# Effectiveness of Community Service Orders on Ex-Offenders Social Re-Integration in Keiyo North Sub-County, Elgeyo Marakwet County, Kenya

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# Abstract

This research aimed at finding out the effectiveness of Community Service Orders on ex-offender's social reintegration in Keiyo North Sub- County, Elgeyo-Marakwet County, Kenya. The research design was descriptive cross-sectional.The respondents included in the study were ex-offenders serving Community Service Order after benefitting from prison decongestion exercise. A sample size of 63 respondents was drawn from a total population of 190 respondents using sample size formula provided by Yamane (1967). Thereafter, simple random sampling was applied to select the 63 individuals to be included in the study from the target population of 190 using the lottery method.Structured questionnaires were used to collect data.Validity of the research instrument was maintained by providing operational definition of terms and describing the meaning of the independent and dependent variables in accordance with the purpose of the study. Content validity was observed by submitting the questionnaires to the supervisors for quality check ensuring the results of the study are relevant with reviews of literature. Reliability of the research instrument was achieved by conducting a pilot study at Eldoret Probation station using 10% of the sample size of respondents. This was followed by a revamp of the questionnaires in terms of wording, design, categorization and ensuring validity of the questions before the final draft of questionnaires was supplied. The data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the help of SPSS version 25 and presented in form of tables. The findings indicated that Community Service Orders had a positive and significant relationship on ex-offenders' social re-integration. From the findings and conclusions, it was recommended that all relevant stakeholders who contribute to the social re-integration of exoffenders on Community Service Order need to play their active role, the government should also consider conducting regular prison decongestion exercises since ex-offenders who benefit to serve Community Service Order for the remainder of their sentences have been shown to re-integrate back to the community successfully. In future, there is need to understand how other forms of supervised non-custodial sentences apart from Community Service Order are effective on ex-offenders social re-integration.

**Keywords:** ex-offenders, community service orders, social re-integration, counselling **DOI:** 10.7176/RHSS/13-18-03

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## 1. Introduction

## **1.1 Background to the Study**

Historically, the issue of social re-integration of ex-offenders serving community sanctions emerged when penologists started to see the need for offenders to maintain strong ties with community members. This saw the emergence of emphasis on community-based programmes, job-training and development of special employment opportunities and mostly the advancement of non-custodial alternatives for offenders with probation and parole as the key sentences (University of Pretoria, n.d.).

The primary objective of Community Service Order is to re-integrate ex-offenders by enforcing discipline, requiring unpaid public work, and reforming them by encouraging personal growth, self-respect and making sure the work benefits the community (PRI/ZNCCS, 2000). Similarly, Community Service Order has been accredited for effectively re-integrating ex-offenders through various interventions that are applied in rehabilitating ex-offenders such as guidance and counselling, reconciliation with members of the community or victims and empowerment through skill acquisition (Ngetich, Murenga & Kisaka, 2019). However, ex-offenders social re-integration process is faced with a myriad of obstacles such as social, economic, personal and challenges that are linked to the ex-offender's family, peer groups, social environment, low educational and skills level. These challenges can be dealt with by institutional and community-based interventions that focus on employment, interpersonal and cognitive behavioural intervention (UNODC, 2018). Many researchers advocate for counselling in ex-offenders rehabilitation and re-integration owing to its capacity to actively include ex-offenders. The assumption here is that when ex-offenders become participants in their treatment, they become

more repsonsible (Sun, 2013).

In European countries like the United Kingdom, Canada and Switzerland Community Service Order which is the toughest and widely used community sanction is preserved for offenders that would be sentenced to short jail terms. Psycho-social learning programmes re-integrate ex-offenders by enabling them to assess their problems, discover solutions, come up with new skills to guarantee their goals are achieved and reflect on the ethical side of their behaviour. Social skills training is tailored to tackle normal personal and social difficulties like minimising alcoholism, job application, prudent management of money and resolving marital wrangles that sees ex-offenders re-integrate in the community easily (PRI/UNDEF, 2015).

In Uganda the type of unpaid public work is spelt out by the work agencies or community-based organisations. Amongst the work performed include environmental and conservation works, maintenance of feeder roads, planting trees, sinking pit latrines and solid waste disposal (PRI/UK Aid, 2012). Re-integration is carried out through a number of ways including counselling, reconciliatory meetings, giving ex-offenders skills, supporting victims and deeply involving support of peers. Home visits to ex-offenders, their relatives and at times victims result to changing ex-offenders' behaviours and provide community members an active role in re-integration process. Victim support services through various psycho-social programs are meant to facilitate reconciliation and acceptance of ex-offenders (Uganda Community Service Programme, 2015).

In Kenya Community Service Officers rehabilitate and re-integrate ex-offenders through a variety of interventions based on the ex-offenders' needs and risks. Counselling, supervision and monitoring, a wide variety of empowerment programs, like formal education, supply of business start-up capital, industrial tools and skills training are also utilized (PRI/GOK, 2012). The Community Service Officers conduct social inquiries and write pre-sentence reports to determine suitability of offenders to serve Community Service Order. The details gathered are then used to outline the risks and needs for designing Individual Treatment Plans that act as a basis for re-integrating ex-offenders. However, there exists a gap between the criminogenic needs assessed and the treatment plans drawn (UANEFI, 2020).

A research study conducted in Keiyo North on illicit alcohol consumption by youths (18-35 years) discovered that chang'aa was the most consumed liqour in the sub-county as indicated by 86.7% of the respondents who were consumers. This was linked to unemployment, peer pressue and the liquor being cheap and readily available although a majority of them were well informed about its dangers (Magut, 2020). However, this research was not based on ex-offenders serving Community Service Order or their social re-integration which provide gaps for this study.

#### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Developed countries like Canada, Australia, United States of America and Northern Ireland have acknowledged the benefit of social re-integration practices of ex-offenders through community-based interventions. This is due to the aid provided to ex-offenders that enables them to overcome stigma associated with criminal conviction and the negative effects of being jailed. This has led to these countries developing and institutionalizing exoffender re-integration in their criminal justice system.

However, in developing countries ex-offenders' social re-integration practices are underdeveloped and have been grappling with lack of enough resources and skills in its support. In Kenya, particularly at Iten Probation Station in Keiyo North Sub-County interventions like counselling, supervision, empowerment of ex-offenders and soliciting family and community support for ex-offenders' social re-integration are practised. Despite this, ex-offenders' social re-integration has not been adequately achieved due to instances where ex-offenders have been re-imprisoned as a result of re-offending while serving their Community Service Order. Additionally, some are stigmatised and labelled as criminals by some of their families and community members and have not been able to effectively take part in social activities like economic, religious, and educational undertakings. This has made their social re-integration to be an uphill task. It is for this reason that the current study has been designed to examine the effectiveness of Community Service Orders on ex-offenders' social re-integration in Keiyo North Sub-County of Elgeyo-Marakwet County in order to fill the existing knowledge gap in literature.

#### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of the study was to determine effectiveness of Community Service Orders on ex-offenders social re-integration in Keiyo North Sub-County, Elgeyo Marakwet County, Kenya.

#### **1.3.1 Specific Objectives**

To examine effectiveness of counselling in Community Service Orders on ex-offenders' social re-integration in Keiyo North Sub-County.

#### 1.4 Hypothesis

Hol Counselling in Community Service Orders has no significant relationship on ex-offenders' social re-

integration in Keiyo North Sub-County

#### 2. Literature Review

#### 2.1 Counselling and Ex-offenders' Social Re-integration

Most non-custodial sentences including Community Service Order offer support for successful social reintegration of offenders by providing an avenue for them to change their actions and behaviours. They teach offenders new attitudes and ways to cope with problems that enables them to avoid criminal activity (UNODC, 2012). Similarly Community Service Order is said to be featured on re-integrating offenders through rehabilitation (Mc Laughlin & Munice, 2006).

As cited in Othman (2013), interventions that are applied in rehabilitating offenders include counselling that shape them to pro-social individuals using rational-thought processes and impacting them with a sense of responsibility towards their actions (Walters, 1992).

Ivery (2020) researched on the influence of community-based re-entry programs on re-integrating exoffenders in Ohio. The study was qualitative employing interviews as data collection tools. The participants were 12 including 4 direct staffs, 4 management staffs and 4 ex-offenders within a community residential program. Data was analysed using qualitative data analysis software. It was concluded that ex-offenders acknowledge the benefits of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy that transformed their thinking patterns, impacted pro-social skills in them, anger management, decision making, communication skills and self-awareness that in turn equipped them with skills of being patient and avoiding peer pressure. This subsequently aided in ex-offenders' reintegration in the community. However, this study was not carried out in the context of Community Service Order.

Akpama (2013) studied effects of cognitive behaviour therapies on prison and post-prison inmates' psychological adjustment in Afokany prison, Cross River state in Nigeria. It was gathered that there were significant differences in psychological adjustment of those treated with either cognitive therapy or behavioural therapy as compared to those not treated at all. It was thus concluded that cognitive and behavioural therapies significantly influenced inmates' psychological adjustment positively especially after imprisonment. However, the study was not carried out in context of Community Service Order.

Muteti, Katungati & Soi (2019) carried out research on probation orders in Kenya in 24 counties amongst 44 magistrates, 137 Probation Officers (POs), 561 probationers, 68 victims and 501 community members. Descriptive cross-sectional research design was adopted while interviews and questionnaires were used to gather data. The study found out that in general 86.4% of the magistrates, 94.9% of the POs, 89.7% of the probationers, 77.0% of community members and 76.5% of victims felt that probation sentence was successful in rehabilitating probationers. In particular the aspects that had a breakthrough as reported by respondents in descending order include; allowing ex-offenders to maintain family ties and fend for their families 97.4%, reducing prison congestion by petty and first time offenders 93.6%, prevention of contamination of petty and first time offenders 94.9%, avoiding juvenile delinquency 85.2%, facilitation of reconciliation between ex-offenders and victims 81.8%, reparation of harm caused to community 73.7%, acquisition of skills 64.3% and connecting ex-offenders to potential employers 55.6%. However, the study was centred on probation orders in Kenya which is a dispatch from the objective of the current study, it did not indicate how rehabilitation of ex-offenders was achieved through interventions like counselling and its effect on their social re-integration as will be underscored in the current study.

Research was carried out on the role of counselling in social re-integration among ex-convicts in Tigania West Sub- County. The study was a census survey design with a target of 7 probation officers, 40 volunteer probation officers, and 10 ex-convicts. Primary data was collected using questionnaires and a pre-test of the data collection instruments was made at Meru Central Sub- County. It was concluded that guidance and counselling ranging from mental health counselling, rehabilitation counselling and substance abuse counselling was offered to ex-convicts that were useful in fostering their self-esteem, making them learn new ideas, cope with stress, life and stigmatization since most of the ex-convicts had been side-lined by the community members due to their conviction (Musau, Kathuri & Wamalwa, 2018). However, the study included volunteer probation officers who will not be present in this study, it was carried out in Meru county and not in context of Commuity Service Order which provide gaps for this research study.

The above reviews of literature pointed out that Community Service Order is premised on social reintegration of ex-offenders through various counselling interventions. It addresses criminogenic factors like drug abuse, mental health problems, social and economic exclusion that shape ex-offenders to pro-social individuals. The studies displayed a wide range of gaps like being conducted in the context of other supervised non-custodial sentences and not Community Service Orders that will be filled by the current study.

# 3. Research Methodology

## 3.1 Research Design

The study was descriptive cross-sectional design. The descriptive research design was employed due to its ability to provide in-depth understanding of any topic of study including getting information we did not know we could find (Sumeracki, 2018). Cross-sectional study design ensured the computation of association between the dependent and independent variable (Cvetovic-Vega et al., 2021).

## 3.2 Study Area

The study area was Iten Probation Station. Iten Probation Station is located in Keiyo North Sub-County within Elgeyo-Marakwet County. The study explored the effectiveness of Community Service Orders in social reintegration of ex-offenders. Keiyo North was chosen because it hosts Iten which is the county headquarters and according to KNBS (2017) Elgeyo-Marakwet County is amongst the growing counties in Kenya. Therefore, the results of this study will contribute to improvement in security and consequently economic growth of Iten and the county at large.

## **3.3 Target Population**

The target population of the study was 190 which comprised of all ex-offenders serving Community Service Order.

# 3.4 Sampling Size and Sampling Procedure

The study employed purposive sampling to identify the head of Iten probation station who provided information about the number of ex-offenders under Community Service Order supervision and gave the necessary documents for review i.e the Community Service Order sentence review central placement ledger and ex-offenders individual supervision files.

A sample size of 63 respondents was drawn from a total population of 190 respondents using sample size formula provided by Yamane (1967). Thereafter, simple random sampling was applied to select the 63 individuals to be included in the study from the target population of 190 using the lottery method.

## 3.5 Methods of Data Collection

Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires which were distributed to ex-offenders during their reporting dates. Questionnaires were preferred as they are less expensive and provide greater anonymity especially where delicate questions have been asked which enhances the probability of acquiring correct information (Kumar, 2011).

The structured questionnaires were self-administered by the researcher and a research assistant. Secondary data was collected from the station's case management records that included; Community Service Order sentence review central placement ledgers, reporting of ex-offender's register and ex-offender's individual supervision files where information regarding number of ex-offenders under supervision, their reporting schedules and where they are located was collected.

## **3.6 Validity of the Research Instrument**

Validity is how good an instrument measures what it is meant to measure (Blumberg, Cooper & Schindler, 2005). Construct validity of the results was be maintained by providing operational definition of terms and describing the meaning of the independent and dependent variables in accordance with the purpose of the study. Content validity was assured by submitting the questionnaires to the supervisors for quality check to ensure collection of accurate data. Validity was also observed by ensuring the results of the study are relevant with reviews of literature. In the words of Singh (2014) reliability and validity are useful in contributing towards transparency and reducing chances of researcher bias in quantitative research.

## 3.7 Reliability of the Research Instrument

Reliability of the research instrument was assured by conducting a pilot study at Eldoret Probation Station. According to (Kothari & Garg, 2014) a pre-test should be small and conducted with 1-10% of the sample size. 6 ex-offenders forming 10% of the sample size were used in the pre-test. What followed was a revamp of the questionnaires in terms of wording, design, categorization and ensuring validity of the questions before the final draft of questionnaire was supplied.

## 3.8 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics generated such as frequency distributions, percentages, means and standard deviations were used to analyse the data and presented in tables for ease of understanding and analysis. Inferential statistics like Pearsons Correlation coefficient and Simple Regression Analysis were used to determine the relationship

between counselling and ex-offenders social re-integration as well as in testing the null hypothesis. Pearsons Correlation Coefficent was used as it provides the magnitude and direction of association between variables (Hauke & Kossowski, 2011) while Simple Regression Analysis was used due to its ability to explain the relationship between a single dependent variable and an independent variable and its capability to make predictions (Jeon, 2015).

#### 4. Data Analysis, Results and Interpretations

#### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics for Counselling (Ex-offenders)

The objective of the study sought to examine effectiveness of counselling in Community Service Orders on exoffenders' social re-integration.

#### Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics for Counselling

					Std.
	Ν	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Deviation
Counselling has enabled me to re-integrate in the community	57	1	5	3.74	.552
Counselling has rehabiltated me by addressing my criminogenic factors	57	1	5	3.65	.612
Counselling has made me develop a sense of responsibility for my actions	57	1	5	3.56	.732
Counselling has made me acquire skills to avoid further engagement in crime	57	1	5	3.47	.734
Counselling has contributed to my personal growth	57	1	5	3.86	.515
Counselling has enlightened me on how to resolve problems amicably	57	1	5	3.32	.909
Counselling has provided me with sufficient moral reasoning	57	1	5	3.89	.451
Counselling has instilled pro-social skills in me	57	1	5	3.61	.726
Counselling has facilitated reconciliation between myself and the victim(s)	57	1	5	3.53	.847
Average Mean				3.63	0.675

#### (Source: Researcher, 2023)

The study findings in table 4.1 shows that counselling has enabled the ex -offenders to re-integrate in the community [Mean=3.74, SD=.552]. Besides, counselling has rehabilitated them by addressing their criminogenic factors [Mean=3.65, SD=.612]. Further, the findings showed that counselling has made them develop a sense of responsibility for their actions [Mean=3.56, SD=.732]. The study results also indicated that counselling has made the ex-offenders acquire skills to avoid further engagement in crime [Mean=3.47, SD=.734]. Majority of respondents agreed that counselling has contributed to their personal growth [Mean=3.86, SD=.515]. In addition, counselling has enlightened them on how to resolve problems amicably [Mean=3.32, SD=.909]. Counselling has also provided them with sufficient moral reasoning [Mean=3.89, SD=.451]. Similarly, counselling has instilled pro-social skills in them [Mean=3.61, SD=.726]. Most ex-offenders also agreed that counselling has facilitated reconciliation between themselves and the victim(s) [Mean=3.53, SD=.847]. With an average mean of 3.63 and standard deviation of 0.675 ex-offenders agreed that counselling was effective to their social re-integration.

The findings concur with that of Strategic Public Relations and Research (2007) who discovered that guidance and counselling is very beneficial towards the re-integration and resettlement of ex-offenders in Kenya.

# 4.2 Correlation Analysis between Counselling and Ex-Offenders Social Re-Integration

The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (r) was used by the researcher. The size and direction of the association between the studied variables are displayed by the correlation coefficient. The purpose of the study was to determine how strongly counselling and ex-offenders' social re-integration are related. In order to do this, the strength of the association was evaluated using Pearson's moment correlation, as shown in table 4.2.

## Table 4.2:Correlations Matrix

		Counselling	Social Re-intergration
Counselling	Pearson Correlation	1	
-	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	57	
Social Re-intergration	Pearson Correlation	.421**	1
-	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	57	57

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

#### (Source: Researcher, 2023)

Table 4.2 indicates that counselling had r value of 0.421 and the p-value was at 0.001, p<0.05. This implies that the relation between counselling and ex-offenders' social re-integration is moderate, positive and significant. The null hypothesis; counselling in Community Service Orders does not have a statistically significant influence on ex- offenders' social re-integration in Keiyo North Sub-County was rejected. The results are in line with Rice & Harris (2013) who stated that anger management, communication skills, dispute resolution, drug and substance abuse counselling, family therapy, cognitive behavioural treatment and depression treatment are common types of counselling provided to ex-offenders and are most fruitful when provided in the community than in prisons.

## 5. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

## 5.1 Summary of the Study Findings

This section provides a summary of the objective of the study which is inline with the results of the analysed data.

# 5.2 Counselling and Ex-offenders Social Re-integration

The findings of the study indicated that counselling offered by Community Service Officers is effective on exoffenders social re-integration. A majority of the ex-offenders reported that counselling was effective in terms of addressing their criminogenic needs, developing a sense of responsibility in them, contributing to their personal growth, providing them with sufficient moral reasoning, instilling pro-social skills in them, facilitating reconcilliation between them and victims and impacting skills to reduce further engagement in crime. The study rejected the null hypothesis that counselling in Community Service Orders has no significant relationship on exoffenders social re-integration. This proves that counselling in Community Service Orders is a paramount determinant of ex-offender's social re-integration. In a nutshell, it is noted that counselling is generally effective on ex-offenders social re-integration.

## **5.3** Conclusion of the Study

It was concluded that counselling is effective on ex-offenders social re-integration. In particular it is effective in addressing the criminogenic needs of ex-offenders, developing a sense of responsibility in them, contributing to their personal growth, instilling moral reasoning and pro-social skills in them as well as facilitating reconcilliation between ex-offenders and victims. This is inline with the rehabilitation theory which postulates that any form of punishment should be directed towards offenders by dealing with factors that make them to commit various crimes since unlawful activities are inclined to personal and social issues.

## 5.4 Recommendations of the Study

Based on the findings and conclusions, the study recommended that there should be massive investment in further levelling up of key pre-requisites for successful social re-integration of ex-offenders like counselling, supervision, family and community support. This will provide a platform for reducing crime prevalence in the society. The government should also do regular prison decongestion exercises since ex-offenders who benefit to serve Community Service Orders for the remainder of their sentences have been proved to re-integrate into their communities successfully.

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