

PRISON EDUCATION, SKILL ACQUISITION PROGRAMMES AND PERCEIVED RECIDIVISM REDUCTION AMONG EX-INMATES IN BENIN CITY, EDO STATE

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of prison education programmes, skill acquisition programmes on perceived recidivism reduction among ex-inmates in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. Grounded in Human Capital Theory, the study employed a descriptive survey design. Primary data were collected with the use of questionnaire from a purposive sample of 110 ex-inmates residing in Benin and analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics, including regression analysis. The results revealed that participation in prison education programmes has significant relationship with reduced ex-inmate perceived recidivism in Benin City ($\beta = 0.249$, $p = 0.010$), whereas skill acquisition has no significant relationship with lowering ex-inmate perceived recidivism rates among ex-inmates in Benin City ($\beta = 0.113$, $p = 0.239$). The study concludes that participation in prison education programmes is significantly and positively associated with ex-inmates' perceived likelihood of recidivism reduction in Benin City, Edo State and that skill acquisition programmes have no significant relationship with lowering ex-inmate perceived recidivism rates in Benin City prison. Based on these findings, the study recommends evidence-based resource prioritisation that favours formal education, coupled with a comprehensive overhaul of vocational training curricula to align with market-relevant skills in digital technology and agribusiness.

Keywords: Recidivism, Prison Education, Skill Acquisition, Rehabilitation, Human Capital.



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INTRODUCTION

The persistent challenge of prison recidivism presents a global crisis, perpetuating cycles of incarceration that compromise public safety and strain communal resources. Internationally, reoffending rates typically range from 40% to 60% within a three-year post-release window; however, systematic data indicates significant variance, with low-resource environments reaching 68% and rehabilitation-focused nations dropping to 20% (Yukhnenko et al., 2023; Yukhnenko et al., 2020).

In Nigeria, this issue is amplified by systemic collapse, characterized by prison occupancy rates exceeding 250% of designed holding capacity, alongside recidivism rates estimated at 50–70%, driven by deficiencies in post-release economic infrastructure (Banwo, 2022; Abuchi et al., 2016). This trend is particularly acute in Benin City, Edo State, specifically at Benin Prison. In this urban hub, overcrowding levels surpassing 300% converge with youth unemployment rates exceeding 40%, forcing ex-inmates toward reoffending due to economic down-turn and social stigmatization (Chigozie et al., 2023; World Bank, 2024).

Prison education initiatives provide structured academic, literacy, and numeracy curricula, frequently integrated with cognitive behavioural therapy to address antisocial cognitive patterns. Complementing these are skill acquisition programmes focused on vocational trades—including agriculture, welding and fabrication, digital literacy, fashion designing and hairdressing—intended to foster economic self-sufficiency.

Recidivism, defined here as re-arrest, reconviction, or return to prison within 1 to 5 years, is often the result of social isolation, human capital deficits, and economic exclusion (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Adegboyega et al., 2019). For the purposes of this empirical study, however, recidivism is operationalised as a self-reported perceptual construct, measuring ex-inmates' assessed likelihood of refraining from re-offending. These dynamics are best understood through the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model, which suggests that successful rehabilitation requires addressing dynamic criminogenic needs, such as employability, through customized interventions (Zubairu, 2023).

Extensive longitudinal research indicates that prison education and vocational training disrupt the pathways to reoffending by improving self-efficacy and labour market participation, with meta-analyses suggesting a 13-43% decrease in global recidivism odds (Davis et al., 2013; Mbawala et al., 2023).

In Edo State, the efficacy of these programmes is often undermined by overcrowding. Local analyses of facilities like Benin Prison reveal that ex-inmates face a 35% joblessness rate double the state average illustrating a direct correlation between poor programme fidelity and high relapse rates (Banwo, 2022; Abuchi et al., 2016; World Bank, 2024).

This research investigated the influence of prison education and skill acquisition on ex-inmate recidivism in Benin City, Edo State, seeking to fill a vital empirical gap in the Nigerian correctional discourse. Given the extreme congestion (300%+) and unemployment-driven reoffending patterns in the region, an assessment of programme efficacy utilizing longitudinal tracking of recidivism and employment outcomes is essential.

Statement of Research Problem

The persistence of recidivism within the Nigerian correctional system fosters a self-perpetuating criminal cycle that depletes public coffers and destabilizes the social fabric. Despite the recognized potential of rehabilitative interventions specifically educational and vocational programmes these tools remain both underfunded and insufficiently scrutinized within the local context. In Benin City, correctional facilities such as the Benin prison suffer from extreme congestion, with recidivism rates hovering between 60% and 70%. These figures are largely attributed to the lack of post-release economic opportunities and systemic failures in rehabilitation, yet a significant gap in rigorous, site-specific research persists (Banwo, 2022; Abuchi et al., 2016).

The fundamental challenge is the lack of empirical verification regarding the efficacy of literacy, cognitive, and vocational initiatives (such as tailoring and mechanics) in curbing reoffending among ex-inmates in Benin City. This issue is compounded by a national prison occupancy rate exceeding 250% of the initial capacity and a regional youth unemployment rate in Edo State of over 40%, which forces former inmates into crime out of financial necessity (Chigozie et al., 2023; World Bank, 2024). Furthermore, the gap between policy intent and actual rehabilitation outcomes is widened by

informal programme implementation that fails to align with the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) framework, particularly regarding long-term employability (Zubairu, 2023).

While international meta-analyses suggest that prison-based education can decrease recidivism by 13 to 43%, research focused on the African and Nigerian urban landscape remains remarkably thin (Davis et al., 2013; Mbawala et al., 2023). Current literature indicates a significant evidentiary void: there are no empirical assessments of programmes in Edo State, even as high relapse rates spark demands for localized evaluations. Notable deficiencies include a lack of ex-inmate-centred design and a failure to integrate social work, resulting in unquantified impacts (Okafor & Eze, 2023; Ugwoke, 2017). While broader African studies on e-Learning and vocational training show potential, they frequently overlook Nigeria's distinct socio-economic hurdles (Koenders et al., 2023).

Unmitigated recidivism in Benin City not only burdens the judiciary but also threatens community safety and hinders the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16 regarding justice reform. Without localized data that accounts for variables like prison congestion (which reaches 300% in some Edo facilities) and social stigma, rehabilitation strategies remain inefficient (World Bank, 2024). This study seeks to bridge these gaps through a mixed-methods analysis, establishing the necessary baseline data to refine interventions and provide a blueprint for scalable correctional reform.

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of participation in prison education programmes on perceived recidivism reduction among ex-inmates in Benin City, Edo State.

H₀₂: Skill acquisition programmes have no significant effect on perceived recidivism reduction among ex-inmates in Benin City, Edo State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Human Capital Theory, primarily pioneered by Becker, serves as the theoretical anchor for this study. This framework conceptualizes education and training as productive investments that systematically enhance an individual's skills, knowledge, employability, and earning capacity. Consequently, rather than viewing formal education and vocational training through the lens of social welfare interventions, this study treats them as strategic investments that elevate a person's economic value and bolster their capacity to engage in lawful work.

Human Capital Theory

Within the parameters of Human Capital Theory, education and vocational training are conceptualized as strategic capital investments designed to yield significant returns in individual productivity. From a criminological standpoint, these investments raise the "opportunity costs" of reoffending by enhancing an individual's marketability and potential for legal income generation (Becker, 1993). In the specialized environment of correctional facilities, programmes focused on literacy, technical trades (such as welding and fabrication; and mechanized agriculture), and entrepreneurship facilitate the accumulation of what may be termed "inmate capital."

This accumulation is a critical counter-measure to the acute job scarcity prevalent in Benin City, where the lack of vocational proficiency among ex-inmates is correlated with a 2-3 times higher risk of recidivism compared to their skilled counterparts (McNeeley, 2023; Banwo, 2022). Empirical evidence from global meta-analyses reinforces this position, demonstrating that vocational education not only elevates post-release wage earning potential by 15-20% but also reduces the likelihood of re-arrest by 20-43% (Davis et al., 2013). These effects are notably amplified in high-unemployment environments like Nigeria, where the gap between skilled and unskilled labour determines the feasibility of successful reintegration (Lofstrom & Raphael, 2019).

Empirical Review

Empirical studies across different jurisdictions consistently show that prison education is associated with lower recidivism and improved reintegration outcomes. Davis et al. (2013), in a large-scale

meta-analysis of correctional education programmes, found that inmates who participated in educational interventions were less likely to return to crime after release than those who did not. The study further demonstrated that prison education improved employment outcomes, suggesting that education works not only through behavioural change but also through economic reintegration. This evidence is important for the present study because it supports the assumption that formal education in prison can reduce the motivation and opportunity for reoffending.

In a similar study, Kim and Clark (2013) examined the effect of prison-based college education on recidivism using a propensity score matching approach. Their findings showed that participation in college education significantly reduced re-arrest rates among released prisoners. The study is methodologically important because it used a stronger design than ordinary survey research, thereby reducing selection bias. It also reinforces the view that educational interventions in correctional settings can produce measurable post-release benefits. The current study draws on this evidence to examine whether prison education in Benin City is similarly associated with reduced perceived recidivism among ex-inmates.

In Nigeria, Adegoke (2017) examined access to education in prisons and reported that inmates who participated in educational programmes showed better literacy, self-confidence, and preparation for post-release life. The study also noted that prison education helped inmates develop a more positive attitude toward lawful living. However, the study did not directly measure recidivism, meaning that its findings were more indirect than outcome-based. Nevertheless, it provides useful evidence that education contributes to the personal development necessary for desistance from crime.

Igbinovia and Omorogiuwa (2019) investigated prison rehabilitation programmes in Benin City and found that educational and vocational initiatives had positive effects on inmate behaviour and rehabilitation. Their study is particularly relevant because it was conducted in the same local context as the present research. However, it focused on inmates currently in prison, not ex-inmates after release. The present study therefore extends the literature by capturing the perceptions of those who have already experienced reintegration and can better evaluate the post-release effect of these programmes.

McNeeley (2023) investigated vocational education and recidivism among individuals released before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study found that vocational education improved

employment prospects and contributed to lower recidivism, although the strength of the effect varied depending on labour market conditions. The research suggests that vocational training is most effective when participants can convert skills into actual income after release. This is relevant to the present study because it implies that skill acquisition in prison may not reduce recidivism if post-release economic support is weak or unavailable.

Mbawala, Mgale, and Rwela (2023) studied rehabilitation initiatives in Tanzanian prisons and found that educational and vocational programmes reduced reoffending when they were implemented with consistency and institutional support. Their work indicates that the success of correctional interventions depends not only on the existence of programmes but also on the quality of implementation. This is important for the present study because it suggests that even when skill acquisition is offered, weak delivery or poor support systems may prevent it from achieving the expected impact on recidivism.

Zubairu (2023) discussed the Risk-Need-Responsivity model and argued that inmate rehabilitation is most effective when programmes are tailored to criminogenic needs. Although this is a theoretical work, its empirical usefulness lies in the implication that rehabilitation interventions must address real barriers to lawful living such as unemployment, antisocial attitudes, and weak social support. The present study differs by focusing specifically on human capital outcomes, but Zubairu's work still reinforces the idea that correctional programmes should be responsive to the actual needs of inmates and ex-inmates.

Simović (2024) also examined post-penal assistance and found that support after release plays a crucial role in reducing recidivism. The study argued that rehabilitation should not end at prison gates, because ex-inmates need continued assistance in employment, housing, and social adjustment. This point is highly relevant to the present study because it helps explain why skill acquisition programmes may fail to show strong effects if they are not linked to practical post-release opportunities. In other words, the impact of prison training depends partly on what happens after release.

Boateng, Boateng, and Mensah (2025) studied vocational skills training in selected Ghanaian prisons and found that vocational training reduced recidivism when the programme content matched labour market demand and when inmates had access to some form of post-release assistance. Their findings

emphasise that vocational training should be practical, market-oriented, and linked to employment opportunities. This study is especially useful to the current research because it highlights the possibility that vocational training may have limited effects if the training is outdated or poorly connected to the external economy. Such concerns are relevant in Benin City, where unemployment and underemployment remain serious reintegration challenges.

Inimiesi (2025) examined inmates' character reformation and recidivism in Nigeria and concluded that rehabilitation programmes significantly influenced inmates' willingness to desist from crime. The study showed that education-based interventions can support behavioural reorientation and reduce criminal tendencies. This finding supports the current study's focus on prison education as a tool for perceived recidivism reduction. At the same time, it suggests that rehabilitation works best when it is continuous and supported by practical post-release structures.

METHODOLOGY

The Research Design

This study employed a descriptive survey research design. The population consisted of all ex-convicts living in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. The sample size of 110 ex-inmates was determined using Yamane's (1967) simplified formula for finite populations, applied to an estimated population of ex-inmates residing in Benin City, consistent with Nigerian correctional survey practice (Abrifor et al., 2023). Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that only respondents who had verifiably participated in at least one prison programme, educational or vocational; were included, thereby maximising the relevance of the sample to the study objectives.

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

The research instrument was subjected to content validity assessment before data collection through expert review by three specialists in Criminology, Social Work and Research Methodology from the University of Benin. The experts assessed the adequacy of item coverage, clarity of language, and alignment of the questionnaire items with the study objectives and theoretical constructs. This validation process followed the expert review procedure recommended by Lynn (1986) and adopted in related Nigerian correctional studies (Abrifor et al., 2023). Furthermore, construct validity was established by aligning the three questionnaire sub-constructs: Prison Education Programmes (Q1–Q5), Skill Acquisition Programmes (Q6–Q10), and Perceived Recidivism Reduction (Q11–Q15), with Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993) ensuring that the instrument measured the intended latent constructs (Field, 2018). The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha following a pilot study involving 20 ex-inmates who were excluded from the main study. The reliability coefficients were 0.81 for Prison Education Programmes, 0.79 for Skill Acquisition Programmes, and 0.83 for Perceived Recidivism Reduction, with an overall reliability coefficient of 0.82. Since all values exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70, the instrument demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; George & Mallery, 2003). All analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 26.

The study operationalised Perceived Recidivism Reduction as the dependent variable, defined as ex-inmates' self-reported perception of their likelihood of refraining from re-offending after participating in prison educational and vocational programmes. The construct was measured using

five Likert-scale items (Q11–Q15), with higher scores indicating stronger perceived recidivism reduction, consistent with previous perceptual recidivism studies (Lofstrom & Raphael, 2019; Mbawala et al., 2023). The independent variables, Prison Education Programmes and Skill Acquisition Programmes, were operationalised as respondents' self-reported participation in educational and vocational training activities within the correctional facility and were each measured using five-item Likert-scale sub-scales (Q1–Q5 and Q6–Q10).

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) and multiple linear regression analysis, with all statistical analyses performed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 26.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Table1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Demographic Characteristics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	104	94.5
	Female	6	5.5
	TOTAL	110	100.0
Age	18 – 25 years	27	24.5
	26–35 years	32	29.1
	36-45 years	43	39.1
	46 years and above	8	7.3
	TOTAL	110	100.0
Highest Level of Education	FSLC	23	20.9
	SSCE	59	53.6
	Diploma/Degree	24	21.8
	No Formal Education	4	3.6
	TOTAL	110	100.0
Duration of Incarceration	Less than 1 year	7	6.4
	1-3 years	31	28.2
	4-6 years	44	40.0
	7 years and above	28	25.5
	TOTAL	110	100.0
Type of Programme Participated In	Educational	10	9.1
	Vocational/Skill Acquisition	7	6.4
	Both	93	84.5
	TOTAL	110	100.0

Source: Researcher's Field Work (2026)

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 110 respondents who participated in the study. The characteristics examined include gender, age, highest level of education, duration of incarceration, and type of programme participated in. The sample is overwhelmingly male, with 104 respondents (94.5%) identifying as male and only 6 (5.5%) as female. This distribution is consistent with the

general population of correctional facilities in Nigeria, where male inmates constitute the vast majority of the incarcerated population. The largest age cohort among the respondents is the 36–45 years group, accounting for 43 respondents (39.1%), followed by the 26–35 years group with 32 respondents (29.1%). Those aged 18–25 years represent 24.5% (27) of the sample, while only 8 respondents (7.3%) were 46 years and above. The concentration of respondents in the productive working-age brackets (26–45 years) underscores the economic implications of incarceration and the critical importance of equipping this cohort with marketable skills to facilitate reintegration. More than half of the respondents (53.6%; n=59) holds the Senior School Certificate (SSC) qualification as their highest level of education, while 24 respondents (21.8%) possessed a Diploma or Degree. A significant proportion (20.9%; n=23) had only attained the First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC), and 4 respondents (3.6%) had received no formal education. These findings suggest that the majority of inmates have some form of secondary-level education, providing a reasonable foundation for participation in both academic and vocational programmes offered within the facility. The plurality of respondents (40.0%; n=44) were incarcerated for a period of 4–6 years. Those that served 1–3 years accounted for 28.2% (n=31), while 25.5% (n=28) were incarcerated for 7 years or more. Only 7 respondents (6.4%) were incarcerated for less than one year. The predominance of medium- to long-term inmates in the sample suggests that respondents had sufficient time to participate in and evaluate the impact of prison programmes on their attitudes and behaviours. An overwhelming majority of respondents (84.5%; n=93) reported having participated in both educational and vocational/skill acquisition programmes. A small minority participated exclusively in educational programmes (9.1%; n=10) or solely in vocational/skill acquisition programmes (6.4%; n=7). This distribution indicates that the correctional facility predominantly offers an integrated rehabilitation model, which may enhance the overall effectiveness of its programmes in reducing recidivism.

Table 2: Respondents' Perception of Prison Education Programmes

S/N	Statements	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean	SD DEV
		No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)		
Q1	My participation in adult literacy classes while in prison significantly shifted my views against committing crimes.	5	4.5	9	8.2	9	8.2	37	33.6	50	45.5	4.07	1.13
Q2	Acquiring academic certificates from the correctional facility has enhanced my ability to find lawful work as an ex-inmate.	4	3.6	10	9.1	9	8.2	38	34.5	49	44.5	4.07	1.11
Q3	The educational programmes in prison equipped me with the logic to distance myself from former criminal associates.	4	3.6	9	8.2	6	5.5	42	38.2	49	44.5	4.12	1.07
Q4	Engaging in formal education gave me a life direction that actively prevents me from re-offending.	3	2.7	11	10.0	9	8.2	37	33.6	50	45.5	4.09	1.09
Q5	I believe my involvement in prison education is the primary reason I have not returned to custody since my release.	5	4.5	12	10.9	7	6.4	50	45.5	36	32.7	3.91	1.11
Grand Mean												4.05	1.10

Researcher's Field Work (2026)

Table 2 presents the respondents' perceptions of the educational programmes offered within the Benin Correctional Facility. Five statements were assessed on a five-point Likert scale, and mean scores and standard deviations were computed for each item. A grand mean of 4.05 (SD = 1.10) was recorded for this construct, indicating a generally positive perception of the prison education programmes. The highest mean score in this section was recorded for Q3 (Mean = 4.12; SD = 1.07), which assessed whether educational programmes equipped respondents with the reasoning to

distance themselves from former criminal associates. This finding highlights the transformative cognitive dimension of prison education, beyond mere literacy and certification. Q4 (Mean = 4.09; SD = 1.09) revealed that engaging in formal education provided respondents with a life direction that actively deters re-offending. Similarly, Q1 and Q2 both recorded identical mean scores of 4.07, indicating that adult literacy participation and academic certification contributed to a shift in anti-criminal attitudes and improved employment prospects, respectively. Q5 recorded the lowest mean of this construct (Mean = 3.91; SD = 1.11), probing whether prison education was the primary reason respondents had not returned to custody. Although still above the neutral benchmark of 3.00, the comparatively lower score suggests that respondents may attribute their desistance from crime to a combination of factors beyond education alone, including social support, personal motivation, and economic opportunities. The grand mean of 4.05 for this construct clearly surpasses the benchmark of 3.00, affirming that the majority of respondents positively perceived the role of prison education in reshaping their values and reducing their propensity to re-offend.

Table 3: Respondents' Perception of Skill Acquisition Programmes

S/N	Statements	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean	SD DEV
		No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)		
Q6	The vocational training provided in Benin City prison gave me skills that are currently in high demand in the job market.	4	3.6	11	10.0	8	7.3	40	36.4	47	42.7	4.05	1.11
Q7	I am confident in my ability to generate income without returning to criminality as a result of the skills I acquired.	6	5.5	6	5.5	9	8.2	42	38.2	47	42.7	4.07	1.11
Q8	The absence of start-up resources following skill training is a key factor leading to recidivism among ex-inmates.	5	4.5	12	10.9	10	9.1	18	16.4	65	59.1	4.15	1.23

Q9	Practical skill acquisition is more effective at lowering re-arrest rates than general academic education.	3	2.7	10	9.1	9	8.2	57	51.8	31	28.2	3.94	0.99
Q10	Learning a manual trade during my time in prison lowered my desire to engage in illegal activities again.	2	1.8	4	3.6	11	10.0	47	42.7	46	41.8	4.19	0.89
	Grand Mean											4.08	1.07

Researcher's Field Work (2026)

Table 3 summarises respondents' perceptions of the vocational and skill acquisition programmes offered within the facility. The grand mean for this construct was 4.08 (SD = 1.07), the highest among the three perception constructs; suggesting that respondents viewed skill acquisition programmes slightly more favourably than general educational programmes. Q10 yielded the highest mean score in this construct (Mean = 4.19; SD = 0.89), indicating strong agreement that learning a trade during incarceration lowered respondents' desire to engage in illegal activities. The relatively low standard deviation (0.89) further suggests a high degree of consensus among respondents on this item. Q8 (Mean = 4.15; SD = 1.23) garnered strong agreement that the absence of start-up resources following skill training is a key driver of recidivism among ex-inmates. The higher standard deviation (1.23) reflects greater variability in responses, indicating that while the majority concurred, a notable portion of respondents held differing views. Q7 (Mean = 4.07; SD = 1.11) indicated that respondents felt confident in their ability to generate income through legitimate means as a result of skills acquired in prison. Q6 (Mean = 4.05; SD = 1.11) reflected agreement that the vocational training provided at Benin Prison is relevant to current labour market demands. Q9, which compared skill acquisition to general academic education in terms of effectiveness at reducing re-arrest rates, recorded the lowest mean in this construct (Mean = 3.94; SD = 0.99), yet remained above the neutral threshold, suggesting a mild preference for vocational training over academic education among respondents. Overall, the findings from Table 3 underscore the perceived effectiveness of vocational training in equipping ex-inmates with legitimate livelihood options, while simultaneously drawing attention to the systemic gap in post-release support, particularly access to start-up capital as a critical factor in preventing relapse into criminal behaviour.

Table 4: Respondents' Perception of Inmate Recidivism

S/N	Statements	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean	SD DEV
		No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)		
Q11	My participation in this programme has provided me with better tools and strategies to avoid criminal activities than I possessed previously.	2	1.8	8	7.3	13	11.8	29	26.4	58	52.7	4.21	1.03
Q12	I am of the opinion that a lack of legal means of income remains the most significant factor that could influence a return to crime.	2	1.8	14	12.7	14	12.7	22	20.0	58	52.7	4.09	1.15
Q13	Following my involvement in these programmes, I have developed a more profound commitment to being a law-abiding citizen.	2	1.8	8	7.3	10	9.1	39	35.5	51	46.4	4.17	0.99
Q14	I am confident that the new skills and education I have acquired will serve as a primary deterrent against being rearrested in the future.	1	.9	6	5.5	9	8.2	43	39.1	51	46.4	4.25	0.89
Q15	My aspiration to succeed through my acquired skills significantly strengthens my resolve to avoid returning to prison.	2	1.8	9	8.2	14	12.7	53	48.2	32	29.1	3.95	0.96
Grand Mean												4.13	1.01

Researcher's Field work (2026)

Table 4 presents respondents' perceptions of how participation in prison programmes has influenced their likelihood of re-offending. With a grand mean of 4.13 (SD = 1.01), this construct recorded the highest overall mean across all three perception constructs, indicating the strongest positive

consensus in relation to recidivism reduction. Q14 recorded the highest mean score in this construct (Mean = 4.25; SD = 0.89), reflecting strong confidence among respondents that their newly acquired skills and education would serve as a primary deterrent against future re-arrest. The low standard deviation suggests a high level of agreement. Q11 (Mean = 4.21; SD = 1.03) indicated that participation in the programmes provided respondents with better tools and strategies for avoiding criminal activity compared to what they possessed prior to incarceration. Q13 (Mean = 4.17; SD = 0.99) highlighted that involvement in these programmes fostered a deeper commitment to law-abiding behaviour, suggesting a meaningful shift in personal values and social identity among the respondents. Q12 (Mean = 4.09; SD = 1.15) confirmed that a lack of legal income remains one of the most significant risk factors for recidivism, consistent with findings in Q8 regarding the absence of post-release start-up resources. The higher standard deviation (1.15) indicates more varied responses on this item, reflecting differing personal economic circumstances among the respondents. Q15 recorded the lowest mean within this construct (Mean = 3.95; SD = 0.96), yet still demonstrated above-average agreement that the aspiration to succeed through acquired skills strengthens respondents' resolve to avoid returning to prison. This finding reinforces the motivational dimension of vocational training in promoting behavioural change.

Hypothesis Testing

Model Summary^b					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	0.297 ^a	0.088	0.071	0.47810	1.731
a. Predictors: (Constant), Skill Acquisition Programmes, Prison Education Programmes					
b. Dependent Variable: Ex-Inmate Recidivism					

ANOVA^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.364	2	1.182	5.171	0.007 ^b
	Residual	24.458	107	0.229		
	Total	26.822	109			
a. Dependent Variable: Ex-Inmate Recidivism						

b. Predictors: (Constant), Skill Acquisition Programmes, Prison Education Programmes

Coefficients^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.962	0.394		7.516	0.000
	Prison Education Programmes	0.190	0.073	0.249	2.617	0.010
	Skill Acquisition Programmes	0.098	0.083	0.113	1.184	0.239
a. Dependent Variable: Ex-Inmate Recidivism						

The R^2 value of 0.088 indicates that the two independent variables, prison education programmes and skill acquisition programmes collectively account for approximately 8.8% of the variance in ex-inmates' perceived recidivism reduction. The remaining 91.2% of variance is attributable to factors not captured in this model, consistent with the known complexity of recidivism as a multifactorial construct (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). The adjusted R^2 of 0.071 further confirms the modest but statistically significant explanatory contribution of the model.

The ANOVA results indicate that the overall regression model is statistically significant ($F(2, 107) = 5.171, p = 0.007$). This confirms that, taken together, prison education programmes and skill acquisition programmes significantly predict perceived recidivism reduction among ex-inmates in Benin City, at the 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of participation in prison education programmes on perceived recidivism reduction among ex-inmates in Benin City, Edo State.

The regression coefficient for prison education programmes was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.249, t(107) = 2.617, p = 0.010$), indicating that higher levels of self-reported participation in prison education were positively and significantly associated with increased perceived recidivism reduction among ex-inmates. Accordingly, H₀₁, which stated that there is no significant relationship between

prison education programme participation and perceived recidivism reduction, is rejected at the 5% significance level.

H₀₂: Skill acquisition programmes have no significant relationship with perceived recidivism reduction among ex-inmates in Benin City, Edo State.

The regression coefficient for skill acquisition programmes was not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.113$, $t = 1.184$, $p = 0.239$), indicating that self-reported participation in vocational programmes did not significantly predict perceived recidivism reduction in this sample. Accordingly, H₀₂ is not rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Research findings indicate a divergence in rehabilitative outcomes within the correctional facilities in Benin City, Edo State. Specifically, Inimiesi (2025) observes that while academic education initiatives are instrumental in decreasing re-offending, vocational skill acquisition lacks a statistically significant impact on ex-inmate reintegration.

The relationship between educational programmes and perceived lower recidivism suggests that academic instruction, spanning literacy and formal schooling, provides ex-inmates with the essential cognitive frameworks required for successful re-entry into society. This localized success in Benin City mirrors broader Nigerian situation, where educated ex-offenders demonstrate a 14% to 43% reduction in reoffending rates, largely driven by improved self-efficacy and employment potential. By addressing systemic challenges such as poverty, these educational tracks facilitate sustained desistance from criminal activity (Inimiesi, 2025; Igbinoia & Omorogiuwa, 2019; Adegoke, 2017).

In contrast, vocational training did not yield statistically significant effects on perceived recidivism reduction in this study, a finding consistent with documented implementation deficits in sub-Saharan correctional contexts (Inimiesi, 2025; Boateng et al., 2025). The finding that skill acquisition programmes yielded a statistically non-significant coefficient ($\beta = 0.113$, $p = 0.239$) warrants critical theoretical and contextual interrogation. The non-significance of vocational training aligns with a growing body of literature documenting the chronic implementation gap between the policy design of skill acquisition programmes and their actual delivery in Nigerian correctional facilities. Inimiesi (2025) and Boateng et al. (2025) document similar null or weak effects in Bayelsa and Ghanaian

prisons respectively, attributing these outcomes to outdated curricula, inadequate instructional infrastructure, and the absence of post-release labour market linkages. In the Benin Correctional Facility, vocational offerings such as hairdressing and tailoring, though valuable; may not align with the emergent high-demand sectors of the Edo State economy, thereby limiting their perceived deterrent value against re-offending.

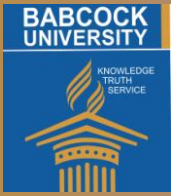
Conclusion

This study examined prison education, skill acquisition programmes and perceived recidivism reduction among ex-inmates in Benin City, Edo State. The study concludes that participation in prison education programmes is significantly and positively associated with ex-inmates' perceived likelihood of recidivism reduction in Benin City, Edo State and that skill acquisition programmes have no significant relationship with lowering ex-inmate perceived recidivism rates in Benin City prison.

Recommendations

The following evidence-based recommendations are proposed to optimize the rehabilitative impact of prison education and vocational programming, specifically aimed at reducing recidivism rates within the Edo State correctional context.

1. To enhance the rehabilitative framework in Benin City, it is recommended that correctional authorities prioritize evidence-based interventions that strategically reduce recidivism. A primary objective should be the expansion of formal education, encompassing literacy, secondary schooling, and tertiary programmes, through formalized partnerships with institutions such as the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), aiming for a minimum inmate participation threshold of 70%. To solidify these educational gains, curricula must integrate cognitive-behavioural components designed to foster long-term desistance, supported by a mandatory six-month post-release follow-up period to ensure sustained employability and self-efficacy.
2. Furthermore, a comprehensive overhaul of vocational training is necessary to address the currently observed null effects on re-offending. This involves replacing obsolete instruction with market-relevant curricula, such as digital skills and agribusiness tailored to the Edo State economy, alongside the provision of modern technical equipment. To bridge existing implementation gaps, the establishment of public-private partnerships is essential for facilitating internships and job placements, complemented by targeted stigma-reduction campaigns to improve social reintegration.



Finally, the Edo State government should implement a data-driven budget reallocation, favouring formal education at 60% and skill acquisition at 40%, while mandating a rigorous monitoring framework and inter-agency collaboration between the correctional service, NGOs, and employment ministries to ensure a holistic approach to inmate reform.

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