

**PRISON CORRECTIONAL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: A  
PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

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**Abstract:** *Worldwide, the prison institutions have a mandate to correct the behaviour of inmates. The objective of this paper is to design a prison correctional conceptual framework, which empowers the inmates psychologically and with practical and sustainable survival skills to avoid recidivism. When the inmates are due for release, they should be community-fit both physical and psychological to meet their communities, ready, willing and with a sense of safety to start life once more in their communities of origin. The correctional conceptual framework is proposed positive perspective of how offenders can best adapt to the institutional environment, impart skills and prepare the inmates for safe landing back in their communities of origin after the release. The prisons should be capacitating, empowering, behaviour-change agents and entrepreneurship imparting institutions. The correctional framework was designed after notable gaps in correctional programs in developing countries in sub-Saharan. The concept of the Zambian Prisons Health System Strengthening (ZaPHSS) has triggered to the holistic development of the framework in a way to bridge the gaps left by ZaPHSS. The authors observed that life after imprisonment was not easy, particularly “the-facing-your-community” after imprisonment depending on the degree of the cases. Most cases in Sub-Saharan are triggered by poverty, jealous and irrational thinking and come in the form of theft, robbery, conning, sexual harassment and abuses amongst many of them, The Humanistic and Social Disorganizational theories and business models informed the authors in the developing this prison correctional conceptual framework. The framework has nine solid steps that can be suitable for inmates who are in poverty, out of employment, with the desire for self-sustenance projects and leading peaceful life after the release. The framework was developed to see positive-minded, self-reliant and functional former inmates integrating well with their communities of origin. It is less suitable for inmates on death rows or life-sentence.*

**Keywords:** Offenders, Prisons, Correctional Framework, Inmates, Behaviour, Recidivism

**Research Area:** Law

**Paper Type:** Research Paper

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, prison institutions have designed correctional programs to the inmates in a way to change and empower their correctional behaviour. Most countries world over are grappling with the acute increase in criminal behaviour. Studies done on Kenya's prisons indicated that prisoners were treated like objects and had no say in their rehabilitation process (Daily Nation, December 1998). According to Masango (2008) indicates that exposing prisoners to such brutal conditions was of no rehabilitative value to them at all and the more likely event was that prisons became training grounds for inmates to hone their criminal

skills. This only led to increased crime in society and high rates of recidivism in Kenya. In this regard, prisons became industries of crime and dungeons of death.

The emerging of correctional programmes for inmates was aimed at equipping offenders with survival life skills to enable them to be reintegrated into society upon release as well as to adapt to the institutional environment. Therefore Correctional programmes help inmates to acquire skills in various trades as a prerequisite for their future lives in the world of employment. Gona, Mugari, and Zondayi (2014) posit that it allows the inmates to upgrade and stay relevant to the changing society outside the prison wall as well as it is an opportunity for inmates to increase their content knowledge base. Many countries began to move towards a more holistic approach in dealing with offenders which mainly incorporates the need to rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders into mainstream society in a manner that reduces the likelihood of reoffending. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and The United Nations Basic Principles for the Treatment of prisoners facilitate the route of rehabilitation to ensure that inmates are treated with care and dignity. Zimbabwe is among countries that subscribe to these international conventions (Cilliers & Smit, 2007; Singh, 2008). The international approach perceives rehabilitation as ensuring that imprisoned offenders are treated with care and dignity such that their re-entry to society should not be a challenge (Cilliers & Smit, 2007; Singh, 2008). Most states use different correctional approaches as a correctional remedy to inmates. In Sub-Sahara, the Zambian Correctional Service (ZCS) partnered with the Centre for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia (CIDRZ) on the Zambian Prisons Health System Strengthening (ZaPHSS) project. The ZaPHSS proposed four stages which are the logic initial stage, intermediate outcome, medium-term outcome and lastly the goal. These stages were presented in a diagrammatical in nature. The project aimed to strengthen structural, organisational and operational weaknesses within the prison health system. Project aims were underpinned by formative and cooperative research conducted by ZCS and CIDRZ prior to the start of the project, which explored and elaborated on the health and health service conditions in Zambian prisons. ZaPHSS has been different in that it has been looking in a holistic way and capacity building and coordinating the other players (Topp et al., 2018). The concept of the ZaPHSS has triggered to the holistic development of the framework in a way to bridge the gaps left by ZaPHSS. The social Disorganizational theory and the differential association was used as the theoretical framework for the development of the framework. The ineffectiveness of most prisons in African including Zimbabwe lack entrepreneurship empowerment skills to inmates and this has motivated researchers to the development of the framework to close the gap. Research in Australia had proved that most offenders commit crimes for financial gains. Therefore the involvement of entrepreneurship skills can reduce recidivism. The entrepreneurship model had informed the invention of the correctional framework. The entrepreneurship model emphasis on training and equipping inmate with financial literacy skills.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The Humanistic and the Social Disorganisational theories informed the authors in the developing of the prison correctional conceptual framework.

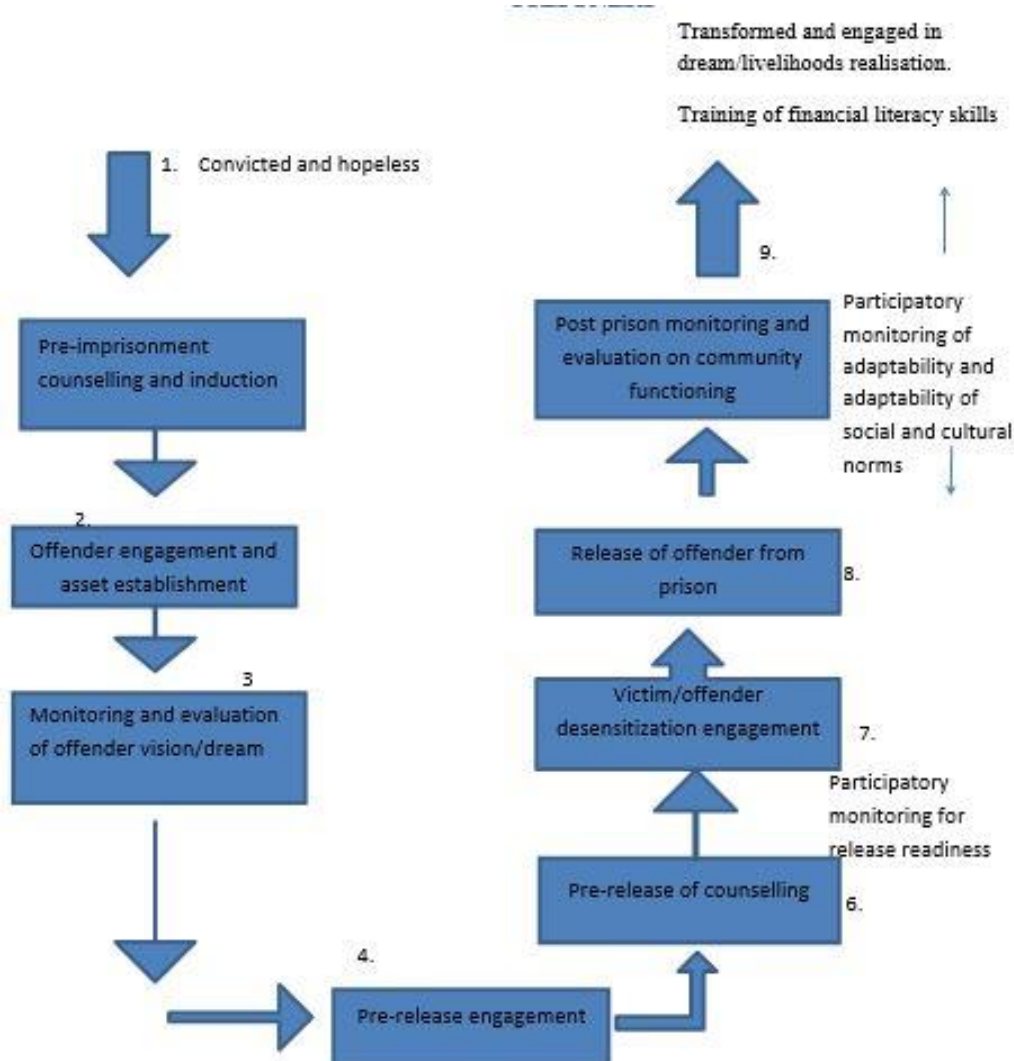
The Humanistic theory, which purports the need to help people fulfil their potentials and maximize their well-being rather than concentrating on dysfunctional aspects. The theory emphasis the realization of the whole individual and stresses concepts such as free will, self-efficacy, and self-actualization. This entails that most offenders engage in criminal behaviours so as to fulfil their needs and wants.

The Social Disorganisational Theory asserts that the physical and social surroundings of a person are predominantly responsible for the behavioural choices that a person makes (Akers, 2000). This theory attributes that exposure to flexible and empowerment correctional programs will encourage the inmates to automatically fade the deviant criminal behaviour and built moral justices to the surrounding environment hence promoting harmonious relationship among individuals. Relationships among people in a given territory are presumed to be especially organised when there are high levels of involvement across age-levels in activities coordinated by representatives of communal institutions such as family-heads, pastors, school organizations and local officials (Bursik, 1998).

Any attempt to ensure sustainable correctional services should start with inmate's engagement. It should begin as soon as the inmate steps into the doors of prisons and continue throughout to post-inmate life back in the community of origin. This is a critical time, where the convicted changes names, from a suspect to an inmate, and from an inmate to ex-inmate. This is the time when the incarceration builds or destroys the expected future personality of an inmate. The correctional services should follow up with an ex-inmate years after the prison life as a way of demonstrating the positive extent and commitment of the Government's intentional motives to correct personality and prevent recidivism.

In order to conceptualize the specificity of the correctional services, a framework is proposed in which there are chronological interlinked steps from incarceration to post-incarceration life. This conceptual framework is more suitable for inmates who are not on death row or serving life in prison. It can be used both in developing and developed countries. The steps 1-9 are further explained below.

### 3. PRISON CORRECTIONAL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR PRISONERS



Princeniko Correctional Framework, 2020

#### 3.1 Convicted and Hopeless

Once someone has been convicted at the courts he/she heads for imprisonment to serve the sentence of the prescribed committed crime. Imprisonment has its own culture and norms that are quite different from home. To a new inmate, everything is new, which include the people, other inmates, environment, norms, values and culture. As such, incarceration comes with high emotions generated within the inmate, families and relatives. Fortunately or unfortunately all these emotions hang on the hope that the days of incarceration will lapse and they will be a reunion with the outside world again. Firstly and foremost, the inmate is:

- Stripped-off all forms of freedom (sexual, conjugal, expression, media, outside world association, name, dressing, time, programme rights) except the prison rights. This further triggers nervousness and uncertainty about future life

- Highly likely to experience psychological complications, such as distress, depression, isolation, guilt consciousness, worthlessness and weird thoughts amongst many of them
- Labelled, vulnerable and visualise no future
- Dearly in need of support and counselling to speedily deal with the current situation

On the other, the family feels the vulnerability, distress, depressed, isolated, has weird thoughts, and labelled too. The prison is highly called in to assess and/or observe the levels of anxiety of this new inmate in preparation for the next step.

### *3.2 Pre-Imprisonment Counselling and Induction*

Soon before locking the convict into prison cells, there is a need for the Psychologists/Counsellors to take the convicted through the pre-imprisonment counselling and induction sessions. The following steps should be implemented;

- Family separation counselling
- Prison adoption and adaptation counselling and induction
- Hope installation

This should be a cooling gauge for the anxious inmate, who should always be looking forward to the reformed future. The counselling services unease the tension, and gives hope to the inmate as he/she joins others in the cells. This is the time to tell the inmate the dos and don'ts, the psychological expectations of Prison Staff, the anticipation by other inmates and general life in prison. This step is done to prepare the inmates for the third session.

### *3.3 Inmate Engagement and Asset Establishment*

The practical journey towards correctional services starts by prison engagement and establishment of an asset. The stage should start between 3-7 days of incarceration for the effectiveness of the programme. The following should be taken into consideration;

- Understanding the background of the inmate
- Understanding background that led to the commitment of a crime
- Understanding family background and community of the victims
- Understanding accessibility to victim's community (for initiation of offender/victim desensitization process to follow)
- Identify capacity building needs in a participatory manner
- Understanding an inmate's life dream/vision (as a way to assist the inmate through capacity building skills) largely as a correctional service process. No dream is short or too long. Each inmate should get capacity building skills that will enable him/her to function well after incarceration.
- Facilitation towards dream/livelihood journey/process
- Facilitation of resources towards dream realisation
- Plan for action towards the realisation of livelihoods/dream journey for the inmate

The inmate should visualise living the dream within days of incarceration. Detailed information about the inmate should be kept safely and become a means of correcting him/her for life after imprisonment. This stage prepares the inmate for empowerment and capacity building skills processes.

### ***3.4 Train, Monitor And Evaluate the Inmate's Vision/Dream***

Plans without monitoring and evaluation are bound to fail or miss the target. The inmates should start their programmes within a 1-2 days after envisioning process. This is critical to cater for those with less time (say 6-12 months) in prison. As such there is need to implement the following;

- Develop a training curriculum for the inmate
- Training should include financial literacy, project planning and management and personal and relational/interpersonal skills
- Develop a monitoring tool for data capturing on progress towards dream realisation
- Monitor commitment towards dream realisation (a continuous process that needs to be reinforced and encouraged)

The inmate should be encouraged to self-assess his/her progress and commitment. He/she should write a self-assessment report as soon as he/she finishes off his/her sentence. The self-report will establish the readiness and willingness of the inmate to go back to his/her community of origin and start to walk his/her dream.

### ***3.5 Pre-Release Community Engagement***

This is an awareness process that will include the following:

- Facilitate and engage the participation of victim and offender families/community with the inclusion of local leaders (chief/ village head, ward counsellor, church leaders, and significant others) in preparation for safe and smooth landing of the offender after prison life. The following methods can be used;
  - Focus Group Discussion sessions
  - Group counselling sessions
  - Lobbying for safe community integration
  - Victim engagement in preparation for reunion, forgiveness and relationship restoration
- Feedback to the inmate is very crucial so that he/she prepares as per the victim's requirements.

At this stage, the Prison Officials should visit the victim's family and community without the inmate to establish the mood and possible opportunities of forgiveness. The process can be done for more than once until the Officers are satisfied that the community and the victim and his/her family will accept the offender and allow him/her to function once more as one of them in the community. Challenges might arise. In the cases of rape, attempted or murder, theft of high-value goods and other crimes deemed serious within that

community. These cases might involve more than one visit by the Prison Officers. The Prison Officers might seek the assistance from Police/Social Services/Psychologists/Community leaders and other persons deemed necessary to ease the tension and afford the inmate a second chance in his/her home of origin.

### ***3.6 Pre-Release Counselling of Inmate***

This step involves the establishment of psychological, emotionally, physically and spiritual readiness of the offender to meet, re-engage and function in his/her community of origin (face the community process). This is a continuous process that should be done at least two to six months before release from prison depending on the crime committed. The following applies;

- Re-union counselling (emotional readiness, spiritual and physical readiness-holistic developing)
- Face the victim and community process (psychological readiness)
- Self-esteem and realisation initiatives
- Readiness to meet the victim, appreciate forgiveness and relationship restoration
- Prepared for dream/vision rolling (resource mobilization readiness)
- Facilitate a wide range of resource mobilization and linkages with other players in line with the offender's dream
- Continuous monitoring
- Link the inmate to financial institutions for possible financial assistance as the former inmate prepares to move towards his/her dream back in the community of origin. In fact, the financial institutions should be regularly invited to prisons, training the inmates on project proposals for financial assistance.

For assurance, there might be a need for the victim or victim's relatives or local leaders to visit the inmate whilst still incarcerated as part of the on-going counselling process. It should be realised that the most psychologically difficult situation of the inmate is to count days towards release, especially when he/she committed a serious crime within the community of origin. The questions always in the mind of the inmates include; how will the community welcome, will they accept me, will they not discriminate me, how will the victim and his/her relatives accept me, will I still function safely as one of the community members in my community, what will my family and relatives say, will they give me a heroes' welcome, will it increase they vulnerably, am I not going to be the song and chat of the community? The inmate deals with many unanswered questions that the Prison should deal with before releasing the former offender into the community.

### ***3.7 Victim/Offender Desensitization Engagement***

It should be accepted that this is a very practical difficult situation one would never want to face, especially after committing a gruesome crime. The face-the-victim or victim-face-the-offender process. Though it is very difficult it is worth doing to heal the internal wounds and prepare for the future functioning of the two. Desensitization is a process that

will go even for years after the release of the offender. It brings healing in the hearts of both, the offended and offender. The process is very difficult especially when it involves a child or close relatives. Tempers might flare but need to be mutually managed by trained and skilled Psychologists/Counsellors. As such, the Prison Rehabilitation Officer should send a letter to the family or guardians and where possible the victim's family informing of the due release of the inmate. The Officer should timely invite these relatives to come during the stated date. The relatives and victims might come at different times. If there were from the same community and have been talking together after the incarceration, it would be good for them to come at the same time. If not, it could be prudent for them to come separately. The Rehabilitation Officer where possible he/she should request for gifts as a sign of appreciation (this is the inmate's psychological preparation for a safe landing at home). Or even, they can even take the former inmate for outdoor meals if in town. The following applies;

- Create a conducive environment that is secure, quiet and friendly without the exclusion of the other
- Facilitate reunion between the offender and victim for forgiveness and relationship restoration
- Respective the opinions of both the offender/victim before, during and after the desensitization process
- If possible recommend that the former victim attends community gathering (as desensitization process and this improves the former prisoner's psychological wellbeing)

### *3.8 Release of Offender*

It should be accepted once more that this is a very practical difficult situation that can bring happiness or inflate anger especially when a gruesome crime was committed. The face-the-community moment is one of the most touching moment where one is not sure how he/she will be treated? There are always psychological contracts amongst the former offender, offended and community. All of them have their expectations. Any move done by a former inmate has a meaning, "the incarceration really changed his life/behaviour or it seems he/she still harbours the old life traces". The former inmate should be prepared to deal with these aspects. This is a final and practical holistic preparation for a smooth landing at the community level, particularly with the victim after release from the prison. The following steps are necessary;

- The Rehabilitation Officer writes a letter to the family, local leaders and significant others, about former prisoner's prison life history, capturing the good practices, achievements and give sound and practical recommendations
- State the capacity building skills acquired and that the community should assist him/her in achieving his/her dreams through newly acquired skills
- Where possible recommend a welcome gathering/party at the homestead. The former prisoner should be given a platform to speak during the gathering



- Recommend that the former convict, visits the local community or church leaders informing them of his/her release

### ***3.9 Post Release Monitoring***

This involves the evaluation of former prisoner on his/her adaptability and adoptability of cultural and social norms, navigation of socio-economic, socio-cultural, socio-political challenges, resilience in dealing with the environment without committing crimes, how he/she is journeying on his/her livelihood dream/vision. Appreciation of the overall post-prison life, understanding what is going well and what needs to be improved in general life and particularly in the realisation of the dream/vision (empowerment). The following needs to be captured;

- Participatory (family, local leaders and the significant other) collect data on general wellness
  - Participatory collect data on empowerment initiatives
  - Participatory collect data on future plans
  - Train financial literacy skills
  - Recommend where possible for financial support
  - Make recommendation and positive remarks that will keep the former offender out of crime, that empowers him/her to keep on with his/her dreams

Research carried out in Washington State proved that the correctional industries program can be expected to result in \$5,171 in benefits per participant tied to the reduced crime. Of these total benefits, \$2,646 accrues to taxpayers in the form of reduced criminal justice system expenditures that will be avoided because recidivism is lower. As such the above mentioned correctional conceptual framework, with sound financial and human resources backing can serve the day of a hopeless convict to a valuable member of the community. Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Services should be guided by such a sound and feasible framework that takes the cognisance of the offender and victim's wellbeing anchored on empowerment and restoration of relations.

The word 'correction' means the provision of services and programmes aimed at correcting the offending behaviour of sentenced offenders in order to rehabilitate them (1 (e) of Act 25 of 2008) of South African correctional services ACT 111 OF 1998. Under this same Act, 'correctional centre' means any place established under this Act as a place for the reception, detention, confinement, training or treatment of persons liable to detention in custody or to placement under protective custody.....used as a police cell or lock-up.

The assumption and reality are that when someone has been convicted he/she goes to prison to serve for a time that is equivalent to the offence committed. The punishment saves the interest of the Government because all offences committed to citizens by offenders are committed to the Government. The prisons execute the imprisonment processes on behalf of the Government. Of late, the prisons have adopted a correctional service that aims at producing empowered and self-sustained people who are expected to commit crime no-more after prison life. According to the Australian Department for Correctional Services (2010),

most persons in custody will be released back into the community and many former offenders supervised in the community following a court order will hopefully never go to prison. It is a key strategy that offenders under supervision are offered meaningful and targeted opportunities to address their offending behaviour to break the cycle of crime. These opportunities occur within a safe and secure framework in prisons.

The correctional services have proved effective particularly in South Africa, where the research has shown that, during the apartheid era, 93% of the former offenders re-committed crimes due to lack of correctional services. The overall aim of correctional services is to empower the convicts after imprisonment to avoid recidivism. According to the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (2005), one goal of correctional industries programs is to give inmates an opportunity to acquire job skills while in prison. It is thought that increased employability will enable offenders to obtain and maintain a job upon leaving prison and that successful job market performance in the community will lower the chance that an offender will engage in future criminal activity.

Zimbabwe prisons changed to Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Services in 2008 with a mind to correct the criminal behaviour. Though many positive results have been realised due to this strategy, however much still needs to be improved in order to market these results to the outside world for further adoption. The above-mentioned conceptual framework illustrates the ideal that constitutes a 'might be a good practice' ready for worldwide marketing. This conceptual framework evolves around the concept of correcting a convicted and hopeless offender who should emerge and empowered with livelihood skills that should obstruct criminal behaviour and recidivism.

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