data about the incarcerated spouses even though they were not the target of the research. It is believed that such information was going to aid effective analysis of the thematic areas identified at the initial stages of the study and all likely themes to be identified subsequently. It is for this reason that socio-demographic characteristics of incarcerated persons are presented below.

The information in relation to the socio- demographic characteristics was sought at three levels. Firstly, from the prison authorities through a review of the personal records of the inmates, secondly, from the inmates themselves and finally from the spouses of the inmates who were the key respondents in the study. The purpose of this varied information sources was to confirm the authenticity of the information gathered in relation to crime type, the duration of the sentence and the number of years served as well as time remaining. Even though the researcher was not given personal access to the files of inmates, assurance from the prison authorities gave the indication that the information given was consistent with the reality in the prisons.

Below therefore, is a presentation of the socio-demographic characteristics of inmates whose spouses were the main respondents in the research process.

In all demographic information was sought from the twenty five (25) inmates whose spouses were the key respondents. The twenty five respondents were found within the age bracket of 22-to-57 years, with majority of them falling within the ages of twenty (20) to forty-five (45). Twenty-two (22) of the inmates were males while only three (3) of them were females. It is worthy of note that the few responses from the spouses of female inmates had been solicited with a lot of efforts and pains since spouses of female inmates were not ready to be part of the research which confirmed an earlier comment by a prison officer who doubted if I could get any spouse of a female inmate to interview since the men abandon their spouses immediately they are convicted of crimes. While majority of the inmates had attained some level of education, majority of them never completed basic education with just one inmate having completed secondary education while a female inmate had completed tertiary education. It must be emphasized that though the sample is not a representative of the inmate population, the findings on the educational levels of the selected inmates is a true reflection of the general inmate population where it had revealed that majority of the inmates had low educational backgrounds.

Basically because of the poor educational background of the inmates they had no meaningful occupations before incarceration and were involved in menial jobs as a means of sustenance and which made them invariably unemployed. However, there were a few of them who were self-employed and were engaged in their private businesses.

The crime categories that sent the inmates to the prisons are varied but per the standards of the prison service and the legal systems of the country, the following breakdown of crime category was determined. There were four (4) inmates convicted of fraud, three (3) inmates were convicted of stealing, another three (3) were convicted of unlawful entry, with four (4) inmates convicted of armed robbery while three (3) inmates were convicted of rape. Three (3) of the convicts were also convicted of indecent assault while three (3) were convicted of post narcotic drugs and the remaining two (2) of the twenty five inmates were convicted of dishonestly receiving.

Basically for any inmate to be part of the research process it was expedient for the person to have spent a minimum of two (2) years in the prison facility. For that matter all the inmates who allowed their spouses to be part of the study had a sentence range of three (3) to thirty (30) years with a variation of number of years of remaining jail terms. However, the inmates were not so much interested in the remaining jail period since that was a sign of acceptance of their status as convicts and were more interested in means of getting out of jail in the shortest possible time through every means available even though their spouses did and kept counting the days as they went by.

In relation to records of prior incarceration, it was found out that none of the inmates had any prior incarceration record. It was, therefore, a little surprising since previous research in various prisons in Ghana had emphasized high levels of recidivism. However, follow up focus group discussions with prison officers revealed that inmates who had prior incarceration records hardly took part in such research processes since they had accepted the prison subculture and remained as such.

After a careful scrutiny of the interviews with the spouses of the incarcerated persons, the following themes emerged; relationship between the family and the incarcerated before incarceration, changes that have occurred in the family as a result of incarceration, how such changes resulting from incarceration have affected the lives of family members, coping mechanisms adopted by family members to deal with incarceration and social support systems available to families of the incarcerated. Below is a presentation and interpretation of collected data in the order outlined above.

#### **4.2 Relationship between the family and the incarcerated before incarceration**

The general aim of this study was to find out the conditions of the passive victims of incarceration who in this case are the spouses and children of the incarcerated. To enable the researcher have access to such vital data, it was expedient he had an exposition of the relationship between the incarcerated and the family before incarceration which will serve as a spring board to determine the degree of changes that has affected the family.

Most of the spouses interviewed stated they lived with their spouses and children happily until the arrest and conviction of their spouses. From the parents while majority of the children had not witness the arrest because they were either in school or the arrest took place outside the home area, the very few children who witnessed them have painful and traumatic memories of the incident.

Juliana is a thirty year old unemployed spouse with four children and a husband serving an eight (8) year jail term with five (5) years remaining noted:

How could my children see their father handcuffed and taken away without any reasons not feel the pain? They keep on asking when their Dad will come back. Sometimes when they remember they feel irritated.

While some of the children knew their parent had been arrested and imprisoned because they witnessed the arrest, it is only the grown up ones who were aware of the cause of incarceration. The very young ones were not aware of the cause of conviction even though they knew their parents have been arrested and convicted. For the group of children that never witnessed the arrest, the whole incident had been hidden from majority and the very young among them with the pretence that the imprisoned spouse had travelled outside the country. It is only the grown ones who had been made known of the incarceration. Salamatu a forty year spouse of a convicted armed robber had this to say:

I have not told my children, I only told them he is travelled because when they get to know of it, it will increase their pain and sorrow of an absentee father.

Most of the spouses of the incarcerated had insisted that their spouses were nice and good people to live with but their absences have created vacuums in their lives. This is even more profound as their spouses were the breadwinners of their homes. Asked if they had memories of their spouses, the general response was that even though some of the memories could be bad, there could be no bitter memory than having your spouse in jail.

Florence a forty one (41) year old trader insisted:

My husband sometimes beat me up and was a mess but it was better than having him in jail. After all he provided the house keeping money and kept the home going.

Most of the spouses insisted that their partners be released to be with them at home since they felt they had been wrongfully convicted. There were a few however who wished the duration of the sentences was reduced to ensure early return to the home. In other few



cases they wished they could have the financial resources to engage the services of lawyers to go for an appeal of the conviction.

Adisa a twenty year old mother of two, whose husband is serving a thirty year sentence for fraud, had this to say:

What else can I wish for my husband? He must be released or at least his sentence should be reduced after the appeal. How do I wait for a husband who will be away for thirty years?

Most of the participants had insisted that the incarcerated spouse was nice to the children and that they did everything in common like brothers and sisters. For some of the female participants, their spouses bathed and played with the children while they prepared the evening meal every day.

Portia a 20 year old woman insisted:

My husband was the housekeeper while I was the breadwinner. Since he closed early from work he did virtually all the household chores including cooking, washing and taking the children to school. But now that he is not there.

The absence of the incarcerated spouse in the homes of the participants had created different reactions amongst the children. While the children who were not aware of the situation kept on asking when the parents would come back home, those who were aware had become reserved and did not want to join the company of their peers for fear of being laughed at while others had accepted it in good faith and saw themselves as single parent children who must assist the remaining spouse to get the home running.

Owusu a fifty year husband of a convicted female spouse noted:

What else can they do? I told them and they have taken it in good faith. They have decided to help me run the home as a single parent father by taking on the responsibilities their mother shouldered.

#### 4.3 Changes that have occurred in the family as a result of incarceration

As part of the research there was an effort to find out the changes that has occurred in the family due to the incarceration of a member of the nuclear family and how such changes have had impacts on the smooth running of the family or otherwise. In an effort to find out these changes, the following responses were obtained.

Since most of the children were not aware of the incarceration of the parent there were no initial changes to their behaviors but the persistent absence of the partner solicited enquiries from the children which led to varied behavioral changes ranging from refusal to eat to persistent visits to the hospital as a result of varied sicknesses.

The category of children who were aware of the incarceration of the parent had responded negatively in diverse ways by showing negative attitude to almost everything they did. While some had become reserved and would not participate in any meaningful activity others would not eat. The situation was worsened when some of these children were sent to the prison to visit the incarcerated parent for reunification. The reactions of these children from crying to insisting on staying with the imprisoned spouse in the prison made the remaining spouses not ready to go back to the prison with these children. Auntie Hannah a thirty-eight year wife of a rape convict serving a ten (10) year sentence had this to say:

I took my children to visit my husband in the prison with the hope of calming them down and my family has changed, they are always crying, will not eat and are always visiting the hospital. I have decided never to send them there again.

For the very few children who had been able to contain themselves on visits to their incarcerated parents and had therefore had the opportunity to visits on more occasions, their behaviors after visits had been quiet and have redrawn from the company of friends

as well as becoming partially recalcitrant and refusal to obey simple home regulations and difficult to control.

Most of the spouses interviewed shared the view that the absence of the other parent makes parenting more difficult and that with carelessness and negligence on the part of the parent could lead to disobedience and possible delinquency of the children since the other parent is not available to give a helping hand in parenting. For some of them, it is even more profound when the remaining spouse is a female who has to cater for male children. Such situations could lead to involvement in social vices by the children and possible rift with the law.

Auntie Hannah a thirty-eight year wife of a rape convict serving a ten (10) year sentence had this to say:

My boys are always being arrested by the police for involvement in drug usage and criminal activity. But for their father who is already in prison and the sympathy of the local police, they would have all joined their father in prison.

Esther a thirty two (32) year old trader with a husband serving a fifteen year jail term for fraud had this to say:

My children after knowing that their father has been imprisoned and will not come home today or tomorrow are now difficult to control and have become more irritating than I expect of them. I realized they were going to change a little with that incident but never knew it will be that much.

While most of the children had increased their visits to the hospital as a result of the initial shock associated with the incarceration, they had reverted to normalcy and did not visit the hospital persistently as it use to be from the onset of the crises.

While most parents emphasised the fact that the academic performance of their wards had become worse as a result of the stigma and subsequent redrawal of their children from their peers, there were others who indicated that their children had been compelled to drop out of school due to their inability to continue to cater for their children as a result of financial challenges they were going through due to the absence of their spouses.

There was however another category of children with incarcerated parents who had been redrawn from the purported good and expensive schools to less endowed and affordable schools and this has negatively affected the academic performance of these children.

Mohammed a thirty-seven year old businessman with a wife serving a five year jail term for narcotic involvement retorted:

I have redrawn my children from the good school they were attending because I cannot afford to pay with the absence of my wife and how will you expect them to academically perform well in that poor and dilapidated school.

Asked if there had been any changes in the nuclear family as a result of incarceration, respondents admitted that once the incarcerated person was an absolute family member, his or her absence will definitely create some changes, some of which respondents enumerated and discussed.

First and foremost, almost all respondents noted financial challenges as one of the major changes that had bewildered their families. Since most of the incarcerated persons were meaningful contributors to their family incomes, the absence of such persons and their contribution had reduced family income since their contributions were not forthcoming. To most of them the situation was even aggravated when apart from the absence of their contributions towards family income, there was further expenditure on the remaining family income to cater for the incarcerated person while in jail. This cost



ranged from everyday maintenance from food to regular visits to prisons as well as the cost for paying for legal services and arrangement for appeal court appearances to ensure early release and possible discharge. In certain real cases some remaining spouses had indicated they had to give up their own sources of income and accumulated capital to ensure if they could get their spouses discharged which all proved futile and hence lost of their means of livelihood and a further compounding of their financial situations

Furthermore, most of the respondents indicated that the incarceration of the family member had led to reduction in the dignity and worth associated with the family. To them in African societies, any person who is incarcerated has himself or herself and other family members looked down upon by other members of the society irrespective of the cause of the incarceration. In some communities while some see incarceration as a taboo and will not be talked about it, others see it as a social stigma and would not want to associate with family members of the incarcerated. The stigma associated with incarceration had made some families lose important social networks they relied upon. Their children have had to lose the important friends they had because their parents will not allow them to associate with children of prisoners.

Notwithstanding the fact that majority of the respondents had insisted on negative or bad changes in their families as a result of incarceration, a few of them insisted that the incarceration of their spouses had resulted in some positive changes in the family even though they do not personally share the view that the incarceration is the best for the family. Some of these spouses had emphasised that their spouses were persistent drug addicts and a drain on family resources and that their absence had created some financial



stability in their homes while others insisted their spouses were a menace to them and so their incarceration had created some level of peace in the home.

Saadia insisted:

I was always frequenting police station whenever my husband was arrested and I spent all my money on him. Now that he is gone for ten years, even though I am not happy, I will be free from police trouble for a while and he will not be here to beat me in addition whenever I get him out of police cells.

#### **4.4 How changes in the family have affected the lives of family members**

There was an effort as part of the research objectives to find out how changes in the family as a result of incarceration had affected the lives of family members who in this setting were the spouses and children of the incarcerated.

On the spouses left behind, most of them had emphasised the fact that the incarceration of the other spouse has had serious repercussions on their emotional and psychological composure since there were no other people they looked up to for comfort and companionship.

For the category of respondents who witnessed the arrest of the spouse with the children, the incident had created some form of trauma, tension and anxiety within the family. Anytime such memories came to mind, the overall moral and composure of family members was nothing to write home about.

Furthermore most respondents had indicated that one of the key changes that had affected the family is the lack of companionship for the remaining spouse and the children which had impacted negatively on the family's socialization process,

One major change that has affected the family has been the reduction in the economic stand of the family with its financial and material challenges as a result of reduction in family income and the cost of maintaining the incarcerated person.

It is profound to have come to terms with the fact that most of the female respondents had stated categorically that one of the major cost of incarceration on them has been the fact that they had been unfaithful to their incarcerated spouses and had committed adultery at one time or the other. Most of them insisted they had to sleep with people other than their spouses to get resources for the maintenance of the home. A few of them had slept with other people to satisfy their sexual desires in the absence of their spouses.

#### **4.5 Coping mechanisms adopted by families to deal with incarceration**

In a bid to understand the conditions of the passive victims of incarceration, there was an effort by the researcher to ascertain the various ways and measures that had been adopted by families of the incarcerated to contain the challenges posed by absence of a family member through incarceration.

Most of the families had indicated that after going through the initial stages of the trauma and the arrest and incarceration and coming to terms with the reality on the ground, the first thing they had to do was to accept the situation in good faith and stand up to the test and reality of it.

Furthermore most of the respondents had alluded to the fact that in the most challenging times they had resorted to religiosity in the form of fasting and prayer as well as attending religious activities like church services and prayer and counseling sections to make them emotionally stable even though they knew those mechanisms were not the practical solutions to the problems at hand. Some other respondents claim to have consulted

shrines and witch doctors for advice and spiritual charms to intercede on their behalf. Though most of the respondents accept the fact that this spiritual involvement never found solutions to their predicaments they had been a form of psychic relief and healing for them.

Esther a thirty-two (32) year old trader with a husband serving a fifteen year jail term for fraud had this to say:

Even though I knew those spiritual involvements was not the solution to the problem I had no option since these spiritualists were the only ones who were ready to listen to me and I needed somebody to listen to console me and they did so it actually helped and it is still helping.

Most respondents had also emphasised that one of the key mechanisms adopted by the family was to reduce family expenditure to make do for the reduced family income. These included moving children out of expensive schools to affordable ones as well as moving out of expensive rented accommodation to affordable ones. In certain real cases where the accommodation the family was using belonged to them, they rented some apartments out to be able to generate enough income for the family.

For some families they had to relocate to a new area in totality to avert the stigma attached to the family as result of incarceration while others had to relocate to their hometowns where cost of living as well as accommodation and education was comparatively cheaper and affordable.

#### **4.6 Social support systems available to families of incarcerated persons**

One of the key areas of this investigation was to find out the forms of social support systems that are at the disposal of the families of inmates both at the micro and macro level.

The respondents had indicated that the reaction of the immediate community members had been diverse. For a group of the respondents the community had pretended as if they had not heard of the incarceration and had therefore kept quiet over the issue while a category of them who were aware had given moral support in the initial stages of the arrest but had not received any material or financial assistance from any community member.

The family members of the incarcerated had been very helpful from the initial stages of the arrest in terms of material and financial assistance but seized immediately the final determination of the sentence with a few of them picking some of the children of the incarcerated spouse to stay with.

Basically while some of the spouses insisted the friends of the incarcerated had been helpful in certain circumstances, majority of them insisted they had not been helpful and in peculiar cases wanted to take advantage of the situation to have sex with them and for that matter had ignored any form of assistance from their spouse's friends

Adisa who was staying with the husband and a friend in the friend's father's house had stated that after the incarceration of the husband, the friend called one morning and said:

You sleep with me from now on or count yourself ejected by tomorrow morning.

At her refusal to sleep with the husband's friend, she was eventually ejected from the house and to her the most annoying aspect of it was that the man went about telling others she was adulterous that is why she has been ejected from the home.

To most of the respondents they never received any form of assistance from elsewhere apart from close relatives and family members. However there were a category of respondents who had received some form of assistance from religious organisations only

after they had become members of these religious groups and had narrated their predicaments to the group.

Those who already belonged to religious groups had not received any form of assistance from the religious bodies because they had not officially reported the incident to them and did not want to do so and the leaders of the groups had also pretended they had not heard of the incident

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to find out the conditions of the passive victims of incarceration who in this case are the spouses and children of the incarcerated. This choice of study focus and direction was driven by the increasing levels of incarceration the world over (Stevenson, 2011), the very limited availability of literature and research on offender families and the lack of concern of the society for prisoner families. This chapter analyses the effect or consequences of incarceration on the left over family in relation to the objectives of the study as well as emerging themes and the available literature in a bid to find answers to the research questions that has directed and guided the whole process.

The data collected represents the perspectives of the families of the incarcerated within the Kumasi metropolis. The perspective of the families of the incarcerated is important to this research because these are issues that affect them. It is indeed their life experience and nobody can tell their story better than themselves.

The incarceration of a parent within a meaningful family has rippling effects on the remaining spouse and children with many dimensions of the family undergoing through significant changes (Travis, 2005). It is in the light of such dynamic changes as a result of incarceration that this chapter discusses the major changes that the families understudied have gone through and how such changes have affected the children and spouses of the incarcerated.

## **Children**

Discussed below are the key themes that emerged out of the research in relation to the unintended consequences or effects of incarceration on children of the incarcerated.

### **5.1 Incidence and Trauma of the Arrest and Trial**

Most children who had observed the arrest and trial of their parents in an inhumane manner without any explanations and understanding of the incidence are traumatized and terrified and live in perpetual fear and anxiety. This finding conforms to an earlier work in which one in five children who had witnessed the police arrest their parents had lived thereafter in fear (Myers et al., 1999). Some of these children after the witness of the arrest had been experiencing hallucinations and nightmares about the incident. This is in tandem with a finding in a study by Kampfner (1995) in which all thirty (30) children who witnessed the arrest of their mothers had flashbacks and nightmares about the incident. It is also expedient to indicate that it was found out that there were some children who had witnessed the trial proceedings of their parents and this compounded their fear and anxiety. Even though there is no available literature to substantiate this, it is worthy of note.

### **5.2 Stigma and Subsequent Redrawal**

A clear outcome of the research is that children of incarcerated parents feel stigmatized from the company of their peers, school mates, family members and the general community. There is a general expression of shame, anger and resentment about the incarceration and most children naturally redraw from the company of peers and other

significant others for fear of being labeled as emanating from homes of imprisoned parents. Not only do these children redraw from the company of others but significant others in the form of relevant social networks and the general community redraw since nobody wants to associate with relations of incarcerated persons as a result of stigma associated with it. This is corroborated by various research findings including Travis, 2005; Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999 and Braman & Wood, 2003. In initial qualitative findings from a 3-year ethnographic study of families of male prisoners in Washington, DC, Braman & Wood suggest that children are also affected by social stigma during a parent's incarceration (Braman & Wood, 2003).

### **5.3 Poor School Performance and High School Drop-out Rate**

One key outcome of this work is that children of incarcerated parents generally perform poorer in school when their parents are incarcerated as compared to when their parents were with them. As a result of the emotional and psychological stress they go through, they encounter problems at school and this indirectly leads to poor school performance. This finding is supported by a study by Stanton (1980) which reported that 70% of 166 children of incarcerated parents studied showed poor school performance and 50% exhibited classroom behavioral problems following the incarceration of their parents. Coupled with this is the key finding that children of incarcerated parents are more likely to drop out of school than their peers with non incarcerated parents. This finding is corroborated with a research finding by Trice (1997) which compared the school performance of 219 children of incarcerated mothers in a state prison in Virginia with their same-gender best friends, whose parents were not incarcerated. This data was

collected using the reports of the caregiver of the target child and the mother of the peer child. The study revealed that the drop-out rate of children with incarcerated mothers was 34% compared to 10% of their best-friend peers (Myers et al., 1999).

#### **5.4 Alcohol and Substance Abuse**

In as much as there is little research that attributes substance abuse to children of incarcerated parents, one key finding of this study is that children of incarcerated parents are prone and more likely to abuse alcohol and other substances as a result of trauma than their peers from intact homes. This finding is in tandem to a similar finding by Reed and Reed (1997) who also noted that children whose parents are incarcerated might be exposed to enduring trauma that leads them to abuse substances as a coping mechanism. In addition, Lowenstein (1986) studied 118 married Jewish criminal first time offenders. Husbands were interviewed in prison and wives at home. This study investigated the ability of the children to adjust successfully to their father's imprisonment. Drug problems and involvement were measured. Results from the study revealed that some mothers identified experiencing drug problems with their children.

#### **5.4 Changes in Family Composition and Weakened Ties to Parents**

It is astonishing to find out that in most families incarceration automatically leads to changes in the composition of the family but in diverse ways. The initial change is the absence of the incarcerated spouse which has serious repercussions on the socialisation process of the children. If the incarcerated spouse provided positive role modeling and supervision to the family incarceration results in trauma associated with the loss (Hagan

& Dinovitzer, 1999). Coupled with this change is the likelihood of some of the children going to stay with other relatives due to the inability of the remaining spouse to cater for the children alone which leads to loss of ties among siblings as well as the remaining spouse.

The final change in the family is a result of the introduction of a new partner of the remaining spouse into the family due to divorce or separation as a result of incarceration. This creates role changes which has negative effects on functioning of the family. Even though this finding is not supported by available literature, it is a clear finding which must be explored for future investigation.

## **SPOUSES**

### **5.5 Role Changes**

One key finding from this research in relation to spouses of the incarcerated is that the imprisonment of a spouse leads to role changes for the remaining spouse. In most cases the remaining spouse has to pick up and performs the roles of the incarcerated spouse in addition to his or her original roles within the family. The change in roles in most cases leads to a compromise of the relationship and possible divorce. This finding is corroborated by Fishman's (1990) qualitative interview results which revealed that relationships were sometimes compromised by the changes in roles that resulted from the spouse's absence.



## **5.6 Economic Hardships**

One major finding of this research is that the imprisonment of a spouse has serious economic challenges for the remaining spouse which automatically trickles down to the rest of the family members. The situation is even more profound when the incarcerated spouse was the major economic contributor to the home. The absence of the spouse meant the absence of his or her contribution to family economic resources. This finding is supported by Arditti (2005) in a qualitative work which indicates that the loss of direct income can create a significant burden on struggling families, especially when it is combined with the additional costs associated with arrest and imprisonment, including attorney fees, collects calls from prison, and the expenses of traveling to the prison and providing material goods for the inmate (Arditti, 2005).

## **5.7 Incarceration and intimacy**

One major finding from the work is that it is very difficult to maintain intimate marital relationship with a spouse in prison because of the restricted nature of the prisons which normally creates emotional and psychological problems for the remaining spouses compelling them to look for companionship from elsewhere and possible divorce with their partners in prison. This finding is corroborated by (Travis, 2005) who asserts that it is difficult to carry out intimate relationships from prison. Barriers to contact and communication, transformations in family roles, and psychological changes due to detainment impede the development and maintenance of intimacy and commitment (Travis, 2005).

## 5.8 Disconnection of social networks

One key finding of this work is that incarceration destroys all acquired social networks of the remaining spouse. Because of the stigma associated with incarceration anybody who has a spouse in prison loses all acquired social networks since nobody wants to associate with the incarcerated. This situation even becomes more profound when the incarcerated person and the family are coming from a low income status family where they will need some form of support from relatives and friends. Even though this finding is not corroborated by any known research, the cultural settings of various studies and the current one with different social support systems are different must, therefore, be looked at as a key finding.

## 5.9 Coping Mechanisms

In effort to find out how families of the incarcerated are able to deal with and contain the effects of incarceration, it was found out that most families resorted to active participation in religious activities as well as guidance and counseling from religious leaders instead of consulting professional counselors when the need be. This finding is corroborated in a study by Lane (2012) on “the function of religion as a coping mechanism for prison wives and girlfriends” which revealed that religious and spiritual beliefs are important sources of strength for prisoners’ wives and girlfriends during the incarceration of their partners.

In relation to this it was also found out that spouses of incarcerated persons resorted to the use of alcohol and drugs as a coping mechanisms even though it is a negative coping mechanism. This assertion is supported by Saxon et al. 2001; José et al. 2000; Butters,

2002 who indicated that, non-criminal justice research indicates that drug and alcohol use is related to stressful life situations and may be used as a negative coping mechanism even though these issues have been virtually unexplored when it comes to understanding how families deal with the additional stress associated with incarceration.

### **5.10 Social support**

In a bid to find out the forms of social support available to families of the incarcerated it was found out that there are no formal forms of social support at their disposal. The main forms of social support available to them were informal and it emanated from family members and friends as well as from religious bodies even though these forms of support kept dwindling as the years go by. Even though this finding is not supported by available literature where the major forms of social support are said to be provided from informal sources, the social context within which the research is conducted where social institutions are yet developing attests to the fact that the major forms of social support being informal must be appreciated.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter being the last of the study presents a summary of findings, limitations of the study, implications for future research, recommendations for policy and practice as well as conclusions.

#### 6.1 Summary of findings

This study sought to find the unintended consequences of incarceration on the nuclear families of the incarcerated. The study revealed that spouses of the incarcerated were mostly female which implied that most of the people incarcerated were males.

Some of the crimes committed by inmates include rape, armed robbery, drug peddling car and mobile phone snatching as well as unlawful entry and possession. The spouses of the incarcerated as well as the incarcerated themselves are emanating from low income bracket group of persons.

On the children of incarcerated persons it was found out that incidence and trauma of the arrest, stigma and subsequent redrawing from the company of peers and other relevant people were some of their experiences. In addition, poor school performance and high school drop-out rate alcohol and substance abuse as well as changes in family composition and weakened parental ties are also some of the major effects on children.

The unintended consequences of incarceration on the spouses of the incarcerated include: radical role changes, economic hardships, loss of intimacy and subsequent divorce as well as disconnection and loss of already established social networks and relations.

However, there is a minor category of respondents who insists that the incarceration of their spouses has yielded some positive results for their families

In relation to the coping mechanisms used by families of the incarcerated to contain the situation, it was found out that the resort to religious activities and religious counseling as well as the use of alcohol and other harmful substances were prevalent. It was also found out that formal forms of social support in the array of institutional arrangements were not available. However, informal forms of social support in tangible and non tangible forms were provided by friends, relations and religious bodies but dwindled with the passage of time.

## **6.2 Problems of the study**

As with all empirical research, the study has limitations and it is important to highlight some of its major limitations.

The first limitation of this study was getting the selected respondents to participate in the study as respondents. Due to the stigma and negative connotations associated with incarceration, some respondents felt reluctant to participate in the study. They, however, gave their consent to participate in the study after the purpose and intent of the study was explained to them.

It is suspected that respondents might have exaggerated some of their responses as a result of their emotional and psychological states as well as their expectations of soliciting some form of assistance or remedy from the researcher. This could partially affect results of the study.



The last limitation of this study is its inability to generalize the results of the findings due to the qualitative nature of the study which emphasizes on the in depth nature of information gathered rather than on numbers. Geographically, the study was limited to the Kumasi Metropolis which also makes it difficult to generalize research findings.

### **6.3 Implications for future Research**

With regards to further research, to assess the long term impact of incarceration on spouses and children, longitudinal studies should be conducted that follows spouses and children for at least three (3) years with a control group for comparison (Laakso & Nygaard, 2007).

Research that also compares spouses and children well being before, during and after incarceration will also be useful. Even though the nature of the research was more of a qualitative work than quantitative studies with emphasis on the in depth nature of the data collected rather than on numbers, it is recommended that future studies should expand the number of respondents as well as the study settings to enhance the generalizability of study results.

### **6.4 Recommendations for Policy and Practice**

The incarceration of a person affects not only the incarcerated but all relevant social networks as well as relations of the person. Incarceration processes must, therefore, ensure that such relevant persons are not unduly affected by putting in place social mitigating measures to ensure effective incarceration and reintegration.

It was also found out that most spouses of incarcerated persons resorted to spiritual leaders to seek much needed counseling services while under duress rather than seeking professional counseling services. It is, therefore, recommended that stakeholders in the social service sector should make professional counseling services available to families of the incarcerated to enhance their coping mechanisms.

Even though the study was not directly involved with remand prisoners, the responses from the spouses of the incarcerated had indicated that their spouses had been on long term prison remand for several months and years before the final determination of their cases. It is, therefore, recommended that the processes of judicial trial should be looked into to ensure easy and smooth as well as speedy trial of suspects. This will ensure the unlawful detention of suspects is curtailed as well as reducing the unintended consequences of incarceration.

Economic problems are one of the numerous challenges facing families of incarcerated persons. Efforts by prison authorities to enhance the ability of inmates to work while in prison could make them economically active as well as having meager resources to support themselves and to remit their families at home.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

The society must be protected from the ills perpetuated by others. It is indeed imperative that people who commit crimes must be restricted from the continuity of such deviant acts. However, it must be appreciated that in an effort to protect society, others must not become victims of societal action and reaction

With increasing levels of deviant behavior and subsequent use of incarceration as a deterrent as well as incapacitation tool renders thousands of children and spouses who have not committed any crimes or offenses victims of the crimes of others.

The study places emphasis on the effects of incarceration on the remaining spouse and children of the incarcerated. Giving the opportunity through this study to the spouses and children of the incarcerated to share their unique and life experiences with its daunting outcomes must influence policy makers and stakeholders in our justice system. Rethinking, understanding and appreciating the underlying fact that incarceration affects people other than the incarcerated and that the increasing use of incarceration to control deviant behavior is making more and more people passive and silent victims of incarceration must influence policy direction.



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## APPENDIX A

### **PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

The purpose of this consent form is to ensure that you understand the intent of the study and the nature of your involvement. The form provides sufficient information such that you have the opportunity to determine whether you wish to participate in this study.

#### **Purpose of the Study and Task Requirements:**

The purpose of this study is to understand how spouses and children of the incarcerated are affected by incarceration. It attempts to understand the unique experiences that spouses and their children face through incarceration. The interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes.

#### **Research Personnel:**

The following people are involved in this study and may be contacted at any time. For questions or concerns regarding the study, please contact: Joseph Brenyah Asomaning (Principal Investigator, 0264173535); Mr Kwadwo Ofori Dua, (First Faculty Supervisor, 0265363234); Ms. Harriet Takyi (Second Faculty Supervisor, 0265126240).

#### **Potential Risk/ Discomfort:**

Some respondents may find certain issues in this study upsetting and causing discomfort. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you are under no obligation to continue with the study.

#### **Confidentiality:**

Data collected in this study will be used only by the researcher and will be kept confidential. All information will be processed in such a way that your name and your personal identity will not be used. Your name will appear only on this consent form, whereas the tape of the interview and or researchers note will have only a code (number) that will be assigned to your name. In order to ensure confidentiality, this consent form with your name and signature will be kept in a separate envelope and only the researcher will have access to it.

#### **Right to Withdraw:**

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and you do not have to answer any question that you prefer not to.

#### **Participant Consent**

I have read the above information and understand the conditions of my participation. My signature or thumbprint indicates that I have agreed to participate in the interview and that I give permission to the researcher to audio record what is said in the interview. I also give permission of my responses to be used in his final research report.

Name of participant.....

Signature\Thumbprint.....

Name of Researcher.....

Contact of Researcher.....

# KNUST



## APPENDIX B

### **GUIDE TO INTERVIEW FAMILIES OF INCARCERATED PERSONS IN KUMASI METROPOLIS**

#### **PART 1: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF NON- INCARCERATED SPOUSE**

1. Age .....
2. Gender .....
3. Level of education .....
4. Occupation .....
5. Area of residence.....
6. Religion.....
7. Number of children and their ages.....

#### **PART 2: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF INCARCERATED SPOUSE**

8. Age.....
9. Gender.....
10. Level of education of your spouse.....
11. Occupation.....
12. What offence sent him/her to prison?.....
13. What is the length of the sentence?.....
14. How many months or years has your partner served in  
prison?.....
15. Does your partner have any prior incarceration record and if so how many  
times?
16. Perception of family of orientation and community about spouse
17. Were you living with your spouse and children before incarceration?

### **PART 3: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FAMILY AND THE INCARCERATED BEFORE INCARCERATION**

18. Did your child or children witness the arrest of your spouse?
19. Do your child/ children know the reason for the arrest of your spouse?
20. What was he or she to you?
21. In what ways has your spouse absence affected you?
22. What are the sweet or bitter memories of him or her?
23. How do you relate memories of your spouse to his or her absence?
24. What will you have wished for your spouse in place of incarceration?
25. How close was your child or children to your spouse?
26. What were some of the things your spouse and child or children did in common?
27. How do your child or children perceive your spouse?
28. What have you observed your children do or say about your spouse's absence?

### **PART 4: CHANGES THAT HAVE OCCURRED IN THE FAMILY AS A RESULT OF INCARCERATION**

29. Does your child or children know the reason for the incarceration? If no, why not?
30. How does your child or children feel about the incarceration of your spouse?
31. Does your child or children visit the incarcerated spouse? If no why and if yes how often and what are some of the observed behavioral changes after visit?
32. Has the hospital attendance of your child or children increased and if so what do you think has accounted for this??
33. Have you noticed any behavioral changes in your child or children after the incarceration of your spouse?

34. Have you noticed any change or changes in the academic performance of your child or children after your spouse's incarceration?
35. Have there been any changes in your family life as a result of the incarceration of your spouse. If yes can you tell me some of the changes?
36. Can you talk of positive and negative changes?

#### **PART 5: HOW CHANGES AS A RESULT OF INCARCERATION HAVE AFFECTED THE LIVES OF FAMILY MEMBERS**

37. Has the changes in your family affected your family life?
38. If yes in what ways have these changes affected your life as a spouse?
39. How has the changes affected your child or children?
40. Can you talk of any positive and negative effects on the family as a result of the changes?

#### **PART 6: COPING MECHANISMS DOPTED BY FAMILIES TO DEAL WITH INCARCERATION**

41. How have you and your children been able to manage the changes that have taken place in your family?
42. Indicate specifically the different actions you have taken or adopted to manage the absence of your spouse
43. Has there been the need for your child or children to adapt to any actions as a result of the absence of your spouse? If yes tell me some of them.

#### **Part 7: SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS AVAILABLE TO FAMILIES OF INCARCERATED PERSONS**

44. What has been the reaction of your immediate community members to your spouse's incarceration?
45. How has your spouse extended family reacted after the incarceration?
46. What about your spouse's friends and their reaction after the incarceration?



47. What kind of assistance have you benefited from if any and from whom?  
Any other comments?

Thank You

KNUST



## APPENDIX C

### Permission Letter from the Ghana Prisons Service

In case of reply the  
number and date of  
this letter should be  
quoted



#### HEADQUARTERS

The Ghana Prisons Service  
P.O. BOX 129, ACCRA  
GHANA WEST AFRICA  
TEL: 760093/760094  
Fax: 233-302-772865  
Email: info@ghanaprison.gov.gh

Your Ref. No.....

My Ref. No. OC/1082/V.17/2013 / 1327

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2013

**RE: PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA FOR THE  
PREPARATION OF STUDENTS PROJECT WORK  
MR. JOSEPH BRENYA ASOMANING**

1. Reference the letter quoted above, permission has been granted the above named student of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Department of Sociology & Social Work to conduct his study on the topic: "The unintended consequences of Incarceration", which would be conducted at the Kumasi Central Prison.
2. He would be required to report to the Officer-In-Charge of the above-mentioned prison for guidance and direction prior to the commencement of his activities.
3. You are to advise him that taking of pictures within the precincts of the prison is prohibited. He should also note that his interactions with the inmates will be supervised.
4. Your cooperation is highly required to obtain a copy of the student's research work and submit same to the Prisons Headquarters as it will help the Service in its effort to improve on the conditions of its facilities.
5. The Service wishes him good luck in his research.

IK TSEGAI  
DIRECTOR OF PRISONS/ADMN. & FIN.  
For: DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF PRISONS

MS. HARRIET TAKYI  
[HEAD OF DEPARTMENT]  
KNUST  
DEPT. OF SOCIOLOGY &  
SOCIAL WORK  
KUMASI

Info:  
The Officer-In-Charge  
Kumasi Central Prison  
KUMASI

Mr. Joseph Brenya Asomaning  
KNUST  
Dept. Of Sociology &  
Social Work  
KUMASI

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