EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF APPRAISAL PANELS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN PAROLE SYSTEM: AN ANALYSIS OF DECISION-MAKING QUALITY AND INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

[1]ERNEST RAMOKONE LEKALAKALA, [2]HENDRICK PULENG MOTLALEKGOSI, [3] HERMAN PULE MOKUBYANE

[1,2,3]Department of Law, Safety and Security Management, Faculty of Humanities,
Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa
E-mail: [1]LekalakalaER@tut.ac.za, Email: [2]MotlalekgosiD@tut.ac.za, Email:[3]MokubyanePH@tut.ac.za

Abstract - The parole system in South Africa is a central mechanism for promoting offender rehabilitation while safeguarding public safety and upholding constitutional principles of administrative justice. Under the Correctional Services Act 111 of 1998, appraisal panels at correctional centres assess offenders' readiness for release and submit recommendations to the Correctional Supervision and Parole Board. Despite their pivotal role, scholarly attention to their effectiveness in ensuring high-quality, accountable decision-making remains limited. This study evaluates the effectiveness of appraisal panels in South Africa's parole system, focusing on the quality of decision-making, procedural compliance, and institutional accountability. A systematic literature review methodology was adopted. Peer-reviewed articles, legislative texts, policy frameworks, government reports, and oversight findings published between 2000 and 2025 were identified through structured database searches and screened using predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The selected literature was analysed thematically to identify recurring issues relating to risk assessment practices, procedural fairness, transparency, consistency of recommendations, and accountability mechanisms. The review identifies persistent challenges, including inconsistent application of risk assessment tools, inadequate training, resource limitations, and limited transparency in recommendation processes. While reforms have strengthened procedural formalisation, gaps remain in monitoring and evaluation systems, which affect the overall quality and consistency of decisions. The study concludes that enhancing standardised assessment frameworks, capacity development, and oversight mechanisms is essential to improve institutional effectiveness. By critically examining appraisal panels as key governance structures, this article contributes to penological scholarship by advancing evidence-based reform discussions on parole decision-making within the South African correctional system.

Keywords - Parole System, Appraisal Panels, Decision-Making Quality, Institutional Accountability, Systematic Literature Review