

ECONOMIC BENEFIT AND IMPLICATION OF EXPLORING PRISONERS' EMPLOYMENT: SCHOLARS PERSPECTIVE FOR CASE OF THE NIGERIAN INMATES IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Cost of maintaining prisoners has become a burden to the national budget in many countries. This has thus resulted to government in most countries to allocate huge amount of resources for the feeding, maintaining prison infrastructures and management cost from time to time to run the prison. This study is therefore aimed at exploring the possibility of prison work regarding the Nigerians inmate in Malaysia. As such, a survey method design to seek the opinion of some Nigerian scholars and non-Nigerian on the issue of engaging the inmates in some productive activities such as road construction and farming is adopted in this study. It is expected that the finding of this study may help in contributing more to the discussion and debates regarding cost reduction of running prisons.

Keywords: Prison, Labour, Inmate, Nigerian.

INTRODUCTION

"It makes no sense to put people in prison and not train them to do something constructive. "We must accept the reality that to confine offenders behind walls without trying to change them is an expensive folly with short term benefits winning the battles while losing the war. It is wrong. It is expensive. It is stupid." (Chief Justice Warren E. Burger 1907 - 1995)

The above statement is one of the numerous advocates of engaging prisoners in one or more activities that can facilitate some kind of training to the prisoners. The size of the prison population globally has been growing continuously at alarming rate and constitutes a huge burden on the government budget. This has equally led to overcrowding problem of the prison. As indicated in a report released in January 2010 by the United Nation Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC), California (United States) spent over \$48,000 annually to imprison one person, more than four times the tuition cost of University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) for a California resident (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2013). The report equally stated that, in 1980, California spent more of its state budget on higher education than on prisons, but that had reversed by 2010, with more of state budget going for prisons than for higher education. This clearly point to the growing level of the crime which has also been indicated to cost the United Kingdom about £37,500 in 2008 on each prisoner per year. It is not only the government that bears the cost of maintaining prisoners but equally the society at large. For instance, the United Kingdom-based Centre for Crime and Justice Studies found that, families and wider society spent an estimated amount of £50,000 per prisoner.

Coming to the case of Malaysia, government equally incurred huge expenses on incarceration. It is reported that daily prisoner-related expenses is estimated at RM35 per prisoner which run to RM12,775 being spent on each prisoner per year (Yaacob, 2012). With 40,000 prisoners, this means that the yearly cost of incarcerating these inmates is about RM511 million thus diverting an average of RM42.9 million per month from the national budget. The Table 1 below presents the breakdown of the expenses on prisoner by Malaysian government.

Items	Price
Food/drinks (price of raw foods, groceries, preparation, and kitchen safety control)	RM7.98
Service costs (envelopes/stamps/ electricity/water/sports/reading materials and medical costs)	RM1.07
Clothes (pants/shirts/towel/etc)	RM1.27
Daily expenses (toothpaste/toothbrush/ soap)	RM0.24
Hygiene	RM4.43
Meeting supervision and safety control	RM0.69
Record and Registration Office management	RM2.48
Safety management and control	RM13.75
Rehabilitation programme	RM3.09
TOTAL COSTS	RM35.00

Source: Yaacob (2012)

There have been quite a number of reports about the criminal activities of some Nigerian living in Malaysia which has culminated in a number of arrests. According to a report by daily trust newspaper, Nigerians are on the same platform with Indonesia and Chinese as the top three foreign criminals. As indicated in the newspaper, about 94 Nigerian were arrested in 2009 in relation to crime ranges from fraud, overstay and money laundry. In a similar vein, a report by the sun daily on January 9, 2014 indicated that about 2433 people were arrested during a major swoop across the country to get rid of illegal immigration.

Considering the substantial sum of sum of money spent on annual basis to maintain prisoner, it is necessary to have an alternative method that could help in reducing government expenditures on prisoners which constitute a significant portion of the national budget. Motivated by this, the present study therefore proposes prisoner work as an alternative in which prisoners are engaged to work (construction work or farming). From this, government could be able to recover some of the expenses spent in maintaining them.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Debate on prison labour is not a new phenomenon and its practices are as early as 1770 in prison of England and Wales (Pandeli, 2012). Indeed this approach has been indicated to be a widespread initiative in the US and has been an aspect of prison life in the UK for many years.

The size of the prison population globally has been continuously growing at alarming rate and has placed a huge burden on the government budget. This has equally resulted to the overcrowding problem of the prison. Moreover, Cox (2009) analyzed the economic effect of prison work. The finding indicated that, prison work has the potential to provide benefit to state, tax

payers and the victims (Cox, 2009). The state could benefit in the form of reduction in the cost of running and maintaining the prisons. The huge amount of resources to maintain prison facilities has been confirmed by Stephan (2004) who did related study for the case of United States of America (USA) and revealed that it cost an average American \$100 per year towards the cost of maintaining prison (Stephan, 2004). More so, large amount of the money saved could be directed towards enhancing the service to the tax payers, while the criminals could equally benefit by earning some money that could be used to take care of their family. This is in line with finding of Smith et al. (2006) who stated that prison work could help in reducing recidivism.

Yaacob (2012) carried out a cost benefit analysis of transforming Malaysia prison department into income generating institutions through Islamic products. According to the author, prison work could assist in reducing the expenditure of government in maintaining inmate. Money generated through the prison work could help in offsetting some of the expenses that otherwise would have met through appropriated funds. The work experience can assist ex-offenders' prospects for employment and reduce the likelihood for recidivism. As indicated earlier, the yearly cost of incarcerating these inmates in Malaysia is RM511 million, thus diverting an average of RM42.9 million per month from the national economy.

Atkinson & Rostad, (2003) in their article where inmate labour has been assessed identified the following advantages of prison labour: enhanced institutional security, reduced recidivism for inmates, an available workforce for business, lower public service costs for taxpayers, and finally, increased economic output for society. The author however concluded that prison labour could contribute to economic growth while assisting in moving prisoner to productive and law abiding lives when they are released. As indicated in the article the 1935 Hawes-Cooper Act was introduced in the United State of America (USA) to create Federal Prison Industries (FPI) as an arm of the Federal Bureau of Prisons in order to allow engaging prisoners in making goods for sale to the government. One of the main reasons for introducing it is to reduce the enormous amount of money spent on more than two million inmates in United State of America as at the year 2003 with about \$40 billion dollars annual spending. This view is in line with the view of (Scott & Derrick, 2006; Saylor & Gaes, 1997). Who examined the impact of prison labour on inmates suggested positive effect of the program on inmates and that it helped reducing recidivism among the inmates.

Kirchhoff (2010) assesses the economic impact of prison growth for the case of the United of America. As indicated in the article, the United State of America has experienced a jumped of about 400 percent in the prison population with its accompanied expenditures. The economic implication of the prison has been emphasized in the article. Indeed, it is stated that about 770,000 people worked in the corrections sector in 2008 and it is expected that the number of guards, supervisors, and other staff will grow by 9 percent between 2008 and 2018, while the number of probation and parole officers is to increase by 16 percent. The pressure on the national budget brought about by the prison growth has prompted the government to look at means of reducing the cost. According to this, the cost of maintaining prison has effect on the allocation to education sector and other sectors. This is in line with the conclusion of Bayer et al. (2007) who suggested the exploring of human capital of the inmates. Cooper (2013) equally indicated the possibility of deriving benefit from prison work, but also mentions the likelihood of misusing it. The effect of incarceration on the national was also mentioned in the article of (Schmitt et al., 2010).

METHODOLOGY AND RESULT

The present study is aimed at exploring the socio economic benefit of engaging prisoner to work in area such construction work or farming activities. Though, the focus of the present study is on Nigerian inmates, it can be applied to the inmate in general. In realizing this objective, a structured questionnaire is developed to seek the opinion of experts and researchers regarding some of the benefit and implications of engaging prisoners to work. Due to unavailability of existing questionnaire in this area, the questionnaire used for this study was developed by the authors based on the existing empirical studies on prison work. After the questionnaire was developed, it was validated by experts in the crime related research. The questionnaire comprises four sections of which, section one is about the demographic information of the respondents, section two sought to know the benefit of the prison labour on the prisoners.in section three, the questions are aimed at exploring the implication and some shortcoming of prison work while the last section which is section is about the benefit of prison labour for the government. After validation, about 150 questionnaire was administered on the targeted respondents comprises people from various educational background that range from bachelor degree holders to postgraduate level. At the end of the exercise, only 120 questionnaires were usable. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (Flanagan & Maguire, 1993).

The statistics about the personal detail of the respondents is presented in Table 2 below. According to the Table 2, 49 representing 39.2 of the respondents are males while 76 of them are female. Regarding the educational background of the respondents, 3 of them are secondary school holder, 76 are bachelor degree holder while the rest are postgraduate holder. As indicated in the Table 2, majority of the respondents constituting 89 are students while the remaining are lecturers.

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	49	39.2
Female	76	60.8
Education		
secondary schools	3	2.4
bachelor	76	60.8
postgraduate	44	35.2
Occupation		
lecturer	35	28.0
students	89	71.2

Table 3 present the response regarding the benefit of prison labour to the prisoners. It could be that noticed that, majority of the respondents agree that prisoners could benefit from prisoners labour. For instance, 62 percent of the respondents indicated that prison labour would prevent the prisoners from idleness while 65 percent are of the opinion that, prison work could assist in rehabilitating the prisoners through the acquisition of new skills. Hence, this finding support the argument of Atkinson & Rostad, (2003) and Yaacob (2012) who indicated that prison work could reduce recidivism among the criminal and prisoners could support their family through this. Regarding the implication of the prison labour, respondents are asked to give their opinion on some of the issues raised in the literatures such as taking of paid job out of the free market and exploitation of the prisoners.

Regarding the response obtained in relation to the benefit of prison labour as presented in Table 3, about 62 percent of the respondents agree that prison work could assist in reducing idleness among the prisoners. Most of the respondents are of the opinion that, prisoners could benefit from prison work in term of getting themselves rehabilitated while acquiring skill in prison. For instance 54 percent of the respondents indicated that prison work would afford the opportunity for the prisoners to support their family member while incarcerated. This finding is of the view of Cox, (2009) who opined that prison work can reduce recidivism.

	Frequency	Percentage
Prisoners are not left idle		
SA	48	38.4
A	62	49.6
N	13	10.4
productive way to rehabilitate prisoner		
SA	40	32.0
A	65	52.0
N	17	13.6
provide prisoners with skill to prepare them for potential employment		
SA	42	33.6
A	63	50.4
N	13	10.4
rehabilitation and monetary incentives		
SA	24	19.2
A	56	44.8
N	35	28.0
support family while incarcerated		
SA	26	20.8
A	54	43.2
N	34	27.2
assist inmate to reform their behaviour and rehabilitate themselves		
SA	35	28.0
A	67	53.6
N	18	14.4
learn specific job and vocational skill		
SA	29	23.2
A	66	52.8
N	23	18.4

Regarding the statement “*prisoners should not be allowed to work*”, majority of the respondents representing about 56 percent disagree with the statement. Meanwhile, Table 4, about 76 percent of the respondents are neutral with the statement “*prison labor is privilege undeserved*”. This is contrary to some who see prison work as a privilege that should not be extended to prisoners.

	Frequency	Percentage
should not be allowed to acquire skill		
N	30	24.0
DA	56	44.8
SD	19	15.2
prison labor is privilege undeserved		
A	13	10.4
N	76	60.8
DA	28	22.4
take paid job out of free market		
A	21	16.8
N	59	47.2
DA	34	27.2
undermine bargaining power of free market		
A	23	18.4
N	59	47.2
DA	31	24.8
private job would be lost to inmate labor		
A	22	17.6
N	46	36.8
DA	46	36.8
prison work take away jobs from regular labor		
A	19	15.2
N	43	34.4
DA	51	40.8
lower public service cost for tax payers		
A	38	30.4
N	56	44.8
DA	21	16.8
encourage repressive state to incarcerate		
A	15	12.0
N	77	61.6
DA	24	19.2

Majority of the respondents are of the opinion that government could benefit from prison work. Based on Table 5, 59 percent of the respondents agree that prison work could help government in reducing the overhead cost. In addition, majority of the respondent representing 63 percent and 59 percent are of the opinion that prison work could contribute to economic and increase the supply of low skilled workers respectively. This is supported by the finding of (Kirchhoff, 2010; Bayer et al., 2007; Atkinson & Rostad, 2003).

	Frequency	Percentage
lower overhead for govt		
A	59	47.2
N	46	36.8
DA	10	8.0
economy benefit from increase skill workers		

SA	26	20.8
A	63	50.4
N	31	24.8
contribute to economic growth		
SA	21	16.8
A	59	47.2
N	37	29.6
increase supply of low skilled workers		
A	53	42.4
N	48	38.4
DA	13	10.4
reduce likelihood of recidivism		
SA	10	8.0
A	41	32.8
N	68	54.4
reduce prisoner disturbance		
SA	10	8.0
A	45	36.0
N	63	50.4

Factor analysis is carried on the data in addition to the descriptive statistics. According to Pallant (2007), factor analysis looks for a way the data may be '*reduced*' or summarized using a smaller set of factors or components. The value of the KMO is above 0.721 which is above the recommended 0.6 benchmark. This thus suggests the sample adequacy of the data. More so, the Barlett's Test of Sphericity is significant. The result of factor analysis identified four factors. The factor loading for the variables ranges from 0.442, -0.879. The first factor has seven loading, the second factor loading has six loading, the third factor has three loading and the last factor has one loading. According to the summary of factor analysis regarding the respondent's opinion about the prisoner work, four main elements regarding the benefit of prisoners work to the inmate has been identified. The four main elements are: (1) It reduce idleness among the inmate, (2) productive way to rehabilitate prisoners (3) inmate could acquire skill. According to the respondent's opinion as presented in the descriptive statistics, majority of the respondents agree that, prisoners could derive significant benefits from those elements.

The second factor identified six main factors representing the reason why prisoners should not be allowed to work. Hence the elements are: (1) undermine the bargaining power of the market, (2) take away paid job out of free market, (3) prison labor is privilege undeserved, (4) prison work take away jobs from regular labor, (5) should not be allowed to acquire skill, (6) private job would be lost to inmate labor. Majority of the respondents as indicated in the Table 6 disagree with all the six statement. This is in line with what has revealed in the finding of (Yaacob, 2012; Cox, 2009). The third and fourth factors identified the following important element regarding the benefit of prison work to the government. These element are: (1) tax payers does not bear the economic burden of the prisoners, (2) lower public service cost , (3) encourage repressive state to incarcerate and (4) lower overhead for government. Based on the responses of the questionnaire, majority of the respondents are in support of all these statements.

	1	2	3	4
prisoners are left idle	0.879			
productive way to rehabilitate prisoner	0.847			
assist inmate to reform their behaviour and rehabilitate themselves	0.732			
provide prisoners with skill to prepare them for potential employment	0.702			
learn specific job and vocational skill	0.577			
rehabilitation and monetary incentives	0.473			
support family while incarcerated	0.428			
undermine bargaining power of free mkt		0.793		
take paid job out of free market		0.788		
prison labor is privilege undeserve		0.773		
prison work take away jobs from regular labor		0.704		
should not be allowed to acquire skill		0.667		
private job would be lost to inmate labor		0.639		
tax payers does not bear the economic burden of the prisoners			0.765	
lower public service cost			0.710	
encourage repressive state to incarcerate			0.891	
lower overhead for govt				0.766

CONCLUSION

This study explores the socio-economics potential of prison labour with special focus on Nigerian inmates in Malaysia using a survey method. The data was later analyzed using descriptive statistics and factor analysis. The finding indicated that majority of the respondents are in support of prison labour due to some socio-economic benefit it can bring to the society. One of the main benefits is that, huge amount of money government incur on inmate could be reduced and it can help in reducing recidivism and crime rate.

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