



EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF PRISONERS ABOUT MANAGING THEIR STUDIES IN A DISTANCE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: A CASE OF NAMIBIA

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Abstract

This qualitative study delves into the experiences of incarcerated individuals in Namibia as they navigate the challenges and opportunities of studying in a distance learning environment. The research aims to uncover the unique perspectives, obstacles, and strategies employed by prisoners in managing their educational pursuits while incarcerated, with the goal of informing policy and practice in correctional education. Utilizing in-depth interviews as the primary method of data collection, the study adopts an interpretive paradigm to delve deeply into the subjective experiences and meanings attributed by participants to their educational endeavors within the prison context. Following the transcription of the interviews, the author engages in thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the complexities inherent in studying while incarcerated. Through this analytical lens, the study sheds light on the diverse challenges and opportunities encountered by individuals in prison settings, enriching scholarly discourse and informing efforts to enhance access to education and promote rehabilitation within correctional facilities.

Keywords: *Experiences, prisoners, distance e-learning, incarceration.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the study was to examine the experiences of prisoners about managing their studies in a distance learning environment in a Namibian correctional facility. The paper's central claim is that, despite their severe living conditions, inmates who are committed to their education cannot have their education impeded by prison walls. This research was carried out in a prison in Namibia. This study was qualitative in nature, utilizing interviews as a means of data collecting while adhering to an interpretive paradigm. A skilled transcriber transcribed the tape-recorded interviews verbatim, and the author was provided the notes to interpret. The analysis was conducted thematically. With relation to prison services, Namibia's legal system saw significant transformations as it moved from an approach centered on punishment and isolation to one that emphasizes corrections and community reintegration.

PURPSOE

The purpose of exploring the experiences of prisoners about managing their studies in a distance learning environment in Namibia was to identify the challenges and barriers they face in accessing and engaging with education while incarcerated. This understanding can inform the development of targeted interventions and policies aimed at enhancing educational opportunities and promoting rehabilitation within correctional settings.

BACKGROUND

The government of the Republic of Namibia has demonstrated a strong commitment to the rehabilitation of inmates by permitting them to enroll in distance education programs via e-learning, according to the findings. Namibia is a young country with great development opportunities and some serious challenges. It is unique in many respects and shares important features with other countries in the southern African region. The author supervised a prisoner doing a master's degree and ended up completing a PhD degree while in prison. This caught the attention of the author as a scientist from a university in South Africa, who dedicated to the scientific

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analysis and better understanding of the experiences of the prisoners studying in incarceration in a Distance Mode. Investigating the provision of education to prisoners while in prison is both a highly complex and a highly sensitive issue. The author decided to approach this difficult issue through the application for ethical clearance both from the institution of the author as well as from the National Research Council of Namibia and the Correctional Authorities of Namibia. Permissions were granted from both the author's institution and from the Namibian authorities for the research to be carried out.

LITERATURE REVIEW

While incarcerated, managing your studies in a virtual learning setting has special obstacles that call for cautious navigation and thoughtful planning. People in these situations have to deal with the limitations of the jail environment, restricted communication routes, and restricted access to resources. Despite these challenges, jailed students can succeed academically by using a number of ways to manage their studies well. Effective time management is essential for managing studies in a distance learning setting. People who are incarcerated frequently follow set daily schedules and must set aside specific times during the day to study in addition to their other obligations. Students who prioritize their tasks and set realistic goals can better manage their time and complete their courses on time. Furthermore, it's critical to create a supportive learning atmosphere inside the institution. During study sessions, finding a peaceful, comfortable area free from interruptions will help you concentrate and stay focused. Furthermore, it might take ingenuity and inventiveness to obtain required study materials, such as textbooks, course materials, and technical resources.

Keeping in touch with teachers, tutors, and other students is another essential component of studying in a remote learning setting. Prison environments may have restricted avenues for communication but making use of what's available—like written letters or regular times for communication—can encourage cooperation and support from classmates and teachers. Furthermore, it's critical to keep your resilience and motivation in the face of difficulties. Despite the challenges they may face, self-discipline, asking for help from classmates and mentors, and acknowledging accomplishments along the road can all help students in prison remain inspired and dedicated to their academic objectives. Current research emphasizes how crucial it is to meet the educational needs of those who are incarcerated in order to facilitate their effective reintegration back into society. Research indicates that educational attainment lowers the likelihood of reoffending and increases the prospects for employment upon release (Davis, 2019). Additionally, studies conducted in prison have linked education to enhanced social integration, critical thinking abilities, and self-esteem (Nally et al., 2015). However, students who are jailed frequently encounter difficulties, such as restricted access to resources and support services and administrative roadblocks in correctional facilities (Irwin, 2017). Despite these obstacles, it is well acknowledged that education can significantly lower recidivism rates among jailed inmates and foster personal development (Travis, 2018).

Studying remotely requires a calculated strategy to get past obstacles and succeed academically, especially while one is incarcerated. Here are some crucial tactics and ideas to keep in mind: Time management: It's critical to manage time well. Since incarcerated people frequently follow set daily schedules, setting aside designated study times is crucial. Making the most of study time while managing other obligations requires setting reasonable priorities and goals. Provide a Good Study atmosphere: It's important to create a good study atmosphere inside the prison walls. During study periods, finding a distraction-free, peaceful place to be improves attention and concentration. It can be important to be resourceful and make use of existing resources in order to obtain appropriate study materials. Communication is key. Even with few avenues for communication, being in touch with teachers, tutors, and other students is essential. Collaboration and support from peers and educators are facilitated when available communication alternatives are used, such as written letters or scheduled communication intervals. Motivation and Resilience: It's important to maintain both of these traits when facing difficulties. Promoting self-control, asking for guidance from mentors and peers, and acknowledging accomplishments all contribute to



sustaining motivation and dedication to academic objectives. Flexibility and Adaptability: It's critical to approach studying with both flexibility and adaptability. Academic achievement is influenced by one's ability to adjust to changes in the learning environment and to be receptive to new teaching strategies. Current research emphasizes how critical it is to meet the educational needs of those who are incarcerated in order to facilitate their successful reintegration back into society. Reductions in recidivism rates and better post-release results have been associated with access to education (Davis, 2019). Education in jail has been linked to improved social integration, critical thinking abilities, and self-esteem despite obstacles including restricted access to resources and support services (Nally et al., 2015). But students who are incarcerated frequently confront particular challenges that call for creativity and ingenuity (Irwin, 2017). Notwithstanding these obstacles, education is acknowledged as a potent instrument for fostering personal development and lowering the recidivism rate among those who are incarcerated (Travis, 2018).

For students incarcerated due to limited resources and rigid daily routines, time management is essential to their academic achievement. Students who are detained can manage their time well to mix their education with other duties and activities inside the correctional facility. Here are some important factors and methods that students in jails should keep in mind when managing their time: Create a Structured Study Schedule: Setting aside certain times for studying in between other obligations and activities requires careful planning. Students can maintain consistency and regular involvement with their coursework by developing a routine. Task Prioritization: Students can better allocate their time and attention to the activities that will have the biggest impact on their academic objectives by prioritizing tasks according to their significance and urgency. Procrastination is avoided and efficient time management is made possible by clearly defining priorities. Use of Downtime: Students may have downtime in correctional facilities in between classes. Making the most of these times to study or finish tasks increases output and makes the most amount of time accessible for academic endeavors.

Effective Goal Setting: Students get a sense of purpose and direction in their studies when they set realistic and attainable goals. By dividing more complex assignments into smaller, more achievable goals, students can make gradual progress and maintain their motivation and focus. Minimization of Distractions: Focus and attention can be sustained by creating a distraction-free, comfortable study space. During study sessions, productivity is increased when distractions like noise or interruptions are recognized and minimized. Adaptability and Flexibility: It's critical to maintain an adaptable and flexible attitude to time management, particularly in settings as dynamic and unpredictable as prisons. Maintaining progress toward academic objectives requires the flexibility to change priorities and schedules in reaction to unforeseen events. The need of time management for jailed students to succeed academically and personally is highlighted in recent research. Research has demonstrated the beneficial effects of organized study plans and well-crafted goals on inmate education outcomes (Andrews & Dowden, 2006). Furthermore, studies have demonstrated the positive effects of prison education on post-release outcomes, such as lower recidivism rates and higher employability (Ward et al., 2018). These benefits include the acquisition of time management skills. Students who are detained exhibit perseverance and ingenuity in efficiently managing their time to seek educational opportunities, even in the face of obstacles presented by the prison environment (Jenkin et al., 2018). However, the lack of resources and support services available within correctional facilities highlights the necessity of creative solutions and institutional support to help convicts manage their time well (Hulley & MacKenzie, 2017).

2. IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

Objective

One main objective of the study "Exploring The Experiences of Prisoners about Managing Their Studies In A Distance Learning Environment: A Case Of Namibia" was: To investigate the challenges and strategies employed by incarcerated individuals in Namibia as they manage their studies within a distance learning environment while incarcerated.

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Question

The main research question for the study was:

"What are the challenges faced by incarcerated individuals in Namibia as they endeavor to manage their studies within a distance learning environment while incarcerated, and what strategies do they employ to overcome these challenges?"

Data collection

In this qualitative study, interviews served as the primary method for data collection, aligning with an interpretive paradigm to delve into the nuanced experiences of incarcerated individuals managing their studies in a distance learning environment. The researcher employed a skilled transcriber to meticulously transcribe the tape-recorded interviews verbatim, ensuring the preservation of participants' voices and expressions in their entirety. This process captured not only the spoken words but also non-verbal cues and nuances, enriching the qualitative analysis. Following transcription, the data underwent thematic analysis, a systematic approach to identifying patterns, themes, and insights within qualitative data. Themes emerged organically from the interviews, reflecting recurring topics, perspectives, and experiences shared by the participants. The thematic analysis process involved coding and categorizing data segments based on commonalities, allowing for the identification of overarching themes that shed light on the experiences, challenges, and coping strategies of incarcerated individuals engaging in distance learning. Moreover, the interpretive paradigm adopted in this study facilitated a deep understanding of the participants' lived experiences, acknowledging the subjective nature of reality and the importance of context in shaping individual perspectives. By embracing interpretivism, the researcher recognized the multifaceted nature of the participants' experiences and sought to uncover the underlying meanings and interpretations embedded within their narratives. Furthermore, the researcher's involvement in interpreting the transcribed interviews added another layer of insight, as their expertise and understanding of the research context enriched the analysis process. Through reflexivity and careful consideration of their own biases and preconceptions, the researcher ensured the integrity and rigor of the qualitative analysis. Overall, the meticulous transcription process, coupled with thematic analysis within an interpretive paradigm, facilitated a comprehensive exploration of the experiences of incarcerated individuals navigating distance learning. By capturing the voices and perspectives of the participants, this study contributes valuable insights to the understanding of education within the unique context of the prison environment.

Data analysis

After the completion of the voice-recorded interviews, the audio files were entrusted to a skilled professional translator proficient in both the source and target languages. The translator meticulously transcribed the interviews, ensuring an accurate representation of the participants' spoken words. These transcriptions served as the primary textual data for analysis, preserving the nuances and expressions conveyed during the interviews. Subsequently, the transcribed data underwent a thematic analysis process. Themes and patterns emerged through a systematic examination of the transcripts, guided by the research questions and objectives of the study. This analytical approach facilitated the identification of recurring ideas, concepts, and experiences expressed by the participants. By organizing the data into meaningful thematic categories, the analysis aimed to uncover insights into the lived experiences and perspectives of incarcerated individuals regarding their management of studies in a distance learning environment.

The thematic analysis process involved several iterative steps, including data familiarization, coding, theme development, and interpretation. Through careful scrutiny and interpretation of the data, overarching themes were identified, capturing the essence of participants' experiences, challenges, and coping strategies related to studying while incarcerated. The resulting thematic framework provided a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted dynamics involved in managing studies within the unique context of a distance learning environment in prison. Overall, the utilization of a professional translator and a thematic analysis approach ensured rigor and depth in the examination of participants' narratives, enriching the study's findings with



nuanced insights and perspectives.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The findings are captured verbatim.

The participant(s) said, *“It is hard work, you need to look away from anything that comes to distract you, you must not think of to be distracted because if someone is talking his own things, do away with that one and concentrate on your work”*.

The participant(s) said, *“I managed especially when I started with my diploma at UNAI, we were assisted mostly especially our office education officers, they understood our cry, because when I started there was not enough computers, we had to share three computers, by that time we were distance students if I were not mistaken. So, it was a bit of a challenge but due to the input of our officers who understood especially commissioner general, wrote letters and they did give some of the directors that we must buy our own laptop, and we must be connected to the internet so that we can access like e-learning like the other students, our lecturers”*.

The participant(s) said, *“By being self-disciplined, setting out the dates and times, setting out the timetable for when I should do my assignments, when I should do my tests, and being able to, just having a programme for myself, for my studies and when I will be able to do my assignments. In our case here like I said before, we go online and get our assignments, you print as much as possible to do a lot a research and then with the limited time that we have access to the internet we go and read, we read a lot and take notes, we go and take our papers back to the units and then read through, take notes and then the following day you come and give your answers”*.

The participant(s) said, *“I was doing my, when I came to prison, I was only having grade 10. So, I thought I have to do this, get my grade 12. So did an application to enroll, so they allowed me, I was accepted until right now, and currently I am doing IT. I manage to study because I have self-discipline, self-control and the goodness of it for me I was put in a single cell, since I started my studies, I was in a single cell, so I had enough time if we knock at three o'clock, I could study until ten o'clock when the lights were put off. It is very hard, I do answer that question, but okay I will answer it. I manage like there is no time even here in the correctional facility to study, there is no lights even at night because the officers are switching off the lights but here at Window correctional facility it more better to study”*.

The participant(s) said, *“You can manage your time because during nighttime the toilets are not, or the bathrooms is not switched off, the lights are not switched off. So during the day you come and do research, and during night you complete your assignments and if you miss out something then you come again during the day, you look for information. For me even before my incarceration I have been studying, I have been a student for many years, I know what I want to achieve, through education. How I managed to study, just to cope with the environment, also what you want to achieve, then once you are having the clear goal, you drive, even when that goal will motivate you”*.

The participant(s) said, *“I personally I would say once everything else outside is okay, these other things cannot affect you. It is about discipline, first of all and you have to discipline yourself because it is not easy to study from a distance mode. There are challenges and there are socio challenges, there are family issues as well, so you need to make time and effort and be diligent, I mean to study from a distance. It is through prayer, fasting, it is not easy”*.

The government of the Republic of Namibia has demonstrated a strong commitment to the rehabilitation of inmates by permitting them to enroll in distance education programs via e-learning, according to the findings. According to some inmates, prison offers them greater opportunities to improve their lives. Prisoners can find it extremely difficult to study while incarcerated, particularly if they are doing so remotely. The things they desire, the help they

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occasionally receive, and their inability to take the easy route imply that occasionally the jail administration may refuse to give in and suggest an alternative. Sometimes they would claim that there are no members, which implies that for them to visit, they will have to work out a deal with the organization in order to use the facilities for learning.

Discussion

The participants in the discussion will be named “T” to hide the identity of the participants. This study was conducted in a Namibian correctional facility and sensitive information must be protected and not to link the information to a particular face of identity of the participants prisoner. The participant(s) said, *“It is hard work, you need to look away from anything that comes to distract you, you must not think of to be distracted because if someone is talking his own things, do away with that one and concentrate on your work.”*

The statement highlights the considerable obstacles that inmates encounter when trying to pursue their education while confined. In correctional settings, distractions are commonplace, and staying focused in such environments calls for a great deal of discipline and effort. In this article, we go over the value of focus and methods for reducing distractions in learning situations that are situated in jails. Focus Despite Distractions: Distractions are common in correctional facilities, ranging from speech and loudness to the unpredictability of community life. In these kinds of settings, staying focused on academic duties requires a deliberate effort to block out outside distractions and focus on the content being studied. Techniques for Reducing Distractions: Reducing distractions is a critical component of good studying while incarcerated. To create a suitable study atmosphere, this may entail setting ground rules with cellmates, utilizing noise-canceling headphones, or locating a quiet spot away from busy areas. The ability to maintain discipline and perseverance is essential for success in jail-based educational programs. Prisoners must possess a strong will to ignore outside distractions and stick to their academic goals in spite of the many obstacles they encounter.

Recent literature underscores the significance of concentration and strategies for mitigating distractions in jail-based study environments. Research has shown that external distractions pose a significant barrier to effective studying among incarcerated individuals, often leading to reduced academic performance and increased frustration (Latessa & Smith, 2011). Moreover, distractions in correctional facilities can contribute to feelings of stress and overwhelm, further impeding educational progress (Travis, 2018). However, studies also highlight the resilience and resourcefulness of incarcerated students in overcoming distractions to pursue their educational goals. Strategies such as creating structured study schedules, establishing designated study areas, and utilizing mindfulness techniques have been shown to enhance concentration and mitigate the impact of distractions on academic performance (Davis, 2019).

The participant(s) said, *“I managed especially when I started with my diploma at UNAI, we were assisted mostly especially our office education officers, they understood our cry, because when I started there was not enough computers, we had to share three computers, by that time we were distance students if I were not mistaken. So, it was a bit of a challenge but due to the input of our officers who understood especially commissioner general, wrote letters and they did give some of the directors that we must buy our own laptop, and we must be connected to the internet so that we can access like e-learning like the other students, our lecturers”.*

The statement illustrates the pivotal role of institutional support and advocacy in facilitating access to education for incarcerated individuals. It highlights the challenges faced by students in prisons, particularly in accessing necessary resources such as computers and internet connectivity for distance learning programs. Furthermore, it underscores the importance of proactive measures taken by education officers and prison administrators to address these challenges and ensure equitable access to educational opportunities for incarcerated students. The importance of institutional assistance and advocacy in facilitating jailed individuals' access to and success in school has been highlighted in recent publications. Research has demonstrated the beneficial effects on inmates' academic performance of supporting policies and initiatives in



correctional facilities, such as greater access to technology and educational materials (Jenkins et al., 2021). Moreover, studies have demonstrated that removing obstacles to education in correctional settings requires efficient cooperation between prison officials, education officers, and outside stakeholders (Ward et al., 2018).

In the context of remote learning, jailed students must have access to technology and internet connectivity in order to participate in their classes and communicate with teachers and other students. Nonetheless, access to these resources is frequently severely hampered by the inadequate infrastructure and resources found in jails (Davis, 2019). Thus, it is imperative to take proactive steps to ensure that incarcerated individuals have fair access to education, such as giving them computers and internet connectivity (Karpowitz & Crouch, 2016).

The participant(s) said, *“By being self-disciplined, setting out the dates and times, setting out the timetable for when I should do my assignments, when I should do my tests, and being able to, just having a programme for myself, for my studies and when I will be able to do my assignments. In our case here like I said before, we go online and get our assignments, you print as much as possible to do a lot a research and then with the limited time that we have access to the internet we go and read, we read a lot and take notes, we go and take our papers back to the units and then read through, take notes and then the following day you come and give your answers”*.

The statement emphasizes how crucial time management techniques and self-control are for prisoners who want to continue their education. It emphasizes how important it is to establish a personalized schedule, set deadlines for projects and tests, and follow structured study habits in order to guarantee academic success. The person also stresses the use of accessible resources, including restricted internet access and online materials, for research and information gathering for assignments. The person exhibits resiliency and resourcefulness in making the most of learning opportunities and participating in independent study techniques despite the limitations of the prison setting. The importance of self-control and time management for the academic achievement of prisoners has been highlighted in recent research. Research indicates that in correctional settings, self-discipline, goal-setting, and efficient study habits all have a major role in improving educational attainment (Ward et al., 2018). Additionally, studies show how crucial it is to give jailed students access to educational materials and support systems so they can engage in independent study and research (Davis, 2019).

Self-directed learning techniques are essential for enabling prisoners to participate in assignments and coursework when it comes to remote learning. Creative study strategies are required due to limited access to resources and technology. Some of these strategies include making use of printed materials and making the most of internet-based study and research options during specific times (Karpowitz & Crouch, 2016). In addition, maintaining academic progress and accomplishing educational objectives while incarcerated requires the establishment of organized study schedules and the observance of deadlines set by the individual.

The participant(s) said, *I was doing my, when I came to prison, I was only having grade 10. So, I thought I have to do this, get my grade 12. So did an application to enroll, so they allowed me, I was accepted until right now, and currently I am doing IT. I manage to study because I have self-discipline, self-control and the goodness of it for me I was put in a single cell, since I started my studies, I was in a single cell, so I had enough time if we knock at three o'clock, I could study until ten o'clock when the lights were put off. It is very hard, I do answer that question, but okay I will answer it. I manage like there is no time even here in the correctional facility to study, there is no lights even at night because the officers are switching off the lights but here at Window correctional facility it more better to study.*

The individual's testimony underscores the transformative power of education within the correctional system and highlights the role of personal discipline and conducive environments in facilitating academic progress. Despite entering prison with a Grade 10 education, the individual demonstrates initiative by pursuing further studies, culminating in enrollment in an IT program. The mention of self-discipline and self-control reflects the personal agency and determination

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required to navigate educational pursuits within the constraints of the correctional environment. Additionally, the individual's solitary confinement provides them with extended study periods, further emphasizing the importance of conducive conditions for academic achievement.

The importance of education in promoting rehabilitation and lowering recidivism rates among those who are incarcerated has been highlighted in recent research. Research has indicated that rehabilitated inmates' post-release prospects are markedly enhanced by having access to educational programs, such as earning a high school degree or seeking vocational training (Pager, 2019). Additionally, studies show how crucial character traits like drive and self-control are for promoting academic performance in correctional environments (Travis, 2018). Many obstacles, such as scarce resources, restricted technology use, and environmental limitations in correctional facilities, frequently prevent incarcerated people from taking advantage of educational opportunities (Davis, 2019). Nonetheless, these difficulties can be lessened and the educational achievements for students who are incarcerated can be improved by offering supportive conditions for learning and personal development programs, like prolonged study sessions in solitary confinement (Irwin, 2017).

The participant(s) said, *“You can manage your time because during nighttime the toilets are not, or the bathrooms is not switched off, the lights are not switched off. So during the day you come and do research, and during night you complete your assignments and if you miss out something then you come again during the day, you look for information. For me even before my incarceration I have been studying, I have been a student for many years, I know what I want to achieve, through education. How I managed to study, just to cope with the environment, also what you want to achieve, then once you are having the clear goal, you drive, even when that goal will motivate you”*.

The individual's account emphasizes the adaptability and determination required to manage time effectively for studying within the confines of the correctional environment. By capitalizing on the uninterrupted nighttime hours when facilities are less crowded, they maximize their productivity by completing assignments and consolidating their learning. Moreover, the individual's pre-incarceration experience as a dedicated student underscores their commitment to educational goals, providing them with the resilience and motivation needed to navigate the challenges of studying in prison.

Recent literature underscores the importance of goal setting and motivation in facilitating academic success among incarcerated individuals. Studies have shown that having clear educational goals and a sense of purpose significantly enhance prisoners' engagement with educational programs and their likelihood of completing courses (Lindsey et al., 2020). Furthermore, research highlights the significance of adapting to the unique constraints of the correctional environment, such as maximizing study time during off-peak hours, in optimizing learning opportunities for incarcerated students (Cooke et al., 2019). In addition, the individual's emphasis on the enduring value of education aligns with recent research emphasizing the transformative potential of education in promoting desistance from crime and successful reintegration into society (Pager, 2019). Access to educational opportunities within correctional facilities has been shown to reduce recidivism rates and enhance post-release outcomes, underscoring the importance of supporting educational initiatives for incarcerated individuals (Davis, 2019).

The participant(s) said, *“I personally I would say once everything else outside is okay, these other things cannot affect you. It is about discipline, first of all and you have to discipline yourself because it is not easy to study from a distance mode. There are challenges and there are socio challenges, there are family issues as well, so you need to make time and effort and be diligent, I mean to study from a distance. It is through prayer, fasting, it is not easy”*.

The individual's statement highlights the multifaceted challenges that incarcerated individuals face when pursuing education through distance learning programs. They emphasize the importance of discipline and self-motivation in overcoming these obstacles, underscoring the need for personal commitment and diligence. Furthermore, the mention of external factors such as socio-



economic challenges and family issues acknowledges the broader contextual barriers that incarcerated students must navigate in their educational pursuits. The reference to prayer and fasting reflects the individual's reliance on personal faith and spirituality as sources of strength and resilience in the face of adversity.

The intricate difficulties that prisoners encounter when attempting to access and participate in online learning programs have been recognized in recent research. Research has brought attention to the psychological, familial, and socioeconomic obstacles that can prevent convicts from advancing their education, underscoring the need for focused assistance and intervention techniques (Jenkin et al., 2018). Additionally, studies have demonstrated that students who are incarcerated frequently need comprehensive support networks that cater to their requirements and situations. These networks may include family support programs, counseling, and mental health services (Davis, 2019). Furthermore, the relevance of spirituality and faith-based therapies in fostering resilience and well-being among jailed individuals has been investigated in recent studies. Studies have indicated that participation in religious activities, like fasting and prayer, can support coping strategies and healthy transitions in correctional environments (Johnson & Larson, 2020). It is imperative to acknowledge that attending to the practical and spiritual aspects of the life of jailed individuals is crucial in fostering their overall well-being and academic achievements.

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Disclosure statement

No conflict of interest.

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PRACTICAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Practical and policy implications stemming from the exploration of prisoners' experiences in managing their studies in a distance learning environment in Namibia are significant and multifaceted: (1) Enhanced Educational Access: Understanding the challenges faced by incarcerated individuals in accessing education highlights the need for improved infrastructure and resources within correctional facilities. Policy initiatives aimed at providing equitable access to distance learning programs, including ensuring sufficient computer facilities and internet connectivity, can facilitate educational opportunities for prisoners. (2) Tailored Support Services: Recognizing the socio-economic and psychological barriers that incarcerated students encounter underscores the importance of tailored support services. Implementing counseling, mentorship, and academic support programs tailored to the unique needs of prisoners can enhance retention rates and academic success within distance learning programs. (3) Prisoner Rehabilitation and Reintegration: Education plays a crucial role in prisoner rehabilitation and successful reintegration into society. Policy efforts aimed at promoting education within correctional settings contribute to reducing recidivism rates and enhancing post-release outcomes. Investing in educational programs for prisoners is not only cost-effective but also contributes to broader societal benefits. (4) Institutional Collaboration: Collaboration between correctional institutions, educational institutions, and government agencies is essential for effectively addressing the educational needs of incarcerated individuals. Establishing partnerships to facilitate the delivery of distance learning programs and support services can maximize resources and improve program effectiveness. (5) Public Awareness and Advocacy: Increasing public awareness of the importance of education in prisoner rehabilitation and reintegration is crucial for garnering support for policy initiatives. Advocacy efforts aimed at promoting the expansion of educational opportunities for prisoners can garner public support and political will for reform efforts. (6) Research and Evaluation: Continued

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research and evaluation of educational programs within correctional settings are essential for identifying best practices and areas for improvement. Investing in rigorous research and evaluation methodologies can inform evidence-based policy decisions and programmatic interventions aimed at enhancing educational outcomes for incarcerated individuals. Overall, addressing the practical and policy implications of exploring prisoners' experiences in managing their studies in a distance learning environment in Namibia requires a multi-faceted approach that prioritizes educational access, support services, collaboration, public awareness, and research efforts. By addressing these implications, policymakers and stakeholders can contribute to the rehabilitation and successful reintegration of incarcerated individuals into society.

4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the exploration of prisoners' experiences in managing their studies within a distance learning environment in Namibia reveals a complex interplay of challenges and resilience. Despite facing numerous obstacles such as limited resources, restricted access to technology, and familial and socio-economic pressures, incarcerated individuals demonstrate remarkable determination and resourcefulness in pursuing their educational goals. Strategies such as self-discipline, effective time management, and utilization of available resources are essential for navigating the unique constraints of the correctional environment. Additionally, institutional support and advocacy play a crucial role in facilitating access to education and creating conducive learning environments within correctional facilities. By addressing the multifaceted needs of incarcerated students and promoting holistic approaches to education, policymakers and stakeholders can enhance educational outcomes and contribute to the rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners into society. Ultimately, the exploration of prisoners' experiences underscores the transformative power of education in fostering personal growth, resilience, and hope for a better future, both within and beyond the prison walls.

Suggestion

Investment in Technology Infrastructure: To address the challenges faced by incarcerated individuals in accessing distance learning programs, there should be an investment in technology infrastructure within correctional facilities. This includes providing sufficient computers, internet connectivity, and access to educational software and resources. Collaborative efforts between correctional institutions and educational providers can facilitate the procurement and maintenance of technology resources tailored to the unique needs of prisoners. **Development of Support Programs:** Implementing support programs specifically designed to assist incarcerated students in managing their studies is crucial. These programs could include academic counseling, mentorship initiatives, and peer support networks aimed at addressing academic challenges, enhancing study skills, and providing emotional support. By fostering a supportive learning environment, incarcerated individuals can better navigate the complexities of distance learning and improve their educational outcomes. **Integration of Vocational Training:** In addition to academic education, integrating vocational training programs within correctional facilities can provide incarcerated individuals with valuable skills and qualifications that enhance their employability upon release. Collaborating with vocational training providers and employers to develop tailored programs aligned with labor market demands can empower prisoners to build sustainable careers post-incarceration. By offering a diverse range of educational opportunities, including both academic and vocational pathways, correctional institutions can better meet the diverse needs and aspirations of incarcerated individuals.

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