

Core Self-Evaluations among Prisoners on Formal and Vocational Training in Uganda's Luzira Prison

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Abstract

The study examined the core self-evaluations of prisoners on formal and vocational education in Luzira Prison in Uganda. A cross-sectional survey design using a quantitative approach with 800 participants selected purposively was used. Core self-evaluations were measured using Judge, Erez, Bono and Thoresen's scale, while data were analyzed using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and post hoc test. The study yielded statistically significant variations among education levels, ($F [4, 795] = 3.18, p < .05$) where a post hoc test revealed significant difference between Degree holders ($M = 2.86, SD = .27$), on the one hand, and O'Level ($M = 3.00, SD = .29$), A 'level ($M = 3.039, SD = .32$) and Diploma ($M = 3.00, SD = .29$) level students, on the other. The study demonstrates the significance of core self-evaluation to the life prospects of the prison inmate and recommends that prisoners' core self-evaluations be nurtured. It supports studies that correlate core self-evaluations to ultimate reduction in prison congestion and government expenditure.

Key words. Core self-evaluations, formal and vocational training, prison inmates, prison education, correctional education, Luzira, Uganda

Introduction

The rate at which the Ugandan prison's population is increasing has raised concern (Uganda Prison Services, 2011). In 2012, there were 34,940 prisoners (UBOS, 2007). By October 2017, the prison

population in the country was 54,059 (World Prison Brief Data, 2017). The annual prisoner turnover is estimated at 100,000 prisoners with a growth rate of 10% each year (UBOS, 2018). The Uganda Bureau of Statistics reported that in 2018 alone, the prisoner population increased by 12.3%. These figures are significantly above the country's population growth rate, which has been constant at an average of 3.2% per annum (UBOS, 2018). The prisoners' population increase has been attributed to lack of education, unemployment, and lack of skills, poverty, debt, substance abuse, and the absence of a social network. In response to this concern, the government of Uganda introduced formal and vocational training as a major strategy for prisoners rehabilitation.

Criminals are sent to prisons in order to protect society from harm. However, if there is nothing done to address the root cause of criminal behavior, prisoners may return to communities with the same or worse behavior (Aalai, 2014). The Uganda Human Rights Commission (2015) states that prisoners suffer cumulative social and economic disadvantages, low education levels, higher rates of mental illness and greater rates of unemployment. Davis, Bozick, Steele, Saunders and Miles (2013) indicate that some prisoners who have difficulty adapting to the pains of imprisonment like boredom are likely to resort to serious prison misbehavior and violence. If however, prisoners are given meaningful activities to do and are equipped with skills they need to support themselves upon release, society becomes safer and the rate of re-offending decreases (Dissel, 2008). Participation in education during incarceration can play an important role in the daily life of many prisoners and has significant consequences for resettlement on release (Carson & Sabol, 2012).

From a socio-economic point of view, low educational attainment, which is a common trait among prisoners, results in fewer opportunities in the labor market (Cohen, 2016). Prisoners who participate in education reduce the risk of recidivism and education increases their post-release employment opportunities Irwin (2008). In any case, access to education is a fundamental human right and prisoners should not be denied the chance to exercise this right (European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, 2012).

However, a successful prison educational programme depends on the critical role of prisoners core self-evaluations. Core self-evaluations are fundamental assessments that people make about their worthiness, competence and capabilities. Individuals with positive core self-evaluations can deal with various stressors, are active, satisfied and have less quitting intentions (Karatepe, Haktanir, & Yorganci, 2010). People with high core self-evaluations have an ability to cope, perform

well in class, are secure and steady in learning. However, individuals with low core self-evaluations believe that they are unable to have control over the environment and events, have low motivation levels and participate poorly in educational activities. However, there is limited empirical evidence regarding core self-evaluations as a predictor of prisoners' participation in formal and vocational training in Uganda prison. This study seeks to fill this gap.

Literature Review

The earliest prison education programmes in the United States were often referred to as Sabbath school with the purpose of teaching inmates how to read the Bible. Bhosale (2014) calculates that it took nearly one hundred years for the concept of educating prisoners to receive any appreciable support from the public, lawmakers, and from the prisoners themselves. The 1900s brought to the United States the industrial revolution and its consequent demand for workers. Both politicians and prison personnel soon adopted a philosophy that inmates could be educated to support the industrial sector (Carson & Sabol, 2012). In Australia, the Government adopted a national strategy for prisoner's vocational education and training to contain recidivism (Callan & Gardner, 2007). In Africa, prison education with the purpose of preparing prisoners for integration into society is more pronounced in southern, western and eastern Africa (Dissel, 2008). Emphasis is placed on providing education and skills that promote self-sufficiency after release (Asokhia & Agbonluae, 2013).

In response to the United Nations standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners, Uganda enacted the Prisons Act 2006 as a step to ensure prisons play a rehabilitative role (Uganda Prison Services, 2011). This act, recommends that academic and vocational training be offered to convicted prisoners to facilitate their rehabilitation and reintegration into the local communities (Uganda Prison Services, 2010). Prisoners are to be provided with an opportunity to advance in education and to acquire vocational skills for use upon release. Education is also meant to help in improving the core self-evaluations of prisoners and substantially reduce their risk of reoffending. This would ultimately reduce prison crowding and the expenditure involved in the maintenance of prisons. However, a study by the Uganda Human Rights Commission (2015) established that 90% of all prisoners in Uganda do not have a diploma in education and 85% had no vocational skills. In the same study, recidivism rates of prisoners who do not participate in formal and vocational education was between 65-75% compared to those who participate which was 10-15%. For academic and

vocational training to register achievements, there is a need for an understanding of Ugandan Prisoners' core self-evaluations (Bidwell, 2013).

Purpose of Education in Prisons

To decrease the number of prisoners, it is important for prisons to be prepared with the necessary tools for successful reintegration into society. The fundamental purpose of education in prisons is to enhance and build the cognitive skills of the prisoners that participate in the program so they can become functional and productive members of society (Rand Corporation. 2013). Prison educational programs in Luzira prison Uganda consists of academic orientation programs; primary, university, and vocational education programs that train inmates in carpentry, tailoring, operating of saloon, building and construction. Such education programs in prison are critical in offering inmates relief from the pain of imprisonment and helping them to appreciate and adopt pro-social norms.

A study conducted by Vasiliki, Evaggelos and Dimitris (2016) on correctional education in Greece assessing education as a rehabilitation strategy for prisoners found out that prisoners who participated in education had significantly lower arrest rates in the twenty-four months following release from prison than those who did not attend programs, and concluded that vocational education programs are effective in reducing recidivism. Similarly, Helen (2015) suggests that participation in education leads to high levels of motivation amongst many prisoners who engage in education and prisoners recognize that education more particularly gaining qualifications is necessary to do well in life. In the same study, 70 % of prisoners reported that they were motivated to participate in education, not only to gain qualifications and improve their prospects, but also to occupy their time and improve their core self-evaluations. For example, Taylor (2014) states that 80% of prisoners participating in formal and vocational training in America had improved their core self-evaluations.

Kouimtzi (2011) suggests that prison education creates an environment that enables positive change and human capacity for those who are detained. Educational programs in prisons draw the citizens' support, due to the fact that education itself is positively valued by society. These educational and vocational programs focus on developing prisoners' practical skills and help them to realize that they remain members of the wider community. They are thereby reminded that they will still be members of the society after their release. By acquiring skills and redefining their position in society, those individuals may become active members in their local economies and communities and overcome the stigma of their criminal involvement.

Research by the Rand Corporation (2013) suggests that education and vocational training in prisons supports the development of social capital. When prisoners participate in educational programs, it boosts their self-confidence, improves their social skills and they feel satisfied. There is also a positive correlation between correctional education and employment after release. For the US, John and Sons (2009) report that post-release employment was 13% higher among prisoners who participated in either academic or vocational education programs than those who did not. Davis, Bozick, Steele, Saunders and Miles (2013) indicate that some prisoners who have difficulty adapting to the pains of imprisonment like boredom are likely to resort to serious prison misbehaviour and violence. Participation in formal and vocational training in prisons reduces the sense of boredom and loneliness. If prisoners are given meaningful activities to do and are equipped with skills they need to support themselves upon release, society becomes safer and the rate of re-offending decreases. A study conducted by Eikeland (2009) states that prisoners in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and Norway, who participated in educational programs, spend their time doing something useful and sensible. In the same study, prisoners pointed out that they felt less discriminated against. Their participation in educational programs gave them optimism, awakened them and boosted their creativity.

Studies carried out by the Reentry Policy Council (2007) regarding the usefulness of in - prison education shows that prisoners who participate in education formed better character, gained self-respect and new prospects in life with a new orientation, obtained new interests and got work credentials in the business market. Papathanassiou (2010) in his study concluded that prisoners who took part in education programs in prison had lower recidivism rates. In a study conducted among 15 US states, it was concluded that recidivism rates for those who took part in voluntary educational programs were lower (Iowa Department of Corrections, 2011).

In a 2013 meta-analysis conducted by Rand Corporation on fifty studies published between 1980 and 2011 to establish the effectiveness of correctional education on the reduction of recidivism rates in American prisons, the findings revealed that recidivism reduced by 85-88%.

The Concept of Core Self-Evaluations

Core self-evaluation is a conceptual idea that stands for the essential appraisals that persons make about themselves and their operating conditions (Boyar & Mosley, 2007). They are a major determinant of an individual's confidence in their abilities, opinions, future goals and aspirations

(Judge, 2007). It represents how individuals feel about themselves and has implications for achievement and well-being (Judge, 2009). Core self-evaluations form the basis for interaction between personality and the environment that influences human behavior (Judge, 2009). Core self-evaluation determines how individuals react to challenges in life (Judge, 2007). Studies by Eikeland, Manger & Asbjornsen (2009) in Nordic prisons show that the experience of imprisonment impairs prisoners' core self-evaluation. Judge (2007) indicates that individuals with high core self-evaluations view situations more positively, see themselves as more worthy of the advantages conferred by these situations and will work harder to extract the benefits which eventually influence participation in learning.

There is limited research on how core self-evaluations affect learning across various levels of education among prisoners. A study among a selected group of prisoners in Norway revealed a significant difference between core self-evaluations across different education levels: prisoners in lower classes reported significantly lower levels of core self-evaluation compared to prisoners in upper classes (Eikeland, Manger & Asbjornsen, 2009). In the same study, college students did not experience any shift in the level of general core self-evaluations. A study by Ross (2009) on the effect of correctional education on core self-evaluations of prisoners among six selected in-prison college programs in New York revealed statistically significant differences where learners in secondary education had lower core self-evaluations compared to learners enrolled in post-secondary programs.

Aalai (2014) states that most prisoners generally have a history of failure in school. This history typically leads to the assumption that they will not succeed in their present schooling puts a limit on their ability to learn and ruins their core self-evaluations. Studies on how core self-evaluations affect prisoners' participation in correctional education are limited. Available literature mainly focuses on the general population rather than specifically prisoners. Judge and Hurst (2007) conducted a longitudinal study to determine the extent to which core self-evaluations would predict perseverance in education. They found that learners with high core self-evaluations had 80% retention rate in schools than learners with low core self-evaluations. In a study on quantifying the effects of a socialization project for prisoners in Australia shows significant differences were between core self-evaluations across different levels of education (Callan & Gardner, 2007). Inmates who were in upper classes had higher core self-evaluations than those who were in lower levels of

education. The higher the learner progressed academically, the higher their core self-evaluations. In the same study, inmates in upper classes reported more self-esteem, higher self-efficacy and higher conviction of internal control as well as higher emotional stability. Negative effects of imprisonment on the self-concept did not occur among inmates on correctional education. Thus, individuals with high core self-evaluations are better suited to the contemporary academic and career landscapes than those who have low core self-evaluations (Boyar & Mosley, 2007). Ahmad, Saleem and Shahid (2012) also observed that persons with high core self-evaluations are more sensitive to positive stimuli and less on negative stimuli, whereas persons with low core self-evaluations are more sensitive to negative stimuli and less sensitive to positive stimuli. Other studies by Judge record that learners in higher levels of learning tend to be more predictive of the outcomes of the learning situation which leads to high core self-evaluations and that high core self-evaluations is strongly associated with higher levels of learning (2007 & 2009).

Other studies also have shown that there is a relationship between core self-evaluations and education levels. Rosopa and Schroeder (2009) suggest that learners in advanced classes have high core self-evaluations, are able to fulfil their task and also help individuals promote their institution in a positive way compared to learners in lower classes. Further studies by Judge (2009) in Michigan indicate that learners in candidate classes have positive core self-evaluations, are more effective in overcoming barriers and are better in solving problems. However, Kammeyer-Mueller, Judge and Scott (2009) suggest that learners in advanced classes usually have low core self-evaluations, tend to be slower when it comes to finishing their educational tasks and are more stubborn, which ultimately interferes with their studies. Other studies by Kleumper (2008) show that learners in lower classes have high expectation, are explorative in nature and have high core self-evaluations compared to learners in advanced classes. Such contradicting positions require further study especially in a different learning environment such as a prison.

In a study assessing inmates' proneness to shame and guilt in Portugal, the findings reveal a link between shame-proneness and all manner of psychological symptoms, including low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal ideation, and substance dependence (Buss, 2010). In the same study, prisoners in lower levels of education were more prone to shame and guilt compared to prisoners in higher levels of education. Similarly, the more prone a prisoner was to shame and guilt the lower the core self-evaluations and the vice.

Tsaousis, Nikolaou, Serdaris and Judge (2007) state that core self-evaluations are significantly influenced by the age of the learner. Young people tend to have high core self-evaluations compared to old people, view a challenging academic task as a deserved opportunity which they can master and benefit from. Old people have low core self-evaluations and are more likely to view education as an opportunity for embarrassment. Biological theorists also state gender differences as determinates of core self-evaluations in an educational setting whereby males show high core self-evaluations in mathematics and science-based subjects compared to females (Kleumper, 2008).

Methodology

Research Design and Methods

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design because it provides a description of trends and attitudes or opinions of a population, allows generalisation from a sample to a population so that inferences can be made about some characteristics, attitude or behaviour of that population (Tashakkori& Creswell, 2007). A mainly quantitative approach was used to collect data, analyse and present the findings. This approach was chosen because it allows generalizations about the phenomenon, involves many cases, and employs prescribed procedures to ensure validity and reliability (Creswell & Plano, 2007).

Study Population

In this study, the population was adult male and female prisoners enrolled in Luzira prison Uganda who are participating in formal and vocational training. This consisted by class distribution, 161 students in ordinary level, 244 students enrolled in a certificate in Business Management, 188 in Advanced Level, 168 enrolled in Diploma in Laws and 39 students enrolled in Degree in Laws

Sampling Strategies

The study adopted purposive sampling strategies, with non-probability samples selected based on characteristics of the population and the objective of the study (Creswell & Plano, 2007). This sampling strategy was chosen because it is economical, allows proper representation, prevents unnecessary and irrelevant items entering into the sample perchance, ensures intensive study of the selected items and gives accurate results.

Sample Size

To increase the chances of maximum prison inmate participation, a total of 800 prisoners on formal and vocational education were involved in the study. The criteria for inclusion in the study were adult male or female prisoner who was enrolled in both formal and vocational training above Primary 7. Creswell (2007) suggests that there are no specific rules when determining the sample size of census studies. Sample size in such cases is best determined by the time allotted, resources available and study objectives.

Instruments/ Measures

The core self-evaluations scale developed by Judge, Erez, Bono and Thoresen was used in this study to assess prisoners' core self-evaluations (Boyar & Mosley, 2007). This is a standardized five-point Likert scale containing twelve items which range from strongly disagree to strongly agree, half of which are scored in reverse. Previous studies by Judge (2009) established the psychometric properties of this scale as $\alpha=.84$.

Procedure

Approval and clearances were obtained from my supervisors and the Department of Educational Foundations and Psychology Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST), and from MUST Research Ethical Review Committee (Reference no: MUREC1/7). Permission was also sought from the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (Reference no: SS5ES) which legitimizes all research projects carried out in the country. Equally, clearance was also sought from the Commissioner General of Prisons in Uganda (Reference no: ADM/143/219/01). At the Luzira the purpose of the study was clearly explained to the officer in charge of Luzira prison and the warden in charge of welfare and education and appointments for data collection scheduled. Study participants were briefed on the purpose of the study and were asked to sign consent forms. They were informed that participation was voluntary and withdrawal at any point was accepted without any reprimand. However, all prisoners were willing to participate. The next step was data collection where prisoners were requested to fill questionnaires on study variables. The prisoners would submit the filled questionnaires to the inmate head teachers who then handed the questionnaire to the government posted head teacher. The researcher would pick the questionnaires from the government posted head teacher on a weekly basis. After data collection, the participants were debriefed.

Data Management

The completely filled instruments were screened, coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 20. Each item of the core self-evaluations scale was scored as follows; even items (2,4,6,8,10,12) were scored as 1 point if a prisoner circled 5, 2 points if the prisoners circled 4, 3 points if the prisoners circled 3, 4 points if the prisoners circled 2 and 5 points if the prisoners circled 1. Odd items (1, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11) were scored as 5 points if a prisoner circled 5, 4 points if the prisoners circled 4, 3 points if the prisoners circled 3, 2 points if the prisoners circled 2, 1 point if the prisoners circled 1. The item scores were summed and the upper limit for high core self-evaluations in this case (37-60) and lower limit (12-36) for low Core self-evaluations were used.

Data Analysis

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and post hoc test using Turkey's least significant differences were computed

Ethical Considerations

The identities of the respondents were kept confidential throughout the study since they did not have to put their names on any of the tools of data collection. After filling the tools, they were kept confidential, only accessible to the researcher and the advisors/supervisors.

FINDINGS

ANOVA Comparisons of Learning Strategies across Education

Variations	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	1.26	4	.32	3.18	.008
Within Groups	71.22	795	.09		
Total	72.78	799			

Analysis of Variance on core self-evaluation scores yielded statistically significant variations among education levels, ($F_{[4, 795]} = 3.18, p < .05$). A Post hoc test using Least Significant Differences (LSD) was conducted in order to ascertain where the difference in education levels of prisoners existed as seen in table 10 below.

Post-hoc Comparisons of Core Self-Evaluations across Education Levels of Prisoners

Education Background	N	M	SD	Tukey LSD Comparisons			
				1	2	3	4
1.O'Level	161	3.00	.29	-			
2.Certificate	244	2.95	.30	.11	-		
3.A'Level	188	3.03	.32	.34	.006	-	
4. Diploma	168	2.98	.30	.502	.368	.098	-
5. Degree	39	2.86	.27	.012**	.101	.002**	.036*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. $N=800$

The results of a post hoc test revealed that Degree holders ($M = 2.86$, $SD = .27$) significantly differ from those of O'Level ($M = 3.00$, $SD = .29$), A 'level ($M = 3.039$, $SD = .32$) and Diploma ($M = 3.00$, $SD = .29$). However, mean scores of CSE among prisoners enrolled on different certificate programmes (carpentry, building and construction, tailoring and business management) did not differ from other education background ($p > .05$).

Discussion

Analysis of variance on core self-evaluation scores yielded statistically significant variations among education levels. The results of a post hoc test revealed that degree holders significantly differ. This finding concurs with a study by Judge (2009) indicating that learners in higher levels of learning tend to be more predictive of the outcomes of the learning situation which leads to high core self-evaluations. Results from a study by Scott and Judge (2009) also indicated that high core self-evaluations are strongly associated with higher levels of learning. Judge, Hurst and Simon (2009) theorized that individuals who persist to higher educational levels tend to have high core self-evaluations compared to their counterparts. This finding is also supported by Rosopa and Schroeder (2009) who suggests that learners in advanced classes have high core self-evaluations, are able to fulfil their task and also help individuals promote the institution in a positive way compared to leaners in lower classes. Further studies by Judge (2009) indicate that leaners in candidate classes have positive core self-evaluations, are more effective in overcoming barriers, and are better in problem solving.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the study, core self-evaluations affect prisoners' participation in education. The more the prisoners participate in higher education levels, the more they are likely to improve their core evaluations which shall ultimately reduce prison congestion and government expenditure. Core self-evaluation has a significant impact on almost everything a learner does e.g. ways of engages in activities, dealing with challenges, and interaction with others. It also can have a marked impact on academic performance. The literature is replete with how teachers can nurture high core self-evaluations among prisoners, some of which we now list.

The teacher should praise the student in a specific and genuine way. Students are experts at distinguishing genuine feedback from empty compliments. They learn to dismiss vague words of praise as insincere, and perhaps even phoney. Comments that suggest thoughtful appreciation of their work, on the other hand, are meaningful to them. Toward that end, students should know in specific terms what the teacher likes about their work or behavior. If the learner is progressing slowly, praise her/him for small steps forward. If you sense that some students feel uncomfortable being praised in front of classmates, tell them in private or in a note.

Instructors should show the student tangible evidence of progress. Expressing confidence in a student's ability is important; talks alone might not be enough. Help the students appreciate their own improvement by pointing to concrete signs of growth e.g by taping an oral reading at the beginning of the year and comparing it to a later performance, by showing papers from earlier in the year and contrasting them with later papers, or by demonstrating that solving the math problems they struggled with during the first marking period now come easily. They should also showcase students' accomplishments, for example, by reading one of the student's compositions to the class, displaying their artwork on a bulletin board, having them demonstrate how to do a math problem, or by inviting a student to speak in front of the class. Overall, in different creative ways, teachers should help the student feel important in class.

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