



Examining the Assistance Needed by Prison Students to Succeed in their Distance Education Studies

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10.46303/ressat.2025.3

Article Info

Received: June 13, 2024

Accepted: September 24, 2024

Published: January 1, 2025

How to cite

Mahlangu, V. P. (2025). Examining the Assistance Needed by Prison Students to Succeed in their Distance Education Studies. *Research in Social Sciences and Technology*, 10(1), 43-58.

<https://doi.org/10.46303/ressat.2025.3>

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the educational experiences of twelve jailed students in prison in Namibia, with a specific emphasis on identifying the factors necessary for their academic achievement. The study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the jailed students' perspectives on the impact of education, utilizing audio-recorded interviews. The interviews were meticulously transcribed verbatim by an English-speaking transcriber to ensure the utmost accuracy and thoroughness in documenting the participants' narratives. The author employed an interpretive paradigm to analyze and delve into the subjective meanings and experiences of the pupils. This methodology enabled a comprehensive understanding of the influence of educational programs on the lives of jailed inmates, potentially aiding in their rehabilitation and successful reintegration into society. The findings offer unique insights into the significant influence that education may have in correctional settings, revealing the challenges and accomplishments encountered by incarcerated students. This study contributes to the broader discourse on education in prisons by focusing on the real-life experiences of prisoners. It highlights the need to provide jailed individuals with educational opportunities to facilitate their personal and professional development. This study emphasizes the significance of tailored educational interventions in prisons to foster advantageous outcomes for incarcerated persons and society.

KEYWORDS

Prison Education, distance e-learning, student support, correctional facilities, academic success.

INTRODUCTION

The objective of this study is to analyze the specific forms of support that incarcerated students need in order to achieve success in their remote learning endeavors. Engaging in remote education programs while incarcerated brings distinctive obstacles and opportunities for inmates pursuing education within prisons. The research was carried out in a prison located in Namibia. Although educational programs can improve the rehabilitation process and aid in effective reintegration into society, incarcerated students frequently encounter numerous barriers that hinder their academic advancement. These factors encompass a scarcity of educational materials, minimal interaction with supervisors, and an absence of academic support structures. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the distinct requirements and obstacles encountered by these students is essential for formulating efficient support strategies that might optimize their educational experiences and results. This study aims to provide insights into how correctional institutions might enhance their support for students by examining different forms of help, including academic tutoring and emotional and motivational support. The findings seek to contribute to the wider discussion on prison education, emphasizing the significance of customized interventions to enhance the academic achievement and general welfare of incarcerated learners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Challenges

Individuals who are incarcerated have significant challenges in accessing and succeeding in higher education. The constraints encompass limited availability of educational materials and technologies, lack of academic support services, and psychological and emotional challenges. To ensure the academic success of jailed students in remote learning, it is crucial to implement a comprehensive approach that successfully addresses the various challenges they encounter and provides the necessary assistance and support. The challenges are classified into four categories: physical, operational, attitudinal, and human. Physical and operational challenges pertain to the evident obstacles to accessible digital infrastructure within correctional facilities, such as insufficient space or the absence of Wi-Fi, as well as limitations in support, including a lack of staff to oversee computer labs. Conversely, attitudinal, and human challenges are equally formidable. Inmates striving to enhance their education face biases that regard this opportunity as a privilege, which many correctional staff or external individuals do not possess, particularly concerning those pursuing higher education qualifications (Parry, 2023). This study examines the specific demands and challenges faced by imprisoned students and the many types of assistance that can enhance their achievement in distance learning.

One significant challenge faced by imprisoned students is the limited access to educational resources and technologies. The limitations of the implementation of digitisation in prisons come not only from the conditions of deprivation of liberty themselves but also from the structural conditions of prisons themselves. Prisons sometimes possess antiquated or

limited digital technologies, hindering students' access to online course materials, communication with professors, and assignment completion (Pulido, 2023). Furthermore, it is important to mention that many though restrictions are imposed on the access to certain information usually when such access is known to present a danger to prison security, the fact remains that prisoners have their own information needs (Sambo et al., 2017). Another significant barrier is the lack of educational support programs inside the jail system. Incarcerated students face challenges in accessing tutoring, academic guidance, and support services compared to traditional college students (Caskey & Price-Williams, 2023). This can make it challenging for prison students to handle their assignments and make consistent progress in their studies. Psychological and emotional factors can significantly impact the academic performance of jailed children. Psychological distress is prevalent among incarcerated individuals, with factors such as low perceived autonomy, safety, and social support contributing to poor mental health (Favril & van Ginneken, 2023).

Furthermore, the lack of social connection and support from peers in the jail setting may provide difficulties for students in sustaining their enthusiasm and engagement in their educational endeavors. In addition, incarcerated students may face emotional and psychological challenges, such as feelings of isolation, stress, and lack of motivation, which can negatively impact their academic performance (Coley & Barton, 2006). The lack of direct physical interaction with instructors and peers can worsen these challenges, as jailed students may feel disconnected from their educational community (Gaskell & Mills, 2014). To address these challenges, experts have suggested increasing support and resources for students who are in prison. Farley and Willems (2017) suggest that providing incarcerated students with appropriate tools, such as tablets or laptops with limited internet access, can enhance their educational experience. Establishing meticulously structured study environments within correctional facilities, characterized by minimal disruptions and dedicated staff support, can greatly increase the probability of attaining academic achievements (Galanek et al., 2022).

Furthermore, Gaskell and Mills (2014) emphasize the importance of creating strong partnerships between prisons, educational institutions, and support organizations to ensure that jailed students receive the necessary intellectual, emotional, and administrative assistance. This can include the implementation of tutoring, counseling, and mentorship programs, as well as the facilitation of communication between students and their professors (Coley & Barton, 2006). Therefore, students who are in prison have numerous obstacles when attempting to participate in distance education, including technological barriers as well as psychological and emotional limitations. To improve students' academic performance, it is essential to implement a holistic approach that incorporates the provision of appropriate resources, dedicated study spaces, and collaborative partnerships among many stakeholders. By addressing these challenges, we can guarantee that incarcerated individuals have equal access to and thrive in their educational endeavors.

Assistance Needed by Prison Students

This part explores the essential types of support required by incarcerated students to excel in their remote learning endeavors, utilizing instances from scholarly sources. The text emphasizes the significance of academic support, technology availability, financial assistance, and social-emotional supports in facilitating the persistence and success of incarcerated students in their educational endeavors.

In order to facilitate the academic success of incarcerated students in their remote learning endeavors, various forms of support are required. The integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in education is crucial for enhancing the quality and accessibility of educational resources (Natividad et al., 2024). This may involve equipping students with laptops, tablets, or other devices that are suitable for educational purposes, as well as guaranteeing dependable internet connectivity and the accessibility of educational applications and online course materials. Prison students greatly depend on academic assistance services. Tutoring and mentoring are not only important programmatic interventions into students' academic, personal, and social development; they also provide successful models for student development (Luescher et al., 2017). In addition, mental health support and counseling programs can assist students in coping with the psychological and emotional difficulties associated with the prison environment. Prison-based peer support programs can significantly benefit both incarcerated students and providers of support (Perrin, 2022). This can aid in mitigating the social isolation that is commonly experienced by incarcerated students and promote a more conducive learning environment.

Students incarcerated in prisons often encounter distinct obstacles while pursuing remote education. Farley and Willems (2017) emphasize the significant challenges faced by incarcerated students, such as restricted technological access, unreliable internet connectivity, and limited availability of library materials. Prisons sometimes have restricted or no internet access, which poses challenges for students in terms of conducting online research, communicating with professors, and submitting assignments electronically (Farley & Willems, 2017). In addition, jailed students may face obstacles in their learning process due to the presence of outmoded or restricted educational resources in prison libraries (Galanek et al., 2022). Another notable obstacle is the absence of designated areas for studying and the natural interruptions present in the jail setting (Coley & Barton, 2006). Students in prison are frequently required to study in their own cells or communal spaces, where noise and disturbances are common, posing difficulties in maintaining concentration on their academic tasks (Galanek et al., 2022). Moreover, the volatile and uncertain environment of prison, characterized by events like lockdowns, transfers, and disciplinary actions, might disturb the consistency of incarcerated individuals' educational pursuits, resulting in missed deadlines or disrupted learning (Gaskell & Mills, 2014).

Academic Support for Prison Students

Extensive academic assistance is an essential resource for incarcerated students engaged in distance learning. Due to the unique challenges they face, incarcerated students often require extra and thorough assistance to effectively navigate the demands of remote learning (Donaldson & Viera, 2021; Livingston & Miller, 2014). For example, Bonato et al. (2024) conducted research examining the experiences of jailed students participating in a remote education program in Brazil. The researchers found that the availability of specialist academic supervisors and mentors had a vital role in helping incarcerated students develop excellent study skills, efficiently manage their time, and sustain motivation throughout their education. Ventura et al. (2023) described a distance education initiative in Mozambique where jailed students were paired with skilled academic mentors. These mentors provided personalized assistance and evaluation for the students' assignments.

In the remote education program, prison students can benefit from organized learning communities and peer-to-peer networks, as well as obtaining personalized academic support (Fiorot, 2024; McTier et al., 2020b). Collaborative learning environments can foster a sense of connection and common purpose among incarcerated students, who may otherwise feel alone in their educational pursuits (Hogan, 2024; Strayhorn et al., 2013). By tapping into the collective knowledge and experiences of their fellow convicts, jailed students can develop essential academic and social skills that are vital for achieving success in distant education.

Technology Access for Prison Students

Prison students engaging in distant education require reliable access to technology as a crucial kind of help. Distance-based courses and programs sometimes necessitate the use of many digital tools and platforms, including learning management systems, video conferencing software, and online libraries (Hogan, 2024; Strayhorn et al., 2013). Nevertheless, incarcerated individuals frequently encounter limited or restricted technological access in jail, impeding their capacity to fully engage in and excel at distant education (Donaldson & Viera, 2021; Livingston & Miller, 2014).

In order to tackle this difficulty, certain distance education programs for incarcerated individuals have adopted cutting-edge technological solutions. An instance of this program, as outlined by Ventura et al. (2023), in Mozambique, granted imprisoned students with supervised and protected usage of computers and tablets that were equipped with instructional materials and communication utilities. In Brazil, Bonato et al. (2024) studied a distance education program that used a personalized virtual learning environment. This environment enabled prison students to access course materials and interact with instructors and classmates, all without requiring unlimited internet access.

To enhance the ability of incarcerated students to participate in distance education programs, it is important to provide them with the required technological resources and support. This will enable them to effectively interact with course materials, communicate with instructors, and complete assignments in a timely manner (Fiorot, 2024; McTier et al., 2020b).

Financial Assistance for Prison Students

Financial limitations provide a substantial obstacle for numerous incarcerated students who wish to engage in remote education (Hogan, 2024; Strayhorn et al., 2013). Imprisoned individuals frequently experience financial constraints and may encounter difficulties in covering the expenses related to distance-based educational programs, such as tuition, fees, and other expenditures (Donaldson & Viera, 2021; Livingston & Miller, 2014). In order to tackle this problem, certain distance education programs for incarcerated individuals have aimed to offer financial aid to eligible students. For instance, Fiorot (2024) investigated a distance education program in the United States that utilized the restoration of Pell Grant eligibility for incarcerated inmates to assist in paying for tuition and instructional materials. In a similar vein, the initiative outlined by McTier et al. (2020b) in the United Kingdom provided scholarships and subsidies to facilitate the enrollment and successful completion of distance-based courses for incarcerated students. Distance education programs can enhance educational access and achievement by obtaining financial aid for incarcerated students, thus eliminating a major obstacle, and improving the chances of student success and perseverance (Bonato et al., 2024.; Ventura et al., 2023).

Social-Emotional Support for Prison Students

Prison students participating in remote education need strong social-emotional support, along with academic, technological, and financial help, to overcome the specific difficulties they encounter (Hogan, 2024; Strayhorn et al., 2013). Transitioning from the rigid prison setting to the independent learning approach of online education can be especially challenging, and jailed individuals may face difficulties such as isolation, self-doubt, and anxiety (Donaldson & Viera, 2021; Livingston & Miller, 2014). In order to meet the social-emotional requirements of prison populations, certain distance education programs have included counseling services, mentorship programs, and peer support networks into their curriculum (Fiorot, 2024; McTier et al., 2020b). For instance, Bonato et al. (2024) investigated a remote education initiative in Brazil that offered jailed students the opportunity to connect with mental health experts who might give them with counsel and support during their scholastic endeavors. In a similar manner, the initiative detailed by Ventura et al. (2023) in Mozambique matched incarcerated students with mentors who could provide them with support, guidance, and a feeling of belonging.

Distance education programs can enhance the academic success of jail students by prioritizing their social-emotional well-being. This approach fosters a higher sense of belonging, resilience, and motivation among learners, as supported by Hogan (2024) and Strayhorn et al. (2013). Distance education offers jailed individuals crucial educational possibilities, particularly when they encounter substantial obstacles to pursuing traditional on-campus schooling. Nevertheless, incarcerated students necessitate certain assistance and resources in order to thrive in distant education programs. This article has analyzed the essential types of aid required by incarcerated students, encompassing academic assistance, technological accessibility, financial support, and social-emotional resources. By attending to these essential requirements,

distance education efforts can enhance the ability of incarcerated students to continue and excel in their educational pursuits, eventually enhancing their chances of successful reintegration and future achievements.

Distance learning has become more popular as a valuable form of education for jailed individuals who may face challenges in attending typical on-campus courses (Hogan, 2024; Strayhorn et al., 2013). Distance education enables incarcerated students to access a broader selection of academic programs and courses that may not be accessible within the confines of the prison (Donaldson & Viera, 2021; Livingston & Miller, 2014). Moreover, online learning can cultivate a feeling of optimism and potential among incarcerated students, who may have previously perceived their educational and professional opportunities as restricted (Fiorot, 2024; McTier et al., 2020b). Although online education offers benefits for incarcerated individuals, they frequently need significant assistance and resources to achieve success in their academic pursuits. The shift from the rigid prison setting to the self-directed learning approach of remote education can pose considerable difficulties for several jailed students (Bonato et al., 2024; Ventura et al., 2023). In addition, incarcerated students may encounter distinctive obstacles, including restricted technological resources, financial limitations, and social seclusion, which might hinder their educational advancement (Hogan, 2024; Strayhorn et al., 2013).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify and analyze the specific forms of assistance required by prison students to succeed in their distance education studies.

Research Question

What specific types of assistance do incarcerated students need to overcome the unique challenges they face in their remote learning efforts, and how can educational institutions and correctional facilities effectively provide this support to enhance their academic performance and facilitate their rehabilitation and reintegration into society?

METHOD

Sampling Procedure

The sampling procedure involved purposively selecting participants who were eligible based on the criteria that they must be registered for a course and studying through distance e-learning while incarcerated. The male prison participants in the study ranged in age from 34 to 69 years, with specific ages including 34, 35, 35, 37, 39, 40, 40, 52, 56, 61, 63, and 69 years old.

Data Collection

Data for this study was collected by conducting tape-recorded interviews with a sample of twelve student detainees. The interviews were conducted in a Namibian prison, allowing for a firsthand and genuine insight into the educational experiences and requirements of the participants. The utilization of tape-recorded interviews provided the precise and detailed collection of responses, facilitating a full study of the difficulties and assistance needed for their

distance education courses. This approach enabled a thorough examination of the individual viewpoints and distinct situations encountered by incarcerated students, providing useful observations for the research.

Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed word for word by an English-speaking transcriber to guarantee precision and comprehensiveness in recording the participants' stories. The careful transcription procedure ensured that the subtle subtleties and specific details of the students' experiences were accurately recorded, resulting in a comprehensive dataset that can be thoroughly analyzed. The author performed data analysis using an interpretive paradigm to explore the subjective meanings and personal experiences expressed by the incarcerated pupils. This strategy facilitated a thorough comprehension of the diverse types of aid required to bolster their remote learning endeavors, emphasizing the personal and communal difficulties encountered by the students, as well as their distinct viewpoints on how to surmount these barriers.

In ensuring the validity and reliability of the study, the interview questions covered various aspects of the assistance needed by prison students to succeed in their distance e-learning. The interview protocols covered a range of questions pertaining to needs required by incarcerated persons in prison. Interview questions were aligned with the constructs being studied. The participants reviewed and validated the accuracy of the information. Reliability was ensured by asking interview questions that were clear and unambiguous to reduce variability in responses due to misinterpretation.

FINDINGS

Based on the responses from the participants, the following themes can be identified:

Theme 1: Need for Support and Guidance:

Participant 1 said, *"Students, they need to be assisted, especially here in the situation I find myself using e-learning. No, we need more information, we need information regarding the modules that we are studying, and either hard copy or through e-learning or online"*.

Participants emphasized the importance of receiving support and guidance from lecturers, family members, and other stakeholders. They highlighted the need for consistent encouragement and proactive involvement to help them succeed in their studies.

Theme 2: Access to Study Materials:

A recurring theme was the need for better access to study materials, both online and in hard copy. Participants mentioned difficulties with internet access and the importance of having offline materials that they can use within their cells.

Participant 9 said, *"I think we need more study material, like hard copies because sometimes we struggle, like here the internet sometimes is a challenge, and then it is difficult to get materials online."* Participant 8 said, *"Help them with the necessary study materials, to motivate them all the time. This way, or the way that like is for the universities to help people in*

custody through classes, they must, okay they must talk to the correctional officers, through the inmates that can be taken out at least once per week to attend classes, if the universities are in the area where the correctional facility is."

Theme 3: Improving Communication and Relationships with Lecturers:

Several participants expressed a desire for stronger relationships and better communication with their lecturers. They suggested more active involvement from lecturers and regular interactions to reduce the feeling of isolation.

Participant 2 said, *"I think one of the things we are looking at how, where the world is, moving now. So, I will find advisable to ask help if students studying by assisting us with internet connection and because we only use our computers at a specific place like this program area, we cannot use our computer at the unit."* Participant 5 said, *"I think if there can be some form or relationship building between the students and the lectures."* Participant 12 said, *"My wish is that the lecturers must come on weekends just to guide us because without guidance we are lost. And in this facility, we are, it is very difficult, if they make themselves available or someone who has the skills can come and teach us on a Saturday or sometimes, they come on a Saturday when the NCS members make themselves available from the education side to come and assist us. To supervise us but if lecturers can make themselves available I will, it will be a great opportunity for us as distance students."*

Theme 4: Challenges of Studying in a Correctional Environment:

Participants discussed the unique challenges of studying in prison, such as limited access to computers and the internet, and the need for perseverance. They called for accommodations like offline access to computers and more flexibility in study arrangements.

Participant 3 said, *"So it would be good for us to be assisted by offline without the internet we can take our computers to the unit or the cell just to go through, because most of the things is soft copies so we serve the information on the computer it is good to be assisted in that way that we must spend four hours."* Participant 7 said, *"It is very difficult, our circumstances here, are not conducive enough, it takes a lot of perseverance and here and support to start. As lecturers, my opinion is that as you have come to us now, is an eye opener for us and through your motivations maybe through e-mails, telephone calls, when we talk to you, we know that you will guide us, especially we believe that you will guide us, especially people your caliber."*

Theme 5: Importance of Physical Presence and Regular Check-ins:

Some participants expressed a wish for lecturers or skilled individuals to visit them in person, especially on weekends, to provide guidance and supervision. They felt that regular in-person interactions would greatly benefit their learning experience.

Participant 11 said, *"It is very vital, I mean for the lecturers to be inclusive of students, especially incarcerated in prison, because of lack of information, secondly to be more supportive, to more conducive friends as well, because it is an issue that lecturers have to look into because incarcerated students are very limited time and they rely on the information from the professors or from the lecturers. So basically, it is not easy, it is not easy it is doable."*

Theme 6: Need for Institutional Support:

Participants highlighted the need for institutions to work closely with prisons to ensure that inmates have access to necessary resources and opportunities, such as attending classes or receiving study materials in a timely manner. All the participants (1-12) were of the view that institutional support was necessary.

DISCUSSION

For several convicted individuals, the process of transitioning from jail to higher education can be a difficult and demanding experience. Studies have identified various significant obstacles and achievements experienced by incarcerated students in their endeavor to engage in remote education.

An important obstacle is the limited availability of educational materials in prisons (Halkovic & Fine, 2013). Prisons frequently possess restricted library collections, antiquated technology, and limited internet connection, which poses challenges for students to carry out research, finish projects, and participate in online learning platforms (Prost, 2020). In addition, the regular lockdowns and interruptions in prison can disturb the consistency of their studies, resulting in missed classes and delayed development (Szifris et al., 2018). Notwithstanding these challenges, several incarcerated students have exhibited exceptional tenacity and resolve in their pursuit of education. Research has indicated that jailed individuals might derive a feeling of direction, self-esteem, and optimism for their future with access to distant education programs (Allred et al., 2013). Prison students who achieve success generally need on the assistance of committed teachers, mentors, and community-based groups to navigate the intricacies of their educational path (Prost, 2020).

Moreover, the effective accomplishment of distant education programs has been associated with greater career opportunities, decreased rates of reoffending, and improved social integration after being released (Szifris et al., 2018). The favorable results highlight the profound impact of education on the lives of jailed individuals and emphasize the significance of offering them the essential assistance to thrive. In order to tackle the difficulties encountered by incarcerated students, experts and policymakers have recommended a greater allocation of resources toward prison education initiatives, enhanced availability of technology and educational materials, and the formation of cooperative alliances between correctional facilities, universities, and community groups (Prost, 2020). By attending to these crucial requirements, we may establish a more comprehensive and fairer educational environment that enables jailed individuals to achieve their maximum capabilities.

Participant 1 discovered that the students require support in utilizing e-learning. This finding was corroborated by Szifris et al. (2018), who discovered that the regular lockdowns and changes to schedules in prisons hinder the consistent progress of incarcerated students' education. Consequently, pupils' absence from lessons resulted in hindered progress. Students in prison frequently encounter substantial obstacles when it comes to obtaining and finishing

their education. A significant problem is the insufficient availability of advanced technology and internet connectivity in prisons. Participant 2 pointed out that our computer usage is restricted to a specific location, such as this program area, and we are not allowed to use our computers at the unit. The restricted availability of technology can provide challenges for students in actively participating with online or digital educational resources. Distance-based courses and programs sometimes necessitate the use of many digital tools and platforms, including learning management systems, video conferencing software, and online libraries (Hogan, 2024; Strayhorn et al., 2013). Nevertheless, prisoners frequently encounter limited or constrained use of technology while in jail, impeding their capacity to fully engage in and excel at distant education (Donaldson & Viera, 2021; Livingston & Miller, 2014). Participants emphasized the necessity for increased assistance and direction from teachers.

Participant 3 proposed providing offline assistance to incarcerated students, allowing them to bring their computers to their units or cells for studying purposes, without relying on internet access. For incarcerated students to effectively participate in their coursework, it is imperative that they are given the essential technology resources and support. This will enable them to access course content in a timely manner (Fiorot, 2024; McTier et al., 2020b). Participant 4 proposed that supervisors should take a more proactive role in the students' studies by actively engaging with them when they encounter difficulties. This would encourage students to speak more with their lecturers and enable supervisors to help in a proactive manner. Distance learning can cultivate optimism and potential among incarcerated students, who may have previously perceived their educational and professional opportunities as restricted (Fiorot, 2024; McTier et al., 2020b). Participant 5 highlighted the need of fostering "interpersonal connections between the students and the instructors." The participant quotes underscore the necessity for more technological accessibility, greater instructor support and supervision, and more robust student-faculty ties to promote success in prison education programs. Students in prison have distinct obstacles that can hinder their educational advancement, including restricted technological access, financial limitations, and social seclusion (Hogan, 2024; Strayhorn et al., 2013).

(Participant 6: "We require motivation and unwavering backing from all individuals and entities involved, including institutions, lecturers, family members, and officers"). Distance education programs can enhance the academic achievement of prison students by prioritizing their social-emotional well-being. This approach fosters a higher sense of belonging, resilience, and motivation among incarcerated learners, as supported by research (Hogan, 2024; Strayhorn et al., 2013). Participant 7 said that initiating a task requires significant determination and the presence of encouragement and assistance. As lecturers, I believe that your being here serves as a revelation to us. Your intentions, whether conveyed through e-mails, telephone calls, or conversations, assure us that you will provide us with guidance. Transitioning from the rigid prison setting to the independent learning approach of online education can be especially challenging, and jailed individuals may face difficulties such as isolation, self-doubt, and anxiety

(Donaldson & Viera, 2021; Livingston & Miller, 2014). In order to cater to the social-emotional requirements of prison populations, certain distance education programs have included counseling services, mentorship programs, and peer support networks into their curriculum (Fiorot, 2024; McTier et al., 2020b).

Participant 8 expressed a need for assistance in obtaining the essential study materials and maintaining constant motivation. Given the distinct difficulties they encounter, incarcerated learners frequently need additional and comprehensive support to successfully negotiate the requirements of distance-based coursework (Donaldson & Viera, 2021; Livingston & Miller, 2014). Participant 9 asserts that incarcerated students require additional educational resources. Because of the distinct difficulties they encounter, incarcerated learners frequently need more concentrated instruction and support to successfully negotiate the requirements of distance-based coursework (Donaldson & Viera, 2021; Livingston & Miller, 2014).

Participant 10 argued that instructors must comprehend their circumstances, namely, their restricted time, and should be provided with additional materials and support to facilitate their writing. Gaskell and Mills (2014) stress the significance of establishing robust collaborations across prisons, educational institutions, and support agencies to guarantee that incarcerated students receive the essential intellectual, emotional, and administrative support. Participant 11 asserts that professors should exhibit greater support toward incarcerated students. Because of the distinct difficulties they encounter, incarcerated learners frequently need more comprehensive support and structured assistance to successfully traverse the requirements of distance-based coursework (Donaldson & Viera, 2021; Livingston & Miller, 2014). Participant 12 reiterated this viewpoint, stating a need for the lecturers to be available on weekends specifically to provide advice, as they feel directionless without it. Ventura et al. (2023) recommend providing guidance to students, similar to the approach used in Mozambique, where incarcerated students are matched with mentors who can provide support, guidance, and foster a feeling of belonging.

Limitation

It is crucial to acknowledge that this study is subject to numerous limitations. At first, the study was conducted solely in a single Namibian correctional facility, which limited the generalizability of the findings to other situations or locations. In addition, the study was hindered by a restricted sample size, as it solely encompassed twelve students. This may have undermined the dependability and applicability of the results. In addition, the study only included male participants, which may undermine the accuracy of the findings in reflecting the experiences and needs of female prison students. These constraints suggest that further research employing larger, more varied samples and done in many correctional facilities is required to have a thorough knowledge of the support required by jailed students to succeed in their distance education studies.

Implications for Practice and Policy

Practical implication: Correctional institutions are required to offer extensive academic support programs that include tutoring, mentorship, and counseling. These programs should be specifically tailored to meet the unique needs of incarcerated students. Efforts must be made to improve the accessibility of educational resources, such as textbooks, online materials, and dedicated study spaces, in jails. Education and correctional personnel should get specialized training to improve their comprehension and capacity to address the distinct challenges faced by incarcerated students, hence fostering a supportive educational setting. By incorporating technology, such as a secure internet connection and instructional software, the learning experience can be significantly enhanced, providing additional resources for remote education.

Policy implications: It is imperative for policymakers to give high importance to jail education in national education initiatives, guaranteeing sufficient funding and resources are assigned to support these programs. An intensified collaboration among correctional facilities, educational institutions, and government organizations is needed in order to provide complete support networks for incarcerated students. Policies should facilitate the integration of male and female inmates into educational programs, while also ensuring that their gender-specific requirements are met. Regular reviews of jail education programs should be implemented to identify areas for improvement and ensure that the support offered adapts to the changing demands of prison students.

By considering these practical and policy consequences, everyone involved can more effectively assist in the educational achievement and rehabilitation of incarcerated students, ultimately facilitating their successful reintegration into society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the assistance needed by prison students to succeed in their distance education studies among others are the following: *Academic Support:* Implement comprehensive tutoring programs, provide access to a variety of educational resources, and offer personalized learning plans to address the diverse educational backgrounds and needs of prison students. *Technology Access:* Equip prisons with the necessary technology infrastructure, such as computers and internet access, to facilitate online learning and virtual classrooms. This includes training staff and students on how to effectively use these tools. *Financial Assistance:* Develop scholarship programs, allocate funds for educational materials, and create partnerships with educational institutions and organizations to reduce the financial burden on prison students. *Social-Emotional Support:* Establish counseling services, peer support groups, and mentorship programs to help prison students navigate their educational journey and address the unique challenges they face. This also involves training educators to be sensitive to the social-emotional needs of their students. This study highlights the critical need for tailored assistance to support prison students in their distance education studies. The challenges faced by incarcerated learners, such as limited access to resources, restricted communication with instructors, and a lack of academic support, underscore the necessity for comprehensive support systems within

prisons. By providing enhanced support services, improving resource accessibility, and incorporating technology, correctional facilities can significantly improve the educational experiences and outcomes for prison students. Additionally, policy reforms that prioritize prison education, foster inter-agency collaboration, and promote inclusive programs for both male and female inmates are essential for creating a more equitable and effective educational environment. Addressing these needs not only facilitates the academic success of prison students but also contributes to their rehabilitation and successful reintegration into society.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses gratitude to the National Research Council of Namibia and the Correctional Authorities of Namibia, and the University of South Africa's Research Ethics Committee. Permissions were granted from both the author's institution [Ethical Clearance Certificate Ref: 2022/11/09/90284259/04/AM] and from the Namibian authorities for the research to be carried out.

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