

Exploring the Importance of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (2014) to Correctional Education Programs for Incarcerated Young Adults



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Abstract

The most common issues among incarcerated juveniles and young adults are related to deficiencies in education and lack of adequate job skills. The primary focuses of this study are to examine the interrelationship of characteristics of incarcerated young adults (e.g., race or education) with post-release employment and recidivism. Results of this 5-year follow-up study of 1,264 adults released from correctional facilities in Indiana showed that a majority were young, African American males, who did not possess a high school diploma at the time of release. Results of a logistical analysis indicated that education and post-release employment were principal contributing factors to post-release recidivism among these young adults. It is important to mention that the youth programs under the 2014 United States Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) for those who are between the ages of 16 and 24 years old will provide pathways to literacy and vocational training programs upon release from correctional facilities.

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Introduction

Even though a notable number of juveniles might not transit into adult criminal careers, young adults represent a complex challenge to the criminal justice system. According to the most recent statistics from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice (Carson and Golinelli, 2014), approximately 34.2 percent of the total number of people in federal or state prisons were under the age of 30 years old and 9.2 percent of them were in the age group of 18-24 years old. In regard to this group of individuals, males in the age group of 18-19 years old had the largest imprisonment rate disparity between Caucasian and African Americans. Specifically, African American males in the age group of 18-19 years old were almost 9.5 times more likely than Caucasian males to be incarcerated in federal or state prisons. Furthermore, gender disparity among incarcerated females in 2012 was also significant. African American females in the age group of 18-19 years old were 3 times more likely to be incarcerated in federal or state prisons than Caucasian females; Hispanic females in this age group were 2 times more likely to be incarcerated than Caucasian females. Young adults in the age group of 18-24 years old were more likely involved in more serious criminal offenses and tended to be incarcerated longer in federal or state prisons.

Based upon a recent internal assessment of incarcerated youth by the Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC) Division of Youth Services (DYS), there were approximately 22 percent (n=1,248) of a total of 5,687 juveniles during the period of 2009-2014 who were re-admitted as an adult to IDOC after release from a juvenile correctional facility. Transition from juvenile delinquency to adult criminality has been extensively studied (For examples, Basto-Pereira, et al., 2015; Jennings, et al., 2014; Lussier and Blokland, 2015; Menard, et al., 2015; Piquero, et al., 2014). Such a notable number of juveniles returning to IDOC custody as an adult implicate the importance of providing education programs for individuals incarcerated in juvenile and adult facilities. Education, along with skill-based, job-oriented vocational training programs create clear pathways for employment for those young people reentering their communities.

Challenges Young Adults Encountered

Young adults in the age group of 18-24 years present a unique challenge to the criminal justice system and their local communities. Numerous studies have examined the contributing factors to juvenile delinquency and the linkage between juvenile delinquency and adult criminality. Incarcerated young adults have a high likelihood of continuous involvement with the criminal justice system due to their

educational deficiency or lack of employment skills. This research intends to examine the contributing factors to post-release recidivism among young adults after release from correctional facilities.

According to various studies, school dropout was a principal contributing factor to delinquent or criminal behavioral among adolescents (Catalano et al., 1999; Gemignani, 1994; Howell, 1998; Jarrett, et al., 2014; Kempf-Leonard et al., 2001; Kliwer and Lepore, 2015; Langan and Levin, 2002; Mallett, 2016; Na, 2017; Reingle-Gonzalez, et al., 2016). Specifically, reenrollment in school is one of the most important transitional services for youth at the time of release from a juvenile correctional facility. Researchers (Feierman et al., 2009; Hawkins et al., 2009; Hirschfield, 2014; Mathur and Clark, 2014) indicated that reenrollment in school was an essential pathway to successful juvenile reentry. For incarcerated juveniles and young adults, education remedy has become an increasingly important element to enhance the success of an individual's reentry into the community after release from prison.

Quite often, education deficiency, commonly associated with school dropout, is the most challenging issue among young people. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, United States Department of Education (Stetser and Stillwell, 2014), among the age group of 16-24 years old, a "first look" at the school drop-out rates for the years 2010-11 and 2011-12 was 8.0 percent among Blacks, but only 5.1 percent among Whites. Education deficiency is generally regarded as the major risk factor for delinquent or criminal behavior among adolescents (Barnert, et al., 2015; Leverso, et al., 2015; Smeets, 2014; Ungar, et al., 2014; Williams, et al., 2014). Researchers also indicated that individuals who were educationally-illiterate were disproportionately unemployed and were likely re-incarcerated after release from prison (Lockwood, et al, 2012; Steurer and Smith, 2003).

The correlation between juvenile delinquency and adult criminality has been extensively studied in the criminal justice arena (Barrett and Katsiyannis, 2016; Bernburg and Krohn, 2003; Dawkins and Sorensen, 2015; Greenwald, et al., 2014; Harris-McKoy and Cui, 2013; Jagers, et al., 2016; Lee, et al., 2015; Mason, et al., 2010; Mercer, et al., 2016; Merrin, et al., 2016; Ryan, et al., 2013; Sullivan and McGloin, 2014; Walters, 2013; Young, et al., 2016). Delinquency, in itself is regarded as the most influential risk factor to adult criminality. Although the juvenile justice system has greatly emphasized rehabilitation, programming, and community supervision, institutionalized youths are most vulnerable when becoming involved in activities that would lead to incarceration in the adult criminal justice system.

Common Issues among Incarcerated Juvenile and Young Adults

Nally, et al. (2013; 2012; 2011) found that a significant number of incarcerated individuals lacked academic competency and job-oriented skills during incarceration. Such uneducated (or under-educated) people were likely to be unemployed and become recidivists after release from prison. Studies have found that there is a positive correlation between unemployment and recidivism among people released from prison. Most importantly, the impact of education deficiency on post-release recidivism among juveniles and young adults was significant (Blomberg, et al., 2012; Burke and Vivian, 2001; Vacca, 2004). For example, Lockwood, et al. (2015) found that the recidivism rate among people who had a college education was 31 percent, but the recidivism rate was 56 percent among people who did not complete high school.

Another common characteristic among incarcerated juveniles and young adults is their lack of adequate employment skills at the time of release from the juvenile or adult correctional facility. Those who were unskilled and uneducated (or under-educated) individuals could not find a job after release from prison and were more likely to be re-incarcerated (Lockwood, et al, 2016, 2015; Nally, et al., 2013, 2012). Unfortunately, correctional education programs across the nation struggle to provide vocational training to incarcerated individuals due to limited or inadequate budgets. Undoubtedly, the legal mandates from the 2014 United States Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) could bridge those gaps in terms of enhancing education competencies and job skills among juveniles and young adults upon their release from correctional facilities and reentry into their communities.

The United States Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

The United States Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), signed into law by President Obama on July 22, 2014, supersedes the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and amends the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, the Wagner-Peyser Act, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The WIOA emphasizes the importance of partnerships and supportive services for potential workers to obtain jobs through career services, education, and training, and to help businesses find skilled individuals for their current workforce in a variety of high-demand industrial sectors. Additionally, one important provision in the WIOA (i.e., Youth Workforce Investment Activities – Sec. 126 through 130 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) requires state and local agencies to establish the necessary education, training, or employment-related services to enhance the youth's

employability. Specifically, the WIOA has authorized state and local agencies to provide necessary funding and employment-related programs for specific vulnerable populations, including youths in juvenile or adult correctional facilities or individuals with disabilities. The WIOA outlines a broader youth vision that supports an integrated service delivery system to support in-school and out-of-school youth.

According to the United States Department of Labor (2014), youth-oriented workforce investment activities focus on continued support for educational attainment, and opportunities for skills training for in-demand industries and occupations. A key provision of the WIOA requires a minimum of 75 percent of state and local youth funding to be used for out-of-school youths. Out-of-school youths are in the age range of 16-24 years old, not attending any school, and meet one or more additional conditions, such as, being a school dropout, being subject to the juvenile or adult justice system, or being an individual with a disability. The key elements of the youth programs under WIOA include: (1) financial literacy, (2) entrepreneurial skills training, (3) employment services, (4) transition to postsecondary education, and (5) continuity of education and job training in the community.

Undoubtedly, the WIOA's youth programs and related mandates will significantly benefit incarcerated juveniles and young adults in terms of creating education pathways beginning in the correctional facilities and continuing through reentry-related services in the communities. However, characteristics of incarcerated young adults are generally vague. Particularly, there is insufficient empirical research on post-release employment and its relation to recidivism among young adults. This study is intended examine the interrelationship of the characteristics of incarcerated young adults (e.g., race or education) with post-release employment and recidivism.

Methods

Data

This study was a 5-year follow-up (2005-2009) of 1,264 people in the age group of 18-24 years old who were released from Indiana adult correctional facilities throughout 2005. It is important to mention that this group of young adults was a subset of a dataset totaling 6,561 people who were released from the Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC) throughout 2005. This sample (n=6,561) represented more than 43 percent of a total of 15,184 who were released from

IDOC custody in 2005. Due to the key provision of the WIOA's youth programs for out-of-school youths in the age group of 16-24, the present study exclusively focused on characteristics of young adults who were aged 24 or younger and were released from Indiana adult correctional facilities.

The dataset of the present study was collected from the Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC) and the Indiana Department of Workforce Development (IDWD). The data contained an array of characteristics, such as, demographics (gender, race, or age), education, legal information, and employment. During the data collection, the IDOC Division of Research and Planning provided up-to-date information, including demographical characteristics and legal information of the released individuals. The IDOC Education Division provided information regarding the individual's level of formal education at the time of release from IDOC custody. Based upon information from the "employed" individual's W-9 forms, the IDWD provided the individual's post-release employment information (e.g., job title or income). The IDWD documented employment information quarterly, but there would be no information on employment among those individuals if they had never been employed after release from prison during this study period. The IDWD data also provided a quarterly income, which would indicate the length of employment and annual income among released individuals if they were employed during the study period of 2005-2009. Additionally, the IDWD had also systematically documented the types of employment individuals obtained upon release from prison.

Characteristics of Incarcerated Young Adults in the Present Study

The characteristics of individuals in this 5-year follow-up study were distinctive. Specifically, 91% were male, and 61.8% were African American. Noting that the WIOA definition of "youth" extends to age 24, it is of interest that 78% of the study group was aged 21-24. In regard to criminal offenses, 77.1% of the total study group committed "non-violent" offenses. Over one third of the group did not possess a high school credential, and approximately one third of the group remained unemployed after release

Independent Variables

In this study, the individual's demographical information included race, sex, age, and education. Based on the most serious offense that the individual was charged, the present study would also identify the individual's classification as either violent or non-violent. The individual's employment status was also an important

independent variable. It was important to obtain employment data to analyze the effect of employment on post-release recidivism among young adults. By using the individual's admission date and release date from the Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC), the present researchers would be able to calculate the "survival time" (elapsed time between re-incarceration and the initial release) among recidivist individuals. This information (i.e., survival time) would provide the general pattern of recidivism among young adults.

Outcome Measure and Dependent Variable

Even though the primary focus of this study was examining characteristics of incarcerated young adults in the age group of 18-24 years old, other characteristics in the age group of 25 years old or older were included in the present analyses in an attempt to provide comparisons between these two age groups from the total sample of 6,561 released individuals in this 5-year follow-up study. The post-release recidivism was the primary outcome measure which was measured by re-incarceration. The status of the recidivist was determined through the individual's admission data after the initial release in 2005. One primary analysis in this study was to examine the contributing factors on post-release recidivism among young adults. The effects of the individual's characteristics (e.g., race or age) and post-release employment on recidivism would be carefully examined in order to understand their distinctive impact on post-release recidivism. Due to the dichotomous nature of dependent measurement (recidivists versus non-recidivists), a logistic multiple regression analysis would be used to examine the effect of the individual's characteristics and post-release employment on recidivism.

Findings

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics about characteristics and post-release employment and recidivism among released individuals in the age group of 18-24 years old and in the age group of 25 years old or older. While comparing with characteristics of individuals in the age group of 25 years old or older, this study's results revealed that there were slightly more males and African Americans among the young adult population. One striking finding was that education deficiency among young adults was significantly higher than adults in the age group of 25 years old or older. There were 53% percent (n=669) in the age group of 18-24 years old without a high school diploma (or high school equivalent) prior to release, compared to about one-third (32.8%) in the age group of 25 years old or older. However, young adults were more likely to be re-incarcerated than adults in the

age group of 25 years old or older. In this study, the recidivism rate among young adults in the age group of 18-24 years old was 54.1 percent, but only 46.5 percent among those released adults in the age group of 25 years old or older. Nonetheless, there was a similar pattern among recidivists in terms of the elapsed time of re-incarceration between these two age groups. This study revealed that more than 80 percent of recidivists were re-incarcerated within 2 years after the initial release from Indiana correctional facilities.

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Table 1. Descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage) of young adults' characteristics and older adults

Variable	Age Group 18-24 (n=1,264)	Age Group 25 or Older (n=5,297)
Gender		
Female	105 (8.3%)	775 (14.6%)
Male	1159 (91.7%)	1159 (91.7%)
Race		
African American	781 (61.8%)	3082 (58.2%)
Caucasian	448 (35.4%)	2083 (39.3%)
Hispanic	30 (2.4%)	106 (2.0%)
Asian	3 (0.2%)	18 (0.3%)
Unknown	2 (0.2%)	8 (0.2%)
Education		
Below high school	669 (53.0%)	1740 (32.8%)
High school or GED	539 (42.6%)	2922 (55.2%)
2-year college	12 (0.9%)	12 (0.9%)
Unknown	44 (3.5%)	341 (6.4%)
Classification		
Non-violent	975 (77.1%)	4016 (75.8%)
Violent	289 (22.9%)	1281 (24.2%)
Employment Status		
Never employed	396 (31.2%)	1972 (37.2%)
Employed 1-4 quarters	433 (34.2%)	1536 (29.1%)
Employed 5-8 quarters	205 (16.2%)	775 (14.6%)
Employed 9-12 quarters	125 (10.0%)	526 (10.9%)
Employed 13 quarters or more	105 (8.4%)	488 (9.2%)
Recidivism Status		
Non-recidivist	580 (45.9%)	2835 (53.5%)
Recidivist	684 (54.1%)	2462 (46.5%)
Survival Time (only recidivists)		
Re-incarcerated within 1 year	306 (44.7%)	1143 (46.4%)
Re-incarcerated within 1-2 years	242 (35.4%)	837 (34.0%)
Re-incarcerated within 2-3 years	67 (9.8%)	254 (10.3%)
Re-incarcerated within 3-4 years	30 (2.4%)	115 (2.2%)
Re-incarcerated within 4-5 years	39 (3.1%)	113 (4.6%)

Table 2 demonstrates a bi-variate correlation between post-release recidivism with the individual's demographical characteristics (e.g., race, gender, and age), education, classification, and employment status for those released individuals in the age group of 18-24 years old. Results revealed that post-release recidivism among these individuals was statistically correlated with their demographic characteristics. Specifically, males, African Americans, uneducated (or under-educated) or unemployed individuals were more likely to be re-incarcerated after release from the correctional facilities. In other words, those individuals who remained unemployed were more likely to be re-incarcerated after the initial release.

Table 2. Bi-variate correlation between post-release recidivism and employment and young adults' characteristics in the age group 18-24 (n=1,264)

Variable	Gender	Race	Education	Classification	Employment	Recidivism	Survival Time
Gender	---	-.097***	-.038	.061*	-.076*	.097***	-.004
Race		---	-.167***	-.002	.151***	-.090**	.029
Education			---	.043	.174***	-.133***	-.092*
Classification				---	.018	.014	-.014
Employment					---	-.322***	.075*
Recidivism						---	n/a
Survival Time							---

Note #1: "*" denotes that Pearson correlation is statistically significant at 0.01 level, "**" at .001 level, and "***" at .05 level.

Note #2: Due to a relatively small sample of Hispanic and Asian individuals, only Caucasian and African American individuals were included in this analysis.

Note #3: "n/a" means that correlation between "Survival Time" and "Recidivism" was not applicable and could not calculate because information in the variable - "Survival Time"-only applied to recidivists.

Table 3 shows a bi-variate correlation between post-release recidivism with the individual's demographical characteristics (e.g., race, gender, and age), education, classification, and employment status. In the age group of 25 years old or older in terms of There was a similar pattern of bi-variate correlations between released individuals in the age group of 18-24 years old and in the age group of 25 years old or older. In other words, the individual's characteristics (e.g., gender, race, or education) were statistically correlated with post-release employment and recidivism. Same as in the age group of 18-24 years old, the correlation matrix among released individuals in the age group of 25 years old or older revealed that uneducated (or under-educated) individuals were less likely to find a job, but more likely to be re-incarcerated, after release from prison. Also, unemployed individuals were more likely than employed individuals to be re-incarcerated, regardless of their age.

Table 3. Bi-variate correlation between pots-release recidivism and employment and individual's characteristics in the age group 25 or older (n=5,297)

Variable	Gender	Race	Education	Classification	Employment	Recidivism	Survival Time
Gender	---	-.020	.065	.068***	-.005	.030*	.009
Race		---	.079***	.051***	.032	-.046***	-.024
Education			---	.017	.101***	-.113***	.009
Classification				---	.041*	.006	.055**
Employment					---	-.304***	.062**
Recidivism						---	n/a
Survival Time							---

Note #1: "*" denotes that Pearson correlation is statistically significant at 0.01 level, "***" at .001 level, and "****" at .05 level.

Note #2: Due to a relatively small sample of Hispanic and Asian individuals, only Caucasian and African American individuals were included in this analysis.

Note #3: "n/a" means that correlation between "Survival Time" and "Recidivism" was not applicable and could not calculate because information in the variable - "Survival Time"- only applied to recidivists.

Table 4 illustrates a logistic multiple regression analyses of post-release recidivism. Results of the logistic multiple regression analysis from the equation of “Young Adult” (age group of 18-24 years old) indicated that the individual’s demographic characteristics (i.e., age or education) were statistically, but negatively, correlated ($p < 0.05$), with post-release recidivism, while controlling of other factors. Specifically, the effect of the individual’s age or education on post-release recidivism was statistically significant, which indicated that younger individuals or uneducated (or under-educated) individuals were more likely to be re-incarcerated after the initial release from prison. Most importantly, this study found that the post-release employment was the most important predictor of recidivism among young adults in the age group of 18-24 years old. Results indicated that individuals would likely become re-incarcerated if they were unemployed after release from prison.

Table 4. Logistic multiple regression analyses of post-release recidivism among young adults (n=1,264) and adults (n=5,297)

Variable	Young Adult Age Group 18-24	Adult Age Group 25 or Older
Gender	.039	.108
Race	-.111	-.088
Age	-.122*	-.011*
Education	-.296*	-.317***
Classification	-.242	.129
Employment Status	-.139***	-.138***
Constant	4.430***	1.538***
-2 Log Likelihood	970.408	3903.656
Nagelkerke R Square	.149	.135

Note #1: “***” denotes that logistic coefficient is statistically significant at 0.001 level, “**” at .01 level, and “*” at .05 level.

Note #2: Due to a relatively small number of Hispanic and Asian individuals, only African American and Caucasian individuals were included in the logist regression analysis.

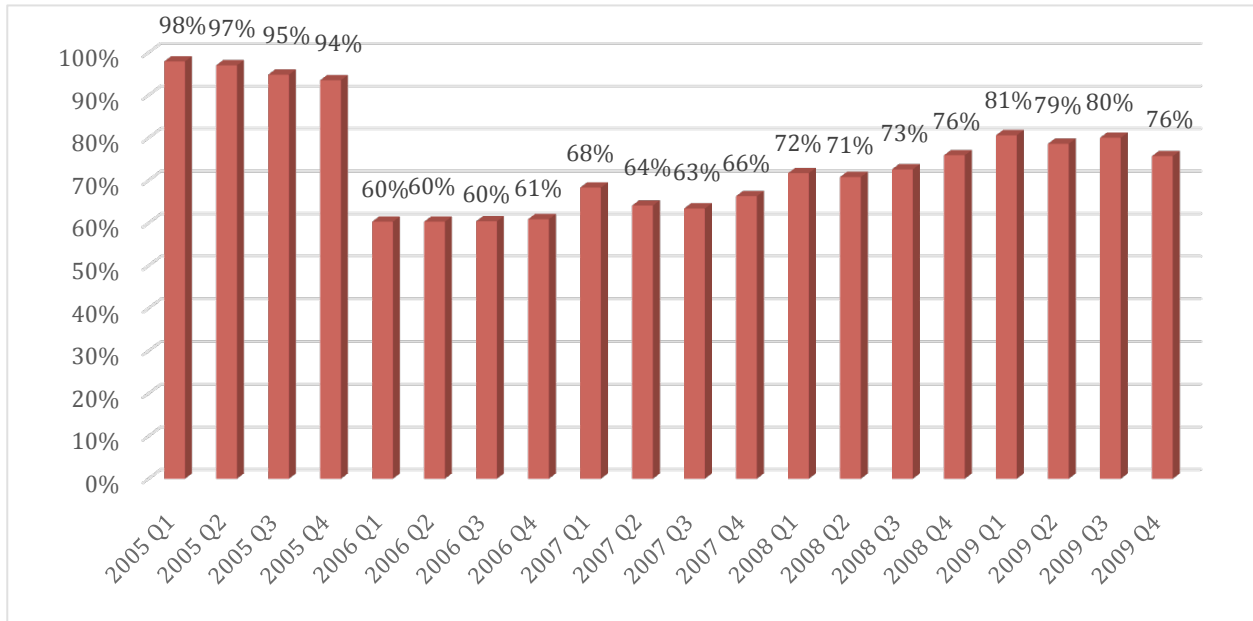
Note #3: The variable –“Survival Time”-was not included in the logistic analysis because information was only applied to recidivists and the dependent variable was dichotomous (Recidivists versus non-recidivists).

There was a similar pattern from a logistic multiple regression analyses of post-release recidivism among 5,297 individuals in the age group of 25 years old or older, while comparing with analyses of released individuals in the age group of 18-24 years old. Results of the logistic multiple regression analysis from the equation of "Adult" (age group of 25 years old or older) showed that the effect of an individual's age on post-release recidivism was statistically significant, which indicated that younger individuals were more likely to be re-incarcerated after the initial release from prison. The effect of education on post-release recidivism was statistically, but negatively, significant. In other words, uneducated (or under-educated) adults were more likely re-incarcerated after release from prison. Similarly, post-release employment was the most important predictor of recidivism among adults in the age group of 25 years old or older. This study clearly revealed that people would likely become re-incarcerated if they were uneducated or unemployed after release from prison.

Discussion

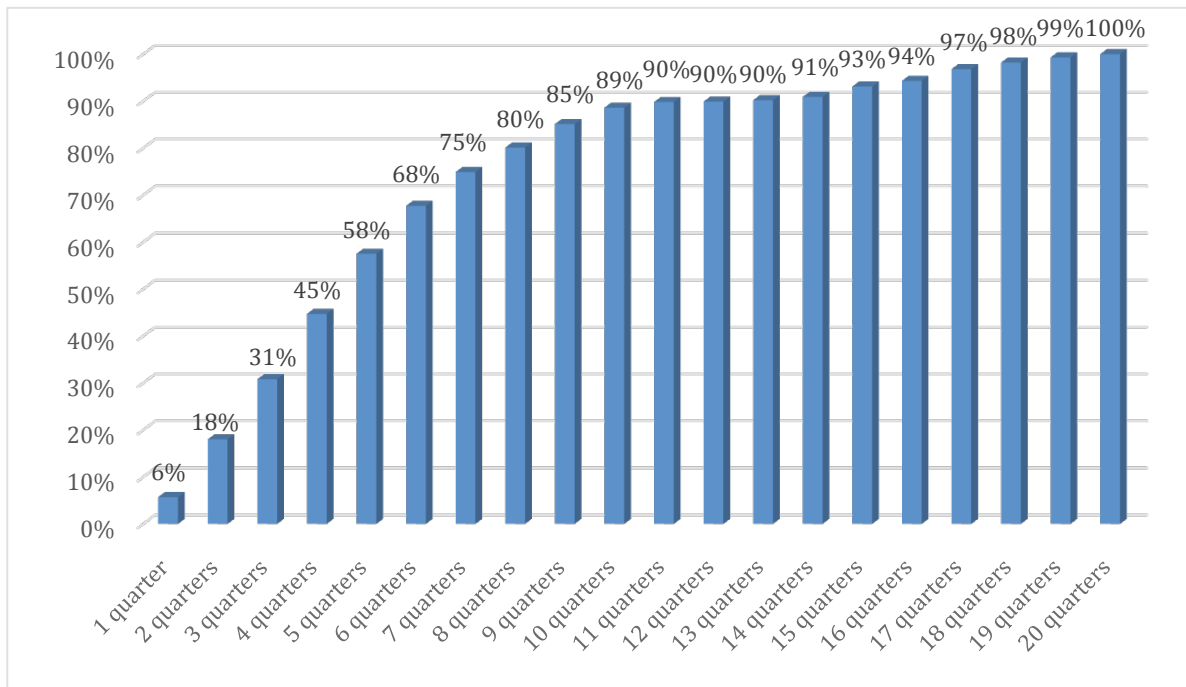
Results of this study indicated that age, education, and post-release employment were principal predictors of post-release recidivism among incarcerated young adults. Regardless of race, this study found that young adults, if uneducated, would find it difficult to obtain employment upon release from prison. Consequently, such young and uneducated young adults would likely be re-incarcerated within the first year of release from prison, as Table 1 indicates. In this 5-year follow-up study, as Figure 1 indicates, the study's results also revealed that young adults were unemployed within the first year of release from prison – the unemployment rates hovered around the range of 94-98 percent. A further analysis of employment status also revealed that young adults, if employed after release from prison, might have difficulties sustaining their employment. Statistics in Table 1 (i.e., Employment Status) showed that less than 27 percent (n=230) of 868 young adults who had been employed after release from prison could sustain their employment more than 8 quarters throughout the 5-year follow-up study period. This study also found that a majority were temporary or seasonal workers with a minimum-wage income in a variety of job sectors, such as, "temporary help services" or "food and lodging services." There was a similar pattern among adults in the age group of 25 years old or older. This study's results indicated that deficiency in formal education and job skills might significantly contribute to the post-release unemployment rate or low-wage jobs among this group after release from prison.

Figure 1. Unemployment rates (by quarter) among young adults (age 24 or younger) after release: A 5-year follow-up study



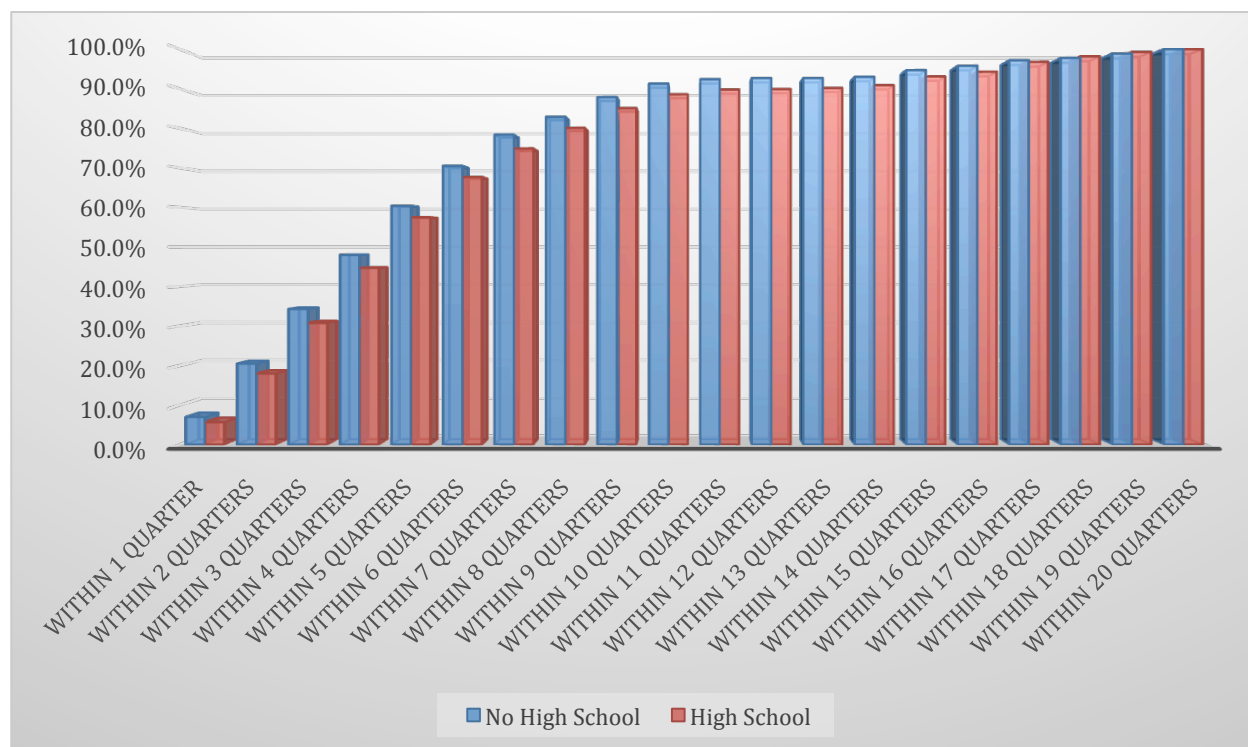
A further analysis revealed that the individual's level of education was statistically correlated with the unemployment rate (chi-square=8.100; $p < .017$), but racial disparities in post-release employment were also distinctive. There were 37.0 percent of 703 African Americans, but only 22.3 percent of 400 Caucasians, who were never employed after release from prison. Results of this study also consistently showed that an individual's level of education significantly impacted the post-release employment status among both Caucasians and African Americans released from prison. In others words, uneducated individuals would likely be unemployed after release from prison.

Figure 2. Cumulative recidivism rates (by quarter) among young adult recidivists (age 24 or younger) within a 5-year follow-up study



In regard to the survival time (i.e., elapsed time between the initial release and re-incarceration) among young adults, this study also revealed that a vast majority of recidivists were re-incarcerated within 2 years after release from prison. As Figure 2 indicates, results of this study revealed that approximately 45 percent of 684 young adult recidivists were re-incarcerated within the first year of release and 80 percent were re-incarcerated within 2 years after the initial release from prison. Furthermore, as Figure 3 indicates, recidivists who did not have a high school diploma or equivalent were consistently re-incarcerated earlier than those recidivists who had a high school diploma or equivalent. A similar pattern also existed among individuals in the age group of 25 years old or older.

Figure 3. Cumulative recidivism rates among young adult recidivists (age 24 or younger): High school versus no high school diploma or equivalent



Consistent with previous studies (D’Alessio, et al., 2013; Author, et al., 2015; Author, et al., 2013; Phillip and Land, 2012; Varghese, et al., 2010), post-release employment has been considered the most influential factor to determine recidivism. This study also found that a vast majority of recidivists were unemployed and less-educated. For example, the recidivism rate among African Americans who had been employed at least 1 quarter after release was 53.6 percent, but the recidivism rate was 64.0 percent among African Americans who had never been employed. There was a similar pattern of re-incarceration between Caucasians and African Americans. The recidivism rate among Caucasians who had been employed at least 1 quarter after release was 44.0 percent, but the recidivism rate was 61.9 percent among Caucasians who had never been employed. Throughout the study period of 2005-2009, African Americans had a higher unemployment rate than Caucasians after release from prison. Meanwhile, post-release recidivism became even more significant while considering the individual’s formal level of education. For example, the recidivism rate reached 70.9 percent among African Americans who did not possess a high school diploma or equivalent and were unemployed after release from prison.

This 5-year follow-up study revealed that the overall recidivism rate among young adults (age 24 or younger) was over half. It also demonstrated that post-release employment was the most influential factor to recidivism. Undoubtedly, one specific challenge to post-release employment is educational deficiency. Such young and uneducated (or under-educated) individuals would likely be unemployed after release from prison due to their insufficient education and inadequate job skills. Consistent with previous researchers' findings (Chappell, 2004; Erisman and Contardo, 2005; Steurer and Smith, 2003), this study found that educationally-illiterate young adults were disproportionately unemployed and would likely become recidivists within a short period of time after release from prison.

Conclusion

Results of this study suggest the need for enhancing educational and vocational competencies among young adults. Even though all juvenile correctional facilities, under legal mandates, have to provide appropriate high school/high school equivalency programs for incarcerated juveniles, these same legal mandates are not present in adult correctional facilities. This study's results showed that approximately 53 percent of individuals under the age of 24 did not possess a high school diploma or equivalent prior to release from prison. Correctional education could play a crucial role to enhance reentry and reduce recidivism among this group of individuals. Subsequently, youth programs under the 2014 United States Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) could provide academic and vocational training programs for out-of-school youths, who are aged 16-24, upon release from prison. The age criteria under WIOA has extended the typical definition of "youth," and those young people leaving both juvenile and adult correctional facilities can benefit from additional employment-related training, education, and services through WIOA funding.

As specified by the United State Department of Labor (2014), the United States Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) retains the nationwide system of so-called "one-stop centers," which directly provide an array of employment services and connect clients to work-related training and education. Each local area must have one comprehensive "one-stop center" that provides access to core programs and other required services. In order to provide employment-related training and continued education services to those disconnected youths and other vulnerable populations, such as, youths leaving correctional facilities, the WIOA requires local areas to allocate 75 percent of youth program funds to serve out-of-school youths, and at least 20 percent of local youth program funds must be used

for work experiences, such as summer and year-round employment, pre-apprenticeship, on-the-job training, or internships and job shadowing. Under the WIOA mandates, the state vocational rehabilitation agencies must allocate 15 percent of youth program funds to provide pre-employment transition services to individuals with disabilities for competitive integrated employment.

With assistance from the 2014 United States Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the logic of educational and vocational programs for incarcerated juveniles and young adults shall focus on the education continuum from confinement to the community. Cross-agency collaboration is essential to enhance an individual's reentry into the community. Currently, the Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC) has established a strong cross-agency collaboration with the Indiana Department of Workforce Development (IDWD) to connect youth with necessary and continuous educational services and vocational training programs upon release from juvenile and adult correctional facilities.

For example, two important IDWD programs enhance youth employability and reentry into the community. The WorkINdiana program is an Indiana Department of Workforce Development (IDWD) initiative stemming from Indiana's Adult Education service delivery system. It involves a framework of approved certifications in specific job sectors. Furthermore, the WorkINdiana program requires regional partnerships among their adult education centers, career and technical education centers, the WorkOne centers, community colleges, and local economic development representatives. Additionally, IDWD provides oversight to the Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) program, a state-based, national non-profit organization dedicated to preventing dropouts among youth who are most at-risk. The JAG's mission is to keep young people in school through graduation and provide work-based learning experiences that will lead to career advancement opportunities or to enroll in a postsecondary institution. Additionally, JAG has out-of-school programs designed for youth who are school drop-outs and are enrolled in High School Equivalency certification programs. Both programs could enhance educational competency and job skills among youth who are reentering their communities upon release from correctional facilities. It would make sense for youth to be connected to WIOA funded programming intended to meet their needs for education and employment.

This study indicates that education and employment are two principal predictors of post-release recidivism. Due to limitations in data collection in the present study, undoubtedly, there are many contributing factors to post-release recidivism among young adults which need further examination. In future studies, researchers should include several important risk factors, such as, the individual's

risk assessment, mental health status, drug or alcohol abuse, or criminal history, to analyze the contributing factors to recidivism among young adults. It is anticipated that such studies will broaden our understanding about practical solutions to address those identifiable challenges among young adults returning to their communities upon release from incarceration.

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