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THE INTEGRATION OF EX-CONVICT'S EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN MALAYSIA HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

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Abstract:

A custodial sentence has four primary goals: retribution, rehabilitation, deterrence, and incapacitation. This study focuses on the skilled and well-trained ex-convict's recruitment opportunity in the hospitality industry after the prison sentence. The Malaysian prison department has provided various vocational skill training for prisoners during incarceration. This initiative aims to give ex-convicts multiple skills to equip them for a job opportunity and reintegrating into society after their jail sentence. However, even after being released, former inmates who have undergone vocational training in prison may still face challenges when seeking employment opportunities. This study will examine the integration of ex-convict's employment opportunities in Malaysian hospitality industry. The study distributed 393 survey questionnaires to potential hospitality sector employers in Malaysia to assess their willingness to hire former prisoners. Skill acquisition, formal discipline and behaviourist view were extracted from valid theoretical background follow by the employer's readiness were used in the study. Regression analysis was conducted to test on the hypotheses, which it revealed behaviourist view directly affected the employer's readiness to hire ex-convict due to the type of criminal record. The finding revealed that skill acquisition has a significant influence on the hire decision when come to operation related vacancies. There were significant correlations between formal discipline and ex-convict's recruitment decision. This research aims to develop measures and training for convicts to aid in their reintegration into society. It also aims to foster a better behavioural mindset for societies to provide second chances and accept ex-convicts into their community

Keywords:

Ex-Convicts, Vocational Program, Skill Acquisition, Behaviourist View

Introduction

Prison sentences are frequently viewed as the end of one's life, with no prospects for future advancement (Bickle & Peterson, 1991). Even with the short jail sentence, social stigma remains the fear ex-convicts face. 56% - 65% of ex-convicts had repeated the same offense as they had challenges fitting into society and getting employed to earn a living (Nally et al., 2014). According to Uggen (1998), the prison government has formed a prison training division that offers various vocational programs ranging from educational to skills programs to provide inmates with sufficient cognitive, psychomotor, and personality development. The key focus is to train convicts to be prepared to blend into the working environment when they complete their jail sentences. However, social stigma remains the core issue among employers when considering hiring ex-convicts.

Literature Review

Ex-prisoners who re-offend can lead to severe and long-lasting consequences, often resulting in the victimization of others, including their own families and other disadvantaged communities (Cox, 2019). Research has indicated that providing prisoners with education, training, and employment programs could significantly increase their chances of successfully reintegrating into society and reduce recidivism rates (Gehring, 2000). Sliva and Samimi (2018) pointed out that vocational training could help ex-convicts to find Employment, which is crucial for successful reintegration into society. This assertion is supported by LaBriola (2020), who found that most inmates who return to prison are unemployed. Some employers may hesitate to hire individuals with criminal records, particularly for jobs involving significant customer contact, handling cash or expensive merchandise, or other tasks requiring trustworthy employees (Link & Phelan, 2001).

It is important to note that individuals with criminal records often face reduced income opportunities and earn less than their peers, even if they can secure Employment. This results from limited job options, discrimination, and reduced earning potential due to their criminal history (Smith, Langston & Nisbett, 1992). This study investigates the hospitality industries' willingness to give ex-convicts with skills a second chance to be part of the industry teams. By examining employers' attitudes and behaviours towards hiring ex-offenders, the study seeks to shed light on the effectiveness of current prison training programs and identify the possibility to be employed. The findings of this study could have significant implications for policymakers and researchers seeking to enhance the employment outcomes of individuals with criminal records.

Managers' Perspective On Ex-Convict's Employment

Research has shown that employers are generally hesitant to make definitive statements about their willingness to hire individuals with criminal records (Clark et al., 2020). This hesitancy is compounded by the stigma associated with felony convictions or incarceration, reducing employer willingness to engage this population. Employers may fear poor work performance, low job retention, theft, and conflict with customers or co-workers for which they might be held legally liable "negligent hiring" (Hale, Householder & Greene, 2002). Nonetheless,

according to Link and Phelan (2001) investigation of individuals with criminal records who were randomly assigned to judges with differing tendencies to impose imprisonment, managers are generally less willing to hire employees who have been incarcerated.

Employment Among Ex-Convicts

When access to criminal history information is limited, employers may use demographic characteristics such as gender, race, or age to infer the likelihood of past illegal activity (Nee, Singh & Kularajasingam, 2022). Without background checks, employers may use statistical discrimination to avoid hiring ex-offenders. Employers who review criminal history records will include race and gender criteria to determine their employment decision without considering their skills and education (Giguere & Dundes, 2002). However, some employers that review ex-convicts based on their education level will significantly impact their hiring decision (Kruttschnitt, 1982).

Skill Acquisition

The Skills vocational program is a gradual process that involves the development of psychomotor, technical, and artistic skills to equip learners with specific abilities for employment opportunities (Boateng, 2018). Hubert and Dreyfus 1980, presented five stages in the skill acquisition theory, which detail the learner's progression from novice to advanced beginner, competence, proficiency, and expertise in the particular skills obtained from the vocational program. The focus of formal skill acquisition is often used to evaluate the convicts' learning outcomes (Agnew, 1992). This theory is commonly portrayed as a concept of skill development in conventional programs.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Skill Acquisition significantly influences the readiness of Malaysian Hospitality employers to employ ex-convicts

Formal Discipline

The Theory of Formal Discipline (TFD) is about the nature of thought that suggests studying certain demanding subjects, such as theory, mathematics and language topic, can lead to the development of domain-general thinking skills, such as logical reasoning and critical thinking (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Among the most notable research, formal discipline study for convicts includes educational program-based country education program. It includes junior and senior high school syllabus (Bickle & Peterson, 1991). It believed that when one achieves education qualification it will received a recognition in the working industry (Cox, 2019).

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Formal Discipline significantly influences the readiness of Malaysian Hospitality employers to employ ex-convicts

Behaviorist View

Employers' behaviorist view in hiring ex-convicts often focuses on the trust that individual behaviours can be shaped through attitude, skills, and discipline (Gehring, 200). There is a possibility that recruiters will have a positive view of ex-convicts as potential employees based on a behaviorist view (Cox 2019). The behaviorist view encourages positive perception and believes in good changes in an individual (Pogorzelski et al., 2005; Stoll, 2009). The behaviorist view of employers in hiring and accepting ex-convicts will contribute to reducing recidivism (wiafe, 2021). The significant support on the right guidance of skills and knowledge will develop a valuable and productive ex-convict for employment opportunities.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: The moderating role of behaviourist view determination on Skill Acquisition significantly influences the readiness of Malaysian Hospitality employers to employ ex-convicts

H4: The moderating role of behaviourist view determination Formal Discipline significantly influences the readiness of Malaysian Hospitality employers to employ ex-convicts

Methodology

This study used a quantitative research method. The respondents were employers from the hospitality industry in Malaysia, including managers, supervisors, and HR personnel from hotel and service companies. A non-probability sampling technique was adopted, total 393 responses was collected. The questionnaire used in the study was adapted from Wiafe (2021). Questionnaire includes demographic information, the independent variables: skill acquisition and formal discipline. Follow by the moderator variable of the behaviourist view. The collected data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 24.

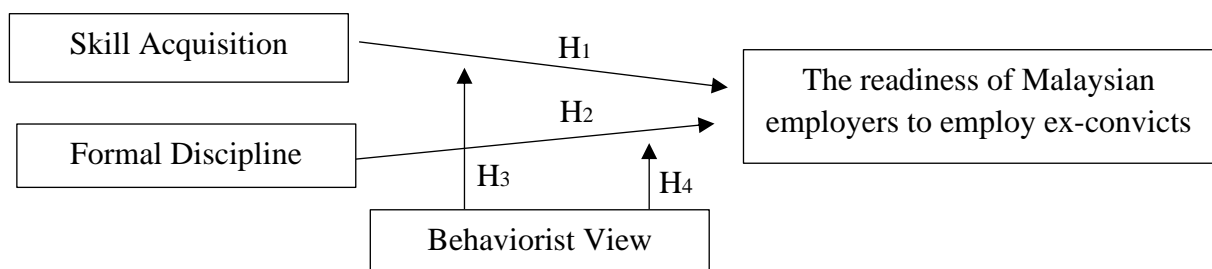


Figure 1: RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Findings

The Cronbach Alpha values for the study variables were greater than 0.8. Overall, 393 respondents' demographic sample.

Table 1: Respondents' Demographic

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	204	51.9
	Female	189	48.1
Position Level	Supervisor	68	17.3
	Human Resource	52	13.2
	Manager	241	61.3
	Others	32	8.1
Year of experience in the Hospitality Industry	Less than 1 year	8	2.0
	1 to 3 years	204	51.9
	4 to 6 years	143	36.4
	More than 6 years	38	9.7

Ex-Covicts Employment Opportunities

Approximately 84.2% never hired ex-convicts (table 2). This indicates a situation reflecting the stigma and stereotypes of employers on ex-convicts. If this perception persists, ex-convicts' employment opportunities will be limited, even if they are well-trained, skilled, or academically qualified. Only 15.5% had previously employed ex-convicts. While respondents who had used ex-convicts stated that the ex-convicts employed were under a government contract, well-trained, and demonstrated good behaviour. Six respondents' negative comments

are relevant to ex-convicts' bad behaviour. The findings suggest that the government's initiative to engage with the hospitality sector to provide more job opportunities for ex-convicts through social awareness programs will effectively reduce the recidivism rate among former inmates.

Table 2: Employee Comment On Hiring Ex-Convicts

		Frequency	Percent
No of Employee employed	Yes	62	15.5
Ex-convicts	No	331	84.2
62 respondents' comments	Positive comment	56	90.3
in hiring ex-convicts	Negative comment	6	9.7

Table 3 present the additional factors to reflect on the behaviourist view of respondents on ex-prison inmates in the hiring decision. Respondents are asked about the impact of the type of criminal offense on their hiring decision. The findings confirmed that ex-convicts' crimes would significantly influence employee hiring decisions (Nally et al., 2014).

Table 3: Types Of Offense Influence Hiring Decision

		Frequency	Percent
Murders	Avoiding offense	377	95.9
	Ignoring offense	16	4.1
Robbery	Avoiding offense	334	85.0
	Ignoring offense	59	15.0
Rape	Avoiding offense	388	98.7
	Ignoring offense	5	1.3
Child Abuse	Avoiding offense	386	98.2
	Ignoring offense	7	1.8
Traffic Violation	Avoiding offense	130	33.1
	Ignoring offense	263	66.9
Drug offense	Avoiding offense	282	71.8
	Ignoring offense	111	28.2

The degree of employer concern about ex-convicts' attributes is another factor determining employer hiring decisions (Harris & keller, 2005). Majority employers feels that fear of victimization is the primary concern influencing their willingness to employ ex-convicts. No training is key to confirm that, ex-convicts' skills and knowledge gains from the prison training will allowed them to have chances to be accepted for job opportunities.

Table 4: Major Concern In Hiring Ex-Convicts

	Frequency	Percentage
People skill/ Social skill	343	87.3
Customers comfort	336	85.5
Co-workers comfort	347	88.3
No training	282	71.8
Time to adjust	286	72.8
Turnover	308	78.4
Fear of victimization	365	92.9

Skill Acquisition And Formal Discipline Influence On The Readiness Of Malaysia Employers To Hire Ex-Convicts.

Results in Table 5 show a positive relationship between these two variables and employers' hiring readiness. The two main hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis, and the hypothesized significant relationship between skill acquisition (H1) and Formal discipline (H2) with employer's Readiness is supported with a significant p-value of 0.00 ($p < 0.05$). The results for both variables are consistent with Wiafe's (2021) conclusion that states an ex-convict's skill acquisition and formal discipline will influence the Readiness of Malaysian hospitality employers to employ them. The outcome is similar to Holzer, Raphael, and Stall's (2003) finding, which found that employers' likelihood to employ ex-convicts will depend on the candidates' qualifications, skills, and personality characteristics.

Table 5: Skills Acquisition & Formal Discipline Analysis

Variables	Employers Readiness	Standard β	Sig.
Employers Readiness	1		
Skill Acquisition	0.867**	0.249	0.000
Formal Discipline	0.893**	0.666	0.000

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the level of 0.01 level (1-tailed)

Behaviourist View Role As A Moderator

The behaviorist view was tested for moderation effect in this study on the relationship between two independent variables (skill acquisition and formal discipline) and the dependent variable (employer readiness). Table 6 result indicated a significant moderating effect of behaviorist view on the relationship between skills acquisition and the Readiness of Malaysian employers to employ ex-prison inmates ($F = 5.02$, $p < .05$). Similar result was also shown for formal discipline and the Readiness of Malaysian employers to engage ex-prison inmates ($F = 6.03$, $p < .05$). The moderating simple slope analysis revealed that the effect of behaviorist view had weakened the relationship for skill acquisition ($B = -.050$, $t = -.29$, $p > .05$) and formal discipline ($B = -.061$, $t = -.40$, $p > 0.05$) as this could be due to the types of offense perceived (table 3) and the concern factor perceived by employers on ex-convicts (table 4).

Table 5: The Moderating Role Of Behaviorist View Determination On Skill Acquisition And Formal Discipline

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	.550	.097		5.703	.000		
Behaviourist Mean Score	.310	.054	.320	5.752	.000	.147	6.789
Formal Mean Score	.585	.056	.572	10.389	.000	.150	6.663
Formal behaviorist	-.061	.015	-.091	-4.039	.000	.898	1.113
(Constant)	.692	.103		6.748	.000		
Behaviourist Mean Score	.487	.058	.501	8.403	.000	.148	6.735
Skill Mean Score	.366	.057	.381	6.383	.000	.148	6.766
Skill behaviorist	-.050	.017	-.071	-2.909	.004	.889	1.125

The conclusion that can be drawn is that skill acquisition and formal discipline will significantly impact employers' willingness to hire ex-prison inmates. However, this relationship is conditional on the level of behaviourism held by hospitality employers towards inmates. There is a need for the government to educate and raise public awareness about the

prisons' efforts in transforming, educating, facilitating, and supporting convicts through their vocational, training, and education programs. The action by the government will alter public perception and allow employers to focus on the ex-convicts' skills and abilities in hiring rather than the offenders' past offenses.

Conclusion

According to the results, most employers in the hospitality industry are open to hiring ex-prison inmates as long as they possess the necessary qualifications and work experience and exhibit good behavior. However, most respondents (80.4%) also stated that the type of offense committed by the inmate would be considered during the hiring process. Furthermore, employers expressed concern regarding the social skills of ex-inmates, their ability to interact with customers and colleagues, and their likelihood of victimizing others (92.9%). Interestingly, the study revealed that only a small percentage (15.5%) of employers had hired ex-convicts. This suggests that changing societal attitudes toward ex-convicts influence hiring decisions. Unfortunately, ex-convicts often face stigmatization, which makes their reintegration into society difficult (LaBriola, 2021).

To address this issue, the study suggests that employers and other sectors can take simple steps to support the hiring of ex-convicts, such as obtaining government support for hiring ex-convicts on a contract basis or offering them jobs that do not require extensive direct interaction with customers or guests, such as the back of the house jobs. The government can also play a crucial role in creating suitable job opportunities for ex-convicts, which can motivate other industries to be more confident in hiring them. Overall, this study highlights the need for societal changes in perceptions towards ex-convicts and the role the government and various sectors can play in facilitating their successful reintegration into society.

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