

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Uncaging the Caged – Reimagining Rehabilitation and Reintegration in a Correctional Centre: A Wellness Perspective

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Abstract:

This paper explores approaches employed by prison officers in order to enhance the social, emotional, academic and physical wellness of juvenile offenders in a Correctional and Prison Centre in one developing country in Zimbabwe. The study is informed by integrative theories of Hettler's (1980) wellness theory, Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, and the UBUNTU theory. A qualitative phenomenological design was used, with focus group discussions, interviews, and observations as data collection instruments for twenty-five (25) juvenile offenders and five (5) prison officers (teachers) in one Correctional Centre and Prison in Gweru Province. These participants were purposively selected. Findings from this study revealed that teaching the new Zimbabwean curriculum has enhanced positive relationships and developed interpersonal relationships amongst juveniles through sharing their problems, the word of God, singing and playing together. In this way, physical, emotional, spiritual, social and academic wellness is being enhanced. Furthermore, it was established that counseling rendered to juvenile offenders enhances positive behaviour modification, tolerance, and respect for others. This study revealed that juvenile offenders are equipped with coping skills to deal with community stigmatisation. It was revealed in the study that the interaction and relationships between educators and juvenile offenders were a clear indicator that a conducive environment was prevalent, and it reassured the juveniles of positive integration into the community. The study recommends networking with relevant groups like social workers, ex-convicts, and community and religious groups to promote social change for juvenile offenders. These groups can give support to the juvenile offenders for smooth reintegration to take place. In this way, emotional, physical, spiritual and social wellness is promoted.

Keywords: Caged, uncaging, UBUNTU, wellness, correctional centre

1. Introduction and Background

The current state of many correctional centres around the world is marked by high rates of recidivism, overcrowding, and inadequate rehabilitation efforts (Chemhuru & Makuvaza, 2014). Incarceration alone often fails to address the underlying issues that lead individuals to criminal behaviour. This paper, therefore, explores innovative strategies to reform correctional centres with a focus on rehabilitating and reintegrating inmates back into society. Traditional incarceration often fails to address the root causes of criminal behaviour and contributes to recidivism. This paper advocates for a paradigm shift towards holistic rehabilitation, education, vocational training, and mental health support within correctional facilities. By examining successful models from around the world, this chapter aims to provide a comprehensive framework for uncaging the caged, empowering them to lead productive lives upon release. This study seeks to shed light on a more humane and effective approach to correctional centres that focuses on rehabilitation and reintegration.

2. Theoretical Framework

The study was informed by Hettler's (1980) wellness theory, Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory and the UBUNTU theory. However, for the sake of this study, the emphasis will be on the following six key areas: social, physical, spiritual, emotional, occupational and intellectual. These key wellness dimensions, when well achieved, make one a perfect match/fit in society. In his earlier writing, Hettler (1976) points out that the achievement of these dimensions leads to a healthy, satisfactory life. These wellness dimensions are essential since they prepare incarcerated people for a successful reintegration into society. The dimensions can be distinguished but never separated, for they are interwoven and holistic in nature, and this model is of value worldwide. Taking these dimensions in isolation from one another will falsify the wellness model. All six dimensions reflect how interconnected they are and that interconnectedness is crucial for the wellness of people in general and juvenile offenders in particular. This model is relevant to the study because social wellness is relational, emphasising wholeness and interdependence between people and their environment to promote harmony in any community. The study is from an African perspective of life, which is relevant to the contextual realities of countries in developing countries in Africa. In this regard, the study considered the six-dimensional model of Hettler (1980) as a framework to explore wellness. Social wellness is the ability to relate to and connect with other people in our

contextual realities. Schaffer (2000) states that the attainment of social wellness in an individual is crucial as it enables a person to recognise the importance of interdependence between people and the environment, working together and creating harmony in their own society. Solvang and Hualand (2014) noted that a person should play an active role in uplifting his/her social wellness in the community.

The attainment of social wellness of juvenile offenders enabled them to cope with the prison context since social wellness involves acceptable interaction, respecting yourself and others and good communication skills with others. Equally, the prison environment does have a great impact on the life of the juvenile offenders. Furthermore, situations found in the prisons of many African countries are appalling. Countries such as Kenya, Zambia, Cameroon and Rwanda have Africa's most overcrowded correctional centres (Maseko, 2014; Gumi, 2014). Thus, the state of the prison either positively or negatively affects the social wellness of the juvenile offender in one way or another.

Attaining physical wellness necessitates being involved in activities such as netball, swimming, soccer, athletics, and volleyball since these sporting activities enhance the social well-being of juvenile offenders. Taking a walk, working, and doing other activities ought to be part of the culture of juvenile offenders in order to manage prison life. The report of the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee (2011) indicates that Zimbabwe inmates get the opportunity to compete with prison officers in sports activities, which enhances their social wellness.

Physical activities such as sports and recreation, exercises and spending friendly time with their inmates reduce stress that causes anger. Activities in the correctional centre promoted physical wellness, which led to stress management (Gallant, Sherry & Nicholson, 2014). Furthermore, they maintain that sports provide inmates with a sense of belonging, achievement, and self-expression and reduce tension and arguments among inmates themselves and officials.

Maslow (1999) points out that an emotionally balanced person maintains a balance or harmony in the world and hence achieves a higher level of self-actualisation. In this regard, the integration of body, mind and environment helps one to function properly. Furthermore, such a person can freely express and manage feelings, thoughts, and behaviours, hence maintaining relationships. In Zimbabwe, a number of prisoners are not able to win their cases even though they are innocent because they cannot afford to have lawyers (Parliamentary Human Rights Committee 2011). This affects the lives of offenders emotionally and psychologically, and the government should accommodate the poor inmates' right to representation in the courts of law. For an individual to manage their own situation, one has to understand the source of anger and what it is. If anger is not controlled, one becomes emotional, potentially leading to violence. Psychologists can help offenders with skills for controlling anger as a problem-solving strategy. Camenisch (2013) noted that offenders are taught to let go of anger and live a life of tolerance for a smooth reintegration. This enables offenders to implement anger-coping plans and manage future anger. Thomas (2015) further expresses that human beings have mixed feelings, which affect them at different times in their lives. These feelings can affect positively or negatively one's life. Therefore, living positively, celebrating life, and having an appreciation of music assist offenders in controlling emotions since inmates interact with different people of different backgrounds. Good communication skills are vital in the lives of juvenile offenders, and laughing is healthy, as psychologists say it is medicine. An offender who has attained emotional wellness displays positive behaviour in life, reveals feelings in a positive manner, and is quite disciplined.

In Zimbabwe, prisoners complained that the expertise and skills they acquire during incarceration were useless because they cannot obtain jobs after when they are released from prison owing to the fact that no company is willing to employ a once-juvenile offender (Parliament of Zimbabwe, 2011). Inmates entreated the repeal of the law that ordered the government not to employ ex-convicts but only the private sector (Parliament of Zimbabwe, 2011). The Mutare Border Timbers provided work for nursing mothers in prisons, and they were able to buy necessities for the children. This impressed the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee since there was inadequate funding. Prisoners in Gambia are sentenced to hard labour on farms to engender revenue for the prison (Dissel, 2008). This trend also applies to prisoners in Zimbabwe.

Governments in Africa should intensify efforts to encourage and motivate the employment of ex-convicts to enhance their reintegration into society. In contrast, several other countries have implemented progressive measures to support ex-convicts' employment and occupational wellness. For instance, Iraq provides financial support to ex-convicts to help them start small businesses, while Japan offers financial assistance to companies that hire ex-convicts (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2022). These initiatives align with United Nations policies on the reintegration of offenders, promoting their occupational wellness and societal contributions. Additionally, the literature indicates that rehabilitation programs are more advanced in countries like the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada, where cognitive skills training, sexual offender treatment, and problem-solving programs are offered (Davies & Raymond, 2018; Cullen et al., 2020; Maruna, 2021). These comprehensive rehabilitation efforts highlight the importance of structured support systems in reducing recidivism and enhancing the employability of ex-convicts.

Technology today plays a crucial role in one's life since it stimulates the mind. Brain-stimulating activities such as games, computers, puzzles and poems that encourage critical thinking and allow for personal achievement are being given to juvenile offenders in one correctional centre in Zimbabwe. Attainment of intellectual wellness helps offenders to share skills with others, solve problems, and be creative, which, according to Hettler (2004), promotes self-directed behaviour and personal achievement.

In Zimbabwe, some prisons have qualified artisans while others are teachers who teach vocational and academic courses, but they encounter problems such as the shortage of stationery and no libraries and tools for tailoring and carpentry. The prison centres use cells as classrooms, and these places are not conducive environments for learning to take place (The Human Rights Committee of the Parliament of Zimbabwe 2011). It has been noted that inmates receive any information necessary from Officers in Charge who communicate through wireless transmission. However, prisoners are

encouraged to read newspapers brought to them by their relatives and friends, which helps them to be conversant and acquire information.

3. African Philosophies on Social Wellness

In the African context, a human being does not develop in isolation; hence, interdependence of people is highly treasured. Mutual caring, compassion, respect, sharing, and cooperation are essential ingredients for enhancing social wellness. In Zimbabwe, the Shona people say, "Munhu munhu nekuda kwevanhu," meaning a person is a person through others. Whilst in South Africa, the Zulu people say, "Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu," translating the same as to the Shona meaning. Thus, interdependence is a reality for all and is highly cherished and respected in the African context. What has been said above resonates with what Gumbo (2014) states on solving crime in Africa; it takes the whole village to raise a child, and in the African context, a family is responsible for good materials, cultural beliefs, socialisation and this is where inspiration is imparted. This means a relationship can reveal various degrees of interaction, living in love and harmony (Mbiti, 2015). The Venda saying, which says, "Muthu u bebelwa munwe," meaning a person is born for the other, supports this; therefore, a person does not belong to self but belongs to the community.

The researcher noted that the approach being employed in Zimbabwean prisons demonstrates a positive impact in enhancing the social wellness of juvenile offenders, though this should be mainly guided by African philosophies to be effective and relevant. Mbiti (2015) propounds that delinquents, criminals and prisoners need special social care whilst incarcerated and when they reintegrate. This sentiment fits well with what Gumi (2014) stated when he said that the prison aims to bring transformation and not punishment. On the contrary, Dzadya (2016) points out that inmate's rights were not considered in the past; they were to be punished for their wrongdoings according to the social perception. Ultimately, Mbiti (2015) maintains that African philosophy is about people's image, attitudes, backgrounds, and other ways of seeing things in the world. Nussbaum (2003) further argues that Africa's traditional culture is oral rather than written; hence, it is practised in our day-to-day lives.

The attainment of social wellness is essential in the process of preparing juveniles for social integration. This will boost self-esteem, empower people to enhance their social wellness, develop good communication skills, handle stress and cultivate a healthy life, just to mention a few. A person who has attained social wellness is able to accept diversity. Magano (2016) reasoned that 'born frees', born after apartheid, enjoy human rights that affect their well-being. Therefore, there is a need for guidance and counselling to help them realise their freedom and identity, thus empowering them to enhance their social wellness.

One of the aspects to be considered in analysing the social wellness of juvenile offenders is the family. Since family is an immediate support unit, the relationship among juvenile offenders with family and other stakeholders is vital. Schaffer (2000) argues that working as a team in a society to achieve the same goal brings the attainment of social wellness. Research shows that the environment and the family play a vital role in shaping one's behaviour and improving the quality of one's life. Parents must, therefore, be empowered to develop good parenting skills and be responsible for the welfare of their children. Vulnerable children in Zimbabwe get assistance through school fees payment from the Basic Education Assistance Program to enhance social wellness. Similarly, in South Africa, vulnerable people are given social support grants so that they may be able to cope with life.

Educators are agents of social change in the world since they share insights and facilitate the catalytic transformation of society (Chemhuru & Makuvaza, 2014). The social skills imparted upon offenders by educators serve as a bridge for smooth reintegration into the community; hence, education should be implemented in line with the needs of juveniles. Zimbabwe regards education as a basic right that is provided to all its people, and juvenile offenders are not an exception to the rights offered to the society. Zimbabwe is one of the signatories to the United Nations Declaration Charter for Human Rights, which regards education as a basic right that governments provide to everyone. Chigunwe (2014) postulates that Zimbabwe is making efforts to empower prisoners through education, but it is facing challenges due to the present economic and political problems. The economic, social and political turmoil has had a devastating effect on the Zimbabwe education system and the education in correctional centres is not spared. Whilst there is a regard for education as a basic right, little has been done in the criminal justice system to enhance the well-being of the juvenile, and there are limitations on the education of juvenile inmates. However, some inmates could write their Ordinary Level and Advanced Level whilst serving but in an environment that is not friendly.

Lack of resources is a deterrent to studying towards a diploma or degree qualification whilst in prison, and there are no university programmes in prisons as of now. Chigunwe (2014) goes on to say that most of the inmates come from a culture of poverty, and they are illiterate, having little or no knowledge of vocational skills. On the flip side, there are some prison officers who are trained as artisans in welding and brick-laying, but lack resources to impart skills to inmates and some officers also lack the skills to help young offenders. It becomes essential to look at the role of prison educators in imparting skills for the social wellness of juvenile offenders. In Zimbabwe, juveniles in conflict with the law are perceived as a threat to society; hence, they suffer stigmatisation (Ruparanganda & Ruparanganda, 2016). There is a need for a change of mindset, and this need for change is echoed by many authors on the social wellness of offenders, such as Makhurane (2014), Schaffer (2000), Ozdemir (2010) and Magano (2014). A number of countries are implementing prison education, the aim being to enlighten and rehabilitate delinquent juveniles through it. In Turkey, education contributes to promoting social wellness, hence equipping young offenders with problem-solving (Ozdemir, 2010).

Globally, countries are trying to offer free education to empower people. Coyle (2018) connotes that the objective of education is to bring back the inmates to society who are well-equipped with skills and knowledge, craving to be good citizens with positive attitudes towards life. Without these skills and knowledge, one will have challenges coping with life,

hence the eminence of recidivism. Many studies have proved that inmates who have been equipped with vocational skills are less likely to reoffend. Gumi (2014) also echoes that prison education provides an opportunity for employment and time to think, improves an individual, turns his life around for the better and opens a door for re-entry into society. Thus, the person who opens a school door closes a prison door. Offenders would, therefore, be productive and useful to society if they were empowered through education. In concurring, Jovanic (2011) points out that the law in Serbia states that education in prison should endow and meet the needs of prisoners in preparation for reintegration. On the same note, distance learning is accessible to Sweden prisoners. In addition, Ozdemir (2010) makes it clear that Turkey focuses on needs-based education; therefore, the educator should be responsible for meeting the needs of the offenders.

Education as a human right issue should be prioritised, irrespective of the conditions of one's life. UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education argues that education in prisons is much more than a tool for change; it is subservient in its own right. Ndoro and Rupande (2014) postulate that educational programs such as skills training, formal education and literacy teaching are included in the Zimbabwe prison rehabilitation policy document to facilitate positive behaviour among inmates. Ndoro and Rupande (2014) further state that prison programs help offenders unlearn the acquired criminal behaviour, and rehabilitation must go beyond prison walls to facilitate successful reintegration. Nevertheless, Gona, Mugari, and Zundayi (2014) highlight that employment is difficult to get since correctional programs do not continue after imprisonment, and this is a challenge for inmates who are adjusting to society. Donald, Lazarus, and Lolwana (2010) state that if juvenile offenders are educated, recidivism will be reduced, and reintegration will flow smoothly. Nevertheless, it was estimated that 80% of prisoners in South Africa return to crime (Readucate, 2012). According to Brand, Citizen News (2016), the ex-convicts are facing challenges to reintegrate into society; the isolation of offenders leads to reoffending.

Many people have stereotypical views of ex-offenders, for they see them as untreatable, thereby affecting their progress in life. Brand, Citizen News (2016) continues to contend that the skills taught in prison are not of much use in the real world since ex-offenders are failing to get employment because some companies do not trust them. Brand, Citizen News (2016) denotes that a human being is not a 'finished product' but one in a continuous process of transformation to integrate smoothly into society. Hence, society should view ex-offenders as human beings and help them to reintegrate into society. In Iraq, the government provides money to offenders without jobs to get married and start small businesses, and they provide counselling to boost the self-esteem of offenders (United Nations, 2003). In Japan, the government also gives financial assistance to companies that employ juveniles; this is also in line with the United Nations, thus promoting the social wellness of juveniles.

4. African Philosophies on Social Wellness

In African philosophies, the concept of social wellness is deeply rooted in the interconnectedness and interdependence of individuals within their communities. This perspective emphasises mutual caring, compassion, respect, sharing, and cooperation as fundamental elements that enhance social well-being. For instance, among the Shona people of Zimbabwe and the Zulu people of South Africa, the adages "Munhu munhu nekuda kwevanhu" and "Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu" respectively encapsulate the idea that a person's identity is shaped and sustained through their relationships with others. This communal ethos underscores the importance of collective responsibility and support in fostering social harmony and individual well-being (Gumbo, 2014; Mbiti, 2015).

Within the context of Zimbabwean prisons, the application of African philosophies is recognised as pivotal in positively impacting the social wellness of juvenile offenders. Mbiti (2015) advocates for special social care for delinquents, criminals, and prisoners, highlighting the need for compassionate approaches to incarceration and reintegration. This perspective aligns with Gumi's (2014) assertion that prisons should prioritise transformation over punitive measures. Conversely, Dzadya (2016) criticises past practices that neglected inmates' rights and focused solely on punishment, emphasising the importance of shifting societal perceptions towards rehabilitation.

African philosophy, as articulated by Mbiti (2015), encompasses the collective image, attitudes, and worldviews of its people, emphasising oral tradition and cultural practices in everyday life. This cultural heritage underscores the significance of community support and guidance in nurturing social wellness among individuals (Nussbaum, 2003).

The promotion of social wellness among juvenile offenders is essential for their successful integration into society. This involves bolstering self-esteem, fostering effective communication skills, stress management, and embracing diversity. Magano (2016) emphasises the importance of guidance and counseling for "born frees" in post-apartheid South Africa, empowering them to navigate their freedom and identity while enhancing their social well-being.

The family unit plays a crucial role in shaping the social wellness of juvenile offenders, serving as a primary support structure. Schaffer (2000) emphasises the importance of familial relationships and community cooperation in achieving social harmony. Effective parenting and social support programs, such as the Basic Education Assistance Program in Zimbabwe and social grants in South Africa, aim to strengthen family bonds and enhance social wellness (Chigunwe, 2014).

Education emerges as a powerful tool for promoting social wellness and facilitating the reintegration of juvenile offenders into society. Educators serve as agents of social change, imparting essential skills and values necessary for successful community reintegration (Chemhuru & Makuvaza, 2014). Despite economic and political challenges, Zimbabwe prioritises education as a basic right for all, including juvenile offenders, in alignment with international human rights standards (Chigunwe, 2014). However, resource constraints and limited vocational training opportunities within prisons pose significant barriers to educational attainment and social wellness (Chigunwe, 2014).

Efforts to enhance social wellness through education extend beyond national borders, with various countries implementing prison education programs aimed at rehabilitation and skill development (Ozdemir, 2010; Jovanic, 2011). The United Nations emphasises education as a fundamental human right and a crucial tool for empowering individuals and reducing recidivism (UN Special Rapporteur, 2014).

Despite these initiatives, challenges persist in reintegrating juvenile offenders into society, with stigma and limited employment opportunities hindering their social wellness (Ruparanganda & Ruparanganda, 2016; Brand, Citizen News, 2016). However, initiatives such as financial assistance and counseling in countries like Iraq and Japan aim to support ex-offenders in rebuilding their lives and fostering social wellness (United Nations, 2003).

Embracing African philosophies and prioritising education are integral to promoting social wellness among juvenile offenders and facilitating their successful reintegration into society. By addressing systemic barriers and fostering community support, societies can empower individuals to overcome adversity and thrive as productive members of their communities.

5. Methodology

The study was embedded within an interpretive paradigm (Henning, Rensburg & Smit, 2010), in which the researcher sought to understand the world as it is from the subjective experiences of individuals. Through this research paradigm, the researcher wanted to get a deep understanding of the meaning that participants attach to specific social phenomena.

It was very crucial for the researcher to understand individual cases, beliefs, and feelings about the world and not universal laws since people are unique and have different issues. A qualitative phenomenological design was used, with focus group discussions, interviews, and observations as data collection tools. Maree (2016) postulates that every situation is considered unique, and it is better to understand the perceptions of individuals by observing them and getting their interpretations of their own context. Creswell (2014) supports this opinion by saying that the context where events and behaviour take place is crucial since they enable the researcher to understand the problem better. Epistemological and ontological aspects are concerned with a person's worldview, which is knowledge and reality. However, people may perceive things in different ways, but there is no view that is superior to the other in academic circles (Babbie & Mouton, 2011). Thus, the researcher went on observing the lives of the juveniles and conducted face-to-face interviews to get an in-depth understanding.

The researcher observed how the juveniles interact at the institution, their behaviour and the patterns of how things occur. Observation helped the researcher to ascertain participants' qualities and uncommon characteristics (Maree, 2016). Furthermore, the observational study allowed a naturalistic inquiry, which facilitated the identification of recurring patterns of behaviour that participants may not be able to identify in qualitative research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The researcher conducted the study in the context in which the behaviour was exhibited into contemplation to get a deeper understanding of what was happening. Learning and exploring from both learners and educators were vital in this research. Interviews, questionnaires, and observations were used to gather data. Creswell (2014) further defines qualitative research as the researcher's intention to interpret or make sense of meanings that other people have about the world.

The researcher thus adopted purposive sampling. The researcher interviewed ten juvenile offenders and five educators and administered questionnaires to educators. Thus, the total number of participants or sample was fifteen. Out of five educators, four were qualified, and one was not qualified. Consequently, the participants were selected from the correctional centre and the centre has male juveniles only. The participants who suit the set criteria took part in the research. The researcher used her own judgement in selecting the sample to have a good and comprehensive understanding of the role of educators in enhancing social wellness in the lives of juvenile offenders. The researcher selected a few from among the juvenile offenders and educators at the Midlands prison. The researcher sought participants who were willing to participate in the research. Thus, the researcher identified participants among juvenile offenders and educators who had knowledge of useful information related to the subject under study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). Sampling was purposive because only educators of the correctional centre teach the juveniles

6. Findings/Results and Discussion

Findings from this study revealed that the teaching of the new Zimbabwean curriculum has enhanced positive relationships and developed interpersonal relationships amongst juveniles through sharing their problems, the word of God, singing and playing together. In this way, physical, emotional, social and academic wellness is being enhanced. From the responses, there is an indication that many juveniles spend their free time on social activities, which help enhance social wellness in their lives. This is in line with Gumi (2014), who noted that prisons should be places where constructive activities take place and bring reformation to people. Gallant (2014) also postulates that sports provide inmates with a sense of belonging, achievement, and self-expression and reduce tension and arguments among inmates themselves and officials. Sports do not promote anti-social behaviour; hence, they are not likely to reoffend, as sports generally enhance teamwork and cooperation. Furthermore, the study established that counselling rendered to juvenile offenders enhances positive behaviour modification, tolerance and respect for others. This study revealed that juvenile offenders are equipped with coping skills to deal with community stigmatisation. Findings also revealed that the interaction and relationships between educators and juvenile offenders was a clear indicator that a conducive environment was prevalent, and it reassured the juveniles of positive integration into the community. This demonstrates that inmates have a common identity. Solvang and Haualand (2014) posit that the wheel of wellness model is a vital model that focuses on various

wellness dimensions of juvenile offenders, in which through socialisation, behavioural changes are enabled through socialisation, hence promoting love and friendship.

Furthermore, the study revealed that educators at the correctional centre use different strategies such as counselling, motivation, child-centred approach, group work and sports engagement activities. This study also revealed that education in correctional centres is a tool for effective offender rehabilitation and that it improves academic wellness as it prepares one to be a good citizen during and after incarceration. Agboola (2016) highlighted that education in correctional centres necessarily means studying the whole of imprisonment, which implies physical, educational, occupational and social conditions.

The researcher observed that some juveniles had acquired skills in making doormats, gardening, fencing and plaiting extensions. One of the juveniles had a unique skill in plaiting, and he taught his friends, and now they are plaiting extensions and selling them. The money raised by these juveniles is used for their personal needs. Findings from the interviews with educators showed that the learners are now able to live in the correctional centre positively and are ready to go into the community with the right mentality since they were empowered with all kinds of social skills through counselling. Furthermore, counselling gives learners hope and teaches them forgiveness, positive living, conflict handling or management, decision-making, love and respect, just to mention a few. These findings relate well with Magano (2016), who reasoned that "born frees' were born after apartheid, enjoy human rights that affect their well-being". Therefore, there is a need for guidance and counselling to help them realise their freedom and identity, thus empowering them to enhance their social wellness.

7. Conclusion

"Uncaging the Caged" is a transformative approach aimed at overhauling the correctional experience in developing countries by prioritising human rights, comprehensive rehabilitation, legal support, and community reintegration. This paradigm shift seeks to address the root causes of criminal behaviour, reduce recidivism, and promote a more just and rehabilitative criminal justice system. By focusing on holistic rehabilitation, this initiative not only enhances the well-being of incarcerated individuals but also prepares them for successful reintegration into society and the workforce, ultimately contributing to safer communities and a reduction in the economic burden of repeat offences.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings in this study, correctional facilities should integrate robust educational and vocational training programs, mental health support, and substance abuse treatment to address the diverse needs of inmates. These programs should be designed to equip inmates with the skills and resources necessary for successful reintegration into society and the job market upon release. A shift from punitive to restorative justice approaches emphasise repairing harm, fostering accountability, and facilitating reconciliation between offenders and the community. This can include victim-offender mediation, community service, and other restorative practices that promote healing and reintegration. Furthermore, there is a need for strong partnerships with community organisations, social workers, and legal aid services to provide continuous support for inmates during and after their incarceration. These networks can assist with legal representation, housing, employment, and other critical areas that support the reintegration process and reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

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