

Working Behind Bars: Employed Prisoners' Perception of Professional Training and Employment in Prison

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Abstract: The research is aimed at examining the perceptions and attitudes of prisoners employed in enterprises in prison vis-à-vis employment and deriving conclusions regarding the impact of employment on the lives of prisoners in prison and its contribution to advancing their rehabilitation. Doing time is generally a painful experience, both physically and mentally, and often adversely influences prisoners' life after release. Programs and activities have been developed in prisons in many countries, including Israel, to mitigate these impacts and at the same time reduce recidivism following release. A key such program is employment in enterprises within the prison walls, including training of prisoners in a variety of professions. In the framework of the present qualitative research 20 prisoners employed in enterprises in Israeli prisons were interviewed, and these aired their perceptions regarding employment and its effects. Three main themes and 18 sub-themes defining the attitudes of the prisoners to the issue emerged from the interviews. The first two themes are: employment provides benefits and alleviates the pains of imprisonment; and employment helps prisoners' rehabilitation. The third theme emerging from the statements of an isolated number of prisoners is: employment is an act of exploitation on the part of the Prison Service and serves no useful purpose. The overall conclusion of the study is that employment in enterprises in prison is generally perceived by the prisoners as positive and contributory, in terms of both reducing the damage caused by imprisonment and raising the likelihood of the prisoner being rehabilitated through employment following his release.

Keywords: Rehabilitation, employment programs, pains of imprisonment, employment in prison.

INTRODUCTION

Although the primary responsibility of prisons is to ensure the security of their inmates, another essential duty is to provide prisoners with an opportunity to acquire skills that will help them reintegrate into community life following release. Employment in prison appears to serve a twofold purpose: it contributes to the security of the prisoners during their time in prison, and it prepares them for life outside.

An extensive theoretical basis (detailed below) can be found for the potential that employment has to safeguard the individual from delinquency. The Good Lives Model (GLM) theory, for example, suggests focusing on the needs of the criminal and seeking legitimate ways in which to provide these needs. Satisfaction of needs eventually leads to reducing risks (for a more elaborate description see Ward & Maruna, 2007). When prisoners are employed their myriad needs are met, including a sense of security and a search for challenges (Anderson & Shomacher, 1991; Laub & Sampson, 2001). According to Social Learning Theory too an explanation can be found for the fact that contact with working people raises the probability of prisoners developing pro-social values and concepts (Akers, 1998). Social Control Theory views

employment as something that widens non-formal social supervision (Sampson & Laub, 1993). In addition, Rational Choice Theory claims that employment lowers delinquency by raising the perceived benefits of normative behaviour (Freeman, 1996). Finally, Strain Theory (Agnew, 1986) regards employment as reducing tension by tempering the economic need.

The time spent in prison is generally characterized by tension and considerable suffering (Crewe, 2011; Sykes, 1970; Toch, 1992). Sykes referred to the "pains of imprisonment". Sykes, and following in his footsteps Toch, classify this suffering according to different types and include in it the loss of freedom and autonomy, subjection to degrading and hurtful torment, and material deprivation, among other things. Goffman (1961) describes prison as an all-encompassing institution characterized by negative features such as a separation between staff and inmates, humiliation and loss of identity, and arrestment of rehabilitative processes.

In the thirty years that have passed since publication of research studies detailing the various types of suffering, numerous studies have focused on the psychological torment, and mental stress experienced by prisoners (e.g. Crewe, 2011; DeVeaux, 2013; Haney, 2001). Crewe (2011), for example, states that some relief has been seen in the pains referred to

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by Sykes and Toch during the past few decades thanks to various legislative reforms regarding imprisonment and the maintenance and treatment of prisoners. However, the psychological stress to which prisoners are subjected has worsened – whether due to the more limited rehabilitation given to prisoners in many countries (Haney, 2001), the uncertainty regarding the prisoners' future resulting from indeterminate periods of imprisonment, or the concerns over being refused to early release. Many prisoners feel that the demands made of them are unclear and unachievable (see Padfield, 2009). Another reason for the heightened suffering is the burgeoning practice of psychological evaluation of prisoners, including evaluations regarding the danger they pose and mental health, recorded in their files. The consequence of these evaluations is that prisoners are often permanently labelled with epithets such as "anti-social personality" or "borderline personality", resulting in rehabilitation being a closed option to them. Evaluations of this nature, which are at times one-off events, can accompany the prisoner throughout his time in prison, and in many cases throughout his lifetime, even after his release (Padfield, 2002).

Against the backdrop of the harshness inherent in imprisonment, it is worth investigating actions, such as professional and vocational training, that are being taken in Israeli prisons to mitigate their negative impacts. This article focuses on the influence of employment in prison on employed prisoners.

As stated, employment in prison appears to alleviate the pains of imprisonment experienced by prisoners. As such, importance is attached to a prisoner doing time in prison and subsequently to one who is employed outside of prison acquiring a sense of satisfaction and developing positive attitudes towards work. Factors cited in the literature as being associated with satisfaction from employment in prison are a work environment with a good atmosphere, and workers who are given a feeling of independence and allowed leeway to use their own discretion (Avdija & Roy, 2012). In the prison environment independence and work satisfaction are influenced by a series of interrelated psycho-social factors (Bond & Flaxman, 2006).

On their release, prisoners start life from scratch, often without sufficient means, devoid of social support and lacking employment. Many find themselves facing challenges such as finding a place to live, integrating into a normative social environment, and obtaining

work (Amir & Horowitz, 2005; Travis & Visher, 2005; Visher, Winterfield & Coggeshall, 2005).

Several researchers who have focused on employment as a key factor in relinquishing crime have shown how objective problems that had at times existed prior to imprisonment, and had been exacerbated during the course of imprisonment, were reawakened on release. These include a poor education, low self-image, lack of work skills and little employment experience. These problems make it difficult for released offenders to fit into a job after release (Davidson & Volk, 2011; Milman-Sivan, 2013; Pierson, Price & Coleman, 2014).

Problems attached to employment and the ability to earn a living upon release have been found in a high percentage of released prisoners (Ben Zvi & Volk, 2011; Bialer & Bar Sinai, 2003; Duwe, 2015; Goldberg, 2013). Because of the multitude of problems associated with released prisoners, some employers are hesitant about employing them (Timor & Shoham, 2014). Thus finding work becomes a key hurdle released prisoners face, often being a factor in their return to a life of crime.

RECIDIVISM AND EMPLOYMENT

Employment in itself is perceived by modern society as being a highly valuable asset (e.g. Gershuny, 2003). According to the literature on criminology, being in a permanent employment framework lessens the likelihood of recidivism (e.g. Gillis & Nafekh, 2005; Sampson & Laub, 1993), while research studies conducted with released prisoners point to permanent work being an important factor in the rehabilitation process and in integration of the prisoner in society (Amir, Diamant & Cranot, 2011; Bierens & Carvalho, 2011; Efodi, 2014; Shoham, Yehoshua, Efodi & Diamant, 2011; Timor & Shoham, 2014). It is for this reason that various programs geared to the integration of prisoners condition participation in them on engagement of the prisoner in an employment framework. As an example, early release of prisoners in Israel is contingent on their first finding a permanent job (Efodi, 2014; Timor, 2014).

The relationship between employment and crime is a complex one and is influenced by many variables such as age, gender, marital status, education and vocational training. Playing a major role in this context are differences between populations and types of offences. Various research studies have shown that this relationship is also affected by stages in an

individual's life. Thus, for example, it is found that employed youths paradoxically tend to commit more offences than unemployed ones (Uggen & Wakefield, 2008; Verbruggen, Blockland & Van der Geest, 2012).

Explanations for the relationship between employment and recidivism can be found, as stated, in various theories. Functionalistic sociological theories claim that the greater the amount of personal and social capital – namely, material and non-material resources – that is available to its members, the greater the fear of losing this capital (e.g. Lochner, 2006). Thus, the higher the social esteem and/or number of possessions a person has, the greater the concern about being deprived of them. When an individual receives fair wages and appreciation for work done in a conventional society he will not be drawn to committing crimes for the sake of financial gains. According to these theories, making a rational choice is key to differentiating between legitimate employment and crime (Cornish & Clarke, 2014). Over and above the economic incentive and social appreciation that legitimate work provides, it can, in the eyes of the delinquent, raise the risk inherent in committing a crime. The possibility of imprisonment could serve as a stronger deterrent for those who have work as compared to those who are not employed since imprisonment and the punishment that comes in its wake could lead to the loss of legitimate employment (Uggen & Wakefield, 2008).

Certain sociological theories that address the lack of social equality with respect to accessibility to social and economic resources, attach prime importance to the profit gained from legitimate employment as compared to criminal activity. Thus, for example, the greater the number of opportunities available to the prisoner to succeed in legitimate directions, the less he will be tempted to resort to non-legitimate ways, for the remuneration to be had from legitimate activity is greater than that from non-legitimate pursuits (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960). Since employment gives the prisoner an opportunity to succeed in legitimate ways it may be reasonably assumed that he will no longer need to seek a criminal solution to his problems when released. An opportunity that opens up for him to integrate in work that is not of a criminal nature raises the chances that he will accomplish a turnaround in his life and free himself from the vicious circle of crime and imprisonment (Tripodi, Kim & Bender, 2010).

The impact of work on reducing crime also stems from the fact that employment is one of the most

important means of social supervision and mature development of social contacts, rendering it of topmost importance in promoting disengagement from crime (Laub & Sampson, 2001). As a normative figure and one who in time could be perceived as a significant personality in the life of the released prisoner, the employer contributes to non-formal supervision of the prisoner by encouraging his involvement in normal activities and his commitment to and belief in norms and the law (Peled-Laskov & Bailer, 2013; Uggen & Wakefield, 2008).

Employment constitutes an absorbing framework, providing oversight and support. Since this framework represents conformism to legitimate norms it serves as a barrier to criminogenic forces, lessening the likelihood that the prisoner will revert to delinquent behaviour. It is in this framework that an individual lives and fills a defined social role that reflects a familiar pattern of behaviour to all members of the group, sets boundaries with respect to the conduct of its members, and is essential to the existence of the social structure. The social role becomes something habitual, assisting in achieving goals and defining relationships. The employer serves as a guide supporting the released prisoner, boosting his self-confidence and positive qualities, while providing the thrust behind his emotional, mental and financial rehabilitation. The workplace is the source for normative-economic connections, for raising self-esteem, strengthening self-image and above all, removing the label "ex-con" (Bialer & Peled, 2011; Duwe, 2015; Goldberg, 2013).

Employment by an individual has a structural impact on his day-to-day life. It diverts his attention from his delinquent past and focuses him on the present and on legitimate activity that is also financially rewarding. In the course of this routine activity the interest in and opportunities for criminal behaviour diminish. Thus, even if the criminal is motivated to revert to crime he will find it difficult to do so in the absence of opportunities (Felson, 2013; Hirschi, 1969). Employment also reduces crime by the very fact that the person has less free time to commit offences (Uggen & Wakefield, 2008).

In contrast to the approaches that address the inverse correlation between crime and employment, other theories claim that such a correlation does not exist. Gottfredson & Hirschi (1990), for example, maintain that the findings on the relationship between employment and crime are the result of a skew associated with the selection process. They claim that

stable personal traits influence the probability of both delinquent and normative behaviour, such as looking for work and persevering in it. Criminals are differentiated from non-criminals, among other things, by their level of self-control: criminals have a low level of self-control compared to that of non-criminals. People with low self-supervision have a greater tendency to wild behaviour, consumption of alcohol, risk taking and delinquent conduct (Arneklev, Grasmich & Bursik, 1999; Gottfredson & Hirshi, 1990), factors that also affect their lower ability to find a job and persevere in it (e.g. DeLisi & Vaughn, 2008).

As stated, knowledge can be gained on the relationship between employment and recidivism from the findings of research studies that point to the importance of employment on integration of the released prisoner into normative society (Rhodes, 2008; Seiter & Kadela, 2003). Accordingly, many countries, including Israel, run vocational employment and training programs for serving released prisoners. Some employment programs are held inside the prison for prisoners serving their sentence, some outside the prison walls for serving prisoners (generally referred to "work release" programs) and some for released prisoners.

The present research focuses on employment programs held for prisoners in Israel while they are doing time, constituting a major component in activities geared to prisoners in Israeli prisons. It is aimed at examining the perspectives and attitudes towards employment of prisoners employed in enterprises in prison, and deriving conclusions on the impact of employment on the life of the prisoners in prison, and its contribution to their rehabilitation. No vocational employment or training programs in Israeli prisons have to date been investigated in terms of their effect on prisoner behaviour, their quality of life in prison, their perspectives, and their self- and social image. Moreover, no research has been conducted on the components of employment that affect prisoners, such as the requirement to arrive for work daily and at a stipulated time, remuneration based on productivity and obedience to the manager.

EMPLOYMENT IN PRISONS

The employment of incarcerated offenders is an activity that contributes to prison management, quality of life of prisoners inside the prison, and integration of prisoners into normative society following their release (e.g. Davidsko & Volk, 2011). Firstly, prisoners'

employment serves an administrative-security purpose by facilitating management of the institution and bolstering its security. Employment prevents idleness and negative utilization of free time while relieving stress and tension between prisoners. These dimensions are of prime importance and have been discussed in the past, when employment in prison served as a central means of discipline (Davidsko & Volk, 2011; Milman-Sivan, 2013; Pierson, Price & Coleman, 2014). Secondly, employment and the accompanying salary allow prisoners to improve their daily living conditions by enabling them to purchase goods in the canteen, buy a Telecard, and at times provide financial assistance to their families. It also positions them as working persons contributing to society (Cullen & Travis, 1984; Davidsko & Volk, 2011; Maguire, Flanagan & Thornberry, 1988).

Employment also helps improve prisoners' self-image. They come to realize their ability for positive action, in contrast to the adverse labelling they received in society in general, and in the courtroom in particular. They begin to believe in their ability to benefit themselves socially and financially, factors that help to boost their own self-respect and regain the feeling of control over their lives (Hunter & Boyce, 2009; Sampson & Laub, 1993). In addition, employment in prison provides prisoners with work skills and the experience they need to integrate into the job market following their release, contributing to reduced recidivism and better rehabilitation (Davidsko & Volk, 2011; Milman-Sivan, 2013; Pierson, Price & Coleman, 2014).

In a comprehensive literature survey conducted by the Education Department of University College London (UCL), a total of seven research studies were reviewed that examined employment programs for prisoners doing time and released prisoners. Six of the seven programs pointed to significant positive statistical differences in employment rates following release with prisoners who had participated in the program vs. those who had not (Hurry, Brazier, Parker & Wilson, 2006).

EMPLOYMENT IN ISRAELI PRISONS

Convicted offenders incarcerated in Israeli prisons are integrated into employment in prison in three "employment levels", differentiated according to both the type of work and the work conditions. Every prisoner who is found fit to work begins on the first level, progressing to the next levels based on acquired

skills and the decision of the Prison Service. The first two levels include employment in the framework of "services, maintenance and kitchen". Productive employment is a feature of the third level, within three different frameworks: Prison Service enterprises operating on a contractual basis; enterprises by private entrepreneurs in the prisons; and businesses outside the prison walls (Davidsko & Volk, 2011; Milman-Sivan, 2013).

Work outside the prison walls constitutes the most advanced stage that the prisoner can attain, and only a few prisoners actually have the privilege of working in this framework. Work of this nature has two orientations: group rehabilitation and individual rehabilitation. As part of group rehabilitation, the prisoners leave the prison for work outside and are employed as a group in a business. Individual rehabilitation is the more advanced stage, in the framework of which the prisoner must look for employment on his own. Having found it, he sets out for work daily. Thus the level of supervision over prisoners in the individual rehabilitation program is much lower than that over prisoners in the group program (Milman-Sivan, 2013).

As stated, the aim of this research is to examine the perspectives and attitudes towards work of prisoners employed in enterprises in prison. The qualitative investigation of these subjects could lead to a knowledge and understanding of their impact and thus contribute to new insights into the employment of prisoners and their vocational training in prison.

METHOD

Participants

Participants in this research included 20 out of 2500 prisoners from four prisons – Ayalon, Ma'asiyahu, Eshel and Rimonim – engaged in vocational activities in Prison Service enterprises or in external businesses belonging to private entrepreneurs. The average age of the participants was 38.05, with a standard deviation of 8.65 years. Fifty-five percent of them were married with children. The average number of prior incarcerations was 1.65, with a standard deviation of 1.38. Details on the participants are given in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that the age of the prisoners ranges from 24 to 54. Half of them have between two and four children. The number of years in prison ranges from two years to life imprisonment. The average number of

incarcerations is 1.65, with a standard deviation of 1.39. Most of the prisoners (with the exception of one soldier, two unemployed men and six who did only odd jobs) had had diverse professions prior to entering prison: building contractors, carpenters, garage mechanics, chefs, electrical technicians, drivers, managers. During the time they spent in prison, nine were employed in the carpentry shop, seven in the sewing workshop, two in the box factory, one in making fringes for prayer shawls, and one in technology.

Tools

The research tool was the semi-structured interview based on an interview guide. Such an interview consists of face-to-face interaction between the interviewer and interviewee on the subject of the research. We chose this tool since it is considered to be effective for research in which the researcher has no other opportunity to meet the subject and interview him (Bernard, 2010) and also because it allows the interviewer to gain in-depth knowledge of the interviewee's viewpoints and investigate issues that arise from the interviewee's statements and do not appear in the interview guide (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Shkedi, 2003). The interview guide included principally questions on their experience and attitudes towards employment in prison, such as "How do you feel about vocational training and employment in prison?" and "What influence does employment have on your attitudes and behaviour?". The interview guide also included brief informative questions on personal, family, employment and criminal background.

Procedure

The research was commissioned by the heads of the Employment Department in the Prison Service, who also approved its procedures. The participants were selected by convenience sampling from the enterprises of the Prison Service during breaks in work. The prisoners who were present in the enterprises we visited were asked if they were willing to be interviewed for the purpose of the research. The prisoners who gave their consent were assured of anonymity and of the fact that no additional identifying details would be published. We interviewed the participants during lunch breaks or rest periods in the yards outside the buildings. For the purposes of the interviews we placed two chairs in a secluded location in order to maintain a distance from other prisoners and foremen. In all the interviews only the interviewee and interviewer were present, and the interviews lasted on average about

Table 1: Details on Research Participants

No.	Age	Marital status	No. of children	No. of years of imprisonment	No. of imprisonments	Previous employment	Employment in prison
1	42	Married	3	Life	1	Contractor	Sewing workshop
2	36	Married	2	Life	1	Carpentry	Carpentry shop
3	48	Married	3	3 years	4	Garage	Technology
4	46	Divorced	4	3 years	1	Cook	Sewing workshop
5	33	Married	2	3.5 years	1	Mechanic	Carpentry shop
6	38	Married	0	Life	1	Unemployed	Sewing workshop
7	25	Single	0	Life	1	Soldier	Carpentry shop
8	45	Married	4	8 years	1	Electrician	Carpentry shop
9	54	Married	2	2 years	5	Cook	Box factory
10	24	Single	0	6 years	1	Unemployed	Carpentry shop
11	26	Single	0	10 years	1	Odd jobs	Box factory
12	31	Single	0	16 years	1	Odd jobs	Sewing workshop
13	47	Married	0	Life	1	Driver	Sewing workshop
14	35	Married	0	16 years	3	Odd jobs	Sewing workshop
15	37	Widower	0	Life	1	Manager	Sewing workshop
16	30	Single	0	4 years	1	Odd jobs	Carpentry shop
17	43	Unmarried	2	5 years	5	Odd jobs	Carpentry shop
18	52	Widower	0	Life	1	Entrepreneur, contractor	Sewing workshop
19	32	Married	2	5 years	1	Odd jobs	Carpentry shop
20	38	Married	2	8 years	1	Construction	Carpentry shop

one hour. The statements made by the interviewees were recorded verbatim after they were requested to adjust their speech to the rate at which the interviewer was able to write down their statements. The number of participants was determined according to the saturation point. Interviewees were added as long as their statements contained new material. Once it was evident that additional interviewees were not contributing new relevant information on the subject of the research, we stopped further recruiting.

Data Analysis

The research was conducted in four stages: preliminary analysis, mapping analysis, focused analysis and theoretical analysis (see Shkedi, 2003; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The preliminary analysis stage included initial classification of attitudes and perspectives and thorough examination of the data. Mapping analysis in the second stage was intended to classify the themes found and differentiate between them. The focused analysis included a close look at the central themes and sub-themes that are appended to

the focused, rich and significant description, based on the two previous stages. The theoretical analysis is intended to present conceptual-theoretical explanations of the researched phenomena based on the data found and the research and theoretical literature that address the subject.

Determination of reliability and validity in the present research was done using open exposure and full transparency with respect to the perceptions and opinions that arose from the start of the research up to its end. Transparency allows the impartial reader to relate to the research and judge it according to its unique conceptual context. The present research quotes statements made by the participants, facilitating identification of the themes and sub-themes, and basing the ensuing discussion on factual grounds. Identification of each of the sub-themes was based on statements by at least two interviewees.

Three main themes relating to the role of employment in prison emerge from the statements made by the interviewees:

1. Employment affords the prisoner benefits and alleviates the tribulations of imprisonment. This theme is associated with 11 sub-themes.
2. Employment contributes to prisoner rehabilitation. This theme is associated with four sub-themes.
3. Employment is an act of exploitation act on the part of the Prison Service and serves no purpose for the prisoner. This theme is associated with three sub-themes.

FINDINGS

First theme – Employment affords the prisoner benefits and alleviates the tribulations of imprisonment (see Sykes, 1970; Toch, 1992).

Integration of prisoners in an employment framework grants them privileges and advantages in comparison to prisoners who are not employed. It lowers the level of suffering associated with doing time in prison and mitigates to a certain extent the negative impacts of prison life. This theme includes 11 sub-themes, presented below in the order of frequency with which they appeared in the interviews.

- a. Employment helps "doing time" in prison pass relatively quickly; it isolates the prisoner from the prison environment and prevents boredom.

Interviewee 7: "I cut myself off from the ward for six hours. I don't feel the day passing. Here time passes quickly". Interviewee 9 adds: "I am here in order to keep myself busy, to not get bored". Interviewee 18 opens with a rhetorical question: "What, should I sit in my cell all day?" And he goes on to say "When I come here I forget I'm serving a sentence ... the day passes well."

- b. Employment rids one of negative thoughts and makes one forget that one is in prison.

Interviewee 6: "Now after my furlough [he received 24 hours leave] I came to work. It cleared my head. When you are at work you are more occupied with the work. You don't think about your imprisonment, what I did, how much time is left". Interviewee 1: "When I am here I forget I am a prisoner ... whoever works in the prison is calmer, his life looks different".

- c. Some of the offenders reported that thanks to the wage they obtained through employment

they did not need financial assistance from the family, and could help support their family

Interviewee 5: "The money I earn I save for furlough, to buy gifts and for going out with the kids ... I don't need financial help from home. Before I worked the family sent me money". Interviewee 6 states: "I earn [from working] between 1,600 and 1,700 shekels and I can help her [his wife] with the rent. When I am on furlough I spend a bit and give my wife the rest." Interviewee 18 sends his entire wage to his family. He says: "All the money I receive I send out for my children and grandchildren. I send them 2,000 shekels every month".

- d. Other incarcerated offenders reported that the wage they received for work allows them to buy various products in the canteen and improve their prison diet.

Interviewee 9 explains: "All the money [he receives from work] goes in the canteen, the food here is beyond redemption". Interviewee 11 says: "Today I buy my food in the canteen and cook it in my cell. Before they gave me work in the factory and before I earned money I would often pass up the food here". Interviewee 14 details his expenditure in the canteen: "I spend my money in the canteen. I buy cigarettes, Telecards, cola and some food to improve the taste of the meals".

- e. The wages prisoners earn for work allows some of them to repay debts.

Interviewee 2 explains: "I pay for myself. This reduces pressure on the family because I don't ask for anything from them. I pay fines and debts I have, and even if I do have any, I still send the family outside money, try to help them a bit. Interviewee 7, who is deeply in debt, states: "Till now, the money [he earned from working] went on the canteen, but now I have decided to stop buying. Eating only what they give in the prison. Saving the money for compensation. I have debts of 100,000 for compensation and other army debts".

This theme can be summed up in general terms with two statements from one of the prisoners (interviewee 1):

"A person who works here [in prison] has much more to lose than a person who does not work, so he will behave better, will not go berserk, in order for them not to

end his employment". "On the day I don't work I don't feel good".

- f. Another work incentive for the offenders was being recommended for furlough and early release while at times work constitutes a condition for conjugal visits.

Interviewee 13 explains: "I don't care that the owner [of the factory] earns money on me, let him be well. I too get something out of it, I receive recommendations for furlough". Interviewee 19 claims: "Prison is no place for me, so I do [in work] all I can to be entitled to leave and more importantly, to be released after two-thirds of my time". Interviewee 6 states that his integration in an employment program was a condition for receiving benefits: "They said come and work. I said, what are you talking about, you get peanuts here. I should work for the Prison Service?! Then I had [scheduled] a conjugal visit [with his partner] and they said, if I don't work I won't get my visit. So I came here".

- g. In the wards prisoners are involved in fights and are under pressure. On the other hand, in the workplace there are no fights and the atmosphere is peaceful and calm.

Interviewee 8: "When you are in the ward it creates tension and then there's fights and all sorts of stuff. When you leave the ward [for work] it's healthier, all's well". Interviewee 2 focuses more on the impact of the workplace and activities taking place there: "The people here [in the carpentry shop] are good and there is also less friction [between the prisoners], so there's a kind of industrial peace. The [employed] prisoner, because he is not in his cell all day, he is not in a pressure cooker, which affects him".

- h. Employment makes the prisoners feel good and gives them a chance to prove that they are honest individuals. It also makes a positive contribution to their image and social status.

Interviewee 3 states: "Work gives me a good feeling, that I am a trustworthy person. If they trust me I have to give them good reason, be honest, not fight". Interviewee 2 adds: "People [in the prison] don't know who you really are. I wanted them to see me otherwise. So they should know who I am". Interviewee 6 details some of the process: "A new employment officer came and expressed his belief in me. He said, 'I am counting on you'. This freed me ... this place, work restores one. This is the most positive place".

- i. In the workplace prisoners behave well. They are calmer. They have good relations with the wardens.

Interviewee 10 states: "Since I have been working [in the carpentry shop] I have no disciplinary problems. I'm calmer. Get on well even with the wardens". Interviewee 3 explains: "At work you learn the culture of speech. You speak nicely ... no cursing. You know how to behave with each other and behave well". Interviewee 4 sums up: "A prisoner who works behaves better".

- j. In the workplace one meets positive people and the atmosphere is pleasant.

Interviewee 5 relates: "[I] meet positive people who don't make you miserable". Interviewee 18 goes into more detail: "Relations here [in the sewing workshop] are personal, the wardens and managers treat one very well. There's a sort of severance from life in the prison. It's pleasant here, the atmosphere is good".

- k. Employment improves connections with the prisoners' families, who begin, as a result, to visit them and develop hopes about their rehabilitation.

Interviewee 10 explains: "When I came to the carpentry shop my family also began to come on visits ... perhaps because I started sending them money. Now they come regularly and that's good". Interviewee 19 describes a similar process: "My parents visit mainly after I started working. They see I am on the right path. They are beginning to regain hope that I will be rehabilitated."

Second Theme – Employment Contributes to Prisoner Rehabilitation

Integration into employment gradually changes the behaviour, perceptions and aims of prisoners and prepares them in many cases for constructive and non-criminal activity following release. This theme includes four sub-themes, presented below in the order of frequency with which they appeared in the interviews.

- a. The offenders explained that learning professions and earning a diploma within the framework of employment would allow them to engage in and earn a living upon release.

Interviewee 10 explains that he has worked in the prison's carpentry shop for three years: "I earned a

carpenter's diploma ... I now have a profession and can work in it, *inshalla* [God willing], outside". Interviewee 1 adds: "I am receiving full training here and after I leave I can work anywhere I like with this profession. It's wonderful for a person who is doing time. He knows that something is awaiting him outside. He has something to look forward to". Interviewee 18 sums up: "I have made progress here, I did courses, learned a profession, received a diploma. When I get out of here perhaps I'll open a small business".

- b. Offenders also explained that employment changes and improves their self-image and contributes to their self-confidence

Interviewee 20 states: "Today I no longer need favours from others. I earn 1,800 shekels and even save money for after my release. I can work in carpentry and in a lot of other things without committing offences. I am not coming back here!" According to interviewee 5, he has undergone a positive change in prison, stating, "I have gained from this [his time in prison]. I have been taught things that have changed me. I am today a different person, I no longer react aggressively and I also have a profession for the future".

- c. There is a reason to wake up in the morning. Employees don't want to lose work days. They get a profession at work and they learn to obey orders.

Interviewee 1 states: "There's a schedule, I have a reason to get up in the morning. Work is also a habit. People here are not willing to forgo a day's work. I see people who did not work before prison and today they have a profession and do not need crime". Interviewee 20 explains: "Before prison I did not want anyone [at work] to tell me what to do. Here [in the carpentry shop] I learned that there are people who are wiser than me, that there is law and order at work and one does not do whatever comes to mind. Today I received an outstanding worker certificate".

- d. A person who acquired a profession in prison and will work in it outside will not return to prison

Interviewee 3 states: "A person who has been employed, is released and goes out to work and also receives therapy outside, they do not come back here. They do not want to return. They have a lot to lose". Interviewee 20 talks about prisoners who do not want to integrate into an employment program: "There are

prisoners, especially the young ones, who have not yet acquired any sense and do not want to work. They have got used to easy money. When they get out they will return to prison fast because they do not have a profession or experience and also no will".

Interviewee 5 sums up this theme: "[After my release] I will work. The things I have learned [in prison] will help me. I feel today that it's good I came to prison. I've been changed here. Today I am someone else. Outside I would not have managed to do this".

Third theme –Employment is an act of exploitation on the part of the Prison Service and serves no purpose for the prisoner: criticism of various aspects of employment in prison.

This theme comprises three sub-themes. Of the 20 interviewees, only a small number (four) criticized the work within a prison framework. Some of the criticism related to the wage, the type of employment and professional training received in prison. Other criticism targeted the contribution of work and professional training to the chances of finding work following release.

- a. Some of the interviewees felt exploited by the Prison Service and the owners of private businesses, as evidenced by the low wage for their work.

Interviewee 11 states: "I work because it is less terrible than staying enclosed in your cell all day. If they paid more I could save a bit of money in order to start something outside. Here you've turned me into your slave, just like a foreign Sudanese worker". Interviewee 12 views employment as a means to exploit the prisoners. He says: "This [employment] is something between exploitation and slavery. They pay us peanuts and make a profit on us, both the Prison Service and the businesses".

- b. The offenders also claimed that the work for which the Prison Service provides training is not in demand in the market. And for some jobs that are in demand no training is provided in prison

Interviewee 9 states: "I was assigned to a box factory. What can one do with this outside?! I wanted to be a chef but I was not given a chef's course in prison". Interviewee 14 is also pessimistic about his training: "I know there is no work in this [sewing trousers] outside, but this is what they give me to do here".

- c. Employment and professional training are in vain since no one will employ a person with a criminal record and incarceration.

Interviewee 9: "I am very pessimistic. When I was released from my previous imprisonment I went to the Tadmor (school for chefs) to learn to be a chef. I did not continue with this because no one wanted to accept me for work, even though I had a diploma from the Tadmor. So I had no choice and I burglarized. Now I am very pessimistic. Once again I will not be accepted for work. I think I'll burglarize again". Interviewee 12 too does not expect to find work in the future, stating: "I don't believe I'll be accepted for work after my release because of my past [sex offences]".

DISCUSSION

The aim of the present research is to examine the perspectives and attitudes of prisoners working in enterprises in prison to employment, and to derive conclusions regarding the impact of employment on the life of prisoners in prison and its contribution to prisoner rehabilitation. Diverse attitudes emerge from the statements made by the interviewees with respect to the role played by employment in their lives. These were classified according to three main themes, with two comprising positive attitudes to work and one negative. These attitudes point to the fact that in the eyes of employed prisoners, working in prison generally reduces the suffering associated with doing time to a significant extent and even contributes to their rehabilitation following release.

As stated, their time in prison is characterized by the "pains of imprisonment" (Sykes, 1970; Toch, 1992). Sykes, and in his wake Toch, group this suffering into different types according to the fundamental characteristics of the prison. It was against the backdrop of harsh basic characteristics in prison that we examined the specific effects of employment as viewed by employed prisoners.

The first theme that emerged from statements made by the interviewees is that employment frees them from a slew of pains similar to those cited by Sykes and Toch (Sykes, 1970; Toch, 1992). According to the interviewees the principal contribution of employment is that it helps "pass the time" in prison relatively quickly, creating an illusion of early release. The prominence assigned to this contribution may be understood against the background of the central aspiration of prisoners to complete their term as early as possible

and shorten their period of torment. Statements in a similar vein may be found in the study conducted by Fabrice (2010), which challenges the theory of Goffman (1961) and Clemmer (1958), who, among other things, described the dimension of time in prison as negative and one-dimensional: as "time to be burned", "stolen time" and "wasted time". Based on interviews with prisoners in French prisons, Fabrice (2010) concluded that inmates there who were part of an employment framework experience time in prison differently and felt that work ascribes a meaning to time, making it pass more quickly and more easily.

Another important contribution mentioned is that the wage prisoners earn from their employment has a number of positive effects on their life in prison. Most of the interviewees referred to the material benefits they can enjoy thanks to the wages they receive. They can make purchases in the prison canteen, including food products which help to break the monotony of the insipid food and enrich their diet. Many prisoners who are not employed and do not earn a steady wage cannot avail themselves of such an option and are forced to make do with the standard menu served them or find indirect ways, at times violent, in order to improve the prison fare (Godderis, 2006).

Wages allowed some of the offenders to free their family from a financial burden and in some cases provided monetary assistance to the family. This contribution is invaluable not only because it improves the precarious financial situation of so many prisoner families (e.g. Farrington, 1995; Freund, 1991) but also because of the enhanced status it accords the prisoner in the eyes of his family members, who see signs of a change for the better in terms of behaviour and outlook. As a consequence relations between the prisoners and their families in many cases improve, as witnessed by the more frequent visits to the prison by family members (Fried, Timor, Ronal & Borochofsky, 2010). Wages earned by prisoners also enable some of them to repay debts that they have accumulated. In this context it may be noted that one of the factors in repeat crimes by released prisoners is the burden of financial debts that they are unable to repay through lawful channels (Efodi & Dahan, 2015; Stringer, 1999).

Another contribution, according to a number of interviewees, lies in the improved quality of their social life in prison as well as their physical and mental health. Employment separates them from prisoners who are not employed, lowering the tension level and the likelihood of disagreements between them. A ward

cohabited by large numbers of prisoners of all types day in and day out, with no significant activity to keep them occupied, is a breeding ground for tensions and arguments (Ben Zvi & Carmel, 2013; Wooldredge, 1998).

The concern over the possibility of losing one's job serves as an incentive to avoid disputes (Laub & Richmond, 2014; Simpson, 2003). The sense of responsibility acquired in work also helps the prisoner stay away from trouble (Fabric, 2010; Laub & Simpson, 2003). Moreover, the prisoner's job accounts for a considerable part of his day, leaving him fatigued and with little interest in picking fights with others. According to Hirschi (1969) a person's temporal and energetic resources are limited, and when he fills his day with constructive endeavours, he will find it difficult to pursue non-constructive activity.

According to some interviewees employment has a positive effect on their social image as well as their self-image. Similar findings emerge from the research of Richmond (2014), showing that over time, employed prisoners developed a renewed self-esteem which had no doubt been dealt a blow on their entry into prison, while also forming positive social relationships with others. Employment provides prisoners with a focused goal (Laub & Sampson, 2003), resulting in a lower likelihood of their engaging in alternative negative activity during their stay in prison. It also evokes a sense of autonomy in the prison environment, which of necessity cultivates dependence.

Employed prisoners feel creative, masculine, independent and better people (ibid). In enterprises that engage prisoners, they rub shoulders chiefly with civilian foremen and with only a few wardens. Their fellow workers are select prisoners who exhibited motivation with respect to vocational rehabilitation and education, gained in educational centres, that is vital to their jobs. The joint activity, conducted on a daily basis, in an environment that is pleasant and free of violence allows them to establish positive social contacts. Some feel that the interpersonal relationships formed in the workplace may be likened to those existing with family members (Richmond, 2014). These relationships earn them social esteem that has no bearing on their criminality, enabling them to a certain extent to restore their self-image (Zamble & Porporino, 1998).

Employment in enterprises leads to a significant change in routine activities and serves as a "place for keeping one's identity". The prisoners feel like regular

human beings once again rather than inmates (Fabrice, 2010; Richmond, 2014). Employment also leads to a change for the better in behaviour and attitude towards the wardens (Richmond, 2014). An employment framework appears to provide an opportunity to narrow the gap between the prisoners and the staff and temper the mutual hostility (Goffman, 1961).

Additional benefits to be gained from employment include recommendations for furlough, for conjugal visits, and even for early release. All in all, according to the interviewees, employment contributes to easing the pains of imprisonment – physically (e.g. wages can be spent on the purchase of food items to improve the diet), socially (e.g. encounters with civilian foremen and positive prisoners with motivation for rehabilitation, developing into social relationships), and psychologically (e.g. enhanced self-image and strengthened family support).

The second theme relates to vocational training. Integration into an employment framework gradually changes prisoners' behaviour, perspectives and goals, and prepares them professionally for constructive, non-criminal activity following release. It provides them with job experience which can in their opinion contribute to their entry into the job market and to securing positions in firms following release, helping to reduce recidivism and advance their rehabilitation (see also Davidsko & Volk, 2011; Milman-Sivan, 2013; Pierson, Price & Coleman, 2014). A number of research studies that examined vocational programs during and after imprisonment have shown significant positive statistical differences in employment rates between prisoners who participated in vocational programs in prison and those who did not (e.g. Amir, Diamant & Kranot, 2012; Hurry, Brazier, Parket & Wilson, 2006). Prisoners employed in businesses in various parts of Israel learn professions for which there is a demand in the job market, allowing them to find work and earn a livelihood following release. Prison Service Regulation No. 15 states: "The prisoner's work shall be oriented as far as possible to his rehabilitation." This regulation serves, according to the Employment Officer of the Prison Service, as the principal goal of employment in prisons (Kashi, Kaplansky & Liran, 2015).

Apart from training in specific professions, employment affords prisoners tools for affirmative performance. It creates good habits that are essential for employment, such as a fixed daily agenda, diligence and attention to safety rules, and prepares them for work in a framework that includes other workers and

strict demands. Employment programs in prison serve primarily as agents of socialization for a life of work rather than a school for delinquents (Fabrice, 2010). Many of the interviewees feel that the person who has acquired a profession in prison and will work in it outside will not return to prison. This assessment, albeit overzealous, does contain a grain of truth. As emerging from numerous research studies,¹ the level of recidivism among prisoners who acquired a profession in prison, were engaged in it and continued to work in it after release is about 10 to 18 percent less than that of prisoners who did not receive training and were not employed in prison (Aos, Miller & Drake, 2006; Bouffard et al., 2000; Kashi, Abraham & Oscar, 2006; Lattimore, Witte & Baker, 1990; Wilson, Gallagher & MacKenzie, 2000).

The third theme relates to criticism of the employment framework in prison by prisoners. A few interviewees viewed employment in a negative light. According to two of them it is an act of exploitation on the part of the Prison Service and serves no purpose for the prisoners. In their opinion the prisoners receive remuneration that is not commensurate with the work they put in: for the same job outside, they claim, the wages are much higher. This feeling is in line with the critical approach adopted by researchers like Fletcher (2011), and Wilkinson & Pickett (2010), who claim that the prison is an instrument in the hands of the state for solving social problems such as unemployment and population growth, serving as a means for capitalistic self-aggrandizement, with prisoners being perceived as an economic resource.

The issue of prisoner wages has been a subject of discussion in the past. In 1989 prisoners petitioned the Supreme Court to order wages to be paid to prisoners at least according to the minimum wage stipulated by law (Supreme Court 1163/96). The Supreme Court dismissed the petitions and accepted the position of the Prison Service, according to which "employee-employer relations are not applicable in prisons", with all the legal implications that this statement holds. Employment in prisons serves in the eyes of the Prison Service as an instrument for prisoner rehabilitation, among other things, through an intricate system of recompense that the prisoner receives from work (see Kashi, Kaplansky & Liran, 2015). Despite dismissal of the petitions, the court did outline a blueprint for

consideration and implementation of the legal powers granted to the commissioner on the issue of prisoner remuneration.

Another claim was that the Prison Service was providing training for work that was not in demand in the job market and was not offering training in certain fields, e.g. courses for chefs. According to Prison Service employment officers the areas in which vocational training is provided in prisons (Kashi, Kaplansky & Liran, 2015) are selected on the basis of a survey of professions in demand in the job market, conducted each year by the Ministry of Labour and Welfare. A similar claim was made by participants in the research carried out by Richmond (2014): apart from the satisfaction they felt with the employment program in prison and its advantages, they complained about the disconnection between the training they received in prison and the job opportunities in the community.

An additional claim concerned the referral of prisoners for employment for the purpose of vocational rehabilitation as a deception since employers, in the view of two interviewees, are at the outset not willing to accept released prisoners in their businesses. There is no broad empirical confirmation of this claim. A research study conducted recently in Israel (Timor & Shoham, 2014) found that employers who were already employing released prisoners verbally expressed their willingness to engage additional released prisoners. Approximately half of the remaining employers expressed their verbal readiness to absorb released prisoners, side-by-side with reservations regarding the employment of prisoners who had been convicted of sex offences.

Despite the above, the findings of the research point to the fact that employment of prisoners in enterprises in prison is generally perceived by the interviewees as positive, helping to alleviate the pains of imprisonment as well as giving the prisoners a head start with respect to their vocational rehabilitation following release. These findings can contribute to consolidating recognition of the potential inherent in prison employment, and expansion and enhancement of employment programs.

The present qualitative research presents the attitudes and experiences of prisoners who have been absorbed in employment programs. It should be borne in mind that the possibilities of generalizing the findings of qualitative research are relatively limited. In order to

¹Some of which contain methodological deficiencies, in particular skewed selection (Bouffard et al., 2000).

reduce this limitation, we interviewed prisoners from four different prisons, while also including interviewees who had novel statements to make and attitudes and viewpoints that had not been presented by previous interviewees. When the saturation point was reached, namely, when statements made by the interviewees contained no new information, we stopped recruiting further interviewees (see Grant, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). Indeed, we could have sufficed with 15 interviewees who presented different perspectives and positions from those of their predecessors, but in order to be certain that we had reached the saturation point, we added a further five interviewees. We thus arrived at a total of 20 interviewees.

It is recommended to carry out a parallel quantitative research in the future, which can provide data on the frequency of the different attitudes and viewpoints expressed by the prisoners on the subject of employment. It is also recommended to conduct a retrospective research among released prisoners with respect to their employment in prison and the extent of its contribution to their reintegration into society and employment.

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