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Education Reduces Recidivism

Gregory Magee

Department of Criminal Justice, University of the Cumberlands, Kentucky, United States of America

gregmixmartialarts@gmail.com

Abstract. The research addresses how and why formal education lowers recidivism rates. Formal education means much of the learning comes from a book or other learning material delivered by a trained teacher. The two types of formal education discussed are academic and vocational education. Statistics for lowered recidivism rates resulting from education are essential to support this topic. How education, either academic or vocational, can prevent crime was the first avenue of the research topic that is explored. There are countless opportunities higher education provides to individuals. Next, a direct correlation between education and crime was looked at from a statistical view regarding the recidivism rate. The progress education has on the prison system exposes the results. A simple examination of statistics regarding the recidivism rate of the selected participants involved in the prison education system will resemble what success or effectiveness has come from education being implemented.

Keywords. Education, recidivism

Education Reduces Recidivism

Recidivism refers to a person's relapse into criminal behavior, often after the person receives sanctions or undergoes intervention for a previous crime (National Institute of Justice, n.d.). Crime is an intentional act in violation of the criminal law and is simply a breach of the legal norm (Bucar Rucman, 2019). The specific sanction discussed in this literature review is prison. There is an abundance of research that supports the theory that education reduces recidivism. Education is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits. Educational methods include teaching and training. The most productive type of education is the formal education of academic and vocational education. This form of education addresses the leading causation of crime and recidivism, which is unemployment. Unemployment is combated with gained qualities derived from education. Higher educational attainment levels are associated with a higher return in the labor market (Buonanno and Leonida, 2006), which combats low income. Education in prison is significant to reducing the recidivism rate.

Types of Education

Formal education refers to a learning program in which the training department, instructional designer, and instructor define the goals and objectives. Formal learning is also called structured learning or synchronous learning. Examples of formal education include classroom instruction, web-based training, remote labs, e-learning courses, workshops,

seminars, webinars, and several more structured environments like these examples. Educational methods include teaching and training. Formal education has proven to be the most effective at reducing recidivism than others—specifically, academic and vocational education.

Academic education

High school and college education are popular forms of education and recognized by many. A college education is also referred to as post-secondary education. Individuals with these two forms of education are less likely to commit a crime. Education reduces the rate of first-time offenders, but more importantly, it reduces the recidivism rate for those who received additional education in prison. In the United States, 68% of state prison inmates did not receive a high school (Harlow, 2003). Usually, a high school educational program that leads to a high school diploma is not offered in prison. Typically, a general educational development (GED) program is provided, which is supposed to serve as the equivalent of a high school diploma. An individual becomes qualified for federal financial aid and can attend post-secondary education once they attain a GED. Fulfilling hopes to get a better job or higher degree, the GED is recognized and accepted by nearly all U.S. colleges, universities, and employers.

Academic education is required for many jobs that do not fall under the criteria of having a trade skill. Even jobs that require a trade skill having academic education is beneficial. It would likely lead to being a more qualified applicant. Torpey and Watson (2014) notated in the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), it designates one of the following eight education levels that workers typically need to enter an occupation: Less than high school, High school diploma or equivalent (GED), Some college no degree, Post-secondary non-degree award, Associate degree, Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, and Doctoral or professional degree. Statistics generated from these levels are as follows:

Less education than a high school diploma, in May 2013, about 27 percent of all U.S. jobs were in occupations that typically require less education than a high school diploma for entry. These jobs had a median annual wage of \$20,350. High school diploma or equivalent, in May 2013, about 39 percent of all jobs in the United States were in occupations that typically require a high school diploma or equivalent, with a median annual wage of \$35,580. Some college no degree, about 1 percent of jobs in the United States in May 2013 were in occupations that typically require some college but no degree. These jobs had a median annual wage of \$29,100. The post-secondary non-degree award, about 6 percent of all U.S. jobs were in occupations that typically require a post-secondary non-degree award for entry. The median annual wage for employment with this education level was \$35,120 in May 2013. Associate degree, nationally about 4 percent of jobs were in occupations that typically require an associate's degree for entry. The median annual wage for these jobs was \$58,240 in May 2013. Bachelor's degree, in May 2013, about 18 percent of all jobs in the United States were in occupations that typically require a bachelor's degree, with a median annual wage of \$68,190. Master's degree, about 2 percent of the nation's jobs were in occupations that typically require a master's degree. In May 2013, the median annual wage for those jobs was \$64,510. Doctoral or professional degree, about 3 percent of all jobs in the United States were in occupations that typically require a doctoral degree (Ph.D.) or first professional degree, such as in law or medicine. In May 2013, the median annual wage for those jobs was \$97,550 (Torpey, & Watson, 2014).

Years of education and pursuit of post-secondary education reduces an individual's risk of incarceration (Swisher, & Dennison, 2016).

Vocational education

The 1990 Perkins Act defines vocational education as "organized educational programs offering a sequence of courses which are directly related to the preparation of individuals in paid or unpaid employment in current or emerging occupations requiring other than a baccalaureate or advanced degree (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). Many prisoners have academic and employment failures. Vocational education programs are commonly offered to inmates and are intended to counteract the effects of low educational achievement and lowered employability commonly found among correctional populations (Bouffard, MacKenzie, & Hickman, 2000). There are several different approaches, including classroom-based vocational education, job training, and apprenticeship training, in such areas as electrician or carpentry skills (Bouffard, MacKenzie, & Hickman, 2000). General vocational educational programs involve providing classroom opportunities to acquire basic work-related knowledge, such as the necessary math skills needed for automotive mechanics or construction tasks. Work-related learning is typically a prerequisite for more hands-on types of vocational or job training experiences (Bouffard, MacKenzie, & Hickman, 2000). Vocational education programs are intended to reduce recidivism among adult correctional populations. Because of the relation between low educational attainment, unemployment, and crime, these programs help reduce recidivism. Vocational education is also known as learning a trade or trade school. A sample list of occupations includes carpenter, electrician, heavy equipment operator, insulation installer, landscaper, painter, plumber, welding, and more.

A four-year degree is not needed to make a decent salary. Jobs that a person can get through trade school can have impressive salaries. With the costs of college tuition rising, it is no surprise that some people are turning away from Bachelor's degrees and other higher education degrees in favor of trade school and certifications (Vista College, 2019). Besides lower education costs, trade school also offers the advantage of a more defined career path (Vista College, 2019). Sometimes, turning a degree into a job is difficult, but with vocational programs, you know exactly where you are headed (Vista College, 2019).

Leading Causation of Crime and Recidivism

It is essential to understand what crime and recidivism are before explaining the leading causations of them both. Crime is an intentional act in violation of the criminal law and is simply a breach of the legal norm (Bucar Rucman, 2019). Recidivism refers to a person's relapse into criminal behavior, often after the person receives sanctions or undergoes intervention for a previous crime (National Institute of Justice, n.d.). Though the focus is not specifically on crime, it goes hand in hand with recidivism. A person must commit a crime to re-offend and become a recidivist statistic. One of the top leading causes of crime and recidivism is unemployment. The family structure does not dictate the crime level; it is driven by poverty (Koski, 1996).

Unemployment

Unemployment occurs when a person searching for employment cannot find work or have a paying job. Unemployment rates are related to a significant number of crimes (Hamzah, & Lau, 2011). High unemployment brings frustration to the consumer due to a loss of disposable income (Ajimotokin, Haskins, & Wade, 2015). The standard of living for most falls significantly, which puts tremendous pressure to maintain the lifestyle accustomed to (Ajimotokin, Haskins, & Wade, 2015). The idea is that those without a steady income have a greater incentive to commit crimes than those with a steady income, who may have more to lose if caught (Ajimotokin, Haskins, & Wade, 2015).

A leading factor for many of the unemployed is a lack of academic and vocational education. The disproportionate number of released offenders is unemployed due to their educational illiteracy and lack of vocational skills to meet various job sectors (Lockwood, Nally, Ho, and Knutson, 2012). A study reported that as many as 84 percent of inmates were unemployed at their current offense (Bouffard, MacKenzie, & Hickman, 2000). According to Lance Lochner (1999), in 1993, two-thirds of more than 1.35 million convicted and incarcerated men had not graduated from high school. Lack of education is not just an issue that leads to incarceration in the United States, but worldwide:

In Canada, 70 percent of offenders coming into federal institutions have an unstable work history at admission, 60 percent or more have no trade, and 70 percent have not completed high school. It is also reported that 65 percent of offenders 25 years and older are unemployed at intake, and the rate of unemployment for offenders under 25 years at intake is an alarming 77 percent. Education levels of federal offenders are also discouraging at admission; 82 percent test at a completion rate lower than grade 12, and 65 percent of offenders test lower than grade 8 (Scott, 2010).

In 2001 more than 75 percent of Italy's overall convicted population had not graduated from high school (Buonanno, Leonida, 2006). Despite where a person is located in the world, unemployment has the same effect on that person. It is concluded that by releasing the offender without change, explicitly addressing their deficits, the criminal justice system cycle is likely to continue in the areas that make them vulnerable to crime.

Effects of Education

In Sweden, a study was done on how the eligibility for trade or college education, which is identified as tertiary (post-secondary) education, affects crime rates. The original hypothesis tested is that continuing to higher education decreases crime rates since it allows young people to escape inactivity and idleness, triggering a crime (Nordin, 2018). Without giving an exact reason, the study talks about the negative impact unemployment has on crime. It connects a mutual relationship of not being eligible for post-secondary education to unemployment and its effects on crime. Sweden changed their grading criteria in secondary education, where the student becomes eligible for post-secondary education.

The change caused inflation in grades and increased the proportion of students who were eligible for post-secondary education. Higher education positively impacts the qualified individuals' future working life (Nordin, 2018). The statistical data translate what this newfound hope means. The study shows that property crime rates were steadily decreasing from 2000 to 2010 by 30 percent (Nordin, 2018). The national standardized test showed no increase in knowledge during this time frame (Nordin, 2018). The study concludes that when people have the opportunity to attend post-secondary education and escape unemployment or inactivity, the inclination to commit crime decreases (Nordin, 2018).

Education Effects Recidivism

Education reduces crime primarily by increasing potential wage rates and changing individual preferences (Lochner, 1999). Individuals who thought they could earn more from work than from crime were less likely to engage in criminal activity (Lochner, 1999). Choices about how to generate income are central to the link between wages and crime. Education and training increase skill levels and wage rates, it is expected that these increases will reduce criminal participation (Lochner, 1999).

A study reveals the power of education in reducing crime through the statistics of lowered recidivism. A study done in South Carolina showed that college degrees gained in

prison had a 4% recidivism rate compared to 33% for those that did not earn a degree in prison (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). Statistics received through the Bureau of Justice Statistics by this research shows that the average educational level achieved before incarceration by inmates is far below the average level achieved by free individuals. Many inmates are unemployed before prison (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). The research demonstrates that men and women who earn a college degree while incarcerated tend to live as law-abiding citizens upon release more often than those who do not. This article showed research that examined 97 articles between the years of 1969 to 1993 showed that 85% of the articles reported documented evidence of recidivism control through education received through the correctional facilities (Stevens, & Ward, 1997).

Research conducted through the North Carolina Department of Corrections sampled 60 inmates released in 1991 that had received college degrees. The study showed that these 60 released inmates' recidivism data for three years only three of them returned to prison (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). The three who did return only had associate degrees, and none of the offenders who earned their Bachelor's returned to prison during that three-year stint (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). All that did not re-offend had jobs in the area of their degree, except for one, and all made more money than they did previous to incarceration (Stevens, & Ward, 1997).

Research has consistently revealed that released offenders, if unemployed and uneducated, would likely become recidivists. Susan Lockwood, John Nally, Taiping Ho, and Katie Knutson (2012) shared a 5-year follow-up study done of 6,561 offenders released from the Indiana Department of Correction to five metropolitan counties during the calendar year 2005. It examined the effect of education and post-release employment on recidivism among those released offenders. This study revealed that an offender's education and employment were the most important predictors of post-release recidivism (Lockwood, Nally, Ho, and Knutson, 2012). This study's results showed that offenders who had not completed high school were likely to become recidivist offenders (Lockwood, Nally, Ho, and Knutson, 2012). The recidivism rate among the offenders who had a college education was 31.0%, but the recidivism rate increased to 55.9% among the offenders below high school. (Lockwood, Nally, Ho, and Knutson, 2012).

The prison population profile has been consistently characterized as economically poor, educationally illiterate, and socially inadequate to societal norms. A disproportionate number of released offenders are unemployed due to their educational illiteracy and lack of vocational skills to meet the demands from various job sectors (Lockwood, Nally, Ho, and Knutson, 2012). According to a special report on education and correctional populations from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, approximately 68% of the prison inmates had education below high school (Lockwood, Nally, Ho, and Knutson, 2012). Furthermore, about 47% of the drug offenders in state prisons did not complete high school or pass the GED exam (Lockwood, Nally, Ho, and Knutson, 2012).

Several states surveyed for correctional education outcome. Data regarding studies that examined the relationship between recidivism and education received while incarcerated was collected during the early to mid-'90s (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). The results were as follows: In Alabama, adult correctional education is provided through the Department of Postsecondary Education (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). The Alabama two-year college system has the responsibility to provide directional education programs for incarcerated individuals throughout the state (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). One community college was established to serve seven correctional institutions. Of Alabama's 19,492 inmates, approximately 11% are enrolled full-time in correctional education (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). The general prison population recidivism rate in any given 12-month period average is 35%, as compared to 1%, for those

inmates who completed post-secondary degrees (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). In Florida, there are approximately 60,000 inmates in its correctional system (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). Of those, 23% participated in diverse academic, vocational, and special education programs delivered by correctional education school authorities (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). More than 7,000 diplomas and certificates of achievements or completion were awarded (Stevens & Ward, 1997). Correctional Education School authority educated inmates were 19% more likely to find employment after release than inmates who were not trained (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). Employment opportunities result in reduce recidivism (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). A few years after this research, Florida housed the third-largest number of prisoners, with nearly 80% of the prison inmates reported tested lower than ninth-grade literacy level (Cho, & Tyler, 2013).

In 1988 the Illinois Department of Corrections performed a study of 760 releasees comprised of the following groups: one, inmates who completed academic education programs only; two, those who completed vocational programs only; three, those with both academic and vocational completion; and four, a control group. Results show that releasees who completed academic or vocational programs did better with employment and had lower recidivism than the control group who had not completed vocational or post-secondary school education while incarcerated (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). Oklahoma researchers examine 360 student inmates participating in college-level courses offered through the Televised Instructional System while incarcerated in Oklahoma (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). Televised Instructional System (TIS) participants were matched with none participating cohorts. Results show that TIS participants had a lower recidivism rate than the matching group (Stevens, & Ward, 1997).

In Maryland, a report that inmates released from prison who had completed a two or four-year degree while incarcerated were most likely to gain employment (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). Of further importance, 46% of those inmates released from the general population of Maryland's 19,014 inmates were returned to prison within three years of their release compared to none of the 120 inmates who had received degrees while in prison (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). New York's correctional service reports that 24 colleges and universities throughout the state provide college programming for approximately 3,500 student inmates in 66 correctional institutions (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). Twenty-six percent of the inmates who earned a college degree while incarcerated were returned to prison compared with 45% of New York's general prison population (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). These college degrees include vocational degrees and academic degrees (Stevens, & Ward, 1997).

In Texas, the system houses 120,000 inmates, of which 44,284 received educational services (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). The criminal justice center at Sam Houston State University did a 2-year recidivism study of inmates in the Texas system (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). Of the 60 men and women who had earned degrees and were released, 10% returned to prison (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). Generally, the recidivism rate of most inmates in Texas is 36% (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). While inmates with college degrees recidivism rates were not measured in this study, combined GED and completed vocational degrees produced a 15% recidivism rate for student inmates (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). Other data were analyzed to determine recidivism rates for various degree earners who left the Texas prisons between September 1990 and August 1991 (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). Two years after release, the overall recidivism rate for degree holders was a low 12% and inversely differentiated by the type of degree (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). Associate degree 14%, Bachelor's degree 6%, and Master's degree 0% (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). The state's auditor projects 6.6 million savings for every 1% reduction in recidivism (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). The previous statistics show a link between correctional education and recidivism via employment (Stevens, & Ward, 1997). Especially since the prisoners tend to have lower education levels (Ewert, & Wildhagen, 2011).

Employment Effects Recidivism

The research investigates the relationship between employment and criminal activity dates over 80 years (Andresen, 2015). According to a comprehensive study conducted by the Justice Policy Center at the Urban Institute, employment is an essential predictor of an offender's successful reentry into the community and recidivism (Lockwood, Nally, Ho, and Knutson, 2012). Work provides former prisoners with a consistent funding source for necessary food, shelter, clothing, transportation, and other basic amenities. It also increases feelings of self-efficacy and self-sufficiency and serves as a protective factor against future criminal activity (Lockwood, Nally, Ho, and Knutson, 2012).

Education leads to employment. Employment provides offenders with responsibility, personal value, independence, dignity, a stake in society, offers income, structure, and routine, an opportunity to increase social networks, and enhance self-esteem and psychological health. Not only does the offender benefit from employment, but the community also profits from the decrease in costs associated with recidivism. Research has consistently demonstrated the link between employment and recidivism. Specifically, targeting employment need is related to reductions in recidivism. In general, it has been found that offenders who participate in programs targeting employability skills are more successful at finding work after release. These researchers also found that offenders who participated in vocational training were more likely to gain employment than those who participated in institutional work assignments only or no other employment programs while imprisoned (Scott, 2010).

Conclusion

Education reduces recidivism. Both forms of formal education, academic and vocational, as discussed, can give the individual the qualifications needed to avoid recidivism. Formal education offers change by making the incarcerated individual qualified for quality employment.

The released offender can support themselves without needing to resort to criminal activities. The newly released person has more to lose at this point in life. When weighing the risk and reward of crime, the risk is much higher when formal education is gained. The effects of being incarcerated after attaining formal education mean missing out on making a higher wage every day while incarcerated. It tends to be more costly.

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