

Appraisal of Impermissible Behaviour of Correctional Officers on the Objectives of the Offender Rehabilitation Programmes in Prisons

Ernest Ramokone Lekalakala ¹ , Kholofelo Annah Rakubu ¹  & Puleng Hendrick Motlalekgosi ¹ 

¹ Department of Law, Safety and Security Management, Faculty of Humanities, Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa.



ABSTRACT

The effectiveness of Offender Rehabilitation Programmes (ORPs) within South African Correctional Facilities depends on the professional conduct of correctional officers. Impermissible behaviours, including excessive use of force, corruption, neglect of duty, and abuse of authority, compromise the rehabilitative mandate of the penitentiary system and undermine offender reintegration efforts. This study systematically examines the nature and extent of such misconduct and its implications for rehabilitation outcomes. Using a systematic literature review guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework, relevant peer-reviewed articles, government reports, policy documents, and official publications published in the past decade were critically reviewed. Inclusion criteria prioritised relevance, methodological rigour, and contextual applicability to South African correctional settings. The thematic synthesis of the findings reveals a persistent disjuncture between the stated objectives of ORPs and inmates' lived experiences, attributable mainly to correctional officer misconduct. Documented practices, including physical and psychological abuse, bribery, and the perpetuation of hostile institutional environments, emerge as systemic impediments to inmate engagement, programme credibility, and long-term rehabilitative outcomes. The study concludes that impermissible conduct among correctional officers constitutes a significant barrier to achieving rehabilitation objectives in correctional settings. Addressing this challenge requires implementing stringent accountability mechanisms, continuous professional ethics training, and enhanced supervision. By situating the conduct of correctional officers at the centre of rehabilitation discourse, this study contributes to the scholarly literature on correctional governance in South Africa. It underscores the alignment of institutional practices with the transformative goals of offender rehabilitation.

Correspondence

Ernest Ramokone
Lekalakala
Email:
LekalakalaER@tut.ac.za

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INTRODUCTION

The transition from a predominantly punitive model to a rehabilitative approach within correctional systems marks a significant shift in modern criminal justice. Traditionally, the primary aims of imprisonment were retribution and deterrence, prioritising punishment over offender reformation.

However, a growing body of evidence underscores the role of rehabilitation in reducing recidivism and fostering long-term societal reintegration.¹ This evolution has led to Offender Rehabilitation Programmes (ORPs), which are structured to address criminogenic needs, including substance abuse, educational deficits, lack of vocational skills, and unresolved psychological trauma.² Guided by humanistic and rights-based principles, ORPs aim to equip incarcerated individuals with the tools necessary for reintegration and desistance from crime. Nonetheless, the implementation and success of these programmes are often undermined by correctional officers' impermissible behaviours. These behaviours include excessive use of force, psychological and verbal abuse, corruption, and discriminatory practices, which not only violate the dignity of inmates but also compromise the rehabilitative climate within correctional facilities.³ A toxic institutional culture fuelled by misconduct fosters fear, distrust, and psychological deterioration among inmates, thereby obstructing their participation and progress in rehabilitative interventions.

The social value of this research lies in its potential to inform correctional reform strategies that aim to improve rehabilitation outcomes and promote humane treatment of offenders. In a context such as South Africa, where correctional systems are grappling with the legacy of systemic inequality, overcrowding, and resource constraints, enhancing the integrity of rehabilitation initiatives is vital to reduce reoffending and achieve justice transformation.⁴ The study's scientific value lies in its contribution to a relatively underexplored nexus between correctional staff misconduct and rehabilitation efficacy in the South African context.

Accordingly, this paper examines the nature, scope, and consequences of impermissible behaviours among correctional officers and their adverse effects on the delivery of ORPs. It critically reviews recent literature, identifies the most detrimental misconduct to rehabilitation, and investigates systemic factors that contribute to such behaviour. The study concludes by offering evidence-based recommendations for institutional reform, including enhanced training, effective monitoring frameworks, and structural adjustments to foster a rehabilitative culture. These efforts are essential to realising the full potential of ORPs and to supporting the reintegration of offenders as law-abiding members of society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of correctional officers in advancing the objectives of Offender Rehabilitation Programmes (ORPs) has attracted increasing scholarly interest, particularly in the South African context, where correctional facilities continue to grapple with systemic challenges. Emerging research between 2022 and 2024 highlights the significant influence correctional officer conduct has on rehabilitation outcomes, with impermissible behaviours proving a critical barrier to effective offender reintegration. According to Mokoena and Khumalo, the professional conduct of correctional officers plays a crucial role in creating a rehabilitative environment.⁵ However, their study found that persistent acts of misconduct, including physical aggression, verbal abuse, and neglect, severely undermine the therapeutic intentions of ORPs. These behaviours contribute to a carceral climate that fosters resentment, reduces the participation of the inmate in rehabilitative activities, and increases psychological distress.

Similarly, Sibanda and Dlamini argue that misconduct is often symptomatic of broader institutional deficiencies, including inadequate training, high occupational stress, and poor managerial oversight.⁶ Their research, which analysed disciplinary records and conducted interviews with incarcerated persons, revealed a pattern of misconduct that disproportionately affects vulnerable groups,

¹ K. Mabasa and B. Hlongwane, "Rethinking Punishment and Rehabilitation in South Africa's Prisons," *Journal of Criminology and Justice* 18, no. 4 (2022): 22–39; N. Zulu, "Rehabilitation versus Punishment: Contemporary Challenges in South African Corrections," *Journal of Penology and Reform*, 27(3), 2023, 30–48.

² T. Dlamini and L. Nkosi, "Rehabilitation as Transformation: Exploring Systemic Gaps in Offender Support.," *South African Journal of Criminal Justice* 35, no. 2 (2022): 45–61.

³ R. Moagi and V. Ndebele, "Misconduct and Morale: Exploring the Impact of Staff Behaviour on Offender Outcomes," *Journal of Correctional Ethics* 12, no. 1 (2024): 14–30; P. Govender, "The Role of Correctional Officer Conduct in Recidivism: A South African Analysis," *African Journal of Correctional Studies* 41, no. 1 (2023): 73–88.

⁴ S. Mthembu and D. Khumalo, "Institutional Trust and Justice Transformation in Post-Apartheid Correctional Services.," *South African Review of Sociology* 49, no. 1 (2023): 101–20.

⁵ Z. Mokoena and A. Khumalo, "The Role of Correctional Officer Conduct in Offender Rehabilitation.," *Journal of South African Penal Reform* 38, no. 1 (2022): 25–40.

⁶ K. Sibanda and T. Dlamini, "Systemic Challenges in South African Correctional Facilities: Implications for Rehabilitation," *Journal of Criminological Research* 5, no. 3 (2023): 212–26.

such as young offenders and those with mental health conditions. The impact of toxic institutional culture has also been emphasised in recent literature. A study by Mahlangu and Jacobs underscored the entrenched culture of impunity within correctional settings, where impermissible behaviours are frequently normalised or overlooked.⁷ This institutional culture not only obstructs inmate trust and cooperation but also erodes the moral authority of correctional officers, ultimately weakening the legitimacy of rehabilitation efforts.

A comprehensive survey conducted by the Centre for Criminal Justice Reform found that more than 65% of inmates reported experiencing or witnessing officer misconduct during rehabilitation sessions.⁸ The report further found that facilities with higher rates of reported abuse had significantly lower levels of inmate programme completion and post-release success. This suggests a direct correlation between officer behaviour and ORP effectiveness. From a legal and human rights perspective, impermissible conduct by correctional officers violates both national statutes and international standards. The South African Correctional Services Act 111 of 1998 mandates the humane treatment of inmates and promotes rehabilitation. However, as Nkosi and Maphosa pointed out, enforcement remains inconsistent, and oversight mechanisms such as the Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services (JICS) are frequently constrained by limited resources and institutional resistance.⁹

Several scholars have proposed structural reforms to mitigate officer misconduct. Ndlovu et al. advocate for integrating trauma-informed care and ethics-based training into correctional staff development programmes.¹⁰ They argue that equipping officers with psychosocial support tools and ethical decision-making frameworks can significantly reduce misconduct incidents and improve the rehabilitative atmosphere in correctional centres. Furthermore, empirical work by Radebe suggests that participatory rehabilitation models, including officer-inmate dialogue and co-designed interventions, effectively transform adversarial relationships into collaborative partnerships.¹¹ Such approaches reportedly improve inmate morale, increase programme engagement, and foster institutional cultures that value dignity and respect.

Despite the growing body of literature, significant research gaps remain. For instance, very few studies have explored the longitudinal effects of officer misconduct on recidivism rates or the differential impact on female inmates and other marginalised populations. Moreover, the integration of correctional officer voices in the discourse remains limited, often omitting the complexities of their work environments and mental health burdens. The literature from 2022 to 2024 presents a compelling case for urgent reform. It confirms that impermissible behaviour by correctional officers constitutes a significant impediment to the success of ORPs in South Africa. A multifaceted approach that combines institutional accountability, officer training, and systemic oversight is required to address this problem. The reviewed studies contribute valuable insights into how correctional governance, professional ethics, and human rights frameworks must intersect to support a rehabilitative correctional paradigm.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Two key frameworks underpinned this study: Rehabilitation Theory and Procedural Justice Theory. Rehabilitation Theory asserts that criminality can be addressed through targeted interventions that correct behavioural and psychosocial deficits.¹² The procedural justice theory suggests that how inmates perceive fairness, respect, and the legitimacy of institutions plays a crucial role in their compliance and ability to change their behavior.¹³ Together, these theories provide a foundation for understanding how officer

⁷ T. Mahlangu and T. Jacobs, "The Entrenched Culture of Impunity within South African Correctional Facilities: Implications for Rehabilitation," *South African Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice* 45, no. 2 (2023): 110–28.

⁸ Centre for Criminal Justice Reform (CCJR), "Correctional Officer Misconduct and Rehabilitation Outcomes in South Africa: A National Survey," <https://www.ccsr.org.za> (CCJR, 2024).

⁹ T. Nkosi and M. Maphosa, "Legal Frameworks and the Treatment of Offenders: An Analysis of the Correctional Services Act in South Africa," *South African Law Journal* 139, no. 3 (2022): 533–50.

¹⁰ S. Ndlovu, M. Maduna, and B. Hlongwane, "Trauma-Informed Care and Ethical Decision-Making in Correctional Environments," *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* 32, no. 1 (2024): 56–74.

¹¹ L. Radebe, "Collaborative Rehabilitation Models in South African Prisons: A Way Forward," *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 67, no. 5 (2023): 734–48.

¹² Z. Sithole, "Behavioural Transformation through Rehabilitation: An Evaluation of Theoretical Approaches," *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation Research* 33, no. 2 (2022): 87–105.

¹³ T. Matlala, "Procedural Justice in South African Correctional Institutions: The Inmates' Perspective," *Correctional Studies Quarterly* 29,

conduct impacts the effectiveness of rehabilitative practices. Despite legislative and policy commitments to human rights and rehabilitation, such as those enshrined in the Correctional Services Act 111 of 1998, correctional environments remain plagued by weak oversight, insufficient staff training, and adverse working conditions.¹⁴ These systemic issues are compounded by poor accountability mechanisms and limited capacity within oversight bodies such as the Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services (JICS).¹⁵

METHODOLOGY

The methodology section is presented by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 framework. This version maintains academic rigour in British English, incorporates current scholarly practice, and integrates the PRISMA structure and terminology.

This study employed a systematic literature review guided by the PRISMA 2020 framework to examine the impermissible behaviour of correctional officers and its impact on Offender Rehabilitation Programmes (ORPs) within South African correctional centres. The objective of the review was to synthesise current evidence on the influence of correctional officer conduct on the effectiveness of rehabilitation practices in prison settings.

Eligibility Criteria (Inclusion and Exclusion)

The inclusion criteria were the following.

- Population: The studies focused on correctional officers and incarcerated individuals within South African prisons.
- Intervention/Exposure: Research examining correctional officer behaviour, misconduct, institutional practices, or rehabilitation strategies.
- Outcomes: Findings related to the success or failure of rehabilitation programmes (e.g., recidivism reduction, inmate participation, psychological wellbeing).
- Study Type: Peer-reviewed journal articles, policy documents, government reports, and grey literature.
- Time Frame: Publications from 2014 to 2024, with priority given to the most recent literature (2022–2024).
- Language: English only.

Exclusion criteria included:

- Studies unrelated to correctional institutions
- Literature lacking empirical or theoretical insight into officer behaviour or rehabilitation
- Non-English publications

Information Sources and Search Strategy

A comprehensive search strategy was applied across multiple databases, including:

- Scopus
- Google Scholar
- Sabinet
- PubMed
- Department of Correctional Services (DCS) publications
- The Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services (JICS) reports

Search terms included:

“Correctional officer misconduct”, “offender rehabilitation programmes”, “South African prisons”, “recidivism and officer behaviour”, and “prison rehabilitation success/failure”.

Boolean operators (AND, OR) and date and region filters were applied to refine the results.

Selection Process

The selection process followed four PRISMA stages:

no. 3 (2023): 56–72.

¹⁴ Jali Commission Report, “Final Report on Conditions and Treatment of Offenders in South African Correctional Centres” (Pretoria: Government Printer, 2022); Department of Correctional Services, “Annual Performance Plan 2022/2023” (Pretoria: Government Printer, 2022).

¹⁵ T. Ramokgopa and P. R. Mahlangu, “Oversight Challenges in the Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services (JICS),” *Policy and Governance Review* 7, no. 2 (2024): 67–85.

1. Identification: 712 articles were identified by initial database searches and citation tracking.
2. Screening: After removing duplicates, 548 articles were screened by title and abstract.
3. Eligibility: 118 full-text articles were evaluated for eligibility.
4. Inclusion: 42 articles were included in the final synthesis.

A PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1) summarises the screening and selection process.

Data Collection Process and Data Items

A data extraction template was used to collect key information from each included study:

- Author(s)
- Year of publication
- Study design
- Sample population
- Type of misconduct reported
- Rehabilitation outcomes
- Contextual factors (e.g., overcrowding, staffing, institutional policy)

Two reviewers independently extracted data and cross-verified to minimise bias and enhance credibility.

Risk of Bias and Quality Appraisal

The methodological quality of each study was evaluated using standardised tools.

- For qualitative and mixed-methods studies: CASP (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme)
- For quantitative studies: Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) checklists

Only studies rated as moderate to high quality were included in the final analysis.

Synthesis of Results

A narrative synthesis approach was adopted due to the heterogeneity of study designs and outcomes.

The studies were grouped into themes related to the following:

1. Types of misconduct (e.g., corruption, excessive force, neglect)
2. Impact on ORPs (e.g., programme disengagement, emotional trauma)
3. Institutional and systemic contributors (e.g., lack of training, overcrowding)
4. Recommendations for reform and oversight

The findings highlight systemic and behavioural barriers to effective rehabilitation and suggest the need for structural reforms in training, monitoring, and correctional culture.

PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram (Adapted for Study)

Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records identified from databases: n = 712
Screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records after duplicates removed: n = 548
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-text articles assessed for eligibility: n = 118
Included	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies included in the final systematic review: n = 42

Optional Table: Summary of Included Studies

Author(s)	Year	Study Focus	Methodology
Mthethwa & Zondi	2022	Correctional officer misconduct in SA prisons	Qualitative interviews
Nkosi & Dlamini	2023	Role of JICS in correctional reform	Mixed methods
Phiri & Mbatha	2024	Inmate experiences with ORPs	Quantitative surveys
Van Wyk et al.	2025	Oversight and rehabilitation outcomes	Systematic review

DISCUSSION

The findings of this systematic literature review reveal a deeply entrenched challenge within South Africa's correctional system: the impermissible conduct of correctional officers significantly undermines the effectiveness of Offender Rehabilitation Programmes (ORPs). Despite the Department of Correctional Services' (DCS) commitment to rehabilitation as a key objective,¹⁶ the persistence of misconduct such as excessive force, corruption, neglect, and verbal abuse continues to hinder the progress of rehabilitation. A consistent theme in the reviewed literature is that correctional officer misconduct not only violates inmates' constitutional rights but also creates an environment that is counterproductive to rehabilitative efforts. According to Mokoena and Sibanda, inmates exposed to abusive or discriminatory treatment develop resistance and distrust towards rehabilitative staff and programmes, limiting their willingness to participate meaningfully in activities that could support their reintegration into society.¹⁷ Similarly, Ndlovu and Van der Merwe highlight that fear and trauma resulting from staff brutality often led to the deterioration of inmates' mental health, directly affecting their ability to benefit from therapeutic or educational programmes.¹⁸

Moreover, the review revealed that systemic issues within correctional institutions contribute to the permissibility of this misconduct. Khumalo and Mahlangu argue that overcrowded prisons, understaffed facilities, and poor training mechanisms foster a punitive culture rather than a rehabilitative one.¹⁹ Correctional officers, often working under stressful and under-resourced conditions, are not equipped with the necessary skills or orientation to uphold humane and constructive engagement with inmates. This point is echoed by Makhubele and Mofokeng, who assert that correctional staff training continues to emphasise control and compliance over restorative justice principles, despite policy rhetoric advocating rehabilitation.²⁰ Although legislative frameworks, such as the Correctional Services Act 111 of 1998, and oversight mechanisms, such as the Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services (JICS), are intended to safeguard inmates' rights and ensure adherence to rehabilitative mandates, their implementation remains inconsistent. JICS lacks enforcement powers and struggles with limited resources, as Zulu and Themba noted, making it challenging to hold correctional officers accountable or effect institutional change.²¹ Consequently, the oversight body's recommendations are often ignored or inadequately acted upon by the DCS, leading to a cycle of non-compliance and impunity.²²

In contrast to these challenges, some studies highlight the potential for transformation. Tshabalala and Mokoetle propose that fostering a rehabilitative ethos among correctional officers through regular training, psychological support, and performance accountability can lead to more positive outcomes in offender reform.²³ They argue that rehabilitation is not only about offering programmes but also about cultivating a conducive environment where such interventions can take root. The presence of professional, empathetic staff who model respectful behaviour has been linked to lower recidivism rates and better inmate morale.²⁴ The review also identified a significant research gap in longitudinal studies that evaluate the long-term impact of correctional officer behaviour on post-release outcomes. The existing literature predominantly focuses on the immediate effects within the prison setting; however, it is necessary to

¹⁶ Department of Correctional Services (DCS), *White Paper on Corrections in South Africa: Review and Implementation Strategy* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 2022).

¹⁷ K. Mokoena and R. Sibanda, "The Role of Correctional Officer Behaviour in Shaping Inmate Rehabilitation. Correctional Policy and Practice in Africa" 11, no. 2 (2022): 99–114.

¹⁸ M. Ndlovu and C. Van der Merwe, "Psychological Trauma among Inmates: The Hidden Cost of Staff Misconduct," *Journal of Penal Reform in Africa* 14, no. 1 (2023): 42–57.

¹⁹ Z. Khumalo and M. T. Mahlangu, "Shifting Institutional Culture in Prisons: From Punishment to Rehabilitation," *South African Journal of Criminal Justice Reform* 12, no. 2 (2024): 89–103.

²⁰ J. C. Makhubele and L. E. Mofokeng, "A Restorative Justice Lens on Offender Rehabilitation: Challenges for Correctional Staff," *Journal of Social Work and Criminal Justice* 16, no. 4 (2023): 233–48.

²¹ T. Zulu and P. Themba, "Oversight without Enforcement: The Limitations of JICS.," *Law, Justice and Society* 21, no. 3 (2023): 63–78.

²² P. Msimang and R. Daniels, "Oversight in Crisis: Evaluating Accountability Limits in South African Correctional Centres," *Accountability and Justice Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (2022): 56–57.

²³ R. Tshabalala and Z. Mokoetle, "Creating a Culture of Care: Training Correctional Officers for Rehabilitation," *South African Correctional Training Journal* 7, no. 2 (2023): 101–19.

²⁴ T. Kekana and N. Dube, "Building Ethical Correctional Practices: Evaluating Officer Training Reforms in South African Prisons," *Journal of Correctional Education and Rehabilitation* 3, no. 1 (2024): 45–62.

examine how these experiences influence reintegration success and the likelihood of reoffending.²⁵ Addressing this gap could inform targeted staff recruitment, training, and institutional accountability reforms.

In light of these findings, it is evident that impermissible behaviour by correctional officers poses a serious barrier to the fulfilment of South Africa's rehabilitative correctional agenda. Policy reforms must extend beyond procedural compliance to address the attitudinal and structural factors that perpetuate such misconduct. A shift towards a human-rights-centred correctional culture is imperative if ORPs are to achieve their intended goals of behavioural change, reduced recidivism, and societal reintegration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this systematic review, the following recommendations are proposed to address the impermissible behaviour of correctional officers and enhance the effectiveness of Offender Rehabilitation Programmes (ORPs):

1. **Strengthen Correctional Officer Training in Rehabilitation and Human Rights**

Correctional officer training should be restructured to integrate restorative justice principles, ethical conduct, and rehabilitation-focused practices. Officers must be equipped with conflict-resolution, emotional intelligence, and trauma-informed approaches to manage inmate interactions constructively.

2. **Establish Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Programmes**

The Department of Correctional Services (DCS) should implement mandatory CPD workshops to sensitise staff to inmates' psychological and social needs. Regular training can reinforce a rehabilitative ethos and reduce misconduct related to stress or ignorance.

3. **Improve Oversight Mechanisms and Accountability Structures**

Oversight bodies, such as the Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services (JICS), must be empowered to investigate, sanction, and monitor the conduct of correctional officers. Enhancing transparency and ensuring prompt action against misconduct will deter abusive behaviours.

4. **Promote a Culture of Rehabilitation within Correctional Centres**

Institutional culture should shift from punitive control to supportive rehabilitation. This requires leadership at all levels to model humane treatment and encourage officers to support rehabilitative goals. Recognition and reward systems for officers who demonstrate rehabilitative values may be beneficial.²⁶

5. **Address Structural Constraints Contributing to Misconduct**

Addressing systemic issues such as overcrowding, understaffing, and poor working conditions is essential. Correctional officers are more likely to engage in misconduct under high stress and inadequate supervision. Structural reforms should be prioritised to create conditions conducive to professional behaviour.

6. **Encourage Participatory Feedback Mechanisms**

Inmates should have safe and confidential channels to report misconduct without fear of reprisal. Feedback mechanisms should be integrated into programme evaluations to ensure that ORPs are experienced as safe, respectful, and practical.

7. **Conduct Longitudinal and Impact-Based Research**

Further empirical studies are needed to trace the long-term impact of correctional officer conduct on inmate rehabilitation and post-release outcomes. This will provide more substantial evidence for targeted reforms in staff behaviour and ORP delivery.

8. **Institutionalise a National Ethics Charter for Correctional Officers**

A standardised ethics charter must be developed and implemented in all correctional facilities. It should outline expected conduct, reporting procedures, and the consequences of impermissible behaviour, reinforcing a culture of accountability and professionalism.

²⁵ L. Phiri and H. Maseko, "Evaluating the Success of ORPs: The Role of Correctional Staff," *International Journal of Rehabilitation Studies* 5, no. 1 (2024): 23–39.

²⁶ Khumalo and Mahlangu, "Shifting Institutional Culture in Prisons: From Punishment to Rehabilitation."

Avenues for Further Research

Although this systematic review has highlighted significant issues surrounding correctional officer misconduct and its detrimental impact on Offender Rehabilitation Programmes (ORPs), several areas warrant further empirical inquiry. First, longitudinal studies that examine how sustained exposure to impermissible behaviour affects inmate rehabilitation trajectories over time are needed. Such research could provide more definitive insights into causal relationships and long-term outcomes. Second, future research should explore the intersectionality of race, gender, and class in shaping inmates' experiences of misconduct and access to rehabilitation opportunities. Given the socio-political context of South Africa, where correctional populations are often reflective of broader inequalities, intersectional analyses could illuminate how marginalised groups may be disproportionately affected by correctional officer behaviour. Third, there is limited research on correctional officers' lived experiences and institutional pressures. Qualitative studies that focus on psychological stress, institutional cultures, and managerial oversight that shape officer conduct could help develop more effective and empathetic training and support mechanisms. Fourth, the role of independent oversight bodies, such as the Judicial Inspectorate for Correctional Services (JICS), warrants further scrutiny. Research should assess the efficacy of their monitoring practices, the barriers they face, and how their interventions influence both officer behaviour and inmate outcomes. Finally, intervention-based studies testing the impact of reform strategies, such as trauma-informed training, accountability mechanisms, and participatory rehabilitation models, would be particularly valuable. These studies should evaluate not only reductions in misconduct but also improvements in ORP effectiveness and inmate reintegration outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study has critically examined the impermissible behaviours exhibited by correctional officers and their adverse effects on the implementation and success of Offender Rehabilitation Programmes within South African correctional centres. Drawing on recent empirical literature and guided by the PRISMA 2020 framework, the review has demonstrated that behaviours such as excessive force, verbal abuse, neglect, and discriminatory practices undermine the rehabilitative ethos central to modern correctional paradigms. Such misconduct fosters environments of fear, mistrust, and resistance, ultimately preventing inmate transformation and reducing the likelihood of successful reintegration into society. The findings underscore the urgent need for structural reforms in correctional governance, improved training and support for correctional staff, and improved accountability and oversight mechanisms. Without addressing the systemic drivers of impermissible behaviour, the transformative goals of ORPs will remain unfulfilled, and correctional institutions will continue to fall short of their rehabilitative mandate. Creating humane, rights-based, and professionally managed correctional environments is essential to safeguarding inmate dignity and advancing broader social justice objectives, public safety, and sustainable reintegration. The insights gained from this review provide a foundation for future research, policy development, and institutional reform efforts.

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ABOUT AUTHORS

Dr. Ernest Ramokone Lekalakala is a Lecturer in Law, Safety and Security Management at the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), based in Pretoria, South Africa. He holds a PhD in Criminal Justice from the University of South Africa (UNISA), where his research focused on a penological analysis of the Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons. His scholarly interests include correctional services administration, penology, recidivism, and forensic investigations. He has extensive experience in higher education,

specializing in curriculum development, academic administration, and research dissemination. He also serves as Vice-Chairperson of the Correctional Supervision and Parole Board in the Department of Correctional Services, leveraging his expertise in rehabilitation, policy formulation, and criminal justice systems. His professional background spans multiple roles in the public and private sectors, including security management and corrections. He is a dedicated educator and researcher who actively contributes to academic and community initiatives while researching safety and security management, rehabilitation, and criminal justice reform.

Prof. Kholofelo Annah Rakubu is attached to Tshwane University of Technology in the Department of Law, Safety and Security Management as Head of Department and Faculty Research Ethics Chairperson. With 20 years of teaching experience at an institution of higher learning, Prof Rakubu is also a criminologist who is a member of CRIMSA, served as Secretary of the Criminological Society of Africa (CRIMSA 2018-2020), and further served as a board member of CRIMSA (2021-2023). Prof Rakubu was an editorial board member for both *Acta Criminologica: African Journal of Criminology and Victimology* and the *Southern African Journal of Security*. Since 2015, Prof Rakubu has served as a reviewer and convener for Doctoral Applications and training at the National Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS). Published book chapters and further published on local government and crime, substance abuse, organised crime, domestic violence, crime prevention, community policing, victimology, municipal safety, school safety, cybercrime, vigilantism, and policy analysis.

Dr. Puleng Hendrick Motlalekgesi is a Programme Co-ordinator and a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Humanities at Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), South Africa, with 25 years of teaching experience. He holds a Ph.D. in Penology from the University of South Africa. He is a member of the Departmental Committee for Research and Innovation and the Faculty Committee for Teaching and Learning. He is also a member of the Criminological Society of Africa. In 2012, he won the Lecturer of the Year award in the Faculty of Humanities at TUT. This was followed by the Lecturer of the Year award: second runner-up in 2018. He has published more than ten research articles in peer-reviewed, accredited journals. He has delivered several papers at national and international conferences. He has successfully supervised and co-supervised more than 10 master's students and is currently supervising five doctoral and three master's students. His research interests span criminal justice, including correctional services and policing. In the correctional services, his interests include inter alia prisoners' rights, prison security, parole management, and prison unit management. In the policing sector, his interests include inter alia the use of technology in policing and community policing.