
Influence of Age on Recidivism among Prisoners at Kabarnet Prison, Kenya

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Abstract

Recidivism remains a major challenge in correctional systems as many offenders return to criminal activities after serving their sentences. Socioeconomic conditions are widely recognized as important determinants of reoffending behaviour, yet limited evidence exists regarding their influence among inmates at Kabarnet Prison, Baringo County, Kenya. This study examined the influence of age as a socio-economic factor on recidivism among prisoners at Kabarnet Prison. The research was guided by Labelling Theory and Strain Theory. A mixed-methods research design was adopted. The target population comprised 175 convicted inmates at Kabarnet Prison, 15 Probation Officers, and 30 Prison Wardens. Simple random and purposive sampling techniques were used. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires and key informant interviews. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, while qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that age at first offence (Beta = -0.389, $p < 0.001$) significantly influenced recidivism. The regression models explained between 21.8% and 23.7% of the variance in recidivism. The study concluded that young offenders are at higher risk of reoffending. The study recommends that the Kenya Prisons Service should expand educational and vocational training programmes, develop age-specific rehabilitation interventions, and enhance family involvement in reintegration planning.

Keywords: *Age, Correctional Systems, Prisoners, Recidivism, Reoffending Behaviour*

INTRODUCTION

Socio-economics is an interdisciplinary field that examines the interaction between social and economic factors and how these factors influence human behaviour, opportunities, and societal development. According to Berkenkotter and Huckin (2016), socio-economic conditions shape the functioning of communities and contribute to differences in individuals' quality of life and social outcomes. Socio-economic status is commonly assessed using indicators such as educational attainment, income level, and occupation. These indicators influence access to resources and opportunities that support personal and social well-being. Individuals with lower socio-economic status often experience limited access to education, employment opportunities, healthcare services, and financial resources compared to those in higher socio-economic groups. Such disparities may affect life outcomes and contribute to various social challenges, including criminal behaviour and recidivism. Oruta (2016) posits that socio-economic factors like gender,

age, education level, and employment status and house ownership affect the chances of re-offending. This can be aggravated in a family where all of the above are missing and where the first perpetrator can get into trouble and be tempted to repeat or perpetrate the same or similar crimes in society.

Recidivism is the likelihood of an ex-prisoner re-entering prison for another crime (Muriuki, Mbaro & Mutisya, 2023). It remains a persistent problem in the criminal justice system on a worldwide level and endangers public safety and puts significant pressure on resources used by law enforcement agencies, courts and correctional facilities (Zubairu, 2023). Recidivism is defined as a person's tendency to reoffend following interventions and sanctions for a previous crime (Magee, 2021). It is usually defined as a resurgence in crime and is frequently assessed by the rate of re-arrest or re-incarceration of former inmates for new crimes. Recidivism can also be defined as "relapse of criminal behaviour. It is basically the recurrence of a negative behaviour, which they have tried to stop (Conklin, 2022). The recidivism problem has now become a big issue worldwide and it has adversely influenced not only the offender himself but also society as a whole. Unemployment, inadequate classification of inmates and psychological trauma suffered by offenders are among the many variables that have been linked to the increase in recidivism in recent years. Other contributing factors are the lack of health services, lack of adequate training materials for rehabilitation of inmates, and lack of personnel in corrections who are qualified. Together, they are all responsible for the high rates of recidivism in many countries around the world. In Chile, a study by Fernández (2021) found that young offenders who had a previous conviction had a high risk of reoffending within a few months after release. One key factor noted for the understanding of recidivism is age but this depends on the characteristics of each individual prisoner.

The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (Republic of Kenya, 2019) reported a rise from 16,987 recidivists in 2018 to 53,765 in 2019, representing a 59% increase from 35%. The growth reflects a paradox: resources are always dedicated to rehabilitation, but results are not satisfactory. Waste of institutional resources, a revolving prison door, and the cycle of crime in communities are all indicated by high recidivism rates. Oruta and Luyt (2021) state that in Kenya, 75% of released prisoners reoffend and 50% would return to prison within two years after their release. Remarkably, repeated offences are more severe and there is a higher reconviction rate for male prisoners (John, 2023). Cheti (2023) found that the national recidivism rate is 47%, with some criminals openly stating that severe economic problems outside prison made it easier to be sent to jail since they got food and shelter there.

Statement of the Problem

Recidivism remains a persistent challenge undermining public safety, straining correctional systems and perpetuating cycles of crime across societies. In Kenya, the problem has reached critical proportions, with the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (Republic of Kenya, 2019) reporting a 59% increase in recidivists from 16,987 in 2018 to 53,765 in 2019. Oruta and Luyt (2021) further observe that 75% of released prisoners reoffend, with 50% returning to prison within two years of release. These alarming statistics underscore the urgency of understanding the determinants of reoffending to inform effective rehabilitation and reintegration strategies.

Despite the gravity of this challenge, existing research on the socio-economic determinants of recidivism in Kenya remains fragmented and inconclusive. Studies have examined individual factors in isolation rather than adopting a comprehensive approach that considers the interplay of multiple socio-economic determinants. Adeyemi (2021) established a relationship between income level and crime type, while Ajadi (2025) linked recidivism to disorganized

neighbourhoods, peer influence, broken homes, and poverty. Baffour (2021) identified structural and situational factors as contributors to re-incarceration. Moreover, a significant geographical and contextual gap exists in the literature. Research has predominantly focused on urban prisons such as Naivasha Maximum Security Prison (Bakora & Mwangi, 2025), Shimo La Tewa Prison (Chebet, 2022), and Nakuru Main Prison (Muriuki et al., 2023). However, no empirical study has specifically examined the influence of socio-economic factors on recidivism at Kabarnet Prison, a rural correctional facility in Baringo County where poverty, unemployment, low educational attainment, and limited family support are prevalent (County Government of Baringo, 2022). Consequently, this study sought to fill this gap by examining the influence of age on recidivism among prisoners at Kabarnet Prison.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Age has been consistently established as a major factor in predicting recidivism elsewhere in the world, as empirical studies show that younger offenders are more likely to reoffend than older offenders. A quantitative study by Belfrom (2021) explored how recently released female violent offenders in Central Texas relate to criminal thinking, age, psychological wellbeing and recidivism. The study sample comprised 98 females (70 ex-offenders and 28 non-offenders). The Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking, Psychological Well-Being Scale and a short demographic questionnaire were used to collect data. The results showed that there were differences between the ages and offender types and between level of education and the risk of offending. The study, however, was conducted in Central Texas, while the current study was conducted at Kabarnet Prison, Kenya.

Likewise, Rakes, Prost and Tripodi (2018) examined factors and risks that predict recidivism among three age groups of offenders: 45-54, 55-64, and 65 and older, based on a database of all prisoners aged 45 and older released from prisons in North Carolina between 2004 and 2005 ($N = 6,522$). The study was part of the body of literature that had already made comparisons between older offenders aged 45 years and older and younger adults. The study aims were accomplished using descriptive statistics, bivariate analysis and multiple binary logistic regression techniques. The results revealed that age was an independent predictor of reduced likelihood of recidivism. Prior violent offences and educational attainment were important correlates of recidivism among older adults but did not make a significant contribution to the overall variance in the model. The study recommended sentencing and parole reforms that consider the factors unique to older offender recidivism. While the study was limited to North Carolina, USA, the current study focused on recidivism among prisoners aged 18 years and above in the Kenyan context.

Research examining the role of age in offender rehabilitation and reoffending remains relatively scarce in many African countries. A study conducted by Shammah (2024) investigated how demographic characteristics, including age and educational level, were associated with family social support during the reintegration of former offenders in Nigeria. The study involved male ex-convicts drawn from a correctional facility in Nasarawa State and employed statistical analysis to compare levels of family support across different age categories. The findings indicated that age differences were not significantly associated with variations in the support received from family members during community reintegration. This suggests that former offenders may experience comparable levels of family support regardless of their age group. Although the study contributes to understanding factors associated with reintegration among ex-convicts, its primary focus was on family support rather than recidivism. In addition, the research

was conducted within the Nigerian context among released offenders. The current study differed by examining the influence of age on recidivism among prisoners at Kabarnet Prison, Kenya. In Kenya, studies have increasingly examined the influence of individual characteristics on recidivism among offenders. Muriuki et al. (2023) investigated the socio-demographic factors associated with criminal relapse among offenders in Nakuru Main Prison. Guided by Routine Activities Theory, the study explored how personal and socio-economic characteristics influenced the likelihood of reoffending. The findings indicated that individual background factors played a significant role in shaping offenders' involvement in repeat criminal behaviour. The study further observed that many repeat offenders faced unstable employment conditions and limited economic opportunities, factors that may have contributed to their continued engagement in crime. Based on these findings, the authors recommended strengthening rehabilitation programmes and enhancing stakeholder involvement in offender reintegration initiatives. Although the study provided important insights into the factors associated with recidivism among offenders in Nakuru Main Prison, it examined a broad range of socio-demographic characteristics rather than focusing specifically on the influence of age. Furthermore, the study was conducted in a different correctional setting. The current study examined the influence of age on recidivism among prisoners at Kabarnet Prison, Kenya.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted at Kabarnet Prison, located in Kabarnet Town, the administrative headquarters of Baringo County in the North Rift Region of Kenya. Kabarnet Prison is a medium-security correctional facility operated by the Kenya Prisons Service under the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government. The prison was established to serve the larger Baringo County and surrounding areas, accommodating inmates from diverse socio-demographic, economic, and cultural backgrounds (Kenya Prisons Service, 2021). The study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design.

The target population for this study comprised 220 respondents, consisting of 175 convicted inmates, 15 probation officers, and 30 prison wardens at Kabarnet Prison (County Government of Baringo, 2022). The study included only convicted inmates who were serving sentences at the time of data collection and who had been in custody for two or more terms, as they represented the population at risk of recidivism. Inmates on remand or awaiting trial were excluded from the study because their legal status and the nature of their incarceration differ from those of convicted prisoners, and their inclusion could have introduced confounding variables. The focus on convicted inmates ensured that the study examined recidivism among individuals who had been formally adjudicated and sentenced, which is consistent with the operational definition of recidivism as the tendency of convicted offenders to reoffend after serving a previous sentence (Magee, 2021).

The study employed a combination of simple random and purposive sampling techniques to select respondents for the quantitative and qualitative phases, respectively. The target population comprised 175 convicted inmates at Kabarnet Prison. From this population, a sample of 122 inmates was selected using the Yamane (1967) formula at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. This sample size was considered adequate for conducting inferential statistical analyses, including correlation and regression analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2020). Additionally, 15 probation officers and 30 prison wardens were purposively selected to participate in the key informant interviews, bringing the total sample to 167 respondents. Of the 122 sampled inmates, 112 completed and returned valid questionnaires, representing a response rate of 91.8%.

The study collected primary data using two instruments: a structured questionnaire administered to inmate respondents and key informant interview schedules administered to probation officers and prison wardens. A pilot study was conducted at Eldoret (Ngeria) Prison, in which 17 inmates participated. The collected pilot data were coded and analyzed using SPSS Version 26 to determine the internal consistency of the study variables. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.70 or higher was considered acceptable, indicating that the instrument was reliable for data collection (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2020). The reliability coefficients for all variables exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70. The dependent variable (recidivism) achieved a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82, while age showed acceptable reliability at 0.76.

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26. Inferential statistics were used to determine the relationships between the independent variables (age) and the dependent variable (recidivism). Qualitative data obtained from key informant interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. Research permits were obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and the Kenya Prisons Service before data collection commenced. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Age Group

The demographic profile revealed a predominantly young prison population, with over half of respondents (52.7%) aged between 18 and 30 years. The 26–30 years age bracket recorded the highest proportion (27.7%), followed by the 18–25 years bracket (25.0%). This finding implies that young adults constitute the majority of the prison population at Kabarnet Prison, suggesting that this demographic group is disproportionately involved in criminal activity and at heightened risk of recidivism. The predominance of young inmates indicates that age is a critical factor in understanding criminal behaviour and reoffending patterns. Young adults, particularly those in their late twenties, may face unique socio-economic pressures such as unemployment, poverty, and limited access to legitimate income-generating opportunities, which increase their vulnerability to criminal involvement and repeat offending. Furthermore, young offenders may lack the maturity and life experience to desist from crime, making them more susceptible to recidivism (Fernández, 2021).

This finding is consistent with Muriuki et al. (2023), who observed that younger offenders constitute a significant proportion of prison populations in Kenya, with offenders aged 18–35 years accounting for the majority of inmates at Nakuru Main Prison. Similarly, Rakes et al. (2018) found that younger offenders in North Carolina were significantly more likely to recidivate than older offenders, with age emerging as an independent predictor of reduced likelihood of reoffending. Fernández (2021) reported that young offenders in Chile who had a previous conviction faced a high risk of reoffending within a few months after release, underscoring the vulnerability of this age group.

However, this finding contradicts Shammah (2024), who investigated the influence of age on family social support during reintegration of ex-convicts in Nigeria and found that age differences were not significantly associated with variations in the support received from family members. Shammah's study suggested that former offenders across different age categories may experience comparable levels of family support during community reintegration, implying that age may not be a differentiating factor in all aspects of post-release outcomes. The contradiction may be attributed to the different focus of Shammah's study (family support rather than

recidivism) and the Nigerian context, where family structures and support systems may differ from those in Kenya.

The predominance of young inmates at Kabarnet Prison supports the Labelling Theory (Becker, 1963; Lemert, 1951), which posits that early labelling as a criminal can create a self-fulfilling prophecy and reinforce criminal identity. When young individuals are labelled as criminals, they may internalize this label and adopt deviant behaviour consistent with it, leading to a cycle of reoffending. The finding also aligns with the Strain Theory (Merton, 1938), as young offenders from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds may experience significant strain from poverty, unemployment, and limited opportunities, leading them to resort to crime as a means of achieving culturally approved goals.

Age at First Offence

Age at first offence data indicated that 30.4% of respondents committed their first offence below the age of 18, while 42.9% committed their first offence between 19 and 30 years. This finding implies that nearly three-quarters (73.3%) of inmates at Kabarnet Prison began their criminal careers before the age of 30, with a substantial proportion (30.4%) initiating criminal activity during adolescence. The high proportion of offenders who began their criminal careers in adolescence suggests that early involvement in crime is a significant predictor of persistent offending and recidivism. Individuals who start offending at a young age are more likely to develop entrenched criminal behaviour patterns, as early criminal experiences may normalise deviance, weaken social bonds, and limit opportunities for legitimate social and economic advancement (Rakes et al., 2018). Furthermore, early-onset offenders may accumulate criminal records that exacerbate the stigma and discrimination they face upon release, making reintegration more difficult and increasing the likelihood of reoffending.

This finding is consistent with international evidence that early involvement in crime is a significant predictor of recidivism. Rakes et al. (2018) found that age at first offence was an independent predictor of reduced likelihood of recidivism among older adults released from prisons in North Carolina. The study established that individuals who began offending at a younger age were more likely to recidivate, as early onset of criminal behaviour was associated with longer criminal careers and greater entrenchment in deviant lifestyles. However, this finding contrasts with Shammah (2024), who found that age differences were not significantly associated with variations in family social support during reintegration of ex-convicts in Nigeria. This discrepancy suggests that while early age at first offence is a robust predictor of recidivism, its influence may not extend uniformly to all aspects of post-release outcomes, such as family support. Additionally, some studies have found that the relationship between age at first offence and recidivism may be moderated by other factors such as rehabilitation programme participation, post-release employment, and family support (Yaqoob, Rehman & Sarwar, 2024; Ishola, 2022).

The high proportion of offenders who began their criminal careers in adolescence supports the Labelling Theory (Becker, 1963; Lemert, 1951). Early labelling as a criminal can create a self-fulfilling prophecy where individuals internalize the label and adopt deviant behaviour consistent with it. When adolescents are arrested, convicted, and incarcerated, they are formally labelled as criminals, which can stigmatize them, limit their access to legitimate opportunities, and reinforce their criminal identity. This process is particularly damaging for young offenders who are still in the formative stages of identity development, as the criminal label may become central to their self-concept and guide their future behaviour. The finding also aligns with the Strain Theory (Merton, 1938), as adolescents from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds may experience

significant strain from poverty and limited opportunities, leading them to resort to crime as a means of achieving culturally approved goals.

Descriptive Statistics for Age

Age had an overall mean of 2.86 (SD = 1.12), indicating a moderate level. Among the constructs, duration of sentence recorded the highest mean (M = 3.34, SD = 1.28), followed by time between offences (M = 2.98, SD = 1.56), current age group (M = 2.67, SD = 1.42), and age at first offence (M = 2.45, SD = 1.10). The mean of 2.45 (SD = 1.10) for age at first offense indicates that many inmates began offending at a young age, with the majority committing their first offence below the age of 18 or between 19 and 30 years. This finding implies that early involvement in crime is a significant predictor of persistent offending and recidivism. Individuals who start offending at a young age are more likely to develop entrenched criminal behaviour patterns, as early criminal experiences may normalise deviance, weaken social bonds, and limit opportunities for legitimate social and economic advancement (Rakes et al., 2018).

This finding is consistent with Rakes et al. (2018), who found that age at first offence was an independent predictor of reduced likelihood of recidivism among older adults released from prisons in North Carolina. The study established that individuals who began offending at a younger age were more likely to recidivate, as early onset of criminal behaviour was associated with longer criminal careers and greater entrenchment in deviant lifestyles. However, this finding contrasts with Shammah (2024), who investigated the influence of age on family social support during reintegration of ex-convicts in Nigeria and found that age differences were not significantly associated with variations in the support received from family members. This discrepancy suggests that while early age at first offence is a robust predictor of recidivism, its influence may not extend uniformly to all aspects of post-release outcomes, such as family support. The finding also aligns with the Strain Theory (Merton, 1938), as young offenders from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds may experience significant strain from poverty and unemployment, leading them to resort to crime as a means of achieving culturally approved goals.

The mean of 2.98 (SD = 1.56) for time between offences indicated that many inmates reoffend within relatively short periods after release. This finding implies that inmates tend to return to criminal activity within a short timeframe after their release, suggesting that post-release support systems may be inadequate to address the socio-economic challenges that former inmates face during their transition back into society. The short time between offences also suggests that many inmates are not successfully reintegrated into their communities, as they quickly revert to criminal behaviour due to lack of employment, financial instability, or social exclusion. This finding supports Clark's (2019) observation that recidivism is highest during the first year after release, with about 45% of former prisoners being rearrested within the first year. Additional rearrests occurred among 16% of released offenders within two years, 8% within three years, 11% between four and six years, and 4% between seven and nine years after release. The finding is also consistent with Durose, Cooper and Snyder (2014), who found that recidivism rates were highest during the early years following release.

The moderate mean for time between offences underscores the critical importance of post-release support during the initial reintegration period. The Strain Theory (Merton, 1938) provides a useful lens for understanding this pattern, as released offenders often face significant strain from poverty, unemployment, and social exclusion, which increases their vulnerability to reoffending. The Labelling Theory (Becker, 1963) also offers an explanation, as the stigma of a criminal

record limits employment opportunities and reinforces criminal identity, making reintegration more difficult and increasing the likelihood of reoffending.

Correlation Analysis for Age and Recidivism

The correlation analysis revealed a moderate, negative, and statistically significant correlation between age at first offence and recidivism ($r = -0.412$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that offenders who committed their first crime at a younger age tend to have higher levels of recidivism. Current age group showed a negative correlation with recidivism ($r = -0.289$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that younger inmates are more likely to reoffend than older inmates. Time between offences showed a positive correlation with recidivism ($r = 0.298$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that shorter periods between offences are associated with higher recidivism. Duration of sentence showed a weak, non-significant correlation with recidivism ($r = -0.156$, $p > 0.05$).

The significant negative correlation between age at first offence and recidivism implies that early involvement in crime is a critical risk factor for persistent offending. Individuals who begin their criminal careers during adolescence or early adulthood are more likely to develop entrenched criminal behaviour patterns, as early criminal experiences may normalise deviance, weaken social bonds, and limit opportunities for legitimate social and economic advancement (Rakes et al., 2018). The significant negative correlation between current age group and recidivism suggests that younger inmates are more vulnerable to reoffending, possibly due to their limited life experience, lower maturity, and greater exposure to socio-economic strain (Fernández, 2021). The significant positive correlation between time between offences and recidivism indicates that shorter periods between offences are associated with higher recidivism, highlighting the critical importance of post-release support during the initial reintegration period (Clark, 2019). The non-significant correlation between duration of sentence and recidivism suggests that the length of incarceration may not be a decisive factor in reducing reoffending, consistent with findings that prison sentences alone are insufficient to change criminal behaviour (Molefi & Harris, 2022).

These findings are consistent with Rakes et al. (2018), who found that age was an independent predictor of reduced likelihood of recidivism among older adults released from prisons in North Carolina. The study established that individuals who began offending at a younger age were more likely to recidivate, as early onset of criminal behaviour was associated with longer criminal careers and greater entrenchment in deviant lifestyles. The findings also align with Muriuki et al. (2023), who found that individual background factors, including age, played a significant role in shaping offenders' involvement in repeat criminal behaviour at Nakuru Main Prison.

However, these findings contradict Shammah (2024), who investigated the influence of age on family social support during reintegration of ex-convicts in Nigeria and found that age differences were not significantly associated with variations in the support received from family members. This discrepancy suggests that while age is a robust predictor of recidivism, its influence may not extend uniformly to all aspects of post-release outcomes, such as family support. The contradiction may also be attributed to the different focus of Shammah's study (family support rather than recidivism) and the Nigerian context, where family structures and support systems may differ from those in Kenya.

The qualitative findings on age and recidivism corroborated the quantitative results, with key informants consistently reporting that younger inmates were more likely to reoffend. A prison warden with over 15 years of experience at Kabarnet Prison observed:

"Most of the repeat offenders we receive are young people between 18 and 30 years. They seem to have no fear of prison and treat it as a normal part of their lives. Some even boast about their prison experiences when they return."

Another warden noted:

"The young ones are the most problematic. They come back within months of release because they have no jobs, no skills, and no one to guide them. The older inmates, especially those above 40, rarely return. They seem to have learned their lesson or perhaps are just too tired to continue with crime."

A probation officer corroborated these observations, stating:

"Age is a critical factor in reoffending. The younger offenders, especially those who started committing crimes in their teenage years, are trapped in a cycle. By the time they reach their 30s, many have become professional criminals. Early intervention is crucial, but we lack the resources to provide it."

The qualitative findings reveal that key informants perceive age as a critical determinant of recidivism, with younger offenders being particularly vulnerable to reoffending. The observation that young offenders have "no fear of prison" suggests that incarceration may not serve as a deterrent for young individuals, possibly because they lack awareness of the long-term consequences of criminal behaviour or because they have normalized prison as part of their life experience. The observation that young offenders "treat it as a normal part of their lives" supports the Labelling Theory (Becker, 1963; Lemert, 1951), which suggests that repeated contact with the criminal justice system can normalize deviance and reinforce criminal identity. The probation officer's observation that young offenders become "trapped in a cycle" underscores the cumulative disadvantage associated with early criminal involvement, where initial offending leads to labelling, stigmatization, and limited opportunities, which in turn perpetuate further offending.

These qualitative findings are consistent with the quantitative results, which showed that age at first offence was a significant negative predictor of recidivism ($\beta = -0.389$, $p < 0.001$), with younger age at first offence being associated with higher recidivism. The findings also align with Rakes et al. (2018), who found that age was an independent predictor of reduced likelihood of recidivism in North Carolina, and Fernández (2021), who observed that young offenders who had a previous conviction had a high risk of reoffending within a few months after release.

The observation that older inmates "rarely return" is consistent with the concept of "ageing out" of crime, which suggests that individuals tend to desist from criminal behaviour as they grow older due to increased maturity, changes in life circumstances, and the development of social bonds (Farrington et al., 2014). However, this finding contrasts with Shammah (2024), who found that age differences were not significantly associated with variations in family support during reintegration in Nigeria, suggesting that the relationship between age and recidivism may be moderated by other factors such as family support and socio-economic conditions.

The qualitative findings provide additional depth to the quantitative results by explaining why younger offenders are more likely to reoffend. The key informants identified specific mechanisms, including lack of fear of prison, normalization of incarceration, limited job skills, and absence of guidance, which are consistent with the Strain Theory (Merton, 1938) and the Labelling Theory (Becker, 1963).

Regression Analysis for Age and Recidivism

Table 1 presents the results for regression analysis for age and recidivism.

Table 1: Regression Analysis – Age and Recidivism

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Standard Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	4.567	0.456		10.02	0.000
Age at First Offence	-0.342	0.078	-0.389	-4.38	0.000*
Current Age Group	-0.189	0.065	-0.267	-2.91	0.004*
Duration of Sentence	-0.098	0.071	-0.123	-1.38	0.170
Time Between Offences	0.156	0.059	0.234	2.64	0.009*

Note. Dependent Variable: Recidivism; $R = 0.487$; $R^2 = 0.237$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.218$; $F(4, 107) = 8.34$, $p = 0.000$; * $p < 0.05$.

Source: Field data (2026)

The regression model for age was statistically significant ($F = 8.34$, $p = 0.000$). The model explained 23.7% of the variance in recidivism ($R^2 = 0.237$). Age at first offence was a significant negative predictor of recidivism ($\beta = -0.389$, $t = -4.38$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that younger age at first offence is associated with higher recidivism. Current age group was also a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -0.267$, $t = -2.91$, $p = 0.004$), confirming that younger inmates are more likely to reoffend. Time between offences was a significant positive predictor ($\beta = 0.234$, $t = 2.64$, $p = 0.009$), indicating that shorter time between offences is associated with higher recidivism. Duration of sentence was not a significant predictor ($\beta = -0.123$, $t = -1.38$, $p = 0.170$). The regression results confirm that age-related factors, particularly age at first offence, are significant determinants of recidivism at Kabarnet Prison. The finding that age at first offence was the strongest predictor among age-related variables suggests that early criminal involvement has a cumulative and enduring effect on offending behaviour. Individuals who begin offending at a young age may miss critical developmental milestones, such as completing education and acquiring job skills, which limits their legitimate opportunities and perpetuates cycles of crime (Rakes et al., 2018). The finding that current age group was also a significant predictor suggests that younger inmates face unique vulnerabilities that increase their risk of reoffending, including limited life experience, lower maturity, and greater exposure to socio-economic strain. The finding that time between offences was a significant positive predictor highlights the importance of the post-release period, with shorter intervals between offences indicating higher recidivism risk.

The regression results are consistent with Rakes et al. (2018), who found that age at first offence was an independent predictor of recidivism. However, the findings contrast with Shammah (2024), who found that age differences were not significantly associated with variations in family support during reintegration. This contradiction suggests that while age is a robust predictor of recidivism, its influence may be moderated by other factors such as family support, which was examined in Shammah's study.

Conclusion

Age negatively influenced recidivism among prisoners at Kabarnet Prison, especially younger age at first offence and younger current age. There was thus sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis that age has no statistically significant influence on recidivism among prisoners. Offenders who commit their first crime at a young age are more likely to reoffend, as early involvement in crime creates a cycle of criminal behaviour that becomes increasingly difficult to

break. The shorter the time between offences, the higher the likelihood of continued reoffending, indicating that early intervention with young offenders is critical for breaking the cycle of recidivism and preventing the development of persistent criminal careers.

Recommendations

Based on the study findings, it is recommended that age-specific rehabilitation programmes should be developed for younger offenders, focusing on cognitive-behavioural interventions, life skills development, and mentorship to break the cycle of early offending. Early intervention is critical, as 73.3% of inmates committed their first offence before the age of 30. The national government should also strengthen correctional policies by integrating socioeconomic interventions that address unemployment, low educational attainment, and limited family support among offenders. Adequate resources should be allocated to prison education, vocational training, and post-release employment programmes. Further, rehabilitation practitioners should undertake comprehensive assessments of inmates' educational, occupational, and family circumstances to inform individualized rehabilitation and reintegration plans.

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