

A Study on the Relationship Between TVET Skills and Employment on Self-Confidence Among Prison Inmates

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Abstract

Technic and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) plays a crucial role in helping prison inmates rebuild their self-identity and enhance self-confidence in preparation for life after release. This study was conducted to identify the level of TVET skills and its relationship with self-confidence among prison inmates. The aspects of TVET skills examined include responsibility skills, positive attitude, adaptability skills, and the ability to work with others. A total of 120 prison inmates from Penjara Simpang Renggam, Johor, were selected using purposive sampling as the study respondents. This study employed a quantitative approach with a survey design and a structured questionnaire as the primary research instrument. The collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. Findings revealed that overall, the level of TVET skills among inmates was high, particularly in the domains of responsibility, positive attitude, and teamwork. The level of self-confidence among the inmates was also found to be generally high. The results also indicated a positive relationship between all aspects of TVET skills and self-confidence, with the highest correlation observed in teamwork skills, followed by positive attitude, responsibility, and adaptability. Overall, the study demonstrates that TVET skills significantly contribute to enhancing the self-confidence of prison inmates and have the potential to support their rehabilitation and social reintegration after release.

1. Introduction

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) plays a crucial role in equipping individuals with the necessary skills to participate in the workforce. For prison inmates, access to TVET training serves not only as a tool for rehabilitation but also as a vital step toward rebuilding their lives upon release. Rehabilitation institutions such as prisons, moral rehabilitation centres, and Henry Gurney Schools are responsible for reforming individuals who have committed offences, enabling them to reintegrate into society as productive citizens. The primary function of these institutions goes beyond punishment—they also provide opportunities for inmates to acquire skills and knowledge that can support a better quality of life post-incarceration. A rehabilitation approach that emphasises education and skills training, particularly through Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes, is essential in fostering inmates' self-confidence and enhancing their employability.

TVET training equips inmates with technical skills, specialised knowledge, and the competence to perform tasks effectively. These skills are not only relevant across various employment sectors but also contribute to personal development, problem-solving capabilities, and adaptability in the face of employment challenges. Moreover, such training instils values of discipline, responsibility, and a strong work ethic—all of which are critical elements for sustaining high work performance. The relationship between TVET training and employability is reflected in improved job performance and the quality of work produced by individuals who have received vocational training while in custody. Through systematic and structured training, inmates who undergo rehabilitation programmes have higher chances of securing stable employment after their release, thereby reducing recidivism rates. Their self-confidence is also strengthened as they recognise their capabilities and potential to contribute to economic development and societal well-being.

Therefore, this study aims to examine in depth how TVET training within rehabilitation institutions influences inmates' self-confidence and to identify its impact on their employability post-release. In addition, this research will explore the challenges faced in the implementation of such programmes and propose improvement measures to ensure their long-term effectiveness. Inmates in institutions such as rehabilitation centres and prisons often face complex challenges when attempting to reintegrate into the workforce after completing their rehabilitation period. One of the main barriers is societal stigma, which frequently undermines their opportunities to secure employment (Nguyen et al., 2020). Human capital development plays a vital role in ensuring social well-being, including among prison inmates. Therefore, an effective rehabilitation system should not only focus on punishment but also serve as a mechanism for reformation, enabling individuals to return to society as competitive and capable citizens.

In this context, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has emerged as a key strategy adopted in rehabilitation institutions worldwide. This training not only equips inmates with skills relevant to the labour market but also enhances their self-confidence, thereby better preparing them for post-release life. In Malaysia, the Prison Department of Malaysia has introduced various TVET programmes as part of its inmate rehabilitation process. These programmes include training in carpentry, automotive repair, tailoring, agriculture, and entrepreneurship. Reports indicate that 70% of inmates who participate in TVET show positive changes in terms of self-confidence and ability to live independently after release. However, numerous challenges continue to hinder former inmates from securing stable employment. These include societal stigma, limited support networks, and mismatches between acquired skills and market demands.

At the international level, countries such as Norway and Germany have implemented prison rehabilitation models that emphasise vocational training as a preparation for social reintegration. These models have proven that inmates who receive skills training and employment opportunities are more likely to secure jobs after release, thus reducing recidivism rates. Studies in the United States have also shown that inmates who undergo vocational and training programmes tend to have higher levels of self-confidence, which aids them in facing employment challenges and life after incarceration. Nevertheless, several issues still affect the effectiveness of such programmes. One of the key challenges is employers' willingness to hire former inmates. Prejudicial attitudes among the public often prevent them from obtaining equitable employment, even when they possess the required skills. In addition, internal factors such as low levels of education, psychosocial issues, and a lack of self-belief further hinder their success in the job market. Therefore, this study aims to explore the extent to which TVET training and employment opportunities provided to prison inmates can enhance their self-confidence. By understanding the factors that influence self-confidence, and the challenges inmates face in securing employment, this research seeks to contribute to the improvement of existing rehabilitation programmes. The findings are also expected to support the development of more inclusive and effective policies that ensure former inmates are given a second chance to contribute to society and reduce the incidence of reoffending. Imprisonment is a form of punishment that involves the confinement of individuals in rehabilitation institutions for a specific period as a means of creating awareness of their wrongdoing and preventing the recurrence of criminal behaviour (Prisons Act, 1995). In supporting the rehabilitation and reintegration of inmates into society, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes have been introduced in rehabilitation institutions in Malaysia. These programmes aim to equip inmates with the necessary skills for reintegration into society upon release.

Nevertheless, despite this potential, the research also reveals several challenges that hinder the effective implementation of TVET programmes. These include a shortage of qualified instructors, limited training facilities,

and persistent societal stigma toward ex-inmates. Social stigma remains a major obstacle, making it difficult for ex-inmates to secure employment that matches their acquired skills, thus preventing them from leading better lives.

More concerning is the fact that although most former inmates have undergone training through TVET programmes, many still face difficulties in obtaining employment that aligns with their training. Statistics show that while 90% of TVET graduates secure jobs, the majority earn only around RM2,000 per month. This clearly indicates that, although employment opportunities exist, they do not necessarily lead to quality or commensurate jobs, resulting in ongoing financial instability and low motivation to move forward with hope. In line with this, Muhammad Jeffery Hizwan Bin Said (2018) also stresses that education in prison is not only intended to improve knowledge levels but also plays a crucial role in building inmates' self-confidence. The inability to fully acquire skills and the challenges in securing suitable employment also affect inmates' self-confidence. This lack of self-belief may lead to deeper emotional distress and increase the risk of recidivism. As such, the study by Muhammad Jeffery Hizwan Bin Said (2018) reinforces that prison education is not merely for enhancing knowledge but also plays a key role in fostering self-confidence among inmates. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between TVET skills and employment on self-confidence among prison inmates.

2. Methodology

This study adopts a used in this study, which involves a quantitative approach and a survey research design. Conducted at Simpang Renggam Prison, Johor, the study involves inmates who are currently undergoing or have completed TVET skills training and are in the pre-release phase. A structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale was employed to measure the relationship between perceptions of TVET skills and employment among the inmates. Sampling was conducted carefully, and data were analyzed using SPSS software for both descriptive and inferential tests, including Pearson correlation. This method was chosen to ensure that the study's findings address the research questions, test the hypotheses, and reveal the impact of skills training and employment opportunities on self-confidence. In this study, the researcher gathers quantitative data through surveys, which are represented numerically. To analyze the data, the researcher codes the responses from the completed questionnaires and inputs them into specialized computer software. The data is then processed and examined using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27. Descriptive statistics are employed to analyze the statistical data obtained from the study findings.

3. Results and Discussion

The findings indicate that the overall discussion in this chapter is guided by the objectives and research questions outlined in Chapter 1, specifically to identify prison inmates' perceptions of the TVET skills they acquired during their time in prison. In addition, this discussion examines the level of self-confidence among inmates in facing challenges upon their release. Lastly, it also explores the relationship between inmates' perceptions of the TVET skills acquired and their level of self-confidence in facing employment-related challenges.

The findings of the study indicate that prison inmates have a very positive perception of the TVET skills they acquired. This aligns with the study by Norhaslinda Hassan et al. (2020), which found that TVET programmes have successfully enhanced inmates' technical skills and provided them with greater opportunities in the job market. These skills include task efficiency, adaptability in work environments, and effective group communication. The study also revealed that TVET programmes in Malaysian prison institutions cover various fields such as automotive, tailoring, agriculture, and business management, equipping inmates with industry-based skills that enhance their employability (Chiew, 2024; Astro Awani, 2023).

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed by the researcher for future researchers who intend to continue or explore similar areas of study. These recommendations are as follows since this study was conducted in only one Simpang Renggam Prison and Batu Pahat Correctional Centre in Johor, it does not represent the overall skill level of inmates across Malaysia. Therefore, future research should be conducted on a broader national scale to assess the extent to which these skills influence inmates across different regions. Additionally, future studies may consider adopting a different research methodology. During the data collection process, both quantitative methods (questionnaires) and qualitative methods (interviews) can be used. This mixed-methods approach would allow for more comprehensive data to be collected.

4. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that TVET skills play a vital role in shaping the self-confidence of prison inmates. Skill development not only enables them to access employment opportunities but also helps build a strong psychological foundation to face post-release life challenges. Therefore, the implementation of systematic, relevant, and inclusive TVET programs is essential to strengthening the rehabilitation system in Malaysian prisons. A brighter future for former inmates depends not only on job opportunities but also on self-confidence built through education, training, and consistent support. Based on the conclusions, discussions, and analyses

conducted, it is evident that pre-release inmates possess skills that qualify them to compete in the job market on par with the general population. However, literature also highlights that employment opportunities for former inmates remain unsatisfactory, contributing to anxiety and uncertainty about their future. Hence, solutions must be identified and acted upon by all stakeholders to ensure that this group can become self-reliant and chart a successful path forward, thereby reducing the likelihood of reoffending. To address various challenges, such as unemployment and foreign labor issues, society must shift its mindset and change perceptions toward former inmates. The community must acknowledge and believe in their abilities and potential, and they should be given fair opportunities to secure suitable and meaningful employment.

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Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of the paper.

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