

## Examining Incarcerated Students' Educational Realities in Prison

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study examines the experiences of 12 incarcerated students in a Namibian jail who were working towards obtaining formal qualifications. The objective was to examine and evaluate the specific challenges, opportunities, and experiences faced by incarcerated individuals who are pursuing education while in prison. The participants were deliberately chosen based on the premise that they were actively involved in formal education.

**Methods:** The data collection strategy utilized literature review and tape-recorded interviews enabling the students to articulate their own experiences and difficulties in managing the dual demands of education and prison life. Data analysis: An English-speaking transcriber transcribed the recorded interviews verbatim to guarantee precision. The transcriptions were subsequently examined using an interpretive framework, allowing the researcher to gain a profound comprehension of the subtle and intricate experiences of the individuals. This technique yielded valuable insights into the strategies employed by these individuals to negotiate the intricate process of pursuing scholastic objectives within the confining and frequently difficult prison setting.

**Results:** Prison students face a lack of independence, disturbances from fellow convicts, and limited resources that pose challenges to their educational endeavors. Despite these obstacles, several individuals have exceptional intellectual abilities and benefit from the organized system and educational opportunities provided in prison. Nevertheless, the presence of excessively populated classrooms, obsolete learning resources, and limited time availability further exacerbate their academic endeavors.

**Conclusions:** Individuals who are currently in prison view education to achieve personal development, acquire new skills, and enhance their chances of finding job after their release.

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## Introduction

The purpose is to examine the realities of prison students' lives while pursuing education during incarceration. The study was done in a prison in Namibia specifically examining the unique and frequently overlooked experiences of jailed individuals who are actively engaged in formal education while serving their sentences. The research is titled "Balancing Two Worlds: Pursuing Education While Facing the Realities of Prison Life," accurately encapsulating the simultaneous and frequently contradictory obstacles faced by these incarcerated students. They are making efforts to attain academic success, which necessitates concentration, self-control, and the availability of resources. However, they are operating within the extremely constrictive and demanding conditions of a prison where constraints and difficulties are a constant presence. The primary objective of this study is to investigate and comprehend how these folks manage the intricate challenges of their educational endeavors while concurrently coping with the severe circumstances of jail. This entails overseeing the physical, mental, and psychological obstacles associated with living in prison, such as restricted availability of educational resources, disruptions caused by other convicts, and a deprivation of personal freedom and privacy. The study aims to illuminate the broader consequences of schooling within the prison system by analyzing how these pupils manage the delicate balance between these two opposing worlds.

This explores the role of education as a powerful instrument for change, offering prisoners a sense of direction, self-esteem, and optimism about what lies ahead.

The study also examines the influence of educational accomplishments on prisoners' self-esteem and their drive to reintegrate into society upon their release.

Through in-depth interviews with the participants and a qualitative analysis of their narratives, this research offers valuable insights into the lived experiences of prison students. By emphasizing the dual challenges faced by these individuals, the study advocates for more supportive educational environments within prisons, where the needs of incarcerated students are recognized and addressed.

## Literature Review

**Experiences of incarcerated individuals who are pursuing formal education while serving their sentences**

The experiences of jailed individuals who engage in formal education while serving their sentences are intricate and diverse. Despite encountering notable obstacles such as logistical hurdles, societal disapproval, and the volatile nature of the prison setting, numerous jailed students also express favorable results, such as personal advancement, acquisition of abilities, and decreased rates of reoffending. It is essential to acknowledge and deal with the distinct requirements of this group in order to guarantee that jailed individuals can access the educational opportunities necessary for their effective reintegration into society after their release. Engaging in formal education while in prison can have a profound impact on persons who are serving their sentences. Davis et al., 2013; Lahm, 2009).

The increasing incarceration rates in numerous nations have underscored the significance of offering educational opportunities to jailed individuals (Johnson & Tewksbury, 2020). Research has demonstrated that education has a beneficial effect on decreasing recidivism rates and promoting successful reintegration into society after release (Costelloe & Warner, 2014). Nevertheless, the experiences of incarcerated individuals who engage in formal education during their imprisonment are intricate and diverse. One of the main difficulties encountered by imprisoned students is the distinctive array of logistical and administrative obstacles they must overcome (Kim & Clark, 2013). Prisoners sometimes have limited access to educational resources and materials, and they may face restrictions on the types of courses they can take or the methods of learning available to them, such as in-person or distance learning (Tewksbury & Stengel, 2006). Moreover, the sometimes volatile and uncertain jail setting might disturb the consistency of educational programs, posing challenges for detained students to sustain concentration and advancement in their studies (Lahm, 2017). Another obstacle that jailed students may face is the negative perception and exclusion from society that they may encounter while in prison and after their release (Costelloe & Warner, 2014). Imprisoned individuals may encounter prejudice and unfavorable attitudes from correctional personnel, fellow prisoners, and even individuals in the wider society, which can diminish their self-assurance and drive to pursue educational possibilities (Kim & Clark, 2013).

Although jailed individuals face difficulties, many of them report positive experiences and outcomes when they engage in formal education while in prison (Lahm, 2017). Education offers individuals a clear sense of direction and organization, along with chances for personal

advancement and the enhancement of skills (Costelloe & Warner, 2014). Engaging in educational programs can also facilitate the acquisition of significant social and cognitive abilities among jailed inmates, hence enhancing their prospects of effective reintegration after their release (Johnson & Tewksbury, 2020). Furthermore, research has demonstrated that incarcerated individuals who engage in educational programs have a reduced likelihood of reoffending, as education can assist them in cultivating alternate avenues for self-expression, problem-solving, and employment (Lahm, 2017). Consequently, this can result in favorable outcomes for both the person and the wider community, since decreased rates of repeat offenses can lead to reduced expenses related to imprisonment and the creation of safer residential areas (Costelloe & Warner, 2014).

An essential element of the educational journey for jailed individuals is the distinct obstacles they encounter. Imprisoned students frequently have restricted availability of resources, technology, and support networks that are commonly accessible to conventional students (Coley & Barton, 2006; Pratt & Gerver, 2016). Additionally, individuals in this situation may have psychological and emotional obstacles, such as experiencing a sense of isolation, lacking motivation, or having worries about their eventual reintegration into society (Lahm, 2009; Pompoco et al., 2017). Notwithstanding these difficulties, several jailed individuals have discovered that engaging in formal education may offer a feeling of direction, self-esteem, and optimism for the future. Research has demonstrated that engaging in educational programs can result in heightened self-esteem, enhanced problem-solving abilities, and a stronger sense of personal empowerment (Bozick et al., 2018; Davis et al., 2013; Pratt & Gerver, 2016).

Moreover, the educational endeavors of jailed individuals can have a far-reaching impact, not just on themselves but also on their families and communities. Research has demonstrated that jailed individuals who engage in educational programs are more inclined to maintain robust family connections and achieve successful reintegration into their communities following release (Bozick et al., 2018; Davis et al., 2013). The endeavors of imprisoned individuals engaging in formal education during their incarceration are intricate and diverse. Despite encountering substantial obstacles, the prospective advantages of educational programs, for both the person and society, render this a crucial domain of study and policy deliberation. Imprisonment can significantly affect a person's life, frequently interrupting their educational and professional paths. Nevertheless,

several incarcerated inmates opt to engage in formal education while serving their sentences, aiming to overhaul their lives and enhance their opportunities upon release.

Access to educational opportunities in prisons is essential as it can equip jailed individuals with the necessary tools and knowledge to effectively reintegrate into society (Morani et al., 2011). Research has indicated that engaging in educational programs while in prison is linked to lower rates of reoffending and better results after release (Davis et al., 2013). An exemplary case is the Bard Prison Initiative (BPI) in the United States, which provides incarcerated inmates with the chance to obtain associate and bachelor's degrees while serving their prison terms (Bard Prison Initiative, 2023). The program has received widespread praise for its effectiveness in assisting participants in cultivating critical thinking abilities, fostering a sense of purpose, and establishing a solid groundwork for successful reintegration (Lagemann, 2016). Imprisoned individuals who engage in educational pursuits while serving their sentences frequently encounter substantial obstacles, such as restricted access to resources, mental health concerns, and the social disapproval linked to being incarcerated (Pompoco et al., 2017). Although facing many challenges, a significant number of individuals perceive the educational experience as a catalyst for personal growth, enabling them to redefine their sense of self and cultivate a positive outlook on the future (Runell, 2017).

### **Purpose**

The purpose is to examine the realities of prison students' lives while pursuing education during incarceration.

### **Question**

How do incarcerated individuals overcome the challenges of pursuing formal education while facing the constraints and conditions of prison life and what impact does this simultaneous pursuit have on their rehabilitation and future reintegration into society?

## **Material and Methods**

### **Data collection**

The study utilised a qualitative research approach to thoroughly investigate the firsthand experiences of 12 incarcerated students at a prison in Namibia. The participants were purposefully picked, indicating that they were intentionally chosen based on the criterion that they were actively

involved in formal education programs during their incarceration. The selection approach ensured that the study specifically targeted persons who were actively involved in managing the challenges of academic pursuits while living in prison. In order to collect comprehensive and intricate information the researcher carried out audio-recorded interviews with every participant. The interviews provide an opportunity for the students to openly discuss their personal narratives, difficulties, and perspectives on the pursuit of education within the confining and frequently unforgiving prison setting. Recorded interviews were employed to ensure a comprehensive and precise documentation of the participants' voices, so safeguarding the subtleties of their experiences. The qualitative technique was selected due to its exceptional suitability for comprehending intricate human experiences particularly in circumstances such as jail where individuals encounter substantial and distinct obstacles. The study aimed to explore the connection between academic life and prison life by examining the personal stories of incarcerated students. It sought to uncover how education functions as both a difficulty and a catalyst for change within the prison environment. This approach not only facilitated a profound comprehension of the students' encounters but also emphasized the wider ramifications of prison education for the sake of rehabilitation and individual development.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis process began by carefully transcribing the recorded interviews, ensuring the accurate recording of every statement made by the participants. To do this, the recordings were entrusted to a proficient transcriber who possesses a high level of fluency in the English language. The transcriber meticulously transcribed the interviews verbatim. This stage was crucial for maintaining the authenticity of the participants' narratives, preserving their original emotions, tone, and nuances. The transcription method effectively recorded the participants' exact words, guaranteeing the precise representation of their experiences and facilitating a more genuine analysis.

Upon completion of the transcribing process, the transcribed data was provided to the author for analysis. The author utilized an interpretive paradigm, a qualitative methodology designed to understand the deep meanings and insights present in the participants' experiences. This paradigm emphasizes the subjective examination of data, specifically examining how individuals understand

their experiences and how these experiences shape their vision of the world. The author did a comprehensive analysis scrutinising the transcriptions numerous times to reveal recurring themes, patterns, and essential characteristics. This technique involved not only analyzing the explicit content of the interviews but also exploring the underlying emotions, attitudes and perspectives expressed by the participants. Through the utilization of this interpretative framework, the author adeptly exposed the complex dynamics involved in the pursuit of education inside a prison setting, including the challenges, incentives, and impacts on individual growth and reformation.

The study provided a thorough and detailed understanding of how incarcerated individuals navigate the difficulties of balancing academic pursuits with the realities of prison life. This was achieved by analyzing their own statements and interpreting them in the broader context of their imprisonment. The findings offer distinct perspectives on the influence of education on incarcerated individuals, highlighting the difficulties they face and the transformative potential of learning in a correctional environment. This analysis improves understanding of the relationship between education and incarceration, offering valuable insights for policymaking, implementation, and further research in the field of prison education.

## Results

Participant 1 said, “My experience in studying in studying, it is a little bit of challenge because it is a prison, we don’t have contact of freedom of doing things the way we would like”

Participant 2 said, “My experience is that there is a lot of disturbance, I experience that sometimes you fellow inmates they are jealous with you”

Participant 3 said, “Officers, the other side of the officers, they don’t understand why you your inmates they are studying”

Participant 4 said, “My experiences are not all negative, it was difficult, it is a struggle to take up my studies, but I persevered and push, I believe that I needed to do this. I wanted to do this and to improve myself. I have also been encouraged by other students who took up studies, for instance our doctor here, he was one of my motivated factors to take up studies”

Participant 5 said, “. The experience is that sometimes people, there is commotion and there are some arguments, they disturb you when you are trying to study. So, these things are things that you challenged when you are studying”



Participant 6 said, "Prison life is even if it was hiccups here and there, I have learned a lot that I have excel more than people whom I left outside".

Participant 7 said, "Prison life is very hard but now since you study, some things become easier like you are like you are the master key to study in prison".

Participant 8 said, "The officers respect you, you develop self-esteem and, it is very hard but with time things get better".

Participant 9 said, "Other inmates do not really pay attention that you are studying"

Participant 10 said, "So, you have to make most of the night while they are sleeping. So that is life, we live here. So basically, studying during the night. To me I would say it is a good thing".

Participant 11 said, "I think that no at least I have achieved something, because when I came I don't know myself, I know what happened outside, I will just leave it there. Now this is the time for me, once I go out, at least I go there, then I will have the qualification at a tertiary level".

Participant 12 said, "My experience in prison life is the challenges that one has encountering from the peers. It is not easy, you have to distance yourself, you must be positive at all times and isolate yourself, make your peers, it is possible because negatively always breaks and people will always be negative. So, the positiveness it is the one who is driving me, keeps me strong in the studies. Prison life is difficult but as I said, I am on holiday in prison".

## Discussion

The participants' replies underscore the difficulties as well as the favorable encounters of seeking education within a jail environment. Below is a rigorous analysis accompanied by illustrative instances and citations inside the text:

The participants articulate a range of obstacles they encounter in pursuing their studies while being jailed. Participant 1 highlights the absence of "autonomy in pursuing our preferred actions," indicating the constricting character of the jail setting (Morani et al., 2011). Participant 2 addresses the matter of jealousy and disruptions caused by fellow inmates, which can hinder their academic pursuits. Participant 5 further highlights the disruptive nature of "commotion and arguments" during their study time. These findings are consistent with previous research that has identified the prison environment as a major obstacle to educational achievement for jailed individuals (Bozick et al., 2018).



Nevertheless, the participants also emphasize favorable parts of their school experiences. Participant 4 exhibits a profound intrinsic drive to enhance their own abilities and is inspired by the influence of fellow students, including a "physician" who served as a source of inspiration for them. The statement highlights the capacity of education to cultivate a feeling of self-efficacy and personal development in jailed individuals (Morani et al., 2011). Participant 6 explicitly expresses that they have gained significant knowledge and have surpassed those who were not incarcerated, indicating that the jail setting has offered them favorable conditions to prosper intellectually.

In addition, individuals reported receiving institutional assistance for their work. Participant 7 suggests that studying in prison can make certain aspects of prison life easier, as it grants individuals access to additional privileges or resources. This implies that the prison administration may offer benefits to those involved in educational programs (Kreager & Kruttschnitt, 2018). Participant 8 expands on the idea that "the officers hold you in high regard, you cultivate a sense of self-worth," suggesting that the prison staff acknowledges and appreciates their educational endeavors. The experiences of the participants exemplify the intricate and diverse nature of educational achievement within a jail environment. Although they encounter substantial difficulties, they manage to surmount these barriers and gain personal advantages from their academic pursuits, potentially receiving assistance from the university as well.

The participants' experiences parallel the findings of Nyseth Nzitatira and Gasasira's (2024) study, which examined the identities and social connections of these persons during their reentry and reintegration phase. Prior to their release from incarceration, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with 165 Rwandan respondents. Additionally, around four months after their sentences ended, follow-up interviews were done with 129 of these individuals. In addition, they conducted interviews with a smaller control group consisting of 25 Rwandans who were imprisoned for offenses unrelated to genocide. By employing this method, the researchers were able to discern distinctive elements of the reentry and reintegration procedure for individuals convicted of offenses related to genocide. The results indicate that a significant number of participants aimed to distance themselves from the stigmatizing labels linked to their acts of genocide. They attempted to construct a narrative of personal transformation, portraying their present selves as morally upright individuals (Nyseth Nzitatira & Gasasira, 2024). The facilitation of this process was aided

using "return rituals" and "gestures of openness" from family and community members, which served as indications of their readiness to interact with the previously jailed individuals.

The study emphasizes the significance of comprehending the actual experiences of detained individuals and how alterations in policies can impact their perspectives of the justice system. Participant 1 observed that fellow inmates may experience jealousy towards others in the prison. This highlights the intricate social dynamics inside the prison setting and how policy modifications can intensify tensions and weaken the credibility of the parole system. Hwang (2024) showcases how recently imprisoned persons have utilized business to overcome labor market inequality. The report emphasizes the difficulties encountered by this demographic in obtaining employment and the potential of entrepreneurship as an alternative means to achieve economic stability and self-empowerment. This study illuminates the hindrances and hurdles that previously imprisoned individuals frequently face while trying to reintegrate into the labor market, and the ways in which entrepreneurship might act as a feasible solution to these difficulties.

Hogan (2024) discovered that providing educational opportunities for incarcerated individuals and the potential of universities in promoting access to higher education, namely in the field of computer science, is significant. This study highlights the significant impact of educational programs in prison settings and how they can provide jailed individuals with the essential skills and knowledge to effectively reintegrate into society after their release. Perry et al. (2024) express concern on the increasing population of elderly individuals in confinement and the hastened aging process they frequently undergo as a result of incarceration. Education can assist individuals in managing their circumstances while incarcerated. This study highlights the need of comprehending the distinct health requirements of elderly adults in detention and the creation of focused interventions to tackle these needs. The user's text is a single letter "T".

One of the difficulties that people in jail encounter is the limited availability of educational tools and possibilities within the correctional system (Harer, 1995). Prisons frequently have inadequate financing and resource allocation for educational programs, leading to overcrowded classrooms, outdated materials, and insufficient staffing. In addition, the prison setting can be disturbing and diverting, so impeding inmates' ability to concentrate on their academic pursuits (Karpowitz & Kenner, 1995).

Another obstacle arises from the conflicting requirements placed on detained folks' time and focus. Prisons generally follow a structured daily routine where inmates are obligated to engage in different activities, including job assignments, counseling sessions, and leisure programs (Steurer & Smith, 2003). This might result in a limited amount of time available for focused study and academic endeavors, creating difficulties for incarcerated individuals in managing their educational aspirations alongside their other responsibilities within the prison system. Despite facing these challenges, a significant number of individuals who are currently in prison view education as a means to achieve personal development, acquire new skills, and enhance their chances of finding job after their release (Coley & Barton, 2006). Engagement in educational programs can significantly enhance their rehabilitation and successful reintegration into society. Research has indicated that prisoners who participate in educational programs are less prone to reoffending and have a higher chance of finding employment upon their release (Davis et al., 2013).

Furthermore, the endeavor to acquire education can profoundly alter the self-perception and identity of incarcerated individuals. Participating in academic activities enables individuals to foster a feeling of purpose, enhance their self-assurance, and nurture novel abilities and passions (Runell, 2017). This can be especially important for persons who have faced social exclusion and restricted access to education before being imprisoned. To facilitate the educational endeavors of jailed individuals, prisons should aim to offer a variety of educational programs encompassing fundamental literacy skills, vocational training, and further education opportunities (Coley & Barton, 2006). In addition, prison authorities should strive to establish a conducive climate that fosters and promotes academic involvement. This can be achieved by offering access to tutoring services, study areas, and technological tools. The obstacles encountered by jailed individuals in their pursuit of formal education while managing the everyday reality of prison life are substantial. Nevertheless, the simultaneous pursuit of education and rehabilitation can significantly influence their recovery process and subsequent reintegration into society. Policymakers and prison administrators can have a significant impact on encouraging jailed individuals to change their lives and reintegrate into society by giving priority and support to educational programs within the prison system. The primary obstacle that jailed individuals encounter is the dearth of educational facilities and possibilities available within the prison system (Harer, 1995). Prisons frequently

experience constraints in financing and resources designated for educational programs, leading to overcrowded classrooms, outdated materials, and inadequate staffing. In addition, the prison setting can be disturbing and diverting, posing challenges for convicts to concentrate on their academic pursuits (Karpowitz & Kenner, 1995). Another obstacle arises from the conflicting requests for detained individuals' time and focus. Prisons often follow a structured daily routine, where convicts are obligated to engage in different activities, including job assignments, counseling sessions, and leisure programs (Steurer & Smith, 2003). This might result in a limited amount of time available for focused study and academic endeavors, posing a challenge for incarcerated individuals to effectively manage their educational aspirations alongside their other responsibilities within the prison system.

Notwithstanding these challenges, numerous jailed individuals perceive education to achieve personal advancement, enhance their skills, and enhance their chances of securing job after their release (Coley & Barton, 2006). Engagement in educational programs can effectively contribute to their rehabilitation and successful reintegration into society. Research has indicated that prisoners who participate in educational programs are less prone to reoffending and have a higher chance of finding employment upon their release (Davis et al., 2013).

Furthermore, the endeavor to acquire education can profoundly alter the self-perception and identity of incarcerated individuals. Participating in academic activities allows individuals to foster a sense of direction, enhance their self-assurance, and nurture novel abilities and passions (Runell, 2017). This can be especially important for persons who have faced social exclusion and restricted access to education before being imprisoned. Prisons should aim to offer a variety of educational programs, such as basic literacy, vocational training, and post-secondary education, to help jailed individuals in their pursuit of education (Coley & Barton, 2006). In addition, prison administrators should strive to establish a conducive atmosphere that fosters and enables academic involvement, for instance, by granting inmates access to tutoring, study areas, and technological tools.

The obstacles encountered by jailed individuals in their pursuit of formal education while managing the everyday reality of prison life are substantial. Nevertheless, the simultaneous pursuit of education and rehabilitation can significantly influence their recovery process and future reintegration into society. Policymakers and prison administrators can have a significant impact

on encouraging jailed individuals to change their lives and reintegrate into society by giving priority and support to educational programs within the prison system.

#### Illustrations:

According to research conducted by Harer in 1995, offenders who engaged in educational programs had a 29% lower likelihood of reoffending compared to those who did not participate. Karpowitz and Kenner (1995) noted that the prison setting presented considerable difficulties for detained individuals attempting to concentrate on their academics due to the persistent noise and disruptions. In their study Coley and Barton (2006) found that a significant number of individuals who were in prison saw education as a means to acquire new abilities and enhance their job opportunities upon their release. In their study Davis et al. (2013) performed a meta-analysis which demonstrated a direct relationship between involvement in educational programs and a decrease in the rates of repeat offenses among those who are incarcerated. In a study conducted by Runell (2017), it was discovered that incarcerated inmates who pursued education saw an enhancement in their sense of purpose and self-confidence. This, in turn, facilitated their rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

#### Implications for practice and policy

The results of this study have important consequences for both policy and practice in the field of prison education. The statement emphasises the necessity for prisons to enhance their support systems to address the distinct difficulties encountered by jailed students, including the provision of educational materials, effective time management, and psychological assistance. It is necessary to create policies that guarantee educational programs in prisons are both accessible and customized to meet the unique circumstances of prison life. This includes providing flexible scheduling and resources that assist students in overcoming the environmental and emotional difficulties associated with being incarcerated. Correctional institutions should incorporate educational programs into their overall rehabilitation efforts, acknowledging the significant impact of education on decreasing repeat offenses and facilitating the successful reintegration of inmates into society. Prison staff training should prioritize the significance of supporting educational endeavors to create a better learning environment in correctional facilities.

**Limitation:** The study was conducted in a single male prison in Namibia, and its conclusions cannot be extrapolated to a broader setting. The study's narrow focus on a male penitentiary in

Namibia prevents the extrapolation of the findings to broader populations, including female inmates or prisoners in different countries or societal settings. The Namibian prison system's distinctive social, cultural, and institutional factors may influence the results, making it difficult to generalize to other regions or populations.

### **Conclusion**

To summarize, the stories revealed by the participants in this study reveal the intricate and diverse difficulties that come with seeking education while being incarcerated. The daily conditions of prison life, marked by a deprivation of personal autonomy, frequent disruptions from other convicts, and minimal assistance or comprehension from correctional authorities, foster an environment that is frequently unsuitable for academic pursuits. Despite the hardships, the participants demonstrated impressive resilience and unwavering drive to overcome obstacles in their quest for education. Education had a significant role for many individuals, serving not only as an academic pursuit but also as a vital means of finding purpose, self-esteem, and optimism. Within the confining confines of a prison, where the scope for personal development is severely restricted, the endeavor to acquire knowledge and skills offered these individuals a purposeful objective to work towards. The experience of achieving scholastic milestones fostered self-confidence and provided them with a glimpse of a more promising future, extending beyond the confines of the jail.

The study also demonstrated the influential role that the accomplishments of others can play in motivating individuals. Observing other prisoners achieve academic success motivated the participants to continue their own educational pursuits, despite facing significant challenges. The sense of collective hardship and reciprocal motivation emphasizes the community nature of education in the prison environment, where the achievement of one individual can inspire and elevate numerous others. Furthermore, a few participants regarded education as a crucial factor for individual metamorphosis and an essential element for their reintegration into society. For these individuals, obtaining information and qualifications during their time in jail was not solely focused on enhancing their intellectual capacities, but also on preparing for a post-incarceration existence that presented the potential for fresh possibilities and a departure from the behaviors that led to their imprisonment. The findings obtained from this study emphasize the crucial significance of promoting more conducive educational settings within prisons. Prison systems can enhance

their rehabilitation efforts by acknowledging the significant influence that education can have on the lives of jailed inmates and incorporating educational programs more effectively. This study illustrates that, even in the most arduous conditions, education may serve as a potent instrument for individual development, rehabilitation, and the eventual assimilation of prisoners back into society. Hence, it is imperative for policymakers and correctional institutions to give utmost importance to the advancement and enlargement of prison education programs, guaranteeing their accessibility, ample resources, and alignment with the distinct requirements of jailed students. These programs have the capacity to enhance individual outcomes and contribute to wider community advantages by decreasing recidivism and fostering effective reintegration.

#### **Data availability statement**

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

#### **Ethics statement**

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the ethics committee of University of South Africa, National Commission on Research, Science and Technology (NCRST) in Namibia, and the Republic of Namibia Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

#### **Author contributions**

The author contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection, and analysis. The author contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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#### **Conflict of interest**

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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