Examining the Motivators of Prisoners to Study Using Technology While in Prison

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to investigate the motivational elements that drive inmates to participate in e-learning while incarcerated, arguing that despite difficult living conditions, offenders are eager to acquire additional knowledge. The research was carried out at a correctional facility in Namibia, using qualitative methodologies, mostly interviews, which were in line with an interpretive paradigm. Thematic analysis was employed, using transcriptions provided by a proficient transcriber. The analysis revealed a transition in Namibia's legal framework towards corrections and the reintegration of individuals into the community. The findings revealed that inmates were driven by a strong desire to provide for their families and make a meaningful impact on society after their release. This motivation was influenced by the educational accomplishments of their family members and a sense of personal responsibility. The accessibility and flexibility of e-learning were important factors, as participants appreciated the simplicity of obtaining information online. They viewed distance education as a very successful and enjoyable method of learning, acknowledging its significance in personal development. The decision to use e-learning was further supported by institutional limitations, such as a lack of personnel and prohibitions on conducting studies. Participants emphasised the ease and practicality of retrieving information via computers and the internet, thanks to the facilities provided within the facility. Inmates considered distance education as a practical way to make academic progress, even if they had to deal with obstacles including time and budget constraints.

KEYWORDS

Prisoners; technology; motivators; study; prison.

INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this study was to examine the elements that motivate inmates to participate in e-learning while they are in prison. Although correctional facilities have difficult living conditions, this paper argues that inmates who are committed to their education are not discouraged by the physical limitations of the prison environment. The study was carried out in a correctional facility located in Namibia. According to the findings, the government of the Republic of Namibia has shown a significant dedication to rehabilitating offenders by allowing them to participate in remote education programmes through e-learning. Namibia is a nascent nation with significant prospects for growth and a number of formidable obstacles to overcome. It possesses distinct characteristics and exhibits significant similarities with other nations in the Southern African region. This piqued the interest of a South African university scientist who is committed to scientifically analysing and gaining a deeper knowledge of the experiences of inmates studying through distance education. Examining the delivery of education to incarcerated individuals is a matter that is both intricate and delicate. The author chose to address this challenging matter by seeking ethical clearance from both the author's institution and the National Research Council of Namibia, as well as the correctional authorities of Namibia. Authorisation was obtained from both the author's institution and the Namibian authorities to conduct the research. The aim of the research titled "Examining the Motivators of Prisoners to Study Using Technology While in Prison" is to identify and understand the factors that drive incarcerated individuals to engage in educational activities through technological means. Specifically, the study seeks to: (a) Determine the primary reasons why inmates choose to study using technology, including intrinsic motivations (e.g., personal growth, self-improvement) and extrinsic motivations (e.g., earning privileges, preparing for post-release employment); and (b) Investigate any obstacles or challenges prisoners face when using technology for educational purposes and how these can be mitigated.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The rationale for inmates' involvement in studying through technology while confined is a topic of considerable interest and significance. Even though they are confined within prison walls, inmates have an impressive determination to pursue educational possibilities. This study seeks to explore the underlying factors that drive inmates to participate in e-learning programmes while incarcerated.

Education in prisons not only imparts useful knowledge and skills to offenders but also serves as a means for their rehabilitation and effective reintegration into society (Harlow, 2003). The supervisors' accessibility, guidance style, and interpersonal traits on students' motivation, efficacy, and satisfaction during the supervision experience is vital (Adedokun & Oyetunde-Joshua, 2024). Because learning through technology involves psychological challenges that could negatively impact motivation, self-efficacy, and emotional wellbeing of inmate students.

Imprisoned individuals have several obstacles that hinder their educational endeavours, such as restricted availability of educational resources, limited mobility and the negative perception linked to being incarcerated. In their study, Nunes and Matete (2023) found that students, who were inmates from rural regions, faced a dual disadvantage because of poverty and an inadequate education system that offered limited or no exposure to digital literacy and practices. These inmates are introduced to a digitalised education system that is completely unknown to them and is marked by a scarcity of digital instruments such as computers, internet connectivity, and, in certain cases, electricity. Notwithstanding these challenges, numerous inmates are driven to participate in technology-facilitated education for various motives. Initially, those who are imprisoned frequently perceive education as a way to achieve personal development and improve oneself (Behan, 2014). Education gives individuals the chance to obtain new competencies, broaden their understanding, and ready themselves for a successful reintegration into society after being released (Harlow, 2003). Furthermore, a benefit of online learning was the ability to provide a more flexible schedule for inmate students (Steyn et al., 2024). E-learning platforms enable students to participate in educational activities at their preferred speed and convenience, irrespective of their physical position within the institution. Moreover, incarcerated students are strongly motivated by the support and the absence of parents physically and emotionally could affect them negatively (Syauqila & Kaloeti, 2024). A significant number of inmates are motivated to seek education using technology to fulfil their obligations towards their family and to prepare themselves for a more promising future. In addition, the availability of educational tools facilitated by technology, such as online lectures, study materials, and evaluations, increases convicts' motivation to participate in learning activities (Bond & Bedenlier, 2019). Technology enables incarcerated students to engage in self-directed learning and build valuable skills, leading to a sense of empowerment and fulfilment. Although there are difficulties, technology provides many chances to improve correctional education. the power of digital technologies and open sharing to revolutionize how knowledge is created, shared, and accessed. Educational resources should be made freely, openly, and equitably available for inmates' students (Sanabria Zepeda et al, 2024). It means that knowledge, as a common good, should be accessible and usable by everyone. Furthermore, the acceptance and continued use of e-learning educational resources by inmates are essential for the efficacy of e-learning (Li & Hu, 2024).

METHOD

Data collection

The study employed a qualitative methodology, with interviews serving as the primary means of data gathering. The sample consisted of twelve (n=12) incarcerated participants who were purposively selected. The sampling method was purposive because the sample was selected based on specific characteristics or criteria. The main criterion for selection was they must be studying through distance e-learning while incarcerated. The author applied for ethical

clearance through the Research Ethics Committee of his institution, the National Research Council of Namibia and the Department of Correctional Services of Namibia. The author arranged with the authorities of the selected Namibian Correctional Facility to do the research. The author travelled from the Republic of South Africa to Namibia to do the study.

The data collection was through individual interviews with each of the selected participants. This methodology offers a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and motivations of inmates who engage in technology-based education while incarcerated. The researcher extensively examined the subjective interpretations and perspectives of participants by employing an interpretive paradigm (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This methodology allows for a comprehensive analysis of the complex interplay between individual motivations, institutional constraints and socio-cultural factors that impact the participation of prisoners in e-learning.

Employing a skilled transcriber who can effectively transcribe recorded interviews ensures that the participants' voices are preserved, and that the data transcription is precise (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). This meticulous process captures the nuances of participants' narratives, allowing for a precise depiction of their experiences and viewpoints. The author's assessment of the transcribed interviews, guided by the provided notes, enabled a thorough analysis of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Through an analytical perspective, the researcher identified emergent themes and patterns that shed light on the motivations and challenges faced by inmates seeking education through technology while incarcerated, offering useful insights. The qualitative technique employed in this study is robust and dependable for understanding the complexities of inmates' experiences and motivations within the framework of e-learning in correctional settings. It offers crucial information that can inform the development of effective educational interventions and support services tailored to the specific needs of incarcerated individuals.

Data analysis

The voice-recorded interviews in this study were given to a professional translator, who translated the data word for word, assuring correctness in language and maintaining the authenticity of the participants' narratives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Themes were extracted from the translated transcripts by analysing the questions asked during the interviews. This approach enabled a structured examination of the participants' answers (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The analysis used a thematic approach, where patterns and connections in the data were identified and analysed to clarify the factors that motivate and the experiences of prisoners who study using technology in a correctional facility (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Contemporary literature emphasises the significance of using meticulous translation methods in qualitative research, especially when dealing with heterogeneous populations or carrying out cross-cultural studies (Squires, 2008). To enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, the researcher decided to outsource the translation process to a trained expert. This was done to mitigate the possibility of misinterpretation or loss of meaning in the data (Neergaard et al., 2009). After the data was converted, thematic analysis was used to extract significant insights and discover reoccurring

themes in the dataset. Thematic analysis is a prevalent qualitative research technique that allows researchers to methodically examine qualitative data and reveal patterns, trends, and underlying meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Thematic analysis has been found to be highly flexible and adaptable, making it suited for a variety of research contexts and purposes, as highlighted in recent studies (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Nowell et al., 2017).

Thematic analysis was used to develop themes based on the interview questions, enabling a thorough investigation of convicts' experiences and motives for studying through technology while in prison. Contemporary research emphasises the significance of including the opinions and viewpoints of participants in the analysis phase, to guarantee that the results truly represent their real-life encounters (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Nowell et al., 2017). Researchers used an interpretive approach to analyse the data, taking into account the specific cultural and contextual aspects that influenced prisoners' educational experiences. In summary, the use of voice-recorded interviews, professional translation and thematic analysis is a strong method for collecting and analysing qualitative data. This approach allows researchers to obtain valuable insights into the factors that drive and hinder studying through technology in a prison setting. A previously validated questionnaire used in a similar context was employed. The author ensured consistency among the items within the interview protocol. Multiple methods were employed to cross-verify the results, including a combination of a questionnaire, interviews, and observations of the participants' responses to the questions.

FINDINGS

The following question was asked to the prison students, "What motivated you to study in a distance e-learning environment?"

The participants' responses are captured verbatim, and "I" will be used to protect the identity of the participants and for ethical reasons because the data was collected under strict rules and regulations of Namibian authorities. The themes emerged from the transcriptions of eleven audio-recorded interviews of participants. The last participant's interview transcript was not used because it was inaudible.

Themes that emerged are the following:

Motivation: To study to assist family after being released.

> **Participant 1, said,** *"It motivates, there is a newspaper term of regarding the employment outside that time and because they wanted to make a where African people or community who will be receiving their things, so I thought doing this, having this more time to study, maybe I should study because I heard other people, especially my cousin, when he was obtaining his masters, when he obtained even his diploma, we are together, so I thought I should also do the same in order that once I go outside, I can assist my family."*

Motivation: To be able to manage and cope with the changing world.

Participant 2, said, *"One of the things that motivated me is to see how the world is changing, because before I started studying, I thought I was asking myself how I would manage."*

Motivation: E-learning platform is a good mode of study.

Participant 3 said, *"So when I saw this platform like e-learning platform where lectures, supervisors, they share all the resources, on e-learning, which way you do your tests, you do tests online, thesis, other lessons, you get your them on e-learning, so it is one of the things that motivated me to do that this one is a good mode of study, enjoying this so I feel that feeling distance education is one of the good platform."*

Motivation: To better themselves through studies.

Participant 4, said, *"The motivation is because I wanted to better myself, and the only way to better myself is through studies. Then the only mode of study available for me as a prisoner or as an offender in the correctional facility is through distance e-learning mode. The setup of the institution does not allow you take full-time or part-time studies because of our incarceration and issues with manpower from the side of the institution."*

Motivation: Circumstances inmates found themselves in prison.

Participant 5 said, *"It was not by choice but because of circumstances that we chose distance mode."*

Motivation: The availability of computers.

Participants 6 said, *"The only means offered here where you can get education. Because I believe that using computers it is easy to access information, rather than attending the class. There is nowhere that you could access, as long as the officers allow you to use the computer with the internet open for you, at least you can do whatever you want to do."*

Motivation: Motivation from friends and supervisors.

Participant 7 said, *"Circumstances which I find myself as I said and also the motivation from my friends, and my supervisors who constantly motivated me to pull up my socks, to study harder and finish my studies."*

Motivation: Other fellow incarcerated inmates who were studying through distance e-learning.

Participant 8 said, *"Distance is better for me, because I am incarcerated, and you know a lot of people like Mr. XXXX. Dr XXXX, he did his PhD through distance, so what is pushing me to do it, so he motivated me to do the distance. Ja, considering the situation where we find ourselves, it is the only opportunity, because the facility having the opportunity for full-time learning, it is the only opportunity we have."*

Motivation: Opportunities presented to inmates to study.

Participant 9 said, *"I decided to take the opportunity. The situation where I find myself, because I know I can do it because I cannot take the courses which is full-time, because I have to go and consider the situation that I find myself. I cannot operate on the full-time that is why automatically just to take on the distance mode which I am able to do."*

Motivation: To be a better person.

Participant 10 said, *"Motivation of pursuing in e-learning studies it is to be a better person and to go along with the globalisation of the world because, the world is evolving especially after Covid 19, so that is basically the motivation of pursuing in e-learning."*

Motivation: Time available and length of sentence.

Participant 11 said, *"I decided to do it because what happened, there is so many things that goes around, my quiet time in this environment that we have is what I decided I make use of the time that I am having because of my sentence that is so long."*

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Morales et al. (2020) suggest that it is important for us, as a collective, to have the necessary competencies to successfully address the varied teaching and learning conditions experienced by incarcerated individuals. This will allow us to cater for their individual learning needs, prior experiences, and personal interests more effectively.

The participants said, *"It motivates, there is a newspaper term of regarding the employment outside that time and because they wanted to make a where African people or community who will be receiving their things, so I thought doing this, having this more time to study, maybe I should study because I heard other people, especially my cousin, when he was obtaining his masters, when he obtained even his diploma, we are together, so I thought I should also do the same in order that once I go outside, I can assist my family."*

The extract emphasises the complex and diverse reasons that prompt incarcerated prisoners to seek education using technology while in prison. Contemporary literature highlights that lecturer/ teacher–student interactions have been shown to predict students' academic and behavioural outcomes in correctional settings (Gagnon et al., 2024). Moreover, there are a number of factors that contribute to academic failure of inmate students such as family, peer, technological challenges and economic factors. It must be noted that the scholastic accomplishments of others, such as relatives or colleagues, can motivate incarcerated individuals to strive for their own educational aspirations (Xie et al., 2024). To succeed in their studies, inmates need support from family, faith community, friends, and the state for successful reintegration (Ajmal & Arshad, 2024).

One participant said, *"One of the things that motivated me is to see how the world is changing, because before I started studying, I thought I was asking myself how would I manage? So when I saw this platform like e-learning platform where lectures, supervisors, they share all the resources, on e-learning, which way you do your tests, you do tests online, thesis, other lessons, you get your them on e-learning, so it is one of the things that motivated me to do that this one is a good mode of study, enjoying this so I feel that feeling distance education is one of the good platform. The motivation is because I wanted to better myself, and the only way to better myself is through studies. Then the only mode of study available for me as a prisoner or as an offender in the correctional facility is through distance e-learning mode".*

The excerpt emphasises the transformative capacity of remote e-learning for incarcerated individuals, emphasising its role in enabling personal development and the acquisition of skills. Recent literature supports and confirms these findings, highlighting the significance of E-learning, in the utilization of electronic technologies to facilitate learning, which has the ability to effectively solve the challenges faced by incarcerated inmate students in prison (Hakimi et al., 2024). Distance e-learning offers incarcerated individuals a valuable chance to enhance their entrepreneurship skills to circumvent a discriminatory labour market to access employment opportunities (Brophy et al., 2024). In addition, the adaptability and availability of e-learning platforms allow incarcerated individuals to participate in educational endeavours at their preferred speed and convenience, thereby granting them the ability to assume authority over their own learning process (Brown & Wilson, 2023).

One participant said, *"The setup of the institution does not allow you take full-time or part-time studies because of our incarceration and issues with manpower from the side of the institution. It was not by choice but because of circumstances that we chose distance mode. The only means offered here where you can get education. Because I believe that using computers it is easy to access information, rather than attending the class. There is nowhere that you could access, as long as the officers allow you to use the computer with the internet open for you, at least you can do whatever you want to do".*

The extract highlights the limitations and difficulties that incarcerated individuals encounter while trying to access educational programmes in correctional facilities. The current body of literature emphasises the perception of unprofessional correctional services staff toward offenders' education as one of the main contributors toward a negative educational environment (Mafilika & Marongwe, 2024). Participation in prison education could reduce misconduct within prisons (Kaiser et al., 2024). The institutional limitations preventing physical attendance in classrooms need the use of technology-based learning platforms include laptops and internet access, for educational participation (Brown & Wilson, 2023). Although not always easily accessible, the passage implies that incarcerated prisoners can benefit from obtaining educational materials and knowledge through technology and the internet, with permission from correctional staff (Kaiser et al., 2024). In addition, e-learning is increasingly becoming a vital component of education, and inmates acknowledge the importance and potential of information and communication technologies in facilitating their learning (Amal, 2024). In a time when proficiency in digital skills is becoming increasingly crucial for engaging in society, incarcerated individuals who aim to reintegrate into the community after release must possess the capacity to navigate online platforms and effectively use technology for educational purposes (Brown & Wilson, 2023). The extract emphasises the crucial significance of distance education in overcoming institutional obstacles and encouraging incarcerated individuals to pursue educational opportunities despite the hurdles presented by incarceration.

One participant stated: *"Circumstances which I find myself as I said and also the motivation from my friends, and my supervisors who constantly motivated me to pull up my*

socks, to study harder and finish my studies. Distance is better for me, because I am incarcerated, and you know a lot of people like Mr. XXXX. Dr XXXX, he did his PhD through distance, so what is pushing me to do it, so he motivated me to do the distance. Ja, considering the situation where we find ourselves, it is the only opportunity, because the facility having the opportunity for full-time learning, it is the only opportunity we have. I decided to take the opportunity."

The extract emphasises the impact of social support and personal motives on the choices of incarcerated individuals to engage in remote education. Contemporary literature emphasises the significance of peer and mentor assistance in fostering educational involvement and perseverance among incarcerated individuals (Kaiser et al., 2024). The consequences of incarceration extend far beyond the inmates (Tadros & Presley, 2024). Furthermore, the accomplishment of those who have accomplished academic achievements through online education acts as an inspiring and validating example for convicts who are pursuing their own educational paths (Hakimi et al., 2024). The inclination towards distant education is motivated by the acknowledgement of its practicality and viability within the limitations of the jail setting.

Education-in-prison e-learning programmes is associated with a reduction in the likelihood of future incarceration or recidivism (Bowling et al., 2024). Despite the difficulties presented by being in jail, remote education provides a crucial opportunity for inmates to learn the skills and values that will help them become good people who follow the rules of society (Bonggot et al., 2024). In summary, the excerpt highlights the significance of social support, personal motivation, and practical issues in influencing the choices of incarcerated individuals to participate in remote education.

One participant(s) said, *"The situation where I find myself, because I know I can't do [it] because I cannot take the courses which is full-time, because I have to… consider the situation that I find myself."*

The sample highlights the practical factors that impact the decisions of incarcerated individuals when it comes to their educational endeavours. The current literature emphasises that the students who were once incarcerated are being stigmatised and perceived negatively by others (Fiorot, 2024). Restrictions imposed by institutions, such as inadequate resources and shortages of staff, render it unfeasible for incarcerated individuals to engage in full-time educational programmes (Brown & Wilson, 2023). Consequently, numerous incarcerated individuals are driven to pursue alternative educational avenues, such as distance education, which are more suitable for their specific circumstances and limitations (Hakimi et al., 2024). The motivation of inmates to behave morally is driven by their need to uphold their self-identity, retain positive social connections with society, and prevent future incarceration (Leach & Iyer, 2024). Despite the difficulties and restrictions imposed by their circumstances, incarcerated individuals exhibit resilience and tenacity in pursuing educational opportunities that correspond with their objectives and ambitions (Brown & Wilson, 2023). In summary, the excerpt emphasises the significance of adaptability and practicality in dealing with the intricacies of educational access and achievement in correctional environments.

One participant said*, "I cannot operate on the full-time that is why automatically just to take on the distance mode which I am able to do. Motivation of pursuing e-learning studies it is to be a better person and to go along with the globalisation of the world because, the world is evolving especially after Covid 19, so that is basically the motivation of pursuing in e-learning. It is, I decided to do it because what happened, there are so many things that goes around, my quiet time in this environment that we have is what I decided I make use of the time that I am having because of my sentence that is so long."*

Distance e-learning has become increasingly popular in correctional settings in recent years, providing incarcerated individuals with an opportunity to pursue education and personal growth. This research examines the underlying motivations that drive inmates to engage in e-learning studies, the perceived advantages they derive from it, and the influence of distance education on their process of rehabilitation and reintegration into society. The reasons why inmates participate in remote e-learning are complex and demonstrate their desires for self-improvement, acquiring new skills and becoming integrated into society. Contemporary literature highlights that information technology tools are needed to set the inmate students up for success. (Carey, 2024). Inmates are less likely to break the law again if they have a job, which is why there is a need to allow them to study using technology to pursue education through e-learning platforms (Johnson, 2021).

Implications for Policy and Management

An analysis of the factors that drive inmates to engage in technological education can provide valuable insights for the development of strategies to enhance rehabilitation efforts and decrease the likelihood of reoffending. By granting inmates access to educational materials and technology, officials may assist them in obtaining new skills and knowledge that will aid in their successful reintegration into society after their release. Correctional policies should prioritise investment in technology infrastructure to ensure prisoners' access to educational resources, including computers, internet connectivity and educational software. This may entail allocating budgets for the maintenance and enhancement of technological infrastructure within correctional facilities. Specialised training may be necessary for prison officials and educators to effectively integrate technology in educational programmes within prisons. One approach is to give priority to policies that focus on offering training and assistance to instructors, with the goal of improving their proficiency in delivering educational content using technological platforms.

By acknowledging the motivators found via research, officials can create incentive schemes that will effectively motivate inmates to engage in educational activities. This may involve providing incentives such as shortened sentences, jail privileges or more resources to individuals who actively participate in educational programmes. Policies should strive to ensure fairness and inclusivity in the availability of technology and educational opportunities for individuals incarcerated in prisons. This may require overcoming obstacles such as limited computer skills, disabilities, language difficulties, and cultural disparities to ensure that all

incarcerated individuals have equitable access to educational opportunities facilitated by technology. Policymakers have the opportunity to cooperate with educational institutions and non-governmental organisations to increase the availability of educational materials and knowledge within prisons. This may entail forming alliances to create and provide educational initiatives customised to the specific need of incarcerated individuals. Ongoing research and assessment of the efficacy of educational programmes including technology in prisons are crucial. It is important that continuous research is to evaluate the effects of these programmes on inmates' outcomes, including their educational achievements, job prospects and likelihood of committing another offence. By integrating the findings into the process of policy formulation, policymakers could establish more efficient and comprehensive educational prospects for incarcerated individuals, ultimately fostering their rehabilitation and successful reintegration into society.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the reasons for and advantages of implementing remote e-learning in correctional settings are clear. E-learning plays a vital part in the rehabilitation and reintegration of incarcerated individuals by offering them access to education and personal development possibilities. In order to fully capitalise on the benefits of distant education for inmates, it is crucial to further enhance the availability of e-learning programmes and support services in correctional facilities. Incarcerated students have diverse motivations and conditions that prompt them to engage in remote e-learning while in prison. Their motivation stems from a desire for personal development and progress, which is inspired by observing the accomplishments of others and acknowledging the need for new skills in an evolving global landscape. The presence of institutional constraints, such as the inability to pursue full-time or part-time courses and a lack of qualified personnel, necessitates the use of remote education as a feasible alternative. The ease of access and convenience provided by e-learning platforms, made possible using technology and internet connectivity, additionally incentivises inmates to participate in educational endeavours. Friends and supervisors providing social support, together with successful individuals who have pursued remote education, also have a substantial impact in motivating prisoners to engage in e-learning. The motivation for the pursuit of distant e-learning is ultimately to improve oneself and adjust to the changing global environment, while maximising the available time for learning during incarceration.

Limitations and Recommendations

Based on the examination of factors that drive prisoners to engage in technology-based education while incarcerated, the following suggestions are made. Correctional facilities should prioritise providing universal access to technology, including computers and internet connectivity, for all prisoners. This initiative aims to ensure equitable and unbiased access to educational resources and opportunities for individual development. To improve educational opportunities, educational institutions should expand their distance learning programmes to

include a wider range of courses. These programmes should cater for the many interests and educational needs of incarcerated individuals.

In order to cultivate a welcoming and advantageous environment for incarcerated individuals to participate in technology-driven education and pursue their academic goals while in prison, it is imperative that correctional authorities, policymakers and educational institutions pay heed to the following suggestions.

Distance education institutions should offer comprehensive support services, including technical assistance and mentorship, to aid incarcerated individuals in effectively navigating distance learning platforms. This support should enhance their level of engagement and success in educational endeavours. Correctional institutions should implement peer support networks to facilitate collaboration, knowledge sharing and motivation among incarcerated individuals engaged in online learning programmes. Peer support exerts a significant impact on both scholastic attainment and individual growth. Higher education institutions should prioritise addressing institutional barriers, such as insufficient personnel and bureaucratic hurdles, which impede convicts' access to education. Effectively coordinating administrative procedures and allocating resources in an appropriate manner improves the implementation of distant learning programmes. Prison authorities should form partnerships with external organisations, educational institutions, and community partners to improve the accessibility of educational resources and support services for incarcerated individuals. Incorporating external expertise and resources can improve educational opportunities in correctional facilities. Moreover, it is crucial to regularly assess distance learning programmes to measure their effectiveness and identify areas that need improvement. Feedback from incarcerated student participants and stakeholders could be used to ensure that programmes are adjusted to meet the evolving needs of those in prison. Education should be given more prominence in the efforts to rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders. The application of technology has had a positive impact on distance education, enhancing the personal development, skill acquisition and potential for a successful reintegration into society for inmates.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest.

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