

## The Empirical Examination of the Socio-Economic Effects of Convicts in Ghana

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### Abstract

*The study examines in-depth knowledge relating to the socio-economic effects of incarceration in Ghana. And further conduct a careful examination of the impact on convicts, their immediate family and working environments, as well as the government expenditure burden through the tax-payer on inmates. The study adopted the approach of qualitative and phenomenological methods to ascertain empirical findings to guide policy formulation and adjudication in Ghana and West Africa as a whole.*

**Keywords:** *Inmates, Prison Industry, Security, Human Capital, Incarceration, Rehabilitation.*

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### Introduction

The use of the term ‘convicts’ in this study, is referring to certain kinds of prisoners with a strong professional orientation either in the formal or informal sector of Ghana and undertaking socio-economic responsibilities prior to their incarceration. For this very reason, the study explores the use of the Human Capital Theory, developed by the Nobel Prize-winning American economist, [1], and [2]. This theory states that the training and education of citizens should be regarded as an investment due to the high amount of money involved. The theory further suggests that organizational and national investment in education, training, healthcare, and other human development-related expenditures should be regarded as investments, which produce long-standing advantages. The theory emphasizes that one’s ability to learn faster than one’s competitors is a source of competitive edge for organizations and nations, and the essence of regarding organizational and national members as a crucial resource for development to this end, Human resource development is generally defined to include processes that develop and release human expertise [3]. In order to achieve socio-economic progress, interconnected activities must function as a combined system in this manner, referred to as the five interdependent energizers for Human Resource Development, which are; education, health, nutrition, environment, employment, political and economic freedom [4]. Education and training

are, therefore, critical dynamics for economic growth and national development.

Ghana can drastically improve its economic growth if thorough attention will be given to the development of its human resources to the fullest. For a country to accomplish constructive economic growth, human capital development needs to be regarded as a fundamental and essential dynamic in the pursuance of economic growth [5]. The accomplishment of the sustainable development pillars will be possible, in that Ghana has a population of 30,643,662 [6]. The active age range of 15-60 years is the bedrock of the economy. Out of the total population of 30,643,662; (9,017,407) falls within the age ranges of 15-60, which is 29.4% of the entire population [7]. It is on record that out of the active population of 9,017,407 in Ghana, 15,463 (0.17%) have been incarcerated [8]. The problem to be studied here is, ‘What is the socio-economic effect of prisoners’ impacts on their families and the nation at large?’ It is for these reasons that the study seeks to critically examine the social and economic importance of developing and exploiting the human capital of prison inmates in Ghana.

The study seeks to explore and provide information on five dimensions of prison inmates who were actively working before their incarceration to the Nsawam Prisons in the Akuapim South Municipality of the Eastern Region of Ghana, which is largely classified among the forty-five (45) prisons established as a medium-security prison, which house inmates

that meet the five-dimensional investigative focus of this study. The dimensions to be investigated in the life of the active prisoners include the social impact of imprisonment, the personal impact of imprisonment, the impact of imprisonment on families, the economic impact of imprisonment, and the impact of imprisonment on human capital development. Accordingly, the five research questions are based on the dimensions of the Ghanaian prisoners who were incarcerated when they were actively working. The findings of this qualitative study would benefit academia, the labour industry, revenue collection agencies, and for socio-economic development policymakers.

## Literature Review

The education and training of human resources have a direct relationship with economic growth in every economy. Several studies have discovered that there exists a positive correlation between human capital development, economic growth, and development [9]. It is therefore imperative for every country to invest heavily in education because it is the bedrock of the economic prosperity of all nations. Indisputably, the strength of an economy and the number of educated people is directly related. Therefore, the fundamental role of human capital in an economy is determined by the enrollment rates of senior high school students [10]. It has been highly recommended that more emphasis is placed on the investment of human capital development instead of capital investment [11]. Productivity is the derivative of the rate of return on one's human capital. It has been strongly suggested that output increases, when there is an investment in human capital development through education, training, medical care – a nation's output are contingent and partly on the rate of return on human capital that nation owns [5]. Human capital remains indispensable in the quest to achieve economic growth and development. [12], employed the endogenous growth model in the assessment of human capital development and economic growth in Nigeria. He made use of admission in the different echelons of education, which included primary, secondary, and tertiary as alternatives for human capital and discovered an extensive positive relationship between human capital development and economic growth in Nigeria with a response procedure [13]. There was a positive relationship, which exhibited itself

between the education of citizens and gross domestic product in the work of [14]. The researcher utilized the enhanced Solow human-capital-growth model to explore the impact of human capital development on national product, a proxy for economic growth, using quarterly time-series data from 1999-2012.

## Methodology

The purpose of the adoption of the qualitative study is to obtain detailed information on the prison inmates of the Nsawam Medium Prisons in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The study will focus on the experiences and challenges prisoners face during their stay in their prison homes. Secondly, is to carefully search and discover empirically the contextual case of Ghana in relation to existing theories of scholars in human capital development, focusing on human capital development, the need, levels of education, and their contribution to economic growth and development. It an approach with the intent to search and establish theoretical frameworks and perspectives on the need for human capital development about the powerfulness of human resources in promoting economic growth and development.

The third purpose of the study is to discover the social effects of incarceration. The study aims at examining the kind of social consequences of the incarceration of the active labour force – social challenges faced by the prisoner, children, siblings, spouse(s), and parents during the prison term of the incarcerated. The study is aimed at delving into the psychological and emotional states of the prisoner, children, siblings, spouse(s), and parents during the term of imprisonment.

The fourth purpose of the study is to discover the economic effects of incarceration, the kinds of economic consequences of the incarceration of the active labour force– the effects of imprisonment on employment, personal income, government revenue, government expenditure and human capital development. In order to have complete knowledge of human actions, social researchers resort to the use of qualitative research, targeting the collection of an in-depth report on human actions and principles within the situational framework in which they occur [15]. The phenomenological approach will be adopted for the study. The objective of the researcher is to describe as precisely as possible the experiences

of prisoners in Nsawam Prisons in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The researcher will be able to clarify, identify and understand the specific situations: the social, psychological, emotional and economic phenomena in the lives of prisoners from their own viewpoints [16]. The researcher would like to obtain first-hand information from the prisoners. An investigation into the lived experiences of research participants is the main concern of the researcher, hence the use of the phenomenological approach for the study [17]. The researcher will obtain qualitative data from both primary sources. The primary data will be collected through interviews. Purposeful sampling will be adopted for the research. Purposeful sampling technique deals with ascertaining and selecting persons or bodies that are particularly well-informed about a phenomenon of relevance in their lives [18]. Understanding the research problem and the research questions by participants reinforces the success of this qualitative research. The main objective of qualitative research is to purposefully decide on participants that will help to comprehend the research problem and the research questions [19]. A sample of sixteen participants will take part in the research. The choice of fewer than twenty participants in this qualitative study will help the researcher to develop and keep a close relationship with participants for sincere conversation [20]. The secondary data will be cross-examined with the primary data. The classification of the primary and secondary strategies will be crucial to the practical approach of triangulation [21]. The researcher will employ one form of triangulation known as data triangulation, which is the adoption of the same approach of data collection at different or of a different approach on the same object of the inquiry [22].

### **Research Questions**

R1. What are the social effects of the imprisonment of active labour in Ghana?

R1a. What are the effects of imprisonment of active labour on the prisoners themselves in Ghana?

R1b. What are the effects of imprisonment of active labour on the children of prisoners in Ghana?

R1c. What are the effects of imprisonment of active labour on the spouses of prisoners in Ghana?

R1d. What are the effects of imprisonment of active labour on the parents of prisoners in Ghana?

R1e. What are the effects of imprisonment of active labour on the siblings of prisoners in Ghana?

R2. What are the economic effects of the imprisonment of active labour in Ghana?

R2a. What are the effects of imprisonment of active labour on government tax revenue in Ghana?

R2b. What are the effects of imprisonment of active labour on employment in Ghana?

R2c. What are the effects of imprisonment of active labour on government expenditure in Ghana?

R2d. What are the effects of imprisonment of active labour on human capital development in Ghana?

R2e. What are the effects of imprisonment of active labour on personal income in Ghana?

### **Empirical Analysis**

Each participant was engaged as a result of individual experience as a convict being unique; however, most of them exhibited commonalities within each research question, and these themes were interrelated. Each research question was coined into a major theme, under which sub-themes (emergent themes) were organized. In all, the researcher created five (5) major themes from each of the research questions. She further identified seventeen (17) sub-themes under the five research questions. The interrelated sub-themes under each major theme were: (1) Social impacts of imprisonment: (1a) Issues of trust in society; (1b) Unfair judgment and favoritism in the legal system; (1c) Creation of public awareness on the legal system (2) Personal impacts of imprisonment: (2a) Loss of personal reputation and goodwill; (2b) Locked up knowledge and skills; (2c) Loss of relationships; (2d) Stigmatization galore (3) Impacts of imprisonment on families of convicts: (3a) Financial losses to families; (3b) Family stigma; (3c) Parental vacuum created (4) Economic impacts of imprisonment: (4a) Reduced economic growth; (4b) Reduced government revenue; (4c) Increased government expenditure; (4d) Loss of personal income (5) Human capital development and utilization: (5a) Reduction in active labour; (5b) Reduction in vocational

training experts; (5c) Rise in unemployment among the youths.

### Demographic Statistics of Participants

To understand the lived experiences of prison inmates in Ghana, data on the gender, age, marital status, educational background, experiences, and the industries in which they operated before their conviction had been investigated.

**Table 1.** Description of Participants' Background Information

Code	Gender	Age	Marital Status	Highest Level of Education	Occupational Sector	Experience (in Years)
ABC 1	Male	37	Married	First Degree	Prisons Service	6
ABC 2	Male	33	Single	Diploma	Teaching	3
ABC 3	Male	49	Married	Doctor of Medicine	Medicine	10
ABC 4	Female	34	Single	Senior High School	Trading	7
ABC 5	Female	39	Married	Diploma	Fashion Design	8
ABC 6	Male	45	Married	Master's Degree	Building Construction	10
ABC 7	Female	36	Married	First Degree	Nursing	4
ABC 8	Male	30	Single	First Degree	Banking	2
ABC 9	Male	35	Married	Senior High School	Auto Mechanism	12
ABC 10	Female	24	Single	Yet to complete Diploma	Student Nurse	0
ABC 11	Male	47	Married	Senior High School	Police Service	9
ABC 12	Male	48	Divorced/Separated	First Degree	Trading	5
ABC 13	Male	55	Divorced/Separated	Senior High School	Farming	20
ABC 14	Male	32	Married	First Degree	Trading	5
ABC 15	Female	35	Married	First Degree	Teaching	5
ABC 16	Male	52	Married	Master's Degree	Trading	15

Source: Field Data, July, 2020

The table above showed the biological data of all participants. The participants comprised

eleven males and five females, which implied that male inmates dominated the prisons in Ghana.

The youngest participant was 24 years old and the oldest was 55 years old in this category as convicts. The average age of participants was 39 years. Ten (10) out of the sixteen (16) participants were married, four were single and two were divorced or separated. One participant obtained a doctor of medicine degree, two participants

obtained their master's degrees in different fields of studies, six obtained first degrees, two held diploma certificates while one about to complete her diploma in nursing when he was convicted and four held senior high school certificates. The average experience of the participants was 7.6 years.

**Table 2.** Age Distribution of Participants

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
21-25	1	6.25
26-30	1	6.25
31-35	5	31.25
36-40	3	18.75
41-45	1	6.25
46-50	3	18.75
51-55	2	12.50
Total	16	100.00

Source: Field Data, July, 2020

From the table above, a higher proportion of the participants, 5 (31.25%) were between the ages of 31 and 35. This was followed by 3 (18.75%) who were between the ages of 36-40, 3 (18.75%) who were between the ages of 46 and 50, and 2 (12.50%) who were between the ages

of 51-55 years. The age ranges of 21-25, 26-30, and 41-45 recorded the lowest number of participants, 1 (6.25%) each. The results showed that the age range of 31-35 years dominated all the prisons in Ghana more than any other age range among the participants.

**Table 3.** Age Distribution of Female Participants

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
21-25	1	20.00
26-30	0	00.00
31-35	2	40.00
36-40	2	40.00
41-45	0	00.00
46-50	0	00.00
51-55	0	00.00
Total	5	100.00

Source: Field Data, July, 2020

From the table above, 2 (40.00%) out of the five females among the participants were found in the age range of 31-35. Similarly, 2 (40.00%) out of the five females among the participants were found in the age range of 36-40. Only 1 (20.00%) of the female participants were found in

the age range of 21-25. The rest of the age ranges of the female participants, 26-30, 41-45, 46-50, and 51-55, recorded zero. The results showed that a vast majority of Ghanaian convicts fell within the age range of 31 and 40 years.

**Table 4.** Age Distribution of Male Participants

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
21-25	0	00.00
26-30	1	9.091
31-35	3	27.273
36-40	1	9.091
41-45	1	9.091
46-50	3	27.273
51-55	2	18.182
Total	11	100.00

Source: Field Data, July, 2020.

From the table above, 3 (27.273%) out of the eleven males among the participants were found in the age range of 31-35. Similarly, 3 (27.273%) out of the eleven males among the participants were found in the age range of 46-50. Two, which was 20.00% of the male participants, were found

in the age range of 51-55. The age ranges of 26-30, 36-40, and 41-45 recorded 1 (9.091%) each out of the eleven male participants. The results showed that more than half of Ghanaian male convicts fell within the age ranges of 31-35 and 46-50 years.

**Table 5.** Gender Distribution of Participants

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	11	68.75
Female	5	31.25
Total	16	100.00

Source: Field data, July, 2020

From the above table, a majority of the participants, 11 (68.50%) were males while the rest, 5 (31.50%), were females. The results

showed that Ghanaian prisons contained more men than women.

**Table 6.** Marital status of Participants

Status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	10	62.50
Single	4	25.00
Divorced/Separated	2	12.50
Total	16	100.00

Source: Field Data, July, 2020

From the above table, it was obvious that the vast majority of 13 participants (62.25%) were married. Four participants (25.00%) had never got married. Two participants (12.50%) indicated

that they were divorced or separated from their spouses. It could be established that Ghanaian prisons were dominated by married convicts more than any other group under marital status.

**Table 7.** Educational Background of Participants

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Pre-Tertiary	4	25.00
Tertiary	12	75.00
Total	16	100.00

Source: Field Data, July, 2020

From the above table, it was clear that the vast majority of 12 participants (37.75%), who participated graduated from various universities in Ghana. Which was followed by 4 (25.00%) participants who graduated from various senior

high schools. From this table, it could be established that a lot of Ghanaian brains had found themselves in prisons for committing crimes.

**Table 8.** Educational Background of Female Participants

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Pre-Tertiary	1	20.00
Tertiary	4	80.00
Total	5	100.00

Source: Field Data, July, 2020

From the table above, 4 (80.00%) of the five females among the participants had graduated from various universities. Only 1 (20.00%) out of the five female participants reported that they

completed senior high schools. The results showed that most women who were imprisoned Ghanaians were university graduates.

**Table 9.** Educational Background of Male Participants

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Pre-Tertiary	3	27.30
Tertiary	8	72.70
Total	11	100.00

Source: Field Data, July, 2020

From the table above, 8 (72.70%) of the eleven males among the participants had graduated from various universities. Only 3 (27.30%) out of the eleven male participants reported that they

completed senior high schools. The results showed that the majority of the men who were imprisoned in Ghanaian were university graduates in such a category of study.

**Table 10.** Gender Distribution Participants with Tertiary Certificates

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	4	33.33
Male	8	66.67
Total	12	100.00

Source: Field Data, July, 2020

From the table above, 8 (66.67%) out of the twelve graduate participants were males. The rest, 4 (33.33%), of the graduate participants,

were females. The results showed that the majority of the graduate prisoners in Ghana were males in such a category of study.

**Table 11.** Occupational Background of Participants

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Security Services	2	12.50
Teaching	2	12.50
Trading	4	25.00
Health Services	3	18.75
Fashion Design	1	6.25
Building Construction	1	6.25
Banking	1	6.25
Auto Mechanism	1	6.25
Farming	1	6.25
Total	16	100.00

Source: Field Data, July, 2020

From the table above, 4 (25.00%) of the sixteen participants were traders prior to their incarceration. Out of the sixteen, 3 (18.75%) belonged to the health sector –two actively worked while one was in her final year of nurses’ training college. Two of the participants (12.50%) were working in the security services (Police Service and Prisons Service) of Ghana when they were convicted of their respective

crimes. Similarly, two of the participants (12.50%) were actively teaching in schools when they were also convicted of their various crimes. Occupations such as fashion design, building construction, banking, auto mechanism, and farming recorded one participant (6.25%) each respectively. The results showed that traders were convicted the most, followed by health services workers in Ghana.

**Table 12.** Sectors of the Economy Participants Operated in

Sector	Frequency	Percentage
Formal	8	50.00
Informal	8	50.00
Total	16	100.00

Source: Field Data, July, 2020

From the table above, 8 (50.00%), out of the sixteen participants, operated in the formal sector of the economy, which comprised security services, education, health, and banking. The

other half, 8 (50.00%), operated in the informal sector of the Ghanaian economy. The results showed that the perpetration of crimes cut across the two sectors of the Ghanaian economy.

**Table 13.** Subsectors of the Formal Sector Participants Operated in

Subsector	Frequency	Percentage
Security Services	2	25.00
Education	2	25.00
Health Services	3	37.50
Banking	1	12.50
Total	8	100.00

Source: Field Data, July, 2020

From the table above, the health services subsector recorded the highest number of crimes, 3 (37.50%) out of the eight participants who worked within the formal sector of the Ghanaian economy. This was followed by the subsectors of health services and education comprises of 2 (25.00%) for each of the eight participants who

worked in the formal sector of the Ghanaian economy. The banking subsector recorded the least number of crimes, which was 1 (12.50%), in the formal sector of the Ghanaian economy. The results showed that health workers dominated the population of formal sector workers in Ghanaian prisons in that category of study.

**Table 14.** Subsectors of the Informal Sector Participants participated in

Subsector	Frequency	Percentage
Trading	4	50.00
Fashion Design	1	12.50
Building Construction	1	12.50
Auto Mechanism	1	12.50
Farming	1	12.50
Total	8	100.00

Source: Field Data, July, 2020

From the table above, the trading subsector recorded the highest number of crimes, 4 (50.00%) out of the eight participants who worked within the informal sector of the Ghanaian economy. This was followed by the

subsectors of fashion design, building construction, auto mechanism, and farming with 1 (12.50%) each of the eight participants who worked in the informal sector of the Ghanaian economy. The results showed that traders



dominated the population of informal sector workers in Ghanaian prisons in that category of study.

### **C.2 Theme 1: Social Impacts of Imprisonment**

The first theme, social impacts of imprisonment, reflected the magnitude of the perceived social challenges created by the incarceration of criminals in society. All participants claimed that their imprisonment had brought to the limelight a plethora of social issues of trust, business relationships, justice in society, and public awareness on the laws of Ghana. Other participants claimed that their social lives had been adversely affected by their imprisonment.

### **C.3 Theme 2: Personal Impacts of Imprisonment**

The second theme, personal impacts of imprisonment, reflected the personal experiences and losses incurred by prisoners during the period of serving their various prison terms. Participants described their prison terms as the periods during which they lost their reputation, locked up their knowledge and skills, lost their relationships, and got stigmatized the most in their lives. Some of them complained that their incarceration has taken their freedom from them.

### **C4. Theme 3: Impacts of Imprisonment on Families of Convicts**

The third theme, impacts on family, reflected the magnitude of impacts imprisonment on the families of the prisoners. Participants acknowledge that their incarceration had caused their families financial losses and stigma. They admitted that their relatives had to pay a lawyer for defense in court, which drained their coffers. They also claimed that their imprisonment had created parental vacuums in the lives of their children.

### **C5. Theme 4: Economic Impacts of Imprisonment**

The fourth theme, economic impacts of imprisonment, reflected the magnitude of economic losses caused by the incarceration of criminals. Participants demonstrated their vast knowledge about the general economy. They outlined the various economic indicators that they thought could be adversely affected by their absence in the economy. Participants reported that their imprisonment had the potential to

reduce economic growth, reduce government revenue, increase government expenditure, and reduce personal income. These were their views on the performance of the economy without their participation:

### **C6. Theme 5: Human Capital Development and Utilization**

The fifth theme, human capital development and utilization, reflected the magnitude of incarceration of criminals on the rate of human resource development and its usage for economic progress. All participants described the imprisonment of perpetrators of the crime as a factor that militated against the smooth development of human capital. They regarded imprisonment as an impediment to the realization of the full potential of the benefits of human resources of convicts. They outlined a reduction in human capital, reduction in vocational training experts and a rise in unemployment among the youths.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study investigated the lived experiences of prison inmates in Ghana. Sixteen (16) convicts who worked in the sectors of security, health, education, trade, fashion design, building construction, banking, and auto mechanics were interviewed and asked to describe their experiences in their various prison yards. The study was aimed at exploring the socio-economic importance of developing and exploiting the human capital of prison inmates in Ghana. The prisoners comprised eleven males and five females, which implied that male inmates dominated the prisons in Ghana. The implication was that 31.25% of prisoners in Ghana were females while the rest were males.

The study recommends that the National Commission for Civic Education must organize seminars on the need to avoid crimes. The study also recommends that women organizations across the globe must harness resources for the creation of awareness among women on the need to eschew crime so as to avoid the creation of a parental vacuum in the lives of their children. An additional recommendation is for the Ministry of Gender and Social Protection must create a department to cater for the welfare of the children of prisoners.

The youngest prisoner was 24 years old and the oldest was 55 years old. It became clear that

all prisoners in Ghana were in their active ages during incarceration.

The average age of participants was 39 years. This implied that in Ghana most prisoners spent their prime in prison custody. This suggests that prisoners must be engaged in productive ventures, such as manufacturing so that the best can be made of their skills and labour for economic growth and development. Ten (10) out of the sixteen (16) participants were married, four were single and two were divorced or separated. This suggested that incarceration had created numerous parental vacuums and socio-economic difficulties for the children of the prisoners in society.

The study recommends that Ghanaian Prison Service must be privatized so that its contribution to economic growth and development can be monumentally felt. The average experience of the participants was 7.6 years. This suggested that the prisons of Ghana had to cage highly productive labours over the last two decades without exploiting them. Which this study recommends a maximum use to be made of their skills and labour for economic growth and development.

The study further recommends that authorities in charge of Ghanaian prisons must explore the skills and knowledge of inmates, polish them and engage them in productive enterprises for economic progress.

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