



# Perspectives of business owners, employees, and consumers on the hiring of formerly incarcerated persons

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## Abstract

The 2021 Philippine Statistics Authority survey shows that unemployment rate among formerly incarcerated persons (FIPs) is twice as high as the national average. This reflects the difficulties encountered by FIPs in finding gainful employment after doing time, as well as the reluctance of businesses to hire them. The study involved a total of 316 respondents consisting of consumers, business owners and managers, employees, and suppliers. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential (comparative and correlational) statistics. Findings show that while the respondents generally agree to the concept of providing employment opportunities for FIPs, in general, they are not open to having them in the workplace. The study also offers detailed insights on the perceptions of stakeholders according to their demographics. From a marketing perspective, plunging headlong into the hiring of FIPs on the principle of inclusivity is ill-advised. It is recommendable to first invest in the education and orientation of stakeholders regarding the hiring of FIPs, before deciding to actually hire them, lest they risk backlash from employees, business partners, and the consumers themselves.

**Keywords:** *human resource management, inclusivity, Philippines, ex-convicts*

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## 1. Introduction

Employment of formerly incarcerated persons (FIPs), also commonly referred to as “ex-convicts,” has become a significant social and economic issue in contemporary labor markets. Securing stable employment is widely recognized as a critical mechanism for reducing recidivism, restoring livelihoods, and supporting successful community reintegration. Policymakers, employers, and civil society organizations increasingly frame second-chance hiring as both a social justice initiative and a practical workforce strategy. Nevertheless, the employment of ex-convicts remains inconsistent and contested across industries and geographic contexts (Peck & Theodore, 2008; Rucks-Ahadiana et al. 2021; Mills et al., 2026). Studies from criminal justice researchers consistently reveal substantially higher unemployment rates among individuals with criminal records compared with the general population (Larson et al., 2022). Comparative reports further indicate that FIPs experience unemployment rates several times higher than non-offenders in jurisdictions where detailed labor-market data are available, reflecting persistent exclusion and long-term earnings penalties after release (Emmert, 2019). National and regional data demonstrate similar patterns. In the Philippines, local studies also report significant employment disadvantages among former persons deprived of liberty (PDLs). A community-level study conducted in Angeles City found an unemployment rate of 13.8% among former PDLs, nearly double the contemporaneous national average, illustrating that the Philippine context mirrors global trends of labor marginalization among individuals with criminal convictions (Amurao et al., 2025).

Despite these barriers, an increasing number of private-sector employers have publicly embraced second-chance hiring initiatives, generating practical examples of how organizations operationalize inclusive hiring practices. Internationally, corporate commitments and consultancy reports demonstrate how firms integrate fair-chance hiring into recruitment systems, workforce planning, and corporate social responsibility initiatives (Frambo et al., 2021). A diverse range of employers, including manufacturing firms and hospitality companies, have been recognized for implementing second-chance hiring practices. Media reports describe manufacturing companies that prioritize hiring formerly incarcerated workers and associate these practices with improvements in employee retention and organizational culture (Dula, 2025; Shingler, 2023; Kapadia, 2025). Similarly, multinational hospitality firms have expanded talent pipelines to include justice-involved

applicants, while local enterprises emphasize inclusive recruitment as central to both their business and social missions (Nesbitt, 2022; Burton & Confino, 2022). Philippine examples are also emerging. Empirical evidence shows pilot reintegration programs, employer partnerships, and skills-matching initiatives designed to improve employability outcomes for former PDLs. These developments suggest that an active, although still evolving, ecosystem of inclusive employment initiatives is taking shape within the Philippine business environment (Barican et al., 2025; Amurao et al., 2025).

However, isolated success stories do not fully address questions regarding the scalability and sustainability of second-chance hiring practices. While some firms report operational benefits such as improved retention, workforce stability, and stronger community relations, others remain hesitant due to concerns regarding liability, customer reactions, and regulatory limitations. This mixed experience stresses the importance of understanding how stakeholder perceptions shape organizational decisions related to second-chance hiring. Empirical and qualitative studies indicate that employer attitudes are influenced by previous hiring experiences, beliefs regarding redeemability, perceptions of risk, and organizational context (Porter et al., 2026; Morzenti & Gringeri, 2021). Employers with positive prior experiences or structured onboarding systems tend to demonstrate greater openness toward hiring justice-involved applicants, whereas those without such experience frequently overestimate associated risks (O'Connor et al., 2023; Morzenti & Gringeri, 2021; Martin et al., 2020).

Consumers and the broader public also represent critical stakeholders in shaping the success or failure of inclusive hiring initiatives. Research on corporate social advocacy and inclusive marketing suggests that stakeholder responses are strongly influenced by perceptions of authenticity and congruence between organizational actions and brand identity (Frambo et al., 2021). Inclusive practices perceived as genuine may strengthen customer loyalty and trust, whereas initiatives viewed as performative or inconsistent with organizational identity may provoke resistance. These dynamics are particularly relevant to second-chance hiring, which may be interpreted either as a principled commitment to inclusion or as a reputational risk depending on stakeholder interpretation. Other stakeholders, including employees, investors, regulators, and community organizations, further shape organizational outcomes. Internal readiness, human resource capacity, and governance structures interact with external pressures such as media attention and activist

scrutiny. Recent controversies involving Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives illustrate how misalignment between organizational practices and stakeholder expectations can produce reputational strain or strategic retreat, even when inclusivity efforts are pursued in good faith (Allen et al., 2025).

Situating the hiring of ex-convicts within broader inclusivity frameworks reveals both opportunities and risks for organizations. When inclusive hiring aligns with organizational identity and is implemented authentically through appropriate screening, training, and communication, it can strengthen employer branding, expand talent pools, and improve customer relationships (Allen et al., 2025). Empirical research on inclusive advertising and brand inclusivity demonstrates that authentic inclusion may generate measurable commercial benefits (Verbytska et al., 2023; Roth-Cohen & Gvili, 2026). Conversely, inclusivity initiatives that conflict with dominant stakeholder perceptions or appear symbolic rather than substantive may result in backlash. Evidence from business news and industry analyses concerning DEI controversies indicates that stakeholder opposition, particularly among consumers and investors, can negatively affect financial performance and organizational legitimacy, thereby undermining the intended benefits of inclusive policies (Allen et al., 2025).

This tension underscores the importance of systematically evaluating stakeholder perceptions before implementing or expanding inclusive hiring programs. Assessing customer sentiment, employee readiness, and community context, while also piloting programs and communicating outcomes transparently, can help organizations mitigate risk and improve the likelihood of successful implementation. Given the well-documented employment disadvantages faced by ex-convicts, the growing adoption of second-chance hiring practices globally and within the Philippines, and the significant influence of stakeholder perceptions on inclusivity outcomes, this study is both timely and practically relevant. The findings may assist businesses in anticipating stakeholder responses, designing more effective inclusive hiring strategies, and maximizing both social and commercial value. Specifically, this study aims to address the following questions:

1. What is the level of trust that the employers have in hiring incarcerated candidates?
2. What is the extent to which factors influence the decision-making of employers to hire FIPs?

3. What is the preference of employers towards hiring applicants who were previously incarcerated?
4. What are the perceptions of employees, customers, and business partners on having FIPs in the workplace/business?
5. Are there significant associations between the perspective of employees and customers on having FIPs in the workplace/business, and their demographics?

## **2. Literature Review**

### ***2.1. Theoretical Framework***

This study is anchored on several theories that explain why stakeholders perceive formerly incarcerated individuals in particular ways and how these perceptions influence business and marketing outcomes. Central to the framework is Stigma Theory, which suggests that ex-convict status functions as a socially discrediting attribute that shapes initial stakeholder evaluations through assumptions related to risk, morality, and trustworthiness (Goffman, 1963). These evaluations are further refined through Attribution Theory, wherein stakeholders interpret criminal history according to perceived causes, offense severity, and the possibility of rehabilitation, leading to varied reactions depending on the nature of the offense and the evidence of reform presented (Heider, 1958; Weiner, 1985). In addition, Social Identity Theory explains how formerly incarcerated individuals are frequently categorized as part of an out-group, generating symbolic and emotional resistance among stakeholders who seek to preserve in-group norms and favorable brand associations (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Hogg, 2016).

From an organizational perspective, the act of hiring FIPs serves as a market signal consistent with Signaling Theory. Through this lens, organizational hiring practices communicate implicit messages regarding corporate values, ethical positioning, and tolerance for perceived risk (Spence, 1973; Connelly et al., 2011). These signals are interpreted differently across stakeholder groups, including consumers, employees, investors, and local communities, depending on their prior beliefs, cultural norms, and social experiences. Guided by Stakeholder Theory, the framework assumes that stakeholder perceptions are not peripheral concerns but are central to organizational legitimacy, reputation, and performance (Freeman, 1984; Freeman et al., 2010).

Finally, the study draws from Market Orientation and Inclusive Marketing Theory to explain how stakeholder perceptions function as a mediating mechanism between inclusive hiring practices and organizational outcomes. These theories suggest that inclusive hiring may generate positive outcomes such as enhanced brand trust, customer loyalty, and stakeholder advocacy when organizational actions are perceived as authentic and aligned with stakeholder expectations. Conversely, when such initiatives are viewed as symbolic, inconsistent, or misaligned with stakeholder values, they may lead to reputational damage, resistance, or public backlash (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Kotler & Keller, 2016; Licsandru & Cui, 2019). Thus, the framework emphasizes that the success or failure of inclusive hiring strategies, particularly the hiring of formerly incarcerated individuals, depends largely on how effectively organizations anticipate, understand, and strategically manage stakeholder perceptions within their branding and marketing efforts.

## ***2.2. Practice of Hiring Formerly Incarcerated Persons***

The literature on the hiring of ex-convicts positions employment as a critical factor in post-incarceration reintegration, with significant implications for individual rehabilitation, organizational practice, and broader societal outcomes. Across the fields of criminology, labor economics, and management research, scholars consistently identify access to stable employment as a key determinant in reducing recidivism and promoting meaningful social participation. As a result, the hiring of FIPs has increasingly become a focal issue at the intersection of criminal justice reform and inclusive business practice (Peck & Theodore, 2008; Rucks-Ahidiana et al. 2021; Mills et al., 2026).

Despite growing recognition of its importance, the employment of ex-convicts continues to be constrained by both structural and perceptual barriers. Existing research indicates that individuals with criminal records experience persistent unemployment and underemployment long after their release, even when factors such as education and skills are controlled. These employment disadvantages are attributed not only to formal legal restrictions but also to employer and societal attitudes that significantly influence hiring decisions and workplace inclusion (Peck & Theodore, 2008).

Within the Philippine context, the existing literature remains limited but points to similar patterns and challenges. Local empirical studies suggest that former PDLs experience higher unemployment rates than the general population due to stigma, limited employer

willingness to engage in second-chance hiring, and the absence of systematic reintegration pathways (Barican et al., 2025). Furthermore, the scarcity of official national labor statistics specifically addressing ex-convict employment highlights the continuing need for localized research that examines employment outcomes, stakeholder perceptions, and employer behavior in the Philippine setting (Amurao et al., 2025).

### ***2.3 General Perceptions of Stakeholders on Hiring Formerly Incarcerated Persons***

Stakeholder perceptions are central to understanding why the hiring of ex-convicts remains relatively uncommon despite increasing policy advocacy and persistent labor shortages. Employers, as primary gatekeepers to employment opportunities, often perceive formerly incarcerated individuals as higher-risk hires (Barican et al., 2025), associating criminal history with concerns regarding reliability, workplace safety, and potential reputational harm. Qualitative employer studies demonstrate that these perceptions frequently persist even in the absence of direct negative experiences with justice-involved employees (Morzenti & Gringeri, 2021).

Empirical research further suggests that employer attitudes are not fixed but are shaped by organizational context and prior experience (Amurao et al., 2025). Employers who have previously hired ex-convicts, particularly those that implemented structured onboarding, supervision, and support mechanisms, tend to report more favorable perceptions and a greater willingness to engage in second-chance hiring in the future. These findings emphasize the importance of experiential learning in reshaping employer beliefs and reducing perceived risk (O'Connor et al., 2023; Martin et al., 2020).

Beyond employers, consumers and the general public also represent influential stakeholder groups whose perceptions can indirectly affect hiring decisions and organizational strategies. Studies on corporate social advocacy and inclusive business practices indicate that consumers evaluate company actions through the lenses of authenticity and congruence with organizational identity (O'Donnell et al., 2025). Inclusive practices perceived as genuine and aligned with corporate values are more likely to receive public support, whereas initiatives perceived as risky, performative, or inconsistent with brand identity may generate skepticism or backlash.

Employees and internal stakeholders likewise shape organizational openness to second-chance hiring initiatives. Literature on diversity and inclusion emphasizes that

workforce acceptance, managerial readiness, and organizational culture play critical roles in determining whether inclusive hiring programs are successfully implemented or informally resisted within the workplace (Platania et al., 2025). Without internal alignment, organizations may encounter employee disengagement or internal conflict, even when external communication strongly promotes inclusivity. Perceptions of ex-convicts are not uniform but vary according to the nature of the offense committed. Employers frequently distinguish between non-violent and violent offenses, with non-violent crimes generally perceived as more acceptable within employment contexts. This differentiation reflects broader societal beliefs regarding dangerousness, trustworthiness, and the perceived potential for rehabilitation (Martin et al., 2020; Morzenti & Gringeri, 2021).

Research also indicates that offenses related to drugs, theft, or minor financial crimes are often viewed as more compatible with rehabilitation narratives, particularly when a substantial amount of time has passed since conviction (Tomaz et al., 2023). In contrast, offenses involving violence or sexual crimes tend to carry significantly greater stigma and are more likely to result in categorical exclusion from employment opportunities (O'Connor et al., 2023). These differentiated perceptions also influence consumer and community reactions to inclusive hiring initiatives. Stakeholder sensitivity to offense type affects how organizations are evaluated when such practices are publicly communicated. Firms employing individuals convicted of less socially stigmatized offenses may experience minimal public resistance, whereas organizations associated with more serious crimes often face heightened scrutiny and reputational risk. This dynamic reinforces the practice of selective inclusivity within many hiring systems.

Within the Philippine context, offense-specific quantitative analyses remain limited. Nevertheless, qualitative studies suggest similar patterns of differentiation among local employers. Existing research indicates that employers demonstrate conditional openness to hiring former PDLs depending on the type of offense committed, perceived evidence of moral reform, and recommendations provided by trusted intermediaries. This conditionality highlights the extent to which moral judgments continue to shape labor-market access and employment opportunities in local contexts (Amurao et al., 2025).

#### ***2.4. Marketing Implications of Hiring Ex-Convicts***

From a marketing perspective, the hiring of ex-convicts intersects with broader discussions on inclusivity, brand identity, and corporate reputation. Research on inclusive marketing and brand activism suggests that internal organizational practices, including inclusive hiring initiatives, increasingly shape external evaluations of brands and corporations (O'Donnell et al., 2025). Stakeholders often interpret employment practices as indicators of organizational values and ethical positioning, thereby influencing trust, customer perceptions, and overall brand equity (Tuli et al., 2025). Inclusivity can function as a source of competitive advantage when organizational practices align with brand positioning and stakeholder expectation. Similarly, authenticity and consistency between internal organizational actions and external communication are critical determinants of positive consumer responses and long-term stakeholder support. Poorly aligned inclusivity strategies may create marketing and reputational risks for organizations. These findings suggest that inclusive hiring practices, particularly those involving stigmatized populations such as ex-convicts, require careful stakeholder assessment and strategic communication planning.

### **3. Methodology**

This quantitative study utilized descriptive, comparative, and correlational analyses. Data were gathered from a total of 316 respondents consisting of 47 representatives from business management, 55 employees, and 214 consumers, all within Lucena City, Philippines. The 47 business representatives also responded as business suppliers or partners.

Four questionnaires, one for each group of respondents, served as the instruments of the study. All four instruments gathered data regarding the respondents' perceptions of the hiring of FIPs. The instrument intended for business management representatives also measured their willingness to hire FIPs.

The study utilized weighted mean to measure the perceptions of the respondents and their willingness to hire FIPs. Since the data were non-parametric and not normally distributed, the Mann-Whitney U test was used as the comparative tool for nominal demographic variables, while Spearman's rho was used to determine the correlation among ordinal demographic variables.

The researchers first obtained verbal consent from each respondent, after which each respondent was given a formal letter requesting participation in the study. The letter

contained the title, objectives, and purpose of the study, the information required from the respondents, and the methods through which the information would be obtained. Each respondent then signed an informed consent form, which reiterated the contents of the request letter and informed the respondents of their rights.

#### 4. Findings and Discussion

The findings in Table 1 indicate that employers generally demonstrate a moderate to high level of trust toward hiring FIPs, particularly when employment is perceived as a stabilizing factor that reduces the likelihood of reoffending.

**Table 1**

*Level of trust that the employers have in hiring incarcerated candidate*

Indicators	WM	Description
<b>Level of trust</b>		
Level of trust		
RECIDIVISM. People who have been in prison are less likely to commit another criminal act if they have stable employment	3.43	Agree
SUITABILITY FOR EMPLOYMENT. People who have been in prison are fit to enter the job market	3.83	Agree
REHABILITATION. Effective rehabilitation programs prepare FIPs for employment	3.81	Agree
CRIME COMMITTED. Type of crime committed influence trust in hiring FIPs	4.04	Agree
<b>Type of crime committed</b>		
Crimes Against Person include homicide, assault, sexual offense, child abuse, domestic abuse, kidnapping, libel, and any crime related to hurting a person.	3.36	Slightly considered
Crimes Against Property include theft, robbery, arson, burglary, vandalism, and any crime related to destroying or taking someone's property.	3.49	Highly considered
White-collar crime is a non-violent crime and a financially motivated crime usually committed by the middle or upper class (specifically those who are in politics) including fraud, tax evasion, embezzlement, money laundering, bribery	3.4	Slightly considered
Cybercrime is a crime made using an online platform, it includes cyberstalking, identity theft, hacking, phishing, cyberbullying, and cyber-libel.	3.34	Slightly considered
Organized Crime is a crime committed by a group of people it includes, human trafficking, drug trafficking, smuggling, and others.	3.49	Highly considered

**Legend:** 1.00-1.80 Strongly Disagree/ Not considered; 1.81-2.60 Disagree/ Least considered; 2.61-3.40 Undecided/ Slightly considered; 3.41-4.20 Agree/ Highly considered; 4.21-5.00 Strongly Agree/ Most considered

Employers tend to agree that stable employment can help mitigate recidivism and that FIPs are generally capable of participating productively in the labor market. There is also a strong expression of confidence in rehabilitation programs, suggesting that employers believe such interventions can adequately prepare individuals for reintegration into formal employment. However, this trust is not unconditional. The results reveal that the type of crime committed plays a significant role in shaping employer trust, making it one of the most influential factors in hiring decisions. Employers demonstrate greater caution when evaluating applicants based on criminal background, indicating that trust is selectively granted rather than universally extended. Among offense categories, crimes against property and organized crimes are more strongly considered in hiring decisions compared with crimes against persons, white-collar crimes, and cybercrimes. This pattern suggests that employers engage in differentiated forms of risk assessment rather than adopting a blanket acceptance or rejection of formerly incarcerated individuals.

These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that employer attitudes toward hiring FIPs are conditional and context-dependent. Existing research has shown that employers often support second-chance hiring in principle, particularly when employment is framed as a mechanism for reducing recidivism and promoting social reintegration (Amurao et al., 2025; Barican et al., 2025). The general agreement that employment reduces the likelihood of reoffending is likewise consistent with empirical evidence emphasizing the stabilizing role of work in post-incarceration outcomes.

The strong influence of crime type on employer trust also reflects patterns documented in studies on employer perceptions, which indicate that hiring decisions are shaped by perceived risk and moral judgments associated with specific offenses. Research conducted by Martin et al. (2020) and Morzenti and Gringeri (2021) similarly found that employers are generally more willing to consider individuals convicted of non-violent or property-related offenses than those associated with violent or personal crimes. This differentiation supports attribution-based explanations, wherein stakeholders assess whether criminal behavior is perceived as situational, reformable, or reflective of enduring character traits. Furthermore, confidence in rehabilitation programs mirrors findings from employer-focused research demonstrating that belief in rehabilitation increases employer willingness to hire FIPs, particularly when organizations trust institutional mechanisms that certify readiness for employment (O'Connor et al., 2023). In this context, trust in formal

rehabilitation processes functions as a form of risk mitigation, allowing employers to justify inclusive hiring decisions while simultaneously maintaining organizational safeguards and reducing perceived uncertainty.

**Table 2**

*Factors influencing the decision-making of employers to hire formerly incarcerated persons*

Indicators	WM	Description
SAFETY. Maintaining a safe workplace when considering FIPs influences the decision to hire them.	4.23	Most considered
POSITION. The position being applied for by FIPs influences the decision to hire them.	4.02	Highly considered
COMPETENCY. The reduced level of competency of FIPs, due to their environment and experiences during imprisonment, is considered a factor in the decision to hire them.	3.81	Highly considered
COMPANY IMAGE. The potential impact on the company's public image when hiring FIPs influences the decision to hire them.	3.77	Highly considered
STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTION. The potential impact on stakeholders' perceptions of the business influences the decision to hire FIPs.	3.77	Highly considered

**Legend:** 1.00-1.80 Not considered; 1.81-2.60 Least considered; 2.61-3.40 Slightly considered; 3.41-4.20 Highly considered; 4.21-5.00 Most considered

Findings in Table 2 are consistent with existing research indicating that employer hesitation toward hiring FIPs is primarily rooted in perceived risk rather than outright opposition to inclusivity. Employer-focused studies emphasize that concerns regarding workplace safety frequently dominate hiring decisions, particularly in environments that involve close interpersonal interaction or physical proximity (Martin et al., 2020; Morzenti & Gringeri, 2021). This observation aligns with the strong prioritization of safety reflected in the present findings.

The importance placed on job position also echoes prior literature suggesting that employers often adopt selective inclusion strategies, wherein FIPs are considered suitable for certain positions but not for others. O'Connor et al. (2023) similarly found that employers' willingness to hire increases when job responsibilities are perceived as low-risk or when sufficient supervision and support structures are available. These findings support the view that hiring decisions are shaped largely by the perceived compatibility between an applicant's criminal background and the demands of the position being offered. Interestingly, although company image and stakeholder perception were identified as highly considered factors, they did not emerge as the most dominant drivers of decision-making. As reflected in one

respondent's statement, customers may support the idea of giving ex-convicts another opportunity, but they may not necessarily bear the consequences if problems arise within the business. Consequently, organizations may prioritize protecting their operational safety and internal stability regardless of public opinion.

This finding aligns with Stakeholder Theory and the broader literature on inclusive business practices, which suggests that although external stakeholder perceptions influence corporate behavior, organizations often adopt conservative approaches when internal operational risks are perceived to be substantial. Studies on inclusive marketing and corporate advocacy further indicate that reputational considerations tend to become more salient only after organizations have addressed concerns regarding operational feasibility and risk management (Tuli et al., 2025).

From a strategic perspective, the lower prioritization of stakeholder perception relative to workplace safety suggests that businesses may underestimate or postpone reputational considerations until operational confidence has been firmly established. This dynamic presents both risks and opportunities for organizations. Although prioritizing safety is a rational organizational response, failing to proactively manage stakeholder perceptions may expose businesses to unintended public backlash once inclusive hiring practices become visible to external audiences.

Table 3 shows the employers' perspectives of hiring FIPs. Despite earlier findings indicating generally positive levels of trust and favorable perceptions toward FIPs, the results reveal a substantial reluctance among employers to actually hire them across organizational levels and functional areas. Employers consistently indicated that they would likely not hire FIPs, regardless of whether the positions were clerical, supervisory, managerial, or executive in nature. These findings suggest that positive perceptions toward rehabilitation and reintegration may not necessarily translate into concrete hiring behavior.

One respondent provided an analogy comparing second-chance hiring to the concept of heaven, stating that while many people speak positively about it, few are willing to embrace it personally or immediately. Several respondents also cited local cases in Lucena City in which businesses reportedly experienced theft or financial losses allegedly involving formerly incarcerated employees. One respondent further referenced a bank robbery incident in the city approximately a decade ago, claiming that the crime had been facilitated by an employee with a prior history of imprisonment. These narratives illustrate how highly salient

negative experiences and anecdotal accounts can strongly influence employer perceptions and reinforce risk-based hiring decisions.

**Table 3**

*Preference of employers towards hiring formerly incarcerated persons*

		Staff/ Clerical	Supervisory/ Managerial	Middle Management	Top Management	Overall
Means	Human resources	1.63	1.42	1.37	1.35	1.44
	Finance	1.46	1.29	1.25	1.22	1.30
	Marketing	1.58	1.33	1.25	1.23	1.35
	Operations	1.68	1.40	1.28	1.24	1.40
	Overall	1.59	1.36	1.29	1.26	1.37
Descriptive equivalent	Human resources	1 (CN)	1 (CN)	1 (CN)	1 (CN)	1 (CN)
	Finance	1 (CN)	1 (CN)	1 (CN)	1 (CN)	1 (CN)
	Marketing	1 (CN)	1 (CN)	1 (CN)	1 (CN)	1 (CN)
	Operations	1 (CN)	1 (CN)	1 (CN)	1 (CN)	1 (CN)
	Overall	1 (CN)	1 (CN)	1 (CN)	1 (CN)	1 (CN)
Rank	Human resources	2	1	1	1	1
	Finance	4	4	4	4	4
	Marketing	3	3	3	3	3
	Operations	1	2	2	2	2

**Legend:** 1.00-1.80 Certainly will not/ 1 (CN); 1.81-2.60 Probably will not/ 2 (PN); 2.61-3.40 Undecided/ 3 (U); 3.41-4.20 Probably will/ 4 (PW); 4.21-5.00 Certainly will/ 5 (CW)

The findings further suggest that willingness to hire decreases as organizational responsibility increases, with the strongest resistance observed in middle- and upper-management positions. Although slight variations were observed across departments, the overall pattern remained highly consistent: FIPs were least preferred as candidates in human resources, finance, marketing, and operations. The uniformity of these responses indicates that employer reluctance is systemic rather than merely role-specific. Most notably, the results reveal a clear disparity between attitudinal agreement and behavioral intention. While employers expressed trust in rehabilitation, acknowledged the social value of stable employment, and agreed that FIPs could potentially reintegrate into society, these beliefs did not translate into actual hiring preferences. This suggests that expressed trust may function more as a conceptual endorsement than as a genuine commitment to inclusive hiring practices.

This discrepancy between favorable attitudes and actual hiring reluctance is widely documented in the literature on second-chance employment. Existing research consistently shows that employers may support inclusive hiring in principle while remaining resistant in practice, particularly when organizational accountability and perceived operational risk are high (Amurao et al., 2025; Barican et al., 2025). A closer examination of departmental preferences in the present study reveals that finance and marketing departments were the least receptive to hiring FIPs, even for entry-level positions. This finding suggests that resistance is not solely hierarchical in nature but also functionally driven, reflecting the perceived sensitivity, visibility, and symbolic importance of specific organizational roles.

The strong resistance observed in finance and marketing positions indicates that employer hesitation is especially pronounced in departments where trust, organizational reputation, and symbolic representation are central to functional identity. The convergence of low hiring preference across these departments reinforces the conclusion that resistance toward FIPs is shaped less by generalized prejudice and more by context-specific forms of risk rationalization. Organizations appear to use these rationalizations to justify the gap between publicly expressed support for reintegration and actual hiring behavior. Employer-focused studies describe this phenomenon as conditional acceptance, wherein employers verbally endorse rehabilitation and reintegration while remaining hesitant to extend actual employment opportunities, particularly for positions involving authority, trust, or financial responsibility. Martin et al. (2020) and Morzenti and Gringeri (2021) similarly found that willingness to hire declines substantially as job seniority and organizational responsibility increase.

From a theoretical perspective, this gap may be explained through attributional and signaling mechanisms. Although employers may cognitively acknowledge that rehabilitation is possible, hiring a formerly incarcerated individual, especially into higher-level positions, may signal a willingness to assume reputational and operational risks. As emphasized in stakeholder-focused and inclusive business research, organizations often retreat from inclusive practices when perceived consequences outweigh moral or social alignment. Consequently, the findings suggest that employer trust and positive perceptions toward FIPs remain largely symbolic rather than actionable, reflecting what may be characterized as performative inclusivity. Employers may be comfortable expressing support for reintegration

at an abstract level while remaining unwilling to operationalize this support through concrete hiring decisions.

From a marketing and strategic standpoint, this discrepancy presents a potential reputational risk for organizations. Companies that publicly endorse inclusivity but fail to implement inclusive hiring practices may become vulnerable to credibility challenges once inconsistencies between stated organizational values and internal practices become visible to stakeholders. Research on inclusive marketing consistently emphasizes that authenticity and consistency between organizational messaging and actual behavior are critical determinants of stakeholder trust and long-term reputational legitimacy (O'Donnell et al., 2025).

As shown in Table 4, a highly stratified pattern of employer preference leans toward hiring FIPs, strongly influenced by the type and severity of the offense committed. Across all business departments, crimes associated with lower perceived physical harm and reduced moral outrage, particularly cyber-related offenses and minor property crimes such as vandalism, emerged as the most acceptable. These offenses were consistently ranked as the most preferred, indicating that employers are generally more willing to consider applicants whose crimes are perceived as indirect, non-violent, and less personally threatening.

**Table 4**

*Most and least preferred crimes by the employers according to business departments*

Type of Crime	HR	Finance	Marketing	Operations	Total	Rank
Cybercrime	1	1	1	1	4	1
Crime against property	2	3	2	3	10	2
Crime against person	4	2	4	2	12	3
White-collar crime	3	4	3	4	14	4
Organized crime	5	5	5	5	20	5

One respondent cautioned against underestimating cybercrime, particularly in the modern business environment. Although cybercrimes are generally non-violent in nature, the respondent emphasized that such offenses have the potential to inflict significant financial losses, compromise confidential organizational information, and disrupt operations with minimal physical effort. This observation suggests that employer perceptions of cyber-related offenses may evolve as awareness of digital vulnerabilities and cybersecurity risks continues to increase. Conversely, crimes involving direct physical harm, severe moral violations, or

organized criminal activity were overwhelmingly ranked as the least preferred across departments. Offenses such as robbery, kidnapping, drug trafficking, smuggling, arson, sexual assault, and crimes against children consistently occupied the lowest ranks in employer preference. The consistency of these responses suggests the presence of a shared evaluative framework among employers, regardless of functional area, wherein certain crimes are perceived as fundamentally incompatible with workplace trust, organizational safety, and moral legitimacy.

The results further indicate that white-collar and financial crimes, including fraud, embezzlement, money laundering, and estafa, were also among the least preferred offenses, particularly within departments such as finance and marketing. This finding demonstrates that employer aversion is not limited solely to violent offenses but also extends to crimes perceived as undermining integrity, fiduciary responsibility, and institutional credibility.

These findings are consistent with previous research indicating that employer perceptions toward FIPs are offense-specific rather than generalized. Existing studies demonstrate that employers sharply differentiate between violent and non-violent crimes, with non-violent offenses, particularly those perceived as situational or technologically mediated, generating greater openness to hiring (Martin et al., 2020; Morzenti & Gringeri, 2021). The preference for cyber-related offenses and minor property crimes also aligns with attribution-based explanations, wherein stakeholders perceive such offenses as less reflective of enduring character deficiencies.

The strong aversion toward crimes involving violence, sexual offenses, and organized criminal activity similarly reflects findings from employer perception studies showing that these offenses trigger heightened stigma and categorical exclusion. Such crimes are frequently associated with perceptions of irreversibility, dangerousness, and severe moral transgression, making employers reluctant to extend trust even when rehabilitation is acknowledged conceptually (O'Connor et al., 2023). In addition, the low preference for financial and white-collar crimes reflects concerns documented in employer and consultancy literature regarding trust, compliance, fiduciary accountability, and reputational exposure. Employers are particularly risk-averse when the nature of the offense is directly related to the functional responsibilities of a position, reinforcing selective exclusion based on perceived congruence between the crime committed and the demands of the role.

From a policy and program-development perspective, the findings suggest that employment pathways for FIPs may be more viable when aligned with offenses perceived as lower risk, such as cyber-related or minor property offenses. The Bureau of Jail Management and Penology may therefore consider developing tailored reintegration programs that strategically match offense profiles with appropriate job roles and organizational environments. Such targeted approaches may improve hiring outcomes, reduce employer resistance, and strengthen the long-term effectiveness of second-chance employment initiatives.

Table 5 indicates that employees and customers generally hold unfavorable perceptions toward the presence of FIPs in workplaces and business settings, as reflected in their overall disagreement across all categories of crime. This pattern suggests a prevailing level of discomfort and resistance among these stakeholder groups, regardless of whether the offenses involve violence, property-related crimes, or organized criminal activity. Even for offenses perceived as less severe, stakeholders did not demonstrate strong acceptance, indicating that stigma toward FIPs remains pervasive across business environments.

**Table 5**

*Perceptions of employees, customers, and business partners on having formerly incarcerated persons in the workplace/business*

Type of Crime	Employees			Customers			Suppliers / partners			Overall		
	WM	Desc.	Rank	WM	Desc.	Rank	WM	Desc.	Rank	WM	Desc.	Rank
Crime against person	2.22	2 (D)	5	2.36	2 (D)	4	2.56	2 (D)	4	2.38	2 (D)	4
Crime against property	2.49	2 (D)	1	2.56	2 (D)	1	2.61	3 (U)	2	2.55	2 (D)	2
White-collar crime	2.44	2 (D)	3	2.49	2 (D)	2	2.61	3 (U)	2	2.51	2 (D)	3
Organized crime	2.25	2 (D)	4	2.27	2 (D)	5	2.56	2 (D)	4	2.36	2 (D)	5
Cybercrime	2.48	2 (D)	2	2.48	2 (D)	3	2.89	3 (U)	1	2.62	3 (U)	1
<b>Overall</b>	<b>2.38</b>	<b>2 (D)</b>		<b>2.43</b>	<b>2 (D)</b>		<b>2.64</b>	<b>3 (U)</b>		<b>2.48</b>	<b>2 (D)</b>	

**Legend:** 1.00-1.80 Strongly Disagree; 1.81-2.60 Disagree; 2.61-3.40 Undecided; 3.41-4.20 Agree; 4.21-5.00 Strongly Agree

In contrast, business partners and suppliers exhibited comparatively more neutral perceptions, particularly toward crimes against property, white-collar offenses, and cybercrime. Although this stakeholder group did not express strong agreement, their

responses generally fell within an undecided or neutral range rather than outright disagreement. This finding suggests a more pragmatic or transactional perspective, wherein business partners may prioritize continuity of operations and commercial relationships over moral evaluations of criminal history.

Across all stakeholder groups, cybercrime emerged as the most tolerated offense category, whereas crimes against persons and organized criminal activity consistently received the strongest rejection. Overall, however, stakeholder sentiment remained characterized more by caution and skepticism than by acceptance, resulting in generally unfavorable perceptions toward the employment of FIPs in business organizations.

With regard to the hiring of FIPs, the findings suggest that the perceptions of business owners or managers and those of their stakeholders largely align with one another. Both groups appear to share similar concerns regarding trust, risk, workplace safety, and organizational reputation, reinforcing the broader reluctance toward inclusive hiring practices involving justice-involved individuals. These findings are consistent with previous research demonstrating that stakeholder perceptions extend beyond employers and play a significant role in shaping organizational behavior and hiring decisions. Studies grounded in Stakeholder Theory emphasize that employees and customers are particularly sensitive to organizational actions perceived as increasing risk or threatening established organizational values (Freeman, 1984). The strong resistance observed among employees is likewise consistent with literature highlighting internal stakeholders' concerns regarding workplace safety, social cohesion, and interpersonal trust.

Consumer-focused research on inclusive business practices further explains why customer perceptions tend to remain conservative. Studies on corporate social advocacy and inclusive marketing indicate that consumers frequently evaluate inclusive initiatives through moral and emotional frameworks, often reacting negatively when inclusivity involves stigmatized groups perceived as threatening or inconsistent with brand expectations (O'Donnell et al., 2025). This perspective helps explain why customer perceptions remained unfavorable even when employers themselves expressed moderate trust in rehabilitation and reintegration.

Table 6 reveals that stakeholder perceptions toward FIPs are not homogeneous but instead vary systematically according to demographic characteristics, particularly sex, age, and educational attainment. Among employees, age emerged as a consistent influencing

factor, with older respondents tending to demonstrate lower tolerance toward FIPs, especially in cases involving crimes against property, white-collar crimes, and organized crime. This pattern suggests that tolerance within the workforce may decrease as age increases, potentially reflecting generational differences in risk perception, workplace expectations, and moral judgment.

**Table 6**

*Association between the perspective of employees and customers on having formerly incarcerated persons in the workplace/business, and their demographics*

	Sex	Age	Educational attainment
<b>Employees</b>			
Crime against property		The older the respondents, the less tolerant they are	
White-collar crime	Males are less tolerant than females	The older the respondents, the less tolerant they are	The higher the educational attainment, the more tolerant they are
Organized crime		The older the respondents, the less tolerant they are	
<b>Customers</b>			
Crime against person	Females are less tolerant than males	The older the respondents, the more tolerant they are	
Crime against property	Females are less tolerant than males	The older the respondents, the more tolerant they are	
White-collar crime	Females are less tolerant than males		
Organized crime	Females are less tolerant than males	The older the respondents, the more tolerant they are	
Cybercrime	Females are less tolerant than males	The older the respondents, the more tolerant they are	

Sex-based differences were also evident among employees, particularly regarding perceptions of white-collar crimes, where male respondents exhibited lower tolerance than female respondents. In contrast, higher educational attainment among employees corresponded with greater tolerance toward FIPs, suggesting that education may moderate stigma by encouraging more nuanced, rehabilitative, or socially integrative perspectives.

Among customers, demographic patterns differed in several important ways. Female customers consistently demonstrated lower tolerance toward FIPs across multiple categories of crime, including crimes against persons, property crimes, white-collar offenses, organized crime, and cybercrime. Age, however, functioned differently among customers compared

with employees. Older customers tended to be more tolerant, particularly toward crimes against persons, property-related crimes, organized crime, and cybercrime. These contrasting patterns suggest that stakeholder group membership interacts with demographic characteristics in distinct ways, shaping perceptions according to differing social roles, expectations, and evaluative frameworks.

These findings are consistent with previous research indicating that employer and stakeholder perceptions toward FIPs are influenced by demographic and experiential factors rather than being uniformly distributed across populations (Martin et al., 2020; Morzenti & Gringeri, 2021). The role of education in increasing tolerance among employees also supports attribution-based explanations, wherein individuals with higher educational attainment may be more likely to interpret criminal behavior as situational, reformable, and influenced by broader social conditions rather than as fixed reflections of character. This interpretation aligns with studies demonstrating that stronger belief in rehabilitation is associated with greater openness toward second-chance employment opportunities (O'Connor et al., 2023).

The contrasting effects of age between employees and customers further reinforce the principles of Stakeholder Theory, which posits that different stakeholder groups evaluate organizational decisions through distinct perspectives and priorities. Older employees may prioritize workplace stability, organizational trust, and risk avoidance, whereas older customers may adopt more pragmatic or socially integrative perspectives, particularly when employment is framed as contributing to rehabilitation or broader societal welfare (Freeman, 1984).

From an organizational perspective, the findings suggest that workforce composition plays a significant role in shaping the feasibility of inclusive hiring initiatives. Organizations with older employee populations or lower average educational attainment may encounter stronger internal resistance to second-chance hiring practices, particularly for offenses involving financial or organizational risk. Conversely, firms characterized by younger or more highly educated workforces may experience greater acceptance, thereby facilitating smoother implementation of inclusive employment strategies.

For external stakeholders, particularly customers, the findings underscore the importance of demographic profiling in marketing and stakeholder management decisions. Businesses whose customer bases are predominantly female or younger may encounter

stronger resistance toward the hiring of FIPs, whereas organizations serving older customer segments may experience comparatively less opposition, especially when inclusive hiring is framed in terms of rehabilitation, social reintegration, or corporate social responsibility.

Strategically, these results suggest that decisions regarding the hiring of FIPs should not be evaluated in isolation but rather contextualized within the demographic composition of key stakeholder groups. Inclusive hiring practices may be more viable in organizations whose stakeholder demographics align with higher tolerance profiles. In contrast, organizations operating in less receptive stakeholder environments may need to adopt phased, less visible, or internally focused approaches to implementing second-chance employment initiatives.

## **5. Conclusion**

While employers generally express trust in rehabilitation and acknowledge the social value of employment in reducing recidivism, this trust does not consistently translate into actual hiring behavior. Instead, hiring preferences remain constrained by perceived risk, offense type, organizational role, and anticipated stakeholder reactions, highlighting a persistent gap between attitudinal support and behavioral commitment.

Across the study objectives, the findings reveal that employer decision-making is fundamentally conditional and selective. Trust is extended in principle but often withdrawn in practice when concerns regarding workplace safety, job sensitivity, or reputational exposure become more salient. Employer resistance toward hiring FIPs intensifies as job seniority increases and is particularly evident in departments associated with fiduciary responsibility and brand representation, such as finance and marketing. These patterns suggest that inclusive hiring is evaluated less as a purely moral or ethical issue and more as a strategic risk assessment embedded within organizational, operational, and market realities.

The findings further indicate that employees and customers generally exhibit unfavorable attitudes toward the presence of FIPs within workplaces and business environments. These responses provide empirical support for employers' cautious stance, particularly from a marketing and stakeholder-management perspective. Although business partners and suppliers demonstrated comparatively more neutral perceptions, the broader stakeholder environment remains characterized by skepticism and caution. This suggests that

resistance toward inclusive hiring initiatives is driven not solely by employer prejudice but also by broader concerns regarding trust, organizational safety, and brand alignment.

Variations in stakeholder tolerance according to sex, age, and educational attainment further demonstrate that stakeholder responses are systematic and predictable rather than random. These findings reinforce the practical value of demographic segmentation in managerial and organizational decision-making. By assessing the demographic composition of their workforce, customer base, and other stakeholder groups, organizations may better anticipate acceptance or resistance toward inclusive hiring initiatives, thereby allowing such strategies to be calibrated rather than uniformly implemented.

From a managerial and marketing perspective, the inclusive hiring of FIPs should therefore be approached as a strategic and stakeholder-sensitive initiative rather than as a symbolic or purely ethical gesture. Organizations are advised to: (a) assess internal and external stakeholder demographics prior to implementation; (b) align hiring decisions with job roles that minimize perceived operational and reputational risk; (c) prioritize internal organizational readiness before external communication; and (d) maintain consistency between inclusive messaging and actual organizational practices. By grounding inclusivity in stakeholder insight and Market Orientation, businesses may move beyond performative support and toward inclusive employment strategies that are both socially responsible and commercially sustainable.

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This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines set by the Calayan Educational Foundation, Inc. (CEFI). The conduct of this study has been approved and given relevant clearances by the CEFI Research and Publication Office.

### **AI Declaration**

The author declares the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the preparation of this paper. In particular, ChatGPT was utilized for translating and refining the phrasing of the introduction, literature review, discussion of results, and conclusions, which were originally drafted using a combination of English and Tagalog. AI was also used to identify and remove references that did not meet the required recency criteria, except for those included in the Theoretical Framework, and to compile the bibliography in APA 7 format based on the available reference information. The author takes full responsibility for the review, verification, and editing of all content generated with the assistance of AI.

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