Original Article

Mapping Women in Prisons Skills Development for Reintegration in the Communities of Aden Region, Yemen

Samah Ali Abdo Yousef[1] & Prof. Grace Bantebya Kyomuhendo, PhD[1]*

[1] Makerere University, P. O. Box 7062, Kampala, Uganda.

* Author for Correspondence ORCID ID; https://orcid.org/0009-0005-1698-2939; Email: Samahaliabdo@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study explored the social, psychological and economic needs of incarcerated women in Yemen, particularly their preparation for reintegration, and how these needs impact their successful integration into their respective communities. The struggle for skill acquisition among women in Yemen is closely tied to limited access to capital for income-generating activities, with financial resources typically controlled by male counterparts. Gender disparities in the treatment and support of female prisoners are prevalent globally, as women represent about 7% of the global prison population, with over 700,000 incarcerated women worldwide (World Prison Brief, 2023). Research indicates that up to 80% of jailed women have experienced trauma, and nearly 50% suffer from mental health issues (Woods, 2015; Van Olphen et al., 2009). This study adopted an exploratory qualitative approach, utilising in-depth interviews with 24 participants, including both prison staff and incarcerated women. The findings reveal a significant gap in structural interventions addressing the skill development needs of incarcerated women in Yemen, which hinders their successful reintegration into society. There is a clear link between the skills required for reintegration and the root causes of female incarceration in Yemen's prison system. Despite these challenges, many formerly incarcerated women express a strong desire to avoid reoffending by engaging in locally driven income-generating activities that could foster self-reliance and economic independence. Future research should explore the reasons behind the community's resistance to addressing the skill needs of incarcerated women, despite Yemen's commitment to international conventions. Additionally, the role of international and local NGOs in supporting these needs warrants further investigation, particularly regarding the effectiveness and sustainability of their interventions.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, the backdrop of imprisonment reveals significant gender disparities in how women prisoners are treated and supported. Women represent approximately 7% of the global prison population, with over 700,000 female inmates recorded worldwide (World Prison Brief, 2023). Studies show that up to 80% of jailed women have experienced trauma, and nearly 50% report having a mental health condition (Woods, 2015; Van Olphen et al., 2009). Additionally, many women in prison are primary caregivers for their children, which adds another layer of complexity to their rehabilitation and reintegration efforts (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004), as evidenced by the fact that they were not income earners in their pre-detention time.

A report by Fair & Walmsley (2021) indicates that the world has experienced unprecedented growth in prison populations over recent decades. According to Kang-Brown et al. (2021), further statistics are provided to show that there are over 11 million people in prison. 93.0% are male while 7.0% are female. A third of the total number are in pre-trial detention or awaiting a final sentence. While prisoner numbers have been rising, there has been little increase in the resources for managing prison systems.

What has not been explained by the existing literature is the understanding of what and how women need skills in prisons in preparation for integration in the community; hence, this study seeks to employ qualitative methods to map and examine the relevant needs of the prison women in Yemen. It also aims to examine how the effectiveness of these models varies significantly across different cultural and social contexts.

In many regions, particularly in the Global South, cultural stigmas and systemic barriers impede the successful implementation of gender-sensitive support systems (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018). In a country like Yemen with a social structure that increases women's vulnerability to crime, it's likely that if no deliberate intervention is forged, the 7% female imprisonment as observed by Kang-Brown et al. (2021) is likely going to increase, and countries alike with already underlying structural conditions will contribute more.

Regionally, in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, rooted in specific cultural settings, the treatment of women in prison reflects broader societal attitudes towards gender and justice. Women constitute a small percentage of the prison population in many MENA countries, yet their experiences are often marked by unique challenges related to cultural norms, legal frameworks, and socio-economic factors. This observation is an attestation to Messina and Grella' (2006) argument that female marginalisation in the human capital pathway, in which women's needs in the areas of education, family support and self-efficacy, as well as relationship dysfunction, contributed to employment/financial difficulties and ultimately imprisonment. However, from another macro

perspective, according to the World Prison Brief (2023), female incarceration rates in this region are significantly lower than in other parts of the world; this may or may not under-representation does not diminish the need for targeted support and rehabilitation programs.

Concerning the above, not having women in prison while at the domestic and societal level, all women experience prison conditions, implies that the three gendered pathways are in effect. However, society is entrenched, not allowing these antagonising values of suppressing women. Yemen women in prison are part of the general women in prison, often identified with a history of trauma and victimisation, including domestic violence and sexual abuse, which significantly impact their mental health and overall well-being (UNODC, 2018). The lack of gender-sensitive policies in Yemen's criminal justice system further perpetuates their marginalisation, making it difficult for them to access necessary resources and support during and after incarceration. Existing support models in the MENA region are often inadequate in addressing the specific needs of women prisoners. This gap in support systems not only affects the individuals but also has broader implications for community stability and social cohesion. Unfortunately, many people do not understand its impact on the entire society, and this has also made it impossible to come up with interventions that avert the antecedent condition related to it.

From empirical theorisation, Yemen seems to be copying detention practices of its neighbouring country, Jordan. In Jordan, the police may also arrest migrant domestic workers if they do not have valid residency papers. The local governor can then issue a decision for detention pending deportation (Tamkeen, 2021). These illustrate harsh internal policy in Jordan, and similarly, Yemen is adopting these policies, an indication that no sign of improvement soon. For instance, in these situations, if the so-called illegal female employees' return

ticket is not paid for by the employers return to their country of origin and they cannot pay for a ticket themselves, their main hope of leaving detention lies with their embassies or with Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) such as Tamkeen. Unfortunately, this rather escalated female suffering is underscored by three gendered pathways perpetuating women's conditions.

Nationally and locally, a review of the condition of prisons in Yemen shows that they are generally poor with limited amenities. Prison problems have escalated since 2011, the year of the Arab Spring. Yemen has been in a critical political crisis, which led to a civil war that started in 2015 and is ongoing. Yemen's prison system operates within a backdrop of significant socio-political challenges, including ongoing conflict, economic instability, and humanitarian crises. The impact of these issues on the justice system is profound, particularly for women prisoners, who face unique and compounded vulnerabilities. Yemen's prison system faces numerous challenges exacerbated by ongoing conflict and humanitarian crises, compounded by a lack of deliberate policy infrastructure.

Women make up a small fraction of the total prison population, with recent estimates indicating that around 4% of prisoners are female (World Prison Brief, 2023), however the 4% which is 1,200 women needs to be halted by deliberately fixing the cause factors through identification of pre and post crime cause factors or else the situation will worsen. Yemen prisons are often overcrowded, with reports indicating that some facilities operate at 200% capacity. This affects both men and women, but women frequently endure harsher conditions due to inadequate facilities (UNODC, 2018). Studies suggest that around 70% of women in Yemeni prisons have experienced trauma, including domestic violence and abuse, which significantly impacts their mental health (Hassan & Osman, 2021). The reoffending rate among women

prisoners in Yemen is estimated to be around 40%, largely due to insufficient support systems and resources for reintegration (Hassan & Osman, 2021). Many women in prison lack educational qualifications, with around 60% having only received primary education or less, which limits their employment opportunities post-release (UNODC, 2018).

Cultural norms in Yemen play a critical role in shaping the experiences of women prisoners. Many women are incarcerated for offences related to societal expectations and norms, including issues surrounding family honour, morality, and gender roles. The stigma associated with being a female prisoner often leads to social exclusion upon release, making it difficult for these women to reintegrate into their communities. Families may be reluctant to accept them back, and they often face discrimination in employment and social services (Hassan & Osman, 2021).

Existing support programs for women prisoners in Yemen are minimal and often lack a gender-sensitive approach. Women usually leave prison without the skills or resources necessary to support themselves (Hassan & Osman, 2021). This increases the likelihood of re-offending and continued social exclusion. In this context, Yemen provides a pertinent case for analysis, as it shares similar socio-cultural challenges faced by women in prisons across the world. This study aimed to address the gap by examining the specific needs and perceptions of women prisoners and conducting a gender analysis of existing prison support models in Aden Prison, Yemen. The study aimed to inform new policies and strategic frameworks. The primary output of the study was to enhance the reintegration process for women prisoners in Yemen so that they receive the necessary support to thrive in their communities and contribute positively to society.

Yemeni society is conservative by its nature. Society tends to have negative attitudes towards females who experience detention, especially women who have engaged in criminal behaviour (Tamkeen, 2021). Therefore, Yemeni women prisoners suffer social and economic deprivation and victimisation as they become isolated and excluded from mainstream society. Further, employers tend to refuse to employ them because such women are considered criminals. The above situation calls for appropriate reintegration programs for women prisoners to facilitate their reintegration in their respective communities after their release.

The reintegration of women prisoners in Yemen presents a complex challenge intensified by socio-cultural norms, inadequate support systems, and ongoing conflict. Despite the increasing recognition of the unique needs of female inmates, current prison support models in Yemen remain largely ineffective and insufficiently tailored to address these needs (Hassan & Osman, 2021). Many women face significant barriers, including stigma, lack of access to vocational training, and inadequate mental health services, which hinder their successful reintegration into society (UNODC, 2018).

Existing studies highlight critical issues faced by women prisoners globally and in the MENA region, including higher rates of trauma and mental health disorders among jailed women (Woods, 2015; Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004). However, specific studies focusing on Yemeni women prisoners are limited, revealing a significant gap in understanding their unique experiences and perceptions regarding available support programs and reintegration into the Yemeni communities. The current study suggests that many female inmates are victims of domestic violence and abuse. Little is known about how these experiences influence their reintegration process, and the status of the reintegration programs or models to support the reintegration of prisoners, especially women, in the current prisons is unknown. This study was conducted in a gender analysis of prison support models for women

prisoners in Yemen. The study addresses the following questions among others. What are women's needs for skills in prisons in preparation for integration into the community? And how are the women's skills needs in prisons addressed by the prisons and their possible impact on their integration into the community?

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The Gendered Pathway Research (Messina and Grilla, 2006)

The gendered pathways research, Messina & Grella (2006), incorporates multiple needs into a comprehensive and holistic treatment approach. This approach was first introduced about 30 years ago, provided a novel feminist approach in its attempt to explain female criminality. Using qualitative interview techniques, researchers have identified multiple pathways into crime that are multiple. ' the typical female trajectory into the criminal justice system begins with an abusive (or otherwise aversive) home environment. For self-preservation, the young female then quits school and leaves home to live on the streets. This, in turn, may lead to further victimisation, and to cope, the individual may begin to abuse substances. The woman is likely to resort to behaviours such as prostitution, human trafficking, fraud or robbery to survive. These survival strategies are ' criminalised ', and the individual ends up caught in the criminal justice system. In a unique and empirically strong study for examining gendered pathways to crime, Salisbury & Van Voorhis (2009) used interview and survey data to assess various gender-responsive needs with an intake of a group of more than 300 female probationers. The results of their study, which used a path analytic approach, supported three gendered pathways to women's incarceration:

1) A pathway beginning with childhood victimisation as a precursor to mental illness and substance abuse. 2) A relational pathway in which women's dysfunctional intimate relationships enabled adult victimisation, reduced self-efficacy, and mental illness and substance abuse. 3) A social and human capital pathway in which women's needs in the areas of education, family support and self-efficacy, as well as relationship dysfunction, contributed to employment/financial difficulties and ultimately imprisonment.

The theories and assumptions above relate to the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders, in which women offenders are included. The thoughts and ideas in these theories support the ultimate aim of this study, which is towards helping offenders re-enter society. Connection to the former community that is based on successful integration is a common feature in the theories above. This feature is of great value as it provides us with broad lines to empower women and prisoners to benefit from the time they spend in prison.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted qualitative research methods and focused on the Aden region of Yemen, a site selected for its large prison facility and notably high rates of female incarceration, including cases of repeat imprisonment. The region presents a critical context for examining post-incarceration challenges faced by women. The rising number of incarcerated women underscores the urgency of identifying skills essential for their successful reintegration. As alluded to by Creswell. (2014), the study exploring the specific needs of this population, the study aimed to contribute to more effective rehabilitation strategies. This research is therefore positioned to inform gender-sensitive reintegration programs in conflict-affected settings. Focusing on what women and workers identified as the key reintegrative steps and their needs, the study was able to contextualise and contribute to the understanding of their situation and possible interventions as per the study aim.

The interviews aimed at collecting information related to women's identity and the needs of women

prisoners in the Yemeni prisons; questions included: who are the women held in imprisonment following conviction? What is their background? Do they have dependent children? Were they employed before arrest, and what is their level of education? Have they experienced violence, or do they have a history of drug or alcohol dependency? What offences have they been charged with or convicted of? What triggered their offences leading to them to the with the criminal justice system? What are the consequences for them of conviction and imprisonment? And what kind of support do these women feel would help them most in building new, self-supporting lives following release?

The novelty of this study is that the answer to the above questions was more than just academic interest; The findings of this study are directed to policy-makers and practitioners to review and adjust legislation and policies in a gender-sensitive way. Further, it is worth emphasising that treating women offenders and prisoners differently from their male counterparts is unfair or discriminatory. Women offenders and prisoners have distinctive needs that must be identified and addressed so that they receive equitable treatment. This also aligns with the local cultural need, which requires separate gender considerations as associated with the Islamic culture of the community members in Yemen. The study will contribute to rectifying the above injustices if applied by the prison authorities.

Study Population

The diversity of the study population was upheld based on the reason that when developing initiatives, a specific group was constituted as posted by Adu & Miles (2023). The study population comprised incarcerated women and staff members from the main prison facility in the Aden region of Yemen. Female participants included both first-time and repeat offenders, serving sentences for various offences ranging from short-term (under one year) to long-term (over five years). Their inclusion provided insight into diverse rehabilitation needs and reintegration challenges. Prison staff, including administrators and rehabilitation officers, were selected for their roles in managing inmates and delivering support programs. The study also considered existing vocational and psychosocial programs available to the women during incarceration. This combined perspective enabled a comprehensive understanding of post-release preparedness and institutional support mechanisms.

The study included incarcerated women of diverse ages, education levels, sentence durations, and offence types, allowing for a broad spectrum of perspectives. Despite varied backgrounds, these women shared a strong interest in acquiring skills to aid their reintegration into society, and their participation reflected a desire to voice their experiences with rehabilitation efforts. To enrich these insights, the study also incorporated views from four senior staff members of Aden Prison's Directorate of Skills Training, who were directly involved in identifying suitable trainees, assessing needs, and overseeing program delivery. By combining inmate experiences with institutional knowledge, the study captured a holistic picture of the prison's rehabilitative initiatives and the socio-structural challenges affecting women's transition back into their communities.

Sample Selection and Sample Size

This study employed purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method recommended for qualitative research aiming to gather rich, detailed information from individuals with specific experiences or knowledge (Creswell, 2014). Two main participant groups were included: (1) all incarcerated women in Aden Central Prison, and (2) prison staff involved in rehabilitation and vocational training programs.

Incarcerated Women

At the time of data collection, the total number of incarcerated women in Aden Central Prison was 20. Given this manageable number, the study included the entire population of women, rather than selecting a sample. This approach ensured comprehensive representation of diverse experiences and backgrounds within the prison.

The 20 women varied in terms of their length of stay—some were newly admitted, others were mid-term, and several had been incarcerated for a long period. Additionally, they were either currently engaged in or eligible for vocational and rehabilitation programs offered by the prison, such as tailoring, handicrafts, perfume making, and basic literacy. Including all women allowed the study to fully capture variations in engagement with these programs and their implications for reintegration and rehabilitation. The demographic characteristics are presented in the table below:

Table 1: Participant Characteristics

Participant ID	Age	Gender	Marital status	Number of children	Education Level	Imprison Charges
P1	37	Female	Married	4	Primary (incomplete)	Kidnapping
P2	47	Female	Divorced	7	Primary (5th grade	Theft
P3	27	Female	Married	2	Primary (6th grade)	Murder
P4	48	Female	Widowed	3	Secondary (1st year)	Drug trafficking
P6	35	Female	Widowed	4	Diploma	Bombing accusation
P7	29	Female	Divorced	0	Primary (income)	Drug dealing
P8	19	Female	Married	2	Illiterate	Prostitution
P9	42	Female	Married	6	Primary (6th grade)	Fraud
P10	29	Female	Married	2	Primary (4th grade)	Murder
P11	38	Female	Divorced	4	Primary (2nd grade)	Bombing accusation
P12	28	Female	Divorced	3	Illiterate	Drug trafficking
P13	47	Female	Widowed	4	Illiterate	Drug trafficking
P14	32	Female	Divorced	3	Illiterate	Theft
P15	22	Female	Divorced	1	Illiterate	Drug trafficking
P16	24	Female	Divorced	2	Illiterate	Drug trafficking
P17	36	Female	Divorced	3	Illiterate	Murder
P18	21	Female	Single	0	Illiterate	Murder
P19	25	Female	Divorced	2	Illiterate	Drug trafficking
P20	27	Female	Divorced	3	Illiterate	Drug trafficking

Prison Staff

In addition to the incarcerated women, four prison staff members were selected through purposive sampling. Selection was based on their direct roles and responsibilities related to the women prisoners, particularly in the areas of training, rehabilitation, and program coordination. These individuals were chosen due to their ability to provide institutional insights aligned with the study's focus.

The staff participants and their roles are summarised below:

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Key Informants

Participant ID	Role	Years of experience	Education level	Focused Area
KI1	Prison Director	Since 2015	Prison Administration	Management, rehabilitation program
KI2	Director General of Training and Rehabilitation	Since 2013	Not specified	Training, Skill building, Reintegration
KI3	Deputy Director of Training and Rehabilitation for Women	Since 2018	Bachelor's in Social Science	Literacy, Vocational Training, Psychological Support
KI4	Head of the Women's Section	Since 2016	High School Diploma	Administrative Oversight, Prisoner Intake, Services

Given the small number of relevant staff, no statistical formula was used to determine the sample size. Instead, inclusion was based on the relevance of each staff member's role to the research objectives.

Data Collection

Data collection took more time, it started in January 2024 and ended in March 2024 from Aden Central Prison, Aden region in the south of Yemen. Interviews were arranged with female prisoners to get information related to their needs as prisoners, as well as after their release. In addition, a separate interview was conducted with workers in the model prisons at Aden Central Prison to obtain data that might help in bridging the gap between women's in-prison life and reintegration life when they go back to their former society.

Data Analysis

Based on the above study's strength, it is imperative to mention that the qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews with 20 incarcerated women and 4 staff members of the Directorate of Skills Training in Aden Prison was analysed using **in vivo coding** as the primary method of thematic analysis. As argued by Adu & Miles (2023), this approach ensured that the voices of participants were preserved and prioritised throughout the analytical process. The study followed the transcription of the recorded interviews, and each transcript was read multiple times to achieve immersion in the data (audio recorded and transcribed). During the initial round of analysis were clustered into themes, words, phrases, or sentences that stood out as emotionally powerful, frequently repeated, or uniquely insightful were highlighted and used as **in vivo codes,** that is, codes drawn directly from the participants' language but under specific thematic study sections, in cases where the participants view got mixed, these were sorted and realigned to the themes.

Participant expression such as "*After I got out of prison... I need some time to get out of prison until I get a specific profession through which I can start my project*." Similarly, Participant 8 expressed a desire to "*start a small project through which I can earn money*." The participants emphasised that "*Psychological support and counselling services are also crucial to help us deal with the trauma and prepare for reintegration into society*," which highlights the emotional and mental health challenges faced by women, which can significantly hinder their ability to reintegrate successfully. The concurring data by the prison staff *to the above, inadequate equipment for training prisoners in livelihood skills, they mentioned a lack of capital, inadequate experts or tutors to train the women with suitable livelihood skills. The lack of funds, training*

equipment, and tutors means the prisons rely on the aid provided by NGOs, which is unpredictable.

Using an in vivo tool for data analysis revealed deep grounded in the lived realities of the participants, allowing their own words to guide the development of themes rather than imposing pre-existing theoretical frameworks. The adoption of this too indicated the relevance of the inductive process helped to surface the complexity of women's experiences in the prison system, which would otherwise be difficult if quantitative methods were employed. It also revealed the role of skills training in their empowerment and prospects, which perhaps would not be quantified. In summary, the use of the in vivo coding facilitated an authentic, participant-centred interpretation of the data, ensuring that the findings reflect the nuanced and context-specific challenges and aspirations surrounding reintegration efforts in Aden's prison context.

Ethical Consideration

To maintain ethical standards, the following key principles were strictly adhered to:

- Informed Consent: Participants were briefed on the study's purpose, procedures, and potential implications. Consent was obtained voluntarily, ensuring that participants understood their right to withdraw at any point without any repercussions.
- Confidentiality: The identities and personal information of participants were meticulously protected. All data collected was anonymised and securely stored to maintain privacy and confidentiality.
- Risks and Safety of Participants: The study prioritised the safety and well-being of all participants. Potential risks were carefully assessed and mitigated, with appropriate support mechanisms in place to address any distress arising during the research process.

By integrating these ethical principles throughout the research process, the study aimed to conduct research responsibly and sensitively, respecting the dignity and rights of the women involved.

STUDY FINDINGS

The findings indicated an intertwining between the crime-causing factors and skills required for the reintegration of women prisoners into the communities. This suggests that the cause of the crimes which led to imprisonment among women is associated with the structural injustice of the communities in Yemen. What were the causes of the crimes?

In terms of Skills required after imprisonment, Many study participants emphasised the need for skill acquisition.

> "*What I need after I get out of prison is to find a job opportunity for myself... I am very eager to learn more and more about sewing skills.*"

The above finding demonstrates the urgent need for skills to be linked to access to capital to start income-generating activities; it also illustrates how the lack of or limited household income is predominantly obtained from male counterparts.

Further, many of the research participants said financial support as capital and employment, would enable them to fit in their communities as they are already stigmatised;

> "*After I got out of prison... I need some time to get out of prison until I get a specific profession through which I can start my project.*" Similarly, Participant 8 expressed a desire to "*start a small project through which I can earn money.*"

Well, as financial support and employment were emphasised, other study participants insisted they needed psychosocial support. Participant 12

emphasised, "*Psychological support and counselling services are also crucial to help us deal with the trauma and prepare for reintegration into society.*" This highlights the emotional and mental health challenges faced by women, which can significantly hinder their ability to reintegrate successfully

In terms of the programmes provided by prison authorities, there was an indication that before the study field activities, some relevant initiatives existed; however, participants expressed that existing programs are often too short and lack the depth needed to truly prepare them for life after prison. Participant 18 summed this up by stating;

"*Women in prisons need more comprehensive support... educational opportunities, and job training programs tailored to their needs.*"

The findings indicate the will to reform, self-reliance and generally the need in the society to consider reforms that expand the scope of post-prison integration. It also indicated that addressing the root causes, such as expanding livelihood opportunities for women in Yemen, will reduce the exacerbation of crime among women. Lastly, these opportunities will make the community appreciate the contribution former prisoners make to their families and society at large.

The prison directorate for skills training participated in the study, and the findings from them had no difference with what the prisoners said, for instance, by the time they were interviewed, they were able to point at only four sewing machines supplied by an NGO intended to be used for training sixty (60). They revealed that they had received the machines four months early and were waiting for NGOs to supply more sewing machines. In addition *to the above, inadequate equipment for training prisoners in livelihood skills, they mentioned a lack of capital, inadequate experts or tutors to train the women with suitable livelihood skills.* The lack of funds, training equipment, and tutors means the prisons rely on the aid provided by NGOs, which is unpredictable. It means many women in the prisons who have completed their sentence are released to the community without relevant survival skills, hence inducing recidivism.

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate concurrence between the real-life experience and the existing literature concerning the increasing number of women incarcerated in the prisons of Yemen. The study was concerned with mapping the skills of women in prison for their reintegration. The conditions established in the study depict the social conditions women go through in prison and outside prisons in Yemen as theorised in the three gendered pathways by Messinna and Grella (2006). Therefore, calling for an urgent broader expansion and funding for skills training would promote self-reliance and prevent the exacerbation of crime committed by women. Participants consistently emphasised the need for comprehensive vocational training, citing skills acquisition such as sewing and hairdressing as vital for gaining financial independence in the post-release time. This alludes to the theory's assertion of the "social and human capital pathway", which agitates for women's needs in the areas of education, family support and self-efficacy, as well as relationship functionality instead of dysfunction. The hope is that this will contribute to employment and finances and hence reduce difficulties and ultimately prevent imprisonment.

The crime-causing conditions in the communities of Yemen are reciprocal to the structural inequalities women go through in difficult cultural settings. The structural inequalities worsen the situation for post-prison recovery twice. This finding aligns with Davis and Ritchie (2020), who highlight the importance of educational programs in improving employment outcomes for women. The idea behind this is that through education and vocational skill

training, the impact of social injustice against women will be minimised, and particularly post-prison wellbeing among women will improve. Similarly, Smith (2019) notes that vocational training in specific trades significantly enhances job prospects and boosts confidence. The urgency expressed by participants for long-term, in-depth training emphasised a critical gap in the current provision of vocational education, reflecting broader concerns in the literature about the limited scope and duration of training programs (Johnson, 2021).

However, the difficulty in fixing the above by the policy architects, implementors and NGOs is the long duration required to train the beneficiaries. Unfortunately, the ex-prison women need activities that help them have quicker financial recovery due to the time wasted when incarcerated. Their need to reorganise the family or their need for self-reliance due to the isolation and stigma by the local community is urgent. In addition, Yemen's economy is unpredictable, torn by war and with a high poverty level, and low purchasing power at the household level. This has made it difficult for the ex-prisoners to achieve self-employment because their outputs lack a local market, hence the probability of self-employment and reliance on the post-incarceration makes integration difficult. The general lack of will and technical capacity to assess the market relevance and saturation for specific skills markets among partners and the local governments has created duplication of skills training outcomes. Therefore, it is likely that the women formerly incarcerated will not see the relevance of the skills training in future, hence complicating skills training as integration of the prisoners in the local communities.

As part of the integration into the post-prison life or even for women outside prison, women's financial empowerment is necessary if they are to avoid further crimes like fraud, drug and human trafficking as posted in the theories pathways one and two. Post-incarceration life, which is characterised by dependence on their husbands, with the endurance of rights violence, creates no difference from the unwavering for life in prison. Secondly, if they are to avoid temptations and crimes that result in their incarceration, then initiatives which enhance access to capital are urgently required. Starting financial capital for women, blended with financial skills, would cause real-life change among women. It would prevent crime and promote the micro-level promotion of women's rights at the local level. This has not been done significantly, which puts a large number of women at risk of committing crimes like drug trafficking, human smuggling and ever ever-increasing number of women incarcerated.

The participants' calls for financial support to initiate small businesses are a reflection of the actual real-world challenges they face and resonate with existing research that emphasises the importance of economic resources for successful reintegration. Brown (2020) posted that structural barriers often hinder women's ability to engage fully in skills development, and financial assistance is crucial for overcoming these challenges. The literature supports the notion that targeted financial resources can empower individuals, helping them to establish stability and independence after incarceration. The need for financial support is highlighted by participants' echoes of findings from Johnson (2021), which advocates for comprehensive financial literacy and support programs.

It is important to note that the communities in Yemen follow the Sharia, i.e. Islamic culture with specific principles related to crime and the role of women in society. The space for women to interact with the outside world in the Islamic teachings and the general culture of the local communities in Yemen is controlled. The limited space to interact with the outside world has three immediate impacts on women prisoners: family rejection and isolation, loss of marriage and children, hence the creation of

an already unstable emotional state among women. And the inability or long period to recover from the post-prison trauma. Many mothers see no difference in life during incarceration and post-incarceration due to severe stigma in some situations, the women opt for suicide and homicide cases also increase, hence precarious crime.

The above situations have made women put forth the necessity for psychological support, which emerged prominently in the participants' responses. Many expressed the emotional and mental health challenges stemming from trauma associated with incarceration, which aligns with Covington (2007). The literature emphasises the need for trauma-informed practices in reintegration programs to address the psychological barriers that can impede successful transition. The participants' recognition of psychological counselling as vital reflects a broader understanding in the literature that mental health support is essential for mitigating the effects of trauma and enhancing overall well-being (Brown, 2020).

In a few local communities of Yemen, there is evidence that the role of family in the post-incarceration recovery and subsequent integration into society is fast. In events where formal recovery institutions are absent or repeated rejection by the society, family reunions of the women prisoners have been important. This situation is easier if the individual has been empowered with skills to support the family business, farm or start her production unit with skills obtained in the post-incarceration time. The more a family sees a change in behaviour and the potential to contribute materially, women prisoners have always been accepted, albeit socially rejected by society. The continued prisoner's contribution to the general development enables society to accept her. The most important reflection in the local communities of Yemen is the consideration of the family as a starting point, despite the challenges. The field

findings and the literature have shown evidence, as examined in the paragraph below.

Participants stressed the importance of reconnecting with their families, suggesting that familial support is crucial for successful reintegration. This finding is consistent with Eddy, Martinez, and Burraston (2013), who found that programs focused on parenting skills not only improve engagement with children but also enhance women's emotional well-being. However, the completeness of the explanation traces to the theoretical assumption of the gendered pathways, more specifically, pathway one, which states a pathway beginning with childhood victimisation as a precursor to mental illness and substance abuse. Findings indicate the need to improve family relationships at the local level and further family acceptance of formerly incarcerated women. The emphasis on family reunification indicates a need for structured programs that facilitate these connections, aligning with the literature's assertion that strong familial ties are pivotal for navigating the challenges of re-entry (Smith, 2019).

The call for more comprehensive and tailored rehabilitation programs reflects a significant gap in current offerings. Participants voiced concerns that existing programs are often too brief and not sufficiently aligned with their specific needs. This sentiment is echoed in the literature, which advocates for holistic support models that consider the complex realities of women's lives (Johnson, 2021; Gonzalez & Peters, 2020). The emphasis on the need for programs that integrate vocational training, psychological support, and life skills training indicates a demand for a more structured and inclusive approach to rehabilitation.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal a significant gap in the structural interventions aimed at addressing the skill development needs of incarcerated women in

Yemen for their successful reintegration into society. There is a clear connection between the skills required for reintegration and the underlying causes of female incarceration in Yemen's prison system. Despite this, many ex-incarcerated women express a strong willingness to avoid reoffending by engaging in locally driven production activities, which could promote their self-reliance and economic independence.

However, the existing interventions remain insufficient, largely due to the social and cultural dynamics of the region, underscoring the urgent need for a comprehensive macro-level policy framework to support reintegration efforts. The gendered pathways, both theoretically and empirically, provide insight into the specific challenges faced by women in prison and their need for skill development to facilitate reintegration.

Future research should investigate the reasons behind the community's resistance to adequately addressing the skill needs of women in prison, despite Yemen's commitment to international conventions and treaties. Additionally, the role of international and local NGOs in supporting these needs warrants further exploration, particularly in terms of the effectiveness and sustainability of their interventions.

REFERENCES

Adu, P., & Miles, D. A. (2023). *Dissertation research methods: a step-by-step guide to writing up your research in the social sciences*. Taylor & Francis.

Brown, A. (2020). *Barriers to skills acquisition for women in prison: A qualitative study* (Doctoral dissertation). University of ABC.

Chesney-Lind, M., & Pasko, L. (2004). *The female offender: Girls, women, and crime*. Sage Publications

Covington, S. S. (2007). *Women and the criminal justice system*. In R. L. Braithwaite, S. E. Taylor, & H. K. Treadwell (Eds.), Health issues among incarcerated women (pp. 31–48). Rutgers University Press.

Creswell. (2014). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches. In *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar* (Vol. 6, Issue August).

Davis, T., & Ritchie, L. (2020). Educational attainment and recidivism among incarcerated women: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Correctional Education*, 71(2), 45-61.

Eddy, J. M., Martinez, C. R., & Burraston, B. (2013). A randomized controlled trial of a parent management training program for incarcerated parents: Proximal impacts. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, *78*(3), 75–93. https://doi.org/10.1111/mono.12022

Fair, H., & Walmsley, R. (2021). World prison population list. *Educare*, *5*.

Gonzalez, M., & Peters, J. (2020). Holistic support models for women in prison: A review of current practices. *Journal of Women and Social Work*, 35(3), 295-308.

Hassan, A., & Osman, A. (2021). Women prisoners in Yemen: Challenges and opportunities for reintegration. *International Journal of Prisoner Health*, 17(2), 111-123.

Johnson, M. (2021). *Vocational training programs for women in prison: An evaluation of effectiveness* (Doctoral dissertation). University of GHI.

Kang-Brown, J., Montagnet, C., & Heiss, J. (2021). People in Jail and Prison in 2020. *Vera Institute of Justice*.

Messina, N., & Grella, C. (2006). Childhood trauma and women's health outcomes in a California prison population. *American journal of public health*, *96*(10), 1842-1848.

Salisbury, E. J., & Van Voorhis, P. (2009). Gendered pathways: A quantitative investigation of women probationers' paths to incarceration. *Criminal justice and behaviour*, *36*(6), 541-566.

Smith, J. (2019). Vocational training programs in women's prisons: A pathway to employment. *Women & Criminal Justice*, 29(1), 55-72.

Tamkeen Fields for Aid. (2021). *Annual report on the situation of migrant workers in Jordan*. Amman, Jordan: Tamkeen Fields for Aid.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). (2018). *Handbook on women and imprisonment*. United Nations.

Van Olphen, J., Eliason, M. J., & O'Connell, J. (2009). The importance of social support for women in prison. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 37(5), 500-508.

Woods, L. (2015). Women in prison: The impact of trauma and mental health. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 53, 1-8.

World Prison Brief. (2023). *World prison population list (12th ed.)*. Institute for Criminal Policy Research.