

Perspectives of Rehabilitation Professionals on Western-Based Juvenile Rehabilitation Models in Eswatini's Juvenile Correctional Center

¹Lwazi Mavuso, ²Weston Chidyausiku, ³Webster Chihambakwe,

¹Social work Masters Student at University of KwaZulu Natal- South Africa

²Social work lecturer at Eswatini Medical Christian University

³Senior Lecturer, Department of Psychology, Eswatini Medical Christian University

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.90400252>

Received: 07 April 2025; Accepted: 10 April 2025; Published: 08 May 2025

ABSTRACT

This study explores the perspectives of rehabilitation professionals on Western-based juvenile rehabilitation models in Eswatini's correctional centers. Using a qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with rehabilitation professionals to gather their insights on the effectiveness, cultural relevance, and challenges associated with implementing Western-based models in the local context. A total of 14 participants took part in the initial stage of the study, which involved two focus group discussions (FGD 1 and FGD 2). Following the focus group discussions, in-depth interviews were conducted with 5 purposively selected participants (P1-P5). Six key themes emerged for the collected data: current rehabilitation models being used in Eswatini; classification of rehabilitation models; strengths and limitations of Western based models; cultural relevance of rehabilitation models; integration of indigenous practices and challenges encountered in the implementation of the rehabilitation models. The main argument pursued lies within the two theories post-colonial theory and the African psychology theory which view Western based models' dominance as the perpetuation western hegemony at the expense indigenous approaches. Researchers proposed four recommendations based on their findings: develop hybrid models, enhance training, allocate resources and engage communities.

Key Words: Western based rehabilitation models, rehabilitation professionals, cultural relevance, post-colonial theory, African psychology theory, hybrid model, indigenous practices.

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Eswatini, like many other developing countries, has adopted Western-based juvenile rehabilitation models in its correctional centers (Mahamba et al. 2025; Dlamini, 2021). These models, which emphasize individualized treatment and rehabilitation, aim to reduce recidivism and promote positive behavioral change among juvenile offenders (Andrews & Bonta, 2010). The underlying philosophy of these models is rooted in the belief that tailored interventions can effectively address the specific needs of each juvenile, thereby facilitating their reintegration into society as productive members (Lipsey et al., 2010). However, concerns have been raised regarding the cultural relevance and effectiveness of these models within the local context (Nwoye, 2017; Gray et al., 2022).

The juvenile justice system in Eswatini is guided by the Children's Protection and Welfare Act of 2012, which emphasizes the need for rehabilitation and reintegration of juvenile offenders into society (Government of Eswatini, 2012). This legislative framework reflects a commitment to protecting the rights of children and ensuring that their rehabilitation is prioritized over punitive measures (UNDP, 2021). Despite this progressive legislation, correctional centers in Eswatini face numerous challenges that hinder the effective implementation of rehabilitation programs (Shabalala, 2020).

One of the most pressing issues is overcrowding in correctional facilities, which exacerbates the difficulties in

providing individualized attention and support to juvenile offenders (Gumedze, 2022). Overcrowding can lead to a chaotic environment that is not conducive to rehabilitation, as staff members are often overwhelmed and unable to meet the needs of each juvenile adequately (Mahamba et al. 2025; WHO, 2022). Additionally, inadequate resources, including insufficient funding, lack of educational materials, and limited access to mental health services, further complicate the rehabilitation process (Mkhize, 2021).

Moreover, there is a significant lack of trained personnel within the correctional system (Sodi et al., 2020). Many staff members may not have received adequate training in modern rehabilitation techniques or cultural competency, which is essential for understanding and addressing the unique needs of juvenile offenders in Eswatini (Mpofu, 2018). Notably, Mahamba et al. (2025) observed a significant gap in the qualifications of personnel employed in juvenile rehabilitation centers in Eswatini, where centers are staffed by individuals trained in psychosocial support rather than qualified social workers. This gap in training can result in the ineffective application of Western-based rehabilitation models, which may not align with the cultural values and social realities of the local population (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013; Mugumbate & Chereni, 2019).

Furthermore, the Western-based rehabilitation models currently in use have been criticized for being culturally insensitive (Gray et al., 2022). Critics argue that these models often fail to consider the traditional values, beliefs, and practices that are integral to the Swazi culture (Nwoye, 2017). As a result, the interventions may not resonate with the juveniles or their families, leading to a lack of engagement and commitment to the rehabilitation process (Dlamini, 2021). The disconnect between Western methodologies and local cultural contexts raises important questions about the appropriateness and sustainability of these models in Eswatini's correctional facilities (Mkhize, 2021; Gumedze, 2022).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the adoption of Western-based juvenile rehabilitation models in Eswatini's correctional centers, there is a significant lack of understanding regarding the perspectives of rehabilitation personnel on the effectiveness and cultural relevance of these models. This knowledge gap raises concerns about the potential mismatch between the rehabilitation models and the local context, which may compromise rehabilitation outcomes for juvenile offenders. The absence of insights from rehabilitation professionals limits the ability to assess whether these models are suitable for the unique socio-cultural landscape of Eswatini.

AIM & OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study was to explore the perspectives of rehabilitation professionals on Western-based juvenile rehabilitation models in Eswatini's correctional centers. The following objectives were pursued;

1. To examine the perceptions of rehabilitation personnel on the effectiveness of Western-based juvenile rehabilitation models in Eswatini's correctional centers.
2. To investigate the cultural relevance of Western-based juvenile rehabilitation models in the local context.
3. To identify the challenges associated with implementing Western-based juvenile rehabilitation models in Eswatini's correctional centers.
4. To gather recommendations from rehabilitation personnel on how to improve the rehabilitation outcomes for juvenile offenders in Eswatini.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The adoption of Western-based juvenile rehabilitation models in Eswatini's correctional centers raises important questions about cultural relevance and power dynamics. Through the lens of Postcolonial Theory (Said, 1978), this study examines how these models perpetuate cultural imperialism, disregarding local values and practices. The dominance of Western knowledge and practices in the field of juvenile rehabilitation has led to the marginalization of indigenous approaches, resulting in a disconnect between the rehabilitation models and the

local context.

African Psychology (Nwoye, 2017) offers a compelling alternative to Western-based rehabilitation models. By prioritizing communal healing approaches and emphasizing the importance of cultural and spiritual practices, African Psychology provides a framework for understanding the unique needs and circumstances of juvenile offenders in Eswatini. This study explores how African Psychology's communal healing approaches can inform the development of culturally relevant rehabilitation models, incorporating traditional healing practices and spiritual leaders to promote social harmony and collective well-being.

The application of Postcolonial Theory and African Psychology in this study provides a nuanced understanding of the complex issues surrounding juvenile rehabilitation in Eswatini. By examining the power dynamics inherent in Western-based rehab models and exploring alternative approaches grounded in African Psychology, this study aims to contribute to the development of context-specific rehabilitation models that prioritize cultural relevance, communal healing, and social harmony. Ultimately, this research seeks to inform policy and practice in Eswatini, promoting more effective and culturally responsive juvenile rehabilitation outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Western juvenile rehabilitation models have been widely implemented in African correctional systems, primarily through international partnerships and policy transfers. These models are often introduced with the intention of modernizing justice systems and reducing recidivism among young offenders. However, their application in African contexts has raised important questions about cultural relevance and effectiveness.

Among the most prominent Western models is Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT). As described by Lipsey et al. (2010), CBT focuses on modifying criminal thinking patterns by addressing cognitive distortions and antisocial behaviors. This model has been adopted in various African correctional facilities, including South Africa's Bosasa Youth Centers and Kenya's Shikusa Borstal Institution. While CBT has shown some success in Western contexts, its implementation in Africa faces challenges. The model's emphasis on individual cognition often conflicts with African communal values, and the shortage of trained therapists limits its effectiveness.

Another widely promoted model is Restorative Justice (RJ), which emphasizes reconciliation over punishment (Zehr, 2015). RJ approaches, such as victim-offender mediation, have been implemented in countries like Uganda, where they are sometimes blended with traditional conflict-resolution practices. In Eswatini, while formal RJ programs are limited, indigenous practices like kukhulumisana/ kucocisana (family arbitration) serve a similar restorative function (Dlamini, 2021). However, the integration of Western RJ models with local traditions has been inconsistent, and questions remain about their legal standing within statutory justice systems.

Behavior Modification Programs (BMPs) represent a third category of Western models applied in African settings. Based on operant conditioning principles (Andrews & Bonta, 2010), these programs use reward and punishment systems to shape behavior. While they have been implemented in facilities such as Nigeria's borstals (Sarki, Abdullahi and Mukhtar, 2018) and Kenya's Shikusa Borstal Institution, concerns have been raised about their over-reliance on punitive measures and their failure to address the socioeconomic factors that contribute to juvenile delinquency.

Common challenges in implementation

The application of these Western models in African contexts has revealed several systemic challenges. Culturally, these models often conflict with indigenous value systems that emphasize community harmony and collective responsibility over individual accountability (Nwoye, 2017). For instance, CBT's focus on personal responsibility may not resonate with Swazi youth raised in an ubuntu framework that prioritizes communal relationships.

Resource limitations present another significant barrier. Many African correctional systems lack the trained personnel, funding, and infrastructure needed to sustain these programs effectively (WHO, 2022). The high costs associated with training staff and maintaining program fidelity often led to fragmented implementation and inconsistent outcomes.

From a critical perspective, some scholars argue that the wholesale adoption of Western models represents a form of neocolonialism in justice systems (Gray et al., 2022). The lack of meaningful local adaptation and the marginalization of indigenous knowledge systems in rehabilitation programming raise important questions about ownership and sustainability.

Emerging hybrid approaches

Some African countries have begun developing hybrid models that blend Western techniques with local practices. South Africa's Child Justice Act (2008) provides an instructive example, incorporating elements of restorative justice while recognizing traditional dispute-resolution mechanisms. These adaptations suggest potential pathways for Eswatini to develop more culturally grounded rehabilitation approaches.

The South African case demonstrates how statutory systems can accommodate both Western-derived principles and African communal justice traditions. Such hybrid models may offer more sustainable solutions by building on existing cultural frameworks while incorporating evidence-based practices from global scholarship.

Implications for Eswatini's juvenile justice system

Eswatini's current reliance on Western models, particularly High School, warrants critical examination. Key questions emerge about the cultural appropriateness of these interventions and the capacity of rehabilitation personnel to implement them effectively. The perspectives of probation officers, social workers, and correctional staff who operate at the intersection of policy and practice could provide valuable insights into needed reforms.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design, using a case study approach to explore the perspectives of rehabilitation personnel on Western-based juvenile rehabilitation models at Vulamasango High School in Eswatini. The qualitative approach allowed for an in-depth examination of the complex issues surrounding juvenile rehabilitation, providing rich and contextualized data.

The study was conducted at Vulamasango High School, a correctional facility that provides rehabilitation programs for juvenile offenders. This setting provided a unique context for exploring the implementation of Western-based rehabilitation models, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with these models.

A total of 14 participants including the Station Commander, 3 social workers, 3 psychologists, 1 Chaplain, 3 wardens, 3 teachers, and 1 sports officer took part in the initial stage of the study, which involved two focus group discussions (FGD 1 and FGD 2). The focus group discussions were used to gather preliminary data and identify participants who were actively engaged in the discussions. Following the focus group discussions, in-depth interviews were conducted with 5 purposively selected participants (P1-P5), who were chosen based on their active participation in the focus group discussions.

The in-depth interviews provided a more detailed understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences, allowing for a richer exploration of the research questions. The interviews were conducted in a private setting, ensuring that participants felt comfortable sharing their thoughts and experiences.

To maintain confidentiality, participants were assigned pseudonyms, with the focus group discussions referred to as FGD 1 and FGD 2, and the in-depth interview participants referred to as P1-P5. This ensured that participants' identities were protected, and their confidentiality was maintained.

In addition to the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, relevant documents were analyzed to provide context and background information on juvenile rehabilitation at Vulamasango High School. These documents included policy documents, rehabilitation manuals, and research reports, providing a comprehensive understanding of the juvenile rehabilitation system in Eswatini.

The data collected from the focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, and document analysis were analyzed using thematic analysis. The data were first transcribed verbatim, and then coded using NVivo software. The

codes were then categorized into themes, which were further analyzed to identify patterns and relationships. The themes were then interpreted in relation to the research questions, providing a rich and nuanced understanding of the perspectives and experiences of rehabilitation personnel.

To ensure trustworthiness, the study employed member checking, peer debriefing, and an audit trail. Member checking involved providing participants with transcripts of their interviews, ensuring accuracy and validity. Peer debriefing involved discussing emerging themes and findings with colleagues, ensuring objectivity and rigor. The audit trail involved maintaining a detailed record of all stages of the research process, providing transparency and accountability.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Theme 1: Current rehabilitation models being used in Eswatini

Rehabilitation professionals in Eswatini identified a blend of Western-based approaches and traditional practices as the primary models used to rehabilitate young offenders. These models aim to address both behavioral and social challenges faced by juvenile offenders.

According to participants in one of the focus group discussions:

"We use a combination of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and traditional practices like Kulungiswa to help young offenders understand the impact of their actions and make amends to the community." (FGD 1)

During an in-depth interview, one of the participants emphasized that:

"We work closely with community leaders and family members to provide a supportive environment for young offenders. This approach helps them develop a sense of responsibility and accountability to their community." (P3)

Another participant highlighted the challenges of integrating Western-based models with traditional practices:

"While Western-based models provide a structured approach to rehabilitation, we often struggle to adapt them to our local context. Traditional practices like Kuphilisana offer valuable insights, but we need more training and resources to effectively integrate these approaches." (P4)

These perspectives from rehabilitation officers highlight the complexities of implementing rehabilitation models in Eswatini, where a blend of Western-based approaches and traditional practices is used to address the unique needs of young offenders.

Theme 2: Classification of rehabilitation models into Western-Based and local practices

The models used for juvenile rehabilitation in Eswatini can be broadly classified into two categories: Western-based approaches and local practices. This classification highlights the distinct differences between the structured, therapeutic approaches of Western methods and the culturally embedded, communal orientation of local practices.

Participants in one of the focus group discussions revealed:

"We have adopted Western-based models like cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and motivational interviewing (MI), which provide a structured framework for addressing behavioral issues. However, we're also aware of the importance of incorporating local practices that resonate with our cultural values." (FGD 2)

Another participant during in depth interviews emphasized the value of local practices:

"Local practices like Kulungiswa and Kuphilisana are essential in our rehabilitation programs. They help young offenders connect with their community and cultural heritage, promoting a sense of belonging and responsibility." (P2)

Another participant highlighted the challenges of integrating Western-based models with local practices:

"While Western-based models provide a clear framework for rehabilitation, they sometimes clash with our local practices. For instance, Western models emphasize individual accountability, whereas our local practices focus on communal responsibility. Finding a balance between these approaches can be challenging." (P3)

These perspectives from rehabilitation professionals underscore the importance of considering both Western-based approaches and local practices in juvenile rehabilitation programs in Eswatini. By acknowledging the strengths and limitations of each approach, rehabilitation professionals can develop more effective, culturally sensitive programs that address the unique needs of young offenders.

Theme 3: Strengths and limitations of Western-Based models

Rehabilitation professionals in Eswatini acknowledged the effectiveness of Western-based models, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and motivational interviewing (MI), in helping juveniles recognize and manage emotions, particularly in controlling anger. However, they also highlighted the limitations of these models in maintaining long-term behavioral change and their cultural mismatch with Eswatini's communal values.

According to one of the participants:

"CBT has been helpful in teaching juveniles to identify and manage their emotions, but we've noticed that the benefits often don't last once they leave our programs. We need to find ways to make these skills more sustainable in the long term." (P1)

Another participant noted:

"Western-based models like MI are great for individual counseling, but they don't always translate well to our communal context. We need to adapt these models to take into account the importance of family and community in Eswatini's culture." (P3)

Another participant emphasized:

"We've seen that Western-based models can be too focused on individual accountability, which can be at odds with our cultural values of communal responsibility. We need to find a balance between these approaches to create more effective rehabilitation programs." (P4)

Participants in one of the focus group discussions shared their perspective:

"We have seen how Western-based models can sometimes disrupt our traditional ways of addressing behavioral issues. We need to ensure that any rehabilitation program respects and incorporates our cultural practices, such as Kulungiswa and Kuphilisana, which have been effective in promoting communal healing and accountability." (FGD 2)

These perspectives from rehabilitation professionals highlight the need for a more nuanced approach to rehabilitation in Eswatini, one that balances the strengths of Western-based models with the cultural values and traditional practices of the local community.

Theme 4: Cultural relevance of rehabilitation models

The findings underscore a pressing concern regarding the cultural appropriateness of Western-based rehabilitation models in Eswatini. Rehabilitation professionals emphasized that these models often fail to resonate with the communal values and cultural practices prevalent in Eswatini.

According to one of the participants:

"We've noticed that Western-based models tend to focus on individualism, which can be at odds with our communal values. We need to adapt these models to take into account the importance of family, community, and social relationships in Eswatini's culture." (P5)

Another participant noted:

"I have seen how Western-based models can sometimes overlook the role of traditional practices and cultural rituals in promoting healing and rehabilitation. We need to find ways to incorporate these practices into our rehabilitation programs to make them more culturally relevant." (P4)

Participants in one of the focus group discussions shared:

"Our community values are centered around Ubuntu, which emphasizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of all individuals. Western-based models often neglect this aspect, focusing instead on individual accountability. We need rehabilitation programs that prioritize communal responsibility and social relationships." (FGD 1)

These perspectives from rehabilitation professionals highlight the importance of cultural relevance in rehabilitation models. By incorporating traditional practices and communal values, rehabilitation programs can become more effective and sustainable in the Eswatini context.

Theme 5: Integration of indigenous practices

Rehabilitation professionals strongly advocated for the integration of indigenous practices, such as Kulungiswa and Kuphilisana, into rehabilitation efforts. These traditional practices align with the Ubuntu philosophy, prioritizing communal healing, reconciliation, and restorative justice over punitive measures.

According to one of the participants:

"Integrating indigenous practices like Kulungiswa into our rehabilitation programs has shown promising results. These practices help young offenders connect with their community and cultural heritage, promoting a sense of belonging and responsibility." (P1)

Participants in one of the focus group discussions shared:

"We have found that indigenous practices like Kuphilisana are effective in promoting communal healing and reconciliation. By involving the community in the rehabilitation process, we can create a supportive environment that fosters positive behavioral change." (FGD 1)

Emphasizing the same point, one of the participants said:

"As a Swazi I have seen how indigenous practices like Kulungiswa can help young offenders make amends with their community. These practices promote accountability, forgiveness, and healing, which are essential for rehabilitation and reintegration." (P1)

Another participant emphasized:

"Ubuntu philosophy is at the heart of our indigenous practices. By integrating these practices into rehabilitation efforts, we can promote a sense of communal responsibility and social cohesion. This approach can help young offenders develop a positive identity and become productive members of society." (P2)

These perspectives from rehabilitation professionals highlight the importance of integrating indigenous practices into rehabilitation efforts. By embracing traditional practices and the Ubuntu philosophy, rehabilitation programs can become more culturally relevant, effective, and sustainable in the Eswatini context.

Theme 6: Challenges in implementation

Despite the importance of rehabilitation programs for juvenile offenders in Eswatini, data analysis revealed several challenges faced by rehabilitation professionals. These challenges include limited resources, inadequate training, and cultural barriers, which hinder the effective implementation of rehabilitation programs.

One of the participants echoed:

"One of the biggest challenges we face is limited resources. We often lack the necessary funding, personnel, and infrastructure to provide adequate rehabilitation services to juvenile offenders. This can lead to inadequate treatment and poor outcomes." (P3)

Another participant noted:

"I have found that inadequate training is a significant challenge. Many rehabilitation professionals lack the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively address the complex needs of juvenile offenders. This can result in ineffective interventions and poor rehabilitation outcomes." (P4)

Participants in one of the focus group discussions shared:

"We have seen how cultural barriers can hinder the rehabilitation process. Western-based models often fail to account for our cultural values and practices, leading to misunderstandings and mistrust. We need rehabilitation programs that respect and incorporate our cultural heritage." (FGD 1)

Participants from another focus group discussion emphasized:

"Language barriers are also a significant challenge. Some of the terminologies used in the Western based rehabilitation models are too technical to be understood by all rehabilitation officers and juveniles. We need to ensure that rehabilitation materials are accessible and effective for all juvenile offenders and officers, regardless of their language or cultural background." (FGD 2)

These perspectives from rehabilitation professionals highlight the importance of addressing the challenges faced by rehabilitation professionals in Eswatini. By providing adequate resources, training, and cultural sensitivity, rehabilitation programs can become more effective and sustainable, ultimately improving outcomes for juvenile offenders.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The analysis of the verbatim responses from rehabilitation professionals reveals significant insights that align with existing literature and theoretical frameworks, particularly Postcolonial Theory and African Psychology. Below, the connections between the data, literature, and theoretical frameworks are examined.

Current Rehabilitation Models Being Used in Eswatini

Participants highlighted a blend of Western-based models and traditional practices, reflecting a hybrid approach to rehabilitation. This aligns with existing literature that emphasizes the need for culturally relevant models. For instance, Gray et al. (2022) discuss the importance of integrating indigenous practices to enhance the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs in contexts where Western models have been implemented.

Classification of Rehabilitation Models

The classification of rehabilitation models into Western-based and local practices underscores the dichotomy between individualistic approaches and communal values. This is consistent with Nwoye's (2017) critique of Western methodologies, which often overlook the communal orientation inherent in African cultures. The participants' emphasis on community-centered practices mirrors the principles of African Psychology, which advocates for understanding individuals within their cultural and social contexts.

Strengths and Limitations of Western-Based Models

While participants acknowledged the effectiveness of Western models like Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT), they also noted limitations in long-term sustainability and cultural mismatch. This reflects the findings of Lipsey et al. (2010), who highlight the contextual challenges in applying CBT in non-Western settings. The critique of Western models' individualism resonates with Postcolonial Theory, which argues that such approaches perpetuate cultural imperialism by neglecting local values and practices.

Cultural Relevance of Rehabilitation Models

The concerns raised about the cultural appropriateness of Western models echo Nwoye's (2017) assertion that these models often fail to account for traditional values. Participants emphasized the need to adapt interventions to local cultures, aligning with the call for decolonizing rehabilitation practices. This perspective is supported by the African Psychology framework, which prioritizes communal healing and the integration of cultural practices in rehabilitation.

Integration of Indigenous Practices

The strong advocacy for integrating indigenous practices like Kulungiswa and Kuphilisana reflects the recognition of the Ubuntu philosophy, which emphasizes interconnectedness and collective responsibility. This aligns with Karenga's (2016) discussion of Ubuntu's role in restorative justice, highlighting the importance of community involvement in the rehabilitation process. The data suggest that incorporating these practices can enhance engagement and effectiveness, as noted by Mahamba et al. (2025).

Challenges in Implementation

Participants identified challenges such as limited resources and inadequate training, which hinder effective rehabilitation. This finding mirrors the systemic barriers discussed by Gumedze (2022) and WHO (2021), emphasizing the need for comprehensive support in implementing rehabilitation programs. The recognition of cultural barriers aligns with the critiques of Western models' applicability in African contexts, reinforcing the necessity for culturally sensitive training and resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Develop hybrid models:** To effectively address the needs of juvenile offenders in Eswatini, it is crucial to develop rehabilitation programs that combine Western-based approaches with indigenous practices. This hybrid model should be designed to leverage the strengths of both methodologies. For example, while Western approaches like Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) can offer structured methods for behavioral modification, indigenous practices such as Kulungiswa and Kuphilisana can provide a culturally relevant framework that emphasizes community healing and social responsibility. The development of these hybrid models should involve collaborative efforts from rehabilitation professionals, cultural experts, and community leaders to ensure that the resulting programs are not only effective but also resonate with the values and beliefs of the local population. Pilot programs can be established to test these hybrid models, allowing for iterative feedback and refinement based on community responses and outcomes.
- **Enhance Training:** Comprehensive training for rehabilitation professionals is essential to ensure that they are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to implement hybrid rehabilitation models effectively. This training should emphasize cultural competence, helping professionals understand and respect the cultural dynamics that influence the behavior and rehabilitation of young offenders. Training programs should cover: The theoretical foundations of both Western and indigenous practices.; practical strategies for integrating these approaches in a cohesive manner; techniques for engaging effectively with families and community members and addressing potential cultural barriers that may arise during the rehabilitation process. Additionally, ongoing professional development opportunities should be provided to keep practitioners informed about best practices and new research findings in the field of juvenile rehabilitation.

- **Allocate Resources:** Advocacy for increased funding and resources is critical to support the development and sustainability of effective rehabilitation initiatives. Policymakers and stakeholders must recognize that adequate resources are necessary to create environments conducive to rehabilitation. This includes funding for: Training programs that build the capacity of rehabilitation professionals; development of culturally tailored rehabilitation materials and resources and infrastructure improvements that ensure safe and supportive environments for young offenders. Moreover, partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community organizations, and international agencies can provide additional funding avenues and support networks. Establishing a clear budget and resource allocation plan will ensure that rehabilitation programs can adequately meet the diverse needs of juvenile offenders.
- **Engage Communities:** Community engagement is a cornerstone of successful rehabilitation efforts. It is essential to involve community leaders, family members, and local organizations in the rehabilitation process to foster a supportive environment for young offenders. Strategies for enhancing community engagement include: Establishing partnerships between rehabilitation programs and local community organizations, schools, and faith-based groups; conduct awareness campaigns to educate the community about the importance of rehabilitation and the role of indigenous practices; actively involve community members in the design and implementation of rehabilitation programs and establish consistent feedback mechanisms to gather input from the community regarding the effectiveness of rehabilitation initiatives. This feedback can be used to adjust programs in real-time, making them more responsive to the needs of young offenders and their families.
- **Future studies:** Researchers can consider exploring how rehabilitation professionals navigate tensions between imported models and local realities.

CONCLUSION

This study has contributed to the understanding of the perspectives of rehabilitation professionals on Western-based juvenile rehabilitation models in Eswatini's correctional center. The findings highlight the need for a critical examination of the dominance of Western-based models in Eswatini's juvenile rehabilitation system. The study's results underscore the importance of considering cultural relevance, indigenous practices, and local contexts in the development and implementation of rehabilitation models. The study's findings align with the principles of post-colonial theory and African psychology theory, which emphasize the need to decolonize and promote indigenous approaches in rehabilitation. The proposed recommendations - developing hybrid models, enhancing training, allocating resources, and engaging communities - offer a way forward for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers seeking to improve juvenile rehabilitation outcomes in Eswatini. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that the development and implementation of effective rehabilitation models require a deeper understanding of local contexts, cultural values, and indigenous practices. The researchers argue that prioritizing cultural relevance, community engagement, and hybrid approaches in Eswatini's juvenile rehabilitation system can move towards a more inclusive, effective, and sustainable model that promotes sustainable rehabilitation and reintegration of juvenile offenders.

REFERENCES

1. Andrews, D. A., & Bonta, J. (2010). *The Psychology of Criminal Conduct* (5th ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315677187>
2. Andrews, D. A., & Bonta, J. (2010). *The psychology of criminal conduct* (5th ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315677187>
3. Bemak, F., & Chung, R. C. (2017). *International Counseling Case Studies Handbook*. American Counseling Association.
4. Dlamini, S. (2021). *Traditional Justice and Juvenile Rehabilitation in Eswatini*. UNESWA Press.
5. Dlamini, S. (2021). *Traditional justice and juvenile rehabilitation in Eswatini*. University of Eswatini Press.
6. Government of Eswatini. (2012). *Children's Protection and Welfare Act, 2012*. Government Gazette.
7. Gray, M., Coates, J., & Yellow Bird, M. (2022). *Decolonizing Social Work* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003198626>

8. Gray, M., Coates, J., & Yellow Bird, M. (2022). *Decolonizing social work* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003198626>
9. Gumedze, S. (2022). *Juvenile Justice in Southern Africa*. Pretoria University Press.
10. Gumedze, S. (2022). Juvenile justice in Southern Africa: Challenges and opportunities. *African Journal of Criminology*, 15(2), 45-67.
11. Karenga, M. (2016). *Ubuntu and Restorative Justice*. Juta Academic.
12. Lipsey, M. W., et al. (2010). Juvenile Justice Rehabilitation Programs. NIJ. <https://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR27421.v1>
13. Lipsey, M. W., Landenberger, N. A., & Wilson, S. J. (2010). Effects of cognitive-behavioral programs for criminal offenders. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 6(1), 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.4073/csr.2010.6>
14. Mahamba, D. T., Mavuso, L. and Chidyausiku, W. (2025). Centering African Epistemologies: A Decolonial Approach to Juvenile Recidivism in Zimbabwe and Eswatini. *UAI Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (UAIJAHSS)*, 2(2), 27–35. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14929686>
15. Mkhize, N. (2021). African psychology and juvenile corrections: A decolonial approach. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 47(3), 234-256. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798420987351>
16. Mpofu, E. (2018). *Counseling people of African ancestry*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316412433>
17. Mugumbate, J. & Nyanguru, A. (2013) Exploring African philosophy: The value of ubuntu in social work. *African Journal of Social Work*, 3 (1), 82-100.
18. Mugumbate, J., & Chereni, A. (2019). Using African Ubuntu Theory in Social Work with Children in Zimbabwe. *African Journals of Social Work*, 9, 27-34.
19. Nwoye, A. (2017). African psychology and mental health: Lessons from indigenous healing traditions. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 54(5-6), 636-657. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363461517722065>
20. Shabalala, N. (2020). Overcrowding and rehabilitation in Eswatini's correctional facilities. *Southern African Journal of Social Work*, 28(1), 12-29.
21. Sodi, T., Mudhovozi, P., & Mashamba, T. (2020). Indigenous healing practices in Southern Africa: Implications for social work education. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, 56(3), 301-318. <https://doi.org/10.15270/56-3-839>
22. United Nations Development Programme [UNDP]. (2021). *Eswatini prison system assessment report*. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.32134.73289>
23. WHO. (2021). *Community-Based Rehabilitation Guidelines*. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241548052>
24. World Health Organization [WHO]. (2022). *Mental health atlas 2022: Country profile for Eswatini*. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240046708>
25. Zehr, H. (2015). *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*. Good Books.