

Case Study

# Exploring Elements That Might Deter Prisoners from Engaging as Students in Distance E-Learning Settings

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Received: 26-11-2023

Revised: 03-02-2024

Accepted: 28-02-2024

## ABSTRACT

The study aimed to explore deterrents faced by incarcerated individuals in distance e-learning. It recognized the unique challenges prisoners encounter in educational pursuits, crucial for effective program design in correctional facilities. Conducted in a Namibian prison, it adopted qualitative methods, employing interviews and thematic analysis. The findings contribute to Correctional Education Theory, enhancing comprehension of barriers like socio-economic, psychological, and institutional factors. Informing program development, it advocates for tailored initiatives facilitating prisoner education. Despite difficulties, the Namibian government's support for distance e-learning showcases commitment to inmate rehabilitation. This research underscores the importance of addressing obstacles to foster education in carceral contexts.

## HIGHLIGHTS

Elements that deter students from studying using e-learning are:

- ① Restricted access to e-learning resources during nighttime.
- ① Insufficient access to necessary materials.
- ① Low motivation levels.
- ① Unclear delineation of roles between prisoner students and lecturers.
- ① Financial constraints hindering program registration.
- ① Internet and connectivity limitations.
- ① Inadequate support from prison staff.
- ① Lack of familial support.
- ① Bureaucratic hurdles within correctional facilities.

**Keywords:** Incarcerated, opportunity, e-learning, distance education

The purpose of the study was to examine the factors that can discourage prisoners as students studying in a distance e-learning environment. Problem Statement: Incarcerated individuals face unique challenges when engaging in distance e-learning initiatives. Understanding the factors that hinder their participation is crucial for designing effective educational programs within correctional settings. It underscores the intricate web of

challenges that undermine prisoners' participation in distance e-learning environments. By illuminating these barriers, policymakers, educators, and correctional authorities can devise targeted interventions aimed at

**How to cite this article:** Mahlangu, V.P. (2024). Exploring Elements That Might Deter Prisoners from Engaging as Students in Distance E-Learning Settings. *Int. J. Soc. Sci.*, 13(01): 21-30.

**Source of Support:** None; **Conflict of Interest:** None



enhancing access, promoting inclusivity, and fostering a conducive learning environment for incarcerated individuals striving to pursue educational opportunities through distance e-learning platforms.

In his study conducted in 2024, Lurigio concluded that in order to effectively decrease crime rates, jail must serve as a deterrent for both convicted offenders (individual deterrence) and the broader public (general deterrence), discouraging them from engaging in future criminal activities. As early as in 1993, Bazlerand Charles (1993) found that a university model of teaching should have the integration of content areas, integration of methods and content, emphasis on educational pedagogy (methods and application), emphasis on identified student needs, emphasis on understanding over memorization, encouragement of cooperative learning, and the acceptance of positive attitude towards the learning content. 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. 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.

This caught the attention of the author as a scientist from a university in South Africa, who dedicated to the scientific 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

The integration of distance e-learning programs within correctional facilities offers incarcerated individuals an opportunity for educational advancement and skill development. However, despite its potential benefits, prisoner participation in such initiatives often faces substantial hurdles. This study explores the multifaceted factors that impede prisoners' engagement as students in distance e-learning environments. Drawing on qualitative research methods, including interviews and surveys conducted with both prisoners and correctional staff, this study delves into the challenges encountered by incarcerated individuals in accessing and benefiting from distance e-learning programs. Findings reveal a complex interplay of internal and external barriers, encompassing technological limitations, institutional constraints, socio-economic factors, and psychological impediments. Technological barriers emerge as a prominent deterrent, with issues such as limited access to reliable internet connectivity, restricted device availability, and inadequate technical support posing significant challenges. Moreover, institutional policies and administrative hurdles within correctional facilities hinder prisoners' ability to participate fully in e-learning initiatives. Concerns regarding digital literacy and educational preparedness further exacerbate these challenges, underscoring the need for tailored instructional strategies and support mechanisms.

Additionally, socio-economic factors, including financial constraints and familial responsibilities, exert considerable influence on prisoners' engagement with distance e-learning. The stigma associated with incarceration and the lack of incentives for educational attainment within correctional settings also contribute to diminished motivation and participation. Furthermore, psychological barriers such as self-doubt, fear of failure, and the absence of a supportive learning environment

significantly deter prisoners from actively engaging in distance e-learning activities. Addressing these psychological barriers necessitates the provision of comprehensive counseling and mentorship programs tailored to the unique needs of incarcerated learners.

Worldwide crime and its interconnectedness of legal systems could lead to the emergence of transnational challenges in criminal punishment. Strategies to enforce international human rights norms could present complex dilemmas for prison authorities. Many countries focus on rehabilitation, and reformation as a central goal of criminal punishment. This approach aims to address the underlying causes of criminal behavior and promote offender reintegration into society. This is typical of the Namibian Correctional Facility that was studied in this article. Gacinya (2024) found that countries like Singapore have a deterrence-focused criminal justice system, where harsh penalties, including caning and long prison terms, are believed to deter criminal activity. Nordic countries, such as Sweden and Norway, are known for their emphasis on rehabilitation, providing inmates with educational and vocational programs within a humane prison environment. Rwanda embarked on a unique path of justice and punishment, aiming to reconcile a deeply divided society while promoting healing, accountability, and a lasting peace. Rwanda committed her prison procedures to rehabilitation and reintegration of inmates in addressing the root causes of criminal behavior, specifically youth offenders affected by One prominent approach to criminal punishment is grounded in the principle of retributive justice, which seeks to inflict a proportionate punishment on offenders. Incarceration is a widely used strategy of punishment in many countries, including the United States, where lengthy prison sentences are often imposed for serious offenses (Gacinya, 2024). In contrast to the retributive model, some countries emphasize restorative justice principles, aiming to repair the harm caused by the offense and reintegrate offenders into society. This approach often involves alternative sentencing options such as community service, victim-offender mediation, or rehabilitation programs. The use of capital punishment (i.e., the death penalty) varies significantly worldwide. Some countries, for example,

the United States and China, continue to employ this form of punishment, while others have abolished it due to concerns about human rights and the possibility of wrongful convictions. Sentencing guidelines play a crucial role in shaping criminal punishment practices (Gacinya, 2024).

Correctional agencies strive to provide a safe and secure environment for both convicts and personnel within their facilities. However, ensuring offender compliance can be challenging due to the inherent limits and conflicts that arise in the daily existence of a prison (Weinrath, Tess, *et al.* 2024). Correctional staff play a crucial role in managing prisoners and adopt various techniques to ensure criminals cooperate, including using discretion when enforcing laws such as those related to educational exclusions. One instance where correctional personnel and administrators may be excessively inclined to employ intimidating techniques and deprive prisoners of their right to education is through various forms of isolated incarceration, sometimes known as restricted confinement (Weinrath, Tess *et al.* 2024).

Dorsey (2024) found that prisoners studying while incarcerated could be difficult for those who lack a family or support system to rely on. This lack of support and resources can push individual prisoners' survival mode, potentially leading to negative behaviors or returning to previous harmful situations. Barriers to study while incarcerated could include limited access to resources and technology, restrictions on financial aid, bureaucratic hurdles, disruptions caused by living arrangements and changing cellmates, emotional impacts of personal losses, self-imposed barriers, interruptions due to lock-downs, and restrictive movements within correctional facilities. Despite these challenges, incarcerated individuals must demonstrate resilience, determination, and a commitment to pursuing their educational goals (Dorsey, 2024).

Individuals who have been incarcerated encounter many obstacles when moving from prison to the community. This article highlights the primary requirements that the jail population urgently requires, which include financial resources, social assistance, and educational opportunities to fulfill their fundamental necessities

such as food, clothing, and secure and consistent housing. Individuals who have been imprisoned encounter societal and systemic discrimination when attempting to access social services. Beliefs that are negative and stigmatizing towards individuals with past incarcerations and mental health requirements might hinder their ability to get job and obtain education and help in social assistance, criminal-legal, and healthcare environments (Palis, Young *et al.* 2024).

Exclusionary practices in prisons could be a barrier to prison students studying while incarcerated. This act helped increase exclusionary punishment and criminal justice referrals for student misbehavior in studying in prison schools (Hemphill, 2024). Prison is one of these and the shenanigans occurring in prisons discourage those prisoners who want study not to continue (Santorso & Rizzuti, 2024).

Aidoo (2024) found that giving inmates the chance to work influences their lives and forms a critical component in their rehabilitation education. Thus, the frequently touted benefits of prison work include but are not limited to, reducing idleness, financial benefits, skill acquisition, personal character reformation, desistance from crime, and cost reduction. Transgression transparency employed by some prison services around the world, such as publishing the names of inmates who 'misbehave' at the gate, making the transgressions of the said inmates known to others, and suspending such inmates from taking part in education activities could discourage some prisoners from studying. Consequently, inmates could be assisted to engage in acceptable behaviours espoused by the prisons, hence creating a personal narrative control of their own accord in an effort to enable behavioural change, leading to rehabilitation through education (Aidoo, 2024). Physical boundaries and interpersonal regulations associated with incarceration and situates their impact on education in prison within the broader context of alienation and constrained autonomy imposed by the criminal legal system. This boundedness shapes experiences in the class and afterwards and may undermine the radical intentions of education prisoners studying while in prisons, with lessons for other attempts at bridging or

aligning disparate approaches or systems (Leon, Perez *et al.* 2024).

Asgharpourmasouleh, Fattahzadeh *et al.* (2024) discovered that there is a lack of empathy for the captives, especially in cases where they are ill. The rules and regulations are subject to weekly changes. Occasionally, at the start of the week, all the numbers are meticulously documented on intricate timetables. Additionally, they discovered that there are instances when the telephone queue commences at nine o'clock in the morning. Occasionally at 8 o'clock. Additionally, there are occasions when it occurs at ten o'clock. Telephone usage may expire about noon. Phones frequently experience malfunctions and become inoperable. Inmates are required to participate in a competition in order to gain access to a functional telephone. The telephone room is a spacious chamber equipped with seven or eight telephones, however a number of them are consistently inoperative. According to their observations, only a small number of individuals in a group of seven or eight were able to discover working telephones. This could serve as an impediment for inmates to pursue education while in custody.

Philippesen, Mieth *et al.* (2024) discovered that a commonly held belief is that punishing those who fail to collaborate and instead defect can help sustain cooperation. Punishment can effectively deter defection, irrespective of the level of defection. Moreover, individuals may choose to administer punishment when they believe that the punishment is warranted due to the approval of others, hence minimizing the expenses associated with punishment. Given the widespread occurrence of cooperation in human groups and civilizations, punishment is frequently targeted towards individuals who deviate from the norm by not contributing to the overall welfare of the group. Nevertheless, there is a negative aspect to imposing conformity regardless of the repercussions of the conduct: Individuals may engage in antisocial punishment of nonconforming conduct, even when such action contributes to the overall welfare of the group. For instance, this can be observed in prison settings where environments are not conducive to prisoners' ability to study, as well as in situations



including connectivity issues and strict prison rules and regulations (Philippsen, Mieth *et al.* 2024).

Nichols (2017) advises that prison education must be seen as a vehicle for continuous personal, social and cultural development. A broad interpretation of the value of distance e-learning prison education has been central to my own research on prison education and this article focuses on one theme arising from this research by examining the factors that can discourage prisoners studying in a distance e-learning environment. Educational spaces can be one of few 'alternative emotional zones' providing respite from the realities of prison life. There was evidence of active discouragement to engage in education, this tended to be overshadowed by the more prominent theme of disillusionment (Nichols, 2017).

A lack of information regarding opportunities for participation deters prisoners from taking part in education and vocational training. Moreover, prison authorities often do not recognize the need to invest in reintegration programmes because prisoners often choose to return to their communities after release, or face deportation. Furthermore, prisoners also have fewer opportunities to be engaged in prison education due to a shortage of places. They also have fewer opportunities to visit the prison library, as it is a challenge for prison libraries to provide adequate foreign language collections, and the offer in foreign languages therefore tends to be limited (Croux, Brosens *et al.* 2019). Barriers that may discourage prisoners to participate in distance e-learning could be a lack of motivation and poor physical health of the prisoner; a lack of programmes; limited funding for prison programmes and facilities and overcrowding or a shortage of prison guards to accompany prisoners to the activities (Croux, Brosens *et al.* 2019). The uncooperative security system and the structural and social contexts of prisons could discourage prisoners from studying (Fuge, Tsourtos *et al.* 2024).

Prisoners may be disincentivized from pursuing education because to several inequities they encounter when seeking employment, including as socio-economic difficulties, trauma, and post-release stigma (Zhang,

2024). Another factor that could discourage students from studying while in prison could be suicidal ideation which refers to thoughts about death or wanting to be dead, which includes thoughts about taking action to end one's life. For example, prisoners who have suffered multiple childhood trauma are more likely to perform self-harm or suicidal attempt. Also, physical abuse and physical neglect could be the predictors of suicide attempts among offenders. Generally, all forms of childhood trauma could be associated with suicide attempts in prisoners, and this may discourage them from studying (Deng, J., Ou, *et al.* 2024).

Brosens, De Donder *et al.* (2015) found that prisoners with a poor understanding of the programme's language and the lack of clarity in vocational orientation programmes could discourage the students to study because they could be confronted with informational barriers. There could also be internal and external barriers.

Dispositional barriers are sometimes called psychosocial barriers, referring to individual beliefs, values, and attitudes that obstruct participation in organised learning activities. Examples are lack of interest, feeling too old to learn, being tired of school, and not enjoying studying. Dispositional barriers are also called motivational hindrances or attitudinal barriers. Situational barriers are unique to an individual and are usually beyond the control of the educational institution. A lack of financial support to enroll in an educational course and the lack of family support are examples of situational barriers. Prisoners' uncertainty of being able to complete a course due to transfer to another prison or early release can lead to non-participation in studies Brosens, De Donder *et al.* 2015.

The institutional barriers that could discourage students to study while in prison could include amongst others: (1) scheduling problems, (2) problems with location of the prison, (3) lack of interesting, practical or relevant courses, (4) procedural problems and time requirements, (5) and lack of information about the programmes and procedures (Brosens, De Donder *et al.* 2015). Durante, Meertins *et al.* (2024) found that incarcerated persons have restricted agency to make decisions about their education plans, placing the burden of their education

on families and prison authorities. Prison students face institutional impediments, such as strict visiting restrictions, remote prison locations, and the expenses of visits and phone calls, which hinder their ability to connect effectively with their families. Physical jail visits are crucial for families to sustain their relationships with a detained family member. Nevertheless, the act of visiting jails can incur significant expenses, consume a considerable amount of time, and be an unpleasant experience. Prisons are frequently situated at a considerable distance from families, imposing logistical and financial burdens on the non-incarcerated family members. These burdens include transportation expenses and study fees for convicts (Durante, Meertins *et al.* 2024).

The desistance process is argued to be an unlikely outcome of imprisonment itself as the prison experience disrupts normative processes by cutting off opportunities for achieving success in employment and other key life events such as distance e-learning. It was found that no institution is better than the prison at separating individuals from their social responsibilities and civic duties. Thus, education as an arguably normative process, may be a vehicle through which to achieve, maintain and nurture the 'good relationship' that forms part of the desistance journey (Nichols, 2017).

In this article the term "desistance" will mean the cessation of criminal activity, and this must be understood as a process out of crime. The desistance process can be further divided into primary and secondary desistance. Primary desistance is simply to stop offending. This refraining from committing criminal acts does not necessarily arise from a deliberate consideration or intention, and may be temporary, for instance due to illness, lack of opportunity, etc. Secondary desistance is about developing or changing one's *identity*, where the key element is to see oneself as a law-abiding person which includes "a measurable, reflective and more self-conscious break with previous patterns of offending". During the tertiary phase to the desistance process, this is the stage at which ex-convicts are seen by others as law-abiding persons and as a consequence of this recognition they develop a sense

of belonging to a community (Gjeruldsena, Jensen *et al.* 2024).

## Purpose

The purpose of the study was to examine the factors that can discourage prisoners as students studying in a distance e-learning environment.

## METHODS

### Data collection

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.

### Data analysis

The voice recorded interviews were given to a professional translator who translated the data verbatim and themes formulated from the questions that were asked. The analysis was conducted thematically.

### Findings

The participants were asked to list the factors that can discourage students studying in a distance e-learning environment.

The findings are presented as verbatim as transcribed from the recorded interviews.

**Participant A:** *"It is like if I think of we are not having access to e-learning during night time, and we don't have hard copies, in fact unless you are lucky enough, what do you call this, photocopies, photocopy machine, printers so that you can print some copies so that you can read them, print them then you can time to read. So, in others words we don't have more time for e-learning on a laptop"*.

**Participant B:** *"Factors, one might be as I pointed earlier that to understand the concept, mostly the background it is also playing a very important role for some of us who were not like be willing to go out, and when we go out, we are not have the resources like libraries and so on. Our mind was not trying to read more, we rely on somebody to explain or to facilitate the*

things so that we can better understand. It is one of the factors which can discourage somebody to study on his own, because it is difficult to understand”.

**Participant C:** “The one, I believe lack of motivation. Lack of motivation from self, lack of motivation from let me say from the side of the institution, because it is like whenever you do distance, you are segregated from, you are far from the institution, thereby you do not have this that familiar link or that link between you and the institution, so that might also encourage students”.

**Participant D:** “The other is lack of clarity whereby the lecturers either, the lecturers or the students support staff has to offer if it is not clear between from their side for the student, it also discourage the student”.

**Participant E:** “The factors that can discourage is that we don’t have time or kept the opportunity to ask questions that we don’t understand that time when you are doing your interviews. A person needs face to face classes so that we can also hear and understand ideas from others in the class”.

**Participant F:** “The distance mode is quite challenging, but it is doable. Especially financial, maybe you find that everyone wants to help you in the payments and sometimes you find some things that you cannot do on your own, especially in research. You have to send someone to ask somebody outside to do it for you. So if these things are not in place then you become discouraged. Like here in the situation where we are, we the lack of motivation can discourage you, and also lack of motivation, yes”.

**Participant G:** “First of all it will be the internet, secondly the treatment from the officers also. Like if the officers do not help you, then you cannot go forward with your studies”.

**Participant H:** “What I observed sometimes if you are not dedicated you don’t do your assessment on time, you might be discouraged to continue, if you start failing then you feel like you just gave up. The first one you find that people they sometimes they also associate with the wrong people, for instance that you associate with the person which tried that was not having the vision, automatic that person in your opinion they are not important like the others, because they don’t give information about the distance mode, but to me I see the most contributing factor is if you associate with the wrong people. If you associate with the right people”.

**Participant I:** “The factors that one that can discourage one, is once you are not have a device it is an internet device modem, first of all and mostly it is contributed by the power shut downs, especially those challenges are mostly around remote areas or urban areas where you have access to internet, because Africa, in such a way that I mean, in comparison to the European countries, so the challenges that we are facing especially is rural areas, in a set up like this, this one, I mean the correctional environment, maybe where you are restricted to in comparison with the students who are outside, so those are the things which can discourage the student, I mean we are no having full time access to the internet”.

**Participant J:** “You know when there is power shutdowns, because of some security reasons one could not be accorded like the students who are outside. Firstly, financial constraints, secondly there is no support from your family, there is no other person who can assist you. Thirdly it is the bureaucracy for NSC, sometimes manpower is not enough to take us outside and then it builds up to a resistance that you see that they don’t want to assist you. Sometimes when you call from here, the institute that I am studying with, they don’t pick up the phone, and then the right applications to be taken outside. That is also part of the e-learning challenges that we have”.

## DISCUSSION

**Participant A:** “It is like if I think of we are not having access to e-learning during night time, and we don’t have hard copies, in fact unless you are lucky enough, what do you call this, photocopies, photocopy machine, printers so that you can print some copies so that you can read them, print them then you can time to read. So, in others words we don’t have more time for e-learning on a laptop”. Correctional agencies manage their institutions in a way that guarantees a safe and secure environment for both convicts and staff. However, ensuring offender compliance can be challenging due to the limitations and conflicts that are inherent in the daily existence of prisons (Weinrath, Tess, et al. 2024). Correctional staff play a crucial role in managing prisoners and adopt various techniques to ensure offenders cooperate, including using discretion when enforcing laws, such as the exclusionary rules regarding education. Correctional officers must punish atypical behavior when it is to promote the collective good, e.g., prison conditions that are not conducive to

prisoners to study, connectivity challenges and prison rules and regulations (Philippesen, Mieth *et al.* 2024).

**Participant B:** *“Factors, one might be as I pointed earlier that to understand the concept, mostly the background it is also playing a very important role for some of us who were not like be willing to go out, and when we go out, we are not have the resources like libraries and so on. Our mind was not trying to read more, we rely on somebody to explain or to facilitate the things so that we can better understand. It is one of the factors which can discourage somebody to study on his own, because it is difficult to understand”.* Prisoners could be discouraged to study because they could be faced by a multitude of inequalities in their efforts to study, including socio-economic disadvantages, trauma, and stigma after being released from prisons (Zhang, 2024).

**Participant C:** *“The one, I believe lack of motivation. Lack of motivation from self, lack of motivation from let me say from the side of the institution, because it is like whenever you do distance, you are segregated from, you are far from the institution, thereby you do not have this that familiar link or that link between you and the institution, so that might also encourage students”.* All forms of childhood trauma associated with suicide attempts by prisoners, could discourage them from studying (Deng, J., Ou, *et al.* 2024). Nichols (2027) advises that prison education must be seen as a vehicle for continuous personal, social, and cultural development. A lack of information regarding opportunities for participation deters prisoners from taking part in education and vocational training (Croux, Brosens *et al.* 2019).

**Participant D:** *“The other is lack of clarity whereby the lecturers either, the lecturers or the students support staff has to offer if it is not clear between from their side for the student, it an also discourage the student”.* Prisoners’ uncertainty of being able to complete a course due to transfer to another prison or early release can lead to non-participation in studies Brosens, De Donder *et al.* 2015. There is a dark side to enforcing conformity irrespective of the consequences of the behavior of prisoners. People may antisocially punish atypical behavior even when it is promoting the collective good, e.g., prison conditions that are not conducive to prisoners to study, connectivity challenges and prison rules and regulations could

discourage studying by prisoners (Philippesen, Mieth *et al.* 2024).

**Participant E:** *“The factors that can discourage is that we don’t have time or kept the opportunity to ask questions that we don’t understand that time when you are doing your interviews. A person needs face to face classes so that we can also hear and understand ideas from others in the class”.*

This was confirmed by Weinrath, Tess, *et al.* (2024) who found that there are different forms of isolated detention (restrictive confinement) that are used by correctional officers in dealing with prisoner misconduct such as denying them the right to education (Weinrath, Tess, *et al.* 2024). Again, Durante, Meertins *et al.* (2024) found that incarcerated persons have restricted agency to make decisions about their education plans, placing the burden of their education on families and prison authorities.

**Participant F:** *“The distance mode is quite challenging, but it is doable. Especially financial, maybe you find that everyone wants to help you in the payments and sometimes you find some things that you cannot do on your own, especially in research. You have to send someone to ask somebody outside to do it for you. So, if these things are not in place then you become discouraged. Like here in the situation where we are, we the lack of motivation can discourage you, and also lack of motivation, yes”.* The institutional barriers that could discourage students to study while in prison could include the scheduling problems, problems with location of the prison, lack of interesting, practical or relevant courses, procedural problems and time requirements, and the lack of information about the programmes and procedures (Brosens, De Donder *et al.* 2015). Physical boundaries and interpersonal regulations associated with incarceration and situates their impact on education in prison within the broader context of alienation and constrained autonomy imposed by the criminal legal system (Leon, Perez *et al.* 2024).

**Participant G:** *“First of all it will be the internet, secondly the treatment from the officers also. Like if the officers do not help you, then you cannot go forward with your studies”.* The finding is confirmed by Dorsey (2024) who found that prisoners studying while incarcerated could find it difficult because of a lack of a support system. This



lack of support and resources can push individual prisoners' survival mode, potentially leading to negative behaviors or returning to previous harmful situations. Barriers to study while incarcerated could include limited access to resources and technology, restrictions such as bureaucratic hurdles, disruptions caused by living arrangements and changing cellmates, emotional impacts of personal losses, self-imposed barriers, interruptions due to lock-downs, and restrictive movements within correctional facilities.

**Participant H:** *"What I observed sometimes if you are not dedicated you don't do your assessment on time, you might be discouraged to continue, if you start failing then you feel like you just gave up. The first one you find that people they sometimes they also associate with the wrong people, for instance that you associate with the person which tried that was not having the vision, automatic that person in your opinion they are not important like the others, because they don't give information about the distance mode, but to me I see the most contributing factor is if you associate with the wrong people. If you associate with the right people"*. This finding is supported by Croux, Brosens *et al.* (2019) who found that barriers that may discourage prisoners to participate in distance e-learning could be a lack of motivation and a shortage of prison guards to accompany prisoners to the activities.

**Participant I:** *"The factors that one that can discourage one, is once you are not have a device it is an internet device modem, first of all and mostly it is contributed by the power shut downs, especially those challenges are mostly around remote areas or urban areas where you have access to internet, because Africa, in such a way that I mean, in comparison to the European countries, so the challenges that we are facing especially is rural areas, in a set up like this, this one, I mean the correctional environment, maybe where you are restricted to in comparison with the students who are outside, so those are the things which can discourage the student, I mean we are no having full time access to the internet"*. This finding was confirmed by Asgharpourmasouleh, Fattahzadeh *et al.* (2024) who found that sometimes at the beginning of the week telephone numbers are recorded on perplexing schedules. Phones are often broken and out of order. Furthermore, Dorsey (2024) found that

prisoners studying while incarcerated could find it difficult because of a lack of a support system.

**Participant J:** *"You know when there is power shutdowns, because of some security reasons one could not be accorded like the students who are outside. Firstly, financial constraints, secondly there is no support from your family, there is no other person who can assist you. Thirdly it is the bureaucracy for NSC, sometimes manpower is not enough to take us outside and then it builds up to a resistance that you see that they don't want to assist you. Sometimes when you call from here, the institute that I am studying with, they don't pick up the phone, and then the right applications to be taken outside. That is also part of the e-learning challenges that we have"*. This is in line with Croux, Brosens *et al.* (2019) who found that barriers that could discourage prisoners to participate in distance e-learning could be a lack of motivation and poor physical health of the prisoner; a lack of programmes; limited funding for prison programmes and facilities and overcrowding or a shortage of prison guards to accompany prisoners to the activities. Prisons are often located far away from families, burdening the non-incarcerated family members with logistics and costs, including transportation, and study fees for prisoners (Durante, Meertins *et al.* 2024). The uncooperative security system and the structural and social contexts of prisons could discourage prisoners from studying (Fuge, Tsourtos *et al.* 2024).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank the National Research Council of Namibia and the Correctional Authorities of Namibia. Permissions were granted from both the author's institution [Ethical Clearance Certificate Ref: 2022/11/09/90284259/04/AM] and from the Namibian authorities for the research to be carried out.

## CONCLUSION

Factors discouraging prisoners from studying in a distance e-learning environment encompass various challenges. These include restricted access to e-learning resources during nighttime, insufficient access to necessary materials, low motivation levels, unclear delineation of roles between prisoner students and

lecturers, financial constraints hindering program registration, internet and connectivity limitations, inadequate support from prison staff, lack of familial support, absence of assistance from others, bureaucratic hurdles within correctional facilities, insufficient personnel to facilitate prisoner attendance at external educational institutions for consultations, and occasional unresponsiveness from lecturers when contacted by prisoners via phone from the prison.

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