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Case Study

BRIDGING EVIDENCE THROUGH THE RULE OF CHAIN AS ANOTHER WAY OF DOING DATA TRIANGULATION: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Much qualitative researches focused on validity. Establishing validity requires a sound knowledge on performing triangulation. However, there is no specific techniques or formula that has been detailed for researchers to embark on triangulation effort. Initiatives to broaden the understanding of techniques to conduct triangulation is vital to support the development of qualitative studies as well as provide guidelines to novice researchers. Data triangulation is one of the methods that examine the consistency of different databases from within the same technique. Consistency means persistent adherence to the same principles, course or form. The aim of this article is to introduce another similar method of finding consistencies based on different types of persons. This study examines views from a group of community leaders upon result of strategies female offenders in the prison planned to use in achieving their goals. The rule of Chain of Events by using the "Ifs" and "then" is applied. The result of the case study showed that there is a link which is consistent between the result of the community leaders' and the female offenders' perception on the strategies.

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INTRODUCTION

The impact of qualitative research is when the results explain the "why" and "how" of a specific phenomenon. However, explaining the reasons and systems that involve complicated and intricate social interactions between individuals and their world need to explain not just the insights of a situation or scenario under study, but most important, they need to be supported from many angles of understandings or evidence that can prove them right or valid. (Guion, Diehl, & Mc Donald, 2011).

Validity is important in qualitative study because it enables readers to agree and accept the work or findings. To establish validity, triangulation approach is used. Triangulation encompasses revising the data collected through diverse measures to achieve a more truthful and valid assessment of qualitative results for a specific phenomenon (Oliver Hoyoa & DeeDee, 2006). However, there is no specific technique that has been detailed for researchers to perform triangulation. Thus, researchers are left to implement triangulation their own way (Sands & Roer-Strier, 2006). This situation has caused novice researchers implement triangulation in their qualitative studies without sufficient guidelines or adequate examples. At the same time, triangulation efforts have become very important in qualitative research. Its presence indicate a complete work and a dense report (Jick, 1979), the most

significant criterion in a qualitative study. Initiatives to broaden the knowledge and understanding of techniques to conduct triangulation are thus vital to support the development of qualitative studies. Referring to the study done by Meijer, Verloop, & Beijaard, (2002), there seems to be no specific triangulation method that is replicable for any specific studies. However, the need to include triangulation in every qualitative research work makes it imperative to have many examples and to understand the way of doing triangulation. One of the approaches of triangulation that needs to have more examples is the data triangulation. Data triangulation is one of the methods that examine the constancy of different databases from within the same technique (Denzin, 1979; Patton, 1990). The aim of this study is to introduce another similar method of finding consistencies based on different types of persons.

The significance of having more guidelines on how to actually seek for consistencies is seemingly disregarded in the current qualitative research scenarios. Consistency means persistent adherence to the same principles, course or form. It denotes agreement, harmony, or compatibility, especially correspondence between the parts of an intricate thing. It is about a cohered or a holding together condition (Dictionary.com, 2014). However, consistency has always been reported to occur in triangulation when the same results are derived from any two or more data sources (Bungay & Vella-Burrows, 2013; Johnson, Welteroth, & Corl, 2000). Different

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findings would most possibly mean inconsistency and therefore needs additional descriptions.

Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, and Sechrest (1966) proposed, "Once a proposition has been confirmed by two or more independent measurement processes, the uncertainty of its interpretation is greatly reduced" (p. 3). Sands and Strier (2006), made a relative analysis of mother-daughter relationships. They found that consistencies appeared as in (1) similar story, similar meaning; (2) similar story but with different interpretations; and inconsistencies as in (3) missing pieces. In their second triangulation where "within groups" and "between groups" were involved, more common characteristics were found between mother-daughter relationships in the same cultural group.

Creswell (2008) explained that data triangulation is a process of confirming evidence which could lead to theme building. Therefore, researchers can perceive that they are going in the direction of accuracy and integrity. This occurs when various groups of people draw the same information from a phenomenon and thus, a theme can be established.

Jick (1979) in his study on the effects of a merger on employees used multiple methods such as interviews, cross-sectional survey and other unobtrusive techniques. He then compared the results with the pattern of archive usage by workers. He found that the "various methods together produced largely consistent and convergent results" (p. 607). In general, similarities in perceptions or views of respondents have always been regarded as consistencies, and more often than not, dissimilarities or inconsistencies in the views are perceived as failures or "negative cases" in triangulation that needs further explanations (McRoy, 2014).

The initial descriptions about finding consistency in data triangulation may result in a simplistic judgment that triangulation can be considered as successful only when the same perceptions or results are reflected through many groups of thoughts, either from *within groups* or *between groups* or through using multiple methods. As a result of this rigid assumption, it is important for the qualitative advocates to understand the implication it has on the value of credence of qualitative studies; a pre-methodological bias.

Operating on a case study, the goal of this work is to explore another way of finding consistencies other than having similar views in the data triangulation method. The case study is on empowerment among female offenders in reducing their risks for recidivism in the women prison in Malacca, Malaysia.

Meanwhile, in relation to the literature review of the case study executed, it was found that there have been cohered findings or agreed complexity about perceptions of female offenders towards the community and *vice versa* during their post release periods. Female offenders were reported to face difficulties, stigmas and labels from the community as soon as they are released (Bontrager, Bales, & Chiricos, 2005; Goffman, 1963; Melossi, 2002; Petrunik, 2002; Simon, 1998) and acted correspondingly to the dilemma (Belknap, 2007; McCorkel, 2013).

However, this paper intends to describe further on the data collected from a group of community leaders, whose views will be used to triangulate our initial findings about the strategies female offenders in the prison planned to use to reduce their risks for recidivism during post release. For the purpose of this article, the study that was done earlier to the female offenders would be referred to as Research A.

METHOD

Initially, in Research A, 13 female offenders of non-drug and drug based offenses were questioned by using in-depth interview method. They were originally from a pool of 40 female offenders of the female prison in, Malacca, Malaysia, who have been selected through a purposive maximum variation sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994) as well as purposive sampling at the case level (Merriam, 1998). Both techniques were applied to describe central themes derived from various participants, from a bounded system (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007) and to get a comprehensive view into the substance (Neergard, Olesen, Andersen, & Soundergaard, 2009). In other words, all who were interviewed were the product of filtered participants considered adequate for the study. This, however, does not mean that it is inclined towards the researchers' biasness because there was an effort to balance the conflict by inducing reasoning to the issue (Patton, 1990).

By using Mayring's (2000) qualitative content analysis and Mills' (1952) technique of analysis, we managed to derive to an initial finding of our Research A that showed female offenders in the prison are able to plan six strategies to counter the challenges or issues during their post release into the community. The six empowerment strategies are "the easiest way" and "an easier way" strategies in the family context, the "way full of guts," the "community way," and the "leave away" strategies in the community context and finally, the "help me find my way" strategy in the peers or intimate partner context. These themes were constructed by reference to a coding manual. (The coding manual is not included in this article). These strategies have within them a process or a system whereby female offenders decide according to their perceptions of themselves and their perceptions on how others would perceive them.

The member of credence for this research was the officer in charge of the female offenders involved in this study. Meeting with actual informants was not suitable due to security reasons and constricted control enacted by the Prison Headquarters. This study used critique checklist (Stake, 1995) to attain results of the report.

Data Collection

For the purpose of this article, the following explanation shall be referred to as description for Research B. In this research, a group of community leaders were asked about their perceptions over the release of the female offenders back into their community. The investigation was to ascertain the accuracy of the initial findings in Research A. Another group of people consisting of the prison officers and staff were not chosen because they may not be able to view female offenders as those who will live with them during post release. Getting back to the

main informants in the prison to perform “between group” data triangulation was difficult due to time constraint (permission from the prison authority) and the unavailability of respondents due to their active involvement in rehabilitation activities. In fact, the effort to involve other female of crimes that are in the society would be difficult because they are the hard-to-reach group (Brackertz, 1997). A lot of time would be required to do this triangulation initiative, especially if it has to go through snowball sampling.

For the purpose of this study, listening to what community leaders have to say about female offenders is particularly important because they can provide a reflection on what usually happens to ex-female offenders when they come back into their community. They are also regarded as the counter party that are able to perceive the strategies of the female offenders as untrue. This was a selection of a group of people who may totally challenge or disconfirm the evidence of Research A findings because they were not from the “within group.”

This study used a list of 25 names of community leaders from the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development. This office had the most recent and up to date information about community leaders from all over Malaysia. The list of community leaders was complete with addresses and telephone numbers for easy contact. At the “case level” of this purposive sampling, the first criterion was that they must come from the state of Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka or Johor because these were the states where female offenders of the female Prison come from. This effort was employed to get to the closest picture possible as to understand their perception upon receiving back their female community members who had gone through sentences or experiences of imprisonment. Second criterion was that they must agree to be interviewed or else the research might fail to obtaining data due to lack of commitment. Out of the 15 names that fit, “within the case” random sampling was performed simultaneously with the data collection process. Random selection using numbered cards was then executed through phone calls. The researcher went to meet the community leaders in their villages or districts either in their homes or public halls within the area. Voice recorder was also used to record the conversations that ended between one to one and a half hours.

Data Analysis

To cross check the findings of Research A, texts from transcriptions of interviews of community leaders were examined using NVivo 10 by means of Mayring content analysis; the summary level, the explication level and finally, the structuring level. This initiative is vital in ensuring the credibility of findings in the prior study which concerned with female offenders.

At the summary level, which is for triangulation purposes, whole data are looked at as exhaustive and complex. However, instead of finding the themes starting from zero, the work focused on tracking the statements that may or may not support the main themes discovered earlier from the main subject of the case study in Research A. Some interesting statements or findings from this group were also emphasized to further illuminate the phenomena about female ex-offenders and recidivism from the eye of community of leaders. Denzin

(1970) may looked at this effort of studying community leaders to cross check findings from female offenders, as taking in other data extents within which the same generic happenings (recidivism) took place.

From a macro point of view, data from the community leaders contained a mixture of comments and perceptions which are positive or negative, including series of experiences offenders faced in their community. Their texts also showed some elements of their expectations on the female offenders. Their concerns over the problem of recidivism among female offenders were also seen prominently. The text materials were then divided into parts, where only those relevant materials supporting or not supporting the findings from the main study were considered. Unimportant texts were reduced or ignored.

At Level 1 of explication work, the data covered only texts contributed by respondents (community leaders) 1 to 6. In applying the concept “(having) the data to think with” (Hammersly & Atkinson, 1982), an array of conclusions within content was found. For example, by applying “comparative grip on the material” technique (Mills, 1952), similarities were seen in all texts about theme no. 1, “Yes, community seemed to reject ex-offenders.” Indication in text showed community leaders will certainly give a non-welcoming or non-acceptance behaviour in an instance when they realized that female ex-offenders were released or get back into their community. However, by believing that “a new classification (node)” would shed to light to some other phenomenon, (Mills, 1952) a new theme no. 2 node, “Ex-offender prove first” was logged in and brought new development in the analysis. By explanation, the theme shows that there is a need for female ex-offenders to prove to the community first that they have repented over the mistake they had done before; failure to do so would result to a refusal of acceptance by the community.

Further explication of the data by using “recognizing themes within different topics” technique (Mills, 1952) revealed that there were repetitions which showed that issue of confidence over ex-offenders’ ability to change or being pessimist towards them had to be in the first order before considering the two previous themes, namely theme no. 1 and no. 2. All explication exercises were done by using NVivo 10.

Prior to the above discovery, plenty of themes were logged in as to comply with the “casting into types” technique. Among others, the themes were “Community accept first,” “Community invite for activities,” “Community leaders in the act,” “Community need to be educated and informed prior to acceptance,” “Discrimination,” “Family also being labelled,” “First perception given on male,” “Isolation is the answer for ex-offender to live,” “Specialized prison for female,” and “Find peers if community do not accept.” All these were also the result of glancing and thinning through the data or being at a narrow context analysis (Mayring, 2000). Krueger (2013) stated that this process of classifying is to choose which boundary of one section ends and where a new one begins. According to him, it is important to note the variations to identify which category belongs to this which theme. Finally, this will connect the categories which will lead to a form of a relationship between events.

Some opposite findings were also found. However, they are prominent in throwing a second thought over the notion that

“ex-offenders should prove first then would they be accepted.” This is because out of the many texts, at most only two community leaders showed that in the communities which have their ex-offenders living with them, they do not show extreme expectations or impose strict precaution towards the latter to be accepted. Yet, observations resort to proposing that choice were not given to those female ex-offenders and that they were from the same locality, such that they have to stay with the family amidst the community. In this context, community leaders played their role to invite ex-offenders to participate in their programmes, regardless of whether or not they have proven themselves to be good citizens. To arrive at this proposition, Mills’s (1952) suggestion on “considering the extremes” technique was used.

To grasp meaningful categories which could or could not support findings from the main texts, the interview text was read again for a second time. Some themes were saved and still worth for consideration, while some were discarded. Categories that have gone through comparison between themes and number of coding references (as in the NVivo 10 run instruction under “Explore”) were filtered carefully where only “large areas” of the Tree Map were selected. At this stage, categories like “Ex-prisoners prove first,” “Yes, community not accepting,” “Issue of confidence,” “Pessimist over ex-offender’s ability to change,” “Ex-offender with empowerment survives better in community,” “Human capital of the ex-offender be used for economic growth,” “Family plays bigger role to make ex-offender accepted,” “Community will accept,” “Isolation is the answer to survive,” “Drug-based offender is harder to be accepted,” “Ex-prisoner brings bad influence,” “Find peers if community and family reject,” “Community optimist over ex-offender’s ability to repent,” “Conditional acceptance and need to hide identity to survive” were formed in conjunction to the effort of triangulating findings in Research A. At Level 2 of analysis (structuring), selected themes were re-examined by re-structuring them. For instance, “Ex-prisoners prove first” was joined with “Conditional acceptance,” and “Issue of confidence” was combined with “Pessimist over ex-offender’s ability to change.” The theme “Community will accept” was also regarded as the same with “Community optimist over ex-offender’s ability to repent.” After the restructuring, the theme with the most prominent structure is “Ex-prisoners prove first,” followed by “Issue of confidence over ex-offenders’ ability to change,” “Yes, community will ignore ex-offenders” and “Community optimist thus will accept ex-offenders.” The rest were left for observation as they were cases where isolated or extreme condition could be explained.

Triangulation was performed at Level 3. At this juncture, situations (theme) from both sides of the texts, female offenders’ and community leaders’ perceptions, were compared semantically. In other words, perceptions of both sides were studied and then kept for making inferences. The reason for conducting triangulation is to prove that female ex-offenders do have some strategies that they can implement in order to heighten their capacity to reach their goal (Research A); viewed from the community leaders’ point of view. (Research B); In fact, by standard expectation, these strategies should be alike or in line with what this study has discovered through the

finding of Research A, namely the Six Empowerment Strategies of Female Ex-Offenders. Otherwise, further explanations are required, and trails of memos need to be uncovered to explain some odd occurrences.

Computer Qualitative Software

Both the studies, Research A and B used the manual and NVIVO computer qualitative software to manage the data for all interview guides (questions). Mason, (1996) suggested that three levels of approaches in qualitative data analysis can be named as *literal*, *interpretive*, and *reflexive* (p. 64). In both the studies, manual process of analysis only used the literal and reflexive approaches. In the literal approach, the researcher has to transcribe back verbatim what has been said by the informants in the Malay Language. The software was less useful in dealing with matters concerning the validity and reliability during the thematic process (Welsch, 2002). Hence, the manual approach was also employed in the analysis. In other words, the software was used at the coding, theming and memoing stage. In so doing, the way the data was managed was controlled to minimize the errors and to get closer to the data (Merriam, 1998). Therefore, the analysis of the qualitative data in this study benefitted from a combination of both the software and the manual.

By looking at the tree map, where themes were compared to the *number of items coded* (NIC), the results were graphitized. NIC is a record of the number of respondents’ coverage (perceptions in texts) and respondents’ trails in memos that discuss the particular context of a specific theme. The comparison between the themes and the *number of coding references* (NCR) was not used for describing the findings because this kind of analysis is used more for the intensity of a specific reference’s perception over specific contexts. In other words, unlike using the analysis of themes versus NIC, this kind of analysis may not have the power to express how the themes that emerged from this study were popularly used by many of the respondents.

Data Analysis – Community Leaders Perception on Female Offenders

In the effort to triangulate the findings from Research A, perceptions of community leaders about female offenders were obtained and then cross checked. Results showed that the themes “Ex-prisoners prove first” scored 7 NIC with 57.83% coverage, while the theme “Yes, community will ignore ex-offenders” scored 7 NIC with 42.17% coverage. This means that most respondents pointed out that they will ignore ex-offenders and they need to see them prove their being good citizens before they could be accepted by their community. In the meantime, the theme “Human capital of ex-female offenders can be used for economic growth” scored 4 NIC, but with a coverage of 32.34%. In a way this shows that some community leaders have emphasized strongly that ex-female offenders can be facilitated to become productive. The theme “Ex-prisoner with empowerment survives better” scored 6 NIC with a total of 21.48 % coverage. This shows that the community leaders strongly believed that female offenders who capitalize on their human capital (religion and knowledge) and psychological capital have better chances to be accepted.

Further, the theme “Pessimist over ex-prisoners abilities” scored 25 NIC with 20.11% coverage, indicating that community leaders had some concern over the strengths of female offenders. The theme “Issue of confidence over ex-offenders” scored 4 NIC with 18.2% coverage, indicating that some community leaders were concerned over the trustworthiness of female offenders. The theme “Family had a bigger role to play” scored 5 NIC with 13.79% coverage, showing that some community leaders gave credence to the female offenders’ family to play their part before hoping that community members would accept their daughters. On the other hand, the theme “Drug-based offender harder to be accepted” had 4 NIC and 11.07% coverage, indicating that some respondents seemed to agree to the condition that ex-drug offenders would face some difficulties to be accepted.

With a score of only 3 NIC and a coverage of 10.97%, the theme “Community will accept” showed that some respondents agreed that ex-female offenders are accepted by community leaders as soon as they are released from prison. Meanwhile, the theme “Isolation is the answer for female offenders if they were to live” had 3 NIC and with 10.5% coverage. This implies that some of the respondents reached a decision that there is no other way for female offenders to survive in the community except to isolate themselves from the public. However, some respondents stated that they are optimistic with female prisoners who has imprisonment experience and claimed that they may have learnt some lessons in the prison that made them to repent. This was seen with its NIC score of 3.0 and a coverage of 8.68%.

Out of eight reference, 5 items (references and memos) were coded as agreeing on the theme “Conditional acceptance (CA),” where a total of 8.01% coverage was recorded. While the theme “Ex-prisoners bring back bad influences (BBI)” registered 4 NIC with 6.79% coverage, theme “They will find peers if community and family do not accept (FP)” registered the same score of NIC but with only 5.23% coverage. Therefore, the CA theme showed that some community leaders were certain that ex-offenders might bring back harmful stimulus to the community members. Both the BBI and FP themes showed that roughly community leaders believe that, when family and community reject ex-women offenders when they come back, they would end up going back to peers. Finally, the belief that ex-female offenders may need to hide their identity to survive from labels and stigma scored 1 NIC with a coverage of 0.61%. The product of collaboration between themes that belonged to the same category or in a sequential position in post analysis (analysis within a finding) has conclusion as shown in **Table 1**.

The Data Triangulation

Since the relationship between the Six Empowerment Strategies and Perceptions by Community Leaders is complex and dynamic, it is quite impossible to match or compare between the themes in a matrix manner merely on one to one basis. Instead, one has to take into account that the relationship between themes from both data is over a cause and effect matter and not in a similarity basis. For example, the theme “leave away” strategy exists when female offenders perceived that either they are not able to “prove first” (PF) to the community that they have changed, and or community leaders have “no confidence” (NC) on them. Therefore, they will face “community non-acceptance” (CNA). In other words, *if* at any time the community enforces action by giving conditional acceptance where ex-female offenders have to PF, and that the latter failed to do so, therefore the NC and CNA will be imposed by the community, *then* the “leave away” strategy would be used by certain ex-female offenders. Therefore, for this study, the organization of cause and effect shall be regarded as a successful triangulation. Hence, the data triangulation for this study was performed with the strategy of “*if* and *then*,” which was derived from the legal term of “Chain of events.” “A chain of events is a number of actions and their effects that are contiguous and linked together. Contiguity... is a series of things in contact or in proximity” (The Free Dictionary.com, 2013). According to the Law of Contiguity by Aristotle, contiguity is defined as “... things that occur near each other in time or space are readily associated” (The Free Dictionary.com, 2013).

Saturation Point

For both Research A and Research B, popular recommendation by Lincoln and Guba (1998) were applied. Samples were treated as sufficient when the redundancy of data appeared. This occurred when no new information can add up to any new perspectives or dimensions. However, to ascertain that the situation was truly saturated, extra samples were used. The saturation point for Research A was found at the 8th respondent and continued to ascertain the pattern across heterogeneity until the 13th respondent. Samples of data for triangulation for Research B showed its pattern at the 5th respondent. An addition of another 3 respondents confirmed that the data were at its saturation point and powerful enough to triangulate the data from the main study.

Table 1

Names of Collaborated Themes Resulted from the Collaboration of Theme 1, 2 and 3.

Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Names of Collaborated Theme
Ex-prisoners proof first	Conditional Acceptance (CA)		Ex-female offenders prove first (PF)
Issue of confidence over ex-offenders	Pessimist over ex-prisoners’ ability”		No confidence (NC)
Community will accept	Optimist ex-prisoners has repented	Ex-prisoners with empowerment survive better	Optimistic with female prisoners’ ability to repent (OR)
Isolation is the answer to survive	Need to hide identity to survive		Isolate self or hide identity to survive (IHIS)
They will find peers if community and family do not accept them (FP)	Ex-prisoners bring back bad influence (BBI)	Yes, community will ignore	Community non- acceptance (CNA)
Family play bigger role (with exception of being on its own)			Family play bigger role (FBR)

Even though Mason (2010) mentioned that usually qualitative interviews stopped when the amount of examples becomes a multiple of ten, somewhat not as when saturation has existed, the researcher was confident (Mason, 2010) with the number of samples in both studies, which succeeded in fulfilling what Bertaux (1981) referred to as meeting a point of “saturation of knowledge” (p. 37).

RESULTS

The result of our triangulation effort indicated that the six strategies perceived by female offenders as strategies to be used during post release complement the perceptions by community leaders on them through various sequences. In detail, we provide seven links of event or contiguity that represented female offender's perception on planning to act on the right strategies at the right domain or system (the family, community or peers and intimate partner) during their post release. They are as follows:

1. **If** family plays its bigger role (FBR) and imposes non conditional acceptance, **then** “the easiest way” strategy will be used.
2. **If** family plays a bigger role (FBR) but imposes conditional acceptance, **then**, “an easier way” strategy will be used.
3. **If** community expects ex-female offenders to prove first (PF) before being accepted, and or at the same time community has no confidence (NC), while ex-female offenders fail to comply to community's expectation, either because they bring bad influence (BBI) and or will find peers (FP), therefore, community implements CNA, **then**, the “leave away” strategy is used. In this case, community leaders agree that they need to isolate themselves or hide their identity to survive (IHIS).
4. **If** community expects ex-female offenders to prove first (PF) before being accepted, and at the same time community is optimistic that they will repent or that they have repented (OR), while ex-female offenders succeed to comply with community's and the family's expectations, **then** the “easiest way” strategy is used. In fact, in this case, acceptance is easier and faster achieved by the community because ex-female offenders have a bigger opportunity to apply the strategy.
5. **If** expectation from the community for ex-female offenders to prove first (PF) before being accepted, but the former expects with pessimism, **then** the “way full of guts” strategy is used if the latter choose not to isolate or hide their identity (HI).
6. **If** the community expects that ex-female offenders prove first (PF) before being accepted, while at the same time motivate them to participate in their community programme, **then** the “community way” strategy is used.
7. **If** when even the family expects ex-female offenders to change, but the community does not expect them to prove anything to remain, whilst there are threats from peers or intimate partner, especially when ex-female offenders were associated with drugs, **then** the “help me find my way” strategy is used unless they choose to (HI). Most probably, ex-female offenders will use “leave away” strategy and settle in other communities to achieve their goals in life.

DISCUSSION

The result of this case study showed that there is a link which is *consistent* and not a simple similarity between the result of the community leaders' perception and the female offenders' strategies to reduce risks for recidivism. Clearly, the strategies taken by female offenders were subsequent to the community's action and perception towards them. It seemed that these female offenders need to consider what and how their community would perceive the actions they planned to undertake during their post release. The strategy undertaken by the female offenders was actually the result of processes that took into consideration what has actually been perceived and planned by community leaders.

Since the main study was done onto the female offenders who were still in the prison, this means that even during imprisonment, female offenders had anticipated that not only their actions would influence community perceptions towards them but the community's perception would make them change the type of strategies they will use when they are freed. It appeared that when there is unconditional acceptance in the family domain, female offenders would be able to use the easiest strategy to achieve their goal. However, if there is an element of dominant-submissive relationship within the family, usually the female offenders will plan to compromise, instead.

At the community domain, some female offenders appeared to realize that they cannot live with the community if they cannot meet the expectation of the community. On the other hand, some female offenders seemed to be courageous enough to continue staying with the community even though they have to face challenges from the community. There is also an indication that some of the female offenders are willing to participate in various programmes when the community invites them.

At the peers or intimate partner domain, where negative influences are concerned, female offenders seemed to be prepared to leave the community if threats are intolerable. In other words, because there are such community actions, the strategies taken by the female offenders were perceived as to achieve lower risks for recidivism.

The seven links of events in this study occurred in the form of actions that affect other actions, which are seen as contiguous and linked to each other. In line with the Law of Contiguity, the events of action and perception of both female offenders and community leaders occurred near to each other in its own context. Hence, the existence of causes that is usually followed with specific actions or plans showed that the findings are consistent even though the perceptions by both parties were not similar. In other words, the data triangulation in this study showed that the existence of the link of chain between events (not limited to only similarities) give evidence to the six strategies of the female offenders in reducing their risks for recidivism.

The data triangulation in this study revealed that the type of people chosen for the triangulation may have determined the form of triangulation whether similarity or consistency, especially when the triangulation is executed through examining the chain of events. Therefore, if the data

triangulation effort were completed by using the same type of group, for instance, another set of female offenders from other prisons, *similar* results would be expected to occur. However, if the data triangulation is performed by using an opposite (antagonistic) party, most probably *consistencies* may occur. For instance, in this study the community leaders can be considered as the opposite group, given that the female offenders have always been facing the community which imposes stigmas and labels. Persistent principles were found in the relationship between the female offenders and the community leaders as described in the literature review. The perceptions of the community leaders towards the female offenders seemed to reduce the uncertainty about the strategies of the female offenders.

The community leaders have also drawn some integrated and accurate views, providing consistent information about female offenders and their efforts to reduce risks for recidivism. This is consistent with the explanation given by Cresswell (2008). Therefore, themes from Research A (Female Offenders) and Research B (Community Leaders) were bridged together to strengthen the logic of the six strategies of the female offenders in this study.

This study has also found a clear indication that one of the ways female offenders can reduce their risks for recidivism is by participating in community activities through invitation, especially for those newly released. This means that, as purported by the female offenders themselves, they need to be invited first, in order to be seen joining in the community activities. This is consistent with the views from the community leaders who are optimistic about the ability of the female offenders to repent and to prove that they have changed, by joining the community activities when they are invited.

This study also found that just as the female offenders themselves believe, the community leaders too believe that the family of the female offenders has a bigger role to play in terms of accepting and supporting them to return into the community. The community leaders believe that it is easier to have ex-female offenders accepted by their family rather than having them rejected. This may be due to the confidence and trust they may have put up to the families who understand the female offenders better.

In the case of community non acceptance, a clear chain of events was observed between the views of female offenders and those of the community leaders. The study showed that whenever the female offenders realize that they are not accepted either by the community or by their own family, they will turn to their peers. The matter will be worse when the family imposes non acceptance through pessimist pre and post judgement which resulted in the ex-female offenders choosing to be in isolation and hiding their identity either within the community itself or in the outside community.

However, with regard to all the consistencies in the rule of chain that resulted in the understanding of the six strategies of the female offenders, in reality it is difficult to determine which happens first. Nevertheless, it was clear that the female offenders may already have all the experiences and understandings about their environment. Therefore, they have decided to outline the strategies in their mind set before actually returning into the community. Thus, it is important to

understand that the rule of chain is another way of doing data triangulation, which can also take place in the form of examining the thinking process of a particular group through the perceptions of others who are also involved in the process. Discussion of the literature by Jicks (1979) that has recognized that consistent and convergent results would mean positive cases and need no further explanations, directly supports this rule of chain type of data triangulation. In summary, this initial study provides a different way of doing data triangulation. One can immerse into tracking the chain of events of a system or process even at the mind set level to bridge evidence or proof that a system well chained is consistent enough. In cases where there are missing links in the chains of events, further investigation is needed to explain the system or the phenomena. Data triangulation does not imply that only similarities are of concerned. However, when it is about studying a process, the consistency of views or perceptions by even a counter party or antagonistic group that exists in the system can be considered as an effective triangulation. This study has provided that other than seeking for as much similarities to proof findings, it is also worthy to consider the value of consistency through the rule of chain in the aspect of data triangulation.

Limitations and Future Research

There are several limitations in terms of the study itself and the data triangulation. First, the female offenders in this study did not signify the whole number of female offenders in Malaysia, therefore the six strategies cannot be generalized to all female offenders. Additionally, the six strategies derived from this study function perfectly in only certain duration of time, or at least when the goals of the female offenders have not yet been achieved. Perhaps, once the goal is realized, the strategies to lead further life might be of a different content and context. The applicability of the six strategies can be further ascertained if a study is conducted to check on the strategies, perhaps after five to ten years after the release of the female offenders.

Implementing triangulation as suggested in this study may inflict bias if the researcher has a prior anticipation on the type of group that could produce significant results. This type of group may exist in the link of chain of the female offenders' perception on the strategies they will undertake during post release. Furthermore, because this triangulation is performed on the basis of the rule of chain, it is limited to only triangulating findings that appeared in the form of processes or systems. However, in spite of its limitation, this study has contributed to the knowledge on how to perform triangulation in qualitative studies. Apart from appreciating that female offenders do think on how to survive in their community by considering the perceptions of the community leaders about them, the triangulation effort performed in this study has opened up new ways of working with triangulation and has created better understanding on how to examine strategies, which usually contain *ifs* and *thens* or systems.

Future research intending to use data triangulation may benefit from the existence of data triangulation performed in the context of a system or a process. This research suggests that data triangulation can be perceived successful when the same perceptions are revealed from many groups of thoughts, either from within or between groups (Bungay & Vella-Burrows, 2013; Creswell, 2008; Sands & Strier, 2006). However, their

statements may be ambiguous because researchers may get confused with the meaning of the “same” perceptions over specific findings. More research is needed to better explain the understanding of the term “same” and its relation with the term “consistencies” or “constancy” in the context of data triangulation.

This study only discovers that there is another way of looking at the terms “same” and “consistencies” when one triangulates a process or a system as the result. Having the links of a system chained fittingly by other group of people is considered as consistent. What is still left to be answered is a question whether there would be another context of “consistency” in other types of triangulation. Through the observation on the data triangulation in this study, there may also be another way of perceiving the meaning of “same” and its relationship with the meaning of “consistency” through the investigator, theoretical or methodological types of triangulation (Denzin, 1970). Therefore, to explore other possibilities of validating findings, further research that focused on triangulating the measurement process is needed.

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