

Full Length Research

Problems, needs and psychological state of ex-convicts: A qualitative study in a Turkish sample

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The rate of perpetration in Turkey and the whole world has increased more and more; therefore, the number of prisoners who are released from prison and received into prison has also been observed to go up. In parallel with this, the studies which aim at endeavors to prevent crime and repeating crime have accelerated. These studies are mostly for the needs of individuals who are released from prison and micro, mezzo and macro practices have been applied. The needs of individuals released from prison and the problems related to satisfy those needs stand out as a current question. In this study, the needs and problems of ex-convicts who are released from prison have been researched. This study devoted aim is a qualitative one which has been done in-depth interview with twelve participants, five women and seven men, who were guided to Ankara Probation Service. The interviews have been performed in the room of institution forensic psychologist and lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Three questions were asked to the ex-convicts and the answers were analysed. In the study, it was observed that those individuals who are released from prison reported that they mostly had troubles such as unemployment, housing, social exclusion, family support and social aspects of needs. They also stated some family, economic and psychological problems in prison and after released. Under these circumstances, it has been discussed what kind of studies are required in order to prevent crimes pursuant to Turkey facts.

Key words: Prison, Female ex-convicts, Male ex-convicts, Post-releasing needs.

INTRODUCTION

As the number of people who are released from prison increased day by day, the endeavors to prevent repeating crime have accelerated and the discussions about what they need to avoid committing a crime again are going on (McIvor *et al.*, 2009). While an answer to this question is being looked for, there have been frequent qualitative and quantitative studies with individuals who are released from prison or repeating criminals (Austin and Hardyman, 2004; McIvor *et al.*, 2009). Besides, micro, mezzo and macro practices have been applied focused on the needs of the individuals. However, these studies are not on desired scale. The studies have showed that the individuals who committed a crime or are recidivists usually have needs like education, health, housing, work

and family support (Singer *et al.*, 1995; Austin and Hardyman, 2004; McIvor *et al.*, 2009). Dissolving these needs is accepted as primary to prevent crimes, as well. One of the significant factors to prevent crimes is preventing recidivism. In the literature, it is stated that the rate of repetition of crimes for individuals who have once committed a crime is high (Sabol *et al.*, 2007). One of the variables which is accepted remarkable to prevent crimes is economic problems and unemployment. Unemployment, poverty, low wages, earnings, inflation rates; that is economic conditions are indicated to be connected with criminal behaviors (Ata, 2011). Moreover; personality traits, anger management problems and social environment are other effective factors about leading crimes (Eysenck, 1997; Kızmaz, 2010; DeLisi *et al.*, 2010). At this point, programs and policies are observed directed to projects and variables for preventing crimes (WIPAN, 2011). It is helpful worth looking at the situation

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of Turkey, herein.

When it is compared with some other countries, it is observed that crime rates increase more and more also in Turkey even though it seems they are low (Turkey crime statics), in parallel with this criminal behaviors are varied. Although an increase is not monitored on the numbers of ones who received into and released from prison in years, it is known that there has been a dramatic rise on the number of ex-convicts who have probation caution (Table 1). In addition, it is seen that the count of brought law suits has increased in years (Table 2). This situation can be interpreted as an indicator of criminal behaviors has gained speed.

In fact, the necessity to be able to prevent recidivism shows up at these tables. Undoubtedly, unemployment which is one of the major risk factors on recidivism must be considered and given importance to employment. Nevertheless, unemployment has appeared as a chronic problem for people who received into and released from prison in our country. It was observed that they were not able have a regular profession after release. In reference to a study by Turkish Statistical Institute, unemployment rate for women is 11.5%, for men is 9.6% (TUIK 2014). However; when it comes to ex-convicts, it is obvious that the rate is much higher. In terms of that, the rate of unemployed male ex-convicts is 11.2%, on the other hand it is 76.4 % for female ones (TUIK, 2011). However, the extent of probation application of judgment reforms which have come after each other has been developed and 33.500 people have been released on 11 April 2012 (TC Avrupa Birliği Bakanlığı -TR Ministry of European Union-, 2013). This has also revealed an increase on the number of unemployed ex-convicts in accordance with that increase of released people in our country (Table 2).

According to years in criminal record statistics there has not been a significant rise on the quantity of people who received into and released from prison, there has been a sharp climbing on the number of probation service, though. Since 2007, there has not been that increase on prison numbers because most individuals who committed a crime have benefited from probation service. Thus, it can be said that it is necessary to have policies to prevent perpetration and support of non-governmental organizations in Turkey. Contrary to this, the obligation to employ ex-convicts was abolished in 2008 and the rate of employing ex-convicts in public works has been limited with 2 %. Even though it is known that unemployment is a severe risk factor for recidivism, it has increased this unemployment problem which was already hard to find a job for them, and they have come to face to face with the risk committing a crime again (Table 3). As it is seen in the following table, the individuals who released from prison have no possibilities to work in private sector any longer with the change in 2008. When it is considered they suffer from social exclusion (Bedük, 2010), it is clearly seen that private sector will hesitate to employ these individuals unless

they have an obligation.

On the other hand, low education level of individuals is another reason of committing and repeating a crime (Bouffard *et al.*, 2008). The studies present that vocational courses and education studies which were given in prisons have been noteworthy on their participation to labor market after releasing (Hamlyn and Lewis, 2000). These vocational courses and psycho-social studies which are applied in prison and post-releasing have accelerated in our country. These studies are education oriented in prisons and probation services by Ministry of Justice and non-governmental organizations in addition to scientific researches about convicts' personal qualities, demographic information and identification of crime risks (Erden, 2011; Erden *et al.*, 2012). Aforementioned studies involve psycho-social programs such as vocational courses, alcohol-substance dependence program, anger management program and convict improvement before releasing. One of the significant projects among the studies is the project of Judicial Modernization and Penal Reform Project Programme in Turkey which was carried out for two years by Ministry of Justice, EU Countries and Europe Commission (Erden *et al.*, 2012). In ninety prisons, psycho-social studies were practiced; professional and psycho-social focused education was given to prison staffs and convicts-detainees people within the scope of this project. The effectiveness of this project has been evaluated with 312 prison staffs and 350 convicts-detainees by using qualitative and quantitative analyses. Depending on the study results, 44.5% of guardians indicated positive changes on the behaviors and manners of convicts-detainees whereas 45.9% of them stated no changes. For the same question, 50% of psycho-social service and medicine staffs stated that there were positive changes on behaviors and manners of convicts-detainees and 43.5% of them indicated there were no changes, on the other hand, 80% of prison governors explained there were positive directed changes on the issue. 39.6% of convicts-detainees indicated there were positive changes on their relations with their friends, 54.3% of them were indecisive; 30.5% of them remarked they had positive changes with prison staffs but 63.8% of them were indecisive about this. Besides, 37.6% of convicts-detainees said those education programs created self-awareness while 57.1% of them were indecisive about it. In the same study, 48.2% of the group indicated they could find a job after releasing thanks to the vocational courses, but 27.2% of them remarked they could not find a job. 42.8% of the prison staffs explained that convicts-detainees could find a job after releasing and 75% of the prison governors gave also positive feedbacks to the same question. In this study, the difference between the answers of prison staffs and prison governors is remarkable. This might be due to prison staffs' thoughts about the studies are not sufficient for them. As a matter of fact, 94.4% of prison staffs indicated that their salaries

Table 1. The number of cases for execution in Probation Services in Turkey.

2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
15.525	42.042	64.744	78.775	104.662	130.402	219.633	345.215

Source: <http://www.cte-ds.adalet.gov.tr/menusayfalari/bilgibankasi/istatistik/istatistik/istatistik.htm>

Table 2. The number of cases, convicts received into prison, convicts released from prison and occupation conditions of convicts in Turkey.

Years	Cases in Turkey ¹	Convicts received into prison ¹	Convicts released from prison ²	Convicts have elementary occupations /unoccupied
2001	3.441.037	122.932	111.372	23.813
2002	3.116.632	115.489	96.423	18.985
2003	2.819.886	122.882	99.099	18.640
2004	2.888.958	128.939	108.437	30.631
2005	2.673.374	77.363	54.592	16.494
2006	2.709.769	100.179	76.832	24.336
2007	3.058.701	147.238	115.195	47.410
2008	3.060.639	97.202	72.420	27.074
2009	2.949.079	74.404	73.936	48.568
2010	3.129.326	88.490	82.327	Unknown
2011	3.096.903	80.096 ¹	72.388 ³	34.094 ³

Source: http://www.adliscil.adalet.gov.tr/istatistik_2011/40.pdf¹
<http://tuikapp.tuik.gov.tr/cikanhukumuluapp/cikanhukumulu.zul>²
 Ceza infaz kurumu istatistikleri (Prison Statistics) 2009, 2011³

Table 3. The number of ex-convicts who apply for a job and who accepted for a job in public sector and private sector.

Years	Apply for a job	Accepted in public sector	Accepted in private sector
2007	7270	290	4914
2008	6603	191	2290
2009	2275	332	0
2010	1458	223	0
2011	1573	237	0

Source: Erden et al. (2012).

were insufficient, 74.4% of them remarked that prison conditions were inadequate and 60.4% of them indicated their occupation definitions were indefinite (Erden *et al.*, 2012). In another study made in our country, female convicts were asked how much these programs would be useful for them after been release. 30.8 % of them indicated educational programs, 48.1% of them for vocational courses, 46.7% for family education program, 36.3% for anger management program and lastly 10.9% indicated that alcohol-substance dependence program would be helpful after been release (Saruç, 2013).

When female ex-convicts are in question, one of the major problems is housing which comes after unemployment problems after releasing. Especially, it draws attention that the women who do not have family support

have difficulties in finding a place to live in safely. Moreover, the children who those women have to take care of are considered, the solution of housing problems of female ex-convicts gather urgency. It has been found out in lots of studies that women suffered from housing more than men did and the women encountered with the risk of losing their own children (Social Eclusion Unit, 2002; McIvor *et al.*, 2009). It is known that there are shelters for women who are released from prison in the world (WIPAN, 2011), however, housing is a great problem for female ex-convicts in our country. In spite of the fact that there are some shelters in Turkey, mostly the women who have had domestic violence shelter there owing to service regulations of related municipalities, but unfortunately female ex-convicts are not accepted

(Ödemiş Belediyesi Kadın Sığınma Evi İç Hizmet Yönergesi, n.d.). This situation stands out as another substantial problem for female ex-convicts.

It is clear that the studies aimed at reducing the risk of committing a crime again for ex-convicts will be helpful to make their lives easier after releasing. What is more, these studies have showed the individuals who were released from prison have not only employment needs but also some other requirements.

On the basis of these necessities, the aforesaid study has been carried out. The needs of individuals who were released from prison in Turkey, the troubles since their needs are not satisfied and what kind of studies must be handled devotedly to solve these issues have been discussed in the way of a qualitative research.

METHODS

There have conducted individual interviews with five women and seven men, in total 12 ex-convicts, who released from prison and were led to Ankara Probation Service by judges of execution within this study. Data collection for this study come from semi-structured and in-depth interviews was conducted. The interviews have been made by institution forensic psychologist who was one of the researchers. In the process of data gathering, twelve participants were chosen randomly from 2334 ex-convicts who led to probation service. The ex-convicts who did not want to be a part of the interviews were not included; the interviews were made with the ones who were eager to participate. Before the interviews, it was stated to the participants that it was a kind of scientific research, it was not about their lawsuit processes, probation service conditions or their own crime behaviors and personal information would be safe. In addition, it was expressed that the participation was not obligatory; the interview would be interrupted when they were annoyed or they did not wish. When the twelve participants accepted to take part in the study, an informed consent was taken. They were thanked since they accepted the individual interviews and they were told that sincere answers were expected. The study started after the researcher introduced herself. After this process, in-depth individual interviews were made with five women and seven men, in total twelve ex-convicts, between 60 and 90 minutes for each. In the interviews, three questions were asked to the participants and they were requested to answer the questions sincerely. These three questions are like this.

1. *What has changed in your life after you were released from prison and what sort of problems have you been faced with after release?*
2. *What have you needed most after release?*
3. *How was your psychology in prison? How do you feel now after release?*

The answers of these questions were indicated with quotation marks in findings; the sexes, ages, crime kinds of them, how many times they were imprisoned and the number of participants were shown with parentheses in order.

RESULTS

The findings which were related to the quantitative analysis of information gathered from the individual interviews have been put forward. The findings set light to the problems which male and female ex-convicts have lived after released from prison, what they have needed most since release, negative feelings which prison life created on them and how they feel then.

The quantitative analysis of the answers related to the first question

The problems after release

Firstly, the answer records of the male and female participants were analyzed which were given to the question "*what has changed in your life after you were released from prison and what sort of problems have you been faced with after release?*" In the answers of this question, pecuniary loss and intangible damages when they used to be in prison and their psycho-social problems after release became prominent. The aforementioned problems are unemployment, housing, adaptation and domestic violence. It has been found out they incurred some negative manners and behaviors like social isolation and labeling as much as they could not have their jobs back which were before prison, the problems of their families (their children's quitting their schools, financial problems of them), the problems about adaptation to the society.

One of the participants stated that he became "*wiser*" then by expressing it was a bad experience to be in prison, he had self-awareness about his criminal behavior and so would do his best so as not to receive into prison again. Participants' explanations about how their lives have changed and what kind of problems they live as follows with their own sentences.

A female ex-convict stated that there has been no meaningful change in her life. She tried to cope with economic problems before receiving into prison and after she released from prison her economic conditions become much harder.

"In fact nothing has changed in my life. When I both received into and released from prison, I was in poverty. House rent and all other expenses are in my responsibility, my mom earns just 200-300 TL money (100\$-150\$). Before receiving into prison I was working as a B-

girl, the bosses have changed, and then they didn't want me to work. Anyway they want me to drink booze, I cannot do it." (Female, 32 years, narcotic crime, once, 4)

Another female ex-convict explained that her economic conditions became worse and worse after released from prison and she had to steal because of financial impossibilities.

"Nothing has changed. My life has become much worse. We have no money. In our culture men do not work and they always drink booze. We are obligated to steal for earning money. I have children. Who provides them food? That's I am still hungry." (F, 27 years, theft, six times, 2)

Another ex-convict said that he was really happy to be free yet he talked about social exclusion and labeling he lived as follows.

"I have gained my freedom again. Is there anything like being free? You are relaxed and all your body feels it. You are tied hand and foot in prison, but this is not enough. I lived in prison just four months. My daughter dropped out, they could not pay house rent. You can't find a job after releasing. You are just tied hand and foot. People say "he used to be in prison". Because of this, I must tell a lie. But still, releasing from prison is just good even by itself, that's all." (Male, 40 years old, assault, second time, 11)

One of the ex-convicts said that prison life was informative to him. Prison circumstances raised his awareness. Additionally, he expressed that he would do his best so as not to turn back to prison.

"In fact the prison showed me evil, I have become wiser. I made a lot of mistakes before receiving into prison. I don't make them again. I don't want to go back to the prison. My perspective for life has changed. I will pay attention not to go there once more." (M, 34 years old, robbery, second time, 12)

Another ex-convict explained that his economic conditions became heavier and he lost his job as follows.

"After releasing, I shut down my shop. I was in a rental house and I did not know what I could do. My children were in a fix. Afterwards, I set up my shop again but I had so much dept." (M, 37 years old, unregistered firearm, second time, 7)

Another female ex-convict stated that she was excluded by her social environment after releasing because of her being an ex-convict, and added that Eastern culture otherize and trivialize women. Thus her relatives did not accept her, and then she had to leave there where she

lived.

"Because of being an ex-convict, people despise you. They say that "she used to be in prison." They do not accept you. Also, we are from Eastern Turkey. Our people do not accept these issues; women are just unfair for them. They do not care about what your husband did but only say "what have you done?" They did same things to my family. My family was good to me but my uncles, aunts all of my relatives excluded me. Thus I had to leave my hometown." (F, 29 years old, narcotic crime, once, 6)

Another ex-convict talked about her happiness of freedom but she expressed she had heavy losses in her family when she was in prison, one of her children started to use substances and the other dropped out.

"I reunited with my children. There is nothing as good as freedom. But my daughter did not attend to school for 2,5 months and my son started to use substance when I was in prison. Somebody made him addicted, he is just thirteen. I could not feel happy to be free. Their father, my husband, and my other son are also in prison. I have no money, no job and no place to stay. I don't know what to do. I am not happy to be out." (F, 32 years old, theft, fifth times, 4)

Another male ex-convict talked about economic conditions that he experienced and his being excluded by his social environment due to the fact that he was an ex-convict. In addition, he stated that he could not find a job and his employer dismissed him when he learned that he released from prison.

"I had lots of troubles both pecuniary and moral. I tried to find job but I couldn't. All employers demand criminal record for insurance. I really feel desperate. I worked for fifteen days at a job but then the boss learned that I had some time in prison and he laid me off. Now, no occupation." (M, 30 years old, robbery-theft, second time, 5)

A male participant told about his family problems after receiving into prison and so his negative feelings and negative mood. He stated that he had housing problems due to financial impossibilities after releasing. In addition, he explained social exclusion he lived because of being an ex-convict and also his problems of unemployment.

"My family has come apart so my psychological state has broken down and my life has become worse. When I received into prison, nobody helped my family, and my wife divorced me. I also lost my job. It is really hard to find a job because of my criminal past. I was going to work at my prior job place but they also demanded criminal record. It really hurt me. My current work place

did not want criminal record and I am working now, thank God. If you have criminal past, people worry about what kind of person you are. They don't want to work with you, they don't employ you." (M, 51 years old, unregistered firearm, second time, 1)

One of the female participants stated that she always had to find a job she did not even feel adaptation problem outside. She added that she could not find a job because she was an ex-convict therefore she had problem like finding a shelter and a life system. She also said some supports of others were not real due to her being a woman.

"I stayed in prison six years; it is not a little time. When it was time to release, I was thinking that I would feel like a fish out of water but I didn't. I had to look for a work all the time, so I didn't suffer from adaptation. I didn't have a home; no place to live... my life was destroyed... People are always reactive, they are always interrogating why you were imprisoned. As an ex-convict, I tried to find job but I couldn't. Criminal past is a big problem. Especially if you are a woman, it is much worse. People say that they can get things done but in reply to what?" (F, 30 years old, homicide-robbery, once, 3)

Another ex-convict stated that he missed job opportunities by receiving into prison and it was hard to find a job as an ex-convict then, therefore he felt good for nothing.

"Outsiders don't know this but feeling useless is really bad. It takes away lots of things from you and you feel exhausted. For example if I hadn't received into the prison, I would start to work in the building of Turkish Parliament, but I cannot work there, any longer. In fact it is really hard for me to find a job now. My life has fallen apart." (M, 49 years old, homicide, once, 10)

Another male explained his happiness as much as his family and economic problems as follows.

"The Sun is shining again for me; I made a new beginning for my life. My children had difficult time when I was in prison. I also lost my job. Anyway, the feeling of freedom is indescribable. I am out now and I feel like I was reborn. I am aware of what it means to live now." (M, 34 years old, sexual crime, once)

The answers of ex-convicts point out that they feel a little happy after they were released from prison. On the other hand, they expressed a lot of psycho-social problems which make their happiness disappear. Participants state that they have been excluded by the social environment because of their criminal record. They cannot find a job, therefore they have economic problems and they even have to cope with housing problems. Besides, ex-convicts state that their family members have faced with

a lot of troubles after they received into prison. Among these problems, drug abuse in family members, children's drop out and families' being unable to pay rent and so housing problems are remarkable. Particularly, it is seen that women have to deal with much harder problems. Women who most especially have weak social support confront much heavier psycho-social losses and social problems if they have children to take care of.

Even though there are a few ex-convicts for this research, it is thought that these interviews give us healthy information regarding their awareness oriented to their past and future, which meet the expectations of whole society. Nevertheless, it was thought that the participants paid the cost of committing a crime once more as life standards were much worse after release as much as they paid it in prisons.

The quantitative analyses of answers related to the second question

Needs of ex-prisoners

In the interview, the question of *"What have you needed most after release?"* was asked to the participants as second question. When the answers of participants were analyzed it was observed that all the participants mentioned about similar needs. These needs are mostly about job, money, housing and subvention. The needs of participants are categorized with their sentences as follows.

Unemployment and economic needs: The needs of this category are narrated with ex-convicts' own statements as follows.

One of the ex-convicts stated as:

"Ex-convicts mostly have occupation problems. They all have economic problems. In fact if they don't have economic problems, they don't turn back to prisons. For example there was a guy that I used to share the ward, I asked him what he would do after release and he told me that he would steal again. What else could he do?" (M, 37 years old, unregistered firearm, second time, 7)

Another ex-convict explained that he could not meet the needs of his children because of his joblessness, thus he had negative psychological state. He expressed that he mostly needed to have a job after he released from prison. He stated as:

"An ex-convict needs a job most of all. Working, finding a job is important. You don't have money in prison. I have got five children. They are all studying. All these things breaks down your psychology, you go nuts. Who will take care of them? If you don't work, you are just tied hand and foot. I'm working now, thanks Allah. While I was

working, I had lots of troubles.” (M, 40 years old, assault, second time, 11)

An ex-convict stated as:

“I had a job, so I didn’t have much trouble but if I hadn’t found a job to work, I would have been penniless, fallen into disgrace, maybe I would be sleeping in a park now. If you don’t have money, you don’t even have a place to sleep. What you need as an ex-prisoner is money and a job, of course.” (M, 51 years old, unregistered firearm, second time, 1)

Another ex-convict expressed his living difficulties because of the joblessness he had after release and he told that he could not find a job as an ex-convict and added the troubles resulted from lack of social policies directed employment as:

“In fact we mostly need a job as ex-convicts. It was so hard to find a place to stay. I have been to ISKUR recently. Legislative amendment cancels the requirement of private sector to employ ex-convicts. Our government doesn’t help us. I made a mistake, I know. I committed a crime and I cannot find a job now. In fact we are really in a bad situation.” (M, 30 years old, robbery-theft, second time, 5)

As it was earlier mentioned, ex-convicts who released from prisons express that they mostly need jobs to work and they cannot meet their families’ needs since they could not have one. In addition, an ex-convict talked about housing problems as a result of economic problems and stated that ex-convicts released from prison need occupations most of all for housing. It is thought that economic problems and unemployment make them feel useless, unsuccessful and desperate. This opinion can be supported with following sentence of an ex-convict. He said that economic problem was a risk of further involvement in crime and if an ex-convict did not have a job, there was no other choice to steal for bringing food to his family.

Family: Another issue that ex-convicts need after release is family support. It is known that support of family and immediate surroundings have a positive effect on well-being for all ages of individuals (Thanakwang *et al.*, 2012; Merz and Consedine, 2009). One of ex-convicts who took part in the study expressed their need for family support to feel better as follows:

“Women need family after releasing from prison. Her family should support her. In any case, government doesn’t help us. Then who? Of course, you family will back up and take care of you. For instance, my mother always drank booze, and my father used to beat her in the past, that’s why she is a little crazy. And I don’t have a job. My children are in child welfare. If I had a job, I

could look after both them and myself. And so, I would not be on my family’s hand.” (F, 32 years old, narcotic crime, once, 4)

Another woman ex-convict stated that a woman mostly needs family support. But it is clear that this requirement is an instrumental need because the participant said if a woman has housing and economic problems it is necessary that these needs should be supported by her family.

“Of course the biggest problem is economic issues. When you don’t find a job, you are in a fix as a woman. As a result, family is really important, because a woman release from prison has no money. I have a family and so a place to stay. There were women in prison who didn’t have family. I really praise to God when I think about this. What will they do? I’m really so lucky.” (F, 30 years old, homicide-robbery, once, 3)

A male ex-convict expressed his wish to feel his family emotionally and his need of family support as follows:

“What didn’t I need? I needed freedom but I mostly needed my family. I needed to be with them most of all. They were always in my mind. We have two cows, we live in a village and we can even work as farmhand to have food. I mean I had a job. So if an ex-convict has a job, he needs his family most.” (M, 34 years old, sexual crime, once, 9)

It is seen that ex-convicts also need family support as above. Especially, it is obvious that female ex-convicts refer to significance of family factor to satisfy their needs of housing and financial possibilities’ being insufficient. In other words, it is known that most of female ex-convicts do not have a specific profession or education like other women do not in our country (TUIK, 2011). In this case, it is clear that they have no other chance except for sheltering to their families. It is observed that ex-convicts need family support even after release and mostly female ex-convicts talk about this family need and support.

Housing: It is found that another need which female convicts indicate is needs related to housing. When women were in prison, it was seen that women’s own families took care of children. Therefore; when female convicts who do not have their husbands’ support released from prison, they would like to live with their children in a different place. They want to take care of their children and do not want to be a burden to their families any longer. However, when they are not able to find a job after release, they cannot provide their own housing. A female ex-convict stated her housing need after release as follows:

“I needed a lot of things especially a shelter and I still

need them but I need money and a place to stay most of all. I can't take care of my children, it is so sad, I am ashamed. What would we eat, where would we stay if I didn't have my family? There is house rent which we can only pay it if my mother or mother-in-law gives some money. Last month, I was going to apply for poverty wage but I was scared that they will take my children from me, I couldn't do it. If you once see the place where I live, no one can live there." (F, 27 years old, theft, sixth time, 2)

Another woman stated that she could not meet her housing need due to economic impossibilities and she could not find a safe place to stay with her children as her family did not support her either.

"I needed money, for sure. We could not pay our rent due to lack of money. I am in a fix with children, no place to go. My husband is also in prison. There are a lot of troubles. I must work. It would be nice if our government helps, provides us a place to stay or gives a job. When I was released from Kocaeli[†] I had no money for coming to Ankara[‡]. Some police officers gave money. I lived both pecuniary and moral problems. If you are woman with children, everything in life is much harder." (F, 32 years old, theft, fifth time, 8)

Another female participant stated that she had housing problem after release, one of her friends helped her about this but still she felt desperate meanwhile as follows.

"I was really desperate. I even didn't where to go. I wasn't sure if I would go to my family. I felt like a bird which was just freed from her cage. No place to escape, I was just feeling like that. I was in a fix totally. I had a friend from prison and I found a place to stay thanks to her. If a woman is not supported by her family, she firstly seeks for a shelter and if she doesn't have one she is in a fix. Thanks God, some amount of money was bequeathed to me and I started to run my own business. I had some money, then. If I hadn't had that money, everything would be so bad now. I grew up in a state dorm[§], I was a dorm child. My government would take care of me, help me. But, after release I was told that if you don't have money and you don't have a shelter to stay and it means you go to the bad, then." (F, 32 years old, theft, five times, 8)

Need of social policy: As a requirement, ex-convicts said that there must be a state policy for them. They indicated that the state should produce some social policies for ex-convicts and they had problems with

current policies. Ex-convicts expressed that the state do not present them employment possibilities as general and they could not find a job by themselves because of excluding manners and behaviors in our society. One of the convicts stated social policy need for them as follows.

"We all need a good job. It used to be easy to find it but not anymore. When we apply labor exchange, probation process blocks it. I used to work in open prison and I had health service at least but probation is not like that. We have neither health coverage nor insurance. While you are working if something bad happens to you no one backs up you. In fact, I need a permanent treatment but I don't have insurance. When I demand some help probation officers they say they won't help me. It is just like they tell me to go back into prison. Frankly, to be in prison was good in this perspective. We can't live like this if our government doesn't help us." (M, 34 years old, robbery, second time, 12)

The thoughts which this convict is referring draw attention that convicts suffer from maltreatment, their not being understood, their rights' not being protected by the state and how merciful employers feel about them.

A male participant stated he could not have a job due to the procedures in probation service. Especially, it is pointed out if an ex-convict has an insured occupation she/he is exempt from community service punishment on the other hand, ones who do have an uninsured one still has to do their community services and this prevents them to look for and find a job. He expressed the need of social policies for ex-convicts as follows.

"For instance, there is probation service after release. We have to attend probation for half day. At the rest of the day, how can you look for a job? Insured workers don't go to probation but jobless ones attend probation service without any money in our pockets, however the state tells us to look for a job even in a half day, this is so hard." (M, 30 years old, robbery-theft, second time, 5)

Another ex-convict stated that ex-convicts could not find a job, committed a crime because of joblessness and turned back into prison, probation service made the problem much worse instead of finding a solution for it. Besides, he expressed that social policies for ex-convicts were insufficient and obligation for employing ex-convicts both public and private sectors must restart as follows.

"People have economic needs. This can only be solved direction and support of the state. Employers don't give you a job if you are an ex-convict. You don't have money if you want to run your own business. So, positions for ex-convicts must be in workplaces and our government should be helpful about it. I am retired and I am okay but there are so many ex-convicts with no occupations, no jobs outside. They apply for a job in several workplaces but they are refused. Some of them receive into prison

* A kind of salary with law number 2022 if you are elder than 65 and in need, desperate and helpless or even if you are under 65, if you are invalid formally with a health report.

† Kocaeli E Type Closed Prison in Turkey.

‡ The city where the female ex-convict lives.

§ Orphanage

because they are excluded outside. The state doesn't employ them, either. Social policies are not enough. Probation services make everything harder. In fact, it is a good philosophy to bring ex-convicts in society but it is not working. They always send us seminars or so instead of giving or finding a job. We are hungry, how could we benefit from a group work in a seminar? I feel like I am being alienated from society instead of being saved. They make finding a job harder by calling ex-convicts probation every day. If you don't go, you can receive into prison again. I mean there is a system which doesn't help or allow to work." (M, 49 years old, homicide, once, 10)

A female ex-convict said that the state did not help them and she had difficulties to take care of her children as an ex-convict.

"I wanted to have a nice house, to be with my children and also their father but it didn't come true. Nobody gives me a job. They will think I have been released from prison and also I can't work. I went to a hospital to have a report so that I can find a job in a position for handicapped people but my disability rate has been understood to be 30 % and it has to be 60 % for having that kind of job. I am jobless and in a fix with my children." (F, 32, narcotic crime, once, 4)

It is remarkable that there are life-sustaining problems which unemployment creates in the analysis of ex-convicts' answers. Individuals who indicated that they were in need of a job as ex-convicts talked about social problems they had because of the fact that the state did not provide employment policies. It is also indicated clearly that ex-convicts do not benefit from health services since ex-convicts who have public service punishment under probation do not have social insurances, which creates another problem for them.

The quantitative analysis of answers related to the third question

Psychological and emotional states of ex-convicts after receiving and releasing

In the interviews, positive feelings which ex-convicts lived after release in contrast to negative feelings they used to live in prison were remarkable for the answers of the third question "how was your psychology in prison, how do you feel now after release?"

A female ex-convict stated she had negative feelings since prison was an indoor area and she was far away from her family as follows.

"Prison is a bad place. I saw other women in there who felt like this. Of course, there were ones who got used to. This is really in the same parallel with your economic

condition. If it is not fine, you have a lot of problems in prison. It was indoor area, I couldn't see my children, I was always thinking of them. When I went to the prison yard, I was dreaming to be with them. I am fine now, for sure. I am with my children. If I also find a job, everything is going to be all right." (F, 32 years old, narcotic crime, once, 4)

Another ex-convict said that he learned to see options in impossibilities of prison, his negative feelings for staying indoor area and it was essential to have family support when you were in prison. Moreover, he stated that negative behaviors he was exposed caused him blame himself much more and added he was exposed to similar behaviors after release.

"Prison life teaches people a lot. Firstly, you learn to be patient and create a solution in desperation there. It is really a bad place. When you receive into prison, you are just overcome by life. You want to ruin the world then. You are the happiest man on earth when you have a visitor. It is an ambivalence feeling, worse than death. Family and social support has much importance in prison. Everyone and everything reminds your penalty to you, tells you have committed a crime. Prison life causes you to blame yourself. Being exposed to all these... (Long silence). In fact, it is not different when you are out. People always become distanced from you. When I was released from prison, people around me were withdrawn to get close. I am not experiencing these now but these kinds of behaviors have taken much from me. I just didn't mind much whatever people thought; however, if somebody else were me he would have a serious depression, I guess." (M, 49 years old, homicide, once, 10)

Another ex-convict explained his psychological problems which he had in prison as he did not have family support as follows:

"You are in an indoor area. You are just longing for people. When there is a concert or so in prison, you go there for 2 hours, time runs away and when you go back to your room same troubles go on. Family is so important in prison. Others used to have visitors but not me. The ones who had visitors talked about their visitors but I didn't want to listen to them. In that case, I used to read the Koran, it relieved me. I didn't use to read when I was out but I read there, because there was nothing else to do, you have to be patient. I endured there by praying to Allah, but I felt like a bird after release. Freedom..." (F, 29 years old, narcotic crime, once, 6)

Another male ex-convict specified that there was a kind of isolated life in prison, this isolation made individual more lonesome and he felt much better after release.

"Prison is a closed area and you have only 2-3 friends in

there. You just talk to them, have conversation with them and go to bed then. I don't want to receive into prison again even if I was without food and water. You can see neither your family nor the ones you love. You are separated from society totally and the worst is your freedom is limited. You are all alone just like you have no close people. When I was released I felt on the top of the world. It is like everything has got better." (M, 30 years old, robbery-theft, second time, 5)

A female ex-convict states that she finds prison life difficult since there is no one to look after her children outside. She mentions her hopelessness and loneliness feelings after she has been release as follows.

"Prison is bad place. It is much worse when you have children outside indeed. My husband was also in prison due to assault crime. There was no one to look after neither me nor my children. My mother was sick. My elder son also committed a crime, he is in prison now. I thought I would feel fine after release but joblessness, poverty, homelessness... I am in a fix and I just don't know what to do. But still, it is nice to be released and I will feel much better when my elder son is released from prison." (F, 32 years old, theft, five times, 8)

Another male ex-convict said:

"Prison shatters people. All the things are just same in there but you get used to living there and you feel like you have never lived outside. When you are out it is same. You just forget your days in prison. When you don't hear from your family it really ruins you, you are destroyed then. On the other hand, I am fine now. I am so happy to be out. I feel really good." (M, 34 years old, robbery, second time, 12)

Another participant describes prison as the place which real life stops. He stated negative feelings he had because of the fact that he had no communication with outside of prison; his family had economic problems and his bad feelings because of being a sexual offender. He said that it was indescribable how much happy he felt after release. He said:

"Prison is the place where life ends, it is the final point. It is the place where humanity ends. You are just in the middle of a room and you can do nothing to save yourself. My child and family have fallen into disgrace, they have no money. It is much harder when one has sexual crime. You can't breathe in there. I have started a new life after I was released from prison. It was the happiest day of my life, I can say. I will never forget that day, I was happy like children. I can say that I have restarted to breathe on that day." (M, 34 years old, sexual crime, once, 9)

In the answers of all ex-convicts, the feeling of happiness

shines out which they have from releasing from prison and being outside. On the other hand, they expressed that prison life made them unhappy and have feelings of loneliness, hopelessness and sadness. They pointed out these feelings revealed as they used to be indoor area, were far away from their families and friends and had limited freedom.

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

In this study, it was aimed to reveal the psycho-social problems of the individuals after release, the needs of them after release and their also psychological and emotional conditions before and after release by using qualitative research method. In line with this purpose, the answers of basic three questions in the interviews between 60 and 90 minutes with 12 ex-convicts were evaluated qualitatively. Their adaptation problems to the society, hopelessness and uselessness feelings they had after release and these problems' influences them to turn into crime were discussed with literature information.

In the study, the question of "what has changed in your life after you were released from prison and what sort of problems have you been faced with after release?" was firstly asked. The answers of these questions have showed that they lived different psycho-social problems after release. Hereunder; it was understood that they lived psycho-social problems such as social exclusion, labeling and domestic losses as much as unemployment, economic problems and housing problems resulted from unemployment. Ex-convicts stated that after they received into prison their family members also lived lots of problems since they could not have a proper communication with their families. In "Project on Dissemination of Model Prison Practices and Promotion of the Prison Reform in Turkey" it was seen that convicts were pleased to start to keep their relationships with their families in enhanced conditions but those were not totally enough (Erden *et al.*, 2012). This situation reflected to the study with following words of a female ex-convict: "When I was in prison, my daughter did not attend school for 2-5 months, my son started to use heroin. Somebody/ies made him addicted, he was just 13. I was not able to be happy to be out". The fact that convicts cannot more frequently meet family members and have qualitative talks that is they are far spatially to their families, removes their control and discipline on the family. Besides, convicts' staying indoor, weak family relationships, family members' being far from the convicts and so their financial problems makes them to cope with the psycho-social problems even if they released from prison. Having been received into prison causes the ex-convicts to have serious problems. On the other hand, not only the individual who received into prison but also his/her family members are also like imprisoned and they are also under the risk of perpetration (Hagan and

Dinovitzer, 1999). Being imprisoned makes convicts' families' endurance to cope with problems and to help them.

Secondly, the question of *"what have you needed most after release?"* was asked to the participants and the answers were qualitatively analyzed. Accordingly, it was found out that one of most essential needs of ex-convicts after release is "working need". One participant stated her/his working need like this: *"there are five kids, all are working? If you do not work, you are tied hand and foot. I am working now. Thank Allah, I had many difficulties when I had no job"*. The participants mentioned they had housing problems in addition to unemployment and they could not satisfy their and their children basic needs. It is a known fact that unemployment rate is high in Turkey. This fact is obvious in the study of Turkish Statistical Institute. It says that unemployment rate for men is 9,6 % and for women is 11.5 % as from February 2014 (TUIK, 2014). Finding a job is even harder when it is about ex-convicts. Thus, according to the report of Turkish Employment Organization (2011), it is known that 11.2 % of male ex-convicts and 76.4 % of female ex-convicts are unemployed. In reference to this statistic, it is seen that women have a quite disadvantageous group. The differences and imperfections which are seen in the statistics lead to confusion, as well. In reality, it is thought that the unemployment rate of male ex-convicts is much higher and the statistics do not reflect the truth precisely. In a way to affirm this thought, employment options for ex-convicts decrease day by day as it is seen in Table 3.

Ex-convicts indicated that social exclusion and labeling is one of the employment problems and they were not able to find a job since they were labeled to commit a crime. This finding is also such as to support the studies. In a qualitative study, it was determined that ex-convicts were labeled and they are excluded by society (McIvor *et al.*, 2009). Hence, it is stated that income inequality, poverty and increasing unemployment is among the factors which cause social exclusion and unemployment is the most crucial level of economic exclusion (Çakır, 2002). What is more, the ones who are exposed to social exclusion are not also poor individuals but also drug users, disabled individuals, suicidal individuals, and they are also considered to be criminal individuals (Işık-Erol, 2012). Social exclusion is a circumstance which ex-convicts are exposed immensely in our country. Many employers are withdrawn to employ ex-convict and feel insecurity and uneasiness (Bedük, 2010). To illustrate, 26 000 ex-convicts are waiting for a job to work in public or private sectors on the basis of TUIK 2008 reports. In the same year, when it is taken into consideration that 72,420 people released from prison (cited in: Kavi and Altun, 2010), the extent of unemployment and exclusion is not ignored. It is surely beyond doubt that this situation brings along some problems like returning to prison again. As a risk factor of returning to prison, unemployment and exclusion were also demonstrated to the researchers.

Nilsson (2003) found out that unemployment was a serious risk factor for recidivism and social exclusion was also a high risk for individuals to return to prison. Also, Chiricos *et al.*, 2007 determined that ex-convicts who were exposed to labeling and social exclusion return to prison in two years based on a study they had with 95,919 ex-convicts. If it is thought that the rate of receiving into prison all over is high (Sabol *et al.*, 2007) it is essential to provide employment options for those individuals and to make the studies for vocational training more efficient in prisons and in probation services. In Turkey, it is promising there are several psycho-social intervention programs in practice and vocational training courses (Erden *et al.*, 2012), but it is emphasized that there has been a decline in this kind of studies since 2007 (Gürsel and Uysal-Kolaşın, 2010). However, it is clear to make these studies more efficient so that recidivism can be prevented. No matter how many support programs there are in our country (Ardıç Programme, Anger Management Programme, Vocational Training Courses And Communication Skills) the effects of the programs decrease as the convicts are not be part of them wishfully and the problems continue after release. The completed studies draw attention the importance of how vocational training courses make ex-convicts find a job (Esteban *et al.*, 2014).

Another need which convicts talk about is the need of social policy. The needs for social policies devoted to ex-convicts have increased in order to prevent recidivism when it is considered that the number of the individuals who released from prison has gone up every year. It is known that there are some projects and programs which have come up, however necessary systems and procedures are just slow and the results of them are not effective as it is thought. Shortly, it is seen that social policies in our country are not efficient. There was an obligation for private sector to employ ex-convicts in the past; however it was legislated away with a change on law in 2008. It was also limited in public sector with 2%. It is obvious that this situation causes ex-convicts, who already have some problems about finding a job, have more problems. Moreover, ex-convicts expressed their social policy needs together with their employment needs in the same parallel. For example, an ex-convict said this:

"People have needs in economic sense. These needs can only be met by the state's guiding. If you want to set up a shop or a market and run it, you do not have money. Employers do not give you a job as you are an ex-convict. So, there must be job positions for ex-convicts and our government should help about this."

Therefore, it is understood that social policies directed ex-convicts' employment and those policies must be applied in macro extent. In this study, it is also seen probation services have some needs for improvement to make their primary purposes come true. To illustrate, it

was mentioned in the answers that “obligation of community service/unpaid work” which is in the scope of probation service makes ex-convicts subject to joblessness problem. The purpose of public penalty is keeping individuals who are sentenced till one year in prison with their families in society and minimizing their social exclusion (Denetimli Serbestlik Bülteni, 2011). In addition, occupational and technical information about convicts’ working life must be gathered and employment possibilities must be given. In practice, community service is not sentenced to the convicts who document they are working, either. In this case, it is observed that the ones who are not still working have serious job finding problems. Also, it was observed that all convicts who are going to community service were supposed to accept to work free; however, it was another problem to sentence community service to every convict who did not have a job, and so convicts’ opportunities for looking a job. Therefore, individual necessities and qualifications of convicts who will have community service must be considered and it is thought that these penalties must be qualified in the way individuals are not deprived from equality of opportunity.

Another need which only female ex-convicts have talked about is housing. The studies also pointed out that housing is the most essential requirement of the women after release (Mclvor *et al.*, 2009). One of female ex-convicts stated this as *“If a woman does not have family, she firstly needs a place to stay.* It was also quoted that one-third of imprisoned women in England lost their houses (qt: Mclvor *et al.*, 2009). Singer *et al.* found out in a study with 201 female ex-convicts that 71 of them had worries about finding a convenient place to stay primarily. Also, female ex-convicts are in need of housing much more than male ones (WIPAN, 2011). It is much more substantial for women who have children because those women are faced with the risk of separation from their children due to housing problem (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). When it also thought female ex-convicts have more problems related to alcohol-substance problems and are exposed to family violence (WIPAN, 2011), these women must deal with a lot of problems about not only themselves but also their children who they are obliged to look after (Indig *et al.*, 2010). It is obvious that women need houses to stay safely after release. Housing problem also causes psychological problems on women. The studies present that housing, social care and support services oriented to female ex-convicts increase their self-confidence, social skills and perceptions of social support (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2005). In the whole world, it is known that women shelters have a great amount of importance and lots of women shelters have opened for women who released from prison in many countries and there are bio-psychosocial studies for women (WIPAN, 2011). However, the situation is different in Turkey. The shelters started to open in 90s in our country and they are for women who have been exposed to violence but

women who released from prison are not accepted to the shelters (T.C. Ödemiş Belediyesi Kadın Sığınma Evi İç Hizmet Yönergesi). The fact that female ex-convicts do not benefit from this service make related problems deeper. Therefore, it is thought housing opportunities must be provided for women who released from prison and this must be practiced as a social policy. In the process of women’s adaptation into society, these shelters are quite essential.

In this study, another need of ex-convicts are said to be as “family support”. The studies have put forth the significance of family support as instrumental, emotional and informal support in social support system (Martinez and Christian, 2009; Walker 2010). In this study, it was indicated that ex-convicts needed their families as both emotional and economic support after release. Particularly, female ex-convicts stated that they needed their families for the reasons like economic support and housing, they expressed they need instrumental and emotional support. To illustrate, a female ex-convict said:

“A woman needs her family after release. If you are especially an ex-convict, no one gives you a job. You family should support you. The state doesn’t do it, then who will? It is really hard if you don’t have a family.”

At this point, the ex-convicts who do not family support have difficulty with basic needs like housing and food. Therefore, the significance of social policies directed ex-convicts shows up once more. Domestic economic problems, unemployment and housing problems also increase ex-convicts’ desperation feelings. Consequently, it is thought that it is necessary to practice family support studies, plan micro-mezzo and macro studies to protect and reinforce family, and develop social policies.

As a last question *“How was your psychology in prison? How do you feel after release?”* was asked to male and female ex-convicts. All participants talked about negative feelings they had when they were in prison and difficulties of prison life. When the answers were analyzed, it was seen that ex-convicts generally mentioned about negative feelings they felt resulted from living indoor area, emotional emptiness caused by their being far away from their families, loneliness feeling, negative mental state they had from an isolated life, opportunities they were deprived of and negative feelings and guiltiness feeling they had from exclusion and labeling because of crime kind (sexual crime). Ex-convicts also indicated that they were so happy that they could do everything so as not to receive into prison. However, most of them stated that they had to cope with many problems, they were labeled, excluded by the society and they lost their self-respect after release. It is known that the individual live psychological problems in prison and after release. On the other hand, it is observed that those problems can cause serious results like suicide and violence tendency

(Görgülü and Tutarel-Kışlak, 2014). Therefore, it is thought that there should be psycho-social rehabilitation studies for these individuals who are in and after prison and these studies should be accepted as a welfare policy by Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Health.

Ex-convicts also stated the most significant reason recidivism especially crimes about stealing is unemployment and economic problems. A different feedback reflected to an ex-convict statement is that negative prison atmosphere made him have self-awareness and he needed to change in order not to receive into prison again. These findings show most of the ex-convicts are faced with many troubles after release. The findings are qualitative enough to support the studies in literature. In many studies, it was expressed that individuals who turned into crime confronted with some problems like job, education, substance dependence, housing and insufficient social support (Singer *et al.*, 1995; Social Exclusion Unit, 2002; McIvor *et al.*, 2009).

It is obvious that prison life causes psycho-social problems. In Turkey, ward system is still being used in some prisons. Arrestees and convicts live in crowded large rooms or there are one-man wards (TBMM, 2009), which have quite negative conditions. Moreover; inadequate social activities due to negative physical conditions, psycho-social services in unsuitable places, insufficient nutrition because of low subsistence allowance make their existing problems worse and deeper. When all these are taken into consideration, it is thought that schedules for curing prisons' negative conditions should be speeded up and psycho-social studies for improving their behaviors and strengthening their relations with their families must be generalized.

It is seen that there are hopeful studies on amending existing conditions, legal regulations and corrections, finding out problems and their solutions and preventing crimes. However, increasing crime rates and crime factors which feed turn into crime simultaneously point out that there must be multi-directional interception studies as much as there are ones for regulating, correcting and improving the system. In many countries, it is observed that there are programs and projects directed variables which have effects on preventing crime (WIPAN, 2011). In Turkey, in addition to mentioned amending endeavors there are also remarkable studies to prevent crime by different establishments. Police departments, municipalities, universities and several ministries have some hopeful studies even though the results are limited and inadequate. This limitations and shortcomings may occur since interception studies have not been able to reach many people; the studies have stayed local and have not had much support. In fact, it is obvious that there should be large scaled social policies and immediate and long-termed action plans like the ex-convicts have mentioned in this study. This is thought to be as an essential requirement in order to obtain positive results. Social policies should be in a system which

provide a participation of most of society, include whole society on a large scale and have determined and consistent order and organization in the sense of quantity, quality and practice. In these policies, it is clear that there is a necessity for educational and modal approach which needs police units for security, ministries of the interior and justice units for operation and ministries of education and health for raising awareness of citizens and personnel on the subject of committing and preventing a crime. Education and meeting and preserving the individual right and freedom must be major components of this approach. Especially, it is significant to take into consideration and pay attention to special groups such as children, young people, women, individuals who have been exposed to violence, terror, war and individuals who needs private requirements, husband, wife and children of the convicts.

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