Effects of Imprisonment on Depression among Female Inmates in Selected Prisons in Kenya

John Mwithalii Kamoyo   Dr. Hillary K. Barchok   Dr. Beatrice M. Mburugu   Dr.Veronica K. Nyaga

Department Of Education, Chuka University, P.O. Box 109-60400, Chuka, Kenya

Abstract

This study examined the effects of imprisonment on depression among female inmates in selected prisons in Kenya. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. A sample of 295 respondents was randomly selected to participant in the study. The study utilized semi structured questionnaires, interview schedules and observation guides to collect the desired data. The reliability of the instruments was estimated using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient. The instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.857. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis. The findings of the study indicated significant effects of imprisonment on depression among the female inmates. The study recommended reevaluation of the prisons' physical, psychological and social environments to root out depression trigger factors. There was also need for recruitment of professional counselors to counsel the psychologically disturbed inmates. This would conveniently be achieved through partnership with religious institutions and non-governmental organizations that provide such services.

Keywords: Imprisonment, Depression, Female Inmates

1. Introduction

Imprisonment plays a vital role in curbing crime and insecurity in any nation as well as correcting deviant behavior among law breakers. However, the psychological and social harm resulting from incarceration among prisoners in Kenya particularly female inmates is an area of concern. The plight of female inmates is more disturbing as some of the inmates serve with pregnancies while nursing mothers are incarcerated alongside their babies. Plenty of research has examined preparation of inmates for life outside prison, but few studies have examined supporting them while in prison (Tomar, 2013).

Depression is a common problem in prison population (Birmingham, 2004; Gunter, 2004; Drapalski, Youman, Stuewig & Tangney 2009). The problem is often associated with imprisonment experiences among inmates, especially female inmates (Boothby & Durham, 1999). Depression which is one of the most common psychiatric disorders in prison, depicts itself in form of depressed mode, loss of interest, enjoyment, reduced energy, leading to increased fatigue and diminished activity (WHO, 1992). The evidence of depression is usually related to experience of sudden deprivation of liberty, autonomy, and other necessities of life that are not common in a prison environment (Gunter, 2004). It is common for newly admitted inmates to suffer from depression for certain period of time due to entry shock and entry into a new environment that contrast the outside environment. Prisoners are exposed to new culture, which is very different from their own culture (Tomar, 2013). While in prison, the prisoner must determine her own way of passing time since the hours appear endless.

Osebe (2012) observes that, the major source of stress and depression is loss of contact with family and friends outside prison and fear of deterioration. Besides this, there is lack of personal choice within the prison environment which may have adverse effects on inmates. Ireland & York (as cited by Ahmad, 2014) posits that depression among female inmates has often resulted to the risk of self-harm and suicide in prison. Many early researchers concluded that imprisonment had negative psychological effects on inmates leading to psychological deterioration (Tomar, 2013). These effects included emotional withdrawal, depression, suicidal thoughts or actions as while as increasing levels of hostility.

Female offenders in Kenya make up to about 18% of total prison population with the number increasing from 10,857 in 2004 to 18,112 in 2012 (Olivia 2013). Studies done in Kenya and elsewhere show that compared to their male counterparts, women incarcerated in various prisons are more likely to have mental disorders and a history of physical and sexual abuses (Osebe, 2012). Inmates have complained of emotional, psychological and health related problems however their special needs have been given no or merely scanty attention by the prison authorities (Onyango, 2013). Inmates in Kenya have further reported facing all kinds of unbearable hardships in prison (Amnesty International, 2013). Despite the problems, little attention has been given to the unique psychological concerns of women prisoners. Thus the study sought to understand the effects of imprisonment on depression among female inmates in Kenya.

2. Problem of the Research

Prisons were designed to cure criminals of crime. In Kenya, the fundamental purpose of prison services is to keep, reform, re-orientate and rehabilitate inmates to avoid recidivism and also empower the inmates to become

law abiding and productive members of society upon release from prison. However, prisons in Kenya may be doing more harm than good to the inmate because cases of suicide, increased re-offending, bullying and incidences of mental illness have been reported among inmates within the prisons. This trend suggests that there could be an underlying psychological problem facing the inmates. If such experiences are not addressed, incidences of mental breakdown and increased recidivism could be an enormous task for the government to manage. Although the pains of confinement affect all prisoners' in different ways, psychological harm resulting from incarceration among Kenyan prisoners is not well understood. Therefore, this study sought to investigate the effects of imprisonment on depression among female inmates in selected prisons in Kenya.

3. Objectives of the Study
The objective of this study was to determine the effects of imprisonment on depression among female inmates in selected prisons in Kenya.

4. Methodology
This study adapted a descriptive survey research design on a target population of constituting female inmates and the prison staff. This design was deemed suitable for the study because data were collected and analyzed as it existed in the field without manipulating any of the variables.

4.1 Sample of the Research
Sampling is the procedure a researcher uses to gather people, places or things to study. It is a process of selecting a number of individuals or objects from a population such that the selected group contains elements representative of the characteristics found in the entire population (Orodho & Kombo, 2002). A sample of 291 female inmates from 4 selected prisons participated in the study. The selection of the inmates who participated in the study was done using simple random sampling. The inmates were distributed among the four prisons using proportionate sampling. The other participants in the study included 4 prison wardens who were purposefully selected. This gave a total of 295 respondents.

4.2 Instrumentation
The desired data were collected by use of custom made questionnaires, interview schedules and observation guides. The questionnaires were used to collect data from the key respondents; the female inmates. The rationale of using questionnaires was the large numbers of this category of respondents and the sensitive nature of the research. The questionnaire provided anonymity to the female inmates and therefore the freedom to express opinions and make suggestions. The Interview schedules were used to gather in depth information from the prison wardens who were relatively few. Observation method was used to supplement the information gathered from the respondents through questionnaires and interviews. To improve on the reliability of the research instruments, a pilot study was conducted in one prison which had similar characteristics with the study prisons. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient technique yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.857 which was considered appropriate for the study. Expert opinion from the University Supervisors was sought to improve on the validity of the research instruments.

4.3 Data Analysis
Data on the completed research instruments were cleaned, coded and entered into the computer for analysis using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 19.0. The data was analyzed by use of inferential and descriptive statistics including Chi Square test, means and standard deviations. Qualitative data was analyzed by determining patterns and trends from the open ended test items and interview responses. The analyzed data were then presented on tables and by prose narration.

5. Results of the Study
This study sought to test the hypothesis "There is no statistically significant differences between imprisonment and depression among female inmates in selected prisons in Kenya." The following are results of data analysis.

5.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents
Most (46.4%) female inmates were below 30 years of age while 45.6% were within the age bracket 31 to 50 years. With regard to marital status, 48.4% of the female inmates were single, 30% were married, 9.2% widowed and 12.4% were divorced. The female inmates were required to indicate the number of children born to them. Majority who comprised 54.8% had 1 to 3 children, 34.8% had 4 or more children while 10.4% had no children. Concerning the highest level of education, 55% of the female inmates had primary school education certificates, 29.3% had secondary school education certificates, 3.2% had bachelor's degree, 2% had attended college while 10.4% had never gone to school. It was inferred that the level of education correlated negatively with

imprisonment among the female inmates. Prison sentences varied among the female inmates with 44.8% having served less than one year in prison, 20.4% between 1 and 2 years, 16.4% between 3 and 5 years, 11.2% between 6 and 10 years while 7.2% had served for more than 10 years. The female inmates belonged to three categories of religious affiliations where 54.8% were Protestants, 37.34% were Catholics while 10.4% were Muslims.

Prison wardens' demographic information sufficed as follows: Majority (75%) of the prison wardens were female while 25% were male. This gender bias was attributed to the prisons belonging to female inmates. with 50% being in the age bracket 30 years to 45 years. Regarding the work experience, 50% of the wardens had worked for a range of 1 to 10 years and the rest had work experience of more than 10 years. Therefore, the prison wardens had relevant information through experience to inform this study. Majority of the prison wardens (75%) were in the rank of an inspector while 25% were corporals. Regarding religious affiliation, most (50%) of the prison wardens were Protestants, 25% were Catholics and 25% belonged to the Muslim faithful.

5.2 Effects of Imprisonment on Depression among Female Inmates
To determine whether the effects of imprisonment on depression among female inmates were significant, Chi Square test was carried out. Test items on effects of imprisonment on depression were rated on a 5 level likert scale where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree and 5 = Strongly Agree. The information on Table 1 represents the results of data analysis.

Table 1: Effects of Imprisonment on Depression among Female Inmates Chi Square Test

Statements	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.
Being in prison makes me bitter	127.960[a]	4	.000
I feel miserable and sad because of imprisonment	125.520[a]	4	.000
I have thought of committing suicide severally ever since I was in prison	79.880[a]	4	.000
Fear of dying in prison	68.000[a]	4	.000
Sweat most of the time in prison and not due to heat	28.760[a]	4	.000
I do not like the life in prison	183.520[a]	4	.000
There is no freedom in prison	175.840[a]	4	.000
I have a lot of fear while in prison	142.080[a]	4	.000
I cry over very little thing that I encounter in prison	72.280[a]	4	.000
There is no hope for the future in prison	33.680[a]	4	.000
I am restless and I cannot keep still in prison	22.520[a]	4	.000
I sleep most of the time in prison	83.800[a]	4	.000
I am less interested in other people or things ever since I was imprisoned	50.160[a]	4	.000
Effects of imprisonment on depression among female inmates	**151.016[b]**	**48**	**.000**

Details displayed on Table 1 reveal that the P-Value (0.000) was less than the set Alpha Value of 0.05 for all the test items. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected meaning that imprisonment had a statistically significant effect on depression among female inmates in selected prisons in Kenya. To assess the patterns of these effects, mean perceptions of the respondents and the Standard Deviations were computed. A mean analysis between 1 and 2.5 indicated low depression, between 2.5 and 3.5 indicated modest depression and 3.5 to 5 indicated high depression. Data analysis results were represented on Table 2 below.

Table 2: Mean Perceptions on Effects of Imprisonment on Depression among Female Inmates

Statements	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Being in prison makes me bitter	250	2.24	1.435
I feel miserable and sad because of imprisonment	250	2.34	1.388
I have thought of committing suicide severally ever since I was in prison	250	3.52	1.537
Fear of dying in prison	250	2.66	1.519
Sweat most of the time in prison and not due to heat	250	3.01	1.464
I do not like the life in prison	250	1.99	1.302
There is no freedom in prison	250	1.96	1.210
I have a lot of fear while in prison	250	2.21	1.250
I cry over very little thing that i encounter in prison	250	2.62	1.370
There is no hope for the future in prison	250	3.15	1.588
I am restless and I cannot keep still in prison	250	2.78	1.446
I sleep most of the time in prison	250	3.51	1.293
I am less interested in other people or things ever since i was imprisoned	250	2.72	1.525
Overall mean: Effects of imprisonment on depression among female inmates	**250**	**2.6680**	**.80267**
Valid N (listwise)	250		

It is clear from information on Table 2 that imprisonment had moderate effects on depression among female inmates in selected prisons in Kenya with an overall mean of 2.6680 and a Standard Deviation of .80267. The test items that depicted low effect on depression included feeling of bitterness, sadness and being miserable as well as hating the prison life and the lack of freedom. Those items that indicated moderate effect on depression were hopelessness, loss of interest, fear of death and restlessness. Suicidal ideation and sleeping most of the time signified high effect on depression. This means that most female inmates thought of committing suicide in prison.

6. Discussion

The findings of this study indicated that most female inmates in Kenyan prisons were depressed given that positive screening of depression was noted pointing to a high likelihood for depressive disorders among the female inmates. The findings supported previous studies that confirm existence of depression among prison population (Birmingham, 2004; Gunter, 2004; Drapalski et al., 2009; Lafortune, 2010). In agreement, Burkaloo (2009) notes that prisons are extremely stressful for inmates partly because they have little control over their environment. This is because the inmates eat, work, shower, and sleep when told. In addition, research has revealed that high levels of psychological problems such as anxiety and depression were common among inmates (Cooper & Berwick, 2001; Cooper & Livingston, 1999; Zamble & Porporino, 1990).

According to the findings of this study, most female inmates slept most of the time and thought about committing suicide as a result of imprisonment. Entering the criminal justice system can be a disruptive and disorganizing experience (Burkaloo, 2009). It is demonstrated vividly by the increased rates of suicide and self-harm among both male and female inmates found within early years of imprisonment. Entry shock is particularly evident within the initial stages of confinement where offenders face disproportionate amount of stress and where high rates of suicide and self-harm are found during early hours of custody (Blaauw *et al.,* 1998). The presence of depression and anxiety among female inmates in the current study indicated that women are more prone to depressive circumstances. Women often have more sources of stress and depression such as social economic problems, family affairs and less educational opportunities (Gunter, 2004). These circumstances are even more significant among inmates who are being incarcerated and restricted from freedom to achieve something like those outside the prison wall (Houck & Loper, 2002).

7. Recommendations

There was need for psychiatry services in Kenyan prisons to enhance proper and accurate assessment, diagnosis and treatment of depression among female inmates. Counselling services would also come in handy to prevent onset of new cases of depression and manage the existing patients who had already succumbed to the disorder. The physical, psychological and social environments in the prisons required reevaluation by psychologists in an attempt to root out depression trigger factors such as congestion, lack of privacy, restricted freedom, bitterness, vengeance and stigma. Personalized, gender specific and needs oriented intervention programmes could as well

be designed to cater for various categories of female inmates such as nursing mothers, these incarcerated due to mistaken identity, mothers who are alienated from their children and inmates with psychological disorders among others. Partnership with religious institutions and nongovernmental organization that offered such programmes would conveniently ease psychological burden from the female inmates.

References

Ahmad, A. & Mazlan, N.H (2014). Stress and Depression: A Comparison Study between Men and Women Inmates in Peninsular Malaysia. International *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Vol. 4 No.2,* 153-160.

Amnesty International (2012).Kenyan Mothers Suffering in Prison with Limited Access toChildren.http;// women News Network.

Birmingham, L. (2004). Mental Disorder and Prisons. *Psychiatric Bulletin, 28*,393-397.

Blaauw, E, Schilder, F. & Van de lande, S. (1998). Prevention of Suicides in the Dutch CJS in D. Libeling(Ed), *Deathsof Offenders; the Hidden Side of Justice,* Wihchesth: Waterside Press

Boothby, J. L,. & Durham, T.W. (1999). Screening for Depression in Prisoners Using the Beck Depression Inventory. *Criminal Justice and Behavior, 26*(1), 107-124.

Buckallo, B.J. (2009). Excuse and the Low Security Inmate; Changes in Depression, Stress and Anxiety. *The Prison Journal 2009 89;328-http;//www.Sage Publication.Com.*

Cooper, C & Berwick, S. (2001).*Factors Affecting Psychological Well Being of these Groups of Suicide – Prone Prisoners, Current Psychology;* Developmental Learning, Personality, Social, 20, 169-182.

Cooper, C.& Livingston, M. (1991). Depression and Coping Mechanisms in Prisoners, *Work & Stress, 5*, 149-154.

Drapalski. A. L,. Youman, K., Stuewig, J,. & Tangney, J. (2009). Gender Difference in Jail Inmates' Symptoms of Mental Illness, Treatment History and Treatment Seeking. *Criminal Behavior and Mental Health, 19*, 193-206.

Gunter, T.D. (2004). Incarcerated Women and Depression: A Printer for the Primary Care Provider. *Journal of the American Women's Association, 59*(2), 107-112.

Houck, K.D.F. & Loper, A.B. (2002). The Relationship of Parenting Stress to Adjustment among Mothers in Prison. *American Journal of Orthopsychistry, 72* (4), 548-558.

Lafortune, D. (2010). Prevalence and Screening of Mental Disorders in Short Term Correctional Facilities. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry, 156*, 837-841.

Olivia, L.O. (2013). *Institutional Treatment of Female Offenders in Kenya,* 153rd International Senior Seminar Participants' Papers Pp 145-149.

Onyango, O.J. (2013). The Challenges Facing Rehabilitation of Prisoners in Kenya and the Mitigation Strategies. *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences, Vol. 2* (2), 39-43

Orodho, A.J. & Kombo, D.K. (2002). *Research Methods*. Nairobi: Kenyatta University, Institute of Open Learning.

Osebe, A.E. (2011). The Effects of Imprisonment on Inmates in Kenya: The Case of Industrial AreaRemandandLang'ataWomen'sPrisons.htt://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke8080/handle/123456789/4460

Tomar, S. (2013). The Psychological Effects of Incarceration on Inmates: Can We Promote Positive Emotion in Inmates. *Delhi Psychiatry Journal, 16*, 64-72.

World Health Organization (1992). *The ICD-10 Classification of Mental Behavioral Disorders. Clinical Description and Diagnostic Guidelines*. Geneva, Switzerland: Office of Publication, WHO.

Zamble, E. & Porporino, F. (1990). Coping, Imprisonment and Rehabilitation; Some Data and Inner Implications; *Criminal Justice and Behaviour17* (1) 53-70.

The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open-Access hosting service and academic event management. The aim of the firm is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the firm can be found on the homepage:
http://www.iiste.org

CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

There are more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals hosted under the hosting platform.

Prospective authors of journals can find the submission instruction on the following page: http://www.iiste.org/journals/   All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Paper version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: http://www.iiste.org/book/

Academic conference: http://www.iiste.org/conference/upcoming-conferences-call-for-paper/

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digtial Library , NewJour, Google Scholar