

# Promoting Socio-Economic Development through Alternative Incarceration Systems of Rehabilitation of Offenders in Nsawam Medium-Security Prisons in Ghana

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## Abstract

The study investigated the contributions of an alternative incarceration system for the rehabilitation of offenders to promote socio-economic development in Nsawam medium-security prisons. An interpretivist worldview was adopted to answer the question regarding the relationship between variables, thus making this an inductive study. A qualitative approach was followed in the study, which is in line with the selected philosophical perspective. Interviews were used to gather data from the prison officers. In the quest to reduce the potential for researcher bias and ensure the exactness of the data gathered during the interview, there was the need to conduct member checking using the sampling ratio proposed by Cochran (1963: p. 75) to arrive at variability  $p = 0.5$  (maximum variability) and with the desire of 95% confidence level and  $\pm 5\%$  precision. Hence, this study was based on a sample population of 20

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prison officers from the Nsawam medium security prison. A semi-structured interview was used to gather data from the prison officers. The interview ended when the researcher reached the point of saturation. In all, 20 prison officers were successfully interviewed. Data was generated through digital recording and were given serial numbers to enable easy identification for scoring. Having transcribed the data, an inductive approach was used to organize the data into various themes and categories based on the research questions and the objectives of the study. The interviews were conducted in two languages namely English and Twi. All interviews were transcribed personally by the researcher to ensure that no data were lost. In some instances, during the transcribing, the researcher identified some vagueness and gaps. The study concluded that prison officers at the Nsawam Medium Security prison were partially aware of alternate forms of incarceration. The study recommended that the general public be educated extensively about alternative forms of confinement, their different varieties, and the importance of their acceptance. This will go a long way toward educating the public about alternatives to imprisonment.

## Keywords

Alternative Incarceration, Rehabilitation, Offenders, Prisons Officers, Medium-Security

## 1. Introduction

Alternatives to jail are forms of punishment or therapy other than prison time that a person convicted of committing a crime may receive. Several of them are referred to as alternative penalties. Fines, restorative justice, transformational justice, or no penalty at all are all possible alternatives. According to [Cunneen, Baldry, Brown, Brown, Schwartz, and Steel \(2016\)](#), the death penalty, physical punishment, and electronic monitoring are all alternatives to jail that are not championed by contemporary prison reform campaigns. Sakho underlined that reformers' overarching goal is to decrease jail populations and promote the use of alternatives with a strong emphasis on rehabilitation. The primary grounds for this are that these sanctions decrease the likelihood of reoffending, cut state costs, and alleviate prison congestion. According to [Van Hoven \(2011\)](#), one generally favoured strategy for combating rising crime rates is the use of incarceration. Prisons are best regarded as the heart of our criminal system, not just in the public's eyes, but also in the eyes of penologists. Certain governments in the developed and developing worlds, like the United States and Ghana, have profited from this, believing that it has the capacity to rehabilitate prisoners in addition to serving as a punishment institution.

Punishment is intended to provide therapy and training to the offender in order to prepare him to reintegrate into society and operate as a law-abiding member of the community. There are several perspectives on criminal rehabili-

tation. Given the four types of theoretical reformative theories: i.e. psychologically relevant theories, social development theories, deterrent theories, and reformative theories. The Social Development Theory, proposed by Tonry and Farrington in 1995, was adopted as the theoretical foundation for this research. Social development theory, according to [Tonry and Farrington \(1995a, 1995b\)](#), is a relatively new area in crime prevention attempts. Although the notion was established more than a decade ago, it has gained prominence slowly but steadily. Social developmental preventions are treatments aimed at preventing people from developing criminal potential by addressing risk and protective variables connected with human development ([Tonry & Farrington, 1995a, 1995b](#)). Theorists of social development place a premium on treatments that try to mitigate these risk factors and strengthen the protective elements that are thought to have the greatest impact on a child's development ([Tremblay & Craig, 1995](#)). Protective factors are those that help protect children and adolescents from harm and promote positive development (for example, bonds and attachments to parents, family, school, and norms), as well as the development of cognitive, social, communication, and problem-solving skills as opposed to enabling anti-social behavior.

According to the proponents of this theory, crime prevention from a social developmental viewpoint is predicated on the premise that criminality is determined by attitudes and behavioral patterns acquired throughout development. In an ideal world, intervention would begin early enough to avoid risk factors from becoming too entrenched ([Tonry& Farrington, 1995a, 1995b](#)), based on the notion that early childhood patterns of behavior are malleable but become inflexible as the child matures. Although there is significant controversy about this hypothesis, it is widely believed that programs are designed to prevent adult and juvenile offenders from recidivating ([Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990](#)). [Danjuma, Nordin, and Muhamad \(2018\)](#) stated that children growing up in high-risk communities afflicted by poverty, poor educational attainment, unemployment, and other environmental risk factors struggle to create unambiguous, pro-social norms. In other words, as a youngster grows, he or she may be driven by specific circumstances to act out and therefore become a social misfit. Despite these theoretical lenses on the claim of alternative incarceration interventions to re-integrate offenders into society, numerous nations globally are still battling an upsurge in crime rates, both inside and without their national borders, questioning whether such alternative incarceration systems are worth the investment. Therefore, the aim of this study was to investigate the contributions of alternative incarceration systems for the rehabilitation of offenders to promote socio-economic development in Nsawam medium-security prisons. The specific objectives of the study were as follows:

- To assess the opportunities for the adoption of alternative methods of incarceration.
- To examine the preference of prison officers for predictable alternative me-

thods of incarceration.

- To identify the threats associated with the adoption of alternative methods of incarceration.

## 2. Problem Statement

According to [Worku \(2020\)](#), the primary mandate of jail is to protect society, dissuade prospective criminals from committing crimes, and punish and rehabilitate prisoners. To this aim, the primary purpose of incarceration is to rehabilitate offenders, i.e. the process of reintroducing criminals to a law-abiding way of life via intervention programs such as training in diverse skills such as masonry in preparation for post-release employment ([Ward & Stewart, 2007](#)). As a corollary to the above, [Agbelengor \(2011\)](#) remarked that “the Ghana Prison Service is tasked with the responsibility of rehabilitation of offenders while they serve their sentences in the confines of prison houses”. With this responsibility, the service has deployed various programs aimed at equipping convicts with the necessary skills to ensure that they are self-sufficient, not a burden or a nuisance to other members of the community, and can contribute positively to the development of the communities in which they live. Despite these attempts, previous studies reveal that incidences of recurrence of criminals and persons unable to establish a living following release are relatively widespread in Ghanaian culture. [Amnesty International Annual Report \(2016\)](#) in its study on prison conditions in Sub-Saharan Africa, attributes the growth in crime and the inability to rehabilitate criminals to the sub-jail region’s deplorable conditions and dysfunctional operation. This questions whether the training acquired by the inmates was relevant, adequate, and appropriate to the sophisticated job market of today, nor whether there is the inadequacy of necessary equipment and supplies, and suffer a shortage of qualified training instructors inside the jails. In a country like Ghana where resources are limited, it does not make business sense to spend a lot of money on alternative programs that are not yielding effective results. Accordingly, [Aaniazine \(2017\)](#) at Tamale Central Prison are critical of inmates upon release were unemployed, neglected, and lacked skills, which stigmatized them and increased their likelihood of re-offending. Therefore, this study investigated the contributions of the alternative incarceration system to the rehabilitation of offenders to promote socio-economic development in Nsawam medium-security prisons.

## 3. Brief Literature Review

According to [Onyango \(2013\)](#), many nations’ jails are understaffed, and few workers have undergone training that teaches them how to facilitate offender growth and reintegration. Commenting on the caliber of correctional staff, the commissioner of correctional services in South Africa was recently quoted as: “Correcting inmates is an extraordinary responsibility that needs extraordinary citizens”. I don’t have extraordinary citizens as yet; at the moment we have got

people that have got a metric and have got no criminal records. He added that his staff had no respect for prisoners and still believed that they “must lock them up and throw away the key” (Pretoria News, 29 September, 2019: 8). Additionally, the majority of African nations lack or have insufficient professional personnel such as social workers, psychologists, educators, and vocational trainers. Additionally, rehabilitation or reformation of convicts is sometimes seen narrowly, with the provision of education, training, or employment prospects being considered as the whole of rehabilitation, even when no other psychological components are addressed. When activities and amenities are provided in prisons, they are often directed toward juvenile offenders and female criminals, which may reflect donor priorities about these underrepresented groups. Rehabilitation programs that address the criminogenic factors of crime often involve the assistance of appropriately qualified specialists. Among them are programs that address cognitive-behavioral functioning, drug misuse, psychosocial dysfunction, and the formation of new attitudes. Additionally, social professionals are required to help reintegration into society, notably through reestablishing touch with family members and resolving family conflicts. Numerous African prison regimes recognize the critical role of skilled social workers and other professional personnel, yet all remain underfunded.

Incarceration is synonymous with jails and prisons, as well as other correctional institutions that house persons suspected of committing crimes (O’Sullivan, Hart, & Healy, 2020). In general, those who are booked into these facilities are referred to as prisoners. According to Bagaric, Wolf and Rininger (2018), the United States has one of the highest imprisonment rates in the world, yet this is not always due to a completely broken criminal justice system. The logical explanation for this is that the reporting is transparent, in contrast to those nations that do not provide accurate imprisonment numbers. The philosophical objective of deterrence is a major purpose of imprisonment as punishment in the criminal justice system. Many feel that prison terms prohibit prisoners from doing more criminal actions (specific deterrence) and educate prospective criminals about the potential consequences of crime (general deterrence). An “alternative to imprisonment” is any kind of punishment other than prison or jail time that a person who commits a crime may receive (Bell, 1995). According to Phelps (2011), alternative punishments usually impose severe obligations on criminals and subject them to intense court and community surveillance. Simply because a penalty does not entail prison or jail time does not make it “soft on crime” or a “slap on the wrist”. In terms of relevance, Glass (2016) believes that alternatives to jail may help victims recover, assist the community, treat drug addicts and mentally ill individuals, and rehabilitate criminals. Alternatives may also help minimize prison and jail expenses and help prevent future offenses. However, before we can reap the advantages of alternatives to jail, we must remove the mandatory minimum sentences and empower judges to utilize more cost-effective, recidivism-reducing sentencing choices. Over the previous several

decades, the majority of affluent nations have seen an increase in imprisonment rates (Glass, 2016). The most well-known example is the United States, where over 2.25 million of the country's 310 million citizens are presently incarcerated, a sevenfold rise in the imprisonment rate since the early 1970s; nevertheless, incarceration rates are high and growing in a number of other nations (in Europe the United Kingdom and Italy are notable examples). This approach, however, runs the danger of self-reinforcing, since a significant proportion of individuals sentenced to jail are repeat offenders.

Apart from jail, there are a variety of other ways to assist the criminal in reforming (Phelps, 2011). These are mentioned briefly below.

### 3.1. Tariff Fines

According to Hayner & Ash (2018), compelling an offender to pay monitoring fees, penalties, and court expenses may be utilized as a stand-alone sanction or in conjunction with other sanctions. Tariff fines are imposed in certain places, such as the United States and Canada, on every offender who commits a specific offense (e.g., \$500 for driving while drunk), regardless of the offender's economic level or capacity to pay. Tariff penalties may be ineffective as a deterrent for the affluent. Tariff fines may be too high for the poor, culminating in prison time if the offender is unable to pay. Glass (2016) suggests day fines in light of this. One alternative is to impose "day penalties". They are not set in stone but vary according to the gravity of the offense and the offender's daily income. Wealthier criminals pay more and incur a significant loss of income, whereas those on lesser incomes pay a reasonable sum and escape incarceration. Restitution compels criminals to compensate the community or victim for any medical expenditures or property loss incurred as a consequence of the crime. This may be a preferable option to imprisonment.

### 3.2. Community Service

Community service may be used as a form of punishment in and of itself or as a condition of probation or as an alternative to restitution or payment of a fine. Community service is work performed by an offender for a civic or nonprofit group that is not compensated. Community service is not considered a penalty in the majority of courts worldwide, but rather a particular condition of probation or supervised release. In the United States, the community service program originated in 1966 with female traffic offenders in Alameda County, California, with local efforts following in numerous counties around the country. Community service enables the offender to see firsthand the immediate consequences of his or her offense. In this manner, the offender may comprehend the rationale for societal tolerance's limitations. Additionally, the offender is given constructive, proactive options for correcting the harm inflicted by his or her crime, which has the ability to enhance the offender's overall feeling of self-worth. This may be a useful strategy for establishing an offender's validity. Additionally, the

services of criminals may be a huge asset to governmental and non-profit organizations. According to Glass (2016), community service focuses on responsibility rather than punishment or rehabilitation. It emphasizes “offenders’ strengths, not their weaknesses; on their lack of insight, not their capacity for responsibility; on their susceptibility to social and psychological causes, not on their power to choose”. Wakefield and Uggen (2010) stated that community service might serve as an alternative to punishment in traditional welfare-oriented organizations. That is since service orders are often tailored to the offender rather than the crime (especially in the juvenile justice system), community service is increasingly used to rehabilitate the criminal, with reparative reasons taking a back seat.

### 3.3. Home Confinement/Electronic Home Monitoring

Home confinement/electronic home monitoring is another alternate technique of incarcerating criminals. Home confinement (alternatively referred to as “house arrest”) forces criminals to remain in their homes except while in pre-approved regions (i.e., at court or work). Frequently, home confinement entails placing the offender on electronic home monitoring (EHM). EHM compels criminals to wear an electronic device, such as an ankle bracelet, that transmits a signal to a transmitter and constantly informs authorities of their whereabouts. As with probation, house confinement is often subject to stipulations. If the criminal breaches such terms, he or she may be sentenced to imprisonment or prison. Offenders on EHM are often required to communicate with a probation officer daily and submit to regular and random drug testing. In many countries, an offender cannot be put on EHM unless it is recommended by the court or a prison officer.

### 3.4. Public Shaming

Public humiliation is defined as public shame. It is seldom used and is typically reserved for low-level offenses. For instance, a court sentenced a convicted mail thief to stand outside a post office for 100 hours carrying a placard that said, “I am a mail thief. This is my retribution”. The purpose of public shaming is to rehabilitate the criminal and deter him from reoffending. Teye (2019) underlined that public humiliation is not a new phenomenon. It has been employed as a sanction in every society—often sanctioned by formal legislation and always accessible for day-to-day enforcement of moral standards. However, Glass (2016) suggested that western nations have moved away from more formal forms of shame over the last couple of centuries, partially in acknowledgment of its brutality. Phelps (2011) stated that humiliating someone in front of their peers is now universally recognized as undesirable conduct, especially in less formal settings. This, he believes, reflects an improvement in the moral climate, but its influence is being mitigated by the advent of social media and new forms of shame. According to Glass (2016), the efficacy of shaming is still debatable. This is because no direct study has been conducted to determine the effect of public

shaming on recidivism rates. Several offenders have attempted to dispute the penalties in court, but the majority of judges have decided that unorthodox punishments such as carrying signs are constitutional as long as they are properly adapted to rehabilitation.

### 3.5. Probation

Probation is another kind of alternative detention. In criminal law, probation is a term of court-ordered monitoring of an offender, often in place of jail. According to Glass (2016), probation maintains the criminal in the community but places restrictions and requirements on his freedom. Probation may include a variety of conditions, such as meeting with a probation officer on a regular basis, being placed under house arrest during certain hours of the day, submitting to random urine tests, remaining drug-free, working, performing community service, and enrolling in substance abuse or mental health treatment. If an offender violates probation requirements, stricter monitoring may be necessary, or, if the breach is substantial, probation may be revoked and the offender may be ordered to spend time in jail or prison. A probationer is required by the court to adhere to specified terms, often under the supervision of a probation officer. During probation, an offender risks the possibility of incarceration if found in violation of the court's or probation officer's regulations. Offenders are often obliged to maintain lawful conduct and may be forced to abstain from firearm ownership, retain employment, engage in educational programs, adhere to curfews, reside in designated areas, respect probation officer directives, or not leave the county. Offenders on probation may be issued with an electronic tag (or monitor) that alerts authorities to their whereabouts.

It is pertinent to highlight that even though the literature focused on discussing alternative methods of incarceration to rehabilitate offenders, little was done about its impact on socioeconomic development through the reformation of offenders. Offenders come out of prison and later found themselves in the same act of violence leading to dis-reform offenders and turning down the socioeconomic development of the country. It is therefore worrying that a developing country such as Ghana where there is a lot of suffering in the socio-economic life of its citizens is bedeviled with such cancer. This study aimed to bridge this gap by understanding the causes of these challenges to propose alternative solutions to improve the socioeconomic lives of offenders and the country wholistically.

## 4. Methodology

An interpretivist worldview was adopted to answer the question regarding the relationship between variables, thus making this an inductive study. A qualitative approach was followed in the study, which is in line with the selected philosophical perspective. Interviews were used to gather data from the prison officers. The study specifically focused on prison officers. According to Babbie and Mouton (2011: p. 86), "a (quantitative) sample should aim to be representative



of a broader population, to include sufficient observations, to assure precision and leverage in the analysis, and to use cases that lie at the same level of analysis as the primary interface”. However, Neuman (2006: p. 219) argues that for qualitative studies, researchers should focus less on the sample’s representativeness rather on how the sample or small collection of cases, units, or activities illuminates social life. In qualitative research, a non-probability sample often fits the purpose of the study (Neuman, 2011: p. 267). In the quest to reduce the potential for researcher bias and ensure the exactness of the data gathered during the interview, there was the need to conduct member checking using the sampling ratio proposed by Cochran (1963: p. 75) to arrive at variability  $p = 0.5$  (maximum variability) and with the desire of 95% confidence level and  $\pm 5\%$  precision. The resulting sample was demonstrated in Equation 1 to arrive at a sample of 20 prison officers. A semi-structured interview was used to gather data from the prison officers. The interview ended when the researcher reached the point of saturation. In all, 20 prison officers were successfully interviewed. Data was generated through digital recording and were given serial numbers to enable easy identification for scoring. Having transcribed the data, an inductive approach was used to organize the data into various themes and categories based on the research questions and the objectives of the study. The inductive approach tends to ensure that themes are effectively linked to the data (Patton, 2002: p. 43). The interviews were conducted in two languages namely English and Twi. All interviews were transcribed personally by the researcher to ensure that no data were lost. In some instances, during the transcribing, the researcher identified some vagueness and gaps.

The table below (Table 1) presents the gender distribution of the respondents, that is, the percentage of male and female respondents who responded to the questions. The proportion of males to females who participated in the study was 14 representing 70% males while 6 representing 30% of the entire sample were females, highlighting that more males responded to the interview. This could perhaps be owing to the high ratio of males to females in the prison service. The inference drawn is that majority of the prison officers in the Nsawam Medium Security Prison are males. This could possibly be owing to the nature of the work, where more males may be required to handle such responsibilities.

#### 4.1. Age-Range of Respondents

The study revealed that out of the 20 respondents, 2 were between the ages of

**Table 1.** Gender summary of respondents (n = 20).

Gender	Frequency	Percentages
Male	14	70
Female	6	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100</b>

Source (field data, 2022).

25 - 35 years while 6 respondents representing 30% were also between the ages of 36 - 45 years. Furthermore, 8 respondents representing 40% of the entire sample were between the ages of 46 - 50 years while 4 were aged 51 years and above. It could be seen that a lot of the senior prison officers in the Nsawam Medium Security Prison are between the ages of 36 - 50 years. Those within the age range of 25 - 35 years are few. A summary of the results is presented in **Table 2**.

#### 4.2. Number of Years in the Service

The results show the number of years respondents have been in prison service. It was expedient to know the number of years respondents have been in the service because it would help in giving the needed information for the study. Out of the 20 samples, 6 of them have been in the service for 7 - 9 years while 3 have also been in the service for 10 - 14 years. Moreover, 5 respondents representing 25% have been in the service between 15 - 19 years. Also, 6 respondents have been in prison service for 20 years and above. The data above is an indication that most of the prison officers in the study area have been in the prison service for quite a long period of time. They might have acquired much experience in the service. A summary of the results is presented in **Table 3**.

#### 4.3. Number of Years Respondents Have Worked at Nsawam Medium Security Prison

Respondents were further asked to state the number of years they have worked

**Table 2.** Age category of respondents.

Age range	Frequency	Percentages
25 - 35 yrs	2	10
36 - 45 yrs	6	30
46 - 50 yrs	8	40
51 yrs & above	4	20
<b>Total</b>	20	100

Source (field data, 2022).

**Table 3.** Number of years in service.

Years range	Frequency	Percentages
7 - 9 yrs	6	30
10 - 14 yrs	3	15
15 - 19 yrs	5	25
20 yrs & above	6	30
<b>Total</b>	20	100

Source (field data, 2022).

at the Nsawam Medium Security Prison. **Table 4** indicates that 4 of the respondents have worked in the study area for 3 - 5 years while 9 respondents have also worked at the Nsawam Medium Security Prison for 6 - 10 years. Moreover, 5 out of the 20 respondents claimed they have worked at the place for 11 - 15 years while only 2 of the prison officers have worked at the Nsawam Medium Security Prison for 16 years and above. The data indicate that a few of the officers have worked at the Nsawam Medium Security for less than 6 years. Most of the prison officers have worked at the Medium Security Prison for 6 years and above. Their responses are presented in **Table 4**.

#### 4.4. Ranks of Prison Officers

Respondents were further asked to identify their various ranks in the service. Out of the 20 prison officers who responded to the study, 6 were Chief Superintendents of prisons while 4 were Superintendents of prisons. Moreover, 9 respondents were Deputy Superintendents of prisons (DSP) while 1 was Assistant Director of Prisons. It was realized that a lot of officers at the Nsawam Medium Security Prison are in the superior officers' rank (**Table 5**).

#### 4.5. Ethical Considerations

In this study, participation was voluntary, and the participants were informed that they would remain anonymous and that confidentiality would be maintained. The researchers got permission to conduct the study from the office of

**Table 4.** Number of years in service.

Number of years	Frequency	Percentages
3 - 5 yrs	4	20
6 - 10 yrs	9	45
11 - 15 yrs	5	25
16 yrs & above	2	10
<b>Total</b>	20	100

Source (field data, 2022).

**Table 5.** Rank of prison officers.

Ranks	Frequency	Percentages
Chief Superintendent	6	30
Superintendent of prisons	4	20
Deputy Superintendent of prisons	9	45
Assistant Director of prisons	1	5
<b>Total</b>	20	100

Source (field data, 2022).

the administration of the Nsawam Prison Service. Furthermore, ethics clearance was obtained from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. The researchers observed all protocols with regard to the prison service and its regulations. These practices brought a measure of inconvenience to the data collection. However, data collection was undertaken smoothly, which created conditions where participants could part take in the study. Before the actual interviews were conducted, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to all participants.

## 5. Results and Discussion

The results are discussed according to the objectives of the study.

### 5.1. Knowledge of Officers about Alternative Methods of Incarceration

According to a recent United Nations research (Heyns & Viljoen, 2021) it is critical for policymakers to examine who is imprisoned, why they are imprisoned, and for how long they are imprisoned. Where such statistics are not readily accessible, the study recommends taking efforts to guarantee that they are provided to policymakers and other key stakeholders in the criminal justice system on a regular basis. The statistics demonstrate that convicts are disproportionately selected from the community's poorest and most vulnerable populations. These inmates may be serving terms for misdemeanor or non-violent offenses or may be imprisoned for unreasonably long lengths of time awaiting trial. For them, jail may be completely inappropriate. Alternatives to jail include a number of techniques for correctly dealing with such individuals that do not include any kind of incarceration. Alternatives should consequently be prioritized in order to minimize an excessive dependence on jail. To ensure that alternative methods of confinement acquire traction inside the jail system, prison guards must be conversant with them. On this assumption, a series of linked questions were posed to assess prison staff's understanding of alternative confinement methods.

**Interview Item 7:** As a prison officer, what do you know about an alternative method of incarceration?

It was shown that the majority of responders are aware of alternate methods of detention. Numerous replies were made to the above question. Respondent "A", a Deputy Superintendent of Prisons, for example, stated the following:

*"Alternative method of incarceration is whereby instead of putting an offender into prison, he or she is given a different punishment as a form of rehabilitation. The punishment may include a non-custodial sentence whereby the offender would be allowed to work around the community as a punishment. Another form of punishment could be a fine"* (Respondent "A", 20th August 2021, 1:25 pm).

Another respondent, an Assistant Director of prisons had this to say about an alternative method of incarceration:

*“What I know about an alternative method of incarceration is that it is a form of punishment given to a criminal instead of putting him or her into prison”* (Respondent “K”, 24th August 2021, 12:40 pm).

A Chief Superintendent of Prisons also expressed his view on the above question with the following comment:

*“It is a form of punishment given instead of jail term or time in prison”* (Respondent “T”, 20th August 2021, 9:52 am).

The majority of jail staff at the Nsawam Medium Security Prison seem to be familiar with alternate methods of confinement. The numerous definitions provided corresponded to those found in the literature study. According to the literature, an “alternative to imprisonment” is any kind of punishment other than prison or jail time that may be imposed on someone who commits a crime (Brockway, 2014). According to Phelps (2011), alternatives to prison or jail terms impose significant responsibilities on criminals and subject them to extensive court and community monitoring. To him, the absence of time in prison or jail does not imply that a certain sentence is “soft on crime” or a “slap on the wrist”.

**Interview Item 8:** Can you mention some of the alternative methods of incarceration you know?

Additionally, respondents were asked to list some of the various techniques of detention that they were familiar with. This question elicited a wide variety of replies. Several alternative imprisonment techniques were suggested, including the following:

- Probation;
- Alternative Education Program;
- Community Service;
- Daily Reporting;
- Electronic Monitoring;
- Fines and Restitution;
- Parole;
- Community Justice and Restoration Justice;
- Public Shaming.

#### **The Need for the Adoption of Alternative Methods of Incarceration**

According to Wang et al. (2000), providing effective alternatives to incarceration would alleviate prison congestion and make it simpler for governments to satisfy their fundamental commitments to the inmates in their care. On the importance of alternatives to jail, Glass (2016) believes that they may help victims recover, assist the community, treat the drug-addicted or mentally ill, and rehabilitate criminals. Additionally, alternatives may help cut prison and jail expenditures and help prevent future offenses (Bagaric et al., 2018). Glass (2016) believes that in order to maximize the advantages of alternatives to jail, mandatory minimum sentences must be repealed and judges given the authority to utilize cost-effective, recidivism-reducing sentencing choices instead.

Over the previous several decades, the majority of affluent nations have seen an increase in imprisonment rates (Glass, 2016). The most well-known example is the United States, where over 2.25 million of the country's 310 million citizens are presently incarcerated, a sevenfold rise in the imprisonment rate since the early 1970s; nevertheless, incarceration rates are high and growing in a number of other nations (in Europe the United Kingdom and Italy are notable examples). This approach, however, runs the danger of self-reinforcing, since a significant proportion of individuals sentenced to jail are repeat offenders. Respondents were asked to express their thoughts on the importance of adopting alternate forms of detention.

**Interview Item 10:** Do you think there is a need for Ghana Prisons to adopt alternative methods of incarceration for the rehabilitation of offenders and if yes why?

All twenty respondents agreed that Ghana's prisons should employ alternative ways of confinement geared toward offender rehabilitation. However, a variety of divergent perspectives about the causes of their affirmations developed. Their replies are summarized and examined in the following themes.

## 5.2. Depopulation of Overcrowded Prisons

The majority of respondents said that the development of alternate methods of imprisonment would aid in reducing the high incidence of overcrowding at Ghana's numerous prison facilities. A significant proportion of respondents noted that Ghana's prisons, particularly the Nsawam Medium Security Prison, are overcrowded and should be depopulated. According to them, it is only through the introduction of alternate techniques of confinement that congestion at different jail facilities can be alleviated. For instance, a Deputy Superintendent of Prisons said the following about overcrowded jail depopulation:

*"The rate at which prison centers in Ghana are becoming overcrowded is very alarming. Over the last five months, almost half a thousand inmates have been brought to the Nsawam Medium Security Prison which has piled up the already high number of offenders. The Prison Service should adopt an alternative method to incarceration so that the overpopulation of Ghana prison centers will be reduced to the barest minimum. One thing that we have to be clear about is that the overpopulation of prison centers comes with serious health implications. In about two weeks, we witnessed the death of four inmates due to ill health and it is all part of the overpopulation issue"* (Respondent "Z", 26th August 2021, 4:19 pm).

Another respondent, an Assistant Director of Prisons also said this:

*"The adoption of alternative methods to incarceration will help solve the problem of the current rate of overcrowding at prison centers in Ghana. It is a must and we must do it because some developed countries have done it and it has worked for them and so why can't we? The justice system should not be that both minor and major offenders are put into prison. I believe that instead*

*of jail terms, some offenders should be put on probation while some 73 should be made to serve in the community. We must do this to save the prison centers from overcrowding”* (Respondent “J”, 2nd September 2021, 3:22 pm).

### **5.3. Reduction of Financial Burden on the State**

According to several responders, the introduction of alternate alternatives to imprisonment might save the state enormous amounts of money spent on prisoner care. According to Agbelengor (2011), it costs Ghana about 21,000 cedis to keep a single individual in jail for a year (some prison costs are much higher). Rather than that, alternatives to imprisonment are less expensive, contribute to the prevention of prison and jail overpopulation, and save taxpayers millions. Respondents said that cash utilized to tend to convicts may be utilized for other developmental initiatives benefiting the whole nation.

### **5.4. Prevention/Reduction of Psychological Trauma among Offenders**

Another subject that came from the interview on the need for alternative punishment approaches is the prevention/reduction of psychological damage among offenders. Several respondents noted that incarceration had psychological ramifications, particularly for first-time offenders.

In order to avoid this, offenders should be made to serve other punishments other than jail terms which will prevent them from going through a lot of psychological traumas. For instance, a respondent said this:

*“Some offenders fear jail term. They become so devastated and emotionally disorganized when they are brought to the prison center. Some do not even eat for days. You could see the psychological traumas they may be going through. Most of the offenders in the prison are not able to psyche themselves.*

*A lot believe that once they come to prison, their good life as some may call it is truncated. The kind of psychological traumas they go through is sometimes unbearable so I believe that serving some punishments instead of jail will reduce psychological trauma among offenders”* (Respondent “V”, 1st September 2021, 9:09 am).

### **5.5. Enhancement of Community Projects and Development**

Most of the respondents mentioned the fact that alternative methods to incarceration help to enhance community projects and development. According to these respondents, when offenders are made to serve in the community development projects are completed within time. The government is also relieved from hiring more people for a specific job in the community.

### **5.6. Strengthens Families and Communities**

Another theme that emerged from the interview concerning the need for alter-

native methods to incarceration is the strengthening of families and communities. Respondents were of the view that prison or jail time separates the offender from his or her spouse and children, sometimes for decades at a time. Alternatives to incarceration keep people with their families, in their neighbourhoods and jobs, and allow them to earn money, pay taxes, and contribute to their communities. One respondent had this to say about the above assertion:

*“When offenders are made to serve other punishments instead of jail terms, it bolsters relationships between families and communities. A good relationship may be broken due to a long absence. Imagine an offender is made to serve 20 years in prison and before imprisonment his child is less than 2 years. After 20 years the child may not even know him to accept the fact that he is the father. Jail term could end a good relationship between wife and husband, father and children, and a man and his community”* (Respondent “B”, 27th August 2021, 11:00 am).

### 5.7. Protect the Public by Reducing Crime

Additionally, respondents felt that the implementation of alternatives to jail would safeguard the public by reducing crime. Regarding the preceding topic, one of the respondents said the following:

*“When offenders are made to serve in the community, they become cautious in their actions. They may fear that committing a similar offense will make them serve in the community again though this may not be the case all the time. Electronic monitoring is one powerful way of reducing crime in the community. When an offender is electronically monitored, imagine what will happen!!! He or she will put up good behaviour. This is what the prison service should do instead of a jail term”* (Respondent “J”, 20th August 2021, 4:10 pm).

According to Braimah (2017), more than 40% of those who leave jail re-offend and are incarcerated within three years of their release. Alternatives to jail, such as drug and mental health courts, have been shown to address the underlying causes of crime (i.e., drug addiction and mental illness) and to assist offenders in avoiding future crimes.

Glass (2016) stated that after two decades of dropping crime rates and a decade of attempts to prevent mass imprisonment, some officials continue to advocate for harsher penalties and more incarceration as a means of reducing crime. To him, it may seem self-evident that increased imprisonment will result in additional crime reduction. Danjuma et al. (2018) argued that imprisonment not only reduces future crimes by removing criminals from circulation (incapacitation), but it may also inhibit individuals from committing future crimes out of fear of punishment. In contrast to these beliefs, Halter (2018) believes that raising jail rates has a little effect on crime reduction and implies substantial expenses. According to him, increases in imprisonment rates have a negligible effect on crime rates, and each subsequent rise has a lesser effect on crime rates than prior ones. Any advantages of jail in terms of crime reduction are restricted to property crime. Consistent research indicates that greater imprisonment rates



do not correlate with reduced violent crime rates (Ikoh, 2011). Jewkes (2013) also contends that, under certain situations, imprisonment may encourage crime. Higher imprisonment may be connected with increased crime in states with high incarceration rates and communities with concentrated incarceration.

Prison, according to Liu et al. (2020), has a negligible effect on crime. This is because the association between increased imprisonment rates and reduced crime rates is quite weak.

Although studies vary somewhat, the majority of the research indicates that between 1980 and 2000, each 10% rise in imprisonment rates was connected with just a 2% - 4% decrease in crime. Since then, just one empirical analysis (research requiring replication) has been conducted on the association between imprisonment and crime. Through the 1990s, the increasing use of imprisonment contributed to between 6% and 25% of the entire decline in crime rates. However, since 2000, the increasing use of jail has accounted for roughly 0% of the total decrease in crime. This suggests that between 75% and 100% of the decline in crime rates during the 1990s may be accounted for by other reasons. The aging population, increased wages, increased employment, increased graduation rates, increased consumer confidence, increased law enforcement personnel, and changes in policing strategies have all been linked to lower crime rates and, taken together, account for a greater portion of the overall decrease in crime rates than incarceration (Liu et al., 2020).

### 5.8. Threats Associated with the Adoption of Alternative Methods of Incarceration

Many persons enter jail with a variety of complicated needs that, if not treated while incarcerated, often result in outside reoffending. Mental health issues, homelessness, and drug abuse are all risk factors for offending behavior. Indeed, an increasing number of individuals are emerging from jail with newly acquired drug abuse and mental health problems (Glass, 2016). Many people who leave jail will have lost their homes, employment, and broken connections with their family while serving their term, making reintegration into society much more difficult and leaving them open to relapse into criminal behavior.

These are just some of the additional reasons why many advocates for the implementation of alternate forms of detention (Liu et al., 2020). On the contrary, the implementation of alternate modes of confinement poses a slew of difficulties and dangers (Brimah, 2017). The study's final purpose was to identify potential dangers linked with the introduction of alternate forms of detention. Respondents were given a series of questions on the purpose stated before.

**Interview Item 12:** Do you think the adoption of alternative methods of incarceration has potential threats?

Sixteen of the twenty respondents answered "yes" to the question, while four responded "no". According to these four respondents, there are no dangers associated with the introduction of alternate techniques of detention. Alternative techniques of confinement, they believe, are the solution to the plethora of issues

found in Ghana's numerous prisons.

**Interview Item 13:** If “yes”, what do you think are some of the threats associated with it?

Respondents who said “yes” to question 12 were further asked to identify some of the threats associated with the adoption of an alternative system of incarceration. Several responses were given and they were grouped into themes by the researcher. These are briefly discussed below.

### 5.9. Lack of Public Awareness and Understanding of Alternative Sentencing

A major theme that emerged from the interview concerning threats associated with an alternative system of incarceration is the lack of public awareness and understanding of alternative sentencing. Most of the respondents claimed that the public is devoid of understanding of the justice system of the country and the various alternative methods of incarceration and this will make their implementation very challenging. A respondent had this to say about the above comment:

*“A lot of Ghanaians do not know about the alternative system of incarceration and even the justice system in the country. All that most of them know is that when a person is caught committing an offense, he or she should be put in prison. When an offender is seen on the street after a court sentence has been made on him or her, the next thing is they will lament with the view that the justice system in Ghana is weak. Most people are not aware or do not know of probation, public shaming, electronic monitoring, fines and restitution, community service, and some other alternative system of incarceration and even the few who know about them have reservations about this alternative system of incarceration. Just imagine that somebody who has been found guilty by the court is put in one village to serve for some years. What will the people say? How will they accept the verdict? These are the issues we are talking about and it is a big challenge to the prison service. For us to adopt these alternatives to incarceration, the public should be given intensive education and enlightenment on these alternatives to incarceration”* (Respondent “J”, 26th August 2021, 5:02 pm).

Another respondent made this comment:

*“If the prison service is to adopt an alternative to incarceration, then the public should be educated on the need for such development. Ghanaians will not take it lightly if they see a murderer on the street and all those authorities say is that the offender is under electronic monitoring.*

*A major threat associated with the adoption of alternatives to incarceration is a lack of public awareness and understanding of alternative sentencing”* (Respondent “X”, 27th August 2021, 5:02 pm).

### 5.10. Avenue for Committing More Crimes

Some of the respondents claimed that adopting an alternative system of incarce-

ration is an avenue for committing more crimes. According to these respondents, when offenders are put on probation or under electronic monitoring, they do not see the punishment being given as serious and are therefore encouraged to commit more crimes. A respondent, a Chief Superintendent of Prison made this comment:

*“Alternative to incarceration does not work in Africa. A black man who has been found guilty and is put on probation has been given the best chance to commit a similar offense. There have been instances where offenders have been put under electronic monitoring and the next day they are nowhere to be found. Our system cannot support such methods”* (Respondent “G”, 1st September 2021, 1:00 pm).

The idea that the adoption of alternatives to incarceration is an avenue for committing more crimes is a bit controversial. Research shows that an alternative to incarceration rather prevents crime in society (Liu et al., 2020). It was revealed in the literature that incarceration has a marginal impact on crime. This is because there is a very weak relationship between higher incarceration rates and lower crime rates.

### 5.11. Promotion of Escape

Another theme that emerged as a threat to the adoption of an alternative system of incarceration is the promotion of escape. Respondents were of the view that alternative systems such as probation, community service, public shaming, fines, and restitution encourage the escape of offenders. According to these respondents, a lot of offenders do not complete their punishments before they escape to places, they could not be traced. This makes the adoption of an alternative method of incarceration a challenging initiative. One of the respondents made a comment on this:

*“...there was a time I went out on supervision with 12 inmates and one made my work very terrible for me that day. He was then left with six months to be released and before I realized he had escaped. It took the intervention of the people in the community where we were to find this guy. Looking at this situation, I believe that when an offender is made to serve in the community as a punishment instead of imprisonment, he or she will escape in no time at all”* (Respondent “G”, 1st September 2021, 1:23 pm).

## 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

According to the study, the majority of prison employees at the Nsawam Medium Security prison are aware of alternate forms of incarceration. Probation, Various Education Programs, Community Service, Daily Reporting, Electronic Monitoring, Fines and Restitution, Parole and Community Justice, and Restoration Justice are just a few of the alternative forms of detention to which prison guards are accustomed. Additionally, the study revealed that the majority of Nsawam Medium Security prison authorities prefer community service, electronic monitoring, and probation to incarceration. Prison guards assert that

these alternatives to incarceration aid in the rehabilitation of inmates while also fostering community development. Additionally, the investigation revealed that the Nsawam Medium Security Prison employs a variety of alternative detention approaches for offender rehabilitation. Community service, probation, an alternative education program, as well as fines and restitution are all available as alternative incarceration systems at the Nsawam Medium Security Prison for the rehabilitation of convicts. These alternatives to incarceration are aimed at successfully rehabilitating offenders and reintegrating them into society upon their release. Another key finding is that the state urgently needs to pass non-custodial sentence legislation and that the Ghana Prison Service should be charged with implementing and overseeing the bill's functioning. It cannot be emphasized how critical non-custodial or alternative forms of confinement are to the community's and nation's progress. Among them are the following: the depopulation of overcrowded prisons, reduction of the state's financial burden, prevention/reduction of psychological trauma among offenders, enhancement of community projects and development, family and community strengthening, and public safety through crime reduction.

The study recommended that the general public be educated extensively about alternative forms of confinement, their different varieties, and the importance of their acceptance. This will go a long way toward educating the public about alternatives to imprisonment. The study further recommended that prison officers should be engaged in workshops and orientations on alternative systems of incarceration based on the premise of integrating prisoners back into society and contributing to the socioeconomic development of the country. This will provide them with the necessary information, enabling them to play a vital part in the implementation of these alternative forms of punishment in Ghanaian society. In addition, the study recommends that the department of ICTs in the Ghana Prisons Service be provided with sophisticated technological gear that would enable it to efficiently track criminals who may be subjected to electronic surveillance. This also eliminates the temptation for criminals to flee, as they will be more aware of a sufficient and efficient monitoring system to deter them from re-engaging in crime.

Further, it is advised that an ex-convict monitoring system be implemented by After Care Agents to guarantee their successful reintegration into society. Society, on the other hand, must provide emotional support for convicts, since they are inextricably linked to it and eventually be reintegrated. Additionally, the report advises that the state enact non-custodial sentencing legislation and that the Ghana Prison Service be charged with implementing and supervising the bill's operation. As an outcome, prisoners would be successfully integrated into the society of work and improve their socioeconomic well-being.

## **7. Organization of Study**

The article is organized as follows: the first paragraph describes the background of the study, followed by the statement of the problem, objectives of the study,

brief literature review, research methodology, data analysis, discussions of results, conclusions, and recommendations.

### Authors Contributions

The first author, Dr. Daniel Ofori conceived and drafted the background study, Dr. Maxwell Achaempong supervised the study, Kakraba Ben Komla reviewed the literature, Michael Oppong conceptualized the study methodology, Bright OseiAkoto, and Nane Peter Kofi gathered data for the study, and Millicent Yengkangyi proofread and organized the study references while GoergeAsumadu, Francis KojoTunu and ElijaDuah determined the trustworthiness and reliability of the data collected.

### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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