



Sociology of Criminal Recidivism: What Role Does the Penal Institution Play Between Rehabilitation and Prevention?

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Abstract: This study seeks to assess the effectiveness of rehabilitation and correctional policies within Algerian penal institutions—measured against contemporary penal policy—in curbing criminal recidivism. Adopting a sociological approach that prioritizes an in-depth understanding of rehabilitation and social-reintegration programs, the research was conducted on a snowball sample of 30 former inmates released from correctional facilities in Biskra province. Using a descriptive methodology, data were gathered through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The findings reveal shortcomings in the activation of the inmate-classification system and a limited role for social workers relative to the functions assigned by Law 05-02. By contrast, educational and vocational-training programs, alongside psychological and religious support, demonstrated positive impact. Deficiencies were also observed in the post-release care and reintegration service, attributable to multiple factors.

Keywords: crime; penal institution; recidivism.

I. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of deviance has imposed itself as a clear indicator of underlying structural imbalance—social, economic and political—that produces such behaviors. The recurrence of deviant conduct, as one manifestation of that phenomenon, is among the most serious and complex social challenges. It attracts particular attention from researchers and practitioners concerned with reform and prevention, as it signals a failure of social subsystems to perform their preventive and corrective functions—most notably for individuals with criminal records.

A multi-country study by **Yukhnenko et al. (2023)** covering 33 nations found that reconviction rates within two years of release ranged between 18 % and 55 % (Denis, Leen, & Seena, 2023). For Algeria, Rabeh (2016) cites data from the Civil Authority for the Reintegration of Ex-Offenders indicating that almost 2 000 of the 5 000 prisoners released in 2015 were at risk of reoffending. These statistics underscore the intricate interplay of individual, institutional and societal factors driving recidivism and explain the practical challenges facing Algerian correctional programs. Indeed, whether an offender reoffends is now regarded as an operational benchmark for gauging the effectiveness of prison-based rehabilitation and the institution's capacity to reshape inmate behavior and reintegrate offenders as socially accepted members of the community.

Because safeguarding society from deviance and crime is an essential imperative, it is vital to operationalize punishment as a mechanism for deterrence, reform and social security by correcting inmates' behavior through structured rehabilitation. Experience shows that controlling the emergence or recurrence of criminal acts—and adopting measures to confront and prevent them—requires addressing their root causes through a division of labor among social institutions. Within such an integrated social plan, the penal institution assumes a pivotal role as part of the formal social system: it is an instrument of social control tasked with preventive–corrective objectives by rehabilitating and reintegrating offenders during and after sentence execution (after-care). Prisons are thus no longer limited to isolating criminals and imposing severe sanctions; they have become spaces for reform, education and social re-entry, guided by purposeful programs grounded in humane treatment (“humanizing prisons”). (**Sadiqi et al. 2002.**) note that punishment aims “no longer at annihilating or exacting revenge upon the inmate, but at temporarily removing him in order to rehabilitate him psychologically and socially.” Such aims can only be realized through educational, moral, health, vocational and social mechanisms embedded in modern penal policy, enabling offenders to become productive citizens capable of social adjustment—during imprisonment and, crucially, after release via after-care, which shields them from relapse and fosters stable integration. **Wadai (2010, p. 2)** stresses that prison-based rehabilitation is incomplete without post-release care that protects ex-offenders from social relapse and aids their reintegration.

Algeria's penal policy has, like that of many states, undergone a fundamental shift, culminating in Law 05-02 on the Organization of Prisons and the Social Reintegration of Prisoners, which replaced Ordinance 72-02. The law seeks to entrench the reformatory character of penal institutions through a new correctional system responsive to societal change—providing health and psychological care, education and vocational training, engaging civil-society actors and guaranteeing after-care in order to eradicate or reduce recidivism.

Despite these positive reformist intentions, field realities reveal a clear gap between declared objectives and practical implementation, prompting questions about the scope and efficacy of the penal institution's role in limiting recidivism and in fulfilling its preventive mandate.

Accordingly, this study is guided by the following central question:

To what extent is the penal institution effective, both in its reformatory and preventive capacities, in confronting recidivism among released offenders?

From this overarching question, several subsidiary questions arise:

1. How do psychological and social-support programs mitigate recidivism factors among inmates?
2. What role do educational and vocational-training programs play in preparing inmates for post-release life?

3. How does religious guidance within the penal institution cultivate preventive awareness that discourages recidivist behavior?
4. What role does the external service for social reintegration play in securing employment opportunities for released inmates?

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1. Conceptual Framework

1.1 Penal Institution

Drawing on Mustapha Cherik's definition, a penal institution is "an establishment designed to accommodate persons sentenced to custodial penalties—often termed rehabilitation centres or reformatories—whose goal is to rehabilitate the prisoner socially, psychologically, physically, vocationally, intellectually and religiously, so that he can reintegrate into a social setting and an official mind-set, aspiring to elevate his personality to that of a conscious and responsible human being" (Cherik, 2008).

1.2 Recidivism

In this study, recidivism is viewed as a setback experienced by a released prisoner who, after serving his sentence and re-entering society, encounters rejection and exclusion, falls again into deviance and returns to prison—hence the label "returning offender."

1.3 Crime

Conduct that violates social norms and moral rules, for which legal sanctions are prescribed and applied within penal institutions; the severity of the penalty varies according to the nature of the offence committed.

1.4 Non-recidivist Releasee

Any individual who has reached the age of criminal responsibility, has previously been sentenced and subsequently released after serving that sentence. In this study, a releasee is classed as non-recidivist if he committed a misdemeanor, was finally convicted and served the sentence, and five years or more have elapsed since its completion. Article 54 bis 3 of the Algerian Penal Code stipulates: "If a natural person has been finally convicted of a misdemeanor and, within five years of completing the previous sentence, commits the same misdemeanor, the maximum term of imprisonment and the fine prescribed for that misdemeanor shall be doubled" (Algerian Penal Code, 2012.). Thus, an offence committed within that five-year window constitutes recidivism; beyond that period, any subsequent offence is treated as a first offence, without sentence enhancement. Accordingly, anyone who has remained offence-free for five years or more after release is deemed non-recidivist for the purposes of this study.

1.5 Prevention

Here, crime prevention is defined as a form of social control encompassing the corrective and therapeutic measures adopted by the penal institution to care for and protect released prisoners, thereby averting their return to deviance and crime.

2. Literature Review:

2.1 Study by Mustapha Cherik (2010)

Entitled "The Prison System in Algeria: A Look at the Rehabilitation Process as Experienced by Prisoners," this evaluative work set out to examine the actual state of rehabilitation strategies in Algerian prisons. Viewing the prison as a formal social institution charged with social control—through reform and prevention achieved by rebuilding, disciplining and reintegrating the individual—the researcher dissected the performance of prison programs and services, highlighting both successes and shortcomings. His central question was: Do Algerian prisons truly work to rehabilitate sentenced inmates?

To answer it, Cherek conducted fieldwork with former prisoners who had been held in several correctional facilities across eastern Algeria.

The principal findings were that most inmates perceive prison as a space for reform, yet the role of the social worker is effectively absent—a gap that undermines a core pillar of the rehabilitation process and hinders proper reintegration. Most respondents found psychological care to be only somewhat adequate. They nevertheless confirmed that prisons make genuine efforts to offer opportunities for continuing or remedial education, and most had benefited from vocational-training programs. Nearly all also stressed the positive influence of religious support on their behavior. On the basis of these results, Cherek concluded that the new Prison Organization Act devotes considerable attention to inmate care and reform through therapeutic measures designed to ensure social reintegration and protect prisoners from future deviance, relying on a range of rehabilitative programs (Cherek, 2010).

2.2 Study by Nael Al-Rashidi (2010)

Titled “The Effectiveness of Rehabilitation and Reform Programs in Reducing Recidivism”, this field study was conducted by the researcher on inmates in the prisons of the Hail region. The study aimed to:

- Assess inmates’ perceptions of the effectiveness of vocational rehabilitation programs in reducing recidivism;
- Examine inmates’ perceptions of the effectiveness of religious programs in limiting reoffending
- Determine whether statistically significant differences exist in inmates’ perceptions regarding the effectiveness of reform and rehabilitation programs in reducing recidivism, based on variables such as age, marital status, educational level, income, type of crime, and number of incarcerations.

The main findings were as follows:

- The overall mean of respondents’ answers indicated a high level of perceived effectiveness of educational programs in reducing recidivism.
- The overall mean of responses also indicated a high level of perceived effectiveness of vocational rehabilitation programs in reducing reoffending.
- The same applied to religious programs: respondents reported a high average level of perceived effectiveness in curbing recidivism.
- Statistically significant differences were found in inmates’ perceptions of the effectiveness of rehabilitation and reform programs (vocational, educational, religious) in reducing recidivism, linked to variables such as age, marital status, educational attainment, income, type of offence, and frequency of incarceration. (Al-Rashidi, 2010).

2.3 Study Awad ben. Muṭlaq Al-Qaḥṭani (2000)

Titled “The Impact of Sentence Reduction for Inmates Who Memorize the Qur’an on Reducing Recidivism”, this theoretical and applied study was conducted in the prisons of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, within the Department of Police Sciences in Riyadh. The research is built upon a central idea: the role of royal decrees issued by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques concerning inmates, which grant a partial pardon—specifically, a reduction of half the sentence—to those who fully memorize the Holy Qur’an with proper recitation, under regulated conditions. This is in accordance with the first royal order issued on 07/02/1408 AH under number 107. It also considers the pardon granted to inmates who memorize two or more parts of the Qur’an, in line with the second supplementary royal order No. 4/4081 issued on 27/11/1411 AH. The study seeks to examine the effect of both decrees on inmates’ behavior, particularly whether they refrain from re-engaging in the conduct that originally led to their imprisonment. It further investigates the ratio of non-recidivists to recidivists from the issuance of the first royal order until the year 1417 AH.

The rationale behind the study rests on the premise that the Holy Qur’an serves as a spiritual and moral instrument of reform and represents a therapeutic

remedy for deviant behavior. Hence, linking sentence remission to Qur'an memorization and engagement with its meanings is considered highly significant in understanding inmates' transformation.

Key findings included:

- None of the inmates who memorized the entire Quran and received a pardon reoffended.
- Among those who memorized portions of the Quran and received a pardon, the recidivism rate was only 1.5 %.
- Overall, memorization of the Quran markedly strengthened self-control and contributed positively to behavior modification, preventing relapse into crime (Al-Qahtani, 2000).

2.4 Study by Minor and colleagues (1999)

An American study titled "Recidivism among Released Prisoners under Supervision," conducted in the state of Kentucky over three years (1 January 1996 – 30 June 1999). The core aim was to explore the relationship between recidivism rates and the supervisory skills used by probation officers to curb deviant and criminal behavior. The sample comprised 200 parolees released from Kentucky prisons.

Findings showed that 72 % had at least a secondary-school education, 63 % found employment, and 69.5 % were not returned to prison within one or two years of supervision, having neither violated probation conditions nor committed new offences (Minor et al., 2003.).

2.5 Study by Garden and Weldon (2003)

Titled "The Impact of Vocational and Technical Education Programs on Adult Offenders: Education Behind Bars," this one-year applied study at Huttonsville Correctional Center (West Virginia) aimed to measure recidivism rates among inmates who participated in educational programs during incarceration. Results indicated a distinctly positive effect: recidivism fell to 6.71 % among prisoners who joined academic programs and to 8.75 % among those in vocational-training programs, whereas non-participants recorded a 26 % rate (Garden & Weldon, 2003).

Commentary on the Previous Studies:

In terms of subject matter, the studies vary in focus, yet most investigate the relationship between prison-based reform and rehabilitation programs and recidivism—precisely the link the present research seeks to explore. Methodologically, differences reflect the diverse problems addressed: some studies adopt a descriptive approach, others employ surveys or content analysis. The current study aligns with several of these works by using a descriptive method. Regarding samples, most studies were conducted on inmates still inside prisons, with the exception of the Algerian study; accordingly, the present research concurs with the Algerian model by focusing on released, non-recidivist prisoners. Geographically, the previous studies cover varied regions, and none coincide with the current study's setting in Biskra province.

II– Methods and Materials:

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive research approach, as it proves most appropriate for examining a current social phenomenon embedded within the Algerian societal structure—namely, the recurrence of criminal behavior among released prisoners. The method allows for a systematic investigation into the observable aspects of the phenomenon, providing a foundation for classifying and analyzing data with precision and objectivity. By doing so, the study seeks to assess the extent to which the correctional institution, as one of the formal mechanisms of social regulation, performs

a meaningful rehabilitative and preventive role. The guiding research question was therefore: How effective is the penal institution's reformatory-preventive role in confronting recidivism among releasees?

Temporal and Geographical Scope

Fieldwork was conducted in Biskra Province between 5 January 2025 and 30 June 2025.

Sampling Technique

The target population is composed of released offenders who have not reoffended which is both unknown in size and difficult to access, since most non-recidivists prefer to conceal their past. To navigate this constraint, the snowball sampling technique was employed, as it is widely regarded as appropriate for studying populations engaged in socially sensitive or stigmatized behaviors, such as former offenders or drug users whose actions run counter to legal norms and prevailing societal values.

Due to the indeterminate nature of the target population and the difficulty in constructing a comprehensive sampling frame, snowball sampling allowed for a chain-based process in which initial respondents referred the researcher to others sharing the same characteristics. These referrals extended across various localities within the study area. Ultimately, the sample reached 35 individuals, although 5 cases were excluded due to incomplete responses, resulting in a final sample size of 30 participants.

In line with the specific focus of this study, several inclusion criteria were applied to ensure that the sample adequately reflects the conditions necessary for evaluating the preventive and rehabilitative functions of correctional institutions in addressing recidivism. These criteria are as follows:

- All participants must belong to the original target population, namely released prisoners who have not returned to criminal activity.
- Respondents must be at least 26 years of age at the time of data collection.
- A minimum of five years must have elapsed since their release, in accordance with the operational definition of the recidivism period.
- Each participant must have previously been incarcerated in a correctional facility.
- Each individual must have served a custodial sentence of no less than two years, ensuring that they were eligible to participate in institutional rehabilitation programs, as outlined by the penal framework.
- Only those who had a single experience of incarceration were included in the final sample.

Data-Collection Tools

Given the topic, objectives and descriptive design, the primary tool was a questionnaire. To overcome respondents' reluctance, the questionnaire was self-administered—i.e. completed without a face-to-face interview for three reasons: (1) to allow respondents complete freedom and candor;

(2) to give them adequate time without pressure; and (3) to reassure them that the researcher did not know their identity, thereby enhancing the credibility of their answers.

A semi-structured interview served as a complementary tool, enriching the study with information unavailable in the literature. In such interviews, the researcher uses a guide of prompting questions to obtain targeted information (Salem, 2012, p. 178). Interviews were conducted with:

- the Head of Social Development Division and Neighborhood Cells at the Social Development Agency (ADS);
- the provincial director of the National Micro-Credit Agency (ANGEM);
- the Head of the External Service for Prison Administration in charge of social reintegration of prisoners in Batna—a regional office that covers several provinces, including Biskra.

III- Results and discussion :

Table (1) : Housing arrangements during the sentence

Arrangement	Frequency	Percentage
Mixed	24	80.00 %
Classified	6	20.00 %
Total	30	100 %

The main purpose of inmate classification is to curb mixing inside prisons and head off the problems that mixing can create. Article 67 of the Prison Organization Act puts it plainly: classification exists “to separate prisoners who might exert a harmful influence on their fellows because of their criminal history or moral corruption, and to group inmates in categories that facilitate treatment and rehabilitation.” In other words, inmates must be placed where social-rehabilitation and therapeutic programs can be tailored to their needs. The survey results show that more than half of the participants—exactly 80 %—spent their sentences in mixed units. Such figures point to a serious flaw that undermines the wider reform effort. Many studies link this failure to chronic overcrowding. When cells are crammed, prisoners of every age and offence type mingle, form close bonds under harsh conditions, swap techniques, and pick up new criminal skills. Instead of functioning as centers of reform, prisons can turn into workshops for reproducing deviant behavior. Only 20 % of respondents said they had been housed under a proper classification regime. This outcome likely reflects conditions in the particular facilities where they served their sentences—institutions that, for structural or logistical reasons, were able to implement the system as the law intends.

Table (2): Contact with a social worker during imprisonment

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	17	30.35 %
No	39	69.64 %
Total	30	100 %

To make social rehabilitation genuinely effective, Article 89 of the Prison Regulation Act requires every facility to employ educators, teachers, psychologists, and social workers. The social worker in particular underpins the preventive side of the correctional mission. His or her impact hinges on grasping each prisoner’s circumstances, identifying the sources of maladjustment, and guiding the inmate toward solutions that fit the institutional setting. Survey results show that only 30 % of respondents met with a social worker during their sentence, while 70 % said they had no such contact. Most former prisoners therefore passed through their term without the structured social support intended by law. This shortfall weakens the wider rehabilitation effort, which relies on social care to keep inmates from slipping back into crime. The pattern echoes Mustapha Cherk’s

earlier findings: 55.43 % of inmates he interviewed reported no regular meetings with a social worker, even though 84.78 % felt they had a good rapport with that professional. The lack of steady guidance was linked to poorer prospects for adjustment once back in ordinary life.

Table (3): Respondents who met with a psychologist during their sentence

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	20	66.67 %
No	10	33.33 %
Total	30	100 %

An examination of the table shows that most participants—66.67 %—reported attending sessions with a psychologist, while 33.33 % said they had not. The figures point to a clear benefit from having a psychologist on staff. Such sessions offer inmates a safe outlet for negative feelings and suppressed emotions, using structured dialogue and disclosure to restore psychological balance and rebuild self-confidence. In this way, prisoners are better able to coexist with others until their release. The 33.33 % who did not attend may have felt that their situation did not warrant help or lacked confidence in the support a psychologist could provide.

Table (4): Enrolment in education programs and level of benefit

Participation and benefit		Frequency		Percentage	
Yes	high benefit	20	8	66.66%	26.67%
	moderate benefit		10		33.33%
	low benefit		02		6.67 %
No		10		33.33 %	
Total		30		100 %	

Article 94 of the Prison Regulation and Prisoner Reintegration Act requires institutions to offer inmates classes in general education, technical subjects, and vocational training, and to supply the resources those programs need.

To gauge how well these courses work in practice, the survey asked whether respondents had been able to join any educational program while serving their sentences and, if so, how much they benefited. Two out of three respondents (66.66 %) said they had been offered a place in such classes; the remaining third (33.33 %) had not.

Among those who did enroll, benefit levels varied. Roughly one third of the total sample (33.33 %) judged the benefit to be moderate, just over a quarter (26.67 %) rated it high, and a small group (6.67 %) reported only slight benefit.

Most former inmates in the study therefore had at least some exposure to classroom learning while inside, across different educational stages. This pattern suggests that prisons are indeed acting on modern penal policy, which calls for raising inmates' educational attainment. The outcome aligns with Garden Howard and Walden Bracie's findings from Huttonsville, where education programs cut recidivism, and with Nael Al-Rashidi's work in Hail, which recorded high inmate ratings for the crime-prevention value of educational courses.

Table (05): Respondents' participation in vocational-training workshops

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	17	56.67 %
No	13	43.33 %
Total	30	100 %

The responses show that 56.67 % of the sample joined vocational-training workshops that matched their interests—the highest proportion recorded—while 43.33 % reported no benefit from such workshops.

The predominance of participants suggests that the penal institution endeavors to offer training in various trades and crafts, helping inmates acquire skills that will make them productive citizens and ease their social reintegration after release, thereby supporting their psychological stability. These findings accord with the study by Garden Howard and Walden Bracie, which found

that vocational training reduces recidivism rates, and with Nael Al-Rashidi's work, where inmates in Hail prisons rated vocational programs highly for preventing a return to crime. The 43.33 % who did not join a workshop may have preferred other programs more in line with their personal interests.

Table (6): Participation in a vocational-training workshop inside the prison and its link to obtaining employment after release

Employment after release Participation in a vocational-training workshop	Yes								No						Total	
	Micro-credit projects		Social network jobs		Pre-employment contracts		Other jobs		Rejected for criminal record		Rejected for lack of trust		No suitable job		n	%
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Yes	7	23.33	2	6.67	1	3.33	1	3.33	04	13.33	2	6.67	01	3.33	18	60
No	3	10.00	1	3.33	00	00	2	6.67	3	10.00	2	6.67	01	3.33	12	40
Total	10	33.33	3	10.00	1	3.33	3	10.00	7	23.33	4	13.33	02	6.66	30	100

More than half of the respondents (60 %) had taken part in a vocational-training workshop while in prison. Among this group, 36.66 % obtained employment after release, most frequently through micro-credit projects (23.33 %). Those projects are attractive because they yield quick profits, yet their conditions are strict; the head of the ADS neighborhood-cell division and the ANGEM director explained that the tight rules are meant to prevent beneficiaries from defaulting on repayments. The remaining cases are scattered across other employment schemes, showing that the prison and external agencies are working together—albeit modestly—to reintegrate former inmates as productive citizens.

Conversely, 23.33 % of workshop participants did **not** secure work. The leading obstacle was employers' reluctance to hire them owing to lack of trust (6.67 %); although the percentages are small, they signal a clear form of social stigma. Among those who did not attend a workshop (40 % of the sample), one fifth nevertheless found jobs. They probably relied on skills they already possessed before imprisonment or drew on personal contacts.

Overall, prison-based vocational training acts as a positive lever for professional and social reintegration. Its impact, however, depends on the absence of external barriers—above all, social stigma—that can blunt the effect of the programs despite genuine rehabilitative efforts inside the institution and in the wider community.

Table (7): Effects of preaching and religious-guidance lessons on the respondents' behavior

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Repentance from sin	3	10.00 %
Memorising the Qur'an	3	10.00 %
Diligence in performing religious duties	2	6.67 %
All of the above	22	73.33 %
Total	30	100 %

The results for the table on the effects of preaching and religious-guidance lessons on respondents' behavior show that 73.33% of releasees stated that these lessons improved their behavior in all of the listed dimensions. A share of 10.00% reported that the lessons helped them repent of sin and memorize the Qur'an. The smallest proportion, 6.67%, indicated that the lessons mainly helped them be diligent in performing religious obligations. Given the highest recorded proportion, it can be said that preaching and religious-guidance programs play a positive role in prisoners' lives and help redirect them toward upright conduct. This clearly indicates the strength of these programs and their impact on inmates. They assist with repentance, seeking forgiveness and feeling remorse for past crimes. Qur'an memorization has an especially effective impact in bringing psychological comfort and raising morale among prisoners, as confirmed by Al-Qahtani's study, which found that the Qur'an markedly strengthened beneficiaries' self-control and added a positive element to behavior modification and regulation, preventing a return to deviance and crime. Commitment to religious duties also supports rectitude in dealings with others. Taken together, these practices function as religious controls that protect the individual from contemplating a future return to deviant criminal behavior.

Table (8): Enrollment in preaching and religious-guidance lessons and diligence in attending

Option		Frequency		Percentage	
Yes	Always	22	16	73.33%	53.33%
	Sometimes		4		13.33%
	Never		2		06.67%
No		8		26.67%	
Total		30		100%	

Article 66/3 of the Prison Organization Act states: "The prisoner has the right to practice his religious duties and to receive a visit from a cleric of his faith" (Prison Organization Act, 2005, p. 14). According to respondents, and as the table shows, the prison gives clear attention to preaching and religious-guidance lessons as a humane, behavior-oriented reform tool. This is reflected in 73.33% of responses. Among these, 66.66% of those who answered "always" and "sometimes" reported that they make a point of attending the lessons, compared with 06.67% who said the lessons are offered but they do not attend. This pattern indicates a positive role for religious programs in rehabilitating sentenced prisoners, strengthening the desire to repent and to avoid behavior linked to crime. The result aligns with Nael Al-Rashidi's study, where the overall mean for the perceived effectiveness of religious programs in limiting recidivism in Hail prisons was high, and with Mustapha Cherk's study, in which a large majority viewed religious programs as important for behavioral correction.

By contrast, 26.67% reported that the prison does not provide preaching or religious-guidance lessons. This may be due to shortcomings in organizing such programs or to limited material resources, such as rooms for religious sessions, given the large inmate population. As a result, not all prisoners have the chance to attend. This can negatively affect one pillar of rehabilitation, even though many international experiences have shown that religious programs can have direct and indirect effects in reducing recidivism and curbing its spread.

Table (9): Assistance provided by the External Reintegration Service in finding employment after release

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	4	13.33 %
No	26	86.67 %
Total	30	100 %

The External Service for the Care and Social Reintegration of Prisoners constitutes an extension of the penal institution's work into the community for inmates after release. It is responsible for attending to them in several respects, including directing them to various professional bodies that have partnership agreements with the Ministry of Justice, with the aim of integrating released individuals and helping them obtain jobs under the different schemes set out in those agreements. The purpose is to assist their social adjustment by integrating them and enabling them to perform their role effectively like other members of society.

According to the table, more than half of the sample reported that they were not guided or assisted in finding employment after release by this service, which is reflected in a rate of 86.67 percent, while a small proportion, 13.33 percent, reported the opposite. This points to a discrepancy between what the Prison Organization Act requires these services to implement and what exists in practice, indicating a functional shortcoming in the external service's performance of its legally defined social tasks. This has a negative impact on the psychological dimension that supports the released person's normal adaptation and reintegration, in contrast to the findings of Minor and colleagues, where 63 percent of the sample obtained employment after release.

This deficiency in the external service's work appears to result from several factors, as confirmed by the Director of the External Service for the Social Reintegration of Prisoners in Batna province during our interview. He stated that the service faces many challenges that hinder its core function of aftercare and social reintegration for releasees, most notably a shortage of qualified human resources, both in number and in caliber, to cover internal gaps. He also noted the small number of such services nationwide compared with the number of affiliated penal institutions, which adversely affects performance. In addition, many inmates are unaware that the service exists, which may weaken its preventive role and, in turn, increase the likelihood of a return to crime if conditions emerge that facilitate such a relapse.

II. Results and discussion :

Based on the analysis of the previous tables and the respondents' answers, the following findings were reached:

- Concerning the inmate classification process, the data in Table 1 highlight a clear issue: the classification system is not being properly implemented. This signals a dysfunction within the rehabilitation process, one that often stems from overcrowding. In such a context, prisons tend to become spaces where deviant behavior is reproduced, as prisoners from different age groups and with diverse criminal backgrounds are placed together. This uncontrolled mixing facilitates the transmission of deviant models, turning the institution from a rehabilitative setting into one that fosters future reoffending. The absence of a scientifically grounded classification approach may ultimately undermine the success of the entire rehabilitative and preventive program, particularly in its psychological and social dimensions.
- The findings also point to the limited role of the social worker in the rehabilitation process. Most respondents did not report attending social work sessions, suggesting that this component of institutional support remains insufficient. This gap is inconsistent with what current penal policy prescribes, particularly the responsibility of the social worker to assist prisoners in preparing for reintegration through structured support sessions. These are intended to promote behavioral adjustment and facilitate post-release adaptation. By contrast, the psychologist's role appeared more prominent and effective, with more than half of the sample reporting psychological support that helped them adjust and reintegrate socially. This outcome reflects positively on the implementation of penal policy in this specific area.
- The results further indicate that educational programs within correctional institutions have progressed significantly. This trend is visible across different levels of instruction and reflects the institutions' effort to implement rehabilitative strategies. The knowledge and skills gained through education provide inmates with tangible opportunities to access employment or develop independent projects after release, thus facilitating their social reintegration and contributing to crime prevention.
- Similarly, the study confirmed a positive orientation toward vocational training, with a notable percentage of respondents reporting participation in these programs. This indicates a genuine effort on the part of correctional institutions to reduce recidivism by equipping inmates with practical skills that align with labor market needs. These training programs also support inmates' psychological stability and prepare them for a smoother transition upon release.
- Within the broader context of rehabilitation and reform, the results underline the positive impact of religious preaching and guidance programs. These are now embedded in penal policy as structured rehabilitative tools. Their effectiveness is evident in the consistent attendance

reported by more than half the sample. Respondents associated these sessions with spiritual relief and moral reflection, both of which helped reshape their thinking and distance them from criminal behavior. These outcomes reinforce the importance of maintaining such programs within the institutional framework.

- On the other hand, in the context of post-release reintegration, the findings reveal a marked weakness in the role played by the external reintegration service. Most respondents reported that this service had not assisted them in finding employment after release. This indicates that, in practice, it remains largely ineffective in fulfilling its legally mandated preventive and support functions. The lack of active post-release support not only disrupts the reintegration process but may also heighten the risk of reoffending, especially in the absence of stable employment and societal acceptance..

III. Conclusion:

Based on the preceding analysis and the empirical findings of this study, it is clear that the penal institution—as part of the broader security and correctional system tasked with maintaining social order—plays a critical role in reform and reintegration. Within the framework of modern penal policy, which promotes the humanization of prisoners, this role is operationalized through a set of targeted programs designed to modify behavior and prevent recidivism. These efforts, however, require coordinated institutional and societal engagement to be truly effective.

The findings confirm that several rehabilitation programs—particularly in education and vocational training—have shown tangible results, both in this study and in comparable research. Nevertheless, when the content of the legal framework is weighed against actual institutional practice, clear gaps emerge. These relate primarily to shortages in material resources, structural capacity, and qualified personnel. This shortfall is made more pressing by the rapid evolution of social conditions and the emergence of new forms of criminal behavior—such as cybercrime—that call for updated, tailored preventative and corrective policies.

Accordingly, addressing these deficiencies is imperative if the goals of reform and prevention are to be achieved. It is also important not to overestimate the role of institutional programs alone: no matter how well designed, they cannot by themselves guarantee behavioral change. Effective rehabilitation requires sustained support from both institutional actors and community organizations working in parallel. This includes providing the necessary infrastructure, tools, and environments to ensure that reintegration efforts are not merely symbolic, but impactful. Ultimately, this is what reduces the likelihood of reoffending.

In this context, the study proposes a set of recommendations intended to serve as a basis for future research and policy interventions aimed at addressing the structural causes of social and penal instability:

- Activate the classification system inside prisons, as it remains fundamental to the success of all rehabilitation programs.
- Support civil society initiatives that work with former inmates. These should include actors from various social sectors capable of contributing to crime and deviance prevention efforts.
- Reassess and strengthen the role of social workers within penal institutions. This involves increasing their numbers and reinforcing their function in supporting inmates' social rehabilitation.
- Establish a dedicated institution for the families of prisoners, especially children, modelled on certain Arab country experiences, to ensure their basic social needs are met and reduce their exposure to deviance.
- Expand the external reintegration services by creating local branches for each penal institution. This would ease the burden on existing regional offices and enhance the post-release support framework.

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- Encourage academic research in the field of penal policy by lifting bureaucratic restrictions and facilitating collaboration between universities, research centers, and practitioners. This would generate evidence-based proposals for improving correctional strategies and post-release care programs.
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