

An Evaluation of Social Work Interventions in the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Former Juvenile Offenders: A Case Study of Katombora Reformatory School, Zambia

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ARTICLE INFORMATION	ABSTRACT
Article history: Published: October 2026 Keywords: Social Work Interventions Rehabilitation Former Child Prisoners Juvenile Justice Reintegration Recidivism	This study evaluates the effectiveness of social work interventions in the rehabilitation and reintegration of former juvenile offenders in Zambia. Children in conflict with the law require rehabilitation-oriented interventions that address their developmental, psychological, social and economic needs. Despite the provision of interventions such as counselling, psychosocial support, family reunification, educational assistance, vocational training, case management and post-release follow-up, former child prisoners continue to experience challenges including stigma, family rejection, unemployment, disrupted education, homelessness and limited social support. These challenges may undermine successful reintegration and increase the risk of recidivism. The study is guided by the Good Lives Model (GLM) of Offender Rehabilitation, which emphasizes the development of individual strengths, capabilities, positive relationships and opportunities necessary for individuals to achieve meaningful and socially responsible lives. The study seeks to ascertain the major social work interventions provided to former child prisoners, assess their effectiveness in promoting rehabilitation and successful reintegration, and examine the limitations affecting their implementation in Zambia. The study will focus on former juvenile offenders and relevant correctional, rehabilitation and social welfare institutions, with Katombora and selected institutions across Zambia providing the geographical context. The study is expected to generate evidence that will assist government, social workers, correctional institutions, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders in strengthening rehabilitation and reintegration programs. It will also contribute to academic knowledge and support the development of more effective, child-centered and sustainable approaches to rehabilitation, reintegration and prevention of reoffending among former juvenile offenders in Zambia.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The issue of children in conflict with the law is a major global social and developmental concern. Historically, juvenile offenders were treated under punitive systems similar to adults, with little regard for their developmental stage or potential for rehabilitation. However, modern justice systems increasingly recognize that children require rehabilitation-focused rather than punitive responses due to their ongoing development (Muncie, 2015). This shift has strengthened the role of social work in juvenile justice systems, particularly in promoting behavioral change, reintegration, and social development.

Social work interventions are structured professional services aimed at improving the wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities in vulnerable situations. In juvenile justice settings, these include counselling, psychosocial support, behavioural therapy, family reunification, educational assistance, vocational training, and community reintegration programs (Payne, 2020). These services help children understand their behavioural, address trauma, rebuild relationships, and develop skills for responsible citizenship.

At the international level, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasizes that children deprived of liberty must be treated with dignity and supported through rehabilitation and reintegration services (United Nations, 1989). Similarly, UNICEF promotes child-friendly justice systems that prioritize reform and reintegration over punishment (UNICEF, 2021).

In Zambia, children in conflict with the law may be placed in approved schools, remand homes, reformatories, or correctional institutions depending on the offence. Legal frameworks such as the Juveniles Act and the Children's Code Act aim to strengthen child protection and promote rehabilitation-oriented justice responses (Government of Zambia, 2022). Despite these efforts, many former child prisoners in Zambia continue to face stigma, family rejection, disrupted education, unemployment, emotional trauma, homelessness, and exposure to negative peer influences after release. These challenges often weaken rehabilitation outcomes and increase the risk of recidivism. Social welfare institutions also face constraints such as inadequate funding, shortages of trained personnel, and weak post-release follow-up systems (Chansa, 2020).

Although social work interventions are central to rehabilitation and reintegration, there is limited empirical evidence in Zambia regarding their actual effectiveness. This makes it difficult to assess whether current interventions achieve outcomes such as successful reintegration and reduced reoffending. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the effectiveness of social work interventions in the rehabilitation and reintegration of former child prisoners in Zambia, with the aim of contributing to improved policy and practice in the juvenile justice system.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Despite the implementation of social work interventions aimed at rehabilitating juvenile offenders and facilitating their successful reintegration into society, many former juvenile offenders in Zambia continue to experience significant social, psychological, educational, and economic challenges following their release from correctional and rehabilitation institutions such as Katombora Reformatory School. Interventions including counselling, psychosocial support, educational and vocational skills training, family reunification, case management, and reintegration planning are intended to promote behavioural change and support successful community reintegration. However, many former juvenile offenders continue to face stigma, discrimination, family rejection, interrupted education, unemployment, psychological distress, and limited access to community support services, all of which undermine their ability to reintegrate successfully and increase their vulnerability to social exclusion and recidivism (Muyobela & Strydom, 2017; Likomeno, 2022). Furthermore, the effectiveness of these interventions is often constrained by inadequate financial resources, shortages of qualified social workers, limited rehabilitation facilities, insufficient vocational training opportunities, and weak post-release monitoring and aftercare services. Although social work plays a pivotal role in Zambia's juvenile justice system, there is limited empirical evidence evaluating the effectiveness of these interventions in achieving sustainable rehabilitation and successful reintegration of former juvenile offenders, particularly within the context of Katombora Reformatory School. This knowledge gap limits the ability of policymakers, correctional institutions, and social work practitioners to strengthen rehabilitation programs and develop evidence-based interventions. Therefore, this study seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of social work interventions in the rehabilitation and reintegration of former juvenile offenders using Katombora Reformatory School as a case study.

1.3 General Objective

To evaluate the effectiveness of social work interventions in the rehabilitation and reintegration of former juvenile offenders at Katombora Reformatory School, Zambia.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

- To identify the social work interventions implemented to support the rehabilitation and reintegration of former juvenile offenders at Katombora Reformatory School.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of social work interventions in promoting the rehabilitation and successful reintegration of former juvenile offenders at Katombora Reformatory School.
- To examine the challenges affecting the implementation of social work interventions for the rehabilitation and reintegration of former juvenile offenders at Katombora Reformatory School.
- To propose strategies for strengthening social work interventions aimed at improving the rehabilitation and reintegration of former juvenile offenders at Katombora Reformatory School.

1.4 Theoretical framework

This study will be guided by the Good Lives Model (GLM) of Offender Rehabilitation, developed by Tony Ward and colleagues. The GLM is a contemporary, strengths-based approach that seeks to reduce reoffending while improving individuals' wellbeing and capacity to live meaningful, socially responsible lives (Ward and Maruna, 2007; Fortune, 2018). Unlike approaches that focus mainly on controlling risk factors, the GLM emphasizes individuals' strengths, capabilities, aspirations and access to opportunities that enable them to achieve positive life goals through socially acceptable means. Recent developments in the model have incorporated insights from desistance, developmental psychology, wellbeing, and protective factors (Willis and Ward, 2024; Ward et al., 2025). The model assumes that individuals seek basic or primary goods, including positive relationships, knowledge, meaningful activities, autonomy, achievement, emotional wellbeing and a sense of belonging. When individuals lack the skills or opportunities to achieve these goals appropriately, they may become vulnerable to problematic or offending behavioural (Ward and Stewart, 2003; Ward and Maruna, 2007). Rehabilitation should therefore provide individuals with the skills, resources, relationships and opportunities necessary to pursue meaningful and socially acceptable lives.

The GLM is particularly relevant to former child prisoners because their rehabilitation requires attention to their developmental, educational, emotional and social needs. In this study, interventions such as counselling, psychosocial support, family reunification, educational assistance, vocational training, case management, community sensitization and post-release follow-up are viewed as mechanisms for helping former child prisoners develop positive behaviors, strengthen relationships, and acquire skills and access opportunities for productive livelihoods. The model also recognizes that successful rehabilitation depends on both individual capabilities and supportive environmental conditions. Factors such as family acceptance, community attitudes, employment opportunities, adequate resources, trained social workers and effective post-release support may either strengthen or weaken rehabilitation outcomes. Therefore, the GLM provides a suitable framework for assessing whether social work interventions contribute to behavioural change, improved wellbeing, family reintegration, skills development, self-reliance, social inclusion, successful resettlement and reduced recidivism among former child prisoners in Zambia.

Overall, the Good Lives Model provides an appropriate theoretical foundation for evaluating the effectiveness of social work interventions in the rehabilitation and reintegration of former juvenile offenders at Katombora Reformatory School. Its strengths-based and developmental perspective aligns with the objectives of this study by recognizing that successful rehabilitation extends beyond preventing reoffending to empowering young offenders with the capabilities, opportunities, and supportive environments necessary to become productive, socially integrated, and law-abiding members of society.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Major Social Work Interventions Provided to Juvenile Offenders

The literature indicates that juvenile justice systems have increasingly shifted from punitive approaches towards rehabilitation, psychosocial support, and community reintegration. Major social work interventions include counselling and psychosocial support,

case management, educational reintegration, restorative justice, family-centred interventions, vocational skills training, probation supervision, and community-based support. These interventions aim to address the emotional, behavioural, educational, social, and economic needs of children in conflict with the law while reducing recidivism.

Globally, counselling, cognitive behavioural therapy, trauma-informed care, and case management help juveniles address emotional difficulties, develop positive behaviors, and access coordinated services. Education and vocational training improve future employment opportunities and social inclusion, while restorative justice and diversion programs promote accountability, reconciliation, and alternatives to incarceration.

In Africa, interventions are strongly influenced by poverty, unemployment, family instability, school dropout, and limited social services. Countries such as South Africa, Kenya, and Uganda have implemented diversion, family reunification, counselling, educational support, and community-based rehabilitation programs. In Zambia, the Children's Code Act No. 12 of 2022 provides a legal framework emphasizing diversion, restorative justice, probation, rehabilitation, and reintegration of children in conflict with the law. However, the effectiveness of these interventions is constrained by inadequate funding, shortages of trained social workers, limited infrastructure, overcrowding, weak inter-agency coordination, rural service gaps, and social stigma. The literature also reveals limited empirical evidence on the actual experiences and effectiveness of social work interventions among former juvenile offenders in Zambia. Therefore, the study is important in assessing how these interventions contribute to rehabilitation, behavioural change, and successful reintegration into families and communities.

2.2 Effectiveness of Social Work Interventions in Promoting Rehabilitation and Resettlement

The literature demonstrates that rehabilitation-oriented social work interventions are more effective than punitive approaches in promoting behavioural change and successful resettlement of juvenile offenders. Effective rehabilitation addresses not only offending behavior but also psychological wellbeing, family relationships, education, employment, and social inclusion (UNODC, 2020; UNICEF, 2021). Key interventions include cognitive behavioural therapy, counselling, family-based interventions, educational reintegration, vocational skills training, community reintegration, and aftercare services. Cognitive behavioural interventions help juveniles develop emotional regulation, problem-solving and decision-making skills, thereby reducing antisocial behavior and recidivism (Andrews & Bonta, 2017; Kazemian, 2018). Family interventions strengthen communication, parental support and family relationships, while educational and vocational programs improve skills, confidence, employability and opportunities for economic independence (Howell & Lipsey, 2016; ILO, 2022).

The literature further emphasizes that post-release support and community aftercare are critical for sustaining rehabilitation outcomes. Continued counselling, monitoring, educational assistance, family support and community involvement can reduce relapse into offending and facilitate social acceptance. However, in many African countries, effectiveness is limited by poverty, inadequate funding, and shortages of trained personnel, weak institutional capacity, stigma, family instability and limited aftercare services. In Zambia, the Children's Code Act No. 12 of 2022 has strengthened the legal framework for rehabilitation and reintegration of children in conflict with the law. Nevertheless, there remains a need for stronger implementation and empirical assessment of whether social work interventions effectively improve behavioural change, family reintegration, educational and economic opportunities, and long-term resettlement.

2.3 Challenges Affecting the Implementation of Social Work Interventions

The literature shows that although juvenile justice systems increasingly promote rehabilitation, diversion, restorative justice, and community reintegration, the implementation of social work interventions remains affected by several institutional, economic, social, and structural challenges. These barriers reduce the ability of social workers to provide consistent and comprehensive services to children in conflict with the law (UNODC, 2020; UNICEF, 2021).

Major challenges include overreliance on detention, inadequate funding, shortages of qualified social workers and mental health professionals, limited rehabilitation infrastructure, and weak transition and aftercare services. Poor coordination between correctional institutions and community-based services can also interrupt continuity of care and make it difficult for children to sustain positive behavioural changes after release. In addition, many juvenile offenders have complex psychological needs resulting from trauma, abuse, neglect, poverty, and substance use, yet specialized counselling and mental health services are often insufficient. In African countries, these challenges are intensified by poverty, unemployment, inadequate infrastructure, limited transport, large geographical coverage, and shortages of social welfare personnel. Rural areas are particularly affected because social workers may face difficulties conducting home visits, monitoring former offenders, and providing regular follow-up services. Community stigma and discrimination further hinder reintegration by limiting access to education, employment, family support, and community participation (UNICEF, 2021). In Zambia, despite the progressive provisions of the Children's Code Act No. 12 of 2022, implementation remains constrained by limited human and financial resources, inadequate rehabilitation facilities, weak inter-agency coordination, insufficient transport, poverty, and community stigma. These challenges can reduce the quality of counselling, case management, family interventions, and post-release follow-up services.

Overall, the literature suggests that effective rehabilitation requires adequate resources, trained personnel, coordinated services, strong family and community support, and sustained aftercare. However, there is limited empirical evidence on how these challenges specifically affect social work interventions for former child prisoners in Zambia, highlighting the need for further research in this area.

3. Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive mixed-methods research design, specifically a convergent parallel approach, to assess the effectiveness of social work interventions in the rehabilitation and reintegration of former child prisoners in Zambia. Quantitative methods were used to establish patterns and trends regarding rehabilitation interventions and their outcomes, while qualitative methods explored participants' experiences, perceptions, and challenges. A case study approach was also employed to provide an

in-depth understanding of rehabilitation and reintegration within selected institutional and community settings.

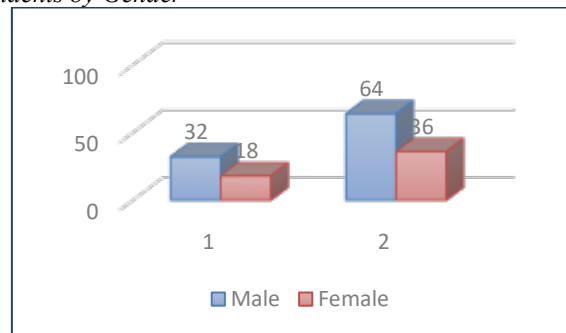
The target population comprised former child prisoners and key stakeholders, including social workers, probation and child welfare officers, correctional officers, NGO representatives, and family members or guardians. The study used purposive, simple random, and snowball sampling to select participants. A total of 50 respondents were selected, comprising 20 former juvenile offenders, 10 social workers, 8 probation and child welfare officers, 5 correctional officers, 4 NGO representatives, and 3 family members or guardians. Data were collected through structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document review. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, tables, and charts, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically to identify major themes related to counselling, family reunification, stigma, employment, and institutional challenges.

The study employed methodological, data-source, and analyst triangulation to enhance the credibility, validity, and reliability of findings. Anticipated limitations included difficulties accessing former child prisoners, response bias, incomplete records, limited time and financial resources, and the small sample size. Ethical considerations included informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, the right to withdraw, non-maleficence, child protection, and ethical clearance from relevant authorities.

4. Results

4.1 Demographics

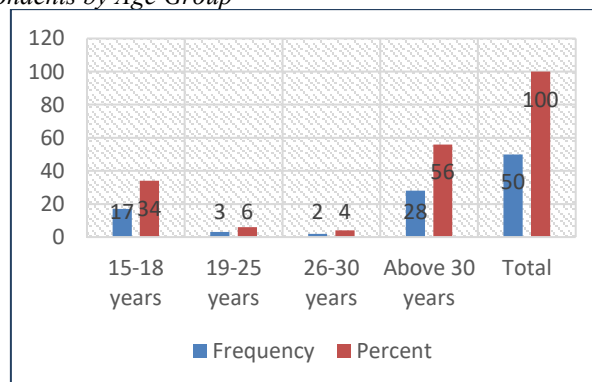
4.1.1 Figure 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender



Source primary 2026

The table shows that male respondents were the majority (64%), while female respondents accounted for 36% of the sample. This indicates a gender imbalance, although both genders were adequately represented. The difference in gender proportions should be considered when interpreting and generalizing the study findings, particularly where gender may influence the variables under investigation.

4.1.2 Figure 2: Distribution of Respondents by Age Group



Source primary 2026

The table shows that 56% of respondents were above 30 years, making them the largest age group, followed by 34% aged 15–18 years. Respondents aged 19–25 years accounted for 6%, while those aged 26–30 years represented 4%.

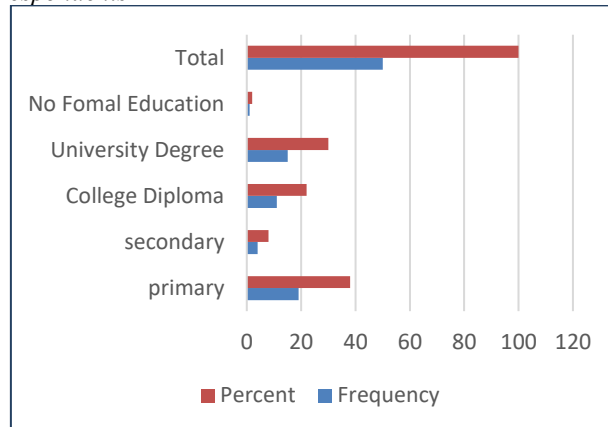
4.1.3 Figure 3: Category of Respondents



Source primary 2026

The table shows that the study involved 50 respondents from six different categories. Former child prisoners formed the largest group (34%), followed by social workers (26%) and parents/guardians (20%). NGO representatives accounted for 10%, correctional officers 8%, while community members constituted the smallest proportion at 2%.

4.1.4 Figure 4: Education Level of Respondents

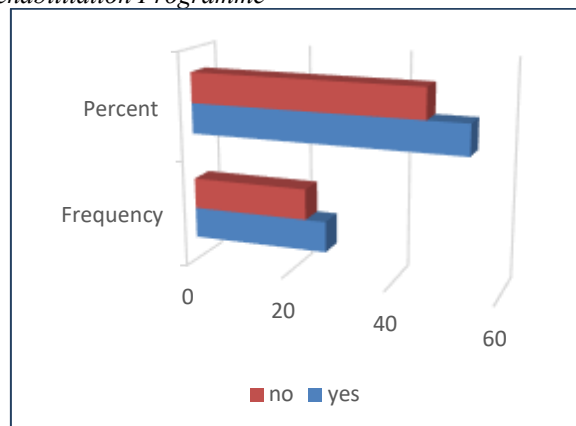


Source primary 2026

The findings indicate that respondents had varying levels of education. Primary education was the most common at 38%, followed by university degrees (30%) and college diplomas (22%). Secondary education accounted for 8%, while 2% had no formal education. Overall, most respondents had some formal education, although lower educational attainment remained significant.

4.2 Major Social Work Interventions Provided to Juvenile Offenders

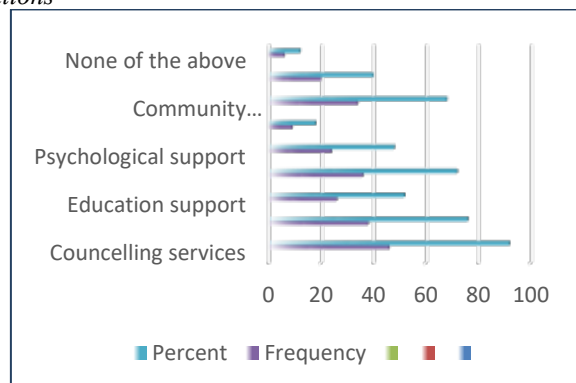
4.2.1 Figure 5: Involvement in any Rehabilitation Programme



Source primary 2026

The findings show that 54% of respondents had participated in rehabilitation programmes, while 46% had not. This indicates that rehabilitation services reached a slight majority of participants, but the significant proportion who did not participate suggests gaps in access and programme coverage.

4.2.2 Figure 6: Social Work Interventions

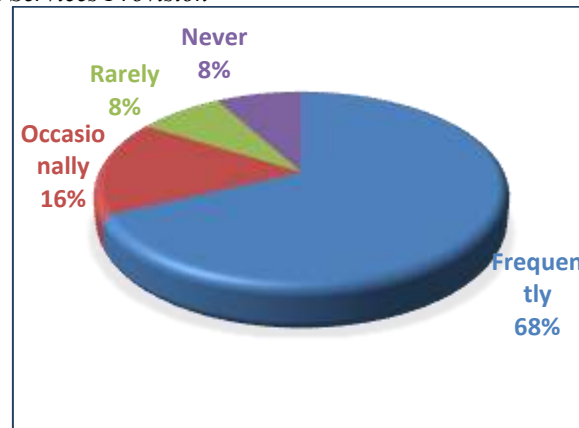


Source primary 2026

The findings show that counselling was the most common intervention (92%), followed by vocational skills training (76%), family reunification (72%), and community reintegration support (68%). Education and psychological support were reported by 52% and 48%

respectively. Financial empowerment was provided to 40%, while drug and substance abuse rehabilitation was least common at 18%. Overall, counselling and skills-based interventions were more widely provided, although some respondents received none of the listed services.

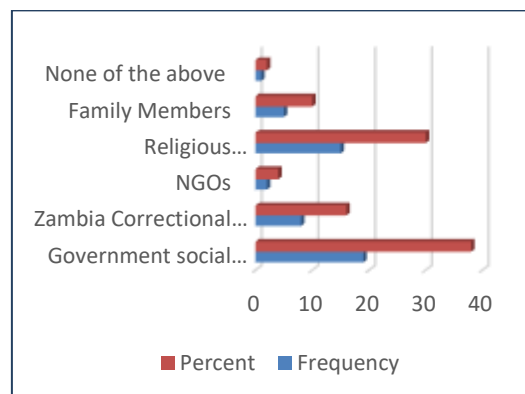
4.2.3 Figure 7: Frequency of Support Services Provision



Source primary 2026

The findings indicate that 68% of respondents received support services frequently, while 16% received them occasionally and another 16% rarely or never. Overall, support services were generally available to most respondents, but gaps in consistency and access suggest the need to improve their coverage and regularity.

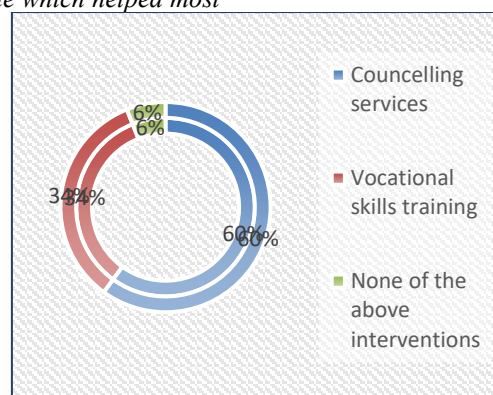
4.2.4 Figure 8: Interventions Provider



Source primary 2026

The findings indicate that government social workers were the main providers of rehabilitation interventions (38%), followed by religious organisations (30%) and the Zambia Correctional Service (16%). Family members contributed 10%, while NGOs accounted for only 4%. Overall, government social workers and religious organisations played the leading roles, with limited involvement from NGOs.

4.2.5 Figure 9: Rehabilitation Programme which helped most



Source primary 2026

The findings show that counselling was considered the most helpful intervention by 60% of respondents, followed by vocational skills training at 34%. Only 6% reported that none of the interventions were helpful. Overall, counselling and vocational training were viewed as key contributors to rehabilitation, emotional wellbeing, self-reliance, and successful reintegration.

Question 11: What other support do you think former child prisoners need after release?

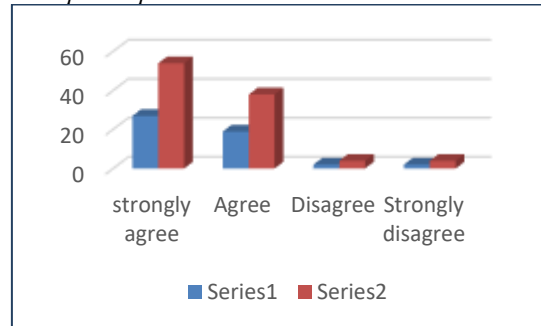
The respondents identified three major forms of support that former child prisoners require after release:

- Continued psychological counselling and mentorship
- Vocational skills training
- Educational support for re-entry into school

The findings indicate that former child prisoners require continued and comprehensive post-release support to achieve successful reintegration. Psychological counselling and mentorship can address emotional challenges, stigma, self-esteem, and adjustment difficulties, consistent with the Good Lives Model (GLM). Vocational skills training can promote employment and economic independence, while educational support can facilitate school re-entry and improve future opportunities.

4.3 Effectiveness of Social Work Interventions in Promoting Rehabilitation and Resettlement

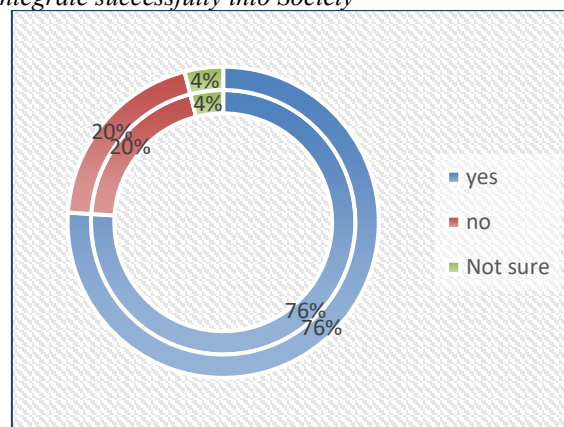
4.3.1 Figure 10: Rehabilitation programs helped improve behavior



Source primary 2026

The findings indicate that 92% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that rehabilitation programmes improved their behaviour, while only 8% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Overall, the results suggest that rehabilitation interventions were perceived as effective in promoting positive behavioural change among beneficiaries.

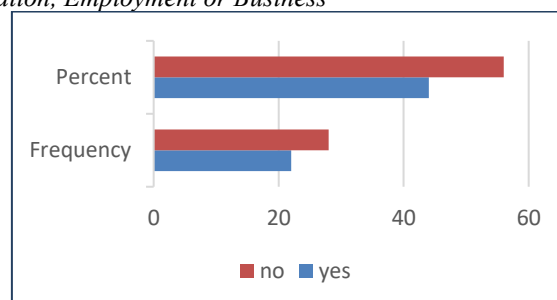
4.3.2 Figure 11: Programme help Reintegrate successfully into Society



Source primary 2026

The findings show that 76% of respondents reported that rehabilitation programmes helped them reintegrate successfully into society, while 20% said they did not, and 4% were unsure. Overall, the results indicate that rehabilitation programmes were generally perceived as effective in supporting social reintegration, although some respondents experienced limited benefits, suggesting gaps in service effectiveness and post-rehabilitation support.

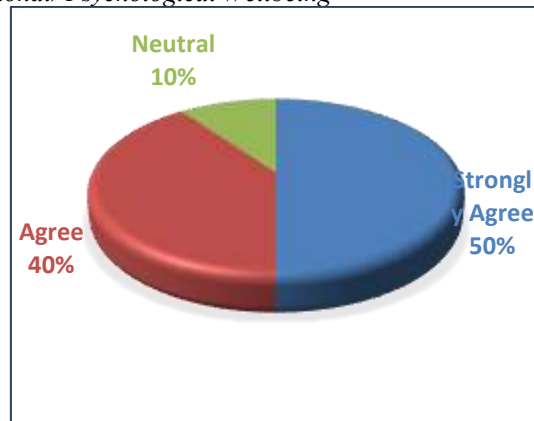
4.3.3 Figure 13: Engagement in Education, Employment or Business



Source primary 2026

The findings show that 44% of respondents were engaged in education, employment, or business after rehabilitation, while 56% were not engaged. This indicates that although some beneficiaries achieved productive reintegration, the majority continued to face challenges in accessing education, employment, business opportunities, and financial support.

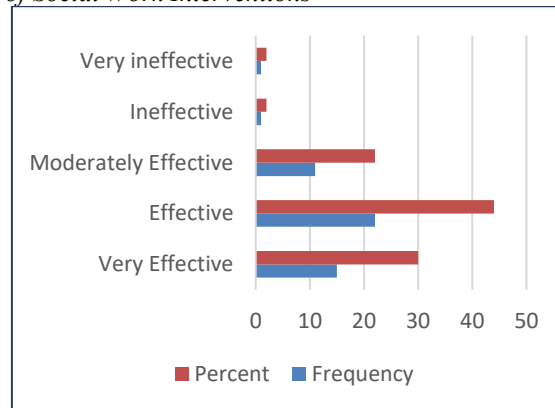
4.3.4 Figure 13: Counselling and Emotional/ Psychological Wellbeing



Source primary 2026

The table presents respondents' views on whether counselling improves their emotional and psychological wellbeing. The findings show that 25 respondents (50%) strongly agreed that counselling improves emotional and psychological wellbeing, while 20 respondents (40%) agreed. Only 5 respondents (10%) were neutral, and none disagreed with the statement. The findings indicate a strong positive perception of the contribution of counselling to emotional and psychological wellbeing.

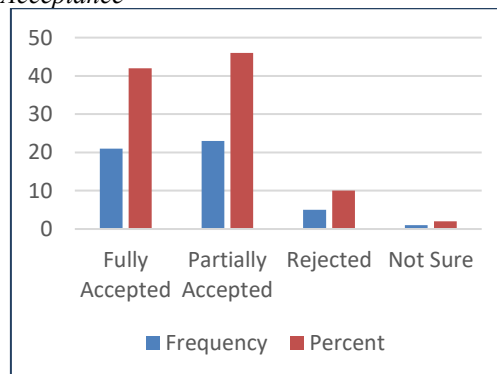
4.3.5 Figure 14: Overall Effectiveness of Social Work Interventions



Source primary 2026

The findings show that 22 respondents (44%) rated social work interventions as effective, while 15 (30%) rated them as very effective. A further 11 respondents (22%) considered them moderately effective, whereas 1 respondent (2%) rated them ineffective and 1 (2%) very ineffective. Overall, 74% of respondents rated the interventions as effective or very effective, indicating a generally positive perception of their contribution to rehabilitation and reintegration. However, the 22% who rated them moderately effective suggests that some areas still require improvement.

4.3.6 Figure 15: Family and Community Acceptance



Source primary 2026

The findings show that 23 respondents (46%) reported partial acceptance by family and the community, while 21 (42%) reported full acceptance. A further 5 respondents (10%) experienced rejection, and 1 (2%) was unsure about their acceptance. Overall, partial acceptance was the most common experience, suggesting that stigma, mistrust, and discrimination may continue to hinder full social reintegration.

Question 18: In what ways did the rehabilitation programmes change your life after release?

The respondents reported the following experiences:

- No change – Some respondents indicated that they did not experience any change because they did not undergo rehabilitation after release.
- Improved self-esteem and decision-making – Some reported increased confidence and better decision-making abilities.
- Restored family relationships – Others indicated that rehabilitation helped rebuild relationships with family members.
- Increased productivity – Some respondents became more productive and engaged in constructive activities.

The findings indicate that rehabilitation programs positively influenced former child prisoners by improving self-esteem, decision-making, family relationships, and productivity, supporting personal development and community reintegration. However, some respondents reported no change because they did not receive rehabilitation after release, highlighting gaps in post-release support. Overall, the findings emphasise the need for accessible and continuous rehabilitation services to promote wellbeing, strengthen relationships, enhance productivity, and reduce reoffending.

Question: What positive outcomes have you experienced after receiving rehabilitation?

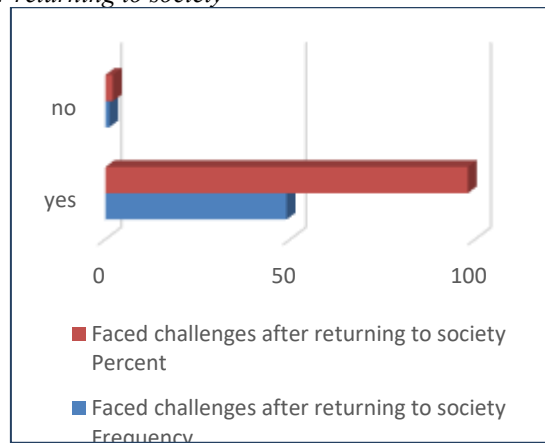
The respondents identified three main positive outcomes:

- Economic empowerment through skills development
- Reduced risk of engaging in criminal activities
- Improved mental health and emotional stability

The findings indicate that rehabilitation programmes have positively contributed to the lives of former child prisoners by addressing their economic, behavioural, and psychological needs. Skills training promoted self-reliance and economic empowerment, while rehabilitation supported positive behaviour and reduced the risk of reoffending. Improved emotional wellbeing also enhanced adjustment to community life. These findings support the Good Lives Model (Ward and Maruna, 2007), which emphasizes personal strengths, positive goals, and meaningful opportunities for successful reintegration.

4.4 Challenges Affecting the Implementation of Social Work Interventions

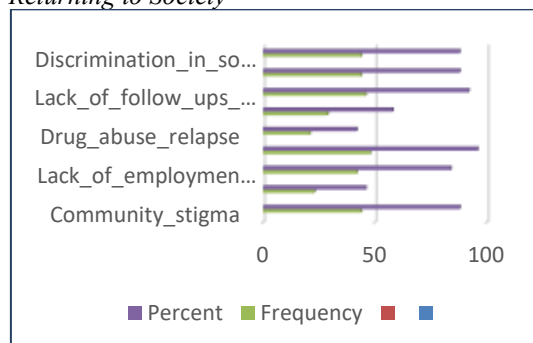
4.4.1 Figure 16: Challenges faced after returning to society



Source primary 2026

The findings show that 49 respondents (98%) experienced challenges after returning to society, while 1 respondent (2%) reported no challenges. This indicates that reintegration difficulties were almost universal among participants. The challenges may include stigma, discrimination, limited education and employment opportunities, financial constraints, strained family relationships, and adjustment difficulties. The findings are further supported by the 56% who were not engaged in education, employment, or business and the 10% who reported family or community rejection, highlighting significant barriers to successful reintegration.

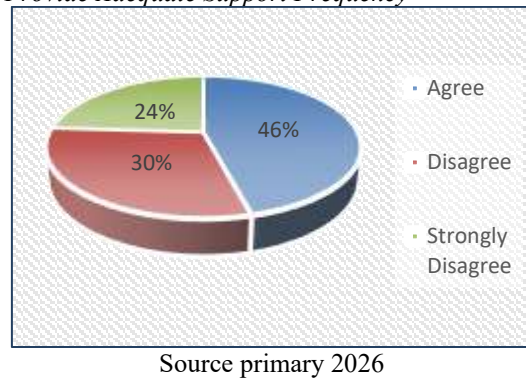
4.4.2 Figure 17: Challenges faced after Returning to Society



Source primary data 2026

The findings show that lack of financial support was the major challenge (96%), followed by inadequate follow-up by social workers (92%). Community stigma, inadequate rehabilitation programmes, and discrimination were each reported by 88%, while lack of employment opportunities affected 84% of respondents. Other challenges included poor counselling services (58%), family rejection (46%), and drug abuse relapse (42%). Overall, the findings highlight significant economic, social, and service-related barriers that hinder effective rehabilitation and resettlement of former child prisoners.

4.4.3 Figure 18: Government Institutions Provide Adequate Support Frequency

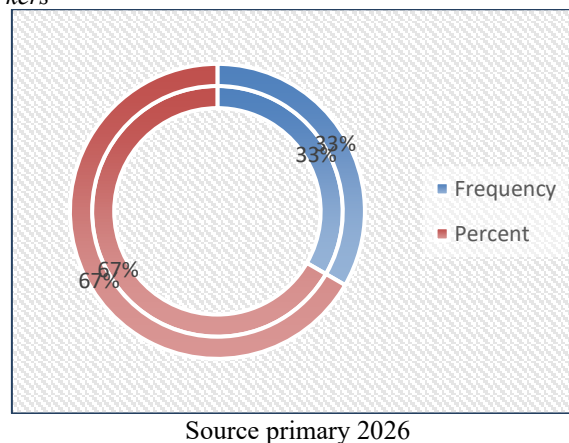


The table presents respondents' views on whether government institutions provide adequate support for the rehabilitation and resettlement of former child prisoners. Out of the 50 respondents, 23 (46%) agreed that government institutions provide adequate support, while 15 (30%) disagreed and 12 (24%) strongly disagreed.

The findings indicate that although 46% of respondents perceived government support as adequate, a combined 54% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. This suggests that more than half of the respondents were dissatisfied with the level of support provided by government institutions. The results may point to gaps in the availability, accessibility, consistency, or adequacy of rehabilitation and resettlement services.

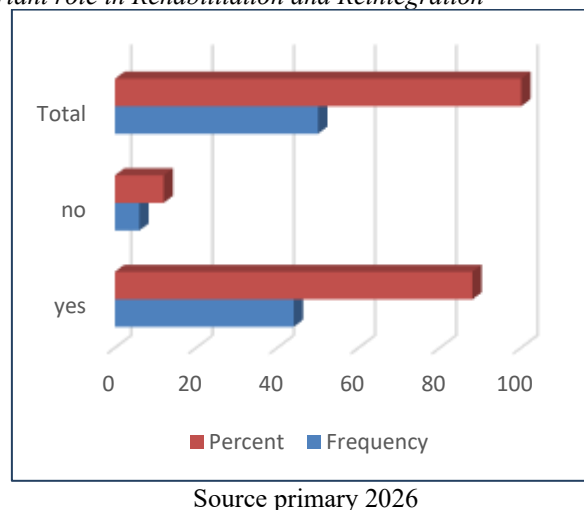
The relatively high level of disagreement may also be linked to challenges identified in the previous table, particularly lack of financial support, inadequate rehabilitation programs, and insufficient follow-up by social workers. These factors may contribute to respondents' perceptions that government institutions are not providing sufficient support after release.

4.4.4 Figure 19: Sufficient Social Workers



The findings show that 23 respondents (46%) agreed that government institutions provide adequate support, while 27 (54%) disagreed, comprising 15 (30%) who disagreed and 12 (24%) who strongly disagreed. Overall, the majority perceived government support as inadequate, suggesting gaps in the availability, accessibility, quality, and effectiveness of services. The findings highlight the need for government institutions to strengthen service delivery, improve outreach and communication, and ensure support reaches intended beneficiaries.

4.4.5 Figure 20: NGOs Play an important role in Rehabilitation and Reintegration



The findings show that 44 respondents (88%) agreed that NGOs play an important role in rehabilitation and reintegration, while 6 respondents (12%) disagreed. This indicates strong recognition of NGOs' contributions through counselling, vocational training, educational support, livelihood programmes, advocacy, and community awareness. Overall, NGOs are perceived as important partners in complementing government efforts, although their impact may not be equally accessible to all beneficiaries.

Question 25: What are the major challenges affecting the success of rehabilitation programmes?

The respondents identified two major challenges affecting the success of rehabilitation programs:

- Limited allocation of funds
- Inadequate vocational training centers

The findings show that inadequate funding and limited vocational training facilities are major barriers to the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs. Limited funding may restrict the provision of counselling, educational materials, skills training and post-release support, while the shortage of vocational training centre limits opportunities for former child prisoners to acquire practical skills for employment and self-reliance.

These challenges may weaken the rehabilitation and reintegration process because former child prisoners require adequate resources and opportunities to develop positive and productive lives. Consistent with the Good Lives Model, effective rehabilitation requires access to skills, resources and opportunities that enable individuals to pursue meaningful and socially responsible lives (Ward and Maruna, 2007).

Question 26: What challenges do social workers face when implementing rehabilitation programmes?

The respondents identified several challenges faced by social workers when implementing rehabilitation programs:

- Heavy workload and too many cases
- Lack of logistical support, particularly transport for follow-up activities
- Limited funding and resources
- Community resistance and stigma
- Lack of cooperation from some stakeholders/funders
- Inadequate facilities for rehabilitation activities

The findings indicate that social workers face institutional, logistical, financial, and community-level challenges that hinder effective rehabilitation and follow-up of former child prisoners. Key challenges include heavy workloads and large caseloads, which limit individualized counselling and monitoring; inadequate transport and logistical support, which constrain post-release follow-up; and limited funding and resources, which restrict the delivery of comprehensive rehabilitation services. Community stigma and resistance also undermine reintegration by contributing to discrimination and rejection. In addition, limited cooperation from funders and other stakeholders affects coordination and access to resources, while inadequate rehabilitation facilities restrict the provision of counselling, vocational training, and group activities. Overall, strengthening staffing, funding, transport, stakeholder coordination, community awareness, and rehabilitation infrastructure is essential for improving the effectiveness and continuity of social work interventions.

4.4.6 Additional Recommendations from Respondents

In addition to the structured questionnaire responses, respondents were given an opportunity to provide further recommendations on the effectiveness of social work interventions in the rehabilitation and resettlement of former child prisoners in Zambia. Analysis of the qualitative responses revealed several recurring themes, indicating broad consensus among respondents regarding interventions required for former child prisoners after being released.

Question 27: What should government do to improve rehabilitation and resettlement programmes for former child prisoners in Zambia? Response: "Increase the budgetary allocation for rehabilitation and aftercare programs."

The response indicates that increasing government funding is considered essential for improving the effectiveness of rehabilitation and resettlement programs for former child prisoners. Adequate budgetary allocation would enable government institutions to provide sufficient resources for counselling, psychosocial support, vocational training, family reunification, resettlement and aftercare services. Inadequate funding may limit the ability of social workers and rehabilitation institutions to provide consistent services and conduct follow-up activities after children are released. Therefore, the finding suggests that government should prioritize and increase financial resources for rehabilitation and aftercare programs to ensure that support continues beyond the period of incarceration. Sustainable funding would also enable the provision of transport, rehabilitation materials, training facilities and other resources required to support successful reintegration into families and communities.

Question 28: What recommendations would you give to improve social interventions for former child prisoners?

Response: "Strengthen follow-ups and case management systems, provide continuous training for social workers on child rehabilitation, and increase collaboration between government, NGOs, CBOs and families."

The findings emphasise the need for a coordinated and continuous support system for former child prisoners. Strengthening follow-up and case management, alongside continuous training of social workers in counselling, psychosocial support, child protection, and reintegration, would improve the quality and continuity of services. The study also highlights the importance of collaboration among government institutions, NGOs, CBOs, families, schools, health services, correctional institutions, and communities to address the multidimensional needs of former child prisoners. A multisectoral approach can strengthen referrals, information sharing, monitoring, and accountability while ensuring comprehensive support in education, health, livelihoods, psychosocial wellbeing, family relationships, and community acceptance.

4.5 Discussion of research findings

The discussion of findings is presented according to the study objectives. The discussion relates the study findings to the existing literature and the Good Lives Model (GLM), which guided the study. The model emphasizes that successful rehabilitation requires developing offenders' strengths, capabilities, positive relationships, and access to opportunities that support meaningful and socially responsible lives (Ward & Maruna, 2007).

4.5.1 Social Work Interventions Provided to Former Juvenile Offenders

The first objective sought to identify the major social work interventions provided to former juvenile offenders. The findings established that respondents received a range of interventions, including counselling, psychosocial support, vocational skills training, educational support, family reunification, life-skills training, community reintegration support, and limited financial assistance. Among these, counselling emerged as the most frequently accessed and highly valued intervention because it helped participants understand their behavior, manage emotions, and prepare for life after release. Vocational skills training was also widely recognized for equipping participants with practical skills for employment and self-employment, while family reunification programs helped restore relationships between former juvenile offenders and their families.

These findings are consistent with Payne (2020), who argues that social work interventions are holistic and seek to improve individuals' social functioning through counselling, advocacy, family interventions, and community support. Similarly, Muncie (2015) observes that effective juvenile rehabilitation should combine psychological support, educational opportunities, family involvement, and vocational training to address the multiple factors contributing to juvenile offending.

The qualitative findings further reinforced these results. Participants described counselling as an intervention that improved their confidence, emotional wellbeing, and ability to make responsible decisions. Others explained that vocational skills training enabled them to become economically productive, while family counselling restored trust and improved communication with parents and guardians. These findings demonstrate that effective rehabilitation extends beyond correcting offending behavior to strengthening the personal, family, educational, and economic capacities of former juvenile offenders.

The findings strongly support the Good Lives Model, which argues that rehabilitation should provide individuals with the skills, opportunities, and supportive relationships required to achieve positive life goals. Rather than focusing solely on preventing crime, the interventions identified in this study contributed to personal development, improved wellbeing, and successful community reintegration.

4.5.2 Effectiveness of Social Work Interventions in Rehabilitation and Reintegration

The second objective examined the effectiveness of social work interventions in promoting rehabilitation and successful reintegration. The findings indicate that the interventions produced several positive outcomes among former juvenile offenders. Participants reported improved self-esteem, better decision-making, restored family relationships, improved mental health, increased productivity, economic empowerment through vocational skills, and reduced involvement in criminal activities. These outcomes suggest that social work interventions contributed significantly to both behavioural transformation and successful reintegration.

Counselling emerged as one of the most effective interventions because it improved emotional wellbeing and strengthened participants' capacity to cope with the challenges of reintegration. Participants explained that counselling enabled them to overcome fear, anxiety, anger, and hopelessness while developing confidence to make positive life choices. These findings agree with Andrews and Bonta (2017), who found that cognitive-behavioural interventions effectively reduce criminogenic thinking and improve behavioural outcomes among juvenile offenders.

Vocational skills training was also found to be highly effective in promoting economic empowerment. Participants reported that the skills acquired enabled them to obtain employment or establish small businesses, thereby increasing self-reliance and reducing dependence on criminal activities for survival. This finding is supported by the International Labor Organization (2020), which argues that vocational education enhances youth employability, promotes social inclusion, and reduces vulnerability to reoffending. Family reunification programs were similarly found to strengthen rehabilitation outcomes. Respondents reported improved communication, restored trust, and increased emotional support from family members following rehabilitation. These findings support Muncie (2015), who argues that stable family relationships provide an important protective factor against recidivism by promoting emotional support, supervision, and social acceptance.

The qualitative findings further revealed that rehabilitation programs promoted improved mental health and emotional stability. Participants explained that counselling and psychosocial support helped them cope with trauma, manage stress, and regain hope for the future. They also reported that rehabilitation encouraged responsible decision-making and reduced their likelihood of returning to criminal behavior. However, some respondents reported experiencing little or no positive change because they did not receive continued support after release. Participants noted that rehabilitation often ended when they left the institution, making it difficult to sustain the progress achieved during institutional rehabilitation. This finding highlights the importance of structured aftercare services in ensuring long-term rehabilitation success. Overall, the findings demonstrate that social work interventions are effective when implemented comprehensively and supported by continuous follow-up. These results support the Good Lives Model, which emphasizes that sustainable rehabilitation requires ongoing access to opportunities, resources, and supportive relationships beyond institutional care.

4.5.3 Challenges Affecting the Effectiveness of Social Work Interventions

The third objective sought to establish the challenges affecting the implementation and effectiveness of social work interventions. The findings revealed that former juvenile offenders continue to experience numerous barriers during reintegration. The most significant challenges included lack of financial support, inadequate follow-up by social workers, community stigma, discrimination, inadequate rehabilitation programs, unemployment, poor counselling services, family rejection, and relapse into drug abuse.

Lack of financial support emerged as the most common challenge. Participants explained that financial constraints limited their ability to continue their education, establish businesses, secure accommodation, and meet basic needs after release. These findings suggest that economic vulnerability remains one of the greatest barriers to successful reintegration and may increase the risk of recidivism if not adequately addressed.

Another major challenge identified was inadequate post-release follow-up by social workers. Participants indicated that they rarely received home visits, counselling, or professional guidance after leaving the institution. The absence of structured aftercare services weakened the sustainability of rehabilitation outcomes because many former juvenile offenders struggled to address new challenges without professional support. This finding supports UNICEF (2021), which emphasizes that successful rehabilitation requires continuous community-based support rather than institutional interventions alone.

Community stigma and discrimination were also identified as significant obstacles to reintegration. Participants reported being labelled as criminals, experiencing rejection by community members, and facing difficulties securing employment or continuing their education because of their previous involvement with the justice system. These findings are consistent with Muyobela and Strydom (2017), who found that stigma and social exclusion remain major barriers to successful reintegration among former juvenile offenders in Zambia.

Family rejection was another challenge affecting rehabilitation outcomes. Some participants indicated that they returned to unstable family environments where they received little emotional or material support. Since family support is an important protective factor against recidivism, the absence of positive family relationships weakens reintegration efforts and limits rehabilitation success.

The study further established that more than half of the respondents believed that government institutions were not providing adequate support for rehabilitation and reintegration. Respondents attributed this to limited financial assistance, inadequate rehabilitation services, weak institutional coordination, and insufficient follow-up after release. These findings suggest that government institutions need to strengthen rehabilitation policies through increased investment, improved coordination, and expanded post-release support programs.

Conversely, respondents overwhelmingly recognized the positive contribution of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in rehabilitation and reintegration. NGOs were perceived as complementing government efforts by providing counselling, vocational training, educational assistance, livelihood support, and community sensitization programs. This finding highlights the importance of collaborative partnerships between government agencies, NGOs, communities, and families in supporting sustainable reintegration.

Overall, the findings indicate that while social work interventions have contributed significantly to the rehabilitation and reintegration of former juvenile offenders, their effectiveness continues to be constrained by economic hardship, inadequate institutional support, weak aftercare services, stigma, unemployment, and insufficient community support. Addressing these challenges through strengthened post-release services, increased financial investment, improved stakeholder collaboration, expanded livelihood opportunities, and community sensitization programs would significantly enhance rehabilitation outcomes and reduce the likelihood of recidivism among former juvenile offenders in Zambia.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that social work interventions play an important role in the rehabilitation and resettlement of former child prisoners. The major interventions identified included counselling, vocational skills training, family reunification, community reintegration, educational support, psychological support, financial empowerment and substance-abuse rehabilitation. Among these, counselling was the most widely provided and was also perceived by respondents as the most helpful intervention. The findings therefore demonstrate that social work interventions can address the psychological, social, behavioural and economic needs of former child prisoners and contribute to their successful reintegration.

The study further concludes that rehabilitation programs were generally effective in promoting positive behavioural change and social reintegration. A large proportion of respondents reported improved behavior, successful reintegration and improved emotional and psychological wellbeing as a result of rehabilitation interventions. Respondents also identified positive outcomes such as improved self-esteem, better decision-making, restored family relationships, increased productivity, economic empowerment and reduced involvement in criminal activities. However, the finding that 56% of respondents were not engaged in education, employment or business indicates that rehabilitation does not always result in sustainable socio-economic reintegration.

The study also concludes that the effectiveness of rehabilitation and reintegration programs is affected by several challenges. These include inadequate financial support, limited follow-up by social workers, community stigma and discrimination, inadequate rehabilitation programs, lack of employment opportunities, family rejection and drug-abuse relapse. Social workers also face heavy workloads, inadequate transport for follow-up activities, limited funding and resources, inadequate facilities, community resistance and insufficient cooperation from some stakeholders. These challenges limit the capacity of service providers to deliver continuous and comprehensive rehabilitation support.

Overall, the study concludes that successful rehabilitation of former child prisoners requires a holistic, continuous and coordinated approach. Rehabilitation should not end at the point of release but should extend into families and communities through continued counselling, vocational and educational support, economic empowerment, family involvement and regular social-worker follow-up. Stronger collaboration among government institutions, the Zambia Correctional Service, NGOs, families, communities and other stakeholders is essential for achieving sustainable rehabilitation and reducing the risk of reoffending.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- Government should increase funding for rehabilitation programs to ensure adequate provision of counselling, vocational training, educational support, transportation, follow-up services and other essential rehabilitation activities.
- Social welfare and correctional institutions should strengthen post-release follow-up services by ensuring that former child prisoners receive regular monitoring, counselling and support after returning to their families and communities.
- Vocational training and economic empowerment programs should be expanded to provide former child prisoners with practical skills, entrepreneurship opportunities and access to employment or income-generating activities.
- Counselling and psychological support should be strengthened because counselling was identified as the most commonly provided and most helpful intervention. Continuous counselling should be provided to address emotional, behavioural and adjustment challenges.
- Government and other stakeholders should strengthen family and community sensitization programs to reduce stigma, discrimination and rejection of former child prisoners and promote positive attitudes towards their reintegration.
- Collaboration among government institutions, social workers, the Zambia Correctional Service, NGOs, religious organizations, families and communities should be strengthened to ensure coordinated and comprehensive rehabilitation and resettlement services.

- The working conditions of social workers should be improved by increasing staffing, providing adequate transport, reducing excessive workloads and ensuring access to appropriate facilities and rehabilitation materials.
- Educational reintegration should be promoted by assisting former child prisoners to return to school, acquire further education or access alternative learning opportunities where their education was interrupted.
- Substance-abuse rehabilitation should be strengthened through continuous counselling, specialized treatment, prevention programs and follow-up support for individuals vulnerable to drug and substance-abuse relapse.
- Rehabilitation programs should be individualized and continuous, taking into account the different psychological, educational, social and economic needs of former child prisoners rather than applying a uniform approach to all beneficiaries.

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