



# Engaging in Formal Education and Vocational Training Programs for Rehabilitation of Children in Conflict with the Law at Shimo La Tewa Borstal Institution, Mombasa County, Kenya

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**Abstract:** *The study aimed to assess the relationship between children's participation in education and vocational programs and their rehabilitation outcomes. Despite efforts to enhance Borstal programs, their effectiveness remains a concern. Guided by Social Disorganization Theory by Shaw and McKay, the study adopted a convergent parallel research design, analyzing qualitative data through thematic analysis and quantitative data using SPSS for descriptive and inferential statistics. The target population was 200 children and eight Key Informants at the Shimo La Tewa Borstal Institution. The study used census sampling for the children, out of which 186 participated, and purposive sampling key informants, out of which five participated. Data collection involved questionnaires for the children and interview schedules for key informants. A pilot study at Shanzu Probation Hostel using 20 children in conflict with the law and 3 key informants confirmed the reliability of the tools, and ethical approvals were obtained. Findings revealed a positive relationship between participation in formal education and vocational training and the rehabilitation of the children, indicating a significant contribution of these programs to reform. The study recommended that Shimo La Tewa Borstal strengthen its education and vocational programs. It also recommended that the Ministry of Interior should establish a standard rehabilitation framework and fund pre-release and aftercare programs. In addition, the Ministry of Education needs to deploy qualified teachers and instructors to Shimo La Tewa Borstal Institution. Additionally, researchers were encouraged to conduct longitudinal studies to evaluate post-release outcomes.*

**Keywords:** *Juvenile delinquency, Borstal institution, Formal education, Vocational training, Rehabilitation, Children in conflict with the law, Shimo La Tewa, Reintegration*

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## 1. Introduction

Juvenile delinquency remains a persistent global challenge, with significant implications for public safety, social cohesion, and youth development (Oesterdiekhoff, 2022; Wilson, 2024). Many children in conflict with the law

experience a combination of socio-economic, psychological, illiteracy, and environmental factors such as parental neglect, peer pressure, and community breakdown, which increase their vulnerability to crime (Yang, Xiong & Huang, 2021; Tasisa & Palanimuthu, 2021).

To address rising delinquency rates, many countries worldwide have shifted from punitive approaches to rehabilitative programs, recognizing that children in conflict with the law are still in developmental stages (Kratcoski et al., 2019). Rehabilitation, in this context, involves offering education, vocational training, and supportive services to children in conflict with the law alongside corrective measures aimed at behavior change and reintegration. Historically, Borstal institutions adopted regimens that included sports and industrial training to build cooperation, literacy, and practical skills. Juvenile delinquency, often caused by factors such as parental neglect, peer influence, psychological immaturity, and family breakdown, results in offenses that have emotional, social, and economic consequences—necessitating interventions across multiple sectors (Gueta et al., 2022; Rice et al., 2024).

As a result, countries have developed juvenile justice systems emphasizing rehabilitation rather than punishment. This shift reflects the growing consensus that institutional responses should focus on reforming behavior, providing education, and preparing children for a constructive return to society. Modern Borstal institutions are designed not merely to incarcerate, but to reform. While many previously operated as isolation prisons, the focus has now shifted to structured, supportive interventions (Koehler & Lösel, 2024; Azam et al., 2021). Today, institutions separate juveniles from adults and aim to rehabilitate them in environments where they are protected from harmful peer influence and exposed to positive behavioral models.

Despite these efforts, the effectiveness of institutional rehabilitation programs remains challenged. Some institutions demonstrate success, while others suffer from overcrowding, resource shortages, and inadequate program delivery, which hinder meaningful reform (Read, 2024; Saaka, Doka & Salihu, 2022). In some cases, the lack of quality instruction, infrequent programming, or disengaged staff can result in missed opportunities for development and behavior change (Lighthart et al., 2021). Furthermore, without appropriate support, institutionalization may inadvertently contribute to further marginalization and recidivism (Umejiaku & Uzoka, 2021; Moore, 2010).

In Kenya, Borstal institutions were established under Cap 92 of the Laws of Kenya with programs such as education, vocational training, and psychosocial services designed to rehabilitate children in conflict with the law by equipping them with skills, values, and behavioral change (Hadulo, 2022; Mbetera et al., 2022). Among the three such facilities in the country, Shimo La Tewa Borstal Institution offers a range of programs aimed at reforming male juvenile offenders. These include formal education, vocational training, psychosocial counseling, recreation, and welfare programs. The ultimate aim is not merely confinement but

reform and reintegration—enabling young offenders to rejoin society as law-abiding, productive individuals.

However, as many studies have shown, there are still challenges related to inadequate funding, overcrowding, weak family reintegration mechanisms, and limited post-release support that compromise the rehabilitative function of these institutions (Njeri & Mwang'ombe, 2024; Crime Research Centre, 2022). These challenges raise questions about whether such programs are effectively fulfilling their purpose in preparing children for life after release.

This study therefore sought to assess the relationship between participation in formal education and vocational training programs and the rehabilitation outcomes of children in conflict with the law at Shimo La Tewa Borstal Institution in Mombasa County. The focus on rehabilitation underscores the need to not only detain but also transform children through structured interventions that support both personal growth and societal reintegration.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Juvenile delinquency is a dynamic and complex issue that poses a significant challenge to social order in Kenya, necessitating various correctional treatments for children in conflict with the law. These juvenile systems encompass both community-based and borstal institutional programs aimed at rehabilitating the children in conflict with the laws with a view to reform them, equip them with skills that shall help their reintegration back into society. The effectiveness of these borstal institutions programs in fulfilling their rehabilitative mandate is gauged on their compliance to constitutional and international legal and human rights provisions on the rights of children. To address, facilities like Shimo La Tewa Borstal Institution were established to provide structured correctional programs, focusing on education, vocational training, among others, thereby equipping young offenders with the skills and discipline needed to reintegrate them positively into their communities. To ensure effective rehabilitation of children in conflict with the law, Shimo la Tewa adopted restorative justice principles, which focus on repairing harm caused by the children in conflict with the law actions rather than solely punishing them which encourages the children in conflict with the law to take responsibility for their actions, understand the impact on victims, and work towards making amends. The facility also initiated post-release programs to ensure that rehabilitated children in conflict with the law have support upon their return to society. Despite various interventions, there is still rate of re-offending or recidivism from children in conflict with the law released from Shimo La Tewa Borstal institution, often within a short period after release. Recent findings indicate that approximately 55% of children released from Borstal institutions in Kenya reoffend within

three years (Crime Research Centre, 2022; Chebet, 2022; academia.edu, 2022). Further, as (Okoth, 2023) highlighted, children in conflict with the law returning to the criminal justice system before three years is over, points to a systemic programs failure to address the root causes of their criminal behavior during their time in custody. In addition, children in conflict with the law' inability to function successfully in society after release is a signal for non-effective rehabilitation through the institution program. Inadequate education and vocational training leave them ill-prepared for life outside, limiting their employability and increasing the likelihood of re-offending (Crime Research Centre, 2022).

This failure to reintegrate, coupled with the persistent cycle of re-offending, has far-reaching social implications. The lack of proper rehabilitation and skills training contributes to a strained criminal justice system, escalating social instability and fostering a continued cycle of criminal behavior. As these children in conflict with the law return to a life of crime, it negatively impacts the communities they re-enter, and ultimately hinders the overall development of society. Nevertheless, there are few studies that have explored the relationship between participation in Formal Education and Vocational training and rehabilitation outcomes of children in conflict with the law particularly at Shimo La Tewa Borstal Institution, Mombasa County. This research gap justified the need for investigation into whether there was a relationship between formal education and vocational training programs and rehabilitation of children in conflict with the law.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Theoretical Framework

#### Social Disorganization Theory of Criminology

Social Disorganization Theory was developed by Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay in 1929 and published in 1942, influenced by Park and Burgess (He & Messner, 2020). Their studies in Chicago showed that despite improvements in some neighborhoods, juvenile crime remained high, leading to the conclusion that an individual's environment strongly influences behavior and crime levels. Key principles of the theory include the role of socioeconomic conditions such as poverty, unemployment, low education, residential instability, and family disruption in fostering crime (Errol et al., 2021). Geographic concentration of delinquency was also observed, with inner-city zones consistently showing higher rates of juvenile offenses regardless of racial changes. These areas typically suffered from poor housing, physical decay, and limited social cohesion (Errol et al., 2021). Rapid social changes like economic decline and inflation were also linked to increased crime. (Kubrin and Tublitz, 2023) noted that social

disorganization undermines informal social controls, while Sampson introduced the idea of collective efficacy-the community's ability to maintain order through mutual trust and intervention. The theory aligns with positivist criminology, which views offenders as shaped by forces beyond their control and emphasizes rehabilitation over punishment (Jones, 2020). Applying this to juvenile justice, the theory justifies removing children from disorganized environments and placing them in institutions like Borstal facilities where structured rehabilitation programs, including education and vocational training can support their reform and reintegration (Kubrin & Tublitz, 2023; Jones, 2020).

### 2.2 Empirical Literature Review

Ranjha et al. (2016) in Pakistan identified illiteracy, family conflict, bad peer influence, and poverty as major causes of juvenile crime. In Borstal Jail Bahawalpur, formal education was provided up to 8th grade along with religious education. Ranjha et al. used qualitative methods-observation, focus groups, and interviews with 29 juveniles, jail staff, and NGOs. Although the institution had classrooms, a library, and a computer lab, only one jail employee taught all grades, contrary to education policy. (UNICEF, 2009) confirmed that formal education is inadequately implemented across Punjab's borstal institutions. Staff explained that irregular admissions hinder hiring permanent teachers. Juveniles' educational backgrounds varied, and focused group discussions revealed weak foundational skills. Compared to 1998, staffing had improved slightly, aided by NGOs offering classroom support and materials. Vocational services, once robust, had declined. Activities like carpet weaving, tailoring, and gardening had been scaled down. Children now use paper instead of cloth in tailoring, limiting market readiness. Some children refuted claims of ongoing gardening programs. (Ranjha et al.,2016) recommended strengthening vocational and educational services through teacher recruitment and institutional investment.

Similarly, Juvenile delinquency is also widespread in Cameroon (Ettah & Daru, 2019). Risk factors include poor social competence, low academic achievement, truancy, impulsiveness, and poverty. Education is seen as a protective factor against violence. In rehabilitation centers, children receive counseling, food, shelter, education, religious services, and vocational skills training to promote pro-social behavior. However, some reoffend after reintegration. (Ettah & Daru, 2019) emphasize that schools offer broader socialization than families and help children make independent behavioral choices. Their study, titled *The Relationship between Social Skills Training and Violent Crimes among Juvenile Delinquent Adolescents at Buea Borstal Institute*, used Social Disorganization, Social Bond, and Social Learning Theories. Employing a mixed-method,

ex-post-facto design, they sampled 125 participants-adolescents, guardians, and staff through convenience and snowball sampling. Tools included questionnaires, interviews, and a checklist covering five crime categories. Findings showed social skills training was impactful; graduates reported learning decision-making, drug avoidance, responsibility, and the value of education. While many felt reformed, some cited infrequent sessions, lazy staff, and non-existent programs. The study recommended integrating social skills training into the rehabilitation curriculum. These issues echo (Onderi, 2017), who found vocational training lacked practical focus, and align with the present study, which noted insufficient training materials.

In Kenya, (Okutoyi, 2015) studied rehabilitation at Shikusa Borstal using qualitative and quantitative methods with 100 participants. His findings revealed that 13% of children lacked vocational training, and 3.3% lacked formal education. Many viewed vocational training as irrelevant to life outside. Primary education was most accessible. While the institution provided vocational training to those outside formal education, reintegration lacked support, and the institution faced resource constraints and outdated laws. The study recommended more funding, updated laws, stakeholder collaboration, and improved infrastructure. These findings reflect the gap between institutional training and practical application, as also highlighted by (Mbetera et al., 2022) and this study.

Mbetera et al. (2022) appraised Section 4(b) of the Borstal Institutions Act at Shikusa, which mandates education and skills training. Using stratified sampling, 118 respondents-including juveniles, teachers, and instructors-completed questionnaires and interviews. Data were analyzed using SPSS. Findings showed 64.7% reported inadequate training kits, a lack of reading materials, and poor learning facilities-all of which hampered rehabilitation. (Mbetera et al., 2022), recommended involving juveniles in choosing their training programs and allocating resources to upgrade facilities. His findings mirror earlier studies showing systemic issues in education delivery.

Onderi (2017) also studied Shikusa Borstal Kakamega, Kenya and found vocational training relevant but overly theoretical, with insufficient practical work. He recommended reviewing and aligning rehabilitative programs to better support reformation. This aligns with the current study, which also found formal and vocational training statistically significant to rehabilitation, but constrained by similar operational challenges. Moreover, this study goes further by integrating post-release indicators such as employment, recidivism statistics, and key stakeholder input, offering a more holistic understanding.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, which involves collecting quantitative data (via questionnaires) and qualitative data (via key informant interviews) simultaneously, analyzing them separately, and then comparing the results. According to (Creswell, 2013), this design allows researchers to merge both data types to offer a comprehensive analysis of the research problem and investigate any discrepancies between them to gain deeper insight.

#### **3.2 Study Location**

This study was conducted at Shimo La Tewa Borstal Institution, located in Mombasa County, Kenya. The institution is situated in the Shanzu area, approximately 16 kilometers north of Mombasa town along the Mombasa-Malindi highway. It is one of the only two borstal institutions in Kenya mandated to provide custodial rehabilitation for male children in conflict with the law aged between 15 and 18 years. Shimo La Tewa Borstal Institution operates under the Kenya Prisons Service and the provisions of the Borstal Institutions Act, Cap 92, offering correctional and rehabilitation services through structured educational, vocational, and psychosocial programs.

The institution accommodates juvenile offenders from various regions of the country and provides them with access to formal basic education, vocational training programs (such as carpentry, masonry, tailoring, and agriculture), and psychosocial support services aimed at reintegration into society. The facility is staffed by correctional officers, vocational instructors, teachers seconded from the Ministry of Education, and social workers.

The choice of Shimo La Tewa Borstal is significant due to its long-standing role in the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders through education and skills training, making it a rich context for examining the effectiveness and challenges of such interventions.

#### **3.3 Target and Study Population**

The target population comprised all 200 children in conflict with the law at Shimo La Tewa Borstal Institution undergoing various rehabilitation programs, as recorded by the institution at the time of the study. A census approach was used due to the small and manageable size, allowing for comprehensive data collection. However, only 186 children participated voluntarily, forming the study population, as some declined consent or had scheduling conflicts. For qualitative data, eight key informants were purposively selected based on their roles (2 rehabilitation officers, 1 recreational officer, 1 psychologist, 1 teacher, 1 vocational trainer, 1 chief security officer, and 1 probation officer). Of these, five participated due to availability and willingness.

### 3.3.1 Sample size

The study's sample size is 200 (employed the whole population without sampling but using census method) respondents for quantitative research and 8 key informants for qualitative research.

### 3.3.2 Sampling Procedure

A total of 200 children in conflict with the law was obtained through the census method because the population size was small and manageable, making it feasible to include all children in conflict with the law in the study. Using the census method ensured that every juvenile's experiences and perspectives were represented, providing comprehensive and accurate data. This approach also eliminated the risk of sampling bias and enhanced the generalizability of the study findings to the entire population of children in conflict with the law at Shimo La Tewa Borstal Institution.

In addition, the purposive sampling was used to sample 8 key informants because this method allows for the deliberate selection of individuals who possess specialized knowledge, experience, and involvement in the rehabilitation of children in conflict with the law at Shimo La Tewa Borstal Institution.

## 3.4 Data Collection Instruments

Data collection involves gathering information from study subjects to test research hypotheses (Kothari, 2020; Pandey & Pandey, 2021). The quality of the collected data hinges on the effectiveness of the tools and methods used (Gatuyu & Kinyua, 2020). This study utilizes both quantitative and

qualitative data collection tools and techniques, as outlined below:

The study utilized survey questionnaires divided into two primary sections. The first section collects data on respondents' profiles to describe the characteristics of the sample. The second section focused on study variables and was further divided into five subsections. This structure ensured the validity of the data and to facilitate both the description of the study's components and the testing of hypotheses. The questionnaire, crafted to align with the study's objectives, featured closed-ended questions. The tools were chosen for their ease of coding and transcription, low response variability, and high response rate, making them a quick and effective method for gathering information (Krosnick, 2018).

To gather qualitative data, a key informant interview guide was employed, targeting Shimo La Tewa Borstal Institution staff—2 rehabilitation officers, 1 recreational officer, 1 counselor, 1 teacher, 1 vocational trainer, 1 chief security officer and 1 probation Officer, as the key information to the study. These interviews aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. The guide was meticulously crafted based on the study's objectives and key thematic areas to ensure the collection of information-rich data. The interviews were conducted in person at the respondents' workplace, with notes taking.

### 3.4.1 Pilot Testing of the Instruments

A pilot study was conducted at Shanzu Probation Hostel to pre-test the research instruments (questionnaires and interview guides) for clarity, reliability, and relevance. It involved 23 participants (20 children in conflict with the law and 3 key informants) who were not included in the main study. The pilot helped identify ambiguous and repetitive questions, refine the layout, estimate completion.

### 3.4.2 Instrument Reliability

Reliability assesses the consistency of results under varying conditions. In this study, internal consistency was measured using **Cronbach's Alpha**, which evaluates the correlation among items within the same construct. A coefficient above 0.70 is considered acceptable for reliability. After data collection, all constructs recorded alpha values exceeding this threshold, indicating high internal consistency and reliability of the questionnaire items.

**Table 1: Reliability Results**

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of constructs	Comment
Education and vocational training	0.834	15	Reliable
Psychological intervention program	0.817	11	Reliable
Recreational programs	0.752	15	Reliable
Welfare programs	0.876	10	Reliable
Institutional characteristics	0.839	13	Reliable
Child-offender rehabilitation	0.881	21	Reliable
Tool (all the measurement items)	0.954	85	dependable

### 3.5 Data Analysis and Discussion

The study employed both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods, consistent with its convergent parallel mixed methods design. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS Version 26. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, and standard deviations) were used to summarize the responses, while inferential statistics such as correlation and multiple regression were used to test relationships between formal education and vocational training programs and rehabilitation outcomes. Assumptions for regression analysis-including normality, autocorrelation, multicollinearity, and singularity-were tested to ensure the validity of results.

For the qualitative data obtained from key informant interviews, thematic analysis was conducted. Responses were transcribed, coded, and organized into themes that aligned with the study objectives. These qualitative insights were then integrated with quantitative findings to provide a comprehensive understanding of how institutional programs influence rehabilitation outcomes among children in conflict with the law.

### 3.6 Ethical Considerations

Authorization to conduct the study was obtained from the institution's headquarters. Since the research involved children, which is a vulnerable population, consent was also secured from the institution's representatives. The purpose of the study and the intended academic use of the data were clearly explained to the participants, and they were informed that their participation was voluntary. In addition, a research permit was obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI).

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Questionnaire Return Rate

A total of 200 structured questionnaires were administered to children in conflict with the law at Shimo La Tewa Borstal Institution, with 186 fully completed, resulting in a high response rate of 93.0%. This strong participation indicates the data was representative of the target population. The high response rate may be attributed to the study's relevance to the participants' experiences and aspirations regarding rehabilitation and reintegration. Additionally, the use of structured, easy-to-complete questionnaires likely encouraged participation and contributed to the success of the data collection.

### 4.2 Formal Educational and Vocational Programs and the Rehabilitation of Children in Conflict with the Law at Shimo La Tewa Borstal Institution, Mombasa County, Kenya.

The objective was to assess how participation in formal education and vocational training programs influences the rehabilitation of children in conflict with the law at Shimo La Tewa Borstal Institution. Respondents rated their agreement with statements on the implementation and effectiveness of these programs, which are key to equipping the children with academic, vocational, and personal development skills for reintegration. A five-point Likert scale was used, and results were summarized using mean scores and standard deviations.

**Table 2: Formal Education and Vocational Programs**

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Children in conflict with the law are promptly enrolled in educational programs after entering the institution	1.1%	5.9%	15.6%	54.3%	23.1%	3.92	.848
The institution provides equal opportunities for enrollment regardless of age groups	1.6%	0.5%	23.7%	53.2%	21.0%	3.91	.780
staff members always encourage children in conflict with the law to enroll in education.	0.0%	1.1%	8.6%	64.5%	25.8%	4.15	.605
learning materials are always provided to support enrolment	0.5%	1.1%	38.2%	43.0%	17.2%	3.75	.766
The institution always offers motivation programs for good academic performance to motivate children in conflict with the law to excel	1.1%	5.9%	15.6%	54.3%	23.1%	3.92	.848
Regular attendance is positively correlated with improved academic outcomes for children in conflict with the law	1.1%	0.0%	32.8%	50.5%	15.6%	3.80	.736
The teaching methods used are effective in enhancing children in conflict with the law' understanding of course materials	5.9%	28.5%	35.5%	21.0%	9.1%	2.99	1.050
Instructors always deliver quality teaching to improve academic performance	0.5%	14.5%	28.5%	44.1%	12.4%	3.53	.907
All children in conflict with the law complete the educational programs they enroll in successfully	0.0%	7.0%	29.6%	51.1%	12.4%	3.69	.778

Dropout rates among children in conflict with the law are always minimal within the institution	1.1%	0.5%	21.5%	50.5%	26.3%	4.01	.775
The institution always ensures that children in conflict with the law receive formal certificates upon course completion	0.0%	0.5%	8.1%	59.7%	31.7%	4.23	.609
Programs always ensure children in conflict with the law attend classes consistently	1.6%	4.3%	32.8%	54.3%	7.0%	3.61	.751
Staff members always monitor course progress to ensure completion	1.1%	1.1%	32.3%	52.2%	13.4%	3.76	.736
Children in conflict with the law actively participate in extracurricular activities, such as sports and debates	0.0%	1.1%	18.8%	55.9%	24.2%	4.03	.689
Leadership opportunities are always provided for children in conflict with the law in educational programs	0.5%	0.0%	25.3%	55.9%	18.3%	3.91	.692
Aggregate statistics						3.81	.427

Overall, the findings indicated that the education and vocational training programs at Shimo la Tewa Borstal Institution are well-received, particularly in terms of staff encouragement, enrollment, completion rates, certification, and extracurricular participation ( $M = 3.81$ ;  $SD = 0.427$ ). However, some areas, notably the effectiveness of teaching methods and the provision of learning materials, would benefit from review and improvement to ensure consistent quality and impact across the board. This was affirmed by the key informants who stated, that: *“Consistent attendance often correlates with improved performance, though improvements in pedagogy could further enhance learning experiences. We have noticed improved grades among those who consistently attend classes. Still, we are working on improving teaching methods to cater for different abilities.”*

In terms of enrollment, respondents largely agreed that children in conflict with the law are promptly enrolled in educational programs upon entry into the institution, with a high mean score of 3.92 and a relatively low standard deviation (0.848), suggesting that this process is well-coordinated and timely. Similarly, the perception that the

institution offers equal enrollment opportunities regardless of age received positive ratings ( $M = 3.91$ ,  $SD = 0.780$ ), indicating fairness and inclusivity. One officer noted that: *‘Enrollment is one of our strongest points. Upon entry, each juvenile is assessed and enrolled in a suitable educational or vocational program. We emphasize equality, and all boys, regardless of age, get the opportunity to join. This has created a learning culture inside the institution’.*

Respondents also noted that staff strongly encourage children in conflict with the law to engage in education and training sessions ( $M = 4.15$ ,  $SD = 0.605$ ), highlighting a robust institutional culture that supports educational attainment. This finding is consistent with those of (Irogbo, 2024), who found that prompt enrollment and proactive encouragement from staff contribute significantly to the success of rehabilitation programs in correctional settings. However, the provision of learning materials was moderately rated ( $M = 3.75$ ,  $SD = 0.766$ ), suggesting that the availability and quality of these materials may need to be enhanced to fully support educational efforts. This finding resonates with those of (Mafilika & Marongwe, 2024), who highlighted that

the lack of adequate instructional resources in correctional institutions undermines the potential impact of educational programs. Conversely, lack of a formal curriculum and qualified teachers in certain correctional settings can severely hinder the educational experiences of incarcerated children in conflict with the law (Kakupa & Mulenga, 2021), which challenges the assumption that enrollment alone guarantees educational success.

The institution's motivation programs to encourage academic excellence were rated positively ( $M = 3.92$ ,  $SD = 0.848$ ), reflecting the role of positive reinforcement in fostering engagement. Furthermore, respondents agreed that regular attendance correlates with better academic outcomes ( $M = 3.80$ ,  $SD = 0.736$ ), which aligns with research by (Nyabuto et al., 2023), who found that consistent attendance is a key predictor of educational success among incarcerated youth. An informant supported this finding by saying: *'We've made learning attractive through reward systems and encouragement from staff. Boys who perform well get recognized during assemblies, which boosts morale. However, some teaching approaches are still traditional and may not fit all learners, especially those with learning difficulties.'* However, the effectiveness of teaching methods garnered more varied responses ( $M = 2.99$ ,  $SD = 1.050$ ), suggesting that while some respondents view the methods as effective, others feel that teaching strategies may need updating or diversification to better meet the needs of the children in conflict with the law. This observation aligns with the views of key informants, such as KII\_5 and KII\_2, who highlighted that some pedagogical methods are outdated and need to be improved to support different learning abilities. This is also consistent with findings from a study by (Gamal, 2022), who observed that correctional education programs often suffer from outdated or inadequate pedagogical approaches that fail to engage students effectively. In contrast, a study by (Njoroge, 2021) found that while teaching methods in correctional settings may vary, the most significant factor in low academic achievement is often the lack of structured and consistent education policies rather than the teaching methods themselves.

Despite the concerns about teaching methods, the quality of instruction was generally viewed more positively ( $M = 3.53$ ,  $SD = 0.907$ ), suggesting that, while there are areas for improvement, the teaching is generally competent. Dropout rates were reported to be minimal ( $M = 4.01$ ,  $SD = 0.775$ ), which indicates that the majority of children in conflict with the law are able to complete their educational programs. Furthermore, the institution's strong administrative follow-through and recognition of achievements were highlighted, with respondents noting that formal certificates are provided upon course completion ( $M = 4.23$ ,  $SD = 0.609$ ). One informant explained this by saying: *'We don't let them start something they won't finish. Monitoring is continuous, and we even have systems that flag inconsistent attendance.'*

*Certification is a big motivation, and most boys look forward to graduation day.'* Another key informant added: *'Completion rates are generally high because we instill the value of finishing what you start. The staff keep close tabs on each learner's progress, although some lose focus mid-way and need regular follow-ups.'* This corresponds with studies by (Mahlangu, 2024), who found that formal recognition of achievement, such as certificates, contributes to increased motivation and a sense of accomplishment among incarcerated learners. Monitoring of course progress by staff was also rated positively ( $M = 3.76$ ,  $SD = 0.736$ ), though there was a suggestion for improvement in ensuring consistent class attendance, as indicated by the lower rating for this aspect ( $M = 3.61$ ,  $SD = 0.751$ ). However, (Bekele, 2022) argue that in many correctional institutions, dropout rates are often minimized in institutional reports, while in reality, many children in conflict with the law discontinue their education due to lack of motivation, inadequate resources, or negative peer influence.

In terms of extracurricular activities, juvenile engagement in sports and debates was perceived very positively ( $M = 4.03$ ,  $SD = 0.689$ ), pointing to a vibrant school culture at the institution. One key informant supported by stating: *'Learning here isn't just about books. Debates, football, music—these bring out their confidence and teamwork. Some boys have discovered talents they never knew they had.'* This is in line with the findings of (Berdychevsky et al., 2022), who argued that extracurricular activities such as sports and leadership programs play a critical role in the holistic rehabilitation of children in conflict with the law.

The institution's commitment to fostering leadership skills was also evident, with respondents noting the provision of leadership opportunities within educational programs ( $M = 3.91$ ,  $SD = 0.692$ ). One key informant emphasized the developmental role of leadership opportunities within education programs, stating: *'We intentionally create leadership roles within education programs—like class monitors and club officials—so they take responsibility and build life skills. Participation in school activities is one of our best rehabilitation tools.'* This finding is further supported by (Savatia, 2021), who emphasized the importance of leadership development in juvenile rehabilitation programs, asserting that such initiatives help cultivate responsibility and positive social behavior.

### 4.3 Correlation Analysis

Before conducting correlation analysis, a normality test was performed on the residuals of the dependent variable (rehabilitation outcomes) to determine the appropriate statistical test. The Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that the data were normally distributed ( $W = 0.918$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), supported by visual inspections using histograms and Q-Q plots. These results justified the use of parametric tests, specifically the

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient, which assumes normal distribution of the variables involved.

The study employed the Bivariate Product-Moment Pearson correlation coefficient (r) to explore the strength, direction, and significance of the relationship between formal

education and vocational training of children in conflict with the law and their rehabilitation outcomes at Shimo La Tewa Borstal. The Pearson correlation statistic was appropriate over the Spearman correlation statistic because the dependent variable scores followed a normal distribution.

**Table 3: Correlations**

Variables	Rehabilitation of Children in Conflict with the Law
Formal Education and Vocational Training	.908**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
N	186

**Note. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

The Pearson correlation results indicated a strong, positive, and statistically significant association between formal education and vocational training, and rehabilitation of children in conflict with the law at Shimo La Tewa borstal. There is a very strong positive correlation between Education and Vocational Programs and rehabilitation of Children in conflict with the law ( $r = 0.908$ ,  $n = 186$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). This suggests that robust education and vocational training are crucial for improving the overall rehabilitation outcomes of children in conflict with the law. These findings align with those of Hassan and Rosly (2021), who found that education and vocational training significantly contributed to the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders by equipping them with skills necessary for reintegration into society.

Additionally, there was a positive, weak but statistically significant association between the institutional characteristics and children in conflict with the law rehabilitation at Shimo La Tewa ( $r = 0.271$ \*\*,  $n = 186$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). This suggests that the physical and organizational characteristics of the institution, while important, have a more moderate impact on rehabilitation outcomes. This result aligns with a study by Wanglar (2021), who found that institutional characteristics, such as facility infrastructure and staff competence, influenced rehabilitation success but were not as significant as educational or psychological interventions.

#### 4.4 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was employed to assess the predictive relationships between formal education and vocational programs and dependent variable (children in conflict with the law rehabilitation outcomes at Shimo La Tewa Borstal Institution, Mombasa County, Kenya). Multiple regression enabled the researchers to determine how the variable independently contributed to the likelihood of positive rehabilitation results. In addition to assessing direct relationships between institutional factors and rehabilitation outcomes, the regression model also facilitated the identification of the mediating influence of institutional characteristics on the relationship between various independent variables and rehabilitation success.

#### 4.5 The Model Summary

The study evaluated the fit and performance of regression models. Model summary was crucial for understanding how well the models explained the variability in the dependent variable based on the independent variable.

**Table 4: Model Summary**

odel	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F Change	df1	df2	Sig.	F Change
1	.908	.824	.823	2.842	865.243	1	184	.000	

**Predictor:** Formal Education and Vocational Training

**Dependent Variable:** Rehabilitation of Children in Conflict with the Law

The results analyzed the regression model focusing solely on formal education and vocational training as predictors of the rehabilitation of children in conflict with the law. The

correlation coefficient (R) was 0.908, indicating a very strong positive relationship between participation in these programs and rehabilitation outcomes. The coefficient of

determination ( $R^2$ ) was 0.824, suggesting that 82.4% of the variation in rehabilitation outcomes among children in conflict with the law at Shimo La Tewa Borstal Institution was explained by their participation in formal education and vocational training. This high  $R^2$  value demonstrates the significant impact of these programs on behavioral reform, skill acquisition, and overall readiness for reintegration into society.

The adjusted  $R^2$  of 0.823 supports the reliability of the model by accounting for possible overestimation. The standard error of the estimate (2.842) was relatively low, indicating a close fit between predicted and actual rehabilitation outcomes. Moreover, the F-change value of 865.243 with a significance level (p-value) of .000 confirms that the model is statistically significant. These findings affirm that formal education and vocational training independently play a critical role in enhancing rehabilitation outcomes for children in conflict with the law, underscoring their centrality in correctional programming at the institution.

## 4.6 Regression Model Equation

To assess the predictive influence of formal education and vocational training on the rehabilitation of children in conflict with the law, the study constructed a simple linear regression model using unstandardized coefficients. The conventional regression equation used was:  $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \epsilon$ . Where:  $Y$  = Rehabilitation of children in conflict with the law,  $\beta_0$  = Constant (intercept),  $\beta_1$  = Coefficient for formal education and vocational training,  $X$  = Formal education and vocational training,  $\epsilon$  = Error term. The resulting model was: **Rehabilitation = 15.106 + 0.863(Formal Education and Vocational Training)**

The constant ( $\beta_0 = 15.106$ ) represents the predicted baseline level of rehabilitation when participation in formal education and vocational training is absent. It reflects the foundational rehabilitation level children may experience due to other environmental or institutional factors not included in this single-variable model.

The unstandardized coefficient for formal education and vocational training ( $\beta_1 = 0.863$ ) indicates that for every one-unit increase in participation or quality of formal education and vocational training programs, the rehabilitation outcome is expected to improve by 0.863 units. This suggests a strong and statistically significant contribution of these programs to positive behavioral reform and reintegration readiness among children in conflict with the law.

This finding reinforces the importance of structured learning and vocational skill development as key pillars in the rehabilitation process. By offering academic credentials and marketable skills, these programs equip children with tools

necessary to rebuild their lives post-release and reduce the likelihood of recidivism.

## 4.7 Summary of Findings

This study assessed the relationship between participation in formal education and vocational training programs and rehabilitation outcomes of children in conflict with the law at Shimo La Tewa Borstal Institution, Mombasa County, Kenya. The findings were drawn from both descriptive and inferential analyses and revealed that a majority of the children at the institution came from low-income families and had attained only basic levels of formal education at the time of admission. The most common offenses committed were theft-related, and a majority of the children had no prior institutionalization history. Their average length of stay ranged between 13 and 24 months, indicating sufficient institutional exposure to participate in available rehabilitation programs.

Formal education and vocational training had a moderate positive impact on rehabilitation outcomes. While the programs equipped children with essential skills for reintegration, challenges such as inadequate training materials and staffing gaps limited their effectiveness.

The inferential statistical analysis, including correlation and multiple regression, confirmed that Formal Education and Vocational Training had a statistically significant positive relationship with rehabilitation outcomes.

## 4.8 Interpretation of Findings about Research Hypothesis/ Objective

The statistically significant positive relationship between formal education/vocational training and rehabilitation outcomes underscores the crucial role of academic and skill-based training in the reformation of children in conflict with the law. A mean score of 3.81 reflects that, on average, respondents agreed that formal education and vocational programs contributed to positive change. This was supported by a low standard deviation ( $SD = 0.427$ ), indicating a high level of agreement and consistency in the responses. The negative skewness observed implies that most children rated these programs positively, with fewer reporting dissatisfaction. This may be attributed to the perceived value of education in offering second chances, improving literacy, and enhancing job prospects post-release. However, while the overall sentiment was favorable, qualitative responses revealed operational challenges such as lack of teaching materials, underqualified instructors, and limited access to certain trades, might have slightly tempered the otherwise strong endorsement of these programs. These findings confirm that while formal education and vocational training

significantly aid rehabilitation, the quality and availability of instructional resources remain critical in determining their effectiveness.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrated that formal education and vocational training, had statistically significant and positive relationship with the rehabilitation of children in conflict with the law at Shimo La Tewa Borstal Institution, Mombasa County, Kenya. These results affirm that formal education and vocational training plays a critical role in the rehabilitation process.

Overall, the study concludes that no single program can fully rehabilitate children in conflict with the law. Instead, a holistic and coordinated approach that combines psychosocial, educational, recreational, and welfare programs delivered within a safe, resourceful, and supportive institutional environment is essential for achieving long-term behavioral reform and successful reintegration into society.

### 5.2 Recommendations

1. Shimo La Tewa Borstal Institution management should equip formal education and vocational training workshops with adequate tools and skilled instructors to improve practical learning.
2. Ministry of Education should deploy adequate qualified teachers and TVET instructors to Borstal institutions.
3. A longitudinal study be undertaken to evaluate the long-term success of rehabilitated children post-release.

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