

Review of: "The Effectiveness of Prison Education in Reducing Criminal Recidivism: A Systematic Review"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Thank you for the work on this vulnerable population.

Introduction

1. The introduction is severely under-referenced and is most reliant on UNODC 2019 work. This then creates the impression that the background is under researched, and it is mostly the author's views. This significantly compromises the scientific grounding of the work. Please improve the intext references.
2. The author writes: "*The situation is much worse in countries with medium to low incomes, which for the most part do not understand the need to invest their limited resources in crime prevention programs and the institutionalization of social reintegration of convicts as part of their criminal justice system.*" - This makes one wonder if it is truly the case that LMICs do not invest in crime prevention efforts owing largely to a lack of understanding. If that is the case, do we know why LMICs do not have such an understanding as claimed? For example, implementation of crime prevention might be taking place, but sustainability of programs might be a challenge due to limitations of resources. Please find and include literature clarifying this.
3. The author writes: "*Providing them with the knowledge, skills, and tools they need to create a dignified life for themselves upon their return to the community. With a new personal identity as law-abiding citizens*" - Consider this phrasing: 'Providing them with knowledge, skills, and tools to be law-abiding citizens upon rejoining the general population.' The use of '...personal identity..' introduces identity aspects into the discussion.

METHODOLOGY

Eligibility Criteria

1. The author writes: "*They were published in the last 5 years in English or Spanish*" - Please justify the motivation for the period of five years and the language choices.
2. The author writes: "*Studies were considered regardless of the age or gender of the participants, or the type of correctional institution where they were incarcerated.*" - This might present a challenge specifically in the area of prison education as not all incarceration spaces offer prison education. Secondly, recidivism motivators (even assuming they all have access to prison education) are different for an adolescent, a young adult, a female, and a male.

Exclusion Criteria

1. The author writes: *“Books and manuals: Books and manuals were excluded because they are not peer-reviewed and may not be based on rigorous research”* - Please justify why scholarly books, which are peer-reviewed and based on rigorous research, were excluded.

Sources of Information and Search

Note: *(reoffen*)* is not included as one of the key words but was included in the PubMed engine and helped yield ‘best results’.

RESULTS

Study Selection

1. The author writes: *“A total of 1,277 studies (ERIC, n = 908; PubMed n, = 189; Dialnet, n = 68; Google Scholar, n = 66; Redalyc, n = 46) were identified after the initial search. The process of reading the title and abstract resulted in the elimination of 1,244 of them for not meeting the inclusion criteria of the present review. Of the remaining 49 studies, 7 duplicates and 1 retracted article were removed”*

There is mathematical incongruence here; **1,277** studies less **1, 244** studies would leave us with **33** studies, not 49.

This then further complicates sample size, and by extension, the rigor of this systematic review, particularly because **you further eliminate 38 articles** (*“Of the remaining 49 [actual, 33] studies, 7 duplicates and 1 retracted article were removed”...+ “Consequently, 41 articles passed to the phase of reading the full text, of which 15 more were rejected”... + “Another 15 were rejected because they were literature reviews (n = 7), case studies (n = 4), and an additional work was excluded because it turned out to be a research protocol design. Finally, three more were excluded for...”*). This then leaves us at a negative value of articles, which compromises the rest of the presented manuscript.

2. The mathematical incongruence is further evident here; the author writes:

“As a result, 10 valid studies were included in the bibliographic review.

Characteristics of the Studies

Of the 11 studies selected for inclusion, only three were purely qualitative”

Please attend to these. My review of this work ended here because of the significant challenges with how many articles actually informed the Results.