

The Pivotal Role of Prison Libraries as an Information Resource for Prisoner Rehabilitation: An Integrative Review of the Literature

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Abstract

This article delves into the multifaceted roles of prison libraries in rehabilitating and reintegrating incarcerated individuals. It begins by underscoring the significance of education in correctional facilities and the inherent challenges of providing access to educational resources due to security constraints. The primary objective of this study is to scrutinize the theoretical underpinnings that drive the rehabilitative functions of prison libraries and identify existing gaps in the literature. This research, through a comprehensive analysis of various empirical studies, reveals the pivotal role played by prison libraries in fostering personal growth, facilitating social integration among inmates, serving as havens where prisoners are afforded the autonomy to choose their reading materials, empowering them to enhance their lives through self-directed learning, and contributing to cultural enrichment, literacy advancement, and preparation for successful reintegration into society. The findings of this integrated literature review underscore the constructive influence of prison libraries on effective time management and offering meaningful activities for prisoner rehabilitation. This study highlights the need for further research that amalgamates robust theoretical frameworks with empirical evidence, thereby establishing how prison libraries can efficaciously contribute to prisoner rehabilitation. This study also informs policy formulation to enable correctional institutions to utilize these insights to bolster behavioural management strategies.

Keywords: education; prison libraries; rehabilitation; social impact; theory and practice

Publication Type: literature review

Introduction

Globally, more than 11 million inmates wake up daily in prisons or detention centres (Pearce et al., 2021). Being put behind bars, with minimal or no rights, is a traumatic experience (DeVeaux, 2013). However, the agencies in charge of the administration of correctional centres usually create multiple avenues of engagement and learning for prison inmates to stay productively occupied and to help them navigate the incarcerated experience. One such avenue of educational engagement is prison libraries (Mishra et al., 2022; Oroleye, 2018). Prison libraries create a space within the prison where inmates can be prepared for reentry back into society. Hussain et al. (2023) state that “[w]orldwide, prison libraries provide inmates with equal access to educational, recreational and rehabilitation programmes” (p. 181). To successfully rehabilitate prison

inmates, incarcerated persons need access to transformative life skills information, educational resources, and social integration opportunities, all of which can be provided by running a well-resourced prison library. The provision of functional libraries within prison walls cannot be overemphasized. According to Bowe (2011), between 80% and 90% of prison populations use the prison library. Some inmates visit the library to add variety to their daily routine and, in the process, discover the practice of reading for the first time.

Rule 4.1 in *The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules)* states that “the purposes of a sentence of imprisonment or similar measures deprivative of a person’s liberty are primarily to protect society against crime and to reduce recidivism” (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2015b, p. 3). These purposes can only be achieved if imprisonment is used to model pro-social behaviours and focus on reintegrating such persons into society upon release so that they can lead a law-abiding and self-supporting life. The United Nations’ (UN) rules stipulate that imprisonment should not be limited to depriving liberty alone. As a rehabilitative measure, imprisonment should include opportunities for prisoners to obtain knowledge and skills that can assist them in their successful reintegration into society upon release (Naylor & Winford, 2019). Since imprisonment, in and of itself, is incapable of solely addressing prisoners’ social reintegration issues (UNODC, n.d.), the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (1966) requires that “the penitentiary system shall comprise treatment of prisoners the essential aim of which shall be their reformation and social rehabilitation.” Such treatment should be equitably provided for all sentenced prisoners and pre-trial detainees.

In many countries, pre-trial detainees comprise a large part of the prison population but are excluded from rehabilitation activities (Heard & Fair, 2019). There is, however, a growing recognition of the importance of rehabilitation programs in prisons globally. Case in point, when policymakers and experts gathered at the 13th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Doha, Qatar, there were deliberations about the essential action priorities for implementing rehabilitation programs in prisons over the following five years (UNODC, 2015a). An essential outcome of this discourse was the *Doha Declaration*, which reaffirmed the commitment of Member States to implement and enhance policies for prisoners that focus on education, work, medical care, rehabilitation, social reintegration, and the prevention of recidivism (UNODC, 2015a). In the *Doha Declaration*, prison administrations, and other authorities stated that prisons should offer education, vocational training, and work, as well as other forms of assistance that are appropriate and available, including those of a remedial, moral, spiritual, social, and health- and sport-based nature (UNODC, 2015a). All such programs, activities, and services should be aligned with prisoners’ treatment needs.

Rehabilitation and reintegration, instead of punishment, is gaining ground worldwide as the primary approach for reforming imprisoned citizens. Prisoner rehabilitation has been recognized as one of the primary functions of the correctional system (Thorpe, 2022; Zoukis, 2014). The primary goal of rehabilitation is to change offenders’ behaviour and prevent future offending through correctional programs designed to address the factors that cause offenders to break the law (Meseret, 2018). Hence, prison libraries aid rehabilitation, positively decreasing prisoner recidivism.

Organizations and governments worldwide have seen the need to develop a more rehabilitative approach to handling prison offenders (UNODC, n.d.). Ibikunle and Oyewumi (2014) noted that information is essential in behavioural change. Libraries in prisons actively enable access to

information. Prison libraries create value for the inmates by providing them with an avenue to develop, advance, and update their knowledge. Reading skills are achievable in prison because the library environment encourages inmates to read. Jarjoura and Krumholz (1998) believe that inmates who visit the library during their jail term have better chances of successful integration into society after their release from custody. Rehabilitation also includes other activities ranging from medical and psychological treatment, counseling and cognitive-behavioural programs, core areas of education, vocational training, and prison work (UNODC, n.d.). Notably, not just any form of information has a rehabilitative effect on prison inmates. Prison inmates need relevant, intentional, and targeted information from the library to create a sustainable, positive behaviour change.

In contemporary society, there has been a significant transformation in the approach to corrections, moving away from corporal punishment towards more humane practices that adhere to the principles outlined in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (United Nations, 1948). This progressive shift emphasizes incarcerated individuals' education, rehabilitation, and social reintegration achieved through diverse programs. The prison library has become a vital part of the prison environment in its support of educational and rehabilitative programs for prison inmates since one primary aim of prisons is to discourage illegal behaviour (Dressel & Farid, 2018).

It is necessary to document past studies on the rehabilitative value of prison libraries to guide future research and to address the link between prison libraries and prisoner rehabilitation. The current body of research on prison libraries and their potential impact on inmate rehabilitation is limited. There is a lack of empirical studies that delve into the specific roles and positive contributions prison libraries can make in rehabilitation. Moreover, theories explaining how prison libraries facilitate prisoner rehabilitation are nearly non-existent. Further studies are needed to examine and document how prison libraries contribute to criminal rehabilitation and to offer appropriate theoretical explanations for this connection. Hence, there is a need for this literature review with an integrative focus to emphasize that the effects of prison libraries on prisoner rehabilitation should be founded on empirical and theoretical arguments and explanations. Therefore, this integrative literature review aims to investigate the roles prison libraries play in rehabilitating prison inmates, explain how prison libraries can be used to rehabilitate incarcerated persons and present the theoretical explanations supporting how prison libraries can contribute to rehabilitating incarcerated persons positively and successfully.

Problem Identification

The prison community is a sub-system of the larger society, which houses individuals that society has isolated due to the legal ramifications of a citizen's anti-societal behaviour (Pabjan, 2005). No matter how long an inmate is incarcerated, if the sentence being served is not a life-or-death sentence, the inmate may one day return to society. A goal of correctional centres is to ensure inmates are rehabilitated and fit to return to society with visible positive behavioural changes (Ubah & Robinson, 2003). One possible way to facilitate positive rehabilitation is by providing inmates with access to educational resources in prison libraries. This access will allow prisoners to engage in constructive learning and self-improvement, equipping them to re-enter society successfully. This goal begs the question: Does access to prison libraries contribute to inmate rehabilitation? With this overarching query in mind, this literature review explores the following questions:

1. What prison library services impact the rehabilitation process of prison inmates?
2. How do prison libraries help in the rehabilitation process of prison inmates?
3. What theoretical lenses have been used to explain the role of prison libraries as a method of prisoner rehabilitation?

Methodology

Literature review studies are often considered "research of research" because they comprehensively explore existing literature related to a specific topic. As a result, literature reviews require the same level of rigorous critical inquiry as empirical research. Literature review methods vary, ranging from meta-analyses to systematic, qualitative, and integrative reviews (Baldwin et al., 2020). In conducting this literature review, the authors adopted the integrative review method developed by Cooper (1998) and expanded upon by Whitemore and Knafl (2005). As noted by Whitemore and Knafl, the integrative review method is the broadest type of review, allowing for the simultaneous inclusion of a broad category of primary research, both empirical and theoretical, to fully understand a phenomenon of concern. As delineated by scholars, the integrative review process comprises five stages: problem identification, literature search, data evaluation, data analysis, and presentation. These five stages are employed in this review.

Literature Search

An extensive literature search was conducted in six databases between November 1 and December 31 of 2022. Table 1 shows the Boolean Logic expressions employed for the search.

Table 1. Initial Search Expressions

Boolean Logic Expressions
prison OR correctional centre libraries AND rehabilitation
prison libraries AND prison inmates AND rehabilitation
prison libraries AND prisoner rehabilitation
jail libraries AND prison inmate rehabilitation
correctional center libraries AND prison inmate rehabilitation
prison OR jail OR correctional centers
(libraries AND prisoners) OR (offender OR inmate rehabilitation)
“the roles of prison libraries in prisons” OR (offender OR inmates rehabilitation)

The six databases used for these searches were Google Scholar, ResearchGate, African Journals Online (AJOL), ProQuest, ERIC, and OECD iLibrary. Particular attention was given to primary

sources. Papers considered primary sources were those published by authors who carried out the study, which differed from literature reviews. All relevant primary source papers were included in this review regardless of the year of publication. The reason for including all relevant primary sources is, first and foremost, to ensure that all relevant information is captured from primary sources. The year of publication was not a criterion for selecting papers to be used for this integrative review. Hence, we do not miss pertinent information over time. The databases used in this study were chosen based on their global coverage of prison librarianship and the large pool of materials accessible in full text.

The initial search, **prison OR correctional centre libraries AND rehabilitation**, yielded 29,232 total results as detailed in Table 2:

Table 2. Boolean search results

Database	Results
Google Scholar	23,600
ResearchGate	5,103
ProQuest	239*
ERIC	182
African Journals Online (AJOL)	106
TOTAL	29,232

**Includes 70 results from the Library Trends journal alone.*

The overall search aimed to find literature on the roles of prison libraries in prisoner rehabilitation and theoretical bases for prison libraries as a method of prisoner rehabilitation. Thus, from the search, the authors included articles if they fulfilled the following criteria:

1. They were original primary research and academic studies, experts' position papers and commentaries, international prison standards policy documents, or theoretical papers on prison libraries as a rehabilitative strategy for prison inmates.
2. The article being considered contained concepts such as: prison OR jail OR correctional centres library(ies), libraries in prison, roles of prison libraries, prisoner OR criminal rehabilitation, OR prisoner rehabilitation theory.
3. The article being considered discussed library use outcomes for prisoners.
4. The article being considered was published in English or translated into English.
5. The article being considered was available in full text.

Studies were excluded if they were systematic reviews or meta-analyses, did not have relevant keywords, did not have library use outcomes, were published in a language other than English, or were not available in full-text.

Following the initial search and manual screening of reading through the titles and abstracts, materials that did not meet the criteria for inclusion and duplicate copies were removed. A second round of screening of full-text articles was completed to ensure the accuracy of data collection based on the inclusion criteria. To ensure this accuracy, the selection of the final

papers for analysis followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) model, as shown in Figure 1. After excluding duplicate articles and articles that did not meet the inclusion criteria for the review, 83 papers met the criteria and were used for the review.

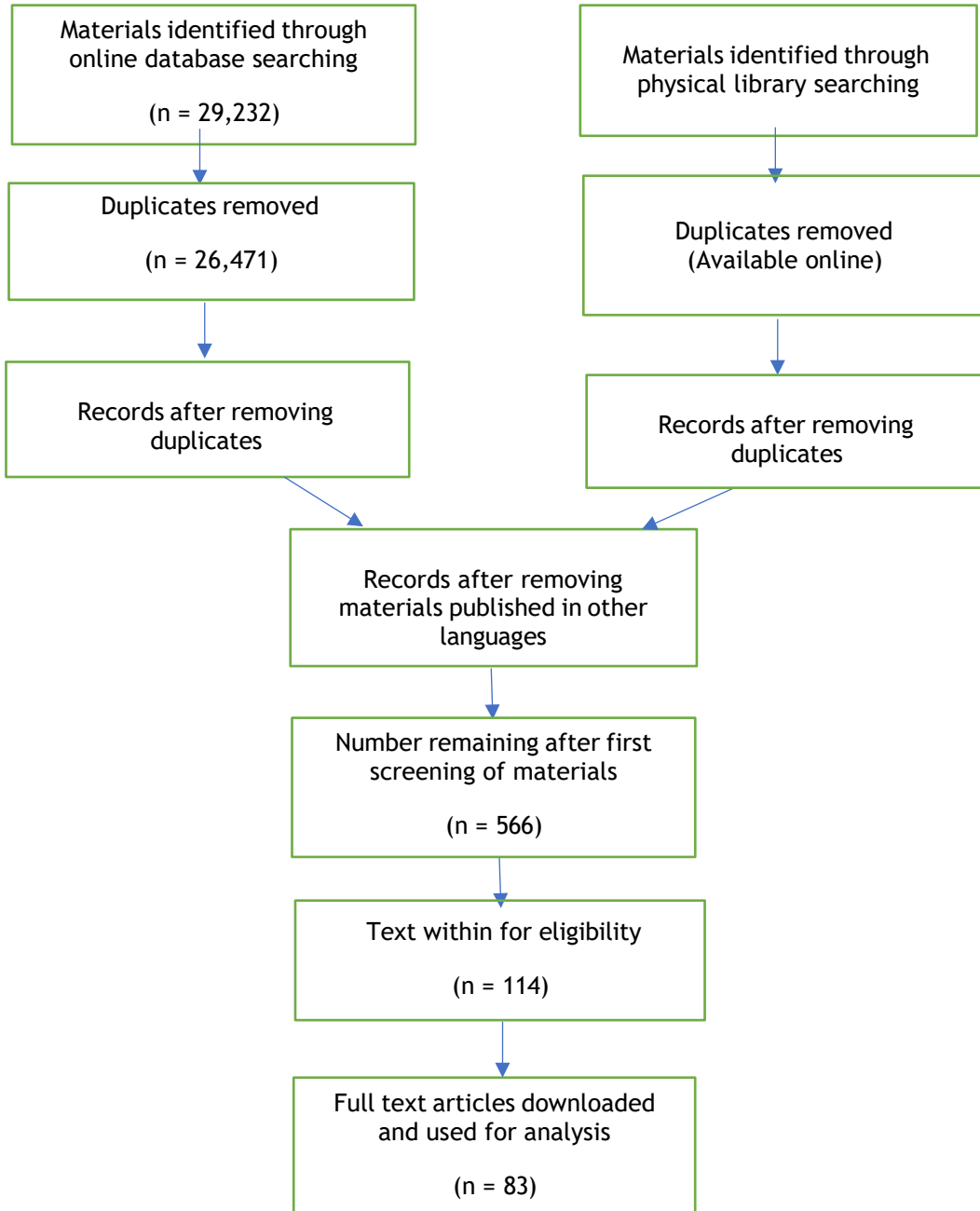


Figure 1. Literature search and analysis procedure following the PRISMA method

Data Evaluation

The initial evaluation was based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The methodological quality of the data was assessed through manual critical appraisal. The authors opted for the manual appraisal because no standard critical appraisal tool exists for any study design. Moreover, no widely accepted general tool can be applied equally across study types.

The selected studies and materials reflected a range of research methodologies. These methodologies include quantitative surveys (n=14), qualitative studies (n=32), mixed methods design (n=6), as well as position papers by experts and professionals in the Library and Information Science field (n=31). Only ten studies out of the 83 analysed included theoretical perspectives for explaining research findings, while six papers suggested the most relevant and appropriate theories to explain the link between prison libraries and prisoner rehabilitation. While the majority of the papers reviewed (n=74) directly engaged with how prison libraries help to rehabilitate prison inmates, 39 papers focused specifically on the roles prison libraries play in the rehabilitation process; 12 explained how prison libraries help prison inmates, while 26 studies were a combination of library roles in prisons and the rehabilitative importance of prison libraries.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is the preferred method for data analysis in integrative literature reviews, as it permits the comparison of patterns and relationships between emerging concepts (Lochmiller, 2021). The authors read all papers at each stage of the analysis process; each author then presented their understanding and interpretations to each other. The authors discussed the emerging themes until terms that adequately represented the literature were reached, leading to the identification of the dominant and subordinate themes. Data analysis was performed using Microsoft Excel.

Findings and Discussion

The literature that met the inclusion criteria was read several times as part of the analysis. Literature analysis was done to align with the objectives of the study under the themes that operationalized the research questions:

1. Prison library services that impact the rehabilitation process of prison inmates.
2. How prison libraries help in the rehabilitation process of prison inmates.
3. Theoretical perspectives used by other studies to explain the rehabilitative roles of prison libraries among prison inmates.

Theme 1. Prison Library Services Impact the Rehabilitation Process of Prison Inmates

All the papers within this theme agree that prison libraries perform critical roles in prisoner rehabilitation. According to Carroll (2013), the goals of prison libraries were to “[improve] the moral character of the depraved” and to “turn man from evil deeds” (p. 46). In the history of prison libraries, the prevailing philosophy of libraries targeted at prisoners was to mold the minds

of criminals (Sullivan & Vogel, 2014). Broadly, prison library services that impact the rehabilitation process of inmates according to the literature reviewed include:

1. Educational services
2. Personal development and social integration services
3. Time management services
4. Relaxation and recreation services

Educational Services

Prison libraries are essential for the entire prison community as educational, informational, and recreational meeting and learning spaces. Prison libraries provide free access to relevant resources, which is crucial for prisoners' personal development and rehabilitation (Adegboy, 2015; Chandani, 2019; Dressel & Farid, 2018; Duguid, 1981; Eze, 2016; Fasae & Folorunso, 2020; Franganillo, 2019; Garner, 2017; Garner, 2020; Ismaila, 2020; Jordet, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c; Krolak, 2022; Lavery & Blackburn, 2015; Onwubiko, 2021; Stevens, 1995; Sullivan & Vogel, 2014; UNODC, 2015b). Prison libraries provide reading materials, serve as independent learning and formal education support centres, provide room for leisure and recreation activities, have legal information centres, give treatment program support, and grant access to information beyond prison walls (Lehmann, 2011).

Because the primary purpose of the prison library is to serve as a mediator for rehabilitation and education, library resources are mainly focused on providing support for the act of reading as a constructive use of free time, as a method to reduce stress, minimize undesirable behaviour, and meet emotional needs and intellectual interests. Zybert (2011) reports that prison libraries are crucial centres for inmate edification, promoting basic and advanced knowledge, developing positive personality traits, developing aesthetic sensibility as well as an appreciation of art and education, preparing for life and work after release, and meeting the professional needs of prison staff.

Stevens and Usherwood (1995) argue that libraries were established in British prisons during the early 19th century to support the goal of prison administrators to reform criminal behaviour through spiritual and moral reading and training. The focus of prison libraries on reform through the reading of religious material began to change in the early 1900s. Wilkins (1977) claims that at this time the function of prison libraries began to resemble public libraries more closely. As the role of incarceration developed from being mainly punitive to taking on a more rehabilitative function, prison libraries began to change their goals accordingly.

Lehmann (2011) describes an innovative program offered by many correctional facility libraries in the US: The Family Literacy Program. In this program, prison libraries have developed quality children's book collections. Prisoners complete a class on child development and learn how to read aloud, select age-appropriate readings, and write poems and letters to their children. They are then allocated extra visiting time with their families where they read aloud to their children and share books and stories. If a prisoner cannot be visited by their children, they can record themselves reading aloud to their children, who are sent a DVD of the recording. Lehmann (2011) notes that one of these programs, particularly the Breaking Barriers with Books program, has been running in a Wisconsin prison for 14 years at the time of writing.

Sharda and Tiwari (2021) conducted a study investigating how prison libraries serve the inmates of Gautam Buddha Nagar district jail in India. The study's objectives were to ascertain the satisfaction of the inmates with the library services and provide suggestions on how the services can be improved. The study employed the survey research method. The study's findings showed that the library served several roles, functioning as a space where prisoners acquire knowledge, read news, and engage in educational and recreational activities. Respondents conveyed satisfaction with the prison library, likening it to a university that aids them in enhancing their reading and computer skills.

Rafedzi et al. (2016) conducted a study to assess the accessibility of prison libraries to inmates of five correctional schools in Malaysia. The study was qualitative; responses were collected via the interview method. The study's result revealed the library's importance to the inmates. Some respondents stated that the library allowed them to further their formal education as provisions were made for them to take national-based examinations. Some said the library catered to their information needs, while others enjoyed comic relief from using the light materials of the library. Another set of prisoners used religious materials to learn how to be responsible members of society and be at peace with God and men. It was recommended that the prison management should provide up-to-date reading materials for the prisoners.

Khumalo (2020) assessed the resources and services provided to prisoners in South African libraries. A descriptive survey design was utilized, employing questionnaires and interviews for data collection. Data examination indicated that the library provided the necessary resources for inmates to study for exams and complete assignments. In addition, it served as a platform for learning from others' experiences, enhanced public speaking and debating skills, and delivered computer proficiency to equip prisoners for their eventual release. The results indicated other essential aspects of the prison library to inmates such as providing a place for productive use of leisure time and relaxation, a centre where knowledge is gained for research purposes, enhanced reading skills, and rehabilitative processes. The results of Khumalo's research imply that providing good library services in prisons can lead to the total well-being of prisoners. Similarly, Chandani (2019) conducted a study to assess the right of prisoners to read behind bars. The survey research design was adopted, and a questionnaire and interview paper were used to collect data from 50 respondents. The results showed that the library helped meet the information needs of the respondents.

Wilhelmus (1999) noted that education as a principal factor in rehabilitation and the eventual reintegration of offenders as productive community members is a significant new stance for prisons. Similarly, Palmer (2000) reports that Dr. Robert R. Ross¹, whom Corrections Canada hired to develop solutions for lasting rehabilitation of prison inmates, used bibliotherapy to help inmates solve problems and to change their lives. The justifications for the use of bibliotherapy are to develop individuals' self-esteem, help inmates find interests beyond themselves, increase their understanding of human motivations, help inmates to do honest self-appraisals, show that there is more than one solution to a problem, and help inmates plan constructive solutions to problems. The summation of Palmer (2000) is that books and reading can change and free a person. Further, Palmer proposed that the public must become interested in prisons as a way of working with rehabilitation agencies and demand programs to empower inmates with skills to find constructive work and to live beyond prison walls.

Information is essential for navigating our everyday lives. It becomes even more critical within a prison environment, as inmates tend to be more disadvantaged and are generally less equipped

to address their challenges. The Woolf Report² argued that establishing a more effective network of information provision within prisons was essential to developing governments based on humanity and justice (Woolf, 1991). However, providing information is also a prerequisite of any successful rehabilitation program to assist prisoners in confronting their choices and being made aware of the implications of their behaviour. Information can help develop cognitive skills; it is empowering and motivating because it can assist inmates in developing alternative problem-solving techniques. An enlarged information base provides a broader perspective for reasoned decision-making and enables prisoners to learn from the experiences of others (Albert, 1989). Information is essential for inmates to be adequately prepared for their release (Stevens, 1995). Access to a prison library can support prison education programs and distance education, enable inmates to obtain educational qualifications, offer career orientation, provide resources for prison educators, and support skills development and vocational training (Krolak, 2019).

However, inmates' educational needs often conflict with the security concerns of prison staff and the public that wants to be tough on crime by denying prisoners access to education. Many prison functionaries try to stop the entry of materials into the library because it may harm the security of the correctional institution (Fasae & Folorunsho, 2020).

Personal Development and Social Integration Services

Franganillo (2019) documented in his study that prison libraries support inmates' intellectual, social, and cultural development and thus help them on the road to personal betterment. In the library, prisoners have two valuable tools – the internet and the prison library's print and online resources – for their cultural enhancement and personal development, as both can improve the conditions under which they move towards social reinsertion and integration. Furthermore, prison libraries help in improving the literacy of prisoners, rehabilitating, re-socializing, and re-integrating and preparing the prisoners to become better citizens who can readapt into society after prison (Chandani, 2019; Ephraim, 2011; Onwubiko, 2021; UNODC, 2015b).

Garner's (2020) study revealed that one significant role of prison libraries is social integration. The survey, which had 27 male and female adult prisoner respondents from seven prisons across Australia, showed that using the library gave prison inmates a sense of freedom, it provided a community for interaction, it gave them a sense of responsibility, and the library was a tool for interaction and positive social experiences. Overall, the study reiterated that prison libraries help inmates learn how to conduct themselves in acceptable ways after their release. Furthermore, Alvarez et al.'s (2018) study in Spain showed that universal literature and dialogic literary gatherings were helpful resources for the social integration of prisoners back into society. Also, Mwangi's (2017) study revealed that the absence of prison libraries affected the outcome of prisoners' re-entry tremendously.

Correctional libraries are critical support structures for inmates' rehabilitation, social re-entry, and inclusion. Similarly, correctional libraries assist rehabilitation and social inclusion through appropriate inmate programs and materials (Mugwisi et al., 2019).

Time Management Services

Prison libraries also help inmates manage their time, thus contributing to inmates' rehabilitation and information needs by providing information resources and services (Ibikunle & Oyewumi, 2014; Onwubiko, 2021). According to scholars (Faletar et al., 2022; Šimunić et al., 2016), prison

libraries provide creative use of time. Prison libraries also provide constructive and meaningful activities for prisoners that are vital in maintaining a stable equilibrium within the establishment and contributing toward the individual's rehabilitation. However, the education and information needs of incarcerated persons are rarely met. Most prison libraries are unequipped to meet incarcerated persons' education and information needs.

Furthermore, it was documented in Stevens's (1995) study that many prisoners reported that reading gave them a feeling that their time in prison was not being wasted and that they had some control over how they used it by choosing to spend it constructively. In addition, for some prisoners, an activity that may have started as a simple time-killer takes on a new and empowering dimension, resulting in an increased awareness of self and society. While occupied with reading, "prisoners are not 'assaulting, stealing from or otherwise generally harassing other inmates'" (Hartz et al., 1987, p. 9 as cited in Stevens, 1995, p. 336). Prisoners often report that they view reading as a displacement activity that keeps them away from the offending culture of the prison environment and instead offers them an opportunity for self-examination and self-development (Ibikunle & Oyewumi, 2014; Jarjoura & Krumholz, 1998; Stevens, 1995).

Relaxation and Recreational Services

UNODC (n.d.) and Krolak (2019) posited that prison libraries open up a world beyond prison bars by allowing inmates to select books and other materials, participate in organised activities, enjoy the company of other people, or simply relax in a safe and welcoming environment. This can help prisoners forget the harsh reality of prison life in an otherwise highly restrictive and regulated environment. Similarly, prison libraries contribute recreational meetings and learning spaces for the entire prison community (Ephraim, 2011). *The Nelson Mandela Rules* (UNODC, 2015b) emphasize that inmates should have access to library services and materials of the same quality as those available to free citizens while also considering security concerns. The authority frameworks of *The Nelson Mandela Rules* reflect the right of prisoners to access a library. *The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners*, first adopted in 1957, were revised in 2015 and adopted as *The Nelson Mandela Rules* (UNODC, 2015b). The collection and the body of works of *The Nelson Mandela Rules* contain 122 rules, one of which explicitly calls for establishing prison libraries (UNODC, 2015b). Rule 64 states that every prison shall have a library for all categories of prisoners, adequately stocked with recreational and instructional books, and prisoners shall be encouraged to use it (Penal Reforms International, n.d.; UNODC, 2015b;). Prison libraries support social cohesion by providing a relaxed, safe environment and meeting place. Prison libraries are the cultural centre of the prison, offering activities such as concerts, readings, debates, films, and other forms of artistic expression (Krolak, 2019).

Free access to relevant resources is crucial for prisoners' development, well-being, and rehabilitation (UNODC, 2015b). Offender rehabilitation is typically thought to have been successful if a higher proportion of released prison inmates avoid being reconvicted for an offense. Conversely, rehabilitation efforts are said to have failed if the individual is reconvicted (Bonta & Andrews, 2016).

Theme 2. How Prison Libraries Help in the Rehabilitation Process of Prison Inmates

Prison Libraries and Criminal Rehabilitation

Making society crime-free is a goal every decent government strives to meet; as such, fighting crime is a severe concern, hence the building of prisons to serve as correctional centres where inmates can be kept to re-adjust and become responsible members of society. Prison libraries are powerful tools used to rehabilitate and mould the character of criminals. A study carried out by Chandani (2020) showed how prison libraries can foster criminal rehabilitation. The religious resources helped redirect the lives of the inmates. Furthermore, Tamilmani's (2014) inmates in Coimbatore and Obiano et al.'s (2020) study in Abia State, Nigeria revealed that extensive utilization of prison library resources resulted in high moral values amongst the inmates. Moreover, it helped shape their lives positively.

Emasealu (2019) assessed how prison libraries can be used as a rehabilitative tool in shaping the psychological well-being of prisoners. Sampling 393 convicted male and female inmates, the study showed a positive relationship between library use and the psychological well-being of inmates. In addition, the results of Folorunso and Folorunso's (2019) study in southwestern Nigeria showed that libraries contribute to the rehabilitation of inmates through the provision of relevant literature and study space, access to information on reformation, reading resources on legal and civic education, information resources on aesthetics and entertainment, and the availability of more reading time. Similarly, Onwubiko's (2021) study revealed that prison libraries are reformation agents in prisons. The study showed prisoner rehabilitation is achieved by providing proactive selective dissemination of information, catering to inmates' information needs, effective reference services, updating the information profile of users, periodic research of users' needs, undertaking comprehensive literature search on request, and current awareness services, among others.

According to Eze (2016) and Garner (2017), prison inmates often need information about career opportunities, training, housing, family relationships, and funding sources. Prison libraries usually provide these, which invariably contribute to meeting the information needs of prisoners as they re-enter society at the end of their sentences. It has been noted that prison libraries, through their resources, have an empowering influence, enabling individuals to make more considered choices and accept responsibility for their actions (Rivera, 1992).

Theme 3. Theoretical Perspectives Used by Other Studies to Explain the Rehabilitative Roles of Prison Libraries Among Prison Inmates

Only six studies included a theoretical explanation of how prison libraries are connected to the rehabilitation of prison inmates. According to Ubah and Robinson (2003) and Ubah (2014), prison inmate rehabilitation is one of the goals of the correctional system. There is a body of perspectives based on the notion that inmate rehabilitation and reintegration can be achieved through prison-based education programs, including prison libraries and other educational avenues. Inmates' exposure to such education programs is a contributing cause of lowered recidivism. The perspectives, which comprise moral development, social-psychological development, and opportunity perspectives, are collectively called individual change perspectives. These perspectives of offender rehabilitation clearly show what should be focused on when planning for the effective rehabilitation of offenders, namely the moral, social, and psychological aspects. However, according to Ubah and Robinson (2003) and Ubah (2014), there

has been a lack of adequate analysis of the benefits of using these perspectives in rehabilitating prison inmates.

Central to individual change perspectives is an assumption that correctional education programs can enhance the successful reintegration of some individual inmates from a correctional institution into the general society. As Ubah and Robinson (2003) assert, the moral development perspective is a perspective of individual change that is very optimistic about the potential of correctional rehabilitative programs. The perspective hypothesizes that prison-based education programs offering liberal arts classes such as philosophy, sociology, history, or literature can be rehabilitative in their effect because these courses seem to strengthen people's consciences as they confront the moral and ethical dilemmas addressed in the study of liberal arts. Social-psychological development perspective is another perspective of individual change that can be used to justify correctional rehabilitative programs (Ubah & Robinson, 2003). The perspective emphasizes the potentially transformative and liberating processes set in motion by educative experiences. This perspective assumes that social cognitive processes play a prominent role in acquiring and retaining new behaviour patterns.

The opportunity perspective is another perspective that can be used to justify college-level correctional education programs (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Latessa et al., 2015; Ubah & Robinson, 2003). This perspective suggests that most crimes, especially crimes on the street—which are usually carried out by poor, undereducated, unemployed/underemployed, and disenfranchised members of society—can be explained by a lack of viable, legitimate means to the attainment of economic gain. The opportunity perspective, therefore, suggests that acquiring college education credentials in prison will provide inmates with legitimate human capital (i.e., resources that influence future activities in people, such as marketable legitimate skills, trades, and network relationships) that can open better job opportunities, which in turn, can build social bonds that protect against criminal behaviour (Ubah & Ubah, 2019). Randall Collins' (2004) theory of interaction rituals (IRs) has yet to be applied to group therapy-based prison rehabilitation. At the heart of Collins' (2004) synthesis of insights from late Durkheim, Goffman, other symbolic interactionists, phenomenology, and ethnomethodology is his entrainment model. Bodily co-presence is the point of departure in this model (Paulle & van der Zeeuw, 2021).

Identity Transformation and Personal Development

Underlying many of the discussions around resistance and change processes is the concept of identity transformation: agency. The concept of agency, which is the belief that individuals are free to make their own choices and control their future, is central to Maruna's (2001) findings on identity transformation. Laub and Sampson (2003) argue that "personal agency looms large" (p. 280) in most theories of desistance (Finlay & Bates, 2018).

Theories of desistance are also relevant here. Desistance is thought of as a gradual process involving the interaction of multiple factors, both internal and external to the individual, that influence the transition out of crime (LeBel et al., 2008; Serin & Lloyd, 2009). Göbbels et al.'s (2012) Integrated Theory of Desistance from Sexual Offending (ITDSO) suggests there are four phases in the desistance process: (1) decisive momentum (initial desistance), (2) rehabilitation (promoting desistance), (3) re-entry (maintaining desistance), and (4) normalcy (i.e., maintaining desistance over a long period). According to the ITDSO, during the rehabilitation phase, offenders reconstruct their identities, acquire strategies to successfully live a pro-social life, and overcome internal and external obstacles (e.g., dynamic risk factors) (Yesberg &

Polaschek, 2019). As argued by Duguid (1981), prison education, and libraries by default, need both a solid theoretical base and a linkage of that base with practice. In dealing with social reality and a group of prison inmates, one may engage in the perverse, twisting observation and data to fit an inherited conception or allow theory to give an objective view of reality to inform practice.

Recommendations for Further Research

Online searches using databases show that studies on the rehabilitative roles of prison libraries are scarce. The available empirical sources on this social problem are quite dated; hence, there is a need for new studies to explore how prison libraries can be used to achieve positive behavioural changes in inmates before re-entry into society (Khan et al., 2023). Also, most published works on prisoner rehabilitation through prison libraries were opinion papers written by experts and librarians who write from their wealth of experience. Based on these enormous gaps in knowledge, empirical studies with theoretical bases are needed to show how prison libraries can contribute to prisoner rehabilitation to reduce recidivism when these currently incarcerated persons are released into society.

Despite the enormous educational and information needs of prison inmates, prison libraries restrict access to the majority of educational materials to inmates. Materials that could have been used to rehabilitate them and create a positive change are kept at bay through legislation and censorship. These usually pose significant effects on inmates in the long run, mainly in prison and after serving their prison punishment, hence affecting the attainment of positive behaviour change, which can eliminate or reduce recidivism to the barest minimum (Awofesọ & Opesanwo, 2023; Faletar et al., 2022; Khan, et al.2023).

Furthermore, new empirical studies are needed to explore and establish the theoretical underpinnings of prison libraries' efficacy in rehabilitating inmates. Governments and policymakers need tangible, tested paradigms to formulate policies recognizing prison libraries as essential spaces within the prison facility that can contribute positively to behaviour management among incarcerated persons.

Conclusion

The library is where prisoners can determine which reading materials to dedicate their time to and how to improve their lives and self-develop constructively. This literature study shows that prison libraries perform myriad functions that can positively impact the lives of incarcerated persons. Specifically, prison libraries can effectively achieve positive behaviour change among prison inmates, contribute skills and knowledge acquisition, and reduce recidivism after these inmates are released into the community. The potential of prison libraries has not been fully explored in institutional-based correction centres. Theories on prison library use and the effect of prison library use on prisoner behaviour are underutilized in research studies. In addition, based on current global crime realities, new theories of how prison libraries can be effectively used to constructively transform the criminal man constructively should be developed through empirical studies.

Endnotes

¹ Robert R. Ross is a psychologist who worked for Corrections Canada for 12 years. Ross is a leading expert in offender rehabilitation and the use of bibliotherapy in prisons. He developed the Reasoning and Rehabilitation Program (RRP), which is a cognitive-behavioral intervention that has been shown to be effective in reducing recidivism rates. As of this writing, Dr. Ross is Professor (retired) with the Department of Criminology and is Director of The Cognitive Centre of Canada, at the University of Ottawa.

² *The Woolf Report*, also known as the *Prison Disturbances April 1990: Report of an Inquiry* was a report published in 1991 by Lord Justice Woolf following a series of prison riots in England and Wales in 1990. The report found that poor conditions in prisons were a significant contributing factor to the riots. The report offered 12 recommendations that included improvements such as better facilities, more education and training opportunities, more contact with families and friends, and more independent monitoring of prisons. *The Woolf Report* was widely accepted as a fair and balanced assessment of the British prison system and its recommendations were largely implemented. The report is considered to have been a landmark moment in the history of prison reform in England and Wales.

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