CrimRxiv

Review 2 of "Exploring Employer Perceptions of Hiring Ex-Offenders"

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Vote: Publish pending minor changes

This paper explores the challenges system-impacted persons (SIP) face in finding employment based on the perceptions of people who have experience working with SIP, including employment counselors, leaders of a manual labor association, and social workers who manage non-profits. Overall, this paper is competently executed and presents good ideas, but there are needed minor changes as defined by this journal. As such, I have voted to publish pending minor changes.

I outline my recommended changes below:

- One concern I have is how this study addresses the limitations of the literature. The literature review in its current form didn't justify the additional contribution of this study, and I felt that a lot of the information presented in the results was already known but not fully discussed in the literature review. The following studies are examples of those that have previously addressed factors like risk, labor markets, and incentives.
 - Albright, S., & Denq, F. (1996). Employer attitudes toward hiring ex-offenders. *The Prison Journal*, 76(2), 118-137.
 - Holzer, H. J., Raphael, S., & Stoll, M. A. (2002). *Will employers hire ex-offenders? Employer preferences, background checks, and their determinants*. Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin-Madison.
 - Holzer, H. J., Raphael, S., & Stoll, M. A. (2003). *Employer demand for ex-offenders: Recent evidence from Los Angeles*. Urban Institute.
<https://www.urban.org/research/publication/employer-demand-ex-offenders>
 - Giguere, R., & Dundes, L. (2002). Help wanted: A survey of employer concerns about hiring ex-convicts. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 13, 396-408.
- These studies are aging, so that may be one contribution of the current study, or the particular sample choice may be the contribution. However, I believe the more original contributions of this study are the results regarding disclosing a record and the potential role of the mentoring programs. This article needs to more strongly emphasize its contribution using a literature review that sets that contribution up.
- I believe Devah Pager's seminal work should be cited when discussing the interaction of race and criminal record in hiring decisions: Pager, D. (2003). The mark of a criminal record. *American Journal of Sociology*, 108(5), 937-975.

- Regarding the methods, the authors state they “coded the data for predetermined and emerging themes.” The authors should clarify which ones were predetermined and how the others emerged so readers can understand how the data were processed.
- There were a few instances in the results section where I wasn’t sure if the information was coming from the participants as a result or if it was the authors’ point that would be more relevant in the discussion section (e.g., Under Employers’ Perceptions of Risk “*While a prior conviction renders...*”). The addition of more specific and general interpretations of the data as defined by this journal can help clarify this issue. I believe more interpretations are also needed to justify the themes. At times a subsection of the results read as a sentence followed by a quotation. More connecting the dots using your data will help your reader understand your results and how strongly those points were articulated by participants as challenges and opportunities.
- Make sure your participants’ quotations are delineated in the text. There were three blocks of text that I think were quotations, but they weren’t indented like the others. This may be a text reading problem and not the authors’ fault, but I wanted to point out the examples I noticed: “*Many employers don't want to hire someone with a criminal background because of adult probation and parole...*,” “*On the job training is a federally funded program...*,” and “*Their truck bosses are former federal prison inmates...*”
- I recommend more clearly linking your discussion section to the results of your specific study. Expanding on the interpretations in the results section as mentioned above may help make those connections more apparent. For example, where do the risk assessments tie into your participants’ revelations?
- I also recommend discussing the climate of the study context in the limitations. Is the area one that is more open to the changes described in the discussion, which might affect how your participants viewed challenges and opportunities for example?
- Organizationally, I recommend making sure your subheadings clearly fall within the heading categories and maintaining consistency in those heading ideas throughout the manuscript.

Finally, I wanted to point out (rather than suggest a change) that the authors make a point to be intentional with their language by using “system-impacted persons” but use “ex-offenders” in the title and in a heading.