

Recidivism: Effect of Incarceration Length on Offenders: A Review of Literature

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ABSTRACT

Offenders may tend to reoffend once they return back to their community, which has come to be known as prison's "revolving door." This review examined the effect of the incarceration on the length of time served in prison on recidivism. A systematic search was conducted utilizing inclusion and exclusion criteria as the method to refine results for literature. The overall findings indicate that the effect of incarceration and sentence length on recidivism is complex and is more likely to be offender-specific. Incarceration and longer confinement were found to increase the risk of recidivism for some offenders. While for other offenders, longer terms of incarceration reduce the likelihood re-offense. Early-release programs however do not appear to have an effect on overall recidivism rates. This literature review also enables to promote employment-led resettlement of offenders, which is ultimately concerned with reducing crime and recidivism.

Keywords: *Recidivism, Re-offence, Incarceration, Offender incarceration, long-term incarceration, Short-term incarceration, Long-term confinement, Short-term confinement*

Recidivism is the tendency of an individual to repeat an undesirable conduct after release (Meade et al., 2012). The frequency of corrections is often measured by the rates of recidivism (Wermink et al., 2017). It was found that, 50%-70% of inmates who have been released are incarcerated again within three years of span (Aarten et al., 2014). Moreover, the factors that affect recidivism rates are socio-economic status, length of incarceration, the severity and seriousness of the crime committed, educational attainment of the individual and effectiveness of post release supervision (Wermink et al., 2017).

The impact of detainment on offender recidivism is a critical issue for those worried about public safety and the cost-viability of imprisonment. Perspectives are isolated between those upholding longer sentences in light of a legitimate concern for public safety, and those supporting shorter sentences with the presumption that more drawn out detainment won't lessen, yet may build, recidivism rates. Those supporting longer sentences for the most part contend that more extended times of imprisonment will diminish wrongdoing rates for three reasons (Wilson 1983; Lipsey 1999): (1) The wrongdoer can't reoffend against the general

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population while imprisoned (incapacitation); (2) Long times of detainment dishearten discharged guilty parties from submitting extra violations (specific deterrence); and (3) The familiarity with punishments dishearten potential guilty parties from carrying out violations (general deterrence). While, those supporting shorter sentences contend that: (1) Certainty of discipline is more vital than length of discipline in stopping guilty parties from reoffending; (2) Many wrongdoers carry out wrongdoings because of physical addictions, or constrained life decisions, and need treatment programs, education endeavors, and occupation preparing instead of extensive stretches of detainment; (3) Prison is a school for offenders, and the individuals who are imprisoned turned out to be more modern and more dug in hoodlums (Bushway, 1998). However, this review condenses the examination that has investigated the connections between recidivism rates and the length of imprisonment. It also constrain the concentration to the impact of specific deterrence, that is, the impact of imprisonment on the criminal conduct of sentenced offenders after their discharge from jail. The recidivism rate of indicted guilty parties is a vital supporter of the measure of wrongdoing, yet it isn't the sole factor. Implications of this review can also contribute to continuing scholarly debates over the socio-economic costs of offender imprisonment.

METHODOLOGY

Search results

A systematic search was conducted utilizing various databases on July 2018. The search supports studies and reports conducted in criminal justice abstracts, pro-quest criminal justice, PsychInfo, criminology, sociology, criminal justice, psychiatry, psychology and the Press CINCH and social services abstracts. The primary mode of data collection was acquired by using the elementary method of refining the results using keywords and terminology by Academic search complete and sage journal.

- Recidivism/ Re-offence
- Incarceration/ Offender incarceration
- Long-term incarceration/ Short-term incarceration
- Long-term confinement; Short-term confinement

The obtained search results were narrowed using inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Inclusion criteria

A total of 5 academic journals were obtained. The results included papers from the year 2000 to 2016 from different countries across the world. All the papers were published in English language. The materials used are largely from The United States and Netherland. The literature review essentially focuses on empirical papers, only. Also, dissertations were not included, as they do not meet peer review criteria. Four criteria were used to filter the final set of empirical papers that will be used in this literature review. Three criteria are listed below.

1. The literature review will focus on peer reviewed empirical studies only.
2. Specific interventions were included where the study focuses long term and or short-term incarceration of offenders.
3. The study is not gender specific, juvenile related studies were also considered.

Exclusion criteria

4. The review doesn't focus on the intensity of crime committed.

RESULTS

Short-term imprisonment on recidivism

Two of the studies focus on the short-term imprisonment on recidivism (Killias et al., 2010, Aarten et al., 2014). The study (Killias et al., 2010) shows that short custodial authorizations neither influence re-offending nor social integration of an individual. Given that basically the majority of the 123 members hoped being appointed to network benefit, one may accept that the individuals who drew the "great" part felt more joyful than those arbitrarily sent to jail. The ex-detainees felt, after 2 years, far less happy with their experience, they felt all the more frequently angry about the vocations and on compensation (Bushway 1998; Grogger 1995; Nagin and Waldfogel 1998; Western et al. 2001) may, subsequently, remain splendidly substantial.

On the other hand (Aarten et al., 2014) found that offenders sentenced to short-term imprisonment were at a higher risk of reconviction at each time interval starting at approximately 5 months. It was found that after 60 months, about 80 percent of the aggregate sample of offenders condemned to short term detainment was reconvicted in comparison to 70 percent of the aggregate sample of offenders given fully suspended jail sentences. It appears that the lower reconviction rates after short-term detainment were the aftereffect of the concealment impact of a first ordeal of imprisonment (Wilson, 1983), though suspended sentences were just a 'slap on the wrist' (Freiburg and Moore, 2009). It is conceivable that offenders viewed suspended sentences as a delicate alternative, unlike detainment, which gave a clear warning that their conduct was undesirable (Bartels, 2009). However, the study has certain limitations. Firstly, the methodology was based upon the registration data and hence underestimating the recidivism rates as the author could only examine reconviction rates. Additionally, judges impose sentences based upon the factors, which are found in the criminal records of an individual. Hence, to minimize the possible future bias, the research should include various legal covariates such as employment, non-legal covariates, risk of reoffending and other possible breaches of suspended imprisonments.

The finding that recidivists given completely suspended sentences are less inclined to be reconvicted than recidivists condemned to short-term detainment is in accordance with the study by Lulham et al. (2009). Besides, in line with social control hypothesis, the study finding proposes that recidivists given suspended prison sentences had the opportunity to hold their social securities with the community, unlike recidivists who were condemned short-term detainment. Remaining inside the community appears to have decreased the danger of reconviction. However, this study was found not in accordance with the theory mentioned. Since recidivists have just been named attributable to their past conviction(s), no major extra impacts of stigmatization of detainment on criminal exercises were expected (Paternoster and Iovanni, 1989). Moreover, future research should additionally look at to what degree the length of a criminal history can impact reconviction rates after a completely suspended prison sentence and after detainment.

Long-term imprisonment on juvenile offenders

One study (Loughram et al., 2009) focused on long-term imprisonment on serious juvenile offenders. Juveniles were aged between 14-17 and were placed in contracted residential setting. Findings of the study suggest that there is an overall null effect on the future rate of re-offense for the serious juvenile offenders. It was also found that, the group placed out of the community had an apparent or no marginal benefits exist for a longer-term imprisonment.

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The study was tested on serious offenders serving in the juvenile prison for 3 to 13 months and the outcome was not significant. Researcher had carefully addressed the information including age, sex, prior criminal reports, situational factors such as substance abuse and social bonds. However, there was no information regarding the offense severity in the study. That could be the reason because the hypothesis shows a null effect as the recidivism may depend upon the severity of the crime. The study results are also in line with other studies which indicate that juveniles when exposed to longer durations of rehabilitative services of the juvenile system will reduce the chance of future crime (Andrews et al., 1990; Lipsey, 1999). Moreover, the sample sizes were comparatively low for the study as the researcher utilizes 419 serious juveniles. Additionally, in future the researcher can have implications on various settings other than residential setting to test the re-offense in juveniles. This is because institutional confinement causes freedom and material restrictions (Fagan and Piquero, 2007).

Time frame in prison

Two of the studies focus on the effect of time frame in recidivism (Meade et al., 2012, Snodgrass et al., 2011). The study (Meade et al., 2012) results shows that, that offenders confined for longer timeframes had bring down chances of recidivism, yet these chances were only substantively lower for those offenders who served the longest timeframes in prison. Findings recommend that the inverse impact of time served was not realized until after offenders have been confined in prison for no less than five years. It could be conceivable that the findings are remarkable to the data utilized in this study. It is also possible to arrive at a conclusion due to the methodology pattern of the study; majority of the existing studies have depended on multivariate regression analysis. However, this study likewise centered on adults rather than juveniles; it might be that longer remains in confinement deter adults, while the impact of various measurements of confinement is invalid for juveniles, who are developing. In this study, recidivism was characterized as "any arrest for a new felony, which excludes arrests for minor crimes and technical violations of parole". However other studies have utilized new felonious conduct as the measure of recidivism has likewise revealed an inverse connection between time served and recidivism (e.g., Bales and Meares 2008; Maguire, Flanagan, and Thornberry 1988). It may be longer that jail stays deter offenders from committing serious offense that may probably get a long-term detainment. It also reflects that confinement may have minimum or zero deterrent impacts on offenders' chances of committing minor wrongdoings or violations because of the fact that the chances of offenders getting a lengthy detainment for these conducts are not much appreciated. Furthermore, the measures utilized in this study were made with data from official sources. Despite the fact that attempts were made to increase reliability of the data over numerous sources, the data was possibly subject to cross-referencing across various sources. Additionally the samples analyzed were the individuals under supervision, hence the results may lack generalizability across regions. The implication policy of this study may hence be less significant even deterrent effect for long term imprisonment may be theoretically important.

On the other hand (Snodgrass et al., 2012) had analyzed the connection between time served and recidivism in Netherlands. Overall results indicate a little proof of a relationship between time served in prison and recidivism. It was found that people confined to long-term detainment are subsequently confined to significantly more days of imprisonment in the initial 3 years of offence. However, there are two imperative provisos with this outcome. In

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the first place, the effect of time served on resulting sentence length turns out to be statistically significant when we incorporate matches including guilty parties who served different periods of confinement. Secondly, this outcome may reflect "progression of punishment". However, if the judiciary, all else level with, holds that discipline for future culpability should be an increasing capacity of the punishment dispensed for past culpable, could hope to see the watched contrast in future imprisonment length.

It was also found that the study lack generalizability as the findings are limited by both methodical and data considerations. However, the study has important benefits for future in terms of scientific validity and policy relevance. The author give insight to legal policies in Netherlands as this study can have some policy implications in terms of length of imprisonment. The outcomes of the study do not address how the impact of imprisonment shifts crosswise over identifiable sub classifications of guilty parties. In spite of the fact that looking at how the impact of time served differs crosswise over subgroups of guilty parties is beyond the scope of current work, which is an essential road for future research.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The overall findings of the review indicate that the effect of incarceration and sentence length on recidivism is complex and is more likely to be offender-specific. To conclude imprisonment did not build the possibility of recidivism compared with completely suspended prison sentences. However, it was found that detainment conveyed a more prominent reconviction advantage for first guilty parties, though recidivists were less inclined to be reconvicted after completely suspended jail sentences. This review would have a logical implication that criminal history will have a prominent place in sentence planning, however individuals are careful about reaching such an inference. Interestingly, completely suspended prison sentences will not remove wrongdoers from their communities, consequently enabling them to participate in a customary social life. This literature review also has policy implications. Initially, probation sentences may be utilized more frequently as an alternative to imprisonment. Additionally, the cost reserve funds related with probation are large in respect to the incapacitation impact of detainment. Likewise, a prison sentence does little to diminish criminal offending after release with respect to offending by probationers. Second, since parole violations play a significant part in the development of the prison system through "back-end" sentencing, redirecting specialized parole violators from imprisonment to elective assents might be an essential component for contracting the size of the prison system.

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APPENDIX

Table 1: Studies utilized for review

SI. NO	Author and Year	Sample	Methodology	Findings	Conclusion	Country of research
1	Aarten et al., (2014)	N=2115 prisoners	Data collected from the research and policy database for judicial documentation, Netherlands.	First offenders given fully suspended prison sentences had a higher risk of being reconvicted than first offenders sentenced to short –term imprisonment.	Short-term imprisonment carried a greater reconviction benefit for first offenders, whereas recidivists were less likely to be reconvicted after fully suspended prison sentences.	Netherlands
2	Killias et al., (2010)	123 subjects randomly assigned to community service or immediate custody.	Data reports of controlled trial conducted between 1993 and 1995 in Switzerland.	Community service does not reduce the odds of later reoffending or improve social integration when compared to imprisonment.	Short custodial sanctions neither effect social integration nor reoffending in the longer run.	Switzerland
3	Loughran et al., (2009)	Serious juveniles aged 14 in institutional settings (N=419)	Reports and data from prison.	There is an overall null effect of placement on future rate of rearrests and future rate of self-reported offending	Exposure to substance use may reduce both crime and self-reported offending.	U.S
4	Meade et al., (2012)	Offenders released from prison under supervision. (N=1,989)	Large representative sample of adult offenders released from prison under post release supervision in the state of Ohio.	Findings suggest that the inverse effect of time served was not realized until after offenders have been confined for at least five	Study findings indicate that the specific deterrent effect of prison sentences may be limited and	U.S

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Sl. NO	Author and Year	Sample	Methodology	Findings	Conclusion	Country of research
				years.	sentences less than five years may be reduced in order to save costs without a substantial threat to public safety.	
5	Snodgrass et al., (2011)	Felony offenders aged 12 to 40 N=4,096	Administrative data held by the Research and documentation centre of Netherlands Ministry of Justice.	Offenders serving 2-3 months were sentenced to significantly fewer days of future confinement compared to offenders serving between 3 months and one year.	A little proof of a relationship between times served in prison and recidivism.	Netherland

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Conflict of Interest

The authors carefully declare this paper to bear not a conflict of interests

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