

ABSTRACT

SOCIAL WORK

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THE IMPACT OF PARENTAL INCARCERATION

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As the population within the prison system continue to grow more parents are becoming incarcerated. Incarcerated parents are leaving behind their children, forcing other family members or the system to raise them. As the children are going through different life stages they are impacted by the absence of their parents which causes them to express and act out in undesirable emotional and social behaviors. Incarcerated parents are affected by the disruption of their incarceration as well. Throughout the research paper, *The Impact of Parental Incarceration*, the history, the explanation, and statistics of imprisoned parents and their children are presented. The purpose of this study is to present a systematic review of how incarcerated parents impact the parent, from a parental perspective, and their children emotional and social well-being.

THE IMPACT OF PARENTAL INCARCERATION

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Research shows that an estimated ten million Americans are incarcerated each year (Dickman, Rich, & Wakeman, 2011). Research also suggests that the rate of incarceration in the United States has increased by almost six hundred percent since the 1950s (Mumola, 2000). As numbers within the penal system continue to grow, more and more parents are becoming incarcerated. Today, an estimated 3.6 million parents are incarcerated in the United States (Mumola, 2000). These inmates are the parents of an estimated 2.3 million children (Mumola, 2000), including 1.7 million minor children (Bureau of Justice, 2008). Sadly, these minors live their daily lives without consistent contact with their parents.

Research demonstrates that parental incarceration can have a negative impact on children's emotional well-being and social behavior (Parke & Stewart, 2003). According to Farrington and Murray (2005), many children of incarcerated parents suffer from separation loss and experience feelings of abandonment. Their separation loss and abandonment often result in anger toward authority figures; this anger produces several problems for children of incarcerated parents (Farrington, Murray, Olsen, & Skekol, 2012). Additionally, research shows that the absence of incarcerated parents produces financial and social insecurities that cause the children of such parents to become

antisocial and defiant (Farrington, Murray, Olsen, & Skekol, 2012).

Studies indicate that parental incarceration also negatively impacts the emotional and social well-being of incarcerated parents (Hairston, 2003). To begin with, incarceration often places extra financial burdens on incarcerated families, and these pressures generally make incarcerated parents feel guilty about the effects of their imprisonment (Parke & Stewart, 2003). Often, these inmates want desperately to be active parents but cannot because of their incarceration (Arditti, 2012). These issues, along with the experiences of their children, are the focus of this study. This study explores the emotional and social consequences of parental incarceration on children and their incarcerated parents.

Statement of the Problem

There are a number of factors that contribute to the ways children of incarcerated parents emotionally and socially cope with their parents' absence. Research indicates that many of these children choose aggressive and deviant behaviors, as coping mechanisms for their parents' absence (National Institute of Justice, 2012). When these children do not act aggressively, research indicates that they choose withdrawal and antisocial behaviors as coping mechanisms (Farrington & Murray, 2005). This study argues that a great deal of work needs to be done to help children of incarcerated parents develop better emotional and social tools. While recent scholarship identifies these children behaviors as maladaptive, researchers have not explored institutional policies that could

thwart the impact of parental incarceration (Hairston, 2003). Indeed, recent scholarship offers very little commentary regarding possible solutions to the emotional consequences of parental incarceration, felt by parents and their children (ASPE, 2001). This study addresses these issues and outlines particular ways social workers can help these families.

Purpose of the Study

This conceptual paper focuses on the impact of parental imprisonment on the children of incarcerated parents. It also focuses on the impact of incarceration on imprisoned parents and explores their emotional and social responses to imprisonment. More specifically, this study seeks to outline the behavioral patterns and attitudes of incarcerated parents' children. Additionally, this study analyzes statistics related to incarcerated families, comparing them to statistics related to non-incarcerated families. This study seeks to answer the following questions: (1) What are the consequences of parental incarceration on children? (2) What are parents' understanding of the impact of their absence on their families? (3) What penal policies would make sure that families, who have incarcerated parents, get the services they need to be functional and healthy?

This researcher hypothesizes that parental incarcerations have negative effects on incarcerated families. Some of these consequences include aggression and other behavioral issues on the part of children and feelings of guilt on the part of incarcerated parents. This study analyzes the effects of parental incarceration on a national level, and it does not focus on racial or ethnic differences in incarcerated populations.

Significance of the Study

This study is important because there has been an increase of parental incarcerations in the United States, and a growing number of children are being affected by disturbances in their familial environment (Mumola, 2000). These incarcerations cause children of incarcerated parents to behave in non-productive ways. There is a serious and urgent need to combat the negative effects of parental incarceration, since many of these incarcerations produce maladaptive behaviors which lead children to criminal misconduct. This study is relevant because it focuses on improving and developing involvement for these children and their families.

Additionally, this study contributes to the reformation of the penal system regarding incarcerated parents and their families. Currently, there is neither enough research on the effects of parental incarceration nor enough resources being devoted to its negative consequences. Where resources do exist, few are allocated toward alleviating the consequences of parental incarceration on both parents and children. This study's significance relies upon the fact that parental incarceration is becoming a societal issue. Because such incarcerations negatively impact children in a way that may cause psychological damage and intergenerational criminality, much research is need on the topic.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this review of literature was to outline and present previously published research that was relevant to this study. This review of literature provides a historical background of parental incarceration in the United States and explores the negative effects parental incarcerations have had on families. More specifically, this review of literature explores the relationship between the negative impacts of parental incarceration and the effects this incarceration has had on the emotional and social behaviors of children and their incarcerated parents.

Additionally, this chapter discusses Humanistic Value Theory and Afrocentric Theory. Both of these theoretical perspectives give primacy to self-knowledge and personal experience and attempt to liberate the oppressed. Because these theories focus on enhancing the lives and emotional well-being of all individuals, they are applicable to prisoners and their families.

Historical Perspective

Since the 1970s, the incarceration rate in the United States has risen from 100 prisons for every 100, 000 people in the country to 500 prisoners per every 100, 000 people (Western & Wildeman, 2010). In 2007, the U.S. Department of Justice issued a

special report that demonstrated that an estimated 809, 800 prisoners—of the 1, 518, 535 prisoners held in the country’s prisons—were parents of minor children. To get a clear understanding of this rise in the inmate population, one should consider the causes of the increased rates of incarceration that began during the late 1960s. Since this period marks a drastic change in the numbers of incarcerated persons in the United States, it serves as a good starting place for a discussion of this study’s research problem.

During the 1960s, private industries used urban manufacturing to help guarantee the livelihoods of men in American cities. These jobs provided stability for American families; these jobs also offered pay that reflected the education level of these men (Western & Wildeman, 2010). When deindustrialization occurred, there was widespread job loss in poor urban neighborhoods: the economy was down and the drug trade began to rise. Its rise created addiction and crime in America’s urban centers (Western & Wildemen, 2010). These issues left young men in inner cities vulnerable to arrest and prosecution (Western & Wildeman, 2010). Indeed, many men were arrested, and since these crime and drug issues persisted well into the 1970s, America’s inmate population continued to increase.

In the 1980s, criminal justice reforms were initiated to ensure that felony convictions received stiff penalties (Western & Wildeman, 2010). These penalties were created to detour crime in American urban centers. The criminal justice reforms of this period were drug-related, and the 1980s witnessed tougher drug sentencing mandates for users and sellers of illegal narcotics. Around this time, the use of crack proliferated American cities. Many people were imprisoned; however, repeat offenders were forced to

serve long sentences (Western & Wildeman, 2010). With incarceration rates soaring for men in general, poor women and their children were left to deal with the incarceration of their husbands and fathers (Western & Wildeman, 2010).

A study conducted by Beck (2000) found there was an increase in the number of inmates in the U.S. penal system because of mandatory sentencing guidelines between 1990 and 1999. The system's growth was owing to decreases in release rates and increases in length of sentences (Beck, 2000). During this period, the number of women in prison had almost tripled (U.S Dept. of Justice, 1997). Women incurred strict sentencing guidelines during the 1990s for drug related crime (Dalley, 2002). This issue is particularly important because it meant increases in the female prison population, and this increase deeply affected incarcerated mothers, who were often the sole caregivers of their children. In 1991, because of drug-related crime policies, an estimated half-million children had a parent in prison (Mumola, 2000). By 2000, the inmate population climbed sharply, leaving an estimated 1.5 million children with a parent in prison (Mumola, 2000). In the 2000s, which witnessed an 80 percent increase in the rate of incarcerated parents, many children lived in single-parent households (Dallaire, Looper, Poehlman, & Shear, 2010).

As studies have demonstrated, parent-child contact during the incarceration period is vital to the emotional well-being and social development of the children of incarcerated parents (Dallaire et al., 2010). In a study conducted by Dallaire et al. (2010), researchers explored a number of inventions created for incarcerated families. The researchers point out that microsystem level interventions addressed children's relationships attachment.

This level of intervention made sure that incarcerated children had contact with their parents (Dallaire et al., 2010). Mesosystem level interventions, however, focused on the parent and encourage him or her to work on themselves while in prison. This self-work concentrated on skill-building through therapy and counseling. These interventions also helped the inmate plan for release into the general population (Dallaire et al., 2010).

Exosystem level interventions focus on changing the social issues of the incarcerated parents. This kind of intervention focused on making sure the parent had appropriate employment and housing (Dallaire et al., 2010). Lastly, macrosystem level interventions advocated and lobbied for changes in policies and sentence lengths at a legislative and juridical level. These interventions focused on drug-offender regulations, which contributed to racial and social disparities in incarceration rates (Dallaire et al., 2010). Also, macrosystem level interventions advocated for facility policy changes with regard to visitation and contact regulations between prisoners and their children (Dallaire et al., 2010).

Issue One: The Impact of Parental Incarceration on Children

As stated previously, research demonstrates that parental incarcerations cause negative impacts on children's emotional well-being and social behavior (Parke & Stewart, 2003). According to Gabel & Johnston (1995), parental incarceration causes disorders in the families of incarcerated people, including emotional and psychosocial disorders. A study done by Farrington & Murray (2005) discusses such disorders and the traumas they produce.

In the study conducted by Farrington & Murray (2005), the researchers showed that there are short- and long- term effects of parental separation on children. For example, the study showed that emotional distress is produced, because of the confusion regarding parent-arrest in children of incarcerated parents (Farrington & Murray, 2005). The study also showed that children often feel anger and resentment because of the parent's absences. Because of this absence, children develop anger toward authority and a belief that law enforcement is keeping their parent away (Parke & Stewart, 2003).

Long-term emotional and social traumas develop in the children of incarcerated parents when their parents are in and out of jail or have long-term sentences. The long-term effects include the development of insecure attachment (Farrington & Murray, 2005). Additionally, children develop other problems such as anxiety, withdrawal, hypervigilance, depression, shame and guilt (Farrington & Murray, 2005).

In a study conducted by Gabel (1992), several hundred male prisoners and their families were interviewed and analyzed. In the study, families that had incarcerated parents were compared to families that had only experienced incarcerated fathers. The study found that wives of prisoners not only experienced serious financial burdens but more than 34 percent of these wives also experienced issues with managing their children (Gabel, 1992). According to Gabel (1992), these children were often separated from their mothers and were being placed in institutional facilities for behavioral issues (Gabel, 1992). When compared to families that had absent mothers due to incarceration, children were less likely to have behavioral issues. According to Gabel (1992), these children appeared less delinquent as well (Gabel, 1992).

In a study conducted by Burkhead and Fritsch (1981), male and female prisoners were asked about the behavioral reactions of their children to their absence. According to the study, 67 percent of the 91 prisoners interviewed had children who developed behavioral problems. However, prisoners who lived with their child before imprisonment, and had contact with them while still in prison, stated they observed changes in behavior that were problematic (Burkhead & Fritsch, 1981). This notwithstanding, these problems were not as pronounced as those experienced by parents who did not have consistent contact with their children before or during imprisonment.

In the study (Burkhead & Fritsch, 1981), researchers compared male prisoners to female prisoners and most of these prisoners, regardless of their gender, had children with behavioral problems (Fritsch & Burkhead, 1981). Males stated that their children demonstrated behaviors that were more hostile, such as drug-usage, drinking, truancy, running away, discipline problems, and delinquency. Females reported problems more emotionally sensitive like withdrawal, fearfulness, excessive crying, and nightmares (Fritsch & Burkhead, 1981).

According to research findings, income loss, and the stress of moving because of income loss, greatly impacted children of incarcerated parents (Farrington, Murray, Olsen, & Skekol, 2012). Research also suggested that emotional issues often lingered for these children well into adulthood (Farrington, Murray, Olsen, & Skekol, 2012). When a family member becomes a single parent because of the incarceration of another family member, the financial resources are diminished. The research points to a number of causes for these emotional issues. To begin with, many children with an incarcerated

parent are forced to grow up in single-parent homes that lack the appropriate economic resources (Foster & Hagan, 2007). The single parent in such cases has less money and less time for their children, because they must work longer hours to earn enough money (Foster & Hagan, 2007).

While the single parent works to barely make ends meet, adolescents are not guided properly. Therefore, they often participate in juvenile mischief to compensate for the lack of parental guidance in their lives. What many adolescents do not realize, however, is that by becoming delinquents they make some of the same decisions their parents made, such as quitting school, using or selling drugs, and showing aggressive behavior (Foster & Hagan, 2007). Statistically, children of incarcerated parents, when compared with children of non-incarcerated parents, are often more antisocial and delinquent—this is especially true of males born to incarcerated parents (Farrington & Murray, 2005).

A study conducted on 20 males and 2 females, including their sons, found that 71 percent of boys who experienced parental imprisonment during their childhood had antisocial personalities at the age 32, when compared to only 19 percent of boys who were not separated from their parents because of incarceration (Farrington & Murray, 2005). In another study conducted by Ohio State University (2008), antisocial personalities were five to six times more prevalent among males of incarcerated parents, when compared to peers who did not have incarcerated parents. The children of incarcerated parents are also more likely to abuse substances (Ohio State University, 2008). Additionally, the children are more likely to drop out of school, runaway from

home, or become homeless (Ohio State University, 2008). The children of incarcerated parents are more likely to have high levels of skipping school, aggression, and the trauma for separation and stigma of a parent in prison (Ohio State University, 2008). This is a social problem because children of incarcerated parents, who have been in the prison system, are more likely to participate in criminal activity and deviant behaviors that will cause them to enter the criminal system (Ohio State University, 2008).

Issue Two: Incarceration Impact on Parents

Parental incarceration has several negative effects on the emotional and social well-being of incarcerated parents as well. Research showed that prisoners and their families experienced a major sense of loss when incarceration occurs, and the loss is even more pronounced when children are involved (Hairston, 2003). The feeling of guilt is a primarily emotional experience felt by incarcerated parents. Incarcerated parents tend to have difficulty adjusting to separation and loss, which can lead to depression and other mental health problems among the parent (Hairston, 2003).

In a study conducted by Arditti (2012), the researcher relays the story of an incarcerated mother named Mary. In the study, the researcher discusses Mary's journey toward prison, and the difficulties her imprisonment brought upon her parenting. What is perhaps most interesting about the study is that Mary describes her personal history, which was laden with poverty and abuse. Eventually, Mary decided to use drugs, which inaugurated her criminal activity (Arditti, 2012). Mary suffered from poor self-esteem, which contributed to her inability to build a relationship with her son—even while she

was in prison. This produced a severe amount of guilt that was not easily overcome (Arditti, 2012).

In a study conducted by Celinska and Siegel (2010), the researchers emphasized the experiences of 25 mothers who were incarcerated. The study focused on the identities and the importance of maintaining healthy relationships with children while incarcerated. In the study, the mothers who maintained contact with their children had a positive outcome with regard to the mothers' adjustment in the prison and post-release (Celinska & Siegel, 2010). Mothers who attempted to maintain relationships with their children disassociated themselves with inmates who they considered "unfit" mothers (Celinska & Siegel, 2010). According to Celinska and Siegel (2010), incarcerated mothers agreed that being isolated and separated from their children was the hardest experience while being in prison.

In a study conducted by Celinska and Siegel (2010), incarcerated mothers feel grief about the separation away from their children; these mothers were concerned about how the separation affected their children lives and development. Like most parental mothers, the subjects in Celinska and Siegel's study (2010) wanted to believe that their children were in safe living situations and were not being abused or neglected (Hairston, 2003). These mothers' worries were rooted in the fact that, before imprisonment, these mothers were often the parent to which their children could normally rely on (Hairston, 2003).

Afrocentric Perspective

The Afrocentric Perspective was created by Molefi Asante in the early 1990s. The Afrocentric Perspective is an analytical and conceptual tool used by scholars to interpret the lives and experiences of oppressed people (Asante, 2011). It necessitates an exploration of the experiences of the oppressed from the perspective of the oppressed. Molefi Asante calls this sort of interpretation “centeredness.” By centeredness, Asante argues for subject-based analyses of the experiences of oppressed people (Asante, 2011).

With regard to the interpretation of African American culture and experiences, Asante argues that African American experiences must be analyzed from an African American point of “centeredness” (Asante, 2011). For Asante, this means that analyzers of the African American experience should consider the importance of Africa and African traditions to the lives of African Americans when analyzing their experiences (Asante, 2011). By making these claims, Asante promotes the influence of African culture not only on Africans but also on others of African descent living in the Western world (Asante, 2011).

Although this study does not address the racial aspects of Asante’s Afrocentric perspective, it uses notions regarding centeredness to analyze the experiences of incarcerated parents and their children. Whereas some studies have focused on observing the behaviors of the children of incarcerated parents, this study looks at those behaviors from the perspective of the children. Additionally, it analyzes the parents’ experiences from their perspective as well. This sort of interpretation is an application of Asante’s Afrocentric methodology, although it does not apply the idea’s racial claims.

At its core, Afrocentricity is very comparable to Humanistic Value Theory. Both theories offer a humanizing view of individuals and cultures; they do not view individuals as objects to subjugated but rather living beings who have the capacity for self-determination. These perspectives—and this is especially true of Humanistic Value Theory—enhance a person’s overall potential; it also eliminates oppression (AHP, 2014).

One way to apply humanistic values to prisoners with children is to implement a program that can help prisoners reach their full potential while behind bars. Such a program would allow prisoners to tell their truth to their children, in order to try and prevent them from making similar mistakes. This applies concepts of self-knowledge and personal experience derived from certain features of Humanistic Value Theory and Afrocentricity. By implementing these perspectives, the prisoners would realize their self-worth, and—if they are released from prison—this self-worth could prevent them from being a repeat offender.

Theoretical Framework

Psychodynamic Theory focuses on the unconscious psychological process of a person and states that “childhood experiences are crucial in shaping adult personalities” (Bornstein, 2016). The social worker uses Psychodynamic Theory when he or she explores a client’s early attachments, including the client’s relationships with early authority figures (Bornstein, 2016). Additionally, social workers use this theory when trying to under relationship dynamics with the clients, such as transference and countertransference (Bornstein, 2016).

Early childhood experiences are central to patterning an individual's emotions; therefore, early childhood experiences are central to problems children encounter in their older lives (McLead, 2007). When a child has a parent that is incarcerated, there is already a stigma placed on the child. A child who has been labeled may internalize a lot of emotions, which may produce aggression and withdrawal. In psychodynamic theoretical praxis, emotions are motivated by an instinctual drive of what McLead (2007) calls, the "Thanatos" (p. 32). In this view, the absence of a parent may produce issues with attachment and relationships later in life.

Emotions are a huge part of the psychodynamic theory (McLead, 2007). If the child of the incarcerated parent is unable to deal with the negative consequences of parental absences, they may become emotionally unstable. The child could also experience transference of the behavior of the incarcerated parent (McLead, 2007). A child may feel that if their parent went to prison—it is the inevitable; they, too, will go to prison also. From a psychodynamic perspective, these children take their parents behavior and place it on themselves, justifying their own bad behavior.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The objective of this conceptual paper is to identify the negative effects of parental incarceration on the children of incarcerated parents, especially the negative emotional effects of their parents' incarceration. The research also aims to identify how incarceration impacts incarcerated parents' emotional and social well-being. These investigations are analyzed using quantitative and qualitative methods.

Methods of the Study

This research used qualitative tools, such as statistics and percentages that focused on parental incarceration figures. Additionally, qualitative tools were used to analyze the emotional behaviors of incarcerated parents and their children. To a lesser extent, this research employed quantitative tools, such as the Afrocentric paradigm, Humanistic Value perspective, and psychodynamic theory. While using these qualitative and quantitative research tools, this research applied several limitations.

The researcher utilized a systematic review method to collect, analyze, and synthesize data related to this study. A systematic review is a type of literature

review that identifies, evaluates, and synthesizes research from previous studies to compile and summarize specific information (EPPI Centre, 2015). An application of a systematic review necessitated the identification of population percentages related to incarcerated parentage. It also necessitated the exploration of articles that discussed children's behavior. While this sort of application involves qualitative methods, it also involves quantitative methods, since it required the research to analyze such data in order to make a causal line of argumentation regarding the two separate data sets.

In this study, research was performed using the Robert W. Woodruff Library System at the Atlanta University Center, to access databases such as *Google Scholar* and *EBSCO Host*. Such research required the use of keyword searches that included: "incarcerated parents," "absent parents," "history of incarcerated parents," "effects of incarceration on families," and "effects of incarceration on children." Initially, the researcher began such searches by targeting the research population and then by applying limits to the database yields, in order to discover whether there was a correlation between parental incarceration and children's behavior. There were many articles on incarcerated parents that confirmed the researcher's hypothesis.

Information was gathered and organized according to headings in the literature review. Information was also organized and presented according to historical developments related to the research problem. The literature review used twenty-two journal articles and eight book reviews. Findings were procured from reputable social work and psychology journals. Findings related to national statistics, however, were gathered from governmental websites.

Limitations of the Study

When conducting a systematic review, a researcher must be careful to avoid errors, bias, and vagueness. Avoiding such things require research limitations. In this study, the researcher did not utilize studies published before 1990. Because of this limitation, very few studies were available to the researcher that explored how parents were emotionally impacted by their own incarceration. However, this limitation produced many results regarding the impact of parental incarceration on children's emotional and social behaviors. It was difficult to find information with regard to parental incarceration's effect on children's emotional and social behaviors without describing other social problems that contribute to the same.

Most of the information that was found about incarcerated parents and their families were written from a criminology perspective. The researcher was also able to find a number of studies written from a psychological perspective. These findings were based on psychological and criminological research methodologies, not social work methodologies. Although social workers use psychological theories such as strengths-based and person-centered tools, this research sought to analyze the study's findings from a perspective that relies heavily on social work theories. Most of the available literature focused on the detrimental impact of parental incarceration on children and the family; sadly, these provided no solution to the research problem explored in this study.

While conducting research, the researcher discovered that there are limited recent statistics on the research problem. It was difficult to find recent statistical data conducted

after 2000. Some studies were more than ten years old; however, the researcher was able to connect these statistics to the research problem. Furthermore, there is little information in the available literature about changing or creating institutional problems that contribute to the negative impacts of parental incarceration on children. Because of this, the researcher was able to identify a lack of programs and policy articles relevant to parental incarceration. The researcher addressed this gap by utilizing chapter five to discuss the implications of the research problem for social work practitioners.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This is conceptual paper sought to identify the impact of parental incarceration on parents and their families, including the emotional and behavioral consequences of parental incarceration. This is relevant because this paper examined the negative effects of parental incarceration on children, paying particular attention to the ways such problems can be avoided in the future. Furthermore, it sought to determine whether children of incarcerated parents are more likely to have emotional and social behavioral issues, such as attachment issues and other socio-deviancies.

Findings on Incarceration Impact on Children

Findings indicated several negative impacts of parental incarceration on children's emotional and social well-being. Nearly 50 percent of incarcerated parents, parents who reported having lived with their child prior to their incarceration, observed changes in their child's behavior (Hairston, Jefferies, & Menghrai, 2001). Despite such statistics, the children of incarcerated parents have been an invisible population, because the judicial and penal systems frequently viewed inmates as neither deserving of help nor desiring contact with their children (Hairston, Jeffries, & Menghraj, 2001). These assumptions are terribly misguided.

A recent study conducted by Burns, Kramer, Phillips, Robbins, & Wagner (2002), that analyzed youth who were receiving routine mental health services, clearly illustrated that children desired a relationship with their incarcerated parents. 43 percent of youth in this sample experienced parental incarceration; those who has had significant high levels of conduct problems were often the children of incarcerated parents (Burns et al., 2002). Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) was the only other clinical problem displayed more frequently by youth who had experienced parental incarceration. 23 percent of children with ADHD had parents who were either (a) incarcerated at the time of the study or (b) had been incarcerated sometime in their children's lifetimes (Burns et al., 2002). It was hypothesized that children of incarcerated parents suffer severe negative impacts, ranging from behavioral and mental-health issues to criminal activity. The research findings proved this hypothesis.

Youth are arrested for about 5 percent of the crimes they commit, and police arrest is one of the most commonly used indicators for identifying problems among adolescents (Elliot & Dunford, 1982). Incarcerated parents reported that 5 to 30 percent of them were arrested during adolescence. Incarcerated parents reported that they exhibited serious conduct problems during adolescence and young adulthood (Elliot & Dunford, 1982). The adolescent children of incarcerated parents are most likely to exhibit violence or serious delinquencies than peers, who have little or no criminal justice system interaction (Burns et al., 1992).

Findings on Incarceration Impact on Parents

The findings indicated that parental incarceration has emotional, social, and economic effects on families. Findings showed that parental incarceration intensifies poverty in already disadvantaged households. Findings also showed that incarcerated parents often feel shame and guilt for their families financial and emotional problems (Arditti, 2012). These parents also reported feeling a lack of authority in their children's lives; this was especially true among the fathers of incarcerated children (Gabel & Johnston, 1995). Mothers felt inadequate to appropriately mother because of the limitations imposed by their incarceration (Gabel & Johnston, 1995). According to Kazura (2001), there is evidence that family support for incarcerated parents promotes positive behavior and reduces the likelihood of recidivism.

According to a study conducted by Kazura (2001), parents were concerned about how their incarceration affected their children's social and emotional development. These parents requested information about how to deal with their children's stress and fear and information about how to deal with their children's behavior (Kazura, 2001). Additionally, these parents wanted a basic parenting education, especially skills concerning how to discipline and care for their children. Finances were another concern of incarcerated parents. Studies reveal that incarcerated parents were emotionally bothered because, upon their future release, they would have to demonstrate to child welfare services that they had the means to gain a substantial income in order to support their children (Kazura, 2001). Additionally, the parents would have financial concerns

about family members who were strained and trying to financial provide for their children. Also, visitation, and being able to keep contact with their children, were other concerns (Kazura, 2001).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This study found that parental incarceration has a negative impact on incarcerated parents and their children. Today, an estimated 3.6 million parents are incarcerated (Mumola, 2000) in the United States. These inmates are the parents of an estimated 2.3 million children (Munola, 2000), including 1.7 million minor children (Bureau of Justice, 2008). While these minor children are often impacted by the absence of their incarcerated parent, this study found that incarcerated parents are also negatively affected.

Summary of the Study

This study's literature review, along with this study's findings section, revealed that children of incarcerated parents have behavioral issues, delinquency problems, and emotional health difficulties. Before beginning this study, the researcher hypothesized that children are negatively affected by parental incarceration, and the available research confirmed this hypothesis. Research also confirmed that incarcerated parents experience emotional consequences, such as grief and guilt, as a result of their incarceration. Because of these consequences, an integrated system involving child welfare organizations, correction departments, police authorities, and community nonprofits

organizations could prove effective in dealing with the negative impacts of parental incarceration. Developing such a system could be costly, but its implementation could make a difference in decreasing adolescent delinquency and adult criminal behavior. In this regard, costs associated with the development of such a system would pale in contrast to current penal system expenditures.

Implications for Social Work

Undoubtedly, there is a need for social work practitioners to become more effective and more sensitive when dealing with imprisoned parents and their families. Social workers can ensure that incarcerated parents, as well as their families, are exposed to effective social work practices that might thwart the negative consequences of parental incarceration. By working sensitively with the incarcerated population, social workers could limit the emotional and social distress parental incarcerations produce.

To accomplish the aforementioned, social workers could benefit from the use of a social-historical assessments called biopsychosocial assessments. These kinds of assessments could help social workers create effective treatment plans for incarcerated parents and their families. Additionally, social workers can also better serve incarcerated parents and their families by familiarizing themselves with community services that address the needs of incarcerated populations and their families.

Social workers can also reduce problems affecting incarcerated parents and their families by advocating for additional social services funding for this population from

state and federal governments. They can also advocate for policies that promote fair sentencing guidelines for minor crimes. Additionally, they help incarcerated parents and their families by encouraging policymakers to advocate for correctional institutions to work more with outside organizations.

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